

Challenges Facing Census of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria: Implication for Programme Placement

¹OWOBI, E. A., ²BODANG, J. R., ³SAIDU, E.

Abstract

This paper examines challenges facing census of persons with disabilities in Nigeria and its implication for program placement. The authors discovered that it will be very difficult for a country like Nigeria to conduct censuses for persons with disabilities on regular bases because of its cost implication, and high level of illiteracy among persons with disabilities. The authors maintain that many census officials can't reach their destination in the process of carrying out census of persons with disabilities; because of the in-ability to access roads in some remotes areas in Nigeria as a country. They said that corruption among census officials is another serious

problem for census of persons with disabilities, where these officers are sometimes bribed into inflating scores or do not carry out head counts but come up with unrealistic figures. Also the authors discovered that, in most cases government ends up using inexperienced census officers who are not demographers or population experts or have nothing to do with persons with disabilities to carry out a head count of these individuals. Finally, they said that other basic variables that sometimes jeopardize successful head counts are related to organizational, Physical and Altitudinal factors.

Introduction

An overview of the Nigerian political experience since independence in 1960 shows clearly that among the many issues that have created great anxiety and brought the country to the brink of collapse has been the attempt at obtaining accurate count of the country's population including persons with disabilities. The potency of the issue as a source of confusion and national discord is underscored by the fact that attempts made by civilians (1962-1963) and the military (1973) for a head count of these individuals were greeted with same degree of cynicism, suspicion and controversies. The conducting of census of persons with disabilities is one of the most important things a country like Nigeria must do on a regular basis. But sadly, in many parts of the world (especially in

the underdeveloped parts) a lot of problems exist during the conduct of census which make it sometimes difficult to conduct regular censuses or get adequate census figures of persons with disabilities. These challenges are categorized into organizational, physical, technical and attitudinal challenges.

In this paper, the authors discusses the following:

1. High Cost of conducting census/High Illiteracy Rate of Persons with Disabilities
2. Poor Access Road/Traditional and Religious Beliefs.
3. Corruption Interferes with Census of Persons with Disabilities
4. Insufficient Census Experts for Persons with Disabilities
5. Poor Demographic Maps
6. Conclusion
7. Recommendation

High Cost and High Illiteracy Rate of Persons with Disabilities

High Cost of conducting census/high illiteracy rate of Persons with Disabilities is one of the biggest challenges associated with census for persons with

^{1,2}Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Jos ³Federal College of Education Zuba FCT Abuja

Corresponding Author
OWOBI, E. A.
E-mail: emmanuelowobi@yahoo.com

disabilities in a country like Nigeria. It is no secret that it is extremely costly to conduct a census for this people. Even in developed worlds, the costs involved in conducting censuses for these individuals can be quite overwhelming. For many poor countries all over the world, taking huge amounts of money out of their limited resources for the purpose of census of persons with disabilities can be a very difficult thing. As a result of this, a country like Nigeria cannot conduct censuses of persons with disabilities as regularly or as efficiently as developed countries.

Missouri Census Data Center (2009) depicts that high illiteracy rate of Persons with disabilities in developing countries has a negative impact on the Conducting of Census for them. Therefore, a country like Nigeria with large proportions of persons with disabilities being illiterates faces a great challenge during the conduct of censuses. Generally, over the years, numerous studies have shown that countries with very high illiteracy rates find it more difficult undertaking efficient population census than countries with high literacy rates. For example, in a very remote parts of the world where illiteracy rates of persons with disabilities are extremely high, many of them tend to run away from census officials when they arrive to count them. As a result of illiteracy, many of people with disabilities feel that it is a taboo to count human beings. Sometimes persons with disabilities feel that the government uses counting of their numbers as a strategy to eradicate them. They therefore run away from their villages when these census officials come to count them. This often translates to inaccurate population figures of persons with disabilities

Poor Access Road /Tradition and Religion Belief

There are certain places in Nigeria where it is very difficult undertaking efficient population census of persons with disabilities because of poor infrastructural facilities such as bad roads, inaccessible roads or insufficient roads that connect various towns and villages. There are certain very remote places where the only available medium of transportation is by foot. In view of this, many census officials can't reach these very remote and

inaccessible places to count persons with disabilities and therefore just make estimations as to the number of persons with disabilities living in such areas. The end result is an inadequate population figures of persons with disabilities after the census.

National population census Report (2013) asserts that traditional and religious belief sometimes interfere with the exercise to carry out census of persons with disabilities. In many underdeveloped parts of the world especially in certain remote parts of Africa where traditional beliefs are the order of the day, census officers face serious challenges when they reach these places and try counting the persons with disabilities. Most of the persons with disabilities in such areas deliberately decide not to make themselves available to be counted because of their strong traditional beliefs. Some of these traditional beliefs consider it an abomination to count people while they are still alive. According to these beliefs, anybody who gets counted exposes himself to suffering from all sorts of ill fortunes which can range from ailments to even death. Some traditional believers also consider it a taboo to let women count men. They therefore don't make themselves available to be counted by the female census officers that are sent by the government to their villages.

Corruption

Corruption during census can make it difficult to have an efficient population census exercise that provides accurate population figures of persons with disabilities. One of the biggest reasons why censuses of these people aren't very successful in a country such as Nigeria is because of the high rate of corruption. Over the years, there have been countless stories of corrupt census officials collecting monies needed for conducting census of persons with disabilities but pocketing these monies and sitting in their various offices where they write down imaginary figures of certain villages and towns with persons with disabilities without actually having visited these places. This automatically leads to inaccurate population figures of such places. Also, in countries where population sizes of persons with disabilities determine how much money the central

government releases for the catering for the needs of person with disabilities, corruption can easily overtake the census taking process and make states to exaggerate the population sizes of these persons with disabilities in order to get a bigger share of funds during the central government's distribution of funds. Mimiko (2006) argued that corruption is one of the biggest reasons why certain countries find it very difficult conducting successful censuses and obtaining reliable population data of persons with disabilities.

Insufficient Census Experts for Persons with Disabilities

Another problem associated with conducting censuses by Nigerian governments is insufficient number of professionals with knowledge and experience of conducting census for persons with disabilities. More often than not, governments don't have sufficient experienced census officers, demographers and population experts to effectively handle the task of conducting population census for persons with disabilities. As a result of this, government ends up using inexperienced census officers who have nothing to do with persons with disabilities. The end result of using people who are not experts to conduct an important exercise like census is an inefficient census that provides inaccurate population figures of persons with disabilities.

Weathers. (2005) notes that effective and educational campaign on census prior to census exercise determines how successful the census exercise eventually becomes. Many times, the Nigerian government is unable to create enough awareness on intensive and effective educational campaigns on the importance of census of persons with disabilities. It is when persons with disabilities become aware of the importance of population census that they are encouraged to make themselves available to be counted and cooperate with census officers. Therefore, in order to ensure a smooth census exercise to bring about an efficient population census of persons with disabilities, there is the need to create adequate awareness campaign.

Poor Demographic Maps

Because of demographic maps that aren't reliable, it

becomes very difficult for the Nigerian authorities to know all the remote areas (especially the very remote areas) in the country to carry out a head count of persons with disabilities. The problem with unreliable or poor demographic maps is the fact that it results in some extremely remote villages not being appearing on the maps, such areas therefore end up not being visited by census officials. Furthermore, challenges face with census of persons with disabilities can also be group under the following variables; Organizational, Physical, Altitudinal

The organizational problem facing census of persons with disabilities includes:

- i) Poor and hasty planning and organization of censuses for persons with disabilities
- ii) Use of personnel with insufficient technical knowledge in the area of special education
- iii) professional skills and experience needed for conducting censuses for persons with disabilities
- iv) Inadequate and uncoordinated planning head count for persons with disabilities
- v) lack of enlightenment and publicity of census activities.

The physical challenges accounted for the census of persons with disabilities include the following:

- i) Inadequate communication and transportation facilities to carry out head count for persons with disabilities
- ii) Difficulties in accessing remote areas where persons with disabilities live
- iii) Limited knowledge of regional topographical area with persons with disabilities.
- iv) Poor and hasty training of field officers to carry out census of people with disabilities
- v) Improper delineation of enumeration areas with persons with disabilities
- vi) Limited access to up-to-date location/ enumeration area maps with persons with disabilities
- vii) Inadequate data capture equipment for census work of persons with disabilities.

The altitudinal barrier facing the census of persons with disabilities could be attributed to:

- i) Wrong perception of census as instrument of determining political and economic status of major categories of person with disability.
- ii) Ethnic battle for dominance among the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria since population figures of persons with disabilities are the basis for sharing national resources and political representation.
- iii) Ethnicity and religion playing dominant roles in demographic manipulation and consequent unreliable censuses of persons with disabilities.
- iv) Intense elite contestation for political and economic power for persons with disabilities, accusations of regional bias and favouritism against persons with disabilities, popular distrust, and widespread suspicion of census results of persons with disabilities.
- v) Poor funding to carry out census of persons with disabilities as census is an expensive venture.
- vi) Census of people with disabilities involving collection of sensitive data after falsified by respondents
- vii) Poor attitude to censuses of persons with disabilities (apathy).
- viii) Insincerity of people in giving accurate information about persons with disabilities
- ix) Superstitious beliefs about number of persons with disabilities and ill-luck.

Another factor is the technical error which process input data or produce the estimates figures of people with disabilities. Smith, Rayer, and Smith, (2008) have explained that these incorrect input data used in the process of generating estimates where Census Bureau processed information sometimes provide incorrect input data. That government has made reasonable efforts to provide corrected estimates of persons with disabilities within the domain in which the census is being carry out and yet all efforts proved abortive.

Also, the decennial census which is very important as apportionment of representation in Congress and redistricting, as well as federal funding for services -- hospitals, education, child-

care, and disaster preparation are determined by the census count of these persons with disabilities. Therefore, undercounting their populations in relation to their level of minorities or low-income, may reduce federal funding for the services that these persons with disabilities need most, or fail to accord them proportionate voting representation. In some situation, technological and other problems arose with respect to computer devices that were to be used in door-to-door outreach to persons with disabilities to voters failed to respond to the initial census mailing. As a result, the agencies had to scramble to reinstate plans to use the old, more cumbersome pen-and-paper method to conduct census of persons with disabilities. Moreover, cost increases due to this shift – as well as a need for additional resources for using handheld computers to canvass address locations forced Census officials to request more funding from government.

In addition, it has been noted that civil rights organizations have urged the Census department to implement communications and outreach plans that use materials tailored to diverse communities and take into account the special challenges involved in reaching certain sub-groups, including Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans and other hard-to-count populations of persons with disabilities. With this, civil rights organizations pressed for inclusion of money in the census department budget for the Partnership Program, which conducts outreach to historically undercounted communities by using trusted community leaders to assuage distrust toward the counting process and bridge language and cultural barriers among persons with disabilities. The Partnership Program is intended to get a more accurate tally for undercounted groups, which include immigrants and language minorities, as well as seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income people. Civil rights groups also argued that the census department must consult and work with ethnic media as it implements its communications plan. Ethnic media are a trusted source of information for many of the nation's hard to reach residents, and these media outlets have extensive expertise on reaching different population groups.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned are the most common reasons why countries like Nigeria are unable to obtain accurate population head count figures during population censuses. Of all the above reasons, the massive costs involved in conducting census happens to be the biggest challenge that nations across the world have to battle with. Many underdeveloped nations, because of very weak economies, struggle a lot getting adequate funds to purchase inputs or logistics for a smooth census exercise. As a result of this, these countries find it very challenging conducting successful censuses. Because of demographic maps that aren't reliable, it becomes very difficult for the Nigeria authorities to know all the remote areas (especially the very remote areas) in the country to carry out a head count of persons with disabilities. The problem with unreliable or poor demographic maps has to do with the fact that most remote villages do not appear on the maps. Finally, the challenges face with census of persons with disabilities can also be

group under the following variables; Organizational, Physical, Altitudinal

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