Work Environment and Compliance with Policies for the "People with Special Needs" in Selected Public Organisations in Ibadan, Nigeria

S. A. OMOLAWAL[1*] and T. A. OBISESAN[2]

[1]Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
[2]Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan,Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: shomolawal@gmail.com[1*], abigailabigail568@yahoo.com[2]
*Corresponding author

Abstract

This study investigated Work Environment and Compliance with Policies for the individuals with special needs in selected Public Organisations in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study was guided by the Social Model of Disability theory and was conducted in two purposively selected Local Government Areas out of the six that make up the urban Ibadan metropolis. Qualitative research technique was adopted and primary data were collected using Key Informant Interviews (5 officials and 10 persons with special needs), In-Depth-Interviews (20 officials responsible for staff matters) and non-participant observation. Data collected were content-analysed. The study revealed that participants had poor knowledge of what disability entails but good knowledge of the specific legal instruments on disability. Most of the organisations were not providing adaptive equipment and no structural modifications had been done to their organisations to enhance good physical environment for the people with special needs. Governments at all levels are enjoined to ensure enforcement of the legislations aimed at protecting the rights and interests of people with special needs especially in public organisations in Nigeria.

Key words: Disability, Rights, Legislations, Work Environment, Organisation.

Introduction

People with special needs are bona fide citizens of a country; they possess innate human rights and they are entitled to the exercise and enforcement of their social, political, economic and other civil rights. They are also referred to as 'people living with disabilities', 'physically challenged people' and in this paper, all the concepts will be used interchangeably. According to Lawal (2016), work is the most important aspect of lives of individuals, especially for the persons living with disabilities. There is virtually no work people with special needs cannot do, however the right and suitable environment must be there for effective work. Work environment that does not accommodate people with disabilities renders them less productive. Work environment is everything that forms part of employees' involvement with the work itself such as the relationship with co-workers and supervisors, physical environment, organisational culture, room for personal development. In addition, it includes the extent of discrimination in the workplace against people living with disabilities by both the employers and co- workers. (Olabode, 2017). Nick, Wendy and Carola (2013) contend that people with special needs are most likely to mention modified hours or days or reduced work hours as something that has helped or could help them to work.

When work environment is not conducive for people with disability, they become handicapped

and cannot add to the production process, they are therefore rendered unproductive in the society and where they work if employed at all. There is a way the work environment must be structured that will be in favour of this category of individuals to be able to carry out their work effectively but in reality there are so many barriers in the physical environment of a work place that pose challenges to them (Peter, 2011, Brewster et al., 2017). Many organisations, especially in less developed countries do not create avenues for persons with special needs to exhibit what they have. An example is an organisation in which the environment does not welcome the physically challenged people. When work environments are not to the advantage of these people, it means they are automatically prevented from actively participating in the work process. Also there is discrimination as to what they do in the society and where they can work is highly limited. Some persons living with disabilities therefore settle for menial jobs, some resign to their fate believing they are not good for anything thereby increasing the level of socio-psychological problems in the society. According to Nick, Wendy and Carola (2013), the physically challenged people were more likely than able bodied people to select as limitation, difficulty with transport, the attitudes of employers or colleagues, anxiety or lack of confidence and issues relating to access and support (e.g. difficulty getting into buildings, difficulty using facilities and lack of special aids and equipment). All these pose threats to their participation in societal activities (Olsen, 2018).

However, to allow for full engagement and social inclusion of the people with special needs, some governmental policies and work environment acts have been laid down to encourage their recruitment and promotion of their rights in the work place. For example, the Nigerian Federal Military Decree 1993, the Lagos State Special People's Law, 2011 and on the international scene, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2014) have all stipulated both the rights of the physically challenged as an individual and their rights in the work place. Despite these rights, people with special needs still face discrimination in terms of social exclusion from work in the formal sector and absence of conducive physical environment,

either as a result of ignorance of the issues on disability, lack of political will to enforce compliance, deliberate disregard for issues of disability, or other social-cultural factors. Previous studies on disabilities have focused largely on discrimination against people living with disabilities and availability of social policies and legal instruments for this category of people, but not much attention has been given to availability of, and compliance with existing policies in the workplace. This study was therefore designed to fill this gap by investigating the level of knowledge of, and adherence to, government policies regarding work environment for people with special needs; and the extent to which the work environment is compliant for them in selected public organisations in Ibadan.

Disability and Work Environment

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland formulated policies for the work environment and well-being at work until 2020 and described a good workplace as a productive, profitable, healthy, safe and a pleasant place. Other characteristics of a good workplace according to the ministry include but not limited to good management and leadership, meaningful and interesting tasks and a successful reconciliation of work and private life. Work must be attractive and it must promote employees' health, work ability and functional capacity. Good and healthy work environment support sustainable development and employees' well being and improve the productivity of enterprises and society (Brewster et al., 2017). In general, the Work Environment Act (2013), section 4 stipulates that physical working environment factors such as factors relating to buildings and equipment, indoor climate, lighting, noise, radiation and the like shall be fully satisfactory with regard to the employees' health, environment, safety and welfare.

The NSW Anti-discrimination Act (1977) states that employers are required to provide necessary services and facilities to enable persons with disabilities to carry out jobs for which they are qualified. Therefore, once employed, management must make sure certain materials and equipment are made available for them especially the public sector of which the basis is to provide work-

related adjustments. There is a connection between the work environment of organisations and employment of people with disabilities. Work environment as revealed earlier includes both the physical environment and attitudinal features of organisations. Therefore when work environment is suitable for people living with disabilities, they work more effectively. Certain barriers to the employment of people with disabilities can be found in the physical environment, attitudes of supervisors, co-workers and societal limitations (Robinson, 2000; Copeland, 2007, Nuth 2018; Tang & Cao, 2018).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) highlighted the role of the environment in facilitating or restricting participation for people with disabilities. The disabling barriers include inadequate policies and standards; negative attitudes, beliefs and prejudices constitute barriers to education, employment, health care and social participation; lack of provision of services; problems with service delivery; inadequate funding; lack of accessibility in terms of built environments [including public accommodations] and transport systems; lack of consultation and involvement of people with disabilities; lack of data and evidence, ignorance on disability and evidence on programmes that work can impede understanding and action (Olsen, 2018).

The work environment is expected to provide some basic accommodations for impaired persons, this could in turn enable them. UNCRPD (2008) defined the term "reasonable accommodation" as the necessary and appropriate modification and/or adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. University College London (UCL) regarded 'reasonable adjustments' as that which is required of all employers which may include physical features of premises or any arrangements for employing disabled people. The college highlighted factors to be considered when providing these adjustments which include; the disabled person's views on what they need; how effective the adjustment would be in overcoming

the disadvantage; how practicable it is to make the adjustment; the extent of any disruption to activities; effects on other staff; sustainability; the financial and other costs incurred by the employer.

Furthermore, UCL gave examples of such reasonable adjustments to be made by employers of organisations such as making adjustments to premises- this could include structural or physical changes such as widening a doorway, building a ramp or fitting power-assisted doors; acquiring or modifying equipment for example, providing a specially adapted keyboard for a visually impaired person or someone with arthritis; providing a support worker such as a hearing assistant; allowing the disabled person to be absent during working hours for assessment or treatment for example, to attend physiotherapy, therapy or hospital appointments; reallocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person for example, if a job occasionally involves taking files to another floor, this task could be transferred to someone who does not have mobility restriction; altering the disabled person's working hours for example, allowing the disabled person to work flexible hours to enable additional breaks to overcome fatigue; assigning the disabled person to a different place of work, for example, moving the person to other premises or working from home.

UCL went further that, not every adjustment requires cost; there are some such as adjusting the working hours. While cost could be a major barrier to these adjustments, it opined that cost alone should not be the only reason why there won't be any adjustment in the work environment.

There are several equipment that could be made available by the society to better include people with special needs in mainstream activities. When some modifications as well as devices and equipment are provided, they are better encouraged to participate actively and freely. According to Rezaul (2015), in Malaysia, majority of the public transportation in the country is not disabled-friendly and some are dangerous to be used. The provision of certain equipment and devices could "enable a disabled individual". For example; "a wheelchair user who has an adapted car, a personal assistance he or she wants (at the times she wants it), an allocated parking place, an

accessible and adapted home and workplace, such is not disabled at home or at work in the same way as the wheelchair user who is contending with inaccessible home and work environment, without personal assistance or transport. The disability experienced by the latter is created by the disabling society. According to the study conducted by Ihedioha (2015) on the environmental barriers and job placement of the physically challenged in organisations in Rivers state, Nigeria, it was found that there was no proof of any form of supportive materials to the physically challenged to enhance productivity, this in turn discourages employers from engaging the physically challenged, hence the denial of employment in organisations. The provision of assistive devices for people with special needs could bring about massive employment in organisations.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2014) was the first document at the global level to elaborate in detail the rights of people with disabilities and set out a code of implementation. It was the first legally binding-specific human rights convention. The Convention does not give people with disabilities "new" human rights, rather, it aims to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy the same human rights and opportunities as everyone else, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UN, 2008).The eight guiding principles that underlie the Convention are: respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between men and women, respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities. The CRPD (2006) includes equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and equality between men and women, among its eight guiding principles and obliges States Parties to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy all human rights on an equal basis with others, and take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of these

rights without discrimination on the basis of disability.

According to NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 part 4A, it is illegal for employers to discriminate against employees or potential employees on the grounds of disability. Public sector employers are required to promote employment opportunities for people with a disability and to eliminate discrimination from their workplaces on the grounds of disability (part 9A). The act also says employers are expected to provide services or facilities needed in order for the person with a disability to carry out the inherent requirements of a job. Failure to provide an adjustment to a job applicant may therefore constitute unlawful discrimination.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) introduced new laws and measures, which aimed to end the discrimination faced by many people living with disabilities, including in relation to employment. It was significantly extended in 2005. As part of the protection offered by the Act, employers were prohibited from discriminating against people living with disabilities for a reason related to their disability, and they had to make reasonable adjustments to their employment arrangements and/or premises so that disabled people were not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other people.

Theoretical Framework: Social Model of Disability Theory

The social model arose in response to the critique of the medical model of disability. According to Rezaul et al (2015), the concept of social model of disability arose from the 1970s to debunk the notion of medical treatment of disability which reduced disability to impairment that disability was located within the body or mind of the individual and that the power to define, control and treat disabled people was located within the medical and paramedical professions. He further said that the introduction of the social model of disability was to redefine disability in the context of a disabling environment and that disabled people were empowered as citizens with rights. Burchardt (2003) argues that from social model

perspective, disability "is seen as the social and economic disadvantage which results from society's failure to respond to the needs of people with impairments"

The Equality Act 1993, as a legislative tool, takes account of two main conceptual models of disability. The first of these is the medical model that focuses on impairment as the cause of disability preventing people from living a normal life; policy based on the medical model therefore leans towards for instance, health care solutions to cure conditions, alleviate symptoms and mitigate impairment. The second conceptual model of disability is the social model that identifies systemic barriers, negative attitudes and deliberate or inadvertent exclusion as the key contributory factor in disabling people – affecting their ability to carry our normal day-to-day activities. It recognizes that individual functional limitation or impairment leads to disability mainly if society fails to take account of and include everyone regardless of their individual differences. Policy based on the social model therefore tries to address these societal failings instead of the medical form. Until very recently 'disability' was viewed almost exclusively as an individual, medical problem or 'personal tragedy' in western culture (Barnes, 1991).

The model is constructed and expressed in Marxist terms, and assumes that human nature, and the resultant choices that individuals can make for themselves, are determined by the structure and ideology of society. It is therefore argued that the kind of society in which disabled persons live has a profound effect upon how their disability is experienced and structured.

According to Lang (2006), the social model of disability should not be considered as a monolithic entity, but rather as a cluster of approaches to the understanding of the notion of disablement. The tenet of the social model is that, irrespective of the political, economic and religious character of the society in which they live, disabled people are subject to oppression and negative social attitudes that inevitably undermine their personhood and their status as full citizens. Disabled people have been subjected to a multiplicity of oppressive social attitudes throughout history which have

included "horror, fear, anxiety, hostility, distrust, pity over-protection and patronizing behavior". Such pejorative attitudes, coupled with an inhospitable physical environment such, as inaccessible buildings and unusable transport systems, are considered to be the real concerns of disability (Barnes et al, 1999). It is therefore maintained that "disabled people live within a disabling world".

The social model disability theory is an attempt to switch the focus away from the functional limitations of individuals with impairment on to the problems caused by disabling environments, barriers and cultures (Oliver, 2004). Unlike the medical model that based disability on biological factors, the social model says that because of certain disabling environments, impairment becomes disability. The knowledge of this in this study therefore implies that the impaired do not become disabled until the environment is unsuitable and inconvenient for their existence and productivity. In essence therefore, the positioning and arrangement of the environment in work organisations are very crucial in either disabling or enabling impaired people. As stated above though all human beings in one way or the other are all impaired (frail, limited, vulnerable, mortal), the given environment can make this impairment to become disability or for an individual to overcome this impairment. Going beyond the physical disability of human beings (though included), an individual (either disabled or not) may be unable to work effectively given the work environment of the organisation which also of course is not limited to the physical structures but also the social interaction that occurs in such places.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research technique and was conducted in two purposively selected local governments out of the six that make up the urban Ibadan city. They were purposively selected by virtue of the fact that most of the public organisations in Ibadan metropolis are located within these two local government areas. The selected local governments were Ibadan North and Akinyele. Primary data were collected from purposively selected persons with special needs and organisational leaders in charge of

management of workers/Establishment Departments charged with the responsibility of implementing both organisational policies and government labour legislations in the selected public organisations in the study locations. Instruments of data collection were Key Informant Interview (KII) conducted with 5 officials and 10 willing disabled persons; In-Depth Interviews (IDI) conducted with 20 officials and non-participant observation. Data were analysed using content analysis. Every effort was made to observe relevant ethical issues that protect human subjects in social scientific research works.

Findings and Discussion

Knowledge and Adherence to Government Policies on Disability Issues

To examine the level of knowledge and adherence to government policies on issues of disability among the participants, questions were asked about their perception of the word disability, their understanding of the various legislations protecting the rights of the people with disabilities and availability of domesticated policies on issues of disability. The result on the participants' perception on the term "disability" shows that more than half of the participants conceived it to be only physical disability. A few also viewed it as the inability to walk, climb stairs, lift or carry things, but all these still show the physical aspect of disability. This was also supported by the view of others who admitted that hearing loss or deafness, visual difficulties and speech difficulties constitute disability. This still showed the obvious part of disability. The above finding supports the Disability Act (1993) where physical disability was indicated as the most common type of disability. People with special needs who participated in the study however demonstrated deeper understanding of the meaning of disability by viewing intellectual disability, mental health and long term illness as disability. The knowledge and perception of disability among study participants who were organisational leaders however differ from the Equality Act 2010 as well as DFID 2007, which described disability as physical or mental condition which has a substantial and long term negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities. While substantial means more than minor or trivial, long term means 12 months or more. From this definition, both mental and long term illnesses are disabilities so long as they inhibit daily activities. In fact, conditions such as HIV/AIDS, Cancer are covered by the Equality Act 2010 from the point of diagnosis regardless of the symptoms. By implication therefore, it could be inferred that participants did not have a good understanding of the term disability. If the people and society believe disability is limited to the physical, it implies that other forms like intellectual, mental disabilities will not be treated as disabilities and this may make victims denied of their disability rights as enshrined in various national and international legal instruments.

Furthermore, in examining the knowledge of participants on disability issues, it was quite revealing that majority of the organisational leaders showed better understanding about the details and requirements contained in the various legal instruments on issues of disability, and they all claimed to have a few persons living with disabilities in their organisations. For participants who claimed that they were aware of some government legislations concerning issues of disability; some said they were aware of equal rights for the physically challenged persons like all other able-bodied individuals; some indicated their knowledge of equal employment rights and non-discrimination; some referred to the general provisions in Nigerian 1999 Constitution on equal rights for all citizens; some indicated that they had rudimentary knowledge of the disability act such as the rights of access to federal buildings or public places. The few who had poor understanding of issues of disabilities especially as related to employment relations believed that they had never been properly oriented towards the issue. Some surprisingly indicated that it is the responsibility of non-governmental organisations established to cater for the welfare of the people living with disability. This was captured further in the words of a respondent during an IDI session:

> *I don't think I know much about the special laws that protect the physically challenged. What I am sure of is that the 1999 constitution protects them*

(IDI/Male/Senior staff/ State Agency/ 2017)

The above therefore shows that not all organisational leaders saddled with responsibility for staff matters in public organisations have high level of awareness and knowledge about issues of disability and this has serious implications for the respect and rights of people with special needs.

Furthermore, only a few participants indicated that there was a domesticated written policy covering the employment of people with special needs in their organisations while others explained that though there is a policy, it is more of unwritten which makes it very informal. This means the employment and maintenance of people with special needs depend on the discretion of the officials and if it is not written, then it cannot be strictly followed. Most of the participants surprisingly revealed that there was no domesticated policy at all, covering the employment of people with special needs in their organisations. A respondent captured the issue thus:

My organisation does not have any written policy about people like us. I have served in this place over 15 years yet I am not aware of any written policy (KII/ Female / Physically challenged / Sept 2017)

Another respondent threw further light as follows:
The issue of disability was not given any special place in our staff handbook. We only rely on general knowledge to handle their issues when the need arises (IDI/Female/Govt Agency/ Sept 2017)

This is very revealing and suggests that not much attention is being paid to deliberate employment and maintenance of persons living with disabilities in many of the organisations studied.

Many of the participants also indicated that national legislations on issues of disability were not in any way monitored to ensure compliance in their organisations. They attributed this to the negligence of government officials saddled with that responsibility as well as the weak structures in

public organisations. This implies that because the policies set aside for the employment of this category of people were not monitored, management may likely not follow them to the letter and only just attend to people with special needs at will, not necessarily because there are policies on ground for it. The above was captured further as follows:

There are laws guiding people with disabilities, but here, though we have laws on ground, they are not implemented. Though there are laws on paper, we have never seen any implementation (KII/Male/Senior staff/ Tertiary Institution/ September, 2017)

However, another IDI participant said:
I don't know if there is any special right made available for them in Nigeria apart from the constitution though they have right as citizens. (IDI/Male/Junior Staff/OYS Govt Agency/ September, 2017)

The responses therefore reveal that there was poor implementation of the policies on issues of disability among participants and this may likely contribute to unfair attitude towards people living with disability in the workplace. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) reveals that part of the barriers faced by the disabled is inadequate policies and standards where in the design of policies, people with disabilities are not considered, even the existing few policies are not enforced. These results also support the report on the situation of the physically challenged persons in Nigeria which revealed that there is no noticeable governmental promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and no communication whatsoever between the government and persons with disabilities or even their organisations (Peter, 2011). This falls short of the situation in the United States and other more developed countries where guidelines are clearly laid down to protect the disabled people in the work environment. For example, various documents such as "Disability in the workplace: policy and guidelines" spell out what employers are expected to do to promote the rights and interests of the disabled people in terms of

accessible physical environment, flexible hours, workplace modification and prevention of discrimination, among others (Disability in the Workplace: Policy and Guidelines, 2008). According to Tang and Cao (2018), China in 2017 introduced a document titled "New Progress in the legal protection of Human Rights in China". This paper emphasized the legal guarantee of rights for disabled people and advocates that the protection of human rights for disabled people should not only be reflected in the legislative and judicial process but also in administrative enforcement and international affairs. The document is fully consistent with the principles advocated by the social model of disability. There exists, Ghana Federation of Disability, an umbrella body founded in 1987. Its mission is to advocate the rights of persons with disability by influencing policies, programmes and activities at the national and local levels. Through the efforts of this body, Ghana now has tactile ballot system, allowing blind citizens to vote on their own, among others (www.gfdgh.org). South Africa has the Disability Code (2002), the purpose of which is the protection of PLWD in employment situations in areas such as reasonable accommodation, education and awareness and so forth.

Compliance with legislations on Work Environment for People with special needs

The study also examined compliance with legislations on work environments for people living with disabilities and this was done in two ways: to find out the adaptive/assistive equipment made available by the organisations and secondly, to find out the modifications done to the work environment to assist the physically challenged persons to work effectively.

On the adaptive equipment provided for the physically challenged persons in organisations, findings indicated that some organisations do not even provide any adaptive equipment for the disabled in their organisations. Only a few made some provisions in the areas of ramps, walkways, cane, crutches, elevators for general usage, alarm systems, Braille display for the blind, voice synthesizers for computer while other assistive equipment which included hearing aids, wheel chairs, supporting wheel drive, speech therapy,

speech instructors, computer speech synthesizers were not provided. Further probing revealed that persons living with disabilities provided and maintained the needed pieces of equipment by themselves, since they were not provided by their organisations. Participants during IDI session threw light on the issue as follows:

> *Normally in the past, we do not have, especially in the area of pattern of building construction but now, there are walkways for the physically challenged persons; the government mandated it. Also, we provide equipment which we call working aids to support their movements such as; wheel chairs, cane for the visually impaired, crutches, recently we have, supporting wheel drive.*
> *(IDI/Male/Senior Staff/ State Agency/August, 2017)*

The above was captured further by a physically challenged person as follows:

> *Once a disabled is hired, it is the responsibility of the management to provide necessary equipment to make him work effectively, it won't make his salary lesser. If management reduces the salary, he or she could sue them, in a well-developed country, they can't reduce the person's salary. Once they've decided to employ a disabled, all the things which will make such work effectively will be adequately provided. They will ask the disabled for a list that he will need to make him do his work effectively but they don't provide them. (IDI/Male/Senior staff/Physically challenged/September, 2017)*

From the above, it could be seen that public organisations are not doing up to expectation in terms of making the work place conducive for the physically challenged persons especially in the area of providing adaptive equipment for them. It is an indication of un-conducive work environment needed to enhance the effectiveness of the physically challenged people in the selected

organisations. Work environment refers to both work location and equipment made available for workers. The Work Environment Act (2013), section 4 stipulates that physical working environment includes the buildings, equipment, indoor climate etc with regard to the employees' health, environment, safety and welfare. This inadequacy poses a discouraging atmosphere for work effectiveness among people living with disabilities in public organisations.

However, probing further on why the adaptive equipment are not provided, findings revealed that a major reason why organisations are not able to provide the required equipment was due to financial cost. A KII participant confirmed this in her words as follows:

> *Special equipment increase costs, so this may be the reason why employers may not want to employ the disabled or even for those that have may not provide it at all. Even school of the disabled is more expensive than the regular schools. (KII/Female/Physically challenged/September, 2017)*

According to the KII excerpts above, the major reason why employers may not want to employ people living with disabilities was because of the special equipment needed for them to work effectively. These pieces of equipment are expensive and they would in turn increase the running costs of the organisations when they have the alternative of employing those who will not incur additional costs for the organisation. Even though public organisations are supposed to cater for the welfare of citizens and provide adequate services for the people and not be established only for profit making, this is only seen in theory and not in reality. The implication of the above is that in order to run away from the cost of providing adaptive equipment for the physically challenged people and making the work environment more friendly, many employers of labour tend to play safe by not employing them but in the process, they again run foul of other legislations on equal employment opportunity acts for all qualified people.

The study also sought to know if there was arrangement for flexible hours of work for the physically challenged individuals and data gathered from all participants indicated that there were no flexible working hours for the physically challenged in terms of arrival and closure for the day or in terms of flexibility in deadline for assignments and longer rest hours. This category of people runs the same hours of operation like other workers. The only concession was that people in this category are not sanctioned when they come late or when they close earlier. A particular participant spoke thus:

> *We do not have special policy on the working hours of the physically challenged people but we do not sanction them when they report late. (IDI/Female Senior Staff/Govt Agency/Oct 2017)*

This finding falls short of the recommendations of the University College London that working hours of this category of people should be altered and allowing them to work flexible hours to enable additional breaks to overcome fatigue. It also suggests that by overlooking their lateness this way, they are being treated with pity and this does not necessarily protect their rights and make the work place conducive for them.

The study also sought to investigate the modifications done to work environment to enhance the work performance of persons with special needs. Only two participants indicated that they have carried out some modifications to make the work environment more friendly for the people with special needs. Some also indicated that they have carried out job re-design for this category of persons to work in their organisations. None of the participants indicated that they provide any special allowance, fitting of power doors, or have widened the door ways for the purpose of the category of people under study. It was however good to note that many of the participants indicated that their organisations provided on-the-job assistance especially by partnering/pairing up the physically challenged people with able bodied employees or mentors. This is quite commendable as it is capable of enhancing the performance of the people in their various organisations. The above

was captured further during an IDI session and a participant indicated thus:

> We partner the disabled we have here with others that are able-bodied for training and guidance, also, there is on-the-job training, as they are recruited, and they are being trained alongside their work.(IDI/Female/Junior Staff/ Govt. Agency/ September, 2017)

The above was corroborated by a physically challenged person who explained that a staff is paired up with her to assist her in her moving around and official responsibilities during office hours. She spoke further as follows:

> What my organisation does to assist me is that a clerical staff is attached to me to help me and ensure smooth passage when I need to move around and do other things for me. (KII/Female/Senior Staff/ physically challenged/ September, 2017)

During the participant observation in the studied organisations, it was revealed that there were massive inhibiting steps which cannot encourage the movement of the physically challenged persons. This supports Ihedioha (2015) who found that there was no proof of any form of supportive materials to the physically challenged to enhance productivity, this in turn discourages employers from engaging the physically challenged, hence the denial of employment in organisations in River state. However, in a tertiary institution in Ibadan North, it was observed that there were ramps with a direction indicating "wheel chairs and crutches only". These were specially designed for those on wheel chairs and for those that use crutches. This therefore shows an encouragement on the provision of adaptable environment for the inclusion of people living with disabilities into the workforce and the society at large. However, generally these findings show gross inadequacy of compliance with legal requirements for this category of individuals in the country and they fall short of the standards provided by the Employment Equality Act (2004) in the United States of America which obliges employers to take appropriate measures (unless the costs of doing so are disproportionate) so that people with disabilities could have access to employment, participate in employment process and undergo training. In Cambodia, there are evidences of provision of training resources, adaptations to the workplace premises to make them more accessible, provision of work equipment and flexible patterns of working time for people living with disabilities (Nuth,2018). In China, the law-based protection of disabled persons breaks through multiple barriers and gradually allows them to share in the profit of economic and social development, as well as how it potentially impacts the establishment of a co-prosperity society (Tang & Cao, 2018).

Findings from this study generally justify the theoretical frame work adopted for this study which explains that the segregation people living with disabilities suffer was not necessarily because of their impairments but rather because of the disabling environment in the society. The model explains that all are impaired, but not all are faced with the disadvantage of disability by the society. Findings show that majority believe when the term 'disability' is mentioned, it refers to only the physically disabled which according to the theory is false. This belief could be associated with the medical model of disability which social model of disability debunked and related social oppression to impairment (disability). The social model of disability theory explains that disability could be both obvious and unobvious, therefore, it could be inferred that the knowledge of participants on right meaning of disability was low.

The social model of disability theory explains that the attitudes of the society towards disability issues will account for lack of knowledge about it. Findings therefore support this claim as most of the respondents indicated that though they were aware of the various legislations protecting the rights of this category of the people, but the major issue is the implementation of such policies and by implication, this inability makes the environment unsuitable for the physically challenged to work effectively. The results also show that lack of adaptive equipment for the disabled persons renders them unable to work effectively. Barnes (1991) says that the major concerns of disability are not the impairment in particular but prerogative attitudes, inhospitable physical

environment such as inaccessible buildings and unusable transport systems. The findings therefore support these claims as majority do not have adaptable equipment to enable people living with disability and more importantly, there is no enabling environment which further promotes the absence of the people with special needs in public work organisations.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there was good understanding and knowledge of issues of disability among the participants especially on the policies set aside for people living with disabilities although people living with disability demonstrated better knowledge than the officials and others who were not disabled. Also, there are laws and policies set aside by the government in Nigeria, however where the problem lies is with the implementation of these policies. This study has also shown that organisations in the study location have not done up to expectation in terms of making the work place conducive for the people with special needs; while some have adaptive equipment such as ramp, lift, voice synthesizers, wheel chairs, Braille display, majority did not have any adaptive equipment for the people with special needs which makes it difficult for them to work effectively. In addition the study revealed that there were no modifications done to the work environment for these special people and by implication there is no encouraging work environment for them. There is therefore the need for effective training of public organisational officials especially those in charge of staff matters to be fully knowledgeable about the rights of the people with special needs as well as the legal instruments protecting their interests. Such enlightenment should also be made to the generality of the workers especially in public organisations. Government at all levels should also ensure allocation of funds to public organisations for the provision of adaptive equipment for the persons with special needs and there should be enforcement of the legal provisions for the employment of people living with disabilities in public organisations in Nigeria.

Reference

About Us-Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations. Retrieved from *www.gfdgh.org* on 4/1/2019

Barnes, C. (1991). Disabled People and Discrimination in Britain: The Case for Anti Discrimination Legislation. London: Hurst &Co.in association with the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People. University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

Barnes, C. et al, (1999). Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Burchardt, T. (2003). Being and Becoming: Social Exclusion and the Onset of Disability. London School of Economics: London:

Copeland J.L. 2007. The Impacts of Disability in the Workplace: An Assessment of Employer Attitudes toward People with Disabilities and the American with Disabilities Act. Capella University.

Brewster, S., Duncan, N., Emira, M., & Clifford, A., (2017). Personal Sacrifice and Corporate Cultures: Career Progression for Disabled Staff in Higher Education. *Disability and Society*. 33 (6), Pp 1027-1042

DFID Nigeria. (2007). State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability – Project Memorandum, DFID, Abuja.

Disability in the Workplace: Policy and Guidelines, (2008), Published by Policy and Employees Relations Branch, Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria.

Global Rights. (2012). Report on the Situation of Disabled Persons in Nigeria. Global Rights: Partners for Injustice, Washington DC.

Ihedioha, E. C. (2015). Environmental Barriers and Job Placement of the Physically Challenged in Organisations in Rivers State, Nigeria. Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences. European Centre for Research Training and Development, United Kingdom. 3(4), 1-13.

Lang, R. (2006). Human Rights and Disability: A New and Dynamic Perspective with the United Nations Convention on Disability, *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*, 17(1),3-9.

Lawal, S.A., (2016). Issues of Policy Implementation in Nigeria. P-Kay publishers, Akure, Nigeria.

Nick, C., Sykes, W. & Carola, G. (2013). Barriers to Employment and Unfair Treatment at Work: A Quantitative Analysis of Disabled People's Experiences. No 88. Independent Social Research, Equality and Human Rights Commission. Manchester, United Kingdom

Nuth, M. (2018). How Context influences the ideologies and Strategies of Disabled People's Organisations: a case study of |Cambodia. *Disability and Society*. 33 (7), 1046-1060

Olabode, G.K., (2017). *Social-Complexities in the Workplace*, Ibadan: Diken Press

Oliver, M. (2004). Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research. Disability Press, 18-31

Olsen, J. 2018. Socially Disabled: the fight Disabled People face against Loneliness and Stress, *Disability and Society*. 33 (7), 1160-1164.

Peter, A. 2011. Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities in the Vision 20:20 Agenda, a call for the Enforcement of their Social, Economic and Political Rights.

Policies for the Work Environment and Well Being at Work until 2020: Ministry of Social Affairs and health. Helsinki, Finland, 2011.

Rezaul, M. I. 2015. Rights of the People with Disabilities and Social Exclusion in Malaysia. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 5(2), 171-176.

Robinson, J. E. 2000. Access to Employment for People with Disabilities: Findings of a Consumer-led Project. Disability & Rehabilitation, 22(5), 246–253.

Tang, N. & Cao, Y. 2018. From Multiple Barriers to a co-prosperity Society: the Development of a Legal System for Disabled People in China. *Disability and Society*. 33 (7), Pp 1170-1174.

LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. 1999.
Nigerians with Disability Act 1993
South Africa Disability Code, 2002
Special Peoples Law (SPL), 2011, The Special Peoples Law, Nigeria: Lagos State Government.
The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, (CRPD), 2006
The Employment Equality Act 2004
The Equality Act, 1993
The Disability Act, 1995
The NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977
The Work Environment Act, 2013
United Nations. 2008. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
United Nations. 2014. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.