



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of Educational Level on Attitude towards the Physically Challenged Persons in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

People living with physical challenges constitutes part of the larger society and should be given the inclusive opportunity to engage fully in societal activities. The plight of persons with disabilities in Kogi State, Nigeria, has attracted increasing concern over the years. Thus, the present study aimed to examine the variations in attitude towards the person with physical challenges in Kogi State based on educational level. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. One hundred and seventeen (n=117) participants randomly pooled from different locations in the Kogi State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The participants completed a self-report measure of the modified version of the Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (SADP) Scale. The result revealed that the participants primarily showed positive attitudes towards persons with physical challenges despite their educational level. Also, the result of the simple linear regression conducted to test the hypothesis revealed that educational level does not predict attitude towards the physically challenged.

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Introduction:-

Research suggests that the phenomenon of disability as a health consequence has not received the deserved attention from society (Cieza et al., 2018). Hence, the issue of disability continues to attract research attention across the globe. For instance, disability concerns have attracted extensive research attention in Nigeria in recent years (Ademodi, 2018; Adeniji, 2020; Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; Etieyibo, 2020; Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2016; Haruna, 2017; Ijezie et al., 2021; McKenzie & Ohajunwa, 2017; Nwokorie & Devlieger, 2019; Onah & Ugwu, 2021). Although defining disability remains an issue, the definition, according to the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), describes disability as an umbrella term covering movement restrictions, participation constraint, intellectual or sensory impairments, and performance complications (Castaneda, 2018). Disability is commonly perceived as a problem existing within an individual that requires medical treatment (Goering, 2015). Individuals with varying forms of disabilities constitute a significant proportion of the global population (Bassoumah & Mohammed, 2020), and the number continue to increase in all cultures.

Though it may be challenging to ascertain the total number of persons living with physical disabilities in Nigeria or elsewhere, it is observed that a considerable proportion of people are with various cognitive and motor challenges. Literature suggests that visual impairment, hearing loss, physical restraint, intellectual problems, and multiple forms of engagement constraints are among the disabilities prevalent in Nigeria (see Abdulraheem et al., 2011; Akosile et al., 2018; Atilola et al., 2014; Balogun & Guntupalli, 2016; Eskay & Chima, 2013; Gureje et al., 2006; Onah & Ugwu, 2021). Consequently, the challenges of living with disability are not only the participation constraints but the

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attitudes of the non-disabled. Accordingly, previous research has implicated social stigma and discrimination in the challenges confronting people with disabilities in Nigeria (Okafor 2003). Thus, social stigmatization and categorization, including the belief associated with disabilities, maybe critical correlates of negative attitudes towards people with disabilities (Akhinedor, 2007).

Perhaps, Labeling, stigmatization, and their accompanying consequences represent critical concerns in disability issues, making the challenged persons one of the excluded sections of the society with numerous daily challenges (Gobalakrishnan, 2013). Public attitudes and the resulting prejudicial response are essential factors in the lives of disabled persons (Haba & Ogiwara, 2001). Perhaps, the stigmatization inflicted against disabled persons leads to relational disadvantages, including poverty and isolation (Doherty, 2020). More so, It could be inferred that the discrimination inflicted out toward persons with disabilities derived its acceptability from the expressions used in relating to the disabled (Onah & Ugwu, 2021). These situations make disabled persons more susceptible to various comorbidities and compromised well-being (Senjam & Singh, 2020).

Attitude is a psychological construct and an essential component of one's behavior towards their social world. Attitudes denote the favorable or unfavorable evaluation of any aspect of one's environment. Thus, attitudes are indispensable in social interaction and influence individual's responses. A negative attitude toward people living with a disability is considered a critical barrier for accomplishing social equality (Zheng et al., 2016), including inclusion and participation of this population in educational settings (Torres et al., 2019). The overall attitudes of the society towards people with disabilities is implicated in behavioral pattern, including avoidance, disempowerment, exclusion, and social disapproval. These attitudes seem to affect a small number of persons. However, a closer look at it may suggest its impact on the general society. Research indicates that positive attitudes toward the physically challenged might lead to total integration and inclusion of the disabled in the community (Onah & Ugwu, 2021).

Numerous research has examined the variables that could account for the attitudes of non-disabled persons towards the disabled (see Cha & Hwang, 2018; Jae-kook Park, 2008; Kim Min-Kyeong & Jae-kook Park, 2018; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996; Parashar et al., 2008; Rosenthal et al., 2006; Uysal et al., 2014). For example, researchers have found that contact with disabled persons (Favazza & Odom, 1997; Laird, 2016; Mazure, 2016), personality dimensions (Page & Islam, 2015), gender (Artale, 2003), social context (Kalargyrou et al., 2021) are among the factors that significantly influence attitude towards the disabled persons. Nonetheless, the present study is focused on persons with physical challenges, including bone damage, nerve or muscle impairment resulting in functional motor difficulties, which limit the ability to perform daily activities.

The Present Study

People with disabilities in Nigeria still live at the margins due to factors that consistently discriminate against them and weaken their rights and general well-being (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2020). In Kogi State, it is observed that the proportion of people with physical challenges is large. Regrettably, these persons have been faced with various challenges relating to the attitudes of society. Generally, there has been a general call by persons with disabilities for a just, equitable, and inclusive community in all ramifications. This concern is due to the increasing stigma, discrimination, exclusion, and observed negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in the state. Although successive administrations in the state showed less attention to the plight of these populations, the leadership of Governor Yahaya Bello in 2019 signed the disability rights bill into law, thereby giving all persons with disabilities in Kogi State a sense of belonging.

Regarding this development, the present study seeks to examine educational level as an essential variable that could account for the variation in attitudes towards persons with physical disabilities in Kogi State. The educational level in the study is operationalized as a person's academic status ranging from basic educational qualification (primary and secondary) to higher educational qualifications (OND, HND, B.Sc., M.Sc., and Ph.D.). Thus, it is hypothesized that educational level would influence attitudes towards persons with physical challenges.

Method:-

Participants:

Indigene and residents of Kogi State constitute the population of the study. One hundred and seventeen ($n=117$) participants randomly pooled from different locations in Ankpa, Lokoja, Okene, and Ajeokuta made up the study's sample. They comprised sixty-three (63) males and fifty-four (54) females aged 30-65 years. The criteria for inclusion included the age bracket and attainment of at least basic primary education. Education level was classified

into high and low, where high represent people with a National Diploma or B. Sc and above and low represents people with a secondary school certificate and below. No education was excluded as a factor. The participants were approached between July and September 2021 and asked to partake in the study.

Although the purpose of the study was explained to them, they were equally informed that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time they wanted.

Measures:-

Attitude towards persons with physical challenges was measured using the 24 items Scale of Attitude Toward Disabled Persons (SADP) initially developed by Antonak (1982). An item analysis was performed on the instrument to test its reliability and validity following a pilot study. The Cronbach alpha revealed a 0.78 reliability index for the scale. Educational level was ascertained with the demographic information on the scale.

Result:-

A total of one hundred and thirty-one persons consented to participate in the study. Hence, the study instrument was distributed to them. In all, one hundred and seventeen copies of the questionnaires were completed correctly and returned. Consequently, the remaining copies of the questionnaires were incorrectly filled or unreturned. Thus, data from the usable instruments were subjected to analysis. Table 1 below indicates that all the respondents gained a higher means above the norms, indicating that the respondents showed a positive attitude toward people with physical disabilities irrespective of their educational level.

Table I:- Table showing the means on educational level and attitude toward people with a physical disability.

Source	Mean	N
Educational Level	High	66
	Low	51

To test the study's hypothesis that educational level would influence attitudes towards persons with physical challenges. A simple linear regression analysis was performed. From table 2 below, the calculated value of $F(1,115) = .571$, $P > .05$ (.186) level of significance, revealed no significant influence of educational level on the positive or negative attitudes toward people with a physical disability. Thus, the assumption of the study that educational level would influence the attitudes towards persons with physical challenges was found to be false.

Table 2:- Table showing the simple linear regression analysis performed to determine the influence of educational level on attitude towards people with physical challenges.

	B	95% CI for B		SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
		LL	UL					
Constant	2.37	2.09	2.52	.143			17.68	.000
E L	-.49	-.59	-.38	.062	-.476	.061	-7.84	.186

Note. E L= Educational Level, B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $p > .186$

Discussion:-

The study examined the variation in attitude towards persons with physical challenges in Kogi State, Nigeria, based on educational level. As shown in table 1, the mean score indicated that all the participants obtained a higher means above the norms, indicating that regardless of their educational status, the participants showed a positive attitude

toward people with physical challenges. The simple regression analysis conducted to test the hypothesis established a negative association between educational level and attitude toward persons with physical challenges. Thus, the result could be interpreted that one's academic exposure, regardless of level (high or low), does not account for the variation in attitude toward persons with physical challenges. The result supports the findings of previous studies (Ajuwon et al., 2015; Olaleye et al., 2012; Onah & Ugwu, 2021; Vincent-Onabajo & Malgwi, 2015), which found that level of education is an insignificant correlate of attitudes towards the physically challenged persons. There are numerous explanations for this finding. First, it could mean that attitude as a psychological construct is unrelated to educational status. Hence, attitudes are more of a learned disposition that can vary based on social situations. Also, education may be serving only statutory functions and not an indicator of behavioral patterns. More so, social and cultural orientations are vital variables in Kogi State that could exert a more decisive influence on behavior than educational qualification.

Conclusion:-

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the influence of educational level on attitude toward persons with physical challenges. The analysis conducted on the data established a negative link between academic exposure and attitudes towards physically challenged persons. Therefore, the study concludes that educational level as an essential factor does not predict disability attitudes. Thus, this study has the potential to contribute to the disability literature by revealing the level of one's education as an insignificant determinant of disability attitudes in Kogi State, Nigeria. More so, the study provides relevant data to disability researchers by excluding educational status as correlates of disability attitudes. Furthermore, the study recommends that future research should endeavor to broaden the predictor variables to include social and cultural orientations.

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