

An Analysis of Factors Influencing Low Enrolment and Retention of Girls with Disabilities in Integrated Primary Schools in Embu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the factors that influenced low enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools. It further explored possible intervention measures that may be employed to mitigate the situation. The study was conducted in selected schools in Runyenjes (Embu East) and Manyatta (Embu North) sub-counties in Embu County. The location was purposely chosen in order to enable the researcher easy access to the respondents. Factors that limit enrollment and retention of girls with disabilities were worth investigating because the government of Kenya provides free primary education for all school going age children although the program does not address fully the education of children with special needs. Questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussion (FGD) were the tools adopted for data collection. The data collected were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed; that is, thematically and frequencies and percentages. Poverty, long distances to school, negative attitude, time wasted by teachers, drug and substance abuse, security, household chores, boy preference, pregnancies and early marriages were the factors established to influence enrollment and retention of girls with disabilities in school.

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Women's education has come a long way. Earlier in Britain, only the daughters of the wealthy had access to education (French, 1990). They mainly learned at home, usually from a governess. Sometimes, they would share a tutor with their brothers at home, until the boys went away, as was customary, to one of the great public schools. Also "a daughter's" prospects would be cheerfully sacrificed to pay an expensive education for the sons: and while there were excellent day schools for boys, there were none for the daughters of the middle and upper classes (French, 1990). Moreover, the context of industrial development, population growth and social concern, the demand for a system of state education, free and fair to all began to grow. As late as the 1860s, there was a general feeling that education for girls in particular was socially and morally dubious as well as being a waste of time and resources. In Africa, however, there was low participation of women in colonial education compared with that of males. Usually, girls were not sent to school, and the few that were, received an education that prepared them neither for equal competition in the job market nor for self-employment in any way that gave them adequate economic independence, dignity or self-esteem. They were employed only as nurses, lady

physicians (not doctors), school mistresses and secretaries. However, even in these selected areas, women were denied access to any position requiring them to exercise authority over men, thus subordination of women in public positions of power and decision making. Education that guaranteed employment in the more prestigious and better paying jobs was exclusively for men and was logically closed up for the women (Robertson, 1986)

However, after the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990, many countries embraced universal education for all (UNESCO, 1996). Kenya was not left behind. This was evident from the various products by the government such as the Koech Report (1999), referred to as “The Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training”(TIQET), which emphasized ways and means of improving access, equity, relevance and quality with special attention to gender sensitivity, groups with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups; the Children’s Bill of Rights (2001) which included education as a right to every child regardless of any kind of distinction; the Persons with Disability Act (2003) which stated that, “No person or learning institution should deny admission to a person with disability to any course of study by reason only of such disability; if the person has the ability to acquire substantial learning in that course, learning institutions should take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities with respect to entry requirements, pass marks, curriculum, examinations, auxiliary services, use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements and other similar considerations.

Studies showed that even the few girls who enrolled in schools were in danger of dropping out than boys (UNESCO, 1996). The low enrolment and high dropout rates of girls was the reason why there was need for the removal of obstacles that hampered girls participation in education all over the world (UNESCO, 1996). A study carried out by the republic of Kenya in 1997 revealed that in Kenya, participation of girls in primary education was very low. According to this study of students entering standard one, only 80 percent of the girls reached standard four and 35 percent entered standard eight (Republic of Kenya, 1997). While these figures referred to students without disabilities, the rates could be even lower for students with disabilities. Hence, there is the need to investigate the situation for the girls with disabilities close to twenty years down the line.

Statement of the Problem

Although the government of Kenya has committed itself to providing education to all school age children regardless of any kind of distinction, special education has not received much attention in terms of enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities. Girls with disabilities are often hidden from the public, and women with disabilities are absent from community activities such as social gatherings and political meetings (Muigai, 1998). A gender analysis report on disability in Kenya noted that disability limited educational opportunities more significantly for women than men, thus their enrolment and retention rates remained low (Mildred, 2002). The information sourced from the offices of the DEO and EARC showed that out of 30,268 girls enrolled in primary schools in Embu County as per 2008, only 219 had the four traditional categories of disabilities, (1) Mentally Handicapped (MH), (2) Physically Handicapped (PH), (3) Hearing Impaired (HI) and (4) Visually Impaired (VI). The number was quite minimal compared to the overall enrolled number of girls. This information clearly pointed to the significant gap between the enrolment and retention rates of girls without disabilities and those with disabilities. Minimal intervention has been undertaken to find out why girls with disabilities continued to register low enrolment rates. Thus, the current study investigated factors that influenced low

enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools in Embu County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to investigate the factors that influence low enrolment rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools in Embu County, explore the factors that influence low retention rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools in Embu County and establish strategies of improving enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools in Embu County.

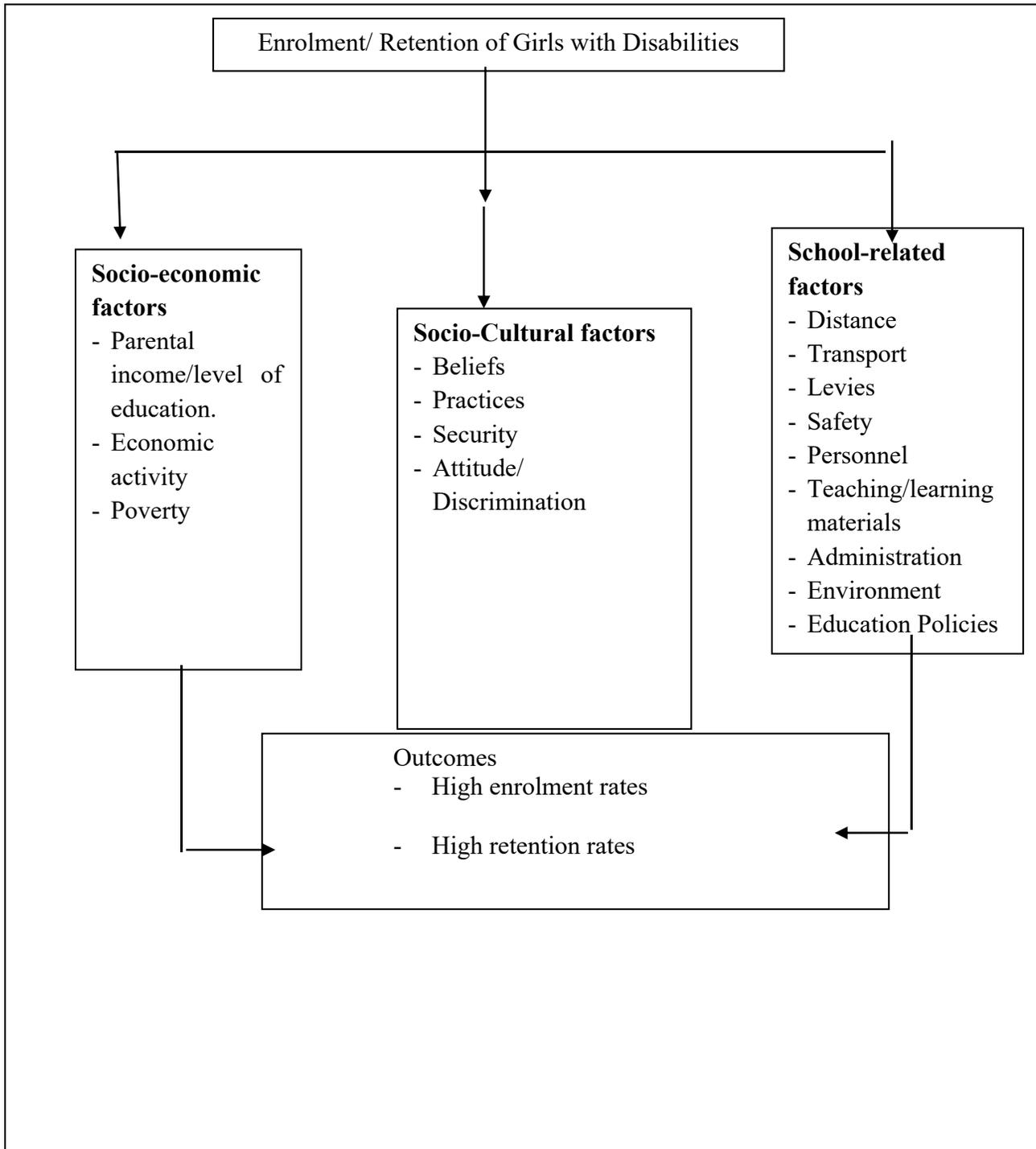
Theoretical Framework

This study was based on a theoretical model of learning by Chinapah Viyagum (1984). The model emphasizes equal rights to education irrespective of any distinctions among children and equal access to different types and levels of education. It urges that children should have equal treatment in terms of teacher behavior as well as teacher learner relationships and interactions. The model identifies school inputs such as teacher education, teacher training, political stability, class size, student-teacher relationship, school facilities, adequacy of teaching materials and resources as well as the school administration as vital factors in participation (enrolment and retention) of pupils in schools. The model summarizes the way the home and school environmental characteristics and processes interact to influence schooling. The home characteristics such as parental socio-economic status together with religious values pre-determine a parent's beliefs and practices as well as attitudes towards education, especially girl child education and more so, the girl child with disabilities. These characteristics determine stereotypes that exist that pre-determine the fears of the parent and the girl's ambition as well as pre-occupation. Parental socio-economic status and home possessions directly influence the home processes such as the parents' support to the school in terms of paying fees, buying books, paying for examinations, feeding programs and so on.

Conceptual Framework

The structural model (see Figure 1) indicated was that the socio-cultural beliefs and practices such as causes of disability, religion, female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriages and attitudes towards persons with disabilities influenced enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools. Furthermore, socio-economic background of the family and the community at large such as parental level of education and income, family size, economic activity, resource availability and allocation such as Community Development Fund (CDF), child Labor influenced enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in schools. The model also indicated the school-related factors such as distance, personnel (staffing and qualifications/training), environment, curriculum, teaching/learning materials and transport levies influenced enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools. The model, therefore, suggested that if the independent variables were geared towards positive influence by means and ways of improving the good ones and eradicating the bad ones, then the outcome would be high enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in schools.

Figure 1: A Conceptual frame work based on the theoretical model of learning.



Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed concentrated basically on factors influencing enrolment of girls with disabilities in schools in Kenya. It focused on cultural beliefs (such as taboos, witchcraft and curses) which are viewed as outcasts (Barasa, 1997), where people with disabilities were seen as cursed, demon possessed and mad, which led to their discrimination. The net effect of this was the tendency by families to hide these children from public to avoid ridicule. Cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages which lead to indiscipline and eventual dropout of school was also reviewed. The legal framework in education, security of these girls to and from school, distance between home and school, availability of teaching and learning facilities for the disabled, the parents' level of education, occupation and income levels were also looked into. Also, information on pedagogical factors such as teacher attitude and classroom dynamics (for instance poor methods of delivery, inefficient teaching, lack of proper qualifications for some teachers handling children with special needs in the integrated programmes, lack of knowledge of the subject matter and lack of commitment of teachers) were reviewed.

Research Methodology

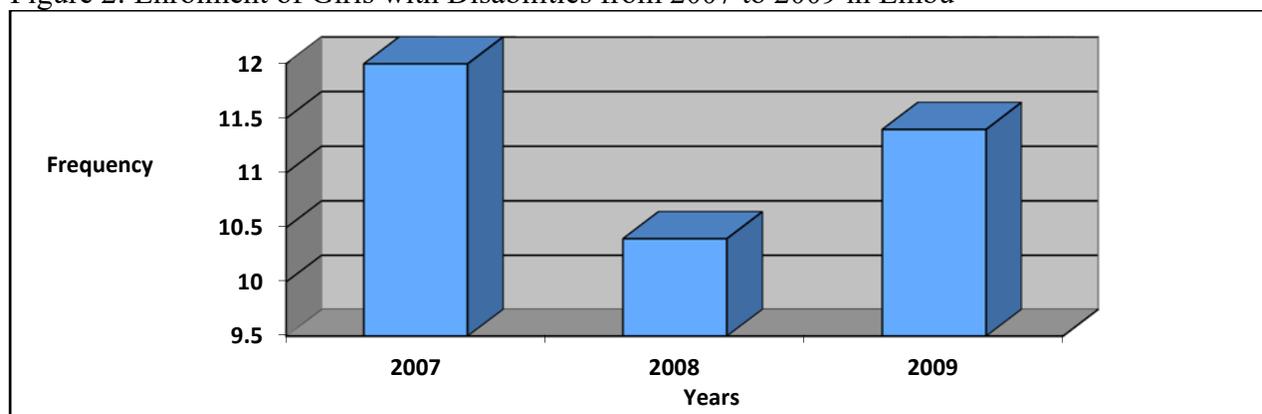
The study was conducted in Runyenjes (Embu East) and Manyatta (Embu North) sub- Counties, Embu County, in Kenya. Descriptive survey was used to determine the causes for the current state of enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in primary schools in Embu. The population comprised 169 learners, 118 teachers, 36 head teachers, and 165 parents from where a sample of 50 respondents was selected. Integrated programs for learners with disabilities in Embu County were stratified in accordance with the four main categories of disabilities namely the MH, PH, VI and HI. Simple random sampling was employed in selecting one program for MH and PH strata while purposive sampling was employed in selecting one program for VI and HI strata respectively. Questionnaires for teachers; interview schedules for head teachers and focus group discussions (FGD) for parents and students were used to collect data. To ensure validity of the instruments, assistance was sought from the supervisors. A Pearson's Product Moment formula for the test re-test was employed to compute the correlation coefficient in order to establish the extent to which the contents of the instruments were consistent in eliciting the same responses every time the instruments were administered. A correlation coefficient of 0.75 was established which was considered high enough to judge the instruments as reliable for the study. Analysis was done using SPSS. Narrative passages, tables and pie charts were then used to convey the findings of the analysis.

Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

This section of the paper presents the results and discussion of the findings of the study. From the results of the study, 29% of the respondents were males while 71% were females. Among the parents who were interviewed, 10 (60%) were married, 4 (21%) separated, single (never married) (7%) divorced (7%), and widowed 5%. Findings on the education level of the parents showed that none of the parents had post-secondary education. The majority of the parents (53%) had primary education level while 5(27%) had secondary education and 3 (20%) had no education at

all. This reveals that illiteracy level in this region is high and therefore the fruits of education may not be known to many parents.

Figure 2: Enrolment of Girls with Disabilities from 2007 to 2009 in Embu



The enrolment of girls with disabilities was 12 in 2007 in the 4 sampled schools. There was a decline of 17% in the enrolment in 2008 whereby only 10 were enrolled as shown in (Figure 4.3) However, in 2009 the number rose to 11 (10%). No reason was given for the sharp decline in enrolment in 2008.

Table 1

Income Generating Activities for Parents of Girls with Disabilities

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	8	46
Business	1	7
Employments (Formal)	3	20
Casual Worker	5	27
Total	17	100

The income generating activities for the parents of girls with disabilities were established that 8 (46%) do farming, 1 (7%) in business, 3 (20%) in formal employment and 5 (27%) in casual Labor. The findings indicate that insignificant number of parents of the girls with disabilities had no formal employment and therefore relied mainly on low income from peasant farming, small business and working in the neighbors' farms as casuals. Such income is not enough to sustain basic domestic requirements like, food, medical expenses and school fees.

Parent Analysis

Parents, 7 (100%), concurred that their level of education, occupation and income were the major factors influencing participation of girls with disabilities in school. Parents with high levels of education struggled to ensure that their children attain better levels of education. They also understood benefits of education. Parents with professional occupations like teaching, masons, and doctors had stable income and could pay school fees for their children. This establishment is in line with an earlier finding by Tyler (1977) that educated parents enrolled their children in school, encouraged them to study by availing relevant and adequate learning materials such as books and ensured completion of their education due to their high income levels, while the case

was not the same for the socio-economically poor parents. Thus, in order to provide equity and quality to all regardless of any kind of social status, the government should make Special Needs Education free in totality.

Table 2

Rates of Children Given Education Priority with inadequate Family Resources

Children	Frequency	Percentage
Boys	12	73
Girls	3	20
Both	1	7
Total	17	100

It was established that, 12 (73%) parents indicated strongly that, when resources were scarce, education of children without disabilities and especially boys would be considered first while 3 (20%) would consider girls with disabilities. However, as indicated (in Table 2), 1 (7%) would consider all children equally at whatever level of resources. The reason for giving boys preference was the belief that girls would leave the parents and get married, while boys would remain in the home to assist and take care of the parents in their old age. A study carried out by Chege & Sifuna (2006) cited the same. The fact that only seven percent (7%) of parents treated all children equally shows that a lot of advocacy is required to change their attitudes towards education for all categories of girls.

Due to the poverty levels of the parents, 14 (85%) were involved in household chores as compared to 3 (15%) who were not. The study established that 7 (42%) of parents did not enroll girls with disabilities deliberately but instead left them at home to do household chores and guard homes as they went about their daily activities. The reason given for not enrolling the girls with disabilities in school was that culturally the place of a woman was at home. It was believed that girls without disabilities would get married while those with disabilities rarely got married since they would not make good wives.

Table 3

Community Attitude towards Girls with Disabilities and their Parents

Attitude (N = 17)	GWD		PARENTS	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Negative	11	64	12	69
Positive	6	36	5	31
Total	17	100	17	100

The study established that 11 (64%) parents were of the view that the community had negative attitudes towards girls with disabilities while 6 (36%) viewed them positively. The study showed that the community had negative attitudes towards parents of girls with disabilities. However, 5 (31%) of the parents said the community had positive attitudes towards them (Tables 4-6). Those who had negative attitudes perceived girls with disabilities and their parents as outcasts, useless or hopeless as illustrated by studies of Barasa (1997) and Otiato (1996) which reported the

negative attitudes by communities towards disability. This study shows that 10 years down the line, the Embu community still holds on such negative attitudes.

Table 4

Community Perception towards Girls with Disabilities

Perception N= 17	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Their parents Frequency	Percentage (%)
Outcasts	10	59	12	71
Useless	5	29	-	-
Hopeless	2	12	5	29
Total	17	100	17	100

The results above clearly show that the perception of the community towards girls with disabilities and their parents was very negative. Of the majority of the parents interviewed, 10 (59%) said that girls with disabilities are viewed as outcasts whose parents had sinned hence they were punished through curse 9 (50%), witchcraft 5 (30%) or taboo 3 (20%) compared to 12 (71%) by the community as well as their own parents. A third of the parents 5 (29%) perceived the girls as useless. Two (12%) felt that the girls were hopeless while 5 (29%) felt the same for the parents.

Table 5

Reasons for Negative Perceptions on Girls with Disabilities

Reason (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Curse	9	50
Witchcraft	5	30
Taboo	3	20
Total	17	100

The results showed that 9 (50%) of the respondents believed in curses, 5 (30%) in witchcraft and 3 (20%) in taboos. The negative attitude towards disability was greatly seen to have influence on the participation of girls with disabilities in school.

Table 6

Parents Perception about themselves for being Parents of Girls with Disabilities

Feeling (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Embarrassed	9	53
Useless and worthless	8	47
Total	17	100

Findings of this study showed that about half 9 (53%) of the parents felt embarrassed of the situation they were in while 8(47%) felt useless and worthless.

Table 7

Impact from the Parents' Negative Perception on Education of Girls with Disabilities

N=17 Response	Frequency	Percentage
Hid the children for fear of ridicule	11	64
Enrolled the children in school	3	18
Viewed the children as useless and worthless	3	18
Total	17	100

The negative perceptions impacted negatively on education of girls with disabilities and made some parents 11 (62%) shy off and hide the children with disabilities from the public since they feared ridicule, 4 (23%) enrolled their girls with disabilities in school while 3 (15%) decided not to take them to school because they viewed them as useless and worthless.

Table 8

Why Girls with Disabilities of "School Going Age" not in School (as noted by teachers)

Response N=12	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fear of ridicule	5	40
Poverty	5	40
Severity of disability	2	20
Total	12	100

Various reasons were given by teachers as to why girls with disabilities of "school going age" were not school; 5 (40%), cited fear of ridicule, 5 (40%) poverty and 2 (20%) severe disabilities. Ridicule leads to discrimination of children, Barasa (1997) and Otiato (1996). Community attitude towards disability and poverty level among parents had been reported by all the four categories of respondents (parents, pupils, teachers and head teachers) as major impediments in enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in school. Muigai (1998), reported that girls with disabilities were hidden from the public and women with disabilities were absent from community activities such as social gatherings and political meetings.

Table 9

Place of Women in the Society

Place (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Home attendant	12	69
Outside the home	5	31
Total	17	100

Although this study established that the place of women in Embu community was considered in the home (as shown by 12 (69%) respondents), 5 (31%) felt that the trend was changing whereby today some women are being involved in activities outside the home such as formal employment, political involvement, business among others. From these findings, an affirmative action may be introduced to compel parents with girls with disabilities to enroll them in school when they attain school age.

Table 10

Security of Girls with Disabilities to, at and from School

Place (N = 17)	Type of Insecurity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To and from school	Defilement /rape	15	90
	Others	2	10
At School	Sexual harassment	12	67
	Bulling	5	33

Parents highly attributed the participation of girls with disabilities in primary education on safety. About 15 (90%) of the parents felt that the girls with disabilities were insecure because they risked being defiled while on the way to and from school while 2 (10%) feared other forms of abuse like harassment or bullying (Table 10). The girls were also not safe in school as revealed by the parents interviewed. (Table 12) shows that 12 (67%) were sexually harassed while 5 (33%) complained of the girls with disabilities being bullied in school. The sexual harassment was associated with male teachers, school boys and other male workers. However, bullying was mainly done by male pupils.

Distance Between Home and School

Distance to school was one of the concerns by 60% of parents as a factor affecting enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities. A number of parents (27%) attributed it to communication, 7% type of school and 6% to severity of disabilities. This was because most of the integrated programs were quite distanced from one another ranging from two (2 km) to ten (10km). Some of the girls with disabilities could not walk to and from school alone and they had to be accompanied by their parents or siblings. Parents found it difficult to take their children to and from school every day due to the fact that they still needed to fend for the family.

The above finding concurs with earlier studies carried out by Hertz (1991) who established that in Ghana and Egypt, long distances to primary schools deterred girls' participation in education but not boys. The study showed that, some areas of Embu County had, and still have transportation hitches since most roads were not all weather friendly. This meant that even where the parents could afford fare for their children, there were no vehicles making them to remain at home. Bringing schools closer to villages will reduce distance covered and encourage more potential girls with disabilities to enroll. Parents who were economically endowed took their girls with disabilities to boarding schools and small homes.

Table 11

Policy Guidelines Awareness by Parents

Awareness (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	7	39
Unaware	10	61
Total	17	100

The analysis showed that only 7 (39%) of the parents were aware of the policy guidelines in the education of learners with special needs as compared to 10 (61%) who were not aware. This lack of awareness could be a major contributor for low enrolment of girls with disabilities who have

attained school going age. Of parents interviewed, 9 (54%) confessed that they were aware of cases of girls with disabilities of school going age but were not in school.

Table 12

Reasons for not taking Girls with Disabilities to School

Reason (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Shame and ridicule	10	59
Ignorance	3	18
Useless and hopeless	2	12
Poverty	2	11
Total	17	100

From the above results, 10 (59%) cited fear of shame and ridicule due to the negative attitude towards disability by the community, 3 (18%) ignorance, 2 (12%) viewed girls with disabilities as useless and hopeless hence no need to educate them. These parents need to undergo some seminars to realize that children with disabilities are still useful. According to Table 12, some parents (2; 11%) attributed their decision not to educate girls with disabilities to level of poverty in the area. Education facilities for girls with disabilities should be free so that even poor parents can access them for their children.

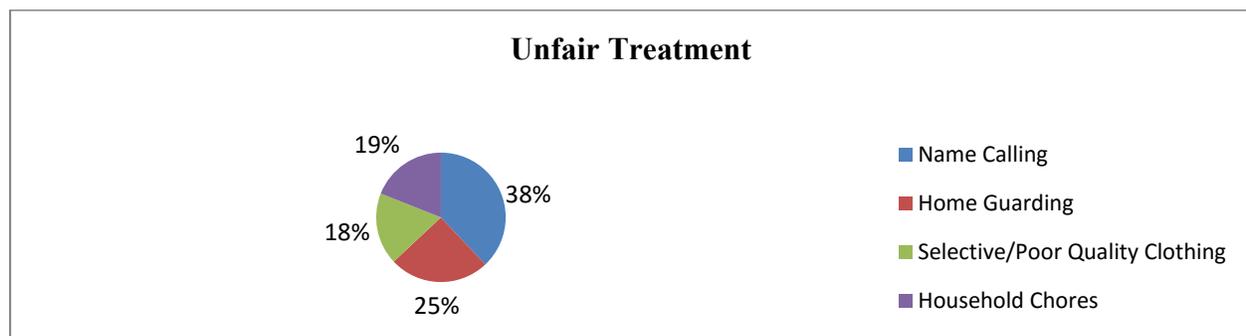
Table 13

Learners Family Characteristics

Type of family (N=17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monogamous	11	63
Single parent	5	32
Polygamous	1	5
Total	17	100

Most of learners interviewed 11 (63%), came from monogamous families compared to 5 (32%) single parent family and 1 (5%) polygamous family. Polygamous families are sometime unstable and can affect children education; however such family setups are rare in Embu. Most of the learners 15 (89%) had their parents alive, while only 2 (11%) had no parents.

Figure 3: Level of Unfair Treatment of GWD by Families



Analysis of learners further showed that children with disabilities are not treated equally as other children. Of the interviewed learners, 7 (42%) indicated that girls with disabilities were treated unfairly. The unfair treatment included abuse such as, name calling consisting of 6(38%) of the respondents), home guarding and household chores contributing 4(25%) and 3(19%) respectively. On discrimination, 18% of the learners cited that when parents bought clothes for the family, those with disabilities would either not be bought any at all, bought fewer and or of low quality. The level of discrimination for children with disabilities as reported by learners in this study is very saddening. This concurs with Barasa (1997) and Otiato (1996) studies that people with disabilities were seen as cursed, demon possessed and mad, which led to their discrimination.

Table 14
Disability as a Hindrance to Participation in School for Girls with Disabilities

Hindrance (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Had to be taken to school	3	15
Distance	4	23
Speech problem	3	15
Hearing problem	3	15
Abuse (lack of concentration)	3	19
Not able to perform extracurricular activities	2	13
Total	17	100

From Table 14 above, 15 (86%) of the learners who participated in the FGD felt that disabilities hindered participation in education. They cited cases as: children with disabilities had to be taken to school (15%), others could not walk long distances (23%), some had speech problems (15%), while others had hearing problems (15%), were continually abused hence lacked concentration (19%) and could not perform some extra-curriculum activities (13%). It is not practical for members of the family members to be supporting the girls with disabilities to school daily, thus affecting the levels of enrolment and retention in education.

Table 15
Income Generating Activities to Meet Children's Education

Means	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	12	72
Casual work	3	16
Business	1	6
Livestock sale	1	6
Total	17	100

Learners who took part in the study said that their parents met their educational needs through income generated from farming enterprise 12 (72%), engaging in casual work 3 (16%), doing some business 1 (6%) and income from sale of livestock (6%) (Table 15). These are carried out on subsistence level while the small percentage grown for commercial, the revenue fetched from it cannot meet the school fees requirements and purchase devices such as wheelchairs, glasses, hearing aids and white cane for the girls with disabilities. So, parents of children with disabilities have no resources to cater for their children's school fees and other necessities. This finding is in

agreement with that of Nkinyangi (1980) who observed that the inability of the family to pay the cost of education led to early withdrawals from school and that girls and especially girls with disabilities were the major victims.

Special Unit Teacher Involvement in Teaching the Regular Classes

It was established from learners (67%) that the arrangements in the schools was that, special unit teachers also taught the regular classes. So when the special unit teacher was not in class, the learners with disabilities in the special unit were left alone 5 (30%), told to play outside 5 (30%), told to go home 2 (10%), asked to join the regular classes 2 (10%) or left with another teacher 3 (20%).

School Environment for Girls with Disabilities

Most girls with disabilities (10; 59%) were happy with the school environment, terming it as disability friendly as compared to 7 (41%) who felt otherwise. However, 41% respondents were unhappy with the school environment due to inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate facilities and lack of equipment.

Distance to School from Home

According to the learners interviewed, schools were situated at average distance of three kilometers from the pupil's homes (standard deviation of two kilometers). The furthest learners (although very few) were ten (10) kilometers away from the schools. Just like parents report, the long distances to schools are challenges to girls with disabilities who have to walk or be taken to school by parents. All head teachers were in agreement that the integrated primary schools were located faraway and much distanced from girls with disabilities homes and that those who went to school walked an average distance of 3.4km to and from school. This distance was too long for a person with severe disabilities and therefore limited girls with disabilities who were potential learners from enrolment.

Table 16

Types of Insecurity Faced by Girls with Disabilities

Danger (N = 17)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Drug Abusers	11	67
Crossing Rivers	6	33
Total	17	100

According to the learners interviewed, 10 (58%) noted that it was not safe to walk alone to and from school as compared to 7 (42%) who thought otherwise. The dangers expressed included fear of being attacked by drug abusers on the way 11 (67%). The drugs included miraa, alcohol and bhang. The other 6 (33%) feared crossing rivers (Table 16). The insecurity factor influenced participation in education. Parents were not sure whether to leave the girls with disabilities to go to school on their own, whether to accompany them or whether to let them remain at home altogether.

Table 17

Bullying in School

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	47
No	9	53
Total	17	100

The study established that in the 4 (100%) sampled schools, 8 (47%) girls with disabilities were bullied or sexually harassed as reported by learners. However, some learners 9 (53%), did not report any cases of bullying. The girls were harassed by the boys (88%) and school workers (12%) according to learner's analysis. However, whenever the harassment cases were reported to the school management, the administration responded positively. The culprits were either punished 10 (60%), cautioned against it 1 (7%) or created awareness 6 (33%) on living in harmony with girls with disabilities. This is a good indication that management has set up mechanisms for improving retention of girls with disabilities through penalty imposed on bullying offenders in schools.

Table 18

School Administration Response to Bullying

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Punished	10	60
Cautioned against it	1	7
Created awareness on the need to live in harmony with GWD	6	33
Total	17	100

Table 19

Rating of School Administration by Learners

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Quite Good	12	71
Fair	2	11
Without Compassion	3	18
Total	17	100

The administration's treatment for girls with disabilities was termed as quite good as reported by 12 (71%), while some termed it fair (2; 11%). A few learners (3; 18%) however reported that school administration had no compassion toward girls with disabilities. Learners (11; 67%) had a feeling that their teachers wasted a lot of class time in the staffroom as compared to 6 (33%) who said that their teachers don't waste time. This (67%) concurs with an earlier study by UNICEF (1998) that teachers wasted pupil's time in the staffroom chatting or doing other things while the classes remained untaught and the syllabus uncovered. For those who did not like their schools and the teachers, the reason given was that some teachers did not know how to handle some disability cases such as the HI.

Table 20

Learners Policy Guidelines Awareness

Response (N = 17)	Policy Awareness	Awareness of girls with disabilities of school going age and are not in school (%)
Yes	47	67
No	53	33
Total	100	100

About 8 (47%) of learners were aware of the government policy on the rights of children, education included. The remaining 9 (53%) were not aware. The majority 11 (67%) of the learners were aware of girls with disabilities of school going age and were not in school and 6 (33%) did not know.

Table 21

Areas of Training for Teachers

Area of Specialization (N = 12)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
MH	1	9
PH	4	33
Inclusive Ed.	7	58
Total	12	100

The areas of specialization as per teacher's training in the sampled schools were as follows: MH 1(19%); PH 4(33%) and Inclusive Education 7 (58%) as indicated in (Table 4.31). According to the findings, all the 4 schools (100%) had at least 1 teacher trained to handle learners with special needs. Areas of specialization were mental retardation (MH), Learning Disabilities (LD) and Inclusive Education (IE). The head teachers indicated that there were times when they experienced shortage of teachers both for regular and special needs classes. The head teachers' information revealed that schools have some capacity to handle all children's needs and therefore low enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities could not be associated with SNE teachers. The substantial number of teachers trained in special needs shows that schools in the areas have capacity to handle girls with disabilities. So, the low enrolment and retention could not be attributed to lack of trained teachers but could be because of other factors like attitude, poverty and insecurity

Table 22

Assessment of School Environment by Teachers

Environment Status in Schools	Frequency	Percentage
Friendly	9	71
Unfriendly	3	29
Total	12	100

In this study, 9 (71%) of teachers felt that school environment was friendly to girls with disabilities as opposed to 3 (29%) who felt it was not friendly. The only issue raised by teachers in the schools was lack of essential amenities such as special toilets and pathways for the PH. Some degrees of physical disabilities require special facilities like toilets and chairs modified to

their comfort without which these parents hesitate to enroll their children in school where such facilities lack.

Table 23

Assessment of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teachers in Schools

Learning Materials	Frequency	Percentage
Enough	6	50
Not enough	6	50
Total	12	100

The above table shows that 6 (50%) of teachers did not have enough teaching and learning materials. They therefore felt that this negatively influenced enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools.

Table 24

Reasons for Administrators' Inability to Girls with Disabilities in the Schools

Response (N=12)	Frequency	Percentage %
Over relied on special meetings resolutions	4	33
Lacked knowledge on special cases	4	33
Greed for money	4	34
Total	12	100

Out of all the teachers interviewed, 6 (50%) condemned the administration saying that it was not effective in handling children with special needs especially girls with disabilities. The reasons they gave were rated as follows: (33%) were of the view that the administration over relied on special meeting resolutions for various decision making, while (33%) felt the administration lacked knowledge on special cases and (34%) said the administration had greed for money. This meant that when the administration received money from the government, donors or any other sources for improvement of special needs education (SNE) in their schools; they usually spent it on other things rather than living up to the expectations of the money providers' objectives. It was noted that none of the school administrators sampled for the study had training in special needs education.

Table 25

Awareness of Policy Guidelines

Response (N = 12)	Frequency	Percentage %
Aware	7	62
Unaware	5	38
Total	12	100

The study found that, 7(62%) teachers were aware of policy guidelines on the education of learners with disabilities as opposed to only 5(38%) who were not aware. However, out of the 12 teachers, nine (79%) noted that these guidelines were not being implemented by schools. More than a half of the teachers 7(57%) interviewed said they were aware of cases of girls with disabilities of school-going age who were not enrolled in school.

Cultural Factors

Half of the head teachers (50%) pointed out that negative attitudes towards disability both by parents and the community has adversely affected enrolment of girls with disabilities in schools. The negative attitude was due to the causes associated with disability, some of which were cited as witchcraft, curse or taboo. This kind of community attitude was reported by Barasa (1997) and Otiato (1996) and over ten years later the communities still associate disability with taboos, witchcraft and curses. This contributes to the parents of children with disabilities shying off and hiding their children from public for fear of ridicule. The perception has not changed despite interventions by government, NGOs, churches and ministry of education among others pointing out that disability is not inability.

Table 26

Cultural Factors that Affected Enrolment of Girls with Disabilities in School

Factor (N = 12)	Frequency	Percentage %
Ignorance	3	27
Lack of value attachment to education	4	30
Safety/security	5	43
Total	12	100

According to the teachers involved in the study, cultural factors that affected participation of girls with disabilities in education were: lack of value attachment to education of girls with disabilities, 4 (30%), safety stood at 5 (43%) and ignorance was rated 3 (27%) as indicated in (Table 4.32). Negative attitudes towards girls with disabilities were an impediment to enrolment since the community had not seen the need to educate girls. Rape at which was 80% for girls with disabilities was cited as the major cause of insecurity. Any effort to address insecurity on the way and at school for girls with disabilities and positive change by community on perception towards disability will definitely improve enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools.

Household Chores /Home Guards

Due to negative attitudes towards disability in the community, there was lack of value attached to the education of girls with disabilities. One (30%) head teacher said that parents of girls with disabilities therefore, let them remain at home and involved them in household chores as indicated in (Figure 4.4). They were also involved in household chores, including washing utensils, cooking, guarding homes and looking after younger siblings among others. Many studies have shown that parents use their daughters for household chores at the expense of their education (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). One (20%) head teacher revealed that the girls with disabilities were just let to stay at home because they were thought to be worthless and useless. The reason given as to why parents considered them worthless and useless was attributed to traditional beliefs that the place of a woman was taking care of the family. The parents of girls with disabilities felt that their girls with disabilities would never be married due to their conditions hence, no need to educate them.

Lack of Qualified Personnel

All the four schools in the study had at least one teacher trained to handle children with special education needs as reported by head teachers. This agrees with teachers' results as reported

earlier in this study. However, the areas of specialization did not match the varying types of disabilities in some cases. Those teachers trained in special education were either for MH or LD. This resulted in little or no enrolment for those children suffering from HI, VI, and Emotional Disturbance. By training teachers widely to cover the above areas will encourage more girls with disabilities to enroll because their needs are met and can receive better attention.

School Levies

The head teachers reported that parents of children with special needs were required to pay some levies to school when enrolling them. The PH who resided in the small homes were required to pay for boarding facilities and maintenance. Those in special units were also required to pay for meals but, some parents were unable to meet the charges due to their social economic standing. This meant that their children remained at home.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy was mentioned by head teachers (80%) as a cause of school drop out for girls and more so girls with disabilities. Some of the pregnancies were as a result of sexual harassment/abuse to and from school, at school and voluntary sex. Voluntary in the sense that these learners come from poor families and can easily be lured with money by their teachers and other school boys or men within the community.

Summary of Findings

Parents' Education and Enterprises

Education level among parents of the girls with disabilities in this study was found to be low. Few parents had primary education or secondary education. Even some had no formal education at all. In terms of economic activities, farming, business, formal employment and casual labor workers were established as the sources of income for the parents in the region. Therefore, parents of girls with disabilities were uneducated and also poor. Such factors can contribute negatively to enrolment and retention.

Security of Girls with Disabilities

Security to and from school were reported by parents, learners, teachers and head teachers as not very good for girls with disabilities. Cases of sexual harassment and abuse to and fro and at school were common which has resulted into poor enrolment because of fear by parents and girls with disabilities themselves.

Poverty and Priority Strategies in Embu County

Poverty level among parents of girls with disabilities versus levies demanded by head teachers in schools contributed significantly to low rates of enrolment and retention in schools in the region. Poverty was as a result of low income of parents who lacked good education to secure better paying jobs. The parents who were interviewed said that when resources were scarce, education of children without disabilities and especially boys was given priority. This was echoed by learners and teachers, who cited poverty among parents as the main setback in enrolment of girls with disabilities. According to the head teachers, some parents were unable to meet the charges due to their social economic standing.

Distance to School

According to the findings, learners in the study were of the view that some potential learners lived as far away as 1.5 to 10 km, while the teachers said they lived 1 -5km away and the head teachers felt they lived 2 – 5km away from the potential primary school for enrolment. Long distances combined with disability among these learners posed challenges in their bid to enroll and remain in schools. . If boarding facilities could be available in schools or any arrangement to transport girls with disabilities to schools or providing them with wheelchairs the problem of long distance will be lighter and this will encourage enrolment and sustain it. This finding is in concurrence with an earlier study by Hertz (1991), that distance deters girls' participation in education but not boys. This finding is in agreement with earlier studies by UNICEF (1998) which observed that the proximity and access to primary education was a predetermining factor to participation in primary education.

Shortage of Teachers and School Environment

Shortages, time wasting and incompetence of some teachers in charge of girls with disabilities were mentioned as factors contributing to low enrolment. School environment was mentioned as another factor affecting enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools. According to the findings, the environment in schools was not friendly to girls with disabilities although majority of learners liked their schools and teachers.

Culture and Attitude among Parents and the Community

Negative attitude towards disability by both parents and community were seen as having adversely affected enrolment of girls with disabilities in schools. The community associated disability to witchcraft, curses and taboos. The results showed that community had negative attitude towards girls with disabilities and their parents as well. Some parents shied off and hid the children with disabilities from the public. Therefore, cultural belief attached to disability is one of the factors contributing to low enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools.

Unequal Treatment among Children

The unfair treatment included abuse, name calling, home guarding while able brothers and sisters have gone to school. The learners cited that when parents bought clothes for the family, those with disabilities would either not be bought any at all, bought fewer and or of low quality. Unequal treatment among children with and without disabilities is contributing to low enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools. Those with disabilities felt discriminated upon and therefore suffered from low self-esteem.

Household Chores/Home Guards

Girls with disabilities were involved in household chores at the expense of learning. Parents deliberately did not enroll their daughters with disabilities in school and instead left them at home to do household chores as well as guard homes. Head teachers said that parents of girls with disabilities normally left them at home and involved them in child Labor like washing utensils, cooking, guarding homes, and looking after their younger siblings, among others.

Pregnancies

Pregnancy was a cause of school drop out for girls and so girls with disabilities to some extent while drop out was attributed for early marriage and therefore both thoroughly affects retention in school for girls with disabilities. Some of the pregnancies were as a result of sexual harassment/abuse to and from school, at school and voluntary sex. Imposing therefore, heavy penalty to the culprits especially those who forcefully impregnates girls with disabilities will be the only way out to improve retention.

Conclusion

The study established various factors contributing to low enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in schools. The factors were low education status among parents of girls with disabilities, insecurity on the way to and at school for girls and women with disabilities, high level of poverty in the region among parents, prioritization of boy child education over girl child education, long distances to schools making it impractical for girls with disabilities, class time wastage and lack of skills by some teachers to handle girls, culture and attitude among parents and community towards disabilities, unequal treatment among abled children and those with disability, child labor among girls with disabilities and finally pregnancy, some through rape and forced marriages.

Recommendations

There is a need for more intervention to teach and advocate for equality in education access among all children in the community and at household level. There should be some organized learning forum in the community purposely for change of attitude so as to eradicate the community's perception of disabilities associated with a curse, bad omen or sin. The government may come up with a program to provide facilities like wheelchair and other supportive equipment so as to improve girls with disabilities mobility for them to easily access schools without having to be supported or guided by parents or siblings. Provision of boarding facilities would address mobility issues. Affirmative action should be introduced to compel parents with girls with disabilities to enroll them in school when they attain school age. The girls with disabilities are vulnerable group which needs maximum support from the parents, community and the government. Policies touching on child abuse if reinforced in this region would really protect girls with disabilities and eventually give them opportunities in education.

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