

Role of Politics in Promoting Involvement of Persons with Disabilities in Education and Sports in Ife East Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria

FAMAYO, Moses Ojo (Ph.D)

Department of Kinesiology, Health Education and Recreation, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the role of politics in promoting involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife Central Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria. It examined the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports; effectiveness of implemented policies and political initiatives; and the challenges faced by persons with disabilities while involving in education and sports in the study area. A random sampling technique was employed in selecting one hundred respondents from four (4) schools in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State and the statistical tools used were percentages, means and chi-square analysis. The results revealed that the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government is active and fully supported by the government with a grand mean of 3.12; there is an effective implementation of policies and political initiatives to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area with a grand mean of 2.62; and that persons with disabilities were faced with challenges ranging from insufficient personnel, inaccessible sports facilities, insufficient mobility devices and equipment with a grand mean of 3.20. The postulated hypothesis “there is no significant difference in the role of politics and involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.” was rejected as $\chi^2 28.2 > 5.99$ at level of .05 significance. This implies that the persons with disabilities were not adequately represented in politics as affirmed by 80% respondents. It was recommended that government and private agencies should rise to the challenges of persons with disabilities not limited to education and sports alone but other areas that can bring development to the socio-economic growth within and outside the locality.

Keyword: disabilities, politics, challenges, education, sports

INTRODUCTION

Disability is no longer news across the globe that serves as excruciating pains and trauma to the affected and the immediate family when they realize that their children, wards, and siblings are deformed in one form or the other that brings a distinction between them and the able-bodied (Famayo, 2010). According to Haruna (2017), disability is a world-wide phenomenon that has no boundary and cuts across countries, sex, age, religion, race, social status, economic and political positions of which its prevalence and incidence in the contemporary world are high and worrisome. It is estimated that there are more than 2 billion physically challenged persons world-wide and majority are from developing countries. The Nigerian National Assembly in 2021 estimated that there are over 20 million people living with disability in the country (El morr et al., 2021). However, this number has increased with a wide margin because, according to the Center for Disability and Development Innovations (CDDI, 2023), the approximate number of disabled people in the country is 25 million.

Disability” is a term of art with different specialized meanings, each developed for the particular policy or program that uses it (Etieyibo, & Omiegebe, 2016). Disability is commonly associated with functional limitations in all human endeavours that people often look with disdainful minds that may not be palatable to the concerned individuals (Famayo, 2022). According to Eleweke (2013), disability is not an attribute of an individual, but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment.

In Nigeria, as in many other countries, there is a gap in educational and sporting opportunities for people with disabilities due to a number of factors. These include lack of awareness and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities, lack of resources, and political will to create and enforce policies that promote inclusion (Etieyibo, 2020). However, in recent years there has been a growing movement to improve educational and sporting opportunities for people with disabilities. This recognizes that people with disability have the same right to achieve their personal goals and ambitions as the rest of the community, and in ways commensurate with achieving the fullest possible quality of life (Clement & Bigby 2008).

The United Nations (UN) projected that in every ten people in Nigeria, one person is suffering from one type of disability or the other. It is also reported that out of every 10 persons with disability in the country, 9 live below the poverty level (Hahn, 1988). As observed by Onalu, & Nwafor (2021), frequent and fatal road accidents that cause serious injuries that lead to stroke, paralysis, and mental illness as well as the continuous threat and suffering from infectious diseases, and the emergence and suffering from chronic diseases that include blindness, stroke, cardiovascular diseases, etc, are responsible for the ever increasing disabilities that millions of Nigerians suffer from. There are millions disabled children in the world, including Nigeria, who suffer from different kinds of impairments that include learning disability, blindness and loss of limbs. It is evident that, compared to non-disabled persons, persons with disabilities have lesser legal protection and live in extreme poverty and poor health, as well as poor educational achievement and are rarely involved in social, cultural and political participation (Oladele, 2016). Disability mostly affects vulnerable and marginalized people with a high level of prevalence among lower income people in particular women, children and older people (Mitra et al., 2021).

Political participation involves the ability of individuals to take part in public affairs, assemble and form associations, register during elections, and declare candidacy during national and local elections (Hall & Alvarez, 2012; Krishna, 2013). Active participation of all citizens in the political process is vital because it helps to maintain trust in the political system (Christensen, 2011; Pahad, 2005). Promoting the right to equal participation in politics is vital for strengthening democracy, promoting social inclusion, fostering economic development and safeguarding the fundamental human rights of all persons (Berrington, 2003; Hall & Alvarez, 2012). Since political participation increases social inclusion, it is an important human rights-based approach to eliminate marginalization as well as increase the participation of less privileged groups in decision making in society (Hall & Alvarez, 2012).

Thus, if persons with disabilities participate in politics, they are likely to be empowered to make decisions about their lives, including decisions on political leadership (Nelson-Rowe, 2017). Barriers restricting the participation of persons with disabilities in political decisions making should therefore be minimized or brought to minimal ebbs to ensure that they are able to exercise this right on equal basis as other members of society (Khasnabis et al., 2010; Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2013). But in most situations, when the politicians cajoled and wooed the electorates with their campaigns leading them to the intended offices or positions, they not only ignore the disabled ones but as well as the larger population (able-bodied) in the society in an attempt to reach their inordinate ends.

Sport activities improve physical, psychological and social development of persons with disabilities and affect their physical, cognitive, social and psychological developments positively and make their adaptation to social life much easier (Levent et al., 2012). Sports can profoundly empower persons with disabilities to realize their full potential and advocate for changes in society. It can be used as a transformative tool to inculcate vital social skills, develop independence, significance of teamwork and cooperation and respect for others (Dowling, 2012). It provides a forum to enable persons with disabilities to build the skills they need to advocate

for and influence change (Mastandrea, 2007). The awareness and confidence that persons with disabilities gain through sport are often the impetus for engaging in advocacy work, as the communication, leadership and teamwork skills. Studies revealed that participation in sports result in improved functional status and quality of life among people with selected disabilities (Zwierzchowska et al., 2017). Diaz et al. (2019) stated that regular recreational and sports activity participation has positive association with improvements in quality of life, life satisfaction, community reintegration, mood, and employment in persons with disabilities. Adaptive sports or permitting modifications of the sport ensures greater participation of persons with disabilities, improved levels of functioning and independence in activities of daily living, better social status and sense of belonging, improved physiological capacity, increased physical capability and improved levels of employment (Zwierzchowska et al, 2017).

Statement of Problem

The joy and happiness of mass participation in sports is diminishing to the persons with disabilities as their interest is not totally captured in the race by the concerned authority for fear of liability, doubting their potentials and capacity, and ridicule them before the public. But the major issue is left untreated such as providing necessary facilities, devices, materials technologically that can induce and instigate their genuine interest in education and sports participation. Aside this, other challenges include lack of accessibility in schools and sporting facilities, insufficient trained teachers and coaches, and a low support from family and society. The role of politics in promoting involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sport has been effective in the country over some period of time through the acceptance of persons with disability to participate in politics and also creating an atmosphere for better education and sports. But the awareness is not enough until it gets to the nook and cranny of the land especially at the primary level of institutions where they need the attention most. A strategy towards creating a better understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities and eradicating attitudinal, physical, and institutional barriers will go a long way towards increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in education and in sport so as to improve their involvement through politics. As a result, many persons with disabilities are not able to fully involve in the physical education and sport benefits. With this gap in between, there is need for the role of politics in promoting involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.

Objective of study: The objectives for this study are to:

1. investigate the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.
2. assess the effectiveness of implemented policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in the study area.
3. explore the challenges faced by persons with disabilities while involving in education and sport in Ife East Local Government area, Osun State.

Research questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were proposed

1. What are the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State?
2. How effective do political leaders implement policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in the study area?
3. What are the challenges faced by persons with disabilities while involving in education and sport In Ife East local area, Osun State?

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the role of politics and involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.

RESEARCH METHODS

A descriptive survey was adopted for this study while the population comprised secondary school staff and special school staff in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State. The sample contained 100 respondents from four (4) secondary schools in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.(Modakeke High School, St Stephen Grammar School, The Apostolic Grammar school and Special needs school, Modakeke). Twenty five (25) respondents were randomly selected from each school, one of the four schools included special secondary school. A Self-developed questionnaire was used that split into two sections: A and B (personal data and stated objectives for the study using modified likert scale SA; A; D; SD). The research instrument was validated by the experts in the area of Adapted Physical Education. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was 0.72 using PPMC (Pearson Products Moments Correlation). The researcher with four research assistants administered the questionnaires with strict compliance to the instructions and was retrieved from the respondents the same day. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used for the research question while x2 analysis was used for the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: showing the demographic information of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Less than 30	32	32%
31 – 40	43	43%
41 – 50	15	15%
Above 51 years	10	10%
Gender		
Male	80	80%
Female	20	20%
Religion		
Christianity	55	55%
Islam	40	40%
Tradition	5	5%
Marital Status		
Single	14	14%
Married	74	74%
Separated	10	10 %
Widowed	2	2%

Table 1 revealed that on age, 32% were less than 30 years, 43% from 31-40 years, 15% were in between 41-50 and 10% were above 51years. For gender, 80% were male and 20% female respectively. On religion, 55% for Christianity, 40% for Islam and 5% for tradition and on marital status, 14% were single, 74% married, 10% separated and 2% widowed.

What are the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife east local government?

Table 2: distribution of respondents based on the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
The government provides adequate funding for special education programs in Ife East LGA.	60	30	5	5	3.45	Agreed
The curriculum in Ife East LGA includes disability awareness and inclusivity training for teachers	55	23	7	15	3.18	Agreed
Schools in Ife East LGA have adequate infrastructure and resources for students with disabilities	54	25	11	10	3.23	Agreed
The government provides scholarships and financial support for students with disabilities in Ife East LGA	72	13	10	5	3.52	Agreed
The government provides adequate funding for sports programs and facilities accessible to persons with disabilities in Ife East LGA	66	20	9	5	3.47	Agreed
Sports facilities in Ife East LGA are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities	60	15	19	6	3.29	Agreed
The government of Ife East LGA has a disability-inclusive policy for education and sports	15	30	25	30	2.30	Disagreed
The government of Ife East LGA has implemented disability awareness and sensitivity training for education and sports officials	16	24	23	37	2.19	Disagreed
The government of Ife East LGA has established a disability desk or unit to address disability-related issues in education and sports	55	20	15	10	3.20	Agreed
Sports programs in Ife East LGA include disability-specific initiatives and inclusivity training for coaches	62	13	10	15	3.22	Agreed
Grand mean	3.12					

Source: Field Survey, 2024 key to decision: Disagreed (0 - 2.49), Agreed (2.50 - 5.00)

The table above revealed that the government provides adequate funding for special education programs in Ife east LGA (mean = 3.45), the curriculum in Ife East LGA includes disability awareness and inclusivity training for teachers (mean = 3.18), schools in Ife East LGA have adequate infrastructure and resources for students with disabilities (mean = 3.23), the government provides scholarships and financial support for students with disabilities in Ife East LGA (mean = 3.52), the government provides adequate funding for sports programs and facilities accessible to persons with disabilities in Ife East LGA (mean = 3.47), sports facilities in Ife East LGA are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities (mean = 3.29), the government of Ife East LGA has established a disability desk or unit to address disability-related issues in education and sports (mean = 3.20) and sports programs in Ife east LGA include disability-specific initiatives and inclusivity training for coaches (mean = 3.22) while it was disagreed that government of Ife East LGA has a disability-inclusive policy for education and sports (mean = 2.30) as well as implementing disability awareness and sensitivity training for education and sports officials (mean = 2.19). The grand mean is 3.12 which imply that the existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East local government is active and fully supported by the government.

How effective do political leaders implement policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife east local government?

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on how effective the political leaders implement policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Political leaders in Ife east LGA effectively implement policies supporting persons with disabilities in education	50	20	13	17	3.01	Agreed
The government of Ife East LGA has effective initiatives to increase access to education for persons with disabilities	15	23	12	50	2.03	Disagreed
The implementation of disability-inclusive policies in education is consistent across Ife East LGA	22	18	12	48	2.14	Disagreed
The government of Ife East LGA provides adequate resources and support for disability sports programs	40	24	26	10	2.94	Agreed
Political leaders in Ife East LGA promote disability awareness and inclusivity in sports	37	39	9	15	2.98	Agreed
Grand mean		2.62				

Source: Field Survey, 2024 key to decision: Disagreed (0 - 2.49), Agreed (2.50 - 5.00)

The table above revealed that political leaders in Ife East LGA effectively implement policies supporting persons with disabilities in education (mean = 3.01), the government of Ife east LGA provides adequate resources and support for disability sports programs (mean = 2.94) and political leaders in Ife East LGA promote disability awareness and inclusivity in sports (mean = 2.98) while it was disagreed that government of Ife East LGA has effective initiatives to increase access to education for persons with disabilities (mean = 2.03) and the implementation of disability-inclusive policies in education is consistent across Ife east LGA (mean = 2.14). The grand mean is 2.62 which imply that there is an effective implementation of policies and political initiatives to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East local government area.

What are the challenges faced by persons with disabilities while involving in education and sport In Ife east local government area, Osun State?

Table 4: distribution of respondents based on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities while involving in education and sport In Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Inadequate trained teachers to support students with disabilities hinders my learning experience	40	37	12	11	3.06	Agreed
Stigma and discrimination from peers and teachers affect my self-esteem and motivation	52	23	15	10	3.17	Agreed
Inaccessible sports facilities (e.g. lack of ramps, adaptive equipment) limit my participation in sports	45	31	10	14	3.47	Agreed
Coaches and trainers lack knowledge and training in disability sports and inclusivity	35	40	10	15	2.95	Agreed
Negative attitudes from family and community members discourage me from pursuing education and sports	72	13	5	10	3.47	Agreed
Limited social support networks and disability organizations to advocate for my needs	66	20	7	7	3.45	Agreed
Transportation and mobility challenges limit my access to educational and sports facilities	59	19	14	8	3.29	Agreed

Lack of role models and mentors with disabilities to inspire and guide me	60	20	9	11	3.29	Agreed
High costs of adaptive equipment and assistive technology hinder my participation in sports	35	34	13	18	2.86	Agreed
Limited opportunities for disability-specific sports programs and events	37	40	7	16	2.98	Agreed
Grand mean				3.20		

Source: Field Survey, 2024 key to decision: Disagreed (0 - 2.49), Agreed (2.50 - 5.00)

It was agreed that inadequate trained teachers to support students with disabilities hinders my learning experience (mean = 3.06), stigma and discrimination from peers and teachers affect my self-esteem and motivation (mean = 3.17), inaccessible sports facilities (e.g. lack of ramps, adaptive equipment) limit my participation in sports (mean = 3.47), coaches and trainers lack knowledge and training in disability sports and inclusivity (mean = 2.95), negative attitudes from family and community members discourage me from pursuing education and sports (mean = 3.47), limited social support networks and disability organizations to advocate for my needs (3.45), transportation and mobility challenges limit my access to educational and sports facilities (3.29), lack of role models and mentors with disabilities to inspire and guide me (mean = 3.29), high costs of adaptive equipment and assistive technology hinder my participation in sports (mean = 2.86) and limited opportunities for disability-specific sports programs and events (mean = 2.98). The grand mean is 3.20 which imply that there are a lot of challenges affecting the effective utilization and organization among people living with disabilities.

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the role of politics and involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State.

Table 5: Role of politics and involvement of person with disabilities in education and sports.

Item	Yes	No	Total	Df	XCal	XCrit	Result
Do you think politics plays role In promoting education and sports for persons with disabilities in Ife East Local Government Area?	88	12	100				
Do you think persons with disabilities are adequately represented in politics in Ife East Local Government area?	20	80	100	2	28.2	5.99	NS
Have you ever voted in an election or participated in a political process in Ife East Local Government Area?	88	12	100				
Total	196	104	300				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above revealed that politics played a significant role in promoting education and sports for persons with disabilities in Ife East Local Government by 88% respondents while 12% respondents said no. 20% confirmed adequate representation in politics by persons with disabilities in Ife East Local Government while 80% denied it. Meanwhile, 88% affirmed participation in a political process in Ife East Local Government Area and 12% decried it. However, the null hypothesis was rejected as x^2 value of $28.2 > 5.99$ at .05 level of significance, thus, the persons with disabilities were not adequately represented in the politics.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results in Table 2 is in support of the findings of UN Division for Social Policy and Development: Disability,(2006) that schools must be accessible (tied to Article 9 on Accessibility), both physically and regarding information and communication. Students with disabilities should receive reasonable accommodations within the classroom that will enable them perform academically and sports wise with their normal counterparts. In line with the above submission, Famayo (2024) argued that if all these materials and

facilities are readily available for the use of persons with disabilities, efforts should be geared towards full implementation for the benefits of all and sundry. Making sports facilities available for the use of the persons with disabilities will improve their participation in sports and recreational programmes that can promote their existence and recognition in the society (Aydemir, Kurt & Omurlu, 2018).

United Nations convention on rights of persons with disabilities in education (CRPD), adopted in 2006, and provides the most comprehensive international legal framework for supporting the educational rights of children with disabilities. The CRPD states that countries that have ratified the CRPD must ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and that children with disabilities have the right to free primary and secondary education and cannot be discriminated against based on their disability. This is in line with the findings of UNESCO (2009) on its Policy Guidelines for Inclusion in Education which recognize inclusive education as a right; identify minimum standards in relation to the right to education, including physical access, communication access, social access, economic access, early identification, adaption of curriculum, and individualized student supports. This was also backed up by the reports of Zwierzchowska, et al. (2017) and Silver & Francis, (2017) that inclusiveness should be seen as the only way of merging the gaps between the able-bodied and the persons with disabilities in the society.

Lack of trained teachers to support students with disabilities may hinder learning experience, stigma and discrimination from peers and teachers affect self-esteem and motivation, inaccessible to sports facilities may also limit participation in sports among persons with disabilities (Drum et al., 2009; Imrie, 1997). Many critics argued that the unavailability of required and needed human and material resources is doing more harms than good but immediate and possible solutions may rescue them out of the total mess (Haruna, 2017). In another dimension, it was observed that one thing is to provide the necessary materials for the use of the persons with disabilities; another factor is accessibility of the students to the facilities and the qualified personnel to put them through (Oladele, 2016). It was also noticed that lack of role models and mentors with disabilities to inspire and guide them, high costs of adaptive equipment and assistive technology hinder their participation in sports and limited opportunities for disability-specific sports programs and events. This is similar to the reports of Famayo (2022 & 2024) that persons with disabilities may still be able to advance and progress in the society if adequate equipment, facilities and qualified personnel are made available within their reach. But the reverse is the case, even when the gadgets and devices that can strengthen their mobility are at their disposal; the human resources to put them through are grossly inadequate. In similar views, the researches carried out revealed that personnel, adequate facilities, gadgets and technological devices available may be lying fallow for years as long as the expatriates to train and harness them to the use of the devices are few in operation (Eleweko, 2013; Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2016; Etieyibo, 2020). The above challenges faced by persons with disabilities also corroborate the findings of the theoretical framework of the Minority group as discussed by Hahn (1988) that societal attitudes is the most powerful environmental factor affecting persons with disabilities. He offered three propositions: negative attitudes are the major cause of the barriers that people with disabilities face, public policy drives in all aspects of the environment, and social attitudes are influential in the creation of public policy. The minority group model is particularly important in the history of disability since it was instrumental in the passage and enactment of disability rights laws and the development of disability activism in the United States.

The implication of the hypothesis tested was that there is still a need for a synergy between government and the people that will streamline the grey areas and complexity that could benefit the persons with disabilities in the society. This is not only applicable to the persons with disabilities in the study area but also across other local governments in the state. According to Krisna (2013), politics is a game of deception that leads and cajoles electorates to cast their votes for the wrong candidates who may be deafened to the plights and complaints of the commoners and the less privilege in the society. This was corroborated by Oladele (2016) and Onalu & Nwafor (2021) that persons with disabilities were only recognized by the politicians before election but as soon as they are sworn in, into their various offices they neither remember the virile people in the society nor the less privilege and disabling individuals for any good thing.

CONCLUSION

The role of politics in promoting the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports within Life Central Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria, is pivotal in shaping the effectiveness and inclusivity of related policies and programmes. Political commitment and leadership are crucial in fostering an environment that supports the full participation of persons with disabilities in education and sports. Effective policy implementation, adequate resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement are all influenced by political will. The challenges identified, including insufficient resources, lack of infrastructure, and gaps in training and awareness, highlight the need for a more robust political approach to disability inclusion. Special education for persons with disabilities to enhance and help them to be able to participate in sports and politics is still a pipe dream in Nigeria. While the government pays lip service to it by offering support to advocacies for special education and making provisions for the rights of people with disabilities to be protected; it needs to follow up all these laudable actions with a political will to pursue the achievement of inclusive education in Nigeria. Without any appropriate policies, discrimination in learning will persist. Hence government should formulate and enforce policies to achieve inclusive education

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, these recommendations were advanced;

- The existing policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in the state and the federation should be implemented for the benefits of all and sundry.
- Monitoring team and task force may be employed to expedite effectiveness of the policies and political initiatives related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in education and sports in the study area and the entire state.
- Non governmental agencies in collaboration with philanthropists may rise up to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities not limited to education and sports alone but other areas that can bring development to the socio-economic growth within and outside the locality.
- The special allocation in funding and promoting disability-inclusive programmes should be directed towards improving accessibility, infrastructure, and support services.
- The local government executives at educational sector should engage persons with disabilities and their representatives in the planning and evaluation of policies and programmes.

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