

Personal and Institutional Constraints to Accessing Tertiary Education among People Living with Disability in Bayelsa State

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Abstract: *The paper investigated personal and institutional constraints to accessing tertiary education among people living with disability in Bayelsa State. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses were answered and tested in the study. Mixed method design was adopted in the study while 165 respondents consisting of 160 persons with disability, four Deans of Student Affairs and an executive of Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) in Bayelsa State were sampled for the study using multistage sampling technique. The respondents were drawn from within and outside four randomly selected tertiary institutions namely; Bayelsa Medical University (Yenagoa LGA), Fderal University Otuoke (Ogbia LGA), Niger Delta University (Southern Ijaw LGA) and Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education (Sagbama LGA). Instruments used for collection of data were questionnaire for the persons with disability as well as Focus Group Discussion while five Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) was conducted with the other respondents. Data gathered quantitatively were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and t-test while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study indicated that poverty and fear of discrimination were the major personal factors that hindered access to tertiary education for the respondents while the major institutional factors were shortage of experts in special needs education and shortage of infrastructure. There existed a difference in the opinion of the students and non-students on these personal and institutional factors. It was recommended that laws should be enacted that will criminalize and punish the violation of the educational rights of people with disability while special fund should be established to take care of their educational needs.*

Keywords: Bayelsa state, disability, institutional, personal, tertiary education

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the government has been making efforts through policies and programmes to make education across all levels accessible for all citizens irrespective of tribe, ethnicity, religion and disability status. However, the extent to which these efforts has improved the chances of people with disability to acquire formal education remains unclear. No doubt, scholars such as Okpara et al., (2020) have pointed out that there are several factors that can limit people with disability from accessing tertiary education and that congenital reasons contribute to disability in the country. However, the inability of some applicants to secure admission suggests that there could also be institutional barriers. The United Nations as cited in Oyintonyo et al., (2018) established that unemployment rate amongst these persons is as high as 70% and this deprivation also affects their access to tertiary education. This scenario resulted in the recent demonstration by people with disability in Yenagoa where more than 200 physically challenged persons took part in the protest. There is no doubt that the Bayelsa State Government education roadmap has shown the government's commitment in creating access to education (Folaranmi, 2022). However, except the personal and institutional factors limiting the access to tertiary education among people with disability is taken care of, the much needed success may not be recorded.

Access to tertiary education is a right for all irrespective of race, tribe, religion and sex. However, access to tertiary education for people with disabilities is still a challenge especially in developing countries. In the words of Neubauer and Tanaka (2011), access is a terminology that refers to the process by which an individual is able to enter a certain sector in this case, the education sector to benefit from the services provided for entrants. Empirically, Engelbrecht and de Beer (2014) pointed out in their study that only 2.8% of people living with disability who are qualified are able to gain access to tertiary education with several of these students experiencing constraints relating to various forms of accessibility which affects the lives of such students living with such condition. Students with disability form a significant portion of the studentship in most public tertiary institutions. Unfortunately, tertiary education is considered especially in Africa; Nigeria inclusive as a right reserved for the abled (Abdullahi, 2023). There is hardly no public tertiary institution without the presence of a student with one form of disability or the other and these students face various forms of impairment challenges which hinder their educational progression. Understanding the nature of these inhibiting factors is essential for policy intervention and for correcting the narrative and this informs this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Disability and Tertiary Education

The concept of disability is one that differs across region, tribe, race, and belief and can mean different thing to different people. However, scholars such as Thompson (2017) pointed out that

disability is a condition of long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Disability could be both physical or mental and often limit a person's ability to use their various senses for activities that would have been normal. They are usually addressed as being handicapped or disadvantaged by law. Disability in practical terms has different dimensions or forms in which it exists and some identified ones are psychological, emotional, social, political, physical etc. (Latham-Mintus & Landes, 2023). The Australian National University (n.d.) identified some possible disabilities that people may suffer from to include visual impairment, deaf and hard hearing, mental, intellectual, physical and autism spectrum disorder. All of these forms of disabilities have a way of affecting the educational success rate of students especially at the tertiary level of education if the right support and condition is not put in place.

Tertiary education is that level of education that comes after secondary education. It includes institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges and any other institution responsible for the provision of skilled manpower for the various sectors of the national economy. Dada and Eni-Olorunda (2014) pointed out that this level of education which is also referred to as higher education succeeds the completion of a secondary education. Tertiary education in most institutions of higher learning can consist of programmes offered at the undergraduate and postgraduate level and can also include vocational education and training which are provided to equip an individual for the world of work. Colleges, universities, and institutes of technology are the main institutions that provide tertiary education and this is because the education provided at this level is essential for developing competent citizens who are able to contribute to the development of the society as well as achieve personal socioeconomic aspirations

Factors Limiting the Access to Tertiary Education for People with Disabilities

There are several educational needs that people with disability will require for meaningful learning but cannot personally afford this hence the need for support (Hussain et al., 2020). There is no doubt that people with disabilities face a wide range of hindrances which limit their access to education. Some of these challenges could be personal as it relates to the attitude of the person with disability, their economic status which determines the quality of education that they can afford among others. However, Safder et al., (2012) pointed to the fact that the teaching method used in some schools also discourage some students or force them to discontinue schooling when they cannot cope. On the part of Yasmeen et al., (2010) the lack of infrastructure, trained staff, clinical services, and proper learning material which are in short supply deter some of these individuals from accessing higher education. This implies that these constraints can be personal or institutional and are further discussed as follows:

Personal Factors

Access to education is not only a government affair or an institutional prerogative but also require the support of education seekers. It is not news that despite the despite governments huge

investment in the free and compulsory basic education, Nigeria still has one of the highest rate of out of school children and this is not only systemic but also personal. The personal belief, orientation and expectation of education seekers also influence their willingness to be educated and this also applies to students with disability in tertiary educational institutions.

Personal factors are the individual disposition towards an activity or course of action and the willingness of students with disability to also access tertiary education is also often determined from the learner's perspective. Students hold different views about the willingness and readiness of the education sector to meet their educational needs and this also influences whether or not they will choose to attend school.

Every individual with disability has a personal story or reason about why they are unable to access, continue or maximize the tertiary education services within their environment and more often than not, it is due to the disposition of the society. Limaye (2016) noted that the perceptions of parents of children with disabilities and their difficulties in helping their children with disabilities, the general attitude of society, government officials, school staff among others are some of the determinants that can affect how people with disability perceive schooling. When some of these individuals feel discriminated and unsupported, it can go a long way to affect their perception about tertiary education.

Similarly, the state of school facilities is another important factor that determines whether or not people with disability will be willing to attend school. When the school system lacks the basic infrastructure that will cater for the educational need of these individuals, it can hinder their willingness to attend school. The shortage or unavailability of learning facilities can pose a limitation to the desire of people living with disability to attend school. In addition, to this, issues such as support from relevant stakeholders such as the community also play a huge role in whether or not an individual with disability will be willing to go to school. There are other factors such as the poverty level and financial condition of the individual. When an individual with disability is unable to meet the financial demands of attending tertiary institution due to poverty level, it can hinder their willingness to go to school. In fact, poverty constitutes a major factor among the reasons why people with disability in developing countries are likely not to further their education. On the other hand, an individual with disability may not be willing to go to school as a result of lack of interest in education. This means that even when the right kind of education is available with the needed support services, he or she is not willing to further their education for personal reasons. The lack of interest makes it difficult for any individual to be enrolled in school as they are likely to drop out at the slightest instance. When an individual is unwilling to attend school due to lack of interest, it becomes very difficult for him or her to see reasons to be enrolled even when the opportunity is available. In their study, Acheampong, Nadutey, Bredu-Darkwa, Agyei-Baffour and Edusei (2022) alluded to the above factors as they identified that self-stigma, knowledge about disability condition, financial challenges, location and accessibility challenges,

communication challenges and lack of personal assistants are among the personal factors that make it difficult for people living with disability to access social services.

Government policies in some localities as well as social and cultural factors as well as religious factors might also be a personal reason why some persons with disability are not enrolled in any tertiary institution. The religious, cultural and ethnic peculiarity of their immediate environment might be a reason why several of these individuals are not in school. Similarly, issues such as poor physical access due to back road network, insecurity, government policy and the unavailability of various support systems has left several people with disability hindered from accessing tertiary education in different localities within and outside Nigeria. These factors have been instrumental to why some of these students are unable to further their education to tertiary level even when the opportunity exists as a result of the presence of a tertiary institution within their environment. This kind of limitations therefore require individual strategies due to their peculiarity to individual needs.

The issue of gender discrimination also plays a significant role in the inability of some women to go to school especially when they are disabled as women. The level of vulnerability where there is no assistance in place makes it difficult for this category of people to consider formal tertiary education as an option. Discrimination by gender, tribe, ethnicity, religion and other social characteristics can be a hindrance why some persons with disability will not consider tertiary education. Discrimination especially in developing economies could mean that they are unable to access educational opportunities around their localities as a result of certain personal characteristics and this plays a major inhibiting role.

The lack of information about the kind of aid and support that exists for people with disability who want to further their education can also be a barrier to access to tertiary education. Lack of information implies that the individual with disability is unable to access the information that will make him or her eligible for education at this level and this makes it difficult for several people in this category to further their education. When information about openings and opportunities are not within the reach of these people, then it becomes difficult to utilize these opportunities even where they exist. This lack of awareness and information has made several persons with disability to remain unschooled especially at the tertiary level. In summary, Marshak, Wieren, Ferrell, Swiss and Dugan (2010) identified identity issues, desires to avoid negative social reactions, insufficient knowledge, perceived quality and usefulness of services, and negative experiences with faculty as part of the factors that hinder the educational advancement of people with disability and these are some of the several other personal factors that contribute to in-access to tertiary education for people living with disability.

Institutional Factors

The school as an institution has a lot of contribution to make to the successful implementation of

educational programmes and policies across all levels of education. The institutionalization of educational policies, programmes and projects are fundamental for the goals and objectives of education to be met especially as it affects different beneficiaries. It is a known fact that educational institutions as a matter of importance must legally provide reasonable adjustments at various times to meet the need of different education seekers particularly students with disabilities in order to enable them to participate in education at any level.

Institutional support is essential for students of different capabilities to realize their educational aspirations. In today's technology driven world, the need for schools especially at the tertiary level to be technology inclined in the provision of educational services especially for students with disability cannot be overemphasized. In every school, inclusive support in and outside the classroom are essential and useful to students with disabilities and the school must be alive to this expectation. Institutional support includes all structure (physical and otherwise) and practices that enable everyone, both staff and students to participate actively in outlined educational activities without any form of discrimination. However, experience has shown that in most schools, while the abled students are often put in perspective during educational planning processes, very little attention is given to the need of students with disability, thereby making it difficult for them to engage actively in various educational activities.

The need for institutional support such as disability services which includes recruiting experts in this area, staff, courses, programmes and facilities which supports the educational needs of people with disability cannot be overemphasized. However, in most tertiary institutions, some of these support is not fully or properly institutionalized thereby making it difficult for students with disability to be assisted to meet their educational aspirations. Supporting students with disabilities to engage fully in tertiary education is a difficult activity in practice. This is because such act requires identifying students who need assistance and in what area. Therefore, doing this will require a variety of intervention which most tertiary institutions are often not prepared for.

Morgan (2021) noted that teaching attitude from some lecturers has been identified as one of the barriers to educational excellence in some institutions as some of these instructors have refused to adopt emerging initiatives that will make educational contents and materials useful to the targeted audiences. Some lecturers lack the professional knowledge and commitment to inculcate emerging facts that support the educational needs of people with disability into their teaching activities and this has left some students with disability uncared for and uninterested in furthering their education. Those who are already enrolled have also found it difficult to meet up with their educational aspiration. Generally, teaching students with disability is an activity that requires having more than one teacher or team of teachers addressing the educational need of such students but this is lacking in most tertiary institutions making higher education undesirable for some of these students as they foresee that their needs might not be met.

Furthermore, the admission process into tertiary institutions is one aspect of institutional factors affecting the education accessibility of people with disability that has remained understudied. Mosia (2017) indicated that although admission at the tertiary education level is considered non-discriminatory because students are mostly admitted and given courses based on merit. Students seeking for admission are expected to compete equally for available programmes irrespective of the fact that some of them are students with disabilities as this is considered irrelevant to during the selection process. However, this in itself also lacks fairness because if a student with disability is expected to compete with a student without disability where they have not been exposed to similar challenges at primary and secondary levels, the admission process should be viewed as unfair because the factors that led to their emergence is not the same and hence the need for more particular attention. Therefore, what obtains is that students with disabilities have limited choice of courses or programmes to pursue due to poor administration of concessions, lack of educational resources, inflexible teaching methods and curricula owing to poor admission process which has ab initio left them disadvantaged. Therefore, some students jettison tertiary education because they feel that their choice of course is likely to be inaccessible even when they decide to compete.

The administration system in most tertiary institution is also a major factor that hinders the ability of some students with disability to pursue higher education as most of these students usually indicate or disclose their disability status during application for admission but this information is usually not used for any planning activity that meets their need. The inability to effectively to accommodate the needs of these students with disability is shown in the poor accommodation system for students with disability, absence of functional library stocked with resources that meet their peculiar learning needs among others. Therefore, information about the disability condition of these students are not considered when allocating accommodation to students with disabilities, development of support services, planning of academic activities and choice of teaching techniques and all of these remain unresolved in most tertiary educational institution.

Similarly, there are varying opinions about accessibility of the physical environment across different higher educational institutions. This means that the physical facility composition of some higher institutions which comprises of tall buildings in some cases makes swapping of classes between several lecture halls difficult for some of these students. Similarly, access to hostels, health facilities or other points of service are often designed in an architectural manner that shows that people with disability are not taking into consideration during the design. Only very few tertiary institutions have provision for ramps for students to access critical facilities while majority remain inaccessible for challenged students with different forms of disability. This situation affects the students as well as staff who are also recruited with some form of disability.

Therefore, issues around infrastructure, the teaching and learning process and the management system are part of the institutional processes and factors that are necessary to facilitate effective learning for students of all orientation (Fernández-Batanero, Montenegro-Rueda & Fernández-

Cerero, 2022) and this has left some students with disability unable to pursue tertiary education like other tertiary education seekers while those already in school are already to maximize their presence for personal and societal benefit. Those who are yet to be admitted are therefore forced to abandon the thought of pursuing tertiary education while those who are already admitted are unable to build all the needed competencies since their basic needs are not factored into the general administrative process of the school. This is more worrisome because these factors are outside the control of the students and hence only these institutions have the capability to change the narrative by modifying the system of administration to take into consideration, more of the needs of students suffering from one form of disability or the other.

Empirical Reviews

Studies have been conducted by some researchers to find out challenges people with disability face in accessing tertiary education. Kabuta (2014) investigated the problems facing students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from 12 physically disabled students. The study found high inadequacy of teaching and learning materials as well as lack of special schemes, trained staff, funds and scholarship for students with physical disabilities. Mosia (2017) conducted another study on access to higher education for students with disabilities in Lesotho. Data were collected from staff and students with various forms of disabilities and analyzed through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological analysis (IPA). Findings revealed that though admission at the university is considered non-discriminatory, it is on merit bases. All students compete equally for available spaces and the identity of students with disabilities is considered irrelevant to disclose during selection of applicants.

Nyavor (2020) conducted another study on provision of teaching and learning materials that enhance participation of students with special educational needs in inclusive schools at Pokuase in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Descriptive survey design was used in the study while 112 respondents were sampled for the study using random sampling technique. The study's findings showed that during instruction, teachers offer a wide variety of teaching and learning resources but some of these resources don't address the particular requirements of every student, particularly those with special education needs. On the other hand, Thompson-Ebanks (2014) focused his study on personal factors that influence the voluntary withdrawal of undergraduates with disabilities. Data were collected from the five participants, who were all former University of Wyoming students with invisible disabilities, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. It was found that disability characteristics, health issues, feelings of inadequacy, a lack of sense of belonging, a lack of desire to attend college, self-advocacy, disclosure to staff and faculty, participation in campus social activities, and finances were some of these factors.

Algolaylat, Alodat, Muhidat and Almakanin (2023) conducted another study on the perspectives of students with disabilities on inclusive education challenges in higher education in a Jordanian

University. Ten students with physical and sensory disabilities were interviewed for the study, which employed a qualitative case study methodology. The information was gathered and examined using semi-structured interviews and descriptive coding techniques. The research results showed that the physical environment, adjustments, individual attitudes, assistive technologies, support, and administrative procedures were the five main themes that reflected the difficulties that university students with disabilities faced when implementing inclusive educational practices. Furthermore, Opini (2012) investigated the barriers to participation of women students with disabilities in University Education in Kenya. Twenty female students with disabilities and four university officers were selected from two public universities in Kenya and challenges identified as findings included factors such as lack of resources for learning, physical access, discrimination, poverty, sexual abuse, and indifference. All of these studies allude to the fact that people with disability still face barriers to fulfilling their tertiary education aspirations.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the personal and institutional constraints to accessing tertiary education among people living with disability in Bayelsa State while the specific objectives were to:

1. examine the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State
2. ascertain the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State?
2. What are the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed method approach comprising quantitative and qualitative methods. Population of the study was all the people living with disability who are 18years and above in Bayelsa State out of which 165 respondents were sampled comprising 160 persons with disability, four Deans of Student Affairs and an executive of Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) in Bayelsa State. Multistage sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents for the study within and outside four randomly selected tertiary institutions namely; Bayelsa Medical University (Yenagoa LGA), Fderal University Otuoke (Ogbia LGA), Niger Delta University (Southern Ijaw LGA) and Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education (Sagbama LGA). The instruments used for data gathering were questionnaire for the persons with disability as well as Focus Group Discussion while five Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)was conducted with the other respondents. The data collected quantitatively were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and t-test while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Score on the Personal Factors Limiting People with Disability from Accessing Tertiary Education

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	Lack of interest from education seekers is the major reason people with disability to attempt tertiary education	2.81	.956	Agree
2	The level of poverty among people living with disability hinder them from pursuing tertiary education	3.44	.726	Agree
3	Discrimination against people living with disability is a factor that hinder their pursuit of higher education	3.44	.653	Agree
4	The lack of information on educational opportunities make it difficult to further to tertiary education	3.10	.936	Agree
5	Sociocultural belief and orientation hinders the prospect of furthering my education	2.85	.969	Agree
6	Lack of basic requirement for tertiary education makes it impossible to further my education	2.89	.968	Agree

Table 1 revealed the mean score of the respondents to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 which were 2.81, 3.44, 3.44, 3.10, 2.85 and 2.89. From the table, item 2 and 3 had the highest mean values of 3.44 implying that the level of poverty and discrimination against people living with disability were the major reason why they fail to access tertiary education and the least reason was lack of interest which had the lowest mean response score of 2,81.

In Fig 1, the focus group discussion revealed that the respondents believed that some of the personal reasons limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education are:

- Change of mind set
- Discrimination and prejudice
- Inferiority complex
- Isolation
- Lack of accessibility
- Lack of encouragement
- Lack of funding or sponsorship
- Lack of technology
- Low self-esteem
- Poor healthcare
- Social isolation
- Stigmatization and inferiority complex
- Unsuitable learning materials

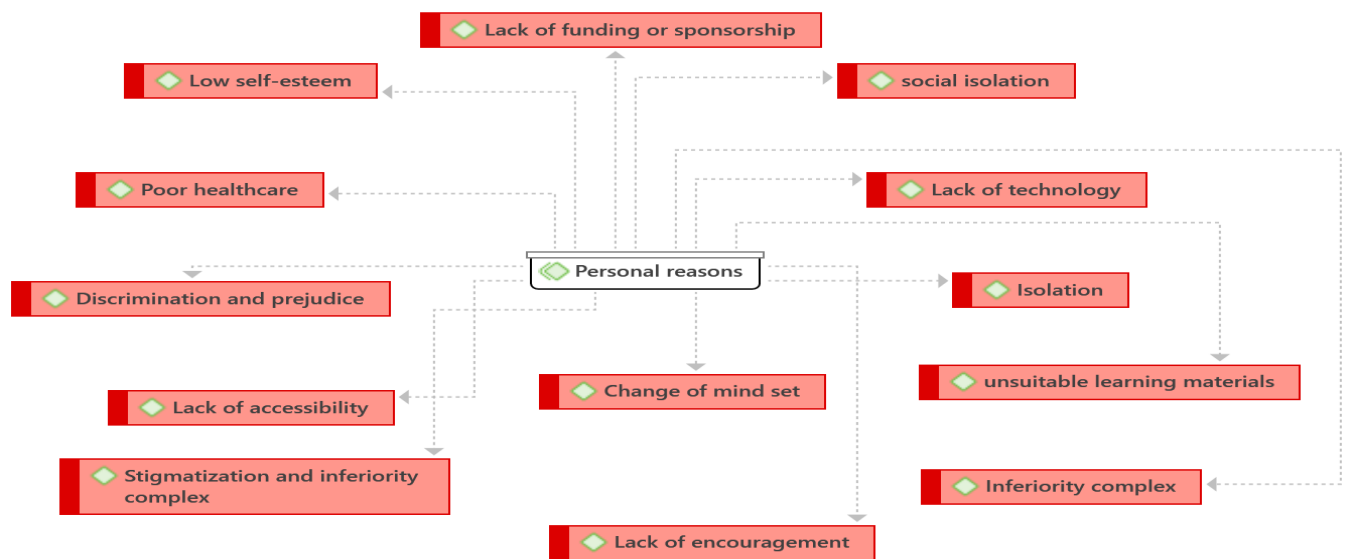


Fig. 1: Personal Reasons for Not Accessing Tertiary Education

Research Question One: What are the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Score on Institutional Factors Limiting People with Disability from Accessing Tertiary Education

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
7	The admission process is not favourable across most tertiary institutions	3.15	.843	Agree
8	There is no disability service centers in the tertiary institutions of interest	3.28	.746	Agree
9	Shortage of experts in special needs education is a major inhibiting factor	3.39	.687	Agree
10	There are no relevant infrastructure in most schools to take care of the needs of people with disability	3.33	.868	Agree
11	The courses offered in most of the institutions are not suitable for people with disability	2.66	1.061	Agree
12	Shortage of teaching and learning materials that are necessary for classroom engagement	3.19	.722	Agree

Table 2 indicated that items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 had mean response scores of 3.15, 3.28, 3.39, 3.33, 2.66 and 3.19. The major mean response was from item 9 with mean score of 3.39 and followed by item 10 with mean value of 3.33. This implied that shortage of experts in special need education as well as lack of relevant infrastructure were the critical inhibitors to access to tertiary education for PLWD while the courses offered was the least of the limiting institutional factors with mean score of 2.66 as shown in the table.

Similarly, from the FGD conducted with the respondents as indicated in Fig 2, they pointed out various institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education include:

- Absence of assistive technology
- Architectural or infrastructural barriers due to design patterns
- Expensive special school
- In need of special school
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of specific information

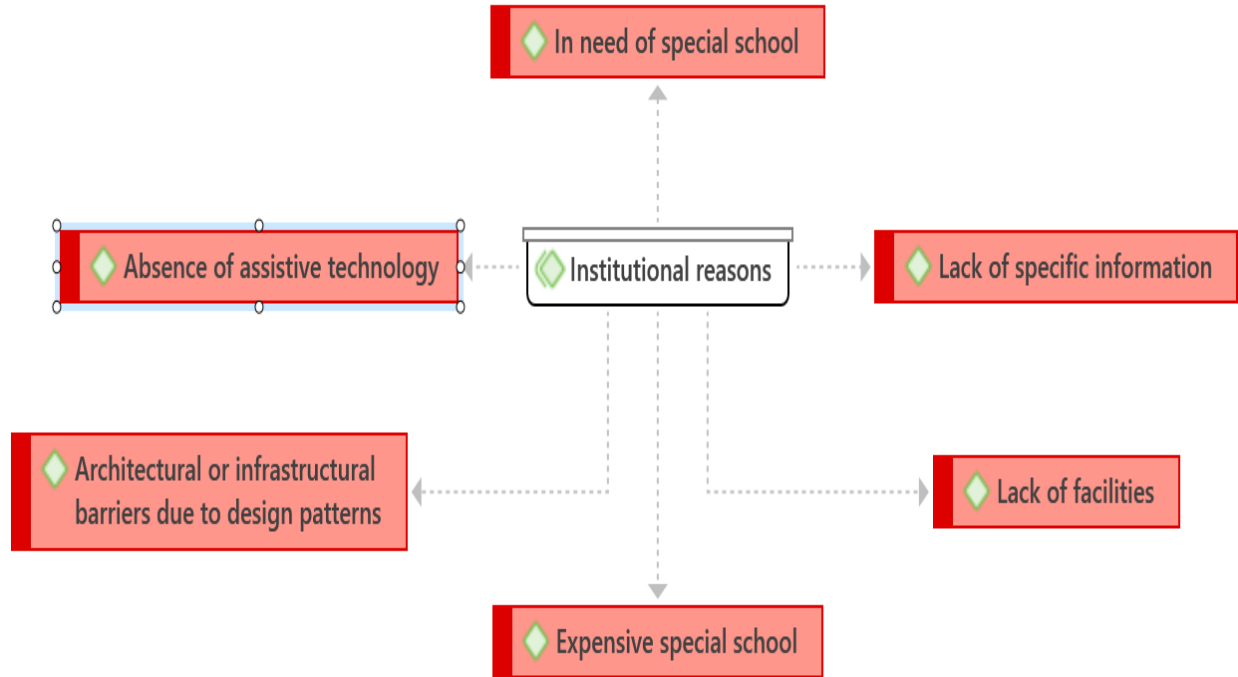


Fig. 2: Institutional Factors Limiting Access to Tertiary Education for PLWD

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State

Variable	n	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Sig. value	Decision
Students	80	158	33.06	1.96	0.000	Rejected
Non-Students	80					

Table 3 indicated that the value of t-calculated of 33.06 was above the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 158 degree of freedom and as such the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education

in Bayelsa State. Similarly, the significant value was 0.00 which was less than the p-value of 0.05 and supports the earlier assertion that a significant difference existed between the responses of both categories of respondents. Averagely, it was deduced that a significant difference existed between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

Table 4: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State

Variable	n	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Sig. value	Decision
Students	80	158	34.11	1.96	0.000	Rejected
Non-Students	80					

Table 4 revealed that the value of t-calculated of 34.11 was above the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 158 degree of freedom and as such the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State. Similarly, the significant value was 0.00 which was less than the p-value of 0.05 and supports the earlier assertion that a significant difference existed between the responses of both categories of respondents. Averagely, it was deduced that a significant difference existed between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Personal Factors Limiting People with Disability from Accessing Tertiary Education

The respondents of the study identified that poverty which is a basic economic challenge was a major personal factor which made it difficult for them to access tertiary education as and at when required. Opini (2012) also conducted a study that equally showed that poverty is a limiting factor to education of several people including PLWD. This means that the economic status of the respondents is a personal inhibitor which makes it difficult for some of these individuals to proceed to higher education. Similarly, they agreed that fear of discrimination was another major personal factor that hindered them from accessing tertiary education. The fear of discrimination makes it

difficult for PLWD to come out and interact with others and this is very critical given the fact that the school is a social environment where teachers need to interact with students and discriminating against PLWD will hinder them from even going to school whether at the tertiary level or across other levels. Supporting this assertion, Thompson-Ebanks (2014) noted that health issues, feelings of inadequacy, a lack of sense of belonging, a lack of desire to attend college were personal factors that hindered PLWD from attending school and this even leads to further discrimination both within and outside the school environment.

Lack of information was also identified as a personal factor that limits PLWD from accessing tertiary education. The lack of information implies that PLWD are unable to get information when required and this has the capacity of limiting their chances of getting access to tertiary education. The respondents also agreed that lack of basic requirements was also a challenge. This means that basic requirements needed to access tertiary education such as elementary qualification like Senior Secondary Certificate requirement, age declaration, and other basic needs. This means that some of these respondents lack these requirements and this made it difficult for some of them to access tertiary education.

On the other hand, socio-cultural beliefs and orientation were also identified as a personal constraint that hinder their access to tertiary education. Algolaylat, Alodat, Muhidat and Almadanin (2023) agreed to this finding by stating that individual attitude is a challenge to accessing tertiary education for some of these individuals. This means that some of the respondents held social and cultural beliefs and orientations that limited their access to tertiary education. This means that social factors as well as cultural factors combine to hinder some PLWD from accessing tertiary education. This will require a total reorientation in order to eliminate these social and cultural beliefs that hinder them from accessing tertiary education. Lack of interest was also identified as a factor that made it difficult for these individuals to enter into school. The FGD held with the students also identified inferiority complex and lack of proper mindset as personal inhibitors to accessing tertiary education. It was equally revealed that there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the personal factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

Institutional Factors Limiting People with Disability from Accessing Tertiary Education

The respondents selected for the study agreed that the major institutional factor hindering their access to tertiary education was shortage of experts in special need education. This means that most of these institutions lacked experts who are skilled in delivering special need to students who fall in the category of PLWD. This implies that certain teaching and learning activities cannot take place in the schools because the schools lack the required expertise to teach these individuals. This no doubt hinders PLWD from accessing tertiary education as they are likely not to get the right kind of education.

Infrastructure deficit was equally reported from the respondents as an inhibitor to accessing tertiary education in the State. In fact, this finding agrees with that of Kabuta (2014) where 75% of the respondents agreed that higher education institutions' infrastructures were available but inadequate. This means that some of these schools may not have the required infrastructure that will make it easy for these individual to have a smooth stay in the school. Infrastructure plays a key role in teaching and learning both in special and regular schools and their unavailability can make schooling unappealing. The respondents alluded to the fact that they are unable to access tertiary education since the infrastructure required are either unavailable or unsuitable.

It was equally pointed out from the responses of the respondents that disability service centres were not available for them and this limited access to tertiary education. Disability service centres are important for meeting the peculiar educational needs of PLWD but when they are not available, it makes it difficult for them to access professional services such as counselling which may be required for successful stay in school. In fact, Nyavor (2020) noted that some of the resources provided by some of these institutions are not relevant to the needs of PLWD and this necessitates the creation of disability service centres. These centres which often provide rapid response to the needs of learners and are critical to the entire stay of students with any form of disability on campus. The absence of such services as this has been responsible for why some PLWD either consider other educational options or stay out of formal school especially at the tertiary level.

Shortage of teaching and learning materials were equally identified as an institutional constraint to the respondents from accessing tertiary education. These resources enable students to engage in meaningful learning that will develop their entire domain and as such the learners cannot harness the full benefits of being in school when these resources are not available. The admission process was also identified as an institutional constraint limiting access and this suggests that the admission process might not have given these individuals a level playing ground despite the fact that there are existing standards for admission. This is because some of these applicants have unfavourable histories prior to access tertiary education and this is usually not considered when accessing tertiary education.

The courses offered in these schools were also identified as an institutional bottleneck which suggests that some of the programmes in these institutions may not meet the expectation of these individuals. Agreeing to this finding, the study by Mosia (2017) indicated that students with disabilities have limited choice of courses or programmes due to poor administration of concessions, lack of educational resources, inflexible teaching methods and curricula and this remains a major institutional challenge. Tertiary institutions therefore need to consider courses that will be favourable to PLWD and help them contribute meaningfully to society after graduation which is an important factor that must be considered by these institutions for PLWD. The FGD also showed that the respondents agreed that infrastructure was a basic institutional constraint to accessing tertiary education and they also identified that the expensive nature of education was

also a constraint and this will continue to limit PLWD from accessing tertiary education except the narrative is changed. It was also established that significant difference existed between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the institutional factors limiting people with disability from accessing tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study was that;

1. There existed a significant difference in the personal and institutional factors limiting access to tertiary education among students and non-students with disability in Bayelsa State.
2. Poverty and fear of discrimination were the major personal factors while shortage of experts was the major institutional factor limiting access to tertiary education for people living with disabilities in Bayelsa State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations draw from the findings of the study:

1. Government at the federal and state levels need to enact and implement laws that will secure the rights of PLWD as well as punish offenders for violating the rights of these individuals especially their right to education across all levels.
2. The government needs to establish special fund that will be used to address the educational needs of people living with disability across all levels of education to improve their chances of accessing formal education at all levels.
3. The government in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) need to set up functional counselling centres in the State. PLWD need to be exposed to regular counselling programmes within and outside the institutions as this is needed to overcome any form of discrimination.

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