IMPACT OF OBSTETRIC-FISTULA ON WOMANHOOD: THE CASE OF WEST POKOT COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented in this proposal has not been presented for any award in any institution. All the work is original unless otherwise acknowledged.

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This proposal has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors.

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ABSTRACT

Women in the developing world, are experiencing “unimaginable suffering” due to lack of effective care during pregnancy and childbirth. Of particular interest in this study is the formation of obstetric fistula. An obstetric fistula is an abnormal opening between the vagina and the bladder or rectum. The fistula results in the uncontrolled passage of urine and/or feces from the bladder and/or rectum into the vaginal cavity. Non-fatal maternal childbirth injuries often have devastating psycho-social and medical consequences which have a profound impact on women’s quality of life. This study seeks to explore the impact of obstetric fistula on womanhood and demonstrate how these impacts shape the identities of afflicted women in West Pokot County. The specific objectives will be to explore the social construction of womanhood among the Pokot as well as look at the perceptions of women and men on the impact of obstetric fistula. In addition, the study will also explore the socio-cultural explications of obstetric fistula on Pokot “womanhood” and assess the social coping strategies employed by the afflicted women. The study will be anchored on the Social Construction Theory and the ideology of Ideology of Stigma and shame. The study will use the phenomenological approach to both quantitative and qualitative research. Non-probabilistic sampling procedures to identify the study site, target and general respondents will be used. The sample size will be determined by the formula for single proportions of Kish and Leslie and estimations for the number of participants to be included in the study made. The study’s target respondents will be limited to women living with and/or healed of obstetric fistula. Questionnaires, interview and focus groups guides will be used to gather data. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and reported in the form of frequencies, cross tabulations, and percentages. Qualitative data will be analyzed manually using pre-determined themes. This study hopes to create awareness on the condition from a gender perspective in the general public, change social attitudes and social interpretation of illness and suffering, and provide information for building locally appropriate solutions.