

PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY IN RAGAMA MOH AREA

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The objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of disability in the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area, Ragama. A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted which included three Public Health Midwife areas that were selected randomly out of 14 in the MOH area. The study units consisted of all households in the three areas selected. The respondent was the head of the household. A screening questionnaire identified those with disabilities among all household members. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to gather relevant disability related information. The total study population was 10683 out of which 2533 were children below 15 years of age. Overall prevalence of all types of disabilities (n = 750) was 7% (95% CI; 6.5%-7.5%). Prevalence among adults and children were 8% (95% CI; 5.0%-6.0%) and 3.8% (95% CI; 3.1% - 4.6%) respectively. A significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher proportion of females (8.5%) were affected than males (5.6%). A total of 636 (85%) had one disabling condition, 95 (12.7%) two and 19 (2.5%) more than two conditions. The overall prevalence of individual disabilities was as follows: visual impairment 4.4% (n = 473), hearing impairment 0.8% (n=89), speech impairment 0.6% (n=67), locomotor disabilities 1.4% (n=149), fits 0.5% (n=55) and abnormal behavior 0.6% (n=59). Four percent (n=30) among disabled were unable to perform all five activities of daily living. The proportions of disabled by the types of disability who were able to perform all five activities of daily living were: overall 82% (n=617), visually impaired 86% (n=408), locomotor disabilities 63% (n=94) and behavioural problems 70% (n=41). This study recommends the establishment of special services towards meeting the needs of these differently-abled people.

Keywords: Disability, prevalence, visual impairment, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities