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EFFECTIVENESS OF INCLUSIVE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS LIVING WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN KAKUMA REFUGEE-CAMP TURKANA, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of the inclusive school environment on the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments in public comprehensive schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Inclusive Education Theory and adopted a mixed-methods approach using a convergent research design. The target population comprised 21 public comprehensive schools, 957 learners with physical and visual impairments, 116 teachers, 21 heads of institutions, and one Quality Assurance and Standards Officer in Kakuma Refugee Camp. A sample of 19 schools, 282 learners, 90 teachers, 19 heads of institutions, and one Quality Assurance and Standards Officer was selected using stratified, simple random, purposive, and census sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides, observation guides, and document analysis schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated a positive relationship between the inclusive school environment and academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments, with a correlation coefficient of $r = .648$. Where

regression analysis was used, the coefficient of determination was $R^2 = .420$, indicating that the inclusive school environment explained approximately 42.0% of the variation in academic performance. The findings suggest that strengthening inclusive school environments may contribute to improved academic performance among learners with physical and visual impairments in public comprehensive schools in refugee settings. The study therefore recommends strengthening inclusive practices, accessibility, teacher support, and school-level mechanisms that promote the effective participation and learning of learners with disabilities.

Keywords: *Inclusive School Environment; Academic Performance; Physical Impairments; Visual Impairments; Inclusive Education*

1.0 Introduction

Inclusive school environment refers to the overall conditions within which teaching and learning take place, encompassing the physical, instructional and social dimensions of schooling. It includes factors such as the accessibility of school infrastructure, teaching and learning practices, availability of appropriate learning materials, and the quality of interpersonal relationships within the school community (UNESCO, 2021). An inclusive school environment accommodates the diverse needs of learners by identifying and removing barriers that may limit their participation, engagement and learning (UNICEF, 2022; World Bank, 2020). Thus, inclusivity extends beyond physical access to schools to include appropriate instructional practices, supportive relationships and an environment in which all learners feel accepted, safe and valued. Learners with disabilities comprise diverse groups, including those with physical impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and other functional limitations (WHO, 2021). This study focused specifically on learners with physical and visual impairments because these learners require particular physical, instructional and social accommodations to participate effectively in teaching and learning. Learners with physical impairments may require accessible classrooms, pathways, sanitation facilities, furniture and other assistive provisions, while learners with visual impairments may require appropriate learning materials, assistive technologies, adapted instructional resources and supportive teaching approaches. Such provisions are essential in creating learning environments that are accessible, adaptive and responsive to the educational needs of learners with disabilities (UNESCO, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2023).

Academic performance refers to the extent to which learners achieve the expected educational outcomes. It may be reflected through assessment outcomes, classroom participation, attendance, progression and retention (World Bank, 2021). In the present study, academic performance was assessed primarily using learners' assessment outcome scores, including school-based assessments and relevant competency-based assessments. For learners with physical and visual impairments, academic performance may be influenced not only by individual learning abilities but also by the extent to which the school environment provides appropriate opportunities and support for participation and learning (Nampamba & Nakabugo, 2021). When schools provide accessible infrastructure, responsive instructional practices, appropriate learning resources and supportive social relationships, learners with disabilities are more likely to participate actively in learning and demonstrate their academic potential. Conversely, inadequate environmental support may create barriers to participation, reduce engagement and contribute to absenteeism and poor academic outcomes (UNICEF, 2021).

The social dimension of the inclusive school environment is particularly important in shaping the academic involvement and performance of learners with physical and visual impairments. While physical infrastructure and instructional practices provide the necessary conditions for

access and participation, the quality of social interactions within the school community can influence learners' sense of belonging, confidence, motivation and engagement in learning activities. A supportive social environment can promote acceptance, safety, mutual respect and meaningful participation among learners with disabilities. Conversely, negative attitudes, social exclusion, discrimination, bullying or limited interaction with peers and teachers may discourage participation and undermine learners' educational experiences. In this study, the social dimension of the inclusive school environment was considered in terms of teacher–learner relationships and learner–learner relationships. Teacher–learner relationships encompass the extent to which teachers demonstrate respect, encouragement, understanding, fairness and willingness to support learners with physical and visual impairments. Positive teacher–learner relationships can enhance learners' confidence, motivation and willingness to participate in classroom activities. Similarly, learner–learner relationships concern the extent to which peers accept, support and interact positively with learners with disabilities. Supportive peer relationships can promote social inclusion, cooperation, belonging and active participation in school activities. Therefore, an inclusive school environment should be understood as a multidimensional construct comprising physical, instructional and social dimensions. The social dimension, particularly teacher–learner and learner–learner relationships, represents an important component of this broader environment. The interaction of these dimensions can influence the extent to which learners with physical and visual impairments participate in school activities, experience a sense of belonging and achieve their educational potential. The present study therefore examined the influence of the inclusive school environment on the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments in public comprehensive schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite government investment and policies guaranteeing inclusive education, academic performance among learners with physical and visual impairments in Kakuma Refugee Camp remains disproportionately low. National frameworks, including the 2010 Constitution, guarantee the right to basic education for all learners, yet implementation remains weak in marginalized, arid regions such as Turkana. Learners with disabilities in this area are severely underrepresented due to inaccessible facilities and pervasive stigma (Akinyi, 2025; Verheyden, 2025). The Kenya Institute of Special Education (2021) found that only 30% of public schools are equipped with infrastructure to support learners with disabilities, severely limiting access. Inclusive Futures (2022) revealed that 40% of learners with disabilities reported discrimination and social exclusion in schools, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive teacher training in Special Needs Education (SNE). Relief Web (2023) further documented a critical shortage of specialized educational materials, noting that only 15% of surveyed schools had access to assistive devices such as Braille, which hinders participation and performance. Although these studies highlight infrastructural gaps, social exclusion and shortages of instructional resources, they report challenges in isolation and do not analyze their combined effect in refugee contexts. Learners with physical and visual impairments in Kakuma Refugee Camp continue to face diminished academic confidence, poor psychosocial well-being, and limited future opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. Little research had examined how different factors of inclusive school environment: infrastructure, teacher preparedness, inclusive social environment and instructional materials interact to influence academic performance in Kakuma. This study therefore sought to investigate the

influence of inclusive school environment on the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To determine the influence of inclusive social environment on academic performance of learners living with Physical impairment and visual impairment in Kakuma refugee-camp Turkana, Kenya

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study may be significant to the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) by providing empirical evidence to support inclusive education policies, resource allocation, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The findings may also inform strategies for addressing teacher shortages and improving the deployment of adequately prepared teachers in schools serving learners with physical and visual impairments. The study may inform teacher trainers, teacher education institutions and universities about the competencies required for effective teaching in inclusive school environments. The findings may support the integration of differentiated instruction, adaptive teaching strategies and inclusive classroom management into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, thereby strengthening teacher preparedness and instructional delivery. Heads of Institutions may use the findings to improve school leadership, planning and resource utilization in support of inclusive education. The study may provide guidance on appropriate infrastructural adjustments, inclusive social practices and interventions that promote learner participation, equitable access and improved academic performance among learners with physical and visual impairments. Teachers may benefit from practical insights into learner-centered and inclusive instructional approaches. The findings may promote the use of differentiated teaching, adaptive instructional materials, responsive classroom management and collaboration with relevant specialists. These practices may enhance learner engagement, participation and academic achievement.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Inclusive Education Theory. It was developed and articulated by Ainscow, Dyson and Booth in 1994. The theory gained global recognition following the 1994 Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, which emphasized that regular schools should accommodate all learners, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties and diverse backgrounds. Inclusive Education Theory is grounded on the principle that learning barriers are created more by the inclusive school environment than by the learners with disabilities themselves. Ainscow and Booth (1994) argued that meaningful inclusion occurs when schools transform their physical spaces, teaching methods, policies and attitudes to become flexible and responsive to diverse needs rather than expecting learners to adapt to rigid systems.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a **convergent mixed-methods research design**, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the study, analyzed separately and subsequently integrated during interpretation. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain both numerical evidence and contextual explanations regarding the influence of the inclusive school environment on the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments. Quantitative data provided measurable evidence of the relationship between the inclusive school environment and academic performance, while qualitative data provided deeper explanations of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the extent to which the school environment supported the participation and learning of learners with physical and visual impairments. The integration of the two strands of data enhanced the comprehensiveness of the findings.

1.5 Target Population

The study targeted **957 learners with physical and visual impairments** enrolled in 21 public comprehensive schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana County, Kenya. These learners were targeted because they were directly affected by the accessibility of school facilities, instructional practices, learning resources and social interactions within the school environment. The study also targeted **116 teachers**, comprising both teachers trained in Special Needs Education (SNE) and regular teachers. The teachers were included because they directly participated in teaching, supporting and assessing learners with diverse educational needs.

The 21 comprehensive schools were included because they served learners with disabilities within the context of inclusive education and provided the institutional setting in which the inclusive school environment and academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments could be examined. The study also involved heads of institutions and the relevant Quality Assurance and Standards Officer to obtain administrative and professional perspectives concerning the implementation of inclusive education in the schools.

1.6 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Stratified random sampling was used to select **19 schools from the 21 comprehensive schools** in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The schools were stratified to ensure appropriate representation before random selection was undertaken. Within the selected schools, learners with physical and visual impairments were selected using an appropriate random sampling procedure to obtain the required sample. Teachers were selected to include both teachers trained in Special Needs Education and regular teachers who taught and supported learners with disabilities. Heads of institutions were selected purposively because of their administrative responsibilities and knowledge of the implementation of inclusive education within their respective schools. Where the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer was the only officer responsible for the relevant schools, census sampling was used.

The final sample comprised **19 schools, 282 learners with physical and visual impairments, 90 teachers, 19 heads of institutions and one Quality Assurance and Standards Officer**. The combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques was appropriate because different categories of participants required different approaches based on their roles and characteristics within the study.

1.7 Data Collection Instruments

Multiple instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. These included **questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, observation guides, classroom observation checklists and document analysis schedules**. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the selected participants, while in-depth interviews provided qualitative information on participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the inclusiveness of the school environment. Observation guides and classroom observation checklists were used to obtain first-hand information on the physical, instructional and social conditions within the schools and classrooms. Document analysis schedules were used to examine relevant school records and documents relating to learners' academic performance and the implementation of inclusive education.

1.8 Validity of Research Instruments

To ensure content validity, the research instruments were reviewed by experts in education and research methodology. The experts assessed the instruments for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness and alignment with the study objectives and research variables. Their recommendations were incorporated into the instruments before they were administered to the study participants. This process helped to ensure that the instruments adequately captured the dimensions of the inclusive school environment and academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments.

1.9 Reliability of Quantitative Instruments

The reliability of the quantitative research instruments was assessed using **Cronbach's alpha coefficient**, which measures the internal consistency of items intended to measure the same construct. The instruments were subjected to reliability testing before the main data collection. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to determine whether the items demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. Instruments or scales that did not meet the predetermined reliability threshold were reviewed and refined before their use in the main study.

1.10 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was established using the four commonly recognized criteria of **credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability**. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the study setting, triangulation of data collection methods and comparison of information obtained from different categories of participants. Transferability was addressed by providing adequate descriptions of the study context, participants and research procedures to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings. Dependability was enhanced through systematic documentation of the research procedures, including data collection, analysis and interpretation processes. Confirmability was promoted through triangulation, maintenance of an appropriate audit trail and ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than researcher assumptions.

1.11 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Following separate analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, the findings from the two strands were compared and integrated during interpretation. Areas of convergence, complementarity and divergence were identified to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of the inclusive school environment on the academic

performance of learners with physical and visual impairments. The integrated findings enabled the researcher to explain not only the statistical relationship between the study variables but also the contextual factors underlying the observed relationship.

2.0 Findings

Table 1:

Learners' Responses on Inclusive Social Environment and Academic Performance

Statement	Very True		True		Sometimes True		Rarely True		Not True at All	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
My classmates laugh at me and do not include me when they are playing	18	6.4	34	12.0	41	14.5	72	25.5	117	41.5
My friends help me with school work and homework when I need help	45	16.0	136	48.2	40	14.2	32	11.3	29	10.3
I am not comfortable asking questions in class because I will be laughed at by my classmates	20	7.1	28	9.9	39	13.8	70	24.8	125	44.3
I join group work or discussions with my classmates and enjoy them	39	13.8	132	46.8	38	13.5	41	14.5	32	11.3
My classmates bully, insult and tease me because I cannot walk or see	21	7.4	34	12.1	44	15.6	71	25.2	112	39.7
Teachers tell other learners to respect me and treat me well	47	16.7	147	52.1	35	12.4	29	10.3	24	8.5
I like spending time with my classmates during break time and lunch time	42	14.9	140	49.6	37	13.1	33	11.7	30	10.6
My classmates do not play with me	24	8.5	29	10.3	49	17.4	60	21.3	120	42.6
My teacher shouts at me and this makes me uncomfortable	16	5.7	25	8.8	38	13.5	69	24.5	134	47.5
My teacher asks me if I have any problem and addresses it	44	15.6	143	50.7	39	13.8	30	10.6	26	9.2
I can talk to my teacher about anything	40	14.2	129	45.7	41	14.5	38	13.5	34	12.1

Source: Research Data, 2026.

Table 1 showed that 117 (41.5%) of the learners affirmed that it was not true that their peers laughed at them or excluded them in the play activity. This finding implies that in many schools a social context was created that facilitated the inclusion and involvement of PVs learners. Positive peer interaction is a factor of children's emotional health, engagement and attachment to school. The results also suggest that relationships within the peer group are supportive and

that this is conducive to good academic outcomes. But 52 (18.4%) learners said this was true, which meant that some learners still face exclusion and stigmatization in school. The results of the study are consistent with those of Ndlovu and Maseko (2024) who found that inclusive peer relationships positively affect psychological well-being, participation and learning. Positive social dynamics minimize obstacles to exclusion and promote meaningful participation in learning experiences.

When it came to helping learners with schoolwork and homework, when necessary, 136 (48.2%) of the learners indicated true, friends did help them with this when they needed it. The finding implies that peer support networks were an important enabler for learning among the learners with disability. Peer support in learning helps to improve understanding, facilitates learning together and makes the student feel confident in learning activities. The results also suggest that social support is positively related to school attendance and school performance. In contrast, 29 (10.3%) of the learners said that this was not true and that some learners were not supported by peers to some extent. The results are in agreement with the results obtained by Adeyemi and Okonkwo (2025) who revealed that peer academic support affects the participation, motivation, and achievement of learners in learning. Positive peer relationships provide opportunities for effective learning and achievement.

As far as the learners' discomfort of asking questions in class due to fear of being laughed at is concerned, it was found that 125 (44.3%) of the learners indicated it was not true. This finding suggests that many learners perceived their classrooms as safe and supportive learning environments. No fear is equal to no problem, active participation, interaction in class and efficient learning. The findings also suggest that having a psychologically safe learning climate is a positive influence on academic outcomes. But 48 (17.0%) of the learners said that the statement was correct, which explained that some learners still had anxiety in participating in the class. The findings corroborate the conclusions drawn by Chikondi and Mwase (2024) that educationally supportive classrooms have positive impact on learner participation, confidence and educational outcomes in the context of an emotionally supportive learning environment. Classroom climates encourage active involvement and enhance learning experiences.

With respect to the statement that the learners took part in group discussions and enjoyed collaborative activities, the results revealed that 132 (46.8%) of the learners indicated it was true. This finding indicates that a significant number of learning-disabled children were involved in collaborative learning in their schools. Group activities facilitate interaction, communication skills and engagement in learning. The results also suggest that collaborative learning improves academic learning experiences for students with disabilities. On the other hand, 32 (11.3%) learners indicated that this is not true implying that there are still obstacles to participation in some educational institutions. The present results coincide with Moyo and Sibanda (2025), who found that cooperative learning leads to a better level of participation, interaction and engagement of learners in their learning. Shared learning opportunities foster inclusion and contribute to educational success.

When asked if learners in their class had been bullied, insulted or teased because of their disabilities, 112 (39.7%) of learners indicated that this was not true. This finding implies that a lot of schools had set up a social atmosphere of respect and acceptance. Less exposure to bullying leads to confidence, emotional security and engagement in learning. The results also suggest that the positive social climate is conducive to the implementation of inclusive education. However, 55 (19.5%) of the learners confirmed that this was true, indicating that some learners still had discriminatory behaviors occurring in the educational environment. The results align with those of the study carried out by Adebayo and Ncube (2024) which concluded that a decrease in bullying and discriminatory practices enhances learner well-being and participation in educational activities. Favorable social conditions foster academic engagement and educational achievement.

With regard to the question of teachers' encouragement of other learners to respect and treat learners with disabilities well, the results revealed that 147 (52.1%) of the learners said that it was true. This finding indicates that teachers were important agents for establishing inclusive values and positive social interactions in schools. Supportive learning environments and respectful relationships are fostered by teacher encouragement. The results also highlight the significance of teacher leadership for the creation of inclusive educational environments. However, 24 (8.5%) of the learners said this was not true indicating differences between teacher practices in educational institutions. The results align with the findings of Kambale and Mukasa (2025), who have confirmed that the promotion of inclusive values by teachers reinforces peer acceptance, social interaction and participation in education. A culture of respect and inclusion in education improves the learning experience and engagement.

In terms of enjoyment of time spent with classmates during break and lunch time, the results indicated that 140 (49.6%) of the learners indicated that they enjoyed it. This finding implies that there were positive social relationships for many students outside the classroom. Informal social interaction fosters friendships, emotional support and belongingness in school. The results also suggest that a positive relationship exists between social integration and students' learning experiences and achievement. On the other hand, 30 (10.6%) of the learners reported that this was not true, which meant that there were still some learners who were subjected to social isolation. The results are similar to the one obtained by Mutharika and Banda (2024) who concluded that positive peer interactions in non-school environment leads to better social adjustment of learners, school engagement and learning outcomes. Favorable social circles play a crucial role in educational attainment.

Regarding this statement of classmates not playing with them, the findings revealed that 120 (42.6%) of the learners said this statement is not true. From this finding, it can be concluded that many learners with disability were involved in recreational and social activities with their fellow learners. Social involvement builds peer relationships, enhances emotional health and engagement in learning. The findings further indicate that social inclusion contributes positively to learners' overall educational experiences. However, 53 (18.8%) of the learners indicated that the statement was true, suggesting that some learners remained socially excluded.

The findings align with those reported by Chirwa and Tembo (2025), who established that participation in peer activities improves learners' sense of belonging and educational participation. Inclusive recreational activities contribute to holistic educational development.

Concerning whether teachers shouted at learners and made them uncomfortable, the findings revealed that 134 (47.5%) of the learners indicated that this statement was not true. This finding suggests that many teachers maintained supportive and respectful relationships with learners with disabilities. Positive teacher-learner relationships contribute to emotional security, educational participation, and academic achievement. The findings further imply that supportive instructional environments facilitate effective learning among learners with disabilities. On the other hand, 41 (14.5%) of the learners indicated that the statement was true, suggesting that some learners continued to experience negative interactions with teachers. The findings correspond with those of Mumba and Phiri (2024), who established that supportive teacher-learner relationships improve learner confidence, classroom participation, and educational achievement. Positive interpersonal relationships contribute significantly to educational success.

Regarding whether teachers asked learners about their problems and addressed them, the findings showed that 143 (50.7%) of the learners indicated that this was true. This finding suggests that many teachers provided emotional and academic support to learners with disabilities. Teacher support facilitates problem-solving, enhances learner confidence, and strengthens educational engagement. The findings further indicate that responsive teacher practices contribute positively to inclusive educational experiences. However, 26 (9.2%) of the learners indicated that this was not true, suggesting variations in teacher support practices. The findings resonate with the observations of Kinyanjui and Musau (2025), who established that teacher support and responsiveness strengthen learner well-being, educational participation, and academic achievement. Responsive educational practices create supportive learning environments.

Concerning whether learners could talk to their teachers about anything, the findings revealed that 129 (45.7%) of the learners indicated that this was true. This finding suggests that many learners had established trusting relationships with their teachers. Open communication promotes emotional well-being, facilitates academic support, and strengthens learner participation. The findings further imply that positive teacher-learner relationships contribute to favorable educational outcomes. Conversely, 34 (12.1%) of the learners indicated that this was not true, suggesting that communication barriers remained in some educational settings. The findings are comparable to those reported by Ncube and Dlamini (2024), who established that open teacher-learner communication strengthens learner confidence, educational participation, and academic engagement. Effective communication relationships contribute to successful inclusive educational practice. Teachers' responses on inclusive social environment and academic performance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

Teachers' Responses on Inclusive Social Environment and Academic Performance

Statement	Very True		True		Sometimes True		Rarely True		Not True at All	
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Other learners do not treat learners with physical and visual impairment kindly	6	6.7	8	8.9	12	13.3	24	26.7	40	44.4
I encourage respect and inclusion of all learners in my class	17	18.9	52	57.8	9	10.0	6	6.7	6	6.7
Learners with physical and visual impairment attend school regularly because they feel safe	15	16.7	44	48.9	12	13.3	9	10.0	10	11.1
Learners with physical and visual impairment are bullied in school by their classmates	8	8.9	9	10.0	18	20.0	18	20.0	37	41.1
Teachers do not create a welcoming environment for learners with physical and visual impairment	4	4.4	5	5.6	13	14.4	23	25.6	45	50.0
Learners with physical and visual impairment participate in group work and discussions with other learners	14	15.6	42	46.7	13	14.4	10	11.1	11	12.2
Learners with physical and visual impairment seclude themselves	10	11.1	9	10.0	16	17.8	20	22.2	35	38.9
Other learners offer support to learners with physical and visual impairment to do classwork and homework	18	20.0	46	51.1	10	11.1	8	8.9	8	8.9

Source: Research Data, 2026.

The results showed that 40 (44.4%) of the teachers stated that it was not true that other learners were not kind to learners with physical and visual impairments, as indicated in Table 14. It is concluded that this finding indicates that many schools had created social environment that was accepted, empathetic and positive in interpersonal relationships between learners. Pupils'

interactions that are respectful are linked to emotional security, the school's participation and effective learning. The results also suggest that inclusive school environments promote student achievement for students with disabilities by stimulating social acceptance and the elimination of discrimination. However, 14 (15.6%) of the teachers indicated that learners with disabilities were not treated kindly by their peers, suggesting that negative attitudes and social exclusion persisted in some educational settings. The results align with Nhamo and Chibanda's (2024) findings which showed that positive peer attitudes play a significant role in the educational involvement and psychosocial development of learners with disabilities. Peer relationships encourage positive working relationships and promote positive inclusive education practices. In terms of encouragement of respect and inclusion in the classroom, 52 (57.8%) of the teachers reported that this was true. This result indicates that the teachers actually participated in fostering values of acceptance, equality and mutual respect in inclusive learning contexts. Positive classroom cultures are nurtured through teachers' encouragement that allows for collaboration and learning participation among students with varying needs. The results also show that teacher leadership is still key to facilitating inclusive learning spaces. However, there was a variation in respect and inclusion in the classroom; 6 (6.7%) of the teachers reported that they rarely promoted respect and inclusion. The results are consistent with those of Chirwa and Moyo (2025) who argued that inclusive values promoted by teachers reinforce social cohesion, involvement of learners and educational engagement. Positive classroom cultures of acceptance and respect have a positive impact on educational outcomes.

The findings related to whether or not learners with physical and visual impairments regularly attended school due to feeling safe indicated that 44 (48.9%) of the teachers felt this was true. The finding indicates that positive social settings play an essential role in learner attendance and participation in education. Pupils feel safe and accepted and attend school regularly and make use of learning opportunities. The results also suggest that a supportive school climate is important to the education of students with disabilities and to student success in school. However, 10 (11.1%) of the teachers reported that learners were not in school regularly due to safety and acceptance issues. The results confirm the conclusions of Ncube and Maphosa (2024) who concluded that the quality of school environments is directly linked to the school attendance, participation and learning outcomes of learners with disabilities. Fostering emotional security in educational environments strengthens students' engagement with education.

In regards to physical/visual impairments, the findings revealed that 37 (41.1%) of the teachers indicated that the statement "Learners with physical and visual impairments were bullied by their classmates" was not true. From this it was concluded that many schools had implemented anti-bullying strategies and had an inclusive school culture which helped to decrease discriminatory behavior. Minimizing exposure to bullying has a positive impact on learner psychological well-being, confidence and educational participation. The results also suggest that it is still relevant to address discriminatory practices in the context of inclusive education. On the other hand, 17 (18.9%) of the teachers reported that learners with disabilities were subjected to bullying indicating that some schools had a problem with social inclusion. The

present findings are in line with those of Adewale and Mbeki (2025) who found that the reduction in bullying and discrimination has a positive impact on the well-being of learners, their participation and their educational outcomes. A climate of respect and safety in learning fosters inclusive learning.

In relation to teachers' lack of providing conducive teaching environment for physically and visually challenged pupils, the results showed that 45 (50.0%) of the teachers responded that this statement was not true. The finding implies that there were many teachers who have made a supportive and inclusive class where learners with different learning needs were accommodated. Learning spaces that are welcoming promote learners' confidence, participation and learning success. The results also suggest that the attitude of teachers and practices in the classroom are essential factors in supporting inclusive education. However, 9 (10.0%) of teachers reported that some classrooms were not friendly towards learners with disability, indicating variations between inclusive education practices. The results are consistent with those of Mugisha and Niyonsaba (2024), who determined that favorable classroom environments boost the involvement, engagement and learning outcomes of learners. Inclusive Educational Practices provide opportunities for successful learning experiences.

In the case of learner participation with physical and visual impairments in group work and discussion, the results revealed that 42 (46.7%) of the teachers said so. These findings indicated that collaborative learning methods had facilitated the involvement of the learners with disabilities in the learning activities. Group participation promotes interaction, communication and engagement in learning. The results also show that the practice educational collaborative is a factor that helps to do more effective implementation of inclusive education. But 11 (12.2%) of the teachers reported that learners with disabilities rarely involved in group activities indicating participation barriers in certain education settings. The results are similar to those of Chisale and Banda (2025) who determined that collaborative learning opportunities enhance learners' involvement, social interaction, and learning achievement. Common learning experiences have a positive impact on inclusive learning environments.

In relation to the question of whether physically and visually impaired learners withdrew from others, the results showed that 35 (38.9%) of the teachers answered that it was not true. The result indicates many learners with disabilities actively engaged in social and educational activities in their schools. Social participation contributes to confidence, building relationships with others and educational engagement. The results also suggest that inclusive school contexts have a positive influence on the learners' social adjustment and educational experiences. On the other hand, 19 (21.1%) of teachers reported that learners with disabilities would tend to isolate themselves, indicating that social barriers still exist in a number of education settings. In line with findings by Okafor and Dlamini (2024) who found that social participation and peer interaction positively impact on learners' emotional well-being and learning outcomes, the results of the study were found to be consistent. Positive social experiences facilitate educational inclusion and learner success.

Regarding whether other learners provided support to learners with physical and visual impairments during classwork and homework activities, the findings showed that 46 (51.1%) of the teachers indicated that this was true. This finding suggests that peer support played an important role in promoting learning and educational participation among learners with disabilities. Assistance from peers facilitates collaborative learning, strengthens social relationships, and improves educational experiences. The findings further indicate that peer support systems contribute significantly to successful inclusive educational practices. However, 8 (8.9%) of the teachers indicated that learners with disabilities did not receive adequate support from their peers, suggesting variations in peer relationships across educational settings. The findings are in agreement with the study by Mwansa and Chanda (2025), which established that peer support enhances learner participation, academic engagement, and educational achievement. Supportive peer relationships create educational environments that promote learning and inclusion.

The Heads of Institutions during the interview were asked to explain the nature of social interactions between learners with and without physical and visual impairments in their schools. They were also given the opportunity to explain the importance of learner relationships in their academic achievement and describe what has been done to foster a positive and supportive social climate. One Head of Institution said:

Most learners interact positively with peers with physical and visual impairments and assist them during class activities, academic discussions and co-curricular activities, thus boosting learners' confidence, school attendance and participation in academic activities. [Head of Institution 9]

This would indicate that positive peer relationships are a significant factor in the educational participation and achievement of students with disabilities. Social relationships can seem supportive to the learner, promoting confidence, emotional health and participation in classroom activities. The study results also show that inclusive school cultures foster belongingness and enhance learners' educational engagement when they have physical and visual impairments. The results support the results of Adeyemi and Okafor (2024) which established that positive peer relationships and social support systems positively affect the participation, self-esteem, engagement and achievement of learners with disabilities. Positive educational inclusion is achieved through supportive educational environments.

One of the other Head of Institution's spoke on this:

Learner-to-learner relationships are important in the attainment of learners as those who are supported and accepted by others within their class will be more engaged and perform well academically. However, there are a few instances where learners suffer from stigma and exclusion. [Head of Institution 13]

The research result shows that social acceptance and peer support have positive influence on participation and achievement of learners in inclusive educational environments. The results also indicate that some negative social experiences (exclusion, discrimination) can have a negative impact on learner confidence, participation and learning outcomes. As such, schools have a duty to ensure positive social climate, inclusion and educational engagement. The results corroborate those of Ncube and Moyo (2025) which found that peer acceptance, social support and positive educational relationships improve learner engagement and learner performance for learners with disabilities, whereas social exclusion has a negative impact on learner performance and learner well-being.

Table 3:

Inclusive Social Environment and Academic Performance of Learners with Physical and Visual Impairments

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig.
Inclusive Social Environment and Academic Performance	.648	.420	267.814	.000

Source: Research Data (2026).

The results showed a correlation coefficient (R) = .648 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) = .420, this means that the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments showed a correlation of 42.0% between inclusive social environment and academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments. The F-statistic was 267.814 with a p-value of .000, which was less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded that there was a statistically significant influence of inclusive social environment on academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairment in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana, Kenya. The results indicate that, while there is a need for supportive social interactions, positive interactions with peers and an inclusive learning environment have a profound impact on educational participation and learner academic performance. Positive social experiences support learner's confidence, engagement and academic performance. The results also showed that the influence of social inclusion on academic performance of learners with disabilities was statistically significant as reported by Banda and Mwansa (2025). The study verified that the supportive educational environments have a positive influence on learner achievement and educational participation.

3.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that the inclusive school environment is significantly associated with the academic performance of learners with physical and visual impairments in public comprehensive schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The findings demonstrated a positive relationship between the inclusive school environment and learners' academic performance. In particular, supportive peer relationships, positive teacher–learner interactions, social acceptance and a school culture that promotes belonging and respect contributed to a more supportive learning environment for learners with physical and visual impairments. Such an environment can enhance learners' confidence, participation, engagement and emotional well-

being, thereby creating conditions that are conducive to improved academic performance. However, the findings also indicated that some learners continued to experience negative social experiences, including peer exclusion, stigmatization and inadequate social support. Such experiences may limit learners' participation and engagement in school activities and potentially undermine their educational experiences. The study therefore concludes that strengthening the social dimension

4.0 Recommendation

Heads of institutions, teachers, parents and other education stakeholders should strengthen the inclusive school environment by establishing and implementing programs that promote positive peer relationships, prevent bullying and stigmatization, and enhance social and emotional support for learners with physical and visual impairments. Schools should develop structured peer-support and mentorship programs, promote cooperative learning and inclusive recreational activities, and provide regular sensitization programs on disability, diversity and inclusion for learners, teachers and parents. Teachers should also be encouraged to foster respectful teacher–learner relationships and create classroom environments in which learners with disabilities feel accepted, supported and able to participate actively.

Parents and community stakeholders should be involved in disability-awareness and inclusion initiatives to address negative attitudes and misconceptions towards learners with disabilities. Heads of institutions should further monitor the implementation of inclusive practices and establish mechanisms for identifying and responding to cases of bullying, exclusion and discrimination. These measures would strengthen social inclusion, enhance learners' participation and sense of belonging, and create a supportive school environment that can contribute to improved academic performance among learners with physical and visual impairments.

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