



# Employment Barriers as Correlates of Economic Empowerment of Persons with Physical Disabilities in Bwari Area Council of Federal Capital Territory Abuja Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The study examined the employment barriers as correlates of economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities in Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. A correlational survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised of 40 people with physical disabilities out of which 25 were purposively sampled for the study. One research question and three null hypotheses guided the study. Two researcher developed twenty four (24) itemed questionnaire in a four point Likert scale with a reliability coefficient of 0.84 and 0.79 were used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The findings revealed that lack education and training, discriminating attitudes of employers and failure to implement legislative recommendations statistically relate with economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. Recommendations were made among others that government should be more committed to the education of persons with physical disabilities and employers should be sensitised to ensure a stigma-free environment at the workplace for employees with physical disabilities.

**Keywords:** Physical Disabilities, Employment, Economic Empowerment, Discrimination Education and Training

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, one billion people live with some form of disability of whom nearly two hundred million (200,000,000) experience difficulties in functioning [17]. Accordingly, the United Nations Development Program opined that 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries of which Nigeria is one. The latest National Census of 2006 did not capture the true position of the disability rate, but it was estimated that about 4.8 million Nigerians are living with one form of disability or the other [10].

The percentage of employment of working-age persons with disabilities is significantly poorer than the percentage among the general population without disabilities. There is an example with the report of Kraus (2015) in which it was stated that among civilians age 18 to 64 in 2014, the employment rate is 34.4% for people with disabilities versus 75.4% for people without disabilities [1]. Studies suggest that

this employment gap is especially evident in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) because of the underlying socioeconomic and political reasons affecting the employment market and social welfare policies [7, 3]. In many instances employed workers with disabilities earn considerably less than similarly situated workers without disabilities [9, 11]. This makes persons with disabilities (PWDs) to be amongst the vulnerable groups in the country that need maximum attention from the government especially in the area of employment.

It is on such grounds as above and other fundamental rationales that Article 27 of the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires that States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis of others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. And that

States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation [21]. In Nigeria, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 stated in addition that all employers of labour in public organisations shall as much as possible have persons with disabilities constituting at least 5% of their employment.

According to World Health Organization [22] 'disabilities' is an umbrella term referring to impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disability is having any enduring physical [16], mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which affects individuals' interactions and activities and hampers their effective and equal participation in society as other people. In another point of view a disability is a difficult condition relating to the interaction connecting an individual's body and the community or environment he lives in. People with disabilities are termed as persons who have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal, day-to-day activities [8].

There are diverse types of disabilities however, in this study the researchers' main focus is on the persons with physical disabilities. Physical disability is a whole or partial physical constraint that has substantial and long term effect on a person's bodily functioning, mobility, agility or strength which could be congenital or acquired in later life. According to [20], people with physical disabilities experience dysfunction, such as poor muscle control, weakness or fatigue; difficulty in walking, talking, seeing, throwing, catching or grasping (because of pain or weakness); difficulty in reaching things; and difficulty accomplishing complex or compound manipulations (push and turn). A person may be born with a physical disability or acquire it later in life through accident, injury, illness or side effects of medical treatment [17]. Physical disability structures or functions can compromise a person's ability to perform tasks of daily living and community socialization [13].

Okafor, L. [15] pointed out that people with physical disabilities in Nigeria are often seen as a disgrace to their families; therefore, they are often confined to discrete places where people will not readily notice them. By such measures, the person with the disability is prevented from participation in normal activities such as educational, economic, political, and social pursuits. Nonetheless, one should never presume that people with physical disabilities have intellectual disabilities as well. People with physical disabilities embody an unused resource of skills and abilities, including practical proficiencies if they have way in to preparation through schooling, training and guidance. They equally have desirable problem - solving skills developed through their everyday life activities and some through education. They have aptitudes to use, work they can perform, contributions to make to their communities and country in general. They need economic empowerment.

Economic empowerment can be defined as the development of the ability of the historically disadvantaged to engage in

economic activity that benefits both the individuals in question and the broader society [4]. Economic empowerment is the ability to make and act on decisions that involve the control over and allocation of financial resources [5]. It is about increasing the economic participation of the individuals and helping them in growing their income. The economic empowerment of people with disabilities is about growing their resources and potentials which enable them to be involved in, bargain and have control of actions and choices that affect their economic destinies. With regards to persons with physical disabilities it is very central in increasing their position in the community. Employment is key for their economic empowerment. They need to be fully represented in employment in the work place such as government and the private sector, NGOs etc. [12]. When a person with physical disability is economically empowered, it does not only affect the economic status of the individual person with the disability. Rather, it also affects other members of the household who may not have disabilities for the empowered one with disability will no more depend on the rest of them economically and the same flows to the society at large.

## 2. Statement of Problems

In Nigeria, many persons with physical disabilities who are competent of working in different fields are not able to acquire employment there and therefore hang about as underutilized segment in the labour market. This is in spite of efforts of international organisations such as the United Nations and other disability policies and legislations meant to put a stop to discrimination in employment of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there is scarcity of research in the area of economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities known to the researchers and therefore the need for this study.

## 3. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between employment barriers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities in Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The study specifically aims at finding:

1. The barriers to economic employment of persons with physical disabilities.
2. The correlation between lack of education and skills and economic employment of persons with physical disabilities.
3. The correlation between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.
4. The correlation between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

## 4. Research Questions

One research question was posed for the study

1. What are the barriers to economic empowerment of

persons with physical disabilities?

2. What are the measures of economic empowerment for persons with physical disabilities?

## 5. Hypothesis

Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant correlation between lack of education and skills and economic employment of persons with physical disabilities.
2. There is no significant correlation between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.
3. There is no significant correlation between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

## 6. Method

This study adopted a correlational survey design. The population of the study comprised of 40 people with physical disabilities from Bwari Area Council of the FCT. 25 people with physical disabilities out of them were purposively sampled for the study. Two research questions and three null

hypotheses guided the study. Two researcher developed instruments in twenty four (24) itemed questionnaires were used for data collection for the study. One is Barriers to Employment for Persons with Physical Disabilities Questionnaire (BEPWPDQ) and the other is Measures of Economic Empowerment for Persons with Physical Disabilities Questionnaire (MEEPWPDQ). Each of the instruments was in a four point Likert scale. The responses were rated in the 4-point scale of strongly agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (DA) 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. Two experts in special education and an expert in measurement and evaluation, all from the school of education, FCT College of Education Zuba Abuja validated the instrument. A test re-test method of the instrument was used in another area council to obtain the reliability co-efficient at three (3) weeks interval and it was found to be 0.76 each. This was considered reliable hence suitable for use in this study. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researchers as appropriate and all were retrieved on the spot. Mean ratings and standard deviation were used in analyzing the research questions. The decision rule was 2.50 mean score cut-off point for accepting an item. The postulated null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

## 7. Results

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics of barriers to economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.*

S/n	Barriers	Mean	STD	Decision
a	Lack of education and skills	3.68	0.80	Accepted
b	Discriminatory attitudes among employers,	3.66	0.74	Accepted
c	Attitudes of co-workers toward employees with disabilities	3.32	1.06	Accepted
d	Low Salary	3.28	1.02	Accepted
e	Negative Perception by employers	3.72	0.73	Accepted
f	Inaccessible Environment	3.60	0.81	Accepted
g	Discrimination by society	3.44	0.96	Accepted
h	Lengthy Work Hours	2.56	1.32	Accepted
i	Failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs	3.80	0.64	Accepted
j	Negation of human capital of persons with physical disabilities	3.52	0.91	Accepted
k	Myths about physical disabilities	3.76	0.52	Accepted
l	Illness-specific factors	3.12	1.09	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.46		

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of barriers to economic employment of persons with physical disabilities. Out of the twelve barriers investigated on economic employment of persons with physical disabilities, items “a”, “b”, “e”, “f”, “i”, and “k” were identified as the major barriers to economic employment of persons with physical

disabilities. Conclusively, the major barriers to economic employment of persons with physical disabilities were lack of education and skills, discriminatory attitudes among, low salary, negative, perception by employers, lengthy work hours, and negation of human capital of persons with physical disabilities.

*Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the major measures of economic empowerment for persons with physical disabilities.*

S/n	Measures	Mean	STD	Decision
a	Own resources and assets	3.64	0.63	Accepted
b	Having savings every month	3.56	0.76	Accepted
c	In control of using own income	3.88	0.33	Accepted
d	Taking care of own family well	3.80	0.40	Accepted
e	Being educated and skilled	3.56	0.82	Accepted
f	Having a career	3.36	0.95	Accepted
g	Fully employed by the government	3.44	0.91	Accepted

S/n	Measures	Mean	STD	Decision
h	Fully employed by a private individual	3.40	1.03	Accepted
i	Doing own business	3.72	0.61	Accepted
j	Working for a company	3.68	0.69	Accepted
k	Access to on credit facilities	3.32	0.98	Accepted
l	Can help some individuals financially	3.44	1.03	Accepted
	Grand mean	3.57		

Table 2 shows mean and standard deviation of measures of economic empowerment for persons with physical disabilities. Out of the twelve barriers investigated on measures of economic empowerment for persons with physical disabilities, items “a”, “b”, “c”, “d”, “i”, and “j” were identified as the measures of economic empowerment

for persons with physical disabilities. Based on these statistical values, the major measures of economic empowerment for persons with physical disabilities were own resources and assets, having savings every month, in control of using own income, taking care of own family well, doing own business, and working for a company.

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation analysis between lack of education and skills and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

Variables		Lack of education and skills	Economic Empowerment
Lack of education and skills	Pearson Correlation	1	0.885**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	15.44	12.68
	Covariance	0.64	0.52
	N	25	25
Economic Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	0.885**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	12.68	13.300
	Covariance	0.528	0.554
	N	25	25

Table 3 shows correlation analysis between lack of education and skills and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. The table further indicated that lack of education and skills was positively related to employment of persons with physical disabilities ( $r = 0.885$ ) at  $p < 0.05$ . Hence, the research hypothesis of no significant

correlation between lack of education and skills and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities was not accepted. This implied that there was significant correlation between lack of education and skills and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation analysis between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

Variables		Discriminatory attitudes among employers	Economic Empowerment
Discriminatory attitudes among employers	Pearson Correlation	1	0.904**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	13.44	12.08
	Covariance	0.560	0.503
	N	25	25
Economic Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	0.904**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	12.08	13.30
	Covariance	0.503	0.554
	N	25	25

Table 4 shows correlation analysis between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. In addition, the variable “discriminatory attitudes among employers” was statistically and positively related to the variable “employment of persons with physical disabilities” ( $r = 0.904$ ) at  $p < 0.05$ . Hence, the

research hypothesis of significant correlation between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities was not accepted. Therefore, there was significant correlation between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

**Table 5.** Pearson correlation analysis between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

		Failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs	Economic Empowerment
Failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs	Pearson Correlation	1	0.952**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	20.24	15.62

		Failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs	Economic Empowerment
Economic Empowerment	Covariance	0.843	0.65
	N	25	25
	Pearson Correlation	0.952**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	15.62	13.30
	Covariance	0.65	0.554
	N	25	25

Table 5 shows correlation analysis between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. Furthermore, it was revealed that the variable “failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs” was statistically and positively related to the variable “economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities” ( $r = 0.952$ ) at  $p < 0.05$ . Hence, the research hypothesis of significant correlation between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities was not accepted. In conclusion, there was statistically significant correlation between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities.

## 8. Discussion

The findings of this study show that there are barriers to employment against persons with physical disabilities in FCT. These range from lack of education and skills discriminatory attitudes among employers, attitudes of co-workers toward employees with disabilities, low salary negative perception by employers, inaccessible environment, failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs, myths about physical disabilities and the rest of the items on the table. This affirmed by [10] who in their study identified low salary, negative perception, inaccessible environment, discrimination and lengthy work hours as barriers encountered by people with special needs in employment. [3] Equally found lack of education and skills, failure to implement government provisions and recommendations for employment of persons with disabilities and discrimination among others in their study.

The findings further reveal that owning resources and assets, having savings every month, control of using own income, taking care of own family well, being educated and skilled, having a career, fully employed by the government, private individual or a company are some of the measures of economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. This finding is supported by [2] who in their study indicated that the above variable and more measures of economic empowerment of women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The findings of hypothesis 1 showed that education and training relate with economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. This goes in agreement with [14] who asserted that education is an effective tool for the economic empowerment of PWDs because education and training gives them independence, a sense of self-worth, citizenship rights,

employment and economic power.

The findings the second hypothesis revealed that there was significant correlation between discriminatory attitudes among employers and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. This is in affirmation with [16] stating that unfair treatment and discrimination against persons with disabilities took various forms and that employers are hesitant to take on employees with disabilities which drastically affect their economic empowerment. This is because such employers believe that the individuals with disabilities are not capable and will create problems and inconveniences in the workplace because of their disabilities.

Further findings of the study in the third hypothesis indicated that there was statistically significant correlation between failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. This supported by [6, 3] who in their different studies stated among other things that failure to implement government provisions and recommendations for employment of persons with disabilities is a barrier to their economic empowerment. This is actually and unfortunately as a result of not having political will and dedication on the part of the Nigerian government and leads to cycling of poverty amongst the persons with physical disabilities.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.

The government should also be more committed in the education of PWDs in its budget to ensure appropriate equipment of schools with curricula, trained personnel, resources and facilities to cater for physical disabilities in our society.

Government should create awareness on the need for equal opportunities for persons with physical disabilities in employment by educating the public on their capabilities.

Sanctions should be meted by the government on any individual, organisation or a state that fails to implement the rights of PWDs to employment as stipulated in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act of 2018.

## 10. Conclusion

In the findings from this study it was observed that people with physical disabilities continue to face extensive discrimination within the labour market, even in the face of

significant constitutional and legislative recommendations. There were some of the measures by which economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities could be rated. It was also found through the study that there was significant correlation between education and training, discriminating attitudes among employers and failure to implement disability acts on employment of PWDs and economic empowerment of persons with physical disabilities. Therefore there is a call for to promoting the understanding the humanity and abilities of persons with physical disabilities so that they are not ignored, economically empowered to alleviate poverty in them to contribute to their development and the development of society.

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