Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.9 No.2 June, 2026; pg. 415 – 432; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

BARRIERS TO VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED IN CALABAR, CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE: IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

[1] Ita Adomi Mbina, [2] Justice Chukwudi Ulunta, [3] Ferdinand Ojonugwa Omoja, [4]Sunday Lami, [5] Nnaemeka Nkemakolam Iroha

[1,2.3,4,] Department of social work, Federal University of Allied Health Sciences, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria
[5] Department of Social Work, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria
itambina@fuahse.edu.ng,justiceulunta@fuahse.edu.ng,ferdinandomoja@fuahse.edu.ng,lamisunday@fuahse.edu.ng,pastoremekairoha81@gmail.com

Abstract

The main thrust of this study is to investigate factors militating against vocational rehabilitation and employability of the physically challenged in Calabar metropolis of Cross River State. The study adopted a cross–sectional survey design. The population comprised 375,196 people both the disabled and none disabled who were residing in the Calabar Municipality and Calabar South local government areas. From this target population, a sample of 612 from both rural and urban settings respectively served as respondents for the study, instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Barriers to Vocational Rehabilitation Awareness and Employability of the Physically Challenged in Calabar, Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State Questionnaire (BTVRAEPCCSDCRSQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at 0.78 to 0.98 using split-half reliability method. This reliability coefficient was considered high enough to justify the used of the instrument for the study. The research question was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Chi-square was used to analyzed the data of the study. The result showed that physically challenged persons with high level of income are more likely to engage in vocational rehabilitation than those with low level of income. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made that measures should be taken to promote vocational rehabilitation in the study area. This will go help in eradicating the barriers to vocational rehabilitation of the physically challenged population in the study area.

Keywords: Awareness, Barriers, Employability, Vocational Rehabilitation, Physically Challenged, Social Work

Introduction

Vocational rehabilitation involves the processes by which services improve a person's capacity for work, help them return to work or assume work duties at a permanent and sustainable level (Marnetoft, 2009). VR consist of services by a range of specialists who have training or experience related to working, workplaces, labour market, and health conditions, as well as activity and participation as they relate to work and employment (Council on Rehabilitation Education [CRE], 2010). As a holistic process, vocational rehabilitation providers can be based in traditional healthcare settings (e.g., clinics, hospitals) or those outside these traditional settings such as those in the community (e.g., work placement).

Vocational rehabilitation or related services may be publicly available (provided or coordinated by government agencies) or it can also be provided by private healthcare organizations or outpatient clinics or non-profit organizations (Finger, et al., 2012). Vocational rehabilitation services are based on individual needs and defined as resources or services a person might need to be employable or to be employed, such as assistive technology devices, counselling and skills development services (Suzuki et al., 2008). However, despite the importance of vocational rehabilitation of the physically challenged, people with disabilities still finds it difficult to access vocational rehabilitation services.

All over the world, people with mental, psychosocial and physical disabilities experience violations of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights (Drew, et al., 2011). There are many factors that affect disability and rehabilitation. Many of them have been recognized by different authors practicing in different parts of the world. For example, the Afghan society views 'empowerment' in a different light from the western societies. In Afghanistan as in many Asian countries, 'empowerment' of the individual is perceived as being selfish and undesirable (Thomas & Thomas, 2015). However, in Saudi Arabia the following factors influence the employability of the physically challenged after rehabilitation. Management factors: the availability of a large skilled workforce and high rate of unemployment are important factors for not hiring persons with disabilities. Cost factors: this has to do with the concern over occupational health, safety and expenses due to the higher rate of absenteeism associated with the employment of persons with disability. Social factors however have to do with the concern about negative responses by customers due to the stigma associated with the physically challenged. These appear to be important factors employers recognize when deciding to hire disabled people (Mansour, 2009). The problem of access to vocational rehabilitation services by the physically challenged is more felt in rural areas than in urban dwellings. Rural people are less healthy than urban people. Rural environments have fewer healthcare resources to address health problems and to promote health of rural populations. Inequalities in power, prestige, income, money, knowledge, education, and social connections are just a few conditions that put rural areas at a disadvantage (Burton et al., 2013).

In Africa, UN assertions to the rights of those with disabilities has recorded a remarkable impact in Africa, for instance, Article 24 of the United Nations Convention, reflects on the UN assertions on the rights of persons with disabilities mandates that disabled people should have full rights to education in inclusive settings such that this has informed policies to address the gap and encourage stakeholders to move from evidence to action to ensure the educational rights of disabled people in Africa (Chataika et al., 2012). For example, in 2006, Ghana passed a Disability Rights Bill which proposes that by 2016 Ghana will provide disabled persons in the country with a variety of services and equal employment opportunities (Reynolds, 2010). Unemployment among persons with disabilities in Ghana is high. The situation is worse for women with disabilities as they experience multiple disadvantages on account of gender and disability. The condition for women with disabilities in Ghana could be more complicated, given the intersection of disability, gender, poverty, cultural beliefs and practices (Naami et al., 2012).

Disability is still understood by many Nigerians in terms of an act of God, witchcraft activities, reincarnation and punishment for wrongdoing (Umeasiegbu & Harley, 2014). For example, some tribes in Nigeria still believe that certain disabilities such as mental illness and epilepsy are caused by possession of evil spirits. This belief in evil spirits as the cause of some disabilities is evident by the type of intervention that many family members of the person with mental illness or epilepsy seek for the person. It is common in Nigeria to find people with mental illness put in chains in some spiritual houses, churches and the houses of medicine men. Prayers and rituals are made, and herbs are given to the person with mental illness or epilepsy for cure of their illness. However, people also seek help from mental health hospitals (Word Health Organization [WHO], 2010).

Notwithstanding the problems associated with vocational rehabilitation, VR can be properly managed if adequate policies are formulated and proper measures are put in place for implementation especially when the major stakeholders in VR are qualified professionals, this is worth the effort because effective utilization of vocational and technical education and implementation of the programme will inculcate the necessary skills and competencies that would help the youth to be self-reliant (Enyekit et al., 2011). This would lead to the much-desired human capital development in the economy. Rehabilitation and social work share a common goal which is that of helping the individual to the fullest extent of independence and self-maintenance as his capacities permit. The National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services (NCHSP) states that: effective rehabilitation is achieved through the work of a well-integrated team of professionals from different disciplines including social work profession (Cooper, 2013). This highlights the importance of social work practice in the rehabilitation of people living with disabilities.

The primary concern of social work in this case is to enhance human wellbeing and to help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (Mathbor, 2007). Social Workers provide clients with interventions such as assessment, counselling, task-centered work, advice, education/information, advocacy, among others (Ngwu, 2014). The above studies were able to x-rayed the problems militating against vocational rehabilitation but failed to point out how those problems can be addressed by social workers. However, this study seeks to figure out how the problems of vocational rehabilitation and employability of the physically challenged can be addressed in Nigeria by social workers with particular interest in Calabar, Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the factors militating vocational rehabilitation and employability of the physically challenged in Calabar, metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the barriers to VR of people with disabilities in Calabar.
2. Determine the role of social work in addressing the barriers to VR of people with disabilities in Calabar.

Research questions

1. What are the barriers to VR of people with disabilities in Calabar, Cross River State?

2. Determine the role of social work in addressing the barriers to VR of people with disabilities in Calabar.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Amaehule and Enyekit (2010) asserts that vocational and technical education equips youths with technological skills and managerial skills to manage human and material resources of their own business through the acquisition of skills and competencies in areas of vocational and technical education. Despite these efforts, vocational rehabilitation programmes are not at its best (Banku & Ashi, 2016). Hernandez et al. (2007), in their qualitative and quantitative study in the United States explored the employment, VR, and Ticket to Work (TTW) experiences of people with disabilities, using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 74 working-age adults revealed that people with disabilities continue to experience significant barriers related to employment. Major barriers to employment were negative employer attitudes toward hiring workers with disabilities, lack of or unreliable transportation to and from job sites, and insufficient levels of formal education to compete successfully within the labour market. Regarding VR, participants expressed concerns with counselors, who they perceived as unresponsive and non-collaborative. Although there was general awareness of the TTW programme, accurate knowledge and utilization of the programme were quite limited.

Furthermore, Chiu et al., (2013) study to examine the factors that determine the employment of persons with disabilities in the United States. The study retrieved data from the rehabilitation services administration (RSA) 911 database in the fiscal year (FY) 2009, and used VR services as predictors to predict employment outcomes of people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) by hierarchical logistic regression. The study revealed that a total of 924 out of 1920 MS clients (48.1%) were successfully employed after receiving VR services. VR services were found to be associated with employment status. Kukka et al., (2016) study using mixed-methods to compare urban and rural supported employment programmes on barriers and facilitators with employment for veterans experiencing mental illnesses in United States. The study revealed that supported employment personnel from rural programmes perceived significantly more barriers to work success compared with urban personnel, particularly in the areas of access to services and a range of job-related factors, including job match and interpersonal relationships at the work site. In contrast, participants from urban programmes reported greater facilitators in the domain of mental health services. Qualitative findings add depth to the quantitative findings and highlight challenges in rural supported employment programmes impacting job development and job fit. Both urban and rural programmes experienced unique barriers.

A quantitative study by Olabiyi (2016) to assess the skill development programmes in woodwork and building trades offered to special needs learners in vocational rehabilitation centres in South West of Nigeria, revealed that the most important facilities are the lack of current books and periodicals in library, health clinic, machines and materials which marred the effectiveness of the programme, furthermore, the major constraints militating against effectiveness of programmes are; employment of rehabilitees not guaranteed after graduation, lack of funds on the part of rehabilitees to start their business after graduation and improper integration of rehabilitees by social agencies. The population of the study consisted of 216

respondents made of 131 woodwork and 85 building teachers, teaching woodwork and building trades in 12 VR centres.

However, Awe et al., (2010) quantitatively and qualitatively conducted a survey with a selected sample of the target population to identify challenges militating against effective vocational training in the Nigeria construction industry, and revealed that trade centres that produced well-trained artisans in the past have been converted to 'glorified' secondary schools. Poor or inadequate funding of technical and vocational education (TVE) had consistent agreements of 100 and 95% respectively. The responses are in consonance with lack of commitment to technical and vocational education on the part of the government, sordid implementation of vocational education policies and abandonment/truncation of past technical and vocational education (TVE) policies which had 91 and 95% agreement respectively. The poor image of TVE has made it less attractive to youths, parents and even the public. This is further demonstrated by the inadequate fund and attention given to TVE on the part of government.

For instance, available data indicate that 20.9%, 7.1% and 13% of total expenditures on education in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively went to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) of which 39.2%, 83.6% and 78.4% of yearly budget appropriations to NBTE in the same years were actually spent (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). However, Challenged and Eze, (2014) study investigates the availability and utilization of library resources and services to the physically challenged students in southeast, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design and a focus group discussion (FGD), the researcher collected data from three separate groups of physically challenged students (mobility, visual and hearing impaired), and the professional librarians who were the service providers in the polytechnic libraries. The findings revealed that general library materials are available (though some are outdated), paucity of specialized library resources for the mobility, hearing and visual impaired students, general lack of support resources in the library and a high extent of use of available resources and services. Problems of availability and utilization of library resources and services and the strategies to curb them were also identified.

Nanjwan and David, (2013) undertook a research study to determine Information and Communication Technology and persons with special needs in Calabar Municipality in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, survey research design was adopted for the study, using a randomly selected sample of one hundred and fifty persons with disabilities for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. The result of the analysis revealed that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) significantly relate with persons with visual and hearing impairments. The result also revealed that there is a significant difference between male and female persons with learning disability on their perception of information and communication technology (ICT). These individuals need information and communication technology (ICT) to enable them not to be denied their rights and opportunities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is effective in learning persons with special needs such as the visually and hearing impaired. This highlights the need for social workers to provide tailored support to people living with disabilities.

According to International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], the social work profession is founded on the principles of human rights and social justice. The IFSW stresses that the profession draws on theories of human development, social theory and social systems to facilitate individuals, organization, social and cultural changes. Furthermore, social workers have a pivotal role in the reorientation of people's perception and attitude towards those with disabilities. Factors militating against vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities as well as the challenges of people with disabilities can also be addressed by social workers through research that challenges repugnant cultural beliefs associated with disabilities and drive policies that promotes the effective implementation of vocational rehabilitation (Healy, 2008).

Heijnders and Van Der Meij (2006), posits that via group discussion sessions, seminars, and conferences, social workers can act as advocates on behalf of the physically challenged to the government for more effective protection against stigmatization, encouraging the government and non-governmental organizations as well as the non-disabled to develop positive attitudes towards the disabled for a social change. Disability mainstreaming in national employment strategies is not enough to meet up with the problems of PWD, rather effective mainstreaming which requires attention to implementation in practice will go a long way in ensuring that the disabled are carried along, and not simply in law. Social workers will always be there to serve as a link between the government and the physically challenged to ensure the proper application of policies that are geared towards improving the lives of the physically challenged.

The above studies show that a lot of research have been carried out on vocational rehabilitation of the physically challenged persons, however, the above studies failed to suggest ways of improving vocational rehabilitation and employability of the physically challenged persons in Calabar, Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria as well as the implication of social work in addressing these problems. To this end, the attitude of people towards those with disabilities, barriers to vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities as well as the implication of social work practice in Nigeria, constitute the basis for this study, with a view to encouraging the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations as well as the non- disabled to develop positive attitudes towards the disabled for a social change, with particular interest in Calabar, Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross–sectional survey design because it permits the researcher to obtain useful data in a short period of time from a sample as well as generalization of research results to the entire population of the study. The population comprised 375,196 people both the disabled and none disabled who were residing in the Calabar South and Calabar Municipal local government areas respectively. From this target population, a sample of 612 from both rural and urban settings respectively served as respondents for the quantitative aspect of the study. The sampling frame consisted of all the twenty-two (22) wards of Calabar, made up of twelve (12) wards in Calabar South Council and ten (10) wards in Calabar Municipal Council. The researcher further clustered the 22 wards/areas into two major areas based urban/rural

features, proximity and way of life. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Barriers to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employability of the Physically Challenged in Calabar Central Senatorial District of Cross River State Questionnaire (BVREPCCCSDCSQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument had three sections, A, B and C. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at 0.78 to 0.98 using split-half reliability method. This reliability coefficient was considered high enough to justify the used of the instrument for the study. The copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researchers with four research assistants trained for the purpose. At the end of the exercise, out of the 612 copies of questionnaire distributed, 574 copies of the questionnaire were collected back by the researcher and the research assistants. For ease of data preparation, codes were designed to each item and a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs of the instrument. The data collected for the study were analyzed using frequency tables, bar chat and pie chart.

Results

Table 4.1: *Percentage distribution of the respondents by gender (N=574)*

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	284	49.5
Female	290	50.5
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by sex. Data from the table show that majority 50.5% of the respondents were females while 49.5% were males.

Table 2: *Percentage distribution of the respondents by age (N=574)*

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25	142	24.7
26-33	149	25.9
34-41	99	17.3
42-49	116	20.3
50 and above	68	11.8
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The age of the respondents ranged from 18-50 years and above. Table 2 shows that out of six categories of the age groups, respondents between the age intervals of 26-33 years were noticeably more than those in any other age interval and accounted for 25.9% of the sample, followed by those aged 18-25 (24.7%), those who identified that they were in the age intervals of 42-49 years were 20.3%. Furthermore, those who stated that they were within the intervals of 34-41 years were 17.3%, and finally, those in the age intervals of 50 years and above were least in the sample and were 11.8%.

Table 3: *Percentage distribution of respondents by marital status (N=574)*

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	287	50.0
Married	189	32.9
Separated	10	1.8

Divorced	11	1.9
Widowed	77	13.4
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents 50.0% were single while married respondents constituted 32.9%. Small proportion of the respondents were separated or divorced from their partners (1.8% and 1.9%) respectively, while 13.4% were widowed. This showed that majority of the respondents were single followed by those that were married. Only small proportion of the respondents were divorced, separated or widowed.

Table 4: *Percentage distribution of the respondents by educational qualification (N=574)*

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	17	3
FSLC	56	9.7
WASC	397	69.2
Degree	107	18.1
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The finding in Table 4 shows the respondents' level of education. A critical look at the result in Table 4 showed that respondents with WASC were the highest in this study with 69.2% compared to other groups. For instance, those with degree were 18.1% followed by those with FSLC who constituted 9.7% and lastly, 3% of the respondents had no formal education. This implies that majority of the respondents have average education as they have successfully completed secondary education.

Table 5: *Percentage distribution of the respondents by religious affiliation (N=574)*

Religious affiliation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	547	95.3
Islam	8	1.4
African Trad. Rel.	19	3.3
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 5 shows the religion of the respondents. The result revealed that 95.3% of the respondents were Christians, and 1.4% were Muslims, while 3.3% belonged to African Traditional Religion. The findings revealed that the majority (95.3%) of the respondents used for the study were Christians and this is not surprising because the study was carried out in Calabar, Cross-River State which is predominantly Christians.

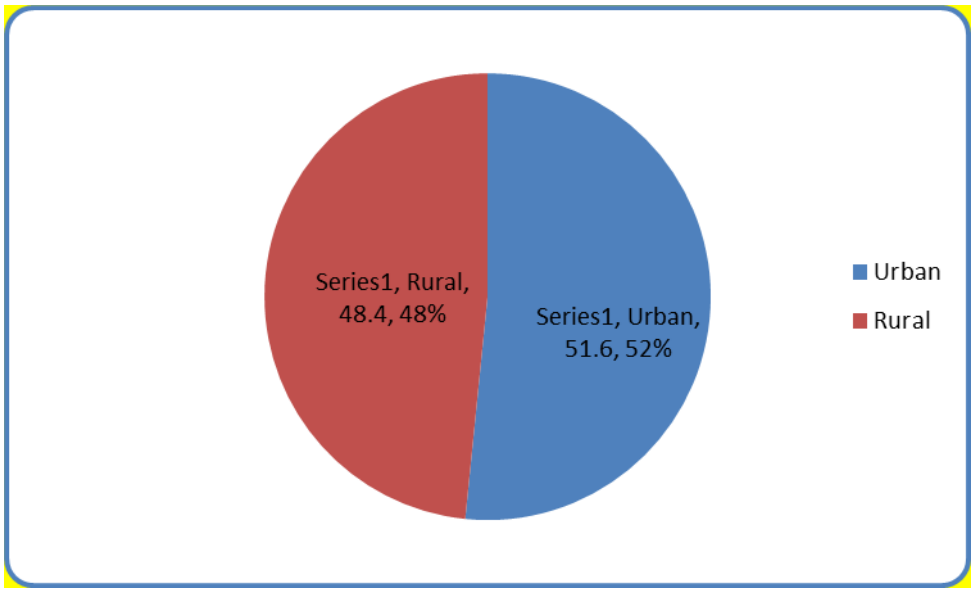


Figure 1
Figure 1: *Percentage distribution of respondents by residence (N=574)*
Source: *Field*

Figure 1 show that 51.6% of the respondents resided in the urban areas, while 48.4% lived in the rural areas. This showed that majority of the respondents lived in the urban areas.

Table 6: *Percentage distribution of respondents by level of income (N=574)*

Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
₦5,000-₦30,000	267	46.5
₦31,000-₦56,000	199	34.7
₦57,000-₦82,000	34	5.9
₦83,000-₦108,000	39	6.8
₦109,000 and above	35	6.1
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 6 shows that (46.5%) of the respondents earned ₦5,000-₦30,000 while those in the income range of ₦31,000-₦56,000 constituted 34.7%. Small proportion of the respondents 5.9% and 6.8% respectively had income in the range of ₦57,000-₦82,000 and ₦83,000-₦108,000, while 6.1% were earning in the range of ₦109,000 and above. This showed that majority of the respondents earned between ₦5,000-₦30,000. Only small number of the respondents earned ₦109,000 and above.

Knowledge, Attitudes, Awareness, Accessibility and Utilization

This section presents the results of data analysis concerning respondent's views on knowledge, attitudes, awareness, accessibility and utilization

Table 7: *Percentage distribution of respondents by the level of their agreement with the questions in each item (N=574)*

Items	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total

Vocational rehabilitation programmes exist in Calabar	216(37.6%)	109 (19.0%)	115 (20.1%)	134(23.3%) 574(100%)
Vocational rehabilitation program covers all categories of the physical challenged	12 (2.1%)	28(4.9%)	342(59.6%)	192 (33.4%) 574(100%)
Males and females are equally involved in vocational rehabilitation programmes	87(15.1%)	385(67.1%)	59(10.3%)	43(7.5%) 574(100%)
The age of the physically challenged determine their involvement in vocational reh abilitation programmes	93(16.2%)	295(51.3%)	99(17.3%)	87(15.2%) 574(100%)
Cultural and traditional belief systems determine their involvement in Vocational rehabilitation programmes	111(19.3%)	196(34.2%)	120(20.9%)	147(25.6%) 574(100%)

Source: *Field*

Data on Table 7 shows the level of respondents' agreement or disagreement with the questions in each item. The result shows that "vocational rehabilitation programmes exist in Calabar", 37.6% of the respondents indicated agreed; 19.0% mentioned strongly agreed, while, 20.1% disagreed and 23.3% strongly disagreed. It is therefore revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that vocational rehabilitation programmes exist in Calabar. Also, on the item "Vocational rehabilitation programmes cover all categories of the physical challenged", 2.1% of the respondents said they agreed to it; 4.9% strongly agreed, while 59.6% disagreed and 33.4% indicated strongly disagreed. Result showed that the majority of respondents disagreed that vocational rehabilitation programmes cover all categories of the physical challenged.

Table 8: *Percentage distribution of respondents by their views on the type of rehabilitation programme(s) which exists for the physically challenged (N=574)*

What type of rehabilitation programme(s) exists for the physically challenged	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Adult literacy	180	31.4
Tailoring	78	13.6
Carpentry	86	14.9
Arts/Crafts	67	11.7
Welding	30	5.2
All of the above	20	3.5
Not applicable	113	19.7
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The respondents were asked the type of rehabilitation programme(s) which exists for the physically challenged. A look at Table 8 shows that 31.4% of the respondents indicated adult literacy; 13.6% indicate tailoring; 14.9% indicated carpentry, while 11.7% said arts/craft. Also, 5.2% of the respondents indicated welding, while 3.5% said all of the above and lastly, 19.7% was not applicable. From the table above, it is seen that majority of the respondents chose adult literacy as the rehabilitation programme which exists for the physically challenged.

Table 9: *Percentage distribution of respondents by their views one which category of the physically challenged they think are more likely to embrace vocational rehabilitation and be employed (N=574)*

Which category of the physically challenged are more likely to embrace vocational rehabilitation and be employed	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Non-literates	195	34.0
Literates	290	50.5
No knowledge	89	15.5
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The respondents were asked which category of the physically challenged they think are more likely to embrace vocational rehabilitation and be employed. The response on Table 9 shows that of all the respondents, 34.0% indicated non-literate, 50.5% indicated literates, while 15.5% indicated that they had no knowledge. This result indicates that majority of the respondents indicated that the literate's category of the physically challenged are more likely to embrace vocational rehabilitation and be employed.

Table 10: *Percentage distribution of respondents by their views on whether there are some factors like level of education that affect the effectiveness of rehabilitation on the physically challenged persons (N=574)*

Are there some factors that affect the effectiveness of rehabilitation on the physically challenged persons	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	288	50.2
No	207	36.0
No knowledge	79	13.8
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The respondents were asked whether level of education affect the effectiveness of rehabilitation on the physically challenged persons. The response on Table 10 shows that of all the respondents, 50.2% indicated yes that the level of education of the physically challenged persons affect the effectiveness of their rehabilitation, while 36.0% indicated 'no' to the question. However, 13.8% said that they "had no knowledge" if there are some factors that affect the effectiveness of rehabilitation on the physically challenged persons.

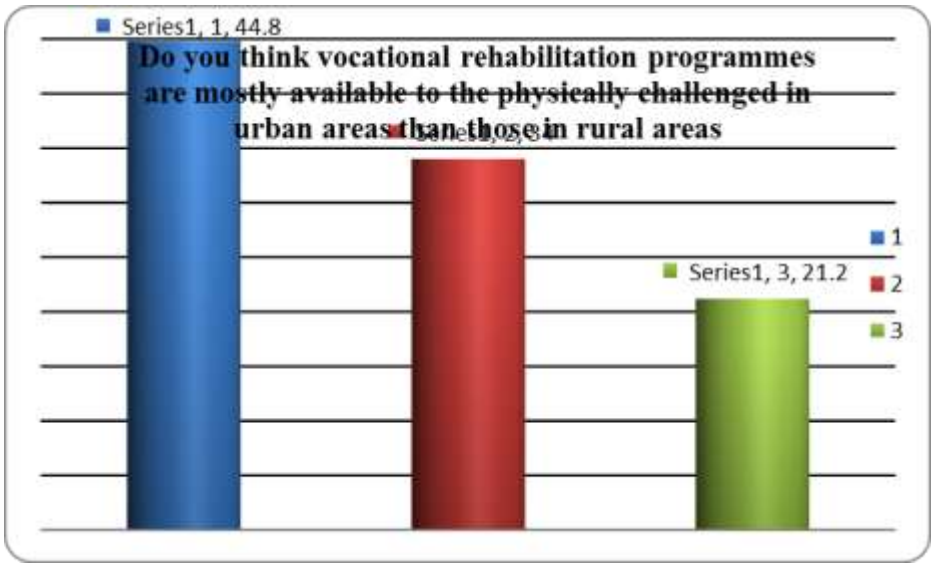


Figure 2: *Percentage distribution of respondents by their view on whether vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas*
Source: *Field*

In Figure 2, the respondents were asked whether they think vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas. A look at the figure therein shows that 44.8% of the respondents said yes that vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas. 34.0% indicated 'no' to same question. Lastly, 21.2% responded that they had no knowledge. From Figure 4.2, it is seen that majority of the respondents said yes that vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas.

Table 11: *Distribution of respondents by their views on why vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas (N=574)*

Why are vocational rehabilitation prep rogram mostly available to the physica lly challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Closeness to NGOs	32	5.6
Easy accessibility	69	12
Convenience	42	7.3
Availability of resources	73	12.7
Better sponsorships	41	7.2
Not applicable	317	55.2
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The respondents were asked why vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas. A look at Table 11 shows that 5.6% of the respondents said closeness to NGOs; 12% chose easy accessibility; and 7.3% went for convenience. Furthermore, 12.7% of the respondents indicated availability of resources, while 7.2% responded better sponsorships to the question. Lastly, 55.2% was not

applicable. From Table 10, it is seen that majority of the respondents chose availability of resources as the reason vocational rehabilitation programmes are mostly available to the physically challenged in urban areas than those in rural areas.

Table 12: *Distribution of respondents by their views on the roles social workers play in the rehabilitation of the physically challenged (N=574)*

What are the roles social workers play in the rehabilitation of the physically challenged	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Counseling	98	17
Rehabilitation	34	5.9
Capacity building	47	8.1
Advocacy	43	7.5
Referrals	18	3.1
Liaison officer	12	2.1
Educator	46	8.3
Not applicable	276	48
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 12 shows the respondents views on the roles social workers play in the rehabilitation of the physically challenged. The result as shown in the table indicates that 17% mentioned counseling, 5.9% said rehabilitation, 8.1% stated capacity building, while 7.5 chose advocacy. Also, 3.1% stated referrals, and 2.1% of the respondents indicated liaison officer, 8.3% stated education whereas 48% indicated no knowledge. From the table, it is seen that majority of the applicable responds indicates counseling as the roles social workers play in the rehabilitation of the physically challenged.

Table 13: *Distribution of respondents by the rate of their knowledge regarding vocational rehabilitation programmes in Calabar (N=574)*

Kindly rate your knowledge regarding vocational rehabilitation programmes in Calabar	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	99	17.2
High	107	18.6
Moderate	185	32.2
Small	85	14.8
Very small	98	17.2
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 13 shows respondents' views on the rate of their knowledge regarding vocational rehabilitation programmes in Calabar. The result as shown in the table indicates that 17.2% of the respondents said very high to the question, 18.6% indicated high, while 32.2% stated moderate. Also, 14.8% said small to the question, while 17.2% stated very small. From the

table, it is seen that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they have a moderate knowledge regarding vocational rehabilitation programmes in Calabar.

Table 14: *Distribution of respondents on their views on whether the physically challenged encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes (N=574)*

Do the physically challenged encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	312	54.3
No	205	35.7
No knowledge	57	10.0
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

The respondents were asked whether the physically challenged encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes. The response on Table 14 shows that of all the respondents, 54.3% indicated yes, that the physically challenged encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes, while 35.7% indicated no, that the physically challenged does not encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes. However, 10.0% said that they "had no knowledge" if the physically challenged encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes. This result indicates that majority of the respondents were of the view that the physically challenged do encounter problems in rehabilitation programmes.

Table 15: *Distribution of respondents by their views on the type of problems the physically challenged encounter in rehabilitation programmes (N=574)*

What type of problems do the physically challenged encounter in rehabilitation programmes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequacy of rehabilitation equipment	54	9.4
Lack of trained personnel	103	17.9
Lack of manpower	68	11.8
Poor management of rehabilitation programmes	45	7.9
Stereotype	42	7.3
Not applicable	262	45.7
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 15 shows respondents' view on the type of problems the physically challenged encounter in rehabilitation programmes. The result as shown in the table shows that 9.4% of respondents indicated that inadequacy of rehabilitation equipment as the problems the physically challenged encounter in rehabilitation programmes. Also, 17.9% and 11.8% said lack of trained personnel and lack of man power respectively to the question, while 7.9% stated poor management of rehabilitation programme, whereas 7.3% of the respondents indicated stereotype to the question. Lastly, 45.7% of the responds was not applicable. From the table, it is therefore seen that majority of the applicable responds were of the opinion that lack of trained personnel was the major problem the physically challenged encounter in rehabilitation programmes.

Table 16: *Distribution of respondents by their views on the ways social workers could help in enhancing rehabilitation programmes (N=574)*

Suggest ways social workers can help in enhancing rehabilitation programmes	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Group counseling	105	18.3
Multi-professional approach	106	18.5
Capacity building	75	13
Advocacy	93	16.2
Referrals	66	11.5
Hands on practical's initiative	32	5.6
No knowledge	97	16.9
Total	**574**	**100.0**

Source: *Field*

Table 16 shows the respondents views on the ways social workers could help in enhancing rehabilitation programmes. The result as shown in the table indicates that 18.3% mentioned group counseling, 18.5% said multi-professional approach, and 13% and 16.2% stated capacity building and advocacy respectively. Also, 11.5% said referrals while, 5.6% stated hands on practical initiative. Lastly, 16.9% of the respondents indicated that they had no knowledge of the question. From the table, it is seen that majority of the respondents were of the view that social workers could help in enhancing rehabilitation programmes via the application of multi-professional approach.

DISCUSSION

Based on the militating factors on vocational rehabilitation, as revealed through findings from this research, it is seen that adult literacy being the most focused programme for the physically challenged have contributed in no small measure to its lack of effectiveness as seen in Table 8, literacy has also contributed its own quota in the utilization as evident in assertion of respondents in Table 7, also, place of residence is a militating factor to its provision, effectiveness and utilization as seen in Figure 2 and table 11. Many other studies also supported this finding of factors militating against vocational rehabilitation programmes (Ayodele, 2006; Hernandez et al., 2007; Chiu, Chan, Bishop, da Silva & O'Neill, 2013; Awe, Griffith & Stephenson, 2010).

The study also arrived at level of education having an influence on the employability of the physically challenged. The study equally revealed that level of income does not exercise influence on engagement on vocational rehabilitation programmes and also, the place of residence influences the ability to engage in vocational rehabilitation programme. Lastly, it was seen that sex does not exert influence on the level by which one will perceive the factors militating against vocational rehabilitation and employability of people with disabilities. Also, sex does influence perception on effects of lack of vocational rehabilitation and employability of people with disabilities.

Selected socio-demographic characteristics had the significance of their predictive abilities tested on crucial dependent variables. On predictors of perceived employment status of the

physically challenged, findings revealed that age, marital status, level of education and place of residence variables recorded significance. On predictors of perceived engagement in vocational rehabilitation programme, findings revealed that age, marital status, level of education and residence variables recorded significance.

Implications for social work practice

Findings of this research have shown the barriers to the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation programmes. Majority of them therefore lack the supposed benefits attached to vocational rehabilitation programme. Given these gaps, arguments have been raised which shed light on the relevance of social workers in the context of policies and programmes that aim to address the wellbeing of these special population. To buttress the above position, Ngwu, (2014), asserts that social workers provide clients with interventions such as assessment, counselling, task-centered work, advice, education/information, advocacy, among others.

Firstly, on the grounds that the accessibility is generally low in Calabar, it becomes the duty of social workers to set up programmes promoting accessibility of disabled persons to such programmes and also to raise disability advocacy to the general public. Social workers during case work could enlighten disabled persons and their significant others on their disability based on its characteristics and how to manage it and also enlighten them as a teacher on the available programmes they could assess help from or better still the social worker could serve as a broker by linking such physically challenged persons to systems or institutions where they could get the needed help. This in tandem with the opinion of Heijnders and Van Der Meij (2006), who posits that via group discussion sessions, seminars, and conferences, social workers can act as advocates on behalf of the physically challenged. Also, on the issue of poverty and unemployment (see table 12) as evident in physically challenged population, the invitation of social work practitioners could remedy the situation to the barest minimum by offering counseling and psychotherapy to the affected and by making them to understand the strengths inherent to become better persons, self-sufficient and self-reliant. This aligns with the assertions of Mathbor (2007), who posits that the primary concern of social work in this case is to enhance human wellbeing and to help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that vocational rehabilitation programmes exist in Calabar and the physically challenged persons do patronize them. However, majority of the respondents attested that such availability and patronage does not equate effectiveness of the programmme. Therefore, the majority of respondents concluded that this ineffectiveness of vocational rehabilitation programmes has brought upon some social effects such as poverty, street begging and unemployment among the physically challenged. Further, the respondents decried residence, lack of programme coverage on all categories of physically challenged, age, societal stigma among others as some of the factors contributing to such experienced lack of effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion from the study, some ideas that would contribute to making vocational rehabilitation programmes more accessible and successful are presented below:

- Government should provide free and compulsory education with vocational and skill development curriculum for all physically challenged individuals so that at the age of leaving school, they would have become self-reliant self-employed and or employable.
- Social workers should advocate for the strict implementation and domestication of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and take the lead in enlightenment campaigns in rural areas of the Central Senatorial District to eradicate stigmatization and harmful cultural beliefs associated with disabled people
- The Ministry of Social Development should establish a standardized, modern vocational training centers in Calabar equipped with tailored assistive technologies and trained facilitators.
- Government should ensure the provision of micro-grants and interest-free startup capital for graduates of vocational centers to ensure successful economic integration

References

Amaehule, S., & Enyekit, E. (2010). Re-branding vocational education skills acquisition: The role of the administrator. *sbmt Nekede Conference Journal 1*(2), 132-137.

Awe, E. M., Griffith, A., & Stephenson, P. (2010). An Enquiry into the challenges of skills training in Nigerian construction industry. *World of Construction Project Management*, *151*.

Ayodele, J. B. (2006). Obstacles to Entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. *Introduction to e ntrepreneurship development in Nigeria, UNAD Press Ado-Ekiti*.

Banku, F. O., & Ashi, M. M. (2016). Inclusive education in Nigeria: Access and equity. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(5), 168-171.

Burton, L. M., Lichter, D. T., Baker, R. S., & Eason, J. M. (2013). Inequality, family processes, and health in the "new" rural America. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*(8), 1128-1151.

Challenged, P., & Eze, I. O. (2014). Availability and utilization of library resources and services by physically challenge polytechnic students in southeast Nigeria. Retrieved from *http://www.unn.edu.ng/publications/files/17729_availability_and_ultilization_of_library_res ources_and_services_by_physically_challenge_polytechnic_students_in_southeast_nigeria.pd f*

Chataika, T., Mckenzie, J., Swart, E., & Lyner-Cleophas, M. (2012). Access to education in Africa: Responding to the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. *Disability & Society*, *27*(3), 385-398.

Chiu, C. Y., Chan, F., Bishop, M., da Silva Cardoso, E., & O'Neill, J. (2013). State vocational rehabilitation services and employment in multiple sclerosis. *Multiple Sclerosis Journal*, *19*(12), 1655-1664.

Cooper, J. (2013). Occupational therapy in oncology and palliative care. John Wiley & Sons. Online, retrieved from *https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/36864847/occu pational_therapy_in_oncology_and_palliative_care.pdf?awsaccesskeyid=akiaiwowyygz2y53u*

l3a&expires=1509136322&signature=hsrjjwv6uy0kgaisxmm9y8cewxs%3d&response content disposition=inline%3b%20filename%3doccupational_therapy_in_oncology_and_pal.pdf

Council on Rehabilitation Education, (2010). Revised core accreditation standards. *Section II core accreditation manual*, 1–21.

Drew, N., Funk, M., Tang, S., Lamichhane, J., Chávez, E., Katontoka, S., & Saraceno, B. (2011). Human rights violations of people with mental and psychosocial disabilities: an unresolved global crisis. *The Lancet*, *378*(9803), 1664-1675.

Enyekit, E. O., Amaehule, S., & Teerah, L. E. (2011). Achieving human capital Development in Nigeria through vocational education for nation building. In Proceedings of the *2011 International Conference on Teaching, Learning and Change*, 63-69.

Finger, M. E., Escorpizo, R., Glässel, A., Gmünder, H. P., Lückenkemper, M., Chan, C., & Stucki, G. (2012). ICF Core Set for vocational rehabilitation: results of an international consensus conference. *Disability and rehabilitation*, *34*(5), 429-438.

Healy, L. M. (2008). Exploring the history of social work as a human rights profession. *International social work*, *51*(6), 735-748.

Heijnders, M., & Van Der Meij, S. (2006). The fight against stigma: An overview of stigma reduction strategies and interventions. *Psychology, health & medicine*, *11*(3), 353-363.

Hernandez, B., Cometa, M. J., Velcoff, J., Rosen, J., Schober, D., & Luna, R. D. (2007). Perspectives of people with disabilities on employment, vocational rehabilitation, and the Ticket to Work program. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *27*(3), 191-201.

Kukka, M., McGuire, A. B., & Salyers, M. P. (2016). Rural and urban supported employment programs in the veteran's health administration: Comparison of barriers and facilitat ors to vocational achievement for veterans experiencing mental illnesses. *Psychiatric rehabilitation journal*, *39*(2), 129.

Mansour, M. (2009). Employers' attitudes and concerns about the employment of disabled people. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, *5*(4), 209-218.

Marnetoft, S. U. (2009). The challenges of vocational rehabilitation in Sweden. *Kuntoutus Fin Journ*al of *Rehabilitation*, *4*, 5-10.

Mathbor, G. M. (2007). Enhancement of community preparedness for natural disasters: The role of social work in building social capital for sustainable disaster relief and management. *International Social Work*, *50*(3), 357-369.

Naami, A., Hayashi, R., & Liese, H. (2012). The unemployment of women with physical disabilities in Ghana: Issues and recommendations. *Disability & Society*, *27*(2), 191-204.

Nanjwan, J., & David, B. (2013). Legislation and adjustments for persons with disabilities in southern senatorial district in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administration Research 4*(5),

Ngwu, C. N. (2014). *Learning to practice social work*: *A guide to field work education in Nigeria.* Nsukka: University of Nigeria press.

OECD, (2009). Employment of disabled people in India: Base line report. Online source, retri eved from *http://sarthakindia.org/scheme/Employment%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities.pdf*

Olabiyi, O. S. (2016). *Assessment of Skill Development Programmes Offered to Special Needs Learners in Vocational Rehabilitation Centres in South West of Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation).

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], (2009). Sickness, disability and work: Keeping on track in the economic downturn. Paris, France,

organization for economic co-operation and development. Online, retrieved from: *https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/43125523.pdf.*

Reynolds, S. (2010). Disability culture in west Africa: Qualitative research indicating barriers and progress in the greater Accra region of Ghana. *Occupational therapy international*, *17*(4), 198-207.

Suzuki, Y., Kikuchi, E., & Watanab, S. (2008). *Assessment of vocational opportunities and continuing job placement for persons with mental disabilities: Factors indicating levels of necessary support work*. *30*(2), 185–94.

Thomas, M. & Thomas, M. J. (2015). Influence of cultural factors on disability and rehabilitation in developing countries. Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (JSRPD). Online, retrieved from: *http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/asia/resource/apdrj/z13jo0400/z13jo0403.html*

Umeasiegbu, V. I., & Harley, D. A. (2014). Education as a tool for social justice and psychological wellbeing for women with disabilities in a developing country: The challenges and prospects in Nigeria. In *The African symposium: An online journal of the African Educational Research Network, 14*(1-2), 119-131.

World Health Organization [WHO], (2010). *Community-based rehabilitation: CBR guidelines*. Geneva, Switzerland.