

Abstract:

As institutions of higher learning across Africa strive toward inclusivity, the physical and digital mobility of students with disabilities (SwDs) remains a critical yet under-researched frontier. By undertaking this study the aim is to investigate the role of Assistive Technology (AT) in facilitating Sustainable Urban Mobility (SUM) for SwDs at Kenyan private universities, addressing a gap in mobility that is often constrained by disorganized urban infrastructure. Through the help of Model of Disability and Spatial Interaction Theory, the research employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected from 91 students across 29 chartered private universities using stratified random sampling. Quantitative results from multiple regression analysis ($R^2 = .783$, $p < .001$) indicated that Assistive Technology factors ($\beta = .412$) and Individual Student Characteristics ($\beta = .387$) were the strongest predictors of successful mobility outcomes. Urban Infrastructure in urban areas became the least influential factor ($\beta = .038$, $p = .478$), revealing a huge "accessibility gap" between inclusive campus environments and exclusionary urban transit systems. This study highlights an important trend: that while traditional mobility aids usage (wheelchair, clutches, white cane) remain robust, students with disabilities in private universities in urban areas in Kenya more so in Nairobi are increasingly pivoting to digital solutions, such as ride-hailing applications, to bypass inaccessible public transport, though this imposes a significant financial burden. In conclusion the study asserts that achieving sustainable mobility requires a multi-stakeholder approach that integrates affordable AT, rigorous policy universal urban design, and enforcement to bridge the existing gap between policy aspirations and students' lived realities.