

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS AND JOB PLACEMENT OF THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED IN ORGANIZATIONS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT: *This work focused on “Environmental Barriers and Job Placement of the Physically Challenged in Work Organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria”. The purpose was to investigate the extent to which the physical environment of work organizations poses as a challenge for the inclusion of the physically challenged in work organizations. Six selected organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. The pilot survey, simple random sampling techniques, questionnaires were employed to select respondents. Primary and secondary data were used in the collection of data. Five research questions were raised. In analyzing data that addressed the research questions the descriptive method of analysis was used. The findings of the study includes: lack of policies and practices; Negative public perception; barriers of physical environment; discrimination; lack of records and on the job challenge. Based on these findings the study recommends among others that there should be domestic policies backed by appropriate legislation which will favour employment of the physically challenged; elaborate elimination of physical environmental barriers to enhance access to employment; promotion and sensitization of advocacy groups to enhance the protection of the rights and privileges of the physically challenged.*

KEYWORDS: Environment, barriers, Job Placement, Physically Challenged, Workplace, Rivers State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 386 million of the world's working-age people have some kind of disability, says the International Labour Organization (ILO). Unemployment among the persons with disabilities is as high as 80 per cent in some countries. While in the U.S. a survey conducted in 2004 revealed that about 35% of persons living with disability are gainfully employed; and in India with a 5 to 6 percent of its population who are disabled have their employment needs unmet with a reserved 3 percent of government jobs (Lang, R. 2006, UN Enable-Factsheets on Person with Disabilities); there are no statistics and/or established employment Act for the physically challenged in Nigeria.

Nigeria has a population of over One Hundred and Forty Million, and an estimated population of over Three Million as the population of the Physically Challenged (National Population Commission, 2006). These persons need to be planned for and included in the economic mainstream of the nation. Unfortunately, the Physically Challenged are usually not given elaborate consideration in National Development Plans and as such become the most vulnerable social group as evidenced by unacceptable low literacy level; high unemployment; and poor access to Development Support Network and Social Capital.

Though fate has been said to bring cruelty on the Physically Challenged, facts abound in recent years that there is ability in every disability. It has been proven in different ways that the physically challenged can achieve and attain any desired goal in life they set for themselves irrespective of their state of deformity. There are evidences to show for their determination to succeed and attain greater heights. The evidences of their performances have convinced the society that they are gifted people just like every other able-bodied men and women. In spite of these evidences, they find it difficult to access jobs.

The social exclusion of the Physically Challenged in workplaces transcends recruitment and placement. Most organizations do not have special facilities in buildings, materials and equipped vehicles to cater for these persons. This poses as a major challenge to the effective engagement of the Physically Challenged in work organizations.

Statement of the Problem

The Physically Challenged are members of the society so they deserve to be treated equally with their able bodied counterparts. An arbitrary survey to determine the number of the Physically Challenged in organizations shows a high level of exclusion. A further observation indicates that even amongst those that are employed, hardly does one find such persons at the Management cadre. The Statement of fact is that the Physically Challenged are the most affected persons in the economic, social and political life of the society (Vrooman and Hoff, 2013). Material deprivation is the most common result of this class of persons.

A major issue that faces the Physically Challenged is the negative public perception. The common perception held by policy-makers and the public at large is that, disabled people and disability issues are viewed in terms of charity and welfare (Quarmby, 2011). The social exclusion of the Physically Challenged in work organizations is further intensified by a hostile Physical Environment. Organizations with a hostile physical environment have enormous potentials to discourage qualified, skilful and capable physically challenged individuals from expressing interest to be engaged. In such a hostile environment, materials and devices or equipment necessary to enhance their productivity are usually not available. Similarly, the Physically Challenged are confronted with the inability to access homes, transport, buildings etc.

The general non conducive environment and the cost implication of making the environment conducive may hamper organizations from engaging the physically challenged. All these put together contributes to the exclusion of the physically challenged in work organizations. The research work intends to further highlight the plights of the Physically Challenged in Nigeria, particularly as it relates to their exclusion in work organizations

Objectives of the Study to:

1. Examine the policies and practices adopted by Human Resource Managers in the inclusion of the Physically Challenged in selected Organizations in Rivers State.
2. Highlight the extent to which the Physically Challenged are discriminated in selected Organization in Rivers State.
3. Examine the barriers posed by Physical Environment to the Physically Challenged in the Selected Organizations in Rivers State.

4. Highlight the challenges Human Resource Managers encounter in the inclusion of the Physically Challenged in Selected Organizations in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What policies and practices do the Human Resource Managers adopt in the exclusion of the Physically Challenged in Selected Organizations in Rivers State?
2. What is the extent to which the Physically Challenged are discriminated in Selected Organizations in Rivers State?
3. What are the barriers posed by the Physical Environment to Physically Challenged in Selected Organizations in Rivers State?
4. What are the Challenges encountered by the Human Resource Managers in the inclusion of Physically Challenged in Selected Organizations in Rivers State.

Scope of the Study

This study concentrated on the Environmental Barriers and Job Placement of the Physically Challenged in work Organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria: A study of Selected Organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. The selected organizations are Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC); OilServ Nigeria Limited, Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), Nigeria Postal Services (NIPOST), University of Port Harcourt (Uniport) and Rivers State Ministry of Water Resources,

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The survey research design was adopted, this design was important because it availed the researcher the opportunity to gather information from a wide range of respondents.

Population of the Study

The target population of this study is the Physically Challenged from the selected of work organizations under study in Rivers State.

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study it was to choose those to be given questionnaire and interviewed. This method was useful because of the nature of the study, since preliminary enquiry shows that the physically challenged that are engaged in work organizations are few and any physically challenged in these organizations was purposely included.

Sample Size

Sample Size 56

Method of Data Collection

Data was obtained from Primary and Secondary Sources. The techniques for data collection include the Pilot Survey, the In-depth Interview (IDI), the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Questionnaire Method

Method of Data Analysis

Data gathered from the study was analyzed using descriptive method. The descriptive methods include frequency distribution percentage tables and charts.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from the field.

Table 4.1: Denial and Limitation of Rights

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	80.4
No	11	19.6
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.1 above shows that 45 respondents representing 80.4% affirmed that there are different forms of denial or limitations of their rights and privileges in the organizations, while 11 respondents representing 19.6 are to the contrary. The significant variation in their responses apparently indicates a high level of discrimination to the physically challenged in the organizations.

If your answer above is Yes, give an example

Since I was employed here I have never been sent for any course or training due to my challenge.

I have not also been promoted, whereas my colleagues who were employed about the same time have been receiving their promotion. I had to ask why; I was not given any reasonable answer for not promoting me. For conferences and seminars, I was told when I confronted my boss sometimes ago that it will cost them much sending people like me for a course.

Again, I cannot access some of the offices in the work environment. Once, I tried climbing the one of our office complex I fell. Since then I have never tried it again.

(IDI, Male, 52 Years).

Another respondent expresses his view as follows:

I had my challenge on the job. My leg was amputated and the institution refused giving me any form of compensation. I was given a walking stick and prosthetic limb. I had this challenge when I was trying to protect some students from cult boys. In the process these boys shot my leg and that was how I had the challenge.

(IDI, Male 35 Years).

Another respondent also expressed his plight thus:

My Sister, the way my company is treating me is something I don't understand. There is nothing I do here that is appreciated. Severally my boss I work directly under had written that they should transfer me to another department. When the company Head called me to ask why, my boss wanted me transferred. I told him I do not know why he wants me to be transferred. He insisted with the threat of transfer. I reported this to the head of the department and further requested that my boss should be asked if I was not doing my job efficiently. When he asked him he did not have any reply so my boss told him that transfer is not done like that. Somebody must be due for transfer before he or she may be transferred.

(FGD, Male, 42 Year).

My sister, before I got this job I applied to several companies because I made a first class in my B.Sc. Any organization that sees my CV will want to invite me for an interview, but once I get to the company they will tell me that they do not have job for people like me. Once, I was invited for an interview. When I got there, while we were waiting for the interview to commence, one of the manager's of the company that passed and saw me with my walking stick entered his office and asked one of his staff invite me to his office. He asked me of my mission and I told him I was invited for interview. He told me that they do not employ people with clutches in their organization, that I should live their environment. I pleaded to be considered but he refused. He further threatened to use the security men to forcefully take me out of the premises. I left and felt so humiliated, and was almost asking God questions about my life. (IDI, Male 48 Year).

The various claims by the aforementioned respondents shows the extent of limitation to access to employment for those who are unemployed; and career development for those already in the employment of these organizations. The comments expressed by these respondents also reveal the problem of societal negative perception towards those who are physically challenged.

Table 4.2: Cases of humiliation

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	67.6
No	18	32.1
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.2 above indicates that 38 respondents representing 67.9% stated that there have been cases of humiliation against the physically challenged, while 18 respondents representing 32.1% had a contrary opinion. The appreciable responses of those who are in the affirmative shows that the physically challenged in the various organizations faces one form of humiliation or the other.

If your answer above is Yes, please explain

Sometimes ago I was harassed by a colleague of mine in the office, who made a mockery of my walking stick. Another one casually called me a one legged person; even when I reported the matter to my Head of department nothing was done about that. (IDI, Male, 42 Years).

Similarly, when I went to the canteen to eat, while we were on queue I pleaded with a staff to allow me stand in front of him so I could be attended to fast since I would not be able to stand for so long. He retorted and asked if he was the cause of my challenge. (IDI, Male, 42 Years).

The aforementioned claim by the respondent is evident of the humiliation which the physically challenged are subjected to in our society. This may be related to the negative public perception towards persons with disability.

Table 4.3: Denied access to legal right

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	80.4
No	11	19.6
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.3 above indicates that 45 respondents representing 80.4% stated that there have been denied access to legal rights against them, while 11 respondents representing 19.6% stated no.

If Yes above, please explain?

As a physically challenged working in my organization, I rose to the management cadre as chief accountant. I was demoted after some years just because I did my work the way it should. What I mean is that as the head of account in my organization, staff comes regularly with financial records and expects me to keep signing, most times they come that I should approve some payments and expenses which I do not know how these were spent.

At a time I told one of my managers that I needed to see the expenses record of what he was demanding refund, He said my friend I need that money urgently; that every time that is how you would be probing someone with several questions. He also made a statement that day that, that is why most organizations don't like engaging physically challenged persons at work because they are very difficult people to work with.

Due to my refusal to comply with that, two days after that incident, one of the accountants working under me was asked to occupy my office and I was assigned another. I was also served a letter that hence forth I should be reporting to the staff who now occupies my office. As a matter of fact, this staff I was told to be reporting to was my subordinate. When I went to the human resource department to ask what was happening, I was only told that the instruction came from above that I should be replaced.

*When I took the matter to our organization's legal units, they never sat or call me for the matter until I got tired and decided to remain at the new post till today. I have a physically challenged friend working in another organization that also shared similar experience with me.
(IDI, Male, 51 Years).*

Table 4.4: Provision of Supportive Materials/Devices

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
a. Yes	0	0
b. No	56	100
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

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able 4.4 above shows that there is no proof of any form of supportive materials or/ and devices to the physically challenged to enhance their productivity. Out of the responses 100% stated there is no supportive materials or/ and devices. The absence of these supportive materials/devices is obviously a physical barrier and a strong potential to discourage employers from engaging the physically challenged; hence, denial of access to employment.

If your answer above is yes, please specify and or list such supportive devices

There was no proof of provision of supportive materials or / and devices to the physically challenged in the employment of the various organizations.

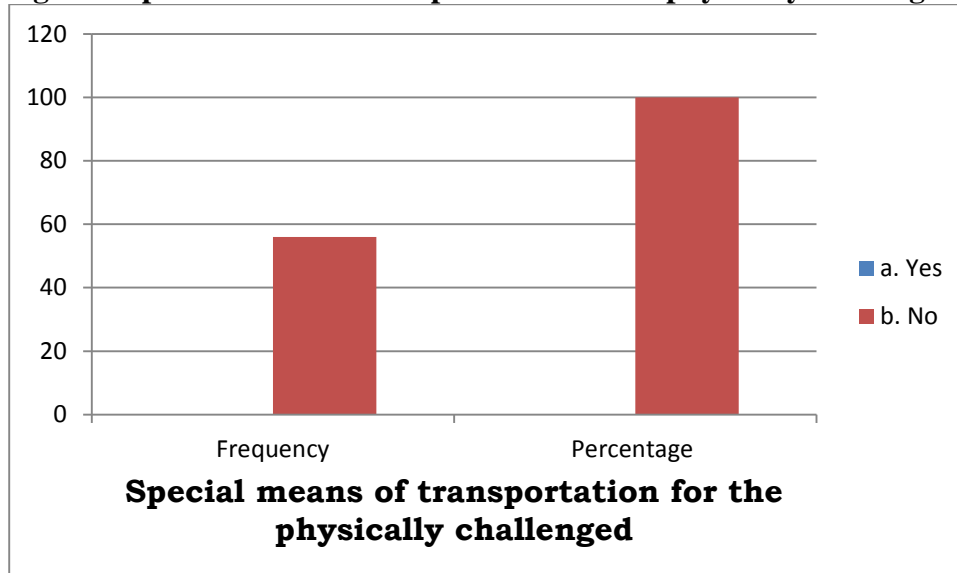
Fig. 4.1: Special means of transportation for the physically challenged**Figure 4.1: Special means of transportation.**

Figure 4.1 shows that 100% of respondents who are physically challenged do not have any special means of transportation provided for by the various organizations under study. This means that in organizations where there are means of transportation for staff both the able-bodied individuals and the physically challenged make use of same to and from work; nonetheless the none suitability and inconveniences to the physically challenged.

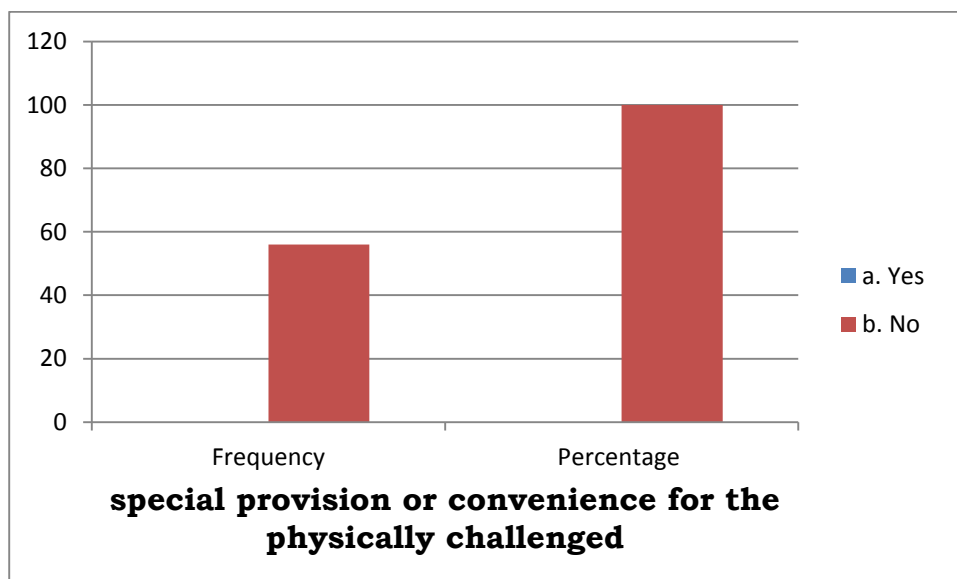
**Figure 4.2: Special provision or convenience**

Figure 4.2 above shows that there are no special provisions or conveniences for the physically challenged to access the office building. 100% of the respondents stated there are no special provisions or conveniences to access the office buildings. Access to office buildings here also includes entrance, exit, work ways within the buildings and entrance to urinals and toilets.

Table 4.5: Special Toilets Accessible

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	56	100
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.5 above shows that there are no special toilets accessible to the physically challenged, 100% of the respondents stated that there is no such special provision. The absence of special urinals and toilets for the physically challenged is a significant barrier to deny the physically challenged of employment and where employed, it is a limitation to their right.

Table 4.6: Availability of Special Walkways

Respondents	Responses		Total	% Yes	% No
	Yes	No			
Non Physically Challenged	6	288	294	2.0	98
Physically Challenged	2	54	56	3.6	96.4
Total	8	342	350	2.3	97.7

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.6 shows that out of the six organizations only one has special walk ways for the physically challenged. 6 respondents representing 10.7% stated that there are walkways, while 50 respondents representing 89.3% stated that there are no walkways in their organizations. The low percentage of respondents' claim of presence of walkways in one of the organizations and the very high percentage of those respondents who claimed absence of such shows clearly the limited awareness of employers and by extension, the society; and the obvious physical barrier to employment of the physically challenged.

Table 4.7: Special Parking Areas

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
a. Yes	0	0
b. No	56	100
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.7 shows that there are no special parking areas within the premises of these organizations for vehicles which conveys the physically challenged to and from work. 100% of the respondents gave their responses as NO. This is an obvious barrier to the physically challenged, and therefore discriminatory.

Table 4.8: Cost of Eliminating Physical Barriers

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	85.7
No	5	14.3
Total	35	100

Source: Researcher's Survey Data, 2014.

Table 4.8 above shows the claims of respondent in the various organizations in response to questions related to challenges which human resource managers encounter in the inclusion of the physically challenged. 30 out of 35 respondents representing 85.7% claimed stated that cost of reducing or eliminating physical barrier in their organizations is a limitation to the inclusion of the physically challenged; while 5 out of 35 respondents representing 14.3% had a contrary view.

The high percentage of respondents who claimed that cost of providing supportive materials and facilities is a limiting factor in the inclusion of the physically challenged only goes to show the extent to which this vulnerable group is denied access to organizations. In addition, the data corroborates the general view that perception of employers is a hindrance to the inclusion of the physically challenged in various organizations.

How many physically challenged are in management cadre in your organization? 2

The claims put together by all the respondents in the organizations shows that only 2 physically challenged have attained management cadre. This is an insignificant number compared with the total number of management staff and in line with the ratio to the number of staff who are physically challenged in all the organizations put together. We can also deduce that the negative mind set of employers towards the physically challenged which portrays them as less capable is a contributing factor to this position. It is likely that most of the physically challenged at management cadre level became challenged in their current status.

That the number of physically challenged at management cadre is very low also indicates a very low recruitment of the physically challenged into these organizations. Looking at cause and effect relationship, one can aptly state that with a low number of physically challenged persons at management cadre, there is reduced internal advocacy for the promotion of the rights and privileges of the physically challenged in these organizations; and consequently denial of access to recruitment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study including field and statistical approach has resulted in several findings that are remarkable:

Lack of Domestic Policies and Practices (Implementation)

The finding that these organizations do have policies on the inclusion of the physically challenged and the associated finding of lack of implementation are consistent with the hypotheses that guided this study.

If policies do exist as claimed by most respondents, we should expect some measure of practices or implementation. This however, has not been the case. It can further be inferred

that most of the organizations do not have domesticated policy; rather the organizations align themselves with government national policy only on paper. This gives a false impression of adoption of favourable policy. The implementation of government national policy is and will continue to be defective largely due to lack of legislation that will make it imperative and compelling for organizations not only to apparently align themselves with government national policy, but domesticate such policy in order to make implementation effective and swift.

The lack of domestic national policy and by extension the negation of the United Nations provisions that ensure that appropriate robust policy and effective implementation framework are developed is an infringement on the rights and dignities of the Physically Challenged. (Barron and Amerena, 2006).

The current situation is obviously a major setback towards eradicating poverty and the country's attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. This observation re-echoes the fear as expressed by Arokoyu, S. (2009), that the Millennium Development Goals ((MDGs) while emphasizing that the interests of persons with disabilities are implicitly included pointed out that "Unless disabled people are brought into the development mainstream, it will be impossible to cut poverty by 2015 (MDG, 2000).

Negative Public Perception

Negative perception is discriminatory, humiliating and therefore a clog in the wheel of progress for the physically challenged in the pursuit of career development. No doubt it disenfranchises the best capable and most intelligent of this vulnerable group with a consequent denial of valuable contributions to these organizations. It contradicts the assertion made by Robert (2012), that some Physically Challenged in our society have come out stronger than able bodied persons in their chosen career. Negative perception poses a major challenge to human resource managers in the inclusion of the physically challenged in work organizations

Barriers of the Physical Environment

The study established the fact that there are obvious barriers which limits the inclusion of the physically challenged in organizations. Barriers such as lack of support devices/materials, special means of transportation and walkways etc limits the inclusion of the physically challenged in organizations. The table generally shows an abysmal low percentage of 2.3% of supportive devices/ facilities for the physically challenged in the organizations studied. This shows clearly that barriers of the physical environment are a major hindrance to the inclusion of the physically challenged in organizations. It is a negation of their rights and also a major setback towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2015), (Wolfensohn J. 2002). Furthermore, it is a contravention of the rights of the physically challenged as provided by the United Nations Conventions, Treaties and Laws.

Discrimination

The study revealed a moderately high degree of discrimination against the physically challenged in organizations. Humiliation and denial of rights even as these contravenes the rights of the physically challenged as contained in the United Nations conventions, treaties and laws have immense potentials to stagnate the career development of the physically challenged in the employment system of organizations and therefore, deny quality contributions of the intellectually endowed ones amongst them towards the growth of such organizations. Such

Discriminatory practices would also not encourage or promote the inclusion of the physically challenged in the employment of these organizations.

Lack of Records.

The study further revealed that while some of these organizations do not have records of bio data, others had inaccessible or inefficient bio data of the physically challenged. The data therefore of the physically challenged in this study were collated mainly based on physical identification of persons with challenges in the various units/ departments of the organizations rather than by statistical records. This is not only obsolete and contrary to best global practices but a cumbersome approach to study.

The finding lends credence to the various aforementioned findings related to the denial of inclusion of the physically challenged in organizations. If records are lacking or poorly kept it becomes obvious that there is no strategic planning for the inclusion of the physically challenged as there is no empirical data upon which to base any form of implementation. It simply means that inclusion of the physically challenged as it currently stands in these organizations is based essentially on arbitrary considerations rather than strategic planning and implementation.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**Summary**

The aim of this study is to draw public concern on the extreme limited access of the Physically Challenged in work organizations with a view to ginger policy makers on the need for policy formulation and implementation backed by appropriate legislation to reverse this trend. The research questions upon which field data were based include; What policies and practices do human resource managers adopt in the inclusion of the physically challenged?; what is the extent to which the physically challenged are discriminated in the selected organizations in Rivers state? What are the barriers posed by the physical environment to the physically challenged in the selected organizations in Rivers State? The methodology in this study captures the research design; the design used for this study was the survey research design. The population of the study the Physically Challenged from the selected of work organizations under study in Rivers State. The Sampling Techniques adopted in this adopted in this study is the purposive sampling technique. The data for the study were collected through the questionnaire, FGD, IDI, and Pilot Survey; and analyzed using both descriptive methods.

Conclusion

The study outcome is consistent with profound views about the plights of the physically challenged in the Nigerian Society as it relates to their exclusion in work organizations. There is no doubt that a far reaching revelation is established with this study concerning the discriminatory factors which limits the physically challenged from their inclusion in work organizations. Thus, the hypotheses which guided this study have been proven from various view points and statistically.

Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be enactment of laws which will favour employment of the physically challenged in public and organized private sectors. In this regard, a specific percentage or quota should be allotted to the physically challenged; a similar law operates in India where about 3% of job vacancies in public organizations is allotted to the physically challenged. Nigeria may borrow and adopt such model law from India.
2. Government authorities need to be sensitized on the need to have an all encompassing policy that will favour not only employment of the physically challenged but also a conducive environment that will enhance mobility, accessibility and productivity. This policy should make it mandatory for all public and private buildings to have access and conveniences for the physically challenged. In addition, there should be walkways, special car parks, working materials, devices that will enhance their productivity in line with global best practices.
3. There should be enactment of laws that will prescribe penalties for any organization that discriminates via policies and practices or limit the rights and privileges of the physically challenged.
4. There should be an all inclusive bio data that will capture persons with disabilities, nature of disability, onset of disability, whether prior to the job or on the job.
5. There should be regular sensitization and awareness campaign on the need to promoting the rights of the physically challenged and eliminating negative perceptions towards the physically challenged; all in a bid to promoting their inclusion in work organizations.
6. Production of equipment for the physically challenged should be encouraged as an industry. If these kinds of industries are created, they will also serve as a source or means of economic development and empowerment for the nation.
7. Most public and private buildings are fire trap to the physically challenged to enable them access job and their environment. Any building that does not have access for the physically challenged should be restructured.

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