

Community based rehabilitation services and inclusion: The experiences of persons with visual impairments in Ukpe, Alege Ubang (UKALU) communities

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *Studies on social model of disability has shown that society and disability are seemingly in a constant interaction however, persons with visual impairments still have society-related challenges on full inclusion and participation in community-based activities. The study examined relationship between CBRs and inclusion of person with visual impairments in Ukalu communities in Obudu-Cross River State, Nigeria.*

Methodology: *It adopted quantitative research and Ex-post facto design as its methodology, the population consisted of 45 persons with visual impairments who registered in CBR training funded by GFO founddation in Ukpe, Alege and Ubang (UKALU) Communities in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Twenty-six 26 of them that completed the programme were purposively used as sample for the study. Instrument used for data collection was “Community Based Rehabilitation Services and Inclusion of Persons with Visual Impairment Questionnaire (CBRIPVIQ)”. It is a four-point response scale of SA, A, D, SD with 16 items developed by researchers and validated by experts in relevant fields. The reliability coefficient of 0.78 was done using Cronbach alpha test-test method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse data and the null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.*

Results: *The findings indicated that vocational and orientation and mobility skills as part of CBR training programmes in Ukalu communities are positively related to full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the communities. This means that functional CBR training is tool for inclusion of persons with disabilities.*

Conclusion: *CBR made more functional and Persons with disabilities in different communities should be encourage to access CBR training to acquire skills needed for full inclusion, independent living and active participation on community-based activities.*

Keywords: *Inclusion, CBR, Society, Disability & Participation*

1 Introduction

The social model of disability has proved that society and disability mutually co-exist, however, it is widely reported that persons with disabilities inclusive of those with visual impairments are excluded from many opportunities to access services such education, health, employment and other aspects of society and that this can give them full sense of membership of any society. This to a large extent predisposes persons with disabilities to poverty, low self-esteem and often resort to begging for alms for their livelihood. This exclusion is contrary to the essence of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is an international human rights instrument of the UN intended to protect the rights and dignities of PWD (UN, 2018). World Health Organization-WHO (2016) estimated the prevalence of persons with visual impairments to be over 285 million, 39 million being totally blind while 246 million have moderate visual impairments. According to Hartley (2016), persons with visual impairment are mostly excluded from community activities due to their limited ability to see and interact with the environment. Hartley said that children with visual impairment must be taught compensatory skills and adaptive techniques in order to acquire knowledge from other senses. The presence of a visual impairment could potentially impact the normal sequence of learning in social, motor, language and cognitive developmental areas. Further, Hartley (2016) and King (2015) asserted that since it would be difficult for persons with visual impairment to become fully independent and capable members of the society without sensory and vocational training, it is imperative for CBR services to provide the needed skills for their inclusion in the society as active members.

International policies and legislative framework such as inclusion UN Standard rule for equalization of opportunities have been formulated and adapted by countries who are signatories to safeguard and improve their lives to extent of facilitating the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in their respective communities as means of breaking disabilities-imposed barriers. In spite of legislative measures being put in place in developing countries to give opportunities to persons with special needs including those with visual impairment to have full participation and equal opportunities especially in the field of health, education and employment, is still a distant dream because the social and physical environment is still designed without considering the special need persons especially persons with visual impairment. Physical obstacles and social barriers prevent these people from participating in community and social life.

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is a philosophy of the empowerment of the people with disability with the active efforts of the local communities. CBR is a strategy within general community development for rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social inclusion of all children and adults with disabilities in

the community (Dalal, 2016, Agarwal & Sharma, 2017). World Health Organization (2014) and Stone (2015) provide a general definitional and operational frame of CBR as the measures to be taken at the community level to use resources available within the community to empower persons with disabilities to live inclusively in their families, community, and became active global citizens. Vocational skills, development of orientation and mobility skills among other training enhance full inclusion of persons with visual impairment to live independently as active members of any society. In the light of this, GFO foundation funds CBR training for PWDs in Ukpe, Alege and Ubang communities in Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria as part of Cooperate Social Responsivities (CSR). These communities are known for their unique social-cultural features such as language where gender has direct influence and if a male speaks the female language and vice versa it is seen as a form of language disorder and failure of socialization process in the communities. There are different models and theories on the gender-based language differences, however, it is not within the scope of this present study. PWDs in these communities need essential skills required for full inclusion and participation in socio-cultural, economic and political activities like their peers.

Vocational skills are technical and practical abilities that are required to perform services associated with a specific trade. These skills according to Nanjwan, Eke and Plang (2019), vocational skills could be classified into, hard skills, soft skills, technical skills and living skills. Community based rehabilitation has vocational skill acquisition as one of its components and types of skills which are included but not limited to tailoring, carpentry, plumbing, designing, weaving of different products such as bags, mat cane chair, basket. These weaving products could be showcase as exhibition in international and national event example, World Disability Day. Vocational skills are to be acquired through different training platforms, among these platforms, CBR is most patronized because of its cost-effective nature. Vocational skill instruction incorporated into CBR programme makes the training relevant to needs of the society or community where it is targeted, trainees easily learn, apply the skills and integrate into the mainstay of artisan needs of the area. Vanneste (2017) carried out a study on the role of CBR in building vocational skills of persons with visual impairment for inclusion in Kenya, it was discovered that barriers to community inclusion and work participation that they have experienced in education, health, social, economic, and cultural settings in everyday interaction were eliminated after a short period of time. Graduates of the training were seen to be active members of their communities. This study contends that a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) strategy affords the opportunity to coordinate communities in identifying access needs and mobilize resources to address common goals within the human sociocultural environment and improve society-disability relationships. The author further explained that much of the advantage of CBR relies on the fact that all that persons with disabilities in

a community can reach goals and meet their basic needs. It concluded that CBR programmes established based on the clients' needs, build capacity to access benefits of any society and integrate fully into the family and community with sense of self-worth. Ajobiwe (2017) asserted that the difficulty of acquiring vocational skills among persons with visual impairments is choosing the right vocational skill. Most parents want their children with the disability to become Lawyers, lecturers and other cherished careers. Consequently, many of them go into careers for which don't have passion and aptitude, so in the end they become seemingly frustrated and attribute it to disability and attitudes of the society.

Orientation is the process of using the remaining senses to establish one's position in the environment. Mobility is the capacity, facility, and readiness to move. Yasarapudi (2009) defined orientation and mobility as the term used for teaching people with visual impairment to move independently, safely and purposefully through the environment. Orientation is establishing one's position in the immediate environment. Skills in orientation refer to the gathering and processing of information from the environment with the remaining senses, through which one establishes his position. Mobility is the movement of a person from the present position to a desired position.

Best (2012) stated that orientation is the ability to understand surroundings through an awareness of space and spatial relationships between objects and people in the environment. Mobility is the ability to travel through the surroundings. It can be in form of walking or even crawling. Best stated that a child will need a certain level of cognitive skill to remember the route and understand what is happening. Motivation and confidence will be needed. In orientation and mobility, there is need for language skills which will help in understanding directions. The coordinated use of several senses –touch vision, hearing, kinaesthetic-will enable the child to monitor direction and space. Orientation and mobility is all about development. Yasarapudi (2009) stated that mobility is a basic aspect of psychomotor development. It is essential for education, occupation and social needs. When you lack visual input, movement through the environment may not occur naturally. According to Sharma (2017) Orientation and mobility has basic concepts that are related to concepts in descriptive geometry. It is concerned with shapes and objects in space, their positions, quantity, distances, locations, angles etc and how one can identify or locate them through the senses, and how to move around those structures in the space safely and gracefully. Basic orientation and mobility relate to the knowledge of space and the relationship of objects to each other and to the person. Example of the use of concepts in orientation and mobility that are geometry related include: maintaining directional orientation using perpendicular or parallel alignment for straight line travel; executing 90° and or 180° turns; recognizing characteristic of objects around the space or landmarks eg shapes, horizontal sides, vertical sides, parallel sides etc.

Onyenekwu, (2018) notes that orientation and Mobility as a process begins at birth, with understanding one's body and how it moves, differentiating one's body from the immediate environment, understanding the world beyond one's body. Yasarapudi (2009) mentions certain aspects of human mobility before mobility training can be given. They include: motor skills in preparation for sitting; walking, developing protective reactions and segmental rotation leading to normal gait. Others are: balance and posture: balance is prerequisite for movement, and posture becomes the basic pattern from which movement must originate. Vision plays an important role in learning posture, even though basically it is learnt kinesthetically. In a study titled Community Based Rehabilitation as a tool for development and validation of orientation and mobility training programme for primary schools' children with visual impairment in North Central Nigeria by Dala (2012), the study reported that children are prepared for proper integration into the society and the task in adulthood is made easy as the foundation is properly laid during participation in community-based rehabilitation training programmes. In related study, National Rural and Remote Support Services -NRRSS (2014) confirmed that CBR reduces barriers for participation in different activities without neglecting the goals of the components of health, education, livelihood, social empowerment. CBR has many benefits particularly in remote and rural practice settings. For communities and clients, it promotes social integration of persons with disabilities into the community because it is a programme based on the need of the community. For example, assessing changes in community attitude towards the clients and mobilizing community resources to support and help them becomes easy. NRRSS also posited that CBR models facilitate the training and employment of Community Based Workers, increase the skills, income, and employability of clients with visual impairments just like it does to local community members.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main thrust of this study is to investigate the relationship between CBRs and inclusion of persons with visual impairments in the society. Its specific focus is to:

- a) Find out the relationship between vocational skills training in CBRs and inclusion of persons with visual impairments in the society.
- b) Examine the link between orientation and mobility training in CBRs and inclusion of persons with visual impairments.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The social model of disability studies makes the society the orbit on which disability and its clients rotate. The relationship between the society and persons with disabilities is inseparable, hence the need for the full inclusion of persons with visual

impairment. Unfortunately, despite international policy on inclusion which mandate signatories' parties to enforce inclusive societies, research revealed that in some developing countries, clients with disabilities inclusive of those with visual impairments are seemingly and overtly experiencing exclusion from activities in the society. They are experiencing deprivation, oppression, denial and abuse of fundamental human right to full and active participation in community activities. This is the experience of clients with visual impairments in Ukalu communities in Obudu Local Government of Cross River State, Nigeria. The sense of sight is very indispensable for interaction and other human activities, deficit of the organ requires some form of rehabilitation training and acquisition of skills to be able to live and participate in all activities in any society. CBRs is the most cost-effective means to enhance the inclusion drive of persons with visual impairment in society as members with equal right to participation in every aspect of the society. The philosophy of CBRs gives it potent advantage over others to train persons with visual impairments to be included in all scheme of activities in the society.

1.3 Research hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study;

1. Acquisition of vocational skills has no significant relationship with inclusion of person with visual impairment in the society.
2. Orientation and mobility skills training in CBR has no significant relationship with inclusion of persons with visual impairment in the society.

2 Methodology

The study adopts quantitative methods and Ex-post facto design as its methodology, this is considered appropriate because of numerical and empirical vaules from data and variables cannot be manipulated by the researchers as the phenomena of interest has already occurred. The population of the study consisted of 45 persons with visual impairments who registered in CBR training funded by GFO foundation in Ukpe, Alege and Ubang (UKALU) Communities in Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria. Twenty-six of them that completed the programme were purposive used as sample for the study. Instrument used for data collection was "Community Based Rehabilitation Services and Inclusion of Persons with Visual Impairment Questionnaire (CBRIPVIQ)". It is a four-point response scale of SA, A, D, SD with 16 items developed by researchers and validated by experts in relevant fields. The reliability coefficient of 0.78 was done using Cronbach alpha test-test method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse data and the null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

2.1 Presentation of results

Hypothesis one

Acquisition of vocational skills has no significant relationship with inclusion of person with visual impairment in the society. The analysis of this hypothesis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the relationship between acquisition of vocational skills and inclusion of persons with visual impairment (N = 26)*

Variable	ΣX ΣY	ΣX^2 ΣY^2	ΣXY	Cal. r-value
Vocational Skills in CBRs (X)	110	2700		
			2040	0.99
Inclusion of persons with visual impairment (Y)	92	1504		

Level of Significance at 0.05, degree of freedom = 24, Tab. r-value = 0.113

The result of the above analysis as presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.99 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.113 at 0.05 level of significance and 24 degree of freedom. The alternate hypothesis was retained. This result therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between vocational skills acquired in CBR training and inclusion of persons with visual impairment in Ukalu communities or society. This reveals that skills acquired during the training enhances inclusion of persons with visual impairment in activities in the society.

Hypothesis two

Orientation and mobility skills training in CBR has no significant relationship with inclusion of persons with visual impairment in the society. Result of this hypothesis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the relationship between orientation and mobility skills and inclusion of persons with Visual impairment (N = 26)*

Variable	ΣX ΣY	ΣX^2 ΣY^2	ΣXY	Cal. r-value
Orientation & mobility training in CBRs (X)	110	2700		
			2500	0.95
Inclusion of persons with visual impairment (Y)	105	2290		

Level of Significance at 0.05, degree of freedom = 24, Tab. r-value = 0.113

The result of the above analysis as presented in table 2 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.95 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.113 at 0.05 level of significance

and 24 degree of freedom. The alternate hypothesis was retained. This result therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between development of orientation and mobility skills and inclusion of persons with visual impairment in Ukalu communities or society. This proves that Community Based Rehabilitation can be used for training persons with visual impairment on Orientation/mobility skills for full inclusion into the society.

3 Discussion of Results

The result of analysis on the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between acquisition of vocational skills in CBR training and inclusion persons with visual impairment in the mainstream of the society. This finding agrees with the findings of Vanneste (2017), Sharma and Deepak (2011), and Kings, (2016) who found a significant impact of CBR in building vocational skills of persons with visual impairment for inclusion in the society. The authors contend that a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) affords persons with visual impairments opportunity to be trained on basic vocational skills required for meaningful life and active participation in socio-economic and political activities in different communities. The training identifies their need, access and mobilizes resources to address common challenges within their sociocultural environment. The training on vocational skills in CBR is effective tool in promoting social change and enabling young adults with visual impairments to advocate for community inclusion and work participation. CBR recognizes that disability is nested in widespread poverty, unequal distribution of resources, social stigma, and unequal access to work participation. The result of the hypothesis is also in line with the findings of Orim, Ajayi and Ndifon (2013) and Titchkosky (2013) who found a significant impact of vocational skills on inclusion persons with visual impairment in Kenya communities. The author further explained that CBR relies on the fact that persons with disabilities in a community can meet their basic needs and self-actualization through earnings from their skills. Through inclusion, family members witnessed and participate in the progress of a relatives with disability, thus enhancing faith in that person's abilities and potential, and challenging their own prejudices.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between orientation/mobility skills and inclusion of persons with visual impairment. The result of this finding is in agreement with that of Carla, Mauro, Marco and Cornoldi (2016) who found out that persons with blindness who participated in Community Based Rehabilitation training in orientation and mobility can navigate all parts of the society for socio-cultural interaction. Based on this study, its arguable that Community Based Rehabilitation programmes are fundamental in improving the wellbeing of persons with disabilities, and for fostering their participation in the community and society at large as they independently visit places like shopping mall,

health facilities, schools and worship centers. The result of the present study is also in correspondence with that of Neutadt (2006) who reported that the teaching and training of Orientation and Mobility has been recommended in CBRs as cost-effective programme to improve disability-society relationships in developing countries. Persons with visual impairments after training can access immediate environment and have opportunities to independently travel with sense of self-fulfillment.

4 Conclusion

In many communities in Nigeria like some parts of world, disability is a barrier to active and inclusive participation in community-based activities for social interactions. Exclusion of PWDs has been a problem in Ukalu communities in Obudu, Cross River State. This among other reasons promoted inclusion as global policy. It is relatively cost effective to persons with visual impairments to acquire skills needed for full inclusion in the society through Community-Based Rehabilitation training programmes. This study like most research validates CBR as the most appropriate tool for training persons with visual impairments in Ukalu on vocational and orientation and mobility skills regarded as indispensable skills for independent living, inclusive participation and improve society-disability relationship.

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