

# Educational Resource Needs and Access to Tertiary Education among People with Disability in Bayelsa State

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## ABSTRACT

The paper investigated educational resource needs and access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses tested in the study. Mixed method approach was adopted in the study while 165 respondents consisting 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. Respondents were selected 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 data collection 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 collected quantitatively were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and t-test while the qualitative data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis. The finding of the study indicated that financial resource, policy intervention and assistive technology were the priority educational resource need of the respondents. Inaccessibility to tertiary education has implication on the employment prospects and human rights of the respondents and this can only be corrected through appropriate policies, better infrastructure among other strategies. There were differences between the opinion of students and non-students on the issues interrogated. It was recommended that the government should collaborate with school administrators to create a fund for persons with disability who wish to acquire tertiary education across all spheres.

**Keywords:** Access, Bayelsa State, Disability, Educational Resource, Tertiary Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education no doubt is essential for the individual, institutional and national growth and development as a result of its economic and social benefits. This has necessitated the different levels of individual and national investments across the different levels of education. At the basic level, education is by law free and compulsory, and this has increased the level of access for those willing and qualified to acquire this level of education through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of the government. However, as people proceed to higher levels of education, the level of access gets slimmer as a result of several factors and part of those who are severely affected are people living with disability. Globally, the need for educational equity for underserved groups has continued to occupy national discourse (Kim & Shin, 2021) and this needs to be given more attention for any meaningful change to occur.

Nationally, a 2020 survey indicates that there are about 27million Nigerians living with some form of disability which could be hearing, visual, physical, communication and/or intellectual impairment which is over 10% of the national population and data shows that at least one in eight of these Nigerians have a form of disability. Additionally, the number of persons with disability who are able to acquire formal education grows slimmer as they transit to higher levels of education when compared to the percentage of their abled counterpart. Oriogu et al., (2017) noted that access to education is a right for everyone including people with disability but how well the higher education needs of people living with disability has been met remains unclear.

The effort of the Bayelsa State Government at increasing the subvention of tertiary institutions in the State is part of the State's effort geared towards increasing the quality and access to tertiary education. Similarly, the increase in the number of tertiary institutions in the State (University of Africa in 2016) are all geared towards improving access to tertiary education for the development of the required manpower in Bayelsa State.

The economic advancement of Bayelsa State and its indigenes is tied to access to quality education especially at the tertiary level and this forms the focus of past and the current administration. Given the significant number of people with disability in the State, the effort of the government at promoting the socioeconomic prosperity of Bayelsans may not yield much result until the challenges to access to tertiary education especially among people with disability are addressed. Depriving people with disability access to tertiary education has several personal and societal implications such as increased poverty, unemployment and demand for social programmes which have huge financial implications on the government. Overcoming this bottleneck will require putting in place adequate resources to take care of the needs of people with disability as inaccess to tertiary education can have several consequences. Addressing this issue is significant not only for increasing the literacy rate among persons with disability in the State but to also improve access to economic opportunities for people living with disability in the State as well as strengthen the prospects of meeting some of the SDGs such as SDGs 4, 5 and 10. This is important for the benefit of all.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of Disability and Tertiary Education

Disability is a concept that is often associated with the inability of an individual to carry out certain basic functions required for being optimally productive. Different educational scholars have made varying attempt at conceptualizing what disability means. Ghosh (2012:3) asserted that "disability is itself not a homogeneous category, subsuming under it different kinds of bodily variations, physical impairments, sensory deficits and mental or learning inadequacies, which may be either congenital or acquired. This implies that disability may be by natural occurrence or by manmade activities and can affect different cells and systems of a person. Similarly, disability can result to either temporary, permanent or situational impairment. However, the World Health Organization as cited in Oladipoet *al.*, (2020:51) stated that "a disabled person is one who is restricted or lacks ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being of comparable culture, age and sex". This implies that disability is a condition in which an individual is unable to discharge services which is considered normal for people of their characteristics.

On the other hand, tertiary education is simply regarded to as that level of education that is at the apex of the educational structure of a country and responsible for the development of high level manpower in the country. In the educational hierarchy of the country, tertiary education is third level of education after primary and secondary education. It is that level of education that is reserved for individuals who have completed lower level of education and are willing to pursue a more advanced level of education which will enhance their skills and competence. Tertiary education encompasses all educational services provided in the colleges, polytechnics and universities which are designed for the building of high level manpower. According to Dada and Eni-Olorunda (2014), this level of education which is also referred to as higher education succeeds the completion of a secondary education which focuses on the production of middle level manpower.

### Educational Resource Needs of People with Disability

There is no nation that can develop politically, economically and socially without leveraging on its human resource. Harnessing the skills and knowledge of people living with disability is also essential for national development but this can only be achieved when their educational needs are attended to. People with disabilities require special educational attention as the difficulty experienced in accessing essential educational services and facilities could hinder or prevent these individuals from achieving their normal level of physical, mental/cognitive, social, and emotional development. In order to reach their ideal learning levels and development, they require more individualized attention, they require special attention on issues that relates to the curriculum, human resource, material resource and realistic approaches to teaching and learning such that their individual and collective potentials can be properly developed.

People with disabilities require educational support that will contribute to their physical, social and general advancement and this is only possible when the right human, material and financial resource are put in place. Attention needs to be paid to the provision of resources that will support their communication, social and cognitive development among others. Watson et al., (2015) noted that people with disability are often educationally disadvantaged and this is due to several factors such as parental social class and education, level of family financial resources, and parental expectations. The education, work and life of people with disabilities will continue to be hindered except their educational resource needs are met. Ijadunola et al., (2019) revealed in their study that essential educational needs such as the public address systems are only slightly more than half (54.5%) in terms of availability in the lecture halls, while only two schools have dedicated

entrances and exits with ramps for people with disabilities. The majority of respondents (96.2%) and those who had access to library facilities (90.4%) had no idea what these amenities were located. Although they don't know the precise number of students with disability, university officials were aware of the assistive facilities available to them. These assistive technologies are needed to help them learn while other support facilities also need to be provided around the school for their movement around. These resources must be provided with the right human expertise as well as financial support for any meaningful progress to be made in providing quality and accessible tertiary education for students with disability.

There are various forms of educational resources that are required for a successful and goal oriented education. Educational resources are essential for meaningful teaching and learning to take place within and outside the classroom and these resources can take different forms of classification such as teaching resources, learning resources, research materials and can come in different forms such as digital or non-digital resources based on the advancement in technology.

The need for educational resources in the school environment cannot be overemphasized as they provide the teacher and students with a suitable environment for meaningful and additional platform for teaching and learning. Educational resources are both essential for the teacher as well as the students if the goals and objectives of education must be met. Educational resources in all of its forms are essential to the cognitive, effective and psychomotor development of the learner irrespective of their social and intellectual orientation and as such the provision of these essential resources in the right quality and quantity is essential in the school system.

In every school environment, whether general or special, educational resources are known to always be in short supply and this poses a constraint to the educational need and aspiration of students especially those with disability. The current state of educational resources in most schools across all levels make it difficult for students with disability to acquire the right type of education that is required for them to live a competitive life. These resources are of different types which could be human, material and otherwise and they are needed for the educational needs of students to be met. Unfortunately, due to the shortage of these resources in most schools, attention is often paid to the needs of abled students with less attention paid to the needs of students with disability.

The supply of relevant human resources for meeting the educational needs of students with various forms of disability has been one area that has not gotten the needed attention in terms of the availability and supply of educational resources in most tertiary institutions. Up to date, very few tertiary educational institutions have experts in special needs education despite the presence of students with some form of disability. There has still not being enough qualified special educators to meet the educational needs of students with disability in most tertiary institutions and this leaves several of these students disenfranchised. What obtains in several of these institutions is that several unqualified teachers are left to teach these students with special educational needs without paying attention to the details that is required to acquire the right quality of education. What obtains in several tertiary institutions is that disabled and nondisabled students are put together in the same classroom and taught by ill equipped and prepared teachers who find it difficult to identify these student's individual needs and living several of these students disadvantaged.

The engagement of highly skilled special educators is a necessity across all tertiary institutions that house students with any form of disability. The presence of these experts is essential to cater for the educational need of students with any form of disability. These experts are better informed about the intervention needed by students in this category and how they can be assisted to meet their educational aspirations. The recruitment and deployment of the right caliber of special educators across all tertiary institutions is an aspect that has not received the right intervention up till date.

The financial allocation to special education also remains abysmal when compared to what obtains in some other developing and developed countries. Adequate funding is needed for meeting the resource need of any school system and this hinges of the allocation of the right fraction of the budget to the education sector which has remained elusive for several years now. Eskay, Eskay and Uma (2012:899) stated that "funding for special education in Nigeria limits the progress of special education. Funding seems to be either insufficient or not provided for the education and service delivery of learners with disabilities". The implication of these is that most schools have been unable to procure the needed resources that can help to drive an impactful educational system that will cater for the needs of students with disability.

Adequate funding is the livewire of any education system and the need for improved financial allocation especially to special needs education and education seekers cannot be ignored as this form of education is often capital intensive due to the type of resources that are required to drive this kind of education. The success of special education is tied partly to the funding of the system which makes it possible for basic teaching and learning needs to be met. The right kind of funding is essential for students with disability to have tailored attention basics on the peculiarity of their situation. There is no education system that can succeed in attending to the needs of students with disability if the issue of funding has not been given the required attention.

One other educational resource need for students with disability that has not enjoyed so much attention is the area of legal support. There is no educational programme especially for students with disability that can be successful without legal enforcement both at the national, state and local level. The absence vis-à-vis shortage of legal mandates, laws, policies and principles that support the right of students with disability to learn in a supportive environment has led to civil right violation of the right of students with disability with no consequence reported for these violations. Several students with disability have been left at the mercy of their various institution and society because there are no adequate laws and legal support in place to protect their educational rights. Scholars such as Bell (2011) reported that most institutions do not have disability policies in place to protect the educational right of students with disability to give them a level learning ground and generally speaking these policies are not well known by staff and students where they exist and hence not effectively implemented to the disadvantage of these students which remain alarming.

### **Implications of In-Access to Tertiary Education among People with Disability**

Education is essential for all and for various socioeconomic reasons. This is why government at all levels as well as other interest groups have been investing in the education sector for the benefits that it provides. However, the inability of people with disability to secure entry into tertiary institutions of their choice has various short and long term implications. The drive for improvement on educational literacy rate and school attendance is one area that can be hindered if the educational needs of students with disability is not properly factored into the programmes of tertiary educational institutions. Scholars such as Luo, Zhou, Mizunoya and Amaro (2020) indicated in the findings of one of their studies that individuals with disabilities are less likely to ever attend school, more likely to be out of school, and tend to have fewer years of education than those without disabilities. When this occurs, it jeopardizes the educational objectives of the nation and this emanates as a result of the inability to create an inclusive educational environment for people with disability at this level. People with disabilities are less likely to complete primary or secondary education and when this happens, it also affects their tertiary education prospects and leads to a decline in the number of successful graduates with disabilities who are able to contribute to national development objective.

The inability of people with disability to access tertiary education also has implication on their employment prospects. In Nigeria today where certification is crucial to employment, any individual without requisite certificate especially from tertiary institution is likely not to be able to secure employment in any formal organization. Depriving people with disability the opportunity of attending school at the tertiary level makes it difficult for them to compete for employment in a high level manpower demanding economy like Nigeria. The inability to acquire the needed certification relegates several of these people to a level where they are able to compete for employment even in areas where they are more qualified and this limits the growth and development of the nation.

People with disability who are unable to pass through any form of tertiary education; university, college or polytechnic are also likely to be deficient in the area of skill sets that is needed for self-sustenance and reliance. There are several soft and hard skills that people can acquire by merely passing through the education system especially at the tertiary level where high level skills are developed. These skills can be used for organizational or personal advancement but this is so for those who have been able to successfully pass through the education system to acquire the needed skills for their sustainability. Therefore, denying people with disability access to tertiary education in any of its forms has the implication of limiting their skills and competence for meeting basic and advanced social and economic needs.

Furthermore, Lelan, Rono and Sang (2019) have also indicated that in-access to tertiary education for people with disability can lead to poor performance and the decision of a student to drop out of school. When any learner perceives that there is no chance of advancing to a higher level of learning, there is the tendency that the seriousness at the lower level might not be encouraging and this leads to poor attention, participation and performance in schools especially at the lower level. Several of such students have also left school from the basic level because of the uncertainty in actualizing their higher education aspiration and some of these individuals have either switched to employment in the informal sector or resorted to street activities which has several other social and economic implications.

The issue of inclusion which promotes self-esteem among students with special needs can also be affected when they are deprived the opportunity of pursuing their higher education aspiration (Zemba&Chipindi, 2020). Inclusivity is hindered in a system where there is not equity in the access to tertiary education for people with disability and the other implications of this scenario is that educational completion is hindered and educational attainment is also limited as a result of this development which requires urgent stakeholders' intervention.

### **Strategies for Enhancing People with Disability's Access to Tertiary Education**

Achieving equity in the process of accessing tertiary education for people with disability is a responsibility for all despite the fact that the government and tertiary education administrators have a huge role to play in this regard. Scholars such as

Pérez-Esteban, Carrión-Martínez and Ortiz (2023) have indicated that achieving inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom requires the development of inclusive strategies in the teaching and learning processes. This means that for tertiary institutions to be accessible to students with disability, one of the areas that must be given proper attention is the entire process of teaching and learning. This includes recruiting the required experts and ensuring that the needed teaching materials are available to take care of the learning needs of these students.

In a related manner, the education of students with disabilities must be seen as an important part of the general education system which should be supported by all available legal resource. In order to promote the integration and retention of students with disability in regular school systems there must be proper adjustment in the process of education delivery which should take into consideration the provision of relevant assistive technologies and other facilities that will make this goal realizable. Similarly, effort must be geared towards establishing programmes and projects that are basically for meeting the educational needs of students with disability. This is required to ensure that people with disability acquire the right type of education that will meet all of their educational needs.

The training and retraining of lecturers who will be in charge of programmes designed for people with disability also need to be given the required attention. Teacher training is required in order to encourage integration especially for students with disability and granting them a sense of belonging. The recruitment of disability expert for teaching and non-teaching activities are essential in the process of preparing an enabling environment for student with disability. These students must be able to interact with experts who are able to meet their educational needs and these experts must be prepared for this responsibility through regular training and re-training.

The need for policy support is also crucial in achieving improved access to tertiary education for students with disability. Over the years, the government has been making effort at formulating programmes and policies that are geared towards creating an enabling environment where students with disability can learn based on established national and international treaties. This has resulted to the offering of schemes and facilities to students with disabilities in order to assist them cope with the demands of tertiary education. However, a lot still needs to be done especially in the areas of protecting the rights of these students as well as ensuring that they are taking into consideration in various educational planning activities.

According to Hayes and Bulat (2017) in order to improve access to education for people with disability, there are certain legal provision that needs to be adhered to and this includes; receiving accommodation around the classroom, addressing their skill needs, providing suitable means of instruction and giving them access to a wide range of assistive technologies whether they are into tertiary, vocational or adult education. Additionally, Hayes and Bulat (2017) pointed out that an inclusive education which involves people with disability has proven particularly effective in helping all students learn, even while challenges to implementing inclusive education systems remain. Addressing these challenges is however essential from harnessing all the benefits of educating people with disability.

In the same manner, the lack of information to relevant interventions that can be of help to this category of learners as well as discriminatory attitude of members of the public towards persons with disabilities at all levels of society including those in school are part of the issues that needs to be properly addressed. The failure to address this issue will have impact on the effort made by well-meaning stakeholders if not properly addressed. Lamichhane (2013) pointed out that awareness of disability issues at all levels is the first step toward implementing strategies and policies to combat other problems like that affect these individuals and this must be given priority through proper sensitization. Similarly, the issues of poverty and lack of relevant resources among current and prospective students who have some form of disability are some of the issues that need to be addressed. Addressing these issues have been identified to be a combination of complex factors which extends beyond the boundaries of the school and classroom and as such will require an all-inclusive approach to deal with the issue and give these students an enabling environment for meeting their tertiary education needs.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEWS**

Researchers have conducted different studies to investigate access to tertiary education for people with disability. Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) investigated the factors affecting learners with disabilities focusing on instructor interaction in online learning. There were forty learners with disabilities who participated in online higher education coursework who were sampled for the study and asked to respond to an electronic survey of 20 questions. Results of the study indicated that there were two factors namely the teaching and social presences and the facilitating and supporting of individual communication related to interaction among learners with disabilities and their instructors that impacted students' perceived learning achievement and class satisfaction.

Dada and Eni-Olorunda (2014) conducted another study on experienced barriers by persons with special needs on access to

higher institutions. Respondents to the forty-item survey created specifically for the study comprised 273 special needs students. The result of the study showed that social and environmental factors impact students with special needs' ability to pursue higher education. Onego (2022) conducted a related study that focused on the impact of resource availability on educational inclusion of students living with disabilities in public Universities in Kenya. The study used a cross-sectional survey design and was based on the Social Model (SM) and with the help of six public universities, six staff coordinators, six student leaders for SLWDS, and 384 students with disabilities who were selected through multistage and purposeful sampling, the sample size was determined for the study. The results of the study demonstrated that resource availability had a significant impact on SLWDS' educational inclusion (significance level = .049).

On the other hand, Ukpong (2020) investigated human and material resources for effective teaching of students with visual impairment in Ministry of Education Special Education Centre Uyo Akwa Ibom State. Three research questions were raised based on the three independent variables namely, human resources, material resources, and the efficiency with which students with visual impairments are taught in schools in the descriptive survey research design that the study employed. The result of the study showed that there isn't a vocational workshop, a library, or large classrooms. The study by Abrahams, Batorowicz, Ndaa, Gabriels, Abebe, Xu and Aldersey (2023) was titled I am not asking for special treatment, I am asking for access with experiences of University students with disabilities in Ghana, Ethiopia and South Africa. The results revealed patterns and variances in the obstacles and enablers to inclusive education for students with disabilities throughout all locations. Participants mentioned how obstacles to education and inclusion include a lack of financial support, restricted access to university resources, unwelcoming environments, and negative attitudes. Support networks and self-directed facilitation are among the recognized facilitators.

Bolu-Steve, Olawuyi and Gbolade (2017) carried out another study on challenges encountered by students in the school for special needs in Kwara State, Nigeria. Two hundred students with special needs were chosen at random from the school using the purposive and simple random techniques. The result of the study showed that the difficulties faced by students in Kwara State's special needs schools were not significantly different based on their gender, age, religious affiliation, or kind of disability. Furthermore, Madhesh (2021) conducted a study on normative exclusion of students with disabilities and enforced isolation of healthy adults during the COVID -19 pandemic. Findings of the study points to certain social, psychological, and isolating impacts, like the incapacity to form social ties.

Okech, Yuwono and Abdu (2021) conducted another study on implementation of inclusive education practices for children with disabilities and other special needs in Uganda. In the findings of the study, there was disagreement over whether or not students with disabilities and other special needs could benefit from inclusive education. Regarding the curriculum, the findings showed that while some students with special needs and disabilities could benefit from the standard curriculum, others would benefit more from a customized curriculum. The study by Kioko and Makoelle (2014) focused their study on inclusion in higher education: learning experiences of disabled students at Winchester University, United Kingdom. Three lecturers and four students in total took part in the conversational, loosely structured interviews, which were designed to extract as much information as possible. According to the findings, inclusive education in the context of higher education is influenced by a wide range of factors and is not limited to the simple identification of obstacles and related solutions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate educational resource needs and access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State
2. determine the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State
3. determine the strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What are the educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
2. What are the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to 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 educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State.

- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the strategies for enhancing people with disability’s access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

### METHODOLOGY

Mixed method approach comprising quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprised all the people living with disability who are 18years and above in Bayelsa State. Sample for the study was 165 respondents consisting 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). Instruments used for gathering 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 collected quantitatively were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and t-test while the qualitative data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis.

### RESULTS

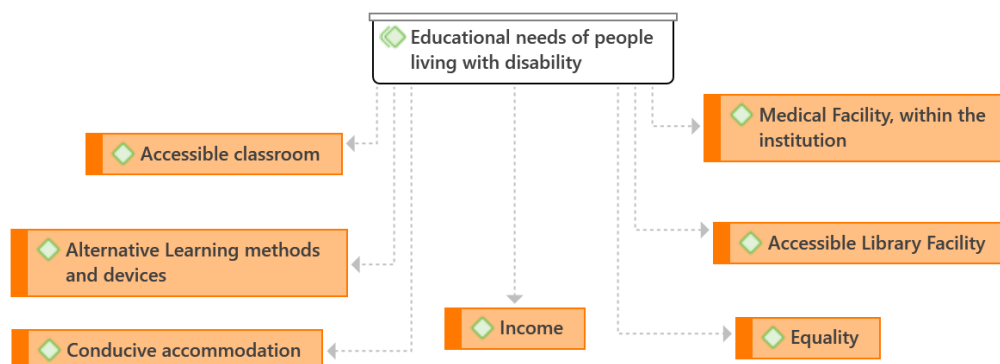
#### Answer to Research Questions

**Research Question One:** What are the educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Score on the Educational Resource Needs of People with Disability in Tertiary Institutions**

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	Material resource needs are the most important to my tertiary education success	3.00	.915	Agree
2	Human resource needs are the most critical to my tertiary education success	3.09	.640	Agree
3	Financial resource need are the most important to my success in school	3.43	.785	Agree
4	Availability of assistive technologies are critical to my tertiary education success	3.29	.719	Agree
5	Policy support is vital to my success in school	3.38	.682	Agree
6	Physical facilities are very instrumental to ability to succeed in school	3.27	.817	Agree

Table 1 revealed that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 had mean scores of 3.00, 3.09, 3.43, 3.29, 3.38 and 3.27. Item 3 had the highest mean score of 3.43 and this suggest that financial resource was the major resource needs of the respondents and this was followed by item 5 with mean value of 3.38 indicating that policy support was another major educational need of people living with disability in the State.



**Fig. 1: Educational Needs of PLWD**

In the FGD conducted as indicated in Fig 1, the respondents also pointed out other resources that will enhance the education of PLWD as indicated in the figure which are:

- Audio Devices
- Digital Text
- Disabilities Right and Advocacy
- Favourable Government Polices
- Good Facilities
- Government Agencies
- Human Begins to Socialize
- Large Print,
- Learning Disabilities Journal
- Radio
- Resource Centers
- Social Media Lectures
- Stigmatization and Inferiority Complex
- Teachers in School
- Television
- Text Book

**Research Question Two:** What are the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Score on the Implications of In-Access to Tertiary Education Among People with Disability**

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
7	The employment prospect of persons with disability is adversely affected	3.59	.706	Agree
8	Lack of interest in education which results to poor academic performance	3.21	.762	Agree
9	Shortage of critical skills needed for survival	3.31	.795	Agree
10	Social crises are likely to arise from not educating people with disability	3.40	.789	Agree
11	School attendance and completion rate of persons with disability is likely to decline	3.25	.824	Agree
12	The rights of people with disability can be further violated	3.45	.892	Agree

Table 2 showed that items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 produced mean values of 3.59, 3.21, 3.31, 3.40, 3.25 and 3.45 and since item 19 had the highest mean value of 3.59, it implied that the major implication of in-access to tertiary education for PLWD was that their employment prospect will be adversely affected and this was followed by violation of their human right with mean value of 3.45 while lack of interest to further their education was the least of these implications with mean value of 3.21.

As gathered during the interview sessions, the respondents from the FGD shared that implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability can cause "depression"(Focus Group Discussion). It can also lead to limited information to PLWD, "Limited to information: Health challenges, as lack of education will make you miss out of information need to maintain good health. They won't be able to take care of themselves."(FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION). In addition, it was expressed by one of the respondents interviewed that the implication can be emotional, financial or psychological issues as presented in the excerpts below.

*"This may involve emotional social and financial issues, depending on the mental or physical limitations experienced by a person or individual"(KII/BAYELSA)*

*"Negative impact on their Learning opportunities and outcomes. They may struggle in all areas of school learning"(KII/BAYELSA)*



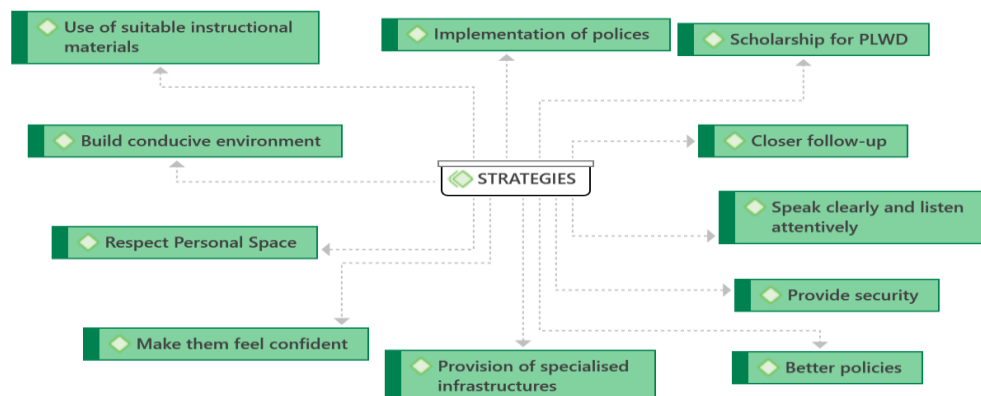
**Research Question Three:** What are the strategies for enhancing people with disability’s access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State?

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Score on the Strategies for Enhancing People with Disability’s Access to Tertiary Education**

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
13	Policy formulation of the rights of persons with disability must be strengthened	3.71	.599	Agree
14	Inclusive teaching and learning strategies must be applied across tertiary institutions	3.54	.615	Agree
15	Recruitment and regular training of experts in special needs education	3.48	.763	Agree
15	Adequate infrastructural development for meeting the needs of people with disability	3.61	.626	Agree
17	Provision of adequate information and disability services across all areas in the school	3.60	.565	Agree
18	Adoption of relevant technologies for meeting the needs of people with disability	3.60	.739	Agree

Table 3 revealed that items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 produced mean values of 3.71, 3.54, 3.48, 3.61, 3.60 and 3.60 respectively. From the responses above, item 25 had the highest mean response of 3.71 and this meant that strengthening policies on the rights of PLWD was the major strategy for improving their access to tertiary education. This was followed by the need for adequate infrastructure with mean response of 3.61. These were key to enhancing people living with disability’s access to tertiary education while other strategies were also very important as indicated from the mean scores. From the interviews conducted and indicated thematically in Fig. 2, in order to mitigate the challenges to access to tertiary education for PLWD, the respondents shared various strategies that can be adopted to enhance people with disability’s access to tertiary education to include.

- Better policies
- Build conducive environment
- Closer follow-up
- Implementation of polices
- Make them feel confident
- Provide security
- Provision of specialised infrastructures
- Respect Personal Space
- Scholarship for PLWD
- Speak clearly and listen attentively
- Use of suitable instructional materials



**Fig. 2: Strategies for Enhancing 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 educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

**Table 4: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State**

Variable	n	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Sig. value	Decision
Students	80	158	32.25	1.96	0.000	Rejected
Non-Students	80					

Table 4 showed that the value of t-calculated of 32.25 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 educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions 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 educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State.

**Table 5: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State**

Variable	n	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Sig. value	Decision
Students	80	158	34.44	1.96	0.000	Rejected
Non-Students	80					

Table 5 showed that the value of t-calculated of 34.44 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 implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability 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 implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State.

**Hypothesis Six:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

**Table 6: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State**

Variable	n	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Sig. value	Decision
Students	80	158	49.96	1.96	0.000	Rejected
Non-Students	80					

Table 6 revealed that the value of t-calculated of 49.96 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 strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to 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 strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### **Educational Resource Needs of People with Disability in Tertiary Institutions**

There are several needs that PLWD require in order to succeed in their educational pursuit especially at the tertiary education level and according to the respondents selected for the study, financial resource is the major need that will enable them succeed in pursuing higher education. This finding makes sense as the study by Dada and Eni-Olorunda (2014) established that financial barriers were the major hindrance while some PLWD are unable to access quality education. This is understandable given the fact that some of these individuals are not engaged in any economic activity and the need to be financially stable cannot be overemphasized if they must meet their basic needs.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that policy that protect PLWD is also an important need for their successful entry and completion of tertiary education. There is no doubt that there are policies on disability which have been formulated across different levels of education but some of which have been scarcely implemented. This may explain why the respondents indicated that there is need for further policy support in order to make it easy for them to access tertiary education when needed.

The need for policy formulation and implementation was followed by the demand for assistive technologies as indicated by the respondents among their needs for accessing tertiary education. Technology has played a major role in enabling people carry out their day to day activities and PLWD require some of these assistive technologies in order to succeed in school. Investing in assistive technologies for PLWD will enable them discharge their basic academic responsibilities when admitted without which it will be difficult for them to cope with the rigour of tertiary education.

The respondents also identified that physical facilities are of importance to their accessing tertiary education and this can take different shape such as suitable libraries, classrooms with ramps and other physical structures that take care of the needs of PLWD. Material resource need was also identified as a critical need which the respondents agreed to as essential for tertiary education. There are several materials which come in audio, visual and other formats which are essential for teaching and learning which people with disability need to carry out their educational duties. Human resource was also identified as basic need for their education and the respondents agreed that this is important to their educational access. In fact, this finding agrees with that of Onego (2022) which showed that educational inclusion of PLWD comes with adequate provision of relevant resources. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted with the respondents alluded to the established findings and showed that medical facilities and alterative learning methods were identified as critical needs for PLWD to access tertiary education. The study further showed that there existed a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the educational resource needs of people with disability in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

### **Implications of In-Access to Tertiary Education among People with Disability**

There are several implications of denying PLWD from accessing tertiary education and from the respondents, such experience will have adverse effect on the employment prospects of PLWD if this is not addressed. If PLWD are unable to go to school especially at the higher level where critical skills are being built, the employment chances of these individuals will be adversely affected and this may explain why several of these people have resorted to menial jobs while others have to beg to survive.

Similarly, the right of people with disability will constantly be violated if they are not adequately informed up to the tertiary level of education as indicated from their responses. Madhesh (2021) noted that PLWD will find it difficult to form social ties due to violation of some of these their rights. Several PLWD have had their rights infringed upon because they were unable to show proper understanding of these rights which comes from being educated at a higher level. The respondents also indicated that social crisis are likely to prevail in a society where PLWD are denied access to tertiary education. Several social ills bedeviling the society is partly due to the fact that PLWD are not adequately educated such as high unemployment rate, child labour, among others.

The respondents of the study also indicated that shortage of critical skills needed for national development may remain persistent if PLWD are not given the required education at the higher level. Okech, Yuwono and Abdu (2021) pointed out in the findings of their study that PLWD can develop their potentials irrespective of the educational setting but the willingness must be there otherwise PLWD will not be able to benefit especially in the areas of developing critical skills. There are also cases of low school attendance and completion rate which may arise if PLWD see no future in tertiary education as alluded to from their responses. Similarly, ultimately, there will be a general lack of interest in education at the tertiary level of education which was identified by the respondents. The interview conducted with some of the critical stakeholders alluded to the fact that denying PLWD access to tertiary education will have great implications such as

negative learning opportunities and outcomes which no doubt is counterproductive to the developmental agenda of any nation. The study showed that there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the implications of in-access to tertiary education among people with disability in Bayelsa State but this differs from the study by Bolu-Steve, Olawuyi and Gbolade (2017) which indicated that schools were not significantly different based on their gender, age, religious affiliation, or kind of disability.

### **Strategies for Enhancing People with Disability's Access to Tertiary Education**

The respondents sampled for the study indicated that policy formulation was a major intervention that is required to enhance the tertiary education prospects of PLWD in the State. This means that while new policies that will protect the educational rights of PLWD need to be formulated, existing policies need to be properly implemented. Similarly, the respondents agreed that there was need for infrastructural development as shown from their responses. Supporting this finding, Ukpong (2020) noted that majority of the schools housing PLWD lacked vocational workshop, a library, or large classrooms and this explains why infrastructural development is important. These tertiary institutions need to invest in facilities that will enable PLWD to be properly integrated into the school and benefit from the activities taking place in the school. Relevant facilities that will aid the movement, learning and social interaction of PLWD must be made available for their personal as well as societal advancement.

The respondents equally stated that access to information is also important. Abrahams, Batorowicz, Ndaa, Gabriels, Abebe, Xu and Aldersey (2023) agreed that self-directed facilitation is key to educating PLWD and this makes access to relevant information very crucial. These individuals need to be properly informed about educational opportunities and other privileges that will improve on their educational prospects. They also identified the need for relevant technologies to be provided to support them in the school which is very essential due to its effectiveness and cost efficiency in the long run. If these schools are able to provide assistive technologies, it may be expensive in the short run but will be beneficial in the long run as several other people can depend on these technologies. The respondents also agreed that there was need for inclusive teaching strategies which will meet their need as a way of promoting access to tertiary education. This relates with the outcome of the study by Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) which showed that individual communication related to interaction among learners with disabilities and their instructors impacted students' perceived learning achievement and class satisfaction and these schools must begin to think in this direction. They also identified recruitment and regular training of experts as important if they must have unhindered access to tertiary education in the State. The interview conducted with the students supported this position as it was revealed that provision of specialized infrastructure and implementation of policies were important strategies for improving access to tertiary education for PLWD in Bayelsa State. Basically, Kioko and Makoelle (2014) pointed out that there must be a multi-stakeholders approach in changing this narrative and this is essential for any progress to be made in this direction. It was established also that there existed a significant difference between the mean ratings of students and non-students on the strategies for enhancing people with disability's access to tertiary education in Bayelsa State.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **The study concludes as follows:**

1. There existed a significant difference in the educational needs and limiting factors to accessing tertiary education among students and non-students with disability in Bayelsa State.
2. Inability to access tertiary education limits the employment prospects of people with disability as well as leads to violation of their human rights.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The government through collaboration with administrators of tertiary educational institutions need to create a fund for meeting the educational needs of PLWD from the beginning to the end of their academic programmes.
2. The government need to ensure that part of employment opportunities across all levels of government as well as sectors is reserved for PLWD as this is needed for promote inclusivity as well as spur their desire for further education.
3. School administrators need to invest in the provision of assistive technologies and other infrastructure that will support meaningful learning for PLWD in tertiary institutions in the State.

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