

## Teachers' Perception and Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Uganda: A Study of Regular Classrooms in Primary Schools of Tororo District

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**ABSTRACT:** The research conducted in Tororo district examined the perception of teachers' towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in primary schools. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey research design, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to gather data from 74 respondents selected through simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The findings revealed a significant relationship between teachers' perception and the inclusion of learners with various disabilities in primary schools within Tororo District. Consequently, it was inferred that teachers' perception significantly influences the inclusion of learners with disabilities in the district's primary schools. The study recommended that school administrators should admit all children, including those with disabilities, without discrimination. Furthermore, it suggested the organization of refresher courses and seminars to equip teachers with the necessary skills for teaching children with diverse forms of disabilities. Additionally, the study proposed that the government of the Republic of Uganda, particularly through the Ministry of Education and Sports, invest more in providing accessible, disability-friendly learning environments and adapted specialized educational materials to facilitate inclusive learning in primary schools within Tororo District.

**Keywords:** Teacher perception, inclusion, children, disabilities, primary schools, Tororo District, Uganda

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### INTRODUCTION

Education has been acknowledged as one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future (GPE, 2019). It plays a key role in human, social and economic developments thus, a powerful agent of change and improved health and livelihoods, contributes to social stability and drives a long-term economic growth. Nelson Mandela once made a famous quote saying "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Education, particularly inclusive education, is able to reduce discrimination through enabling children with and without disabilities to grow up together, gives children with disabilities skills to allow them to become positive role models and join the employment market, thereby helping to prevent poverty. Secondly, inclusive education has been established as a significant policy direction with

respect to including children with disabilities in regular or mainstream schools globally, (Sandeep, 2016). The Global Initiative on Out of School Children (2015), however, reports that even if children with disabilities can gain access to school, they are particularly disadvantaged by non-inclusive teaching methods, inflexible curricular and examination systems. This finding points to teacher factor as one fundamental area that should be looked into to ensure success of inclusive education, especially in Tororo District. It seems that no study has been focused to establishing teachers' perception towards inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms in primary school context in Uganda. It is therefore, worth to get insight of teachers' perceptions towards inclusion of children with disabilities, putting much focus on the Primary schools of Tororo

District.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Disability is one of the least visible but most potent factor in educational marginalization. Children with disabilities face significant hurdles in enrolling, attending and completing schools. UNESCO, (2017) assert that accurate figures on the prevalence of disability are difficult to find for most developing countries including those in Africa partly due to the hidden nature of the problem and partly because of the low levels of attention given to it by actors in various fields. However, the little statistical evidence that is available shows that it is a prevalent problem. UNESCO, (2012) identifies that the disability prevalence rate in the population is between 10 and 16% yet the reported number of children with disabilities in schools is much lower. UNESCO (2010) found that fewer than 10% of children with disabilities in Africa receive primary education. In Uganda it is about 1.79% of the total school enrollment (UNESCO, 2012). This indicates that large numbers of children with disabilities are not in school or if they are, they are unidentified within the current school population. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (2017), there are 172,864 children with special needs in primary schools in Uganda, which is 2.0% of the total primary level enrollment and 9% of the overall children with special needs disaggregated in the following categories of impairment, hearing (27.2%), mental (22.7%), visual (25.8%) and physical impairment (17.9%).

Several studies indicate growing evidence base on disability gap in school access. Lately, Mizunoya et al. (2017) analyzed datasets from 15 developing countries and concluded that attainment of initial access to education for children with disabilities is a significant challenge. In 7 out of the 8 countries examined, more than 85% of primary school age children with disabilities had never attended school. Similarly, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017) also analyzed data from Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) from 3 countries (Cambodia, Maldives, and Uganda) which used the short set of disability questions by Washington Group. The datasets explored school attendance by disability status and the study found out of school rates to be higher for children with a disability (UNESCO-UIS, 2017). The most striking amongst these was Cambodia where every second child with a disability is not in school (UNESCO-UIS 2017).

In a related study, Moyo (2012) discovered that disabled children in Uganda exhibit a significantly lower likelihood of enrolling, attending, and completing grade five. Additionally, Wood (2007) argues that among children aged 11, the probability of ever enrolling in school was 13 percentage points lower for children with disabilities compared to their counterparts without disabilities (Wodon et al., 2017). These findings shed light on the

educational challenges faced by disabled children in Uganda and emphasize the importance of addressing barriers to their access and participation in education. Exploring disability gaps in educational attainment and literacy, the paper further argues that while the enrolment rate of children with disabilities has increased over time, there is a widening gap in rates of enrolment between children with and without disabilities. In the same vein, World Bank report, (2018) “exploring school enrolment and learning achievement among children with disabilities in 13 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa” also concluded that many children with disabilities never enroll in school. The census data identified that among 12-year-olds; the likelihood of having ever enrolled in school was 10 percentage points lower for children with disabilities compared to children without disabilities. The study concluded that with time, the enrolment gap between children with and without disabilities has been growing Cooper, (2007). These studies indicate the discrepancy in enrolment of children with disabilities in schools but did not explore teachers’ perception on enrolling different categories of children with disabilities in regular schools as this study did.

UNESCO (2014) also acknowledge lack of concrete data showing the true scale of disabilities worldwide as one of the major factors severely constraining the ability of the international community to monitor the situation of children, youth and adults with disabilities. UNESCO further, observes that the current data does not allow for in-depth understanding of the cross-cutting disadvantages faced by people with disabilities; insufficient attention to collect data on disabilities and link them to education outcomes has persisted and yet it is essential to understand the current schooling status of children with disabilities. Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2018) too, recognize the limited data on learners with disabilities for appropriate planning as one of the challenges facing Inclusive Education in Uganda. They further note that the data mostly captured for learners with disabilities refers to children with visual or hearing impairment and data on learners with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities or psychosocial disabilities is not captured and this affects planning for their needs. In addition, they assert that disability data is mostly at the national level and lack of which especially at the district and local level compounds the difficulties in planning and targeting of services for those with disability. The lack of adequate disability data in educational sector plans is also cited as a reason for weak responses towards education of children with disabilities (GPE, 2018). GPE however, substantiates that understanding the gaps in data can improve access, as identifying those children that cannot even access education can lead to targeted interventions which get them in, in addition to identifying children with disabilities already in school. GPE further admits that data are imperative at every level of education system to

inform robust sector analysis and planning, support equitable resource allocation, implement and monitor inclusive policies and programs and serve as an evaluative tool for policy dialogue and reform efforts to enhance the equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of education services.

The above authors all appear to appreciate that disability data is a critical prerequisite to developing any form of educational intervention to leverage learning opportunities of children with disabilities though consistently lacked or been inadequate but did not relate teachers' perception towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the primary schools which the study examined because at school level teachers are key players in receiving learners and keeping records about every learner.

Similarly, Sarton and Smith (2018) notes that at school level, use of data allows head teachers to effectively target groups of children and track progress while at national level exploration of data allows investigation into issues around disability and subsequently target gap. Sarton and Smith advise that when schools are trained and resourced to begin the process of carrying out screening of their students in order to identify children with disabilities for example basic hearing and eye screening and those traditionally labeled as slow learners who may have a cognitive disability or development delay, there is potential to significantly increase the amount of identified disability in schools.

Sarton and Smith referred to a certain project in Ethiopia that trained a lead teacher and head teacher in each of the 123 schools in carrying out screening and improved identification. The result indicated that on average an additional 18 children were identified per school and across the project the proportion of children with disabilities rose from 0.7% to 3.5% which exceeded the government target of 2.7%.

Some environmental variables have also indicated positive association with teachers' perception towards inclusion. Jordan et al. (2009) acclaim that effective inclusionary practices depend to a noticeable extent on the sentiments of teachers about the nature of disability and their perceived roles in supporting students with special education needs. Some studies have indicated that teachers are more positive towards children with mild impairments and most negative to accept students with severe intellectual disabilities or behavioural problems in their classrooms,

Grosche, (2015). In addition, Moyi (2012) also acknowledge that children with disabilities face obstacles to school participation but the magnitude of the obstacles vary by the nature and extent of the impairment. 71% of children who reported facing a lot of difficulty seeing with glasses were attending school compared to about 36% of children who had a lot of difficulty with self-care. However, Van Reusen, et al. (2001) caution that the success of inclusive programs may be at risk if regular

classroom teachers hold negative perceptions toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. Therefore, it is important to examine the attitudes of educators toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular settings as their perceptions may influence their behaviour toward and acceptance of such students (Hammond and Ingalls, 2003; Esteves and Rao, 2008). However, these studies did not show teachers' perception towards inclusion of most of the different categories of children with disabilities in primary schools in disaggregated way which this study explored farther in Tororo district.

Hays, (2009), admit that although there has been an increase in primary completion rate amongst children with disabilities over time, they have made smaller gains in completion rates than their peers without disabilities. UNESCO-UIS (2017) also reports a significant gap in primary completion rates between children with and without disabilities. In the five countries where there was sufficient data, 73 per cent of children without disabilities complete primary school in Cambodia, Colombia, Gambia, Maldives, and Uganda and Only 56 per cent of children with disabilities finish primary school in these countries.

Similarly, Leonard Cheshire (2018) found that average completion rates for primary school for children with disabilities and children without disabilities were 48 per cent and 70 per cent respectively. it is very well established that children with disabilities are being left behind in getting counted, being identified, accessing quality education and participating in learning. The background makes a detailed case of exclusion and identifies different levels within the education ecosystem which aggregate the issue. If Uganda is to deliver on its commitment to 'Leave No One Behind', data on prevalence and enrollment of children with disabilities is an essential contributor to the process. There is need to streamline development of procedures for proper assessment of the disabilities, collect more accurate and reliable data, train teachers to support children with different forms of disabilities and provide schools with educational resources to serve these children in Tororo District.

## METHODOLOGY

Across sectional design was used because the study collected both qualitative and quantitative data as Amin, (2005) and Creswell (2012) recommend. Data was collected from 74 respondents from the five primary schools that practiced inclusive education in Tororo District who included, Head teachers and teachers selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from respondents and analysis was done descriptively and thematically.

**Table 1:** Responses on whether the selected schools enrolled children with different categories of disabilities.

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes       | 64        | 87         |
| No        | 10        | 13         |
| Total     | 74        | 100        |

Source: Field data 2023

**Table 2:** Responses on inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities.

| Indicators                                                                                   | SD  | DA   | N    | A   | SA   | M    | St. D |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|
| The environment in our school is welcoming.                                                  | 7%  | 27%  | 00 % | 54% | 12%  | 3.37 | 1.20  |
| I use child centred teaching approach                                                        | 3 % | 12%  | 00 % | 73% | 12 % | 3.79 | 0.90  |
| There is increased enrolment in my school                                                    | 3%  | 16%  | 00 % | 59% | 22 % | 3.81 | 1.04  |
| There is high completion rate for learners with disabilities in this school                  | 23% | 55 % | 00 % | 12% | 10 % | 3.47 | 1.34  |
| There are learners of diverse categories in my school                                        | 00% | 7%   | 00%  | 62% | 31   | 4.17 | 0.74  |
| The adapted educational materials in my school are good for learners of different categories | 5%  | 8 %  | 15 % | 42% | 30 % | 3.82 | 1.11  |

Source: Field Data 2023

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher perception towards the inclusion of different categories of children with disabilities in regular classrooms. The study used a questionnaire to investigate whether the selected primary schools enrolled learners with different categories of disabilities and responses were recorded in (Table 1). Table 1 results show that, the majority of the respondents indicated by 87% agreed that learners with different categories of disabilities were enrolled in the selected primary schools. The 13% of the respondents disagreed on this item. This implied that the respondents in the selected primary schools admitted learners with different categories of disabilities. This finding supports Article 30 provision in the Uganda's Constitution (1995) that states that all persons have a right to education and the Disability Act (2020) section 6 states among other things that an institution of learning that enrolls a learner with a disability shall provide an inclusive education system for the learners. Much as this finding gives hope that learners with disabilities are enrolled in mainstream schools, the findings of objective one on teachers' awareness and knowledge presented in (Table 2) indicated that teachers' awareness and knowledge on inclusive education in the study area was minimal. Ando (2012) cautions that if inclusive education is promoted with an inaccurate image, a small-minded practice that simply focuses on the integration opportunities in mainstream schools and classes will take place. In agreement, Sanagi (2016) substantiates that teachers' misunderstanding of the concept of Inclusive education will not lead to good practices rather make an inconsiderate environment for pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream schools and that how teachers understand the concept of inclusive education directly affects practice and development hence it's quite important to urge teachers to have at least an appropriate conceptual understanding to successfully accommodate the diverse learning needs in

their classrooms. This appears to be the situation in the area of study as majority of the respondents from the selected primary schools claimed to be providing inclusive education to learners with disabilities but the actual practice in the schools appear to fall short of ideal inclusive practices.

In addition, the study using questionnaire with six items measured the extent to which teachers believed their schools were inclusive with children with disabilities. The questionnaire was based on the Likert scale where 1. Strongly disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (DA), 3. Not sure (NS), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly agree (SA). The findings were presented in (Table 2).

According to (Table 2) majority of the respondents represented by 66% reportedly agreed that the environment of the selected primary schools was very welcoming while the 34% of the respondents disagreed. The mean of 3.37 implied that the environment of the selected primary schools was fairly welcoming. This also meant that the school environment fairly facilitated inclusive education. The standard deviation of 1.20 meant that the views of the respondents were related. Similarly, the Uganda's Constitution (1995) Article 30 states that all persons have a right to education and the Disability Act (2020) section 6 states among others that an institution of learning that enrolls a learner with a disability shall: - provide an inclusive education system for the learner and make the necessary structural adjustments to the buildings and premises of the institution of learning, to enable access to the building or premises by a learner with a disability.

The respondents on the item that teachers in the selected primary schools used child centred approach to facilitate inclusive education agreed indicated by 85% of the responses. The 15% of the responses disagreed. The mean of 3.79 implied that the use of child centred approach to enhance inclusive education was good in the selected area. The standard deviation of 0.90 meant that the views of the respondents were similar. In agreement Inclusive education is a process of addressing and

**Table 3:** Average responses on respondents self-rating on inclusive education of learners with disabilities.

| Statistic               |       | Value  |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|
| Mean                    |       | 19.27  |
| 95% Confidence interval | Lower | 18.62  |
|                         | Upper | 19.92  |
| Median                  |       | 19.66  |
| Standard deviation      |       | 2.80   |
| Range                   |       | 13.50  |
| Skewness                |       | -0.114 |

Source: Field Data 2023

responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2005) but did not examine inclusive education of learners with different categories of disabilities in the study area the gap this study covered.

The majority of the respondents on the item that there was high pupil enrolment in the selected primary schools due to inclusive education agreed indicated by 81% of the responses while the 19% of the responses disagreed. The mean of 3.81 implied that the pupil enrolment in the selected primary schools was high while the standard deviation of 1.04 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ. UNESCO (2010) found out that fewer than 10% of children with disabilities in Africa receive primary education which implied that large numbers of children with disabilities were not in school or if they are, they were unidentified within the current school population.

The respondents on the item that there was high completion rate for the learners in the selected primary schools disagreed indicated by 78% of the responses while 22% of the responses agreed. The mean of 3.47 implied that learner completion rate in the selected primary schools was poor while the standard deviation of 1.34 meant that the views of the respondents did not differ. This finding concurs with the Education Monograph Report (2017) that indicated that average Primary seven completion rate of persons with disability in Bukedi sub region where Tororo belongs was about 4.1 % while the national average is 6.5 % (UBOS, 2017).

The majority of the respondents on the item that the selected primary schools had diverse learners agreed indicated by 93% of the responses while 7% of the responses disagreed. The mean of 4.17 meant that the selected primary schools had high learner's diversity in relation to sex, age, individual learner's difference among others. The standard deviation of 0.74 meant that the views of the respondents were related. Inclusive education is the inclusion of all children and young people regardless of any individual differences, including race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, or socioeconomic status. The majority of the respondents on the item that the adapted educational materials catered for learner's individual differences agreed indicated by 72% of the responses, the 15% of the responses were not sure while the 13% of the

responses disagreed. The mean of 3.82 implied that the adapted educational materials were good to cater for learners of different categories. The standard deviation of 1.11 implied that the views of the respondents did not differ. In the same vein studies indicate that teachers who truly believe in inclusive education initiatives and have positive attitudes towards implementing inclusive education in their classes have been reported to use teaching practices such as co-operative learning and peer tutoring that promote inclusion in their classes (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007).

The researcher generated average responses using the six quantities indicators on inclusion of learners with disabilities in the selected primary schools and data was presented in (Table 3). Table 3 shows that the inclusion of learners with disabilities in Education was fairly done indicated by the mean of 19.27 at the 95% class bound between 18.62-19.92 bounds. The negative skewness of -0.114 implied that inclusion of pupils with disabilities in the selected primary schools was fairly done while the standard deviation of 2.80 meant that the views of the respondents were related. In agreement, Cook, (2001) recommended the need to improve the skills of teachers to implement inclusive education as a developmental process, requiring much more than once-off work sessions and in-service development. In order to ensure sustainability, it is imperative that teachers receive continuous support; giving them the confidence to attend to the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

According to (Table 4) the majority of the respondents indicated by 72% agreed on the item that learners with (motor) physical impairment were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo district. However, the 18% reported that learners with physical impairment were admitted in the selected primary schools with hesitation while the 10% reported that learners with physical impairment were not at all enrolled in the selected primary schools. This implied that learners with physical impairment were admitted in the selected primary schools. However, the low mean of 1.51 implied that Teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with physical impairment in the selected primary schools was poor while the standard deviation of 0.91 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ.

The respondents fairly agreed represented by 49% on the item that learners with hearing impairment were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo

Table 4: Responses on Teachers perception towards inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Regular schools.

| Indicator                                    | Easily | Not at all | With hesitation | Mean | Standard deviation |
|----------------------------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Learners with physical disability impairment | 72%    | 10%        | 18%             | 1.51 | 0.91               |
| Learners with Hearing problems               | 49%    | 21%        | 30%             | 1.81 | 0.91               |
| Learners with Visual impairment              | 49%    | 19%        | 32%             | 1.83 | 0.89               |
| Learners with speech problems                | 60%    | 7%         | 31%             | 1.79 | 1.41               |
| Learners with emotional problems             | 62%    | 15%        | 23%             | 1.60 | 0.84               |
| Learners with intellectual Disability        | 57%    | 15%        | 27%             | 1.72 | 0.91               |
| Learners with autism spectrum                | 53%    | 23%        | 24%             | 1.72 | 0.86               |
| Learners with specific learning Difficulties | 61%    | 13%        | 26%             | 1.64 | 0.86               |
| Learners who are deaf blind                  | 18%    | 43%        | 39%             | 1.63 | 0.86               |

Source: Field Data 2023

district. The 30% reported that learners with hearing impairment were enrolled in the selected primary schools with hesitation while the 21% of the responses reportedly disagreed that learners with hearing impairment were enrolled in the selected primary schools. The low mean of 1.81 meant that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with hearing impairment was poor in the selected primary schools in the study area. The standard deviation of 0.87 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ. The majority of the respondents on the item that learner with visual impairment were easily enrolled fairly agreed indicated by 49% of the responses. The 32% reported that learners with visual impairment in the selected primary schools were enrolled with hesitation while the 19% of the respondents reported that learners with visual impairment were not enrolled in the selected primary schools. The mean of 1.83 implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with visual impairment in the selected primary schools was low while the standard deviation of 0.89 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ. The respondents 60% agreed on the measure that learners with speech impairment were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo District. The 31% of the respondents reported that learners with speech impairment were admitted with hesitation while the 7% reported that learners with speech impairment were not at all enrolled in the selected study area. This implied that learners with speech impairment were enrolled in the study area. The low mean of 1.79 meant that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with speech impairment in the study area was low while the standard deviation of 1.41 meant that the respondent's views did not significantly differ.

The 62% of the respondents agreed on the measure that learners with emotional and behavioral problems were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools. The 23% of the responses reported that learners with emotional problems were admitted with hesitation while the 15% of the respondents reported that learners with emotional and behavioral problems were not at all admitted in the selected primary schools in Tororo district. The mean of 1.60 implied that teachers' perception toward inclusion of learners with emotional and behavioral problems was low. The standard deviation of 0.84 signified that the

views of the respondents were similar. The majority of the respondents indicated by 57% of the responses fairly agreed on the item that learners with intellectual disabilities were easily enrolled in the study area. The 27% of the respondents reported that learners with intellectual disabilities were enrolled in the selected primary schools with hesitation. However, the 15% of the respondents reported that learners with intellectual disabilities were not at all admitted in the selected primary schools. This implied that learners with intellectual disabilities were fairly admitted in the selected primary schools. The mean of 1.72 signified that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities was poor and the standard deviation of 0.91 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ. Similarly, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2018) too, recognized the limited data on learners with disabilities for appropriate planning as one of the challenges facing Inclusive Education in Uganda but did not investigate the inclusion of learners with different forms of disabilities in the study area the gap this study filled.

The 53% of the responses fairly agreed on the item that learners with autism spectrum were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo district. The 24% reported that learners with autism spectrum were enrolled with hesitation and the 23% of the responses revealed that learners with autism spectrum were not at all enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo district. The mean of 1.72 implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with autism spectrum was low in the selected primary schools in Tororo District and the standard deviation of 0.86 meant that the views of the respondents did not significantly differ. In agreement GPE (2018) also report that the lack of disability data is cited in educational sector plans as a reason for weak responses towards education of children with disabilities but did not explore teachers' perception towards inclusive education of children with autism spectrum in the study area the gap this study covered. The majority of the respondents indicated by 61% of the responses agreed on the item that learners with specific learning difficulties were easily enrolled in the selected primary schools. The 26% of the responses reported that learners with specific learning difficulties were enrolled with hesitation and the

Table 5: Average index on teachers' perception on inclusion of children with different forms of disabilities in regular schools.

| Statistic               | Value  |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Mean                    | 23.82  |
| 95% Confidence interval | Lower  |
|                         | Upper  |
| Median                  | 23.22  |
| Standard deviation      | 8.52   |
| Range                   | 71.00  |
| Skewness                | + 0.16 |

Source: Field Data 2023

13% of the respondents reported that learners with specific learning difficulties were not enrolled at all. The mean of 1.64 implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with specific learning difficulties in the study area was not fair. This also meant that inclusion of learners with learning difficulties was not effectively done. The 43% of the respondents reported that learners who are deafblind were not at all enrolled in the selected primary schools in Tororo District. The 39% of the respondents reported that learners who are deafblind were enrolled with hesitation while the 18% of the responses agreed on the item that learners who are deafblind were easily admitted in the selected primary schools in the study area. This meant that enrolment of learners who are deaf or blind in the selected primary schools was poorly done. The mean of 1.63 meant that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with disabilities in the study area was low and the low standard deviation of 0.86 implied that the views of the respondents did not differ. The above findings indicate that teachers in the selected primary schools fairly believe that children with disabilities can be included. The positive beliefs among teachers, the enrollment of learners with disabilities have continued to below;

In support of the findings on teacher perception on inclusion of learners with different categories of disabilities, some studies have indicated that teachers are more positive towards children with mild impairments and most negative to accept students with severe intellectual disabilities or behavioural problems in their classrooms (Cook, 2001; Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Lifshitz, Gloubman and Issawi 2004; Moberg 2003) as quoted by Ewing et al., (2017): In the same accord, Jordan et al. (2009) acclaim that effective inclusionary practices depend to a noticeable extent on the sentiments of teachers about the nature of disability and their perceived roles in supporting students with special education needs. This further corroborates MoES data of 2017 that indicated that there were 172,864 children with special needs in primary schools in Uganda, which was 2.0% of the total primary level enrollment and 9% of the overall children with special needs disaggregated in the following categories of impairment, hearing (27.2%), mental (22.7%), visual (25.8%) and physical impairment (17.9%) Ministry of Education and Sports (2017). This data did not capture all the common disabilities and special

educational needs that this study explored. Similarly, UNESCO (2012) acknowledges that the disability prevalence rate in the population is between 10 and 16% yet the reported number of children with disabilities in schools is much lower. Relatedly, Wang et al. (2011), analyzed data sets from 15 developing countries and concluded that attainment of initial access to education for children with disabilities is a significant challenge. In 7 out of the 8 countries examined, more than 85% of primary school age children with disabilities had never attended school. Similarly, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017) also analyzed data from Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) from 3 countries (Cambodia, Maldives, and Uganda) which used the short set of disability questions by Washington Group. The datasets explored school attendance by disability status and the study found out of school rates to be higher for children with a disability (UNESCO-UIS, 2017). The most striking amongst these was Cambodia where every second child with a disability is not in school (UNESCO-UIS 2017) but this was not in any way linked to the study area which necessitated this study. However, GPE (2018) maintain that understanding the gaps in data can improve access, as identifying those children that cannot even access education can lead to targeted interventions which get them in, addition to identifying children with disabilities already in school.

The researcher generated an average response on the respondents self-rating on Teachers' perception on inclusion of learners with different forms of disabilities in the selected primary schools and the views obtained were recorded in (Table 5). According to (Table 5) the mean of 23.82 at the 95% confidence interval between 21.85-25.80 implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with different forms of disabilities in the study area was fair. The standard deviation of 8.25 meant that the views of the respondents did not differ. The positive skewness of +0.16 implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the study area was poor. It also thus implied that teachers' perception towards inclusion of learners with disabilities in the study area was low. Ando (2012) argue that a discussion on enabling conditions for inclusive education should begin with a note that the evidence base for Inclusive Education in Sub-Saharan Africa is extremely poor.

Sinagi, (2016) observed that children with disabilities face obstacles to school participation but the magnitude of the obstacles vary by the nature and extent of the impairment. In agreement, Goodman and Burton, (2010), acknowledge that in mainstreaming, traditional attitudes and beliefs regarding teaching students with disabilities, as well as their perception in society play an important role.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The study findings suggest that there is a moderate and significant relationship between teachers' perceptions and the inclusion of learners with various disabilities in primary schools in Tororo District. It can be concluded that teachers' perceptions have an impact on the inclusion of learners with disabilities in these schools. Therefore, it is recommended that teacher training institutions, such as colleges and universities, provide teacher trainees with the necessary skills and knowledge in inclusive education pedagogy and practice. Furthermore, school administrators should ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, are admitted to schools without discrimination. Additionally, refresher courses and seminars should be conducted to equip teachers with the skills needed to effectively teach learners with different forms of disabilities.

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