Challenges faced by women with physical disabilities in accessing reproductive health services in Nairobi County

This study was on challenges faced by women with physical disabilities in accessing reproductive health services in Nairobi County. Its objectives were to find out the factors that hinder women with physical disabilities from visiting reproductive health service providers and to describe their experiences when they visit reproductive health service providers. The study mainly used a cross-sectional descriptive research design utilizing qualitative methods of data collection. The study used convenient sampling and purposive sampling to select 34 informants. The individual disabled woman was the unit of analysis. The qualitative data were obtained from in-depth interviews and key informants interviews and were transcribed and analysed thematically to generate frequencies and percentages presented using tables and charts. This study was guided by the critical theory by Michael Oliver (1998). This theory covers the health care given to disabled people, but it sees the problems of disabled people explicitly as products of an unequal society. The relevance of this theory is shown by the factors that hinder women with physical disabilities from accessing reproductive health services. Prejudice and discrimination as expounded in the theory are significant in explaining the factors that hinder women with physical disabilities in accessing reproductive health services. The discrimination aspect of the theory helps to explain the experiences of women with physical disabilities in accessing reproductive health care services. The study found that among the difficulties that women with disabilities face when they visit reproductive health service providers are mainly accessing the various physical facilities. These difficulties include lack of stairs, ramps and steps and getting onto high examination beds. Accessing public transport, which is the most convenient means of travel to the health facilities, was also a challenge. The study concluded that the difficulties experienced by the women in terms of access to health facilities and with personnel show a generalized assumption that women with disabilities are not sexually active and may thus not require reproductive health services. These women encounter physical and altitudinal barriers as they seek care. The study recommends that since awareness seminars for those with disabilities are an important source of reproductive health information these should be enhanced to include topics covering more than STDs, contraceptives and HIV/AIDS. There is also a need for creating awareness among the medical personnel to change their attitudes towards sexuality and disability. Given the challenges women with disabilities face in accessing buildings and public transport the government should establish a responsible authority to oversee the accessibility of the buildup environment by leveling of pavements, building of ramps, installing lifts and ensuring access to other public places and utilities and the building of accessible public vehicles.

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