

Attitudes toward Disability among Selected Kenyan Undergraduate Students

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Participants of the present study were a convenience sample of University of Nairobi students enrolled in Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Political Science, and Public Administration. The Attitudes Towards Persons Disabled Persons (ATDP) Form-O scale (Yuker, Block & Campbell, 1960) was used to study attitudes. Results suggest that Kenyan students possess somewhat less positive attitudes toward disability and little or no familiarity with disability law. Implications for education, policy and future research are provided.

Keywords: disability, attitudes, policy, Kenya

Many definitions of the word, attitude, have been presented in the literature, with no universally accepted definition (Findler, Vilchinsky, & Werner, 2007). Researchers seem to agree, however, that attitude is comprised of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Olson & Zanna, 1993; Rajecki, 1990). Attitude has been defined as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized thorough experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport, 1935, p. 810), "an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations" (Triandis, 1971, p. 2), and "any belief or opinion that includes a positive or a negative evaluation of some target (an object, person, or event) and that predisposes us to act in a certain way toward the target" (Plotnik, 1996, p. 520). The World Health Organization (WHO), through its International Classification of Functional Disability and Health (ICF) initiative, provides two conceptual models to disability (i.e., medical and social). According to the medical model, disability is thought to be caused by sickness, a traumatic event or other health related condition and that treatment by a health care practitioner is necessary in order to solve the problem. According to the social model, disability is a socially created problem through a non-accommodating physical environment such as attitudes and other attributes of the social environment. A political response is required in order to alleviate disability in this model (WHO, 2002). Societal attitudes can impact the ability of persons with disability to be fully accepted and integrated in the community (Antonak & Livneh, 2000). Given the potential for attitudes to influence behavior,

it is important to examine the attitudes of the Kenyan people toward individuals with disability.

Disability in Kenya is often seen as burdensome (Macha, Kieti, & Ngunyi, 2007; Mamboleo, 2009) and shameful; and persons with disability are seen as cursed (Macha, Kieti, & Ngunyi, 2007). Furthermore, disability is misunderstood, a situation that necessitates the use of cultural and religious beliefs in order to understand the concept (Kiima, Njenga, Okonji & Kigamwa, 2004). For example, in trying to understand the etiology of disability in Kenya, some people believe it has to do with witchcraft, curses from the gods/ancestors, and punishment from God (Kiima et al., 2004; Manyibe, Mamboleo, Mugoya, & Kampfe, 2009; Ogechi & Ruto, 2002).

Many developed countries have, in recent years, adopted legislation that promotes the rights of individuals with disability to full and equal participation in society. Such legislation includes the United States' Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 15), and the United Kingdom's Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 (Loo, 2002, 2004). Some countries in Africa, including Kenya, have also made strides in introducing disability-related legislation. In Kenya, the Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA) was enacted in 2003. The Act defines disability as "a physical, sensory, mental or other impairment, including any visual, hearing, learning or physical incapability, whether arising from natural or artificial causes, which is irreversible and long term and which impacts adversely on a person's capacity to participate in social, economic, cultural or political activities" (Kenya Law Reports, n.d.,

pg. 2). The Act has three broad aims: (a) to provide for the rights and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities; (b) to achieve equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities; and (c) to set up the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. Section 12 of the PDA promotes access to equal opportunities in employment as well as treatment in the workplace, regardless of disability. Section 15 prohibits discrimination against disability with regard to recruitment, pay, promotion and training among other organizational functions (Kenya Law Reports online). Furthermore, the Act obliges employers to allocate a percentage of jobs to be available to individuals with disability (Freedom House, 2006). Although all these issues are clearly articulated in the Act, it is not clear if there is conformity with these provisions (Freedom House, 2006). According to the International Labor Organization (2004), disability legislation in developing countries is not implemented once it is enacted. This may be the case in Kenya where, although Persons with Disabilities Act was enacted in 2003, it may remain on paper, only.

As present and future generations of leaders, students at the University of Nairobi are influencing/will influence the lives of persons with disability through implementation of policies such as the PDA that can enhance the lives of persons with disability. A literature review in this area, however, did not yield any study of current or future Kenyan leaders' general attitudes toward disability. According to findings from a recent study in Kenya, persons with disabilities perceived that the Kenyan population had negative attitudes toward disability (Macha et al., 2007). This finding comes at a time when the disability law is being implemented. This may imply that people in positions to implement disability law, such as present and future leaders, are likely to have negative attitudes toward disability and may not be aware of, or receptive to, the new law's provisions. It is, therefore, imperative to study attitudes toward disability and knowledge of the disability law among present and future leaders because they will be in a position to provide future direction in the implementation of the law.

The purpose of this study was to examine attitudes toward disability among students enrolled at University of Nairobi and to identify the degree to which they had self-reported knowledge of Kenyan Disability law. This study was designed to answer the following two research questions, "What are the general attitudes toward disability among undergraduate students at the University of Nairobi?" and "to what degree are undergraduate students at the University of Nairobi familiar with the disability law?"

Method

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design. This is a type of research in which both the entire population or its subset is selected; and from these individuals, data are collected to help answer research questions of interest (Olsen & St. George, 2004). This manuscript describes one aspect of the study. Other findings will be reported in companion manuscripts that are currently being developed (Mamboleo, 2010; Mamboleo & Kampfe, 2010; Mamboleo, Kampfe, & Ocharo, 2010).

Participants

Participants were drawn from a convenience sample (Polit & Hungler, 1999) of undergraduate students who satisfied the following criteria: they were based at the University of Nairobi's Main Campus and, at the time of study, were majoring in one of the following undergraduate areas: Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Political Science, and Public Administration. These majors were chosen as criteria because the majority of the graduates were expected to formulate and/or implement, or were already formulating and/or implementing, policy both in the public and private sectors in Kenya. There were 36,991 students enrolled at the University of Nairobi in the 2006/2007 academic year (University of Nairobi, 2008). Approximately 700 undergraduate students were enrolled in the selected majors. Based on the statistical analysis used in this and other companion studies (Mamboleo, 2010; Mamboleo & Kampfe, 2010; Mamboleo et al., 2010), approximately 200 students were targeted for recruitment for the study. However, a total of 309 students who met the recruitment criteria completed the survey. This was 44% of the total population. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 45 years ($M = 24.09$, $SD = 4.44$). The majority (61.8%) of the participants indicated they were female. Eighty-three percent (82.9%) reported that they were single, with 17.1% indicating they were married. Participants represented five educational majors and were distributed in the following order: Sociology (34.4%), Psychology (24.9%), Political Science (17.6%), Social Work (12.2%), and Public Administration (4.6%). A small number of participants (6.3%) reported majoring in more than one area of focus. Somewhat more than half (53.7%) were in the second year of study (sophomores), while 46.3% reported they were in the third year of study (juniors). Approximately half (51.7%) were part-time while the rest (48.3%) were full-time students. The majority of the participants (60.4%) indicated that they grew up in rural areas, whereas 39.6% said they grew up in urban areas. Most of the participants (83.8%) said they currently resided in urban areas while 16.2% indicated they resided in rural areas.

Approximately half of the participants (52.6%) indicated they were unemployed, while 22.7% worked for

non-government organizations (NGOs), 11.7% worked for the government, 8.9% worked for businesses organizations, and 4.1% worked at other unspecified places of employment. The unit of measure of income was the Kenya Shilling (Ksh.). The exchange rate at the time of the study was (Kshs.) 78 equivalent to 1US Dollar (US\$). The incomes were based on monthly wages and salaries and were converted to the US\$ as described. The majority of the participants (65.3%) indicated that they did not have income while 2.4% earned under US\$ 40; 5.2% earned US\$41 – 130; 4.1% earned US\$ 131-260; 7.6% earned US\$261-390; 6.5% earned US\$ 391-500; and 8.9% earned over US\$ 500.

Participants' responses to self-perceived knowledge of disability showed that 3.7% had no knowledge of disability, 26.3% had little knowledge, 60% had some knowledge, and 10% had great knowledge. Regarding previous contact with a person with a disability, 10.2% of the participants indicated they did not have previous contact with disability. The majority of the participants (54.0%) indicated they had a casual contact with disability. Seventeen percent (17%) reported having a friend or work-mate with a disability, and 18.8% indicated they had a family member with a disability.

Procedure

Data were collected by a research assistant under the supervision of an assistant supervisor in accordance with requirements by the Government of Kenya and the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The research assistant was a master's student at the University of Nairobi, Kenya and the assistant supervisor was a lecturer at the same institution. Both received written instructions regarding collection of data and both completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Because the study took place in a college setting, lecturers teaching undergraduate courses in the majors that fit the criteria for this study were approached with a request to allow their students to participate in a research survey. During the following week, the research assistant visited each of the selected classrooms to distribute the research packets. Prior to the start of data collection, the research assistant read the Introduction to the Study to the participants. He explained the purpose of the study and invited the participants to read the Subject Disclosure Form that was part of the research packet. He informed them of the measures that would be taken to assure confidentiality. Participants were asked to complete the survey and place it in a blank envelope that was collected immediately after they completed the survey. They also were informed that if they did not wish to complete the survey, they could simply place the blank forms in the envelope and hand it in to the research assistant. Data were collected on a

first-come, first-served basis until the desired sample was reached. The packets were mailed to the principle investigator in the United States in a sealed box via the Express Shipping Service from the assistant supervisor's office at the University of Nairobi.

Data Collection Instruments

As indicated earlier, this manuscript is a companion to other data-based manuscripts focusing on various aspects of Kenyan attitudes and knowledge about disability. A questionnaire was used to generate quantitative data for a variety of research questions. For the purposes of this specific study, the survey instrument (questionnaire) included: (a) a researcher-designed demographic data sheet, (b) a question regarding self-reported knowledge of disability law in Kenya and (c) the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons scale (ATDP), Form-O. The questionnaire was administered via paper and pencil. The research designed data sheet included questions regarding basic information such as gender, age, marital status, educational focus, level of enrollment, type of enrollment, employment affiliation, socio-economic status, area of residence, place where one grew up, contact with a person with a disability, and self-perceived knowledge of disability. One item focused on knowledge of disability law in Kenya. This item asked, "How familiar are you with laws regarding disability?" The possible responses were based on a 6-point scale (1 = *not familiar at all*, 2 = *a little familiar* 3 = *moderately familiar*, 4 = *familiar*, 5 = *very familiar*, and 6 = *very much familiar*).

The ATDP scale (Yuker et al., 1960) was developed to measure general attitudes toward persons with disability. Form-O is the most preferred version of the ATDP scale (White, Jackson, & Gordon, 2006). This instrument is a 6-point Likert-type scale consisting of 20 items (Tervo, Palmer, & Redinius, 2004). The possible responses to each item of the scales range from +3 (*I agree very much*) to -3 (*I disagree very much*) (Antonac & Livneh, 1988). Scoring began with changing the sign of some items of the scale (i.e., 2, 5, 6, 11, and 12). This was necessary in order to eliminate the negative signs. Once this was done, the total sum of all the items was computed and the sign of the sum reversed (from negative to positive and vice versa). Total possible scores can range from -60 to +60. In order to eliminate the negative values, a constant of 60 was added to the scores and the resultant scores ranged from 0 to 120. High scores reflect of positive and more accepting attitudes while low scores reflect a negative rejecting attitude (Antonac & Livneh; Yuker & Block, 1986). Median reliabilities for Form-O have been found to be high (5 week test-retest = .83, 4 to 16 month test-retest = .68, split-half = .80, alpha = .76). Furthermore, the scale has been found to have high

content, predictive, concurrent, and construct validities (Yuker & Block, 1986).

Prior to administration of the structured questionnaire, a panel of experts with knowledge of Kenya and with similar characteristics as students at the University of Nairobi reviewed the instrument for language appropriateness to provide an impression of the instruments' utility in Kenya. These experts were doctoral students in rehabilitation counseling and former students of the University of Nairobi. Although the instrument was written in English, it was thought to be appropriate for the purpose of the study because English is the language of instruction in Kenya. These experts agreed therefore, that the instrument was written in a language comprehensible to students in Kenya. They, however recommended that Item #20 "Disabled people are often grouchy" of the ATDP, Form-O be revised because they thought the word "grouchy" could not be easily understood by the study population. The Item was revised to read "Disabled people are often complaining."

Results

Initially, data processing was undertaken to edit, code, and tabulate data in preparation for statistical analysis. All statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS) Windows Version 17. Frequency distributions and percentages were computed for the demographic variables and for knowledge of disability law, and means and standard deviations were calculated for ATDP scores. Internal consistency of the ATDP scales for the current study was checked by using the Cronbach's Alpha statistic. A Cronbach's Alpha of .68 was obtained. A set of items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 are typically considered to indicate a valid instrument (De Vaus, 2002). Because the obtained alpha was nearly .70, it was considered acceptable for this study. The ATDP scores for the present study ranged between 24 and 106 with a mean of 64.29 ($SD = 15.19$). Regarding self-reported knowledge of disability law in Kenya, participants reported as follows: 116 (39.0%) not familiar at all, 117 (39.4%) a little familiar, 36 (12.1%) moderately familiar, 24 (8.1%) familiar, 3 (1.0%), very familiar, and 1 (0.4%) very much familiar.

Discussion

The overall mean ATDP scores for participants in this study was 64.29, which is slightly higher than a mid or neutral score of the ATDP that ranges from 0 to 120. The range of the scores for this group was between 24 and 106. Yuker and Block (1986) identified 79.7 as the mean for their normative data from 38 studies. The finding that the current participants' mean score was approximately 16 points lower than the mean norm score (Yuker & Block) may be interpreted to mean

that participants in this study had less positive attitudes toward disability than those participants from countries other than Kenya. This finding corresponds with other reports regarding the concept of disability in Kenya. As indicated earlier, disability is often seen as burdensome and shameful, and people with disability are viewed as useless, good for nothing, and cursed (Macha et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is a perception that disability is caused by witchcraft, curses from the gods/ancestors, and punishment from God (Kiima et al., 2004; Ogechi & Ruto, 2002). However it is important to note that approximately two thirds of the participants either had no contact or casual contact with disability. This low level of contact may explain the somewhat low overall attitudes in the sample. Although mixed findings have been reported, previous studies have found that individuals with less contact with people who have disabilities tend to have less positive attitudes toward this population (Budish, 2004; Choi & Lam, 2001; Thomas, Palmer, Coker-Juneau, & Williams, 2003).

Because attitudes have been found to be associated with discrimination and biases toward persons with disability (Millington, Strohmer, Reid, & Spengler, 1996), findings of the current study may confirm the assertion that persons with disability tend to be treated differently than non-disabled people in Kenya (Government of Kenya, 2008; Macha et al., 2007). These findings may suggest that present and future leaders of Kenya have biases in hiring person with disability. Some participants scored exceptionally low on the scale, a situation that may have influenced the mean score. However, the finding that there were some who received high scores on the scale (i.e., the highest score was 106) may also be an indication that although the overall score was low, there are current or future leaders in Kenya with high regard to persons with disability.

Findings that the majority of the participants (78.4%) indicated that they had little or no familiarity with disability law is an indication that even though the Kenya's Persons with Disabilities Act was enacted in 2003, the undergraduate students of the University of Nairobi are not familiar with its existence. Hernandez & Balcazar (2004) found a significantly positive relationship between participants' assessed knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and their attitudes toward disability rights. They concluded that this is an indication that people with more knowledge of disability law may have more favorable attitudes toward persons with disability. These findings that the University of Nairobi students possessed little knowledge of disability law may therefore be related with finding that these students possessed less favorable attitudes toward persons with disability than the norms of the ATDP.

The findings from the present study may affirm the notion that disability law in Kenya has not been adopted (International Labor Organization, 2004). That is, the students in this study who are considered to be current and future leaders typically were not aware of the law. If this is the case, these findings may also confirm the assertion that persons with disability in Kenya may be isolated from mainstream society (Macha et al., 2007).

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of the current study have implications for rehabilitation counseling practice. For example, research has shown a positive relationship between training and attitudes toward disability (Hunt & Hunt, 2004; Martin, Rowell, Reid, Marks, & Reddihough, 2005). Hunt and Hunt studied the impact of educational experience on attitudes toward persons with disability among students majoring in business studies using ATDP scale. They found that students, who took part in a presentation about persons with disabilities, possessed significantly higher attitudes toward disability compared to those students who did not take part in the intervention. In another study, watching a 20-minute video tape regarding cerebral palsy improved participants' knowledge of the disability as well as promoted positive attitudes toward people with cerebral palsy (Martin et al., 2005). The finding that overall, students at the University of Nairobi possess less positive attitudes toward disability than the normative data (Yuker & Block, 1986) could mean some of these students may benefit from strategies that improve their general attitudes. These strategies may include video tapes regarding a variety of disabilities similar to the one developed by Martin et al.; an educational intervention similar to the one described by Hunt; student research on disability, from the perspective of their field of study, on topics such as reasonable accommodation in the workplace or disability in the workplace (Loo, 2002); role plays about disability; group discussions on disability issues (Loo, 2004); and self-assessment exercises using some disability scales to encourage the students to evaluate their own attitudes (Hutchinson & Allen, 1997). Students may also learn more about disability and disability-related issues by visiting local organizations that serve persons with disability and interacting with guest speakers with disability as well individuals from organizations that work with persons with disability. The mentioned strategies may mitigate negative attitudes and support more positive attitudes among University of Nairobi students.

In a study of assessed knowledge of disability law and attitudes toward disability rights, Hernandez & Balcazar (2004) found a significantly positive relationship between participants' knowledge of the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and their attitudes toward disability. They concluded that this is an indication that people with more knowledge of disability law may have more favorable attitudes toward persons with disability. Because of the finding that many students of the University of Nairobi possess little of no knowledge of disability law, it may be beneficial to familiarize these students with relevant disability legislation such as the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 (Mamboleo, 2009). Furthermore, institutional barriers such as policies, practices, and procedures adopted by entities such as employers, businesses, and public agencies contribute to the isolation of persons with disability from society (Silverstein, 2000). As present and possible future employers, the students may benefit from the knowledge of the PDA, as it relates to important organizational functions. For example, knowledge of Section 12 of the PDA could help the students understand how they could promote access to equal opportunities in employment as well as how to treat disabled employees at the workplace. Knowledge of Section 15 could help them to understand prohibitions of discrimination against disability in relation to recruitment, pay, promotion and training, among other organizational functions.

Furthermore, the finding that many Kenya students are not aware of the Persons with Disabilities Act and its provisions may be an indication that the law is not being implemented or that its implementation has not been promoted. The government of Kenya, with the help of other stakeholders, could ensure full implementation of the PDA. As centers for excellence, universities may need to incorporate disability issues and laws into their programs (Mamboleo, 2009). A good place to start would be to infuse disability studies or rehabilitation concepts in course syllabi in major fields of study such as Political Science. The other step would be to establish disability programs of study that would provide students with opportunities to study disability issues in order to work with this population. Kenyan university students may also benefit from exchange programs with universities in countries where disability rights and disability law have taken root, such the United States and Canada (Mamboleo). These international exchange programs may enable students to learn from their counterparts in these countries as well as enable the students to participate in disability issues through experiential learning.

Limitations of the Study

As it may be expected, the present study has several limitations. First, the study relied heavily on literature from the United States. This may be an impediment because most of the information and perspectives were likely to be slanted toward this area (i.e., United States). Perhaps this assumption might be mitigated by the fact that disability rights in Kenya

had not developed at the pace of that in the US and that there was limited disability literature from Kenya. Second, direct response methods are susceptible to numerous threats to validity (Antonak & Livneh, 2000; Gething, 1994). For example, Cannon and Szuhay (1986) found the ATPD to be prone to faking. Individuals are likely to provide socially desirable answers when completing attitudes toward disability scales (Stone & Colella, 1996; Yunker & Block, 1986). In order to mitigate this problem, a social desirability scale should have been included for the present study. Third, the attitudes scale used in this study was developed in North America and was normed based on this geographical region. Fourth, because data were collected from a sample of convenience, it was not possible to generalize the results. The study was limited to one institution of learning; therefore care must be taken in assuming results will be valid in all contexts. The study was a snapshot of attitudes and perceptions at a moment in time and may not necessarily predict future opinions or behaviors. Further, because this study utilized a convenience sample rather than a random selection of students, there may be an element of 'expected' answers known as the Hawthorne Effect (Polit & Hungler, 1999), which may skew the results. Also, a question regarding nationality of the participants was missing. The researchers made an assumption that all student participants in this study were Kenyans, which might have not been the case.

Further Research

Future research is recommended in the following areas. First, because Kenyan students tended to possess lower scores of the general attitudes toward disability than the normative data (Yunker & Block, 1986), further study of these data will be undertaken to identify the combination of reasons why this is so. Second, because this study took place in a single university in Kenya, findings may not be generalized for the whole country. Further research on attitudes toward disability is, therefore, recommended in other institutions of learning and places of employment. Furthermore, an examination of a wider sample of the general population would be instructive. Third, if deemed important by the government, some qualitative study (e.g., focus groups) conducted by trained local residents to study general attitudes toward disability among persons with disability is suggested. Fourth, attitudes toward disability among students in other majors of study in other constituent campuses of the University of Nairobi should be studied because they, too, comprise a major group of present and future leaders of Kenya.

In conclusion, the government of Kenya has shown its commitment to provision of opportunity for persons with disability through the enactment of the PDA. This study revealed that select Kenyan students, as a group, possess less positive general attitudes toward disability than people from other countries. Research

has indicated that the greatest barrier to rehabilitation of persons with disability is negative attitudes prevalent in society. It is, therefore, important to find effective ways to promote more positive attitudes in order to ensure integration of persons with disabilities into the Kenyan society.

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