

# Persons with Disabilities Perspective on Disability Rights

\*Ndifreke Andrew-Essien

N.E. Freky Andrew-Essien Care Foundation, Nigeria

Obraori Adiola

Dept. of Jurisprudence & Int'l Law, Rivers State University

\*Correspondents

## Executive Summary

This research on persons with disabilities perspective on disability rights, gives some insight as to the knowledge, awareness and attitude persons with disabilities had towards their own rights and carry out a training to build capacity. This is a descriptive cross-sectional study using quantitative data collection method in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. Only 16.67% of the participants claimed to have heard about the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) act, 2018, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 and the Rivers State Persons with Disability Welfare (Enhancement) Law, 2012 but after training, this increased. This was the trend throughout the study. For persons with disabilities to truly be able to advocate for their own rights, a sustained building of their capacities is key to capitalising on opportunities for advancing disability rights and for strategic advocacy. The state and other states in the South-South Region will gain from more of these capacity building activities, which will in turn promote disability rights.

## Key Words

Disability, knowledge, awareness, perspective, perception, Disability rights, persons with disabilities, Nigeria, disability awareness, awareness, rights

## Introduction

With the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 in Nigeria, it is essential that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are well aware of the provisions of both the Act and the CRPD. There is also the need to create awareness about the provisions

of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 to PWDs so they can appreciate what it means to them. The project is also intended to train them on the requisite skills to advocate for their rights. Considering that the elections in Nigeria and how strategic, it is for leadership in different institutions, levels including States, to equip persons with disabilities with knowledge and skills to be able to demand for their rights. Furthermore, considering future elections, public awareness-raising will push for disability inclusion in public officers' mandates especially when the disability consciousness begins to blaze brightly. It is anticipated that building capacities will lead to learning the situation of the rumoured existing law and advocating for implementation of the Act so as to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in the State.

## Introduction

Persons with disabilities value many of the same subjects considered important by the general public. Estimated as over 30 million in Nigeria (1), with a good percentage of this population in the South-South region of Nigeria, persons with disabilities, continue to constitute one of the poorest, socially excluded and marginalized groups within the society (2).

The conceptual development over the last 10–20 years has expanded the understanding of disability from welfare to social and rights based, and to an even more integrated approach. It has therefore become necessary to take disability into account in development as people with disabilities represent a significant proportion of the world population (15%) (3). The Nigerian population cannot and should

not be ignored or excluded whether they live in the nation's capital or not.

Many persons with disabilities, including so called leaders and advocates, are still not adequately armed with the right knowledge of what is within their rights as persons with disabilities as expressed in the CRPD and the current National Disability Discrimination Act. Many in these part of Nigeria, are unable to exercise national laws and its provisions within their local context.

Persons with disabilities are not equipped by way of built capacity, with the right tools and skills to effectively advocate for their rights. Even when the opportunities present themselves, there is an inability to compose, coordinate and present their concerns. This has resulted in personal and self-serving approaches to gaining support which in most cases is largely welfarist and individualistic, with only the strong few with connections getting the so called welfare benefits.

Consequently, the Sustainable Development Goals have striven to ensure "no one is left behind" by promoting a stronger focus on disability (4). People with disabilities continue to suffer most from inequalities and Nigeria cannot develop in a cohesive manner if a significant part of their members continue to be treated differently and discriminated against because of their disabilities.

### Objectives

The general objective of this study is to determine the level of knowledge, awareness, and attitude that persons with disabilities in Rivers State have towards Disability Rights.

The specific objectives are:

- To ascertain the level of knowledge persons with disabilities in Rivers State have of their disability rights.
- To determine the level of awareness persons with disabilities have of their own rights.
- To learn the attitudes that persons with disabilities have of disability and disability rights.

### Materials and Methods

This is a descriptive cross sectional study using quantitative data collection method in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. To ensure correct collection and interpretation of information, it was an interviewer administered questionnaire.

The questionnaires were administered by the data collectors, who are volunteers conversant with working with persons with disabilities. The questionnaires were administered before and after the training. The training served as a form of an intervention. The data was analysed to determine knowledge, awareness and attitude before and after capacity building.

### Study Population

The study population were persons with disabilities who participated in the three days capacity building training of 30 Persons with Disabilities in Rivers State to advocate for their rights and to participate more actively and engage with community members and government in a meaningful manner on a regular and sustained basis. Questionnaires were administered before and after the training.

### Study Area

The study was conducted in Obio / Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, participants were however persons with disabilities resident in Port Harcourt and Obio / Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

### Limitations / Mitigations

A one-day capacity building workshop was held on disability research and understanding disability for the data collectors who are project volunteers. This was to reduce interviewer biases and ensure proper data collection in disability research.

The sample size was small and limited to training participants, so extrapolation of findings may not be generalised to all persons with disabilities in River State.

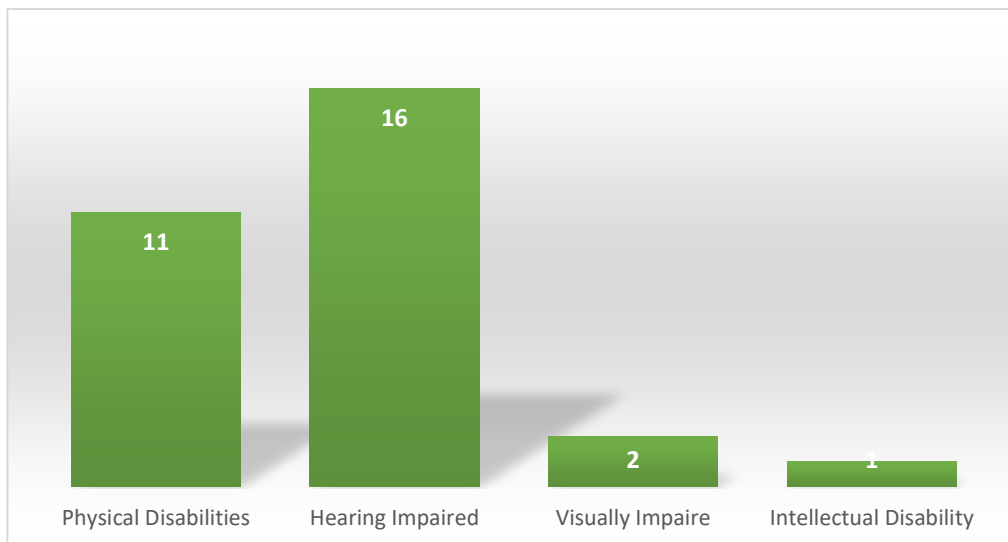
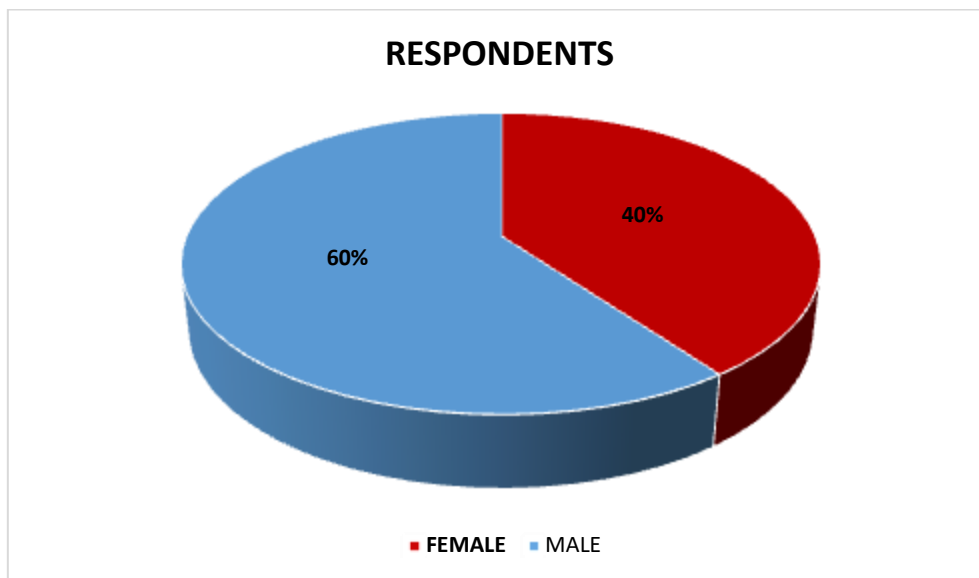
Communication and response from hearing impaired participants was especially challenging, primarily in understanding concepts. This to a great extent was mitigated by engaging sign language interpreters. It was however clear that fundamental understanding and communication of understanding by this cluster is somewhat limited.

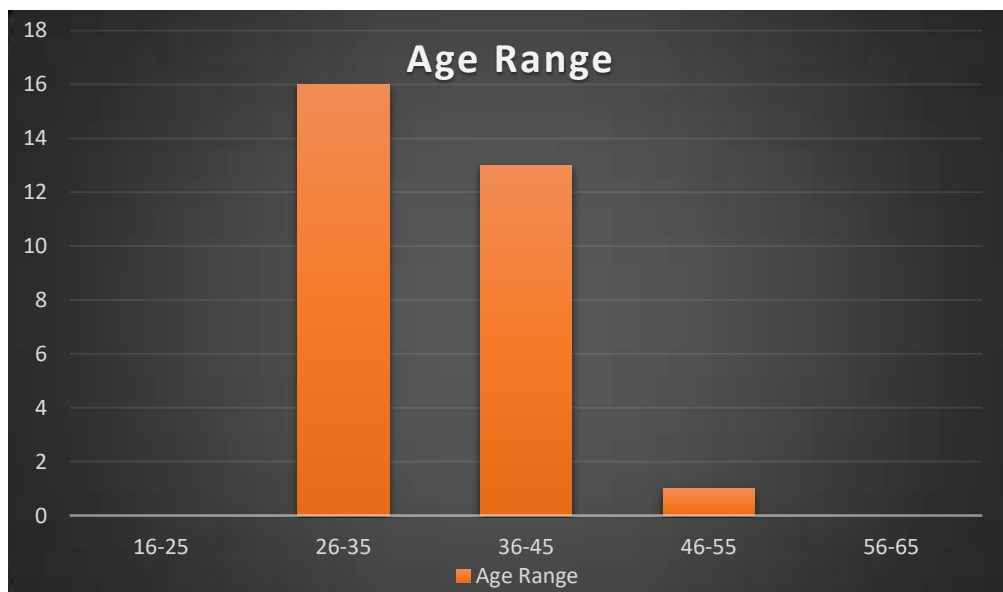
### Result and Discussion

There were 30 participants in total, which comprised of 18 male participants and 12 female participants. 16 of them were between the age ranges of 26 - 35, while 13 persons were within the age range of 36 - 45. Only one

person was within the age range of 46 - 55. 19 persons were single, 9 married and 1 person each indicated being separated and living together respectively. All 30 participants acknowledged that they had a disability. 18 of them indicated that they had sensory disability, while 11 participants indicated that they had physical disability. Only 1 participant noted that he or she had intellectual disability. 17

specifically indicated that they were deaf and hard of hearing. 9 persons identified that they had mobility impairment and physical challenge, 2 persons indicated that they were blind or had visual impairment, only one person had cerebral palsy. One participant specifically noted that his or her disability was paraplegic.





**Knowlegde**

The knowledge aspect of the research focused on determining what respondents knew. Questions around which of the statutory laws

they had heard and read about and, which rights they knew, were asked. Knowledge on some relevant skills was also asked.

Disability laws heard about (Pre-test)		
LAW	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.Persons with Disabilities Discrimination (Prohibition) Act 2018	19	63.33
2.Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	1	3.33
3.Rivers State Persons with Disabilities Welfare (Enhancement) Law 2012	2	6.67
4.None of the Above	2	6.67
1 & 2	1	3.33
1, 2 & 3	5	16.67
Disability laws heard about (Post-test)		
LAW	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.Persons with Disabilities Discrimination (Prohibition) Act 2018	7	23.33
2.Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	0	0.00
3.Rivers State Persons with Disabilities Welfare (Enhancement) Law 2012	3	10.00
4.None of the Above	0	0.00
1 & 2	1	3.33
1, 2 & 3	18	60.00

The Pre-test evaluation revealed that only 16.67% of the participants claimed to have heard about the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) act,

2018, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 and the Rivers State Persons with

Disability Welfare (Enhancement) Law, 2012.  
While the post-test evaluation showed that

60% of the participants knew of the three laws.

<b>Disability laws read about (Pre-test)</b>		
<b>LAW</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
1.Persons with Disabilities Discrimination (Prohibition) Act 2018	18	60.00
2.Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	0	0.00
3.Rivers State Persons with Disabilities Welfare (Enhancement) Law 2012	1	3.33
4.None of the Above	7	23.33
1 & 2	2	6.67
1, 2 & 3	1	3.33
1 & 3	1	3.33
<b>Disability laws read about (Post-test)</b>		
<b>LAW</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
1.Persons with Disabilities Discrimination (Prohibition) Act 2018	5	16.67
2.Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	1	3.33
3.Rivers State Persons with Disabilities Welfare (Enhancement) Law 2012	4	13.33
4.None of the Above	1	3.33
1&2	1	3.33
1, 2 & 3	16	53.33
1 & 3	1	3.33
2 & 3	1	3.33

<b>Know any five provisions of any of these laws against the discrimination of persons with Disabilities? (Pre-Test)</b>		
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
18	11	1
60.00	36.67	3.33
<b>Know any five provisions of any of these laws against the discrimination of persons with Disabilities? (Post-Test)</b>		
<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>FREQUENCY</b>	26	4
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	86.67	13.33

The pre-test showed that only 3.3% of participants had read the three laws revealed. However, the post-test revealed that 53.3% of the participants had read the three laws. 60% claimed to know at least five provisions of any

of the laws on discrimination. While the post-test revealed that 87% of the participants now knew at least five provisions on the discrimination.

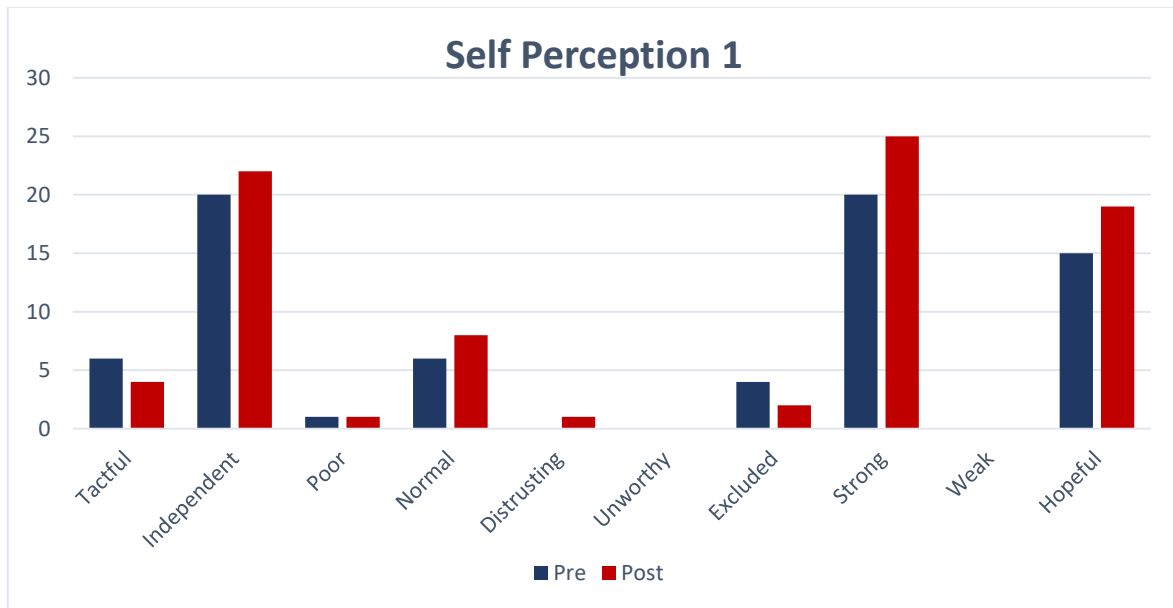
<b>Advocacy Skills Knowledgeable In (Pre-Test)</b>		
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
Negotiation	14	46.67
Communication	6	20.00
Lobbying and Influencing Skills	5	10.00
Working with Media to advance Disability Right	1	3.33
None	4	13.33
<b>Advocacy Skills Knowledgeable In (Post-Test)</b>		
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
Negotiation	10	33.33
Communication	3	10.00
Lobbying and Influencing Skills	13	43.33
Working with Media to advance Disability Right	4	13.33
None	0	0.00

The pretest showed that 47% have negotiation skills, 20% have communication skills, 10% have lobbying and influencing skills, 3% have skills working with media to advance disability rights and 13% acknowledged that they had no advocacy skills. These percentages appear high and respondents may have over-exaggerated because of lack of understanding of the skills. The post-test revealed that 33% negotiation skills, 10 % have communication skills, 43% have lobbying and influencing skills, and 13% have

skills working with media to advance disability rights.

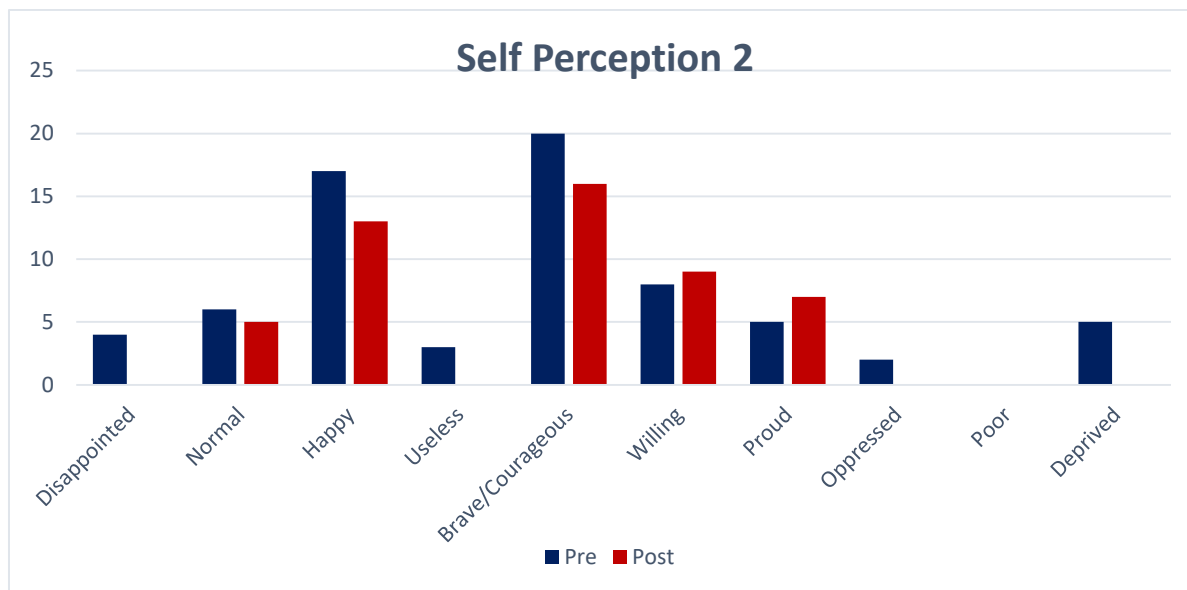
**Awareness**

This part of the study, focused more on self-perception that persons with disabilities had about what characteristics and feelings qualified them best. The options from which respondents could only pick three had both positive and negative qualities. It was important to gain insight into how PWDs see themselves.



The pre-test revealed the following claims by the participant: 20% are tactful, 67% are independent, 3% are poor, 20% are normal, 13% are excluded, 67% consider themselves as strong, and 50% are hopeful. Meanwhile,

the post-test revealed that 13% are tactful, 73% are independent, 3% are poor, 27% think they are normal, 3% think they are distrusting, 63% are hopeful, 7% think they are excluded, 83% considered themselves as strong.



The pre-test showed that 13% of the participant feel disappointed, 20% feel normal, 57% feel happy, 10% feel useless, 67% feel brave, 27% feel willing, 7% feel oppressed

and 17% feel deprived. While the post-test showed that 17% of the participants are normal, 43% are happy, 53% are brave, 30% are willing, and 23% are proud.

S/N	Pre-test	SA	A	N	D	SD	Weighted Mean	Remark
1	People in the society are not aware of disability rights	12	10	0	3	3	3.63	Agree
2	Persons with Disabilities are not aware of their right	15	8	1	1	1	3.77	Agree
3	Persons with Disabilities do not have adequate skills to advocate for their right	9	11	0	6	1	3.40	Neutral
4	I do not have adequate skills to advocate for my rights	9	10	2	3	3	3.33	Neutral

S/N	Post-Test	SA	A	N	D	SD	Weighted Mean	Remark
1	People in the society are not aware of disability rights	15	13	0	1	1	4.33	Agree
2	Persons with Disabilities are not aware of their right	16	9	1	2	0	4.10	Agree
3	Persons with Disabilities do not have adequate skills to advocate for their right	15	10	2	3	0	4.23	Agree
4	I do not have adequate skills to advocate for my rights	7	9	1	6	7	3.10	Neutral

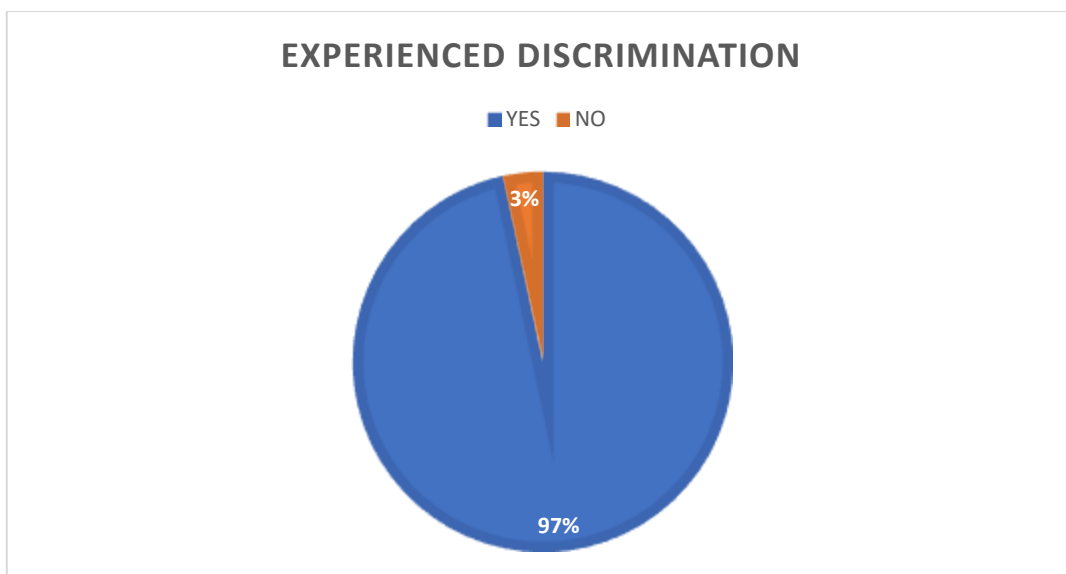
The result of the pre-test revealed that more respondents agree that people in the society are not aware of disability rights and persons with disabilities are not aware of their rights. While the response to the question “persons with disabilities do not have adequate skills to advocate for their rights” was neutral. Same response to the question “I do not have adequate skills to advocate for my rights”. However, the results of the post-test revealed that the respondent agree that people in the society and persons with disabilities are not aware of disability rights, and persons with

disabilities do not have adequate skills to advocate for their rights. While the respondents were neutral as to whether they have adequate skills to advocate for their rights

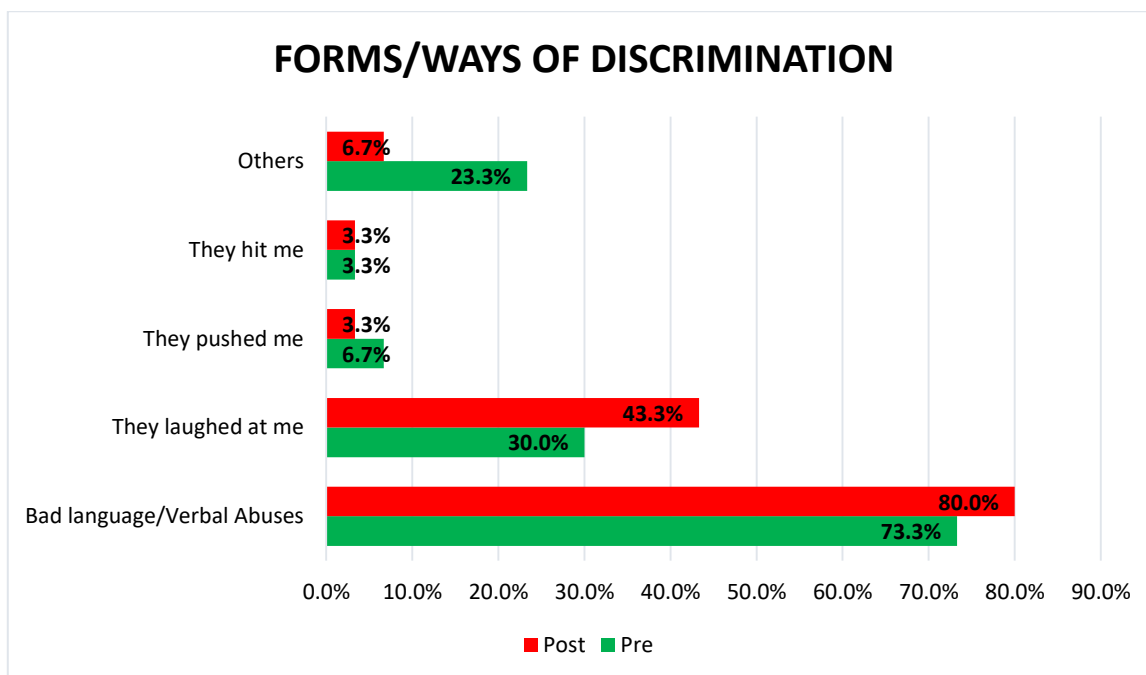
**Attitude**

This aspect of the study focused on determining if the respondents had experienced discrimination, the forms of discrimination and how they responded to discrimination.

Has anyone discriminated against you because of your disability?		
RESPONSE	YES	NO
FREQUENCY	29	1
PERCENTAGE (%)	96.67	3.33



Both the pre-test and post-test revealed that 97% of the participants agreed that they have been discriminated because of their disability.

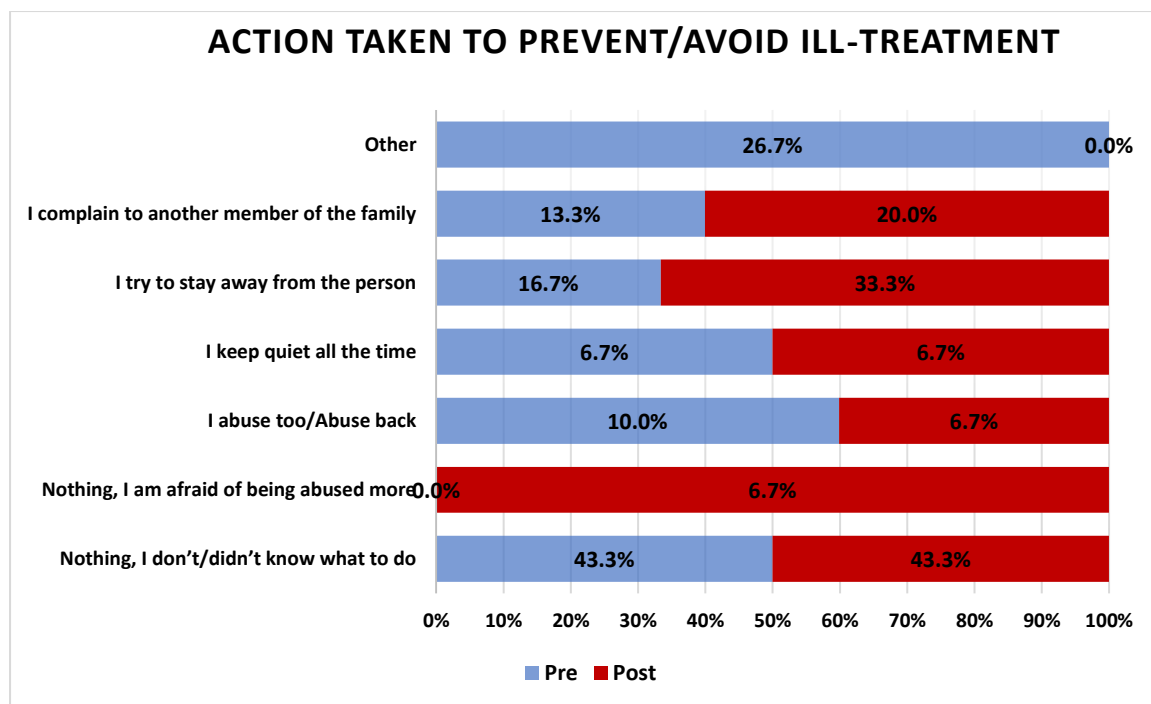


The pre-test revealed the nature of discrimination as follows:

Bad language / abuses: 73% of the respondents, Being mocked at: 30%, Being pushed: 7%, Being hit: 3%, Other forms of discrimination: 23%

After the capacity, the post-test revealed that 80% had been verbal abused because of their

disability, 43% of them claimed to have been mocked at, while 3% claimed to have been pushed and hit. While 7% claimed that they had suffered other forms of discrimination not captured.



With result to their reaction to the discrimination, the pre-test revealed that 43% of them did nothing because they didn't know what to do. No respondent acknowledged doing nothing out of fear. 10% admitted abusing back in retaliation. 7% admitted keeping quiet all the time. 17% said the stay

away from the abuser. 13% noted that they complain to other family members, while 27% indicated that they responded in other ways not covered. The post-test was similar to the scores of the pre-test with 43% of them indicating that they do nothing because they do not know what to do.

Attitude towards other Persons with Disabilities								
S/ N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	W. Mean	Remark
1	Persons with Disability should live with those without disability	15	14	0	0	1	4.40	Agree
2	If provided adequate support, Persons with Disabilities can lead social lives as people without disability can	15	11	0	0	0	3.97	Agree
3	Persons with Disabilities deserve to live where they want	16	11	1	1	0	4.30	Agree
4	With sufficient qualifications and through legitimate process, Persons with Disabilities can be elected into public office	18	10	0	0	2	4.40	Agree
5	I will not let my children hang out with children with disability	2	6	0	8	13	2.10	Disagree

6	I feel uncomfortable being around Persons with Disabilities because I am not sure how to treat them	1	6	0	10	12	2.03	Disagree
7	It is difficult for me to approach Persons with Disabilities because I feel like they are different from me	1	7	0	10	11	2.13	Disagree
8	Persons with Disabilities would consider themselves unfortunate	2	8	0	7	11	2.23	Disagree

The study revealed that the participants agree that persons with disabilities should live with those without disability; if provided adequate support, persons with disabilities can lead social lives as people without disability can; persons with disabilities deserve to live where they want in ways they want; and that with sufficient qualifications through legitimate process, persons with disabilities can be elected into public office. The study showed that respondents disagreed with the statements: that they will not let their children hang out with children with disability; that they feel uncomfortable being around persons with disabilities because they are not sure how to treat them; that it is difficult for them to approach other persons with disabilities because they feel they are different from them; and that persons with disabilities should consider themselves unfortunate.

However, the post-test showed that the participants agree that persons with disabilities

should live with those without disabilities; and that persons with disabilities deserve to live where they want in ways they want. It revealed that the participants strongly agreed that if provided adequate support, persons with disability can lead social lives as people without disability can. They disagreed that with sufficient qualification and through legitimate process, persons with disability can be elected into public office; that they will not let their children hang out with children with disability; that they feel uncomfortable being around persons with disabilities because they are not sure how to treat them; and that it is difficult for them to approach other persons with disabilities because they feel they are different from them. The respondents were neutral to the question that persons with disabilities would consider themselves unfortunate.

Pre-Test								
S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	W. Mean	Remark
1	Advocating against disability discrimination is a continuous effort	19	7	0	1	2	4.23	Agree
2	Persons with Disabilities can partner with persons without disabilities to advocate for disability rights	14	12	0	0	2	4.00	Agree
3	Persons with Disabilities requires advocacy skills to be better disability advocates	18	8	1	0	2	4.23	Agree
Post - Test								
S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	S D	W. Mean	Remark
1	Advocating against disability discrimination is a continuous effort	21	7	1	1	0	4.60	Strongly Agree

2	Persons with Disabilities can partner with persons without disabilities to advocate for disability rights	18	8	2	1	1	4.37	Agree
3	Persons with Disabilities requires advocacy skills to be better disability advocates	19	8	2	0	1	4.47	Agree

The pre-test indicated that participants agreed that advocating against disability discrimination is a continuous effort, while the post-test revealed that they strongly agreed to this assertion. Both the pre-test and post-test revealed that respondents agreed that persons with disabilities can partner with persons without disabilities to advocate for disability rights; and that person with disabilities require advocacy skills to be better disability advocates.

### Conclusion

The intention of the Disability Right Initiative Project was to enlighten and create awareness within the members of the disability community in Rivers State about their rights. The focus was the disability rights as contained in the CRPD, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, and the Rivers State Persons with Disabilities Welfare (Enhancement) Law of 2012. This goal was achieved, and the choice of this particular region of Nigeria is relevant, important and timely. Persons with disabilities within the region are now aware about the provisions of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, thus, they appreciate what it means to them. The project also exposed and trained them on the requisite skills to advocate for their rights.

### Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest

### Funding Statement

This work was supported by Disability Rights Fund under Grant number 36590275 to Freky

Andrew-Essien Care Foundation (FAECARE Foundation)

### Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the contributions of research assistants, and FAECARE Foundation who provided support as research assistants during the research

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