

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this pilot study was to explore participation in tertiary education of teenage girls with physical disabilities. Qualitative research methods were applied to answer the two study questions: How do tertiary schools accommodate the needs of students with physical disabilities and what opportunities do students with physical disabilities have to participate in social activities within school settings and beyond? The sample was systematically selected as the girls had already participated in a study conducted by Snæfríður Þóra Egilson (2005) on participation of students with physical disabilities in primary schools. Four interviews were taken with three students and with their permission were transcribed verbatim. Template analysis was used for the data analysis. Two main themes emerged, namely, social participation within the school and social participation outside the school. Further sub-themes surfaced from the data. The former included three: Occupations and settings, social affiliations and relations with teachers or assistants. The latter divided into two: Social participation in leisure time and friendships. The results show that participation of teenage girls with physical disabilities in tertiary education is either hindered or supported by the interaction of various elements. Their satisfaction in attending tertiary schools was very apparent. Furthermore, their social relations had increased after attending the school. This study is a first step towards a deeper look into this target group. It sheds light on the participation of these three girls in tertiary education and their lives and what factors are most important to them.

*Key words: Physical disabilities – qualitative research – participation – template analysis*