



CHAPTER 14

GENDER, DISABILITY AND EQUALITY INTERSECTION: THE SOCIAL JUSTICE INTERVENTION.

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Introduction

This chapter focused on gender, disability and equality nexus and the instrumentality of social justice in promoting equality among women and men, persons with and without disabilities. The history of gender inequality and discrimination against persons with disabilities is long and tedious. Prioritizing men over women and subjecting persons with disabilities to lower-class citizen treatments were (and to some extent, are still) the norms in some societies. Being a woman with disability is worse because she is bound to face the compounded sociocultural deprivations which societies have constructed for women and persons with disabilities. The intersection of gender and disability as embodied by women with disabilities is also an issue discussed in this chapter .

The perspective at which this chapter considered gender is that societies have constructed some status practice by which women are perceived and treated as inferior to men. This practice had deprived women some visible presence or participation in social, economic, political and educational spheres. Persons with disabilities were similarly discriminated against in various forms. They indeed suffered worse denials than women did. Oftentimes, they were either denied the chance to live or were segregated from their able-bodied fellows. Modern history has brought in equality which is an ideology or a movement canvassing for equalization of opportunities and responsibilities for all citizens regardless of sex or conditions. Social justice has become an enhancer for the equality or equity agenda. Its involvement in this chapter is therefore for exploring its principles of accessibility and human rights to institutetionalize equality in gender and disabilities matters.

The import of equalizing opportunities and rights for all, gender and disability notwithstanding, is that women and the girl child particularly women or girls with disabilities would have greater access to education and thereby enjoy better prospects for employment, stronger participation in politics and greater inclusion in the society.

Gender: Definitions and Antecedents.

Gender is a concept often employed in dissecting the roles, activities or responsibilities of women and men in any society (Odekunle, 2008). It is a socio-



cultural norm for differentiating people by their sexes and an expression of societal expectations of roles and behaviour attached to females and males (Elyakubu & Yakubu, 2020). It is also about the attributes and opportunities associated with being women or men and their relationships (Zeigler, 2014). These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed. Gender concerns are often about understanding the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, the aggregates of women and men and gender sensitivity in assessing any situation which to a greater extent brings about a society of equal opportunities for both sexes (Rekiya, 2008).

Gender manifests in prevailing norms of every society as per what women and men do and how their roles are valued (Shakeshafi, 2005). It is the systematic assignment of roles or expectations for women and men as embedded in the social, cultural and linguistic structures of a society (Drinam, 2004). It also implies the social identity ascribed to females and males (Ozaji, 2021). Such identity is usually shaped by various cultural perspectives of a people. By providence, everyone is born either a girl or a boy. However, the society has and exercises the overarching influence to teach every child to act as girl or boy (Iwuamadi & Oruwari, 2018). The society also decides which resources or privileges to proffer girls or boys.

The culture of prioritizing men over women is usually rooted in the societal socio-cultural fabric. Perceptions of women have always been shaped by the sociocultural contexts of communities where they exist. This age-long tradition has resulted in gender stereotyping which Alade (2012), linked to a collection of commonly held beliefs or opinions about behaviours and activities communities considered acceptable from females and males. Some characterizations of gender manifest in classifying women and men by their biological make up, social roles, and cultural stereotypes. Such sociocultural orders were infused into the religious and secular practice of every society as far back as human existence was (Chafetz, 2006). For instance, the Jewish history had it that unlike men, women were expected to be quiet, to serve in the home and to stay on the fringe of religious and political life. Whatever appeared as contrary to role expectations of women were considered as breach to the Jewish cultural norms. The ongoing debate in some religious groups over whether women are eligible or not to officiate in worship alludes to the ancient culture of women non-participation in worship officiating.

Dividing every society into female and male stratifications is universal (Epistein, 2006). However, gender constructs and practice vary from society to society. In some societies gender roles are more rigid than others. For instance, in some African countries, women are associated with lesser political, economic, social and educational privileges than in developed countries. Women in African societies are particularly vulnerable since welfare packages available in various Western countries for women to contend with various types of problems, are not available to their counterparts. (Oloko, 2004). Gender practice in developing countries are very handicapping for women depending on the cultural and socio-economic contexts they are embedded. Nigeria for instance, is predominantly



patrilineal. Men head and control almost everything in both nuclear and extended family matters (Opeke, 2008). Where, for instance, a nuclear family is headed by a woman as in case of widowhood, separation or divorce, the woman cannot take certain decisions concerning her children without the consent of a recognized male figure from her husband side. This shows how limited are the sociocultural privileges women are entitled to in some third world societies.

Disability in Time and Space

People exhibit differences from one another (Werts, Culatta & Tompkins, 2007). Sometimes the differences may be mild, sometimes they may be profound. Degrees of difference determine which axis one falls into in what his or her society considers as “normal” or “abnormal”. Persons who have disabilities such as profound hearing loss, visual loss, speech-language defects, mental retardation, physical deformities or ailments are often classified as abnormal, exceptional, disabled, impaired or handicapped. Whatever names they are called in their communities, persons with disabilities (PWDs) are often classified and treated differently from the rest of ‘normal’ populace of their communities. Branding them as “less privileged” and classifying them with the destitute or orphans have always been norms in various communities. They are often perceived as individuals of lesser physical strength, mental capacity or sensory ability compared to the able-bodied group.

Disability history since ancient time is replete with stories portraying PWDs as “unwanted” or “unfit- to- live” . The divide between them and ‘normal’ group is usually occasioned by presence or absence of disabilities such as blindness, deafness, mental retardation, physical deformities or ailments. In addition to coping with challenges of their disabilities, these individuals are also subjected to diverse forms of inequality. Erting, 1994, disclosed that they are often misunderstood and treated as a minority. Misconceptions held against them by the able-bodied majority, as Ladd, (1994), remarked further, are largely due to lack of understanding or long -standing acquired culture of indifference.. Meadow-Orlans and Erting (2000), added that stereotypes and bias experienced by PWDs sometimes become more handicapping to them than disabilities themselves. It is important to stress that whenever an understanding and love environment is provided for PWDs, they have always demonstrated sheer courage to surmount challenges posed by their disabilities and produced amazing results even in endeavours considered impossible for them (Ademokoya, 2019).

In Babylonian days, PWDs were perceived as demon-possessed (Abosi, 1988). Early Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle were reported to have classified PWDs as good-for -nothing beings who should be eliminated rather than be allowed to live. Eliminating them was considered as necessary for prevented from defiling the humanity or reproducing their like (Durrant, 1944).Where they were not summarily eliminated, it may be they were spared for amusement or entertainment. In ancient Rome for instance, a stutterer known as Balbus Balaesus



was caged and displayed along the Appian Way to entertain the travelers with his funny speech (Bragg, 1977). There were stories in some parts of Europe of how some persons with mental retardation were kept in kings' or nobles' courts to entertain guests (Heward, 2000).

Similarly, PWDs were hardly given any chance to live in various African communities. Giving birth to children with disabilities was usually considered as ill-omens for their families or their communities (Ademokoya, 2013). Alake (1988) for instance, stated that deaf children among some Nigerian tribes are regarded as "accursed" and their parents perceived as sinful individuals penalized by gods for their evil deeds. Appiah-Kubi (2016), remarked that commitment to communal bond among members of African communities is very strong. According to him, to be born an African is to be born to your community as much as you are born to your family. Being born to a community implies you are also born to its culture. African cultures are extensively and intensively religious. African traditional religion is very hard to detach oneself from. Indeed, attempting to detach oneself from religious beliefs and practice of their community amounts to assaulting one's communal membership and security which may eventually cause one to lose identity or meaning of life.

African traditional religion ascribes occurrences like fortune, good health, long life, disability or death to the benevolence or wrath of the Supreme Being (God in African perception) and spirits (good or evil spirits). The birth of a disabled child (often considered as misfortune) is attributable to activities of the Supreme Being or the spirit world. It could also be seen as punishments meted to erring parents by the evil spirits. Consequent on these beliefs, PWDs and their parents/family members are usually subjected to suspicion, indifference or stigmatization from the rest members of their community. As a result, it has always been a traumatizing shock, grief, self-pity and shame for Africans to give birth to a child with disability. This partly explains why many parents would prefer to hide such children from the public or even consider eliminating them quietly before the community gets to know of their existence.

Equality: Definitions and Objectives.

In a rights-related context, equality is considered as an ideology centering on guaranteeing human rights, as well as fostering their development norms and standards. Equality connotes fairness applied uncompromisingly to every person no matter their gender, colour, creed, or condition. It presents all citizens as equal before law, in status and advantages (Unegbu, Thani & Anyanwu, 2017). Equality upholds fairness of treatment to all. Equal treatment does not necessarily mean that in every circumstance, an exact type of rights or provision must be given or applied to everyone, however, everyone must get what is considered equivalent or appropriate in terms of rights, opportunities or responsibilities (Erinsakin, Alumona, Awogoke & Bokun, 2019). Equality describes a state or system which principles and practice are devoid of visible demarcations or bridges in



opportunities, privileges or opportunities accessible to citizens. All citizens are entitled to same conditionalities for accessing education, employment or social services (Elyakubu & Yakubu, 2020). Equality demands that all citizens have equal access to allocation of resources, programmes and decision-making (Erinsakin, et al, 2019).

A vital goal of equality is to institutionalize social justice, equity and fairness for all citizens. It is a movement which preoccupation is to seek redress for individuals who have suffered neglect, deprivation or segregation due to societal practice of segregation by status, race, qualifications or conditions. As an ideology, equality is fast becoming a global phenomenon associated with rights or social justice campaigners who are committed to combating inequality wherever it is found. It has become a popular subject of debate at fora for addressing human rights, discriminations or maltreatments of minorities like women, persons with disabilities and so on.

Perhaps, understanding equality as a concept could get clearer if it is examined in comparison to its antonym- inequality. Thus, Sarumi and Ojo, (2020) argued that stating that something is not equal is as good as asserting that people are not the same in height or weight while arguing that certain things are equal is like claiming that all people are the same in height or weight. So both equality and inequality, though inseparable, have varying shades and interpretations. For instance, a frontline sociologist, Kandal, (1988) asserted that in spite of their biological differences, women and men are equal since differences in them are just “trifling variations”. His stance therefore is that both sexes deserve equal rights. Four years after this assertion, Kandal came up with another view informed by his subsequent research findings. He stated that biological differences between women and men are not trifling but profound. As result, permitting women to enter public life could be antithetical to human progress (Chafetz, 2006).

Arguably, equality does not ignore the fact that differences abound in biological composition of women and men, but as a matter of rights and equity, both sexes are equal before the law and should be treated equal (Bryant, Smith & Bryant 2008). Where and when it is extremely difficult to distribute resources and responsibilities equally to both principle of normalization can be substituted for equality. Normalization as a practice entails making available to every person’s patterns of life and conditions for everyday living which are as close as possible to same as the regular circumstances and ways of life of society (Nirje, 1985). Normalization applies and appeals to equality of gender and of persons with disabilities PWDs.

Equality opposes status beliefs and propagation in societies. Status beliefs and practice are as old as human history. Status propagation is a fundamental dimension of social inequality in complex societies (Werts, et al. 2007). Societies are usually constructed on status stratifications of power, royalty, majority, wealth, servitude, minority, poverty or destitution. Citizens are usually allocated to status



classes by circumstances of birth, gender, religion, race, wealth, war, disability, ill-health and so on

Gender Equality Struggle.

While the gender practice in societies may be as old as humanity, the gender equality agitation is as recent as a few decades ago. Winter (2007), traced the gender equality history in United States to 1970s when the women's right movement ushered in an era of intense concern for equity of female and male in public spheres. There were civil rights acts promulgated in 1970s to prohibit discrimination by sex. For instance, in 1972, there was Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act which provided for egalitarian treatment of females and males in all aspects of school policies, admission and participation.

Gender equality also known as equality of sexes is a human rights movement which seeks to address the distinct and intersectional needs of women and men in their diversities. It focuses on identifying and addressing restrictive gender norms and inequality (gendevcomms@usaid.gov 2022). Gender equality considers the proportion of shared resources between women and men in a given community. On the other hand, gender equity examines fairness in sharing of resource status and positions for women and men. Realistically, there is hardly any society where there is perfect equity in sharing resources between women and men. Indeed, what obtains in many societies is far from fair sharing of privileges and responsibilities between females and males. Gender equality reflects situations where women and men including their human rights are equal (Ozaji, 2021). It aspires towards gender fair education, health and economic provisions.

Men have always had larger and better share of socio-cultural prestige, participation and officiating religious activities, educational provisions, political posts and employment opportunities. For instance, the unfortunate culture of low presence of women in the both local and global public spaces was a major idea behind the Beijing Conference on Women Rights in 2015. The conference came up with a blue print for advancing women rights. This blue print otherwise known as the Beijing Declaration among other things, canvassed for reservation of 30 percent political seats/posts for women in every country. 30 percent share for women is still a far cry from gender equality target. Realistically, gender equity standard should have been 50-50 percent share formula for both women and men in all situations.

According to President Joe Biden of United State, the new world order has placed emphasis on full and equal participation of all people-including women and girls, across all aspects of every society. This new order is an essential requisite to the economic well-being, health and security of the world. Gender equality between men and women does not mean that women and men have to become the same aged UNESCO (2020), but that rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not be based on whether people are born female or male. Rather, treatment of women and men in all matters should be based on fairness of treatment to both



sexes according to their respective needs. This may warrant equal treatment or treatment that is different but strongly upholds equity in dispensation of benefits, or obligations.

Esu (2022), similarly reiterated that gender equality represents equal participatory roles between females and males. The same view was earlier made by the United Nations (1979), which argued that discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of rights and aspects of human dignity. A new social consensus therefore should be no one should be segregated or discriminated against on basis of her or his gender.

Disability and Equality Struggle.

Concepts of disability and the unfortunate fate which PWDs experienced in the past have been discussed earlier. This section begins by asking how did various societies come up with some universally similar negative dispositions towards persons with disabilities? A proposition offered by Obiyo, Onuigbo and Adaka (2020) is that in every community, people who deviate markedly from the norm are always considered as exceptional, classified as minority and treated differently from the rest of community members. Little wonders then why PWDs were made to constitute a segregated group in whichever community they were (Nwolise, 2004).

Even now it seems societal perceptions about them are much better than in the past, Smith (2008), has cautioned that new generations should not be fooled into thinking that in spite of more information and greater understanding about disabilities, PWDs are now enjoying some remarkably decent treatments from their able-bodied fellows. Surprisingly, the modern history is still reeled with some cruel treatments to PWDs. Not long ago, Nazi Germany annihilated several PWDs, Jews and other targeted groups in the infamous Concentration Camps. Acts of discrimination, rejection and neglect against PWDs are still ongoing in some societies. Three years ago during the corona virus outbreak, the United Nations Director General, Antonio Guterres, raised alarm over how PWDs were excluded in various health programmes introduced to prevent or manage corona virus infections. PWDs were not involved in some specific health programmes like accessing basic information on covid-19 pandemic. They were virtually not considered in design and implementation of covid-19 basic hygiene measures such as public hand washing, getting necessary support from others on observing social distancing or adapted health care (United Nations, 2020).

In spite of some cases of neglect or human rights abuse concerning PWDs, there is, in recent times, some improvement in public perceptions and attitude towards them. This improvement is what Taylor (1994) believed to have emanated from an 18th century ideology of "recognition". According to him, the ideology is about accepting others and their differences. Whatever be the sex, condition or race of an individual, her or his worth as a person must be recognized and treated as equal to every other person. This ideology was also buoyed by some concurrent



developments such as equality movements demanding equal rights for minorities such as women, immigrants and blacks. Similarly, various governments at the wake of this century, adopted new measures for integrating PWDs into the socio-cultural strata of their communities. There were new laws and policies which granted them access to more jobs, social services and greater participation in public activities. These developments are also complemented with the fact that PWDs have themselves took up responsibility for acquiring greater levels of education and attaining stronger self-reliance. This resulted in them achieving some remarkable feats in educational and economic spheres.

Nevertheless, it is not yet uhuru as far as achieving true equality for all citizens with and without disabilities is concerned. For instance, available records on employment opportunities, school enrolment and graduation rates as well as living standards show some appalling disparities among persons with and those without disabilities.

Though the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted since 1990, employment records in America still show that youth and adults with disabilities are not accessing employment as much as their non-disabled counterparts do even when they possess required educational qualifications and skills for such employment (Stapleton & Burkhauser, 2003). Many Americans with disabilities are unemployed while those employed earn lower salaries than their colleagues without disabilities. Employment rate for Americans with disabilities some years to date has been between 29 to 34 percent. Only 56 percent of qualified job seekers with disabilities were employed. Employed male persons with disabilities earned an average salary of \$20,572 yet their counterparts without disabilities earned \$39,401 (Smith, 2007). Incomes of deaf workers have decreased compared to that of hearing workers since about fifty years ago (Christiensen & Barcnartt, 1987).

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on Human Rights clearly states the “rights of PWDs to work on equal basis with others”. This is a title deed for PWDs to compete and be considered for employment just like any other persons. Globally prevailing records on employment of PWDs show that they are not remarkably visible in the world labour sector. World Bank (2011) reported that persons with disabilities account for 15 percent of the world population. However, their employment rate is far low compared to their population.

It is always more difficult for PWDs in developing countries to access employment than in developed countries. Stronger discriminations, higher unemployment rates and fewer educational opportunities for persons with disabilities in third world than what obtains in developed world are some PWDs for abject poverty experienced by these individuals. For instance, the deaf often stand better chances of getting employment than other categories of persons with disabilities in third world countries, but with that, the best jobs they can get in Nepal for instance, are portering, plumbing or ploughing (Messkey, 1988) while in Nigeria they are often employed to do non-skill jobs like cleaning, clearing or watchmen services.



Women with Disabilities as Exemplification of Gender and Disability Intersection.

Women, often times, are at the receiving end of women-men inequality records. Similarly, PWDs are usually branded as incomparable and incompatible with their able-bodied peers. Being a woman with disability therefore connotes double jeopardy. Women with disabilities do experience multiple layers of discrimination (www.usaid.gov. 2022). They are often predisposed to “double discrimination” because of their gender and disability status. The inequality they encounter could become more pronounced if they also belong to marginalized ethnic or racial groups or other socially stereotyped groups like lesbians, gay, transgender or intersex. Another jeopardy for them is their susceptibility to high rates of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitations.

Hans and Mohanty (2022) described being women with disabilities as paradoxical experience. Their place in society is simply out of sight and out of mind. In Africa and Asia, which are predominantly patriarchal, women live at mercy of men. Whenever disability is added to femalehood, the vulnerability gets heightened. Women with disabilities are denied community living. They can hardly perform day to day chores of normal women. Their conditions usually get worsen when disaster breaks. They often struggle to get reliefs or attention during disasters or emergencies.

Gender and disability are two elements of intersectional and multidiscrimination (Ziegel, 2014). Women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination such as experienced by HIV/AIDS patients. They are usually stereotyped as sick, helpless, childlike, dependent, incompetent and asexual. These labels do limit their expectations and opportunities. Consequently they are not able to exercise their rights.

Unfortunately the societal bias against them are often more handicapping than their gender and disability do. They are often pushed to extreme margins of economic and social status of their societies. Disability is an interaction between persons with impairments, attitudinal and environment barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Ziegler, 2014).Ozaji (2021) opined that the plights of women with disabilities are always aggravated by their placement in a sub-minority group. They have slimmer chance for getting attention in either gender or disability matters. This precarious condition do predispose them to gender violence cum disability abuse which often go unreported or ignored if reported. More plights experienced by women with disabilities include exclusion from various humanitarian activities, deliberate exclusion from educational and health programmes, unemployment and poverty.

Severe discriminations against women with disabilities have dare consequences for them and their societies. Depriving women education for instance, promotes poverty, early marriage and poor health among women. Kester, Anjuwon and Idowu (2008), pointed out that family and community members and



states also share in the burdens arising from women marginalization. National and international economic well-being is bound to be impaired by low female labour force participation, high rate of illiteracy, maternal mortality, high cost of health care, redundancy and destitution emanating from denying girl and women proper education.

Similarly, the inequality and marginalization of PWDs directly affect many including communities, states and social systems (Nwolise, 2004). Nations which fail to “respond effectively to the challenges of her citizens with disabilities incur not only huge cost of human resources but also cruel waste of human capital” Societal bias against PWDs usually arise from some faulty assumptions which Linton, (1998) listed as individualization of disability as a personal or family issue and not as societal concern, construction of disability as a problem and failure to give appropriate concerns to education of PWDs. Efforts to equalize opportunities for PWDs would include finding an epistemology of inclusion. This according to Linton (1998) is “a broad based body of knowledge for the incorporation of the disabled as full and equal members of society”. There should be a new outlook as proposed by Ziegler (2014) should shift from the norm of locating problems in persons with disabilities to creating interactions between PWDs and the environment (institutions, physical and attitudinal).

Social Justice: Concept and Emergence.

A major focus of this paper has been on marginalization of women and PWDs either as separate groups who experience status inequality or women with disabilities as an unusual group who experience severer level marginalization. These groups have always been classified as minorities and consequently are socially excluded members of their societies.

The modern history, however, has witnessed some significant change in socio-cultural perspectives of women and PWDs in various societies. The world is now embracing a better attitudinal dispositions towards women and PWDs. There appears to be some paradigm shifts now as regards the socio-cultural, economic, political and educational status of women and PWDs everywhere. This change is predicated on some modern reconstructs of status beliefs and practice. According to Nwolise (2008), there comes a phase in human history, when some vital decisions must be made concerning specific categories of citizens. A time to reset socio-cultural perspectives of a people, define or redefine their status, reassess their social values and rethink their worth. That aptly describes the inclusion trajectory that has ushered in status elevation drive for women and PWDs. Call it gender equality struggle for women or inclusion agenda for PWDs, there is an obvious factor that binds these new developments together-social justice, a socio-political and philosophical ideology for the initiation and promotion of status change for the neglected, deprived and marginalized citizens such as women and PWDs.

Social justice is a relatively recent concept born out of a struggle for attainment of equality for anyone or group marginalized. It stands for fairness and



compassionate distribution of income, wealth, responsibilities and rewards. It is fairness as it manifests in the society (www.humanrightscareers.com 2022). It articulates the fact that everyone deserves equal economic, educational, political and social rights. Social justice encompasses three major dimensions, they are equal rights, equal opportunity and equal treatment for all regardless of sex, religion, tribe or condition (www.sdfoundation.org 2022). As a result social justice applies fairness in allocation of social amenities such as healthcare, housing and employment to all citizens. Social justice is therefore an ideological arsenal for combating inequality, discrimination and neglect.

Social justice goes beyond the application of equitable distribution of privileges and tasks for citizens. It also demands for fairness in human relations- relations between individuals in the society (corporatefinanceinstitute.com 2022). This places social justice in the campaign platform for equal access to wealth, opportunities and social privileges. Social justice demonstrates tolerance from inside out (Landorf, Rocco & Nevin, 2007). It calls for some redefinition of the “other” (who are usually the minority) by the majority. It canvasses for acceptance of minority people their challenges and needs. Social justice should truly be the “rights we demand for ourselves that should be offered to others”. Its agenda involve the disengagement of the dichotomies in names, definitions and labelling women or persons with disabilities pejoratively from men or the non-disabled.

Social Justice Interventions for Gender-Person with Disabilities Equality.

Application of the social justice interventive measures to drive equality agenda for women and women with disabilities are discussed through the following social justice principles of 1.accessibility and 2.human rights. Each of the listed is discussed as follows:

1. Accessibility.

Accessibility entails cultivating gender and disability equality by opening up to women and persons with disabilities all provisions that have been hitherto reserved or available for men or able-bodied individuals. It also implies the removal of bias and discrimination against women and PWDs resulting from socio-cultural attitudes and practices and economic status (United Nations, 2015).

Accessibility as an objective and instrumentality of social justice also applies to gender and disability equality by eliminating the following:

a. Inequality in distribution of access to knowledge. This can be implemented by promoting the girl-child education and making education for PWDs equitable, quality and inclusive.

b. Inequality in distribution of health services. This involves prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women and PWDs in health programmes and health services. Neglect of PWDs in health emergencies such as witnessed in the covid-19 era should never reoccur again.



c. Inequality in distribution of opportunities for civic and political participation. Women should be empowered through necessary means-legally, economically and educationally to access the civic and political space as much as men do. The same applies to PWDs.

d. Inequality in accessing public spaces. PWDs should be enabled to access public and corporate places like banks, public libraries, hospitals, offices and so on by constructing ramps, walkways and mobility assistive facilities.

2. Human Rights.

Another vital preoccupation of social justice is attaining justice for individuals deprived of their fundamental human rights. It is becoming increasingly accepted that gender and disability are human right issues (United Nations, 2006). Human rights abuses associated with women and PWDs may remain largely unchecked except necessary laws to address them are enacted. National and international laws are needed in addition to extant ones to enhance equal rights for women and persons with disabilities on the following issues:

1. Equality of rights for all including by enacting laws that eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and PWDs.
2. Guaranteeing the respect for the fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights of every individual sex and disability notwithstanding and
3. Ensuring all entitlements of every citizen are given without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, race, religion, political or other opinion, line with the Charter of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (Article 1).

Implications for the Special Needs Education.

Attaining equality of women and men and zero discrimination against persons with disabilities is fundamental to the implementation of the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NERDC, 1998). This policy document expressed the Federal government's resolve for providing equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities through the special needs education just as the general education is for their counterparts without disabilities. This laudable objective could become a mirage in the face of stern discriminations against the PWDs.

With the guaranteed equality of rights, provisions and responsibilities for all, adoption and implementation of inclusive education as preferred placement option for special needs education in Nigeria becomes feasible. Social justice guarantees respect for rights of every person. This implies that the rights of the special needs child to education can no longer be toyed with. Ditto for ensuring that the special needs education for the special needs child is quality, equitable, accessible and lifelong as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

Conclusion



Women and PWDs share a number of things in common. Since both are usually classified as minorities in their communities, they are often subjected to discriminations and neglect. Societal bias against them is rooted in some age-long socio-cultural constructs which prioritized men over women and conceived PWDs as sub-humans. Being a woman and having disability presents an awful experience of complex tragedy. Intersection of gender and disability as embedded in women with disabilities offers some deep insights not only to the plights of these individuals but also to the need for exploring how social justice as an intervention can be engaged to facilitate equality between women and men and between PWDs and able-bodied persons. The earlier women and men as well as PWDs and the non-disabled are treated as equals the better for humanity.

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