

ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS IN THE POLITICS OF ONDO STATE OF NIGERIA: 1999-2018

Musa, Toyyib O.^{1*}, Mustapha, Ayodele Haruna² Enikanselu, Adebayo³

^{1,2,3}Department of Social Sciences, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

*¹olaniyitoyyib@gmail.com, ²harunmustapha721@gmail.com, ³enikanseluadebayo@yahoo.com

Article History: Received on 27th February, 2023, Revised on 23th March 2023, Published on 31th March 2023

Abstract

This research examined the physically challenged persons' participation and representation in the politics and decision-making system of Ondo State since the advent of the fourth republic (1999-2019). Available and existing literature showed that the physically challenged represent small percentage of the Nigerian population and the same is true of the population of Ondo State. The research investigated the inverse relationship between the population of physically challenged persons and their representation in leadership positions in Ondo state, particularly in the executive and legislative arms of government in the period under review. The study adopted theory of participatory democracy and action theory model of personality as its theoretical frameworks to guide the work. The research methodology comprised the use of primary and secondary data. The primary data were derived from interview and survey with emphasis on the administration and analysis of well-structured questionnaire while textbooks, journals, internet materials and government official bulletin on the subject matter served as sources of the secondary data. Frequency counts, percentage and descriptive methods were used for the analysis of the result. The research also examined the roles of environmental factors, people's perceptions of the physically challenged persons, psychological constraints and such others associated with disabilities which affect the political participation of the physically challenged and their representation in the politics of Ondo State specifically and the nation at large. The findings of the study provide veritable tools and insights for researchers, public policy analysts, electoral agencies, political parties and sociologists in the quest to deal with the problem of physically challenged persons' participation in politics and governance. Equally, the outcome of the research, no doubt, enhances future research and discourse on democratic participation and representation in Nigeria generally.

Keywords: Democracy, Disability, Exclusion, Representation, Physically Challenged Persons

INTRODUCTION

People with physical infirmities and disabilities have most times been excluded from active roles and leadership responsibilities in the political, economic and social activities in their countries. This has led to serious gap on how to provide help and support within the context of increasing inclusive leadership for persons with disabilities (Price, 2018). The United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities buttressed the equal rights of persons with disabilities to participate in political life. However, in Africa, they are most times unable to exercise their rights to vote and to be voted for despite government's ratification of focused legislation and proclaimed equal opportunities, as barriers occur on their ways (Virendrakumar, Jolley, Badu & Schmidt, 2018).

It is estimated that 15% of the world's population live with one form of physical infirmities (disabilities) or the other, and that much of them are prevalent or higher among women, as about 1 to 5 women of 18 years and older live with one (Lorryman, 2019). The 12th session of the conference of states parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) took place from 11 to 13 June 2019 and focused on the overarching theme of ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing world through the implementation of the CRPD which involved gender equality as one of its general principles, recognises that disability is an evolving concept and that it results from the interaction between persons with impairments, attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinder their full and effective participation

in society on an equal basis with others (Lorryman, 2019; Thad & Alvarez, 2012).

Democracy involves popular control over decision making and equality among citizens in their exercise of that control. Popular control over decision-making is achieved through inclusive political participation and representation in democratic institutions and processes in which each citizen has an equal right and opportunity to engage in and contribute to decision making. Without citizens participation and the rights of freedom and means to participate, the principle of popular control over government cannot be realized. Without representation as well, public institutions of citizens cannot be developed. They go beyond the act of voting in elections; they also embody the freedom of citizens to express their opinions and to mobilize to influence policy, and these ensure that democracy and democratic institutions are genuine reflection of the will of the citizens (Cordenillo&Gardes, 2013; Ekman &Amna, 2012; Wang, 2019).

Participation in political and public life is a critical element of socially inclusive development along with the realization of human rights. In the case of persons with disabilities, participation in political and public life enables them to take part and have a voice in decisions that affect them, their communities and countries. Such participation is an important means of overcoming exclusion and discrimination, and also dismantles other barriers frequently faced by persons with disabilities, while their rights are being denied to political participation and representation which often result to direct or indirect discrimination. In the literature of political analysis about participation and representation of persons with disabilities, scholars like Mikko, M. (2016), Achillets, P. (2017), Price, R. (2018), B. Virendrakmar (2018), Nate, W.J. (2019), Thad E. H. & Alvarez (2012), Wang (2019), Somorin (2008) and others have commented on the right to political participation and representation for people with disabilities in Africa.

In Nigeria, people with disability (PWD) are apparently absent in politics and public life (offices) in the country despite an anti-discrimination law in support of people with disability in the country. In the mantra on disability, "Nothing about us without us" would not hold true for people with disability (PWDs) in Nigeria if there are no people with disability occupying key offices in the top echelon of decision making circles. Unfortunately however, most of the built up environment are

inaccessible to people with disability (Vweta, 2013). According to Babalakin cited by Somorin (2008) that:

It was a long-overdue process of ensuring that people who are physically challenged are engaged constructively in the nation's electioneering process in a manner that results in improved participation and representation... people with disabilities are product of natural existence. They found themselves where nature placed them. It is therefore the duty of the entire populace to make them happy (Somorin, 2008).

Essentially, political participation and representation mean the inter-relationship between people, between men and women, parents and children, people with and without disabilities and the operation of power at every level of human interactions. It includes a broad range of citizens through which people develop and express their opinions on the country and how it is governed and try to take part in it and shape the decisions that affect their lives, as ordinary citizens can participate in politics like every individual with disabilities. The convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, Article 29, on participation in political and public life, mandates that states parties (political) shall guarantee persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others (CBR, nd:5).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is compelling evidence that disabled people experience systematically, higher risks of household poverty and social exclusion in terms of employment, education, relative income and material deprivation, yet this demographic is usually not included as variables in comparative studies. This has led weak focus on the subtle exclusion, even though if not advertent, of people living with disability from participating actively in the political process.

Therefore, addressing this problem , which could be attitudinal or even systemic, will go a long way in addressing problems faced by physically challenged people regarding the level of their participation and representation in the democratic process.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The World Disability Report of 2011 stated that 25 million Nigerians have at least one disability, while 3.6 million of that figure have significant difficulties in going about their business (Grassroots Researchers, 2018:6) and that 3.3 million Nigerians have disabilities, placing the official

incidence rate at 2.32% of the population (Nigeria Country Report, 2018:10), while the number of people with disabilities in Ondo State is put around 59,941 (Fifty Nine Thousand, Nine Hundred and forty-one) which is about 1.8% of the total population of Ondo State put at 3,460,877 (Three Million, Four Hundred and Sixty Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy-Seven) as per the population census of 2006.

Taking the above statistics into cognizance, the study becomes necessary in order to explore the relevance of people with disabilities in any democratic arrangement. This also becomes imperative in order to provide a supplementary account of their cases which in any case requires more focus, so as to be able to make appropriate judgment and reasonable conclusions.

TABLE 1: Distribution of population (2006) by sex and type of disability in Ondo State

S / N	SEX	TOTAL	TYPES OF DISABILITY						
			SEEING	HEARING	SPEAKING	MOBILITY	MENTAL	OTHER	NONE
1	MALE	1745057	8389	4780	6580	4752	1574	2878	1716104
2	FEMALE	1715820	8958	5348	6600	4456	1403	3223	1687832
	TOTAL	3460877	15347	10128	13180	9208	2977	6101	3403936
	%	100	0.44	0.29	0.38	0.27	0.09	0.18	98.35

Source: Demographic and vital statistics, Ondo State, Ministry of Economic Planning

However, regardless of the percentage level people with disabilities constitute in Ondo State, a formidable group of special people recognized by international organizations with special conventions like International Disability and Human Rights Convention, National Council on Disability (2002), convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2008), National Organization on Disability, International Disability Alliance, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities Empowerment, Developmental Disabilities Organisations, Disabled people's International etc. and within Nigeria, have striven to project the voice of this marginalized demographic. There exist the other disabilities platforms such as: Joint National Association

of Persons with Disabilities (1992), Association for the Comprehensive Empowerment of Nigerians with Disabilities, Center for Citizens with Disabilities and so and so forth. President Muhammadu Buhari has signed the bill on the discrimination against persons with disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2019 into law, while the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 17(3)(a) (as amended) gave the nod to the rights of people with disabilities, while Nigerians with Disability Decree of 1993 by the Federal Military Government bordered on Disability Rights, Education and Defense fund (DREDF). As such, they need to be heard, felt, accommodated and seen in the political spectrum.

Table 2: showing gross representation of physically challenged people in Ondo State House of Assembly

Source: Field Work Generated (2020).

Note: The above table excludes all other political offices

S / N	PERIOD	NUMBER OF ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MEMBERSHIP	NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	REMARKS
1	1999-2003	26	-	None of the PWDs was elected
2	2003-2007	26	-	-
3	2007-2011	26	-	-
4	2011-2015	26	-	-
5	2015-2018	26	-	-
TOTAL		130	-	-

and political appointments in the history of Ondo state. In spite of the above, none of the people with disabilities was given political appointment during the years under review as well.

With the absence of physically challenged persons in political positions, be it elective or appointive, the following questions become germane in examining the problem of their participation in the polity: How can physically challenged persons' participation and representation in politics be improved both in elective and appointive positions?

- ii. How can the barriers which prevent the participation of people with disabilities and their families in the political processes be reduced or removed?
- iii. How can the government of Ondo State and the civil societies in the state be aware of disability issues and the rights of persons with disabilities and their families to participate in political processes?
- iv. How can stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities negatively affect their participation and representation?
- v. How can people with disabilities impact in political participation and representation improve development of Ondo State specifically, and Nigeria, generally?

In comparative analysis of African nations on people with disabilities' towards political participation and representation, the table below indicates the year and level of people with disabilities involvement in political and public life in selected countries in Africa:

Table 3: showing the year of affirmative legislation for PWD and the degree of their involvement in public life in selected countries in Africa.

S/N	NAME OF COUNTRY	YEAR OF LEGISLATION OF PWDS	DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT IN BOTH POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE
1	Uganda	PWDs Act of 1997	12 Seats reserved for PWDs
2	Tanzania	PWD Act of 2010, Article 51	Allowed to vote, hold public office
3	Kenya	PWD Act of 2015, Article 38	Allowed to involved in an any political matters
4	Sierra Leone	PWD Act of 2010	Allowed to cast their votes with a companion
5	Nigeria	PWD Act of 2019 Electoral Act 2010(56) (1-2)	Allowed as they may request support from the registration officer to complete the registration form.
6	Mauritius	PWD Act of 2011	
7	Zimbabwe	PWD Act of 1992.	Allowed for self-representation
8	Mauritania	PWD Act of 2006, Article 11	Allowed
9	Burkina Faso	PWD Act of 2010, Article 40	Allowed, but not incapacitated
10	Burundi	PWD Act of 2014	Allowed, but not with mental illness people.

Sources: Virendrakumar, Jolley, Badu S/Schmidt, 2018:542 and the researchers' compilations, 2020

The exclusion of people with disabilities by political parties in their programmes is one of the fundamental reasons for their non-participation and representation. Though, protection and promotion of physically challenged people's rights are not well pronounced in Africa, but their aspirations, will and drive in the social, economic and political activities in their countries remain high. Therefore, the current research is topical and justifiable on the basis of the need to further investigate the physically challenged persons' political participation and representation in consolidated democracy like Nigeria.

The study will also be of immense benefits to political scientists, social analysts, electoral agencies, population experts, public policy analysts and economic planners in Ondo State and Nigeria in general. Furthermore, the study would be able to highlight and fill the major gaps in previous studies pertaining to democracy, population, the physically challenged person in public life in Ondo State in particular, and Nigeria as a whole

OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine the level of the physically challenged persons' political participation and representation in Ondo State;
- ii. To interrogate the efficiency of physically challenged persons in both elective and appointive positions in the state;
- iii. To determine the efforts to secure more political participation and representation rights of the physically challenged persons or people with disabilities and;
- iv. To investigate and discuss the reasons (barriers) for the low involvement of physically challenged persons in political participation and representation in Ondo State of Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

The expanding literature on the physically challenged persons on political participation and representation has emphasized a little critical linkage between physically challenged persons and political participation/representation (if it exists) in Nigeria and in Ondo State. The basis of literature review is to provide theoretical perspective for the research leveraging on numerous research studies and publications in the areas of democracy, governance, human rights and physically challenged persons. Quite a number of publications that

focus on the study have been written by different scholars and these include: Oluchi (2014) who observed that democracy and political participation are two sides of a coin, as participation may be direct or indirect which refers to the different ways in which the public express their opinion and exert influence on politics, economic and other social decisions, while democracy is based on mass participation and political sovereignty (Oluchi, 2014). Falade (2014) noted that political participation particularly in the electoral process is a fundamental requirement of representative democracy (Falade, 2014). Johari (2009) was of the opinion that political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of their rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy. These activities are like casting vote, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings, making financial contributions to political parties, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the legislators and other leading figures and the like (Johari, 2009).

While according to Ball (1976) cited in Johari (2009):

Political representation is the process through which attitudes, preferences, viewpoints and desires of the entire citizenry or a part of them, are with expressed approval, shaped into governmental action on their behalf by a smaller number among them with binding effects upon those represented (Johari, 2009)

In essence, Gauba (2003) noted that political participation denotes the active involvement of individual and groups in the government processes affecting their lives (Gauba, 2003; Kuna, 2005), while the state of disability determines a person's ability to participate in public and private life (Smith, 2011), and Amusat noted that bringing people with disabilities into the development mainstream will have a significant effect in public life (Amusat, 2009). Abang (2007) observed that the position of disabled people has improved in recent times with respect to the development of disability movement and protective legislations in their social economic and political status (Abang, 2007) and Magdalene, James and Uminya (2015) asserted that the society needs to work towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities by lifting them into the mainstream of society through education, rehabilitation, employment, training, consultation and other social service support programmes (Magdalene, James & Uminya (2015), while Price (2018) noted that the actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence government and politics in a way that participation in political and public life is a

critical element of socially inclusive development along the path of exercising human rights' realisation (Price, 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study shall adopt the theory of participatory democracy and action theory model of personality to midwife the work. Participatory democracy theory is a process of collective decision making that combines elements from both direct and representative democracy. Citizens have the power to decide on policy proposals and politicians assume the race of policy implementation. It implies that ultimate authority of governance rests with the people themselves as it repudiates the model of democracy with regards to people's political participation as the basic principle of democracy (Sanchez-Pages & Aragones, 2009; Gauba, 2003; Pateman, 2012).

Proponents, theorists and writers on theory of participatory democracy include Robert Oahl(1991), Macpherson C.B (1973), Carole Pateman and others all agreed that sovereignty not only originates in the people, it is also retained by the people.

The linkage of the theory to the study lies in the participation of the physically challenged persons or people with disabilities to bridge the gap between exclusion and involvement to representation. However, the defect of the theory hangs on the basis that it does not suggest any alternative system for its implementation, too permissive, undisciplined and uncontrollable for the crowd it generated (Gauba, 2003).

The other theory is the action theory model of personality. It is based on differentiated expectancy-value theory whose situations specific constructs are logically connected with personality constructs of generalized self-referential cognitions. The conventional political participation is predicted by situation - and action - specific variables and that the exposed political participation of political activists can be predicted best by situation-/action-specific non-specific motivational variables and that of political nonactivists can be predicted best by domain- specific personality variables (Krampen, 1988; Krampen, 1991; Okafor, 2017:) The theory represents a general model of works- related cognition and behaviour with implications for a wide range of issues.

The following amongst others are the proponents, theorists and writers of action theory model of personality: Krampen G. (1986), Nicholis, J.G. (1979), Epstein. R.

&Komarita, S.S (1971), Gore, W. J. (1962), Herrmann, T. &Lantermann, E.D. (1985) Garske J.P. (1976), Beck, A.T. (1972) and so on and so forth.

The utility of the theory to the study rests on the basis of grouping physically challenged persons as group of personality demanding collective agitation for greater move and efforts in political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State. It further stresses the arguments of people with disabilities (formidable group) as a special specie in action of (group) model personality towards making better input in both political and public life as citizens of any given country.

The defects however lies on the basis that development of measures that operationalize the action theoretical person variables with reference to action model personality more precisely than the presently used measures of locus of control, trust and self-concept, is perhaps difficult and this tend to mix the action-theoretically differentiated constructs of competence, contingency, situational expectancies and their generalisations.

LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The study was located in Ondo State. The state was created from the defunct Western region of Nigeria on the 3rd February, 1976 with its administrative capital in Akure. The state is located in the Western zone of the country. It is bounded by Ekiti, Osun, Edo, Ogun and Kogi States. The present Ondo state has 18 Local Government Areas with a population of about 3,460,877 Yoruba speaking people who are mostly Muslims, Christians and traditional Worshipers. It is endowed with enormous natural resources and adequate manpower (both skilled and unskilled) and has significant number of primary and secondary schools and higher institutions of learning.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in randomly selected urban and rural towns and communities in Ondo State using Nine (9) local governments out of the eighteen (18) local governments in the state. To achieve this, three local governments were randomly selected from each senatorial district. This was to ensure that the locations cut across the three senatorial districts in the state (Central, North and South).

Table 4:Design outlay for selecting study area location

S/N	SENATORIAL DISTRICT	LOCAL GOVT. TO BE SELECTED	NUMBER OF COMMUNITY TO BE SELECTED	TOTAL NO TO BE SELECTED	TOTAL AGGREGATE
1	Ondo Central	Ondo West	Igbado, Fagbo, Ondo Town,Laje, Bagbe.	5	15
		Akure South	Igbatoro, Aponmu, Ilara-mokin, OkeAro, Akure town	5	
		Ifedore	Igbara-oke,Ipogun, Owena, Ijare,Isarun	5	
2	Ondo South	Okitipupa	Ode Aye, Ilu Titun, Ijuodo, Okitipupalgbotako.	5	15
		Oke-Igbo/Ile Oluji	Ile-Oluji, Oke-igbo, Ifetedo, Bankemo,Oloruntel e	5	
		Ese-Odo	Asere, Akina, Zion, Epemubou, BaikiriBibokepiri.	5	
3	Ondo North	Owo	Ipele, Ijebu, Uso, Emure-Ile, Idasen.	5	15
		Akoko South-West	Akungba, Oba, Oka Supare, Ayegunle.	5	
		Akoko North-East	Okeagbe, Ikaramu, Ese, Irun Eriti.	5	
TOTAL	3	9	45	45	45

REASON FOR THE STUDY AREA (LOCATIONS)

A total of Nine (9) Local Government out of Eighteen (18) Local Government Areas were selected for the study. This ensured that the state is adequately represented. The nine local Government and Forty-five (45) Communities selected are relatively appropriate for the chosen study.

SAMPLE FRAME/PARTICIPANTS

The participants for the study cut across several demographics of the communities: physically challenged persons, youths and students, leaders of communities, academics and professionals.

INTERVIEW

In the investigation, execution and realization of the aims and objectives of the study, both primary and secondary method were used for data collection. The technique of data collection from primary sources included questionnaire, oral interview while the secondary data were sourced from relevant textbooks, journals and

internet materials. Analysis of the data was done using through frequency counts, percentage and other descriptive methods.

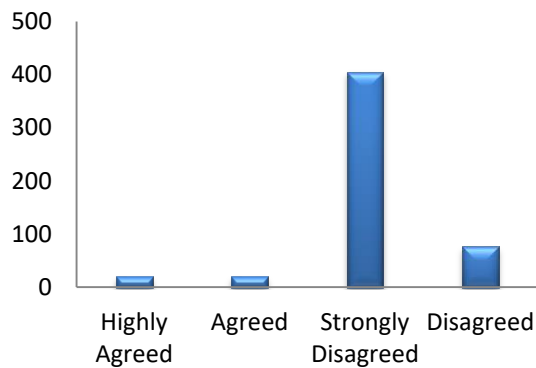
METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Structured questionnaire and personal interviews were used to elicit information from the respondents, while secondary data were collected from textbooks, journals, internet materials on the physically challenged persons' political participation and representation in politics of Ondo State.

TABLE 5: Democratic process in Ondo State has enhanced physically challenged persons' participation in politics and governance.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agreed	20	3.9
Agreed	20	3.9
Strongly Disagreed	402	77.6
Disagreed	76	14.7

Fig 1: Democratic process in Ondo State has enhanced physically challenged persons' participation in politics and governance



The result from table 5 and figure 1 showed that 402(77.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 20(3.9%) highly agreed while 76(14.7%) disagreed and 20(3.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the democratic process in Ondo state has enhanced pcps' participation in governance and participation. The outcome above showed that majority (92.3%) of the

respondents strongly disagreed that Democratic practice in Ondo State has been enabling factor for effective physically challenged persons' participation in Politics and Governance of Ondo State.

TABLE 6: Are you confident that electoral laws (in practice) in Nigeria are fair to physically challenged persons' vis-à-vis people that suffer no disability?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agreed	44	8.6
Agreed	365	71.2
Strongly Disagreed	38	7.4
Disagreed	66	12.9

Fig. 2: Are you confident that electoral laws (in practice) in Nigeria are fair to physically challenged persons vis-à-vis people that suffer no disability?

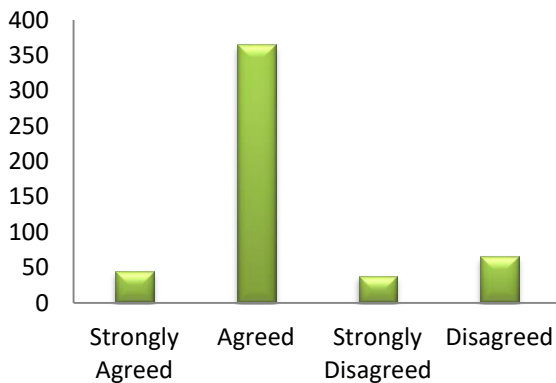


The outcome from table 6 and fig. 2 revealed that 280(54.4%) of the respondents were not confident and 2(0.4%) were highly confident, while 212(41.2%) were confident while 20(3.9%) of the respondents were undecided. The result above showed that majority of the respondents were not confident that electoral laws in Nigeria are fair to physically challenged persons vis-à-vis people who suffer no disability.

TABLE 7: Do you agree that barriers/exclusion continue to be impediment physically challenged persons' political participation / representation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Confident	2	0.4
Confident	212	41.2
Not Confident	208	54.5
Undecided	20	3.9

Fig 3: Do you agree that barriers/exclusion to be impediments towards physically challenged person's political participation /representation?

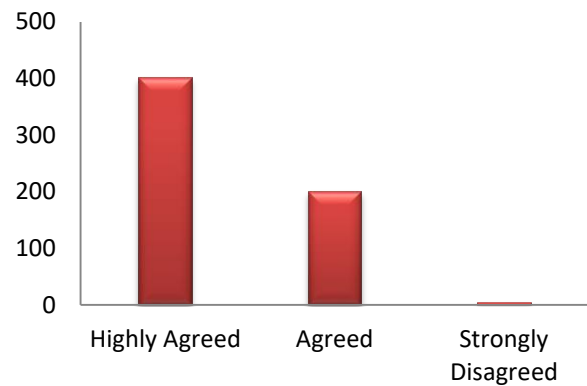


The result from Table 7 and fig. 3 revealed that 365(71.2%) of the respondents agreed and 44(8.6%) highly agreed, that exclusion continue to act as barrier against physically challenged persons' political participation and representation whereas only 38(7.4%) strongly disagreed and 66(12.9%) of the disagreed. The result showed that majority (79.8%) of the respondents agreed that barriers and exclusions have continued to be impediments toward physically challenged persons' participation /representation in Ondo State

TABLE 8: Do you agree that higher risks are issues to physically challenged persons' Political participation/representation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agreed	402	77.6
Agreed	200	21.0
Strongly Disagreed	05	1.4

Fig.4: Do you agree that higher risks are issues to physically challenged persons' Political participation/representation?

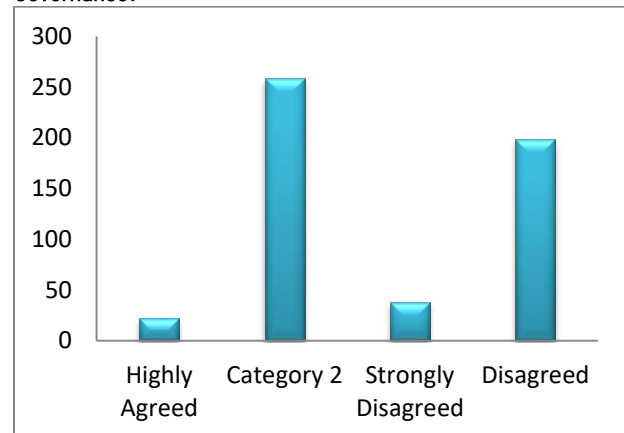


The outcome from table 8 and fig.4 showed that 200(21.0%) of the respondents agreed and 402(77.6%) of them highly agreed while 5(1.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. With such opinion, this means that majority (98.6%) of the respondents highly agreed that higher risks are issues to physically challenged persons' in political participation and representation in Ondo State.

TABLE 9: Do you agree that non-access to political activities in Ondo State has hindered greater

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agreed	22	4.3
Agreed	258	50.0
Strongly Disagreed	38	7.4
Disagreed	198	38.4

Fig 5: Do you agree that non-access to political activities in Ondo State has hindered greater participation of physically challenged persons; political participation in Politics and Governance?

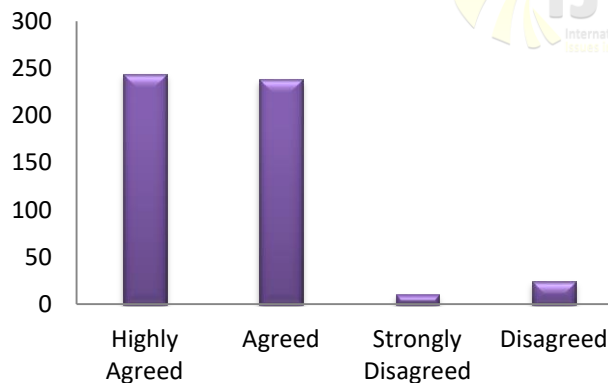


The result revealed from Table 9 and fig. 5 that 258(50.0%) of the respondents agreed and 22(4.3%) highly agreed, while only 198(38.4%) disagreed and 38(7.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that non-access to political activities in Ondo state. The result showed that a slim majority (54.3%) of the respondents agreed that political activities of physically challenged persons' do influence their participation in Politics and Governance.

TABLE 10: Do you agree that offer of free ticket for physically challenged persons by the various political parties can enhance their political participation and representation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agreed	244	47.3
Agreed	238	46.1
Strongly Disagreed	10	1.9
Disagreed	24	4.7

Fig 6: Do you agree that offer of waivers for physically challenged persons by the various political parties can enhance their political participation and representation?



The result from table 10 and fig 6 showed that 23(46.1%) of the respondents agreed and 244(47.3%) highly agreed that offer of waivers for physically challenged persons by the various political parties can enhance their political participation and representation. On the contrary, 24(4.7%) disagreed and 10(1.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with such view. The result above indicated that majority (93.4%) of the respondents highly agreed that offer of waivers for physically challenged persons by the various political parties can enhance their political participation and representation.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Simple percentage and frequency count were used to analyse the data gathered from the field work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research found out the following:

- i. Contributed to knowledge about people with disabilities/physically challenged persons' political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State;
- ii. Ascertained the level of degree of physically challenged persons/people with disabilities involvement in the political participation and representation in politics of Ondo State;
- iii. Identified factors responsible for people with disabilities/physically challenged persons' exclusion from political participation representation in politics of Ondo State; and
- iv. Identified the plights or challenges of other indicators /variables that challenged persons continue to face in the consolidation of Ondo State democracy.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

The study created further awareness as regards the imperative for more active people with disabilities/physically challenged persons' political participation and representation in politics of Ondo State considering that they represent a distinct demographic within the system, and protecting their interest will help in the sustainability of the Nigerian project at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is inferable from the empirical research study that physically challenged-persons have been under-represented, marginalized and excluded in the political system of Ondo State governance between 1999 and 2018 as there was no single person from the disabilities demographic family included in any elective or appointive positions. Therefore, the study recommends that political should parties agree to accommodate physically challenged aspirants to engage fully in political participation and representation in the governance of Ondo State. Enabling environment for their smooth participation has been enhanced through electoral laws that recognise their disabilities status. In recognition of the disability right in Nigeria, and across the world, the physically challenged persons should be encouraged to

participate actively in democracy and governance through focused human capital development and enhanced platform for participation for the needed overall development and inclusiveness of the political system.

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