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## CHAPTER 38

### CHANGING SOCIETAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA

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#### **Introduction**

Attitude change is the process of alteration or modification in the existing attitude towards an object or someone. It is a change in the beliefs or behaviours towards someone or something. Since attitudes are unstable and likely to change one's social influence have a lot of impact on them. Attitude change occurs when the existing attitude is further strengthened towards an object. Thus, a positive attitude becomes more positive and a negative attitude becomes more negative. It is also a change when someone acquire new attitude and dropped the old attitude.

Attitude is an individual's mental state which is based on one's beliefs or value system, emotions and the tendency to act in a certain way. An individual's attitude reflects how one thinks, feels and behaves in a given situation. Attitude is composed of three components, which include cognitive, affective/emotional and behavioural components. The cognitive component is based on the information or knowledge, whereas affective component is based on the feelings. The behavioural component reflects how the attitude affects the way a person acts or behaves. For example, in case of a nursery school class boy who is scared of Father Christmas, the cognitive component might be that Father Christmas would kill or hurt him. On the other hand, the affective component would be feeling that he is afraid or scared of Father Christmas. The behavioural component would be that the boy would completely avoid getting closer, touching or scream at the Father Christmas. So, attitude is essentially like an evaluative statement that is either positive or negative depending on the degree of like or dislike for the matter at hand.

A person with disability may experience difficulty in moving, hearing, seeing, communicating, thinking, learning, mental health, remembering and social relationships. This is because, disability is the experience of any condition that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities or have equitable access within a given society. The disability may include injuries or chronic illness. The attitudes of the society toward the persons with disabilities (PWDs) are negative. The treatment given to most of them are often cruel and shocking. They are viewed as unhealthy, defective and thus often abandon by their own families and communities due to lack of understanding about their condition. Many of them are often seen as object of charity, medical treatment and social protection, they are not



seen as individuals who are capable of exercising their rights, making decisions based on their free and informed consent and being active members of the society and the economy. The society believes that PWDs are more likely to experience poverty, live in a poor quality or unsecure apartment or housing. For these reasons, they should have low level of education. With these societal reaction toward the PWDs, the individuals are socially isolated with fewer opportunities to take part in community life. And despite the fact that the Nigerian government through National Policy on Education (NPE, 2008), has worked for positive attitude change towards PWDs, the societal attitude towards them is still largely negative.

Changing attitude towards PWDs involves societies' displaying empathy, patience and positivity towards PWDs to promote inclusion and openness for the affected. The society also needsto accept PWDs as equal not as persons who need to be pitied. The PWDs need to be given equal opportunities to come forward and participate in whatever programmes normal persons are doing. The PWDs do not want to be treated as different, they want to be treated as equal. The society must interact with them and make them feel normal. After all, there is ability in disability. They can be assisted but without hurting their dignity. Most importantly, people must teach others not make mockery or jest of them.

Prevention and removal of barriers affecting the PWDs involve finding a way for PWDs to access public places without discrimination or being ridiculed. This is because barrier is the exclusion of PWDs from society. It means PWDs are excluded from or are unable to access humanitarian assistance programs. It is also a factor in a person's environment that through their absence or presence limits functioning and creates disability. In the same vein, barriers to the PWDs means a physical environment that is not accessible, lack of relevant assistive technology (adaptive and rehabilitative devices) and negative attitude of people towards a person with disability. Therefore, removal of barriers means removing and preventing barriers that will hinder the PWDs from interacting and socializing with normal persons. For example removal of public and institutional barriers, laws and policies, strategies or practices that discriminate against PWDs full participation in the societal functions and programme will make them feel equal to others. Barriers are also removed when PWDs feel free to socialize with the normal persons in the society.

### **Concept of Attitude**

Attitude is a person's thoughts, feelings or reaction towards other persons. It is formed from one's beliefs which result inbehaviour. Attitude is also learned and can be changed to suit desired behaviour through new experiences and information. According to Wallex (2010), attitude is "a combination of concepts, verbal information and emotions that result in a predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably towards a particular subject." Supporting this view, Paye(2012), defined attitude as the manner of placing, way of feeling, thinking or behaving. This definition of attitude lays emphasis on one's stand towards people,



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things and situations which actually influences one's opinion. It is an individual's stand that determines his specific attitude which can be negative or positive.

The importance of one's attitude cannot be over emphasized because it has its affective tendencies. Attitude can be moulded if its intention is to encourage, altered for a better one or changed entirely for a new one. For instance, some attitudes accepted in the past are being discouraged by the younger generation as a result of exposure.

Attitudes are subject to change. An individual can develop, maintain or change his or her attitude towards people, objects, ideas and situations in the process of new developments and experiences. New developments or new experiences play an important role in attitude change because it leads to new ideas and new knowledge which influence one's thoughts, resulting in new behaviour. In the same vein, the negative attitude of many tribes in Nigeria towards the killing of twin babies in the past has positively changed tremendously as a result of exposure, new experiences and enlightenment. This shows that many people needed to be enlightened on the negative effects of their unfavourable attitudes towards persons who are disabled.

There are various approaches to attitudes as there are many writers on it. According to authorities like Sodynne(1990), attitude is defined as "a combination of concepts, verbal information and emotions that result in a predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably towards a particular subject. However, there has not been a common agreement among experts concerning what attitudes are. Ozoji (1991), identified three components of attitudes- cognitive, affective and behavioural distinctions. The idea of the three components seems to be logically convincing in the sense that it is the cognitive (implying) beliefs, knowledge, and understanding that shape one's feelings and emotions and it is the way people feel towards an object that informs their behavior. This implies that a negative belief forms a negative attitude. For example, in a circumstance where a woman observes that her newborn baby has a disabled condition believes that she has offended the gods of the land. This belief would result in a negative disposition towards the disabled baby and may stimulate many personal questions like - Why me? What have I done to the gods of the land? What will be people's attitude towards me and my family? These personal questions by the mother of the child could give a convincing support to Ozoji's (1991), assertion that "attitude is a combination of feelings and beliefs, and this attitude can equally be expressed through beliefs, affective statements and behaviours, particularly from someone who is completely ignorant of disabled conditions." Moreover, this situation promotes a view that where there are inconsistencies and discrepancies among the three components, attitude prediction from behaviour may become difficult and could be guided by one's emotion towards a specific person or group, rather than formal logic.

In simple terms, attitudes amount to like or dislike, interest or disinterest; they can be private or shared. They are equally cultural in nature and as a rule,



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formulated through the socialization process. They in turn often influence and raise further socializations. Culturally, since a negative outlook has been shaped there is no way such an individual can even associate with a person with a disability or even take an of interest in him. For instance, our unenlightened society believed that once a person has a disability, he cannot perform any task effectively in the society. And ultimately the possibility of such an affected person becoming useful in life is totally frustrated and destroyed. Whereas in more enlightened societies such as America and Britain it is believed that disabled conditions are not necessarily inhibiting factors toward success and attainment in life.

### **Concept of a Person with Disability (PWD)**

A PWD refers to anyone with a condition that makes it difficult for him to carry out certain activities or who cannot interact effectively with the world around him socially or mentally. Also, the Disability Discrimination Act sees a person with disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (DDA 1995). This condition or impairment according to Luke (2011), “may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or a combination of multiple factors.” In addition various attitudinal environmental obstacles usually make it difficult for full participation in the society. The cognitive disability can mean limitations in mental functioning and skills such as communication, self-help and social skills. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions caused by an impairment in physical, learning, language or behavioural areas. The impairments causing disability may be present from birth or can be acquired during a person’s life. Benthly (2015 P.7), also defined a disability as “any condition of the body and mind that makes it more difficult for the affected person to do certain activities and interact with the world around him or have.” This means a disability could be visible or invisible in nature. This is because two people with the same type of disability may not have the same experiences.

Physical disabilities may either temporarily or permanently affect a person’s physical capacity or mobility. Mental illness can affect a person’s thinking, emotional state and behaviours while different types of sensory disabilities can affect one or more senses such as sight, hearing, smelling, touching, taste or spatial awareness. It is also important to note that a Person With Disability may be regarded as an individual with disabilities in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role that the person is assumed to take in his/her community. The perception and reality of disability also depend on the technologies, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations. In most parts of the world, there are deep and persistent negative stereotypes and prejudices against Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) or with certain conditions and differences. These attitudes themselves also shape who is considered to be a person with a disability in each society as well as have



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contributed to a negative image of persons with disabilities. The language used to refer to PWDs has played a significant role in the persistence of negative stereotypes. Clearly, terms such as “crippled”, “mentally retarded”, “blind” or “deaf and dumb” are derogatory. Other terms such as “wheelchair-bound” or “disabled persons”, “deaf” and “blind persons” emphasize disability before the person.

Disability is not something that resides in the individual as the result of some impairment. Disability is an evolving concept and legislation or law may be adopted to reflect positive changes within society. The society should be made to know that disability resides in the society not in the person. Also, in a society where hearing aids are available for those who are hard-of-hearing, the affected persons would not be stagnated, called or considered to have a disability. But someone with that same condition in an environment where hearing aids are not available would be Labeled, named or considered to have a deafness or disability, especially if the hearing level prevented the affected person from performing the tasks expected of him/her such as teaching, learning without interpreter and driving without the use of hearing aids. A child with an intellectual disability might have difficulties going to school due to the attitude of teachers, class mates and possibly parents who are unable to adapt to learners with different learning abilities. Likewise a person in a wheelchair might have difficulties being gainfully employed not because of her condition but because there are environmental barriers such as inaccessible buses or staircases in the work place which obstruct access to the work-place. Again, in a society where corrective lenses are available for someone with low vision, this person would not be considered to have a disability, however, someone with the same condition in a society where corrective lenses are not available would be considered to have a visual impairment, disability, especially if the level of vision prevents the person from performing tasks expected of this person such as shepherding, sewing or farming.

### **Attitudes of Society Towards Persons with Disabilities**

The way the Nigeria society perceives the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is subject to attitudes. The attitudes, expectation and standards of conduct shown by the society to the PWDs are from that of normal persons. Attitudes such as the specific ways of the society’s reaction to PWDs might serve as a convenient explanation of the maltreatment, social isolation, stumbling blocks, inequalities and lack of recognition faced by PWDs in Nigeria. The historical perspectives of the societal attitudes towards PWDs can be traced back to the following three distinct period;

- a. **The Era of Extermination:** This was the period when a person with disability was completely abandoned or thrown away into the evil forest or killed immediately. During that time, those who were not thrown away into the evil forest by their parents for while animals to kill them were thrown



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- into big rivers to drown or swept away or exterminated/eliminated by suffocating them to death at birth.
- b. **Era of Ridicule:** During this period, persons with disabilities were usually sold into domestic slavery. They were made to work on the farms and in the houses of wealthy men or act as clowns entertainers to entertain people during ceremonies or in palaces of chiefs.
  - c. **Era of Evangelisation:** It was the time when social conscience led by the missionaries surfaced and prevailed. That time coincided with the renaissance period which was the time of revival or rebirth or transition period when people were evangelized to know and accept God. People became enlightened that children with disabilities were neither idols nor devil nor evil spirits, but human beings like others. And that they should stop killing and wasting the lives of PWDs. The people were made to understand that children with disabilities can also be useful to the society. The community and society's new experiences and exposure to the word of God and information about the disabled resulted in the creation of a place of safety and protection for persons with disabilities. Since then, persons who are disabled were kept from being killed but inmated in asylum to work in churches, noble men's houses and palaces. This was how the lives of PWDs were saved from being wasted and from premature death. Hence, they were accommodated in different places and churches and till today they serve as house helps and child-care givers.

In the same vein, the introduction of special education schools and rehabilitation centres in Nigeria where persons with disability could undergo education and training have brought light to their lives. This step has helped them to have a sense of belonging as members of the society. A few of them are being employed in government parastatals to earn their living while some are the managers of their businesses; thus making them tax payers in their various communities or societies. In another development, the education committees in Nigeria normally consider the PWDs in educational programmes and national celebrations of the country. Hence, the declaration of National Policy on Education which was revised in 1981, 2004 and 2008 respectively made provision for the education and care for PWDs in the society as well as the recognition of the International Year of the Disabled.

Much still needs to be done by way of acceptability of the PWDs in the society due to various forms of societal attitudes towards the PWDs which in most cases are not favourable, The negative attitudes of the society towards PWDs mainly stem from limited awareness and lack of knowledge of what the PWDs ought to be, their usefulness and what they can offer. This calls for awareness training, societal contact programmes and positive portrayal of PWDs in markets, churches, mosques and the public media.

In another development Gani (1981), in Ozoji (1995), classified attitudes of Nigerians toward the PWDs into four which includes:



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- a. send them to beg (attitudes that could be subsumed in this classification may include rejection and despised mentally).
  - b. it is not my business (attitudes under this category may include indifference, ambivalence, and an "I don't care attitude).
  - c. I am ashamed of you (attitudes under this circumstance may include worthlessness and shame).
  - d. something has to be done (attitude under this category may include empathy, concern and acceptance).

But Gani's classification does not agree with Ozoji's (1988), research findings in Adurayoh (2007), among grade two student teachers' attitudes toward the blind in Northern Nigeria. These students were found to hold more neutral attitudes followed by positive and lastly negative attitudes toward the blind. Ozoji's finding is that the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria hold more of neutral attitudes than either positive or negative attitudes toward exceptional children. Some people think blindness equals unhappiness. Therefore people who are blind are looked upon as objects of pity and charity. However, Jolayemi (1990), has noted that students as a whole have passed through three stages of interaction in their attitudes towards students with disabilities. These stages include the:

- a. stage of mendicancy (when PWDs are begging for alms for a living).
- b. stage of asylum (when PWDs are regarded as wards of society).
- c. stage of integration (when PWDs are accepted as members of society).

Jolayemi insisted that these stages are still found in the present day schools, in the manner the societies handle the disabled. It is therefore, difficult to isolate all known attitudes towards the disabled in inclusive schools in Nigeria today. However, a specification of attitudes towards the blind produced by Jolayemi include the followings, that;

- a. loss of sight is equivalent to loss of intellect, therefore loss of sight means loss of all the senses
- b. the public looks upon blindness as darkness
- c. blindness equals unhappiness.
- d. blind persons are sources of anxiety.

Furthermore, Ozoji's (1991), study to determine the traditional attitudes of Nigerians toward the blind showed that are regarded as:

- witches
- persons who are able to see into the mind of others.
- neglected because of the belief that they became blind due to fault of their parents or forefathers.
- T worthless.
- people who deserve neither sympathy nor empathy/
- individuals endowed with hidden powers
- associated with bad luck and so on.

From the attitudes described above, it is evident that positive attitudes have been given very little prominence in our society. There are factors that affect the



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attitudes of normal persons toward the disabled. These include people's lack of knowledge of the disabilities, poor awareness and the quality and frequency of their contact with the disabled. This implies that the more people know about disabilities, the more likely they are to have positive attitudes. Also the frequency and quality of contact with people who are disabled have also been proven to promote positive attitudes.

### **Types of Attitude Change**

Attitude may change when people learn new information or when they are persuaded by influential people and when they experience discomfort due to holding conflicting beliefs.

There are two types of attitude change, these include:

- a. Incongruent Attitude Change
- b. Congruent Attitude Change

**Incongruent Attitude Change:** refers to attitude change wherein the attitude changes in the opposite direction to the existing attitude. For instance, a positive attitude becomes a negative or a negative attitude becomes a positive attitude.

**Congruent Attitude Change:** is a type of attitude change where the existing attitude changes in the same direction. The existing attitude is further strengthened towards an object. That is a positive attitude becomes more positive and a negative attitude becomes more negative.

There are three levels of attitude change which include; Compliance, Identification, and Internalization attitude change.

**Compliance Attitude Change:** refers to a change in behaviour based on consequences, such as an individual's hopes to gain rewards or avoid punishment from another group or person. This is the kind of influence one accepts, normally when someone is watching one's behaviour.

**Identification Attitude Change:** explain one's change of beliefs and the effects in order to be similar to someone he admires or likes. In this case, the individual adopts new attitude, not due to specific content of the attitude object, but because it is also associated with the desired relationship. This is when we accept influence because we want to be like someone who is trying to influence us.

**Internalisation Attitude Change:** refers to deepest level of conformity. Here a person changes the public behavior and private beliefs. This is when one accepts influence because the behavior or attitude is consistent with our own values. That is one has internalized the message and no one can change the person from the decision he/she has taken because the person believed in what the influential has said or narrated.

The factors that can influence the attitude change of the society towards PWDs involved people's knowledge of disability, their contact with PWDs, making sure the language used to describe PWDs respects their dignity and humanity. The following are other important points that the society can put into consideration for effective attitude change towards the PWDs. Non-disabled people should:



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1. be ready to put away or erase the old notion, beliefs or behaviours that PWDs cannot be useful in life from their mind.
  2. to understand who they are and accept them.
  3. consider the removal of segregation between the normal people and the disabled.
  4. find out the causes of disability and the way of preventing it.
  5. NGOs and Governments must create awareness programme through mass media.
  6. empower the PWDs in self-help skills and small scale businesses.
  7. inform others in the rural areas about PWDs and their capabilities.
  8. parents and siblings should avoid using abusive words or labelling towards PWDs at home.
  9. parents should send their normal and their PWDs to the same inclusive school.
  10. avoid curious comment against PWDs.

Attitude change according to Johnson and Matross in Ozoji (1995), is defined as “acquisition, reversal or intensification of an attitude.” Supporting the view Ozoji (1995), highlighted some points in cognitive and behavioural strategies for attitude change to take place. These include:

1. disability awareness programme, abundant and cheap literature in special education.
2. element of special education project in teacher training programmes at all levels.
3. training in special education service teachers or volunteers.
4. seminars, conferences, workshops in special education.
5. competitive as oppose to shelter job placement.
6. participation in social clubs and societies.
7. behaviour modification techniques.
8. visit to disabled children and adults in their institutions for interaction.

### **Changing Attitudes towards Persons with Disabilities**

Disabilities have been known to make people outcast or isolated from wider society, especially if the disability can be visually seen. The focus of the society should be on making educational institutions, classrooms and libraries accessible to PWDs. This positive attitude and remarkable awareness of the need of the special education for PWDs in the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004), has showed government, institution, democratic responsiveness to the world by improving the lives of the neglected persons of the Nigerian society through equal education opportunities. In the same vein, the society can pave ways to success by building acceptable environment for the disabled, improving public transportation and ramping up information and communication technologies. NGOs and government parastatals should also start employing more PWDs in their verticals so that PWDs can learn many skills and earn a living instead of regretting their



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disabilities. They are ambitious and want to work. The government can increase PWDs representation in political setting and integrate Disability History in school Curriculums. They can also promote social inclusion in schools and provide College scholarship to Athletics with disabilities. In this way, persons with disabilities will feel themselves equal to others and have a sense of belonging.

Some expectations from the society to ensure attitude change include the following:

- (a) **Equal Opportunities:** In education, social interaction, health and livelihood. Any opportunity given to the normal persons in every programme must be enjoyed by the PWDs.
- (b) **Social Empowerment:** Any provision or programme that the society and government presents should include persons with disabilities.
- (c) **Discard Superstitious beliefs:** Negative beliefs about the causative factors of disabilities as perceived by different culture should be discarded. Society should embrace contemporary views about the theology of disabilities.
- (d) **Advocacy and Sensitisation:** Government, NGOs and society should embark on public awareness, media engagement, on attitude reformation that support the education and social provision for PWDs.
- (e) **Societal Participation:** PWDs should be involve in the policy draft and implementation efforts of government and society in which they live. Once PWDs are participating in societal activities alongside those without disabilities, there will be a sense of belonging and their skills will be showcased thereby reducing the negative attitude.

Other necessary and important positive attitudes that are needed and worthy of consideration as explained by Odiakoza (2008) for PWDs are below:

1. **Educational Institution Provision of Offices and Ramps**  
Access is the key - if PWDs are not able to go to school, college or office, how will they gain education or work? The education system and work environment should be disabled friendly. PWDs need the right infrastructure and right persons to achieve success in life. There is need to give sensitivity training to people for them to train PWDs in order to explore their potentials.
2. **Governments Provision of Appropriate Facilities for PWDs**  
PWDs need special arrangements in every environment for their mobility. It is important to identify public places that are inaccessible to PWDs and inform the government about it. The government should take steps to make public places accessible to PWDs.
3. **Sensitisation of the Society to Needs of Persons with Disabilities**  
The society may admit it or not, but most people lack the basic courtesy that an individual should be show, especially in public places and transport. People call themselves courteous, but they do not bother to offer their seats to ladies or elderly persons while travelling in any public transport; so one



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can begin to imagine the treatment meted to PWDs. There is a need to make the general public understand that PWDs do not want anybody's sympathy, rather they want people's encouragement. People should consider themselves lucky to have all their limbs intact, but having cold feelings towards PWDs is in no way justifiable.

4. **Making Public Places Friendly to PWDs**

People often see that persons with disabilities are forced to live in enclosures. They are not allowed to go outside alone for safety reasons. But by continuously living in the same place, they feel depressed. It is important for them to move out so that they become aware of the outside world. But the question arises, is it safe for them to go to public places? The answer is No. The reason behind is because of the unsafe and bad roads, poorly managed parks and markets, the issue of terrorists, unexpected civil crisis and other public places problems. The society and the governments should keep proper check on these. There should be foot-paths on roads where PWDs can freely walk. The traffic police can play a great role by helping them on roads. People should strictly follow traffic rules so that a person with disability does not get hurt due to people's negligence. Helpers should be provided by the governments to help the PWDs in parks and markets. Proper sitting facilities should be available for them at these places.

5. **Make this World a better a Place for PWDs**

The perception of PWDs as sick and unproductive person tends to isolate them. All buildings must be made compatible with the needs of these persons. Government should ensure that an equal opportunity employment policy is made so that in the selection of the best candidate quotas or bracketing individual as "abled" or "disabled" is followed. Visual free alarm should be available at all public places. Accessible toilets are required with adequate clearance, grab bars and fixtures within the reach of PWDs. The doors that open out, non-slippery flooring, panic buttons and signage should be available to make a room for persons with disabilities. The society as a place with responsible citizens should make this world a better place to live in for all persons irrespective of whether they are abled or disabled.

6. **Additional Helps in Public Places for PWDs**

Proper ramps, special washroom and sitting facilities should be at public places for them. Some additional room for help should also be available all the time to assist PWDs. It is equally important that before PWDs are taken to any public place, they must be kept abreast of the details and various facilities available there so that they do not face any problem whenever they visit. PWDs should be encouraged to visit public places, enjoy facilities they provide. Nothing should prevent PWDs from enjoying the full compliments of these facilities.



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## 7. Humane Treatment of PWDs.

It is essential to change one's mentality and perception towards PWDs. The society must understand that these persons are not abnormal and we do not pity them. They are equal to everybody and can perform to the best of their abilities if given the right guidance and opportunities. So the society should not treat them as lesser persons. The society should ensure conducive environment for them through generous counselling. The society should also stop treating them as disabled persons but as special creation of God.

Each human being has something special in them and some weaknesses too, and so do persons with disabilities. The society must help PWDs to focus on their strengths, instead of their weaknesses so that they can enjoy their lives like normal persons.

### **Elimination of Barriers for PWDs**

Barriers limiting opportunities and access for PWDs include: physical or architectural barriers, informational barriers, technological barriers, and attitudinal barriers. A barrier is referred to as anything that prevents a PWD from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability. These barriers happen when places and activities that all people should have access to are designed in a way that limit this access. Barriers limit the things PWDs can do or the places they can go. For instance, heavy doors are barriers for people with limited upper body movement (the physically impaired). Such types of doors prevent them from entering buildings. In the same vein, negative attitude towards PWDs can make them to isolate or withdraw themselves from social interaction with normal persons. Societal changing attitudes can make those with personal companies or organizations to welcome more visitors who are PWDs by recognizing, removing and preventing barriers that will hinder them from interacting with normal people. This is done by identifying barriers. When a building owner recognizes a barrier such as heavy doors that would limit some persons access to the building, there should be rebuilding, removing or reconstructing of the barriers. Removing a barrier means finding a way for everyone to access the company or organization. For instance, a building owner can install automatic doors that every visitor can use. Barriers can also be prevented if a building owner knows about possible barriers in advance, he should design barrier - free access for people. That is, a building designer who has planned to have automatic doors in the first place, has automatically prevented the barriers of heavy doors beforehand.

Ishalaye (2016), explained that "when negative or unfriendly attitudes are changed to friendly and positive ones, barriers are removed for free access to PWDs." This implies that the PWDs feel free to socialize with normal persons. This will make the affected persons make themselves more available, closer and more accessible, more friendly to normal people. As a result, the normal persons can get



more customers in their companies, interact with PWDs, share something in common with them and both can gain more knowledge and experiences from each other. This attitude will make the PWDs become more forthcoming, they can share many ideas and experiences with the society.

Another barrier which is lack of accessibility refers to the degree to which a product, service or environment is available for use to the people that need them. There are persons with certain types of disabilities who struggle to get equal access to something in the society. For example, if a person with visual impairment cannot read printed paper ballots is the denied the right to vote in avoting system that requires paper ballots. A change in the negative, unfriendly or uncondusive environment to positive, friendly or condusive one can improve this access by carrying them along and make them feel they belong. That is, if voting ballots are available in braille or on a text-to-speech machine, or if another person reads the ballot to persons with visual impairment and record their choices, then the persons who are visually impaired would have had access to voting.

### **Suggestions**

1. Parent must drop negative attitude, traditional beliefs that are obvious and detrimental.
2. Government must ensure equal educational opportunities as stated in NPE (2008), and provide relevant assistive technologies to the PWDs.
3. Society should, through NGOs and Philanthropists encourage participation of PWDs in their programmes.
4. Many PWDs prefer begging for alms on the streets even if they are given opportunity to go to school. They should wake up and drop the attitude of defeatism among themselves. They should also strife to acquire education and develop the necessary livelihood skills.
5. Society and government must make physical environment accessible to PWDs.

### **Implications**

The implication of this study is that the attitude change of the society is possible if the society make themselves available for the change and accept the PWDs. Their negative attitudes could be change to positive and the positive could be change to negative one. In the same vein, positive attitude could be change to more positive if the old notion or beliefs can be erase and accept the new attitude and put them in reverse to enhance societal attitude change toward the PWDs in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Attitude change are not stable because of communication and behavior of other people as subject to change by social influence as well as the individual's motivation to maintain cognitive consistency, when cognitive dissonance occurs.



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That is, when two attitudes or attitude and behavior conflict. It seems clear that negative attitude along with misconception and lack of awareness, present barriers to social inclusion in various life domain such as education, employment and community participation. Also, lack of knowledge or training among some professionals make the society access to services difficult. Attitude is a significant factor in the drive to achieving self-actualisation. PWDs are human beings and should be accorded desirable attitude. Negative attitudes are regarded as barriers to educational and social integration of PWDs. It is thus necessary that all forms of discrimination, rejection and neglect of PWDs in the scheme of works in our society are changed for the better. This will enhance access to societal services and participation of PWDs for self-worth and national development.

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