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LIBRARY FUNDING AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

One principal factor determining the provision of the required information resources and facilities that meet the needs of physically challenged students is funding. This study investigated library funding and physically challenged students in Nigerian universities, Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 236 librarians in 17 public universities in South-west, Nigeria. Total enumeration sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument of data collection was questionnaire. Out of the 236 copies of the questionnaire administered, 171 copies were retrieved, representing 72.5% response rate. Data collected were analysed using percentage, frequency count and statistical mean. The study found that: the library facilities for physically challenged students in universities are walkway free of obstacles, clear and well lit signs in the building, and automatic doors; the challenges faced in providing services for physically challenged students include lack of funds to acquire special equipment, costly equipment, and lack of orientation on how to use the library; and the budgetary provision for meeting the library facilities needed by the physically challenged students is low. It was recommended that the management of the library should provide facilities that can help the physically challenged students use the libraries; consideration should be given to the physically challenged students in the architectural design of the library; and a significant portion of the library budget should be devoted to acquiring the facilities that can ease the use of the library by the physically challenged students.

Keywords: Library facilities, Library funding, Physically challenged students, University libraries, Nigerian universities, Libraries

Introduction

In line with the Nigerian constitution which prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of disability, universities in Nigeria admit students to their various academic programmes on the basis of merit, including physically challenged students. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) enacted in 2006 is a legally binding instrument that guarantees persons with challenges to inclusive education (Phukubje and Ngoepe, 2017). One of the educational rights of students is the right to access library facilities and information sources and services of their institutions (Bodaghi and Zainab, 2013). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that came into operation in 2015 emphasized provision of information to persons with challenges. In 2015, after the completion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals advocates inclusive and quality education for all (Goal 4). Target 8 centres on building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability

and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (United Nations, 2017). Despite all these, it is noted that students with physical challenges in Nigeria are still facing some difficulties in accessing and using libraries resources. Evidence abound that most of the university libraries in Nigeria have no special provision for the physically challenged students (Lawal-Solarin, 2012; Anjiode, 2010). This is evident in the architectural design of most of the academic libraries in Nigeria whereby students on wheelchairs cannot easily enter into the libraries let alone accessing the books on shelves.

Physical challenge is an abnormality of body structure, appearance, organ and system functioning. Physical challenges are conditions that obstruct individuals from effectively performing their daily tasks (Todaro 2005). Adamu (2009) posits that there are more than 19 million physically challenged people in Nigeria. The World report on disability published in 2011 revealed that about 25 million Nigerians had one form of challenge or the other. A good number of them face some human rights abuses such as discrimination, and lack of access to education (Ewang, 2019). The World Bank reveals that 20% of the poor people in the world are living with disability, majority of who are in Africa. The vast majority of students living with challenge experience challenges in accessing library information resources which tend to affect their academic life.

In Nigeria, the Division of Special Education in the Federal and State Ministry of Education is responsible for the educational needs of physically challenged students, which provides divergent contexts for advancing special education. The global best practice in education is to make education all inclusive for the various categories of people. Mandatory Special Education Programmes were introduced in the United States in 1975 in which Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was passed by the United States Congress in response to discrimination against the students with disabilities by public educational agencies. This was later modified and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Anjiode, 2010).

United Nations Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2013) reveals that 10% of the world's population (650 million people) are living with a challenge of one form or another. These include deformity, loss of limbs, blindness, deafness and mental retardation. On January 23, 2019, the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, was passed into law in Nigeria (Ewang, 2019). The Act prohibits educational institutions from denying students of the benefits of education on the basis of disability. In spite of this, it is only the universities that run special education and have learning resources for the people with challenges that admit students with special physical challenge (Visual and hearing impairments) in Nigeria. Most of these students find it difficult to access information resources in the libraries. Meanwhile, the task of providing learning and educational resources in universities falls within the realm of the library (Chaputula and Mapulanga, 2017). Ahmad (2015) claims that the Act requires the design of libraries to ensure that they are physically accessible to students with challenges; acquire the required materials and assistive devices through which students with challenges can access their collections; and bring in services that address their special needs.

Provision of educational resources and facilities that meet the needs of the physically challenged students depends substantially on the budgetary provision for the university and the proportion of the fund allocated for the acquisition of library resources. Funding is a critical feature of a functional university library. Library funding deals with provision of financial resources to acquire valuable library resources and facilities to meet the information needs of the

patrons. Funding models for academic libraries vary vastly based on ownership of the institutions, whether it is private or public (Onomeh and Okiy, 2011). University fund administration can be categorized into three namely, recurrent, capital and research. The parent institutions are the major funders of university libraries. The decision on the facilities to acquire for the libraries is made by the university governing authorities. Therefore, the direction of library funds is determined by the governing authorities. More importantly, since the proportion of the physically challenged students in universities is usually small, efforts to ensure easy use of the library and its resources are not given much recognition in library funding.

As part of the agreement reached in 1992 by the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Federal Government of Nigeria, the National Universities Commission, by memorandum dated 18th January, 1993, mandated that a separate account should be opened for the library (Awala-Ale, 2012). Also, in a bid to ensure inclusive education for all as proposed by UNESCO (1993), a significant portion of the budget should be high marked to attend to the needs of the physically challenged students while planning the library building. These funds should cover: architectural design – lifters; physical facilities - clutches, wheel chairs, ramps, etc.; information resources - books, brails, juls and electronics; and staff trained specifically to serve the physically challenged students.

Acquisition of library facilities and information resources is capital intensive. Universities spend a great proportion of their budgetary allocations on acquisition of up-to-date information resources. Since accreditation of academic programmes in universities relies greatly on the available relevant information resources (books, journals, reference materials, etc) in the library, the universities cannot but pay attention to the needs of the libraries. However, evidence shows that little consideration is given to the acquisition of resources that can serve the needs of the physically challenged students in universities in Nigeria (Ponera, 2015; Iroeze, Umunnakwe and Eze, 2017; Lawal-Solarin, 2012; Anjiode, 2010). Aside the universities that run programmes on special education, only few Nigerian universities have budgetary plan for the physically challenged students in terms of acquiring the resources that will make movement and learning easy for them. This has caused many physically challenged students to believe that they are not adequately fit into the university environment, leading to learned helplessness. As a result of this, this study aims at investigating the consideration given to the physically challenged students in Nigerian universities in library funding.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. investigate the facilities available for physically challenged students in libraries;
- ii. find out the extent of challenges facing libraries in providing services for the physically challenged students; and
- iii. ascertain the extent of budgetary provision for meeting the library facilities needed by physically challenged students.

Library Facilities Available for Physically Challenged Students

There is perpetual growth in the number of physically challenged students in Nigerian universities. This is due to general rise in world population, improvement in medical services and medical technologies which increase the chances of survival of infants with challenges, decrease in funding for health services, increase in the cost of healthcare services which puts more children at risks for birth defects, increase in road accident leading to physical challenge, and global economic recession which reduces the propensity to provide aid to poor people, accidents victims and families with physically challenged (Echezona, Osadebe and Asogwa, 2011). A study by Ponera (2015) reveals the failure of libraries to make budgetary provision for facilities such as mobile facilities, adjustable shelves, chairs, audio visual and multimedia services, and shelves that can make libraries easily accessible by the physically challenged students.

Iroeze, Umunnakwe and Eze (2017) investigated library services for the physically challenged in South-East, Nigeria and found that information resources available in the public libraries for the physically challenged such as: braille books, talking books, moon books, sign language books, text books, theses/dissertation, and Internet and digital resources are in low supply. Echezona, Osadebe and Asogwa (2011) identified the library facilities needed by physically challenged students to include: architectural design – lifters; physical facilities - clutches, wheel chairs, ramps, etc.; information resources - books, brails, juls and electronics; and trained staff to serve them.

Challenges Libraries Faced in Providing Services for Physically Challenged Students

Physically challenged students face a number of barriers in their quest for education. Adesokan (2003) posits that most physically challenged students suffer rejection, isolation, and maltreatment from other students. Viney (2006) observes that physically challenged students encounter physical access limitations in retrieving books from the library shelves. Okoli (2010) notes that the architectural design of the libraries discourages many physically challenged students from accessing library resources. Lawal-Solarin (2012) surveys library and information services to physically challenged students in academic libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria, and found that many physically challenged students encounter problems accessing library services as typical libraries work best for able-bodied users (Rumsey, 2002). Pivik (2002) observes that one of the main problems facing physically challenged students is barrier in the physical environment such as the surroundings of the school library, the entrance, stairs, elevators or ramp, etc.

There are students with physical challenges in schools in all parts of the world. The physical challenges have a vast long-term adverse effect on students' ability to carry out normal educational activities. The challenges faced by physically challenged students and the associated frustrations, stereotyping, derogatory labeling, depersonalization, rejection, isolation, and maltreatment, have been noted in some literature (Momodu, 2013; Ponera, 2015, Iavishe and Isibika, 2018). Physically challenged students suffer physical disabilities, or chronic sickness leading to educational disadvantages. In spite of the fact that right of access to information is a fundamental right to all and sundry, the greater proportion of libraries in African universities are not accessible to movement challenged students (Kavishe and Isibika, 2018). Architectural barrier is usually the difficulty noted in most library buildings (Eskay and China, 2013). Most of the library buildings have steps, high book shelves, narrow doorways and lack elevators (Kavishe and Isibika, 2018). Most of the physically challenged students, especially those on wheel-chair, cannot climb stairs and no budgetary provision to buy a ramp or a stair lift (Carson, 2004).

Onsinyo (2018) conducted a study on challenges of accessing library and information services for students with physical challenges in university libraries in Meru County, Kenya and found that the parking areas, pathways and entrances to the library building were not accessible to the students living with challenges. The study further found that the library aisles were not kept wide and clear for wheelchair users, and that none of the libraries investigated had elevators or access ramps in place of stairs. Service desks, shelves and book were not accessible to physically challenged students. Physical library resource needs can only be met by providing a balanced visual environment, safe structure, sufficient sanitary facilities, and good terminal environment (Momodu, 2013). Chimhenga (2017) posits that experience at Zimbabwe Open University, Bulawayo Campus reveals that physically challenged students could not fully use the library resources, and that the few that visit the library could not get the services that suit their challenged needs.

Unconscious discriminatory practices in the acquisition of library information resources in the budgetary allocations of universities are affecting the physically challenged students. Most academic libraries allocate a vast portion of their funds on acquisition of information resources and infrastructure that can only be used by able-bodied students. Libraries have to know that the library resources are meant to be accessed by both able-bodied and physically challenged students. Anjode (2010) considers the library services for the physically challenged students which must have budgetary allocation under the following areas: physical access to buildings, service counters, workstations, reading rooms, and shelves where possible, library entrance with clear openings or automatic doors, ramps outside and within the building, elevators, barrier-free hallways effective lighting, accessible tables, computer stations and public service desks, accessible public areas such as toilets and public telephone, and easily accessible shelves.

The barriers faced by the physically challenged students in using the library include:

1. Steps in the library building which obstruct students on wheel-chairs
2. High book shelves
3. Narrow doorways and lack of elevators
4. Lack of financial budget to buy the material and equipment needed for efficient services to the physically challenged students.

Owing to the fact that the libraries have no consideration for the physically challenged students in the apportionment of funds, they fail to:

1. make an arrangement with skilled manpower to produce the material needed by the physically challenged students
2. train library personnel to attend to the physically challenged students
3. consider the physically challenged students in the architectural design of the libraries
4. allocate funds for the acquisition of information resources needed by the physically challenged students
5. purchase facilities that can aid the movement of the physically challenged students within the libraries.

Budgetary Provision for Libraries

Funding is very important in providing quality library service. Fund glues the building, collections and staff together and enables the library to achieve its goals. The budgetary allocation of universities for libraries to acquire the resources to meet the information needs of the clientele is usually huge (Onome and Okiy, 2011). Emojoorho (2004) states that libraries in public universities get budgetary allocations from government allocations, library fees, gifts,

endowment funds and other sources which include fines, sale of duplicate materials and photocopying. There have been financial challenges in provision of resources that will help the physically challenged students in accessing library resources (Iroeze, Ummunnakwe and Eze, 2017). Nnadozie and Anyanwu (2008) state that establishment of a section for the physically challenged in state libraries is faced with financial crises. Meanwhile, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Policy on Education (1975), advised public libraries which also serve the physically challenged users, to seek other sources of fund.

Poor budgetary allocation is one of the greatest challenges facing provision of library services for the physically challenged students in Nigerian universities. Academic libraries are not well funded to cater adequately for the needs of the physically challenged students. Founding without adequately funding hampers the achievement of 'education for all' initiative of the government. Budgetary allocation for the procurement of equipment that will make accessibility of library resources easy for the physically challenged students in Nigerian universities is usually inadequate. It is even believed that special budgetary consideration should be provided for the physically challenged students in library funding. Iroeze, Ummunnakwe and Eze (2017) advise that allocation of financial resources and wider varieties of funds should be made available for the libraries to enable them continue to exist, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the services they provide for the physically challenged students.

A number of funding challenges are facing academic libraries. These, according to Aman (2010), include:

1. Inflationary prices for books, serials, audio-visual and other types of library materials;
2. Budget cuts and demands on budgets for technology, databases, special programs and services;
3. Acquiring more new technologies in addition to the traditional books and;
4. Budgetary demands from multidisciplinary studies, new programmes, etc.

Libraries are funded majorly by their parent institutions which is not enough in the current information age. Gone are the days when academic institutions allocate about 4% of their total educational and general (E & G) expenditure fund to their libraries (Aman, 2010). Meanwhile, ACRL Standards for College and Research Libraries have bargained for 6%, which some institutions still fail to meet. The situation is deplorable today as academic libraries are getting proportionally less of the resources of the universities despite the fact that more courses are introduced and more academic programmes spring from the existing ones. Inadequate budgetary provision greatly impedes the provision of facilities and information resources for university students living with disabilities in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population for the study was 236 librarians in the libraries of the 17 public universities in South-west, Nigeria. Due to the manageable size of the population, the entire population was used as the sample size for the study. This is in concordance with the position of Baxter and Babbie (2004); Egbule and Okobia (2001) that when the population is manageable, the entire population can be used for the study. Total enumeration sampling technique was adopted for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Out of the 236 copies of the questionnaire administered, 171 copies were retrieved, representing 72.5% response rate. The data generated from the returned copies of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical tool such as the simple percentage, frequency counts and statistical mean. These were carried out using SPSS version 21.

RESULTS

Table 1: Library Facilities Available for Physically Challenged Students in Libraries

Facilities	Mean
Walkway free of obstacles	3.01
Clear and well lit signs in the building	2.93
Automatic doors	2.76
Lift for multi-storied buildings	2.44
Adjustable furniture	2.03
Ramp	1.97
Ideal shelves of about 750-2000mmm from floor level	1.79
Low desk service points	1.72
Public service desks	1.63
Special pavement for wheelchairs user	1.44
Crutches	1.09
Walking sticks	0.93
Braces	0.87

Table 1 reveals that the library facilities available for physically challenged students in libraries are walkway free of obstacles ($X=3.01$), clear and well lit signs in the building ($X=2.93$), automatic doors ($X=2.76$), lift for multi-storied buildings ($X=2.44$), and adjustable furniture ($X=2.03$). However, facilities such as Special pavement for wheelchairs user ($X=1.44$), crutches ($X=1.09$), walking sticks ($X=0.93$, and braces ($X=0.87$) are barely provided for the students.

Table 2: Challenges Facing Libraries in Providing Services for Physically Challenged Students

Challenges	Mean
Lack of funds to acquire special equipment	3.49
Costly equipment	3.42
Low patronage by physically challenged students	3.15
Lack of free walkways for physically challenged students to access library services	3.06
Lack of orientation on how to use the library by the physically challenged students	2.97
The doors are not user friendly for those on wheelchairs	2.74
Lack of university initiatives to meet the needs of physically challenged students	2.39
Non-recognition of physically challenged students as a special group requiring special assistance	1.99
Lack of knowledge of issues affecting physically challenged students	1.78
Lack of commitment from top management	1.57
No institutional policies on library services for physically challenged students	1.21

Table 2 shows that the challenges libraries faced in providing services for physically challenged students include: lack of funds to acquire special equipment ($X=3.49$), costly equipment ($X=3.42$), low patronage by physically challenged students ($X=3.15$), lack of

walkways for physically challenged students to access library services ($X=3.06$), and lack of orientation on how to use the library by the physically challenged students ($X=2.97$). However, the challenges such as Lack of knowledge of issues affecting physically challenged students ($X=1.78$), lack of commitment from top management ($X=1.57$), lack of institutional policies on library services for physically challenged students ($X=1.21$) are minimal.

Table 3: Extent of Budgetary Provision for Meeting the Library Facilities Needed by Physically Challenged Students

Facilities	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean
Clear and well lit signs in the building	107	119	8	2	3.40
Walkway free of obstacles	84	86	61	5	3.06
Public service desks	27	45	102	62	2.16
Ramps	9	22	141	64	1.90
Low desk service point	16	21	119	80	1.87
Ideal shelves of 750-2000mm from floor level	8	22	134	72	1.86
Adjustable furniture	3	21	151	61	1.86
Lifts for multi-storied building	3	33	129	71	1.86
Automatic doors	4	29	129	74	1.84
Walking stick	4	21	122	89	1.75
Braces	3	16	118	99	1.67
Wheel-chairs	3	15	110	108	1.63
Crutches	2	15	104	115	1.59
Average Mean					2.04
Criterion Mean					2.50

Table 3 reveals that the average mean ($X=2.04$) is less than the criterion mean ($X=2.50$) which means that the extent of budgetary provision for meeting the library facilities needed by the physically challenged students is low. Aside clear and well lit signs in the building ($X=3.40$), walkway free of obstacles ($X=3.06$), and public service desks ($X = 2.16$), the finding evidently shows that the libraries never give priority to acquisition of facilities that will make the accessibility to library easy for the physically challenged students.

DISCUSSION

Funding determines the wellness of a library. The opinion of the respondents revealed that the libraries need to acquire adequate facilities such as walkway free of obstacles, automatic doors, adjustable furniture, etc, that can aid the physically challenged students in making good use of the library facilities. This finding agree with that of Iroeze, Umunnakwe and Eze (2017) which investigated library services for the physically challenged in South-East, Nigeria and found that libraries are supposed to provide barrier-free hallways, public service desks, adjustable table/ideal shelves, public service desks, and accessible public areas such as toilets which can enable the physically impaired individuals to use the library. However, their studies showed that the libraries failed to provide the facilities. This finding further agrees with that of Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) which found that the design of library buildings and provision of library equipment should enable the physically challenged individuals to access the library resources and facilities. Meanwhile, Harris and Oppenheim (2003) posited that walkways should

be free of obstacles, service points should have low desks for physically challenged users, and the doors to the library should be wide enough such that clients using wheelchairs are able to access the library. This also aligns with the position of Harris and Oppenheim (2003) and Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) that easy entry of the physically challenged students into the library can only be achieved by using electric doors and that electronic lifts should be provided for high-rise buildings so that people with impairment could easily access the upper floors of the library. The finding shows that the libraries are supposed to provide facilities to support the physically challenged students in accessing the library resources. This buttresses the finding of a study by Lawal-Solarin (2012) which revealed that 2(8.3%) of the physically challenged students are using wheelchairs for mobility, 19(79.2%) are on crutches, while 3(12.5%) are on braces.

The study shows that libraries face a number of challenges in providing services for the physically challenged students. This finding corroborates the assertion of Chilemba (2012) that most libraries in Malawi are not accessible to people with challenges. Koulikourdi (2008) said that while academic and special libraries in Greece are making effort to provide the facilities and resources needed by the physically challenged students, national and school libraries mostly lacked these equipment. Equally, investigations by Todaro (2005) in Argentina and Bodaghi and Zainab (2012) in Iran showed that people with challenges could not easily access the libraries. Epp (2006) observed that facilities for people with challenges are costly. Chaputula (2011) claimed that libraries in Malawi experience challenges increasing financial resource constraints in providing facilities and resources for the physically challenged persons. Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) claimed that lack of knowledge by library staff regarding disability issues is a big issue. This finding agrees with the position of these erudite researchers.

The finding of this study also justifies the position of Kavishe and Isibika (2018) which investigated provision of library services for users in wheelchairs at Ardhi University and University of Dar es Salaam Libraries and found that the libraries lacked the existence of special section for users on wheelchair, elevators, special pavement for wheelchairs user, standby library staff to assist such users, toilet facilities for wheel chair users, automatic doors, and low shelves that host library collections.

The study also shows that the extent of budgetary provision for meeting the library facilities needed by the physically challenged students is low. This is probably due to the weak budgetary allocation available to the libraries which hamper them from meeting the revolutionary trends in providing the necessary facilities that can aid the effective use of the library resources by the physically challenged students. This justifies the argument of Stoffle (1991) that finance is a major factor in library revolution. The failure of the libraries to meet the budgetary need to acquire the facilities that would enable easy use of the libraries by the physically challenged students as revealed in this study has earlier been acknowledged by Rifaudeen (2015) who claimed that the rising costs of library facilities and decreasing budget affect the quantity and quality of facilities libraries can procure; mostly now that government revenue has depleted. Most of the academic libraries in Nigeria, except the few institutions that offer special education, have repeatedly failed to provide the basic facilities such as that ramps, low desk service point, lifts for multi-storied building, automatic doors that can make the use of the libraries easy for the physically challenged students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Marginalization of the physically challenged students has long been acknowledged and is still in operation in the provision of academic infrastructure and facilities in academic

environment, including the library. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) enacted in 2006 is a clear indication that the physically challenged individuals have equal right to enjoy educational facilities with their able-bodied counterparts. This is also evident as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enacted in 2015 emphasizes provision of information to persons with disabilities and advocates inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning. However, this study has found that students with physical challenges in Nigeria face uphill challenges in accessing libraries. Starting with the architectural design of the libraries to provision of facilities such as adjustable furniture, automatic doors, wheel-chairs, low desk service point, and clear and well lit signs in the building, the physically challenged students are still experiencing perpetual marginalization.

Based on the findings in this study, the researcher has come to a conclusion that the failure of the libraries to provide the basic facilities that can aid the use of the libraries by the physically challenged students is sufficiently traceable to inadequate fund. The shrinking budget and high cost of library facilities hamper the libraries to make adequate plan for the purchase of the facilities that can be used by the physically challenged students.

In line with the findings of this study, it is recommended that the management of the library should have a deliberate plan and sustained effort to acknowledge the legitimacy of the physically challenged students by providing the facilities that can help them use the libraries. Consideration should be made for the physically challenged students in the architectural design and delineation of obstacle free walkways in the library. Libraries should meet the information need of the patrons by making available the needed information resources. Physically challenged students should not be neglected in the provision of library services. Information resources for them should be physically present and within their reach in the libraries. Aside the funds from the governments, alternative sources of funding should be sourced by the libraries. Lastly, a significant portion of the library budget should be high marked to acquire the facilities that can be used by the physically challenged students.

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