

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS PERSONS WITH DISABILITY IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

Chrisanctus C. Nwoko*

Department of Christian Religious Studies Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu

***Corresponding Author: -**

ABSTRACT

There is growing concern about the attitudes of contemporary societies towards persons with disability. Observations indicate a wide variation in attitudes relative to disability in Nigeria regardless of their religious beliefs. Thus, the present study investigated the variations in attitude towards a person with a disability in Enugu State based on religious affiliations. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A convenient sample of two hundred and seventeen ($n=217$) respondents completed a self-report measure of the adapted version of the Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (SADP) scale. The result of the simple regression model revealed that the calculated value of $F(1,215) = .461, P > .05 (.000)$ level of significance indicated a significant influence of religious affiliation on the level of attitude toward people with disability among the respondents. Most importantly, the finding revealed that religious affiliation contributed about 21.6% of the variation in attitude towards persons with disability. The finding has implications for disability policies.

KEYWORDS: *Religious affiliation, disability, attitude*

INTRODUCTION

Indications suggest that the concept of disability as a health implication has not received adequate attention from the socio-cultural environment (Cieza et al., 2018). Though, the issue of disability continues to attract research attention across the globe. For instance, a considerable number of studies have been dedicated to disability matters in the Nigerian context (Ademodi, 2018; Adeniji, 2020; Etieyibo, 2020; Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2016; Haruna, 2017; Ijezie et al., 2021; McKenzie & Ohajunwa, 2017; Nwokori & Devlieger, 2019; Onah & Ugwu, 2021). Although defining disability remains an issue. However, the definition according to the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), which describes disability as an umbrella term covering movement restrictions, participation constraints, intellectual or sensory impairments, and performance complications (Castaneda, 2018), is the most acceptable description of the phenomenon. However, disability is generally perceived as a problem existing within an individual that requires medical treatment (Goering, 2015). In particular, persons with disabilities form a substantial amount of the world's total population (Bassoumah & Mohammed, 2020). Moreover, the number of people with physical challenges increases in all cultures.

Though it may be challenging to ascertain the total number of persons living with physical disabilities in Nigeria or elsewhere, indications suggest that many people have varying psychomotor and cognitive challenges. Literature indicates that hearing loss, visual impairment, intellectual problems, physical restraint, and multiple forms of engagement constraints describes the frequently observed disabilities predominant in Nigeria (see. Abdulraheem et al., 2011; Akosile et al., 2018; Atilola et al., 2014; Balogun & Guntupali, 2016; Eskay & Chima, 2013; Gureje et al., 2006; Onah & Ugwu, 2021). Consequently, the challenges of living with a disability are not only the participation constraints but the attitudes of the general public. Accordingly, previous research has implicated social stigma and discrimination in the challenges confronting people with disability in Nigeria (Okafor 2003). Therefore, social stigmatization and categorization, including the belief associated with disabilities, may be critical to negative attitudes toward people with disability (Akhinedor, 2007).

Indeed, stigmatization, labeling, and their accompanying consequences represent critical concerns in disability matters. People with these challenges feel excluded from society, which instigates several day-to-day social challenges (Gobalakrishnan, 2013). Mainly, public attitudes and the resulting prejudicial response are essential factors in the lives of disabled persons (Haba & Ogiwara, 2001). Perhaps, the stigmatization inflicted on disabled persons leads to relational disadvantages, including poverty and isolation (Doherty, 2020). It could be concluded that the discrimination imposed on persons with disabilities derived its tolerability from the terminologies used in describing people with disability (Onah & Ugwu, 2021). These conditions diminish the well-being of people with disability and increase their susceptibility to various social challenges (Senjam & Singh, 2020).

Attitudes are a psychological construct and an essential component of one's behavior towards their socio-world. Attitudes represent a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of any aspect of one's environment. Thus, attitudes are crucial in social interaction and influence individuals' responses. A negative attitude toward people living with a disability is considered a critical barrier to achieving social equality (Zheng et al., 2016), including participation and inclusion of this population in educational settings (Torres et al., 2019). The overall attitudes of society toward people with disabilities is implicated in behavioral pattern, including avoidance, disempowerment, exclusion, and social disapproval. These attitudes can affect a small number of people involved, but it affects our society when we look at it on a larger scale. However, a positive attitude toward the physically challenged will lead to inclusivity and complete integration of the disabled in the community (Onah & Ugwu, 2021).

Numerous research has examined the variables that account for the attitudes of non-disabled persons towards the disabled (see Cha & Hwang, 2018; Jae-kook Park, 2008; Kim Min-Kyeong & Jae-kook Park, 2018; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996; Parashar et al., 2008; Rosenthal et al., 2006; Uysal et al., 2014). For example, researchers have found that contact with disabled persons (Favazza & Odom, 1997; Laird, 2016; Mazure, 2016), personality dimensions (Page & Islam, 2015), gender (Artale, 2003), social context (Kalargyrou et al., 2021) are among the factors that significantly influence attitude towards the disabled persons. However, the current study examined the role of religious affiliation in attitudes towards people with disability.

Religious affiliation and attitude towards people with disability in Enugu state

There are growing indications that persons with disabilities all over Nigeria, including the Enugu state, still live at the margins due to increased discrimination, which strongly undermines their rights and general well-being (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2020). Observation of persons with disability in the Enugu state suggests that the proportion of people with challenges are enormous. Regrettably, these persons have faced various challenges primarily occasioned by negative attitudes from the general society. Religious affiliation is a specific type of identity formation. Notably, it is the sense of group membership to a religion and the importance of this group membership relative to one's self-concept. Religious affiliation is the self-identified association of a person with a specific religion, denomination, or sub-denominational religious group. Insinuations suggest that religion is an essential component of people's behavior.

Moreover, religion and spirituality play a role in people's development, including health, subjective well-being, education, risk behavior, and civic engagement. Enugu state is comprised of mainly Christianity with diverse religious affiliations. Indeed, different religious groups have specific behavioral norms crucial to their attitudes. In other words, the specific religious group one belongs to has a significant influence on their attitude towards any aspect of their socio-world. Arguably, religious affiliation is an integral part of people's lives that shapes their corporation and how they value others. The present paper examined religious affiliation as a scarcely explored factor that could explain the variation in people's attitudes towards persons with disability.

Hypothesis: *Religious affiliation would significantly predict attitude toward persons with disability*

Method

Participants:

The population of the study comprised indigenes and residents of Enugu State. Thus, two hundred and seventeen (N-217) participants conveniently pooled from the state and local government civil service participated in the study. They comprised sixty-three (112) males and fifty-four (105) females aged 30-65 years. The rationale for selecting civil servants follows the observation that they are easy to assemble, and they comprise the characteristics relative to the independent variables. The participants were all Christian with affiliation with the Catholic, Anglican, Sabbath, and other Pentecostal faiths.

Measures

Attitude towards persons with disability was measured using the 24 items Scale of Attitude Toward Disabled Persons (SADP) Questionnaire developed by Antonak (1982). An item analysis was done on the scale to test its validity and reliability following a pilot study, and the Cronbach alpha revealed a .78 reliability index for the scale. Religious affiliation was assessed with the demographic information on the scale.

Result

From table 1 below, the calculated value of $F(1,215) = .461, P > .05 (.000)$ level of significance, revealed a significant influence of religious affiliation on the level of attitude toward people with disability among the respondents. Thus, the assumption of the study that religious affiliation would influence attitudes towards persons with disability was affirmed. Notably, the R^2 revealed that religious affiliation contributed about 21.6% of the variation in attitude towards a person with a disability.

Table 1:

Table showing the linear regression analysis performed to examine the effect of religious affiliation on attitude towards people with disability

	B	SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
Constant	2.35	.134			17.59	.000
Religious affiliation	-.49	.062	-.476	.216	-7.83	.000

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $p > .149$

Discussion

The present paper investigated the variation in attitude towards persons with disability in Enugu State, Nigeria, based on religious affiliation. Two hundred and seventeen respondents pooled with diverse religious affiliations participated in the survey. The simple regression analysis conducted to test the study's hypothesis established a statistically positive association between religious affiliation and attitude toward persons with disability. Thus, the result could be interpreted that the different religious groups in Enugu state have varying influences on their member's attitudes towards persons with disability. The result supports the findings of previous studies (Weisel & Zaidman, 2003), which provided evidence that religious orientation is a significant correlate of attitudes towards people with disability. There are numerous explanations for this finding. First, it could mean that attitude as a psychological construct is related to religious doctrines; hence, attitude as a learned disposition can vary based on religious orientations. Also, religion is an essential instigator of behavioral patterns. Religion and spirituality are vital variables in the Enugu state that could exert a more substantial influence on behavior than educational learning and cultural dispositions.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the influence of religious affiliation on attitudes toward persons with disability. The analysis conducted on the data established a positive link between religious affiliation

and attitude towards the disabled. Therefore, the study concludes that religious affiliation is an essential factor that predicts disability attitudes. Thus, this study has the potential to contribute to the disability literature by revealing the religious group as a potential determinant of attitude toward persons with disability in the Enugu state. The finding has implications for disability policies. Furthermore, the study recommends that future research should endeavor to broaden the predictor variables to include social and cultural orientations.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdulraheem, I. S., Oladipo, A. R., & Amodu, M. O. (2011). Prevalence and correlates of physical disability and functional limitation among elderly rural population in Nigeria. *Journal of Aging Research*, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.4061/2011/369894>
- [2] Ademodi, T. (2018). Caregivers' perceptions of the quality of life of individuals with developmental disabilities in Nigeria. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 78(9-A(E)).
- [3] Adeniji, O. (2020). Social participation among older people with a physical disability in Nigeria: A qualitative study. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 101(11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2020.09.056>
- [4] Akosile, C. O., Mgbeojedo, U. G., Maruf, F. A., Okoye, E. C., Umeonwuka, I. C., & Ogunniyi, A. (2018). Depression, functional disability and quality of life among Nigerian older adults: Prevalences and relationships. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2017.08.011>
- [5] Artale, L. J. (2003). Attitudes of community college students toward people with disabilities. In *Attitudes of Community College Students Toward People With Disabilities*.
- [6] Atilola, O., Omigbodun, O., Bella-Awusah, T., Lagunju, I., & Igbeneghu, P. (2014). Neurological and intellectual disabilities among adolescents within a custodial institution in South-West Nigeria. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12044>
- [7] Balogun, S. A., & Guntupalli, A. M. (2016). Gender difference in the prevalence and socio-demographic correlates of mobility disability among older adults in Nigeria. *European Journal of Ageing*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-016-0386-z>
- [8] Bassoumah, B., & Mohammed, A. A. (2020). The socio-cultural challenges to maternal and neonatal care: The views of women with disabilities receiving maternity care in the Chereponi district of Northern Ghana. *Scientific African*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2019.e00258>
- [9] Cha, S. J., & Hwang, S. Y. (2018). Analysis of attitude and influencing factors of university students toward the peer with disabilities as community members. *Korean Journal of Physical, Multiple and Health Disabilities*, 61(3). <https://doi.org/10.20971/kcpmd.2018.61.3.1>
- [10] Cieza, A., Sabariego, C., Bickenbach, J., & Chatterji, S. (2018). Rethinking disability. *BMC Medicine*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-017-1002-6>
- [11] Doherty, G. (2020). Prejudice, friendship and the abuse of disabled people: an exploration into the concept of exploitative familiarity ('mate crime'). *Disability and Society*, 35(9). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1688646>
- [12] Eleweke, C. J., & Ebenso, J. (2016). Barriers to Accessing Services by People with Disabilities in Nigeria: Insights from a Qualitative Study. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2016.v6n2p113>
- [13] Eskay, M., & Chima, J. N. (2013). Library and information service delivery for the blind and physically challenged in the university of Nigeria Nsukka library. *European Academic Research RESEARCH*, 5(5).
- [14] Etieyibo, E. (2020). Rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. *Afrika Focus*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.21825/af.v33i1.16559>
- [15] Etieyibo, E., & Omiegbe, O. (2016). Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria. *African Journal of Disability*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v5i1.192>
- [16] Etieyibo, E., & Omiegbe, O. (2020). People with disabilities in the margins in Nigeria. *Africa Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09744053.2020.1812040>
- [17] Favazza, P. C., & Odom, S. L. (1997). Promoting Positive Attitudes of Kindergarten-Age Children Toward People with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299706300308>
- [18] Gobalakrishnan, C. (2013). Problem Faced By Physically Challenged Persons and Their Awareness Towards Welfare Measures. *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development*, 2(4).
- [19] Goering, S. (2015). Rethinking disability: the social model of disability and chronic disease. In *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine* (Vol. 8, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12178-015-9273-z>
- [20] Gureje, O., Ogunniyi, A., Kola, L., & Afolabi, E. (2006). Functional disability in elderly Nigerians: Results from the Ibadan Study of Aging. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 54(11). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-5415.2006.00944.x>
- [21] Haba, Y., & Ogiwara, S. (2001). Attitudes of the citizens of Kanazawa and its vicinity towards the physically challenged. *Journal of Physical Therapy Science*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1589/jpts.13.107>
- [22] Haruna, M. (2017). The problems of living with disability in Nigeria. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 65.
- [23] Ijezie, O. A., Okagbue, H. I., Oloyede, O. A., Heaslip, V., Davies, P., & Healy, J. (2021). Coronavirus disease

- 2019 (COVID-19) and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2601>
- [24] Jae-kook Park. (2008). A study on tendency & influencing factors of the university students' attitudes toward the university students with disabilities. *The Journal of Special Children Education*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.21075/kacsn.2008.10.4.109>
- [25] Kalargyrou, V., Pettinico, W., & Chen, P. J. (2021). Attitudes toward people with physical disabilities: An examination of social context, discipline, disability type, and demographics. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 54(2). <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-201124>
- [26] Kim Min-Kyeong, & Jae-kook Park. (2018). Analysis of Factors Influencing University Student's Attitudes toward University Students with Disabilities. *The Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.26592/ksie.2018.13.2.49>
- [27] Kowalski, E. M., & Rizzo, T. L. (1996). Factors influencing preservice student attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.13.2.180>
- [28] Laird, L. A. E. (2016). A little bit more like yesterday: A mixed methods exploration of choir member empathy and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- [29] Mazure, P. (2016). The effects of contact on pupils' attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities. *PQDT - UK & Ireland*.
- [30] McKenzie, J., & Ohajunwa, C. O. (2017). Understanding disability in Nigeria: A commentary on "country profile: Intellectual and developmental disability in Nigeria." In *Tizard Learning Disability Review* (Vol. 22, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.1108/TLDR-02-2017-0008>
- [31] Nworie, O. V., & Devlieger, P. J. (2019). "We only got Coca-Cola": Disability and the paradox of (dis)empowerment in Southeast Nigeria. *African Journal of Disability*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v8i0.444>
- [32] Onah, F. C., & Ugwu, K. T. (2021). Factors influencing the attitudes of Nigerians toward persons with physical challenges. *Int. J. Adv. Res.*, 9(05), 395–399. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/12851>
- [33] Page, S. L., & Islam, M. R. (2015). The role of personality variables in predicting attitudes toward people with intellectual disability: An Australian perspective. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 59(8). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12180>
- [34] Parashar, D., Chan, F., & Leierer, S. (2008). Factors influencing Asian Indian graduate students' attitudes toward people with disabilities: A conjoint analysis. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 51(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355207311317>
- [35] Rosenthal, D. A., Chan, F., & Livneh, H. (2006). Rehabilitation students' attitudes toward persons with disabilities in high- and low-stakes social contexts: A conjoint analysis. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 28(24). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280600646102>
- [36] Senjam, S. S., & Singh, A. (2020). Addressing the health needs of people with disabilities in India. *Indian Journal of Public Health*, 64(1). https://doi.org/10.4103/ijph.IJPH_27_19
- [37] Torres, A. A., González, M. L. G., López, F. P., & Arroyo, J. C. (2019). Attitudes toward disability in a Mexican University. *Revista Brasileira de Educacao*, 24. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782019240023>
- [38] Uysal, A., Albayrak, B., Koçulu, B., Kan, F., & Aydin, T. (2014). Attitudes of nursing students toward people with disabilities. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(5). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.09.001>
- [39] Weisel, A., & Zaidman, A. (2003). Attitudes of Secular and Religious Israeli Adolescents towards Persons with Disabilities: A multidimensional analysis. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 50(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912032000120471>
- [40] Zheng, Q., Tian, Q., Hao, C., Gu, J., Tao, J., Liang, Z., Chen, X., Fang, J., Ruan, J., Ai, Q., & Hao, Y. (2016). Comparison of attitudes toward disability and people with disability among caregivers, the public, and people with a disability: findings from a cross-sectional survey. *BMC Public Health*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3670-0>