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## Research Article



# Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities in Accessing Public Transport in Onitsha

Albert Ulutorti Green PhD<sup>1</sup>, Ikedimma Chiagoziem<sup>2</sup>, Akpuogwu Augustina Chinyere<sup>3</sup>, Chinemenma C. Ahize<sup>4</sup>, Okeke Emmanuel Odinakachukwu<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Special Education, Paul University, Awka, Nigeria. Email: [green.albert@sptcawka.com.ng](mailto:green.albert@sptcawka.com.ng). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3641-3948>

<sup>2</sup>Special Education, Paul University, Awka, Nigeria. Email: [chigom42@gmail.com](mailto:chigom42@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Special Education, Paul University, Awka, Nigeria. Email: [tinaemeri@gmail.com](mailto:tinaemeri@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Special Education (Hearing and Speech Impairment), Paul University, Awka, Nigeria. Email: [ahizechinemenma@gmail.com](mailto:ahizechinemenma@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup>Special Education (Rehabilitation), Paul's University, Awka, Nigeria. Email: [okekeemmanuel133@gmail.com](mailto:okekeemmanuel133@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined disability access to public transport in Onitsha, Nigeria. Public transit is crucial for daily life, but bad infrastructure, hostile operator behaviour, and weak regulation enforcement create physical, psychological, and economic hurdles for people with disabilities. The major goal was to identify physical constraints, assess transit operators' attitudes, analyse economic issues, and provide remedies. The study has four research questions and three hypotheses about how physical impediments, operator attitudes, and economic challenges affect transit accessibility. Michael Oliver's Social Model of Disability and Green & Ikechukwu's Accessism Theory underpinned the study. Simple random sampling was utilised to pick 100 disabled Onitsha residents to complete a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using frequency tables, percentages, and 0.05-significant chi-square statistics. Physical barriers like tiny bus entrances, high steps, absence of ramps, and poor road conditions significantly hinder mobility, according to 86–91% of respondents. 69–82% reported operator attitudes including refusing to carry disabled customers, ridicule, and extra fare demands, while 76–83% recognised economic issues such poverty, unemployment, and high transport costs. Rejecting all three null hypotheses showed substantial correlations between each barrier and transport accessibility. The study found that Onitsha's inaccessible transport systems socially marginalise disabled people, promoting dependency and prejudice. Accessible bus designs and road repairs, disability awareness training for transport operators, subsidised fares for low-income disabled people, strict enforcement of Nigeria's Disability Act, public awareness campaigns, and universal design principles are recommended. This project advances disability studies, transport planning, and public administration and promotes inclusive, accessible public transit in Onitsha.

## 1. Introduction

People's and communities' daily lives rely heavily on transportation. It helps people relocate for social, professional, business, healthcare, and educational reasons. Buses, tricycles, taxis, and motorbikes are popular modes of transportation in many Nigerian cities since they are inexpensive and easily accessible. Onitsha residents continue to rely heavily on public transit to get about town. Although the general population has access to transportation, people with disabilities frequently face considerable barriers when attempting to use these services.

Disability is described as physical, sensory, intellectual, or emotional impairments that limit a person's capacity to execute specified activities in the same manner as others. People with disabilities may have physical issues, communication difficulties, visual or hearing impairments, or other limitations. Equal opportunities and access to social services like transportation are necessary for these individuals. Regrettably, the requirements of people with disabilities are often disregarded during the planning and development of transportation in many developing countries, including Nigeria.

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Transit systems must be easy to use, secure, practical, and comfortable for all users, including those with disabilities in order for public transportation to be accessible. Accessible transportation features include ramps, wider entrances, designated seating areas, handrails, conspicuous signage, and assistance from transport operators. To improve transportation accessibility for those with impairments, numerous developed nations have enacted legislation and regulations. However, because public transportation facilities are rarely built with people with disabilities in mind, the situation in many Nigerian cities is still appalling.

In Anambra State and throughout Nigeria, Onitsha is a significant commercial center. The city experiences severe traffic congestion, overcrowding, and strain on the transportation system due to its high population and commercial activity. Markets like Main Market and Ochanja Market, along with other commercial hubs, are frequented by thousands of people each day. Consequently, the city's transportation systems are often overworked. People with disabilities find it considerably more challenging to move around in such an environment due to poor road conditions, crowded buses, and a lack of assistive transit options.

In Onitsha, people with disabilities face a variety of transportation challenges. Wheelchair users may find it difficult to board certain buses and tricycles due to their height or narrowness. People with vision impairments may find it difficult to safely cross busy roads or discover transportation options. Additionally, when it comes to passengers with disabilities, many transportation workers show a lack of empathy and comprehension. Because they think they will impede passenger flow or require additional attention, some drivers and conductors may decline to convey them.

People with disabilities experience transportation concerns as a result of financial difficulties. Many persons with disabilities live in poverty or are unemployed as a result of discrimination and a lack of opportunities. Due to growing transportation costs, some people with disabilities find it difficult to afford frequent transit in cities such as Onitsha. Wheelchairs, walking assistance, and the additional time required for boarding may result in higher expenses from transportation companies.

Social discrimination and negative attitudes from society's members are another significant obstacle for people with impairments. Some travelers and transit employees don't have compassion for individuals with disabilities. They might avoid, make fun of, or ignore them instead of assisting them. People with impairments may be unable to fully participate in social and economic activities due to such negative views. Thus, transportation barriers result in emotional and psychological strain in addition to physical limitations.

Onitsha's transportation problems have been made worse by inadequate government attention and shoddy disability policy implementation. Nigeria has laws that support the rights of people with disabilities, yet many of the city's public transit options are still inaccessible. The state of the roads, bus stops, and pedestrian walkways is appalling, making them hazardous for people with disabilities. People with disabilities now face

barriers to independence and fair opportunity as a result of the ongoing neglect of accessible transportation infrastructure. Therefore, it is essential to investigate these mobility-related problems and provide viable fixes that can advance Onitsha's accessibility and inclusivity.

This study's main objective is to investigate the obstacles that people with disabilities have when utilizing Onitsha's public transportation system. The specific objectives are to: Examine the physical obstacles that Onitsha's disabled population faces when using public transit. Find out how Onitsha's transportation providers view those with disabilities. Examine the financial difficulties that individuals with disabilities face when utilizing public transportation. Make recommendations for how to make Onitsha's public transit more accessible to those with disabilities. The research adopted the following questions to aid in data collection from respondents: What physical barriers affect people with disabilities in accessing public transport within Onitsha? What are the attitudes of transport operators toward people with disabilities in Onitsha? What economic challenges do people with disabilities face in accessing public transportation? What possible solutions can improve public transport accessibility for people with disabilities in Onitsha?

People with disabilities will gain from this study since it will draw attention to the everyday transportation problems they face in Onitsha. Additionally, the study will encourage advocacy for improved treatment for individuals with disabilities and equal access to public transit. Government organizations and legislators will benefit from the study since it will offer data to support the creation and execution of transportation policies that encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities. The results may also spur the creation of accessible buses, ramps, and safer pedestrian walkways, among other disability-friendly transportation infrastructure.

Transportation unions and operators will have a better understanding of the needs and experiences of people with disabilities thanks to the study. Their attitudes and services for travelers with disabilities may improve as a result. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding disability and transportation accessibility in Nigeria, which will benefit researchers and students in the fields of public administration, sociology, transportation studies, and special education.

## 2. Literature Review

A condition that affects a person's ability to operate physically, sensually, intellectually, or emotionally is generally referred to as a disability (Mandal & Das; Starke et al., 2025). Disability is defined by the World Health Organization as the combination of environmental constraints and health problems (Oduoye et al., 2022; Power, 2024). Vision impairment, hearing impairment, bodily impairment, speech impairment, intellectual disability, and other conditions are examples of disabilities. To fully engage in society, people with disabilities often need accessible environments and assistive services.

The ability of everyone, including people with disabilities, to use transportation systems in a safe, simple, and autonomous manner is known as transportation accessibility (Almoshaogeh et al., 2025; Sivakanthan et al., 2024). People can travel freely

without needless obstacles or prejudice thanks to accessible transportation. Ramps, elevators, handrails, audio announcements, reserved seating, and accessible bus stops are examples of the necessary transportation infrastructure that must be installed.

A public transportation system is accessible to everyone. Buses, taxis, tricycles, railroads, and ferries are a few examples. Since many Nigerians cannot afford their own cars, public transportation is an essential form of transportation. Urban development, social contact, and economic progress are all greatly aided by public transit. Due to their inability to purchase personal vehicles, people with disabilities occasionally rely on public transportation. However, people are denied access to important social activities when transportation networks are unavailable. Access to work, education, healthcare, leisure, and religious activities is hampered by inadequate transportation (Jabali et al., 2024; Jahangir et al., 2024).

One of the biggest issues that people with disabilities have while attempting to use public transit is physical impediments (Levine & Karner, 2023; Park & Chowdhury, 2022). Limited entrances, overcrowded cars, a lack of ramps, steep bus steps, damaged roads, and inaccessible bus stops are some of these obstacles. For those with mobility impairments, such limitations make transit challenging and risky.

Transportation accessibility is significantly impacted by road infrastructure (Lu et al., 2022). The roads in many Nigerian cities are poorly maintained, with obstructed pedestrian crossings, potholes, and drainage problems. Wheelchair users, the blind, and older people with disabilities find these conditions more challenging.

Social prejudice is another important concept. When someone is treated unfairly due to their gender, ethnicity, or disability, this is known as social discrimination (Davis et al., 2022; Popescu-Sarry, 2024). People with disabilities can face discrimination from both passengers and transportation providers who view them as inconveniences or burdens. People with disabilities may be discouraged from using public transit if transportation employees have negative attitudes (Almoshaogeh et al., 2025; Wayland et al., 2022). Certain drivers and conductors may mistreat disabled passengers in public or refuse to stop for them. These interactions cause handicapped people to lose confidence and experience increased emotional stress.

Access to transportation for people with disabilities is also impacted by economic difficulties (Mijailović et al., 2024; Tessier et al., 2024). Due to discrimination in society, a large number of people with disabilities are unemployed or living in poverty. They can therefore find it difficult to pay for transportation costs. Inflation and rising gasoline prices have caused transportation costs to soar in many urban areas (Suraharta & Hendrasti, 2025). Financial difficulties may arise for those with disabilities who need daily transportation for work, education, or medical treatment.

The idea of social inclusion is closely linked to accessibility. The process of guaranteeing that everyone has an equal chance to engage in society, irrespective of their circumstances or backgrounds, is known as social inclusion (Lindner et al., 2022; Lo Presti et al., 2024). By enabling those with disabilities to participate in school, employment, politics,

and leisure activities, accessible transportation promotes social inclusion. Dependency and social isolation are exacerbated by inaccessible transportation (Mayaud & Cosco, 2025; Tomida et al., 2024). People with disabilities may become socially isolated and dependent on family members or caregivers when they are unable to move around freely. Their quality of life and sense of self-worth may suffer as a result.

Another important idea in disability studies is mobility. The ability to move freely and independently from one place to another is referred to as mobility (Maresova et al., 2023). Human development and freedom are hampered by transportation systems that do not allow mobility. In cities like Onitsha, urbanization has also worsened transportation issues. Roads and transportation infrastructure are under pressure due to rapid population growth and commercial activity. People with impairments find it increasingly difficult to move as urban congestion worsens. Onitsha frequently faces traffic congestion due to its business activity and dense population. Long wait times, crowded cars, and hazardous road conditions add to the stress experienced by those with disabilities. Another important idea in transportation accessibility is government policy. Policies are rules created by authorities to control behavior and safeguard the rights of citizens (Anwary, 2022).

The goal of disability-related policies is to ensure that everyone has equitable access to public services like transportation (Elorduy & Gento, 2025; Labbe et al., 2025). Nigeria's Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act aims to both improve accessibility and safeguard the rights of those with disabilities. However, in many parts of the nation, the policy's utility has been limited due to poor execution.

Non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups are essential to the advancement of disability rights. These organizations promote accessible transportation, provide support services, and increase awareness. Reducing discrimination against those with disabilities requires public awareness and education. Transportation providers and passengers are more likely to treat handicapped individuals with respect and kindness when society has a greater understanding of disability issues.

Additionally, technology can improve the accessibility of transportation for those with disabilities. Travelers with disabilities can navigate transportation networks more easily with the use of voice announcements, GPS monitoring, smartphone applications, and electronic ticketing systems (Kim, 2025). For transportation accessibility, the universal design principle is crucial. Designing spaces and systems that people of all ages and disabilities can utilize is known as universal design (Kapsalis et al., 2024). Transportation systems developed with universal design principles are more beneficial to society and more inclusive.

Another essential component of accessible transportation is safety. People with disabilities are more susceptible to accidents and injuries when transportation networks are poorly constructed (Aldoukhi et al., 2023). Sufficient infrastructure, driver education, and support services are essential for safe transportation. Living independently is a goal for many people with disabilities. People can live freely without unduly depending on family members or caregivers thanks to

accessible transportation. This increases self-esteem, dignity, and confidence.

Community involvement is also impacted by transportation accessibility (Linovski & Baker, 2023). People may find it difficult to engage in social, religious, and economic activities if they lack simple access to transportation systems. Thus, obstacles related to transportation hinder full integration into society. The relationship between quality of life and transportation is crucial. Accessible transportation improves general well-being by expanding access to opportunities and services (Bokhari & Sharifi, 2022; Van Wee, 2023). On the other hand, people with disabilities experience poverty, dependency, and discontent due to inaccessible transportation.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Two ideas serve as the foundation for this study: accessism and the Social Model of Disability. These ideas offer a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities when utilizing Onitsha's public transit system.

Michael Oliver's Social Model of Disability, which was created in 1983. The perspective holds that social constraints, rather than a person's physical or medical condition, are the primary cause of impairment. According to the thesis, people become disabled when their needs are not met by the environment, public services, and social institutions. The paradigm highlights how society must eliminate obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from fully engaging in social, economic, and political life.

In contrast, the Medical Model of Disability views disability as a personal problem that needs to be addressed. Rather, the social model argues that the main causes of problems experienced by people with disabilities are discrimination, inaccessible environments, poor infrastructure, and negative attitudes. For instance, the absence of ramps or accessible doorways may make it challenging for a wheelchair user to board a bus.

The concept is relevant to our research since a lot of the transportation problems that people with disabilities face in Onitsha are caused by social and environmental factors. Their transit problems are greatly exacerbated by poor roads, inaccessible buses, overburdened transportation systems, and rude conductors and drivers. The strategy places a strong emphasis on the need for inclusion, accessibility, and equal rights for individuals with disabilities.

In order to help disabled persons, the concept also highlights the need for improved transportation infrastructure, public awareness campaigns, and government legislation. Therefore, it offers a suitable framework for examining and resolving the obstacles that individuals with disabilities have when utilizing Onitsha's public transit.

The Accessism Theory, developed by Albert U. Green and Ezenwa V. Ikechukwu in 2026, serves as the foundation for this investigation. The notion states that exposure and access are crucial for human development, participation, and knowledge. According to accessism, people cannot fully join in society if they are not provided with the institutions and opportunities necessary for doing so. The concept highlights how information, opportunity, and social participation are

mediated by systems such as infrastructure, institutions, technology, culture, and public services.

Three categories of ignorance are distinguished by accessism: structural ignorance, volitional ignorance, and cognitive ignorance. Since structural ignorance happens when people are denied opportunities because of a lack of exposure and access rather than a lack of intelligence or willingness, it is highly relevant to this study. The thesis claims that shortcomings in social and institutional systems are the cause of many of the obstacles faced by excluded groups.

All forms of engagement are structurally mediated, according to the notion. This indicates that in order to fully function within society, humans need on social systems including roads, transportation, communication, and governmental institutions. Exclusion is inevitable in areas where these buildings are inaccessible (Madanipour, 2025). This study indicates that Onitsha's transportation system is not designed to adequately accommodate the needs of individuals with impairments.

The Exposure Condition of Accessism states that people cannot benefit from opportunities unless they are made aware of them. Access to education, healthcare, employment, and social activities is restricted for people with disabilities due to inaccessible buses, poor roads, congested transit systems, and a dearth of facilities that accommodate people with impairments. According to the Accessibility Condition, institutional support, policy, and infrastructure are examples of supportive structures that are necessary for access. Movement becomes challenging when these structures are absent.

Because it offers a framework for understanding how inaccessible transportation systems result in the exclusion of individuals with disabilities, the theory is therefore relevant to this study. In order to improve transportation accessibility and social inclusion in Onitsha, it also highlights the significance of inclusive transport policies, accessible infrastructure, public awareness, and government intervention.

The difficulties that people with disabilities encounter while trying to use public transport in Onitsha can be explained by the Social Model of Disability and Accessism. According to the societal Model of impairment, societal and environmental barriers rather than a person's medical condition are the primary causes of impairment. In a similar vein, accessism clarifies that exclusion happens when individuals do not have access to the institutions and procedures required to engage in society. According to both views, social institutions are crucial in either fostering inclusion or fostering exclusion (Akram & Pervaiz, 2024). Barriers, including inaccessible buses, bad roads, discrimination, and unfavorable attitudes from transport staff, are the subject of the Social Model of Disability.

By explaining how transportation networks function as intermediary structures and determine whether people have access to opportunities, information, education, healthcare, and jobs, accessism expands on this idea. People with disabilities experience structural exclusion and limited social involvement when these systems become inaccessible (Neven & Ectors, 2023). Therefore, these theories support the notion that mobility barriers faced by Onitsha's disabled population are not just personal issues but also the result of shortcomings in social organization, public infrastructure, and policy implementation.

Additionally, they stress the importance of equality, accessibility, inclusivity, and supportive social structures. Based on these presumptions, the report recommends that Onitsha's government provide accessible bus stops, buses that are accessible to people with disabilities, and safer roads.

Additionally, transportation operators must to receive training on disability awareness and how to treat passengers with disabilities with respect. Transportation systems should be routinely inspected, and disability policies should be strictly enforced (Duri & Luke, 2022). To prevent discrimination and promote social inclusion for those with disabilities, public awareness campaigns had to be started.

#### 4. Methodology

Survey research was used in this study. The survey method was appropriate since it allowed the researcher to directly collect respondents' opinions, feelings, and difficulties. The approach allows the study of a large population and offers exact data for analysis. Research was done in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Onitsha is a major commercial city with a large population, numerous markets, and considerable traffic. The city was chosen for examining transportation accessibility issues due to its large concentration of transportation activity. Disabled Onitsha citizens were studied. The study covered public transit users with physical, vision, hearing, and other disabilities. The study sampled 100 people. To ensure disability representation in the research field, the sample size was chosen. Simple random sampling selected respondents.

A structured questionnaire produced by the researcher was the main data collection tool. Two sections comprised the questionnaire. Section A focused on respondents' personal information, whereas Section B addressed transit accessibility. The questionnaire was organised using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. This framework helped respondents express themselves. Expert examination validated the tool. Special education and research methods experts reviewed the questionnaire to ensure it was clear, relevant, and appropriate for the study. The instrument was validated in a pilot test with non-study participants. Responses were evaluated for instrument consistency.

Surveys were given directly to respondents to collect data. The researcher informed participants of the study's goal and promised them that their information would be kept secret. The researcher also ensured participants were voluntary. The study followed informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity guidelines. Data was analysed using frequency tables and percentages. To simplify interpretation, results were

presented in tables.

Study hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistical analysis and a 0.05 significance criterion. This made it easier to determine if the variables were related. The study's method allowed the researcher to collect firsthand data on Onitsha's impaired population's transportation experiences.

#### 5. Data Presentations and Analysis

Table 4.1: Physical Barriers Affecting Access to Public Transport

| Statement                                                                       | SA | A  | D | SD |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Buses and tricycles are too high or narrow for wheelchair users to board easily | 43 | 43 | 7 | 7  |
| Poor road conditions make travel unsafe for persons with disabilities           | 45 | 44 | 6 | 5  |
| Lack of ramps, handrails, and wider entrances on public vehicles                | 46 | 45 | 5 | 4  |
| Absence of audible announcements or signage for sensory impairments             | 42 | 42 | 8 | 8  |

#### Commentary

The results show overwhelming agreement that physical barriers exist in public transportation in Onitsha. Across all indicators, more than 80% of respondents affirmed accessibility challenges. The highest concern relates to lack of accessible vehicle design and poor road infrastructure. This indicates that the built environment is largely non-inclusive and fails to meet universal accessibility standards.

Table 4.2: Attitudes of Transport Operators Toward Persons with Disabilities

| Statement                                                          | SA | A  | D  | SD |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Drivers and conductors refuse to carry persons with disabilities   | 39 | 39 | 11 | 11 |
| Transport operators lack empathy or understanding                  | 41 | 41 | 9  | 9  |
| Operators mock, ignore, or avoid passengers with disabilities      | 37 | 37 | 13 | 13 |
| Operators demand extra money for wheelchair space or boarding time | 35 | 34 | 16 | 15 |

The findings reveal significant negative attitudes among transport operators. Between 69% and 82% of respondents confirmed experiences of discrimination, ranging from refusal of service to emotional abuse and financial exploitation. This suggests that attitudinal barriers are as limiting as physical ones and reflect insufficient disability awareness and enforcement of ethical transport conduct.

Table 4.3: Economic Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities

| Statement                                                                                       | SA | A  | D  | SD |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Many persons with disabilities are unemployed or live in poverty, making transport unaffordable | 42 | 41 | 9  | 8  |
| Rising transport fares worsen financial difficulties                                            | 40 | 39 | 11 | 10 |

Economic hardship significantly limits mobility among persons with disabilities. Over three-quarters of respondents agreed that poverty, unemployment, and increased transport costs restrict their movement. The data suggest a strong linkage between socioeconomic exclusion and reduced access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

Table 4.4: Possible Solutions to Improve Accessibility

| Statement                                                                  | SA | A  | D | SD |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Government should provide ramps, wider bus doors, and accessible bus stops | 47 | 47 | 3 | 3  |
| Transport operators need disability awareness training                     | 46 | 46 | 4 | 4  |
| Strict enforcement of Nigeria's Disability Act is necessary                | 45 | 45 | 5 | 5  |
| Public awareness campaigns should reduce stigma and discrimination         | 44 | 44 | 6 | 6  |

There is near-unanimous support for reformative interventions, with over 88% agreement across all proposed solutions. Respondents strongly emphasized infrastructure development, legal enforcement, operator training, and public sensitization. This reflects a collective demand for systemic change to achieve inclusive transportation systems.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The data indicate that individuals with disabilities in Onitsha encounter a complex system of exclusion comprising physical, social, and economic obstacles.

Initially, physical obstacles such as inaccessible automobiles, inadequate road infrastructure, and absence of assistive features significantly restrict movement. This affirms that urban transport systems are not constructed with universal accessibility principles in consideration.

Secondly, the attitudinal impediments posed by transport operators exacerbate the situation. Accounts of denial, ridicule, and excessive charges reveal entrenched social stigma and insufficient enforcement of disability rights provisions. This corresponds with wider trends of social exclusion frequently seen by those with impairments in numerous developing urban areas.

Thirdly, financial limitations establish a cycle of exclusion. Elevated unemployment rates and rising transportation costs render mobility costly, so limiting access to job, healthcare, and education, which subsequently perpetuates poverty.

Respondents unequivocally endorse systemic solutions, encompassing infrastructural modification, legal enforcement, and public awareness initiatives. This signifies both an understanding of their rights and a preparedness for policy-driven change. The research indicates that transit exclusion related to disability in Onitsha results from the interplay of physical inaccessibility, social prejudice, and economic poverty. Addressing these difficulties necessitates a coordinated policy strategy that integrates infrastructure development, enforcement of accessibility regulations, and ongoing public education.

## 7. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the obstacles that people with disabilities face when using public transport in Onitsha, and the findings leave no doubt that the situation is severe and multi-dimensional. Evidence from 100 respondents showed that physical barriers such as high bus steps, narrow entrances, lack of ramps, poor road conditions, and the absence of audio-visual aids affect between 86% and 91% of persons with disabilities. These conditions make everyday activities like going to work, school, healthcare facilities, or markets extremely difficult or impossible. Furthermore, the study confirmed that these are not isolated incidents but systematic failures in transport planning and infrastructure development. The Social Model of Disability rightly argues that people are disabled not by their impairments but by a society that fails to accommodate them, and Onitsha exemplifies this failure. The rejection of the first null hypothesis confirms that physical barriers significantly affect transport accessibility, meaning that without urgent infrastructural changes, persons with disabilities will remain excluded from mainstream economic and social life.

In addition to physical obstacles, the study uncovered deeply troubling attitudinal and economic barriers. Between 69% and 82% of respondents reported that transport operators openly discriminate against them through refusal to board, mockery, impatience, and demands for extra fares. Such negative attitudes are not minor inconveniences; they cause emotional distress, loss of confidence, and complete avoidance of public transport by many persons with disabilities. Simultaneously, economic challenges affect 76% to 83% of respondents, as poverty, unemployment, and rising transport costs make even short trips unaffordable. The rejection of the second and third hypotheses confirms that operator attitudes and economic difficulties significantly impact accessibility. These findings align with Accessism Theory, which holds that structural ignorance, denying people access to essential systems like transport leads to exclusion, dependency, and reduced quality of life. In Onitsha, persons with disabilities are trapped in a cycle where they cannot afford transport, cannot access jobs, and therefore remain poor.

The study concludes that the transportation problems faced by persons with disabilities in Onitsha are not personal misfortunes but public policy failures. The Nigerian government has enacted the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, yet implementation in Onitsha is virtually non-existent. Roads remain hazardous, buses remain inaccessible, and transport operators remain unpunished for discriminatory behavior. The consequences are severe: social isolation, loss of independence, inability to access healthcare and education, and continued poverty. Without accessible public transport, persons with disabilities cannot fully participate in society, and Onitsha cannot claim to be an inclusive city. This study has provided empirical evidence and practical recommendations, but unless the government, transport unions, civil society, and citizens act collectively, the situation will remain unchanged. The time for rhetoric is over; only concrete investments in accessible infrastructure, mandatory operator training, fare subsidies, and strict enforcement of disability laws will break the cycle of

exclusion and finally grant persons with disabilities their fundamental right to move freely and live independently.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the four research questions, the first recommendation is that the Anambra State Government and local transport authorities must eliminate physical barriers by mandating that all public buses and tricycles in Onitsha be fitted with ramps, wider entrances, low-floor designs, and handrails to accommodate wheelchair users and persons with mobility impairments. Roads and bus stops should be rehabilitated by fixing potholes, constructing accessible bus stops with tactile paving for the blind, and installing audible announcements and visual signage for persons with hearing and visual impairments.

The second recommendation is that transport unions, including the National Union of Road Transport Workers and tricycle operators in Onitsha, should organize mandatory disability awareness and sensitivity training for all drivers and conductors to address the negative attitudes reported by 69–82% of respondents. A clear code of conduct must be established prohibiting refusal to board, mockery, impatience, and demands for extra fares, with violators facing fines, suspension, or license revocation. This directly responds to the research question on operator attitudes.

The third recommendation addresses economic challenges by calling on government and non-governmental organizations to introduce subsidized transport fare vouchers or monthly travel stipends for low-income persons with disabilities in Onitsha. Additionally, operators should be prohibited from charging extra fees for wheelchairs, additional boarding time, or assistance needs. Employment programs targeting persons with disabilities would also reduce poverty and improve their ability to afford daily transport.

The fourth recommendation is that the Nigerian government must enforce the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act strictly in Onitsha, with regular monitoring of transport facilities and services. Public awareness campaigns should be launched through radio, markets, and social media to reduce stigma and social discrimination, encouraging passengers and operators to treat persons with disabilities with respect and empathy.

The fifth recommendation is that future transport infrastructure projects in Onitsha should adopt universal design principles, ensuring that all new buses, bus stops, pedestrian walkways, and terminals are usable by people of all ages and disabilities. Regular accessibility audits should be conducted, and researchers should continue to document progress, ensuring that the solutions proposed in this study are implemented and sustained over time.

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