

The extent to which physical facilities in criminal justice system are friendly to persons with disability in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the suitability of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Kakamega County, Kenya, with particular focus on the accessibility of physical infrastructure. Although the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, and the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, provide for equality, accessibility, non-discrimination and access to justice, persons with disabilities continue to experience physical, communication and institutional barriers within criminal justice institutions. This study was guided by the Human Rights Model of Disability and adopted a descriptive research design. The study was conducted in selected police stations, courts and correctional institutions in Kakamega County. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 35 persons with disabilities who had direct experience with the criminal justice system (CJS). Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with criminal justice officials and key stakeholders, including police officers, magistrates, probation officers, correctional officers, Officers Commanding Station (OCSs), Organizations of Persons with Disabilities leaders (OPD) and National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) officials. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions and a physical infrastructure observation checklist. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and non-parametric statistical tests, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically using NVivo. The findings showed variations in satisfaction with the physical facilities across the criminal justice settings. Police stations recorded the highest level of dissatisfaction (62.9%), followed by correctional institutions (51.4%), while courts recorded the lowest level of dissatisfaction (40.0%). Pairwise comparisons using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed statistically significant differences between courts and police stations ($p = 0.009$) and between correctional institutions and police stations ($p = 0.011$). However, the difference between courts and correctional institutions was not statistically significant ($p = 0.335$). The findings indicate that the physical facilities in the criminal justice system vary in their suitability for persons with disabilities, with police stations recording the highest dissatisfaction. This study concludes that inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate assistive devices, unsuitable sanitation facilities and communication barriers constrain effective participation of PWDs in criminal justice processes. This study recommends that police stations, courts and correctional institutions should make improvements in physical accessibility, including accessible entrances, ramps, pathways, service points and sanitation facilities.

Keywords: Criminal Justice System (CJS); Access to Justice; Kakamega County, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs); Physical Accessibility

I. INTRODUCTION

Disability is a significant global human rights and development concern that affects individuals' ability to participate fully and effectively in society. The World Health Organization and World Bank estimate that approximately 15% of the world's population experience some form of disability, with a significant proportion experiencing severe disabilities (World Bank, 2017). Persons with disabilities (PWDs) experience various forms of vulnerability that may restrict their participation in social, economic, political and legal processes. These vulnerabilities are often compounded by social, structural, environmental and institutional barriers, which may limit their ability to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with persons without disabilities. One of the areas in which these barriers are particularly significant is access to justice, which is a fundamental human right and an essential prerequisite for the realization and protection of other human rights.

The right to justice demands not only suitable laws and legal mechanisms but also physical access to criminal justice agencies that cater to the unique needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Criminal justice agencies such as police stations, courts, prosecutors' offices, legal aid centers, and correctional institutions should be able to facilitate the

entry of, movement around, provision of services and independent participation of PWDs as suspects, accused persons, victims, witnesses, or prisoners. It is evident from research that PWDs constitute a relatively larger share of the criminal justice system and face increased risks of victimization, arrests, prosecutions, and incarceration as there are a large number of inmates with disabilities (Bronson et al., 2015; Oberholtzer, 2017; Schlanger, 2017). Physical impediments like absence of ramps, narrow entrance points, inaccessible routes, unaccommodating toilets, inadequately designed service delivery points, and poor navigational aids could limit PWDs' mobility and independence.

The rights and participation of persons with disabilities have increasingly attracted attention within the African human rights framework. African States have demonstrated a growing commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities through national legislation and regional human rights instruments. An important development is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, commonly referred to as the African Disability Protocol (ADP), which entered into force in 2024. The Protocol recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities to equality, non-discrimination, participation and access to justice. It requires States to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have effective access to justice on an equal basis with others and are provided with appropriate accommodations to facilitate their participation in legal proceedings (African Union, 2018). These obligations demonstrate that access to justice requires justice institutions to be responsive to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities, including their physical accessibility requirements.

Despite these developments, persons with disabilities continue to encounter legal, institutional and practical barriers within African justice systems. These include inaccessible physical infrastructure, inadequate communication mechanisms, limited access to legal aid, discriminatory attitudes and inadequate procedural accommodations (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), 2025). Physical inaccessibility can be particularly significant because it may prevent persons with disabilities from reaching or using justice institutions in the first place. Consequently, the existence of formal legal rights does not necessarily guarantee effective access to justice unless criminal justice institutions are physically, procedurally and communicatively accessible to persons with disabilities.

In Kenya, persons with disabilities constitute a significant population whose rights require protection across all sectors of society, including the criminal justice system. The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census identified approximately 918,000 persons aged five years and above as having a disability, representing about 2.2% of the population within the age group covered by the census (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). The census further showed that mobility disability was the most commonly reported form of disability, followed by visual disability, while hearing, cognition, communication and self-care disabilities were also reported (KNBS, 2019). These statistics demonstrate that a substantial number of Kenyans may require accessible public infrastructure and reasonable accommodation when accessing public institutions, including police stations, courts, correctional institutions and other criminal justice agencies.

More recent evidence from the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2022 demonstrates that the prevalence of functional difficulties may be considerably higher depending on the method used to measure disability. The survey assessed six functional domains, namely seeing, hearing, communicating, cognition, walking and self-care, among the household population aged five years and above. The findings indicated that 15% of the population aged five years and above experienced some level of difficulty in at least one of the six functional domains, while 5% experienced a lot of difficulty or could not function in at least one domain. Mobility and vision were the most commonly reported areas of severe functional difficulty, each affecting approximately 2% of the population (KNBS, 2022). These findings are significant to the accessibility of criminal justice infrastructure because different forms and levels of functional difficulty may require different physical features and accommodations within justice institutions.

For instance, Persons Living with Physical Disabilities may require ramps, accessible entrances, appropriately designed pathways, lifts where necessary, accessible parking spaces and accessible toilets. Persons with visual disabilities may require physical environments that facilitate safe and independent movement and navigation. Persons with other forms of disability may similarly require adjustments to the physical environment to enable them to access justice institutions. Thus, the accessibility of criminal justice infrastructure should be understood in relation to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities rather than merely the presence or absence of a particular facility.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, provides a strong legal foundation for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Article 27 guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of disability, while Article 48 provides that the State shall ensure access to justice for all persons. Article 54 specifically provides for the rights of persons with disabilities to be treated with dignity and respect and to access information through appropriate means of communication. These constitutional provisions place an obligation on the State to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy their rights and participate in public institutions on an equal basis with others (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

Kenya has enhanced the legal safeguards for persons with disabilities by enacting the Persons with Disabilities Act 2025, which replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act 2003 and was enacted on 27 May 2025. The Act includes a strong focus on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, participation, access to information, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation. These include strong legislative provisions to ensure the availability of infrastructure (ramp, entrance, pathway, waiting area, service counter and toilet) in criminal justice facilities (police stations, courts, prosecution offices, legal aid facilities and correctional institutions).

A gap still exists between legal provisions and their implementation, notwithstanding this strengthened framework. There is evidence that people with disabilities still face inaccessible facilities, lack of procedural accommodations, limited communication support and other institutional barriers in the criminal justice system (ICJ, 2025). In addition, there is limited disaggregated data or empirical research to inform the extent to which people with various types of disability have physically easy access to criminal justice institutions.

As per the 2019 Census, there were about 47,900 people with disabilities in Kakamega County (KNBS, 2019). There are no empirical studies about physical accessibility of the police stations, courts, and other criminal justice institutions for people with disabilities. Merely the presence of accessible legal requirements does not ensure that they are implemented. Therefore, assessment of physical accessibility is crucial in order to identify the possible obstacles for accessing the criminal justice institutions independently. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the physical accessibility of the criminal justice system for people with disabilities in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Access to justice remains a significant challenge for persons with disabilities (PWDs) globally. Although persons with disabilities are entitled to equal access to justice, their ability to exercise this right may be constrained by physical, institutional and procedural barriers. Persons with disabilities may interact with the criminal justice system as suspects, accused persons, victims, witnesses or incarcerated persons and may therefore be required to access police stations, courts and other justice institutions. Where such facilities are physically inaccessible, PWDs may experience difficulties entering buildings, moving within facilities, accessing service points and using essential amenities, thereby limiting their effective participation in criminal justice processes (Oberholtzer, 2017).

There is empirical evidence from international settings that people with disabilities encounter various barriers within the criminal justice system, including lack of health care, means of communication, legal assistance, and reasonable accommodation, with physical accessibility being a major precondition for accessing justice (Bronson et al., 2015; Schlanger, 2017). The Constitution of Kenya (2010) stipulates that people with disabilities should enjoy equality, freedom from discrimination, and access to justice. Additionally, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, ensures accessibility, participation, access to information, and reasonable accommodation. All these legal measures put a responsibility on all public entities, including police stations, courts, and correctional centers, to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Despite these legal and policy measures, persons with disabilities continue to encounter barriers within the criminal justice system, including inaccessible facilities, inadequate communication and procedural accommodations, limited legal assistance and insufficient capacity among justice sector actors to identify and respond to disability-related needs (Onsomu, et al, 2024; International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), 2025). In particular, inaccessible physical infrastructure may prevent persons with disabilities from accessing justice institutions in the first place or may make their participation dependent on assistance from other persons. This raises concerns about whether the physical environment of criminal justice institutions adequately reflects the constitutional and statutory commitment to equality and access to justice.

There is a significant number of PWDs in Kenya who might suffer from mobility and vision impairment that make them require specific needs concerning physical accessibility to public institutions. According to the Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2019, there are approximately 918,000 people of age five and above with disabilities, and KDHS 2022 revealed that 15% of people of age five and above have some difficulty in at least one functional domain (KNBS, 2019). There were approximately 47,900 people in Kakamega County who had disabilities; however, there is limited evidence concerning the physical accessibility of criminal justice institutions for PWDs. In particular, there is no information about the accessibility of entrances, pathways, ramps, toilets, parking spaces, service points, waiting areas and courtrooms in police stations, courts and other criminal justice institutions. Existing literature primarily focuses on legal and human rights aspects and general barriers to justice without empirical evidence on the state of physical infrastructure on a county level. Consequently, there is no information about the state of physical accessibility of criminal justice facilities in Kakamega County to PWDs. Therefore, the study consequently sought to investigate the accessibility of physical infrastructure within the Kenyan criminal justice system for persons with disabilities, with particular focus on Kakamega County.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the extent to which facilities in criminal justice system are friendly to persons with disability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Human Rights Model of Disability

The Human Rights Model of Disability was developed within the United Nations human rights framework in 2006. The model addresses inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and seeks to redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind. This includes access to justice by persons with disabilities (DARU, 2019).

The model stresses the inherent dignity of all people in society and human rights as essential to protect that dignity. According to Donnelly (1989) life cannot be enjoyed fully without human rights. Viewed from this perspective, persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others in society. Their access to justice should not be limited by discriminatory practices, inaccessible environments or institutional arrangements that do not respond to their needs.

The Human Rights Model of Disability is relevant to this study because it recognizes access to justice for persons with disabilities as a human rights issue. Criminal justice institutions, including police stations, courts and correctional institutions, should meet the different needs of persons with disabilities. Inaccessible police stations, physical barriers within justice facilities and lack of interpreters may prevent persons with disabilities from accessing services and participating effectively in justice processes. These barriers therefore require attention to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights with dignity and equality.

The model provides a basis for examining whether criminal justice facilities in Kakamega County are suitable for persons with disabilities. In this study, the accessibility of physical facilities is considered in relation to the responsibility of criminal justice institutions to provide an environment that enables persons with disabilities to access justice. The model therefore helps to interpret physical and institutional barriers as issues of equality, dignity and the realization of human rights rather than as challenges arising from an individual's impairment alone.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Physical Accessibility of Criminal Justice Facilities

Access to justice remains a significant challenge for persons with disabilities (PWDs) globally. Although persons with disabilities are entitled to equal access to justice, their ability to exercise this right may be constrained by physical, institutional and procedural barriers. Persons with disabilities may interact with the criminal justice system as suspects, accused persons, victims, witnesses or incarcerated persons and may therefore be required to access police stations, courts and other justice institutions. Where such facilities are physically inaccessible, PWDs may experience difficulties entering buildings, moving within facilities, accessing service points and using essential amenities, thereby limiting their effective participation in criminal justice processes (Oberholtzer, 2017).

There is empirical evidence from international settings that people with disabilities encounter various barriers within the criminal justice system. Incarcerated persons with disabilities have also been reported to experience difficulties in accessing appropriate healthcare, communication, legal services and reasonable accommodation (Bronson et al., 2015; Schlanger, 2017). The Constitution of Kenya (2010) stipulates that people with disabilities should enjoy equality, freedom from discrimination, and access to justice. Additionally, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, ensures accessibility, participation, access to information, and reasonable accommodation. All these legal measures put a responsibility on all public entities, including police stations, courts, and correctional centers, to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Physical accessibility is a key element in the suitability of criminal justice facilities for persons living with disabilities. The physical environment should ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access services and participate in justice processes without unnecessary barriers. However, the lack of ramps, inaccessible routes, unsuitable toilets and poorly designed service delivery areas may limit their mobility and self-reliance. These barriers may affect persons with disabilities in the reporting of cases, in seeking assistance, in attending court proceedings, or in accessing services within correctional institutions.

The experiences of persons with disabilities may also differ between police stations, courts and correctional institutions because these facilities play different roles within the criminal justice system. Police stations are often the first places people visit when reporting a crime or seeking help from law enforcement officers. Courts provide facilities for hearings and other judicial proceedings and correctional institutions accommodate persons serving custodial

sentences. In any of these settings, inaccessible infrastructure may create difficulties for persons living with disabilities and limit their effective participation in justice processes.

The Human Rights Model of Disability helps explain these challenges by showing that persons with disabilities are often excluded because of barriers within their surroundings and institutions, rather than their disabilities alone. This means that criminal justice institutions have a responsibility to remove barriers that limit access to their services and prevent persons with disabilities from enjoying the same rights as others. It is therefore important to assess the physical accessibility of police stations, courts and correctional institutions to determine whether their facilities meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

2.2.2 Communication and Reasonable Accommodation

Vernon and Miller (2005), in one of the earlier empirical examinations of the experiences of persons with hearing impairments within the criminal justice system in the United States, found that such persons encounter obstacles from arrest through prosecution and sentencing. A particularly significant barrier identified by the authors is the inadequate availability of qualified interpreters, which affects communication between accused persons and justice officials and consequently undermines procedural fairness. This finding is important because it demonstrates that accessibility within the criminal justice system extends beyond physical access to facilities. In the context of persons with hearing impairments, for example, an accessible police station or courtroom may still be effectively inaccessible if the individual cannot understand questions, communicate with investigators or follow court proceedings. Thus, the availability of communication support should be viewed as an essential component of a disability-friendly criminal justice facility rather than as an optional service.

Vernon and Miller (2005) further report that nearly one-quarter of hearing-impaired inmates did not receive interpretation services. This finding points to a broader institutional problem because the absence of interpretation may prevent suspects and accused persons from understanding the reasons for their arrest, the charges against them or the proceedings in which they are expected to participate. The authors also observe that police officers may sometimes avoid pressing charges because of communication difficulties or the perceived challenges associated with accommodating persons with hearing impairments. While such conduct may appear to demonstrate sympathy towards persons with disabilities, it may instead reflect institutional incapacity and produce unequal treatment before the law.

2.2.3 Disability Accessibility in the Kenyan Criminal Justice System

Kenya has made significant progress in establishing a legal and policy framework for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination on the basis of disability and provides for access to justice for all persons (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Kenya has also enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, which provides for equality, accessibility, participation, access to information and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities (Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025). Despite these legal and policy measures, persons with disabilities continue to encounter barriers within the criminal justice system, including inaccessible facilities, inadequate communication and procedural accommodations, limited legal assistance and insufficient capacity among justice sector actors to identify and respond to disability-related needs (Onsomu, et al 2024; International Commission of Jurists [ICJ], 2025).

The problem is particularly important in Kakamega County, which has a substantial population of persons with disabilities. The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census identified approximately 47,900 persons with disabilities in the county (KNBS, 2019). However, there is limited empirical evidence on whether criminal justice institutions in Kakamega County are accessible and responsive to the specific needs of persons with disabilities. In particular, there is insufficient evidence on the extent to which PWDs can access police services, legal representation, court proceedings and other criminal justice services; the availability of reasonable and procedural accommodations and the challenges experienced by PWDs when interacting with criminal justice actors.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design to investigate the accessibility of physical infrastructure within the Kenyan criminal justice system for persons with disabilities. This study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya, focusing on selected police stations, courts and correctional institutions.

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in the criminal justice system in Kakamega County, Kenya. The police stations where the study was conducted include Kakamega Central Police Station, Mumias Police Station, Shisasari Police Station, Malinya Police Station and Malava Police Station. The courts where the study was carried out include Kakamega Law

Courts, Mumias Law Courts and Butali Law Courts. The prisons where the study was conducted include Kakamega Main Prison, Kakamega Women Prison and Shikusa Prison.

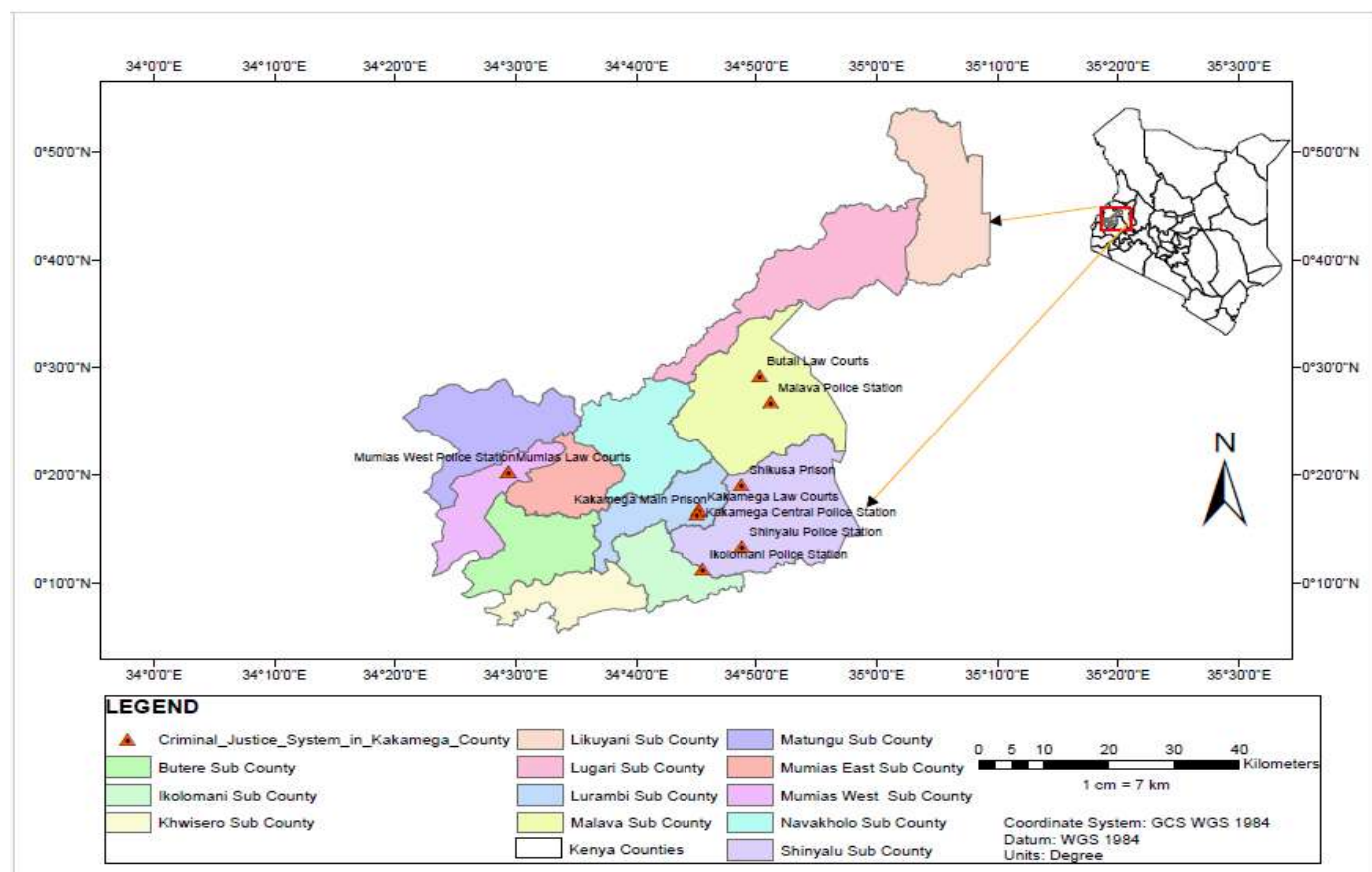


Figure 1
Map Showing the study Area

3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised persons with disabilities who had interacted with the criminal justice system and key justice-sector actors and stakeholders with knowledge of disability accessibility. These included convicted persons with disabilities, convicted persons without disabilities, police officers, magistrates, probation officers, correctional officers, Officers Commanding Stations (OCSs), formerly convicted persons with disabilities, County Commissioners, leaders of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and officials of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD).

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study sampled convicted persons with disabilities. There are 35 convicts with disability in Kakamega County (Prison Service records, 2024). The study adopted 100% that was used to sample disability convicts, and from the 35 convicts with disability, 35 convicts were selected by simple random method.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

This study used questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussion guides and a physical infrastructure observation checklist as data collection tools. The questionnaire was administered to convicted persons with disabilities, while interviews were conducted with key informants and focus group discussions were used to obtain broader experiences concerning accessibility. The observation checklist enabled the researcher to directly assess physical features such as entrances, ramps, pathways, toilets, service points, waiting areas, courtrooms and other accessibility facilities. A total of 35 questionnaires were distributed among convicted persons with disability. The interview guide collected data from police, magistrates, probation officers, prison officers in-charge, Officers Commanding Stations (OCSs), ex-convicts with disability, OPD leaders, the director of NCPWD and the County Commissioner. A total of two focus group discussions were conducted.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires and observation checklist were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, tables and figures, were used to describe the accessibility of physical infrastructure within the selected criminal justice institutions. Where appropriate, inferential statistics were used to examine relationships between relevant variables at a 95% confidence level. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded and analyzed thematically using NVivo. The findings from questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations were compared through methodological triangulation to establish the extent to which the physical infrastructure of criminal justice institutions was accessible to persons with disabilities.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was strictly adhered to during the data collection period, where identification and disclosure of names for those who participated remained private. The researcher got official permission from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) Directorate of Postgraduate Studies and NACOSTI to carry out the study. The researcher also got permission from MMUST IERC to enable the study to be carried out. The respondents filled an informed consent form in respecting their decision to take part in the study.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Accessibility and Suitability of Physical Infrastructure

The study sought to establish whether the criminal justice system was accessible to persons with disabilities. The study sought to establish the accessibility of physical infrastructure in the criminal justice system.

4.1.1 Satisfaction Ratings Across Criminal Justice Settings

The results indicate that accessibility and suitability of physical infrastructure remain a significant challenge across the three CJS settings. Police stations received the most unfavorable ratings, followed by correctional institutions, while courts recorded comparatively higher satisfaction ratings. Satisfaction ratings varied across the three CJS settings (Table 1). Police stations recorded the highest proportion of respondents reporting dissatisfaction, with 22 respondents (62.9%) indicating that they were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. This was followed by correctional institutions, where 18 respondents (51.4%) reported being either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. Courts recorded the lowest proportion of dissatisfaction, with 14 respondents (40.0%) reporting either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. The distribution therefore indicates that, descriptively, satisfaction was lowest at police stations, followed by correctional institutions, while courts recorded comparatively higher satisfaction ratings. (Table 1)

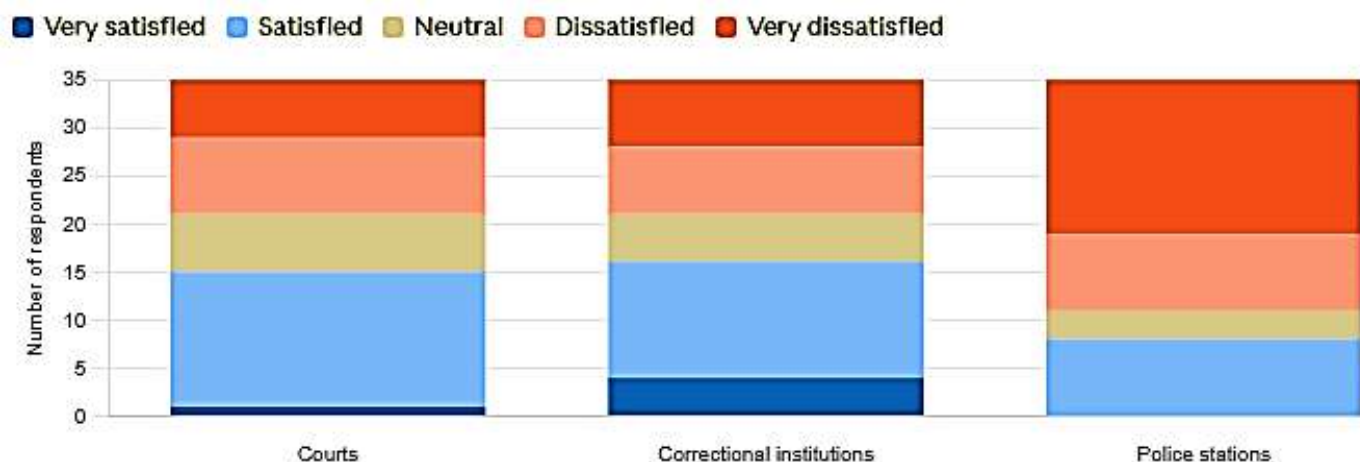
Table 1

Distribution of Satisfaction Ratings Across CJS Settings (N = 35)

Satisfaction Rating	Police Stations	Courts	Correctional Institutions
Very dissatisfied	10 (28.6%)	4 (11.4%)	6 (17.1%)
Dissatisfied	12 (34.3%)	10 (28.6%)	12 (34.3%)
Neutral	8 (22.9%)	11 (31.4%)	10 (28.6%)
Satisfied	4 (11.4%)	8 (22.9%)	6 (17.1%)
Very satisfied	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.7%)	1 (2.9%)
Total 35 (100.0%)	35 (100.0%)	35 (100.0%)	35 (100.0%)

The results indicate that accessibility and suitability of physical infrastructure remain a significant challenge across the three CJS settings. Although courts and correctional institutions performed relatively better than police stations, the results still indicate substantial accessibility challenges. In court settings, inaccessible buildings, limited mobility support, and inadequate disability accommodations may restrict the ability of PWDs to attend hearings, provide testimony, or access court services independently.

The results also show that police stations may pose accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities, as they are often the first place of contact where people get help from the criminal justice system. Persons with disabilities may need to visit police stations to report crimes, seek assistance or participate in investigations. Their ability to access these services independently may be limited where entrances, pathways and service areas are inaccessible, their ability. Inaccessible facilities within correctional institutions may affect movement, access to essential amenities and the ability to participate in institutional activities.

**Figure 2**

Frequency distribution of satisfaction ratings for CJS physical facilities by setting (n = 35)

4.1.2 Differences in Satisfaction Across Criminal Justice Settings

The analysis examined the distribution of respondents' satisfaction ratings across the three Criminal Justice System (CJS) settings, namely police stations, courts, and correctional institutions. The analysis was based on 35 respondents who provided satisfaction ratings for all three CJS settings. The effect size was examined using Kendall's W, which was 0.021. This represents a very small effect, indicating that only a limited proportion of the variation in satisfaction rankings was associated with differences between the three CJS settings. The result suggests that although respondents may have perceived some differences between institutions, the magnitude of these differences was relatively small. Following the overall comparison, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used to examine pairwise differences. A Bonferroni correction was applied, resulting in an adjusted significance level of $\alpha = .017$ (.05/3).

Table 2

Wilcoxon signed-rank post-hoc comparisons of satisfaction ratings across CJS settings

Comparison	Setting	Mdn	W	P	Decision
Courts vs. police stations	Courts	3.00	2.50	.009	Significant
	Police stations	2.00			
Correctional institutions vs. Police stations	Correctional institutions	3.00	7.00	.011	Significant
	Police stations	2.00			
Courts vs. Correctional institutions	Courts	3.00	27.00	.335	Not significant
	Correctional institutions	3.00			

Note: N = 35. Bonferroni-adjusted significance level = .017. Source: Field Data, 2026.

The results showed a statistically significant difference between courts and police stations, ($W = 2.50$, $p = .009$). The median satisfaction rating was higher for courts (Mdn = 3.00) than for police stations (Mdn = 2.00). A statistically significant difference was also observed between correctional institutions and police stations, ($W = 7.00$, $p = .011$). In contrast, the comparison between courts and correctional institutions was not statistically significant, ($W = 27.00$, $p = .335$). The post-hoc findings suggest that police stations constitute the most problematic of the three CJS settings in terms of respondents' satisfaction, while courts and correctional institutions recorded comparatively better and statistically similar satisfaction levels.

The results indicated that police stations were rated lower than courts and correctional institutions, suggesting respondents had more challenges with physical accessibility at police stations. These differences may be due to inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate sanitation facilities, limited assistive devices and insufficient communication support (Danso *et al.*, 2019). Because the difference between courts and correctional institutions was not statistically significant, accessibility challenges seem to be common throughout the criminal justice system, although dissatisfaction was highest at police stations. This highlights the need to focus on improvements at police stations while maintaining a disability-inclusive infrastructure and support in all criminal justice institutions.

4.1.3 Satisfaction by Disability Type

A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine whether satisfaction with court physical facilities differed significantly across disability types: hearing impairment, physical disability, and visual impairment. For purposes of Chi-square analysis, satisfaction ratings were collapsed into two categories: Not Satisfied (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied and neutral) and Satisfied (satisfied and very satisfied).

Table 3

Chi-square analysis of satisfaction by disability type

Disability Type	Satisfied n (%)	Not Satisfied n (%)	Total
Hearing impairment	3 (25.0%)	7 (36.84%)	10
Physical disability	7 (58.33%)	9 (47.37%)	16
Visual impairment	2 (16.67%)	3 (15.79%)	5
Total	12 (38.71%)	19 (61.29%)	31

Note: Three respondents who did not specify a disability type were excluded from this analysis $\chi^2(2) = 0.495, p = .781$.

The findings showed that there was no statistically significant association between disability type and satisfaction with court physical facilities, ($\chi^2(2) = 0.495, p = .781$). Since the p-value was greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that satisfaction levels regarding court infrastructure did not vary significantly across different disability categories. The results showed no statistically significant relationship between type of disability and satisfaction with physical facilities of the court ($\chi^2(2) = 0.495, p = .781$). The descriptive results showed differences in satisfaction among the disability categories. Respondents with physical disabilities accounted for 7 (58.33%) of the satisfied group, while those with hearing impairment accounted for 3 (25.0%) and those with visual impairment accounted for 2 (16.67%). Among respondents classified as not satisfied, 9 (47.37%) had physical disabilities, 7 (36.84%) had hearing impairment and 3 (15.79%) had visual impairment. These differences were not significant. This indicates that the accessibility challenges were not limited to one type of disability, but could indicate high limitations in the physical infrastructure of justice institutions. This is supported by qualitative results where respondents reported barriers in sanitation, mobility, communication and access to information.

4.1.4 Qualitative Experiences of Physical Accessibility

The qualitative findings further explained the quantitative findings. Participants' narratives revealed that different disability groups experienced common environmental barriers that affected their interaction with court facilities. For respondents with physical disabilities, qualitative responses emphasized challenges related to mobility, building access, and sanitation facilities. One respondent stated:

"Toilets and bathrooms are not tailored to meet my needs as a person with physical disability" (Police Officer, 21 May 2026).

The findings showed that inaccessible buildings and inadequate physical infrastructure affected the movement of persons with disabilities within criminal justice institutions. Participants reported difficulties accessing buildings and moving between service areas because some facilities lacked ramps, accessible entrances, appropriate pathways. One OPD representative explained that

"Most of the buildings are not friendly to persons using wheelchairs because there are no proper ramps or accessible entrances. Sometimes we have to depend on other people to help us reach the offices" (OPD representative, 27th May, 2026).

These accounts show that physical barriers within justice institutions are not just about mobility, but also affect independence, dignity, and the ability of persons with disabilities to participate effectively in justice processes.

Participants with hearing impairments highlighted difficulties related to limited availability of communication support;

One respondent with hearing impairment explained:

"Lack of communication experts or interpreters causes delayed justice" (Magistrate, 19th May, 2026).

Respondents with sensory disabilities reported barriers associated with communication and information accessibility. While persons with visual impairments identified challenges associated with accessing information within justice institutions. These qualitative findings demonstrate that although the specific barriers may differ according to impairment type, the underlying issue is the limited implementation of disability-inclusive design within court environments.

Qualitative findings indicated that physical infrastructure barriers in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) significantly affect persons with disabilities (PWDs) access to justice services. Respondents reported mobility, access to facilities, availability of assistive devices and inappropriate environments as issues. These examples show that

physical barriers within justice institutions affect not only mobility, but also independence, dignity and the ability of persons with disabilities to participate effectively in justice processes.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that criminal justice facilities in Kakamega County are not fully accessible or disability-friendly. Physical infrastructure within police stations, courts and correctional institutions continues to present significant barriers to independent access and participation by persons with disabilities. Police stations recorded the highest level of dissatisfaction, followed by correctional institutions and courts. Inaccessible buildings, unsuitable sanitation facilities, inadequate assistive devices and communication barriers limit effective participation of persons with disabilities in criminal justice processes.

5.2 Recommendations

- i. The study recommends that the Government and criminal justice institutions strengthen the implementation of disability-inclusive policies by enforcing universal accessibility standards and improving physical infrastructure in police stations, courts and correctional institutions.
- ii. Criminal justice institutions should allocate adequate resources and conduct regular accessibility audits to identify and address barriers affecting persons with disabilities. They should also provide necessary assistive devices and communication support services to facilitate access to justice.
- iii. Collaboration with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), legal aid providers and other stakeholders should be strengthened to improve awareness of disability rights and promote the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in justice processes.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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