

# Ways of Assisting Married Women Who are Adventitiously Blinded in Machakos District, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to investigate possible ways of assisting married women who are adventitiously blinded in Machakos District, Kenya. Being a global issue, the socio-economic predicaments have not been identified and sufficiently addressed by researchers in Africa and specifically in Kenya. This is contrary to the government's effort to provide free rehabilitation for persons with visual impairment. Therefore, their integration into the societal fabric is wanting. The study sampled married women who are adventitiously blinded in Machakos district and how their becoming blinded affected them. The researcher first identified and sampled married women who were adventitiously blinded in Machakos District employing purposive sampling and snowball techniques. Purposive sampling was used in Machakos Rehabilitation Institute because it was reliable while snowball technique was used to identify married women who are adventitiously blinded who were not residing in the Rehabilitation Institute. Using both sampling techniques, 20 cases of adventitiously blinded married women were purposively selected to participate in the study from a target population of 50 married women who are adventitiously blinded. Data were collected through face-to-face structured interview schedules for the rehabilitees, institute personnels that are blinded and married women who are adventitiously blinded outside the institute. The results from the semi-structured interviews were manually coded and narrated. The structured interview method was preferred because the participants could not read printed materials. Data was analyzed thematically according to the objectives of the study. All the coded data under major themes of topics were assembled. The study concluded that married women who are adventitiously blinded have historically been neglected. Issues of disability must be prioritized by all stakeholders. Married women who are adventitiously blinded needs spousal companionship and lack of access to educational information concerning them should be addressed.*

**Keywords:** ways, adventitiously blinded, married women, Machakos

## 1. Introduction

Challenges encountered by married women who are adventitiously blinded are experienced all over the world. Although married men and women who are adventitiously blinded are subject to discrimination because of their disabilities, married women who are adventitiously blinded are at a further disadvantage because of the combined discrimination. This is the global picture. The discrimination is mainly described in form of gender and disability. Such groups need support and assistance while undertaking the activities of daily living (ADL) and field work activities (Shepherd, 2001). The universal Declaration of Human Rights provided that no one should be subjected to torture or to cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, (Mbote 2000-1).

The visual system can be considered as the dominant sensory modality in humans. This is supported by Shepherd (2001) who postulates the same ideology. Other studies shows that, there are also visual biases in the languages used by humans to describe the world (Shepherd, 2001). Tuttle & Tuttle (1996), suggest that notions of objecthood have traditionally been framed to visuocentric terminology.

Their domestic role of married women may be reduced as they try to cope with the new lifestyle due to sight loss (<http://www.wvda.org>). They experience challenges in their marriages but mostly affected are the married women who are adventitiously blinded. Some of the affected women experience hardships in adjustments and socialization. Because they do not see, they may be sexually discriminated against. This is true in African countries too.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory implies that a conducive environment must be created for work to be done. If the married women who are adventitiously blinded are not provided with enabling conditions to face life, they will suffer increased frustration, lower performance (both at home and workplace) and job dissatisfaction.

Blindness is not an issue one expects in life. However, if it strikes, the married woman affected is bound to face many more challenges compared to married men who are adventitiously blinded. We examine the lives of married women who are adventitiously blinded and effects this double discrimination. The specific purpose of this study was to suggest ways of assisting married women who are adventitiously blinded in Machakos District, Kenya.

The study was aimed at assisting the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development in their programme development for married women who are adventitiously blinded. It also aimed at creating awareness within the Kenyan community of the plight of persons with disabilities and especially married women who are adventitiously blinded.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Descriptive Survey Design to identify social challenges encountered by adventitiously blinded married women in Machakos District. This design is suitable to assess attitudes and opinions about events, individuals or procedures (Gay, 1992). It also involves

collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study. The study was undertaken in Machakos District, Eastern Province of Kenya due to presence of the Machakos Rehabilitation Institute for persons who are Visually Impaired within the district.

## 2.2 Target Population

The study targeted 50 married women who are adventitiously blinded in Machakos District.

## 2.3 Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive sampling to sample the married women who are adventitiously blinded from Machakos Rehabilitation Institute. The Snowball sampling technique was used to sample out the adventitiously blinded married women who were not in the Rehabilitation Institute. This method facilitated easier identification of women in similar circumstances (Orodho, 2005).

## 2.4 Sample Size

The study sample comprised 20 women who are adventitiously blinded. Ten were purposively sampled from the centre. Ten were obtained from outside the centre.

## 2.5 Data Collection tools and Procedures

Semi-structured interview schedule formed the research instrument. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the married women who are adventitiously blinded.

## 2.6 Data analysis

The collected data were categorized in relation to the objectives of the study. Key quotations were highlighted. All the coded materials under the major themes of topic were put together for summarization reports and conclusions were drawn. The data were then interpreted and generalization formulated (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999).

## 3. Results and Discussion

From the findings, majority 8(66.67%) of the respondents were not aware of any role played by the government in sensitizing the public on the plight of challenged persons in the community while 4(33.33%) were aware. The findings established that 8(66.67%) of the respondents had a challenge of accessing government sensitization towards them. This is supported by Israel (1985), was observed that inaccessibility was brought about by materials which were available in print, not in Braille or on tape.

The study findings established that the role of the government in sensitizing the public on the plight of challenged persons at the community level were minimal. This indicated that the government did not plan, implement, or evaluate its initiatives properly through the Community Based Rehabilitation (Okech, 2003).

### 3.1 Rehabilitation of Married Women who are Adventitiously Blinded

The study established that rehabilitation is one of the ways that was meant to assist married women who adventitiously blinded. It emerged from the study that 9(75%) of the respondents were being rehabilitated but 3(25%) were not but had already been referred to the Machakos Rehabilitation Institute by PCEA Kikuyu Mission Hospital. Further, 9(75%) of married women who are adventitiously blinded included in the study were going through rehabilitation while 3(25%) were awaiting rehabilitation.

### 3.2 Establishment of Other Rehabilitation Institutes

The study findings revealed that 6(50%) of the respondents agreed and supported their response by identifying Thika and Nairobi as places where other rehabilitation centres were to be established. 6(50%) of the respondents said they were not aware. The findings were in agreement with Okech (2003) on establishing Community Based Rehabilitation centres to assist the newly blinded individuals.

### 3.3 The Role of Church in Assisting the Married Women who are Adventitiously Blinded

The study established that 1(8.33%) respondent was supported by the church and had this to say;

*The Catholic Church that I attended was of so much help to me that they took care of my children during the time I went for rehabilitation. They gave me money for upkeep and medication throughout the rehabilitation period. (Married woman who is adventitiously blinded, No.1, interview, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010).*

The study also established that 11(91.66%) of the respondents were not assisted by their churches in any way. From the interviews, the findings indicate that 5(41.67%) respondents said there were non-governmental organizations but could not trace them. On the other hand, 7(58.33%) respondents said they were not aware of any non-governmental organizations that could assist the married women who were adventitiously blinded.

One respondent had this to say;

*People will always tell you to look for assistance from NGOs but those who have the knowledge about them are not willing to share about them (Married woman who is adventitiously blinded, No.3, interview, 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2010).*

The study also revealed that there was minimal contribution by the church.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings reviewed that none of the participants had been assisted by the non-governmental organizations. The study findings revealed a constraint of non-governmental organizations not supplementing government development at the community level. Therefore, the role of the government, religious organization and the non-governmental organization in assisting the married women

who are adventitiously blinded in the process of their rehabilitation was minimal.

The government, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations should play an effective role of being stakeholders in establishing methods of assisting married women who are adventitiously blinded to avoid marginalization, isolations and discrimination.

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