

‘Obuntu Bulamu’: Parental Peer to Peer Support for Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Central Uganda

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Abstract : Background: ‘Obuntu bulamu’, an intervention for children, parents, and teachers to improve the participation and inclusion of children with disabilities (CwD) through peer-to-peer support, was developed and tested in central Uganda between 2017 and 2019. The intervention consisted of children, parents, and teachers' training sessions and peer to peer support activities directed at disability inclusion using an African disability framework. In this paper, we discuss parent participation in and parent evaluation of the ‘Obuntu bulamu’ intervention. Methods: This qualitative Afrocentric intervention study was implemented in 10 communities in the Wakiso district in Central Uganda. We purposely selected children aged 8 to 14 years with different impairments, their peers, and parents, with different levels of household income and familial support, who were enrolled in primary schools in the ten communities with on average three children with disabilities per community. Sixty four parents (33 parents of CwDs and 31 peers) participating in the ‘Obuntu bulamu’ study were interviewed at baseline and endline. Two focus group discussions were held with parents at the midline. Parents also participated in a consultative meeting about the intervention design at baseline, and two evaluation workshops held at midline and endline. Thematic data analysis of the interview and focus group data was conducted. Results: Findings showed parents found the group-based activities inspiring and said they built hope and confidence. Parents felt the intervention was acceptable, culturally appropriate, and supportive as it built on values and practices from their own traditions. Parents reported the intervention enhanced a sense of togetherness and belonging through the group meetings and follow-up activities. Parents also mentioned that the training helped them develop more positive attitudes towards CwD and disability inclusion. Parents felt that the invention increased a child’s participation and inclusion at home, school, and in communities. Conclusion: The Obuntu bulamu peer to peer support intervention is an acceptable, culturally appropriate intervention that has the potential to improve the inclusion of CwD. A larger randomized control trial is needed to evaluate the impact of the intervention model.

Keywords : inclusion, participation, inclusive education, peer support, belonging, Ubuntu, ‘Obuntu bulamu’

Conference Title : ICISE 2022 : International Conference on Inclusive and Special Education

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : August 08-09, 2022