

ABSTRACT

This study investigates, “Mentally Challenged Children: Tanzanian context analysis, concepts of caring communities and sustainable diaconic strategies in the ELCT Northern Diocese. The study was conducted in Moshi Municipality. The aim of the study was to find out Tanzanian concepts of mental challenges, current challenges facing mentally challenged children, and the role played by BCC in supporting mentally challenged children and the framework of sustainable diaconic strategies in order to bring quality life to mentally challenged children. The study employed a qualitative approach based on interviews of various stakeholders. However, library literature and observations methods were used in the data collection processes. During interview, thirty-six participants provided in-depth data through face-to-face interviews. After transcribing the interviews, an open coding process was undertaken.

The findings indicated that the participants had a limited knowledge of mental disabilities some of them were associating mental retardation with witchcraft and curse in the family. Mentally challenged children and their parents or caretakers were experiencing multiple challenges such as socio-economic challenges like poverty, discrimination, etc. The study observed the role played by BCC in supporting mentally challenged children and their families i.e. providing them with nutritious food, education, poverty eradication projects. However, BCC was facing financial challenge because it depends on donor support. In addition, the study suggests sustainable diaconic strategies for services given to mentally challenged children and their parents such as education, income generating activities and financial management. It also provides revised strategic planning of BCC to ensure sustainability of quality services towards mentally challenged children. The study concludes by providing relevant recommendations to various stakeholders including parents of mentally challenged children, church leaders, government, BCC and areas for further studies.