

**EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN
ACCESSING LEARNING MATERIALS DURING COVID-19 IN KAMPALA**

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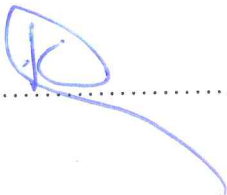
19/U/20689

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD
OF A BACHELORS DEGREE OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL
ADMINISTRATION MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

JANUARY 2023

DECLARATION

I, Junju Kasimu, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted for any academic award to any Institution of higher learning.

Signature..........Date. 10th JANUARY 2023

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APPROVAL

This dissertation titled experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 in Kampala has been submitted with the approval of the research supervisor.

Signature *Agatha* Date..... *10/01/2023*.....

Kafuko Agatha

(ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR)

DEDICATION

This dissertation is wholesomely dedicated to my lovely parents for the great work you have done towards my education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following people who have assisted me in a special way in carrying out this research work.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere and hearty gratitude to my supportive supervisor Madam Agatha Kafuko, for her critical reviews, expert advice, and regular availability to me throughout the course of my research work.

In a special way, a vote of thanks goes to Mr. Ssaku.Regan for his motivation and encouragement during the entire research process.

I also thank my supportive family for their patience, compassion, and guidance. I would not have been what I am now without having such an incredible family support and encouragement to be a better person I'm forever grateful for your love.

Moreover, I will never forget to thank my true friends who have been there to help me along the way till this work was finally done and these include Patrick, Shamirah, Shakirah, Isaac, Ritah, Mafabi and Fatah

I would also like to thank my parents Mr. Abdallah Musisi and Mrs. Nambogo Hadijah for all forms of support to me.

May Almighty God bless you all.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Wi-Fi -	Wireless Fidelity
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
UNICEF-	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of primary school learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. The specific objectives of the study were: to identify key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, to explore the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19 and to understand the coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19. The study employed a qualitative approach in the data collection from 10 participants and analysis process.

The study revealed that findings that financial constraints were a barrier in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study recommends that learners should develop more positive attitude toward education in order to overcome the challenge of negative attitude towards education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The study focused on the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials in Kampala Uganda. This chapter entails the study background, problem statement, research objectives and questions, the study scope as well as significance.

1.1 Background of the Study

Disability is a major problem worldwide. Statistics from the World Health organization and World Bank indicate that over a billion people or 15 percent of the world's population is estimated to live with at least one form of disabilities (Jalali et al., 2020). According to Yazcayir & Gurgur (2021) people with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups who are currently left behind in most of the planning done by states, although their wellbeing and inclusion is now rising up in the sustainable development agenda. While the statistics of persons with disability is particularly skewed, Vieira et al.(2020) emphasized that the best estimates are 15 percent of the global populations will be identified as having at least one or numerous forms of disabilities.

Furthermore, statistics by WHO African region suggest that Africa displays the highest percentage (6%-19%) of children (0-14 years) and adult (15-59 years) are currently living with one form of disabilities across all regions (Mapunda et al., 2017). Additionally, the World Health Organization further suggests that many children and adults have been historically excluded from main stream education opportunities due to their disabilities (WHO, 2018).

Sub-Sahara African has seen an increase in the number of persons with disabilities with statistics showing over 80 million people living in the horn of Africa with at least one form of disability (Zziwa et al., 2019).The United Nations report on disability maintains that about 40 percent of Africa's population consists of people with disabilities including 10-15 percent of children and adult in lower and higher institutions of learning (UN report on disabilities 2020).

In the education sector Yazcayir & Gurgur, (2021) pointed that there were a number of measures put in place in different countries to mitigate the spread of the virus. Some of these measures include suspension of face-to-face classes at all levels of education (Berger et al.,

2020). This however gave rise to the introduction of distance learning which left many learners at a great disadvantage of not having access to education facilities.

The UN Sustainable development Group on disability inclusive response to COVID-19 pointed that learners with special need/disabilities are least likely to benefit from the distance learning solutions as a strategy to replace face to face class room interaction (Sherr et al., 2020).

The corona virus pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on learners with disabilities who according to Averett, (2021) were already experiencing social and educational disadvantages. As many as half of the estimated 65 million learners with disabilities in higher and lower institutions in developing countries were already out of school before COVID-19 (Smith et al., 2022).

Uganda is overall on track towards achieving education for all, with a net enrolment rate of 94 percent for boys and 97 percent for girls (Emong & Eron, 2016). Much as this is seen as an achievement in the right direction, the fact remains that learners with disabilities remained underserved. Averett, (2021) points that learners with disabilities in primary schools are disproportionately affected by the corona virus pandemic as most of them are faced with challenges related to accessing learning resources provided by schools, especially for those with hearing and visual disabilities. These challenges are attributed to the lack of ready trained personnel to facilitate such programs(Smith et al., 2022).

According to Emong & Eron, (2016) about sixteen percent of Ugandans are living with disabilities worst of it all some of these lack access to regular social services such as education. While Uganda has made strides in ensuring inclusive education for all, people with disabilities are unable to attend school and learners with special needs fail to transition from one educational level to another. Only five percent of these can access education facilities through inclusive schools and ten percent through special schools (Baguma & Wolters, 2021).

The government of Uganda through the Ministry of Education and Sport has stated that education is a human right for all including people with disabilities (MoES, 2020). Based on this commitment from the government the ministry of education and sports provided learning materials to learners in rural and urban areas during schools' closure to facilitate home learning during the pandemic. However these were disproportionately distributed to learners with learners with disabilities failing to access some of the materials distributed by the government (Baguma & Wolters, 2021).

Approximately 2.5 million out of 14 million learners in Uganda have received these materials to ensure continuity of learning (UNICEF, 2020). However, little is known about how primary school learners with disabilities benefited from the learning materials that the government supplied. Smith et al. (2022) suggest that different types of disabilities require different assistance such as braille printing and assistive aids for hearing impaired learners and these might be found in schools but not always at home.

The European Commission. Joint Research Centre., (2020) indicate that despite Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre's effort to develop an inclusive learning package for disabled learners, the package has neither been finalized nor shared with the concerned bodies. Accordingly, families with learners with disabilities need additional support that can help them meet their learning needs in time of crisis such as COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Uganda the COVID-19 measures such as maintaining social distance put in place by the government through the Ministry of Health to mitigate the spread of the corona virus led to the indefinite closure of schools. This left over 15 million learners stranded at home with unequal access to learning materials for learners at all levels of education (Baguma & Wolters, 2021). The government in collaboration with the ministry of education distributed learning materials to primary school learners as well as implemented learning at home using different platforms however there is no information as to whether learners with disabilities especially those in primary schools accessed the learning materials to ensure education continuation among such groups. The accessibility issue during COVID-19 could be fuelled by the lack of instruction materials, assistive devices such as braille, hearing aids, and wheel chairs for those with physical disabilities and computer gadgets for online education. All this, however remain undocumented which provides a basis for this inquiry.

1.3 Main Objective

The main objective of the study is to explore the experiences of primary school learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19
2. To identify key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic

3. To understand the coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19? From which sources did the learners acquire this knowledge?
2. What are some of the challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did the extended stay at home affect the opportunity to access school materials among disabled learners?
3. What are some of the coping measures used by primary school learners with disabilities to overcome COVID-19 learning difficulties? What opportunities were available to help the learners access materials for learning?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted among primary school learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic in Kampala city. The study was conducted in Kampala the capital city of Uganda, in one of the special needs education centres, the Kampala school for the Physically Handicapped. The school is located in Mengo Balintuma Road plot 634. This school combines education, rehabilitation and vocational skills training to children with various disabilities within the 6 to 21 age range. The school has a population of 186 pupils and 42 teaching staff supported by a wide range of volunteers. This school started in 1969 as a project by the Uganda Spastics-an indigenous non-profit making organization.

1.5.1 Methodological scope

The study employed interview method as the basic method of data collection particularly in-depth interviews which enabled the researcher to get detailed information. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis

1.5.2 Time scope

The study was conducted between October and December. It was retrospective in that focused on the experiences of learners with disabilities during the COVID-19 lock down period.

1.6 Significance of the Study

By conducting this study, the researcher envisions contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the area of disability studies. The study findings will seek to inform the decisions

of practitioners, policy makers to address the issues and education experiences of people living with disabilities during such difficult period as the corona virus pandemic. The study will also pave the way for further investigation in the area of disabilities.

The findings of the study will add to the existing body of knowledge that supports practice in the area of disabilities especially primary learners with disabilities. The study will also lay the grounds for further research into the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities especially in crisis just like the COVID-19 pandemic and possible interventions.

1.7 Justification for the Study

The study is justified on grounds that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted major service delivery to key populations around the world (WHO, 2020). Amongst these are people with disabilities who were already the most marginalized in most community more likely to live in poverty, experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse. While health care, education and employment are often inaccessible.

The study is further justified based on the fact that people with disabilities have experience difficulties due to COVID-19 response measures. Lockdowns create significant disruption and additional risks to their autonomy, including access to education. Many, who rely on formal support by assistants or service providers or informal support by relatives/friends, have lost this due to movement restrictions and physical distancing measures. In some cases, this has left them without food, medicine and medical facilities, and unable to bathe, cook or eat.

Finally, the study is justified on grounds that there is a dearth of literature that describes experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in regards to accessing learning materials. This would enable those that formulate national policies on people with disabilities to consider such experiences when designing interventions. This study is also justified on policy grounds in as far it makes a case for developing policies that inform practitioners on the need to put persons with disabilities interest at the centre of social service delivery especially education.

1.8 Definition of Key Concepts

Access refers to the ability to use and benefit from specific resources (material, financial, human, social, political, etc.)

Experiences refer to the encounters that learners with disability had regarding learning materials during COVID. It includes the facts or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation.

Disability: is defined as a physical, sensory, or psychological impairment that limits major life activities, such as “caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning, and working” (Maki & Tarvydas, 2012, p. 87). This study focused on all forms of disability.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of related literature obtained from theoretical and empirical sources guided by the study objectives.

2.1 Conceptualization of Disability within the context of education and learning

The World Health Organization indicates disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning (Yihun & Belay, 2020). Disabilities differ in terms of characteristics of mental, sensory ability, communication skills, and social behaviour and physical characteristics (Klang et al., 2020).

Disability in Uganda is defined as the permanent and substantial functional limitation of daily life activities caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment and environmental barriers resulting in limited participation (Uganda National Policy on Disability, 2015). The kinds of disabilities vary from difficulty in hearing, speaking and conveying messages, difficulty in moving around and using other body parts, difficulty in seeing, strange behaviour, epilepsy, difficulty in learning, leprosy, loss of feeling and multiple disabilities. The world health organization on the other hand defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments activity limitations or participation restrictions (European Commission joint Research Centre, 2020).

Disability can be categorized into physical and intellectual disability which is defined as a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical (mobility) activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying simple object. Another category of disabilities is intellectual disabilities (Gomda et al., 2022). This class includes mental retardation and autism spectrum disorders.

Different scholars including Mapunda et al.(2017) have identified different forms of disabilities these are discussed below.

2.1.1 Mental Retardation

Mental retardation is a developmental disability that that substantially limits a person's life skills (Otyola et al., 2017). Mental retardation is characterized by significantly sub-average

intellectual function existing concurrently with limitations with limitations in life skills such as communication, self-care, home living, social skills, academics, work and recreation (Shakespeare et al., 2021).

Ravichandran et al. (2022) appear to suggest that mental retardation being a developmental disability occurs as a result of drug abuse by pregnant women. However the world report on disability released by the European Commission joint Research Centre (2020) indicates that mental retardation can be caused by anoxia (oxygen deprivation during birth, typically caused by the position of the umbilical cord), breech birth, low birth weight, and/or premature birth.

Mental retardation can include childhood diseases (e.g., meningitis), as well as accidents and traumas (e.g., a blow to the head). Additionally, environmental factors such as poverty, malnourishment, toxins, and poor medical care in general can contribute causally to the development of mental retardation(Amin et al., 2021).

2.1.2 Visual impairments

Visual impairment involves a total lack of vision; by contrast, "a person who is visually impaired may have some or very little vision, but needs assistance such as corrective lenses, a magnifier, or large print to employ vision in learning"(Akbar et al., 2022). Mwanza et al. (2021) suggests that three of the most common causes of blindness include trachoma, "dry eyes," and river blindness. Additionally, a study by Yihun & Belay, (2020) emphasized that student with visual disabilities face enormous economic, political, and social barriers that have an adverse impact on their physical, economic, social and intellectual development and wellbeing. Furthermore, a report by World Health Organization (2021) indicates that globally more than 1.5 billion people experience some degree of hearing loss. Of these, an estimated 430 million have hearing loss of moderate or higher severity in the better hearing ear. Prevalence of hearing loss varies across WHO regions; the vast majority of people affected live in low- and middle-income countries of the world.

Hearing impairments if unaddressed can negatively impact many aspects of life such as communication; the development of language and speech in children; cognition; education; employment; mental health; and interpersonal relationships(Otyola et al., 2017). Furthermore, hearing loss can cause low self-esteem, and is often associated with stigma, and can significantly impact the families and communication partners of those living with the condition (Amaniampong & Nyavor, 2021).

2.1.3 Physical disabilities

Physical disabilities and health conditions are classified as either congenital or acquired. Learners with congenital conditions either are born with physical difficulties or develop them soon after birth (Aktan, 2020). Acquired disabilities are those developed through injury or disease while the child is developing normally. Some people with severe physical disabilities must rely on assistive devices that take advantage of their specific abilities and on their ability to use assistive devices with standard products (Amin et al., 2021). The commonly used assistive devices include mobility aids (e.g. crutches, wheelchairs), manipulation aids (e.g. prosthetics, orthotics), communication aids (e.g. single switch based artificial voice), and computer/device interface (e.g. eye gaze-operated keyboard). The inability of a person to freely move around without the support of another individual is classified by Baguma & Wolters, (2021) as physical disability. They further highlight that learners with physical disability are uniquely challenged in their day-to-day activities especially in accessing different facilities within their respective institutions of learning.

2.1.4 Blindness

Blindness defines is the inability to see, According to Kirk et al., (2009) blindness is a situation when a child cannot use vision for learning yet she or she can respond to light and darkness and can have some visual imagery in some instances. For the purpose of this study, blindness involves these children who are blind use their tactile or auditory senses as their primary learning channels.

2.1.5 Low Vision

According to the international standard of classification as proposed by World Health Organization (WHO). Low vision is when the measurement is worse than 20/60 in the better eye with best correction. Low vision is the loss of eyesight that makes the accomplishment of visual tasks difficulty. However, with aid, children with low vision can use their visual sense for learning. After treatment or with refractive correction, vision can be corrected to normal. Learners with low vision can usually read when the print is enlarged sufficiently.

2.1.6 Specific Learning Disability

“A Specific Learning Disability is a disorder in one or more of the central nervous system processes involved in perceiving, understanding and/or using concepts through spoken/written language or nonverbal means. This disorder manifests itself with processing, memory,

communication, reading, writing, spelling, and maturity. While specific learning disabilities may affect any of these areas, deficiencies are usually limited to only one or two areas."

From the above it is clear that persons with different forms of disability have varying needs. Therefore, special consideration has to be given to learners with disabilities to facilitate their learning to develop their full potential either a face-to-face teaching at home or an online approach. This therefore justifies the need to modify and customize teaching practices to cater for such learners with learning difficulties.

2.2 Knowledge of learners with disabilities on learning resources available in COVID-19 lockdown

In order to ensure the continuity of education for school-age children throughout the world during the pandemic period, distance education process has been commenced through various technological tools and Internet-based education systems (Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2021). While the continuity of learning is ensured for all learners however (Smith et al., 2022) emphasized that some of the interventions left out learners with disabilities as number of them were stuck at home with no other alternative of learning.

The provision of learning materials during the pandemic mostly targeted other learners as their learning needs were deemed easy to meet however for learners with disabilities this was not the case since some of them had knowledge of the interventions but they were left out due to their unique learning needs (Averett, 2021). In some countries, learners with disabilities were excluded from education programming based on grounds they required specialized education based on the type of disabilities of the individual (Reimers, 2022). As a result of this many of these learners especially those with visual and hearing impairments were given no other alternatives but to remain at home the entire COVID-19 period.

In some African countries including Uganda (Karasel Ayda et al., 2020) parents of learners with disabilities were forced to confine their children at home due to the inability of learning institutions to cater for their education needs. In Uganda specifically, the ministry of education provided learners with learning materials as well as home schooling through the use of radio and television the main beneficiaries were mostly learners without disabilities however those with disabilities were left out with no other option but to stay home throughout the pandemic.

Learners with learning disabilities are a frequently mentioned group as each person is special and different. Nevertheless, despite having various disabilities, many disabled learners have some common ground in terms of behaviour (Fook & Sidhu, 2015). They show reduced

incentive to study, are less proficient in studying, require assignments to be divided into smaller parts, encounter difficulties in simplifying, and lack analytical skills and objectivity. Thus, it was difficult to provide appropriate learning interventions since some of them lack the initiative to explore other learning alternatives.

Although the study environment of a student does not directly affect the academic progress of learners, it has been proven to affect their psychological state and cause them to worry. This indirectly contributes to the decline in their mental health as well as studies (Paramasivam et al., 2022). The outbreak of the pandemic which led to the indefinite closure of school further worsened the learning related difficulties experienced by learners with disabilities.

2.3 Coping mechanisms used by learners with disabilities

Coping is an ability to adjust, adapt, and meet a challenge successfully (Tesfaw et al. 2022). It should be noted that coping means when one constantly changes her/his behavioural and thought effort that people adapt to master, reduce or minimize stressful events and restoration of equilibrium in order to manage some specific external demands that causing the distress in problem and emotion-focused coping.

The most frequently used coping strategies used by disabled learners is religious or spiritual-focused coping strategy when finding meaning and purpose to adversity through a strong relationship with God (Issakah et al., 2021).

A study on disability mobility conducted by Givon & Court, (2010) highlighted the importance of friends as a coping mechanisms used by student with visual impairments. The study adds that learners who are visually impaired mostly relied on their friends to access certain services within institutions of higher learning especially those in institution premises that lack favourable infrastructure for learners with disabilities.

Social relationships are vital for learners with disabilities to remain in school (Macmbinji & Pwani, 2018). The study suggests that in a world where most people suffer psychological trauma because of their shape or body size the only source of comfort is the use of social relationships to get over the stress and anxiety.

Learners with disabilities attach so much importance when it comes to engaging in social relations or friendships (Alias et al., 2019). Friends could provide good strength whenever learners with disabilities would need any kind of support. This is seen as a positive coping mechanism and could go a long way in instilling a sense of belonging among such learners.

While building friendships and engaging in social relations has been cited as coping mechanisms among learners with disabilities however Petretto et al. (2021) cautioned that some learners are sensitive about others findings out about their disability and ridiculing them, sometimes these learners were introvert and had difficulty making and maintaining friendships and other social relations.

In addition to adaptive coping techniques such as regular exercises and meditation, evidence exists to demonstrate how support networks may help disabled learners to cope productively with stress (Issakah et al., 2021). It is also evident that sharing useful teaching skills and behaviour management techniques may be critical ways of helping learners with disabilities cope with stress presented particularly in the school environment.

2.4 Gaps in the literature

There have been numerous literatures in the area of learners with disabilities and their experiences over the past decades. This has seen different countries not only in Uganda but the world over come up with programs and interventions so as to ensure that persons with disabilities get the right education to boost their skills. Most of the literatures focuses mostly on disabled learners in higher institutions will little attention on primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 in Uganda. This study therefore, seeks to address these gaps by gathering information so as to inform policy makers on the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during Covid-19.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focused on the research design, description of the study, sample size and selection, how data was collected, method of data analysis and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design to explore the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials. Descriptive research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened, with a goal of describing a phenomenon (Erickson, 2017). The study employed a qualitative approach in the data collection and analysis process. Qualitative research enables a researcher to wholly explore experiences. (Kumar, 2015). The qualitative approach was adopted to enable the researcher obtain a detailed and deeper understanding of the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning during the pandemic (Noble & Smith, 2015).

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kampala the capital city of Uganda. It occupies a series of hills at an elevation of about 3900 feet and is situated in the southern part of the country just north of Lake Victoria. The study selected one of the special needs education centres in the Kampala metropolitan areas as the main study site.

The Kampala school for the Physically Handicapped is located in Mengo Balintuma Road plot 634. This school combines education, rehabilitation and vocational skills training to children with various disabilities within the 6 to 21 age range. The school has a population of 186 pupils and 42 teaching staff supported by a wide range of volunteers. This school started in 1969 as a project by the Uganda Spastics-an indigenous non-profit making organization.

3.3 Study Population

The primary study population comprised of all learners in the upper primary section of the school. Overall, the school had 86 learners who were in upper primary with different forms of disabilities. These included 50 females and 36 males. The justification for focusing on only children in the upper section was the assumption/belief that older children possessed vital information and would communicate more effectively compared to the younger children in

lower primary. The secondary study population was members of staffs at the school. There were considered because of the positions that they hold which give them the privilege to access information that is potentially vital in understanding the experiences of learners with disabilities.

3.4 Sample Design, Procedure and Size

The study employed a nonprobability sampling design to identify and select study participants. According to Creswell, J. (2013), non-probability sampling is the best form of sampling in qualitative research. To ensure that those selected had relevant experiences, purposive sampling was applied in selecting both primary participants and key informants who participated in the study. The criteria for sample selection was as follows:

- (i). Gender balance was considered to ensure a balance of the experiences of both male and female participants of the study.
- (ii) Learners in upper primary were considered for the study particularly those who were at school during COVID-19 period-what is upper primary i.e., what classes
- (iii) The researcher also considered voluntary participants who were willing to participate in the study.

The study was qualitative in nature; a relatively small sample size was used. The sample size in qualitative studies is always supposed to be relatively small to provide in- depth information for the study. The sample size comprised of ten (10) participants. Of these five (5) were primary participants who were learners in the upper primary section of the school. The other five (5) were key informants who included members of staff, including teachers and school administrators.

3.5 Data Collection

The collection methods included in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as discussed below.

3.6.1 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with primary school learners with disabilities using an in-depth interview guide. This method enabled the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study.

Prior to the interviews, informed consent was sought from the learners through the school administration. Given that the learners were in boarding school, away from their parents, the

school had oversight over them. The consent provided by the school was considered to be adequate. After permission is granted to conduct interviews, the researcher explained to the learners what the study was about and also provided them with an assent form before engaging them in the interview. The interviews were conducted in the school environment. The researcher ensured that the place for the interview was comfortable; privacy was guaranteed so that people who are not part of the study were out of earshot. This was intended to enhance confidentiality.

The researcher spent some time talking about general issues before each interview as an approach to building trust and confidence in the participants. The interview questions focused on the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19, the challenges they faced in accessing materials for school in the lockdown, and the coping mechanisms they adopted. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Deliberate effort was made to create informality due to the sensitivity of the topic under study.

3.6.2 Key Informant interviews

Key informant interviews were held in this study with the help of key informant interview guide. The key informants were members of staffs and school administrators. The advantage of using key informant interviews was that they provided the perspectives which otherwise did not capture in the learners' in-depth interviews. Key informant interviews were considered useful in filling gaps and providing further explanations and information for the study. Every key informant was given an identifier in form of numbers so as to ease understanding of statements that arise in the findings.

3.7 Data Management and Analysis

For analysing collected data thematic analysis approach was employed (Braun & Clarke, Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tonkiss, 2004). While analysing data, Creswell's (2009) guides us with six steps method of qualitative data analysis which the researcher also adopted to use at that stage. The first step of this method involved data transcription. At this stage, the researcher could listen to the voices over and over again to familiarize herself with them and all the relevant parts of the audio-recorded data was later transcribed to text format.

The second step was familiarization. With this step, data collected was re-read over and over again. This helped to get a general sense of the overall meaning of the data from the perspectives of the participants. This exercise provided the cornerstone for the identification of codes and themes which guided presentation of the findings.

The third step involved coding. In respect to this, the researcher could organize the materials into segments to bring meaning to the information. These segments were labelled with codes that describe the data at different levels with emerged themes.

The fourth step was to develop themes. The researcher developed themes that appear as major findings and were used to create subheadings in the presentation and discussions of data. In the final step, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the themes in line with the objectives of the study. These were later compared with the information from the literature to conclude.

3.7.1 Data Quality Control

The supervisor critically analysed the instruments and suggested changes where necessary to ensure that the items measured what they intended to measure in order to ascertain the validity of the interview guide. Reliability was ascertained by doing a pre-test of the data collection tools before the actual study.

3.8 Research Ethics

Participant's information was kept confidential. This was done by keeping responses and other issues that arises from the study anonymous. Additionally, the study used pseudonyms to identify respondents with key phrases during data analysis.

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants so as to enhance their confident and prevent withholding necessary information that could was critical to the findings of the study.

Participants were informed that they ended the interviews at any time they wanted or omit any question they did not wish to answer. Potential benefits and risks of the study to the participants were explained to ensure the protection of participants if the need arose.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter presents the results and data collected from the field using key informant interviewees and key informant interviews. Findings are presented in line with the study objectives as follows: knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19; key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and; coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19.

However, before presenting findings on the objectives of the study, a profile of the study participants is provided.

4.1 Profiles of primary study participants

The study employed a purposive sampling procedure which involved a researcher selecting a sample that was most useful to the purpose of the study. The reason for this type of sampling is because the researcher wanted to gain a detailed knowledge about experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 in Kampala.

Below is a description of the study participants. While each participant is identified by a name, it should be noted that names used in this study are pseudonyms suggested by the participants upon being prompted by the researcher. The use of pseudonyms is intended to ensure privacy and anonymity of participants.

David is 18 years old. He is in primary six. He has an impairment of difficult walking which he acquired in 2009. He comes from Luweero District. He lives with his grandmother who is 40 years old in a family of 6 people. He is an orphan who lost all his parents in 2009 in an accident. The grandmother's age is suggestive of teenage pregnancy which is an indication of intergenerational poverty.

Gift is 19 years old. She was in Primary seven class. She is a catholic. She has a disability of difficult talking. She lives with her grandmother, in Wakiso district, near the capital of Uganda. She also lives with her two uncles and two siblings, who are aged 6 and 11 years old.

Hadijah is 19 years old and she is a Muslim. She is in primary seven she comes from Mityana district. She has multiple disabilities which including difficulty in talking; however she was still recalling what happened during Covid-19 period, She lives with her grandmother because her parents abandoned her because of her disabilities.

Jane is in primary six, she is 18 years old and she has a disability of difficult with self-care and difficult talking. She lives in Busabala with her mother. She lives in a family of 8 people. She wants to become a nurse.

Allan is 18 years old He has a disability of difficult walking. He is a catholic and lives in a family of 3 people who include his step mother, cousin and his elder sister). He lives comes from Jinja district. He was in primary seven.

The study involved 5 key informants and among these one was the director of the school and 4 teachers.

4.2 Knowledge about learning resources available during the lockdown

One of the objectives of the study was to describe the knowledge that learners with disabilities had about learning resources that were available during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study findings showed that the learners were aware about resources that were provided by the school...

The learners interviewed in the study reported that teachers used to tell them about school that was available from government through this Ministry of Education. Study findings show that despite the lockdown, teachers remained a key resource, and found means to keep the learners informed of available opportunities and resources. The learners interviewed in this study reported that their teachers contacted them and provided information on available resources, as well as accessibility options for reaching these resources. This is exemplified in the quotation below:

My mathematics teacher called me and told me about these resources and how to use these resources from Government of Uganda (Allan, P,6)

The study findings demonstrate the commitment of the teachers towards the education of their learners. Although these teachers were excluded from the COVID-19 taskforce, they did not abdicate their responsibilities towards learners. They recognized the vulnerability of their

learners and continued to reach out, as a means of keeping the learners interested and grounded in education.

Furthermore, the study findings indicate that although learners were aware of efforts to provide materials, they did not know who organized them. Very many efforts were made to enable the pupil to continue with learning. The study findings indicate that some upper primary school learners did not have knowledge about these learning materials from Ministry of Education. The learners' homes are located in the rural areas, and as such, they did not easily access information on opportunities available from the government. This was attributed to lack of sensitization, lack of gadgets that were to be used in accessing learning materials. To make matters worse, it was revealed by the researcher that most of the learners with disabilities were not informed by their caretakers on how and when to access the materials. This left most of them without accessing the learning materials.

They did not use them because one they had to buy newspapers in order to get them (Cissy, teacher).

4.2.1 Support from family

The findings indicated that support from family was so important. According to Gift it is noted that

'My family provided me with prayers and counseling which always motivated me and enabled me to achieve my learning needs during COVID-19 period''.

They also looked for people to support me and my family always motivated me more so my mother, who used to tell me that as soon as schools are opened I will go back to school (David, P.7,18 years).

My mother sometimes provides some transport to my sister to go to school and pick my materials in case the school failed to deliver them. People in my family always helped me to access materials from my neighbourhood class mate since me personally I could not reach out to the place due to my disability. My family also helped me to get books, pens, sets and pencils to support my learning in lock down (Jane, 18 years).

4.3 Access of primary school learners with disabilities to learning materials during the COVID-19 School lockdown.

One of the study objectives focused on gaining an understanding of how primary school learners with disabilities accessed learning materials during the COVID-19 lockdown. The findings show that the schools played a key role in reaching out to learners to send them materials.

4.3.1 School providing learning materials especially work

The study indicates that school learning materials were sent to the learners with disabilities via their parent/grandmother's phone. One of the study participant noted that noted that she received soft copies of learning materials from her grandmother's phone.

I received reading materials on my grandmother's phone inform of soft copies (David, 18 years).

This implied that some learners got access to the learning materials despite of the challenges encountered in. However according to Allan, he noted that he received learning materials from school since the school had their parents WhatsApp phones. However, according to *Jane* the school used to pay bodaboda man to go and deliver the learning materials to her parent's home.

The study indicated that some learners with disabilities had positive experiences as a presented below According to *Jane* noted that her experience was not so bad because of various reasons, she noted that.

To me personally learning at home was not so hard because I had some social support from my friends and family members. I never had any copying strategy that helped learning during the Covid-19 pandemic; I was able to learn from home. I always had lessons on television (Jane, 18 years).

4.3.2. Making individual revision

It was found from the study that learners with disabilities read books on their own and they always made revision on personal basis after getting materials from schools: they listened to radios, got materials from school and I always attended lessons on the TV. On addition to this they also used previous books used at school before lockdown. This implied that despite of the lockdown, most of the learners with disabilities continued studying.

I always made my personal revision using my old materials (Gift, P.7)

4.3.3 Support from friends

The study indicated that friends were very vital in helping these learners with disabilities

My friends helped me so much (Gift, P.7)

Some of them used friends to continue learning during COVID-19. Some of our learners resorted to vocational skills which enabled them survive during COVID-19 this helped them to get some resources such as reading materials for example textbooks. (John, Teacher)

Learners with disabilities visited nearby friends more especially those who had reading materials and shared with them and this was done those who were able to walk and this was seen in the second lockdown (Alex, Teacher).

4.3.4 Support from family

The findings indicated that support from family was so important According to Gift it is noted that

‘My family provided me with prayers and counseling which always motivated me and enabled me to achieve my learning needs during COVID-19 period’.

They also looked for people to support me and my family always motivated me more so my mother, who used to tell me that as soon as schools are opened I will go back to school (David, P.7,18 years, Difficult with self-care).

My mother sometimes provides some transport to my sister to go to school and pick my materials in case the school failed to deliver them. People in my family always helped me to access materials from my neighbourhood class mate since me personally I could not reach out to the place due to my disability. My family also helped me to get books, pens, sets and pencils to support my learning in lock down (Jane, 18 years).

4.3.5 Support from teachers

The findings also indicate that some teachers were supportive through calling me to motivate me. The school also provided us with reading materials via my grandmother’s smart phone.

My teacher for mathematics used to call me and guided me on various topics. My teachers always guided me during my studying like my Mathematics teacher who always called me and discussed for me some topics via phone calls. (Gift, P.7)

The school also always motivated me through counseling and guidance and this always kept me going on with my learning during lockdown.

My teachers always provided counseling and guidance to me (Jane, P.6)

As teachers we used to interact with our learners via parent’s phones during this interaction we could advise both parents and learners on what to do to keep their learners learning during COVID-19 for example we could direct parents on where to get the learning materials in different places and online as well (Cissy, teacher)

4.3.6 Support from neighbours

The study also shows that some neighbours supported these learners According to one of the learners with disability noted that the school and some resources were provided neighbours

I personally continued learning on Television especially Wednesday and Friday from my neighbour’s home (David, P.7).

4.3.7 Learning on televisions and radios

One of the learners, Hadijah noted that *‘I always learnt on Bukedde Television and Sanyuka TV’*. I was also aware of lessons on Radios but I did not attend them’. I accidentally landed on these lectures as I was watching the television. This helped her in accessing learning materials.

4.3.8 Self-awareness

Self-awareness emerged as one of the coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic to access learning materials

‘I believed in myself regardless of what people in community were talking about me’. Believing in my self-enabled me to have confidence that despite of challenges I will make it. That is why I’m now in primary six waiting for next term to join Primary seven (Allan, P.6)

Me personally I’m too ambitious and I love studying. I want to become a doctor see that I achieve my learning needs. My good relationship with my friends also helped me to achieve my learning needs (David, P.7).

4.3.9 Spiritual support

The study findings indicate that spiritual support was one of the coping mechanism Most student indicate religion was a key strategy employed by people with disabilities. This helped them to cope up.

I was so prayerful and I had hope (Hadijah, P.7).

4.3.10 Support from volunteers

The study indicates that support from volunteers was a key strategy used by people with disabilities.

‘I managed to get volunteers who always came at home and went with my grandmother’s phone and printed for me the notes in hard copies’.

The strategy of getting me volunteers was so effective because they helped me in getting reading materials.

She further noted that, some friends of hers and donors gave her some money to facilitate her learning. She further noted that, ‘some friends of mine and donors gave me some money to facilitate my learning, for long distances I was able to obtain support from the District Education Officer who got me support from police. Therefore, whenever I used to go to school to pick my work, the police would get me car to help me reach out to school and get my work, this was abased strategy to a challenge of long distances.

The researcher also asked about some of the coping measures learners with disabilities used to overcome COVID-19 learning difficulties. He stated that “*Some learners with disabilities bought phones which enabled them to access learning materials and these phones were used to download reading materials during COVID-9*”.

4.3.11 Partnership with other organizations

The study indicated that the school adapted partnership with other organizations as coping mechanism.

In partnership with crane network, our school carried out home visits to learners in Kampala and those who were in nearby places. We gave learning materials as well as learning materials this enabled them overcome learning difficulties. More sensitization and mobilization was conducted on how to learn during COVID -19 this was done through radio stations and televisions. Community libraries were formed in Kampala for both ordinary and learners with disabilities whereby learners with disabilities got a chance to interact with others and also shared knowledge during COVID-19. (Rose, Director)

These materials were provided to learners with the help of partner organizations whereby some parents had to find teachers to teach their children at home but this was only done by the financially able parents. These parents invited some of us to go to their homes where we taught their children but only a few parents could afford to do so. Use of television was also adapted by learners with disabilities more especially those who were not visually or those who lacked hearing impairment (Cissy, Teacher)

He further noted that their learners were taught vocational skills such as tailoring, catering among others so, these learners used these skills to earn a living since they were able to operate and work from home. This made such learners to buy reading materials and writing materials like pens and books which helped them to continue learning during coved 19.

4.4 Key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during the COVID-19 pandemic

The key challenges identified challenges are poor relationships with community members, poor infrastructures and accommodation in community, lack of gadgets, unfavourable methods of distribution by incompetent people and poverty

4.4.1 Poor relationships with community members

The study also shows that the neighbours to these learners never wanted them study at their homes because these learners always wanted to go there to access both radios and televisions and all this was attributed to their negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. People in the community have a negative attitude towards children with disabilities and they say that they

are useless; because their parents wronged their ancestors therefore they failed to give those children support.

People in community were not supportive to me. Some people were calling me various names like crippled and lame this made them to chase me from their homes (Gift, P.7).

Some learners from other schools in the community always failed to help them but teachers were there for them to ensure that they get scholastic materials.

4.4.2 Poor infrastructures and accommodation in community

Within the interview guide one of the learners noted that because she uses a wheel chair, the road structures were not favourable for her to move in community to ask for help. This is one of the challenges that faced learners during covid-19 pandemic, for example most of the roads in rural areas are in dilapidated state and do not favour learners with disabilities and this has forced most learners with disabilities to quit schools and stay home.

4.4.3 Lack of gadgets

The study indicated that lack of gadgets was another challenge faced by primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I did not have a smart phone to receive materials in form soft copies from school (Allan, P.7).

This challenge was faced by most of learners especially those that were living in rural areas. To make matters worse most of the learners did not have radios and televisions where they could listen and access learning materials.

4.4.4 Unfavourable methods of distribution

The study findings indicate that incompetent people were used to design and distribute the government reading materials thus excluding professionals who are qualified in special needs education. This perception was universal in the interviews with key informants.

Teachers who knew how to handle learners were not involved in providing materials to learners with disabilities''.

So, we teachers of learners with disabilities can understand problems these learners face. For example, various learners have various reading materials. For example, learners with visual impairment read brailed work or work in braille. As if it was not enough disabilities agencies and organizations were not engaged in the designing and distributing learning materials for learners with disabilities in Kampala. These organizations and agencies are more

knowledgeable about challenges that learners with disabilities face in achieving education needs thus a challenge in accessing learning. The learning materials which were provided did not cater for all forms of learners with disabilities. The learning materials were not evenly distributed as many some areas missed out getting learning materials in Kampala, this means that learners with disabilities were left out thus unable to access learning materials. This did not do enough to ensure that learners with disabilities get reading materials

4.4.5 Presentation of findings from key informant in the study

The study indicates that having experts or trained staff to support learners with physical disabilities in primary schools.

Teachers should be trained in order to equip them with skills to train learners how to cope up (Rose, school director)

The study shows that closure of all transport means in the first lockdown was also a challenge as indicated below

“The biggest challenge which learners with disabilities faced in accessing learning materials was the closure of transport means”, for example here in Kampala, many of our learners and parents as well plus where the teachers use Bodabodas and taxis to move from one area to another. All of this kind of transport was cut off this meant that learners who had difficulties in walking and those with visual impairments could find it hard to walk from one place to another. Therefore, accessing materials was very difficult. (Alex, Teacher)

Another staff teacher was asked about the challenges those learners with disabilities faced during time of Covid-19. The teacher stated that ‘it was a challenge in a way that materials were not enough to the learners with visual impairments.

One of the teachers noted that learners faced various challenges in accessing education. He stated that. Learners in Kampala had a number of challenges they faced and these challenges limited them from accessing learning materials during COVID-19. He said that closure of transport means such as motorcycles, taxis among others made learners unable to move from one place to another and this became a challenge to them in accessing learning materials. He noted that it was challenge because they had to walk a long distance to go and get the learning materials.

He further noted that the inferiority complex among some learners with disabilities was also a challenge in accessing learning materials during Covid-19. Most learners feel inferior they cannot do certain things by their own because of fear to be ashamed or to be seen as learners

with disabilities this made some learners hide themselves thus not accessing some materials. There was loss of parents. Some learners with disabilities in Kampala lost parents and this made them unable to access learning materials because parents who were supposed to encourage them had died, they had no financial support and even the guardians who took care of these learners. The mere fact that many people lost jobs during Covid-19, this made them unable for their parents to provide learning materials to learners with disabilities due to the loss of jobs many people became poor and could not afford buying materials to their learners and even looking for those materials that were provided by the government because of lack of transport.

One of the teachers further noted that high population was a challenge because many learners were in need of materials and yet materials they were inadequately provided by the government and this high population brought in competition on the freely provided materials this competition came in the picking of materials by both learners with disabilities and those without disabilities where by those without disabilities had an advantage of being fast, able to move even without transport unlike the disabled learners who had difficulties in walking, vision among others thus affecting learners in accessing learning materials during covid 19. Teachers were not given support to help learners with disabilities to go through reading materials hence a challenge in accessing reading materials. Many learners were unable to interpret materials; these learners needed us to interpreter for them so that they can easily understand those materials.

The materials provided were not in favour of the visually impaired learners that is, there was no brailled work thus a challenge for this learners to access learning materials. This was attributed to weak leadership for persons with disabilities were yet another challenge that made learners with disabilities unable to access learning materials. The examples of leaders for persons with disabilities include councillors, and members of parliament. These people could not talk about the education of learners with disabilities. Poor sensitization of people available materials was also a challenge during Covid-19.

However, another key informant was interviewed on extent learners with disabilities achieve their learning needs during COVID 19 pandemic

He noted that it is to a smaller extent because these learners never continued with their learning during the lock down. Schools were closed whereby persons with disabilities did not have

physical contact with the teachers and as a school we were not able to organize online classes for them due to lack gadgets and skilled personnel to operate the gadgets.

The researcher further interviewed the respondents on challenges learners with disabilities faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. The first challenge is that COVID-19 lock down came abruptly whereby teachers and learners were not ready. This meant that teachers had no time to prepare learning materials for their learners for example, our school had no time to prepare learning materials that can accommodate every form of disability and that made it difficult for our learners to go at home with at least some learning materials prepared for them thus a challenge faced by learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19. One of the respects noted that corruption could be another challenge that limited learners with disabilities from accessing learning materials during COVID-19. He noted that some of these leaders in Kampala could have poorly distributed these learning materials due to corruption. Many of the materials which were freely provided by the government could have instead sold to some people and others given to the relatives of those who were providing the materials. He noted.

The materials provided were inadequate this made many learners with disabilities left out therefore a challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during covid-19 and ignorance among parents, community members and even some of our learners was another challenge in accessing learning materials.

However, another key informant noted that ignorance was another challenge among parents and community leaders and the researcher asked him what he meant

“Many of the parents, community members, and some off the learners had no information on when and where learning materials are provided from. And this was due to ignorance, this made such parents communities and learners unable to get learning during Covid-19”.

Many of parents take education for learners with disabilities as an option thinking that their learners with disabilities are unable to learn and even succeed in their education by having such an attitude means that these parents get learning materials for their children and they can also not provide support which can enable their get materials by themselves hence a challenge student with disabilities faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19.

Key informants further noted that inconsistency in providing learning materials was yet another challenge. This was a challenge because different materials could be distributed on different

days. The materials were not distributed at once this made some learners with disabilities tired more especially those with difficulties in walking could not walk on a daily basis to go and pick learning materials. By failing to walk, meant that this student gets most of the learning materials. Many parents in Kampala had nothing to eat, this meant that such parents had to concentrate much on accessing food rather than thinking about getting reading materials for their learners and this became a challenge.

Furthermore, another respondent was asked about the challenges that learners with disabilities faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19?

He stated that some families abandoned learners with disabilities during COVID-19 whereby these learners were affected this meant that this child could not access learning materials because they had no one to cater for them.

4.4.6 Poverty

It was revealed by the study findings that primary study participants hail from low-income families that are poor. Poverty in families stood out as a key hindrance to accessing learning materials during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is indicated interviews with most of participants. Therefore, poverty emerged as a universal challenge face by all primary school learners with disabilities who were interviewed in this study.

“We did not have money the only money we had was for buying food. My mother and my father lost their jobs during the Covid-19 lock down, there were market vendors this made them unable to continue giving me the necessary supports” (David, P.7 Difficult with self-care)

My grandmother did not have money to buy newspapers and access materials for Ministry of Education to help me pass my final exams. ‘Poverty was as a result of closure of the work place of my grandmother which was selling clothes, my mother did not have a smart phone to receive these notes inform of soft copies and this left me lagging behind in terms of academics (Gift, P.7).

The study indicated that some learners with disabilities had negative experiences in accessing learning material during COVID-19 pandemic

To me learning from home was not easy because it was challenging’. At home they could not understand what I needed because I have difficulty with talking (Gift, P.7, difficult talking).

However, the study indicated at first learning of these learners in lockdown was not easy but later some of them were able to learn from home

To me at first it was not easy to learn from home because I always wanted to interact with my fellow learners and teachers. I was able to learn from home because I used to get materials from school. (Allan, P.6, Difficult talking)

However, according to *Hadijjah* ‘My life during lockdown was so challenging. I was staying with my grandmother who is my best friend. The reason why I say my life was not good is because I faced a lot of challenges like we did not have money and food and sometimes we slept hungry? In addition to that people in society also used to abuse me because of my disability they say that I was cursed. I actually became tired of them and this made my learning experience so bad. However according to Jane, she noted that “*my life I can say that my life and experience was not good*”. This is because I faced a number of challenges like I obtained malaria for more than a half a month.

However, according to *David* ‘We did not have a radio at home where learning could take place, thus it was not easy. Life was not good since; I could not travel from one place to another as a result of the lockdown. During covid-19 pandemic, my life was not good since I could not get access to treatment of my leg this was during to the closure of transport means such boda bodas, taxis which could take me to Kasambya health centre.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of major findings

The study aimed at presenting the experiences of primary school learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. Findings were presented based on the objectives of the study which were; to identify key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, to explore the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19 and to understand the coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

In regard to the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19, the study identified two critical issues that emerged where some learners with disabilities were able to get knowledge about these resources and how to use them through radio stations, televisions and others from their teachers. The study also indicated that some learners did not have knowledge about these learning resources since after going back home they did not have any communication with the school and other significant people

The findings indicated that there was a number of coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic. In order to cope up and these included schools providing learning materials, support from friends, support from family members, support from teachers, support, from neighbours, self-awareness and support volunteers / NGOs

The study found that primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic had both positive and negative experiences on available learning resources used during COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences based on a number of factors in the student's environment.

The data collected shows that challenges that were faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic included poverty, death of family members, long distances from homes, community negative attitude, poor infrastructures /transport, impairments/disabilities and closure of transport means.

5.2 Discussion of findings

Study findings show that despite the lockdown, teachers remained a key resource, and found means to keep the learners informed about available opportunities. The learners interviewed in this study reported that their teachers contacted them and provided information on available resources, as well as accessibility options for reaching these resources. However, learners were constrained by the road structures that were not favourable for learners to move in community to ask for help. This is one of the challenges that faced learners during Covid-19 pandemic, for example most of the roads in rural areas are in dilapidated state and do not favour learners with disabilities and this has forced most learners with disabilities to quit schools and stay home. This was evidenced by the number of children with disabilities who never reported to school after Covid-19.

The study findings demonstrate the commitment of the teachers towards the education of their learners. Although these teachers were excluded from the COVID-19 taskforce, they did not abdicate their responsibilities towards learners. They recognized the vulnerability of their learners and continued to reach out, as a means of keeping learning interested and grounded in education. However, they were constrained by the learning materials that were not evenly distributed as many some areas missed out getting learning materials in Kampala, this means that learners with disabilities were left out thus unable to access learning materials. This did not do enough to ensure that learners with disabilities get reading materials

The study indicated that poverty is one of the challenges that learners 'with disabilities in primary schools faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. This is in line with earlier findings of (Karasel Ayda et al., 2020) which states that in some African countries including Uganda ,parents of learners with disabilities were forced to confined their children at home due to the inability of learning institutions to cater for their education needs. In Uganda specifically, the ministry of education provided learners with learning materials as well as home schooling through the use of radio and television the main beneficiaries were mostly learners without disabilities however those with disabilities did not access them because of poverty.

Social relationships are vital for learners with disabilities to remain in school (Macmbinji & Pwani, 2018). The study suggests that in a world where most people suffer psychological trauma because of their shape or body size the only source of comfort is the use of social

relationships to get over the stress and anxiety. This is in line with the study findings which indicated that social support from families, volunteers and others was a vital coping strategy for learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic.

The study indicated that poverty is one of the challenges that learners 'with disabilities in primary schools faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. This is in line with earlier findings of ((Karasel Ayda et al., 2020) which states that in some African countries including Uganda ,parents of learners with disabilities were forced to confined their children at home due to the inability of learning institutions to cater for their education needs. In Uganda specifically, the ministry of education provided learners with learning materials as well as home schooling through the use of radio and television the main beneficiaries were mostly learners without disabilities however those with disabilities did not access them because of poverty.

Small budget allocated to address the issues of disabilities as revealed by head teacher was also the cause to problems and challenges facing learners with physical disabilities. This is in line with Johnstone (2011) who revealed that some physically disabled learners are totally independent, while others may need part- or full-time assistance. As the matter of fact, trained staff to assist and support learners with disabilities cannot be avoided

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion the study presented the experiences of primary school learners' disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. Findings were presented based on the objectives of the study which were; to identify key challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, to explore the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19 and to understand the coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic. In regard to the knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19, the study identified two critical issues that emerged where some learners with disabilities were able to get knowledge about these resources and how to use them through radio stations, televisions and others from their teachers. The study also indicated that some learners did not have knowledge about these learning resources since after going back home they did not have any communication with the school and other significant people. The findings indicated that there was a number of coping mechanisms used by primary school learners with disabilities

amidst COVID-19 pandemic. In order to cope up and these included schools providing learning materials, support from friends, support from family members, support from teachers, support, from neighbours, self-awareness and support volunteers / NGOs. The study found that primary school learners with disabilities amidst COVID-19 pandemic had both positive and negative experiences on available learning resources used during COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences based on a number of factors in the student's environment.0

The data collected shows that challenges that were faced by primary school learners with disabilities in meeting their learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic included poverty, death of family members, long distances from homes, community negative attitude, poor infrastructures /transport, impairments/disabilities and closure of transport means.

5.4 Recommendation

5.4.1 Recommendations for learners

Learners should develop more positive attitude toward education in order to overcome the challenge of negative attitude towards education.

Learners should develop a good working relationship with other learners because social support is the best source of support

Learners should also develop strong self-confidence and resilience in order to cope up with the issue of negative myths attached to them by the society.

5.4.2 Recommendations for teachers

Teachers should provide psychosocial support to learners with disabilities like through counseling and guidance in order to motivate learners

Learners should carry out continuous assessments in order to get all needed details about learners with disabilities since this information is always vital like contacts.

5.4.3 Recommendations for the schools

Schools should carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation

Schools should establish various offices in various part of the country which can ease access to learners in case any lockdown in put in place

5.4.4 Recommendations for the government/policy makers

The Ministry of education and sports should come with favourable means of distributing education materials which are inclusive and accommodative

The Government should plan for all categories of learners before coming up with the lockdown since some groups like people with disabilities are affected more by others. Study Strengths and

5.5 Limitations of the study

The main strength of this study is that it shows experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings have provided a number of strategies to stakeholders to improve experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials in case COVID-19 pandemic lock down is put in place.

The major limitation of the study is that it was entirely qualitative thus missing out quantitative research findings that would have been also useful.

The findings cannot be generalized to all learners with disabilities.

5.6 Suggested areas for further research

Further studies can explore inclusive measures that can support learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide For Primary Participants

EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACCESSING LEARNING MATERIALS DURING COVID-19 IN KAMPALA DISTRICT

(INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS)

Introduction

Good morning/Afternoon respondents. My name is Junju Kasimu, I am a third-year student from Makerere University pursuing a bachelors’ degree in Social Work and Social Administration. As part of my academic program, am conducting a research study on the experiences of primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 in Kampala

You have been selected on purpose to participate in this study and not because there is anything known about you but because you are believed to have more knowledge about this topic. This study is purely for my academic purposes, although other benefits may accrue from it. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You can stop the interview at any time. Your participation in the study is voluntary and you will not be affected in any way if you decide not to participate. If you agree to participate the interview will take less one and a half hour and also your time is highly appreciated and valued. Thank you

Day/ month/ year

Date: ____/____/____

To ALL respondents: All your answers or information provided will be kept strictly confidential. They will be put together with other people I am talking to in order to get an overall picture. It will be impossible to pick out what you say, so please feel free to speak to me honestly.

Designation.....

Interview date

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Tell me about yourself. (Name, sex, age and health)

A. (Probe for general life of a student, form of disability and others) Knowledge of primary school learners with disabilities on available learning resources used during COVID-19

Please tell me about your life during the COVID-19 lockdown. (PROBE: Where were you staying? With whom were you staying? How was life generally?)

As schools were closed, was there some efforts made to enable you continue to learn even though they were at home. Which of these efforts are you aware of?

How did you come to learn of these efforts?

How exactly where you able to continue learning during lockdown?

Who was providing resources to make sure you continue learning? (Please share with me all that you know about the learning initiatives and interventions that took place in the COVID-19 lockdown?)

What do you know about the learning/study materials that the ministry of education sent to the communities in that period?

B. Challenges faced by primary school learners with disabilities in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 in Kampala District

As a person with disabilities, please share with me your experience with learning from home during the COVID-19 lockdown? (Probe: were you able to learn from home? How exactly did this happen? If there was no learning, what could have stopped/constrained you from learning?)

What are various challenges at individual level that made your access to learning materials during COVID-19?

What are some of things that happened in your family that made it difficult for you to access learning materials? (Probe for location of family home i.e., far away from centre, family resources, family's access to materials)

What are limitations/challenges at the community level that made it difficult for you to access learning materials?

C. FACTORS THAT ENABLE LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR LEARNING NEEDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAMPALA DISTRICT

What factors at individual level enabled you to achieve learning need during COVID-19?

What factors at family level enabled you to achieve your learning needs during COVID-19 period?

Which factors at school level enabled to achieve your learning needs in primary schools during COVID-19?

D. COPING MEASURES OR MECHANISMS WERE USED BY PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES TO OVERCOME COVID-19 LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

How did you overcome the challenges that you faced (probe for solutions that were adopted to overcome the challenges identified above? What are some of the coping strategies used by learners with disabilities in primary schools during COVID-19 period? (**Probe** Did the strategies mentioned above work? How did they work?) What was your general experiences with COVID-19 learning?

What are some of the challenges that you faced in accessing learning materials during COVID-19 period?

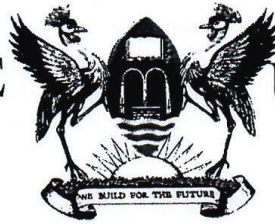
To what extent did you achieve your learning needs during the COVID-19 lock down?

What are some of the coping measures you used to overcome COVID-19 learning difficulties?

Thank you so much for your time

Appendix 2: Field Introduction Letter

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 7062,
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Cables: MAKUNIKA

Tel: 256-41-534114
E-mail: awsa@ss.mak.ac.ug

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Tuesday 05th July, 2022.

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.....
.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Undergraduate Research

Topic EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS WITH
DISABILITIES IN ACCESSING LEARNING MATERIALS
DURING COVID-19 IN KAMPALA.
.....
.....

This is to introduce Mr./Miss/Mrs. JUNSU KASIMU.....
Who would like to carry out research in your area as part of the requirements
of the Social Work and Social Administration course.

I am requesting you to give him/her the necessary assistance to enable
him/her accomplish his/her research.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Laban Musinguzi Kashaija,
Lecturer In-charge of
Research and Dissertation.

