

# Self-Image as Predictor of Stigma Consciousness among Physically Challenged Students in Tertiary Institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study investigated the levels of stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State. It ascertained the effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students. Also, the study determined the relative influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically students. Furthermore, it examined the influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students. These were with a view to providing information on the factors that could influence stigma consciousness of the physically challenged students. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State. Three institutions (University of Ibadan, The Polytechnic Ibadan and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo) were purposively selected within Oyo State because they have the physically challenged students. A sample size of 120 physically challenged students were selected from the institutions using proportionate random sampling technique. One adapted instrument with two scales was used to collect data from the students. The scales were "Stigma Consciousness Scale (SCS) and Self-Image Questionnaire (SIQ). Data collected were analysed using percentage, frequency counts, one-way ANOVA and multiple regressions. The results of the study showed that 4.8%, 88.6%, 6.7% of tertiary institutions in Oyo State demonstrated low, moderate and high levels of stigma consciousness respectively. The results showed that there was no significant effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of the physically challenged students ( $F_{(2,102)} = 0.059, p = 0.943$ ). It was also discovered that there was a significant positive influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students ( $N = 105, t = 0.198, p < 0.05$ ). Finally, the results showed that the self-image ( $\beta = 0.019, F = 1.98, p < 0.05$ ) contributed significantly in influencing stigma consciousness with coefficient of multiple regression ( $R^2$ ) of 0.164 at  $p < 0.05$ . It was concluded that self-image could influence stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions.

**Keywords:** Stigma Consciousness of Physically Challenged and Self-image.

## 1. Introduction

Students with physical challenges are those students suffering from one challenge to other and who may wish to achieve financial and personal independence need to access postsecondary education and overcome numerous academic barriers. It appears therefore that challenged students are experiencing many barriers to their presence, participation and learning at school and little is known of the specific nature of these barriers. Physically challenged person may be referred to as people who have substantial, adverse and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Lawal-Solarin (2010) in an article titled Banks and the Physically Challenged quoted MSN Encarta Dictionary which defines physically challenged as an inability to perform some or all the tasks of daily life or a medically diagnosed condition that makes it difficult to engage in the activities of daily life. Some people are born with disabilities and challenges, while others develop them later in life.

There are, however, many types of challenges or disabilities; both physical and mental, and they vary greatly in causes, degrees and treatments. Common disabilities include blindness, deafness, and deformity, loss of limbs, mental illness and mental retardation, muscular, nervous and sensory disorders. This opinion was supported by Adesokan (2003) when he noted that most challenged persons suffer rejection, isolation, and maltreatment from other members of the society. He opined that challenged persons are shown negative attitudes and in the Traditional

Yoruba society terms such as *Abirun meaning handicap*, *Didinrin meaning imbecile*, *Abami meaning strange person*, and *Alawoku meaning mentally imbalance* are used to refer to them. They are seen as objects of ridicule, shame and pity.

Meanwhile, there is a great deal of disagreement as to what should be considered offensive or derogatory by people with or without disabilities, Wikipedia (2010) noted that views vary with geography and culture, over time, and among individuals. Furthermore, terms such as, "retarded" and "lame" are said to be a deliberate insult. Also the term "wheelchair-bound" is inherently negative. Yet another term "Mongolism" is based on stereotypical ideas of certain groups of individuals with disabilities. The word "handicapped" is considered by some people to be derogatory, while others see it as a synonym for "a person with a disability", and it is still used by Adesokan (2003).

The researchers observed that physically challenged students are present in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Oyo State in particular. Some of these physically challenged students may be signally conscious because of their perceived low self-image. This is likely to result in poor academic performance and incompetence when compare with their able colleagues and this gives the need for this study in tertiary institutions in Oyo State, Southwestern part of Nigeria. Differences in stigma consciousness of physically challenged students may be explained by differences in cognitive aptitude, but variables like self-image status stereotype may also intervene.

The potential consequences that individuals may experience as a result of high stigma consciousness are important. One study revealed that women high in stigma consciousness avoided engaging in tasks in which they may be vulnerable to prejudice (Pinel, 1999). Additional research has linked high stigma consciousness to lower grade point averages for ethnic minority students (Brown & Lee, 2005), as well as poorer performance on a math exam for women (Brown & Pinel, 2003). In another study of biracial individuals, high stigma consciousness was related to lower levels of belongingness (Wilton, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2013). All this may affect the academic performance of a normal person and physically challenged in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Although, several studies have been carried out on the factors that could predict stigma consciousness of students of physically challenged student. One of the factors that can predict it is the self-image. Self- image is seen as the way individuals regularly describe themselves in relation to their physical, social, emotional, and psychological feelings. According to Martin, (2007), self-image has to do with the individual's feelings, knowledge of self, and ideas about self. This means that self-image is the totality of an individual and all that is peculiar with the person. At the center of Self-image is one's self-schema, which is a mental framework, a cognitive structure that organizes individuals' emotions, knowledge, and ideas. Social psychologists believe that Self-image has to do with individuals' possible selves. Therefore, one's Self-image plays a lot of roles in the development of the person academically, socially, and psychologically. When students are stereotyped and work along the same view, it tends to affect them from different dimensions. Martin and Osborne (1992) stated that individual Self-image is the collection of beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that individuals have about themselves. It is the individual's Self-image that is the way the person sees himself or herself. Self-image is seen as a general term that refers to the wide range of one's self-descriptions made by individuals.

Most of the individuals' self-descriptions have been associated with rewards that are likely to elicit very positive images and emotions. This implies that how individuals perceive themselves in terms of the stereotypes eventually affects the totality of their behavior. According to Demidenko, Tascas, Kennedy, and Bissada (2010), self-image contains three parts: self-esteem, stability, and self-efficacy. Self-esteem is the evaluative component, where one makes judgment about his or her self-worth. In their views, stability refers to the organization and continuity of one's self-image. For McGraw (2008), Self-image is a person's composite or collective view of himself or herself across a multi-dimensional set of specific precepts. It is based on self-knowledge and evaluation or worth of a person's capabilities that one formed through experience and interpretation of the environment. McLead (2008) sees Self-image as how people think and evaluate themselves. Features associated with Self-image include personality, skills, abilities, occupations, hobbies, and physical characteristics, among others.

A person's self-image may change with time as reassessment occurs, which in some cases leads to identity crises (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2002). Self-image is not restricted to the present; it includes past selves and future selves. The past self represents the activities and experiences of the individual in previous occasions, while the future self indicates one's proposals and intentions that have not been accomplished. These correspond to hopes, fears, standards, goals, and threats (Santrock, 2009).

The aim of this present study is to investigate to what extent the variability in self-image, could predict stigma consciousness among physically challenged students. Studies had been done on the related issue around the globe, but the present study is focused on Nigerian sample and Oyo State to be precised. The study will add to the existing literature on the issue and will also have implications for educationalists, counsellors and therapists, who work in school settings. It is expected that Self-image will reveal the nature of its predictability of stigma consciousness of physically challenged students.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The broad objective is to determine the impact Self-image as a Predictor of stigma consciousness among special students in a tertiary institution in Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate the levels of stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo state
- Ascertain the effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students
- Determine the relative influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students;

## 3. Research Questions

The following research question will be addressed in this study:

- What are the levels of stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo state?

## 4. Research Hypotheses

- There is no significant effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students.
- There is no significant relative influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of the physically challenged students

## 5. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This entails the process of gathering information from a representative sample of a population. The descriptive survey design studies characteristics and opinions of relatively small samples of a population through which it seeks to determine the incidence and distribution of such characteristics and opinions in the population. Using small sample for fact gathering and testing theories and hypotheses, it has the ability to provide accurate information on the whole population of people. Due to its techniques of sampling and the capacity of the results from such samples to be generalized to the whole population, the descriptive survey research is widely used by researchers, especially for practical and policy goals. The results from researcher have usually been remarkably accurate and generalisable. This study adopted this research design because it sought to obtain information from a representative sample of the population. The dependent variable was physically challenged. The independence variable was self-image. Stigma consciousness of physically challenged students was measured using stigma consciousness scale to establish the levels of stigma consciousness of physically challenged students. Also, the independence variable, Self-image was measured using Self-image scale of Chen and Gully (2001) to establish students' Self-image.

This consists of three sections: section A is the bio-data of the respondents while section B and C were stigma consciousness and self-image scale respectively. The instruments were validated with the help of experts in Tests and Measurement and Psychology of Education at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Kaiser-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were carried out to ascertain the usability of factorial validation for the validation of the items in each section of the questionnaire and each item yielded uniform data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value for stigma consciousness and self-image scale were 0.85 and 0.925 respectively which is greater than critical value at 0.05 level of significance and so is acceptable. The Cronbach's Alpha approach was adopted in determining the reliability of the scale and it yielded a coefficient of 0.756 and 0.884

## 6. Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the levels of stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State?

In order to answer this research question, items on stigma consciousness scale (SCS) were scored such that a strongly agree response was allotted 4, agree response 3, disagree response 2, and strongly disagree response as 1. In this scale, high scores represent a high level of stigma consciousness and vice versa. However, negatively worded items such as items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 were reversed in scoring. Students' responses to these items were cumulated to build a measure of stigma consciousness. The minimum and maximum scores obtained in this scale were 14 and 56 respectively while the range was 42. Scores of 14-28 were described as a low level of stigma consciousness, 29-42 as moderate level while scores of 43-56 were described as a high level of stigma consciousness. This categorization is then subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation. The result is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Levels of Stigma Consciousness among Physically Challenged Students in Tertiary Institutions in Oyo State

Levels	Score Range	Mean	SD	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low	14-28	27.00	1.41	5	4.8
Moderate	29-42	34.86	3.20	93	88.6
High	43-56	43.86	0.90	7	6.7
Total				105	100.0

Table 1 shows the levels of stigma consciousness among physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State. As shown in the Table, out of 105 (100.0%) of the physically challenged students that participated in this study, only 5 (4.8%) exhibited low level of stigma consciousness. The score range for this group on Stigma Consciousness Scale is 14-28 with respective mean and standard deviation values of 27.00 and 1.41. Also, 93 (88.6%) exhibited moderate level of stigma consciousness with score range of 29-42 (Mean=34.86, SD=3.20) while 7 (6.7%) exhibited high level of stigma consciousness with score range of 43-56 (Mean=43.86, SD=0.90). It is shown in this result that the majority of the physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State exhibited a moderate level of stigma consciousness.

### Research Hypotheses

**Research Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students.

In order to test this hypothesis, students' scores (GPAs) were subjected to a One-Way Analysis of Variance using level of stigma consciousness as a factor variable. The result is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. One-Way Analysis of Variance of effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students

Source	Df	SS	MS	F	P
Between Groups	2	.053	.027	.059	.943
Within Groups	102	46.272	.454		
Total	104	46.325			

Table 2 shows a one –way between groups analysis of variance conducted to explore the effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students. It can be observed from the result that there was no statistically significant effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students with low, moderate, and high levels of stigma consciousness as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(2,102) = .059, p = .943$ ). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, we do not reject the stated null hypothesis. This result concludes that there is no significant effect of stigma consciousness on the academic performance of physically challenged students.

**Research Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relative influence of self-image and status stereotype on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students.

In order to test this hypothesis, students' scores on the measure of stigma consciousness were subjected to multiple regression with self-image and status stereotype jointly treated as the predictor variables. The coefficients indicating the individual contribution of the independent variables were obtained and are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of Relative Influence of Self-Image on Stigma Consciousness of Physically Challenged Students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	25.990	4.144		6.272	.000
Self-image	.014	.071	.019	.198	.843

Table 3. Shows the result of the relative influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students. As shown in Table ... self-image had t-value of .198 and beta weight of .019. From the values of beta weights and t-ratio for independent variable (self-image), it is shown that status stereotype had significant influence on self-image. It can be concluded from this result that self-image had no significant influence on stigma consciousness of physically challenged students.

## 7. Discussion of Findings

It was discovered that most of the physically challenged students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State had a moderate level of stigma consciousness. This may also aid the high academic performance of physically challenged students in their studies.

The result of the three hypothesis shows a significant correlation between stigma consciousness and the self-image of students. A study by Barker in Awan, (2011), a positive and statistically significant correlation was found between self-image and stigma consciousness of physically challenged students. McCoach (2002) indicated that self-image is a significant predictor of stigma consciousness. The same author further states that as much as one-third of the variance in achievement can be accounted for by academic self-image alone. In a study to investigate the relationship between self-beliefs, academic background and achievement of adolescent Asian-American students in post-secondary education (House 1997), self-image was found to be a significant predictor of Asian-American students' subsequent academic performance. In another study, self-image was found to be directly and significantly related to the deep rather than the surface learning approach (Drew and Watkins 1998). It was also observed from the analysis that self-image had an influence on stigma consciousness.

The findings of the current study emphasized a positive relationship between 'self-image' and 'stigma consciousness of physically challenged students'. To be more specific, self-image and stigma consciousness of physically challenged students were strongly correlated (Ahmed (1986), Gordon (1997), Haque and Sarwat (1998), Sabir (1999), and Shafique (2002). Gage and Berliner (1992) research findings on the relationship between self-image and stigma consciousness of physically challenged students and this suggests that measures of general or even self-image are not significantly related to stigma consciousness of physically challenged. And this is against the findings of this current study which states that self-image had an influence on stigma consciousness of physically changed students in tertiary institutions in Oyo State.

The finding of the study shows a significant positive relationship between stigma consciousness of physically challenged and self-image of the Under-graduate students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This finding has been supported by researchers (Barker, McNerney, and Dowson (2003) Lawrence and Vimala, (2013). As per the interview and discussion with the subjects, it was observed 80% of the participants were of the view that their target is to have good self- image of themselves and which may also aid the good performance of the students in their studies. In turn, it makes them try to achieve excellence in their area of interest. They become confident about themselves and able to choose the career they want.

To conclude, in order to improve the self-image of students, efforts must be taken by the teachers and parents to provide a good environment both inside and outside the educational environment. It will develop their self-image which will further lead to an understanding of their capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, interests, attitude, aptitude, emotions, knowledge etc. this will finally lead them to develop stigma consciousness.

## 8. Conclusion

The present study established that majority physically challenged undergraduates possessed a moderate level of stigma consciousness. The study concluded that self-image predicted stigma consciousness. The study also concluded that there was a significant influence of self-image on stigma consciousness of physically challenged.

## 9. Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion of this study, various recommendations were proposed to further enhance stigma consciousness of physically challenged students, which will result in academic excellence and high performance of the students. Therefore, this study should be applied in various educational and counseling settings. These recommendations are given subsequently.

There is a need for students to make real commitments to their stigma consciousness with the intention to be successful academically. It is also important that physically challenged undergraduates should develop good self-image and this will also aid their academic performance. School counsellors should organize periodic academic seminars for physically challenged students on how to develop and maintain good self-image and this will enhance their stigma consciousness and result in high academic performance. Teachers, school owners and parents should

also encourage students to develop positive image toward their academics and this will help them to be successful at school.

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