

# The effects of institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges on the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school: A case of one selected Special School in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia

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**Abstract:** This manuscript is a study on the effects of institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges on academic performance on learners with physical disabilities face in schools in Zambia. The study was conducted at Dagama School for the Physically Challenged in Luanshya district. The site was selected because it had learners with physical disabilities. The instruments for data collection included the semi-structured interview schedule for school administrators, focused group discussion for class teachers and learners with physical disabilities, and observation checklist for class teachers and the natural surroundings.

The study found that learners with physical disabilities faced challenges in the school and these were difficult in accessing the common bathrooms, mobility problems due to lack of crutches and wheelchairs, poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, negative attitude of parents and school administrators towards the learners, unmodified curriculum, being taught by untrained special teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of support from the parents, poor payment of school fees by parents, limited support from the well-wishers and little funding from the government. The effects of the challenges on the learners' academic performance included mobility problems, reporting late for lessons, promotion of dependence syndrome and absenteeism, losing of marks in compulsory and practical subjects, being passive in the class, teachers not providing the necessary skills required by the learners, no prescribed textbooks and psychological effect.

The study discovered the measures such as modification of the common bathroom infrastructure, curriculum, maintaining the existing ramps, rails, paved pathways, and double doors, orientations of new teachers in special education, improving the lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, training more teachers in special education, acquisition of appropriate teaching and learning materials, government increasing funding to the school, offering bursaries, involving into self-help activities like farming and fundraising ventures and commitment of the parents to paying school fees and provision of school commodities for the children.

**Key Words:** Physical Disability. Challenge, Effect, Environmental, Attitudinal, Institutional, And Financial

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term physical disability is broad and covers a range of disabilities and health issues, including both congenital and acquired disabilities (Mifflin, 2003).

A learner with physical disabilities is a learner who has a physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities such as learning. Someone with a moderate physical disability would have mobility problems, for example, unable to manage stairs, and need aids or assistance to walk. Someone with a severe physical disability would be unable to walk and dependent on mobility care. Learners with physical disabilities need to be placed in a conducive learning environment or classroom for them to perform effectively. (Kandimba and Penda, 2018 p:7)

These types of learners face a lot of challenges that affect them academically. This study aims to bring to light how these learners are affected, and these effects can be addressed.

### *Statement of the problem*

The challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school affect them academically. This is supported by K. Mcleod (2014) who stated that learners with physical disabilities experience personal limitations in school environments that affect their social and psychological spheres that later affect their academic performances at school. The effects are not known which are a result of institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges being faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools. Thus, this study investigated the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities which affected them academically in the school and bring this knowledge gap to light.

*Purpose of the study*

The purpose of the study was to establish the effects of institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school on their academic performance and find out how these effects can be addressed.

*Objectives of the study*

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To establish how the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.
- ii. To suggest the measures to be put in place to address the challenges affecting the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.

*Research questions*

- i. How do the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities?
- ii. What measures should be put in place to address the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges that affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities?

*Significance of the study*

This study is significant because it established the effects learners with physical disabilities experience in the school due to the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges they face. It also brought out the ways of addressing them. Secondly, the information will be useful to educational practitioners, school administrators, and policymakers who will address the challenges that affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in schools. Thirdly, it is also hoped that the findings of the study may be added to the general body of knowledge on the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in school.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the interpretive research paradigm. According to Burch and Carolyn (2016), a descriptive research design is a method that involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way. Burch and Carolyn (2016) added that a descriptive research design enables researchers to examine the phenomenon in its natural state. This study used a case study research design. The instruments for data collection included the semi-structured interview schedule for school administrators, focused group discussion for class teachers and learners with physical disabilities, and observation checklist for class teachers and the natural surroundings. The study comprised 36 participants consisting of four (4) school administrators, eight (8) class teachers, and

twenty-four (24) learners with physical disabilities. This sample was chosen because it was believed to have the information on the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*Delimitations of the study*

This study was conducted at one Special school which is Dagama School for the Physically Challenged in Luanshya district. This site was chosen because it is the only school for learners with physical disabilities in the Copperbelt province.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature will focus mainly on the institutional, attitudinal, environmental and financial challenges that affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.

*Environmental challenges*

Several environmental challenges lead to psychological factors among the learners that affect the academic performance of learners with physical impairments. Biggie (1991) highlighted those environmental challenges that come because of psychological factors such as pain, fatigue, and absenteeism as well as motivation, self-concept, and social-emotional problems need to be identified in learners with physical impairment, and modifications are required to minimize their effects. Therefore, factors such as pain, fatigue, and absenteeism affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school psychologically.

Kabuta (2014) carried out a study on the problems facing learners with physical disabilities in learning institutions in Tanzania. The study found that the physical layout of the school is also a factor impacting successful education. Children with mobility difficulties need an adapted environment. Classrooms need to be wheelchair-friendly and compatible. If the physical layout of the school is not wheelchair-friendly and compatible, the learner would experience mobility problems in terms of walking from dormitories to the classes and this affects the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.

Furthermore, Ndhlovu (2008) conducted a study on the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing education in Zambia and found that learners with physical disabilities require specialized equipment and adaptations to the physical environment to succeed in school. Others would require assistance from professionals outside the school who would work with the child in school and consult with teachers as needed. Lack of this specialized equipment and adaptations to the physical environment affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities because learners experienced mobility problems leading to coming late for lessons.

*Attitudinal challenges*

Bunch et al (1997) conducted a study on Resistance and Acceptance: Educator attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities in New York and found that learners with physical disabilities are regarded to be incapable of low intelligence, without friends, and of no value from them. Their participation at school is regarded to be useless and of no meaning. Because of this they often had difficulties with peer relationships, and this affected their academic performance in the school.

A study conducted by Nangosi (2014) on the challenges faced by children with disabilities in Uganda found that learners with physical disabilities continue facing negative attitudes and stereotypes in the education system from teachers and their fellow learners. This negative attitude from the staff and other learners affected their academic performance in the school.

In addition, Mandyata (2002) conducted a study on teachers' views on some teaching practices in basic schools in Kasama District in Zambia and reported that nonacceptance of children with disabilities by ordinary teachers in Kasama was mostly due to lack of training and resources to equip teachers in handling children with special needs in ordinary classes. The non-acceptance of children with disabilities by ordinary teachers contributed to the poor academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*Institutional challenges*

Johnstone (2001) researched disability studies in London and found that the inability of the teacher to modify and change assignments, instructional strategies, class resources, methods of assessment, and teaching style influence a learner's success in school. Children with special education needs are affected because they do learn the same way other children learn.

Bunch et al (1997) who conducted a study on Resistance and Acceptance: Educator attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities in New York and found that the curriculum for learners with physical disabilities is not fully modified and implemented; infrastructure is not modified to suit the needs of pupils with physical disabilities. Some teachers are also not willing to adjust their teaching methodologies so that they comply with the requirements of the modified or new curriculum. This made learners with physical disabilities fail to cope in schools academically.

A study carried by Mandyata (2002) on teachers' views on some teaching practices in basic schools in Kasama District found that inadequate provision of specialized training and resources to equip teachers in handling children with special educational needs in ordinary classes affected many learners including learners with physical disabilities in terms of academic performance and dropping out of school.

*Financial challenges*

According to a study conducted by Smith (1998) on teaching in an Age of challenge in America, teaching children with physical disabilities in general education classrooms takes specialists and additional classrooms to support the learners' needs. Coordinating services and offering individual support to children requires additional money that many schools do not have. The study concluded that inadequate provision of facilities and materials to mainstreamed public schools led to poor academic performances of students with physical disabilities in the school because learners had no materials and resources to use in the school.

Morley (2010) carried out a study on students with disabilities in learning institutions in Ghana and Tanzania and found that lack of funding in schools affects the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school. The study further found the relationship between the availability of facilities and academic performance of learners with special educational needs and compared the academic performance of male and female learners with special educational needs; the results showed that schools lacked basic and important facilities such as wheelchairs, crutches, and special support from institutions due to inadequate funding to purchase such equipment. Lack of these facilities affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school because they reported late for lessons.

A study by Ndhlovu (2008) on the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing education in Zambia, discovered that inadequate funding to schools affects the academic performance of learners with disabilities in Zambia. For instance, unsuitable infrastructure, inadequate learning resources, inadequately trained teachers in special education could all be attributed to inadequate funding by the government. The amount of money spent on education had been declining substantially in real terms to the point that education could account for about 2.5% of the Gross Product (GDP) compared to 5 to 6% in the mid-1980s. UNESCO (1994) suggested that government should increase resources such as funding, teaching, and learning materials in the mainstream when learners with special educational needs are included. Failure by the government to increase these resources due to lack of funding affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*Presentation of the Findings*

To assess how the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school affected their academic performance, data was collected from school administrators, class teachers handling these learners and learners with physical disabilities. The researcher used interviews and focused group discussions to probe from the participants how the challenges affected their academic performance. The effects of these challenges are presented under the following sub-themes namely the

environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges, and financial challenges.

*The effects of the environmental challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The challenges affecting learners with physical disabilities due to the learning environment were difficulty in accessing the common bathrooms, mobility problems due to lack of crutches and wheelchairs, and poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors. The question was administered to the four school administrators to find out how these environmental challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, in terms of the challenge where the learners with physical disabilities had difficulties in accessing the common bathrooms, school administrator A stated that

*This challenge made some learners not to be taking a bath. This affected their health which negatively affected their academic performance as well.*

School administrator B stated that since learners with physical disabilities had difficulties in accessing the common bathrooms, they sorely depended on others for help and there were times when there was no one to help, learners reported late for lessons, and this affected their academic performance.

Concerning the challenge where learners with physical disabilities lacked crutches and wheelchairs school administrator C stated that the lack of this specialized equipment affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities because learners had mobility problems. School administrator D reported that the lack of wheelchairs and crutches increased absenteeism among the learners because of mobility problems which also affected the academic performance of learners.

Concerning the challenge of the poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, school administrator E reported that since there was no good lighting in the classrooms, their studies were affected, and this affected their academic performance as well.

The researcher administered a question to the class teachers to find out how the environmental challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For example, concerning the challenge of accessing the common bathrooms, class teacher A stated that

*Some learners were not bathing, their health was affected, and this negatively affects their academic performance as well.*

Class teacher B said that learners had challenges in the common bathrooms, and this increased diseases in the school, which affected the academic performance of learners.

Concerning the challenge where learners with physical disabilities lacked crutches and wheelchairs. Class teacher C stated that

*Few learners did not have crutches and wheelchairs, their movement was affected as well because they reported late for lessons, as a result, their academic performance was affected.*

On the challenge of the poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, class teacher D stated that poor lighting system affected the learner's studies. Class teacher E responded that a good lighting system in the school environment was key to the learners' success and inadequate lighting systems affected the learner's studies.

The researcher administered a question to the learners with physical disabilities to find out how the environmental challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For example, concerning the challenge where the learners with physical disabilities had difficulties in accessing the common bathrooms, learner A stated that

*Not accessing the common bathrooms affected my health which in turn negatively affected our academic performance.*

Learner B responded that since we faced difficulties in accessing the common bathrooms, we sorely depended on others for help and if there was no one to help, we even reported late for lessons, and this affected our academic performance.

Concerning the challenge where learners with physical disabilities lacked crutches, wheelchairs, and writing equipment. Learner C reported that the lack of this specialized equipment affected our academic performance because we had mobility problems and we reported late for lessons. Learner D reported that lack of wheelchairs, crutches, and writing equipment increased absenteeism among the learners and this affected their academic performance. Learner E explained that

*I reported late for lessons because I have no wheelchair, and this affected my academic performance at school.*

Concerning the challenge of the poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, learner F stated because there was no good lighting in the classrooms, our studies were affected, and our academic performance was affected.

With these empirical pieces of evidence concerning how the environmental challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, it was discovered that the challenges which emanated from the learning environment negatively affected the academic performance of the learners. For example, the challenges resulted in mobility problems among the learners, learners reporting late for lessons, and promoted dependence syndrome on learners. In this case, the environmental

challenges negatively affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*The effects of the attitudinal challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The researcher conducted observation in a grade one class to discover how learners with physical disabilities were affected in terms of the attitude of others towards them. For instance, the researcher observed that learners were neglected by their parents and the school administrators for not being provided with writing equipment especially those who had no fingers they were observed being passive in the classroom because of not having writing equipment. The researcher also observed that the attitude of negligence by parents and the school administrators promoted the dependence syndrome of learners with physical disabilities on other learners who were writing for them, helping them move from one classroom to another because they were not being provided wheelchairs, crutches, writing equipment, and computers.

Based on these empirical pieces of evidence concerning how the attitudinal challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, it was discovered that the attitudinal challenges negatively affected the academic performance of learners in the school. For example, the challenges resulted in passiveness among learners, promoted dependence syndrome on learners, learners reporting late for lessons, learners faced mobility problems, and promoted absenteeism among the learners. In this case, the attitudinal challenges negatively affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*The effects of the institutional challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The institutional challenges which were discovered as having affected learners with physical disabilities in the school were unmodified curriculum, being taught by untrained teachers in special education, and inadequate teaching and learning materials. A question was administered to the school administrators to find out how the institutional challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, in terms of the challenge of the unmodified curriculum, school administrator A reported that

*Learners faced challenges in compulsory questions in Mathematics during the final examination, where candidates without hands or those with cerebral palsy failed to attempt such questions and learners have been losing marks and this affected their academic performance*

School administrator B stated that

*In-Home Economics at grade 9 level, learners with no fingers lost marks in needlework and Home Economics practicals because of dependence on teachers and other*

*non-disabled learners to do the practicals for them and this affected their academic performance.*

Concerning the challenge of being taught by untrained teachers in special education, school administrator C pointed out that

*Because most of the teachers were not trained in special education, they lacked knowledge on certain conditions of disabilities, and they did not have the necessary skills required by learners with physical disabilities and this adversely affected the academic performance of the learners.*

On the challenge of inadequate teaching and learning materials, school administrator D reported that inadequate teaching and learning materials affected the academic performance because some learners had no prescribed books to use in the school and those with writing problems had no writing equipment to use for writing.

The researcher administered a question to the class teachers to find out how institutional challenges affected the academic performance of learners. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For example, concerning the challenge of an unmodified curriculum, class teacher A responded that because the curriculum was not modified, some learners failed to participate in science practicals because the curriculum was rigid.

Concerning the challenge of being taught by untrained teachers in special education, class teacher B stated that since most of the teachers were not trained in special education, they lacked knowledge on certain conditions of disabilities, and they could provide the necessary skills required by learners with physical disabilities. Furthermore, class teacher C reported that some teachers who were not trained in special education were filled with fear as they went to teach the learners with physical disabilities and failed to deliver as expected as a result the academic performance of the learners was affected.

Concerning the challenge of inadequate teaching and learning materials, class teacher D reported that

*Inadequate teaching and learning materials affected the academic performance of learner because learners had no prescribed books to use in the school and those without fingers had no writing equipment, as a result, they depended on class teachers and non-disabled learners to do most of the work for them.*

The researchers administered a question to the learners with physical disabilities to find out how the institutional challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, learner A stated that

*The curriculum was not modified, and we found difficulties in practical subjects and compulsory questions which required the use of both hands.*

Additionally, learner B stated that we were affected in terms of academic performance because the thirty minutes that were added when writing the examination were not enough. After all, we still failed to finish answering all the questions.

Concerning the challenge of being taught by untrained teachers in special education, learner C reported that some teachers were not concerned with our individual needs in the classroom, and this affected our academic performance.

On the challenge of inadequate teaching and learning materials, learner D stated that

*Lack of specialised resources like crutches and wheelchairs affected their mobility in school, as a result, they reported late for lessons.*

Lack of writing equipment promoted the dependence syndrome of learners without fingers on class teachers to be writing for them.

With all these empirical pieces of evidence on how the institutional challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, it was discovered that the institutional challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school. For example, learners lost marks in compulsory and practical subjects during the final examination, some learners were passive in the lessons, the challenges promoted dependence syndrome of learners with physical disabilities on the class teachers and non-disabled learners, teachers who were not trained in special education did not provide the necessary skills required by learners with physical disabilities, there were no writing equipment and prescribed books to be used in the school by the learners. In this case, the institutional challenges negatively affected the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*The effects of the financial challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The financial challenges which were discovered as having affected learners with physical disabilities in the school were high poverty levels among the learners and inadequate funding in the school. The question was administered to the school administrators to find out how the financial challenges affected the learner's academic performance. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, school administrator A stated that

*Because some learners came to school lacking some essential commodities such as pens, books, groceries and pocket money, learners were affected psychologically, especially when they compared themselves with friends who had all the commodities*

School administrator B reported that some learners failed to perform well academically because they were most of the time occupied with the thought of how they were going to survive at school.

Concerning the challenge which emanated from inadequate funding in the school, school administrator C stated that because of inadequate funding in the school, the school failed to purchase some specialized equipment such as wheelchairs and crutches which affected the learners' mobility and academic performance.

The researchers administered a question to the class teacher to find out how the financial challenges affected the academic performance of learners. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, class teacher A said that

*Because of inadequate funding in the school, some learners stay without mobility aids such as wheelchairs and hearing aids which the school did not provide because of inadequate finances, and this affected their academic performance*

Class teacher B pointed out that lack of specialized equipment affected their learning because learners failed to reach the classrooms on time and arrived when the lesson had already started, and this affects their academic performance in the school.

The researchers administered a question to the learners with physical disabilities to find out how the financial challenges affected the academic performance of learners. Their responses reflected the answers to this question. For instance, learner A stated that

*Because of not having money, I stayed without pens and exercise books and performance has not been good.*

Learner B indicated that the performance was not very good because parents could not provide money to buy pens and groceries for the whole term.

Concerning the challenge of inadequate funding in the school, learner C responded that

*My parents have no money to buy me a wheelchair and I always crawl from the hostels to the classrooms daily and this affects my academic performance.*

Basing on the empirical evidence concerning how the financial challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, it was discovered that the challenges affected the academic performance of learners in the school. For instance, the challenges affected the learners psychologically, promoted dependence syndrome of the learner on the school and due to mobility problems, they arrived late for lessons. In this case, the financial challenges negatively affected the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school.

*Suggested measures that can be put in place to address the challenges affecting the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school*

To establish the measures that should be put in place to address the challenges affecting the academic performance of

learners with physical disabilities, data was obtained from the school administrators, class teachers, and learners with physical disabilities. The researcher used interviews and focused group discussions to probe the responses on the measures that should be put in place to address the challenges under the following sub-themes the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges, and financial challenges.

#### *Measures to address the environmental challenges*

Basing on the research findings, the challenges that affected learners with physical disabilities due to the learning environment were difficulty in accessing the common bathrooms, mobility problems due to lack of crutches, wheelchairs, and poor lighting system in the classrooms and corridors.

The researchers administered a question to the school administrators, class teachers, and learners with physical disabilities for them to suggest measures that should be put in place to address the environmental challenges that affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, their responses were reflected in the following statements. For instance, to address the environmental challenges, school administrator A stated that

*The Ministry of General Education should modify the existing school infrastructure for the common bat rooms to suit the needs of learners with physical disabilities in the school and this will lead to improved health among learners and ultimately improved academic performance.*

Class teachers A stated that to address the environmental challenges the school administration should continue maintaining the already existing ramps, rails, paved pathways, and double doors that would promote good movement of learners using wheelchairs in the school environment and eventually improve their academic performance. Class teacher E also suggested that

*Learners with physical disabilities should continue building strong relationships with non-disabled learners so that they continue helping them during their movement and this may help them not report late for lessons and result in improving their academic performance*

Cass teacher B added that the school should engage in fundraising activities to help them purchase important equipment such as wheelchairs and crutches and various learning assistive devices that are very important in ensuring the accessibility to various academic services in school by learners with physical disabilities and this can enable them to perform well academically.

To overcome the environmental challenges learner A suggested that

*The school administration should use the little resources they have to provide writing materials, books and*

*computers in the classrooms, and this can help in improving our academic performance.*

Furthermore, learner C suggested that the school administration should talk to their parents during open days so that they are committed to the provision of mobility aids for us as their children.

The empirical findings of this study have established the measures to address the environmental challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities such as modifying the existing common bathroom infrastructure, maintaining ramps, rails, paved pathways, and double doors to suit their needs, building strong relationships with non-disabled learners, engaging in fundraising activities to find money to purchase wheelchairs and crutches, sensitizing parents on the importance of buying mobility aids for their children during open days and purchasing of learning materials and equipment by the school administration. In this case, the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities would be addressed effectively using among many these measures and these would help learners perform well.

#### *Measures to address the attitudinal challenges*

Basing on the research findings, the attitudinal challenges which were discovered having affected learners with physical disabilities were the attitude of negligence by some parents. Some parents neglected their children because they did not provide wheelchairs, crutches, writing equipment, and computers for them.

The researcher administered a question to the school administrators, class teachers, and learners with physical disabilities to suggest measures that should be put in place to address the attitudinal challenges that affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, their responses were reflected in the following statements. For example, to address the challenge of negative attitude towards the learners by the parents, school administrators suggested that the school should make it a requirement that before admitting a learner with physical disabilities in the school, the parents, guardian, or the sponsor must have all the specialised equipment that was supposed to be used by the learner in the school. It was also suggested by school administrator A that,

*The school should involve itself in fundraising activities to purchase wheelchairs, crutches and writing equipment for the learners.*

To overcome the attitudinal challenges class teacher C suggested that

*Parents should have a positive attitude towards the education of their children by involving well-wishers to help in the procurement of the wheelchairs, crutches and writing equipment such as computers for their children especially those who may not write properly.*

Furthermore, one class teacher also suggested that the school must approach well-wishers to help in the purchase of wheelchairs, crutches, and writing equipment. Class teacher D suggested that parents and school administrators should have a positive attitude towards learners with physical disabilities by providing wheelchairs, crutches, and writing equipment. Class teacher B stated that school administrators should be trained in special education for them to have a positive attitude towards learners with physical disabilities.

To address the attitudinal challenges, learner A who had no wheelchair suggested that

*The school administration should inform my parents as they come for an open day that they should buy for a wheelchair for me.*

The suggested measures which were discovered by this study concerning the attitudinal challenges faced by learners in the school were that school administrators should be trained in the area of special education for them to have a positive attitude, parents and sponsors should buy requirements before admitting a learner with physical disabilities in the school, the school involving itself into fundraising activities to purchase wheelchairs, crutches, and writing equipment, the school should approach Well-Wishers to purchase wheelchairs, crutches and sensitize parents on the importance of buying mobility aids for their children. This implies that the study established the measures to be put in place to address the attitudinal challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities.

#### *Measures to address the institutional challenges*

Basing on the research findings, the institutional challenges which were discovered having affected learners with physical disabilities in the school were unmodified curriculum, being taught by untrained teachers in special education as well as inadequate teaching and learning materials.

The researcher administered a question to the school administrators, class teachers, and learners with physical disabilities for them to suggest measures that should be put in place to address the institutional challenges that affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, their responses were reflected in the following statements. For instance, school administrator A suggested that a modified curriculum was required to suit the needs of learners with physical disabilities. School administrator B suggested that

*The school would involve different stakeholders to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate teaching and learning materials.*

Furthermore, to overcome the institutional challenges, one class teacher suggested that the government through the Ministry of General Education should train and retrain more teachers in special education even those who are trained in areas other than special education and deploy some of them to the special school. To address the challenge of inadequate

teaching and learning materials, class teacher D suggested that it was the duty of the school to ensure that it involves different stakeholders to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate teaching and learning materials.

To curb the challenge of an unmodified curriculum, learner C suggested that

*Since our conditions are different with other learners, we also needed a different curriculum.*

Furthermore, learner B suggested that to address the challenge of untrained teachers in special education, the Ministry of General Education should send teachers with a good attitude to the school to train in special education. Additionally, another learner suggested that the Ministry of General Education should send enough teaching and learning materials to the school for all of us with physical disabilities.

The study discovered that the measures to address the institutional challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school were the need for a modified curriculum, trained teachers in special education as well as provision of teaching and learning materials. In this case, the study established the measures to address the institutional challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities.

#### *Measures to address the financial challenges*

Basing on the research findings, the financial challenges which were discovered having affected learners with physical disabilities were high poverty levels among the learners and inadequate funding to the school.

The researcher administered a question to the school administrators, class teachers, and learners with physical disabilities for them to suggest measures that should be put in place to address the financial challenges that affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school, their responses were reflected in the following statements. For example, school administrator A suggested that parents should be committed to payment of school fees and provision of school commodities for their children. School administrator B suggested that

*The government should be more considerate of the nature of the school by increasing funding to the school.*

To address the challenge of high poverty levels among the learners, class teacher B also suggested that

*Parents should involve themselves in self-help activities like farming and fundraising ventures to raise money for their children at school.*

Furthermore, class teacher A suggested that the school should involve different stakeholders in raising funds for the school.

To overcome the challenge of high poverty levels among the learners, learner D suggested that the Ministry of General Education and Well-Wishers should offer some bursaries to the learners in the school.



The study discovered that the measures to address the financial challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school were that; parents should show commitment by paying school fees and provision of school commodities for their children, the school involving parents and Well-Wishers into self-help activities like farming and other fundraising ventures, government increasing funding to the school and provision bursaries to the learners. In this case, learners with physical disabilities can learn effectively.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the current study discovered the effects of the challenges on the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school. The effects of these challenges will be discussed under the following themes: the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges, and financial challenges.

*The effects of the environmental challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The findings of this study have shown that learners with physical disabilities were affected by the environmental challenges in mobility, in terms of reporting late for lessons and they depended on others for help. This was confirmed in one of the responses from the respondents teacher A which stated that

*Learners did not have crutches and wheelchairs and their movement was affected. They went late for lessons, as a result, their academic performance was affected.*

Similarly, Kabuta (2014) carried out a study on the problems facing learners with physical disabilities in learning institutions in Tanzania. The study found that children with mobility problems needed an adapted environment and classrooms needed to be wheelchair-friendly and compatible. Kabuta (2014) further stated that if the physical layout of the school was not wheelchair-friendly and compatible, the learner faced mobility problems which affected their academic performance. However, the study by Kabuta did not discuss the issue of learners reporting late for lessons and the dependence syndrome on other learners for help, which this study has discovered.

The findings of the study were similar to the theoretical framework of the Social Model of disability by Rieser (2002) on how the environmental challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities because the model stressed how the environmental challenges caused mobility problems among the learners with physical disabilities, although the theoretical framework did not explain how the challenges made the learners report late for lessons and depend on other learners in the school, an issue the current study has unveiled.

With this type of research findings, the researchers feel it was imperative to acknowledge that the environmental challenges

faced by learners with physical disabilities negatively affected their academic performance in the school.

*The effects of the attitudinal challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The findings of this study have shown that learners with physical disabilities were affected by the attitudinal challenges in the school in terms of mobility, they were absent from school, depended on others for help, and being passive in class. This was observed by the researchers during lesson observations. The findings of the current study were in line with research conducted by Nangosi (2014) on the Challenges faced by children with disabilities in Uganda and found that learners with physical disabilities continued facing negative attitudes and stereotypes in the education system from teachers and their fellow learners. Lack of knowledge about and sensitivity to disability issues on the part of some educators, staff, and other learners made it difficult for learners with disabilities to access educational services equally. This negative attitude from educators, staff, and other learners affects their academic performance. However, Nangosi did not highlight how learners were affected for them to produce poor results as discovered by this current study.

The findings of the current study were inconsistent with the theoretical framework of the social model of disability by Rieser (2002) on how the attitudinal challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school which argued that negative attitude affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities, although it did not mention passiveness among learners, dependence syndrome on learners, learners reporting late for lessons and absenteeism among the learners, an issue the current study has focused on.

With all this empirical evidence on the findings of the current study, the researcher's view was that the attitudinal challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school could have been the reason why the learners were affected in mobility, reporting late, absenteeism, being passive in the lessons which resulted in poor performance.

*The effects of the institutional challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The findings of this study have shown that learners with physical disabilities were affected by the institutional challenges in terms of losing marks in compulsory and practical subjects, teachers not providing the necessary skills required by learners, lacked prescribed books, depended on other learners for help, and being passive in the class. This is revealed in one of the responses from school administrator A which indicated that

*There were compulsory questions in subjects like Mathematics at grade 9 and 12, where a candidate*

*without hands or cerebral palsy could not attempt and learners have been losing marks over the years.*

School administrator C said that

*Because most of the teachers were not trained in special education, they lacked knowledge on certain conditions of disabilities, therefore, they failed to provide the necessary skills required by learners with physical disabilities and this adversely affected the academic performance of the learners.*

The findings of the current were similar to a study conducted by Bunch et al (1997) on Resistance and Acceptance: Educator attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities in New York, and found that the curriculum for learners with physical disabilities was not fully modified and implemented and teachers are not willing to adjust their teaching methodologies so that they copy up with the needs of the learners. The study by Bunch et al identified the challenge of the curriculum, which was not modified, and some teachers were not willing to adjust their teaching methodologies but left out the challenge of inadequate teaching and learning materials, which is also one of the challenges the current study has unveiled.

The findings of the study were in agreement with the theoretical framework of the Social Model of disability by Rieser (2002) on how the institutional challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school because the Model highlighted that if the curriculum was not fully modified and implemented, learners were being taught by untrained teachers and there were inadequate teaching and learning materials for learners with physical disabilities, then their academic performance would be affected.

Based on the empirical findings on the institutional challenges and their effects on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities, the researchers' view was that the institutional challenges might have contributed to the learners being affected in terms of losing marks in compulsory and practical subjects, teachers not providing the necessary skills required by learners, lacked prescribed books, depended on other learners for help and being passive in the class.

*The effects of the financial challenges on the academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities in the school*

The findings of this study have shown that learners with physical disabilities were affected by the financial challenges in terms of mobility, depended on others for help, and learners were affected psychologically. As reflected in one of the responses from school administrator A which stated that,

*Because some learners came to school lacking in many essential commodities, this affected them psychologically and their academic performance was affected as well.*

The findings of the current study agreed with a study conducted by Morley (2010) on students with disabilities in learning institutions in Ghana and Tanzania and found that lack of funding in schools affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school. The results showed that schools lacked basic and important facilities such as wheelchairs, crutches, and special support from institutions due to inadequate funding to purchase such equipment. However, Morley (2010) did not highlight how lack of funding in schools affected the learners psychologically which the current study has highlighted.

The findings of the study were like the theoretical framework of the Social Model of disability by Rieser (2002) on how the financial challenges affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school because the Model highlighted how inadequate funding in schools resulted in mobility problems among the learners. Nevertheless, the Model did not highlight how the financial challenges affected learners psychologically, which the current study discovered.

Bearing in mind the findings of the current study, the researcher's point of view was that the financial challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school could have been the reason why the learners were affected in the area of mobility and psychologically, dependent on other learners for help and academic performance.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the effects of challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school in areas namely environmental, attitudinal, institutional, and financial. The study found that learners with physical disabilities were affected by challenges they faced in the school in these areas. The research further found that these challenges negatively affected the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in the school. The research also unveiled the measures that should be put in place to address the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in the school.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. The school should modify the common bathroom infrastructure, curriculum, maintain the existing ramps, rails, paved pathways, and double doors, improve the lighting system in the classrooms and corridors, enroll non-disabled learners as boarders to help the learners with physical disabilities in terms such as mobility.
2. The school to engage into self-help activities like farming and fundraising ventures to raise enough money to be used for procurement of school materials and equipment like computers and provide adequate teaching and learning materials to learners.

3. School administrators should recommend teachers to be trained in special education, counseling services to be offered to both pupils and parents.
4. The government should increase funding to the school and offer bursaries to learners with physical disabilities to help them access education which their human right.
5. Parents should show commitment by paying school fees for their children with physical disabilities.

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