AN ASSESSMENT OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS FACED BY GIRLS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES: A CASE OF NATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTRE, LOWDON LODGE, MUTARE, ZIMBABWE.

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ABSTRACT

The study looked at the background pertaining to how girls with physical disabilities have been treated in the society. The study sought to assess the available opportunities and threats faced by girls with physical disabilities using National Rehabilitation Centre, Lowdon Lodge as a case in point. The study involved some of the international, regional and national pieces of legislation and policies, which protect the rights of people with disabilities. The study explained how girls with physical disabilities face intersectional discrimination, that is, they are discriminated in various forms not only because of their gender, but their disability and yet again because they are children. The research then suggested measures to attain equal representation of girls with physical disabilities at all levels. A wide range of literature was reviewed to acquire the perceptions of various authors regarding the opportunities and threats faced by girls with physical disabilities. To obtain results, the researcher used availability sampling to select 18 respondents from the 28 girls with physical disabilities and purposive sampling was used to select the key informants, who comprised the institution’s superintendent, one teacher, one matron, one social services officer and two parents with children at the institution. For data collection, in depth interviews were carried out with the 18 participating girls whilst the 6 key informants responded to a questionnaire. To analyse data, frequency tables and graphs were used. Research results indicated that all the girls at the institution were boarders, receiving free primary education as well as medical treatment at any government hospital when the need arose. However, they also encountered numerous threats, which included stigma and discrimination, various forms of abuse, inaccessible environment and unavailability of role models. The institution rehabilitated the girls through participation in sporting activities as well as skills training. Recommendations made were to lobby the Government of Zimbabwe to revise the Disabled Persons Act Chapter 17.01 of 1992, avail funds in order to assist the girls more effectively at the institution and conduct community awareness programmes.