

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTITUDE OF FEMALE LEARNERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES TOWARDS EDUCATION IN KISUMU, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study explored Socio- Cultural factors influencing attitude of female learners with Physical disabilities towards their own education. The study adopted descriptive exploratory design. The sample size of the study was 100 respondents which included 68 female learners with physical disabilities, 10 teachers in a school for the physically impaired, 20 parents of girls with physical disabilities, and 2 opinion leaders. Purposive and snowball sampling procedures were employed to get the respondents for the study. Instruments for data collection included interviews, document analysis, and Focus Group Discussions. The study findings revealed that female learners with physical disabilities had negative attitude towards their own education, education of females with physical disabilities is more expensive as compared to that of their able bodied peers which makes majority of their parents reluctant to take them to school.

**Keywords:** Socio-Cultural, Attitudes, Physical disabilities, female learners and education.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Globally, girls with physical disabilities are the most excluded children in accessing education (Frankline 2000). According to Asch, Rousso and Jefferies (2001). Females with disabilities are a large diverse groups whose educational needs have gone unnoticed by those committees to either gender equity or disability equity. This could have been influenced by societal regard of disability as a strain to the society at large. Little attention has been focused on Education of girls with physical disabilities from a global perspective (Smith, Pollaway, Patton & Dowdy, 2002). For females in any society having a physical disability is seen as a weakness leading to loss of status and condemnation to being unproductive ( Deabester 2003). Studies have shown that only a few females with physical disabilities who have managed to break through walls of prejudice and discrimination in education have benefited (UNICEF 2000). Many studies have focused on many issues surrounding people with disabilities, but there is lack of information on the attitude of females with physical disabilities towards education.

### **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Gimbeleth (2000), in United States of America, females with physical disabilities who were upper level students in schools served as mentors to those in lower level

classes. They all recognized that students who were physically disabled often do not develop social skills that they need to succeed in education. Sometimes, these students were regarded by teachers and other students as not being able to do the required academic work (Kemp and Parette 2000). The girls themselves believed they could do well academically and might only lack the motivation to succeed due to societal negative attitude towards their capability as females and as the disabled. The female students with physical disabilities therefore had strong support for each other. They met weekly to provide emotional support and information. Through this they discovered what academic and social risks existed and developed strategies to meet and overcome the challenges. They also identified the best accessible study locations and techniques of leaving particular subjects. The girls themselves evaluated major career goals and share how to be effectively advocated for themselves in society. In this context, females with physical disabilities in senior classes could similarly find ways of encouraging each other and the newly enrolled in order for them to complete their education.

Burchadt, T., Le Grand, J., & Pichaud, C. (2002) record that, women with disabilities face the typical disadvantages of gender inequality, which are compounded by disability. The disadvantages posed by gender and disability intersect to create further marginalization and disadvantage a concept referred to as intersectionality.

The double discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities can clearly be seen within this context. These females are often excluded from education, health services, family life and employment and experience high rates of physical, mental and sexual abuse.

A research by UNICEF ( 2006) in four countries in Africa revealed that there was a common view that girls were academically less capable than boys and taking them to school would be a waste of resources. This attitude has had a negative effect on the participation of girls in education (Krathwol 2007).

Since females who were physically disabled were considered less capable academically, they received less encouragement and were rarely challenged at home or school to strive to succeed in their education. Since less was expected of them, they also expected less of themselves and were less confident in their academic abilities.

UNESCO (2002) in Uganda revealed that the girls with physical disabilities who do manage to break through the walls of prejudice and discrimination, usually have benefitted from strong role models or support groups of their own peers.

Butalia, ( 2001) argue that emotional and psychological well- being of a student is a factor that underlies success in education, coupled with suitable environment for teaching and learning. Moreover, a students' positive attitude towards learning greatly influences the learners performance and retention in schools.

According to (Summers 1992), girls who are physically disabled need to increase their self-determination, confidence, independent living skills and community participation. This is to help them become more self- efficacious, whereby they can become their own judges on what they are able to do with the skills that they have.

A study carried out by Frankline (2000) indicate that teachers, parents of able bodied children and the able bodied peers of girls with physical disabilities viewed the girls with physical disabilities as less capable in several ways including their academic work.

A qualitative study conducted by Muigai (2012) on challenges facing education of females with physical disabilities in Kenya established that discrimination and isolation impede education of females with physical disabilities.

From the cited literature, it is evident that globally, females with physical disabilities were regarded by the society as not being able to do required academic work, this would impact negatively on their own attitude towards their own education.

Objectives;

- 1) To explore the Challenges faced by girls with physical disabilities in pursuit of education
- 2) To explore the attitudes of female learners with physical disabilities towards education.
- 3) To find out the availability of females with physical disabilities who are role models to others.
- 4) To examine the attitude of parents towards education of female learners with physical disabilities.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Design**

A descriptive exploratory design within a mixed method approach was used.

#### **3.2 Sample Size**

A total of 100 respondents participated in the study, they included, 68 females with physical disabilities, 10 teachers of learners with physical disabilities, 20 parents of females with physical disabilities and 2 opinion leaders.

#### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

Sampling techniques used were, 50 females with physical disabilities in school were purposively sampled and 18 females with physical disabilities who had dropped out of school were sampled through snowballing, 20 parents of females with physical disabilities were selected through convenience sampling procedures, 10 teachers and 2 opinion leaders were sampled through purposive sampling procedure.

#### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The source of data in the study was obtained through interviews with the students, teachers and opinion leaders, focus group discussions with the parents and document analysis.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. While qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

### **4.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Females with physical disabilities experience various challenges as they pursue their education and as a result majority of them drop out of school before they complete primary school education.

Majority of females with physical disabilities have negative attitude towards their own education. This is highly influenced by the attitude of people around them.

The majority of females with physical disabilities perceive education as important only to the able bodied individuals. This could be attributed to lack of role models who have gone through education and are in good employment.

Majority of females with physical abilities have no hope of gainful employment after their education which results into low self- esteem and a sense of hopelessness.

Females with physical disabilities meet a lot of discrimination against various resources necessary for their access to education which leads to lack of enthusiasm in education.

Due to low expectations from females with physical disabilities by their teachers, parents and peers, the females with physical disabilities also expect very little from themselves.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The most prominent factor that affect females with physical disabilities attitude towards education is the general populations attitude towards disability, many people regard disability as some punishment for wrongs done by either parents or grand-parents of the disabled.

As the females with physical disabilities observe other people's attitude towards their education, they lose hope and render themselves educationally unfit.

Attitude of females with physical disabilities towards their education is highly influenced by the attitude of people around them. When societal expectations do not match with the actual performance of females with physical disabilities, this interferes with their self- esteem which leads to negative attitude towards education.

Females with physical disabilities lack exposure to other females with disabilities in good careers who would act as their role models.

The result of this study suggests that the strength of relationship between self- esteem and academic achievement is partly dependent on societal context which results into the development of either a positive or negative attitude towards education.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Parents, teachers and peers of females with physical disability should collaborate with other stakeholders in education to recognize the challenges faced by females with physical disabilities in accessing education and provide strategies to meet and overcome the challenges.

Females with physical disabilities should be exposed to opportunities of interacting with female role models with physical disabilities in good careers to motivate them to complete their education.

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