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Abstract
Disability is a social construct with roots in societal attitudes. Some cultural beliefs and negative perception on disability have made persons living with disabilities to be stigmatized and even isolated in the communities. There have been cases of discrimination evidenced in access to meaningful participation in many activities in societies where people with disabilities live. Although, there is a policy put in place and enshrined in the government constitution to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, socio-cultural beliefs and negative perceptions have continued to be a barrier to the freedom of persons with disabilities. Sometimes they become victims of assault and are even targeted for ritual sacrifice. In Kakamega, names such as lifokhoyo, lindonde, musiru and shiyingwa are used to refer to people with disabilities. The Church as the voice of the state is to advice or assists the government on the way forward on how the rights of people with disabilities can be protected. It’s from this background that, this study sought to examine the ability of the Church to mitigate on the rights of persons living with disabilities against the social cultural beliefs and perceptions on disability. The study was carried out in Kakamega County. The study sought to assess social cultural beliefs and understanding of disability. The study employed the social discrimination theory whose proponent is T. Billet 2009. The research adapted a descriptive research design that was used to describe, analyze and interpret the contents of the study in relation to the phenomenon under research. The research was carried out from 6 sub counties who were purposively sampled to represent Kakamega County. The research intended to have a target population of 264 respondents who were purposively sampled from the 6 sub counties in Kakamega County. The research employed qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Oral interviews, Focused group discussion, questionnaires and observation methods were utilized to collect primary data and secondary data. This study therefore recommended that a team of religious professionals including theologians with a wide experience should come up with strategies on how to correct these biblical texts and provide knowledge and a clear understanding on disability.

1.1 Background to the Study
There is compelling evidence from around the world that in many national contexts, perhaps most, the life of disabled people cannot be taken for granted. Clement and Read (2008). According to Priestley (2001), both the majority and minority worlds, practices and policies result in decreased life chances and life expectancy for disabled people making disability a life and death issue. Disabled people’s vulnerability to violations that put their lives in
serious jeopardy has been and remains evident across the developed and developing world. Hence, Priestly (2001), Clement and Read (2008) observes that, the ways the disabled lives are not protected and safeguarded, have always been hazardous for disabled children and adults wherever they live.

People with disabilities are among the most marginalized people in the world (Baron & Nuebe, 2012). Therefore, not only do the vast majority of persons with disabilities live in developing nations, evidence suggests that, they are more likely to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. Disability has been included in various targets and as a cross-cutting in 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving these targets for persons with disabilities remains a path full of obstacles. Persons with disabilities face physical, social, economic and environment barriers to participation, which may lead to poverty and hunger. For instance, lack of accessibility in the physical environment and discrimination from entering the labor market limits the kind of work they can do, lowering their incomes.

Similarly, increased expenditure related to disability may have an adverse impact on financial resources and push persons with disabilities into poverty. Though social protection schemes can help alleviate poverty, persons with disability encounter various barriers in accessing social protection programs. These barriers include lack of accessible information provided to persons with disabilities about social protection programs and how to apply them, absence of the requisite documentation, limited accessibility of grant offices to persons with disabilities, pervasive discrimination by grant offices and lack of clarity in disability evaluation process United Nations Report (2018).

In Kenya, despite the policies, regulations and provisions protecting persons living with disabilities, they still remain among the marginalized lot (Akinyi, 2019). Therefore, persons living with disabilities in Kenya hardly access any specialized support services in urban and rural areas. Instead, they depend on third parties for support. Unfortunately, the helpers are mostly ignorant of their plight and are sometimes unavailable. According to Akinyi, this state of affairs has forced the majority of persons living with disabilities to be left behind in the social, economic and political participation in the country. Their productivity levels have been greatly hindered and this proves burdensome to the society and the whole country’s economic progress in the long run. In article 54 of the constitution of Kenya, it provides that, a person with disability is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to be addressed in a manner that is not demeaning. However, the Kenya government is yet to fully realize the rights of persons living with disabilities leaving them vulnerable in the society.

1.2 Literature Review
Assess Socio-cultural beliefs and understanding of disability
Society has continued to disable physically impaired people by imposing disability on top of their impairments by the way they are isolated and excluded from full participation in society. According to Oliver (2012), imposing disability on physically impaired people must change. There are marked social gradients in difficulty across the life-course with evidence of enduring effects associated with childhood circumstances. In addition, and at each stage of the life-course, people with disabilities are disproportionately exposed to the social factors that contribute to health inequalities, including proximal risk factors such as lack of physical activity, alongside broader determinants associated employment opportunities, poverty and poor housing and inequitable access to services. These environmental disadvantages are in turn, disabling and create further barriers. Therefore, there should be a new paradigm shift involving nothing more or less fundamental than a switch away from focusing on the physical limitation of people with disability. Disability must not be understood as a form of oppression, ableism and exclusion from social life.

The foregoing information was very relevant to this study as it highlighted on some discrimination issues on people living with disabilities. However, there was no mention of social-cultural beliefs as one of the causes of discrimination on disability. This was a point of concerns for this study. This study examined the socio-cultural beliefs and perception on disability as one of the causes of discrimination on people living with disability in Kakamega County. These was the information the study provided to fill the gap. According to Goodly et al. (2016) critical disability studies is very necessary as it aims to reframe the disabled minds along the lines of capacity, potential,
The area of study was Kakamega County which is located in the former Western Province of Kenya. Population study for this study was collected from the following Sub-Counties: Ikolomani, Butere, Navokholo, Malava, Mumias East and Lurambi Sub Counties which made a good representation for the remaining sub counties. The data collected from the six Sub Counties provided adequate information which represented the entire Kakamega County. The study employed purposive sampling technique. The data collected was translated from the local languages among them were, ‘Abatsotsa” “Abamarama”, “Abawanga” “Abesukha”, “Abakabrasa” and ”Abedakho” into English. This was done by examining the notes that were taken during oral interviews and observation in order to identify the major issues. The information was put together basing on research objectives.

1.4 Findings of the Study

Disability as a curse in Kakamega County
Research findings from the field revealed that, majority of the People in Kakamega believe that, a curse from God or Ancestors cause disability. According to the respondents, people believe that, if one does something that triggers the anger of God or ancestors, the most serious punishment he or she receives from them is a curse. Therefore, people try so much to avoid getting a curse from the Ancestors or God. Therefore, for one to avoid the curse, he or she is to adhere to all the beliefs given to them by those who were there earlier than them. And in this case, it is believed that, the characters and beliefs to be held on were handed over from one generation to the other up to date. Failure to do what is required brings a curse on the person or the entire family concerned. Kirima (1976) shares the foregoing sentiments when he observes that, very community has its own beliefs and rules that guide them in order to live in harmony. Breaking this belief comes along with consequences that affect the entire family. Hence, a person who does not have the good will of his society may according to African traditional belief suffer physically, even to the point of death. This belief helps to ensure that, individual members of the community do not become conceited or segregate them because if they fail out of favor with the community, the consequences may be fatal. Thus, a person is to maintain good relations with members of his kinship group. If he fails to do this and suffers, the community may say, ‘Did we not tell you?” Did we not warn you?” This is your lesson for showing no respect to the community.”
Research findings in Kakamega County revealed that, beliefs on disability are still held on strongly by majority of the people. Similarly, discrimination and stigma that originates from these beliefs on disability make people to fear being associated with disability. This is why people who have persons living with disabilities prevent them from appearing in the public domain for fear of being discriminated or stigmatized.

It can therefore be argued that, because of the socio-cultural beliefs on disability, people in Kakamega County live in fear of disability. According to the respondents, when a woman is expecting a child, the whole family becomes anxious wondering whether the child to be born will have disability or not. It becomes a relief when the child is born without disability. However, for those who unfortunately are born with disability, blame games in the family begins. The husband blames the wife and on the other hand, the wife blames the family. According to the respondents, in most cases, the family to the husband puts all the blames to the wife and at times the marriage gets shaken by a divorce or separation. It was also revealed that, if a person through sickness or accident acquires a disability, the blame game begins with the community. This is why disability is viewed as a phenomenon that occurs due to disobedient to the Ancestors or God. Similarly, it was believed that, disability is associated with practices that are viewed as evil or demonic in nature. This is why people in Kakamega County believe that, people who fail to adhere to beliefs in relation to disability acquire a curse that disturbs the entire family for a long time. It was believed that, a curse can affect the whole family for a long time. Sometimes it becomes worse and goes as far as causing death. Research findings revealed 3 different categories of disability that were linked to curses.

1.5 Disability for Mistreating the Disabled

During field research, respondents stated that, culturally people in Kakamega County believe that one can bring a curse to himself or herself because of mistreating persons living with disabilities. This mistreatment can be directly or indirectly done in the community or households who have persons living with disabilities. According to the respondents, such a curse in most cases affects the entire family up to the 4th generation. To avoid these curses, persons living with disabilities need to be taken care of well by treating them well just like other people without disabilities.

It was revealed that, name calling of persons living with disability or making fun of them or laughing and imitating their disability was not taken lightly. According to the respondents, people are required to empathize with person’s living with disabilities. Therefore, one who engaged in any of the foregoing actions was believed to be mistreating persons living with disabilities and the only reward he or she receives is a curse from the ancestors or God. For instance, if one makes fun, laughs or mocks a disabled person by calling her or him names or imitating his or her state of disability, it is believed that, such a person will definitely receive a curse and if the person is still in the age of bearing children one of the child to be born will definitely be born with the same or a more serious disability. This therefore is believed to be a curse received for mistreating a Persons living with a disability. Similarly, it is believed that, if the person fails to ask for forgiveness from the person who was mistreated, the same curse follows his or her family from one generation to the other. According to the respondents, the person is required to ask for forgiveness when whoever was mistreated is still alive. However, if the person dies before being asked for forgiveness, no other person can break the curse.

Research finding revealed that, name calling of persons living with disability in relation to the nature of disability one has is disastrous. During an interview in Mumias, one of the respondents an elderly woman in her 50’s coded as (xi) gave a living example of a woman who mocked and laughed at a disabled person by calling her names or giving him names or him names because of his disability. It was observed that, there was a disabled man who moved by crawling using his hands in the village. Any time the woman could see him approaching, she mocked and imitated his disability by saying “weilikava yetsanga” a name given to a disabled person who moves by crawling using his or her hands among the Abawanga. According to the respondents, it did not come as a surprise when one of her sons took long to walk and finally the boy started to move by crawling on his knees. To date, the boy is living with the same disability similar to the disability the man she used to laugh at. According to the respondents, it doesn’t matter whether a person
During field research in Ikoromani sub-county, respondents noted that, if a disabled person is mistreated and by bad luck he or she dies, the curse that follows as a result of their death affects the entire family. They are attacked by mysterious diseases and some members in the family acquire similar disabilities of the dead people. One of the respondents in his late 70s by code (xii) observed in “Lwidakho’ that,” mundu mulema, wi indulume rende mulalu yikhama munzu ma banukhunji, nalwoluchilanga banyola bumbu bulema bveyebo” Meaning, if a person suffering from physical disability, epilepsy or mentally challenged comes for shelter in some one’s house then he or she is chased away, it is believed that, people in that family will suffer from the same disease. Majority of the respondents stated that, a curse from a disabled person is believed to be so bad. If he or she is maltreated, they get a curse immediately. Therefore, to avoid such a curse, any person living with disabilities should be treated with a lot of care. Similarly, according to a respondent coded (xiii) who was in her 50’s stated in mother tongue, “wone yanyiega mwana wo murende shiyungwa, naye bveyuule shiyungwa khandi”. Among the’ Abedakho’ it means, someone used to abuse the neighbors’ child who was mentally challenged and later she also gave birth to a mentally challenged child. Respondents observed that, it is an abomination to laugh at any person living with disability or any parent who has a child with disability. Such a person eventually gets a curse that attacks the entire family. According to the respondents, it is believed that, any family living with any person who has disability of which ever kind is as a result of a curse that is running in the family. Respondents further stated that, some disabilities have a hidden reason. According to one of the respondents with code (xiv) it is believed that, God or ancestors have a reason why someone should have a disability. Therefore, it is believed that, the only disability God or ancestors have a hand in is the disability one is born with but not the one acquired after one is born or later in life. It is therefore believed that, if one gets a child who has disability and mistreats the child because of his or her disability, God and the Ancestors gets angered when such a child is mistreated. Therefore, God or the ancestors punishes such a family by striking them with a curse. This is a curse that will cause diseases, disabilities or even death. Similarly, it was revealed that, when a child is born, one of the ancestors’ demand for the child to be named after him or her, if the parents refuses, the ancestor can strike the family with a mysterious disease including disability. According to the respondents, this is believed to be a curse from the ancestor who was not named as required.

From the foregoing discussion, it was revealed that, disability is caused by God or ancestor. Therefore, children born with disabilities should be well taken care of. Mistreating such a child will mean calling for disaster from God or the ancestors. Hence, mocking, laughing, imitating and mistreating persons living with disabilities evokes a curse from God or ancestors.

During a field research in Butere, the responses were similar to those in Mumias and Ikoromani. An elderly respondent in her mid-60s coded (xv) gave an example of a woman who laughed at disabled man who was living with dwarfism. Unfortunately, the woman was expectant, when she gave birth to a son, by the time the son was 10 years old, it was discovered that the son had dwarfism and his condition was more complicated because he had a very big hunch back. The whole village knew that this was a curse the mother received when she laughed at a person living with dwarfism yet she was expecting the son. Similarly, in Malava Sub-County, the respondents observed that, when one is eating and by good luck or bad luck a person living with disability passes by and shows that he or she is hungry and needs some food to eat, he or she should be given some food to eat. According to one of the respondents with code (xvi) it is believed that, failure to do so brings a curse to the whole family. Eventually, some members in the family or children
Field research in Navakholo Sub-County revealed that, the belief that, a person born with disability in a family should be taken care of well in order to avoid a calamity to befall other members in the family was taken seriously by people in Kakamega County. According to the respondents, People in Navakholo Sub-County believe that, one of the ways God tests people who claim to be his flowerers was by giving them a child who has a disability. According to one of the respondents who was an elderly woman in her late 60s with code (xvii), people will always be happy and praise God when everything is okay in their lives. She further stated that, this is commonly among majority of people who are viewed as strong Christians. However, when disability occurs in their families, they among the people who begin to blame God for attempting them and will often ask “God, why me?”. In the process they begin to dislike the person living with disability in the home. Finally, they begin to mistreat the person in question and this becomes the beginning of curses in the family. Respondents revealed that, in most cases, disability does not just come but God plans for it to happen. Hence, if God allows disability to happen in the family, He has a purpose for that and mistreating the person is one way of inviting curses in the family. Hence, the curse may run in the entire family causing sicknesses, disabilities and even death. One of the respondents in her early 40s with code (xxv), mistreating a person living with disabilities is like denying God indirectly. Similarly, it was believed that, if disability runs in a family, an ancestor who was disabled in the family may be re-born through a child and mishandling the person is equal to mistreating the ancestor. Therefore, if such a thing happens and the person dies, it is believed that the ancestor gets angered and decides to take away the person. However, a respondent who was an elder among the Abakabras coded as xxii stated that, the death of a person living with disabilities which happens as a result of poor care, negligence and maltreatment was the cause of so many calamities in the concerned family. According to (xxv), such a family begins to experience calamities that come in series. In most cases, the family will start to blame others for causing them sufferings but in real sense, they are the ones’ who have ignited curse in the home by mistreating one of their own who was living with disabilities up to death. He further narrated a story about what happened to a family in the village who maltreated their son who was mentally retarded to death.

According to (xvi) the family had a business that was doing so well in the community. They lived a very luxurious life and owned a fleet of vehicles. The couple had 5 children. Unfortunately, the fifth son was born with disabilities. The parents were so busy with their business and had no time for him. They had even taken the other children to boarding schools leaving him alone and lonely in the home. Although they had employed workers and one of their duty was to take care of the son who had disability challenges, workers could not completely take the whole responsibility of taking care of him as it was expected. The parents left early and came back late when the boy was a sleep. They never bothered to check on him to know how he was fairing on. Gradually, the boys’ health started to depreciate but the parents could not notice because they hardly gave attention.

One day, a Pastor from the Church which they fellowship made a surprise visit to the family’s home. The couple had already left for their daily routine. Fortunately, the Pastor found their son who was living with a disability lying outside on a very dirty mat. The boy was looking weak, hungry and had boils all over his body. This prompted the Pastor to go up to their business premises to give them a weird advice about the son. According to the respondents, their Pastor had a clue that the boy was being mistreated because of his disability. He advised the parents to take care of their son or else God will curse them. Unfortunately, when they went back home in the evening, the boys’ health had further deteriorated and he unfortunately passed on in their presence. Very few people knew about the death of the boy because the parents decided not to make it public for the fear of being discriminated and stigmatized because of the disability.

Within the same year, the business went down, the couple started ailing from a disease that Doctors were unable to diagnose. They used all the money for medication but did not recover well. Businesses collapsed and they started to languish in poverty. They could no longer afford boarding fees for the other children. The whole community knew that they
were under a curse for neglecting their son who was born with disabilities. According to the respondents, God tested their faith by giving them a child who had a disability. Unfortunately, they failed to realize that God was testing them. According to the respondents, taking care if a person living with disability in the family was believed to be one of the ways in which Gods' blessings are tapped.

Therefore, research findings established that, not all forms of disabilities are believed to be as curse. Disability can sometimes be a source of blessings in a family. Similarly, God plans for some people to be born with disabilities basically to taste his follower’s faith. Unfortunately, mistreating persons living with disabilities is one way of inviting curse in the family. Such curses cause too much harm in the family even death. Therefore, a curse that is associated with disability has no boundary. It can affect any family that does not do what is right in relation to disability. Hence, whether the family is rich, poor or from a strong Christian background, consequences are the same.

On the same note, Wachege (2003) observes that, in many African communities, the fear of curses and cursing is real. A curse is a disturbing anguish in life and in living. It does not matter whether one is a leader, educated or uneducated, restless youth or an elder, medicine man or a soothsayer, sorcerer or witch, polygamist or monogamist, celibate Churchmen and women, or laity, man endowed with virility and fecundity, or woman blessed with femininity cum fruitfulness, pauper or billionaire, a peace maker or a peace breaker. The underlying factor is that, it is such an incredible phenomenon whose anxiety and wonder remains.

From the foregoing information, it was established that, in Kakamega county, disability is viewed either as a source of curses or blessings. Hence, a family which has a person living with disability is expected to take care of him or her in order to receive blessings from God or ancestors. Therefore, when one gives birth to a child with disability or a member in the family who acquires disability, the family is expected to accept the reality and take full responsibility to care for the child. This is why one of the respondents, an elderly woman in her early 70s coded (xvii) stated in Kinyala that, “esialombwa esilema siyunyala ukalugasia ta!” Meaning, you cannot change one who was born with a disability.

Hence, it can be argued that, persons living with disabilities should not be mistreated but taken care of well to avoid the wrath of God or the ancestors that comes through curses.

Disability acquired later in life as a curse
Research findings revealed that, in Kakamega County, any person who is born without a disability but acquires it later in life is viewed with a lot of suspicion. Majority of the respondents observed that, God only reveals himself thought persons who are born with disability but not those who acquire it later in life. They further observed that, God is the ultimate creator of human being therefore he is the one who decides who to be born with disability, from which family and the purpose why the person is to be born with disability. However, a person who is born without a disability but later acquires it is believed to have engaged in evil activities together with his or her family. Such evil practices are believed to anger God and the ancestral spirits to the extent that he or she receives a curse from them as a punishment. The curses are believed to be the cause of mysterious happenings to the victims including acquiring disability. This is why families hide such a person from the public domain for fear of being discriminated in the community. A respondent in her late 40s with code (xo) made it clear when she said in Kinyiala that, “vaonanga vachi omwana oyo khalamwa, kho vikhisa” Meaning, people believe that, a person who acquires disability later in life is living under a curse. This is why the family decides to hide them from the public to avoid being stigmatized.

During field research in Lurambi Sub-county, respondents noted that, in any African set up, disability is associated with many things. It was revealed that, people believe that a family that engages in evil activities is usually identified by mysterious happenings in the family. Similarly, people rarely visit the family and the home looks deserted and lonely. Hence, people fear to be associated with such families and they decide to keep off. One of the respondents in his 50s coded (xoo) noted that, engaging in evil activities especially by killing people is an act that brings a curse to the family. Some of these curses can be brought by ancestors who get angered when people cause death for others. According to the respondents, some of the
mysterious happenings that reveals a family that is cursed include attacks from jiggers, disability especially mental challenges and recycled poverty within the family. An elderly woman in her early 70s given code (xxo) noted that, when a family is living under a curse, God or ancestors exposes them to the public for everybody to know that they have been cursed because of their evil deeds. This is why in most cases, when a member in the family acquires a disability especially with relation a mental challenge, the spirits sends the person out to public places. She further stated that, sometime back in the community, a man killed his brother in order to inherit his land. The brother had no child and he was planning to sell the piece of land. After he was buried, the brother who killed him developed a mental challenge. One morning, the wife woke in the morning only to realize that the husband had committed suicide. According to the respondents, he was cursed by God and the ancestors. This is why he developed a mental challenge and within a short time he committed suicide. In the same vain, Mugambi and Kirima (1976) observes that, human life which came from God through the spirits and ancestors, was considered sacred and was held in great reverence. It can therefore be argued that, no one is to mess or end another person’s life. Therefore, destroying another persons’ life by cutting his or her life short is against Gods’ will and this is the same to ancestors. Hence, in order to discourage the practice, it is believed that, God together with the spirits punish such families by striking them with a curse that makes them to be noticed, discriminated and stigmatized in the community.

Research findings revealed that, one can acquire disability later in life from spoken words in form of a curse. According to the respondents, such curses are categorized as weaker or stronger curses. In this case, weaker curses are those believed to be uttered by a person against the other out of envy or jealousy. Similarly, major curses are those spoken against a person who has offended the victim. According to the respondents, such a curse can become a serious challenge especially among close relatives. During field research among the people of Ikolomani Sub County in Kakamega County, one of the respondents in his 50s coded (xxoo) noted in Idakho that, ˚abandu shibayatsa beshe tawe, nokula omotokha, akhushindika nabola, onyole achiali.” This meant that people dislike others because of their jealousy. This is why when someone in the community buys a vehicle, out of jealousy they curse the person by wishing him or her to be involved in an accident. According to the respondents, such curses are likely to affect someone especially among relatives and may end up causing disability among people. According to the respondents, such disabilities that are caused through accidents are prevented through prayers to the ancestors, God and by administering manyasi, herbal medicines to the victims. The herbs are prepared in a concoction form and the affected person given to drink and others put in bathing water. Similarly, the herbs are also burnt, crushed into ash and given to the person to be licking it every morning before he or she lives home. Mbiti (1991) confirms the foregoing information when he stated that, other rituals performed to give protection to the baby as it begins its long journey in life, to bring good fortune to it, to commit it to God for his care. It is believed that, the child needs protection against magic, sorcery, witchcraft, evil eyes, diseases, malicious spirits and any other source of harm. Therefore, in Kakamega County, the fear of being harmed through peoples’ utterances that are in form of curses makes people to protect the entire family by using herbal medicines.

According to the respondents, these herbs are believed to be protective charms against many things including curses and witchcraft. However, major curses are believed to run from one generation into another especially up to the fourth generation. Such curses originate from what someone did knowingly and even fail to ask for forgiveness. It was revealed that, such curses cause so many complications that include disability and even death. In the same breath, Chaffart (2016) observes that, curses are often manifested in different ways. Some of the common manifestations include the following: continual financial problems, continual poverty, chronic illness, premature deaths, repetitive accidents or mental torment, repetitive business failure, poor eating habits, poor sleeping habits, barrenness or repetitive miscarriages. According to Edmiston (2010), the motivation for cursing others may be pronounced on the selected targets because of hatred, envy, jealousy, spiritual conflict or the desire for revenge.
Basing from the foregoing information given by different scholars in relation to disability, there’s a possibility that, majority of persons who acquire disability or born with disability might have acquired it through a curse. Therefore, any kind of disability in Kakamega County is not viewed as a natural phenomenon but it is believed to have been caused by an evil person in the community. It was very clear from the respondents in Kakamega County that, people fear to be associated with disability. The fear of being isolated, discriminated and viewed as a cursed family has contributed to negative attitude on disability as they are believed to be lethal to peoples’ lives. Hence, majority of the respondents alluded that, curses vary but a more powerful curse can bring even death. This is why Passmore (2017) says that, the underlying factor is that of curse and cursing phobia. It is a fear which is indispensable among many Africans.

From the foregoing discussion with respondents, it came out clearly that, in Kakamega County, disability is believed to be a curse as a result of the evil deeds that a family engages in. Therefore, the curse can be from God or ancestors who get angry because of the evils one does to others. Similarly, people believe that, it is Gods’ plan to have some people to be born with disability. Hence, maltreating them angers God who in turn punishes the victim to acquire the same disability or to get a more serious disability. This why such a disability is believed to be a curse through a punishment from God. Research findings also revealed that, in Kakamega County, it is believed that, if one is born without disability and later acquire it, the disability is viewed as a curse for the wrongs the person is engaged in. However, a person who is born without a disability and later develops disability is believed to have been cursed by God or ancestors for his or her own evil engagements. Hence, disability is viewed as a phenomenon that is to be handled with care in order to avoid a curse befalling a family.

On the same note, research findings revealed that, majority of Christians in the community believe in curses. Some of them have been victims of circumstance and others believe that, they are victims of generational curses. A generational curse is believed to be passed down from one generation to another due to rebellion against God. If your family line is marked by divorce, incest, poverty, anger or other ungodly patterns, you’re likely to be under a generational curse. According to the respondents, generational curses are believed to have generated from fore fathers who did wrong to others with the intention of harming them. Such a curse is viewed to be a major curse which goes up to the 4th generation. These are curses families inherit and it is not possible to do away with them. They cause a lot of harm to the family including children being born with disabilities, get involved in accidents and acquire disabilities and even death. This is why Hank (2006) stated that, some people even assert that family or generational curses are passed down along generational lines. Whether or not families inherit spiritual curses, it is obvious that patterns of sin are passed down through families. Everyone sins; but just as culture, ethnicity, and gender steer our patterns of sin in particular directions, so do our families. Children inherit many traits and preferences from their parents that aren’t always a positive influence on themselves or others. When we acquire a sinful habit or belief that negatively affects our lives or those around us, this is known as a generational curse.

On the same note, Mbti (1969) observes that, there is mystical power in words, especially those of a senior person to a junior, in terms of age, social status or position. The words of parents, for example, carry power when spoken to children, especially, when fortune, curse, success, peace, sorrows or blessings especially when spoken in moments of crisis. The words of medicine men work through the medicine he gives, and it is this, perhaps more than the actual herb, which is thought to cause the cure or prevent misfortunes. Therefore, formal curses and blessings are extremely potent and people may travel long distances to receive formal blessings and all are extra careful to avoid formal curses. From what Mbti says, it can therefore be argued that, people in Kakamega County whether they are Christians or not, all fear curses and they try to prevent them through prayers alongside using herbal medicine for protection. It is therefore a reality that, disability in a family is mostly linked to curses.

The foregoing information from Hank (2006) and Mbti (1969) was confirmed during field research in Kakamega County. It was revealed from respondents that, the sufferings which majority of the people experience is believed to originate from curses they
These sufferings include living in poverty, being involved in accidents, getting children with disabilities and acquiring complicated diseases that are incurable. One of the respondents in his 60s by code (xooo) reiterated in Marama; “Efitalmo ni amakuwwa kachaka khale okwanzila khubango Abraham nende Sara Omukhasiwe, nende Adam nende Eve omukhasiwe” The foregoing claim was confirmed from the Bible the book of Genesis 12:1-20. This verse explains when God send Abram to Haran. People in Haran were expected to receive him in Haran as their father. Therefore, God assured Abram His protection as He told him that, “I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” According to the respondents, it is believed that God expects people to obey and respect His servants. Therefore, when a servant of God is not treated well, God curses the people responsible for the act. The influence of the curse includes premature death or acquiring disability. According to the respondents, the curse is believed to run in the family up to the fourth generation. This was confirmed from the Bible in the book of Exodus 34: 7 that says: “I keep my promise for thousands of generations and forgive evil sin, but I will not fail to punish children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation for the sins of their parents” It was revealed from the respondents that, majority of people are not aware that the sufferings they are experiencing are as a result of the curses from their ancestors for the offences they committed in their life time. This is why a respondent coded (xixi) in his 50s among the Abedakho in Ikholomani Sub-County reiterated that, “shilamo shiabadu bakhale nishibi khu bana. Khandi bamanya balalukha.” Meaning, the curse from long time ago people is very bad, it destroys children. They even cause madness. According to the respondents, majority of persons living with disability are believed to have acquired disability either from God or ancestors. This is why people are very careful not to annoy the dead lest they cast a curse on them. Hence, when a person dies, they try all they can to send them off with dignity in order to avoid the curse. However, it was revealed that, majority of persons living with disabilities have acquired a disability because of the evil activities they engage in or their parents.

From the foregoing information together with biblical verses, disability is believed to have a relationship with a curse. Kakamega County believes that most persons living with disabilities acquire it as a result of a curse. It was also believed that, curses have a bad influence and can run in a family for a very long time. This is why Hank (2006) noted that, indeed, there is a sense in which the curse of sin has been passed on from generation to generation.

1.6 Conclusions

The study ascertained that, in Kakamega county, people fear to be associated with disability because of the socio-cultural beliefs and perception on disability. Disability is understood to be a punishment or a curse from God or ancestors.

1.7 Recommendation

The government of Kenya has tried its level best to make persons living with disabilities to enjoy their rights by putting a clause on disability in its constitution that allows inclusion of persons living with disabilities to participate in all activities nationally up to the community level. Similarly, Churches need to come up with a clause in their constitution on disability that will allow inclusion of persons living with disabilities to participate in all the Church activities including holding higher positions in Church.

References


Lukalo and Maseno (2021)


