

Abstract

Living with the HIV virus poses a great challenge to the children. Most of the HIV infection to children is through Mother To Child Transmission (MTCT). Consequently, the HIV infected children have lost either both or one parent, or their primary caregiver. The availability of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment has prolonged the infected children's lives indefinitely but it leaves them with developmental and episodic disabilities (Cooper,2007; NIAD,2009).These children are expected to go through the education system in place since the education institutions are yet to adapt systems that can best serve the HIV infected children. Teachers claim not to know how to handle this category of children in schools due to their health and emotional behavior. The educational policy provides special education for them. There are a few studies that have examined the disabilities of HIV on infected children and whether special education program is suitable for them at the rural area in Kenya. The study of HIV infected school going children on ARV in Taita was conducted to highlight on the disability of HIV and whether special education program have an impact towards achieving their basic education.

The methods used to collect data were qualitative. The use of questionnaires from 45 HIV infected school children on ARV (aged 2.5 to 16 years), 16 People Living With AIDS (PLA) and 6 Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and focus group discussions (FGD). The study group was from the Coast province of Kenya, Taita/Taveta District. I used the international classification of Functioning-Disability and Health (ICF-DH) to measure the HIV infected children's disability of HIV by constructing questionnaires by using the ICF-DH concept of disabilities (WHO,2002). The same ICF-DH framework was used to highlight on the differences of disability of HIV and the disability without HIV by respondents from PLA and PWD. I also used focus group discussions with HIV infected

children, PLA and PWD to get their views on the special education program. A school-community based HIV activity was proposed.

The results show that, HIV infection and the antiretroviral treatment cause some impairment that could limit the infected children's performance in their day to day school activities. The Disability of HIV is not visible but has impacts on physical, emotional and could cause activity limitations. The disability of HIV referred to as episodic disability have more triggers from the personal and health factors than the environmental factors (O'Brien et al. 2008) and could not be corrected by use of assistive devices but medical advice, social support and personal living strategies. The focus group discussions results showed that, both the HIV infected children and the PLA do not appreciate the special education program for the HIV infected students, however, they did demonstrate difficulties in managing the regular school program. Contrarily, the PWD do not see any problem with HIV infected children to enroll for special education program.

The conclusion for the study is that, HIV infected schoolchildren experience some impairment that causes some obstructions to their daily school activities. The impairment is triggered by personal (health), emotional, environmental and social factors.

Modification of the ICF-DH to include the HIV status could give a better indication on how to reduce the disability of HIV by providing health, social and psychosocial support to the HIV infected children in school.