Disability Rights Legislation Awareness and Workplace Inclusion among Employed Persons with Disabilities in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Disability rights legislation provides a vital legal foundation for workplace inclusion, yet the relationship between awareness of such legislation and workplace inclusion among persons with disabilities (PWDs) remains underexplored, particularly in Nigeria. This study examined the relationship between awareness of the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and workplace inclusion among employed PWDs in Southwest Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 322 employed PWDs in Lagos and Oyo States. Analytical sample sizes varied across constructs because of missing or "Not Applicable" responses. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire assessing awareness of the Disability Act and workplace inclusion. The reliability and validity of the measures were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis. Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analyses were employed to examine the relationships between awareness of disability rights legislation and dimensions of workplace inclusion. The measures demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .865–.898$). Awareness of the Disability Act was positively associated with onboarding ($r = .527$, $p < .001$), workplace relationships ($r = .362$, $p < .001$), and career advancement ($r = .320$, $p < .001$). Regression analyses indicated that awareness significantly explained 27.8% of the variance in onboarding ($R^2 = .278$), 13.1% in workplace relationships ($R^2 = .131$), and 10.3% in career advancement ($R^2 = .103$). Awareness of disability rights legislation is therefore associated with more positive workplace inclusion, with the strongest association observed for onboarding and the weakest for career advancement. The findings suggest that awareness of disability rights legislation is an important but insufficient condition for workplace inclusion. Effective enforcement of the Disability Act 2018 should therefore be complemented by workplace-level practices and inclusion strategies to ensure that legal protections of PWDs translate into meaningful workplace inclusion.

Keywords: Career Advancement, Disability Rights Legislation, Onboarding, Workplace Inclusion.

Introduction

Workplace inclusion is increasingly recognised as an important dimension of decent work and organisational equity (ILO, 2015; Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Thompson, 2020). For persons with disabilities

(PWDs), inclusion extends beyond access to employment to encompass participation, belonging, equitable treatment, supportive workplace relationships, reasonable accommodation, and opportunities for career development (Lindsay et al., 2019; Omolawal & Obisesan , 2019; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). Securing employment is therefore only the first step towards meaningful workplace inclusion. Employees with disabilities may remain excluded when they encounter inaccessible onboarding processes, inadequate workplace support, limited participation in organisational activities, strained workplace relationships, or restricted opportunities for career advancement. Contemporary disability scholarship consequently emphasises the importance of workplace practices and experiences in determining whether employment translates into meaningful inclusion (Chandratilaka, 2023; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022).

Workplace inclusion is distinct from related ideas such as diversity, organizational inclusion, employee inclusion, disability inclusion, workplace participation, and reasonable accommodation. In this study, workplace inclusion means the extent to which Persons with disabilities experience fair and supportive participation in their everyday workplace life. Workplace inclusion dimensions of this study are onboarding experience, workplace relationship satisfaction and career advancement experience.

The gap between formal legal protection and workplace realities is particularly important because disability inclusion involves processes that extend beyond recruitment. Human resource practices relating to recruitment, orientation, training, performance management, career development, and workplace support can influence the extent to which employees with disabilities experience meaningful inclusion (Chandratilaka, 2023; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). Where employees lack awareness of their legal rights, they may have limited capacity to identify violations or seek remedies. Conversely, greater awareness may strengthen employees' ability to assert their rights and engage with organisational mechanisms designed to promote inclusion. Thus, examining workplace inclusion requires investigating Persons with disabilities experiences within employment relationship rather than focusing only on Labour market participation.

Globally, approaches to disability have increasingly shifted from welfare-oriented perspectives towards a human-rights framework centered on equality, dignity, participation, and non-discrimination. This shift is reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. National legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in the United States and the Equality Act 2010 in the United Kingdom, has further institutionalised principles of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation. Nevertheless, the existence of legal protections does not necessarily guarantee their effective implementation in workplaces. Research indicates that organisational practices, managerial awareness, workplace culture, and the effective implementation of disability-related policies are important in translating formal rights into inclusive employment experiences (Chandratilaka, 2023; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). These international developments provide useful context for linking disability rights with workplace experiences. The extent of legal awareness on workplace inclusion remains shaped by local context.

Within this context, disability rights legislation awareness is potentially important for workplace inclusion. Employees who are aware of their statutory rights may be better positioned to recognise discriminatory practices, seek reasonable accommodation, report violations, and demand equitable treatment. Similarly, awareness of employers' legal obligations may facilitate compliance with disability-related requirements. However, legal awareness alone may not be sufficient to produce inclusive workplace experiences because the exercise of legal rights also depends on organisational practices, institutional enforcement, accessibility, and workplace attitudes. This creates an important question concerning if legal awareness of the Act is associated with Persons with disabilities actual experiences of workplace inclusion.

Nigeria has established a formal legal framework for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities through the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. The Act prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and provides for their integration into society, including protections relating to employment. The Act also established the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, which has responsibilities relating to awareness, monitoring compliance, investigation of complaints, and enforcement of disability rights. These provisions represent an important institutional commitment to disability inclusion. However, the existence of legislation does not automatically ensure that employed Persons with disabilities are aware of the rights and protections available to them or that such rights are effectively realised in workplace settings.

Previous Nigerian studies have examined disability, labour-market participation, discrimination, employer perceptions, and the implementation of disability legislation (Arigu, 2025; Omolawal & Obisesan. 2019), comparatively limited attention has been given to the relationship between disability rights legislation awareness and workplace inclusion among employed Persons with disabilities. In particular, onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement have received less empirical attention as dimensions of inclusion after entry into employment. This represents an important research gap because obtaining employment does not necessarily mean that employees with disabilities experience equal participation, acceptance, support, and opportunities for advancement.

Theoretically, the gap between possessing legal rights and actually experiencing those rights in everyday workplace interactions and organisational processes. Legal protections set out formal entitlements while legal awareness reflects Persons with disabilities understanding of those entitlements and their ability to recognise and respond to discrimination and fair treatment. Examining this relationship shifts the focus from existence of disability legislation to how awareness of such legislation is reflected in Persons with disabilities workplace experiences.

There is also a clear methodological gap. Much of the Nigerian literature on disability and employment has been on labour market participation, and discrimination, some literatures were either on barrier to entry or policy implementation. There has also been more qualitative research, doctrinal and far less on quantitative research on disability legislative awareness and specific dimensions of workplace inclusion. By focusing on employed Persons with disabilities, the study moves beyond whether Persons with disabilities gain employment to exploring what they encounter within the workplace.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and workplace inclusion among employed Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between awareness of disability rights legislation and three dimensions of workplace inclusion: onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement. By focusing on Persons with disabilities who are already employed, the study extends existing research beyond labour market access to examine whether awareness of disability rights legislation is associated with more positive workplace inclusion experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to disability and employment scholarship and provide useful implications for human resource management, disability-rights implementation, and workplace inclusion policy in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Workplace Inclusion and Disability Rights

Research on disability and employment has increasingly moved beyond employment access to consider participation, belonging, workplace relationships, and career development. Workplace inclusion concerns the extent to which employees experience belongingness, respect, equitable participation, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully within organisations (Chan & Hutchings, 2024; Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Thompson, 2020). For persons with disabilities (PWDs), meaningful inclusion extends beyond obtaining employment to encompass equitable treatment, reasonable accommodation, supportive workplace relationships, and opportunities for development and career progression (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022).

The human-rights approach to disability has strengthened the legal basis for workplace inclusion. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly Article 27, recognises the right of Persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible. Article 27 addresses non-discrimination in employment, equal employment opportunities, reasonable accommodation, and equal opportunities for career advancement and access to vocational and continuing training (United Nations, 2006).

However, the existence of legal protection does not necessarily guarantee inclusive workplace experiences. Organisational practices, workplace accommodation, supervisor support, and organisational culture are important in translating formal rights into actual employment outcomes. Schloemer-Jarvis et al. (2022) identified recruitment, orientation, training, supervisor support, performance management, and career development as important human resource practices for the inclusion of Persons with disabilities. Similarly, Jansen et al. (2021) found that employer-level factors such as work accommodations and social support are relevant to work participation among workers with disabilities.

Workplace Inclusion among Persons with Disabilities

Workplace inclusion refers to the extent to which employees experience belongingness, equitable participation, respect, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully within their organisations, irrespective of their personal characteristics or social identities (Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Thompson, 2020). Unlike diversity, which is primarily concerned with the representation of different groups, inclusion focuses on whether individuals are valued, accepted, supported, and able to participate fully in organisational life.

For Persons with disabilities, workplace inclusion extends beyond recruitment and employment access to encompass accessible work environments, equitable human resource practices, supportive workplace relationships, reasonable accommodation, participation in organisational activities, and opportunities for training and career advancement. Formal access to employment does not necessarily eliminate barriers to effective participation. Employees with disabilities may continue to encounter inaccessible organisational procedures, inadequate accommodation, negative attitudes, social exclusion, and restricted opportunities for career development (Chan & Hutchings, 2024; Nevala et al., 2015; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022).

Workplace accommodation is an important aspect of workplace inclusion for persons with disabilities because it can enable them participate effectively in the workplace. Nevala et al. (2015) found that workplace accommodations can support employment and work ability among persons with disabilities, although their effectiveness depends on workplace barriers and facilitators. Jansen et al. (2021) also identified workplace accommodations and social support among employer-related factors associated with work participation. These

findings indicate that legal protection needs to be accompanied by organisational arrangements that enable Persons with disabilities to participate effectively in working life. However, accommodation alone does not constitute workplace inclusion.

In Nigeria, existing research similarly indicates continuing barriers to the full participation of Persons with disabilities in employment. Efayena and Ichoku (2024) found evidence of disability-related inequalities in the Nigerian labour market and highlighted the need for equitable training opportunities for persons with disabilities. Omolawal and Obisesan (2019) also reported inadequate organisational adaptations and limited provision of equipment and structural modifications for persons with special needs in selected public organisations in Ibadan. These findings demonstrate that employment access alone does not necessarily result in inclusive workplace experiences.

Against this background, workplace inclusion in the present study is examined through onboarding, workplace relationships, and career advancement. These dimensions represent important stages and experiences within the employment relationship and are also consistent with the employment rights recognised under Article 27 of the CRPD.

Disability Rights Legislation Awareness and Onboarding

Onboarding is an important organisational process through which newly employed workers acquire information about their roles, responsibilities, organisational procedures, workplace expectations, and available support. Bauer (2010) describes onboarding as an important process for facilitating employees' adjustment and integration into organisations. For employees with disabilities, this process may additionally require accessible information, appropriate accommodation, supervisor support, and awareness of available disability-related rights and organisational provisions. In this study, onboarding refers to the experiences of employed Persons with disabilities during their initial integration into the workplace.

The relevance of onboarding to disability inclusion is reflected in the systematic review by Schloemer-Jarvis et al. (2022), which identified orientation, training, supervisor support, and related human resource practices as important areas for including Persons with disabilities in the workforce. Their review suggests that inclusion requires organisational practices that support employees not only at the point of recruitment but also during their integration into the workplace.

Workplace accommodation is also relevant to organisational entry. Nevala et al. (2015) found that accommodations can facilitate employment and work ability among Persons with disabilities, although their implementation may be affected by organisational barriers and facilitators. Jansen et al. (2021) similarly identified accommodations and social support as employer-related factors associated with work participation. These findings suggest that awareness of disability rights may be relevant to whether employees and organisations recognise and utilise available support during the early stages of employment.

Evidence from Nigeria provides further support for examining this issue. Efayena and Ichoku (2024) identified continuing disability-related inequalities in the Nigerian labour market, while Omolawal and Obisesan (2019) reported inadequate organisational adaptations and limited provision of facilities for persons with disabilities. Such evidence indicates that formal employment does not necessarily guarantee an accessible or supportive organisational entry experience.

More directly, Salau et al. (2026) examined awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and employment access among Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. They reported a moderate positive relationship between awareness of the Act and employment access ($r = .481$, $p < .001$), with awareness explaining 23.1% of the variance in employment access. Their findings indicate that disability rights awareness is relevant to labour-market participation but also suggest that awareness alone is insufficient to guarantee inclusion.

However, Salau et al. (2026) focused on access to employment rather than experiences following entry into employment. Consequently, there remains limited evidence on whether awareness of disability rights legislation is associated with the quality of onboarding experiences among Persons with disabilities who are already employed. The present study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between awareness of the 2018 Disability Act and onboarding experiences among employed Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Disability Rights Legislation Awareness and Workplace Relationships

Workplace relationships are an important component of inclusion because interactions with supervisors and colleagues influence employees' experiences of acceptance, belonging, participation, and social support. For Persons with disabilities, workplace relationships may be affected by perceptions and assumptions concerning disability.

Marques et al. (2020) demonstrated that managers' conceptions of disability influence their perceptions of employees with disabilities, including perceptions concerning their performance, organisational contribution, and training needs. Mik-Meyer (2016) similarly showed that interactions between employees with disabilities, managers, and colleagues may be shaped by assumptions concerning disability and by relationships characterised by helping and caring. These findings indicate that formal equality does not necessarily eliminate problematic interpersonal dynamics within organisations.

Schloemer-Jarvis et al. (2022) further emphasised the importance of supervisor support, inclusive leadership, training, and organisational practices in promoting the inclusion of Persons with disabilities. Such practices can influence the way disability is understood within organisations and may contribute to more supportive workplace relationships.

Nigerian evidence also indicates that interpersonal and organisational factors can constrain workplace inclusion. Omolawal and Obisesan (2019) reported experiences of social exclusion and discrimination among persons with special needs in selected organisations in Ibadan. Okudolo and Ojakorotu (2022) similarly highlighted challenges concerning the participation and belonging of persons with disabilities within Nigerian public administration and the need for stronger disability-inclusive organisational practices.

Although these studies demonstrate the importance of organisational attitudes, social interactions, and workplace culture, they do not directly establish whether awareness of disability rights legislation among Persons with disabilities is associated with their workplace relationship experiences. This represents an important gap because awareness of disability rights legislation may affect employees' ability to recognise discriminatory practices, seek appropriate support, communicate their needs, and participate more confidently

in organisational life.

The present study therefore examines whether awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 is associated with workplace relationship experiences among employed Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Disability Rights Legislation Awareness and Career Advancement

Career advancement is another important dimension of workplace inclusion because meaningful employment should provide employees with opportunities for training, professional development, promotion, and increased responsibilities. The CRPD explicitly recognises equal opportunities for career advancement and access to vocational and continuing training for persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

Research indicates that inclusion should therefore extend beyond recruitment and retention to employees' continuing development and progression within organisations. Schloemer-Jarvis et al. (2022) identified performance management and career development among the human resource practices relevant to the inclusion of Persons with disabilities. Their review indicates that organisations need to provide opportunities for development and progression if employees with disabilities are to experience substantive rather than merely formal inclusion.

Lindsay et al. (2018), in a systematic review of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, found that employing Persons with disabilities can generate benefits for organisations, including positive effects on organisational outcomes and workforce diversity. However, because the review primarily concerned the benefits of employing Persons with disabilities rather than career advancement, it provides contextual rather than direct evidence for the present dimension. It therefore should not be cited as evidence that disability-inclusive practices necessarily increase promotion or career advancement.

Nigerian research suggests that structural barriers may continue to constrain the development and advancement of Persons with disabilities. Efayena and Ichoku (2024) identified the need for equitable access to training, while Okudolo and Ojakorotu (2022) highlighted continuing challenges concerning the participation and advancement of persons with disabilities within public administration.

Salau et al. (2026) provided a particularly relevant Nigerian precedent because they found that awareness of disability rights legislation was positively associated with employment access. However, their study did not examine whether such awareness continues to influence the experiences of Persons with disabilities after employment, particularly with respect to promotion, professional development, or career advancement.

Thus, while existing literature establishes the importance of inclusive HR practices, accommodation, training, and organisational support for Persons with disabilities, limited empirical evidence exists on the relationship between awareness of disability rights legislation and career advancement among employed Persons with disabilities in Nigeria. The present study extends the existing literature by examining whether awareness of the 2018 Disability Act is associated with career advancement among employed Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Empowerment Theory, drawing on the foundational work of Rappaport (1984) and subsequent conceptual development by Zimmerman (2000). The theory provides an appropriate framework for explaining how knowledge and access to resources can enhance the capacity of individuals to participate in decisions affecting their lives and exercise control over circumstances that affect their well-being. In the context of this study, awareness of disability rights legislation is viewed as an important resource that may strengthen the capacity of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to recognise, understand, and exercise their statutory rights within the workplace.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory emerged from efforts to understand how individuals and groups can gain greater control over decisions and conditions affecting their lives. Rappaport (1984) conceptualised empowerment in terms of processes through which individuals, organisations, and communities gain greater control over matters affecting them. Zimmerman (2000) subsequently developed the concept of psychological empowerment, emphasising the interaction between individual-level beliefs, participation, and the ability to exert influence within social and organisational settings.

The theory is particularly relevant to persons with disabilities because disability-related disadvantage is not determined solely by individual characteristics but may also arise from social, organisational, and institutional barriers. Empowerment therefore involves creating conditions that enable Persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully, exercise their rights, influence decisions affecting them, and challenge practices that restrict their participation.

Within the context of employment, knowledge of disability rights legislation can constitute an important empowerment resource. Awareness of disability rights legislation may enable employees with disabilities to understand the protections available to them, recognise discriminatory practices, request reasonable accommodation, participate in workplace processes, and seek remedies when their rights are violated. Thus, awareness of disability rights legislation may strengthen the capacity of Persons with disabilities to act within the employment relationship rather than remaining passive recipients of organisational decisions.

This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria following the enactment of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. The Act establishes legal protections relating to discrimination, employment, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation. However, the existence of statutory protection does not necessarily mean that employees with disabilities are able to benefit from those rights. The extent to which employees understand the provisions of the legislation may affect their ability to recognise when their rights are neglected and to seek their implementation.

Applied to the present study, Empowerment Theory suggests that greater awareness of the Disability Act may strengthen the capacity of employed Persons with disabilities to participate effectively in workplace processes. During onboarding, awareness of disability rights legislation may help employees understand their rights and available workplace protections and enable them to communicate accommodation or support needs. In relation to workplace relationships, awareness of disability rights legislation may strengthen employees' capacity to recognise and respond to discriminatory or exclusionary treatment and participate more confidently in interactions with supervisors and colleagues. With respect to career advancement, awareness of

disability rights legislation may enable employed Persons with disabilities to recognise their entitlement to equal opportunities for training, professional development, promotion, and career progression.

The theory therefore provides a logical explanation for the proposed relationship between disability rights legislation awareness and workplace inclusion. It does not assume that legislation automatically produces inclusive outcomes. Rather, it suggests that legal protection becomes more meaningful when individuals possess the knowledge and capacity required to understand and exercise their rights. The theory consequently provides a basis for expecting a positive relationship between awareness of disability rights legislation and the three dimensions of workplace inclusion examined in this study.

Nevertheless, Empowerment Theory has limitations. Awareness of disability rights legislation may not necessarily result in empowerment or workplace inclusion. Organisational culture, employer attitudes, availability of resources, institutional enforcement, power relations, and structural barriers may constrain employees' ability to exercise their rights even when they are aware of them. Thus, awareness of disability rights legislation should be regarded as a potentially important enabling resource rather than a sufficient condition for workplace inclusion.

This limitation is consistent with the findings of Salau et al. (2026), who found a positive relationship between awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and employment access among Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria but also concluded that awareness of disability rights legislation alone was insufficient to guarantee full inclusion. Consequently, the present study does not assume that awareness of disability rights legislation automatically produces workplace inclusion; rather, it examines whether awareness of disability rights legislation is associated with employees' experiences of onboarding, workplace relationships, and career advancement.

Research Hypotheses

The study examines the relationship between awareness of disability rights legislation and workplace inclusion among employed persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Southwest Nigeria through the following hypotheses.

- Awareness of disability rights legislation is significantly associated with onboarding experiences among employed PWDs in Southwest Nigeria.
- Awareness of disability rights legislation is significantly associated with workplace relationships among employed PWDs in Southwest Nigeria.
- Awareness of disability rights legislation is significantly associated with career advancement among employed PWDs in Southwest Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design to examine the association between awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and workplace inclusion among persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Southwest Nigeria. The cross-sectional design enabled data to be collected at a single point in time, while the survey approach facilitated the assessment of the relationship between awareness of disability rights legislation and workplace inclusion, particularly onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement.

The study was conducted in Lagos and Oyo States, which were purposively selected based on their institutional arrangements for disability affairs, including the Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs (LASODA) and the Oyo State Agency for Persons with Disabilities (OYSAPD). The study population comprised employed Persons with disabilities aged 18 years and above working in the public, private, and informal sectors.

An initial minimum sample size of 399 was determined using Cochran's formula on the estimated total population of Persons with disabilities in both states of 20980 with an allowance for non-response. A total of 399 completed copies of the questionnaire were obtained. During data screening 77 respondents were excluded from the workplace inclusion analysis because they reported being unemployed or indicated that they had never held a job. These respondents could not provide valid responses to questions concerning workplace inclusion dimensions. Consequently, the final analytical sample of 322 respondents was used. However, the analytical sample varied across constructs because of missing and "Not Applicable" responses. Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling ensured that only respondents who met the eligibility criteria were included, while snowball sampling facilitated access to additional eligible participants through disability associations, community networks, and referrals. These non-probability sampling techniques were considered appropriate because a comprehensive sampling frame of employed Persons with disabilities in the study areas was not available. However, snowball recruitment may introduce network homophily, and to reduce this risk recruitment was conducted through multiple entry points such as disability organisations, Persons with disabilities network and even government-related disability networks rather than relying on a single referral chain.

Figure 1: Participant flow from recruitment to final analytical sample and constructspecific analysis. Source: Author's fieldwork (2026).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with items adapted from existing measures and tailored to the provisions of the Nigerian Disability Act, comprising five sections. Section A captured respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, state, disability type, educational qualification, employment sector, years of work experience, and monthly income. Section B assessed awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, while Sections C, D, and E measured workplace inclusion. For the purpose of this study, workplace inclusion was operationalised through three dimensions: onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement. The measurement items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing Strongly Disagree and 5 representing Strongly Agree, where this response format was applicable. Higher scores indicated greater awareness and more positive workplace inclusion experiences, with negatively worded items reverse-coded where necessary.

Data collection employed both self-administered and researcher-assisted questionnaires to accommodate the diverse accessibility needs of respondents. Trained research assistants helped where necessary without influencing participants' responses. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Lagos Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. UNILAGREC/25/08/015).

The questionnaire items measuring the four construct of this research was subjected to construct-structure assessment using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. PCA was used to examine the underlying structure and item loading of the instrument. The rotated component matrix showed acceptable item loadings across the study constructs. Awareness items loaded between .448 and .813, onboarding items between .466 and .698, workplace relationship items between .475 and .649, and career advancement items between .516 and .776. These results provided evidence that the questionnaire items demonstrated meaningful associations with their respective dimensions. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with values of 0.70 or above generally considered acceptable.

Prior to data analysis, responses coded as "Not Applicable" were treated as missing for the relevant construct because they indicated that the corresponding workplace experience was not applicable to the respondent. Composite scores for each construct were calculated by averaging the respondent's valid item responses, subject to the predetermined criterion for sufficient valid responses. Data were coded and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and the study variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationships among the study constructs. Simple linear regression analyses were subsequently conducted to test the hypotheses by examining whether awareness of the Disability Act was significantly associated with onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement. The assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and independence of errors were assessed and found to be satisfactorily met.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Respondents aged 35–44 years constituted the largest age group (32.3%), followed by those aged 45–54 years (28.0%). Males constituted 53.7% of the respondents. Respondents from Oyo State accounted for 51.2%, while those from Lagos State accounted for 48.8%.

Regarding disability type, mobility impairment was the most prevalent (40.7%), followed by hearing impairment (20.8%) and visual impairment (14.9%). Albinism accounted for 9.3%, dwarfism/short stature for 9.0%, multiple disabilities for 2.8%, and speech disorder for 2.5%.

In terms of employment sector, more than half of the respondents were self-employed (53.1%), while 35.7% worked in the public sector and 9.9% in the private sector. A small proportion (1.2%) reported other forms of employment. Regarding years of work experience, respondents with more than 10 years of work experience constituted the largest group (34.2%), followed by those with 1–5 years of work experience (29.8%), 6–10 years of work experience (17.4%), and less than one year of work experience (18.6%).

With respect to educational qualification, secondary education was the most common level attained (43.5%), followed by a bachelor's degree (22.4%). A further 20.2% reported other qualifications, while 9.3% had primary education, 3.4% had a master's degree, and 1.2% had no formal education.

Regarding monthly income, the largest proportion of respondents (37.9%) earned between ₦70,000 and ₦150,000, followed by those earning below ₦70,000 (32.3%). Those earning ₦150,001–₦300,000 accounted for 13.0%, while 1.9% earned ₦300,001–₦500,000 and 1.2% earned above ₦500,000. A further 13.7%

preferred not to disclose their monthly income.

Table 1. Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics (N = 322)

Variable

Category

Frequency (n)

Percentage (%)

Age (years)

18–34

82

25.5

35–44

104

32.3

45–54

90

28.0

55–64

29

9.0

65 years and above

17

5.3

Gender

Male

173

53.7

Female

149

46.3

State

Oyo

165

51.2

Lagos

157

48.8

Disability Type

Mobility impairment

131

40.7

Hearing impairment

67

20.8

Visual impairment

48

14.9

Albinism

30

9.3

Dwarfism/Short stature

29

9.0

Multiple disabilities

9

2.8

Speech disorder

8

2.5

Employment Sector

Self-employed

171

53.1

Public sector

115

35.7

Private sector

32

9.9

Others

4

1.2

Years of Work Experience

Less than 1 year

60

18.6

1–5 years

96

29.8

6–10 years

56

17.4

More than 10 years

110

34.2

Educational Qualification

Primary

30

9.3

Secondary

140

43.5

Bachelor's degree

72

22.4

Master's degree

11

3.4

No formal education

4

1.2

Others

65

20.2

Monthly Income

Below ₦70,000

104

32.3

₦70,000–₦150,000

122

37.9

₦150,001–₦300,000

42

13.0

₦300,001–₦500,000

6

1.9

Above ₦500,000

4

1.2

Prefer not to say

44

13.7

Source: Survey (2026)

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability of the study constructs. Awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 had a mean score of 3.009 (SD = 0.971), while onboarding had a mean of 3.089 (SD = 0.857). Workplace relationships recorded a higher mean score of 3.559 (SD = 0.720), while career advancement had the highest mean score of 3.587 (SD = 0.779). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .865 to .898, exceeding the generally accepted minimum threshold of .70 and indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the measures. The valid sample size varied across constructs because respondents who selected "Not Applicable" on relevant items were excluded from the calculation of the corresponding composite scores.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Study Constructs

Construct

N

Mean

SD

Cronbach's α

Awareness of Disability Act

320

3.009

0.971

.884

Onboarding

261

3.089

0.857

.868

Workplace Relationships

253

3.559

0.720

.865

Career Advancement

259

3.587

0.779

.898

Note. Valid N varies across constructs because respondents with “Not Applicable” responses on relevant items were excluded from the calculation of the corresponding composite scores.

Table 3 presents the exploratory assessment of the measurement structure of the study constructs. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .780, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(741) = 3671.219$, $p < .001$, indicating that the correlation matrix was significantly different from an identity matrix and that the items were sufficiently intercorrelated for factor extraction.

A principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted as an exploratory assessment of the underlying structure of the 39 measurement items. The analysis produced a four-factor solution broadly consistent with the theoretical constructs. The ranges of primary factor loadings were .448–.813 for Awareness of the Disability Act, .466–.698 for Onboarding, .475–.649 for Workplace Relationships, and .516–.776 for Career Advancement. The factor loadings indicate that the retained items had acceptable primary loadings on their respective factors, although the lowest loading of .448 warrants consideration when interpreting the factor structure.

As shown in Table 4, the results indicate that awareness of the Disability Act was positively and significantly correlated with all three dimensions of workplace inclusion. Awareness was moderately correlated with onboarding ($r = .527$, $p < .001$), while its correlations with workplace relationships ($r = .362$, $p < .001$) and career advancement ($r = .320$, $p < .001$) were positive but comparatively weaker.

Among the workplace inclusion dimensions, onboarding was positively and significantly correlated with workplace relationships ($r = .494$, $p < .001$) and career advancement ($r = .378$, $p < .001$). The strongest correlation in the matrix was between workplace relationships and career advancement ($r = .698$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong positive association between the two dimensions.

Table 4. Correlations Among Study Constructs

Variables

1

2

3

4

1. Awareness of Disability Act

1.00

2. Onboarding Experience

.527***

1.00

3. Workplace Relationships

.362***

.494***

1.00

4. Career Advancement

.320***

.378***

.698***

1.00

*Note. Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients are reported. **p < .001

Table 5 presents the results of the simple linear regression analyses examining the association between awareness of the Disability Act and the three dimensions of workplace inclusion. Awareness of the Disability Act was significantly and positively associated with onboarding experiences (B = .483, SE = .048, β = .527, t = 9.985, p < .001). The regression model was statistically significant, F(1, 259) = 99.693, p < .001, and explained 27.8% of the variance in onboarding experiences (R^2 = .278).

Awareness of the Disability Act was also significantly and positively associated with workplace relationships (B = .284, SE = .046, β = .362, t = 6.154, p < .001). The model was statistically significant, F(1, 251) = 37.878, p < .001, explaining 13.1% of the variance in workplace relationships (R^2 = .131).

Similarly, awareness of the Disability Act was significantly and positively associated with career advancement (B = .268, SE = .050, β = .320, t = 5.420, p < .001). The model was statistically significant, F(1, 257) = 29.379, p < .001, and explained 10.3% of the variance in career advancement (R^2 = .103).

Overall, awareness of the Disability Act was significantly and positively associated with all three dimensions of workplace inclusion. The strongest association was observed for onboarding experiences (β = .527), followed by workplace relationships (β = .362) and career advancement (β = .320).

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression of Awareness of the Disability Act on Workplace Inclusion Dimensions

Predictor

Onboarding

Workplace Relationships

Career Advancement

N

261

253

259

Awareness of Disability Act, B

.483

.284

.268

SE

.048

.046

.050

B

.527

.362

.320

T

9.985

6.154

5.420

P

< .001

< .001

< .001

R^2

.278

.131

.103

Adjusted R^2

.275

.128

.099

F

99.693

37.878

29.379

Model p

< .001

< .001

< .001

Note. B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardised regression coefficient. Awareness of the Disability Act was entered as the sole predictor in each simple linear regression model.

Discussion of Findings

The study found a significant positive association between awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and onboarding experiences among employed Persons with

disabilities. Awareness was moderately correlated with onboarding ($r = .527$, $p < .001$), and the regression model explained 27.8% of the variance in onboarding experiences ($R^2 = .278$). The relatively strong association suggests that awareness of disability rights may be particularly relevant during the transition into employment, when employees encounter organisational procedures, workplace expectations, accommodation arrangements, and support mechanisms. This finding is broadly consistent with Nevala et al. (2015), whose systematic review found that workplace accommodation is important for the employment and retention of persons with disabilities and identified organisational and social factors that can facilitate or hinder the accommodation process.

The finding is also consistent with Dong et al. (2023), who examined awareness of Americans with Disability Act (ADA) knowledge, accommodation knowledge, workplace support, and the receipt of workplace accommodations among 596 employees with disabilities. Their findings showed that workplace support was significantly associated with the receipt of accommodations and that receiving accommodations was associated with job satisfaction. Although their study did not establish a direct effect of legal knowledge on accommodation receipt, it demonstrates the importance of a supportive workplace environment in translating disability-related rights and needs into actual workplace support.

From the perspective of Empowerment Theory, awareness of disability rights legislation provides Persons with disabilities with information that may strengthen their capacity to understand their rights, communicate their needs, participate in workplace processes, and advocate for appropriate treatment. Thus, the relatively strong association observed between awareness of disability rights legislation and onboarding may reflect the importance of rights-related knowledge during employees' initial engagement with organisational systems.

The study also found a significant positive association between awareness of the Disability Act and workplace relationships ($r = .362$, $p < .001$), with awareness explaining 13.1% of the variance in workplace relationships. Although weaker than the association with onboarding, the finding indicates that awareness of disability rights is associated with how Persons with disabilities experience interpersonal interactions at work. This finding is broadly consistent with Bonaccio et al. (2020), whose review of the participation of Persons with disabilities across the employment cycle showed that employer concerns and misconceptions about the work-related abilities of Persons with disabilities can affect their experiences throughout the employment relationship, including workplace entry and subsequent participation.

The finding can be interpreted through Empowerment Theory, which emphasises individuals' capacity to exercise agency and participate meaningfully in the social environments in which they operate. Awareness of legal protections may enhance employees' ability to recognise discriminatory treatment, communicate their needs, seek support, and participate more confidently in workplace interactions. However, the relatively modest explanatory power of the model indicates that awareness is only one factor associated with workplace relationships. Colleague attitudes, supervisory behaviour, organisational culture, and management commitment to disability inclusion are likely to be important complementary factors. This interpretation is consistent with Nevala et al. (2015), who identified social and organisational conditions among the factors influencing the effectiveness of workplace accommodation.

Awareness of the Disability Act was also significantly associated with career advancement, although this was the weakest relationship observed. Awareness of disability rights legislation was positively correlated with career advancement ($r = .320$, $p < .001$), while the regression model explained 10.3% of its variance ($R^2 = .103$). This finding suggests that awareness of disability rights legislation is relevant to employees'

experiences of career progression, but its relatively limited explanatory power indicates that career advancement is influenced by factors extending beyond individual awareness of disability rights legislation. Nevala et al. (2015) reviewed evidence on workplace accommodations specifically in relation to recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting persons with disabilities, demonstrating that organisational accommodation practices extend beyond entry into employment to longer-term employment outcomes.

The weaker association of awareness of disability rights legislation with career advancement is particularly consistent with an empowerment perspective. Empowerment involves not only possessing knowledge but also having access to resources, opportunities, and supportive structures through which agency can be exercised. An employee may therefore understand the protections provided by the Disability Act without necessarily having equitable access to promotion, professional development, leadership opportunities, or other career-enhancing resources. Bonaccio et al. (2020) similarly demonstrated that disability-related concerns and barriers can permeate different stages of the employment cycle rather than being confined to recruitment or entry. Consequently, awareness of disability rights legislation may provide an important basis for rights-claiming, but it is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to overcome organisational and structural barriers to career advancement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a consistent positive association between awareness of the Disability Act and all three dimensions of workplace inclusion, although the strength of the relationships varies. Awareness had the strongest association with onboarding ($r = .527$; $R^2 = .278$), followed by workplace relationships ($r = .362$; $R^2 = .131$) and career advancement ($r = .320$; $R^2 = .103$). This pattern suggests that legal awareness may be particularly important in helping Persons with disabilities navigate initial workplace processes, whereas longer-term outcomes such as workplace relationships and career advancement are likely to depend more extensively on organisational culture, managerial practices, accessibility, and available opportunities. The findings therefore support the relevance of Empowerment Theory by highlighting rights-related knowledge as an important resource for employee agency, while also indicating that empowerment requires enabling organisational conditions.

The findings have an important practical implication. Organisations should not rely solely on increasing employees' awareness of the Disability Act. Awareness of disability rights legislation should be complemented by accessible onboarding procedures, effective reasonable-accommodation processes, supportive workplace relationships, and transparent and equitable career development practices. This position is consistent with Dong et al. (2023), who emphasised the importance of workplace support in facilitating accommodation for employees with disabilities, and with Nevala et al. (2015), who identified organisational and workplace factors as important to effective accommodation and sustained employment.

Conclusion

The study found that awareness of disability rights legislation was significantly and positively linked to onboarding experiences, workplace relationships, and career advancement experiences among employed Persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. This association was strongest for onboarding and weaker for workplace relationships and career advancement experiences, suggesting that awareness contributes to workplace inclusion but does not fully account for employed Persons with disabilities' experiences. The findings therefore highlight that awareness of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act,2018 must be complemented with accessible workplace practices, reasonable accommodation, supportive workplace relationship and fair opportunities for career advancement.

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