

The sexual agency of Haitian women with physical disabilities

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ENGLISH ABSTRACT

Women with disabilities (WWD) in Haiti represent one of the most vulnerable groups due to the lack of access to fundamental social services such as education, as well as persistent discrimination and stigmatization. Internationally, scholarly literature has highlighted specific challenges experienced by WWD in terms of sexuality compared to women without disabilities, as well as their increased exposure to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse within their intimate relationships. However, very little scientific knowledge allows us to paint a picture of the experiences of WWD specific to Haiti. To address these knowledge gaps, this dissertation explores their sexual and intimate experiences and aims to, on the one hand, identify forms of oppression and injustices they face, and on the other hand, shed light on the expression of their sexual agency.

Six women participated in four group interviews using the photovoice method. Thematic analysis, considering intersectional feminist theories and the concept of agency, reveals that they face ableism and violence at both structural and interpersonal levels.

The results indicate that WWDs are victims of various forms of violence from their relatives, which hinders their intimacy and limits their relational and sexual opportunities. They encounter difficulties in accessing leisure spaces, socialization, and sexual health services. Despite these challenges, WWD demonstrates strong sexual agency. They actively seek to discover and explore their sexuality; identify their sexual desires and needs, communicate them, and satisfy them through masturbation, flirting, and sexual relationships with one or more partners.

However, to enable them to fully experience their sexuality, it is crucial to adapt services to the needs of WWD and raise awareness among their relatives about these issues.

Keyword: Ableism, Haiti, disability, sexuality, sexual agency, intersectionality, gender