

Challenges Encountered by Women and Girls with Disabilities in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The most vulnerable groups include women, children, and those with disabilities. They had to deal with differences in income. Women and girls with disabilities must be evaluated in this research study to establish if they have suffered financial disparity and gender inequality, notably during pandemic times, which is goal #5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study aimed to determine the challenges women and girls with disabilities encountered in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte during the covid-19 pandemic. Women and girls with disabilities have been overlooked by feminist and disability rights activists, putting them at a disadvantage. W&GWDs are more likely to encounter “double discrimination,” which includes violence, abuse, and marginalization based on gender. A mixed method was used, a combination of quantitative and qualitative. In quantitative, the survey questionnaire used the five-point Likert Scale. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the 127 respondents. Findings suggest that women and girls with disabilities are frequently overlooked at the national and sectoral levels, as well as in overall policy directions, due to ineffective related laws and regulations, sociocultural impediments, and a lack of public awareness, which should be part of the plans during the covid-19 pandemic. In an atmosphere of the ongoing pandemic, women survivors of covid-19 are known to have significantly more significant problems in accessing care. In conclusion, the government should launch an advocacy program to empower women and girls with disabilities during times of crisis.

Keywords: Awareness literacy, empowerment, health education, vulnerability

Introduction

Most social inequities have been made worse by the coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing lockdown, especially those that affect vulnerable groups like the disabled, particularly young girls. Following recent media coverage, several government organizations, non-profits, and foundations have joined forces to guarantee that girls and women in rural areas can access period care products (Nagesh & Padhee, 2020). Even though women and girls with disabilities are subject to all human rights and development norms and standards, they have not enjoyed equal access to these rights. Women, Additionally, women and girls with disabilities have been marginalized by activists for women's and disability rights, which makes them more vulnerable. It is more common for women and girls with disabilities (W&GWD) to experience "double discrimination," which comprises gender-based exclusion and physical and verbal abuse. Because of this, women with disabilities frequently experience more setbacks than men with disabilities or women without disabilities (Addressing gender equality in the context of disability, Inputs from U.N. Women). As a result of U.N. Women's input on the experiences of women and girls with disabilities (W&GWD), this study is also grounded in the Magna Carta of women (R.A. 9710). Based on these U.N. inputs regarding Women and Girls with Disability, the research team would also be interested in coming up with a study in the local scenario that happened in the Philippines, from these U.N. inputs regarding Women and Girls with Disability. The research team would also be interested in coming up with the study in the local scene in the Philippines, curious to come up with the study in the local scenario that happened in the Philippines, specifically in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte. In light of this, this study investigates the demography of disabled women and girls in the barangays of Iligan City and Lanao del Norte.

The study's conclusions will be utilized to create an action plan for disabled women and girls who want to participate in the government's PWD program. This study examined the characteristics of women and girls with disabilities (W&GWD) in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte and their challenges. Women with disabilities face more difficulties finding appropriate housing, healthcare, education, vocational training, and employment in the public and private sectors. They are also more likely to be institutionalized (Kothari, 2005). They also have difficulty accessing training and retraining, credit, and other productive resources and are rarely involved in making economic decisions (Stephenson, 2016). They also experience prejudice in hiring, promotion rates, and pay for equal

effort. To achieve widely recognized development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals, gender equality, and women's empowerment are essential. Due to double prejudice, disabled women and girls are more likely to experience sexual assault, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation. According to a UNDP study, only 1% of women worldwide have impairments. (United Nations Enable “Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities”).

Women typically face social, cultural, and economic barriers that make participation in communal life more difficult. There is little information about disabled women's access to maternal health services in low-income countries, and few studies consult disabled women directly to learn about their experiences with care and the difficulties they encounter in obtaining skilled maternal health services. Many studies have examined the factors that affect disabled people's access to and use of healthcare services in general (Ganle et al. 2016). In rehabilitation and disability studies, the complex relationship between gender and disability has recently started to be explored. For women with impairments, having both a disability and being feminine has a double effect. Problems with psychosocial health are more prevalent in women than in men. Due to their disability, individuals may be more susceptible to gender disparities than other people. For instance, women with disabilities had higher rates of stress and depression than women in general (Nosek & Hughes, 2003). Discrimination against women and girls with disabilities has many forms. Due to their gender and disability status, they frequently experience “double prejudice.” Lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people are also more likely to be disabled women and girls than other women and girls (Kiefel, 2019).

The unemployment rates for women with disabilities are the highest. According to the U.N., 75% of women with disabilities are unemployed, and those who work make less money than their male coworkers and female peers without disabilities. There are gender variations in education as well. By UNESCO, women and girls with disabilities are believed to have a literacy rate of only 1%, even though the overall literacy rate for individuals with impairments is 3% (Kiefel, 2019).

Unfortunately, most societal inequalities have been made worse by the coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing lockdown, especially those that affect vulnerable groups like the disabled, particularly young girls, and those that affect communities of color.

Methodology

Research Design

This research study employed a descriptive method using a quantitative approach. A non-probability, sample, a purposive sample, had been chosen with the study's objective and demographics in mind. Therefore, purposive sampling was utilized to select the 127 respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

In the process of gathering the data, the research team sent letters to the Mayors of Iligan City and Lanao del Norte as part of the admission protocol. After the approval of the letters, the research team sent letters to the barangay chairpersons together with the approved letters from the Mayors. After the approval of the barangay chairpersons, the research team discussed the consent form with the participants before distributing the survey questionnaires.

Profile of the women and girls with disabilities (W&WGD):

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 and below	15	11.8	11.8	11.8
	19-23	15	11.8	11.8	23.6
	24-28	10	7.9	7.9	31.5
	29-33	18	14.2	14.2	45.7
	34-38	15	11.8	11.8	57.5
	39-43	8	6.3	6.3	63.8
	44-48	15	11.8	11.8	75.6
	49 and above	31	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The age of the disabled women and girls in a few barangays in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte is displayed in the table and graph above. The findings indicate that 24.4 percent, or the bulk of the women and girls with disabilities who took part in the poll, were above the age of 49.

Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Female	112	88.2	88.2	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ sex is depicted in the graph above. The table demonstrates that 112 or 88.2 percent of the respondents were women, while 15 or 11.8 percent were men. Few men responded as an adequate representation of the women and girls with disabilities who struggle with handwriting.

Monthly Family Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5,000 and below	108	85.0	85.0	85.0
	6,000-10,000	14	11.0	11.0	96.1
	11,000-15,000	1	.8	.8	96.9
	16,000-20,000	1	.8	.8	97.6
	26,000-30,000	1	.8	.8	98.4
	31,000-35,000	1	.8	.8	99.2
	36,000-40,000	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ monthly earnings are displayed in the table above. The results show that, on average, most respondents made Php5,000 or less per month. This indicates that the respondents were below the poverty line, so a livelihood support initiative must address the poverty issue. Furthermore, they want government assistance to boost their livelihood initiatives because disabled women and girls they are disabled women and girls who also struggle with poverty.

Educational attainment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary	15	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Elementary	34	26.8	26.8	38.6
	Secondary	41	32.3	32.3	70.9
	College level	27	21.3	21.3	92.1
	Post graduate level	2	1.6	1.6	93.7
	others	8	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents, who are women and girls with disabilities, are listed in the table above according to their level of schooling. The findings indicate that the vast majority of respondents had completed secondary school. This suggests that the respondents may find it challenging to achieve the highest level of schooling due to their disability. To complete their educational enhancement program, they also need some educational training.

Results and Discussion

Types of Impairments

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
physical	95	74.8	74.8	74.8
psychosocial	16	12.6	12.6	87.4
intellectual	14	11.0	11.0	98.4
sensory condition	1	.8	.8	99.2
others	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The table above lists the different impairments the respondents which prevent them from performing their duties and jobs. The findings indicate that practically all of the respondents had physical impairments.

This suggests that physical issues are especially prevalent among women and girls. Therefore, people experience physical effects from carrying out their duties and obligations.

**Experienced different levels of vulnerability and marginalization:
Because of a range of complex factors related to the composition of society**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
	somewhat disagree	5	3.9	3.9	5.5
	neutral	74	58.3	58.3	63.8
	somewhat agree	37	29.1	29.1	92.9
	strongly agree	9	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The table above displays the reasons for and degrees of vulnerability and marginalization that the respondents have gone through due to various intricate elements related to the makeup of society. The findings indicate that, in terms of women and girls with disabilities, most respondents need to learn more about the variety of complicated elements relating to society’s social makeup.

Prevailing culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	5	3.9	3.9	3.9
	somewhat disagree	6	4.7	4.7	8.7
	neutral	75	59.1	59.1	67.7
	somewhat agree	24	18.9	18.9	86.6
	strongly agree	17	13.4	13.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ responses regarding their level of vulnerability and marginalization as a result of the dominant culture are displayed in the table in the previous page. The findings indicate that “neutral” received the most votes among the respondents. This suggests that their theory regarding the existing culture as the root of vulnerability and marginalization among women and girls with disabilities needs to be thoroughly explained. Furthermore, this indicates that the respondents are uncertain about the dominant culture. This dominant culture refers to the prevailing cultural values of the participants. According to Quisumbing (2002), one should not undervalue the importance of education for fostering cross-cultural and interethnic understanding, which goes beyond simply learning more about other people and their cultures’ geography, histories, economies, and value systems to also understanding and appreciating those cultures’ patterns, traditions, customs, values, and beliefs.

Structure of service delivery and discrimination on the basis of disability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	4	3.1	3.1	3.1
	somewhat disagree	5	3.9	3.9	7.1
	neutral	65	51.2	51.2	58.3
	somewhat agree	36	28.3	28.3	86.6
	strongly agree	17	13.4	13.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The table above displays the levels of vulnerability and marginalization in terms of the delivery of services and disability-based discrimination. The findings show that “neutral” is the most common response given by respondents. This suggests that the respondents require more information regarding the delivery of services and disability-based discrimination.

Violence and gender

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
7	5.5	5.5	5.5
12	9.4	9.4	15.0
66	52.0	52.0	66.9
34	26.8	26.8	93.7
8	6.3	6.3	100.0
127	100.0	100.0	

The vulnerability and marginalization caused by violence and gender are depicted in the table above. Results indicate that “neutral” was the respondents’ most often selected response. This suggests that a gender and violence awareness component is necessary for the informational campaign for women and girls with disabilities. Their answers are unclear due to their ignorance of gender-related violence. To be safe in their response choice, they just chose “neutral.”

Women and girls with disabilities encounter persisting challenges due to discrimination, marginalization, social exclusion, stigmatization and routine failure to ensure their social inclusion and effective participation in public life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	2.4	2.4
	somewhat disagree	5	3.9	3.9
	neutral	51	40.2	40.2
	somewhat agree	32	25.2	25.2
	strongly agree	36	28.3	28.3
	Total	127	100.0	100.0

The respondents’ responses are shown in the table above regarding the challenges women and girls with disabilities continue to face due to stigmatization, social exclusion, stigmatization, and frequent failure to ensure their social inclusion and effective participation in public life. The results show that most disabled women and girls gave “neutral” responses. But several gave “agree” and “very agree” responses. This indicates that

minor difficulties for women and girls with disabilities include discrimination, marginalization, social exclusion, stigmatization, and chronic failure to facilitate social inclusion and effective participation in public life.

Vulnerabilities heightened: Because of limited awareness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	4	3.1	3.1	3.1
	somewhat disagree	2	1.6	1.6	4.7
	neutral	54	42.5	42.5	47.2
	somewhat agree	36	28.3	28.3	75.6
	strongly agree	31	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

Respondents’ responses on the vulnerabilities heightened due to limited awareness are displayed in the table above. The findings show that the dangers are raised due to a lack of understanding. Therefore, the respondents need information about the vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities.

Because of low educational attainment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
	somewhat disagree	2	1.6	1.6	3.1
	neutral	76	59.8	59.8	63.0
	somewhat agree	30	23.6	23.6	86.6
	strongly agree	17	13.4	13.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ responses about the vulnerabilities heightened by poor educational attainment are shown in the above table. According to the results, most respondents selected “neutral,” followed by “somewhat agree.” This suggests that vulnerabilities were made worse by low levels of

education. This indicates that educational literacy programs are necessary for women and girls with disabilities to raise their knowledge of their vulnerabilities and marginalization.

Because of lack of resources and dependence on others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	somewhat disagree	7	5.5	5.5	5.5
	neutral	56	44.1	44.1	49.6
	somewhat agree	33	26.0	26.0	75.6
	strongly agree	31	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ responses are shown in the table above regarding increased vulnerabilities due to a lack of resources and reliance on others. This result revealed that the neutral answer is the highest, followed by somewhat agree and then strongly agree. This implies that women and girls with abilities cause vulnerabilities heightened because of lack of resources and dependence on others.

Because of increasing the likelihood of experiencing higher levels and more severe forms of violence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	2.4	2.4	2.4
	somewhat disagree	8	6.3	6.3	8.7
	neutral	63	49.6	49.6	58.3
	somewhat agree	30	23.6	23.6	81.9
	strongly agree	23	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ responses are shown in the table above in terms of how likely they will encounter higher levels and more severe types of violence. This indicates that the respondents are ignorant of the different sorts and forms of violence they have experienced. This suggests that to

raise their understanding of various kinds and types of abuse, women, and girls with disabilities need information, education, and communication (IEC).

Persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls, have difficulty accessing sexual and reproductive health services due to several factors, including the stereotyping of persons with disabilities either as persons with strong sexual desires or persons without sexual needs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
	somewhat disagree	4	3.1	3.1	4.7
	Neutral	68	53.5	53.5	58.3
	somewhat agree	30	23.6	23.6	81.9
	strongly agree	23	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents' responses to the statement are displayed in the table above. People with disabilities, especially women and girls, find it challenging to access sexual and reproductive health care for several reasons, including stereotypes that they either have strong sexual desires or no need for them. The findings indicate that neutral is the most common response among respondents, followed by slightly and strongly agree. The results suggest that women and girls with disabilities have issues accessing sexual and reproductive health care. This is difficult for people with disabilities, especially women and girls, due to several problems, including stereotypes that people with disabilities are either sexually active or not. This suggests that local government units (LGUs) should consider finding a solution to these problems faced by women and girls with disabilities.

Significant obstacles and challenges of women and girls remain in place: Primarily in the form of the weak protection system for women and girls with disabilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	4	3.1	3.1	3.1
	somewhat disagree	7	5.5	5.5	8.7
	neutral	67	52.8	52.8	61.4
	somewhat agree	29	22.8	22.8	84.3
	strongly agree	20	15.7	15.7	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

The respondents’ responses are shown in the table and graph above regarding the substantial issues still faced by women and girls, particularly the inadequate protections for women and girls with disabilities. The majority of respondents provided neutral, slightly agree, and finally strongly agree on responses, according to the data. The implication is that women and girls with disabilities continue to experience significant challenges and issues, notably an insufficient protection system, because of a lack of information and understanding concerning women and girls.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Rights of Women with Disabilities program, which strives to prevent and protect them, ranks discrimination against disabled women as one of its top concerns. Supporting the needs of women and girls with disabilities, such as providing kits during the Covid-19 outbreak, requires the cooperation of partner organizations. To assist disabled women and girls, local governments are urged to look for foreign partners. Women with impairments, need support programs. Respect must be shown for the rights and dignity of women and children. Government should constantly give them its full attention.

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