

## IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES IN PLATEAU CENTRAL SENATORIAL ZONE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the implications of the involvement of Persons with Disabilities in political party activities under democracy. The specific objectives are to examine the extent to which party membership and party participation can be used to enhance political inclusion of PWD, using survey research design. The population is seventy-two (72) PWDs. The sample size is forty-five (45) PWDs. Political Inclusion Scale (PIS) was the instrument used to obtain data in this research. Data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics comprising of simple means, percentages, frequencies, standard deviations and tables to answer the two research questions. The results revealed that party membership and party participation enhanced political inclusion of PWD to a high extent. This study as a result, recommends that Political parties and nongovernmental organizations should be committed to helping PWDs in the areas of political parties' membership and participation.*

**Keywords:** *political inclusion, party membership, party participation, persons with disabilities.*

### Introduction

Inclusion literally means involvement or participation; it is a scheme that does not leave someone behind due to physical impairment, health condition or state of mind of the person in question. Andzayi (2012) acknowledged that inclusion is a peacebuilding approach and strategy; such that no one person is left out in a system, say politics; nor aggrieved as a result of being left out which can degenerate to lawlessness and outright disturbance or disruption of peaceful coexistence in a political party. Inclusion gives room for peacebuilding to flourish and to do away with any form of exclusion, marginalization and prohibition against persons with disability (PWDs) in Politics.

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) ought to enjoy equal political rights and opportunities with other party fellows; they should be allowed to participate in voting or choosing leaders of their choices at all levels and not relegated to the background or forced to give up their choices due to any disability. These party executives should co-ordinate and implement activities that ensure full inclusion of persons with disabilities into the main stream of the party even in the area of party rights. As persons with disabilities will always say, "Nothing for us, without us".

Politics is the way people live in groups and make decisions, persons with disabilities inclusive admitted that politics is about making agreements between people so that they can live together in peace and harmony. Political Inclusion in this study has to do with increasing involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in political parties' activities or parties' accomplishments.

Political inclusion is basically right to be involve, acknowledged and registered into a political party. Political inclusion also implies rights to be included, rights to presence/entry into a political party and facilities such as building/hall and getting or receiving needed services just like regular persons. Political inclusion is party-political right of entry which also implies rights to right participation, practices and procedures. Legnem, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) averred that it is having access to political party and its' structure or simply getting into and receiving all kinds of services offered by a political party by PWDs. Participation in political parties' activities can certainly promote political inclusion. In this investigation, the buildups of political inclusion are party membership and party participation by PWDs.

Party membership is basically admittance of PWDs into a political party, giving chance to PWDs to contribute, exercise and experience inclusion in all aspects of the political party's affairs and structures. Party membership is basically admittance into a party or creating space for PWDs in the party or on the party's structure, arrangement or facility area to enable PWDs obtain services or render services in the

political party. Ehiamentor, Osu-Nwufu, Makeri-Yahaya and Oladunjoye (2018) likens it to ideal business places which are conducive and convenient for all customers to obtain services or carryout transactions. UNESCO (2003) affirmed that once political parties encourage and practice political party membership for PWDs, it will certainly enhance political inclusion to a high extent. But Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) heightened that there is so much discrimination against PWDs in politics and on political facilities, including party structures in many societies in Nigeria, thereby preventing them membership into political parties and political facilities.

Party Participation simply means involvement in party activities by a person with disabilities by participating in decisions making and having a sense of belonging to a political party. Dan (2022), Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) lamented that some barriers often hinder participation in political party by PWDs. These barriers towards PWDs are easily classified in three categories: attitudinal, physical and institutional. UNESCO (2003) said that proper handling of attitudinal barrier is one of the most important ways for eliminating barriers to effective participation and inclusion of PWDs in political party's affairs.

Andzayi (2012) argued that the influence of political inclusion on PWDs is so huge and can never be over emphasized. This has to do with the inspirations, guidance and encouragement persons with disabilities are able to receive. It is instructive to note that the position of PWDs is not recognized with the political parties and their constitutions. PWDs in Plateau Central Zone are generally excluded from the grassroots level to the national level.

From the researcher's experience as one of the patrons, advisers and Board members to some of the organizations for persons with disabilities in Nigeria, I am sick and tired of appearing before security operatives in trying to report rape cases against politicians/wealthy individuals and to secure judgement for PWDs and would helplessly watch the cases being swept under the carpets. Lack of funds or legal aids has greatly hampered the prosecution of offenders. In many cases, Government had treated politicians and wealthy individuals with countless immunity and great contempt towards women with disabilities, thereby discouraging or hampering PWDs from participation in party affairs.

Fube (2022) lamented that it is rather unfortunate to observe that the attitude of some politicians and many wealthy individuals towards many female PWDs have been negative and degrading. Both groups of persons have simply taken advantage of the poor economics status of ladies with disabilities and taken advantage of them by assaulting these ladies sexually for peanuts; some others have turned these ladies into sex slaves and are badly in need of some forms of therapies; as a result, many PWDs are disheartened and discouraged towards active participation in political party undertakings and relationships.

Dan (2022) grieved that PWDs in some states of Nigeria are faced with ugly negative treatments from politicians and political office holders. It is worrisome that despite staging several protests in different forms against politicians and political office holders for sexual assaults, no one seems to be bordered nor worried about these politicians' ills and persecutions; politicians' issues had constantly been swept under the carpet or treated with great impunity, perhaps because PWDs' "do not matter". Those had in turn, grossly hampered participation in party affairs.

Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) stressed that all hands must be on deck to create space for PWDs to be heard and to participate in all and at all political activities so as to eliminate the marginalization of PWDs in politics and political activities. As a result of those, there is a profound need to open political doors for PWDs in Nigeria.

Andzayi (2012) and Jurmang, Jatau&Jikukka (2012) further emphasized that persons with disabilities for long were abused to the point of exclusion, marginalization and even to the point of extermination (death). Negative political attitude towards PWDs is the root cause of these problems; these attitudinal problems are found in cultures that are revealed in songs, stories, folklores, proverbs and many more. For instance, Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) reports that the Ngas people of Plateau state of Nigeria have a proverb that says; "a le gyemzhibawak a le gyempowatbul" meaning "to give birth to a mentally retarded child, it is better to give birth to child that is a thief". Definitely where a thief is preferred to a child with disabilities, it means a child with disabilities will never be treated well in such society. This is purely an attitudinal problem embedded in culture, exhibited towards PWDs. Negative attitudinal problems rooted in politicians will always manifest in these politicians in many ways; as members of the society, they will

prefer other politicians with devious characters than PWDs, perhaps because they see PWDs as “fragile and weak” (lack physical energy and or strength) and cannot be entrusted with political mandates or given any serious party position to hold or occupied. This negative belief and behavior often profoundly limit and discourage PWDs’ political participation, opportunities and activities.

Jurmang (2010) accentuated that PWDs are simply judged by their disabilities and not competences, capabilities nor qualifications. Jurmang further averred that if a PWD is looking for a job or political position or political power, the employers, party leaders/members and the general public will be more interested in scrutinizing the PWD’s disability than his/her skills, competence or wits. This equally discourages PWDs from participation in societal activities and political party activities, just to say the least.

Jurmang (2010) and Andzayi (2012) opined that it can visibly be observed that political parties’ membership issues are often miserable issues for PWDs. For instance, public entrance doors/gates of most political party buildings are not accessible for: persons on Wheel Chairs, persons on Crouches (Walkers), the visually impaired with their White Cane and the like. Others are, physically impaired persons who cannot access many parties’ offices and officials because they are located upstairs or in story buildings which are not easy for PWDs to access or be easily admitted into.

Ozaji (2005) and Andzayi (2012) stated that if inclusion scheme must be regarded and respected which is the ideal thing to do; every party’s executive and members must restructure, adapt or reform their party structures, buildings, infrastructures and arrangements to accommodate PWDs. Once political parties acknowledge the importance and possible contributions of PWDs to political parties and governance as party members or as stakeholders, the party executives and members will continually make policies and decisions that will touch the lives of PWDs to achieve political satisfaction, happiness and fulfilment; until PWDs are properly included in the political party structures, irrespective of physiological, educational and economical status, inclusion is far to be reached.

Dan (2022) lamented that PWDs are faced with severe stigmatization, deprivation, frustration, marginalization, exclusion, discrimination, segregation and negative attitude from the larger society when it has to do with enforcing inclusion schemes. When it comes to securing places in political parties or occupying the executive spaces of political parties; it is like squeezing water from a rock as regular members of these political parties will make demands or block PWDs.

Disability is not just a mere health predicament, it is a multifarious experience that affects the person’s mind or thoughts, body or physique, spirit or essence of life and the ability to function just as any other person in the society in which the person lives. Andzayi (2012) professed that disability may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional and developmental or some combination of those, and may be present from birth or occur during a person’s life.

Disability is an umbrella term connoting, activity limitation (low ability) and/or participation restrictions and is an outcome of interaction between impairment and negative environmental impact. It is a fact that most people at some points in their lives will experience one type of disability or the other (Ozaji, 2005). The researcher feels that a Person with Disability is one with “reduced ability” as a result of an impairment. A person with disability is one faced with restriction or low/reduced ability to perform a certain task within a manner that is considered normal for human beings. Cal (2022) and Andzayi (2012) opined that a condition is considered disabling only when it interferes with activity or adjustment in an important manner. Disability is actually an effect. Parties often focus too much attention on the defects and deficiencies of PWDs rather than on the strengths and efficiencies.

A person with disability is said to be one whose impairment reduces his/her ability to perform certain tasks. This means that there are many tasks PWDs can perform in political parties; especially tasks that are not related to or dependent on the damaged organ. But the negative attitudes of political parties through their executives or members are the undesirable consequences of their presumed limitations (disabilities) to work in the political party (Ozaji, 2005; Andzayi, 2012).

Other problems are, can political inclusion be used to: Change the political party access of PWDs? Enhance the fear of stigmatization, humiliation and trauma experienced by PWDs? The aim of this investigation is

to investigate the influence of political inclusion towards persons with disabilities (PWDs). The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. examine the extent to which party membership can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs.
- ii. determine the extent to which party participation can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs.

### Research Questions

1. To what extent can party membership be used to enhance political inclusion of PWDs in Plateau Central Zone?
2. To what extent can participation in partitivities used to change political inclusion of PWDs?

### Theoretical Frame Work

This study is anchored on the Theory of Politics also known as Aristotle's Political Theory. The theory states that government exist to promote and foster virtue in a way that leads to the good life of the citizens. Virtuous citizens are prepared to live together under common laws and contribute to their community. This theory was propounded by Aristotle Nicomachus in 1937 (Sabine, 1960). The theory is related to this study because it advocates that all human beings who can make important decisions on politics and governance should be members of political parties and should participate in politics. Aristotle believes that when people are all equal in their moral and intellectual quality, none are justified to rule all the time, even over PWDs. Thus comes his famous saying "Ruling and being ruled in turn," is the essential idea of the democratic parties and governments; the applicability of Aristotle's Theory and contribution to this study is also in the fact that people living in structured groups (political parties) must be organized under an umbrella of laws and guidelines. The formal adherence to political party rules will result in harmony and productivity.

### Methodology

This study employed the survey research design; specifically, the cross-sectional survey. Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2004) opined that a cross-sectional survey examines a sample from the population for the purpose of achieving any or all of the following objectives: description, explanation and exploration. The reason for using this cross-sectional survey, is that it helps to collect data, from the sample at this particular time and determine the influence of political inclusion towards PWDs.

According to UNESCO (2003) there is severe discriminations against PWDs in our public spaces including political spaces today which are purely attitudinal issues. Discrimination in access to political space is a form of social exclusion. At the individual level, the impact of social exclusion can be devastating, leading to low self-esteem, poor social relationships, isolation, depression and psych-trauma.

The population of this research is seventy-two (72) PWDs in the study area. This population is found to be suitable for this study because it has the same characteristics of PWDs suitable to be used in this study. The sample size of this study was forty-five (45) PWDs. The choice of forty-five (45) as the sample size, was informed by the fact that this was the only number that was present for the investigation and also met the requirement for this investigation: PWDs with only one specific disability (visually, hearing, physically, AA impaired; others are persons with leprosy and cerebral palsy) and not having two or more disabilities at the same time (multiple disabilities) and are involved in political activities. The sampling technique used was the purposive sampling technique based on the following reasons: First, the choice of the study area where the research took place was based on purpose: the selected area had the largest number of PWDs without multiple disabilities but with single disability at a time. Second, the researcher purposely selected: 10 PWDs with hearing impairment; 10 PWDs with visual impairment; 10 with physical impairment, 10 PWDs with cerebral palsy and 5 PWDs with leprosy who are ready to take part in the survey research.

The forty-five (45) PWDs were given the instrument: Political Inclusion Scale (PIS) which they responded to, through which data was obtained. The Cronbach's alpha reliability method was used in this study to ascertain the suitability of the research instrument. This method was a more generalized method of estimating internal consistency. It was the average split-half correlation based on all possible divisions of an investigation into two parts. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was computed from the variances of individual investigation items and variance of the total investigation scores. PIS provide response: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Cronbach's alpha is defined by the formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1} \left[ \frac{1 - \sum S^2 \text{ items}}{K-1} \right] \quad [ \quad S^2 \text{ test} \quad ]$$

Where  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha

K = Number of items

$S^2$  = Variance

The reliability of the instrument obtained using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient index was 0.782 for PIS. PIS is basically divided into Sections A and B. Section A. was the Bio-data of the respondents and Section B. has twenty (20) items via which the respondents responded to. Those are list of items that sought to collect the political inclusion (party membership and party participation) of the respondents.

The respondents' responses were collected and used; the sample items: 1, 3,5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19 were used to test research question one; while items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 were used to test research question two. Respondents were asked to tick ( $\checkmark$ ) items from the options that best expressed their minds on the Political Inclusion Scale. The scale used for scoring each of the items on political inclusion was the five points Likert Scale rated: Strongly Agreed (SA: 5 points), Agreed (A: 4 points), Undecided (U: 3 points), Disagreed (D: 2 points) and Strongly Disagreed (SD: 1 point).

Two experts with PhD from University of Jos (Department of Political Science and Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences) were used to establish the validity of Political Inclusion Scale. This is to ensure that, the contents of the instrument are applicable and effective for use with the sample, and these experts judged and guides the researcher in making revision of the items for content validity. The items on the instrument were judged for the instrument's comprehensiveness, adequacy and relevance by the experts. The validity index of the instrument was generated to be 0.811. The two research questions were answered using simple means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and table.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

### Research Question One

To what extent can party membership be used to change political inclusion of PWDs?

**Table 1**

#### Extent to which party membership can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs

Determinant Factors: Party Membership	Respondents' Responses					Total	Mean $\pm$ SD
	SA	A	UD	D	SD		
The membership of PWDS into my party needs to be reconsidered.	17(37.8)	23(51.1)	3(6.7)	2(4.4)	0	45(100)	4.2 $\pm$ 0.82
My party's membership needs to be disability compliant.	7(15.6)	16(35.6)	11(24.4)	11(24.4)	0	45(100)	3.4 $\pm$ 1.04
My party's membership policies cater for PWDS.	3(6.7)	3(6.7)	16(35.6)	20(44.4)	3(6.7)	45(100)	2.6 $\pm$ 1.02
There are no programmes and services for PWDS in my party.	10(22.2)	27(60.0)	3(6.7)	5(11.1)	0	45(100)	3.9 $\pm$ 0.89
There seems to be no room for PWDS in my party.	7(15.6)	38(84.4)	0	0	0	45(100)	4.2 $\pm$ 0.38

**Source:** field data 2022

Table 1 shows the Extent to which party membership can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs. Based on the mean and standard deviation, the membership of PWDS into parties need to be reconsidered which had 4.2 $\pm$ 0.82 and no room for PWDS in political parties had 4.2 $\pm$ 0.38 are ranked highest, followed by no programmes and services for PWDS which has 3.9 $\pm$  0.89 ranked third. This implies that the membership of PWDS into political parties need to be reconsidered with the highest extent.

**Research Question Two**

To what extent can party participation be used to change political inclusion of PWDs?

**Table 2**

**Extent to which party participation can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs**

<b>Determinant Factors: Party Participation</b>	<b>Respondents Responses</b>					<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean ± SD</b>
	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>		
My political party needs to let me participate in its activities.	6(14.9)	37(78.7)	0	2(6.4)	0	45(100)	4.0±0.64
My party needs to make room for me; for participation in politics.	6(14.9)	27(57.4)	6(12.8)	2(6.4)	4(8.5)	45(100)	3.6±1.09
I need to participate in my political party.	10(21.3)	14(29.8)	10(21.3)	11(27.7)	0	45(100)	3.5±1.12

**Source:** field data 2022

Table 2 shows the extent to which party participation can be used to change political inclusion of PWDs. Based on the mean and standard deviation: political parties need to let PWDs participate in political parties' activities with mean and standard deviation 4.0±0.64 ranked first. Political parties need to make room for PWDs to participation had 3.6±1.09 ranked second and the need for PWDs to participation in political parties' activities had 3.5±1.12 ranked third. This implies that the major problem is lack of political parties' participation of PWDs.

**Discussion of Findings**

The first research question reveals that political party membership based determinant factor was to a high extent able to change political inclusion of PWDs. This result strengthened the positions of UNESCO (2003) and Andzayi (2012) who affirmed that political party membership encourages and enhances political inclusion to a high extent. It puts out certain elements of discrimination against PWDs in politics and encourages inclusion into party structures in many political parties, thereby affording them membership into political parties. Party membership of PWDs gives them the sense of belonging into political parties and a common sense of inclusion instead of being excluded or discriminated upon. Political party membership gives room for PWDs in political parties' contributions.

Similarly, the second research question exposed that participation based determinant factor was effective in improving participation to a high extent amongst PWDs. These results supported the position of Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) and Dan (2022) who averred that participation in political parties' activities certainly promote political inclusion to a high extent. Party participation is involvement in party activities, decisions making and having a feel and belief of being in the right place (political party). Therefore, political parties need to let PWDs participate in political parties' activities. Political parties need to make room for PWDs to participation in political parties' activities, and there is need for PWDs to actively participation in political parties' activities.

Andzayi (2012); Dan (2022); Jurmang, Jatau and Jikukka (2012) affirm that an example of attitudinal barriers in the political parties' context include: holding to a wrong belief that PWDs are beggars and not worthy to be found in politics or political parties, this typecast belief is also habitually seen in the attitudes of party's officials, administrators and would never desire to give room for admittance nor participation of PWDs in good number; this makes PWDs feel unwelcome. It creates barrier against PWDs from joining political parties to do politics like other regular persons. These PWDs simply feel stigmatized, discriminated upon and tactfully excluded by many political parties.

McCall (2003) said that institutional barriers are often created when there is no legal framework for disability inclusion or when existing laws and regulations, such as those that require programmes and services are poorly or never enforced. Okwudire (2012) said that institutional barriers are difficult to identify because they are often entrenched within political, social and cultural norms, "but when I see one, I will

know''. Examples of institutional barriers in political party's setting include: inability for a party to provide brailled materials for the visually impaired or to provide interpreters to assist the hearing impaired and many more.

### Conclusion

This study has substantiated that political inclusion of PWDs can change political parties' membership and participation to a high extent. Parties' executives and regular members need to give room for inclusive politics, were PWDs are involved in political parties' structures, programmes and services. Managers and administrators need to work on their attitudes and policies to consciously and deliberately work to create space for PWDs in political parties in order to strengthen political inclusion towards persons with disabilities.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings:

1. Political parties and nongovernmental organizations should be committed to helping PWDs in the areas of political parties' membership and participation.
2. Government and NGOs such as Equal Rights for Special People International and Voice of Special People should ensure that the doors of political parties are open and accessible to PWDs, especially when it comes to removal of attitudinal, policies, physical and institutional barriers in political parties.

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