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# HUMAN DISABILITY AS A BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN LABOUR MARKET IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The study focused on the barriers confronting the disabled in securing paid employment in Nigeria. The target population was 954 members of the Joint National Association of People Living With Disability (JONAPWD) in Kwara State, Nigeria. 145 members were randomly picked from the population for interview through convenience sampling technique. The data gathered were analyzed using context analysis method. The findings show that lack of education and vocational training, discrimination and none implementation of disability law amongst others are the factors responsible for the unemployment of the disabled in Nigeria. To remedy the situation, the study recommended that the Federal Government in Nigeria should direct its component states to strictly implement the Disability bill in order to offer employment opportunities, promote the healthcare and civil rights of the disabled amongst others.

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**Keywords:** Nigeria, People With Disabilities, Unemployment, Poverty, Empowerment

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## Introduction

Disability is a global phenomenon because there is no country in the world that does not have people with one form of disability or the other. The World Bank estimates that one billion people or 15% of the world's population experience some form of disabilities and the prevalence is higher in developing countries. The National Population Commission of Nigeria (NPC) has estimated that no fewer than 19 million Nigerians are living with disabilities (Agency Report, 2018). Globally, people with disabilities have poor health outcomes, lower education, high unemployment rate, less economic participation and higher rate of poverty compare to people without disabilities (Chan and Zoellick, 2011).

In most developing countries including Nigeria, poverty and poor standard of living are prominent among people with disability. People with disabilities are more likely to be socially discriminated and neglected than able bodied persons. Being disabled, they are automatically more vulnerable in obtaining employment opportunities than people with mental and physical abilities in the labour market. People with disabilities face discrimination and unemployment. Report from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) revealed that a good number of people with disabilities are likely to be unemployed when compared with the general population The people in

authority in. some countries have failed to realize the fact that neglecting disabled people can lead to social discrimination and marginalization. The consequences can increase the dependency rate of people with disability; create room for poverty and low per capital income.

In order to achieve social recognition, reduce discrimination and be elevated from poverty level, the disabled persons in Nigeria, like in other countries, formed a body or an association called Joint National Association of People with Disability (JONAPWD). The apex body is registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) while the units or branches are domiciled in all States of the Federation and are also registered with the Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development in order to gain the needed recognition towards addressing issues that pertains to the disabled (Muhammed, 2017). The Federal and States Ministries of Women Affairs are supposed to fund these organizations to carry out their activities, however, the funding of people with disability for various activities like education, workshop, empowerment and sports are sometimes not forthcoming or are inadequate. Under this situation, donor agencies and NGOs do come to the aid of disabled people's organizations (JONAPWD, 2016). This scenario raised awareness that prompted Disability Decree (1993) to be promulgated during the defunct military regime.

In March 2009, the Nigerian Senate approved the Disability Bill. The Bill prohibits all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities. Furthermore, the bill demands equal opportunities in all aspects of life including health, education, employment, transportation and housing for individuals with disabilities. It made it mandatory that all public buildings should provide access to people with disabilities. The Bill also stipulated the penalties for corporate bodies and individuals found discriminating against people with disabilities (Adelaja, 2009; Ogala, 2009). Regrettably, the former President Goodluck Jonathan declined to sign the Bill into law. However, on January 23, 2019, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Disability Bill into law (Ewang, 2019).

Today, there is persistence recognition across the world on the need to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities in terms of relative health, education and employment. People with disabilities in Kwara State is no exception, after all, there is a common saying that; "there is abilities in disabilities". Interestingly, there are tax benefits for employers hiring people with disabilities in Kwara State and also fines for discriminating against them. Few researches have been conducted regarding the attitudes of Nigerians towards people living with disabilities and the problems of youth unemployment. Unfortunately, it seems no extensive research has been conducted on why human disability portends a barrier to securing gainful employment in Nigeria. The lack of adequate attention to this important issue tends to put the disabled at a disadvantage position in the labour market in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, focuses on the causes and the effects of human disability in securing a hitch free employment and also proffered suggestions on how to tackle the problem.

## Literature Review

### A. Concept of Disability

Over the years, there is no single, universally acceptable definition of disability as a concept or term that cut across all category of human diversity: race, gender, sexual orientation, intellectual, etc. Studies by scholars have examined the concept of disability with no specific definition of the subject (Davis, 2010; Pelka, 2012 & United Nations, 2003). The United Nations' (UN) assertion presupposes a "modifier" that could be used to identify people who live with disabilities. In another instance, Pelka (2012) asserts that disability is a dynamic phenomenon and its definition could be factored on time and social circumstances even as he contends that historically, it has been based on the opinions of the nondisabled majority with prevailing social attitudes regarding physical and psychological differences determining how people with disabilities are treated. Davis (2010) defines disability as the process that turns impairment into negative outcomes by creating barriers to access. These various attempts at conceptualizing

disability highlight the fact that its definition is largely dependent on culture and as cultural practices evolved over time, knowledge about disability is expected to improve. For instance, what is perceived as disability in one culture may not be so considered in other culture.

According to Sabbath & Masagwa (2014) disability is part of human condition temporarily or permanently that impaired someone at some point in life and those who survive it to old age experience increasing difficulties in functioning. However, disability according to Anderson, Citro & Salvo (2011) was defined as an affirmative response to provide detail on the estimates of the person who is deaf or have serious difficulty in hearing, seeing even when wearing glasses because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions or have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, dressing or bathing and cannot go errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping. Disability is therefore viewed as a condition which may restrict a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have a disability.

### Types of Disability

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), 2010 outlines and defines briefly the following categories of disability:

- i. **Physical** - affects a person's mobility or dexterity
- ii. **Intellectual** - affects a person's abilities to learn
- iii. **Mental Illness** - affects a person's thinking processes
- iv. **Sensory** - affects a person's ability to hear or see
- v. **Neurological** - affects the person's brain and central nervous system.

Naturally, some people are born with disability while others acquire it. For example, a person may acquire a disability through a workplace accident

or car accident, or may develop a disability in the course of ageing Disability is associated with medical conditions and viewed as a problem for the affected individuals. The concept of disability continues to evolve over time and it is important to note that persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group; they have different capacities and needs and contribute in different ways to their communities (UNHCR, 2019).

### B. Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) as people who do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are currently available for work. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as members of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World bank, 2010). Taylor & College (2015) defined unemployment as when persons above a specified age (usually above 15) are not in paid employment or self-employment and are currently available for work during the period. Unemployment is a situation in which people who are qualified for a job, willing to work and willing to accept the going rate cannot find jobs with considerable delays (Olojede, Nwaodike & Oni (2019)). Fajana (2000) opined that unemployment is a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. Unemployment is a term referring to individuals who are employable and seeking a job but is unable to find a job.

The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher the poverty level and associated welfare challenges Uddin and Uddin (2013) in Fajana (2000), Olojede, Nwaodike & Oni (2019), Wikipedia(2010) and Sadare and Elegbede (2012) identified types of unemployment to include structural unemployment, frictional unemployment, seasonal unemployment, technological unemployment, residual unemployment, and open unemployment.

**Structural Unemployment:** this occurs when there is a change in structure of an industry or the economic activities in the country. This may be

because people's tastes have changed or it may be because technology has been outmoded and the product or service is no longer in demand.

**Frictional Unemployment:** this is caused by industrial friction in which jobs may exist yet the workers may be unable to fill them either because they do not possess the necessary skills or because they are not aware of the existence of such jobs. The employable may remain unemployed.

**Seasonal Unemployment:** this occurs due to seasonal variations in the activities of particular industries caused by climatic changes, changes in fashion or by the inherent nature of such industries. In the tropical region, ice factories are less active in rainy season because demand for ice is low.

**Technological Unemployment:** this is caused by changes in the techniques of production. Technological changes are taking place constantly, leading to increased mechanization of the production process.

**Residual Unemployment:** this is caused by factors such as old age, physical or mental disability, poor work attitudes and inadequate training.

**Open Unemployment:** this is the type of unemployment where there are some categories of young men and women roaming about the streets looking for job. There is job for them to do but they refused to do the job(s) for reasons best known to them.

### C. Empirical Review of Disability and Unemployment in Nigeria

Eleweke & Ebenso (2016) conducted a study on experiences of people with disabilities in Nigeria and specifically the barriers they encounter in accessing various services in the country based on the framework of social model of disability. The qualitative research method was utilized in the data collection and interpretation. The results indicated that people with disabilities in the country encounter a plethora of barriers in accessing important services. These obstacles in accessing essential services deprived people with disabilities the opportunity to get services that would enhance the development of their potentials in their chosen careers..

Muhammed (2017) conducted a research on the problems of people living with disability in Nigeria. The study focuses on the multiple problems faced by disabled persons and significant others with a view to understanding the negative experiences of living with disability. Documentary source was used in collecting the data for the study. The chosen theoretical framework for the study is the Social Model of disability. The finding from the study shows that disabled persons suffer and experience discrimination from the government and other members of the society in which they live. Majority of them have negative experiences with respect to employment, adequate training, sustainable and dependable empowerment, exclusion from social interaction and participation in decision making on public affairs. The study implored the then Nigeria government to as a matter of urgency ensure that Disability B[ill is signed into law and also make the provision of welfare and social security services to disabled persons a priority.

United Nation (UN, 2015) revealed in a study on women and girls with disabilities (W&GWD) that in the 2011 World Report on Disability, female disability prevalence rate was 19.2 per cent whereas it was 12 per cent for men. The global literacy rate was as low as three per cent for all adults with disabilities, and one per cent for women with disabilities. Although, all persons with disabilities face barriers to employment, men with disabilities have been found to be almost twice and likely to be employed than women with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities experience higher rates of gender-based violence, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation than women and girls without disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to experience gender-based violence compared to non-disabled women

Artale (2003) examined the attitudes of community college students toward persons with disabilities in order to see if certain personality characteristics would make a person more or less likely to have a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward a person with a disability. Artale (2003), using the Situational Scale-Handicapped (SS-H) found a significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

The study used a convenience sample of students in a middle sized college in Central Florida. .

According to Okafor (2003), the most difficult challenge and threat to people living with disabilities are social stigma and discrimination which tend to pervade all sections of Nigerian society. For instance, the current census information (1991) described the disabled in negative terms such as “mentally retarded/lunatic,” “crippled,” “dumb,” and “deaf and dumb.” People with disabilities labeled or stigmatized as mentally retarded/lunatic by the Nigerian Government encompass people with mental, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities. One can attribute this stigmatization by the government to be one of the reasons why the public may not be as open-minded towards people living with disabilities as one would have expected. According to the Daily Champion (2004), prejudice meted out to people with disabilities in Nigeria actually derives its legitimacy from the negligence and the culpable indifference of the larger society.

A study conducted by Bratsberg, Fevang & Road (2010) on disability in the welfare state and titled: an unemployment problem in disguise? revealed that economies laced with the experience of unemployment often have high disability rates. In Norway, the permanent disability insurance rolls registered unemployment by four to one. Based on administrative registered data matched with firms' financial statements and data closure sourced from bankruptcy proceedings, a large fraction of Norwegian disability insurance claims could be directly attributed to job displacements and other adverse shocks to employment opportunities. For men, the estimate of the job loss more than doubles the risk of entry to permanent disability and the displacements account for 28 percent of all new disability insurance claims. The authors concluded that unemployment and disability insurance are close substitutes.

Based on the empirical review, there is evidence that various reasons were adduced for the causes, challenges and socioeconomic variables that influence attitudes towards people with disabilities. However, since very little research exists regarding disability unemployment in Kwara State, Nigeria, this study sampled opinion of Nigerians and some

individuals with disabilities particularly members of JONAPWD, Kwara State chapter. This was done through the exploratory method of interviews to ascertain the root causes and effects of social and economic exclusion, discrimination, and problems faced by people with disabilities in Kwara State and their handicaps towards accessing job opportunities and to make suggestions on how these challenges could be effectively tackled to ameliorate the unfair trends.

## Theoretical Framework

### A. Critical Theory

As a basis for theoretical framework, this study employed theories that previously have shown promise in understanding the plights of people with disabilities in other countries. Namely: critical theory and social exclusion theory. The Critical Theory (as articulated by Bereford, 1994; ICIDH 1991, cited in Oliver, 1997; Rioux, 1994; Roeher Institute, 1996; Roth, 1983), is based on the notion that disability has social and economic causes and is as a result of how the society is organized and the relationship between the individuals to economic benefits of the society at large. This theory focuses on the factors that keep disabled persons from being included as equals in society in terms of job opportunities and economic benefits. This approach draws from other academic disciplines and disability unemployment issues from the standpoint of human rights doctrine. Critical theorists construct analyses of how society marginalizes people with disabilities and how it can be adjusted to respond more effectively to their needs were also reviewed. The theory makes the exercise of human rights by the disabled person the dependent variable, while the social and economic structure the independent variable. The social model of disability framework was also considered in the study. It was therefore, imperative that people with disabilities in Nigeria were provided the medium to express their views on the challenges they encountered in their attempt to have access to employment and economic benefits in the society.

### B. Social Exclusion Theory

Olojede, Nwaodike and Oni (2019) in Gardner, Pickett, Brewer (2000) described social exclusion

theory as the deliberate and continuous effort in which persons or group are consistently barred from complete accessibility to various rights, opportunities and resources that are usually available to members of different groups in the society. The discrimination emanating from social exclusion can be as a result of an individual's social class, race, skin colour and educational level. The result of social exclusion is a situation where an individual or group in an environment are denied the opportunity to participate in economic, social and political life of the society in which they reside and therefore, cannot enjoy or maximally benefit from the society because they do not belong to a particular social class, education and race. Social exclusion includes a broad range of social inequalities (Igbodalo,2012). The factors linked to social exclusion range from exclusion from social process. For instance, through racial harassment or exclusion because of poor education, poor health, homelessness, disability, poor social networks, lack of access to informal contacts and also to its availability (Olojede, Nwaodike and Oni,2019).

However, the critical theory is considered to be more relevant to this study due to the fact that it addresses the issue of social and economic discrimination that keep disabled persons from being included as equals in society in terms of job opportunities and economic benefits.

## Methodology

The population of this study comprises of 954 members of Joint National Association of People Living With Disability (JONAPWD) in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Out of this population, 145 participants were randomly selected from members of JONAPWD in Ilorin, Kwara State for interview using convenience sampling technique. The data collected from the explorative interview were analysed using context analysis method. Thus, the narratives of their experiences on various causes and effects of disability unemployment and in accessing social and economic services further provided better insights for the study. A limitation to the data collection was the few people with disabilities that participated in the study. Despite the sample size, the causes and effects of disabilities

unemployment were recurring in themes and sub-themes in the responses provided by the participants. This provided validity (consistency) and reliability to the data collected.

## Analysis and Discussion

The main objective of this study was to draw an insight on content analysis of disabilities unemployment, causes and the effects of excluding people with disability from tapping the benefits of socioeconomic development in Nigeria with a special focus on the Joint Association of People Living with Disability (JONAPWD) in Ilorin, Kwara State. This section presents the results that emanated from the field work that adopted qualitative paradigm to realize the objective of the study.

### A. Causes of Disability Unemployment in Nigeria

**I. Physical and Intellectual Barriers:** one major reason for people with disability for not been able to be gainfully employed is their physical and intellectual barriers. All the participants use mobility aids (including guide canes, clutches or wheelchairs) seen as physical and intellectual barriers which restricted their access to job opportunities and economic benefits in the society. It was very clear from their comments that people with disabilities in Kwara State encountered physical and intellectual challenges in accessing public buildings. One of the participants interviewed stated:

*“Due to fear of the unknown, hiring managers worry that candidates with disabilities might burden the company in some way, or just make them and their colleagues uncomfortable”.*

This implies that many organizations believed that there will be lot of discomfort from people with disabilities. A study conducted by (Olojede, Nwaodike and Oni, 2019) indicated that 1.6% and 1.8% of individuals with diseases or physical disabilities are prone to unemployment in Oyo and Ogun State respectively. This implies that individuals with diseases and physical disabilities were more susceptible to unemployment because their health conditions will be a hindrance for them to be employable. Kware (2015) aligned that

poor health and physical incapacity is a disaster. It restricts and forces individuals to become unemployed and unemployable.

**II. Lack of Ramps and Lifts:** most of the participants reported that the societal class and economic prospects were not in their favour when compared with people without disabilities. Similar to this is the existence of structural and physical barriers they encountered daily at work and other places, These include the lack of ramps, lack of lifts, narrow entrances and corridors, inaccessible restrooms, tight and over-crowded office and so on. One of the participants articulated his statement thus:

*“Industries in the major cities changed their public entrances to narrow security gates barely large enough for a standing adult among the people with disabilities to squeeze through.*

*“Access into premises is impossible for people using walking aids or wheelchairs in most of the organizations visited”.*

Many of us walk around the industrial areas regularly and come back not employed.

**III. Nature of the Job:** although some women with disabilities might possess extensive computer skills but they might not be hired because as one participant puts it:

Jobs like receptionist have a kind of public image. If they have put in the advert that only women need apply, it is obvious they have in mind a certain kind of women – a pretty face, an attractive face, and a public relations model. Furthermore it is, someone very attractive that people will admire.... Nobody will ever consider a woman with disability in that kind of job.

This is in consonance with the report made by United Nation (UN, 2015) Women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to be neglected or experience maltreatment and gender-based violence when compared to non-disabled women.

**IV. Socio-Cultural Barriers:** can focus on family background. Others are religion, gender inequality, education, stigmatization and environment that are the major causes and

challenges which prevent people with disabilities from tapping the benefits of employment opportunities in the society. Some are not granted the opportunities in accessing jobs provided in their immediate environment. Thus, unemployment in particular has effects on social integration, life satisfaction, access to economic resource and mental health which hindered the achievement of psychosocial needs that are fundamentally associated with working such as social and higher self-efficacy (Sabbath & Mazagwa 2014; Pohlan, 2018). One of the participants comments thus;

*“My family neither allowed me to take a job nor do they provide one for me being a female with disabilities among others, I was always advised to be a full time housewife as a norm of the societal class I belong to.”*

**V. Discrimination :** It is another major cause of disability unemployment. Discrimination is a form of social exclusion. Disabled persons experience and suffer from the discriminatory attitude of most members of the public and the government in terms of policy, decision making and implementation of issues that affect their lives (Muhammed, 2017). According to one of the Respondents

*“Most organizations either private or public often discriminate as employers always prefer to offer jobs to those who are not disabled than those with disability even when they possess the same qualification with those not disabled.”*

This implies that people with disabilities are not fairly treated in comparison with their colleagues not disabled. Injustices are prevalent all over but should this be extended to the people with disabilities looking for jobs? More importantly, women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination. Thus, women and girls with disabilities face intersecting and interlocking forms of discrimination: marginalised because they are female and because they have a disability (Amusat, 2009; Hallock, Hendricks & Broadbent 1998;).

**VI. Lack of Implementation of Disability Bill:** despite many years of delay and subsequent passing of the Disability law by President Muhammadu Buhari the recurring theme from the



participants was that it remained very challenging for them to access services due to the absence of political will by the government to faithfully implement the law. One of the participants expressed the view that;

*“People with disabilities in the country are ...swimming against the tide...” in attempting to acquire industrial skills because of the absence of any legal framework for implementing policies such as the UN Convention that the government of Nigeria ratified.”*

One of the participants stated that;

*“We have never for once witnessed government initiating the ideas to empower us with needed skills. Yet they promise equal rights on economic benefits to all citizens.”*

This implied that non implementation of disability bill in Nigeria is a strong barrier to the rights of people living with disability. However, the bill stated very clearly the rights of people with disabilities in the country; these include right to education, healthcare, transportation, economic benefits, and employment opportunities among others.

#### **VII. Lack of Education and Vocational Training:**

Globally, the level of education of people living with disability is generally low with Nigerian disabled inclusive. In fact, most people with disabilities cannot afford the cost of acquiring quality education due to poverty. Those that acquired some basic education or training programmes do not meet the requirements for some jobs due to their physical impairment. Ta & Leng, (2013) reported that Malaysia is still low and left out in the context of providing equality of educational and employment opportunities for people with disability. In the study of (Uromi and Maazagwa 2014) women and girl with disability in Tanzania are without education, consequently, they are unable to get job or participate in the community life. In a study conducted by Smith (2011) it was revealed that limited education is often associated with a very high rate of unemployment among people with disabilities in Nigeria.

Similarly, one of the respondents attests to this by stating that:

*“We are not given enabling environment for quality education and vocational programme in Nigeria. Most of the empowerment programme were not supported with financial aids to start the business”.*

This implies that government of Nigeria is not essentially committed with educational development and vocational programme for people living with disability. The cost incurred in acquiring quality education in Nigeria is very high hence the need to make it free for people living with disability.

#### **B. Effects of Disability Unemployment in Nigeria**

**High Dependency Ratio:** It is widely accepted that unemployment among people with disability is bound to increase the dependency rate as many people with physical impairment are incapacitated to provide all their needs by themselves rather they depend on their parents, families and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for support. This however, poses a great burden on their immediate families and people in the host communities, thereby creating room for high dependency rate and low per capital income. Subsequently, there will be decline in quality of life, family income, heightened insecurity, tension and conflict amongst others.

**I. One of the Respondents Articulated thus in his Statement:**

*“I am happy that I have a family and people around me that cater for my up keepings....they have been so helpful in terms of needs, supports and cares despite not skilfully employed but having diploma certificate. My parents extremely go to a great extent to ensure that am comfortable. I really depend on them and they are so reliable.”*

**II. Street Begging:** poverty rate of persons living with disability is at an alarming rate and has turned some of them to become street beggars (Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014) This is one of the societal challenges faced by people living with disability in Nigeria. Though, this was found to be predominant in Northern part of Nigeria among the children, however, adults who are disabled

and could not get job and means of survival adopt this measure to keep their body and soul alive. One of the participants revealed that;

*“some of us are educated but could not get job, therefore, we resulted to street begging for daily needs because of the poverty level and conditions of impairment and with the kind of gestures received from societies most of us are able to get our daily needs to cater for the family”.*

The foregoing implies that some people hide under the umbrella of lack of employment and vocational empowerment to extort monies from the unsuspecting public in order to earn their living. Thus, they may be disabled but they are mentally fit to work. Due to the fact that they cannot get job easily they resort to begging on the streets. The society in the above instance seems not to be playing a helpful role since they always make these disabled persons happy by giving them monies or arms and gifts rather than encouraging and counselling them to be self employed. This aligned with the postulation made by Jimmy (2013) that people with disability are regarded as those who cannot contribute to anything, are dependent and always waiting for help from members of the society.

**III. Poverty and Economic Exclusion:** disability has cause and its consequence is poverty (Muhammed, 2017). People with disability are living with poverty; they face many challenges such as unemployment and economic exclusion. The relations of persons living with disabilities often have more expenses relating to health and rehabilitation services. In addition, refugees with disabilities may have less income generating opportunities (WRC, 2018). GD11. Thus, poverty as a result of unemployment and disability can limit access to healthcare, better services and good standard of living. A good number of aged adults who experience at least one year poverty have a disability and do not have job (Vallas & Fremstad, 2014). One of the participants posits thus

*“Firms and industrial areas in Kwara State are not accessible [to individuals with mobility disabilities]. Most of their entries do not give room for easy access to office by people with disability, thereby preventing them from getting employment within the organizations. The few jobs available are paying*

*meager wage/salary. Even if there is need to accept it, the transport allowance and accommodation is not provided and most of us are in the wheelchairs or depending on walking sticks to engage in a trek daily to the distant job from home. Poor salary and stigmatization of accommodating us were cited as the reasons for exclusion in employment opportunities”.*

This implies that accessibility was not the paramount problem for those on wheelchairs or walking aids, but also their visual impairments, long distant, poor salary, non provision of transportation and accommodation are contributory factors to poverty and economic stress for these disabled persons.

People with disabilities are also much more likely to experience material or physiological hardships such as food insecurity; inability to pay rent, mortgage, and utilities; or not being able to get needed medical care than people without disabilities on the same income levels.

**IV. Sexual Harassment and Rape:** from the accounts of the female participants, it appears that problems arise when female with disabilities are seeking for job. Due to the negative attitude of some employers to engage them, they become victims of circumstance like rape and sexual harassment and because they are physically challenged, men use coercion a times to have their ways without pitting their disabled condition. Such experience by women with disability creates intense fear that they might be forcefully harassed, raped and ultimately carry unwanted pregnancies. Therefore, they would prefer to remain jobless than being treated indecently in the quest of searching for job.

One of the female participants narrated her experience thus:

*“There was a time I found out that my male employer wanted to forcefully harass me, ... (name withheld) He called me and started to touch my body and before I could shout for help, he was already on top of me. I was struggling with him, begging but he overpowered me, consequently, the following day I quitted the job”.*

This implies that society's misconceptions of women with disabilities do manifest in many spheres of life. They have experience on how indecently they are treated. Yet, the participants

were unanimous that women with disabilities encounter more obstacles that could be attributed to gender inequalities in the course of job search. They are subjected to various types of harassments including rape, and put in family way to carry unwanted babies. According to another female participant:

*“There was a case where a woman in a wheelchair was raped. The case was not taken seriously. Even the family members did not want our Association to pursue the case. They felt that if a disabled woman got raped in their opinion, she should have been grateful that someone wanted to have sex with her despite stigmatization attached to disability.”*

This thus implies that some female participants encounter physical and sexual violence in the place of work, and the reaction of society and the judicial system when they report such abuse seem unfair due to the prominence given to the patriarchal system in the society.

**V. Poor Access to Medical and Healthcare Facilities:** another problem faced by people living with disability is the negative impact on both their health and wellbeing put together. The fact that most disabled people is living in esteem poverty make them unable to take care of their health conditions. In fact, when some of them damage their aid materials such as clutches, wheel chairs, it takes them long time to get new ones to replace the damaged ones.

A friend who is physically challenged told the researcher thus:

*“I spent up to a month at home when my clutches get damaged completely. That period was very tough for my family because I could not move out and also I have problem with my phone I could not make calls.”*

This implies that disabled people with worsened health impairment may not afford to pay costly medical bills because they are unemployed. However, they are faced with double tragedy for being physically challenged and at the same time being wretchedly poor make them unable to access medical interventions when the need arises. Under normal circumstance, they should have been given unfettered access to adequate medical care and health facilities considering their disabled status:

**VI. Early Marriages:** People with disability often find it necessary to get married at earlier age. In many occasions this has led to early marriages among themselves simply because they are already excluded from jobs as a result of their physical impairment. So, their families seize the opportunity to get them married so that they can start having children at a very tender age and that could serve as a source of inspiration and better hope for the future.

One of the respondents share experience that;

*“...as a woman with disability, I have my first baby when I was eighteen and I almost fainted because it was through caesarian. It was a very sad experience when I heard that I could not deliver but through surgical operation as a result of pressure and the tension on me at my tender age at that time.”*

### C. Remedies to Disability Unemployment

The following remedies are suggested to address the highlighted causes and effects of disability unemployment in Kwara State, Nigeria.

**I. Building of Ramps:** Organizations should endeavour to build ramps and lifts to enable physically challenged persons gain access to the industries for vacant jobs and be given the opportunity to participate in the productive sector of the national economy. This however, will unanimously reduce structural and physical barriers to accessing programmes and services that adversely affect all aspects of the lives of people with disabilities in places like business, healthcare, education, employment, transport, recreation, sport and leisure. It will equally provide access to job opportunities for the people who use mobility aids including guide canes, wheel chairs in getting jobs in organizations. One of the participants stated that:

*“firms are expected to provide ramps and other working aids to people with disability .This will give them access to job opportunities and also allays the fears of those who use mobility aid such as guide canes, wheel chairs in getting jobs in an organization”.*

**II. Provision of Good Medical Treatment:** people with disabilities should be provided with good medical and healthcare services like other citizens

to make them fit for employment. General health needs to include health promotion, preventive care, treatment of acute and chronic illness, and appropriate referral for more specialized treatments where required and also free medical treatment should be granted to the disabled. These healthcare needs should be met through primary, secondary and tertiary sources as the case may be. Access to primary healthcare is particularly important for those who experience a thinner or narrower margin of health to achieve their highest attainable standard of health and functioning (W.H.O, 2011). One of the participants posits that:

*"Government should come out with policy which will provide free medical treatment for people living with disability"*

Other participants posit that:

*"We are not given special treatment in hospitals as we undergo stress before given medical treatment and pay the same bill with those that are not physically challenged."*

**III. Provision of Job Opportunities:** although, it is already provided in the Disability bill in Nigeria, there is the dire need for private employers, individuals and government to create enabling environment for job opportunities for people with disabilities. This can be done through provision of empowerment and skills acquisition programmes so that they can be self dependent and be fit for some specific jobs in the labour market. For example, people with physical disabilities can fit into the job of accounting, computer operators, typist, graphic designer, secretary etc. This will reduce high dependency rate and at the same time improve the general welfare and standard of living of the people with disabilities. One of the respondents posits that:

*"I want the government to please provide us with suitable jobs to enable us earn money for a living and take good care of ourselves, families and siblings, I am a graduate, yet no work"*

Another respondent lamented that;

*"I am no more a kid, after my secondary school, I need to have my own private handiwork whereby I will be doing some works in form of service rendering to people and then get paid, and the kind of handiwork I*

*am looking forward to from the government to help me with is the provision of tailoring machine and a teacher that will teach me how to sew clothes?"*

Furthermore, one of the respondent corroborated this by stating that:

*"I did not encounter any difficulties as a physically challenged person because of the kind of job I had. It was not so stressful and the job criteria matches the person I am and my boss was very happy to see me deliver with no or little supervision."*

**IV. Implementation of Disability Bill/Law:** Nigerian ministries, government agencies and corporate individuals should implement fully the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (prohibition) Act, 2018. The Act provides for full integration of persons with disabilities into the society and provides responsibilities for their education, healthcare, social, economic and civil rights. The Act also provides that people with disabilities should be given equal rights and participation as well as reduce any form discrimination they might encounter when looking for jobs. Therefore, attitudinal changes, as well as policy shift has be an instrument in the policy towards combating employment for people living with disabilities. One of the participants have this to say

*"During our first quarterly meeting of JONAPWD, we were told that the government has approved the Disability bill. We are looking forward to start implementing the bill so that our life can be better and improved."*

**V. Provision of Free Education and Training Programmes:** there is no doubt that there is high rate of illiteracy among the disabled people due to their physical impairment and poverty. However, some of them are well talented and skilful. Therefore, free and quality education and training programmes are needed for the physically challenged people to enable them to develop their potentials and be fit to be employed in the industry. The Nigeria Disability Act Section 17, sub section 1 provides that "A person with disability shall have an unfettered right to education without discrimination or segregation in any form". Subsection 2 states that "A person with disability is entitled to free education up to secondary school level". Access to free education

and training programmes for people with disabilities could help them live productive life and contribute to socio - economic development in the national economy.

Some respondents corroborated the following while trying to know what is needed in their education system; A respondent states

*“Some of us attended Schools and we do not enjoy the classrooms, so we plead with government of Kwara State to please help us improve facilities in our schools in order to improve the cognitive and skills development of physically impaired people, and even build more classes.”*

One of the respondents articulated the above viewpoint;

*“ I have my General Certificate of Education (GCE) O' level certificate and I passed my (Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) as well, but I am not sure if I will be able to go further even if am offered admission into University because I suffered a lot before I got money for JAMB. Government should make our education free to enable us have access to University education.*

Another respondent stated that;

*“We want the government to help alleviate us from street begging and poverty because some of us have completed our primary school. If the government can help us to further our education to university level, we will be very happy to see that we are fit for some of the jobs that required proficiency”*

This implies that disabled people also perceive that street begging is tantamount to poverty and so the government needs to urgently put measures in place which will see to the reforms in educational sector to include people with disabilities in the system in order to save the country from future humanitarian crisis.

**VI. Governmental Support Through Empowerment Programmes :** The researcher took cognisance of governmental neglects on the life of people with disabilities. It is very unfortunate that many disabled people today are on streets begging for food and money. The population is just too large and really needs government intervention through sound empowerment programmes.

Some respondents acclaimed that:

*“We are neglected by the government and we only see government support when it is time for election. During election time they will be here to give us food stuffs, clothes, gifts, and also give our parents some money. The purpose of doing all this is because they want us and our parents to vote for them and before they leave, they always promise us schools, jobs, good healthcare, motorized boreholes but after the election, we will not see them again”*

In another excerpt, one of the respondents affirmed that;

*“if government can create a platform to empower us through her N-POWER programmes , we can fully utilize our talents and skills for industrious and productive services. It will not only reduce disability unemployment but can also save the country from unexpected humanitarian crisis and terrorism.”*

This implies that most cases of terrorism and humanitarian crises were caused by idle hands and devil's workshop. Therefore, if disabled people are empowered and given economic support through laudable programme like N-POWER, it is likely that violence and agitations in the country will be mimimised.

## Conclusion

The study focused on unemployment among people with disability in Nigeria using Joint National Association of People with Disability (JONAPWD) Kwara State chapter as a case study. Disability unemployment is a syndrome that exists because of social and economic exclusion, discrimination and challenges faced by people living with disabilities in accessing job opportunities after acquiring the needed skills that can make them fit to be gainfully employed or become economically independent by establishing business of their own. The findings of the study, although quite depressive in some cases, but however, it need be emphasised that many organizations both private and public in Kwara State and some other States in Nigeria do not provide enabling environment to create employment opportunities for people with disability More so, there is no political will to implement religiously the Disability law to protect the disabled. Findings also revealed some of the

shortcomings regarding the general welfare of people living with disability in Nigeria such as high dependency ratio, poverty and economic exclusion, street begging and poor access to medical and healthcare facilities. The study had shown that unemployment is very high among people with disability in Nigeria, and also, lack of implementation of Disability bill is a major factor responsible for disability unemployment. Organizations should ensure equal rights for people with disabilities as it applies to people without disabilities particularly with regards to employment opportunities. This will close inequality and the seeming gap in society.

In terms of lessons or contribution, the study had demonstrated the need for government in Nigeria to ensure that the Disability Act is compulsorily implemented to the letters by its federating States and the private employers of labour, By so doing, people living with disability or disabled will suffer minimal discrimination, enjoy free healthcare services, be given the opportunity for absorption into paid employment and their civil right amongst others respected.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Both private and public organizations should take the issue of unemployment among people living with disability as a serious challenge to the socioeconomic development of the country and do their utmost best to give the problem the deserved attention by addressing it promptly.
2. Measures should be taken to review industrial and economic policies that will give room for better opportunities to people living with disability.
3. Each state of the Federation should be mandated to take actions that will ensure full implementation of the Disability law and also to ensure that people with disability are not discriminated against with regards to employment opportunities, education, healthcare, social, economic and civil rights. Joint Association of People with Disabilities (JONAPWD) should be established at all

levels of government (federal, state and local). This will ensure that issues affecting people with disabilities will receive prompt consideration in policy formulation and implementation in all establishments.

4. Government should provide enabling environment such as empowerment that can give disabled people hope for the future. This will go a long way to curb or reduce sexual harassment and early marriages among girls with disability.
5. Government through its agencies should provide free education and disability vocational training centres and have it well equipped to enable people with disability to be self employed and also to improve their standard of living.
6. Organizations should provide special/free medical facilities to people with disability.
7. There should be a public campaign to promote awareness of the potentials of people with disabilities so as to reduce or eliminate negative attitudes and discrimination that hinder them from accessing job opportunities in the country.
8. Organizations should provide enabling environment which will remove structural and physical barriers that people with disabilities encounter daily at work and other places in the public. These include the provision of ramps, lifts; widen entrances and corridors, accessible restrooms, light, and avoidance of over-crowded offices.

The foregoing viewpoints may be the way and the way out to pull this vulnerable group out of misery and poverty line in developing countries.

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