A Study of Factors Influencing Attitude of Nigerians Toward People with Physical Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to examine the factors influencing the attitudes of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. The study hypothesized that gender, age, level of education, and exposure to physical challenge will not influence the attitudes of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. The design of the study was cross-sectional. The participants comprise a total of one hundred (100) workers drawn from state and local government civil service in Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi States, Nigeria using random sampling technique. Data were collected through self-administered survey questionnaire, using a modified version of the Scale of Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (SADP). The four hypotheses were tested using 2x2x2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed that the independent variables studied (i.e. gender, age, level of education, and exposure to physical challenge) neither jointly nor independently influenced the attitudes of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. The practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Physical Challenge, Attitude, Gender, Age, Level of Education, Exposure to physical challenges.
Background

The International Classification of Functioning (ICF) defines disability as an umbrella term that covers such thing as activity limitations, participation restriction, intellectual or sensory impairments and all forms of performance difficulties. The Equality Act of the United Kingdom 2010 refers to people with disability as living with certain limitations and conditions affecting their ability to engage in normal daily activities. At the time of this study, there is no established number of persons with functional limitation in Nigeria. Although, it is difficult to ascertain the total number of persons living with disability in Nigeria but the Nigerian census report of 2006 estimates the total number of people with disability to about 3,253,169 (2.32%) of the total population (Umeh & Adeola 2013). According to a report published by the World Report on Disability 2011, put the total number of Nigerians with different kinds of disability to approximately 25,000,000 and the report also estimated that 14.4% of the them suffers from serious functional limitations.

According to Umeh and Adeola (2013), disabilities that are prevalent in Nigeria includes, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, and physical impairment. These disabled persons are faced with challenges not only from disabilities but from the non-disabled others. According to Okafor (2003), the most difficult challenge and threat to people living with disabilities are social stigma and discrimination. Akhinedor (2007) stated that stigmatization and labeling of the disabled together with the belief about disabilities and its causes and consequences lead to negative attitude toward people with disabilities. The center for law enforcement education 2004, reported that people with disability are the least cared for and they experience wide spread of discrimination from their families and Nigerian societies in general.

A member of the Nigeria House of Representative on April 2012 proposed a law which makes it a crime for any individual or corporate organizations to discriminate against persons with disabilities either in terms of employment or making public offices inaccessible to persons with disabilities was passed by the Nigerian House of Representative on April 2012.

The bill sponsored by Abike Dabiri-Erewa, a member representing Lagos/Ikorodu Federal Constituency seeks to ensure full integration of Nigerians with disabilities into the society and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them. The bill prescribes punishment for offenders ranging from prison terms or paying fines as the case may be. The bill provides that persons with disabilities shall have right to work, on an equal basis with others, this includes the right to opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open. Section 60(1) of the bill states that, no employer or his agent or purported agent shall discriminate against a person with disability in any manner whatsoever and in particular but not limited to a job application procedure. In order to ensure easy access to people with physical challenges to promotion with the non-physically challenged, the bill further prescribes that workers with disability must not be denied access or limiting the employee’s access to promotion, advancement, transfer or training or to any other benefit associated with employment. It also recommended that every public office building should create special parking spaces, special stair cases or lifts for the disabled among several other provisions.

The bill’s sponsor, Hon Abike Dabiri-Erewa was shocked to discover that some members of the house of representative were not comfortable with the idea and as such opposed the bill. So, what do we say about the attitudes of those opposition members of the house? Are there other Nigerians that share such negative attitude against the disabled, moreover, are there people like Hon Abike who have such a positive attitude towards people living with disabilities?
Labeling, stigmatization and their consequences are issues that cannot be ignored when discussing disabilities. The discriminations accorded to the disabled are made manifest by the terms applied by the non-disabled persons in referring to persons with disabilities. Okafor (2003) stated that the most difficult challenge and threat to people living with disabilities are social stigma and discrimination both of which seem to pervade all sections of Nigerian society. For instance, 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 society encompass people with mental, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities. It could be inferred that the discrimination meted out toward persons with disabilities derived its legitimacy from the terminologies used in describing or identifying the disabled by the larger society. Okafor (2003) also stated that people with disabilities are often seen as disgrace by family members and therefore they are being confined in a discrete place.

This disabled Nigerians are often marginalized and excluded from the society, in most cases, they are perceived as beggars and people who are caused and are not supposed to exist. Most Nigerians are yet to come to term with the fact that disability is never any one’s wish, the truth, however, is that all human beings are disabled in one way or the other, this is because no human being has infinite ability. According to Ojo (2012), every act of terrorism, road or domestic accidents, parents’ inability to immunize their children against polio and other killer diseases, building collapse and other forms of accidents leaves their victims as a potential temporal or permanent member of people living with disabilities.

The Present Study

This study is concerned with persons with physical challenges, in order words, the study examined the factors that influence attitude towards persons with physical disabilities, including muscle, nerve, or bone damage resulting in motor functional difficulties limiting the ability to carry out day-to-day activities. We aim to investigate the role of age, gender, level of education and exposure to disability on the cognitive, affective and behavioral dispositions of Nigerians (non-disabled) toward people with physical challenges.

The independent variables were classified into two levels. Thus, age was classified into young (25-45) and old (46-65), gender (male/female), level of education was classified into high and low, where high represent people with National diploma or B. Sc. and above and low represents people with secondary school certificate and below. Exposure to disability refers to whether one has a relation, friend or significant person with physical challenge and it was determined by a yes or no answer.

We hypothesized that the independent variables (age, gender, level of education and exposure to disability) will not influence the attitudes of Nigerians towards people with physical challenges. Thus, this study has the potential to contribute to the attitude to disability literatures by investigating age, gender, level of education and exposure to disability as previously unexplored factors influencing attitude to disability in Nigeria and also help in strengthening policies and action geared towards integrating and enhancing the plight of persons with physical disability in Nigerian and beyond.

Studies (e.g., Elmaleh 2000, Artale 2003,) have shown that many demographic and psychosocial factors influence the attitude of people toward disabilities. Factors such as age, gender, exposure to disabilities and level of one’s education may influence attitudes toward persons with disabilities. For instance, one study focused on people who either worked with people who are disabled or whom have a relation or close friend who is disabled found that people who have being exposed to disabilities showed more positive attitude toward the disabled than those who had no contact with
disabilities. (Goreczny, Bender, Caruso & Feinstein, 2011).

Osmanaga (2013) studied the influence of pupil’s gender on their attitude toward their peers with disabilities and the result showed that female pupil had a more positive attitude toward their peers with disabilities than their male counterparts. A study by Carrie and Lauron (2011) showed that older adults had more negative implicit and explicit attitudes toward people with physical disabilities than did younger adults. Akhidenor (2007) reported no significant difference on attitudes toward disability as a function of level of education.

Attitudes are among those components of the psychological makeup of an individual which makes that person to behave not in a passive or neutral way, but in a selective and characteristic manner especially, in relation to certain specific stimulus situations. Attitudes are positive or negative evaluation of object, person or event; attitudes help us understand people’s responses to stimuli. Attitude when acquired can influence behavior even when those attitudes are inconsistent with our expectations.

Most of our views, ideas and how we interact and observe the behaviors of others are done through social learning. Our attitudes are affected and influenced by many factors and that is the reason why attitudes are being studied in three components, cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Cognitive component is the belief, understanding or knowledge of a person toward an attitude object. Affective component is the feelings occurring from a person’s belief of an attitude object. The behavioral component is a person’s response towards an attitude object.

The negative attitudes of people towards people with physical disability will lead to a behavioral pattern, such as, avoiding them, not engaging with them or disempowering them by looking down on them. These attitudes can affect a small number of people involved but when we look at it at a larger scale, it is affecting our society as a whole. However, a positive attitude toward the physically challenged will lead to total integration and inclusion of the disabled in the society.

**Method**

**Participants:**
A total of one hundred (N-100) state and local government civil servants in Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi states, Nigeria were randomly selected as participants for the study. They comprised thirty-nine (39) males and sixty-one (61) females with age range of 25-65 years. The rationale for selecting civil servants follows our observation that they are easy to assemble and they comprise the characteristics in relation to our independent variables.

**Measures**
The 24 items Scale of Attitude Toward Disabled Persons (SADP) Questionnaire developed by Antonak (1982) was used for the study. An item analysis was done on the scale to test its validity and reliability following a pilot study on one hundred (100) participants with age range of 30-60 years drawn from the Institute of Management and the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Fifty-eight (58) participants comprising thirty (30) male and twenty-eight (28) females were drawn from the Institute of Management and Technology while forty-two (42) participants comprising twenty-six females (26) and sixteen (16) male were drawn from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The Cronbach alpha revealed .78 reliability index for the scale. On observation of the corrected item total correlation indicated that out of the twenty-four (24) items, only three (3) items were insignificant in the scale. In other words, only three (3) items 1, 8 and 13 failed to load with other items and thus, they were discarded living the scale with only twenty-one (21) items. Therefore, the research relied on the modified twenty-one (21) item scale of attitude toward disabled persons. A score of 55 and above shows a positive attitude while a score below 55 shows a negative attitude.

**Procedure**
We requested an authorization from the relevant heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi State Civil Service and the request was granted. However, some heads of MDAs never responded to the request. The participants were selected using random sampling technique. A participation letter notified volunteers who wished to participate in the survey to meet the researchers at a designated location and time. A total of one hundred and forty-six participants showed up in the three states. The one hundred and forty-six (146) copies of the questionnaire distributed were completed and returned to us immediately. However, only one hundred (100) copies of the questionnaires were properly completed and were subjected to statistical analysis. The remaining 46 were discarded due to improper completion and unreturned.

**Ethical Consideration**

While administering the questionnaire, respondents were provided a verbal and written explanation of the study, including the purpose of the study, an assurance of total anonymity and confidentiality, and a discussion of the importance of respondents understanding they participated in the study voluntarily. Respondents were counseled that they could opt out or withdraw from the study at any stage of the process. Respondents were encouraged to answer all questions, but were asked to disregard questions to which they did not feel comfortable responding.

**Result**

Table I: Summary table of means on psychosocial factors influence on attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>69.46</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70.62</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>68.52</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>71.55</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>69.89</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70.33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to physical disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72.31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68.91</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 1 above, all the participants obtained a higher means above the norms, meaning that they all showed positive attitude toward people with physical disability irrespective of their gender, age, level of education and exposure to physical disabilities. However, older male with higher education who are exposed to physical disability showed the highest group means of (x = 74.43), followed by younger female with higher education who had being exposed to physical disability (x = 71.63).

From table 2 above, calculated value of F (1,88) = .690, P > .05 (.408) level of significance, revealed no significant influence of age on positive attitude toward people with physical disability. This indicated that age as a factor had no remarkable influence on attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. Meaning that being old or young does not influence Nigerians positive attitude toward people with physical challenges.

The second calculated value of F (1,88) = .571, P > .05 (.452) level of significance, revealed no significant influence of level of education on positive attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. This indicated that level of education as a factor had no remarkable influence of Nigerians attitude.
toward people with physical challenges, meaning that whether high or low education does not influence Nigerians positive attitude toward people with physical challenges.

The fourth calculated value of $F (1,88) = 3.21$, $P>.05$ ($,.077$) level of significance, revealed no significant influence of exposure toward physical disability on positive attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. This indicated that exposure to physical disability as a factor had no remarkable influence on Nigerians attitude toward people with physical challenges, meaning that, being exposed to physical disability or not does not influence Nigerians positive attitude toward people physical challenges.

**Table II: Summary table of 2x2x2x2 Analysis of variances (ANOVA) on the independent variables (age, gender, level of education and exposure to disability) influence on attitude of Nigerians towards people with physical challenges.**

**Dependent Variable: Attitude**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III sum of squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>59.873</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59.873</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>49.553</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49.553</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>278.171</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>278.171</td>
<td>3.204</td>
<td>.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * age</td>
<td>8.179</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.179</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * level of education</td>
<td>55.075</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55.075</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td>.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * exposure</td>
<td>145.519</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145.519</td>
<td>1.676</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age * level of education</td>
<td>1.964</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.964</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age * exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education * exposure</td>
<td>29.820</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.820</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * age * level of education</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.111</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * age * exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * level of education * exposure</td>
<td>22.111</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.321</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age * level of education * exposure</td>
<td>10.321</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * age * level of education * exposure</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7638.415</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>86.800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected total</td>
<td>495064.000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8418.240</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. $R^2 = .093$ (Adjusted $R^2 = -.021$)*

Finally, the calculated value for interaction effect $F (1,88)$. 255, $P>.05$ and $F (1,88) = .119, P>.05$ (.731) level of significance, revealed no significant interaction effect among the psychosocial factors on influencing positive attitude of Nigeria toward people with physical disability.

**Discussion**

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From the result of this study, it was observed that all the participants obtained a higher means above the norms, meaning that they all showed positive attitude toward people with physical disability regardless of their gender, age, level of education and exposure to physical disabilities. The findings of this study is in agreement with the study conducted by Akhidenor (2007). The study investigated the attitude of Nigerians living in the Sacramento California toward disabled persons using the Scale of Attitude Toward Disabled Person (SADP) the result found positive attitude of Nigerians in Sacramento counties toward people with disability. This study also agrees with Kahikuuta-Kariko (2003) whose study revealed a positive attitude of Namibian primary school principals toward students with disability. However, the findings of this study contradict the findings of Saravanabhavan (1994) which investigated the attitude of individuals in India using the Scale of Attitude toward People with Disability (SADP) and the result showed that gender, family disability, contact/experience with disabilities, educational level and economic status significantly affected attitudes toward individuals with disabilities.

The findings of this study revealed that the first hypothesis which stated that gender will not influence attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability was found to be confirmed. The result indicated that the respondents showed more positive attitude toward people with physical disability regardless of their gender.

Based on this study, there were no differences between males and females regarding attitudes towards people with disabilities. This finding is incongruent with Artale (2003), Saravanabhavan (1994), Elmaleh (2000), and Nishikawa (1998) who found relationships between gender and attitude. However, the findings of this study support Hengst (2003), and Choi and Lam (2001), who did not find a significant difference as a function of gender regarding attitudes toward people with disabilities.

The findings also revealed that the second hypothesis which stated that age will not influence attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability was found to be confirmed. The respondents showed positive attitudes toward people with physical disability without the interference of their age, such that participants age 25 - 45, 46 and above showed significantly same positive attitudes.

No other significant differences emerged as a function of age. This result is consistent with the findings of Al-Abdulwahab and Al-Gain (2003) and Hengst (2003), who found little or no relationship between age and attitudes toward people with disabilities. This result contradicted the studies by Trawick (1990) and Nishikawa (1988), who found a relationship between age and attitudes toward people with disabilities.

The findings of the study showed that the third hypothesis which stated that level of education will not influence attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability was found to be true. The result revealed that differences did not emerge as a function of level of education, suggesting that educational background whether highly educated or low education has no influence on attitudes toward physically disabled people. These findings support Al-Abdulwahab and Al-Gain (2003) but are incongruent with the findings of Trawick (1990), and Fiske (1997), who found a relationship between level of education and attitudes toward people with disabilities.

The findings of the study also showed that the last hypothesis which stated that exposure to physical disability will not influence attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability was also found to be true. This indicated that exposure to physical disability as a factor had no remarkable influence on Nigerians attitude toward people with physical disability, meaning that, being exposed or having contact with physically disabled persons or not does not influence Nigerians positive attitude toward people physical disability.
This result did not agree with the studies of Paris (1993) who found contacts with disabilities to have positive effects on attitude toward people with physical disability and Choi and Lam (2001) who found that previous contacts with persons with disabilities have more positive attitude toward students with disabilities.

**Applied Implication**

From the findings of this study, it appears that Nigerians have positive attitudes toward people with physical disabilities. Although, this study was of the assumption that due to the disability laws as well as the way people with disabilities assert themselves to ensure that their civil rights are protected would influence Nigerians. The findings of this study are most likely unattainable in some other countries where disabilities are viewed as a cause or as a consequence action.

The practical implication of this study also relate to the integration and participation of the physically disabled into the mainstream of today’s society. If age, gender, level of education and exposure to physically challenged persons as factors does not influence the attitudes of Nigerians toward people with physical challenge, it therefore, suggest for increase in the efficacy of the programs designed to carter for the plight of the people with physical disability and in integration of people living with physical disabilities into the mainstream.

It is of vital importance to identify individual’s attitudes toward any issue relevant to people, especially people with physical challenges and study the resultant impact of the different variables influencing attitude formation and change. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends that laws to integrate people with physical disability into the mainstream society should hasten since Nigerians have shown to be in support of such law.

Attitude studies are expected to assist in the formulation of social policies, educational programs, disability-related legislations, employment laws, and service delivery systems. It is anticipated that information from this and similar studies will increase public awareness on issues related to people with disabilities.

**Limitations, strength and future directions**

This type of study is normally characterized by certain limitations that should be emphasized. first, the participants comprise individuals with same socio-cultural and religious background therefore affecting the generality of the findings. Second, data collection was based only on the self-report measures, therefore, raising the question of common method variance. Also because the variables were not manipulated, the study could not establish cause-effect relation between the independent variable and dependent variable.

Future studies should investigate other influencing variables including but not limited to self-efficacy, employment status, personality, self-esteem in a more representative sample of not just people from same socio-cultural and religious backgrounds but from divers socio-cultural and religious entity. Another important suggestion for future research is to utilize data from other sources and utilize other research designs to determine cause-effect relationship.

This study contributed to literature by providing further evidence that Nigerians show positive attitude towards people with physical challenges and being the first to examine the influence of age, gender, level of education and exposure to disability on attitude among Nigerian samples.

**Conclusion**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of psychosocial factors on attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability. This study adds to literature by empirically demonstrating that the factors studied did not influence attitude of Nigerians toward people with physical disability.

Based on the outcome of this study, it is safe to speculate that Nigerians, would support and advocate for equal rights for people with disabilities. The positive attitudes of Nigerians towards people with physical disabilities can be attributed to environmental influence since it is
obvious that there is no individual with infinite ability and for the fact that anybody could be disabled at any giving time as long as violence and accidents still occur and does not choose its victims based on tribe, sex, socio-economic status or religion.

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REFERENCE