

**EXPLORING CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES ON BULLYING,
DISCRIMINATION AND NEGLECT FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN
SELECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LUAPULA PROVINCE,
ZAMBIA**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Zambia in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Special Education)

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LUSAKA

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, **Moses Chisala**, do hereby solemnly declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that it has never been previously submitted for a degree at the University of Zambia or any other university.

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Signature

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Principal Supervisor	Signature	Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

My late dear Dad and Mom, Mr. Stanford Kabaso Waya and Mrs. Elizabeth Waya Mwila who did not live to witness the completion of this thesis, but they will remain as a source of theory in my academic and professional accomplishments. Their interests and enthusiasm in the education of all their children shall ever be cherished and appreciated.

I also wholeheartedly dedicate it to all my family members for their holistic support they have always rendered to me not only in academics but also as a member of the family. My loving wife, Patricia and my lovely daughter, Mwansa in whom I am well pleased. I have endeavored to motivate and lay a solid foundation for you all my life by the mercies from our Almighty God.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected primary special education schools in Luapula province. Constructivist/Interpretive paradigm and qualitative intrinsic case study design were employed because the case study outcomes were intended to provide insights to the researcher about experiences of learners with disabilities about protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected primary special education schools. The sample size comprised of 38 participants. Purposive critical case sampling was used to select the two head teachers, expert sampling was used on 12 teachers and criterion sampling was used to select 12 learners and 12 parents. Data from head teachers and teachers from semi-structured interview guide and from learners and parents used Focus Group Discussions Guide (FGD) and data collected were analysed thematically. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies; recognising, responding and reporting strategies. Then, safety, disciplinary and prevention measures were used to address incidents of discrimination in Special education schools. The study also showed that in case of neglect in selected special education school, material support, social and emotional support and capacity building measures were provided. These strategies helped to address bullying, discrimination and neglect against learners with disabilities in selected special education schools. Based on these findings, the study recommends for the school to have rules and regulation (policy), and provide up-to-date professional development training needed among teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in schools for the purpose of identifying, reporting and addressing all forms of direct or indirect bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities in school.

Keyword: *Bullying, Child Protection measures, Discrimination, Neglect.*

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

3R's	-	Recognizing, Responding and Reporting
CCP	-	Chisala's Child Protection
CPD	-	Continuous Professional Developments
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
HSSREC	-	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
JAWS	-	Job Access with Speech
MYSCD	-	Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	-	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNZA	-	University of Zambia.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The chapter provides a background to the study, statement of the problem and purpose of the study. It further states the objectives and research questions of the study. Then, significance, delimitations, limitations, theoretical framework, and definition of key operational terms, and the summary of the chapter to support the study.

1.2 Background

It is the responsibility of every individual in the society to protect learners and provide them with an environment that caters for their healthy development. In the face of the international mandate for safe learning environments, the reality for many children in school is quite different. The reality of a safe learning environment from a global perspective is that many learners with disability do not fare well (UNICEF, 2017). United Nations (2019) reported that despite important progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mistreatment remains a harsh reality for millions of learners including those with disabilities around the world. Therefore, one wonders how learners with disabilities were protected against bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Learners need to be protected against all sorts of physical, mental, sexual abuse including bullying, discrimination and neglect, while in the school environment (Augustin & Abubaker, 2016).

Child abuse in schools is a deeply troubling issue that have devastating effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of learners. An estimated 246 million children experience violence in school every year, which is approximately 1 in 4 students (UNESCO, 2017) Bullying in special education schools may go unnoticed or unaddressed by school staff due to inadequate training, lack of awareness, or a failure to take complaints from students with disabilities seriously. UNICEF (2019) revealed that close to one in three students with disabilities between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide experiences bullying on a regular basis. Similarly, UNESCO (2019) reported that almost one-third of school students have been bullied by their peers at least once in a month. Further, UNESCO (2019) found that persons with disabilities face the worst discrimination, affecting their right to go to school and within school. Clement et al., (2016) investigated the prevalence and risk factors of child neglect in Canada

and the findings revealed that 21% of children aged between 10 to 15 years were victims of neglect. UNICEF (2017) estimated that children with disabilities experience three to four times the level of violence compared to children without disabilities. Sharley (2022) also, confirmed neglect to be the most common form of child abuse in schools, but frequently goes unrecognized and threaten well-being of children while in school. In recognition of the importance of child protection, the school should have a legislative framework and protection system that encompasses a range of prevention and response mechanisms in case of bullying, discrimination or neglect occur in school. Against this background, it is no surprise that children with disabilities usually experience more bullying, discrimination and neglect at school, relative to their peers. To address the bottlenecks requires schools to implement child-safeguarding procedures; provides for access to justice and services for victims of abuse and neglect; and details children's rights to social protection, health care, education, and parental care (Chibwili, 2023).

Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development [MYSCD] et al (2018) reported that child abuse in school has taken a range of forms including physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, discrimination, neglect, and even sexual abuse. More and more learners continue to experience bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools and this has caused on the increase of drop from school among learners with disabilities (Njelesani and Swarm, 2022). Study after study has been conducted and an overwhelming amount of them find that child bullying, discrimination and neglect is a behavior that is handed down from generation to generation. Kanchiputu & Mwale (2016) noted that little progress has been made to lessen the risks learners are facing from bullying, discrimination and neglect by fellow pupils and their teachers. There are concerns about keeping pace with emerging risks of bullying, discrimination and neglect to learners in schools. Even Al-Raqqad et al. (2017) argued that many learners in schools continue to face multiple child protection issues in school. The study of Swearer & Hymel (2015) found that learners with disabilities are at a greater risk of bullying, discrimination and neglect as compared to regular learners those without disability. However, majority of Zambians give their government good marks on its efforts to protect and promote the well-being of vulnerable children in regular school. However, fewer than half say that resources are available in special education school to help abused and neglected children, children with disability. Therefore, the goals of this study were to explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

However, children with disabilities are not always specifically mentioned as a population needing additional protections against school violence, nor is school violence and bullying highlighted as a particular context of risk. All learners have the right to protection and must to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence (UNICEF, 2022). There is need to scale up efforts to ensure that school environments are made safe and more inclusive for all children and young people including those with disabilities to avoid the dire consequences of bullying such as missing classes, avoiding school activities, and dropping out of school which negatively impacts academic achievement and future employment prospects.

Studies have looked at various aspects of bullying from prevalence and severity to coping strategies used and the effectiveness of schools' interventions at both primary and secondary school level (Oldenburg, 2017; Cervancia et al., 2019; Matulac and Zamora, 2020). Although, child protection efforts in Zambia been made, more and more learners are bullied, discriminated and neglected (Likumbo et al., 2021). Hatimbula et al. (2019) noted that although the National Child Policy (2006) being the main policy on learners it does not directly address the protection of learners in school environment. Mantey (2017) revealed that less attention to research on bullying has been given to learners with disabilities and their teacher' views. Due to that, bullying has resulted into significant drop in school performance, loss of concentration in class, failure to study and failure for one to make choices. The victims usually develop negative attitude towards school due to the trauma that they experience at school.

The schools need to respond to issues of bullying or other acts of abuse being perpetrated in school. Butterfly Tree Charity (2018) confirmed that a lot of bullying incidents and abuses like calling names, punching each other took place in school environments but little progress has been made to lessen violence. Similarly, Chirwa (2019), observed that some constraints in handling child protection issues in school. Many schools' learners experience bullying and many other forms of violence on a day-to-day basis within school. Bullying, discrimination, neglect and other forms of violence in schools' blight learners' experiences of formal education and their abilities to make the best of the opportunities they have. Ng'andu & Chilufya (2019) stated that bullying among school going learners' experiences in educational settings have lasting impact on their physical, mental and emotional well-being. In the study of Bibou-Nakou and Markos (2017), found that many learners with disabilities in our schools are exposed to different forms of violence and threats in schools and other educational settings. Munger and Markstrom (2019) pointed out a gap between the school and child protection service on bullying

in school. Hence, the study explored the current situation of child protection measures on bullying, in schools to understand if learners with disabilities are protected in schools.

Further, access to education, violations and breaches of the right to education persist, illustrated perhaps most starkly by learners who are still out of school (UNESCO, 2019). WHO (2019) confirmed that persons with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who face the worst discrimination, affecting both their right to go to school and their rights within schools. Human Rights Council (2019) also confirmed that learners with disabilities face disproportionately high levels of discrimination. While some valuable research has been conducted on prevalence and factors of bullying, discrimination and neglect in school in Zambia, significant gaps remain. There was fairly little reliable information on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The special education and family as the base units of child protection are crucial, and there is an urgent need to build community capacity to protect children, rather than rely on well-wishers or legal services. Hence, school environment plays a critical role in ensuring protection and supporting learners affected by of bullying, discrimination and neglect (United Nations, 2019). Child protection activities need to address the needs of all learners, including learners with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by discrimination while in school.

The educational needs of learners with disabilities are not properly taken care of and the system did not help them to benefit from education (Mantey, 2017). Learners with disabilities mostly face challenges like discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school. This also evident by Dankyi et al. (2021) who found that discrimination in school encourages the tendencies that distinguish, exclude or restrict individuals or groups with disabilities from having access to quality education. Because of these inequities, many learners with disabilities are not reaping the full benefits of education. Hence, teachers lack the knowledge and framework to handle them. Rijbroek et al. (2019) also reported that 100% of school administrators reported having problems handling learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms and the majority of these administrators lacked knowledge of specific disabilities and special needs. More research on understanding the prevention, intervention and supportive system the special schools have put in place as child protection measures will go a long way to convince administrator in schools for learners with disabilities to ensure protection and prevention services.

Additionally, the incidents of neglect have perpetrated educational settings (Lucinda 2021). Numerous studies indicate that neglect, contributes to the risk of learners coming late, being absents or drop out from school (Matulac & Zamora, 2020; LeCroy & Milligan-LeCroy, 2020). The response of the government in many developing economies towards neglect in schools is not too good as some studies have shown that neglect may be more detrimental to children's early brain development than physical or sexual abuse (Sharley, 2022; Jackson et al., 2023).). The Government is expected to provide the abused and neglected students the required services, which include medical care, family counselling, foster care, and specialized education such as; vocational education, aided education. Learners in school lack access to quality instruction, appropriate learning materials, educational technology, or special education services for students with disabilities, but frequently goes unrecognized within the school-aged population and represent major threats to child health and well-being (Sharley, 2022). This contribute to academic underachievement, low graduation rates, and limited opportunities for future success. Hence, intervening in neglect at the earliest opportunity not only serves to minimise the long-term and dangerous effects on learners, but it also saves the cost of reactive services on the public purse (Lucinda 2021).

Child protection programmes lays the groundwork that meet the needs of learners who have experienced or are at risk for experiencing bullying, discrimination and neglect in an educational setting. Sharley (2020) revealed that schools are vital safeguarding partners within the local community, having the opportunity to observe learners' interactions with their peers and families over an extended period of time and development. Although, Rachel and Fay (2019) indicated that school-focused child protection programs are often limited or create unexpected outcomes. Hence, opened the research lens of the study to look child protective measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities in the school environment.

The evidence provided by Bibou-Nakou and Markos (2017) indicated that child protection is associated with bullying, discrimination and neglect throughout childhood and could lead to impaired academic performance in school. Learners who have been exposed to bullying, discrimination, neglect in childhood, and perform worse in school than unexposed learners (UNESCO, 2019). Therefore, schools are struggling to effectively ensure child protection, and more evidence for learners with disabilities (Better Care Network, 2017; Malungo et al., 2018). UNESCO, 2019, Hatimbula et al., 2019; World Vision, 2019). UNICEF (2018) noted that

despite child protection programme having been given guidelines and rules on how to create a secured and safe environment for learners need attention. Therefore, there is need to explore protection measures put in place to address bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

With the increasingly concerned, with the increasing cases of bullying, discrimination and neglect amongst learners in schools (UNICEF, 2018); MYSCD et al., 2018; Likumbo et al., 2021; Dankyi, et al., 2021). Learners with disabilities have experienced bullying, harassment, or peer victimization, being excluded from group activities, ignored by peers, or marginalized within the school. Also, teachers underestimate a student's abilities, schools fail to provide accessible facilities, materials, or technology to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. There is failure from the school and homes to academic support and emotional care, poses significant risks to the well-being of children in special education settings (MYSCD et al., 2018; Nakamba & Kaani, 2023). Therefore, there was important to explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination, and neglect to comprehend tailored strategies that account for their specific needs and vulnerabilities in special education school. Hence, was crucial to bridge that gap, by ensuring a safe school environment that may provide protection among learners with disabilities in school. It was against that background, the study explored child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Bullying, discrimination and neglect has remained a long-standing social depravity facing learners in schools. Almost one-third of school going learners with disabilities have been bullied, discriminated or neglected by their peers with or without disabilities on daily basis (UNICEF 2019; Njelesani & Swarm, 2022). Further, UNESCO, (2017) reports that learners with disabilities face challenges of bullying and discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school about three times more than their peers “without” disabilities. Similarly, Republic of Zambia, (2018) reports that learners with disabilities are vulnerable to bullying compared to their non-disabled peers, with rates as high as two to three times greater. Additionally, they face peer rejection, teasing, name-calling, derogatory remarks about their disability, or hurtful language to belittle or demean them. They are also excluded from group activities, ignored by peers, or marginalized within the school community, leading

to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Protection of these children with disabilities is therefore necessary if they have to participate in the school activities including academic work. However, it is not known how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. If these acts of bullying, discrimination and neglect remain unchecked among learners with disabilities in schools, they have far-reaching consequences that may impact negatively on their physical health, mental well-being, academic achievement, and social development. In addition, they may be characterised with decreased motivation, absenteeism, and declining grades. It therefore, becomes imperative to conduct a study of this nature and explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province of Zambia.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying in selected special education schools.
- ii. establish intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.
- iii. explore the supportive measures in place to address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools

1.6 Research Questions

The following study questions guided the study.

- i. How were learners with disabilities safeguarded from bullying in selected special education schools?
- ii. What measures against discrimination were put in place for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools?

- iii. What supportive measures were put in place to address neglect of learners with disabilities in the selected special education schools?

1.7 Significance of the study

Findings of this study may provide the basis for recommendations to policy makers and other stakeholders interested in strengthening child protection in schools. The findings may have important implications for future policy and practice in the delivery of school-based child protection measures against bullying, discrimination or neglect. Learners with disabilities may benefit the most in this study because the results of the study may help them to have a school that is free from bullying, discrimination and neglect thereby promoting learning. Further, it is hoped that with increased understanding in teachers, caregivers, and parents about how to safeguard learners from bullying discrimination and neglect. The study may also provide a basis for designing an action plan that serves as a mechanism to ensure the school has child protection programme to respond to any reported bullying, discrimination and neglect incident in school.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on two special education school in Luapula province that St. Marys Special Education Primary school in Kawambwa district and Mambilima Special Education Primary school in Mwense district. The justification for choosing these schools are that there has been reports of increased prevalence of ill-treatment against learners with disability.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

The researcher used qualitative research methods. Due to the small sample size of 38, it is difficult to generalise the findings to other populations. A case study like this one was meant to have in depth understanding of how learners with disabilities were protected in the two selected special education primary schools as such generalisation to other schools needs to be done with a lot of caution.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

The ecological approach by Bronfenbrenner (1979) was selected for the study as it had often been used in child protection research. From an ecological perspective, child bullying, discrimination and neglect is viewed as a transactional issue between teacher, learners and the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), and the complexity surrounding child bullying, discrimination and neglect can be understood in several ways by an ecological approach. According to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory (1979), learners interact with their surroundings and the people within each setting: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. For the sake of this study the concentration was based on mesosystem. The Mesosystem definition is that it comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such as the child's relations within school, and peer group; among family, and social life. In school setting, it includes interaction between the teachers and the family, family and the peers, and teachers and the peers. Hence, it a responsibility of all individuals of the school environment to protect and enrich its learners with disabilities and to make sure that their interaction with the caregiver and the environment is positive.

1.10.1 Relevance of ecological Model

The model suggests that child protection from issues of child protection is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors, these factors must be considered in terms of their existence at each level, as well as their interaction across each level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). To ensure that learners with disabilities are safeguarded and taken careful from bullying, discrimination and neglect, different stakeholders including those with direct (family, and teachers) and indirect contact (school administration, NGOs and government) need to work together.

The mesosystem, advocate for policy changes and systemic improvements can enhance protections for learners with disabilities. Laws and policies mandate that schools provide a safe and nurturing environment for students. This involved lobbying for anti-bullying policies in terms or rules and regulations in school that explicitly address the needs of learners with disabilities, advocating for inclusive education practices, and promoting legislation that strengthens legal protections against discrimination and neglect. Therefore, through working

together within the family, school, and stakeholders create supportive environments that promote the well-being and safety of all learners.

In the context of protecting learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination, and neglect, the mesosystem of ecological theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interactions between different microsystems, such as family, school, healthcare providers, and community organizations. The study found parents are actively engage with their learners, communicate openly about their experiences at school, and collaborate with teachers and administrators to address any concerns regarding safety or well-being. Effective collaboration between families and schools is crucial for protecting learners with disabilities from harm. Parents and caregivers play a key role in advocating for their child's needs, communicating concerns to school staff, and working collaboratively to develop individualized plans to address any challenges their child may face. This partnership ensures that learners receive consistent support and intervention both at home and in the school environment, reducing the risk of bullying, discrimination, and neglect. Ecological system theory emphasises on child-teacher relationship, which is the tenet of child protection in school.

Teachers who have strong relationships with their learners may not abuse their learners while those with weak relationships tend to abuse their learners. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a safe and supportive classroom environment. They should be vigilant in identifying signs of distress or abuse among students and provide necessary support or referrals to appropriate resources. Strong relationships make learners with disabilities to rely on their teacher when they need help and they help teacher to support them in school. This enhances the learners' academic performance. Within the mesosystem, schools serve as important settings for identifying and addressing the needs of learners with disabilities. Administrators are responsible for implementing and enforcing policies and procedures that prioritize the safety and well-being of students. They ensure that staff members are adequately trained in child protection protocols and that mechanisms are in place for reporting and addressing safety concerns. The ecological approach provides protective factors that apply in schools, and learners with disabilities spend a large amount of their time in school where teacher have close and constant interactions with them. In order to achieve the main goal of education, the school must remove obstacles that prohibit a child's ability to learn by promoting inclusion and providing necessary resources for students with disabilities. By tailoring educational strategies to meet the unique needs of each child, schools create environments that foster positive social

interactions, academic success, and overall well-being, thereby reducing the likelihood of bullying and discrimination. There is need for working together to share information, resources, and expertise, multidisciplinary teams identify early warning signs of bullying, discrimination, or neglect, and implement appropriate interventions to mitigate these risks and support learners' development. Having access to the types of services, along with positive school experiences, can have an impact beyond the classroom and affect learners in a positive manner throughout their lives.

The mesosystem encompasses various stakeholders and resources that can contribute to the protection of learners with disabilities. This may include advocacy groups, support networks, counseling services, recreational programs, and respite care facilities that provide additional support and assistance to learners and families. By connecting families with relevant community resources and fostering social connections, the mesosystem promotes resilience and strengthens protective factors that buffer against the impact of bullying, discrimination, and neglect. Therefore, *poor* relationships between teacher and learners with disabilities that can cause child bullying, discrimination and neglect that can make learners fear their teacher. With this kind of relationship, learners are unlikely to seek help from their teacher because they fear them. Consequently, such learners are unlikely to perform well compared to their peers with teacher support. Ensuring the safety and well-being of learners in school is a shared responsibility that requires the commitment and collaboration of everyone involved in the education system and the broader community.

1.11 Definition of the Key Terms

Bullying in school refers to a repetitive pattern of negative behaviours directed at an individual or a group, often with the intention of causing harm, fear, or distress (Al-Raqqad et al., 2017).

Child protection to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation neglect and abuse against learners. For the purpose of this study child protection shall refer to protecting child from bullying, discrimination and neglect (Butterfly Tree Charity, 2018).

Child- The researcher used the word 'child' to cover and refer to all learners below the age of sixteen years whether they were in or outside the school establishment (UNICEF, 2018). A child with disability will be the main focus of the study.

Discrimination: Bias or prejudice resulting in denial of opportunity, or unfair treatment. This may involve the exclusion or limitation of the discriminated group members against access to exercise of certain rights and opportunities that are otherwise available to other groups (Mantey 2017).

Neglect. Failure to provide for a child's basic needs (Sharley, 2020). In this study, neglect cover lack of appropriate supervision, failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs, or failure to provide psychological care. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance

Violence is any type of physical, psychological, or verbal and/or sexual aggression among pupil, teachers, and/or school personnel toward a pupil (Likumbo et al., 2021), which is often expressed through acts of bullying, intimidation and repression.

1.12 Organisation of the Thesis

The following outline of the chapters provides an overview of this thesis:

Chapter one provides the context within which this study was conducted. Here, the background, problem statement, purposive of study, research objectives, research question and justification. In addition, a theoretical underpinning of the study with a focus on four major theoretical models namely: ecological approach by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is provided.

Chapter two reviewed scholarly works related child protection issues of bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. The literature reviewed were presented according to the following sub-headings derived from the study objectives: protection measure for Learners with disabilities from bullying in schools, intervention measures against discrimination in schools and supportive measures to address neglect in schools. It ends with a summary.

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the philosophical underpinnings and design of intrinsic case study because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher how, learners with disabilities were protected and the protection measure put in place in study schools, was of main interest using multiple sources of data. The chapter outlines the research methodology guiding the design of this study. The final section describes how trustworthiness was achieved, in undertaking this research.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study. The chapter presents the research findings using inductively manually analysed using six major stages that included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and report writing, and verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants. The section presents description of the empirical data generated in the field, the next section highlighted the themes that emerge from the data and the conclusion links how protection of vulnerable learners can be improved upon. The direct quotations from the participants are presented in a scholarly manner and comprehensively analyzed. The chapter summary succinctly summarizes the contents of the chapter and gives the signal for what to expect in the next chapter.

Chapter five was dedicated to the discussion of the findings of the study. The discussion is done under the “sub-questions” constituting the themes. Section one is the introduction while Section two looks at the main findings. Main findings are linked with the overarching aim, which is: “was to explore child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province”. Section three presents an analysis of findings relating to the other research questions. Section four presents the proposed model whereas the summary acts as the conclusion of the chapter and this forms section five. The discussion was deftly linked to the objectives of the study as well as to literature.

Chapter six concludes the thesis and provides recommendations informed on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. This chapter provides an integrated critical analysis of the findings of this study. In doing so, the chapter not only examines the main finding, but also highlights thesis immensely contribution to the phenomenon of protection of vulnerable learners with disabilities against abusers. It is hoped that with increased understanding and knowledge teachers, caregivers, and parents will be able to better protect and care for learners with disabilities in a bullied, discriminated and neglectful environments.

1.12 Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, the three key objectives through which the question will be addressed have also been outlined, as well as the delimitation and limitations of the study. The conceptual framework of the study has been introduced by describing how ecosystem was applied in

ensuring the learners with disabilities are prevented and supported in incidence of bullying, discrimination or neglect, and operational terms used in the research have been briefly explained in this introductory chapter, and a synopsis of the thesis has been given. However, few studies on how learners with disabilities are protected from issues of bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education school had been undertaken in Luapula province, Zambia, hence the present study. The next chapter contains a review of related literature to support the study.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviewed literature related to bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. The literature reviewed has been presented according to the following sub-headings derived from the study objectives: protection measures for Learners with disabilities from bullying in schools, intervention measures against discrimination in schools and supportive measures to address neglect in schools. It ends with a summary.

2.2 Measures to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in schools

Protecting learners with disabilities from bullying in schools requires comprehensive measures that address their unique vulnerabilities and needs. It should be noted that bullying in its various forms has been associated with various emotional, psychological as well as academic problems in learners. It's important to recognize that learners with disabilities may experience multiple forms of bullying simultaneously, compounding the impact on their well-being and academic success. The study of Aubdul et al. (2022) who looked at association of bullying on happiness from Thailand argued that there are two different types of bullying behaviour either direct or indirect. Direct bullying can be either verbal bullying which includes such behaviours as taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumours, or physical bullying encompasses behaviours, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, and destruction of property or theft. Indirect bullying is often subtler and can include behaviours such as threats, obscene gestures, excluding others from a group, and manipulation of friendships (Aubdul et al., 2022). Similarly, Hinduja & Patchin (2021) reported the new type of bullying that has emerged in youth as cyber-bullying. Cyber bullying is done electronically through the internet via emails and on-line chat rooms.

In recent years, disability status has emerged as a notable risk factor, within the dynamism of bullying (Mohan & Bakar, 2021). On the other hand, Sabramani et al. (2021) whose study was carried out in Malaysia provides evidence from students at national secondary school on bullying and its associated individual, peer, family and school factors. It confirmed that in the 21st century, bullying has become an increasingly common phenomenon with 5% to 15% of people being the victim of bullying worldwide, of which some cases lead to deaths.

Regarding children with disabilities, Ratib, & Lisa (2021) reported on bullying of students who receive special education services for learning and behavior difficulties in Norway. It was found that students with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience victimization when compared with their peers without disabilities. Its prevalence in special education school is, in part, a product of the lack of information and the paucity of studies, which analyse the wide-ranging consequences for the individuals involved. Studies have further shown that the safety of learners with disabilities in schools or on their way to school is still a major source of concern, as they are faced with threats of bullying (Al-Raqad et al., 2017; Falla, et al., 2021). There was need therefore, to understand how how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education school in Luapula province.

The justification for choosing to conduct a study like this one in schools is in line with Bronfenbrenner, (1979) who argues that school operates centrally within a social-ecological framework of connecting learners and parents to schools. As such, the systemic dimension of interrogating school climate, institutional culture and relationships is an important broadening of protective perspective beyond simply treating bullying as a problem of learners with disabilities in special education schools. This means that since schools deals with issues of learners have a duty to keep them safe and uphold their wellbeing. Therefore, protection of learners from bullying in school incorporates the zero tolerance policy against bullying; safe and positive school environment; capacity building for teachers; empowerment and participation of learners; family and community support; awareness campaigns; and monitoring, reporting support services.

2.2.1 Zero Tolerance Policy against bullying

Zero tolerance policy against bullying refers to creation of a culture of respect, safety, and inclusion where all learners feel valued and supported. Therefore, laws and policies must protect the rights of learners and young people with disabilities, prohibit violence against them, and support inclusive education. In line with this view, UNESCO (2019) in the study behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying in Paris, identified the need for robust laws and policies, including policies at the school level, to prevent and address school bullying. Available evidence shows that learners with disabilities are less likely to experience bullying in schools with zero tolerance policies, and in schools where there is fair and consistent enforcement of school rules and standards of behaviour and teachers intervene (Oldenburg,

2017; UNESCO, 2019; Wenwuyu, 2020). In a study, Sabramani et al. (2021) stated that many countries throughout the world including, Japan, Great Britain, and Norway have had long going research and anti-bullying campaigns to combat and provide students, teachers, and parents with understanding and intervention strategies. To combat bullying behaviours all school, need to adapt a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of bullying. Xiao et al. (2021) narrated in order to protect learners with disabilities from bullying schools need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. Chen et al. (2021), also called on schools to set the school climate of mutual support and ensure that all members of staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying. Schools with learners with disabilities need to ensure that school staff are trained and held accountable for policies to protect, prevent and respond to bullying for learners with disabilities. Therefore, thus calls for school with learners with disabilities to ensure that school staff are held accountable for policies to protect learners with disabilities and to prevent and respond to bullying. It became of interest therefore, to explore measures that the selected special education primary schools use to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in schools.

The prevention of ill-treatment against children with disabilities in schools often necessitates the implementation of specific policies and laws. Downes and Cefai (2016) who looked at how to prevent and tackle bullying and school violence in Luxembourg, proposed policy protective approach to bullying that establishes legal mandates for schools, influences the behaviour of students and school personnel, and guides the implementation of other targeted interventions within schools. The study indicated that at the school level, policies can guide organizational practices, such as establishing bullying incident reporting procedures and creating school-safety teams tasked with developing and executing school-safety plans. Although, the relevance of the literature on adapting anti-bullying or zero tolerance policy in school to ensure the protection of learners with disabilities from bullying in school has not been explored in special education school, hence the study.

In the study Xiao et al. (2021) on school bullying and health related quality of life in Chinese school aged learners and adolescents, revealed that bullying remains a significant concern in schools worldwide, affecting students' well-being, academic performance, and overall school climate. The study reported that zero tolerance policies, which involve strict disciplinary measures for bullying behavior, have been implemented in many educational settings as a means of addressing and preventing bullying incidents. Research suggested that schools with

zero tolerance policies experience reductions in bullying incidents and increased reporting of bullying behavior due to heightened awareness and enforcement of consequences. By establishing clear expectations and consequences for bullying behavior, schools can signal their commitment to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel safe and supported. its applicability in special education school is something this study tried to address. Wanwuyu (2020) argued that these policies serve as a deterrent to bullying, create a safer school environment, and provide victims with a sense of security and justice. It was argued that the recent surge in anti-bullying programs, specifically the prevalence of zero-tolerance policies, resulted in a counterproductive response to a valid problem. Not only are these policies ineffective in reducing bullying and school violence, and not only are they linked to an increase in covert bullying, if they exist and applied in special education school, few researches in special education school having learners with disabilities had confirmed, hence the study.

2.2.2 Safe and Positive School Environment

Creating a safe and positive school environment is essential for promoting student well-being, academic success, and overall school culture. Thomas et al. (2018) argue that the extent to which bullying occurs in a school is not only a matter of differences in the composition of students of different background; it has also been empirically linked to school characteristics such as school climate, school culture, and the organization of the school. Through the development of a clear policy on student behavior outside the classroom, valuable information about bullying incidents and targets such as bullies, victims, bystanders, isolated students can be collected. Research has shown that effective schools develop a policy concerning effective supervision of their students. Therefore, increased monitoring of student behavior during recesses and before the beginning of lessons can help school stakeholders to identify and intervene when bullying occurs (Thomas et al., 2018). Schools may also organize activities during break times such as playing in cooperative groups, table games, music which can calm students' aggressive emotions and increase their feelings of safety, happiness, and school enjoyment (Sabramani et al., 2021). Rewarding good behavior inside and outside the classroom can also be beneficial. For example, schools could set up a motivation system to improve the school's social environment by emphasising maintenance of the behavior code and the promotion of appropriate and positive behaviours outside the classroom (Oldenburg, 2017). Thus, the school policy on student behavior outside the classroom is seen as an important factor

associated with reduction of school bullying, however the study needs to confirm that in school for learners with disabilities.

The establishment of a protective school environment, educational institutions can create a safe, inclusive, and supportive space where all children, including those with disabilities, can thrive and reach their full potential. Thomas et al (2018) in their study which focused on child friendly schools: challenges and issues in creating a positive and protective school environment in India, highlighted the need to create a school environment where students feel safe, secure, welcomed and supported, and the role of school principals, teachers and other staff in this. In Malaysia, Mohan and Bakar (2021) in their systematic literature review on the effects of bullying at school revealed that for any bullying protection program to be successful, it is necessary for each school to have a clear and easily understood philosophy that promotes a safe and positive environment. Schools need to combat bullying as all learners in the school community deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Learners who are not treated with respect will in return treat others with a lack of respect. If learners are expected to be respectful of other learners and teachers, then teachers and other students with the same respect and dignity must also treat them. Teachers should also help students become engaged with school and build positive teacher student relationships (Munger & Markstrom, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that all staff members create and maintain a positive working community to ensure the success of a positive climate at school. A school where learners don't feel safe is a school where learners struggle to learn. In effective schools, teachers interact on issues associated with learning and teaching in order to create a business-like school and classroom environment (Hall, 2017). Thus, the school management team may encourage their teaching staff to learn from each other by exchanging ideas and experiences on facing and reducing bullying. For example, activities such as supervising students during breaktime can be appointed to pairs of teachers. By working collaboratively, teachers can discuss what they observe, exchange opinions, work out solutions and even present to the whole school the efforts they found effective in reducing bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2021). Every student deserves to thrive in a safe school and classroom free from bullying.

Safe and positive school environments are essential for promoting student well-being, fostering positive relationships, and mitigating the risk of bullying. Falla et al. (2021) indicated that schools characterized by high levels of safety, connectedness, and positive social norms are less likely to experience bullying incidents and have better outcomes for students. When

students feel safe, respected, and supported at school, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors, seek help when needed, and develop the skills necessary to navigate conflicts and challenges effectively. Moreover, safe and positive school environments contribute to a sense of belonging and community among students, fostering empathy, mutual respect, and social cohesion. By prioritizing inclusivity, equity, and social-emotional learning, schools can create environments where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute to the school community. Safe and positive school environments play a critical role in bullying prevention by fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and support. By prioritizing clear expectations, positive relationships, social-emotional learning, evidence-based strategies, and collaboration, schools can create environments where bullying is less likely to occur and where students feel safe, valued, and empowered to succeed (Daro, 2019). However, how this intervention can be applied in special education school in an event of bullying, little seems to be known, hence the study.

2.2.3 Training and Support for Teachers

Training and support for teachers in addressing bullying in schools are crucial to creating safe and supportive learning environments where all students feel respected and valued. UNESCO (2021) in its report on violence and bullying in educational settings in France. This document aims to improve understanding of how violence and bullying impacts learners with disabilities, encourage further research and generate evidence about effective interventions. The findings showed that for learners with disabilities identify teachers as one of the most important factors influencing their experience of school bullying. Rusteholz et al. (2021) suggested that classroom environments characterised by caring staff attitudes, peer friendships and acceptance are protective against school bullying. Ratib and Lisa (2021) posits that learners with disabilities are less vulnerable to bullying in schools where teachers actively encourage and facilitate peer relationships and positive interactions between students with and without disabilities. In the study of Wenwuyu (2020) on anti-bullying interventions for Learners with special needs in Jonkoping. The aim of this systematic review was to explore anti-bullying interventions programs for learners with special needs, and intervention outcomes. The findings of the study indicated that to ensure that the needs of learners with disabilities are protected requires adopting an inclusive curriculum, learning and teaching that promotes the values of equality, respect for diversity and inclusion and ensures that all students know about

the rights of people with disabilities. The study makes up gap that addressed in the area of protection from bullying for learners with disabilities.

Effective teacher training and support are critical for equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to recognize, respond to, and prevent bullying behavior. Bibou-Nakou and Marko (2017) indicates that teachers who receive training in bullying prevention are better prepared to identify warning signs, address incidents promptly, and create inclusive classroom environments where all students feel safe and valued. Training and support programs for teachers are essential components of comprehensive bullying prevention efforts in schools. By equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to create safe and inclusive classroom environments, schools can empower teachers to play an active role in preventing and addressing bullying behavior (Augustin & Abukaker, 2016). Consequently, research was needed to advance understanding of effective strategies for training and supporting teachers in bullying prevention in special education school for learners with disability.

In providing training and professional development opportunities for educators, administrators, and support staff on topics such as bullying prevention, enhances their capacity to respond effectively to bullying incidents and support students' social-emotional needs. Training should include guidance on recognizing warning signs, conducting investigations, and implementing evidence-based interventions. Al-Raqqad et al. (2017) identified significant gap in the lack of comprehensive training and awareness among school staff regarding the unique vulnerabilities of students with disabilities and how to effectively prevent and address instances of bullying. While some schools may offer general anti-bullying training, specialized training tailored to the needs of students with disabilities is often lacking. This gap leaves educators ill-equipped to recognize and respond to complex situations involving these students. Antwi (2021) suggested providing ongoing training for school staff on recognizing signs of bullying, responding effectively to reports of bullying, and creating a supportive and inclusive school climate.

It should be noted that capacity building and provision of adequate support and resources to teachers in special and mainstream schools is crucial for education and protection of learners with disabilities. Teachers require training, resources and disability sensitisation, beginning during pre-service teacher education, to address the needs of learners with disabilities. This

includes staff with a crucial role to play in addressing school violence and bullying, such as guidance counsellors. Governments should allocate resourcing to these positions. Similarly, it empowers students with knowledge and skills to identify and address bullying behavior, encourage bystander intervention, and seek help from trusted adults. Hence, the study was needed to reveal if training taking place for teacher in special education to up skill specialist teachers to reduce the incidents of bullying among learners with disabilities.

2.2.4 Empowerment and Participation of Learners

Learners are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, and feel engaged and empowered to use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe. Wenwuyu (2020) noted that most common bullying protection are based on increasing learners' interactions with peer groups, or involving more facilitators in learners' environment context. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, schools, classes and peers are key elements in microsystem that can influence the protection goals. Protection of learners in school takes personal assertive skills, peer relations and other performance in schools, which covered both microsystem and mesosystem that is where there, is increasing interactions between participants and general peer groups to help students with disabilities gain self-esteem, social satisfaction, and reduce bullying victimization. Theory of ecological model that identify empathy as integral to developing pro-social behaviours acknowledge the inborn traits of empathic concern, but emphasize that it can be nurtured through counselling, teaching, and modelling. A review of literature conducted and published by Ferguson (2017) outlined several school interventions and classroom-based programs designed to teach empathy and reduce bullying behaviours: these models exist, the problem seems to be our general failure to specifically connect them to anti-bullying methodology. To assist a bully to change his or her behavior, the bully must be taught how to interact with others, while others are trained in empathizing with bullies. Blake et al. (2021) found that when perpetrators are shown empathy, their self-image can be repaired; this, in our view, directly pertains to our worry about bully-labelling. Empathy training and inclusion seem to be a step in the right direction of addressing bully-stigmatization, and have been shown to motivate individuals with aggressive social mal-adjustments: perpetrators can be motivated toward pro-social behaviours when their community recognizes their struggles.

In a study of Xiao et al. (2021) on school bullying and health-related quality of life in Chinese school-aged learners and adolescents. The main was to explore the association between bullying and health-related quality of life among Chinese school-aged learners and adolescents utilizing a cross-sectional survey design. The study found that the relationships with peers and teachers are widely recognized as protective factors against bullying. Therefore, building relationships with peers is at the core of learners' protection, by providing them with social competences required to master social challenges. But few of the existing literature explored the participation of learners with disabilities in ensuring their protection in special education schools from bullying.

In the report of UNESCO (2021) indicated that in order to protect learners with disabilities from bullying it must involve all students in programmes to prevent school bullying, and this should include learners with disabilities to ensure that bullying protection strategies are inclusive. The study of Ng'andu & Chilufya (2019), child rights violation and mechanism for protection of learners' rights in Southern Africa. The article analysed the extent of child rights violation in terms of child abuse in Southern Africa in the perspective of three provinces in Zambia and mechanisms put in place to ensure learners rights protection. The findings highlighted the need to ensure that learners with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in all school activities including extracurricular activities and are represented in school leadership committees. Therefore, it was important to establish protection mechanism that exist in relation to bullying in special education schools.

The schools need to go further in protection of learners with disabilities from bullying by formulation of anti-bullying programs that supports the learners with disabilities where they are taught the advantages and disadvantages of bullying acts in the school. This supported by the findings of Yahia et al. (2021), who noted that students should be encouraged to participate fully in activities that raise their awareness about bullying and to increase their empathy, in order that they clearly understand what to do if they, or another student, are being bullied. Similarly, Lessard et al. (2022), revealed that learners need to be part of anti-bullying programs that involves and promote improving their mobility, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities as well as by reducing day-to-day tensions. Although anti-bullying programs appear to be effective, emphasis should be placed on "cultivating comprehensive, multi-tiered climates of acceptance and inclusion. The other distinguishing feature of many of these programs is individualized behavioral support. Targeted behavioral support programs for

at-risk students generally consist of small-group or one-on-one training sessions. Many effective behavioral supports also help students develop individualized anger management plans for dealing with the specific sources of stress or anger in their lives (Lessard et al., 2022). These individualized interventions often involve trusted family members as well.

2.2.5 Family and Community Support

Family and community support play crucial roles in promoting student success, well-being, and school engagement. By involving family members in these plans, targeted behavioural support programs educate family members about the sources of the student 's negative behavior and help them to reinforce the lessons learned during training sessions (Goodenow et al., 2020). Downes and Cefai (2016) in their study on how to prevent and tackle bullying and school violence: evidence and practices for strategies for inclusive and safe schools, found that parent training was one of the programme elements significantly associated with both a decrease in bullying and being bullied. Mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's model is consisting of connections between elements in microsystem. One thing happens in child's immediate family may affect his or her academic performance in school. Involving this connection in to intervention process is not only helpful to provide sufficient information to design plan, but also beneficial for protecting learners from bullying.

In order to have a school free from bullying families and communities need to collaborate as partners with teachers and other professionals to support learners' learning, safety and wellbeing in school. As the study of Likumbo et al. (2021), on involvement of selected secondary schools in child protection against violence, exploitation and sexual abuse in Lusaka. This study focused on the practices of secondary schools in ensuring the protection of their learners in Lusaka district of Lusaka province of Zambia. The findings indicated that the protecting learners from bullying includes involvement of the parents, in action to prevent school bullying. To ensure the needs of learners with disabilities are protected, this needs to be complemented by interventions to educate parents and the community about the vulnerability of learners and young people to school bullying (Likumbo et al., 2021). It does not provide insights to questions concerning safety of students with disabilities at special education schools. That's why it was vital to conduct research at special education schools to be sure how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected special education primary schools.

Family and community support are essential for promoting positive social norms, building protective factors, and creating a sense of belonging among students. Goodenow et al. (2020) indicates that students who receive support from their families and communities are better equipped to cope with bullying, seek help when needed, and develop the skills necessary to navigate social challenges effectively. By fostering open communication, collaboration, and empowerment among schools, families, and communities, educators can create a unified front against bullying and promote a culture of respect, empathy, and inclusion. However, the involvement of parents and caregivers in addressing child protection issues within special education schools is something not clearly understood in special education school, hence the study. While, Amanda (2019) revealed that parental involvement is recognized as a protective factor against bullying and discrimination, parents of learners with disabilities may face barriers to engagement, such as language barriers, lack of transportation, or limited understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Schools may also fail to effectively communicate with parents about incidents of bullying involving their learners, further exacerbating feelings of isolation and helplessness. Allen et al. (2021) suggested to involve parents and guardians in bullying prevention efforts by providing them with information about school policies, resources for supporting their child's social and emotional development, and opportunities for involvement in school activities and decision-making processes.

The active involvement of teachers, students, and parents in defining the school policy on bullying and the strategies and action plans to face bullying may encourage their active participation in implementing these action plans for improvement purposes, since school stakeholders are very likely to adopt a more positive attitude toward improvement projects when they are involved in developing the interventions, rather than simply implementing actions developed by a team of “experts” (Cortes & Grady, 2019). By establishing good relations not only with parents but also with the wider school community, effective schools make use of all available human and other learning resources in their attempts to face and reduce bullying incidents. Schools may also organize school-based in-service training courses on issues associated with the tasks that teachers are undertaking in the school to address attitudes and behaviours targeting thoughts, attitudes, and interpersonal and emotional skills (Cortes & Grady, 2019).

2.2.6 Awareness Campaigns against Bullying

In the study of Rusteholz et al. (2021), impact of bullying on academic performance, a case study for the community of Madrid in Spain. The main objective of this research is to study the incidence of bullying on the academic performance of students in education centres in the Madrid Region. The findings of the study revealed that protection of learners with disabilities from bullying the school needs to put up awareness program as it is a critical requirement for school to combat bullying behaviours in schools. If a school is unaware of a bullying problem, it is impossible for such an incident to be resolved. Whether teachers or administrators are in denial about a problem or whether they are unaware of a problem; it remains an unresolved issue for students. Schools need to be honest with themselves and the ability of their school to create a safe and positive environment for the students. Xioa (2021) indicated that when learners are involved, awareness of bullying increases and levels of bullying are reduced. Xioa further indicated that bullying behavior interventions needs to include teaching social skills such as friendship, empathy, and anger management in one-on-one settings, not in a group setting. Hence the need to understand and help to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in special education schools.

Awareness campaigns against bullying have become prominent tools in efforts to address this pervasive issue in schools. Sesar and Dodaj (2021) indicated that by raising awareness, promoting empathy, and fostering a culture of respect, these campaigns aim to prevent bullying incidents and create safer and more inclusive school environments. Awareness campaigns play a crucial role in educating students, educators, parents, and communities about the prevalence, impact, and consequences of bullying. Sesar and Dodaj (2021) further, suggested that awareness campaigns can increase knowledge and awareness of bullying-related issues, promote empathy and understanding among students, by raising awareness, challenging stigma, and fostering empathy, these campaigns contribute to the creation of safer and more supportive school environments where all students can thrive. Thus, the study needs to confirm if awareness campaigns against bullying is an effective measure in special education school to address bullying against learners with disabilities.

2.2.7 Restorative Practices

Incidences of bullying in school need restorative practices that focus on repairing harm, promoting accountability, and restoring relationships in the aftermath of bullying incidents.

WHO (2019) encouraged dialogue between the victim and the perpetrator, facilitate meaningful apologies and restitution, and work towards reconciliation and positive behavioural change if we are stop ill treatment in schools. Further, WHO advocated for implementation educational programs that raise awareness about bullying, promote empathy and respect for diversity, and teach students positive social skills and conflict resolution strategies. These programs should be tailored to the unique needs of students with disabilities and incorporate interactive and inclusive teaching methods. The report also, encouraged schools should to establish clear and comprehensive anti-bullying policies that explicitly prohibit all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, verbal abuse, physical aggression, and social exclusion. These policies should outline consequences for bullying behavior and procedures for reporting and addressing incidents (WHO, 2019).

Furthermore, research has shown that effective teachers support their students academically by helping them to perform well and to know that they have performed well (Wenwuyu, 2020; Sightsaver, 2021). It was also found that perceived academic competence helps to prevent the development of norm-breaking behavior. This statement is supported by empirical studies indicating that opportunities for students to experience success in school are linked to a low incidence of student misbehavior and bullying (Mohan & Bakar, 2021). When teachers provide clear explanations, students' perceptions of the meaningfulness of schoolwork may be improved and commitment to learning may be enhanced. Provision of learning opportunities for students is one of the most important aspects of school policy on teaching when dealing with bullying (Matulac & Zamora, 2020). Beyond addressing the aims included in the formal curriculum, the development of this aspect of teaching policy may encourage teachers to introduce relevant cognitive and affective aims targeted at reducing bullying such as development of social cognition, understanding of social values, emotional recognition, and development of positive attitudes towards peers. Schools which are effective in facing and reducing bullying are those where teachers can stimulate their students by providing appropriate and well-designed learning opportunities targeting the achievement of relevant affective and cognitive aims (Maclean et al., 2017). However, what is not clear is on restorative practices applied in special education school to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, hence the study.

2.2.7 Monitoring, Reporting, and Support Services against bullying in schools

Monitoring, reporting, and support services are components in protecting learners from bullying (Thomas et al., 2018). Monitoring needs to take account of the factors that increase the vulnerability of some learners to victimization and to ensure that data collected on school bullying is disaggregated by type of disability as well as by age and gender. UNESCO (2021) reported that people with disabilities reported that victims often do not speak up because they are afraid that the violence and bullying will get worse, no-one will listen to them, their confidentiality will be breached, and perpetrators will not be held accountable. Therefore, establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, is a key component of child protection program in schools. To protect the specific needs of learners with disabilities, it is essential that mechanisms for reporting school bullying are accessible as well as confidential, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive. Hence, UNESCO (2021) advocated for establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, as they are key component of child protection program in schools. It requires to increase supervision and monitoring in common areas such as playgrounds, hallways, and lunchrooms, where bullying incidents are more likely to occur. Ensure that adults are visible and proactive in addressing conflicts and intervening promptly to prevent escalation. Therefore, little is known how monitoring, reporting, and support services is realised in order to ensure protection of learners with disabilities in special schools.

Effective monitoring, reporting, and support services are essential for identifying and addressing bullying behavior promptly and ensuring the well-being of those involved. Aubdul et al. (2022) indicated that schools with robust monitoring and reporting systems experience lower rates of bullying and are better equipped to intervene in incidents before they escalate. Moreover, support services play a crucial role in aiding assistance, counselling, and resources to students who have been bullied or who are at risk of bullying. By offering targeted interventions, referrals, and follow-up support, schools can address the underlying factors contributing to bullying and promote healing, resilience, and positive social-emotional development among students. Schools should establish clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for students, parents, educators, and staff to report incidents of bullying promptly and confidentially. Chen et al. (2021) noted that many special education schools lack clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for students to report incidents of bullying, discrimination, or

neglect. Existing reporting systems may not be designed to accommodate the communication needs of students with disabilities, leading to underreporting and a lack of accountability for perpetrators. Cervancia et al. (2019) suggested regularly assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention strategies through data collection, surveys, and feedback from students, parents, and staff. Use this information to adjust and improvements to the school's anti-bullying efforts. By establishing clear reporting mechanisms, conducting thorough investigations, and providing accessible support services, schools can create safer and more supportive environments where bullying is less likely to occur and where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed and this study intend confirm the assertion in special education school for learners with disabilities.

In the study of Amanda, (2019), on preventing and intervening with bullying in schools in United States. From the study the findings designated that schools should identify staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who has been trained in bullying prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. Schools should also provide support or referral to support services for learners with disabilities affected by school violence and bullying (Amanda, 2019). From the study the findings designated that schools should identify staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who has been trained in bullying prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. Schools should also provide support or referral to support services for learners with disabilities affected by school violence and bullying (Hall, 2017). Therefore, school administrators and teachers must take an active approach to physical monitoring of learners and remain constantly vigilant to prevent bullying behaviours within their schools. There was clear evidence about how identify staff are used in monitoring, reporting, and support services to protect and respond to bullying, in general, but there had been little research to explore how it was being appreciated in ensuring protection of learners with disabilities from bullying, in selected special education school as learners with disabilities have a heightened risk of being bullied, therefore effective protective interventions supporting learners with disabilities who been bullied is vital to identify. This was the gap this study addressed. While the psychological impact of bullying, discrimination, and neglect on students with disabilities is well-documented, there is often insufficient access to mental health support services within special education schools. Students may face long wait times for counseling or therapy, or these services may not be tailored to their specific needs. As a result,

students may struggle to cope with the emotional consequences of victimization without adequate support. How the prevention measures of monitoring, reporting, and support services help to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in selected special education schools, was the gap the study intended to address. There is need for clearer guidance at school-level on dealing with school violence and bullying, including anonymous reporting mechanisms in schools and communities and establishing stricter punitive consequences, would help prevent school violence and bullying

2.3 Measures against Discrimination of Learners with disabilities in Schools

Measures against discrimination of learners with disabilities in schools are essential to creating inclusive and equitable learning environments where all students feel respected, valued, and safe. Banks et al (2018) in their study on disability and discrimination in Ireland noted that disability-based discrimination refers to discrimination, isolation or restriction of impaired learners, which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in education. In schools, discrimination makes it difficult for students to learn because they do not feel safe or accepted. Mantey (2017) study on Challenges and perspectives from stakeholders on discrimination against learners with disabilities in mainstream schools in Southern Ghana. It examined the challenges learners with disabilities face in mainstream school, stakeholder's perceptions and causes of disabilities and implication for policy and practice. The study found that learners with disabilities mostly face challenges of discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school, how.

In the study of Janardhana (2015) on discrimination against differently abled learners among rural communities in India. The article attempted to analyse and describe the common discriminatory grounds that learners with disabilities commonly face from their immediate families and from the larger community through analysing the filed visit reports of the Basic Needs India Staff providing on job training (handholding support) for the community-based rehabilitation workers. The study found that people with disabilities also report a greater incidence of repeat discrimination, with 77 per cent of those who experienced discrimination saying it occurred more than once. Further the study revealed that it happens when education providers specifically exclude students with disabilities from educational services, withhold benefits that are available to others, or impose extra burdens that are not imposed on others,

without a legitimate reason (Janardhana, 2015; Bastart, et al., 2021). This discrimination is often based on negative attitudes, stereotypes and bias towards students with disabilities. Despite such findings the study did not bring out intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools. Hence, schools should strongly commit to ensure protection for the wellbeing of learners with special needs.

According to Bibou-Nakou and Markos (2017) in their study Greek teachers' experience and perceptions of child abuse/neglect, *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion in Greece*. The present paper focused on teachers' experiences of child abuse/ neglect cases, teachers' awareness of reporting or discounting, and their ways of responding to a hypothetical disclosure of abuse/ neglect. The study revealed that lack of appropriate facilities, inaccessible school buildings, high pupil to teacher ratios, and limited support for learners with disabilities are some of the factors associated with increased risk of discrimination in schools. Bibou-Nakou and Markos (2017) indicated that policies are needed to specifically support and protect members from different forms of discrimination within the school. Schools need to make it clear that they have a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination. Not only that, Swearer and Hymel (2015) study on variations across student subgroups on bullying and discrimination in schools in United States. The study also found that a range of disability discrimination issues were uncovered in the areas of enrolment, post enrolment, meeting personal support needs, participation and belonging, discriminatory attitudes by staff, bullying, other parent attitudes, and insensitivity to disability specific issues. Swearer and Hymel (2015) argued schools to engaged in development of written policy that defines procedures and rules as deterrent to discrimination in schools. Despite these studies bring out discriminatory challenges faced by learners with disabilities in schools very little was known on intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

Deuchert et al. (2017) in their study disability discrimination in higher education in Switzerland the study found that learners with disabilities are treated unfairly and discriminated against because of who they are, this can have a detrimental effect on their mental health, their self-esteem, and their educational performance. This study was carried out in higher education in Switzerland, hence for a similar study to establish intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province. It is important that schools and settings understand protect learners with disabilities from discrimination. According to the study of Sightsaver (2021) suggested that to protect the

learners form discrimination there is need to ensure quality education opportunity; upholding human rights; safe school environment; physical accessibility of school and related facilities; capacity building; family-school partnerships; and appropriate language use and increasing awareness campaigns.

2.3.1 Anti-Discrimination Policies and Procedures

Establish clear and comprehensive anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic. Al-Qaysi (2018) suggested to ensure that these policies are widely communicated, understood, and enforced throughout the school community. Anti-discrimination policies and procedures are essential tools for promoting inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity in special education schools. While progress has been made in developing and implementing these policies, there is still much work to be done to address persistent barriers to inclusion and ensure that all students with disabilities have access to high-quality education in safe and supportive learning environments. Banks et al. (2018) suggested that schools with strong anti-discrimination policies tend to have lower rates of bullying, higher levels of inclusion, and better academic and social-emotional outcomes for students with disabilities. Therefore, effective implementation of anti-discrimination policies requires a multi-faceted approach involving school leadership, staff training, community engagement, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. By developing comprehensive policies, implementing effective training and enforcement mechanisms, and addressing systemic inequalities, special education schools can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive. How such measures are used to intervene against discrimination in selected special education schools for learners with disabilities, was what the study intended to established.

2.3.2 Opportunities for quality Educational

Nebre (2018) reported on social discrimination against people with albinism at University Circle, Turlock. The goal of the study was to bring awareness of the social struggles that people with albinism face in their everyday lives. Nebre argued that protection of learners from discrimination needs to ensure all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities alongside their peers. The protection of learners from discrimination has to begin by schools understanding who might be at risk of discrimination,

what they can do to minimise discrimination and how they can support students at risk of discrimination. A good place to start is with an assessment of the current situation, identifying the strengths that exist in the school, but also needs and priorities. Given the sensitivities involved there is argument for collecting information on individuals' experiences of discrimination anonymously. To that effect little was known on whether learners with disabilities are provided with quality educational opportunities in special education schools (Lucinda, 2021).

Quality education is fundamental to promoting social mobility, empowering marginalized groups, and challenging discriminatory attitudes and practices. Research indicates that equitable access to high-quality education can mitigate the effects of discrimination by providing students with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to succeed academically and thrive in diverse settings. Dankyi et al. (2021) noted several strategies to support the effective leveraging of quality educational opportunities to combat discrimination in schools. Implementing policies and initiatives that promote educational equity, such as targeted funding for high-needs schools, equitable distribution of resources, and affirmative action measures, can address systemic barriers and expand access to quality education for all students. Dankyi et al. (2021) revealed that fostering culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusive curricula, and diverse representations in instructional materials can validate students' identities and experiences, challenge stereotypes, and promote cross-cultural understanding. In addition, establishing support systems, such as peer mentoring programs, affinity groups, and restorative justice practices, can promote a sense of belonging and community among students, mitigate conflicts, and address instances of discrimination or bias within the school community. Engaging families and community stakeholders as partners in education can also strengthen the effectiveness of efforts to combat discrimination and promote educational equity (Dankyi et al., 2021).

2.3.3 Upholding Human Rights

Upholding human rights against discrimination, schools can foster greater equality, respect, and dignity for all individuals, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate and contribute to in the learning process. Bastart et al. (2021) from the study revealed that confronting discrimination can be challenging and intimidating, but it is critical to safeguarding students' rights to learn. Schools have a legal obligation to ensure that students are not denied

opportunities, treated differently, discriminated against, or harassed because of their disabilities. Laws exist to protect students from discrimination. Human rights prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in any programs or activities receiving while in schools. Laws exist to protect students from discrimination. Schools may be in violation of human rights when they knowingly tolerate, allow, or condone such acts or when teachers treat learner differently on the basis of disability (Lucinda, 2021). Despite the best of intentions, everyone has prejudices and biases, and seemingly harmless actions can actually be detrimental to students even if no harm was intended (Swearer and Hynel, 2015). Hence, the study to establish how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special school.

In the study of Bastart et al. (2021), on legitimating discrimination against students with disability in school in France. The study aimed to show that the social acceptability of the justification provided when excluding a student with disability decreases the perception of discrimination and the social rejection of the perpetrator of the discrimination. The study suggested that schools must have policies and procedures to prevent and address bullying, discrimination and neglect based on disability and must ensure equal opportunities for all learners. Encourage non-discriminatory policies and practices. All schools should have a designated person in charge of non-discrimination efforts who is supposed to provide more information about school policy and civil rights at your request (Bastart et al., 2021). Protection of learners with disabilities from discrimination calls for having clear policies and standards in place setting out expectations for appropriate behaviour. At the same time, in some cases, discipline policies may have an adverse effect on students with disabilities.

2.3.4 Safe School Environment

Prioritising the creation of a safe school environment, educational institutions can provide children with disabilities the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in an inclusive and supportive setting. Njelesani et al. (2021) argued that learners deserve affirming and safe school environments that celebrate them for who they are and provide robust opportunities to learn. Dankyl et al. (2021) revealed that learners with disability need to learn in a safe, caring and respectful environment, which embraces and conveys positive messages about their identity, diversity, and faith. This feeling of belonging is important to their wellbeing, and to their academic achievement. Schools and settings need to develop tolerance early in all pupils by using health and wellbeing lessons, as well as other cross-curricular activity, to help learners

with disabilities. In the study of Baginsky et al. (2019) on perspectives on safeguarding and child protection in English schools in England. This article focuses on schools' engagement with safeguarding and child protection from the perspective of senior education and learners' social care professionals employed within local authorities. The study found that in order to ensure the protection of all learners in school teachers has to make sure classroom settings and lesson plans need to be inclusive and provide a platform for inspirational and relatable role models to speak in schools and support learners with disabilities through peer mentoring. Mantey (2017) reported that in order to address issues of discrimination most important thing is to be proactive and to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students by reporting any incidents of discrimination to the school administration. Also, teachers need to conduct routine check-ups to stop harassment and discrimination acts in school. There is need to increase supervision in areas in school where students are fearful of going, creating more opportunities for constructive learning and play in school. These discrimination prevention strategies enable the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. That was why the study established the child protection mechanism that exist to eliminate discrimination against learners with disabilities from all form of discrimination in special education schools. Education environments should be designed inclusively and must be adapted to accommodate the needs of a student with a disability in a way that promotes integration and full participation.

Protecting learners with disabilities at the school level has two very important goals, namely to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning and to ensure the safety of staff and learners. If certain learners are too scared to attend school because they constantly feel threatened, or because the behaviour of learners in a school disrupts the normal teaching and learning process, then their access to equal educational opportunities would be seriously compromised (Stephen, 2021). Part of an educational institution's duty is to maintain a safe learning environment for all students, including students with disabilities, includes addressing discrimination behaviour. Thus, a safe and healthy school environment for learners serves as a foundation for their outstanding performance and achievements (Ng'andu & Chilufya, 2019). If that is the case less has been documented on the measure taken in special education schools to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination while in school. Hence, schools must create and maintain a safe environment by providing means and area where the learners with disabilities can seek help and report incidents of discrimination of utmost confidentiality.

2.3.5 Physical Accessibility of Schools and Related Facilities

The physical accessibility of schools and related facilities is a crucial consideration in the education of learners with disabilities. In this study, the child needs to be protected in school by ensuring physical accessibility from the perspectives of the appropriateness in terms of design and construction of buildings, public transport and how they either allow physical access and free mobility or result in exclusion. The way school buildings and other public infrastructure are designed and built has the potential to reinforce discrimination of learners with disabilities from mainstream public spaces as well as restricting their movement. The inaccessibility of toilets and the unsanitary situation of bathrooms, coupled with the nature of some disabilities, might create a situation where a child with disabilities has to be helped with toileting. In the study of Duncan et al (2020) on missing the mark or scoring a goal? Achieving non-discrimination for students with disability in primary and secondary education in Australia. The study revealed that in a classroom setting, for any positive action to address discrimination the teacher needs to be giving praise, letting students out of unwanted behaviour, or providing token rewards, candy, extra playtime, or fun activities. This simply adding a factor to increase a behavior. While for perpetuator of discrimination something uncomfortable or otherwise unpleasant should take away in response to a stimulus. Over time, the target behavior should increase with the expectation that the unpleasant thing will be taken away. Thus, with these prevention strategies in place and reinforced, learners would be protected for discrimination in schools. They further indicated that most important thing for guidance and counselling teachers in school to deal with discrimination is to be aware of the signs of discrimination, talk to the students who are being targeted, speak out against discrimination and promote inclusion in classroom or school (Duncan et al., 2020). With the findings above, it was clear that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention strategies. That's why the study was carried out to establish if physical accessibility of schools and related facilities does not pose discriminatory against learners with disabilities which need to be addressed and protected.

2.3.5 Responsive Discipline Practices

School need to implement discipline practices that are fair, consistent, and culturally responsive to address discrimination in schools. Rijbroek et al. (2019) argued that school should avoid punitive measures that disproportionately affect students from marginalized groups and instead

focus on restorative approaches that promote accountability, repair harm, and foster learning and growth. Prevention strategies should focus on fostering inclusive school cultures that promote respect, empathy, and acceptance of diversity. This entails implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies, providing training for staff and students on disability awareness and empathy-building, and actively involving parents and the wider community in promoting a supportive environment.

School need to implement restorative justice practices that focus on repairing harm, promoting accountability, and restoring relationships in the aftermath of discrimination incidents. Bring together the victim, the perpetrator, and relevant stakeholders in facilitated dialogues to address the impact of the discrimination, explore underlying causes, and work towards reconciliation and resolution. Avoid punitive measures that may exacerbate feelings of marginalization and instead focus on strategies that promote understanding, empathy, and learning. Stephen (2021) suggested to school to provide students with access to supportive resources, such as counseling or mental health services, to address any emotional distress or trauma resulting from the discrimination incident. The schools should engage students, parents, educators, and other relevant stakeholders in collaborative problem-solving processes to address discrimination incidents. UHICEF (2018) also, encouraged open communication, active listening, and mutual respect in identifying underlying issues, developing solutions, and implementing preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of future incidents and a study intended to verify if such intervention measures were being applied in special education school against discrimination among learners with disabilities.

2.3.6 Capacity Building on handling cases of Discrimination

Capacity building on handling cases of discrimination is crucial for ensuring that schools are equipped to address instances of discrimination effectively and promote inclusivity. Deuchert et al. (2017) revealed that if discrimination is to be effectively countered over the longer term, it is essential that both current and future teachers and administrators are fully conversant with the issues involved, current research and relevant strategies at the system, institution, schools and classroom levels. In particular, it is important for school staff to be trained in beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices. Participation by students with disabilities in our schools depends on the goodwill of individual head teachers and teachers experience in teaching students with disabilities in separate facilities

but have little or no experience or knowledge in how to assist students with & without disabilities to participate developmentally with one another or participate and learn free from discrimination. Maciver et al. (2019) stated that school can provide training for school personnel, discussing ways to talk about race and prejudice in the classroom, raise awareness of the necessity of fair and just classrooms, and close the achievement gap between marginalized and non-marginalized students. This has been also achieved by engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners with special education needs and or disabilities and on the best ways of fighting discrimination in special education schools. In the light of discrimination in school, teachers who have knowledge, training, and experience on child protection can contribute information to other interested parties who must also be trained on handling learners who are sufferers of discrimination. Bastart, et al. (2021) suggested for setting of initial priorities which should go hand in hand with professional development for senior leadership teams as well as teaching staff. An element of personal training for tackling of discrimination in school. As the study did not bring out if teachers in special education schools are trained to handle issues of discrimination in section to ensure protection of learners with disabilities in schools. Hence the study establishes the protectiveness of learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province is under-explored.

United Nations (2019) argued that capacity building is essential for equipping educators and school staff with the competencies and tools necessary to recognize, challenge, and address discrimination in all its forms. World Vision (2019) indicated that professional development programs focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion can improve educators' awareness of bias and discriminatory practices, enhance their cultural competence, and empower them to create inclusive learning environments. Goodenow et al. (2020) posits that despite challenges, effective strategies, such as ongoing professional development, dialogue, student engagement, and policy integration, can support the development of inclusive school communities. By investing in capacity building initiatives and fostering a culture of equity and inclusion, schools can create environments that honour diversity, challenge discrimination, and cultivate the full potential of every learner. Several strategies can support the effective implementation of capacity building initiatives to address discrimination in schools. Further research is required on how capacity building intervention measures address discrimination against learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

Furthermore, creating safe spaces for dialogue and reflection, such as diversity committees, affinity groups, or professional learning communities, can facilitate discussions about privilege, power dynamics, and systemic inequities within the school community. In order to address discrimination in schools it calls for engaging students as partners in capacity building efforts through student-led diversity initiatives, peer mentoring programs, and inclusive curriculum development can also promote a sense of ownership and agency among learners (Munger & Marktorn, 2019). In addition, integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into school policies, curriculum frameworks, and disciplinary practices can institutionalize a commitment to anti-discrimination and create structures for accountability. Collaborating with community organizations, cultural institutions, and advocacy groups can broaden schools' capacity to address discrimination and promote social justice within and beyond the school walls (UNICEF, 2019).

The school need to provide ongoing professional development and training for school staff on responding to discrimination, implementing responsive discipline practices, and promoting diversity and inclusion. Equip staff with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to address discrimination effectively and create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students. Provide training for school staff on recognizing and addressing discrimination, promoting inclusive practices, and responding effectively to incidents of bias or prejudice. Similarly, empower students with knowledge and skills to identify discrimination, assert their rights, and advocate for themselves and others (Njelesani & Swarm, 2022).

2.3.7 Family-School Partnerships

In order to ensure the protection of learners with disability from discrimination, families need to form partnerships with schools to develop more effective solutions for improving equal opportunities for all students. Mantey (2017), looked at challenges and perspectives from stakeholders on discrimination against learners with disabilities in mainstream schools in Southern Ghana. The study found that in order to achieve child protection in school, true partnership has to be fostered between parents and experts, through various mechanisms of using the child is safe from any form of discrimination. However, the working relationship in special education school to reinforce protection of learners with disabilities from discrimination has not been explored. Families and teachers generally share the common goal of ensuring that all learners have access to high-quality educational opportunities but with learners with

disabilities little is known how they work together towards protection of learners with disabilities against discrimination.

Discrimination in school settings can manifest in various forms, including academic disengagement, absenteeism, and lack of parental involvement. Family-school partnerships offer a promising approach to addressing neglect by fostering collaborative relationships between families and educational institutions. Stephen (2021) indicated that parental involvement in education is associated with improved academic outcomes, reduced behavioral problems, and increased school engagement among students. By establishing collaborative relationships with families, schools can gain valuable insights into students' needs, strengths, and challenges, enabling them to provide targeted support and interventions to address neglect.

Furthermore, family-school partnerships can enhance communication between home and school, facilitating early identification of issues related to neglect and enabling timely interventions. When families are actively involved in their learners' education, they are more likely to reinforce positive behaviors, monitor academic progress, and provide a supportive home environment conducive to learning. Several strategies can support the development of effective family-school partnerships to address neglect in schools (Ratib & Lisa (2021). Creating welcoming and inclusive school environments that value and respect the diversity of families can help build trust and promote engagement. Providing opportunities for meaningful involvement, such as parent workshops, volunteer opportunities, and parent-teacher conferences, can empower families to take an active role in their learners' education. Moreover, leveraging technology, such as digital communication platforms and mobile applications, can facilitate communication between families and schools, particularly for parents with limited time or mobility constraints (Jackson et al., 2023).

In addition, adopting a strengths-based approach that recognizes and builds upon families' assets and resources can foster a sense of partnership and mutual respect between families and schools. Allen et al. (2018) commented that by leveraging the collective expertise and resources of both families and schools, educators can create a supportive ecosystem that promotes student success and well-being. Family-school partnerships offer a promising avenue for addressing neglect in school settings by promoting collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility for student success. Sesar and Dodaj (2021) claimed that despite challenges, such as systemic barriers and limited resources, effective strategies, such as creating inclusive

environments, leveraging technology, and adopting a strengths-based approach, can support the development of meaningful partnerships between families and schools. By prioritizing family engagement and collaboration, schools can create nurturing environments where all students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally Sesar & Dodaj (2021). Further research and collaboration are needed to advance understanding and implementation of effective family-school partnerships in addressing neglect in schools.

2.3.8 Appropriate Language

The elimination of discrimination in school begins with using appropriate language in portraying learners with disabilities (Sightsavers, 2021). There is a close association between language and the objectivity of society and what individuals consider to be “real” experiences. Thus, depending on how it is used, language has both edifying and debilitating potentials. Hence, language plays an important role in facilitating or hindering access to education. Language used in daily interactions and in professional discourse can have debilitating effects by leaving false impressions of “feeble status” and of “little value” about the life of the person with a disability. Antwi (2021) in his study multidisciplinary approach in child protection in Ghana revealed that school is a place where they have the right to feel safe, to be themselves and to communicate any concerns they have about discrimination. Antwi (2021) went on to say in a school that promote the protection of learners with disabilities there are many opportunities to celebrate difference within schools. This called for building understanding about difference in learners in special education schools. That’s why a study like this one was needed to verify the situation in special education school in order to ensure protection of learners while in school against discrimination.

In the realm of special education, appropriate language is paramount for creating inclusive environments that support the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Language use not only shapes interactions within special education schools but also influences students' self-concept, academic progress, and social integration. WHO (2019) noted that several strategies can support the promotion of appropriate language in special education schools. Providing guidance on respectful language use through staff training, resource materials, and ongoing support can empower educators to create affirming and supportive environments for students with disabilities. In addition, the adoption of inclusive language policies and guidelines can provide a framework for promoting respectful and person-centered communication practices

across all aspects of school operations. Appropriate language in special education schools is essential for fostering inclusive environments, affirming students' identities, and promoting their educational success (UNICEF, 2018). By prioritizing appropriate language use and promoting ongoing professional development, special education schools can create welcoming and supportive environments where all students can thrive.

2.3.9 Awareness Campaigns against Discrimination

Discrimination in schools, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other factors, poses significant barriers to students' educational attainment and well-being. Awareness campaigns aimed at combating discrimination play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity within educational settings. Dankyi et al. (2021) in their study child abuse in basic schools in Ghana. The study aimed to find out teachers' and pupils' awareness and the utilisation of safety net structures for abused pupils in Cape Coast Metropolis. The findings indicated that the first step towards reducing discrimination and guarantee protection to learners in schools is teaching students self-awareness and self-reflection. Awareness of discrimination against learners and its serious impact on learners' development and well-being is essential to create demand for its end. Given the all citations, it is very important to know how learners with disabilities are protected from discrimination. Hence, the need for study to address child protection issue of discrimination to explore how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province

Effective awareness campaigns employ targeted interventions tailored to address specific forms of discrimination and the unique needs of diverse student populations. Research suggests that targeted interventions, such as anti-bullying programs, inclusive education initiatives, and cultural competency training for educators, can effectively reduce discriminatory behaviors and improve school climate (Swearer et al., 2016). Allen et al. (2018) demonstrated that student-led initiatives, such as diversity clubs, peer mentoring programs, and student advocacy groups, can foster a sense of agency, belonging, and collective action among young people, leading to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors.

Further, awareness campaigns often include teacher training and professional development programs aimed at equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to address discrimination effectively in their classrooms and schools. WHO (2019) indicated that

comprehensive training on cultural competency, implicit bias, and inclusive pedagogy can enhance educators' ability to create supportive and affirming learning environments for all students (Blake et al., 2021; Sleeter, 2019). Awareness campaigns against discrimination in schools are vital for fostering inclusive, respectful, and equitable learning environments. By raising awareness, promoting targeted interventions, empowering students, supporting educators, engaging communities, and fostering accountability, these campaigns contribute to building a more just and inclusive society where all students can thrive. Further, Miranda-Julian et al. (2020) revealed that in order to end discrimination in school there need to implement educational programs and workshops that raise awareness about different forms of discrimination, promote empathy and understanding of diverse identities, and challenge stereotypes and biases. Engage students, staff, and parents in discussions and activities that foster respect, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity. However, if the indicated measures address discrimination in selected special education schools for learners with disabilities is what the study intended to establish.

2.4 Supportive measures to address neglect in schools

Neglect refer to deprivation or the absence of sufficient attention, responsiveness, and protection appropriate to the age and needs of a child (Avdibegovi & Brki, 2020). In this study it will be considered as a school's or teacher's failure to provide the requisite resources, academic and moral provision to carry on with various engagements at school. It involves the failure to provide supportive educational opportunities for the child with disability. In schools, child neglect is the most common reason for taking child protection action. Avdibegovi and Brki (2020) revealed that learners in school who experience neglect in school need material support because the availability of learning resources and other school requisites influence the stay of the learner in the boarding school. Although neglect is one of the biggest threats to development and welfare of learners, research on the supportive measures of learners with disabilities from neglect in special education schools has not explored (Sharley, 2019).

In school neglect occurs when students are denied access to appropriate education and educational opportunities. This may include chronic absenteeism, lack of necessary school supplies or resources, failure to provide academic support or encouragement, and failure to address learning difficulties or special needs. Therefore, addressing neglect in schools requires a comprehensive approach that involves implementing supportive measures to identify,

prevent, and respond to neglect effectively. Ngororabanga and Habinshuti (2021) who looked at abuse and neglect of learners with disability as one of the causes of drop out of school in Gatebe Sector, Burera District in Rwanda intended to examine to what extent do abuse and neglect of learners with disabilities contributes to their drop out of school in Gatebe Sector and improving the community awareness about abuse and neglect of learners with disabilities. The study found that neglect frequently goes unreported and, historically has not been acknowledge or publicized as greatly as child abuse. If that is the situation one wonders how learners with disability were protected from neglect. But the study suggested that materials support in school as they have great influence on learning and behavior of learners, this learner with disabilities need material support from the school and well-wishers (Ngororabanga & Habinshuti, 2021). Kang and Jain (2020) in their study child abuse and neglect in the COVID-19 era in British Columbia. Kang and Jain (2020) argued that neglect has received less attention in maltreatment research than other subtypes, yet neglect may have a detrimental impact on school performance. Hence, the need of the current study to explore the supportive measures in place to address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

Neglect can manifest in various forms and can have serious consequences for students' physical, emotional, and academic development. Schools play a critical role in identifying and responding to signs of neglect, providing support and resources to students and families in need, and implementing preventive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. Sharley (2022) indicated that learners with disabilities are neglected in the area physical barriers including inaccessible buildings for learners in wheelchairs, toilets, buildings without lifts and elevators to facilitate easy circulation around buildings. Not only are that learners with disabilities considered increasingly vulnerable to ongoing health needs from their primary care also inadequate food while in school. Such neglect makes learners with disabilities feel uncomfortable and become at risk of dropping out of school. This is supported by Mulder et al. (2018) study on disabled learners and child protection in school, Netherlands. The study found that learners with disabilities experience maltreatment than learners without disabilities, and likely to experience more than one form of neglect. Despite the prevailing situation of neglect of learners in the foreign literature, it has not been verified on learners with disabilities in special schools. The literature reviewed is limited in the sense that it is not providing a detailed explanation on how learners with disabilities are protected from neglect in schools. That why this study intended to explore the supportive measure in place to ensure protection

learners with disabilities are from neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province

The participation of learners with disabilities in addressing neglect in schools is essential for may be better positioned to identify instances of neglect within the school environment, whether it be related to accessibility, accommodations, or support services. Maciver et al. (2019) in their study participation of learners with disabilities in school in Scotland. The aim of this study was to synthesize evidence of psychosocial and environmental factors associated with school participation of 4-12-year-old learners with disabilities to inform the development of participation-fostering interventions. The findings showed that despite state efforts to meet certain requirements regarding the education of learners with disabilities, different forms of educational neglect are still there, such as permitting habitual truancy, failure to accommodate a child with disabilities, low value given to special educational needs. School neglect was observed through absenteeism, lack of trained teachers, overcrowding in classrooms, insufficient textbooks and school materials, inefficient curricula, among others (Maciver et al., 2019). Maciver et al. (2019), indicated that encouragement can go a long way in boosting a child's mental health and well-being. Learners who feel encouraged and confident will likely perform better at school, participate in clubs or sports, have better relationships with family and peers and be healthier overall. Despite the relatively large body of literature on child neglect, there is a dearth of research locally, which explores the protection of learners with disabilities from neglect in special education schools. Hence, the need of this study to explore supportive measure against neglect in selected special school. As UNICEF (2018) and Sharley (2020) suggested that protection of learners from neglect in school encompasses the school policy; safe school environment; partnership and shared responsibility; support services; increasing advocacy and awareness; staff training and learners participation and other relevant services in school. There is a need for research that examines how interventions tailored to address neglect in special education schools for learners with disabilities.

2.4.1 School Policies

School policies play a critical role in protecting children against neglect by establishing clear expectations, procedures, and protocols to ensure their safety and well-being. Sharley (2020) in her study responding to child neglect in schools: messages for inter-agency safeguarding practice in England. This study focused on bringing new understanding about the ways in

which school staff support learners and explores the nature of their inter-professional relationship with learners' services. In her findings indicated school policies are relevant to child protection which include the explicit stipulation of the administrators, teaching staff, academic non-teaching, other non-teaching personnel, students and parents duties and responsibilities in the school, rules on behavior and discipline, the enumerated offenses, and the corresponding procedures and interventions in all cases concerning learners' safety and welfare, Student-Teacher-Parent communication mechanisms, and programs and activities to counter child neglect. The study of Sharley (2019) argued schools to formulate strictly law and policy to prohibit mistreatment so as to ensure that the learners with disabilities are well protected from neglect. Developing a school policy to deal with neglect can help the school to agree on a shared vision and overall plan to tackle violence in schools which little is known on its visibility in special education schools. The policy has to be based on existing data on neglect and on evidence of what works to protect and respond to neglect. Despite this literature significance of a school policy covering neglect in school, little was known about school policy put in place to support learner with disabilities who are living with neglect in special education school.

Mandatory reporting policies require school personnel to report suspected cases of neglect to appropriate authorities. Jackson et al. (2023) showed that these policies increase the likelihood of neglect cases being reported and lead to interventions and support for affected learners and families. Child protection policies outline schools' responsibilities in safeguarding learners from neglect and abuse. These policies provide guidance on recognizing signs of neglect, reporting procedures, and collaboration with child protective services. Effective implementation of child protection policies ensures a proactive approach to addressing neglect in schools (Al-Qaysi., 2018; Antwi, 2021). Policies promoting educational equity and access ensure that all students, including those experiencing neglect, have equal opportunities to succeed academically. These policies address barriers to learning associated with neglect, such as attendance issues, lack of access to resources, and disruptions in academic progress. By promoting equitable education, schools mitigate the impact of neglect on students' educational outcomes (Asio et al., 2020). Policies supporting the provision of comprehensive support services address the needs of students experiencing neglect. These services may include counseling, social work support, health services, academic interventions, and access to community resources. Well-defined policies ensure that students receive timely and appropriate support to address the underlying issues contributing to neglect (Allen et al., 2018;

World Vision, 2019). School policies are instrumental in addressing neglect in educational settings by providing a framework for identifying, reporting, and responding to suspected cases. Effective policies promote a proactive, equitable, and supportive approach to addressing neglect, ultimately ensuring the safety, well-being, and academic success of all students, how little is known from special education for learner with disabilities.

2.4.2 The School Environment.

The determining factor in the protection of learners with disability from neglect in school is by ensuring a safe school environment. The school environment is undeniably an important factor which contributes to learners' protection of learners in school (Sharley, 2019). A safe and healthy school environment does not only promote the good health of learners but surely helps them to achieve excellent academic performance and supportively boost their morale. The school must be accepting in the context of allowing all students to participate in various activities regardless of their disabilities. Next to family, the school is a remarkable experience in the development of a child which needs to provide utmost protection learners need while in school. For learners, the school environment serves as the platform for interaction within the socio-psychological framework of the school.

The school need to prioritise the creation and maintenance of a safe environment, schools can establish a strong foundation for implementing supportive measures against neglect and promoting the well-being of all students. In the study of Emmanuel (2019) on child neglect: the role of school counselors in Nigeria. The aim of this study was to empower parents, community leaders, and stakeholders in the educational system and most importantly school counselors on the counseling techniques that can be adopted in dealing with child neglect and ultimately reducing the menace to the barest minimum in societies. The study suggested that in order to have supportive measure against neglect, schools must create and maintain a safe environment by providing means and area where the learners can seek help and report incidents of neglect of utmost confidentiality. Emmanuel (2019), advised the school to engage in disability awareness, the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding those with disabilities can be brought to the forefront. Of which it was silent on the protectiveness of school environment in special education school in Luapula. Special education schools need to have a healthy and protective school climate to foster the holistic well-being of learners, hence, the need for the study to explore the current situation.

Consequently, it should be noted that a safe environment supports students' overall development by providing opportunities for learning, growth, and exploration. Additionally, Duncan et al. (2020) argued that the school environment plays a crucial role in addressing neglect among students by providing a safe, supportive, and nurturing setting that promotes their overall well-being. Schools strive to create a safe and supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking help if needed. A positive school climate characterized by respect, trust, and empathy can encourage students experiencing neglect to reach out to teachers, counselors, or other trusted adults for support (Duncan et al., 2020). Despite a growing body of research on addressing neglect among students, there is a lack of robust empirical studies specifically focusing on addressing neglect in special schools for learners with disability.

2.4.3 Partnership and shared Responsibility

Families play a fundamental role in child protection, and caregivers are often best able to protect their learners from neglect. Sharley (2020) findings suggested that schools can help families fulfil their role by engaging them in prevention and protection efforts and education about child abuse and neglect. Even though neglect has been reported as the most common type of maltreatment which needs the involvement of everyone in its protection in school, how learners with disability are protected in special education schools are not explored. UNICEF (2018) & Sharley (2020) called on parents and teachers to work together as parents provide care, direction, guidance and control in a manner appropriate to the child's age and understanding; they also determine all aspects of upbringing and support when the child feels neglected in school.

Therefore, addressing issues of neglect in schools requires a collaborative effort involving teamwork among various stakeholders. Al-Qaysi (2018) noted that successful protection requires carefully coordinated and communicated actions. The school must be a community which encourages family and community participation in all matters related to learners' welfare. In the study of, Armfield et al. (2020), school absenteeism associated with child protection system involvement, maltreatment type, and time in out-of-home care in Australia. The study findings indicated that protecting learners with disabilities from neglect is based on the principle of partnership and shared responsibility across a broad range of human service professionals. Most learners with disabilities are best protected and cared for within their own

family; however, when parents, carers or guardians are unwilling or unable to protect their learners from significant neglect, the protection of the child becomes the responsibility of the school. Armfield et al (2020), indicated that the school through the office of the guidance teacher need to consistently offer love and support to the child to help them build feelings of trust and safety. The school need to offer emotional and loving support to the child when they are upset or acting out. Despite partnership and shared responsibility is key in the protection of learners with disabilities from neglect, little was known about its relevance in special education schools.

Nevertheless, fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration, schools can enhance their capacity to address issues of neglect effectively and create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where all students can thrive. The study of Baginsky et al (2019) on perspectives on safeguarding and child protection in English schools in England. The study focused on schools' engagement with safeguarding and child protection from the perspective of senior education and learners' social care professionals employed within local authorities. The study found that collaborative work within the school can improve outcomes for learners with disabilities. The local action by schools to inform parents about neglect in school against their learners with disabilities as not be established, hence the need of this study. By linking school personal safety programs to the wider movement to help prevent child neglect has not been explored. Despite schools exert effort to encourage collaboration in the reporting of concerns and accentuate dialogue, coordination, and follow-up between the principal, teachers, guidance counsellors and other staff, learners, and parents on child neglect. Maclean et al. (2017) noted that the prevalence of disabilities in the child protection system suggests a need for awareness of the scope of issues faced by these learners and the need for interagency collaboration to ensure learners' complex needs are met. However, there is a lack of research examining partnership and shared responsibility would help address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools

2.4.4 Support Services

Support services play a crucial role in addressing neglect in schools by providing students and families with the necessary resources, interventions, and support systems. These services are designed to address various aspects of neglect, including academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being. Daro (2019) in his study which was on shift in perspective: a universal

approach to child protection in New Jersey, United States. The study found that learners are neglected due to lack of support service which results on them engaging in various risks. It is noted that to protect learners from neglecting due to lack of support service we must provide equitable access to quality universal services for learners with disabilities. As the study found disparities in service access that was often shaped by race and class, mean that a disproportionate number of minority and poor families receive distinctly fewer and often more punitive service options (Ferguson, 2017). Despite the fact that to protects learners with disabilities against all forms of neglect schools should ensure immediate access to appropriate services; and provides durable solutions in the child's best interest, less is known on how learners with disabilities are protected from neglect in special education school.

Supports services are needed for families with learners with disabilities to assist in meeting the child's health and developmental needs, but also to support the parents in managing the often more complex-parenting environment. Kang and Jain (2020) revealed that sstudents experiencing neglect may have special educational needs that require additional support and accommodations. Special education services, including individualized education plans (IEPs) and 504 plans, provide students with disabilities with access to appropriate educational interventions, accommodations, and related services to address their unique learning needs. Maciver (2019) proposed for the schools adopt trauma-informed practices that recognize the impact of neglect and other forms of trauma on students' behavior, learning, and well-being. These practices create a safe, supportive, and culturally responsive school environment that promotes healing, resilience, and academic success for students affected by neglect. Such practices promote educational equity and access for all students, including those experiencing neglect or other forms of adversity. It also ensures equitable access to high-quality education, resources, and opportunities helps mitigate the impact of neglect on students' academic achievement and future success (Onolemhenmhen & Osunde, 2018). However, there is a need for studies that explore how supports services support address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

2.4.5 Staff Training

It is important to develop the skills of the coordinating team and all those who put in place protection measures at school. The study of Onolemhenmhen and Osunde (2018) on child neglect as predictor of academic performance among senior secondary school students in Edo

State, Nigeria. The study determined the extent to which child neglect (Educational and social neglect) individually and jointly predicts the academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in the state. The study found child neglect have devastating effect on the health of the child in school. The study further indicated that in order to provide protection to learners the head teacher and all other staff who work with learners need to undertake appropriate child protection awareness training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively. Teachers have more access to learners than almost any other professional so much so that their opportunity to help protect the health and safety of their students through interventions is great. Tingberg & Nilsson (2020) suggested that that in light of protecting learners, teachers need to have knowledge, training, and experience on issues of protecting learners from neglect.

Although, school staff must have a wide awareness and clear understanding of the system, information, and the procedures involved in protecting learners from neglect in the literature review (Onolemhenmhen & Osunde, 2018). Teacher training on ways of protecting learners with disabilities against neglect against has not been explored in special education school. Hence, the focus of the study is to establish how to protect learners with disabilities from neglect as teachers that are often ill-prepared fail recognize signs and symptoms of child neglect. In the light of protecting learners, teachers need to have knowledge, training, and experience on issues of protecting learners from neglect. Therefore, there was little information on competences of teacher about how learners with disabilities are protected from neglect in special education schools. Hence, the study to remedy this gap in prevailing situation in selected special education schools.

Teachers play a crucial role in addressing neglect in schools due to their unique position as trusted adults who interact with students on a daily basis. A study of Ng'andu and Chilufya (2019) reported that staff within schools hold a particular advantage, as schools possess long-standing interactions with learners between the ages of 4 to 16 years old. Teachers and other school staff play a consistent role in learners' lives through the provision of universal services. Teaching staff in schools form an important part of the wider safeguarding system for learners (Thomas et al., 2018), whilst non-teaching staff hold the added benefit of observing learners and their interactions in more informal situations such as the breakfast club, canteen or school yard. However, each cited study was limited to specific areas of research on how these learners are supported against neglect while in school, which the researcher thought was important for

the study. Schools ensure that staff members, including teachers, counsellors, administrators, and support staff, are trained to recognize signs of neglect and respond appropriately. Training may include education on mandatory reporting requirements, trauma-informed practices, and strategies for supporting students experiencing neglect (Onolemhenmhen & Osunde, 2018).

Teacher training in child abuse and neglect plays a crucial role in teachers' awareness and identification of potential indicators of maltreatment (Ngarorabanga & Habinshuti, 2021). Sharley (2020) suggest that an expanding awareness of child neglect raises questions about the level of safeguarding training which is currently received by teachers. Particularly so, with enquiries into child deaths continuing to emphasise the importance of ensuring suitable responses to concerns within education settings (Sharley, 2019) and the pivotal role of education in multiagency practice (Sharley, 2022). The most common challenges for teaching professionals reporting concerns of abuse or neglect within schools are the lack of training in or ability to recognise maltreatment, or not being familiar with the reporting procedures that govern safeguarding practice (Tingberg & Nilsson, 2020), or the necessary understanding of detailed information on identifying signs of abuse and neglect within the school (Armfield et al., 2020).

2.4.5 Supportive Counselling Services

Even though child neglect has been reported as the most common type of maltreatment, its causes, effects, prevention, and treatment are not as explored and discussed frequently compared to physical or sexual abuse. Most sadly, counsellors who are better equipped to tackle this menace are usually not recognized in discourses that enters on addressing child neglect. Empirical evidence indicates that access to supportive counselling services in schools can mitigate the negative effects of neglect on students' academic performance, social-emotional development, and overall well-being (Asio et al., 2020). Counselling interventions tailored to address trauma and neglect-related issues have been shown to improve outcomes for affected students (Allen et al., 2018). School counselors offer individual and group counseling to students experiencing neglect or other forms of trauma. They provide emotional support, crisis intervention, and help students develop coping skills and resilience. School counselors also collaborate with teachers, parents, and outside agencies to address the underlying issues contributing to neglect and to facilitate access to additional support services.

School counsellors play a crucial role in addressing neglect in schools due to their unique training, expertise, and position within the school. Therefore, Avdibegovi and Brki (2020) revealed that school counsellors develop intervention strategies that help parents to improve the quality of care for their learners. Intervention programmes promote a positive and responsive parent-child relationship. School counsellors in their intervention programmes on child neglect should involve stakeholders such as parents, community leaders, legislators, faith-based bodies, researchers, and other practitioners who are directly involved with learners. As such, all stakeholders work collaboratively in mitigating this recurring problem. This is very important in the intervention programmes of counsellors. This strategy assists some of the families in learning how to solve their problems uniquely and thus curtailing the culture of overdependence on the government. Some neglectful parents want to be good parents; however, they are limited due to lack of personal, financial, and adequate supportive resources. School counsellors advocate for policies and procedures focused on the trauma-sensitive framework and the establishment of a safe school climate for all students. IT existence and how it applied to address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools, this intended to explore.

2.4.6 Mandatory Reporting Policies

Schools typically should have mandatory reporting policies in place, requiring teachers and staff to report suspected cases of neglect or abuse to designated authorities, such as child protective services or law enforcement agencies. Schools regularly monitor and evaluate their efforts to address neglect, including the effectiveness of supportive measures and the outcomes for students and families. This ongoing evaluation informs continuous improvement and the implementation of evidence-based practices. Binou-Nakou and Markos (2017) indicted that support strategies should prioritize early identification and response to instances of neglect. This may involve establishing clear reporting mechanisms, providing targeted support for victims and perpetrators, and implementing restorative justice practices to address harm and promote accountability (Binou-Nakou & Markos, 2017).

Mandatory reporting policies for incidents of neglect in schools are critical tools for safeguarding the well-being of students and ensuring that suspected cases of neglect are identified and addressed in a timely and appropriate manner. Jackson et al. (2023) reported that mandatory reporting policies ensure that students who may be experiencing neglect receive the necessary protection and intervention. Neglect can have serious consequences on a child's

physical, emotional, and psychological development, and timely intervention is crucial to mitigate harm and provide support. By identifying and addressing signs of neglect promptly, schools can help prevent further harm to students and families and promote their well-being. Therefore, mandatory reporting policies of incidents of neglect in schools are essential mechanisms for protecting students, promoting their well-being, and fulfilling schools' duty to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all. These policies not only comply with legal requirements but also demonstrate a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of every child (Jackson et al., 2023). Further research is required or needed to confirm how mandatory reporting policies help address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

2.5 Summary

From the reviewed literature, it was clear that learners with disabilities in schools have experienced bullying, discrimination and neglect. Learners with disabilities were at increased risk of bullying, discrimination and neglect. Through the reviewed of literature, the researcher identified that there was knowledge gap concerning how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools and in relation to this study, in Luapula province. Based on the knowledge gap identified, the researcher found it appropriate to explore how learners with disabilities protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect put in Special education school had it resulted into late coming, absenteeism and dropping out of school. The next chapter provide the methodology the study.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology that was used in the study consisting of the following: philosophical paradigm, research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure as well as data analysis. Furthermore, the chapter presents trustworthiness, ethical considerations and ends with a summary.

3.2 Philosophical paradigm

Philosophical paradigms often overlap, intersect, and evolve over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of philosophical inquiry and human thought. It carries assumptions a researcher makes about reality, how knowledge is obtained and the methods of gaining knowledge. Lincoln and Guba, 2013) explain that a paradigm can also be understood as a set of beliefs that represents a worldview. The beliefs or paradigms mainly include positivism, constructivism and pragmatism. Paradigms are useful in that they lay the foundation for the research allowing the researcher to identify the best methods to meet what research aims to achieve (Leavy, 2017). In other words, a paradigm is a basic belief system with assumptions about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), axiology (the role of values in research) and methodology (process of research) (Yong et al., 2023).

3.2.1.1 Ontology

Researchers have assumptions (sometimes implicit) about reality, how it exists and what can be known about it. Three ontological beliefs exist: (i) that there is only one reality or truth, (ii) the belief that there are multiple realities or truths and (iii) the belief that reality is constantly negotiated, debated or interpreted. Since this is a qualitative study, its belief was anchored in the stance that there are multiple realities or truths (Charles & Ahmed, 2017). As suggested by Yong et al. (2023), it is the ontological question that leads a researcher to inquire what kind of reality exists. In relation to this study, a socially constructed question (how learners with disabilities are protected or safeguarded from bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected special education primary schools in Luapula province?) with a belief that truth can be obtained from multiple participants with varied experiences about child protection measures.

The study adopted a constructivist approach, focusing on understanding the perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders involved in protecting learners with disabilities. As the research design involved interview and focus groups discussion to explore head teacher, specialist teacher, learners with disabilities and their parent's perspective on how learner with disabilities are protected against bullying, discrimination and neglect within their cultural and social contexts. The study engaged learners with disabilities, their parents, specialist teacher and head teacher to understand their perceptions, and measures of practices against bullying, discrimination, and neglect. The themes which emerged as prevention, intervention and supportive measures were subjective and socially constructed by participants experience and perspectives. The researcher ensured that the voices of learners with disabilities were heard and respected as the beneficiary of the prevention, intervention and supportive measures in place to address bullying, discrimination, or neglect. This involved obtaining informed consent, and ensured that the research did not inadvertently contributed to further marginalization or harm. By prioritising understanding diverse perspectives and experiences from key stakeholder within special education school during data collection, researchers generated insights that contribute to more effective strategies for promoting the well-being and protection of learners with disabilities. During data analysis and interpretation, the researcher engaged in qualitative coding and thematic analysis to explore the subjective meanings and interpretations of participants on prevention, intervention and supportive measures in place to address bullying, discrimination or neglect in special education school for learners with disabilities.

3.2.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated (Leavy, 2017). Similarly, Kamal (2019) states that epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge, how it can be acquired and how it is communicated to other human beings. Three epistemological beliefs exist: knowledge can be measured using reliable design and tools, reality needs to be interpreted to discover the underlying meaning and the belief that knowledge should be examined using whatever tools are best suited to solve the problem. Since this was a qualitative study driven by the need to have in-depth understanding about how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools, the epistemological belief that reality or truth needs to be interpreted to discover meaning guide the study. Researcher opted for qualitative methods such as interviews which allowed for in-

depth exploration and interpretation of participants' perspectives and experiences on prevention, intervention and supportive measures that guarantee protection against bullying, discrimination or neglect in special education school among learners with disabilities. The researcher immersed in the data, identifying patterns, recurring themes, and meaningful connections related to protection measures. Through identifying patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, come up with emerging themes which comprised of prevention, intervention and supportive measure applied in special education school to control bullying, discrimination or neglect incidents. Researchers developed theoretical framework insights based on the patterns and themes identified in the data.

3.2.1.3 Methodology

The other assumption is based on methodology, it guided the researcher in deciding what type of data was required for a study and which data collection tools was most appropriate for the purpose of his study (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). It was the methodological question about how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools that led the researcher to opt for qualitative methodology. While, methods are specific means of collecting and analysing data, such as questionnaires and open-ended interviews. The method used in a study dependent on the ontological, epistemological and axiological beliefs of the researcher. As such, in relation to the qualitative study, qualitative methods were employed and used face to face interviews and focus group discussions. During data collection and analysing the researcher constructed themes which informed the prevention, intervention and supportive measures the special educations apply to address bullying, discrimination or neglect among learners with disabilities.

3.2.1.4 Axiology

Axiology is concerned with values or ethics. In short, axiology is concerned with what is good or bad to the participants. Three axiological questions may lead the research; a) What values or outcomes will come out from the research? b) Can our personal values shape the research or how do we control our personal values from influencing the research? c) Should we seek just to understand or seek to change society for better? While putting values into practice, the researcher needs to know that he/she has values and the participants also have their values. All data that were collected from the research were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Participants remained anonymous and untraceable in this research. The participation in the research was entirely voluntary and were free to withdraw any time during the study without any consequences. Researcher prioritized values such as honesty, transparency, and fairness in the analysis process. Consent was sought from all participant and the form described the nature of the research and possible risks and benefits. The researcher disclosed his values in the study by being unbiased, curious, attentive, diligent and in the same way considered the value-laden nature of the information collected in the field.

3.2.2 Types of research paradigm

There are three main research paradigms: positivism, constructivism and pragmatism. These paradigms are borne from the ontological, epistemological and axiological beliefs that a researcher holds.

3.2.2.1 Positivism paradigm

The term positivism refers to a branch of philosophy that rose to prominence during the early nineteenth century because of the works of the French philosopher Auguste Comte (Leavy, 2017). The positivism paradigm has an ontological stance or belief that there is a single reality or truth and an epistemological belief that knowledge can be measured. Researchers come in as objective observers to study phenomena that exist independently of them and they do not affect or disturb what is being observed which is not the case in this study on learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education school where the researcher needs created reality on child protection measures under study. It also recognizes the possibility of the researcher's own beliefs and values affecting what is being observed. In addition, positivism paradigm has a stance of quantitative research.

3.2.2.2 Constructivism paradigm

Constructivist or Interpretivism is a response to the over-dominance of positivism (Mohajan, 2018). Interpretivism rejects the notion that a single, verifiable reality exists independent of our senses. Interpretivists believe in socially constructed multiple realities. Truth and reality are created and not discovered by an experiment or test. Constructivists argue that it is not possible to know reality as it is, because it is always mediated by our senses. Interpretive epistemology is subjective, meaning that the researcher and participants will engage in

interactive processes to understand their personal experiences of the real life within the natural settings on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special educational schools. Interpretive methodology requires that social phenomena be understood through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher (Muzari et al., (2022). The goal of interpretive methodology is to understand social phenomena in their context. Interpretivists believe that there is a constructed reality that is based on the experiences, circumstances, and situations of the participants. In relation to this study, constructivism paradigm was considered appropriate. This is based on the ontological belief that there are multiple realities and epistemological belief that knowledge must be discovered and interpreted from experiences of participants (head teachers) who are looking after the learners with disabilities, their parents and the learners themselves who can provide in depth understanding on how the learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools.

3.2.2.3 Pragmatism paradigm

The emergence of the mixed research approach has been accompanied by searching for a philosophy that legitimates mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in one research. Pragmatism takes a more practical and flexible approach, focusing on the usefulness and applicability of research findings, rather than an all-or-nothing, mutually exclusive philosophical position (Xiong, 2022). This allows you, as the researcher, to explore research aims that cross philosophical boundaries, using different perspectives for different aspects of the study. With a pragmatic research paradigm, both quantitative and qualitative methods can play a part, depending on the research questions and the context of the study. This often manifests in studies that adopt a mixed-method approach, utilising a combination of different data types and analysis methods. Ultimately, the pragmatist adopts a problem-solving mindset, seeking practical ways to achieve diverse research aims. Many researchers consider pragmatism as the most common philosophical justification for the mixed research approach; however, pragmatism is criticized as a philosophy in general and also as philosophical support for the mixed research approach especially for not addressing the differing assumptions of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Xiong, 2022).

3.2.3 Paradigm used in the study and justification

This study was guided by a Constructivist Paradigm. The central endeavour of the Constructivist Paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Lincoln, & Guba 2013). This approach will try to ‘get into the head of how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglected in special education schools and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context. Every effort was made to try to understand the viewpoint of the subject being observed, rather than the viewpoint of the observer. Emphasis was placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. Hence, the key tenet of the Constructivist Paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. Constructivists believe that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. Constructivism is also built upon the premise of a social construction of reality (Matta, 2021). This approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories. Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants’ actions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Further, the constructivist paradigm was chosen because it enabled the researcher to have in depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. In this study, the epistemological position of the researcher was that knowledge needs to be interpreted to discover underlying meaning of how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. In line with Creswell (2014) the researcher acknowledges that naturalist methodology puts the researcher as an active participant who utilised data gathered through qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions. As such the researcher utilised the data collected from head teachers and teachers through face to face interviews, and from parents and learners with disabilities through focus group discussions. These sources of data were chosen based on their expert knowledge and experiences on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools.

3.3 Research design

In keeping with the research paradigm, a qualitative research design was chosen to conduct this research. Creswell (2014), describes how qualitative research uses the interpretivist paradigm, theoretical frameworks and the researchers' own knowledge to inform the research question through the meanings individuals or groups accredit to a social or human problem. A case study design was used for the study. It was chosen because it helped to have in-depth understanding about how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected special education primary schools in Luapula Province. According to Yin (2014), a case study can be a unit or units within a real-life contemporary setting. There are several components which define case study research. Case study research examines a phenomenon of interest. In the present research, the phenomenon of interest is child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected two special education primary schools in Luapula Province. Case study research should be bounded within certain parameters such as place and timeframe. In this study, this case was bound by location within the context of two selected special education primary school and learners with disabilities. Case studies aims at giving a portrait of a particular situation (or phenomenon) and reveal the reality via thick description. While doing that, the study brought out the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the participants on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools as they are of the utmost importance.

Bhatta (2018) divided case studies into three types: intrinsic-a single case (an individual, group, organization, event, or other entity) that is important in its own right, not necessarily because of its potential predictive theoretical powers; instrumental-a single case where the focus is on going beyond the case to understand a broader phenomenon of interest; aims to provides insight into an issue or refine a theory in which the case itself here is secondary and might be atypical of other cases. While collective is a multiple case version of instrumental where the focus is on learning about a phenomenon. A collective case study explores differences within and between cases ideally to replicate findings across them.

The study had chosen an intrinsic case study design. An intrinsic case study is a research design where the primary interest lies in understanding the specific case itself, rather than using it as a means to generalize data to a broader population or theory. Intrinsic case studies are characterized by an in-depth exploration of a particular case or cases for the purpose of gaining

a rich and detailed understanding of the unique context and complexities involved. In this case the child with disability and special education school was of primary interest in the study. An intrinsic case study is when the aim is fundamentally to understand the case (Kekeya, 2021), and in this case is to explore protective measure put in place to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect while in schools. The outcomes were internalized on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Further, the intrinsic case study design was chosen because of its flexibility and adaptability to a range of contexts, processes, people, foci and because it provides some of the most useful methods available in educational research. It also allowed for in-depth exploration on the child protection measures put in place to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools (Harrison et al., 2017).

3.3. 1 Justification for case study design

A case study research design using the qualitative approach was used to allow the researcher to interact with the research participants in order to collect in-depth data. This study employed an intrinsic case study design because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher how learners with disabilities were protected against bullying, discrimination or neglect and the protection, intervention and supportive measure put in place in study schools, was of main interest using multiple sources of data. Intrinsic case study particular was considered had it included multiple perspectives of data sources from head teachers, teachers, learners and parents. While not aiming for generalizability, intrinsic case studies offered depth and specificity, making them particularly relevant for exploratory and in-depth on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. By collecting information from a range of different stakeholders, such as head teachers, teachers, parents and learners. Given the nature of the research problem as outlined in chapter one, the study judged this design as the most appropriate for this study. It is well suited to new research areas, as demonstrated in the literature review section, which highlighted the paucity of data to guide information exchange in child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Furthermore, it was realised that the design was compatible with the current study as there are distinctive factors of key consideration and these are identified as; case study design is the preferred research strategy when ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions are being asked (Kekeya, 2021), and the study is based on ‘how’ and ‘what’ research question. Research questions of the study are: 1. How were

learners with disabilities protected from bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province? 2. What measures against discrimination were put in place for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools? 3. What supportive measures were put in place to address neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province? This approach was supported by Miles (2015) who indicated that to elicit case study research as the design of the study include the facts that parallel the explanations about case study, the question of how or what can be explained via case study research in a more advantageous way. Then, Case study design is valuable when the researcher has little or no control over the event (Kekeya, 2021). This study sought to explore the phenomenon of information exchange from a participant's perspective, without controlling either the participant's encounter or the meaning people ascribe to the experience. Also, case study is beneficial for contemporary events. The topic is a contemporary situation. This study was conducted within the real-life contemporary context of how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

Further, it was clear that case study provided the researcher with the ability to explore a phenomenon through a variety of lenses. This multi-perspective approach was crucial for a very in-depth and comprehensive understanding of 'objects', such as child protection measures from bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in special educational schools, as well as to a range of real-life situations (Pearson et al., 2015). Intrinsic case study also had the flexibility to delve into and unpack more complex experiences and circumstances which may not have a specific or singular outcome. With qualitative approach it enabled a rich exploration of the subjective experiences, meanings, and interactions within the case. As it allowed researchers to explore child protection measure for bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools in detail through multiple sources of data collected.

3.4 Population

The study population comprised of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners. Head teachers were included in the study because they are the in charge of schools and overseers of learners' safety protection while in school. As such they are well positioned to provide data on measures put in place in their schools to protect children with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect while they are in school. Teachers were included in the study because they are the class teachers and have day to day responsibility to protect learners from bullying,

discrimination and neglect while in class. Learners with disabilities included in the study because they were the ones who were expected to have experienced the protection from bullying, discrimination and neglect in school. Parents were brought in to help validate the views of head teachers, teachers and learners on how the school protected the learners (their children) from bullying, discrimination and neglect while they were in schools.

3.5 Study Sample Size

The sample size for the study comprised of 38 participants. These were two (2) head teachers, 12 teachers, 12 parents and 12 learners from the two selected special education schools. Each of the two schools were represented by one head teacher, six teachers, six learners and six parents. The sample sizes of teachers, parents and learners were adequate as they were consistent with the principle of data saturation in qualitative studies. Data saturation occurred within the sixth interview. This was consistent with Guest et al (2006) and Sim et al (2018) who stated that in qualitative studies saturation may occur as few as six participants. Each focus group discussion involved six participants. The six participants were within the principle of data saturation. This was consistent with Jassim and Whitford (2014), who found that for a focus group discussion, a group of 6 to 10 member able to provide rich in-depth data till no new themes or insights emerged. The study used the point of data saturation to determine final sample size of 38.

3.5.1 Characteristics of Participants

The characteristics of the participants by study site, gender, age and work experience are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants

Study Site	Participant	Gender	Age	Work Experience	Date of Interview
	Head Teacher-1	M	51-60	7 Years	20.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-1	M	21-30	3 Years	21.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-2	M	31-40	3 Years	21.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-3	F	31-40	7 Years	21.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-4	M	31-40	6 Years	21.10.22

Primary School 1	Specialist Teacher-5	F	31-40	6 Years	21.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-6	F	31-40	3 Years	21.10.22
	Learner-1	M	13 Years	NA	31.10.22
	Learner-2	F	16 Years	NA	31.10.22
	Learner-3	F	17 Years	NA	31.10.22
	Learner-4	M	15 years	NA	31.10.22
	Learner-5	M	15 Years	NA	31.10.22
	Learner-6	F	14 years	NA	31.10.22
	Parent-1	F	21-30	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-2	F	21-30	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-3	F	21-30	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-4	M	31-40	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-5	M	31-40	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-6	M	31-40	NA	28.10.22
Primary School 2	Head Teacher-2	M	51-60	7 Years	25.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-7	M	41-50	6 Years	26.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-8	M	41-50	7 Years	26.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-9	F	41-50	3 Years	26.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-10	M	51-60	3 Years	26.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-11	F	41-50	6 Years	26.10.22
	Specialist Teacher-12	F	41-50	3 Years	26.10.22
	Learner-7	M	16 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Learner-8	F	15 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Learner-9	F	16 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Learner-10	M	13 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Learner-11	M	14 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Learner-12	F	12 Years	NA	20.01.23
	Parent-7	F	31-40	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-8	M	41-50	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-9	F	41-50	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-10	F	41-50	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-11	M	51-60	NA	28.10.22
	Parent-12	M	51-60	NA	28.10.22

From Table 1 above, thirty-eight participants participated in the study. They were selected from two special education primary schools. Each school had one head teacher, six learners, six specialist teachers in special education and six parents. The specialist teachers also members of the Committee on child protection for about four to seven years, which was long enough to gain experience how to prevent bullying, discrimination or neglect in special education schools.

3.6 Sampling Procedures

The study utilised purposive critical case sampling to select two Head Teachers that was one from each school, by virtue of their respective office. Then criterion sampling was used to select 12 learners from grade five going up, that was six from each school those with shared experience with bullying, discrimination or neglect, but vary in characteristics and in their individual experiences. Taherdoost (2016) argued that case study uses criterion sampling, and most prominent criterion is the participant's experience with the phenomenon under study, for example, only learners with disability who experienced bullying, discrimination or neglect were targeted for the study as they are the representatives of all learners and because they are the ones who are directly affected. The study recruited learners participates for a focus group discussion from upper primary had they were believed to be capable to engage in meaningful discussion and bring out their experience. Those in lower grades despite of the disability and below 10 years were excluded from the study, had it would have been difficult for them to engage in the in-depth discussion. Similarly, their parents also were selected using the criterion sampling procedure. These were parents of the learners with disability chosen to be the sample for the study as they know what is best for their learners. Only parents whose learners with disabilities were part of sample were included in the study and in grade five going up, as for those parents whose learners have not experienced bullying, discrimination or neglect before and have learners in lower class were excluded from the study.

Then, for 12 teachers, expert sampling was used to select them. Expert sampling involved selecting teachers who have significant experience and expertise in working with students with disabilities and who are familiar with the policies and practices related to safeguarding and protection within the school environment. Specialist teacher are considered experts in the field of special education, particularly in the areas of addressing bullying, discrimination, and neglect. They were identified through head teacher on committee member of child protection in school. During data collection they were able to share their perspectives, experiences, and

recommendations into insights of strategies, policies, and practices employed in the selected special education schools to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination, and neglect. By using expert sampling in this study, researchers accessed the valuable insights and perspectives of experienced professionals who are directly involved in supporting and advocating for students with disabilities in special education settings.

Teachers are often perceived as credible sources of information due to their professional expertise and first-hand experience in the classroom. The data collected from the specialist teachers as expert interviews were analysed to identify common themes, patterns, and recommendations related to safeguarding practices against bullying, discrimination, or neglect in special education settings. By selecting teachers as experts, researchers enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of their findings among stakeholders in the educational community. It allowed researchers to tap into their specialized knowledge, representative perspectives, practical relevance, diversity of experiences, and credibility within the field of education. Researchers gained a comprehensive understanding of the strategies involved in protecting learners with disabilities from harm within the school environment. The teachers who were not in the committee for child protection of learners with disabilities while in special education schools were excluded from the study.

3.7 Research Instruments

The research instruments that were used in the study include semi-structured interview guide and Focus Group Discussions Guide (FGD).

3.7.1 Interview Guide

The study used the interview guide on head teacher and specialist teacher to collect data. Moser and Korstjens, 2018) argued that interview guide is a commonly applied data collection tool for qualitative researches. In case study research, interviews play a crucial role in collecting rich and detailed data from participants. Case studies are an in-depth exploration of a particular individual, group, event, or situation, and interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to gather first-hand information, perspectives, and insights. It was considered appropriate for the study to use interview guide as a tool to collect data because it allowed for follow up questions to construct of reality on child protection measures in schools. The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect in-depth qualitative data from head teachers and teachers.

The semi-structured interviews employed here were flexible in that they allowed me to alter the sequence and even the phraseology of questions. It also allowed a back and forth dialogue (Vagle, 2014), thus providing an opportunity to react to comments, change wording of questions, interjections for probes and clarifications on child protection measures applied in special education schools. The interview schedule did not try to be exactly the same for each participant, but aimed to follow what each participant talked about. The interviews were conducted in a distraction-free place that participants preferred.

3.7.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD)

Focus group discussion guide was used to collect data from parents and learners from upper primary as they can engage in meaningful deliberation in the focus group discussion. Focus groups discussion are a popular qualitative methodology that use a group interview process to generate knowledge, evaluate services and programs and to seek the lived experiences of people with diverse experiences and needs (Saunders, et al., 2018). A focus group can be defined as a small and diverse group of people (typically 6-12 participants) with an interviewer or moderator who seeks to elicit individual responses to research questions and to generate group discussions and often consensus on a range of topics and experiences. The participants of FGD comprised of learners with disabilities who have experienced bullying, discrimination or neglect before and their parents. It was chosen because it allowed participants to discuss their concerns in a group. The use of focus group discussion guide also allowed for follow up question to have in depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. In that case, child protection measure on bullying, discrimination and neglect put in place in special education schools.

FDGs was helpful in providing an insight into different opinions among learners on how they were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. These provided a broad frame for discussions which follow. Focus groups discussion was considered to be the most appropriate method for this research, as many parents learners felt more comfortable voicing their opinions in the company of colleagues. The FGD provided a forum for parents and learners to reflect on and react to the opinions of others. The focus group discussions were ideal in that they availed the study valuable insights on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. As participants interact within the group the quality and richness of data was enhanced. It encouraged open

and honest communication while maintaining a structured approach to cover the relevant topics.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The study followed the data collection procedure, clearance and introductory letters were sought from the University of Zambia. In addition, written permission was sought from the Permanent secretary under the Ministry of Education to allow the researcher to go and collect data from respective province and district. Also, the authority of the District Education Board Secretary for respective districts where the research was conducted was sought and permission was obtained from the head teachers of all schools to be visited during the study before the research is conducted who in turn authorised, teachers and learners to participate in the study. Further, the head teacher gave guidance on parents who can take part in the study as they frequently visit the school just to check on the welfare of the school. At the school level, verbal permission was obtained from the head teachers of respective schools to use their facilities before proceeding with data collection. The head teacher was made to sign the consent forms on behalf of the learners (learners) since the learners shall be those below the age of 21 years and are considered learners who cannot make independent decisions on their own as they were in boarding.

Data collection methods included open-structured interviews and focus group discussion. The researcher devoted few minutes towards introducing the research and its purpose to the respondents and an assurance was given that data to be collected were purely for academic purposes. The participants were asked to complete and sign a consent form agreeing to take part in the research study. The consent form described the nature of the research and possible risks and benefits. The interviews for each participant were held for approximately thirty-sixty minutes. Participants were asked questions as per interview questions that were provided in the interview guide.

During the interviews the researcher recorded the interview with permission granted by participants, so as to reduce on interview duration and efficiency compared to note taking during interviews. The researcher explained the rationale for tape recording to each participant and also indicated that there recorded audios tapes shall not be made available to anyone except the researcher supervisor. The researcher thanked participants after the interview and reiterated that the confidentiality would be maintained in the study. Thereafter, the recorded

interviews were later be transcribed after which the researcher cross-checked the voice recorded interviews against the transcribed interviews.

The researcher held two focus group sessions at each school, one for the parents for those learners with disabilities who were involved in the study and the other one for the learners. The selection of participants for FGD with learner with disabilities was based on learners who were previously victims of bullying, discrimination or neglect in school and were based on the recommendation from the school committee from their record of previous victims and were learners in the age range of 12 years going up and are in Grade 5 to 7 or level 3 in special education schools and could engage in a meaningful conversation. Each FGD comprised six participants. The purpose of the research was explained to parents as well as to learners. An open-ended focus group discussion allowed the participants to talk about the issues they think are important, using their own language and describing their experiences in detail, with stories and examples. With a low level of moderation, the researcher guided the discussion by asking some key questions, but allowing the freedom to discuss freely. The major advantage of this procedure is that a researcher collected rich data with descriptions and examples, and the participants' language and concerns were at the forefront. In order to maintain alignment with research questions researcher politely used to interrupt whenever the discussion drifted in other direction. Researcher maintained a list of questions as well as keep record of the time spent on FGD using a stop watch to ensure that all FGD received due time and focus.

The audio recorded of interviews were transcribed immediately within 48 hours following the interviews. After the interviews are converted to text, the texts were analysed for any inaccuracies by comparing the audio recording and the writing. After transcription, a flash was used to store data for confidentiality of the participants. Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were triangulated. Triangulation of evidence from different sources confirmed the warranted claims on child protection measure against bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. The qualitative data collected through the FGDs and Interviews provided a basis for understanding the measures schools have put in place. Therefore, triangulating the data collection techniques enhanced trustworthiness of the study findings. In addition to triangulation, data saturation was used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. This is in line with Jassin and Whitford (2014) who used saturation to ensure trustworthiness of study findings.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, a vital element of qualitative research, is the confidence in confirming the data, methods, and processes associated with qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (2013) proposed a set of criteria to judge the trustworthiness of interpretive research. Research is considered to be of good quality if it has credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The study was validated based on them.

Credibility is confidence in the “truth” of the findings. Credibility in qualitative research includes activities that increase the probability that convincing findings will be produced. The researcher triangulated the data collection instrument and ensure data saturation consistent with other scholars such as Jassin and Whitford (2014) who said that after the 10th interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. Therefore, it was deemed that the data collection had reached a saturation point. We continued data collection for two more interviews to ensure and confirm that there are no new themes emerging.

Creswell (2014) further point out that credibility is established when the participants recognize the findings of the study as true to their experiences. To ensure this, member checking was done at the end of data analysis. The research findings were taken back to the participants for verification. The participants confirmed the results as reflecting their experiences. Course mates and some friends who are experts in qualitative research also provided an opportunity for peer debriefing and they guided and provide feedback on qualitative instrument formulation. Crosschecking the interview of the participants were also applied. Then, the study employed triangulation in order represent the phenomenon as accurately as possible by obtaining corroborating evidence.

Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did (Connelly, 2016). Kamal, (2019) also stated that dependability is achieved by providing the reader with a frank statement of the methods used to collect and analyse data as the audit trail. The audit trail was applied which entails a description of all procedures and processes conducted from data collection to their analysis (Lincoln, & Guba, 2013). The researcher addressed these critical elements of trustworthiness through in-depth and detailed methodological description and by providing background data

and information in the literature review and introduction. Additionally, dependability of the study was enhanced through adherence to the process that led to the research findings.

Transferability means that the findings can be applied to other contexts or settings (Leavy, 2017). The researcher will ensure transferability by providing the reader with a clear description of the research setting, characteristics of the participants, data collection methods as well as data analysis procedures. Therefore, in the study, the researcher tried to achieve transferability through a detailed description of the context. In this study, the researcher provided the thick description of the contributions of the participants in chapter four (4) on presentation of research findings and the research process in chapter three (3) talking about the methodology of the study. The researcher also addressed transferability through a universal member check procedure whereby the participants had to confirm the essential themes from the data analysis.

Confirmability refers to the ability of the reader to link the findings of the study to the thought processes that led to the conclusions (Connelly, 2016). According to Lincoln, & Guba (2013). Confirmability implies that the researcher should demonstrate that the results could or should be corroborated by others. The analysed data were shared with the research supervisor who, as an expert in qualitative research, had supervised a number of qualitative studies. The supervisor critically questioned the researcher's reasoning for the interpretation of the data, based on the research question and evidence of the raw data. After verification by the research supervisor of how the themes and subthemes were developed and how they were interpreted, the researcher moved to the next step, which is development of the storyline (which was confirmed by the participants). Extracts from the participants' responses were used to illustrate how the themes and subthemes emerged. Therefore, the study findings and research process are trustworthy as the four quality checks namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were observed as displayed above.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data was inductively analysed manually using six major stages that includes familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and report writing, and, where possible, verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants (Saldaña et al., 2014). Collected data were analysed to

answer the three research questions on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

The first step that the researcher took to transcribe all the interviews from the recordings. The transcriptions were read thoroughly alongside the recordings to ensure that correct words were captured. Thereafter familiarized with the data to have deep understanding of it. Then the second stage which involved the generation of initial codes by sorting and collapsing meaningful transcriptions which lead to coming up with a list of all possible topics that were identified from the transcriptions. From the list of all possible topics, similar topics were then grouped to form broader topics which was then assigned codes.

Then the researcher went to the stage that followed that required searching for themes among the codes. This was attained by assigning most descriptive wording to the topics and turning them into themes. Then attention was given to the frequencies of the themes because it indicated the trends which helped in the reviewing process of the themes. After the review, major themes drawn and described according to the research questions on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. Defining and naming of the themes were also done to have a comprehensive analysis of the way the themes that contributed to understanding the data. Additionally, the researcher used the data gathered during related literature review to refine the themes which made it easier for the findings to be presented in themes and quotations.

The final stage involved deciding on themes that made meaningful contributions to understanding child protection measures presented in the report that answered the research questions. The researcher decided on the meaningful themes that answered the research questions on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province and used them in the report writing. This were done in the light of the research questions at hand. Some responses were also isolated for them to be used as original quotes for verbatim to highlight important findings of the study.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance was sought from Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Zambia. An introduction letter was obtained from the University of

Zambia. Permission also was sought from all the respective participating institutions for the study. In the field, an explanation of the nature of the study was done by the researcher to participants. Written consent was obtained from the participants who were above 16 years and parents gave consent on behalf of their children who were below the consent age. Signing a consent confirm implied willingness to take part in the study.

In compliance with ethical issues regarding anonymity of the participants, codes were used. The code **SCH 1 HT1** represents school one Head teacher one and **SCH 2 HT2** represented School two Head teacher two. The codes for the specialist teachers were as follows: **SCH 1 ST1 M** represents, school one, specialist teacher number 1 who was male. **SCH 1 ST5 F** represents school one, specialist teacher number five who was female. Then code **SCH 2 ST7 M** represents school two, specialist teacher number seven and was male. **SCH 2 ST9 F** represents school two, specialist teacher number nine who was female.

The codes for the learner with disabilities were as follows: **FGD 1 ML** represents from Focus Group Discussion one, Male Learner who were involved and **FGD 1 FL** represents from Focus Group Discussion one, female learner who were involved from school one. As code **FGD 2 ML** represents from Focus Group Discussion number two, male learner who were involved and **FGD 2 FL** represents from Focus Group Discussion number two, female learner who were involved from school two. Also, code of **FGD 3 MP** represented during Focus Group Discussion number three, male parent who were involved from school one and **FGD 3 FP** represented during Focus Group Discussion three, female Parent who were involved from school one. Further, an identity code of **FGD 4 MP** during Focus Group Discussion number four, male parent who were involved from school two and **FGD 4 FP** during Focus Group Discussion number four, female Parent who were involved from school two

Generally, the participants were informed of what the study involved so that they can make their own judgment on their involvement in the study. In order to avoid the element of deception, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. The names, personal details of the participants as well as the information collected remained confidential, and for uniformity, the real names of institutions have been left out except the use of titles. Further, in order to protect the privacy of the participants, confidentiality was guaranteed by assuring the participants that the data provided would be used only for academic purpose. Interviews were recorded and the recordings were deleted after transcription.

3.12 Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology that were used in the study. An explanation of qualitative research as a method for data collection and analysis was given. Measures followed during the data collection were discussed in this chapter and the information about the sample was provided. Further it included data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical issues that were considered in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Overview

The chapter presents the findings on how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected special education schools of Luapula province. The research questions form the reflection points for the chapter. The presentation is guided by the study questions and themes that emerged from the questions.

4.2. Measures to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in selected special education primary schools in Luapula province

The first research question focused on the measures to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in selected special education schools. The study used interviews and FGDs to probe the participants. The question was asked to the head teacher, specialist teacher, learners with disabilities and parents: *“How are learners with disabilities protected from bullying in your school?”* The study revealed that schools had put up three main measures to protect the learners with disabilities from bullying. The measures included Recognizing, Responding and Reporting. These measures are presented in detail by using themes generated during data analysis as shown in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: Measures to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in the selected special education primary schools

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Recognising	• Noticing sudden changes in behavior, such as withdrawal • Keeping an eye on acts of bullying in the school. • Noticing sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork • Identifying harassment and bullying acts in school. • Noticing fearful behaviours or avoidance of certain locations in the school
2. Responding	• Having child protection rules in schools. • Involving parents in the education of learners • Holding meetings with learners to reinforce positive behavior • Providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying. • Formulating anti-bullying programmes in the school • Formulating peer support groups to sensitise learners. • Training staff on how to respond to incidents of bullying. • Teaching learners anti-bullying social skills
3. Reporting	• Having a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting all forms of ill-treatment. • Allowing multiple ways of reporting bullying incidences in schools. • Creating awareness to learners, staff, and parents about reporting procedures for bullying acts • Listening to reports from peers who may have witnessed bullying behaviors

Below is a detailed presentation of findings regarding Recognising, Responding, and Reporting measures on how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in the selected special education primary schools.

4.2.1. Recognising bullying behaviour and acts

In order to protect learners with disabilities bullying, schools put up measures. One of the measures that came up was recognising bullying behaviour and acts. It included noticing sudden changes in behavior, such as withdrawal from peers and school activities, noticing

sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork, identifying harassment and bullying acts in school, noticing fearful behaviours or avoidance of certain locations in the school.

These findings were evidenced in the following verbal account given by one head teacher from School 1 during interviews who said that: “some of the ways schools were able to protect learners with disabilities from bullying was by noticing sudden changes in behavior of a learner, such as withdrawal from peers and school activities, noticing sudden decline in academic performance or loss of interest in schoolwork,” (**SCH 1 HT1**, 20.10.2022).

Similarly, another head teacher from School 2 during interviews said that: “to protect learners from bullying in the school, we first notice if there's a sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork, then we find a way to address the act” (**SCH2 HT2**, 25.10.2022).

One male Specialist teacher from School 1 during interviews pointed out that: “in order to recognize bullying behaviours in schools, we do routine checkups to identify harassment and bullying acts and observe if the learners appear fearful or avoid certain locations of the school” (**SHC 1 ST1 M**, 21.10.2022).

4.2.2. Responding to bullying behaviours and acts in school

Regarding how schools respond bullying findings revealed the following measures were in place: child protection rules in schools, involving parents in the education of learners, holding meetings with learners to reinforce positive behavior, guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, anti-bullying programmes in the school, peer support groups to sensitise learners. training programmes for staff on how to respond to incidents of bullying and programmes for teaching learners anti-bullying social skills.

In conformity with the above findings, one head teacher from School 1 during interviews said that: “the school has responded to bullying behaviours and acts of bullying by formulating child protection rules that protects learners with disabilities from bullying in school” (**SCH1 HT1**, 20.10.2022).

Another head teacher from School 2 during interviews stated that: “as a way of responding to bullying, the parents to the bully and the victim are called upon when such an issue is reported to see how best it can be resolved” (**SCH2 HT2**, 25.10.22).

Additionally, the head teacher from school 2 contributed by saying that “we hold meetings with teachers that reinforce positive behavior among the learners. Some teachers didn’t know how to control the bullying acts in the school therefore, it is important to reinforce them with that positive behavior expectation” (**SCH2 HT2**, 20.10.2022)

Similarly, one female Specialist teacher from School 2 during interviews said that: “as a way of responding to bullying, the school provides guidance and counselling to the bully and the victim” (**SCH 2 ST11 F**, 26.10.2022).

The Head teacher from School 2 during interviews highlighted that as a way of responding to bullying behaviour, “sometimes teachers punish learners who use discriminatory language or derogatory remarks against other learners in the school. We do this to protect learners with disabilities from bullying” (**SCH2 HT2**, 25.10.2022).

Contributing on how schools respond to bullying, one male specialist teacher from School 2 during interviews said that: “As a school we protect learners with disabilities from bullying by formulation of anti-bullying programs that supports the learners with disabilities. In these programmes learners are taught the advantages and disadvantages of bullying” (**SCH2 ST7 M** 26.10.2022).

Similarly, the head teacher from School 2 pointed out that: “one-way learners with disabilities are protected from bullying in schools is by formation of support groups to sensitize learners and the teachers on issues of bullying in school” (**SCH2 HT2** 25.10.2022).

It was found that one-way schools responded to bullying was by training staff on how to respond to incidences of bullying. To this effect, the head teacher from school 1 said that:

We train staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying is one-way learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. Some teachers have no knowledge and skills in special education so they need to be trained on how they

should recognize incidents of bullying in the school (**SCH1 HT1** 20.10.2022).

Contributing to how schools respond to bullying, one female specialist teacher from School 2 during interviews narrated that,

we train learners with disabilities anti-bullying social skills We have also formed anti- bullying clubs in the school which spearheads the training of anti-bullying social skills in learners. This has helped learners ‘without’ disabilities to interact with their peers with disabilities freely” (**SHC 2 ST12 F**, 26.10.2022).

4.2.3. Reporting bullying behaviours

The findings of the study showed that schools had several ways in which bullying could be reported. These included, having a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting all forms of ill-treatment, allowing multiple ways of reporting bullying incidences in schools, creating awareness to learners, staff, and parents about reporting procedures for bullying acts and listening to reports from peers who may have witnessed bullying behaviours.

As evidence to these findings, the head teacher from school 1 had this to say, “my school has put in several ways through which bullying can be reported to me. We have a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting bullying in school. We have also taught our learners, their parents and teachers about the procedures of reporting bullying in school (**SCH1 HT1** 25.10.2022). More ways of reporting bullying were brought out by the head teacher of school 2. For instance, the head teacher from School 2 pointed out that: “some of the ways my school has put in place for reporting bullying are through the class teacher, the Deputy head teacher, parents and the learners themselves” (**SCH2 HT2** 25.10.2022).

In crossing checking the truth of the data from the two head teachers, data from learners was triangulated with that from the head teachers. The above views were reflected in a response from one male learner during the focus group discussion 1 who confirmed that: “all forms of ill-treatment concerning bullying are reported to the teachers and in turn teachers also report to the administration for action on the offenders. This has helped reduce the rates of bullying in the school” (**FGD 1 ML**, 31.10.2022).

Additionally, another female learner during the focus group discussion 1 advanced that “the school has created an environment that encourages learners to report bullying incidence in school. As a result, all the learners are alert to reporting any form of bullying act to their teachers” (FGD 1 FL, 31.10.2022).

Contributing on the measures schools have put in place for reporting bullying in school, one other male learner during the focus group discussion had this to say: “we are taught about the reporting procedures for form of harassment and bullying acts incidents. If one tries to harass us, we quickly report them to our teachers or the administration for action” (FGD 1 ML 31.10.2022).

4.3. Measures against discrimination of learners with disabilities in selected special education primary schools

The second research question of this study focused on intervention measures against discrimination put in place for learners with disabilities in selected special education primary schools. A question was asked to the the head teachers, specialist teachers, learners and their parent - *What intervention measures have schools put in place against discrimination of learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province?* The findings were grouped in three themes. These were; Safety, Disciplinary and Prevention measures. The themes are tabulated with their codes and near codes as shown in Table 4.3 below:

Table 3: Intervention measures against discrimination in selected special education schools

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Safety Measures	• Developing clear school child protection policies and procedures • Respond promptly to reports or allegations of acts of discrimination in schools. • Reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration. • Routine check up to stop harassment and discrimination acts.
2. Disciplinary Measures	• Having a child amends through an apology • Calling a child’s parents or sending a note home • Giving verbal warning, written reprimand, or suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks.

	• Impose appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination.
3. Prevention Measures	• Provide in house training for staff on discrimination issues. • Engaging in CPDS and teacher group meeting to raise awareness on handling learners. • Providing support and resources to individuals who have experienced discrimination • Offering counseling, advocacy, or other forms of assistance to help them cope with the impact of the incident • Involving parents in addressing discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion in school

Below is a detailed presentation of findings cited above concerning Safety measures, Disciplinary measures and Prevention measures that were used as intervention measure against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

4.3.1. Safety Measures to protect learners from discrimination

The study findings indicated that schools had put in several measures to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in the selected special education primary schools. These measures included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts.

These findings were evidenced in the following verbal account given by one female parent participant during the third focus group discussion said:

“To protect learners from discrimination the school has rules and regulation which stop everyone, parent, teachers or fellow learners from discrimination others by word of mouth or action or denying them access to what they are entitled to in school” (**FGD 3 FP** 28.10.2022).

Adding to the same discussion on measures to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination, one head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews indicated that: “As school administration we have come up with the child protection policy to help every individual at our school how to cope up with learners living with disabilities” (**SCH2 HT2** 25.10. 2022).

Contributing on the same, another female learner participant from School 2 during second focus group discussion confirmed that: “To ensure that learners with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools, we report all forms of ill-treatment to the administration so that the offenders are punished” (**FGD 2 FL** 20.01.2023).

These findings were supported by one female Specialist teacher participant from School 1 during interviews who noted that: “As teachers we conduct routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts in the school” (**SCH 1 ST3 F** 21.10.2022).

Based on the findings above, learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies such developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. These discrimination prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

4.3.2. Disciplinary Measures to protect learners from discrimination

The findings of the study also indicated that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using disciplinary measures. These measures included having a child amends through an apology, calling a child’s parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, or suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination.

In support of this, one female Specialist teacher-participant from School 1 during interviews, noted that: “wwe usually ask child using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks amends through an apology” (**SCH 1 ST5 F** 21.10.2022).

In her contribution on how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination, one female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 had this to say: “We provide positive and negative reinforcement to the learners. By positive reinforcement, we give praises and awards to good performing learners. Concerning negative reinforcement, we withdraw certain incentives from the learners” (**SCH 2 ST8 M** 26.10.2022).

Adding to the same discussion, one head teacher participant from School 2 expressed additional feelings by saying that: “Learners with disruptive behaviour are usually disciplined, we even give verbal warning, written reprimand, suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks or sometimes we call a child’s parents or sending a note home.” (**SCH 2 HT2** 25.10.2025).

A similar sentiment came from another male Specialist teacher participant from School 1 who mentioned that: “Learners fear reprimand. So, when they hear that all those with unwanted social behaviour will be punished. Also, to stop misbehaving, all those found guilty of the acts the school impose appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination.” (**SCH 1 ST2 M** 21.10.2022).

Based on the findings above, it was clear that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using disciplinary measures such as a child amends an apology for using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. Thus, if these prevention strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected for discrimination in schools.

4.3.3. Prevention Measures to protect learners from discrimination

Concerning the findings of the study on how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention measures, participants revealed that some of the prevention strategies employed included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling.

This was confirmed by one male Specialist teacher participant from School 1 who supported these findings: “To protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools, we engaged teachers in the school in house training for staff on discrimination issues” (**SCH 1 ST4 M** 21.10.2022).

One other male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 added that: “As a school we are engaged in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on

handling learners is one-way learners with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools” (**SCH 2 ST10 M** 26.10.2022).

These findings were also supported by views of one female parent participant from school 2 during third focus group discussion who stated that:

“The school also has special education teachers and guidance teachers who counsel them against discrimination. I have witnessed some individual teachers have taken upon themselves to assign learners to help those with disabilities to write or copy for them the noted in class, promoting the spirit of brotherhood” (**FGD 3 FP** 28.10.2022).

In contributing on the views above, one head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews indicated that: “I inform parents when a discrimination incident occurs involving their child. I provide specific details about what happened, including the nature of the discrimination, the parties involved, and any actions taken by the school to address the situation” (**SCH 2 HT2** 25.10.2025).

Based on the findings on the second research question above, learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety measures, disciplinary measures and prevention measures. Examples of safety intervention measures that were used against discrimination in selected special education schools included developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Examples of disciplinary measures that were used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools having a child amends through an apology, calling a child’s parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. Further, some preventive measures that were used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. These strategies enabled the teachers in schools to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination.

4.4. Supportive measures to address neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province

The third research question for the study was aimed at establishing supportive measures put in place to address neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The head teachers, specialist teachers, learners and parents' participants were asked: *What supportive measures put in place to address neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province?* The study revealed that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in special education schools using Material Support measure, Social and Emotional Support measure and Capacity Building measures as indicated by codes or near codes generated during data analysis as shown in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4: Supportive measures to address neglect in selected special education schools

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Material support measures	• Providing mobility aids. • Providing Auxiliary aids and services. • Providing financial and material support • Accommodating learners in the boarding. • Provision of the school requirements to learners. • Providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners. • Provision of bursaries to learners. • providing medical or mental-health treatment
2. Social and Emotional Support measures	• Provision of guidance and counselling sessions. • Providing motivational talks • Acceptance and commitment therapy. • Engaging in religious activities. • Providing encouragements to learners • Providing psychological care. • Involving parents.
	• Conduct disability-awareness trainings. • Orient new staff on how to handle learners.

3. Capacity Building Measures	• Conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners. • Encourage teamwork and love amongst learners.
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Below is a detailed presentation of findings cited above concerning material support measure, social and emotional support measure and capacity building measures that were used to address acts of neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

4.4.1. Material Support Measures

The study findings indicated that learners with disabilities who experience neglect in selected special education schools were supported through material support services. These measures included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding and provision of the school requirements to learners. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, provision of bursaries to learners and providing medical or mental-health treatment.

Supporting the findings above, one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews lamented that:

“We provide extra aids or services by providing equipment or extra help, for example the use of a laptop and tuition in touch typing like for those with learners with visual impairment. Other equipment is wheelchair, arm crutches and walking white canes” (SCH1 HT1 20.10.2022).

In line with findings, one other head teacher- participant from School 2 during interviews said that: “We try also to provide auxiliary aids and services, for example, a special piece of equipment or a sign language interpreter and school requisites like washing and bathing soap and exercise books and pencils/pens” (SCH2 HT2 25.10.2022).

Similar sentiments were expressed by one female parent participant during the fourth focus group discussion who noted: “This school is supported financially by well-wishers to meet school requirements to for each child and the school provides guidance and counselling services to the learners” (FGD 4 FP 28.10.22).

Similarly, one other female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 during interviews pointed out that: “The school helps in providing school requisites to those in need and the school go a mile further in proving assistive devices and aid to this learner like walking can, computer with JAWS” (**SCH2 ST9 F** 25.10.2022).

It was evident from the findings of the study that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in selected special education schools using material support measures such as provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical or mental-health treatment.

4.4.2. Social and Emotional Support measures

Regarding the findings of the study on how learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in selected special education schools through Social and Emotional Support, participants revealed that some of the Social and Emotional Support measures employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, providing motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities. Other Social and Emotional Support measures that were employed to address neglect in special education schools for learners with disabilities were providing encouragements to learners, psychological care and involving parents as supported by one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews who noted: “Regarding support, we conduct disability-awareness training in school through teacher group meeting. This gives learners with disabilities who are neglected some hope” (**SCH1 HT1** 20.10.2022).

Similarly, one male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 reported that: “The school provides motivation talk to parents and their learners on the importance of keeping these learners in school and how they can contribute to economic development of this country” (**SCH2 ST10 M** 26.10.2022).

Another female learner participant during the first focus group discussion with similar views expressed that:

“The school always engage our parent if there is something affecting us in school. We usually see some parents coming in school. For example,

when I was not feeling well my class teacher called by parents and my parents came to pick me and took me to the clinic” (**FGD 1 FL** 31.10.2022).

In support of this view, one Head teacher-participants from School 2 during interviews lamented that: “For learners with disabilities who are neglected, we show them love, care and support them academically, materially and spiritually so that they feel encouraged to be in school” (**SCH2 HT2** 25.10.2022).

Notably, supportive intervention measure that were in place included Social and Emotional Support to help address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools. These strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities, offering encouragements, psychological care and involving parents.

4.4.3. Capacity Building Measures

The findings of the study also indicated that to address the underlying issues of neglect in special schools among learner with disabilities and to provide support and resources to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals affected school embarked on capacity building among teachers and stakeholders in school. These intervention measures included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners as indicated by one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews who lamented that: “Through our CPDs and teacher group meeting we try by all means to induct and orient new staff on how to handle different learners with disabilities with their specific learning needs” (**SCH1 HT1** 20.10.2022).

In support of this view, one Head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews noted that: “At my school teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions to both sighted and learners living with disabilities are planned and implemented” (**SCH2 HT2** 25.10.2022).

In conformity with the findings above, one Head teacher participant from School 1 lamented that: “Regarding professional development strategies, special education strategies are

discussed in CPD meetings that meet the specific learning need for these learners in the school” (SCH 1 HT1 25.10.2022).

In agreement with the findings above, one male parent participant during the third Focus Group Discussion articulated that:

“Teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners in the school. Learners with disabilities require love, friendship protection, guidance and much help, at the same time they need much guidance and sensitization on how-to live-in love with one another” (FGD 3 MP 28.10.22).

Contributing on the findings above, one Head teacher participant from school 2 during interviews reported that: “The school provides capacity building programs to the teachers, to have knowledge how to meet the specific learning needs of each child” (SCH 2 HT2 25.10.2022).

Arising from the findings on the third research question, on supportive measures put in place to address neglect in selected special education school. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in special education schools using Material Support strategies, Social and Emotional Support and Capacity Building measures. These strategies helped to address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

4.5. Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study in line with the three study questions, which aimed at exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. Arising from the findings on the first research question, learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using the 3R’s bullying prevention strategies namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting measures. Recognising measures included paying attention to sudden changes in behavior, such as withdrawal, keep an eye on acts of bullying in the school, noticing if there's a sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork, routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts in school. And noticing if the individual appears fearful or avoids certain locations, such as specific areas of the school. Responding

bullying prevention strategies included formulation of child protection rules or policies, involving parents, holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviour expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Reporting bullying measures included create a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting all forms of ill-treatment, providing multiple avenues for reporting bullying incidence in school settings. Educating students, staff, and parents about the reporting procedures for form of harassment and bullying acts incidents and listening to reports from peers or other students who may witness bullying behaviours or interactions. The findings of the study on the second research question revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies. Safety intervention measures that were used against discrimination in selected special education schools included developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Examples of disciplinary measures that were used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools Having a child amends through an apology, calling a child's parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. Further, some preventive measures that were used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. Concerning the third research question, on supportive measures put in place to address neglect in selected special education school. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in special education schools using material support strategies, social and emotional support and capacity building measures. These strategies enabled participants to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

The previous Chapter presented findings on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia. The chapter revisits the various themes that emerged in chapter four and weaves other researchers' findings conducted in various settings worldwide. The discussion is organised based on the set objectives of the study and anchors on the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner ecological model. The discussion of the major findings has two sections. The first section discusses the findings in relation to literature. The second discusses the relevance of the study outcome to relation to the theoretical framework. Before concluding, the chapter it proposes the framework from themes that can be used in the prevention, intervention and supportive against bullying, discrimination or neglect in special education school. The conclusion closes out the chapter.

5.2. Protection Measures for Learners with Disabilities from Bullying

The first research objective explored how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying in selected special education school, the study revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies for learners with special educational needs. These included Recognising, Responding and Reporting Strategies. Thus, to protect the specific needs of learners with disabilities, it is essential that mechanisms for reporting school bullying are accessible as well as confidential, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive. Until this study was conducted, little was known on how monitoring, reporting, and support services was realised in order to ensure protection of learners with disabilities in special schools. Nevertheless, the report by UNESCO (2021) focused on learners and young people's experiences of violence and bullying in educational settings. The present study focused on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Below is a discussion of the three 3R's bullying prevention strategies for learners with special educational needs.

5.2.1 Measures to recognise bullying in special education primary schools

The study found that schools had put in several measures to recognise acts of bullying as a way of protecting the children with disabilities. These included paying attention to any behaviour change such as withdraw in school and from friend and decline in academic performance or interest in school. This was in line with Bibou-Nakou and Marko (2017) who indicated that teachers who receive training in bullying prevention are better prepared to identify warning signs, address incidents promptly, and create inclusive classroom environments where all students feel safe and valued. It was essential for teacher, parents, and other stakeholder in special education school to be vigilant for those signs bullying and act if bullying is suspected. Encouraging open communication and providing support to learners who may be experiencing bullying are key steps in addressing this issue effectively.

Further, some other measures included recognising the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. This finding agreed with Chirwa (2019), who found that if you know or suspect bullying has occurred, learn how to find out what has happened to a child. Understanding what has happened may also help in communicating with class teachers or school officials about the situation. Similarly, Falla et al. (2021) pointed out that the teachers and administration need to recognize the warning signs of bullying in schools that learners are involved in. They could be being bullied, bullying others, or witnessing bullying. Although these signs could signal other issues, teacher or school counsellor need to talk to learners if they display any sort of behavioural or emotional changes as a result of being bullied in school. The strategies enabled the teachers to recognise or identify the bullying acts among learners with disabilities in special education schools. However, the study by Falla et al. (2021) focused on teachers' knowledge about bullying in schools for learners with disabilities, while the present study focused on child protection Strategies on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

Based on these findings, learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using recognising strategies such as recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognizing the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. The researcher's perspective was that if the recognising strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected from bullying acts in special education schools.

5.2.2 Measures to respond to bullying in selected special education primary schools

The selected schools had put in measures to respond bullying acts as a way to protect learners with disabilities from bullying. The measures included ensuring the school has rules and regulation to prohibit acts of bullying in schools. Addressing bullying requires a proactive and multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders who needs to take actions of creating a safer and more supportive environment for all students and effectively address acts of bullying when they occur. This was in agreeable with Downe and Cefai (2016), who indicated that at school level, policies can be formulated and guide organisational practices, such as establishing bullying incident reporting procedures and creating school safety teams tasked with developing and executing school safety plan. Therefore, special education schools typically should have rules and regulations in place to prohibit acts of bullying as part of their broader efforts to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. These rules are essential for setting clear expectations for behavior and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion among learners with disabilities in special education schools.

Further, learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools by ensuring that the school has child protection rules. The study revealed that teachers held meetings that reinforced positive behaviour expectations, provided guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying and punished learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark. Further, participants reported that they formulated of anti-bullying programs, formulated of support groups to sensitize learners, trained staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and taught anti-bullying social skill. These findings were in line with Chen et al. (2021), who reported that schools needed to set a school climate of mutual support and ensure that all members of staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying. When students feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviours. The schools are engaged in training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying are one-way learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. Some teachers have no knowledge and skills in special education so they need to be trained on how they should recognize incidents of bullying in the school. These results were in line with Amanda (2019), who noted that schools should identify and train staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who needs to be trained in bullying

prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. The special education schools need training of all staff in bullying prevention and intervention and need to provide support services for learners with disabilities affected by school bullying.

Further, schools protected learners with disabilities from bullying by formulation of anti-bullying programs that supported the learners where they taught them the advantages and disadvantages of bullying acts in the school. These findings were supported by Yahia et al. (2021), who noted that learners should be encouraged to participate fully in activities that raised their awareness about bullying and increase their empathy so that they clearly understood what if they being bullied. Similarly, Lessard et al. (2022) revealed that learners needed to be part of anti-bullying programs that involved and promoted their mobility, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities as well as by reducing day-to-day tensions. Although anti-bullying programs appeared to be effective, emphasis should be placed on cultivating comprehensive, multitiered climates of acceptance and inclusion.

The study revealed that learners with disabilities in schools should be taught anti-bullying social skills. There were anti-bullying clubs, which spearheaded the teaching of anti-bullying social skills to all learners in the school. In regard, learners with without disabilities interacted with learners with disabilities freely. This was consistent with Wenwuyu (2020) who pointed out that most common bullying protection were based on increasing learners' interactions with peer groups, or involving more facilitators in learners' environment context. Similarly, Xioa (2021) revealed that when learners are involved, awareness of bullying increases and levels of bullying were reduced. Additionally, Xioa noted that bullying behaviour interventions included teaching social skills such as friendship, empathy, and anger management in one-on-one settings, not in a group setting. However, the study by Xioa concentrated much on the association between bullying and health-related quality of life among Chinese school-aged learners and adolescents utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, while the current study focused on child protection Strategies on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

The study further revealed that school hold meetings to share workable Strategies that reinforce positive behaviour expectations among the learners. Some teachers did not know how to control the bullying acts in the school therefore, it is important to reinforce them with that positive behaviour expectation. Similar findings were reported by Mohan and Bakar (2021),

who revealed that teachers needed to be competent in order to prevent and respond to the bullying acts that affected learners with disabilities. For schools to protect learners with disabilities and respond to bullying in school need to conduct intensive guidance and counselling with the victims of bullying and bullies. This provides on-going opportunities for continued open discussions, checking in with the learners regularly in school.

With these findings, it was clear that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using responding strategies. These included holding meetings to reinforce positive behaviour expectations, guidance and counselling, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, support groups, training staff members and taught anti-bullying social skill. The researcher's remarks were that if these responding strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected from bullying in special education schools.

5.2.3 Measures to report bullying in selected special education primary schools

Regarding measures to report bullying as a way of protecting learners with disabilities in schools, the findings of the study showed several measures were in places. These included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, bullying incidence in school settings and harassment and bullying acts. These strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. These findings were in conformity with Lessard et al. (2022), who indicated that measures to report bullying were fundamental to preventing and addressing bullying. The measure enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. Knowing how bullying is handled in schools enables parents to know who to contact the teachers in the event of an incident. It also sets clear expectations of how the school might handle the situation. All forms of ill-treatment concerning bullying were reported to the teachers and in turn teachers also reported to the administration for action on the offenders. This helped reduce the rates of bullying in the school. By reporting bullying incidence in school settings, learners with disabilities were protected from bullying acts in schools.

Furthermore, all the learners in the school were alert to report any form of bullying act to their teachers or the administration for action. This involved giving informing to teachers about occurrence of bullying acts so that an action would be taken to address the situation. It was done through creation of supportive environment where stakeholders in schools are educated on reporting procedures for any form of harassment and bullying acts incidents in school.

These findings were in conformity with the study by UNESCO (2021), which revealed that establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and policies and referral services, are key component of child protection program in schools. These findings agree with Antwi (2021), who stated that incidents of bullying should always be reported so that actions were taken to address the situation.

Parents were made aware about how to notice signs of bullying, such as changes in their child's behavior, reluctance to attend school, unexplained injuries, or a decline in academic performance. It was found that the parents visited the schools to meet with school personnel and have a face to-face discussion about how to report bullying. This demonstrate their commitment to seeing the situation resolved. When they suspect that their child may be experiencing bullying, they initiate conversations to gather more information. Upon learning about a potential bullying incident, parents typically reach out to school administrators or teachers to report the situation. They scheduled meetings or phone calls to discuss their concerns and provide details about the bullying behavior their child has experienced. These findings agreed with UNESCO (2021), who advocated for establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, as key components of child protection programs in schools. Therefore, to protect the specific needs of learners with disabilities, it was essential that reporting mechanisms for school bullying were accessible. It was found that parents play a proactive role in reporting bullying incidents involving their children with disabilities, advocating for their safety and well-being, and collaborating with schools and other stakeholders to address the issue of bullying in special education schools effectively. Based on the findings above, it was evident that some of the reporting strategies included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting forms of harassment and bullying acts. The researcher's remarks were that if these reporting measures were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected from all forms of bullying acts in special education schools.

The findings of this study on how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in schools were also in line with the ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (1979) that guided this study. The model suggests that to protect learners with disabilities and prevent them from bullying, different stakeholders including those with direct such as the family and teachers, and indirect contact such as school administration, NGOs and government need to work together. Ecological system theory is applicable to this study because it brings about child-teacher

relationship, which is the tenet of child protection in school. Teachers who have strong relationships with their learners may not abuse their learners while those with weak relationships tend to abuse their learners. Strong relationships make learners with disabilities to rely on their teacher when they need help and they help teacher to support them in school. This enhances the learners' academic performance. Poor relationships between teacher and learners with disabilities that may have been caused by child bullying, discrimination and neglect make learners fear their teacher. With this kind of relationship, learners are unlikely to seek help from their teacher because they fear them. Consequently, such learners are unlikely to perform well compared to their peers with teacher support. However, the model has limitations, which needs consideration. For example, while the model informs us on factors are contributing to a bullying of learners with disabilities in the schools; the model does not give insight into how the factors affect the learners. This makes it hard for teachers and families to uncover which aspect of the ecological model they can focus more on to make a change in their environment or personal actions. Additionally, implementation of the model into schools may be difficult because of cost. For example, it would be difficult to implement violence prevention programs in schools located in cities that have high crime and violence rates.

Arising from the findings on the first research objective above, it was evident that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting strategies. Recognising bullying prevention strategies included recognising the statistics or acts of bullying, the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Responding bullying prevention strategies included holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviour expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Reporting bullying prevention strategies included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting any form of harassment, and bullying acts. These bullying prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. The researcher's views were that if the 3R's bullying prevention strategies namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting strategies were implemented in schools, learners with disabilities would be protected from all forms of bullying acts in special education schools in Luapula province.

5.3 Intervention Measures against Discrimination for Learners with Disabilities

Concerning the findings of the study on intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools, the study revealed three significant themes. These were safety, disciplinary and prevention measures, which were discussed below.

5.3.1 Safety Measures against Discrimination for Learners with Disabilities

The study findings indicated that intervention measures against discrimination for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools involved putting place safety strategies. These strategies included developing a clear school child protection policies and procedures, respond promptly to reports of acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. To address discrimination in special education school they had rules and regulation, which stopped everyone, parent, teachers or fellow learners from discrimination others by word of mouth or action or denying them access to what they are entitled to in school. These findings were in line with the study by Al-Qaysi (2018), who suggested that to ensure that these policies are widely communicated, understood, and enforced throughout the school community. Anti-discrimination policies and procedures are essential tools for promoting inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity in special education schools. School administration should come up with the child protection policy to help every individual in school how to cope up with learners living with disabilities. Similarly, the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017), who indicated that policies were needed to specifically support and protect members from different forms of discrimination within the school. Schools needed to make it clear that they have a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination. Schools should be engaged in development of written policy that defined procedures and rules as deterrent to discrimination in schools. However, the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) focused on teachers' experiences and perceptions of child abuse and neglect, while the present study focused on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

Further, the school ensured that school staff reported all forms of ill-treatment to the administration so that the offenders where appropriate interventions were addressed. These findings were in line with the study by Banks et al (2018) who indicated that teachers and education professionals had a key role to play in both supporting learners and young people with a visible

difference and creating an inclusive learning environment for all pupils by reporting every form of discrimination in school. Similarly, the study by Mantey (2017) reported that in order to address issues of discrimination most important thing is to be proactive and to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students by reporting any incidents of discrimination to the school administration. However, the study by Mantey (2017) examined the challenges learners with disabilities faced in mainstream school, stakeholder's perceptions and causes of disabilities and implication for policy and practice. The study did not suggest learner protection measures on discrimination in schools, which the current study unveiled. Therefore, teachers needed to conduct routine check-ups to stop harassment and discrimination acts in school. Further, there was need to increase supervision in areas in school where students are fearful of going, creating more opportunities for constructive learning and play in school. These discrimination prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

Based on the findings, the intervention measures against discrimination that were applied selected special education schools for learners with disabilities involved safety strategies which encompassed developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration, routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. The findings similar to the work of Njelesani et al (2021) posits that learners deserve affirming and safe school environments that celebrate them for who they are and provide robust opportunities to learn. Also, Dankyl et al (2021) who revealed that learners with disability need to learn in a safe, caring and respectful environment, which embraces and conveys positive messages about their identity, diversity, and faith. The researcher's perspective was that if teachers implemented these discrimination prevention strategies, learners with disabilities would be protected in special education schools from any form of discrimination.

5.3.2 Discipline Intervention measures against Discrimination

Further, the findings of the study revealed discrimination in selected special education schools are being addressed using disciplinary measures. These measures included having a child amends through an apology giving verbal warning, written reprimand or suspension of a learner using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and the school sometimes impose appropriate consequences for individual found guilty of discrimination such as withdrawing support or attention of the discriminator. These findings resonate with the study by Rijbroek et

al (2019), who argued that school should avoid punitive measures that disproportionately affect students from marginalized groups and instead focus on restorative approaches that promote accountability, repair harm, and foster learning and growth. Learners fear punishment, therefore, when they hear that all those with unwanted social behaviours would be punished, they stop misbehaving. These findings were in line with the report by UNESCO (2019), which unveiled that there should be laws and policies to protect the rights of learners and young people with disabilities, prohibit violence against them, and support inclusive education. The report identified the need for robust laws and policies, including policies at the school level, to prevent and address school bullying. However, the report by UNESCO (2019) focused in ending school violence and bullying, not necessarily discipline intervention measures to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in special education schools. Also, UHICEF (2018), encouraged open communication, active listening, and mutual respect in identifying underlying issues, developing solutions, and implementing preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of future incidents discrimination among learners with disabilities. By implementing these discipline intervention measures, special education schools for learners with disabilities would work towards creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all students have the opportunity to learn and thrive free from discrimination.

Furthermore, the school provided positive reinforcement in form of give praises and awards to good performing learners, then negative reinforcement, by withdrawing certain incentives from the learners. These results were in consistent with Duncan et al (2020) who revealed that in a classroom setting, for any positive action to address discrimination the teacher need to be giving praise, letting learners out of unwanted behaviours, or providing token rewards, candy, extra playtime, or fun activities. This simply adding a factor to increase a behavior. While for perpetrator of discrimination, something uncomfortable or otherwise unpleasant should take away in response to a stimulus. Over time, the target behavior should increase with the expectation that the unpleasant thing will be taken away.

Based on the findings, it was clear that discrimination in selected special education schools against learners with disabilities are addressed through appropriate disciplinary actions on a perpetrator of discriminatory actions using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks such providing positive and negative reinforcement for unwanted social behaviours. Perpetuator are made an apology and depending of the nature of the case the school administrations call on parents of both involved learners to come and address case at hand

together. The schools need to use restorative justice practices to address discrimination. These approaches focus on repairing harm, restoring relationships, and promoting accountability by bringing together the victim and the perpetrator to discuss the impact of the discriminatory behavior and work towards resolution. As also observed by Stephen (2021) that school to provide students with access to supportive resources, such as counseling or mental health services that builds on good character among learners, to address any emotional distress or trauma resulting from the discrimination incident. Schools should provide support services for victims of discrimination, including counseling, advocacy, and resources to address any emotional or psychological trauma they may experience. It's essential to prioritize the well-being of the victim and ensure they feel supported and protected throughout the process. The researcher's remarks were that if these disciplinary intervention measures were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected for discrimination in schools.

5.3.3 Prevention Measures against Discrimination in Special Education Schools

Regarding prevention measures, in order to address discrimination in special education schools, the school provided in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting for them to build competence on handling learners with special education needs and or disabilities and provision of guidance and counselling. To address discrimination, the school engaged teachers in the house training for staff on discrimination issues. This were in order helps specialist teachers feel more confident in their ability to address discrimination in special education schools. By providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills, training sessions empower staff to intervene when they witness discriminatory behavior, support victims, and collaborate with colleagues to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. Further, helped raise awareness among specialist teachers about different forms of discrimination, such as when students with disabilities are treated less favorably than their non-disabled peers, denying access to educational opportunities, resources, or accommodations that are necessary for their learning and development. For example, if a school fails to provide necessary accommodations such as assistive technology, accessible facilities, or individualized education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, it constituted disability discrimination. Hence the training helped specialist teachers in special education schools to understand how discrimination manifests in various contexts and the impact it can have on individuals and the school community as a whole. These findings were in line with the report of Maciver et al (2019), which reported that schools

provided training for school personnel, discussing ways to care for those with disabilities and prejudice in the classroom, raised awareness of the necessity of fair and just classrooms, and closed the achievement gap between marginalized and non-marginalized learners. This was achieved by engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners with special education needs and or disabilities and on the best ways of fighting discrimination in special education schools. These findings were consisted with the study by Deuchert et al (2017), who revealed that if discrimination is to be effectively countered over the longer term, it is essential that both current and future teachers and administrators are fully conversant with the issues involved, current research and relevant strategies at the system, institution, schools and classroom levels. In particular, it is important for school staff to be trained in beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices. Similarly, Bastart, et al (2021) who suggested that the setting of initial priorities should go hand in hand with professional development for senior leadership teams as well as teaching staff. An element of personal training for tackling of discrimination in school. In particular, it is important for school staff to be trained in beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices.

The study also revealed that the schools had guidance teachers who provided counselling to the learners in the school against discrimination from the teachers and learners. Learners with disabilities are often more vulnerable to discrimination, which can have significant emotional and psychological impacts. Counseling provided a safe and confidential space for students to express their feelings, process their experiences of discrimination, and receive validation and support from a trained professional. This finding was in line with Deuchet et al. (2017), who indicated that most important thing for guidance and counselling teachers in school to deal with discrimination is to be aware of the signs of discrimination, talk to the students who are being targeted, speak out against discrimination and promote inclusion in classroom or school. However, the study by was Deuchet et al. (2017) was carried out in higher education in Switzerland, whose prevailing conditions may not the same as the present study, which was conducted in special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia. However, it can be settled that by integrating and scaling up counseling services into the support framework for learners with disabilities, special education schools would create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students can thrive.

Further, in any incident of discrimination in a special education school, it's crucial to involve and inform parents for the discriminated and discriminator this allowed for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making in addressing discrimination incidents in special education schools. Parents have the right to know what happened to their child and how the school is handling the situation. Keeping parents informed demonstrated the school's commitment to addressing discrimination and maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all learners. As also noted by Allen et al (2018) that by leveraging the collective expertise and resources of both families and schools, educators can create a supportive ecosystem that promotes student success and well-being. Family-school partnerships offer a promising avenue for addressing neglect in school settings by promoting collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility for student success. Therefore, involving and informing parents in incidents of discrimination in a special education school is essential for promoting transparency, accessing parental support, facilitating collaborative problem-solving, fulfilling legal and ethical obligations, and ensuring continued support for learners while in school.

The findings showed that the way discrimination is addressed in special education schools in Luapula province, agree with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, which affirms that schools, classes and peers are key elements in microsystem that influence the protection goals. Protection of learners in school from discrimination takes personal assertive skills, peer relations and other performance in schools, which covered both microsystem and mesosystem that is where there, is increasing interactions between participants and general peer groups to help students with disabilities gain self-esteem, social satisfaction, and reduce bullying victimization. Hence, it a responsibility of all individuals of the school environment to protect and enrich learners with disabilities and to make sure that their interaction with the caregiver and the environment is positive.

With the findings above, it was clear that discrimination in special education schools was being addressed using prevention measures such as in-house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. Some actions taken by the school involved parents in addressing discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion in school has discrimination is addressed. Thus, the researcher was of the view that if these prevention measures were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected for discrimination in schools.

5.4 Supportive Measures to address Neglect among Learners with Disabilities

The third research objective for the study was aimed at exploring the supportive measures in place to address neglect among learners with disabilities in selected special education schools. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in special education schools through material support, social and emotional support and capacity building measures as discussed below.

5.4.1 Material Supportive Measures against Neglect in Special Education School

The study findings indicated that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in selected special education schools through material support intervention measures. These measures included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding and provision of the school requirements to learners. The findings are supported by Avdibegovi and Brki, (2020) who revealed that learners in school who experience neglect in school need material support because the availability of learning resources and other school requisites influence the stay of the learner in the boarding school. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, provision of bursaries to learners and providing medical or mental-health treatment. These findings were in line with Sharley (2020) who indicated that learners with disabilities are neglected in the area physical barriers including inaccessible buildings for learners in wheelchairs, toilets, buildings without lifts and elevators to facilitate easy circulation around buildings. They are also vulnerable to ongoing health needs from their primary care such as inadequate food while in school. Such neglect makes learners with disabilities feel uncomfortable and become at risk of dropping out of school.

However, the study by Sharley (2020) was limited, as it did not provide a detailed explanation on how learners with disabilities are protected from neglect in schools. Thus, the present study explored how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in special education schools in Luapula province. Similarly, Daro (2019) who revealed that learners with disabilities were neglected due to lack of support service, which resulted in them engaging in various risks. Thus, for learners who lacked support service, teachers were to provide equitable access to quality universal services for learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, the study by Daro (2019) was conducted in the United States of America whose prevailing conditions were not the same as Zambia, where the present study was conducted.

Based on these findings, it was evident that learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Material Supportive measures such as provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical or mental-health treatment, similarly to results by Onolemhenmhen and Osunde (2018) who indicated schools to ensure equitable access to high-quality education, resources, and opportunities helps mitigate the impact of neglect on students' academic achievement and future success. The findings were contrary to the study by Daro (2019) who found that children are neglected due to lack of support service which results on them engaging in various risks. Thus, the researcher was of the view that if material support strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected for neglect in schools.

5.4.2 Social and Emotional Supportive Measures against Neglect in Special Education School

Further, in incidences of neglect in the selected special education schools against learners with disabilities, special education schools provide guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy, engaging in religious activities, encouragements, psychological care and involving parents in selected special education school having learners with disability in Luapula province.

The findings showed that neglected learners with disabilities were subjected guidance and counselling sessions. Notably, the study school involved in provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and, offering encouragements, psychological care. It was noted that guidance and counseling sessions played a crucial role in supporting neglected learners with disabilities, addressing their unique needs, promoting their social, emotional, and academic development, and empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. The current study findings are in conformity with the works of Asio et al. (2020) who indicated that access to supportive counselling services in schools can mitigate the negative effects of neglect on students' academic performance, social-emotional development, and overall well-being. Special education schools should prioritize the provision of counseling services to ensure that neglected learners with disabilities receive the support and guidance they need to thrive.

The finding indicated that special education schools strive to create inclusive environments where all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have the opportunity to participate fully in co-curricular activities and experience the associated benefits. The teacher encourages learners with disabilities to be with friends to provide a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and offer opportunities for mutual support and understanding. Teachers include all learners with disability in extracurricular clubs, sports teams tailored to the needs of students in special education. Participating in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for learners with disabilities to interact with their peers in structured and supportive environments which are essential for building positive relationships and navigating social interactions in school. Their involvement provides them with opportunities to form friendships, build camaraderie, and develop a sense of identity and pride in being part of a group or team.

Further, the study school where mission schools for learners with disabilities are involved in religious activities. The school has daily religious activities that often involve worship services or group prayers. These gatherings provide learners with disabilities opportunities to interact with peers, build friendships, and develop social skills in a supportive and inclusive environment as well as emotional support and comfort to them, particularly during challenging times which help them cope with adversity and navigate life's ups and downs. It nurtures their spiritual, social, and emotional well-being, fosters a sense of identity and purpose, and enriches their lives in meaningful ways. Involving learners with disabilities in religious activities allows them to feel included and part of school family and promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance, which is crucial for their overall well-being. Schools should strive to create inclusive environments where all learners, regardless of their abilities, have the opportunity to participate in religious activities and experience the associated benefits.

The study found that parents involved whenever incidences of neglect have been observed. Involve families in the support process by providing resources and information. The school holds regular meetings that provide opportunities for open communication, collaboration, and partnership between the school and the family. Some parents even volunteer in classrooms to observe the teaching and learning of their children, or join parent-teacher associations to contribute to the school community and advocate for their child's needs. The findings also showed that the school keeps families informed about their child's progress, upcoming events, and available resources to ensure they feel supported and engaged in their child's education and

well-being. The findings are supported by Al-Qaysi, N. (2018) who noted that successful protection requires carefully coordinated and communicated actions. The school must be a community which encourages family and community participation in all matters related to children's welfare. It should be noted that involving families in the support process of their neglected child and providing resources and information, special education schools can strengthen partnerships, empower families, and create a supportive and collaborative environment that promotes the child's social, emotional, and academic success. Thus, the researcher's remarks were that if social and emotional support measures were scaled up, incidences of neglect would not be an issue in special education schools.

5.4.3 Capacity Building to teachers, parents, and learners on how to address Neglect

The special education schools need to focus on providing education, training, support, and resources to empower teachers, parents, and learners to recognize, respond to, and prevent neglect in special education schools. By working together collaboratively and proactively, stakeholders would create a safe and supportive environment where all learners to succeed in school. The findings of the study indicated that neglect in selected special education schools was intervened through conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners. These findings resonate with the study by Rusteholz et al (2021), who found that to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, the school needs to put up awareness program, support and capacity building trainings that would help combat bullying behaviours in schools. If a school was unaware of a bullying problem, it would be impossible for such an incident to be resolved. Hence there was need of teachers and parents to understand how awareness help to protect learners with disabilities from neglect in special education schools. Similarly, supporting the findings of the study, Ng'andu and Chilufya (2019) reported that staff within schools hold a particular advantage because they possess long-standing interactions with learners. Teachers and other school staff play a consistent role in learners' lives through the provision of universal services. However, the cited studies were limited as they did not explore supportive measure to control neglect in special education schools.

Further the training was not only orientation of new staff on how to handle learners and how to report neglect cases. The finding showed that the trainings equip teacher with skills of

recognising signs and symptoms of neglect, such as poor hygiene, unexplained injuries, chronic absenteeism, and emotional withdrawal and it create safe and confidential reporting channels for learners to report concerns about neglect to trusted adults, such as teachers, school counselors, or administrators and makes them feel empowered to speak up on their concerns. Binou-Nakou and Markos (2017) indicted that support strategies should prioritize early identification and response to instances of neglect. By identifying and addressing signs of neglect promptly, schools can help prevent further harm to students and families and promote their well-being.

Therefore, in ensuring the safety, welfare, and well-being of learners with disabilities, particularly from neglect, different stakeholders including those with direct (family, and teachers) and indirect contact (school administration, NGOs and government) need to work together. These were in line with the principles of the ecological model, which guided this study. The model suggests that safety and well-being of learners, is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors, these factors must be considered in terms of their existence at each level, as well as their interaction across each level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher is potentially able to provide a crucial link to many of the bullied, discriminated or neglected child's needs. Learners with disabilities spend a large amount of their time in school where teachers have close and constant interactions with them. Teachers have the prospective not only to help tend to the emotional wellbeing of the child, but also aid the family in gaining access to the services they need to help avoid any future bullying, discrimination and neglect (Lowenthal, 2001). Teachers are given the inimitable opportunity not only to be a child's advocate, but also to offer programs and services that would aid learners with disabilities and support families. In order to achieve the main goal of education, to teach, one must remove obstacles that prohibit a learner's ability to learn.

Basing on the findings above, it was evident that learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using in house training such as conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners. Thus, the researcher's perspectives were that if professional development strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities would be protected for neglect in schools. In summary, it was clear from the findings on the third research question that learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education

schools. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in special education schools using material support social and emotional support and in-house trainings supportive measures. These strategies address neglect against learners with disabilities in selected special education schools.

5.5 Relevance of Study outcome to Theoretical Framework

One of the principles of a model in research is to predict the outcome of the study. The Ecological Model by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which guided the current study center on four systems in the environment, which influences or affect the behaviours of the child. This study however, the concentrated on the mesosystem, which comprises the interrelations among two or more microsystems in which the developing person actively participates, such as the child's relations within school, and peer group, family, and social life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In line with the findings of the present study, the study revealed that bullying, discrimination and neglect of learners with disabilities in special education schools, were done by teachers and peer in the same school environment. These findings were in line with the principle of the model that states that teachers and peers who are the elements of the mesosystem influences or affect the behaviours of the learners in schools. Hence, it a responsibility of all individuals of the school environment to protect and enrich its learners with disabilities and to make sure that their interaction with the caregiver and the environment is positive.

In the context on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, the mesosystem of ecological theory provides a framework that pay attention behavior changes and notify any decline in academic performance among who may victim of bullying. The framework provided a comprehensive understanding of how various factors within the mesosystem influence the prevention measures against bullying and how they are reported to ensure learners with disabilities are safeguarded from bullying. This holistic perspective is essential for developing effective interventions and policies to promote the safety and well-being of these learners with disabilities free from bullying within their school environments.

Also considering these interconnected systems and relationships within the mesosystem, a study on intervention measures against discrimination can provide insights into the complex dynamics of considering appropriate consequences on individual found guilty of discrimination influence the effectiveness of anti-discrimination efforts in special education schools. This

holistic perspective is essential for developing comprehensive interventions that address the multifaceted nature of discrimination and promote equity and inclusion in education settings.

Taking in consideration the interconnected systems and relationships within the mesosystem, a study on supportive measures to address neglect provide insights into the complex dynamics measures such as conducting disability awareness training, encouraging teamwork, love among learners influence the effectiveness of interventions in special education schools. This holistic perspective is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to neglect and promote the well-being of learners with disabilities in school.

Further, this study has unveiled that child protection from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools was a result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors. These factors must be considered in terms of their existence at each level, as well as their interaction across each level so that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect, different stakeholders including those with direct such as the family and teachers, and indirect contact such as school administration, NGOs and government.

5.6 Constructed Child Protection Framework for Prevention, Intervention and Support in incidents of Bullying, Discrimination and Neglect in Special Education School

This section is the extension of the findings and discussion of the chapter discussed above. The emergent framework is nicknamed Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) framework, which is a result of twenty-four months of deep reflection on the elements or constructs that may lead to effective prevention, intervention and supportive measures for learners with disabilities against bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. The researchers develop CCP framework insights based on the patterns and themes identified in the data collected from interviews with head teachers and specialist teachers, and focus group discussion with parents and learners with disabilities

5.6.1 What the CCP Framework is about

Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework provides prevention, intervention and supportive measures that may be used against bullying, discrimination or neglect in special education schools. The framework is divided into four sections. The first segment focuses on strategies

that may be used to prevent bullying acts in schools. The second section focuses on intervention measures that would be used to address discrimination in schools. The third section focuses on supportive strategies that may be used in incidents of neglect in schools. The fourth section focuses on the learners who are the beneficiaries. Figure 5.1 below gives the silent features of the proposed CCP framework arising from the study for prevention, intervention and supportive against bullying, discrimination or neglect in Special education Schools among learners with disabilities.

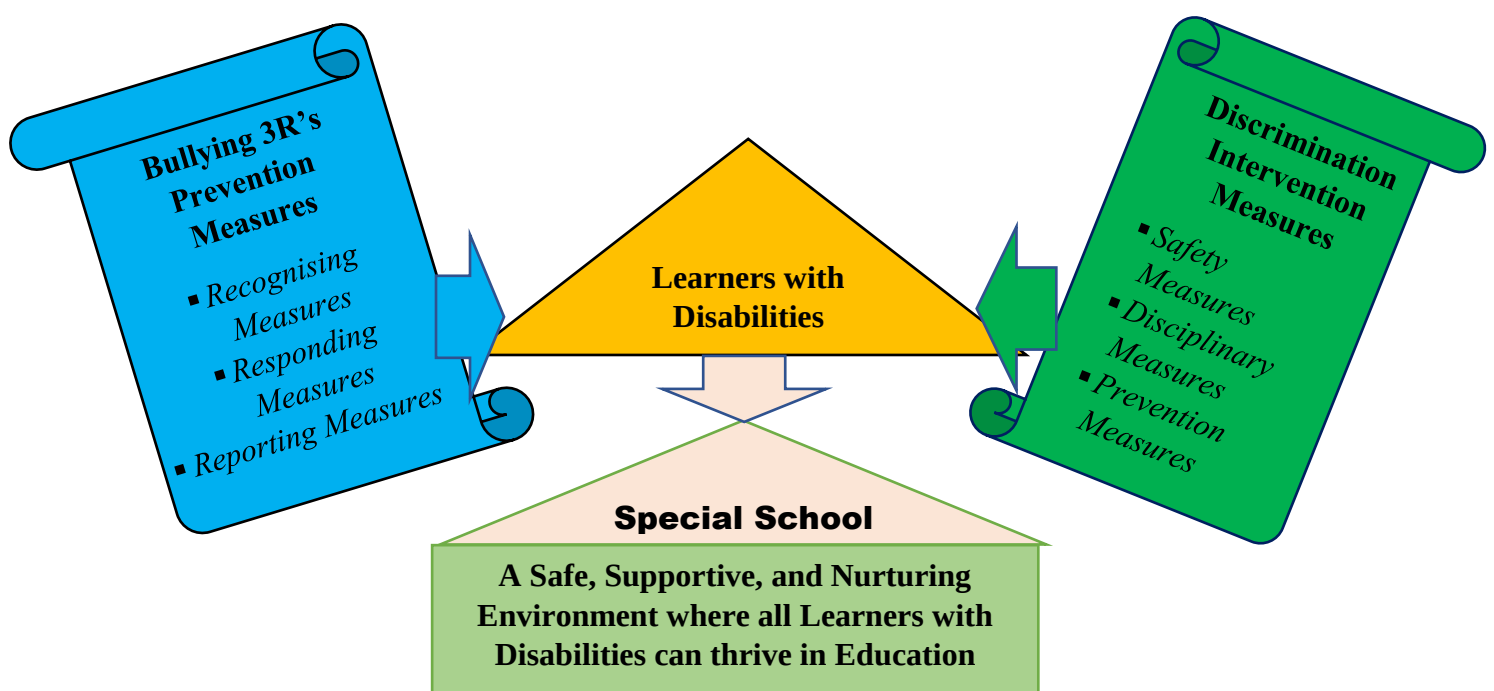


Figure 1: Proposed Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework (2024)

Figure 5.1 above shows the four sections of the CCP framework. The framework provides an integrated prevention, intervention and supportive comprehensive strategies that can be employed both preemptively and responsively in special education schools to combat and mitigate instances of bullying, discrimination, and neglect among learners with disabilities. At the center of the CCP framework, are learners with disabilities who are the beneficiaries surrounded by three strategies to protect them from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. These include the 3R's bullying prevention strategies (recognising, responding and reporting strategies); discrimination intervention measures (safety, disciplinary and prevention measures); and neglect supportive measures (material support measures, social and emotional support and capacity building).

The first section of CCP framework focuses on measures that may be used to protect learners with disabilities from bullying acts in schools. These are known as the 3R's bullying prevention measures namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting measures. The CCP framework affirms prevention efforts based on this model address bullying through multiple layers of intervention, such as teachers need to first pay attention to sudden changes in behavior such as withdraw or decline in academic performance. Recognising would involve gathering on the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. After recognising the bullying acts, teachers would need to employ responding strategies. This involves formulation of child protection rules in school, parental involvement, holding meetings that reinforce positive behavior expectations, provide guidance and counselling, punishing learner, formulation of anti-bullying program, support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members and teach anti-bullying social skills. Lastly, teachers should employ reporting strategies, which include creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting all forms of ill-treatment, bullying incidence in school settings and any form of harassment and bullying acts. Special education schools have to establish clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for students to report instances of bullying them witness or experience. Promoting reporting mechanisms for bullying in schools is crucial for creating a safe and supportive environment where learner with disability would feel empowered to speak up about their experiences in case of ill-treatment. The CCP framework affirms that when the 3R's bullying prevention measures were employed, learners with disabilities would be protected from in schools. Each of these bullying prevention measures offers valuable insights and strategies for preventing bullying in schools, and effective prevention efforts often incorporate elements from multiple models to create a comprehensive and holistic approach. These arm of bullying prevention measures involve bringing together the individuals affected by bullying, including the victim, the perpetrator, and other relevant parties, to discuss the impact of the behavior, address underlying issues, and work towards resolution and reconciliation.

The second section focuses on intervention measures that may be used to address discrimination in schools for learners with disabilities. The CCP framework states that to address discrimination in selected special education schools, teachers should employ safety strategies, disciplinary measures and prevention strategies. Examples of safety strategies that should be employed by teachers include developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and

routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Regarding disciplinary measures, teachers should ensure a child amends through an apology, calling a child's parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, or suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. Further, interventions influenced by this arm of intervention measures aim to raise awareness of discrimination, privilege, and power dynamics, challenge stereotypes and biases, and empower students to become advocates for equity and inclusion. These interventions measures promote formulation policies and procedures for preventing and responding to discrimination, providing training on legal rights and responsibilities, conducting investigations into allegations of discrimination, and implementing corrective actions when violations occur.

This intervention measures also provide educational workshops and trainings for students, staff, and parents on topics such as diversity, equity, inclusion, cultural competence, and eyewitness intervention. These workshops raise awareness of discrimination, promote empathy and understanding, and equip individuals with the skills to address bias and discrimination when they encounter it. The school involve parents in addressing discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion in school. This should be done to provide resources and guidance on how parents can recognize signs of discrimination and support their children with disabilities in addressing and confronting it. It also solicits input from parents on ways to strengthen anti-discrimination policies and ensure they reflect the values and needs of the entire special education school community. The CCP framework affirms that when these discrimination prevention measures were employed, will help hold individuals and special education school accountable for discriminatory behavior in schools. With the implementation of these interventions, special education schools would take proactive steps to address discrimination, promote diversity and inclusion, and create a positive school climate where all students feel safe, valued, and supported in the learning process.

The third section of the CCP framework focuses on neglect measures that may be used to protect learners with disabilities in schools. The CCP framework stressed that to address neglect in selected special education schools for learners with disabilities, teachers should employ measures that include material support, social and emotional support and capacity building among specialist teachers, parents and learners with disabilities themselves. With

these measures in place it would enable special education school to protect learners with disabilities from neglect.

Supportive measures play a crucial role in addressing neglect in schools by providing resources, interventions, and supports to students who may be experiencing neglect. Special education schools have to offer a range of supportive services to address the needs of learners with disabilities experiencing neglect. The CCP framework states that to address neglect in selected special education schools, teachers should employ strategies such as material support measures, social and emotional support measures and capacity building measures. The CCP framework states that material support measures help address neglect in learners with disabilities include provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical or mental-health treatment. Social and emotional support measures should include provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities, offering encouragements, psychological care and involving parents for learners who may be experiencing neglect at school. Schools should also offer breakfast and lunch programs, food pantries, clothing closets, and hygiene kits to ensure that students have access to essential resources to learners with disabilities to those who would not afford. In special education school supportive measures should also include educational supports to help students who may be falling behind academically due to neglect. This to include providing tutoring, academic interventions, homework assistance, and other supports to help learners with disabilities succeed in school despite the challenges they may be facing within school and at home.

Then, under capacity building measures, supportive measures should include training and awareness efforts to ensure school personnel are knowledgeable about neglect, its impact on learners, and how to respond effectively. Training should include orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, recognizing signs of neglect, mandated reporting requirements, trauma-informed practices, and strategies for supporting students and families. It also covers counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners. The CCP framework affirms that when these neglect supportive measures were employed, learners with disabilities would be protected in schools and it would help create a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where all learners would thrive.

Finally, the fourth section of the CCP framework focuses on the learners who are the beneficiaries on protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Children in special education schools should thus be exposed to all the strategies highlighted in the CCP framework if they were to be protected in special education schools. With the implementation of prevention, intervention or supportive measures, schools would play a critical role in addressing bullying, discrimination or neglect and supporting the well-being and academic success of learners with disabilities who may be experiencing bullying, discrimination or neglect at school.

The CCP Framework outlines prevention, intervention and supportive strategies that teachers should use to address bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. With the full implementation of the constructed framework special education school would be secure and nurturing environment where learners with disabilities feel safe, supported, and valued. The CCP framework prioritizes the well-being and success of all learners with disabilities by establishing such an environment with policies addressing anti-bullying, discrimination or neglect, reasonable accommodations, accessibility, and inclusive education practices. Employ qualified specialist and support personnel who are trained to work with learners with disabilities and ensure that physical facilities, classrooms, and instructional materials are accessible to learners with disabilities. This would involve making adjustment to school buildings such as installing ramps, accessible restrooms, adaptive equipment, and providing materials in alternative formats such braille, audio, large print. The CCP Framework fulfilling roles and commitments, schools would take to create a protective environment that promotes the well-being, inclusion, and academic achievement of learners with disabilities, ensuring that they have equal opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential.

5.7 Contribution of the Study

As outlined in chapter one, part of the motivation for this study was the absence of systematic scholarly work that explored how learners with disabilities are protected against bullying, discrimination and neglect being reported to be long-standing injustices facing learners with disabilities instigated by fellow pupils and their teachers in schools in Zambia. To address these gaps within the research literature, this research sought to provide empirical evidence about and theorisations of the situation of multiple key stakeholders in school who were head teacher, specialist teachers, learners with disabilities and their parents.

The study has provided an understanding to stakeholders inside and outside MOE on how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. Clearly, the study has unveiled that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting strategies. By examining protective measures implemented in special education schools, the study highlighted effective strategies for mitigating bullying and promoting the safety and well-being of learners with disabilities. Special education schools should have comprehensive anti-bullying policies in place that explicitly address the unique vulnerabilities of learners with disabilities. These policies may include clear definitions of bullying behavior, reporting procedures, and consequences for perpetrators. Teachers in special education schools should be equipped with knowledge of disability-specific vulnerabilities and effective intervention strategies. Prevention measures in special schools should be multifaceted, proactive, and tailored to the unique needs of learners with disabilities. The study donated that implementing comprehensive policies, providing staff training, individualized support plans, promoting social skills, encouraging reporting, involving parents, and continuously monitoring and evaluating efforts, special schools would effectively prevent bullying and create a safe and supportive environment for all students.

Based on your findings, the study contributes to the development of best interventions measures for promoting the safety and well-being of learners with disabilities in special education settings. The study has enriched our understanding that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety measures, disciplinary measures and prevention measures. These best intervention practices can serve as a resource for specialist teachers, administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders for addressing discrimination in special education school. Therefore, research findings inform the development of evidence-based practices and guidelines for addressing discrimination in educational settings. Through rigorous evaluation of interventions, researchers identify promising approaches that can be replicated and scaled up to support learners with disabilities effectively. Also, research informs the professional development of educators, administrators, and support staff working with learners with disabilities. By disseminating research findings through training programs, workshops, and conferences, educators gain knowledge and skills to implement effective interventions and create inclusive learning environments to address discrimination.

The study contributes significantly to the development of best supportive measures against neglect among learners with disabilities in special education schools by providing evidence-based insights into effective strategies and practices. The study also brought to light how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools. Learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in special education schools using Material Support measures, Social and Emotional Support measures and capacity building measures. Based on your findings, the study contributes to the development of interventions and supportive measures to address neglect in special education schools. This involve recommendations for policy changes child protection in school, staff training, collaboration with other stakeholders, and enhancement of support services in special education schools. These strategies enabled teachers to address neglect and supporting the well-being and academic success of students who may be experiencing neglect in special education schools. Then, research findings inform the development of evidence-based practices and guidelines for preventing and addressing neglect in special education settings. Through rigorous evaluation of interventions, researchers identify promising approaches that can be implemented to support learners with disabilities effectively.

Lastly, the use of a strong theoretical frame derived from empirical literature review data and themes generated from collected data allowed helped develop the framework. The proposed CCP framework suggests how learners with disabilities would be protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools and ensure the success of every learner and empower all learners with disabilities to reach their full potential. This framework has the potential to generate valuable insights and recommendations that inform policy, practice, and advocacy efforts aimed at creating safer and more inclusive environments for learners with disabilities in special education schools.

Developing a comprehensive framework for protecting learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination, and neglect in special education schools is essential to ensure their safety, well-being, and equitable access to education. Such a framework integrates various strategies, policies, and practices to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. It contributes by establishing a foundation for addressing these issues systematically and ensuring consistency in responses across the special education schools. The framework provide that staff members of special education schools are knowledgeable and competent in supporting students

with disabilities, the framework strengthens the school's ability to create a safe and inclusive environment. The framework enhances support networks for students with disabilities and strengthens the school-home-community connection by involving parents by in the affairs of the children with disabilities. The CCP framework remains responsive to the evolving needs and challenges faced by students with disabilities through continuous monitoring and evaluation of bullying, discrimination and neglect incidents in special education school.

5.8 Summary

This Chapter presented a discussion on the study findings on protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province and theory presented in the earlier chapters of this study. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention measures namely Recognising, Responding and Reporting measures. The study also found discrimination incidents being interceded on in selected special education schools using safety measures, disciplinary measures and prevention measures. On support against neglect, the study unveiled that learners' issues of neglect in selected special education schools were addressed using Material Support measures, Social and Emotional Support measures and capacity building measures. These strategies enabled participants to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Based on these measures, CCP Framework was proposed as an alternative approach to enhance how learners with disabilities should be safeguarded from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. This framework empowered the novice researcher to determine sample saturation based on the similarity of prominent words from the participants and then documented emergent themes accordingly. Further, this framework aided the researcher in developing a story line based on the emergent themes during the write-up process. Through integrating policies, staff training, individualized support plans, promotion of positive peer relationships, family and community engagement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation, the framework creates a supportive and inclusive environment where all students can thrive.

CHAPTER SIX SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Overview

This Chapter presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. It is divided into three sections. The first section provides a summary of findings based on the research objectives. The second section provides a conclusion of the study on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools before providing key recommendations based on the outcome of the present study. It ends with suggestions for future studies on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

6.2. Summary of Findings

Based on the findings of the first research question, it was evident from the study that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention measures namely recognizing, responding and reporting strategies. The findings established that Recognizing bullying prevention strategies included paying attention the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Also, noting the individual appear fearful or withdraw, sudden decline in academic performance or interested in school. The study also revealed that Responding measures included holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviours expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Other strategies identified include the Reporting bullying prevention measures, which included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting any form of harassment, and bullying acts. Based on the findings on the second research question, discrimination is being addressed in selected special education schools using safety measures, disciplinary measures and prevention measures. The safety strategies that were used to address discrimination in selected special education schools through development of school child protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools,

reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Disciplinary measures included punishing those using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks through an apology or giving verbal warning, written reprimand or suspension from school, imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty for disruptive of activities, unwanted social behaviours. Further, preventive measures that were used included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. Concerning the third research question, on supportive measures against neglect in selected special education schools. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were victims of neglect in special education schools were supported using Material Support measures, Social and Emotional Support measures and capacity building measures. These strategies enabled participants to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

6.3. Conclusion

This study focused on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. Based on the findings of the study, by implementing a combination of these measures/strategies, schools can create a safer and more inclusive environment, reducing the prevalence of bullying, discrimination, and neglect. Also ensuring collaboration among learners, parents, teachers, and school administrators is crucial to the success of these efforts. The findings of the study on objective one revealed that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies that included recognising, responding and reporting measures. The findings of the study on the second research question revealed discrimination in special education schools were addressed using safety, disciplinary and prevention measures. It was also clear from the findings of the study on the third research objective that victims of neglect in special education schools were help through Material Support measures, social and emotional support measures and capacity building measures. When strategies were implemented, learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that learners with disabilities should be protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools if they were to progress academically.

Absolutely, protecting learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination, and neglect is not only ethically imperative but also legally mandated in many jurisdictions. Every individual deserves a safe and supportive learning environment that fosters their growth and development regardless of their abilities. Bullying, discrimination, and neglect can have devastating effects on anyone, but they can be particularly harmful to learners with disabilities who may already face additional challenges. These negative experiences can hinder their academic progress, emotional well-being, and social integration. Special education schools had policies and procedures in form of rules and regulation to prevent and address bullying, discrimination, and neglect. Also, parents for learners with disabilities were actively involved in the incidents of bullying, discrimination, and neglect in school. By working together, special education school created learning environments where all learners feel valued, respected, and safe. Nevertheless, special education schools lack sufficient resources as such it derails the needed training for stakeholder to effectively implement prevention, intervention and supportive strategies in an event of such acts. This would result in inconsistent or ineffective responses against bullying, discrimination, or neglect incidents. Hence, providing staff with training on recognizing and addressing these issues, creating a culture of inclusivity and respect, and offering support services for affected learners are essential components of a comprehensive prevention, intervention and supportive measures to promoting a safe and supportive learning environment in special education schools for learners with disabilities.

6.4. Recommendations

From the research findings and conclusion, the following are the recommendations made:

- i. Due to the rising incidence of school bullying, discrimination and neglect as well as other types of harms including abuse in special education schools, it is critical that Ministry of Education come up with policies outlining the additional vulnerability of children with disabilities to such acts and how these incidents should be addressed.
- ii. The Head Teacher should ensure that the school create and enforce clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying, discrimination or neglect and provide up-to-date professional development training for teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in schools for the purpose of identifying, reporting and addressing all forms of bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities in school.

- iii. The Head Teacher should ensure that the school implement recognizing, responding and reporting measures against bullying, as well as promoting intervention measure such as safety, disciplinary and prevention strategies to address discrimination, and provide supportive measure inform of material support, social and emotional support, and capacity building in addressing incidents of neglect among learners with disabilities in special education schools.
- iv. The Head Teacher should ensure collaboration and engage with specialist teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in a non-punitive and supportive manner to address underlying issues contributing to bullying, discrimination or neglect and connect them with appropriate resources and services, including access to counselling services and peer support groups.
- v. The class specialist Teacher should regularly monitor and track attendance, academic performance, and behavior patterns to identify students who may be experiencing bullying, discrimination, neglect or lack of adequate support to help them receive the support and resources they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

6.5. Suggestions for Future Studies

Further research should delve the effectiveness of these strategies in address bullying, discrimination, and neglect among learners with disabilities, identify barriers to their effectiveness, and propose improvements. Secondly, this study focused on longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impact of experiencing bullying, discrimination, and neglect on the academic, social, and psychological well-being of learners with disabilities. Understanding the lasting effects of these adverse experiences can inform the development of more comprehensive child protection, intervention and supportive measures. In addition, the study could use the mixed method methodology in order to deal with qualitative factors in detail while at the same time paying attention to quantitative factors and could be reasonable to use statistical software such as SSPS or Envivo in portions of data analysis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Published Articles



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**EXPLORING CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
SCHOOLS IN ZAMBIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Constructivist/Interpretive paradigm and qualitative intrinsic case study design were employed because the case study outcomes were solely about the learner with disability's experiences and special education school was of primary interest in the study. The sample size comprised of 38 participants and purposive critical case sampling was used to select 2 head teachers, expert sampling was used on 12 teachers and criterion sampling was used to select 12 learners and 12 parents. Data collection from head teachers and teachers used semi-structured interview guide and from learners and parents focus group discussion was used and data were analysed thematically. Learners with disabilities were protected from bullying using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies; recognising, responding and reporting strategies. Then, safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies were used to protect learners with disabilities discrimination in schools. Also, learners with disabilities were protected from neglect using material support strategies, social and emotional support and professional development strategies in selected special education schools. These strategies enable to protect children with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. The study recommends that for the schools to ensure child protection from bullying, discrimination and neglect should develop and implement child protection policy (rules and regulations), ensure professional

development training among member of staff on child protection measures taken when recognizing and responding to bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools.

KEYWORD: *Child Protection measures, bullying, discrimination, neglect,*

Introduction

The reality of a safe learning environment from a global perspective is that many children with disability do not fare well (UNICEF, 2017). United Nations (2019) reported that despite important progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) violence remains a harsh reality for millions of children including those with disabilities around the world. Children need to be protected against all sorts of physical, mental, sexual abuse including bullying, discrimination and neglect, while in the school environment (Augustin & Abubaker, 2016).

Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development (MYSCD) et al. (2018) reported that child abuse in school has taken a range of forms including verbal abuse, bullying, discrimination and neglect. More and more children continue to experience bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools and this has caused on the increase of drop from school among children with disabilities (Suyanta and Harefa, 2019). Cervancia et al., (2019) found that children with disabilities are at a greater risk of bullying, discrimination and neglect as compared to regular children those without disability. Likumbo, et al (2021) revealed that more and more children are bullied, discriminated and neglected. Kanchiputu and Mwale (2016) reported that little progress has been made to lessen the risks children face from bullying, discrimination and neglect by fellow pupils and their teachers.

UNICEF (2019) reported that close to one in three students with disabilities between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide experiences bullying on a regular basis. In the study of BibouNakou & Markos (2017), found that many children with disabilities in schools are exposed to different forms of violence and threats in schools and other educational settings. Similarly, UNESCO (2019) reported that persons with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who face the worst discrimination, affecting both their right to go to school and their rights within schools. Human Rights Council (2019) also confirmed that children with disabilities face disproportionately high levels of discrimination. In the study of Sharley (2019) also, found neglect to be the most common form of child abuse in schools, but frequently goes

unrecognized within the school-aged population and represent major threats to child health and well-being in school. However, if that is the case there is need to know how learners with disability were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province of Zambia. There is increasingly concerned, with the increasing cases of bullying, discrimination and neglect amongst children in special schools (UNICEF, 2018); MYSCD et al 2018; Chirwa, 2019; Dankyi, et al, 2021). Bullying, discrimination and neglect are significant and long-standing social issues facing learners, teachers, and parents in schools. Violation of children rights in form of bullying, discrimination and neglect is underreported and under-punished when discovered leading to high prevalence of bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools (Better Care Network, 2017). If that has been the case, the question is how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools? Children with disabilities are a vulnerable group. It is crucial to bridge this gap, by ensuring a safe school environment that may provide protection among children with disabilities in school. As such there is need to explore how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Hence, the study explored child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools.

Methods and Materials

The ecological approach by Bronfenbrenner (1979) was selected for the study had it has often used in child protection research. Ecological system theory was applicable for the study because it brought about child-teacher relationship, which is the tenet of child protection in school. The study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, it enabled the researcher to have in-depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on protection measures children with disabilities are subjected to due to bullying, discrimination and neglect experienced special education schools. An intrinsic case study design was employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that was solely about the learner with disability's experiences and specials education school was of primary interest in the study.

The study population consisted of two head teachers and critical case sampling was used to select them, then, expert sampling was used on 12 teachers and in-depth interviews was used to collect data. While criterion sampling was used to select 12 learners and 12 parents and

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were used to collect data. Interviews and FGD were appropriate for this study because they gave participants opportunity to fully describe their experiences. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The study used an Inductive thematic approach for data analysis using six major stages that included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and report writing, and, where possible, verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants.

RESULTS

In an attempt to how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The major emergent themes indicated that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using recognising strategies. These strategies included recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. In support of the findings above, participant (SCH2 ST10 M) had this to say: “The school make sure that it provides routinely check to ensure that harassment and bullying ceases in school”. Teacher and learners have the responsibility for look out for any signs of bullying in school”

Another great theme that emerged from the findings was regarding responding strategies that involved formulating child protection rules or policies, involved parents, held meetings that reinforced positive behaviours expectations, provided guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying and punished learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark. Further, participants reported that they formulated of anti-bullying programmes, formulated of support groups to sensitize learners, trained staff members on how to recognising incidents of bullying and taught anti-bullying social skill. In support, participant (SCH1 HT1) had this to say: “The school has put in place school rules that prohibit any form of bullying from taking place ill-treatment are reported”

In support participant (SCH1 HT1) indicated that:

“My office also usually discussed the issue of bullying with other parents, individually or in a support group. Talking with the parents of the bully, or the bully him/herself, are some of the things I do with my teacher to ensure these

children are protected from bullying from teachers and fellow learners with or without disabilities”.

Contributing on the same another participant (SCH1 ST4 M) had this to say:

“We talk to the children and provide guidance and counselling services to learners who are bullied because of their disability. We provide on-going opportunities for continued open discussions on how to deal with bullying in school and, checking in with the child regularly”.

The participant (SCH2 ST11 F) said:

“During anti-bullying club and activities all the learners are educated that bad effect of bullying. The school from time to time has been providing up-to-date and timely in-service training for staff to help them best handle and recognize bullying problems and potential disability harassment.

Another theme that emerged from the findings was the reporting strategies that included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, bullying incidence in school settings, any form of harassment and bullying acts. These strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools from bullying. In support participant (SCH2 HT2) indicated that: “There are teachers who are involved in sensitization on the same during school assemblies and engage them to report all form of bullying to teachers in school and then the teachers bring them to the administration for action”.

Contributing on the same findings the above, one other male learner participant during the first focus group discussion (FGD 1 ML) had this to say: “We are protected from bullying acts in schools by reporting any form of harassment and bullying acts to the teachers. If one tries to harass us, we quickly report them to our teachers or the administration for action”.

The second research question of this study focused on how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The themes that emerged included safety strategies that included developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. This was evident from participant (SCH1 HT1) had this to say:

“As a school! We work towards reducing discrimination by promoting religious activities, respect for human rights and preaching love for one another. I ensure that all learners’ needs are met equally, even those who are not supported by their parents with school requisites, the school with well-wisher we try our level best to help such learners”.

Yet from the focus group discussion, participant (FGD 3 FP) said:

“To protect children from discrimination the school has rules and regulation which stop everyone, parent, teachers or fellow learners from discrimination others by word of mouth or action or denying them access to what they are entitled to in school. We report all forms of ill-treatment to the administration so that the offenders are punished”.

Punishment strategies came out has an emerging theme. These strategies included punishing children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, material support, punishing children with disruption of activities and punishing learners with unwanted social behaviour. In support, participant (SCH1 HT1) said: “We usually punish children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks. Children with disruptive behaviour are usually punished”.

Participant (SCH 2 ST8 M) in his contribution on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination, reported that: “We provide positive and negative reinforcement to the children. By positive reinforcement, we give praises and awards to good performing children. Concerning negative reinforcement, we withdraw certain incentives from the children”.

Another theme that emerged from the findings was the prevention strategies, participants revealed that some of the prevention strategies employed included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. In contribution the participant (SCH1 ST6 M:) had this to say: The school provides capacity building programs to the teachers, we engage teachers in the in-house training on discrimination for them to have knowledge how to meet the specific learning needs of each child”.

In support of this finding, Participant (SCH1 ST3 F) said that: “We provide guidance and counselling services to both sighted children, children living with disabilities, teachers and parents, we advise to give hope in this learner by being positive on them”.

The third research question for the study was aimed at establishing how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools. The study findings indicated that learners with disabilities were protected from neglect using material support strategies. These strategies included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, and provision of the school requirements to learners. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, and involving of parents. In support, participant (FGD 3 MP) had this to say:

“The teachers share some of the support services that are available for children with disabilities who may be victims of neglect in this school. I have seeing Sisters from the church coming in school to assist those who don’t have books, soap and enough clothes. not only that the school is supported financially by well-wishers to meet school requirements to meet specific learning needs of each child.

Participant (FGD 3 MP) has this to say: “The school provide school requisites like bathing and washing soap, assistive devices and equipment such as wheelchair, crutches and walking white canes”.

Another great theme that emerged from the findings was the use of social and emotional support strategies, participants revealed that some of the social and emotional support strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, providing motivational talks and engaging in religious activities. Other Social and Emotional Support Strategies that were employed were providing encouragements to children, psychological care and involving parents. Participant (SCH1 ST2 M) had this to say:

“The school always engages our parent if there is something, we have seen some parents come in school, like me when I was not feeling well they called by parents and they came to pick me and take me home”.

Also, participant (FGD 3 MP) during focus group discussion said: *“The school also through the guidance and counselling teacher always counsel these children when in school and make*

them understand that disability is not inability”. the teachers also share word of encouragement to our children through bible verse discussion”

Another theme that emerged from the findings was the use of Professional Development Strategies. These strategies included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children. In support, participant SCH1 ST4 M) had this to say:

“Usually the school has CPD and TGM services, counselling’s service, motivational talk service to promote positive attitude in teacher towards these children with disabilities. Through teacher group meeting we try by all means to induct and orient new staff on how to handle different learners with disabilities with their specific learning needs”.

In contribution, participant (FGD 4 FP) stated that:

“As for me, the Schools should identify staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying, discrimination and neglect and to whom learners with disabilities can talk freely in case they are bullying, discrimination and neglect. School has prefects who monitor, control and report bullying incidents because in most of the times these incidents are not reported to teachers”.

Based on the findings on the first research question above, it was evident from the study that children with disabilities were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools.

Discussion

Based on the findings of the first research question, it was evident from the study that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying using the 3R’s bullying prevention strategies namely recognizing, responding and reporting strategies. Recognizing bullying prevention strategies included recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Similarly, Falla et al (2021) pointed out that the teachers and administration need to recognize the warning signs of bullying in schools that children are involved in.

Responding strategies included holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviours expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Other strategies identified include reporting bullying prevention strategies, which included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting any form of harassment, and bullying acts. These findings were in conformity with the study by UNESCO (2021), which revealed that establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support was a key component of child protection program in schools. These bullying prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

The second research question, children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies. The safety strategies that were used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Punishment strategies included punishing those using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing learners with disruption of activities and punishing learners with unwanted social behaviours. Further, in house training for staff such as Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling were used. These findings were in line with the report of Maciver et al (2019), which reported that schools provided training for school personnel, raised awareness on non-marginalized learners. These strategies enabled the teachers in special education schools to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination.

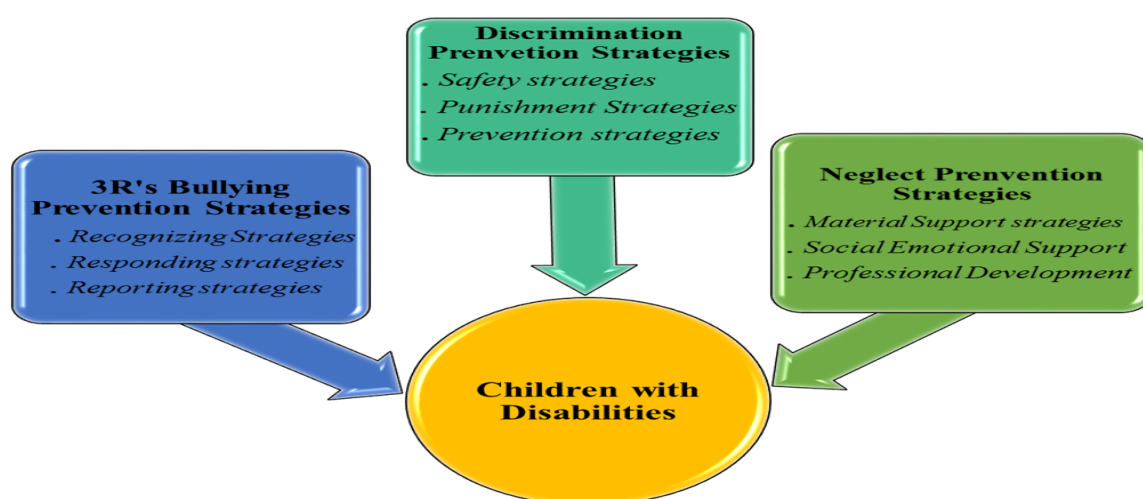
The third research question, learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in schools through material support strategies, social and emotional support and professional development strategies. These findings were in conformity with the study by Daro (2019) who revealed that to protect learners who were neglected due to lack of support service, teachers were to provide equitable access to quality universal services for children with disabilities. These strategies enabled participants to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and

neglect in selected special education schools. However, these findings were in line with the principle of the model that states that teachers and peers who are the elements of the mesosystem influences or affect the behaviours of the children in schools. These strategies must be considered in terms of their existence at each level, as well as their interaction across each level so that learners with disabilities.

Constructed Child Protection measure in special education schools

The emergent framework is nicknamed Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework, which is a result of twenty-four months of deep reflection on the elements or constructs that may lead to effective protection of learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. Figure 1 below gives the silent features of the proposed CCP framework arising from the study.

Figure 1: Chisala's Child Protective (CCP) Framework



Source: Researcher's Proposed Child Protective Framework (2023)

Figure 1 above shows the four sections of the CCP framework. At the centre of the CCP framework, are learners with disabilities who are the beneficiaries surrounded by three strategies to protect them from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. The first section of CCP framework focuses on strategies that may be used to protect learners with disabilities from bullying acts in schools. The CCP framework affirms that to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, teachers need to first recognise or identify the acts of bullying in the school. This would involve recognising the warning signs of victims and

stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. After recognising the bullying acts, teachers would need to employ responding strategies. This involves formulation of child protection rules in school, parental involvement, holding meetings that reinforce positive behavior expectations, provide guidance and counselling, punishing learner, formulation of anti-bullying program and training staff members. Lastly, teachers should employ reporting strategies, which include reporting all forms of ill-treatment, bullying incidence in school settings and any form of harassment and bullying acts.

The second section focuses on strategies that may be used to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in schools. The CCP framework states that to protect children with disabilities from discrimination, teachers should employ safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies. Examples of safety strategies that should be employed by teachers include developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking ups. Regarding punishment strategies, teachers should punish children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, disrupt activities and those with unwanted social behaviours as well as provide positive and negative reinforcement. Some preventive strategies that should be used include in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling.

The third section of the CCP framework focuses on neglect strategies that may be used to protect learners with disabilities in schools. The CCP framework states that to protect learners with disabilities from neglect, teachers should employ strategies such as material support strategies, social and emotional support and professional development strategies. The examples of material support strategies that must include provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support and provision of school requisites. Social and emotional support strategies that may be employed to protect learners with disabilities from neglect include provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, in religious activities, offering encouragements and involving parents. Professional development strategies include conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children. The CCP framework affirms that when

these neglect prevention strategies were employed, learners with disabilities would be protected in schools.

Finally, the fourth section of the CCP framework focuses on the learners who are the beneficiaries on protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools. Children in special education schools should thus be exposed to all the strategies highlighted in the CCP framework if they were to be protected in special education schools.

The study has provided an understanding to stakeholders inside and outside MOE on how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. In the context of the present study, the CCP framework emphasises on teachers and children without disabilities to employ these strategies in order to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

Recommendations

From the research findings and conclusion, the following are the recommendations made:

- i Special education Schools should develop and implement bullying, discrimination and neglect rules and regulation (policy) that promote inclusion and diversity in all aspect of school experience among learners with disabilities.
- ii The special education schools need to ensure that administrators, teachers, staff, and learners have up-to-date professional development training needed to recognise and respond to incidences of bullying discrimination and neglect, and to adopt strong policies for preventing and addressing bullying in special education schools.
- iii The Head teacher in special education school should ensure collaboration among teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in schools for the purpose of identifying and reporting all forms of direct or indirect bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities.

Ethics Approval

The ethical approval was provided by the University of Zambia, Zambia with the reference number HSSREC:2022-JUL-047

Consent for participants

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES ON BULLYING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

Bullying is a destructive social problem in schools that needs attention. Schools have the responsibility to create a safe place where students can learn without fear of being bullied. The purpose of the study was to explore child protection measures against bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province. This study was guided by a Constructivist Paradigm, in keeping with the research paradigm, a qualitative intrinsic case study design was employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that is solely about the case itself. In this case, the child with disability and special education school was of primary interest in the study. The sample size comprised of 38 participants consisting of 2 head teachers, 12 teachers, 12 parents and 12 learners from the two selected special education schools. Purposive critical case sampling was used to select head teachers, expert sampling was used on teachers and criterion sampling was used to select learners and parents. Data from head teachers and teachers were collected using a semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussions guide (FGD) were used on learners and parents. Data were

analysed by thematic analysis. The study revealed that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R's (Recognizing, Responding and Reporting) bullying prevention strategies for learners with special educational needs. The findings established that Recognizing bullying prevention strategies included recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognizing the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. The study also revealed that Responding bullying prevention strategies included holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviour expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Other strategies identified include the Reporting bullying prevention strategies which included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting any form of harassment, and bullying acts. These bullying prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the school should be on the lookout for incidences of bullying, respond to bullying quickly and effectively and document and report all actions taken when recognizing and responding to bullying.

Keywords: bullying, child protection, special education school

1. Introduction

Bullying is one of the leading social problems facing young people today. In the face of the international mandate for safe learning environments, the reality for many children in school is quite different. The reality of a safe learning environment from a global perspective is that many children with disability do not fare well (UNICEF, 2017). United Nations (2019) reported that despite important progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) violence remains a harsh reality for millions of children including those with disabilities around the world. Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development (MYSCD) et al. (2018) reported that child abuse in school has taken a range of forms including verbal abuse, bullying, discrimination and neglect. The negative consequences of bullying affect everyone – the bullies, the victims, the bystanders, the school, parents, and the community. According to Oldenburg (2017), absenteeism due to bullying occurs among 6% of boys and 9% of girls on a

weekly basis. Due to the alarming statistics and long-term effects of bullying, it is imperative that school personnel and parents help prevent bullying by knowing the facts. More and more children continue to experience bullying, in schools and this has caused on the increase of drop from school among children with disabilities (Musonda and Qinglin, 2015).

The study of Swearer & Hymel (2015) found that children with disabilities are at a greater risk of being bullied as compared to regular children those without disability. Some studies suggest that learners with disabilities are equally vulnerable to bullying in both mainstream and special schools. However, the evidence is mixed. UNICEF (2019) reported that almost one-third of school-going learners with disabilities have been bullied, by their peers with or without disabilities on a daily basis. In China, Chen et al. (2021) revealed that learners with disabilities were two to three times more likely to experience bullying in mainstream schools than in special schools. Other studies have found that those with certain types of disabilities, for example, learning difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorders, are at higher risk of bullying in mainstream schools than in special schools (Hatimbula et al., 2019; Allam & Martin, 2021).

Learners with disabilities in institutions and residential schools are at higher risk of bullying. Investigations by the United Nations Children's Fund (2019) suggest that children and young people with disabilities in institutional settings and boarding schools are more vulnerable to violence from teachers, other school staff and other students. They are often maltreated by their peers, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school (Malungo et al., 2018; MYSCDSS et al. (2018). Factors that increase vulnerability include the 'closed' nature of institutions, inadequate inspection and lack of accountability. Rusteholz et al. (2021) revealed school bullying adversely affects the education of learners with disabilities. The increasing burden of bullying, on children with disabilities coming from their peers and teachers usually forced them to come late or drop out of schools (Allam & Martin, 2021). It further induces absenteeism among learners with disabilities because of fear of being bullied, by peers and teachers in schools (Ng'andu & Chilufya, 2019). Similarly, Njelesani et al., (2022), posit that learners with disabilities who experience bullying by peers and teachers may miss classes, have problems concentrating or drop out of school. It affects their access to and participation in education, attainment and future prospects. This has raised questions over the child protection measures special schools have put in place in order to ensure all children are protected against bullying whilst accessing education (Better Care Network, 2017; Hatimbula et al., 2019). As

children with disabilities are a vulnerable group, it is not known how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying, in special education schools in Zambia.

It should be appreciated that children with disabilities in special education schools require adequate protection from bullying, in school if they have to benefit from the learning environment (Njelesani et al., 2022). Hence, this makes it imperative that a study to explore child protection measures on bullying, in special education schools. The purpose of the study is to explore child protection measures on bullying, put in place in selected special education schools in Luapula province. Therefore, the findings of this study will provide the basis for recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders on priorities and next steps for strengthening child protection in educational settings. It is hoped that with increased understanding and knowledge teachers, caregivers, and parents will be able to better protect and care for children in a bullied environment.

2. Statement of the Problem

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that has created negative consequences for the general school climate and for the right of learners to learn in a safe environment without fear (Baginsky et al., 2019). Further, bullying has remained a significant and long-standing social issue facing learners, teachers, and parents in schools. UNICEF (2019) reported that almost one-third of school-going learners with disabilities have been bullied, discriminated or neglected by their peers with or without disabilities on daily. It has been established that in special education schools having children without disabilities, learners with disabilities face challenges of bullying and discrimination about three times as many as children without disabilities are maltreated from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school (Malungo et al., 2018; MYSCDSS et al., 2018). The increasing burden of bullying on children with disabilities has prematurely forced them to come late or drop out of school and it has also induced absenteeism among them because of fear of being bullied (Ng'andu & Chilufya, 2019). This has raised concern over the child protection measures in place in special education schools to ensure all children are protected against bullying (Better Care Network, 2017; Hatimbula et al., 2019). As children with disabilities are a vulnerable group, it is not known how learners with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools. And, surprisingly, few scholars have directed their attention to exploring child protection measures against bullying in special education schools. It should be appreciated that children with disabilities in

special education schools require adequate protection from bullying, in school if they have to benefit from the learning environment. Hence, this makes it imperative that a study to explore child protection measures on bullying in special education schools in Luapula Province be carried out.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The ecological approach by Bronfenbrenner (1979) has been selected for the study as it has often been used in child protection research. From an ecological perspective, child bullying is viewed as a transactional issue between teachers, children and the environment, and the complexity surrounding child bullying can be understood in several ways by an ecological approach. To protect children with disabilities and prevent them from bullying, different stakeholders including those with direct (family, and teachers) and indirect contact (school administration, NGOs and government) need to work together. Ecological system theory is applicable to this study because it brings about the child-teacher relationship, which is the tenet of child protection in school. The ecological approach provides protective factors that apply in schools, and therefore, it is beneficial in ensuring the safety of children with disabilities in a school environment. The teacher is potentially able to provide a crucial link to many of the bullied child's needs. Teachers have the perspective not only to help tend to the emotional well-being of the child, but also aid the family in gaining access to the services they need to help avoid any future bullying (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Having access to these types of services, along with positive school experiences, can have an impact beyond the classroom and affect children in a positive manner throughout their lives.

2.2 Geographical Location of Study Sites

Luapula Province is one of Zambia's ten provinces located in the northern part of the country. As per the 2010 Zambian census, the Province had a population of 991,927, which accounted for 7.57 per cent of the total Zambian population. The major economic activities are agriculture and fishing, with sweet potato being the major crop. The study focused on two special education school in Luapula province the Mambilima special school in Mwanse district. Mwanse district is located in Luapula Province of Zambia, about 867 kilometres north of Lusaka and about 110 kilometers away from Mansa, the provincial capital, with an elevation of 1,175 metres above sea level. As of the 2000 Zambian Census, the district had a population of 105,759 people. Its top tourist attraction is the Mumbuluma Falls, which is a set of waterfalls

and is a national monument of Zambia. The main economic activity is fishing but there is potential for development of agriculture. Mambilima Special Primary School is located in Mulundu village and it is under government and mission (C.M.M.L.). The school has been dedicated its work to the needs of expanded physically handicapped children. Kawambwa District is located in Luapula Province. The capital lies at Kawambwa, which lies at the intersection of three roads: D19, M13, and Kawambwa-Mbereshi. While, St. Marys special school for the blind in Kawambwa district is also under government and Catholic Church, its majority learners are those with visual impairment and albinism.

3. Literature Review

Bullying is a destructive social problem in schools that needs attention. Schools have the responsibility to create a safe place where students can learn without fear of being bullied. Bullying in its various forms has been associated with various emotional, psychological as well as academic problems in children. The study of Aubdul et al. (2022) who looked at the association of bullying on happiness from Thailand argued that there are two different types of bullying behaviour either direct or indirect. Direct bullying can be either verbal bullying which includes such behaviours as taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumours, or physical bullying encompasses behaviours, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, and destruction of property or theft. Indirect bullying is often subtler and can include behaviours such as threats, obscene gestures, excluding others from a group, and manipulation of friendships (Aubdul et al., 2022). Hinduja & Patchin (2021) reported the newest type of bullying that has emerged in youth as cyber-bullying. Cyberbullying is done electronically through the internet via emails and on-line chat rooms (Hinduja & Patchin, 2021).

Sabramani et al. (2021) whose study was carried out in Malaysia as an evidence from students at national secondary school on bullying and its associated individual, peer, family and school factors confirmed that in the 21st century, bullying has become an increasingly common phenomenon with 5% to 15% of people being the victim of bullying reported worldwide, among which some cases even lead to deaths. Ratib, & Lisa (2021) study on bullying of students who receive special education services for learning and behavior difficulties in Norway, reported that students with disabilities are significantly experience victimization when compared with their peers without disabilities. Its prevalence in special education school is, in part, a product of the lack of information and the paucity of studies,

which analyse the wide-ranging consequences for the individuals involved. Falla et al. (2021), noted that the teachers and administration need to recognize the warning signs of bullying that children are involved in school. The safety of children with disabilities in schools or on their way to school is still a major source of concern, as they are faced with threats of bullying (Falla, et al., 2021).

The school operates centrally within a social-ecological framework of treating the children, school and connections to parents as being part of an interconnected system of relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). So, the systemic dimension of interrogating school climate, institutional culture and relationships is an important broadening of protective perspective beyond simply treating bullying as a problem of children with disabilities in special education schools. This means that since schools deals with issues of children have a duty to keep them safe and uphold their wellbeing. Therefore, the protection of children from bullying in school incorporates the visible leadership; zero tolerance policy against bullying; safe and positive school environment; capacity building for teachers; empowerment and participation of learners; family and community support; awareness campaigns; and monitoring, reporting support services. In the study of Houchins et al. (2016), in Atlanta, USA on bullying and students with disabilities found that leadership at all levels, from national to school level, as critical to champion an effective response to school bullying protection. Leadership needs special training in order to champion the prevention of bullying against learners with disabilities.

UNESCO (2019) in the study behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying in Paris, identified the need for robust laws and policies, including policies at the school level, to prevent and address school bullying. Xiao (2021) narrated that in order to protect children with disabilities from bullying schools need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. Chen et al. (2021), also called on schools to set a school climate of mutual support and ensure that all members of staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying. Therefore, schools with children with disabilities need to ensure that school staff are trained and held accountable for policies to protect, prevent and respond to bullying for learners with disabilities.

Thomas et al. (2018) in their study on child-friendly schools: challenges and issues in creating a positive and protective school environment in India, highlighted the need to create a

school environment with anti-bullying programs where students feel safe, secure, welcomed and supported, and able to participate fully in school activities (Yahia et al., 2021). In Malaysia, Mohan & Bakar (2021) in their systematic literature review on the effects of bullying at school revealed that for any bullying protection program to be successful, it is necessary for each school to have a clear and easily understood philosophy that promotes a safe and positive environment. Schools need to combat bullying as all children in the school community deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Therefore, it is crucial that all staff members create and maintain a positive working community to ensure the success of a positive climate at school. A school where children don't feel safe is a school where children struggle to learn. Every student deserves to thrive in a safe school and classroom free from bullying.

Rusteholz et al. (2021) suggested that classroom environments characterised by caring staff attitudes, peer friendships and acceptance are protective against school bullying. Ratib & Lisa (2021) posits that learners with disabilities are less vulnerable to bullying in schools where teachers actively encourage and facilitate peer relationships and positive interactions between students with and without disabilities. In the study of Wenwuyu (2020) on anti-bullying interventions for children with special needs in Jonkoping. The findings of the study indicated that ensuring that the needs of learners with disabilities are protected requires adopting an inclusive curriculum, learning and teaching that promotes the values of equality, respect for diversity and inclusion and ensures that all students know about the rights of people with disabilities.

Wenwuyu (2020) noted that most common bullying protection is based on increasing children's interactions with peer groups, or involving more facilitators in children's environment context. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, schools, classes and peers are key elements in the microsystem that can influence the protection goals. Protection of children in school takes personal assertive skills, peer relations and other performance in schools, which covered both microsystem and mesosystem that is where there, are increasing interactions between participants and general peer groups to help students with disabilities gain self-esteem, social satisfaction, and reduce bullying victimization (Wenwuyu, 2020).

In a study by Xiao et al. (2021) on school bullying and health-related quality of life in Chinese school-aged children and adolescents. The study found that relationships with peers and teachers are widely recognized as protective factors against bullying. Further, Xiao et al.

(2021) indicated these bullying behavior interventions needs to include teaching social skills. Therefore, building relationships with peers is at the core of children's protection, by providing them with the social competences required to master social challenges. The report of UNESCO (2021) indicated that in order to protect children with disabilities from bullying it must involve all students in programmes to prevent school bullying, and this should include learners with disabilities to ensure that bullying protection strategies are inclusive. The findings highlighted the need to ensure that children with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in all school activities including extracurricular activities and are represented in school leadership committees.

Downes & Cefai (2016) in their study on how to prevent and tackle bullying and school violence: evidence and practices for strategies for inclusive and safe schools, found that parent training was one of the programme elements significantly associated with both a decrease in bullying and being bullied. Mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's model is consisting of connections between elements in a microsystem. In order to have a school free from bullying, families and communities need to collaborate as partners with teachers and other professionals to support children's learning, safety and wellbeing in school. As the study of Likumbo et al. (2021), on the involvement of selected secondary schools in child protection against violence, exploitation and sexual abuse in Lusaka. The findings indicated that protecting children from bullying includes involve training teachers and other stakeholders, in action to prevent school bullying. To ensure the needs of learners with disabilities are protected, this needs to be complemented by interventions to educate parents and the community about the vulnerability of children and how to respond to bullying in school (Likumbo et al., 2021).

UNESCO (2021) reported that people with disabilities as victims often do not speak up because they are afraid that the bullying will get worse, no one will listen to them, their confidentiality will be breached, and perpetrators will not be held accountable. Therefore, establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, is a key component of child protection program in schools. To protect the specific needs of learners with disabilities, it is essential that mechanisms for reporting school bullying are accessible as well as confidential, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive. Hence, UNESCO (2021) advocated for establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, as they are key components of child protection programs in schools. In the study of Amanda (2019), on preventing and intervening

with bullying in schools in United States. From the study, the findings designated that schools should identify staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who has been trained in bullying prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. Schools should also provide support or referral to support services for learners with disabilities affected by school violence and bullying (Amanda, 2019). Therefore, school administrators and teachers must take an active approach to the physical monitoring of children and remain constantly vigilant to prevent bullying behaviours within their schools.

4. Material and Methods

This study was guided by a Constructivist Paradigm, as it enabled the researcher to have in-depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province. In keeping with the research paradigm, a qualitative research design, an intrinsic case study design was employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that was solely about the case itself. In that case, the child with disability and child protection measures of bullying in special education school was of primary interest in the study. An intrinsic case study is when the aim is fundamentally to understand the case (Kamal, 2019), and in this case was to explore protective measures put in place to protect children with disabilities from bullying, while in schools.

For the study population, purposive critical case sampling was used to select 2 head teachers as they were in charge and overseers of children's safety protection while in school. Expert sampling was used to sample 12 Teachers as they have day-to-day responsibility for children's protection from bullying, while in school. Criterion sampling was used to select 12 Learners as they were key informers who appreciate child protection measures on bullying, in special education schools. 12 Parents were brought in to help validate the views of head teachers, teachers and learners on how the school protects the children from bullying and criterion sampling was used to sample them. The sample sizes of teachers, parents and learners are adequate as they are consistent with the principle of data saturation. Guest et al. (2006) state that in qualitative studies, saturation may occur with as few as six participants. Jassim and Whitford (2014), also found that after the 10th interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. Therefore, it was deemed that the data collection was reached a saturation

point, the two more interviews were to ensure and confirm that there are no new themes emerging (Jassim and Whitford, 2014).

The research instruments that were used in this study included a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussions guide (FGD). The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect in-depth qualitative data from head teachers and teachers as it allows a back-and-forth dialogue (Vagle, 2014), thus providing an opportunity to react to comments, change the wording of questions, interjections for probes and clarifications. A focus group discussion guide shall be used to collect data from learners and parents, it was chosen because it allowed participants to discuss their concerns in a group. As participants interact within the group the quality and richness of data is enhanced. Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were triangulated to enhance the trustworthiness of the study findings.

The data was analysed manually to answer the research questions on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province, using six major stages that include familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and report writing and where possible, verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants (Saldaña et al., 2014).

5. Results

To establish how children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools, data was collected from thirty-eight (38) participants. The study used interviews and FGDs to probe the participants. A question was asked to the participants: *“How are children with disabilities protected from bullying in selected special education schools in Luapula province?”* The study revealed that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R’s bullying prevention strategies for learners with special educational needs. These included Recognizing, Responding and Reporting strategies as indicated by codes or near codes generated during data analysis as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Ways children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools

Themes	Codes or Near Codes
1. Recognizing Bullying Prevention Strategies	• Recognize the acts of bullying in the school. • Recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies • Routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts.
2. Responding Bullying Prevention Strategies	• Holding meetings that reinforce positive behavior expectations. • Provide guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying. • Punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks. • Formulation of anti-bullying programs • Formation of support groups to sensitize learners. • Training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying. • Teach anti-bullying social skills
3. Reporting Bullying Prevention Strategies	• Reporting all forms of ill-treatment. • Reporting bullying incidence in school settings. • Reporting any form of harassment and bullying acts.

Source: Researcher's illustration based on fieldwork.

Below is a detailed presentation of findings cited above regarding Recognizing, Responding, and Reporting bullying prevention strategies on how children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools.

5.1 Recognizing Strategies

The study findings indicated that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using recognizing strategies. These strategies included

recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. These findings were evidenced in the following verbal account given by one head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <SCH1 HT1> who observed that:

“One-way children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools was by first recognizing the form of bullying acts in the school and thereafter a measure was put in place to address that particular type of bully.” (20.10.2022).

In support of the above findings, another head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 HT2> lamented that: “To protect children from bullying in the school, we first recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies, then we find a way to address the act.” (25.10.2022).

Contributing on the above findings, one male Specialist teacher participant from School 1 participant during interviews <SHC1 ST1 M > pointed out that: “Children with disabilities are protected from bullying in selected special education schools using routine checking mechanism in order to stop harassment and bullying acts in the school.” (21.10.2022).

With these findings, children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using recognizing strategies such as recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognizing the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. The strategies enabled the teachers to recognise or identify the bullying acts among children with disabilities in special education schools.

5.2 Responding Strategies

Regarding responding strategies as a tool on how children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools, most teacher participants reported that they were held meetings that reinforced positive behaviours expectations, provided guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying and punished learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark. Further, participants reported that they formulated of anti-bullying programs, formulated of support groups to sensitize learners, trained staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and taught anti-bullying social skills.

In conformity with the above findings, one head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <**SCH1 HT1**> reported that: “We hold meetings with teachers that reinforce positive behavior expectations among the learners. Some teachers didn’t know how to control the bullying acts in the school therefore, it is important to reinforce them with that positive behavior expectation.” (20.10.2022)

In agreement with the above findings, one female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 during interviews <**SCH 2 ST11 F**> confirmed that:

“As a school, the measures that we have put in place to protect bullying to our learners living with disabilities is intensive guidance and counselling. We provide on-going opportunities for continued open discussions, checking in with the child regularly.” (26.10.2022)

Supporting the findings above, one head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews < **SCH2 HT2**> highlighted that: “Sometimes teachers punish learners who use discriminatory language or derogatory remarks against other children in the school. We do this to protect children with disabilities are protected from bullying.” (25.10.2022)

Agreeing with the findings above, one male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 participant during interviews <**SHC 2 ST7 M**> observed that: “As a school, we protect children with disabilities from bullying by formulation of anti-bullying programs that support the learners with disabilities. In these programs, children are taught the advantages and disadvantages of bullying acts in the school.” (26.10.2022)

In support of the notion on how children with disabilities were protected from bullying in schools, one head teacher participant from School 2 < **SCH2 HT2**> observed that: “One-way children with disabilities are protected from bullying in schools is by the formation of support groups to sensitize learners and the teachers on issues of bullying in school” (25.10.2022)

One head teacher participant from School 1 < **SCH1 HT1**> confirmed that:

“Training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying are one-way children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. Some teachers have no knowledge and skills in special education so they need

to be trained on how they should recognize incidents of bullying in the school.”
(20.10.2022)

Similar sentiments from one female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 participant during interviews < **SHC 2 ST12 F** > were that: “Children with disabilities were protected from bullying in schools by teaching anti-bullying social skills. There are anti-bullying clubs, which spearheads the teaching of anti-bullying social skills. This has helped children without disabilities interact with disabilities freely.” (26.10.2022)

It was evident that responding strategies such as holding meetings to reinforce positive behaviours expectations, guidance and counselling, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, support groups, training staff members and taught anti-bullying social skill, were some of the strategies children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools.

5.2 Reporting Strategies

The findings of the study showed that some of the reporting strategies included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings and reporting any form of harassment and bullying acts. These strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

The above views were reflected in a response from one by Male Learner participant during the first Focus Group Discussion <**FGD 1 ML**> who asserted that: “All forms of ill-treatment concerning bullying are reported to the teachers and in turn teachers also report to the administration for action on the offenders. This has helped reduce the rates of bullying in the school.” (31.10.2022)

Additionally, another female learner participant during the first focus group discussion <**FGD 1 FL**> advanced that: “Children with disabilities are protected from bullying in schools by reporting bullying incidence in school settings. All the children are alert to report any form of bullying act to their teachers” (31.10.2022).

Contributing on the same findings above, one other male learner participant during the first focus group discussion < **FGD 1 ML** > had this to say: “We are protected from bullying acts in schools by reporting any form of harassment and bullying acts to the teachers. If one

tries to harass us, we quickly report them to our teachers or the administration for action.”
(31.10.2022)

Arising from the findings above, it was evident that some of the reporting strategies included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting forms of harassment and bullying acts. These strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

6. Discussion

The study revealed that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies for learners with special educational needs. The results indicated that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using recognizing strategies. These strategies included recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Children with disabilities were protected from bullying was by first recognizing the form of bullying acts in the school and thereafter a measure was put in place to address that particular type of bully. This was in line with Chirwa (2019), who reported that if you know or suspect bullying has occurred, learn how to find out what has happened to a child. Understanding what has happened can also help in communicating with class teachers or school officials about the situation. Similarly, Falla et al. (2021), noted that the teachers and administration need to recognize the warning signs of bullying in schools that children are involved in. They could be being bullied, bullying others, or witnessing bullying. Although these signs could signal other issues, teacher or school counsellor need to talk to children if they display any sort of behavioural or emotional changes as a result of being bullied in school. The strategies enabled the teachers to recognise or identify the bullying acts among children with disabilities in special education schools.

Further, regarding responding strategies as a tool on how children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools, most teacher participants reported that they were held meetings that reinforced positive behaviours expectations, provided guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying of learners and punished learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remark. Further, participants reported the formulation of anti-bullying programs, support groups to sensitize learners, trained staff

members on how to recognize incidents of bullying and taught anti-bullying social skills. These results were in conformity with Chen et al. (2021), who reported that schools need to set a school climate of mutual support and ensure that all members of staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying. When students feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviours. The schools are engaged in training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying are one-way children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools. Some teachers have no knowledge and skills in special education so they need to be trained on how they should recognize incidents of bullying in the school. These results were in line with Amanda (2019), who noted that schools should identify and train staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who needs to be trained in bullying prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. The special education schools need training of all staff in bullying prevention and intervention and need to provide support services for learners with disabilities affected by school bullying (Amanda, 2019).

The schools need to go further in the protection of children with disabilities from bullying by formulation of anti-bullying programs that support the learners with disabilities where they are taught the advantages and disadvantages of bullying acts in the school. This is supported by the findings of Yahia et al. (2021), who noted that students should be encouraged to participate fully in activities that raise their awareness about bullying and to increase their empathy, in order that they clearly understand what to do if they, or another student, are being bullied. Similarly, Lessard et al. (2022), revealed that learners need to be part of anti-bullying programs that involve and promote improving their mobility, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities as well as by reducing day-to-day tensions. Although anti-bullying programs appear to be effective, emphasis should be placed on “*cultivating comprehensive, multi-tiered climates of acceptance and inclusion*” (Lessard et al., 2022)

The study revealed that children with disabilities in schools are also taught anti-bullying social skills. There are anti-bullying clubs, which spearheads the teaching of anti-bullying social skills. This has helped children without disabilities interact with disabilities freely. This resonates with Wenwuyu (2020) who reported that most common bullying protection are based on increasing children’s interactions with peer groups, or involving more facilitators in children’s environment context. Similarly, Xioa (2021) indicated that when learners are

involved, awareness of bullying increases and levels of bullying are reduced. Xioa further indicated that bullying behavior interventions needs to include teaching social skills such as friendship, empathy, and anger management in one-on-one settings, not in a group setting.

Further, the school holds meetings with teachers that reinforce positive behavior expectations among the learners. Some teachers don't know how to control the bullying acts in the school therefore, it is important to reinforce them with that positive behavior expectation. This is supported by Mohan & Bakar (2021), who lamented that teachers need to have the necessary competencies to prevent and respond to bullying affecting students with disabilities specifically. For schools to protect learners with disabilities and respond to bullying in school need to conduct intensive guidance and counselling with the victims of bullying and bullies. This provides on-going opportunities for continued open discussions, checking in with the children regularly in school.

Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that some of the reporting strategies included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings and reporting any form of harassment and bullying acts. This was in affirmation with Lessard et al. (2022), who indicated that bullying reporting was fundamental to preventing and addressing bullying. This strategy enables the teacher in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools. Knowing how bullying is handled at your child's school will enable you to know who to contact in the event of an incident. It will also set clear expectations of how the school might handle the situation. All forms of ill-treatment concerning bullying are reported to the teachers and in turn teachers also report to the administration for action on the offenders. This has helped reduce the rates of bullying in the school. Children with disabilities are protected from bullying in schools by reporting bullying incidence in school settings.

All the children are alert to report any form of bullying act to their teachers or the administration for action. These results were in line with Antwi, (2021) who incidents of bullying should always be reported. Ask to meet with school personnel and have a face-to-face meeting. This demonstrates your commitment to seeing the situation resolved. Also, the results were not quite different from those of UNESCO (2021), who advocated for establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, as key components of child protection programs in schools. To protect the specific needs of learners with disabilities, it is essential that mechanisms for reporting school bullying

are accessible as well as confidential, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive. Arising from the findings above, reporting strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools from all forms of bullying.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research question above, it was evident from the study that children with disabilities were protected from bullying in selected special education schools using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies namely recognizing, responding and reporting strategies. The findings established that Recognizing bullying prevention strategies included recognizing the statistics or acts of bullying in the school, recognize the warning signs of victims and stereotypes of bullies and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. The study also revealed that Responding bullying prevention strategies included holding meetings that reinforce positive behaviour expectations, providing guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, formulation of anti-bullying programs, formation of support groups to sensitize learners, training staff members on how to recognizing incidents of bullying and teach anti-bullying social skills. Other strategies identified include the Reporting bullying prevention strategies which included reporting all forms of ill-treatment, reporting bullying incidence in school settings, reporting any form of harassment, and bullying acts. These bullying prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

Based on the results on child protection measures on bullying in selected special education schools presented, the study recommends the following:

- Develop and implement a school bullying policy for preventing and addressing bullying. The school needs to ensure that administrators, teachers, staff, and learners have up-to-date professional development training needed to recognise and respond to incidences of bullying and to adopt strong policies for preventing and addressing bullying in special education schools.
- The school should be on the lookout for incidences of bullying. School officials should develop an environment where students feel safe reporting bullying that involves them or that they hear about.
- The schools should respond to bullying quickly and effectively. When an investigation reveals that a student with disabilities is being bullied, school administrators need to

respond quickly and effectively and should act to ensure that bullying does not take place in the future.

- School need to document and report all actions taken when recognizing and responding to bullying. Moreover, the parents of the victim and perpetrator should be kept abreast of actions taken in response to the bullying and for future reference.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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EXPLORING CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES ON DISCRIMINATION IN SELECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore, how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province. Interpretive paradigm and qualitative intrinsic case study design were employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that was solely about the case itself. The sample size comprised of 38 participants who included head teachers, teachers, learners and parents who were purposively selected. In-depth-structured interview guide and focus group discussions guide (FGD) were used to collect data and data were thematically analysed. The results showed that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies. The safety strategies that were used to protect children with disabilities from discrimination included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Punishment strategies included discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing learners with disruption of activities and those learners with unwanted social behaviour. Further, preventive strategies included in house training for staff

on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners with disabilities and provision of Guidance and counselling. Based on results, the study recommends for school-based safety, punishment and preventive strategies to reduce discrimination and to support learners with disabilities in special education schools who may be victim of discrimination.

Keywords: *Child Protection, Discrimination, Preventive strategies, Punishment strategies, Safety strategies*

Introduction

Discrimination is a human rights violation which can have a damaging effect on all learners, especially those who are targeted. Teacher judgements can be biased by a variety of stereotypes which in turn could lead to discrimination. Teachers have been observed to have lower expectations of children with disabilities (Ho & Cherng, 2018) Fighting discrimination takes courage and commitment. Prejudices are deeply ingrained in our society, and discrimination has a long, sad legacy in our schools, but when individuals speak up, students stand to benefit. If we do nothing, such injustices will surely continue. Research has shown that perceived discrimination is associated with a range of adverse outcomes, especially for children with disabilities attending regular schools, including poor academic performance (Baginsky et al., 2019; Armfield et al., 2020).

UNESCO (2019) argued that despite efforts by government to ensure access to education, violations and breaches of the right to education persist. UNESCO reported that persons with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who face the worst discrimination, affecting both their right to go to school and their rights within schools. Human Rights Council (2019) also confirmed that children with disabilities face disproportionately high levels of discrimination. Hence, by ensuring protection of the school environment may play a critical role in supporting children affected by of discrimination (United Nations, 2019). This calls for child protection measures to address the needs of all children, including children with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by discrimination while in school.

Schools can indeed play a key role in reducing discrimination (Banks et al., 2019) and in protecting vulnerable children facing stigma. In other words, schools can act as agents of change. Often it is assumed that schools are ‘change agents’ in terms of changing the attitudes,

aspirations and achievements of individual students; that is, facilitating change within the context of the school. In the study of Mantey (2017), found that children with disabilities mostly face challenges such as discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school. Educational needs of children with disabilities are not properly taken care of and the system does not help them to benefit from education. Dankyi et al (2021) found that, discrimination in school encourages the tendencies that distinguish, exclude or restrict individuals or groups with disabilities from having access to quality education. Because of these inequities, many children with disabilities are not reaping the full benefits of education. Rijbroek et al. (2019) also indicated that 100% of school administrators reported having problems handling children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms and the majority of these administrators lacked knowledge of specific disabilities and special needs. If that is the case, then one asks, how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools.

Statement of the Problem

Although education is recognized as a fundamental right of Children with disabilities and the government is making extensive efforts to ensure inclusivity, enrolment and participation in a classroom environment absent of discrimination are questionable and need to be treated as a priority. Children with disabilities in schools are subject to multiple deprivations and limited opportunities in several dimensions of their lives. UNICEF (2019) reported that almost two-third of school going learners with disabilities have been discriminated by their peers with or without disabilities on daily. Discrimination contributes to students' reduced sense of belonging at school, disengagement from school, decreased educational aspirations, and perceptions of the school environment as unsafe, all of which negatively impact on academic performance. Similarly, Njelesani et al (2022), posits that learners with disabilities experience discrimination by peers and teachers which makes them miss classes, have problems concentrating or drop out of school. It affects their access to and participation in education, attainment and future prospects. Therefore, as learners with disabilities are a vulnerable group, little is known on child protection measures put in place to protect these learners with disabilities from discrimination in special education schools. Hence, the need to establish how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province

Theoretical Framework

The ecological approach by Bronfenbrenner (1979) guided the study. From an ecological perspective, child discrimination is viewed as a transactional issue between teacher, children and the environment, and the complexity surrounding discrimination of the child with disability can be understood in several ways by an ecological approach. To protect children with disabilities and prevent them from discrimination, different stakeholders including those with direct (family, and teachers) and indirect contact (school administration, NGOs and government) need to work together. Ecological system theory is applicable to this study because it brings about child-teacher relationship, which is the tenet of child protection in school. The ecological approach provides protective factors that apply in schools, and therefore, it is beneficial in ensuring the safety of children with disabilities in a school environment. The teacher is potentially able to provide a crucial link to many of the discriminated child's needs. Teachers have the prospective not only to help tend to the emotional wellbeing of the child, but also aid the family in gaining access to the services they need to help avoid any future discrimination (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Having access to the types of services, along with positive school experiences, can have an impact beyond the classroom and affect children in a positive manner throughout their lives.

Literature Review

Discrimination are significant and long-standing social issues facing students, educators, and adults; yet, the gap between research findings and real, tangible solutions seems to be growing. Banks et al (2018) in their study on disability and discrimination in Ireland noted that in schools, discrimination make it difficult for students to learn because they do not feel safe or accepted. Hence, teachers and education professionals, have a key role to play in both supporting children and young people with a visible difference and creating an inclusive learning environment for all pupils by reporting every form of discrimination in school (Banks et al., 2018). Also, Mantey (2017) study on Challenges and perspectives from stakeholders on discrimination against children with disabilities in mainstream schools in Southern Ghana. The study found that children with disabilities mostly face challenges of discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school. Hence, the study by Mantey (2017) suggested that in order to address issues of discrimination most important thing is to be

proactive and to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students report any incidents of discrimination to the school administration.

In the study of Janardhana (2015) on discrimination against differently abled children among rural communities in India. The article attempted to analyse and describe the common discriminatory grounds that children with disabilities commonly face from their immediate families. The study found that people with disabilities also report a greater incidence of repeat discrimination, with 77 per cent of those who experienced discrimination saying it occurred more than once. Further the study revealed that it happens when education providers specifically exclude students with disabilities from educational services, withhold benefits that are available to others, or impose extra burdens that are not imposed on others, without a legitimate reason (Janardhana, 2015; Bastart, et al., 2021). Bastart, et al (2021) pointed the need of setting of initial priorities that should go hand in hand with professional development for senior leadership teams as well as teaching staff. In particular, it is important for school staff to be trained in beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices. Hence, schools should strongly commit to ensure protection for the wellbeing of children with special needs.

According to Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) in their study Greek teachers' experience and perceptions of child abuse/neglect in Greece. The study revealed that lack of appropriate facilities, inaccessible school buildings, high pupil to teacher ratios, and limited support for children with disabilities are some of the factors are associated with increased risk of discrimination in schools. Not only that, Swearer & Hymel (2015) study on variations across student subgroups on discrimination in schools in United States. The study also found that a range of disability discrimination issues were uncovered in the areas of enrolment, post enrolment, meeting personal support needs, participation and belonging, discriminatory attitudes by staff, other parent attitudes, and insensitivity to disability specific issues hence the school need to have policy that defines actions on discrimination in school. With those risks of discrimination in school the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) recommended for policies are needed to specifically support and protect members from different forms of discrimination within the school. However, little is known about how the learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in special education schools.

Deuchert et al. (2017) in their study disability discrimination in higher education in Switzerland the study found that children with disabilities are treated unfairly and discriminated against

because of who they are, this had a detrimental effect on their mental health, their self-esteem, and their educational performance. This study noted that it is important that schools understand how to protect students with disabilities from discrimination. According to the study by Sightsaver (2021) suggested that to protect the children from discrimination there is need to ensure quality education opportunity; upholding human rights; safe school environment; physical accessibility of school and related facilities; capacity building; family-school partnerships; and appropriate language use and increasing awareness campaigns among other interventions

Material and Methods

Research design

This study was guided by a Constructivist Paradigm, as it enabled the researcher to have in depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on how children with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province. In keeping with the research paradigm, a qualitative research design, an intrinsic case study design was employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that was solely about the case itself. In that case the child with disability and child protection measures of discrimination in special education school was of primary interest in the study. An intrinsic case study is when the aim is fundamentally to understand the case (Kamal, 2019), and in this case was to explore protective measure put in place to protect children with disabilities from discrimination while in schools.

Study population and sampling procedure

For the study population, purposive critical case sampling was used to select 2 head teachers as they were the in charge and overseers of children's safety protection while in school. Expert sampling was used to sample 12 Teachers as they have day to day responsibility for children protection from discrimination, while in school. Criterion sampling was used to select 12 Learners as they were key informers who appreciate child protection measure on discrimination, in special education schools. For 12 Parents were brought in to help validate the views of head teachers, teachers and learners on how the school protects the children from discrimination and criterion sampling was used to sample them. The sample sizes of teachers, parents and learners are adequate as they are consistent with the principle of data saturation.

Guest et al (2006) state that in qualitative studies, saturation may occur with as few as six participants. Jassim and Whitford (2014), also found that after the 10th interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. Therefore, it was deemed that the data collection was reached a saturation point, the two more interviews were to ensure and confirm that there are no new themes emerging (Jassim and Whitford, 2014).

Research instruments and Data collection procedures

The research instruments that were used in this study included semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussions guide (FGD). The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect in-depth qualitative data from head teachers and teachers as it allows a back and forth dialogue (Vagle, 2014), thus providing an opportunity to react to comments, change wording of questions, interjections for probes and clarifications. Focus group discussion guide were used to collect data from learners and parents, it was chosen because it allowed participants to discuss their concerns in a group. As participants interact within the group the quality and richness of data were enhanced. Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were triangulated to enhance trustworthiness of the study findings.

Data analysis

The data was analysed manually to answer the research questions on how children with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools, using six major stages that includes familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and report writing and where possible, verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants (Saldaña et al.,2014).

Results

The research question of this study focused on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province. A question was asked to the participants: *“How are children with disabilities protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province?”* From the findings three significant themes emerged namely Safety strategies, Punishment strategies and Prevention strategies.

This were supported by relevant codes or near codes as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Ways children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools

Themes	Codes or Near Codes
1. Safety strategies	• Developing school child protection policies. • Reacting to acts of discrimination in schools. • Reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration. • Routine checking to stop discrimination acts.
2. Punishment strategies	• Punishing learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks. • Providing positive and negative reinforcement. • Punishing learners with disruption of activities. • Punishing learners with unwanted social behaviours.
3. Prevention strategies	• In house training for staff on discrimination issues. • Engaging in CPDs and teacher group meeting on handling children. • Provision of Guidance and counselling.

Source: Researcher's illustration based on fieldwork

Safety strategies

The study findings indicated that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies. These strategies included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts.

These findings were evidenced in the following verbal account given by one female parent participant during the third focus group discussion <**FGD 3 FP**> who observed that:

“To protect children from discrimination the school has rules and regulation which stop everyone, parent, teachers or fellow learners from discrimination others by word of mouth or action or denying them access to what they are entitled to in school” (28.10.2022).

Adding to the same discussion, one head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 HT2> reported that: “As school administration we have come up with the child protection policy to help every individual at our school how to cope up with children living with disabilities” (25.10. 2022).

Contributing on the same, another female learner participant from School 2 during second focus group discussion <FGD 2 FL> confirmed that: “To ensure that children with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools, we report all forms of ill-treatment to the administration so that the offenders are punished” (20.01.2023).

These findings were supported by one female Specialist teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <SCH 1 ST3 F> who noted that: “As teachers we conduct routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts in the school” (21.10.2022).

Based on the findings above, children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies such developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. These discrimination prevention strategies enabled the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

Punishment strategies

The findings of the study also indicated that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using punishment strategies. These strategies included punishing children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing children with disruption of activities and punishing learners with unwanted social behaviour.

In support of this, one female Specialist teacher-participant from School 1 during interviews, <SCH 1 ST5 F > noted that: “We usually punish children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks” (21.10.2022).

In her contribution on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination, one female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 < SCH 2 ST8 M> reported that: “We provide positive and negative reinforcement to the children. By positive reinforcement, we give praises and awards to good performing children. Concerning negative reinforcement, we withdraw certain incentives from the children” (26.10.2022).

Adding to the same discussion, one head teacher participant from School 2 <SCH 2 HT2> expressed additional feelings by observing that: “Children with disruptive behaviour are usually punished. Because of our strictness, some children don’t even misbehave” (25.10.2025).

A similar sentiment came from another male Specialist teacher participant from School 1< SCH 1 ST2 M> who mentioned that: “Children fear punishment. So, when they hear that all those with unwanted social behaviour will be punished, they stop misbehaving” (21.10.2022).

Based on the findings above, it was clear that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using punishment strategies such as punishing children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing children with disruption of activities and punishing children with unwanted social behaviour. Thus, if these prevention strategies were implemented, children with disabilities would be protected for discrimination in schools.

Prevention strategies

Concerning the findings of the study on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention strategies, participants revealed that some of the prevention strategies employed included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling.

This was confirmed by one male Specialist teacher participant from School 1 <SCH 1 ST4 M> who reported that supported these findings: “To protect children with disabilities from

discrimination in selected special education schools, we engaged teachers in the school in house training for staff on discrimination issues” (21.10.2022).

One other male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 <**SCH 2 ST10 M**> added that: “Engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners is one-way children with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools” (26.10.2022).

These findings were also supported by views of one female parent participant from school 2 during third focus group discussion <**FGD 3 FP**> who stated that:

“The school also has special education teachers and guidance teachers who counsel them against discrimination. I have witnessed some individual teachers have taken upon themselves to assign learners to help those with disabilities to write or copy for them the notes in class, promoting the spirit of brotherhood” (28.10.2022).

With the findings above, it was clear that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention strategies such as in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling.

Discussion

The research objective of this study focused on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The findings on how children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools through three significant themes emerged namely safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies.

The results indicated that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies. These strategies included developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. To protect children from discrimination the school had rules and regulation

which stop everyone, parent, teachers or fellow learners from discriminating others by word of mouth or action or denying them access to what they are entitled to in school. School administration have come up with the child protection policy to help every individual in school how to cope up with children living with disabilities. These findings were in line with the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) who indicated that policies are needed to specifically support and protect members from different forms of discrimination within the school. Schools need to make it clear that they have a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination. Similarly, Swearer & Hymel (2015) noted that schools are engaged in development of written policy that defines procedures and rules as deterrent to discrimination in schools.

Further, the school has to ensure that school staff report all forms of ill-treatment to the administration so that the offenders are punished. These findings were consistent with the study by Banks et al (2018) who indicated that teachers and education professionals, have a key role to play in both supporting children and young people with a visible difference and creating an inclusive learning environment for all pupils by reporting every form of discrimination in school. Similarly, the study by Mantey (2017) reported that in order to address issues of discrimination most important thing is to be proactive and to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students by reporting any incidents of discrimination to the school administration. Also, teachers need to conduct routine check-ups to stop harassment and discrimination acts in school. There is need to increase supervision in areas in school where students are fearful of going, creating more opportunities for constructive learning and play in school. These discrimination prevention strategies enable the teachers in the school to protect learners with disabilities in schools.

Further, the findings of the study also indicated that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination through punishment strategies that included punishing children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing children with disruption of activities and punishing learners with unwanted social behaviour. The schools usually punish children using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks against peer with disabilities. Children with disruptive behaviour are also usually punished and because of school strictness, some children don't even misbehave. Children fear punishment. So, when they hear that all those with unwanted social behaviour will be punished, they stop misbehaving.

Furthermore, the school provide positive reinforcement in form of give praises and awards to good performing children, then negative reinforcement, by withdrawing certain incentives from the children. These results resonate with Duncan et al (2020) who revealed that in a classroom setting, for any positive action to address discrimination the teacher need to be giving praise, letting students out of unwanted behaviour, or providing token rewards, candy, extra playtime, or fun activities. This simply adding a factor to increase a behavior. While for perpetuator of discrimination something uncomfortable or otherwise unpleasant should take away in response to a stimulus. Over time, the target behavior should increase with the expectation that the unpleasant thing will be taken away. Thus, with these prevention strategies in place and reinforced, children with disabilities would be protected for discrimination in schools.

Additionally, children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools through prevention strategies which included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners with special education needs and or disabilities and provision of guidance and counselling. To protect children with disabilities from discrimination, the school engage teachers in the house training for staff on discrimination issues. These findings agree with the report of Maciver et al (2019) who reported that school can provide training for school personnel, discussing ways to talk about race and prejudice in the classroom, raise awareness of the necessity of fair and just classrooms, and close the achievement gap between marginalized and non-marginalized students. This has been also achieved by engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners with special education needs and or disabilities and on the best ways of fighting discrimination in special education schools. These findings were consisted with the study by Bastart, et al (2021) who suggested that the setting of initial priorities should go hand in hand with professional development for senior leadership teams as well as teaching staff. An element of personal training for tackling of discrimination in school. In particular, it is important for school staff to be trained in beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices.

The schools also have guidance teachers who provide counselling in school against discrimination to teacher and learners. These results were in line with Deuchet et al (2017) who indicated that most important thing for guidance and counselling teachers in school to

deal with discrimination is to be aware of the signs of discrimination, talk to the students who are being targeted, speak out against discrimination and promote inclusion in classroom or school. With the findings above, it was clear that children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, children with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using safety strategies, punishment strategies and prevention strategies. The safety strategies that were used to protect children with disabilities from discrimination in selected special education schools included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. Punishment strategies included punishing those using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks, providing positive and negative reinforcement, punishing learners with disruption of activities and punishing learners with unwanted social behaviour. Further, preventive strategies that were used included in house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. These strategies enable the teachers in special education schools to protect children with disabilities from discrimination.

Based on these results, the study recommends the following:

- ❖ School to introduce rules and regulation (policy) on discrimination that promote inclusion and diversity in all aspect of school experience among learners with disabilities
- ❖ The school to act to tackle the root cause of discrimination, including attitude that underpin discrimination among learners with disabilities in special education school
- ❖ There is need for school-based safety, punishment and preventive strategies to reduce discrimination and to support learners with disabilities in special education schools who may be victim of discrimination.

- ❖ There is need for collaboration among teacher, parents and learners in schools for the purpose of identifying and reporting all forms of direct or indirect discrimination among learners with disabilities.
- ❖ The special education schools to decrease school and self-discrimination among learners with disabilities and promote affirming and inclusive attitudes and behaviour targeted to learners with disabilities in school.

Conflict of Interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES AGAINST NEGLECT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The purpose was to explore, how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools. Interpretive paradigm with Qualitative intrinsic case study design was employed. The sample size comprised of 38 participants who included head teachers, teachers, learners and parents who were selected by purposive In-depth-structured interview guide and focus group discussions guide (FGD) were used to collect data and data were analysed by thematic analysis. The results showed that children with disabilities were protected from neglect material support strategies through provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical treatment. Other strategies

included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities, offering encouragements, psychological care and involving parents. The result also revealed that children with disabilities were protected from neglect by enhancing disability awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children. The study recommends for the schools to ensure child protection in special education school from neglect by enhancing the promotion of children's wellbeing within the school-setting.

Key Words: *Child Protection, Material Support, Professional Development, Neglect, Social and Emotional Support, Special Education Schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Child neglect is widely recognised as a chronic and pervasive public health issue, often considered to be the most complex form of child maltreatment rarely based upon a specific incident. The prevalence in the normal population was found to be between 16 and 26 percent, while the prevalence in persons with disabilities seem to be significantly higher (Tingberg& Nilsson, 2020). Thus, Emmanuel (2019) reported that many neglected children may feel unworthy to interact with peers, may isolate themselves, and may encounter peer rejection. In return, there are feelings of anxiety, guilt, embarrassment, depression, and anger. Because of these inequities, many children with disabilities are not reaping the full benefits of education (Emmanuel, 2019). Sharley (2022) noted that Child neglect in school is a symptom of a bigger problem that needs to be addressed. It often is an indicator of other forms of neglect and abuse occurring within the home, or of exposure to bigger societal ills. Sharley (2019) reported that neglect is the most common form of child abuse in schools, but frequently goes unrecognized within the school-aged population and represent major threats to child health and well-being. The incidents of neglect in special educational settings for learners with disabilities are not formally reported or recorded by education authorities, nor are systematic steps being taken to prevent or mitigate the risk of their occurrence (Lucinda 2021). Avdibegovi & Brarki (2020) acknowledged that neglect has lacked attention in comparison to other forms of abuse because it is thought of as less serious than other forms of child maltreatment, often accumulative and not always instantly observable. Despite the relatively large body of literature on child neglect, there is a dearth of research in special educational school on the protection measures applied in schools. Child neglect is among a wide range of problems that present potential barriers to

effective learning and teaching (Goris, 2016). In school it happens when there is parent's failure to ensure their child's educational needs are being met. Indicators often include hunger, inadequate clothing, missed appointments or health checks, poor hygiene, persistent lateness, educational absence, or children presenting with cognitive or emotional delay, all of which can be observed in schools. Wider factors such as substance or alcohol use, learning disability, mental health problems, or domestic violence and abuse in the family, all increase the likelihood of a child experiencing neglect, and can potentially be detected by school staff during interactions between the child and their parents. It is widely recognised that children are unable to learn successfully unless their basic needs have been met (Suyanto & Harefa, 2019). It is for this reason that schools are pivotal sites for the identification and intervention in child neglect. Numerous studies indicate that neglect, contributes to the risk of children coming late, being absents or drop out from school (Matulac and Zamora, 2020; LeCroy & Milligan-LeCroy, 2020). However, if that is the case there is need to know how learners with disability were protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Intervening in neglect at the earliest opportunity not only serves to minimise the long-term and dangerous effects on children, but it also saves the cost of reactive services on the public purse (Suyanto & Harefa, 2019). Although schools play a crucial role in the protection of children, there is little known about what level, and in what form, the protection measures being exercised by staff in special education schools when responding to concerns of child neglect. More and more children continue to experience neglect in schools and this has caused on the increase of drop from school among children with disabilities (Musonda and Qinglin, 2015). UNESCO (2021) reported that persons with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who face the worst neglect, affecting both their right within school and their rights through school. Given the universal nature of service provision within the school, and the prevalence of neglect, schools are well-placed to notice and intervene early and provide support to children with disabilities identified being neglected in special education school. How learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools, is the phenomena this study intends to address.

Statement of the Problem: Parents entrust their children with disabilities' education in teachers at school. Although not all, but some parents still think that children's education is left entirely to the school were they also face neglect. In school, neglect occurs when a parent or teacher fails to ensure an appropriate education is provided for the child. In addition, it also includes wider aspects of the child's learning and development such as: suitable stimulation,

taking an interest in the child's education, identification of and provision for any special educational needs, and engaging with parents' evenings, assigned homework tasks and school events. Njelesani & Swarm (2022) reported that children with disabilities their school basic needs go unmet. The increasing burden of neglect on children with disabilities has induced absenteeism or prematurely force them to drop out of school because of fear of being stigmatised and look more vulnerable in the eyes of the peers (Ng'andu & Chilufya, 2019). This has raised concern over the child protection measures in place in special education schools to ensure all children are protected against neglect while in school (Hatimbula et al 2019). Therefore, findings provide the basis for recommendations to policy makers and other stakeholders on priorities and next steps for strengthening child protection measures in educational settings. The findings have important implications for future policy and practice in the delivery of school-based child protection measures, towards neglect. Hence, the need to explore, how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province.

Theoretical Framework: The theoretical models that are used was Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Risk factors can be found at all levels when using ecological models. The theory affirms that the developing person is embedded in these series of environmental systems that interact with one another and with the individual to influence for protection against any abuse or exploitation. It also believes that social networks and the support that members provide both directly and indirectly affect the behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).). Research shows that factors involving the relationship parent-child are among the most important to address neglect in school among learners with special education needs and or disabilities.

Literature Review: Neglect refer to deprivation or the absence of sufficient attention, responsiveness, and protection appropriate to the age and needs of a child (Avdibegovi & Brki, 2020). In this study it will be considered as a school's or teacher's failure to provide the requisite resources, academic and moral provision to carry on with various engagements at school. It involves the failure to provide supportive educational opportunities for the child with disability. In schools, child neglect is the most common reason for taking child protection action. Avdibegovi & Brki, (2020) revealed that learners in school who experience neglect in school need material support because the availability of learning resources and other school requisites influence the stay of the learner in the boarding school. Although neglect is one of

the biggest threats to development and welfare of children, research on the protection measures of children with disabilities from neglect in special education schools has not explored (Sharley, 2019).

Ngororabanga & Habinshuti (2021) who looked at abuse and neglect of children with disability as one of the causes of drop out of school in Gatebe Sector, Burera District in Rwanda intended to examine to what extent do abuse and neglect of children with disabilities contributes to their drop out of school in Gatebe Sector and improving the community awareness about abuse and neglect of children with disabilities. The study found that neglect frequently goes unreported and, historically has not been acknowledge or publicized as greatly as child abuse. The study suggested that materials support in school as they have great influence on learning and behavior of children, this learner with disabilities need material support from the school and well-wishers. Sharley (2020) indicated that children with disabilities are neglected in the area physical barriers including inaccessible buildings for learners in wheelchairs, toilets, buildings without lifts and elevators to facilitate easy circulation around buildings. Such neglect makes children with disabilities feel uncomfortable and become at risk of dropping out of school, hence need support in their stay in school like books and pen. If that is the situation one wonders on how learners with disability were protected from neglect. Kang and Jain (2020) in their study child abuse and neglect in the COVID-19 era in British Columbia. Kang and Jain (2020) argued that neglect has received less attention in maltreatment research than other subtypes, yet neglect may have a detrimental impact on school performance as this learner are not supported materials and with other school requisites. Maciver et al (2019) in their study participation of children with disabilities in school in Scotland. The findings showed that despite state efforts to meet certain requirements regarding the education of children with disabilities, different forms of educational neglect are still there, such as permitting habitual truancy, failure to accommodate a child with disabilities, low value given to special educational needs. (Maciver et al., 2019). Children in school need encouragement to boost their mental health and well-being. Children who feel encouraged and confident will likely perform better at school, participate in clubs or sports, have better relationships with family and peers and be healthier overall. Despite the relatively large body of literature on child neglect, there is a dearth of research locally child protection measures for neglect in special education schools. As UNICEF (2018) & Sharley (2020) suggested that protection of children from neglect in school encompasses the school policy; safe school environment; partnership and shared responsibility; support services; increasing advocacy and awareness; staff training and children participation

and other relevant services in school. The study of Sharley (2019) argued schools to formulate strictly law and policy to prohibit mistreatment so as to ensure that the children with disabilities are well protected from neglect. Developing a school policy to deal with neglect can help the school to agree on a shared vision and overall plan to tackle violence in schools which little is known on its visibility in special education schools. In the study of Emmanuel (2019) on child neglect: the role of school counselors in Nigeria. The aim of this study was to empower parents, community leaders, and stakeholders in the educational system and most importantly school counsellors on the counselling techniques that can be adopted in dealing with child neglect and ultimately reducing the menace to the barest minimum in societies. The study suggested that in order to have protective school from neglect, schools must create and maintain a safe environment by providing means and area where the children can seek help and report incidents of neglect of utmost confidentiality. The school should engage in disability awareness, the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding those with disabilities can be brought to the forefront (Emmanuel, 2019). Special education schools need to have a healthy and protective school climate to foster the holistic well-being of children, hence, the need for this study to explore the current situation.

Al-Qaysi (2018) noted that successful protection requires carefully coordinated and communicated actions. The study suggested that school need to offer guidance and counselling the affected children of neglect in school. Guidance and counseling provide children with the skills and methods necessary to manage their emotions and navigate stressful situations. It promotes a higher level of self-esteem and self-confidence, can improve social skills, and assist neglected students by providing appropriate services, high-quality services, with research-based intervention techniques, to children who are victims of neglect. In the study of, Armfield et al (2020), school absenteeism associated with child protection system involvement, maltreatment type, and time in out-of-home care in Australia. The study findings indicated that protecting children with disabilities from neglect is based on the principle of partnership and shared responsibility across a broad range of human service professionals. Most children with disabilities are best protected and cared for within their own family; however, when parents, carers or guardians are unwilling or unable to protect their children from significant neglect, the protection of the child becomes the responsibility of the school. The study suggested that guidance teacher as the work in collaboration with the parents of the children need to consistently offer love and support to the child to help them build feelings of trust and safety. The school need to offer emotional and loving support to the child when they are upset or acting

out. The local action by schools to inform parents about neglect in school against their children with disabilities as not be established, hence the need of this study. Daro (2019) in his study which was on shift in perspective: a universal approach to child protection in New Jersey, United States. The study found that children are neglected due to lack of support service which results on them engaging in various risks. It is noted that to protect children from neglecting due to lack of support service we must provide equitable access to quality universal services for children with disabilities. As the study found disparities in service access that was often shaped by race and class, mean that a disproportionate number of minority and poor families receive distinctly fewer and often more punitive service options (Ferguson, 2017). Despite the fact that to protects children with disabilities against all forms of neglect schools should ensure immediate access to appropriate services; and provides durable solutions in the child's best interest, less is known on how children with disabilities are protected from neglect in special education school. Supports services are needed for families with children with disabilities to assist in meeting the child's health and developmental needs, but also to support the parents in managing the often more complex-parenting environment.

The study of Onolemhenmhen & Osunde (2018) on child neglect as predictor of academic performance among senior secondary school students in Edo State, Nigeria. The study further indicated that in order to provide protection to children the head teacher and all other staff who work with children need to undertake appropriate child protection awareness training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively. In light of protecting children, teachers need to have knowledge, training, and experience on issues of protecting children from neglect (Ondo, 2017). Teachers need to receive training that explains their responsibilities for children's safety and wellbeing and outlines how those responsibilities should be met with sensitivity and purpose ending child neglect. A study of Ng'andu & Chilufya (2019) reported that staff within schools hold a particular advantage, as schools possess long-standing interactions with children between the ages of 4 to 16 years old. Children have the right to be heard, to express opinions on matters that affect them, and to access information, while respecting the roles and responsibilities of parents and others in authority. When children learn to communicate opinions, take responsibility and make decisions, they are prepared for improved academic performance and good citizenship (UNICEF, 2018). Children can help determine how to create safe and enabling school environments and children who experience violence can provide input and make choices in their care, safety, and access to justice. Despite all the measures and efforts put in place to educate every child in the special

education schools, children with disabilities still find it challenging to have full access to education in schools due to neglect (Human Rights Council, 2019).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Design: The researcher used the interpretive paradigm and the data collected was qualitatively interpreted and analysed. This assisted in data understanding and have in depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on how children with disabilities are protected from neglect in special education schools in Luapula province.

Qualitative intrinsic case study design was employed because the case study outcomes were intended to tell the researcher something that was solely about the case itself. In that case the child with disability and child protection measures of neglect in specials education school was of primary interest in the study. An intrinsic case study is when the aim is fundamentally to understand the case (Kamal, 2019), and in this case was to explore protective measure put in place to protect children with disabilities from neglect while in schools.

Study Sample and Sampling Procedure: For the study population, purposive critical case sampling was used to select 2 head teachers as they were the in charge and overseers of children's safety protection while in school. Expert sampling was used to sample 12 Teachers as they have day to day responsibility for children protection from neglect, while in school. Criterion sampling was used to select 12 Learners as they were key informers who appreciate child protection measure on neglect, in special education schools. For 12 Parents were brought in to help validate the views of head teachers, teachers and learners on how the school protects the children from neglect and criterion sampling was used to sample them. The sample sizes of teachers, parents and learners are adequate as they are consistent with the principle of data saturation. Guest et al (2006) state that in qualitative studies, saturation may occur with as few as six participants. Jassim and Whitford (2014), also found that after the 10th interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. Therefore, it was deemed that the data collection was reached a saturation point, the two more interviews were to ensure and confirm that there are no new themes emerging (Jassim and Whitford, 2014).

Instruments for Data Collection: In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were used to collect data. Interviews and FGD were appropriate for this study because they

gave participants opportunity to fully describe their experiences. Questions for the interviews and FGD were prepared by the researcher and reviewed by the supervisor. Questions were based on the objectives of the study

Data Analysis: The data was analysed manually to answer the research questions on how children with disabilities are protected from neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The study used an Inductive thematic approach for data analysis. The first stage of the data analysis involved the repeated reading of all the interview transcripts and extracting significant statements, including quotes. The significant statements were coded, and the initial codes were then grouped into more abstract levels of themes. Verbalisms were used to indicate actual voices of the participants.

RESULTS

The research question for the study was aimed at establishing how children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools. The participants were asked how children with disabilities protected from neglect in selected special education schools. The study revealed that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in special education schools using Material Support strategies, Social and Emotional Support and Professional Development Strategies as indicated by codes or near codes generated during data analysis as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Ways children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools

Themes	Codes or Near Codes	
1. Material support strategies	☐	Providing mobility aids.
	☐	Providing Auxiliary aids and services.
	☐	Providing financial and material support
	☐	Accommodating learners in the boarding.
	☐	Provision of the school requirements to learners.
	☐	Providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners.
	☐	Provision of bursaries to learners.
	☐	providing medical or mental-health treatment
2. Social and Emotional Support Strategies	☐	Provision of guidance and counselling sessions.
	☐	Providing motivational talks
	☐	Acceptance and commitment therapy.
	☐	Engaging in religious activities.
	☐	Providing encouragements to learners
	☐	Providing psychological care.
	☐	Involving parents.
3. Professional Development Strategies	☐	Conduct disability-awareness trainings.
	☐	Orient new staff on how to handle learners.
	☐	Conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children.
	☐	Encourage teamwork and love amongst children.

Below is a detailed presentation of findings cited above concerning Material Support strategies, Social and Emotional Support and Professional Development Strategies that were used to protect children with disabilities from neglect in selected special education schools.

Material Support Strategies: The study findings indicated that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Material Support strategies. These strategies included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding and provision of the school requirements to learners. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, provision of bursaries to learners and providing medical or mental-health treatment. Supporting the findings above, one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <SCH1 HT1> lamented that: “We provide extra aids or services by providing equipment or extra help, for example the use of a laptop and tuition in touch typing like for those with learners with visual impairment. Other equipment is wheelchair, arm crutches and walking white canes” (20.10.2022).

In line with findings, one other head teacher- participant from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 HT2> said that: “We try also to provide auxiliary aids and services, for example, a special piece of equipment or a sign language interpreter and school requisites like washing and bathing soap and exercise books and pencils/pens” (25.10.2022).

Similar sentiments were expressed by one female parent participant during the fourth focus group discussion <FGD 4 FP> who noted: “This school is supported financially by well-wishers to meet school requirements to for each child and the school provides guidance and counselling services to the learners” (28.10.22).

Similarly, one other female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 ST9 F> pointed out that: “The school helps in providing school requisites to those in need and the school go a mile further in proving assistive devices and aid to this learner like walking can, computer with JAWS” (25.10.2022).

It was evident from the findings of the study that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Material Support strategies such as provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support,

accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical or mental-health treatment.

Social and Emotional Support Strategies: Regarding the findings of the study on how children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Social and Emotional Support strategies, participants revealed that some of the Social and Emotional Support strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, providing motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities. Other Social and Emotional Support Strategies that were employed to protect children with disabilities from neglect in schools were providing encouragements to children, psychological care and involving parents as supported by one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <SCH1 HT1> who noted: “Regarding support, we conduct disability-awareness training in school through teacher group meeting. This gives children with disabilities who are neglected some hope” (20.10.2022).

Similarly, one male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 <SCH2 ST10 M >reported that: *“The school provides motivation talk to parents and their children on the importance of keeping these children in school and how they can contribute to economic development of this country”* (26.10.2022).

Another female learner participant during the first focus group discussion<FGD 1 FL>with similar views expressed that:

“The school always engage our parent if there is something affecting us in school. We usually see some parents coming in school. For example, when I was not feeling well my class teacher called by parents and my parents came to pick me and took me to the clinic” (31.10.2022).

In support of this view, one Head teacher-participants from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 HT2> lamented that: “For children with disabilities who are neglected, we show them love, care and support them academically, materially and spiritually so that they feel encouraged to be in school” (25.10.2022).

Notably, children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Social and Emotional Support strategies. These strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and

commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities, offering encouragements, psychological care and involving parents.

Professional Development Strategies: The findings of the study also indicated that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Professional Development Strategies. These strategies included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children as indicated by one Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews <SCH1 HT1> who lamented that: “Through our CPDs and teacher group meeting we try by all means to induct and orient new staff on how to handle different learners with disabilities with their specific learning needs” (20.10.2022).

In support of this view, one Head teacher participant from School 2 during interviews <SCH2 HT2> noted that: “At my school teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions to both sighted and children living with disabilities are planned and implemented” (25.10.2022).

In conformity with the findings above, one Head teacher participant from School 1 <SCH 1 HT1> lamented that: “Regarding professional development strategies, special education strategies are discussed in CPD meetings that meet the specific learning need for these children in the school” (25.10.2022).

In agreement with the findings above, one male parent participant during the third Focus Group Discussion <FGD 3 MP: > articulated that:

“Teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children in the school. Children with disabilities require love, friendship protection, guidance and much help, at the same time they need much guidance and sensitization on how-to live-in love with one another” (28.10.22).

Contributing on the findings above, one Head teacher participant from school 2 during interviews <SCH 2 HT2> reported that: “The school provides capacity building programs to the teachers, to have knowledge how to meet the specific learning needs of each child” (25.10.2022).

It was evident that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Professional Development Strategies. These strategies included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children.

Discussion

The study findings indicated that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Material Support strategies. These strategies included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding and provision of the school requirements to learners. These results were in line with Avdibegovi & Brki, (2020) who noted that learners in school who feel who experience neglect in school need material support because the availability of learning resources and other school requisites influence the stay of the learner in the boarding school. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, provision of bursaries to learners and providing medical or mental-health treatment. This supported by Ngororabanga & Habinshuti (2021) who revealed that materials have great influence on learning and behavior on children in school. Children from disadvantaged families like those with disabilities need support in school inform of materials like washing and bathing soap, lotion and books and pens like any children to enjoy like any child to enjoy life in school. The school is supported financially by well-wishers to meet school requirements to for each child and the school provides guidance and counselling services to the learners.

The school provide extra aids or services to learners with disabilities by providing equipment or extra help. The school helps in providing school requisites to those in need requisites like washing and bathing soap and exercise books and pencils/pens and the school go a mile further in proving assistive devices and aid to this learner like walking can, computer with JAWS. Other equipment is wheelchair, arm crutches and walking white canes. These results are contrary to the study by Sharley (2020), who indicated that children with disabilities are neglected, school lack equipment, accessible instructional material and inaccessible buildings for learners in wheelchairs, toilets, buildings without lifts and elevators to facilitate easy circulation around buildings. Regarding the findings of the study on how children with

disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Social and Emotional Support strategies, participants revealed that some of the Social and Emotional Support strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, providing motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities. This resonates with Hatimbula et al (2019) who indicated that build an environment of warmth, reassurance and support by talking or doing age appropriate activities together that they will enjoy. Take an interest in their life, like how their day was at school or what they love most about their friends. Teachers in school should let affected child talk to them. Listen carefully to what they say about how they feel. Encourage the child to share their feelings. The child must be made to understand that there are no right and wrong feelings, and that it is helpful to share feelings with trusted people. Pay particular attention to their well-being during important life changes like being in a boarding school. Other social and emotional support strategies that were employed to protect children with disabilities from neglect in schools were providing encouragements to children, psychological care and involving parents. This is supported by Maciver et al (2019), who said encouragement can go a long way in boosting a child's mental health and well-being. Children who feel encouraged and confident will likely perform better at school, participate in clubs or sports, have better relationships with family and peers and be healthier overall. Also, UNICEF (2018) & Sharley (2020) suggested that parents and teachers need to work together as parents provide care, direction, guidance and control in a manner appropriate to the child's age and understanding they also determine all aspects of upbringing and support when the child felt neglected in school.

Further, regarding support, the school conduct disability awareness training in school through teacher group meeting. This gives children with disabilities who are neglected some hope. Similarly, Emmanuel (2019), revealed that the school should engage in disability awareness, the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding those with disabilities can be brought to the forefront. When these are gone, attitudes and behaviours become more positive and impactful on support children with disabilities can receive while in school from their parents and teachers. If neglect has to be defeated it calls for digging deeper to create a better understanding on the potential of learners with disabilities for their right through education. For children with disabilities who are neglected, are shown them love, care and support them academically, materially and spiritually so that they feel encouraged to be in school. This is supported by Armfield et al (2020), who indicated that the school through the office of the guidance teacher need to consistently offer love and support to the child to help them build feelings of trust and

safety. The school need to offer emotional and loving support to the child when they are upset or acting out. Notably, children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using social and emotional support strategies. The findings of the study also indicated that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Professional Development Strategies. These strategies included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children. These results were in line with Ondo (2017), who indicated that in light of protecting children, teachers need to have knowledge, training, and experience on issues of protecting children from neglect. Teachers need to receive training that explains their responsibilities for children's safety and wellbeing and outlines how those responsibilities should be met with sensitivity and purpose ending child neglect. Through CPDs and teacher group meeting the school try by all means to induct and orient new staff on how to handle different learners with disabilities with their specific learning needs. The school provides capacity building programs to the teachers, to have knowledge how to meet the specific learning needs of each child. Further, teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children in the school.

These results agree with Al-Qaysi (2018) who indicated that School counsellors are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. School counsellors must be able to guide and assist neglected students by providing appropriate services, high-quality services, with research-based intervention techniques, to children who are victims of neglect. Children with disabilities require love, friendship protection, guidance and much help, at the same time they need much guidance and sensitization on how-to live-in love with one another. It was evident that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Professional Development Strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was evident from the findings of the study that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Material Support strategies such as provision of mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding, provision of school requisites, bursaries to learners and medical or mental-health treatment. Further, children with disabilities were protected from

neglect in selected special education schools using Social and Emotional Support strategies. These strategies employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities, offering encouragements, psychological care and involving parents. The result also revealed that children with disabilities were protected from neglect in selected special education schools using Professional Development Strategies. These strategies included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle children as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst children. Based on these results, the study recommends the following:

- School counsellors and other school staff, there is need of full involvement and support of the parents in the child protection process of the child with special education needs and or disabilities and encourage advocates for protection of children with special education needs and / disabilities against neglect in special education schools
- The schools through head teacher to support and develop effective professional development strategies within their schools that would promote supportive environments and school-based material support where teacher create regular opportunities for learners with special education and or disability who may feel neglected in special education schools
- It is recommended that for the schools to ensure child protection in special education school from neglect should enhance the promotion of children's well-being within the school-setting through material, social and emotional support and professional development.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The ethical approval was provided by the University of Zambia, Zambia with the reference number HSSREC:2022-JUL-047

Consent for Publication:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the research.

Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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Appendix II: Interview Guide for Head Teachers

Dear Sir /Madam,

Ref: *Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Special Education) at the University of Zambia. As the head teacher you have been identified as one of the participants to be interviewed in this study and your participation will be of help to the research.

The study is purely academic and information provided will be treated with outmost confidentiality and will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher.

Your assistance and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Gender of respondent

a. Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age of the respondents

a. 11 – 20 years ☐ b. 21 – 30 years ☐

c. 31 – 40 years ☐ d. 41 – 50 years ☐

e. 51 – 60 years ☐

3. How long have you been heading this school which has children with disabilities?

4. Does your school have a written school-based child protection programme?

5. What steps has the school taken in order to ensure that the children with disabilities are protected from any form of bullying in this school?

6. In your view, how does your school protect children with disabilities from issues of discrimination while school?

7. In your view, how does your school protect children with disabilities from issues of neglect while in school?

8. Could there be anything else you would like to share about how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in this school?

Appendix III: Interview Guide for Teachers

Dear Sir /Madam,

Ref: *Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education at the University of Zambia. As the specialist teacher you have been identified as one of the participants to be interviewed in this study and your participation will be of help to the research.

The study is purely academic and information provided will be treated with outmost confidentiality and will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher.

Your assistance and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Gender of respondent
 - a. Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age of the respondents
 - a. 11 – 20 years ☐ b. 21 – 30 years ☐
 - c. 31 – 40 years ☐ d. 41 – 50 years ☐
 - e. 51 – 60 years ☐
3. How long have you been teaching children with disabilities?
4. Does your school have a written school-based child protection programme?
5. What steps have you taken in order to ensure that the children with disabilities are protected from any form of bullying in classrooms?
6. What steps have you taken in order to ensure that the children with disabilities are protected from any form of discrimination in classrooms?
7. What steps have you taken in order to ensure that the children with disabilities are protected from any form of neglect in classrooms.
8. Could there be anything else you would like to share about how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect while in class?

Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) parents

Dear Sir /Madam,

Ref: *Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Special Education) at the University of Zambia. As a parent you have been identified as one of the participants to be in this discussion for the study and your participation will be of help to the research.

The study is purely academic and information provided will be treated with outmost confidentiality and will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher.

Your assistance and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Gender of respondent

a. Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age of the respondents

a. 11 – 20 years ☐ b. 21 – 30 years ☐

c. 31 – 40 years ☐ d 41 – 50 years ☐

e. 51 – 60 years ☐

3. How long has your child with disability been learning at this school.

4. What is the nature of disability do your child has?

5. What steps has the school taken in order to ensure that the children with disabilities are protected from any form of bullying in this school.

6. Tell me, how this school protect children with disabilities from issues of discrimination they face in order to guarantee them safety while school.

7. From your view, what role has the school taken to ensure that children with disabilities are protected from neglected at this school?

8. Could there be anything else you would like to share about how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect while in school?

Appendix V: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for Learners

Dear Sir /Madam,

Ref: *Exploring Child Protection Measures of Bullying, Discrimination and Neglect in Selected Special Education Schools in Luapula Province, Zambia.*

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Special Education) at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on child protection issues of bullying, discrimination and neglect in school. As the learner you are invited to participate in this study.

The study is purely academic and information provided will be treated with outmost confidentiality and will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher.

Your assistance and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Gender of respondent: Male [] Female []
2. How old are you.....
3. Tell me, has the school given you a written school-based child protection programme?
4. What has the school done in order to ensure that you are protected from any form of bullying while in school.
5. Tell me also, how this school protects you from issues of discrimination while in school.
6. What do you think the school does in order to ensure that you are protected from neglected at this school?
7. Could there be anything else you would like to share about how you want to be protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in this school?

THE END. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix VI: Ethical Clearance



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 Fax: (+260)-211-290 258/253 952 | E-mail: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376
HSSREC IRB No. 00006464

16th September, 2022

REF NO. HSSREC-2022-JUL-047

Moses Chisala
The University of Zambia
School of Education
P.O. Box 32379
LUSAKA

Dear Mr. Chisala,

RE: “EXPLORING CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES ON BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND NEGLECT IN SELECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS”

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC-2022-AUG-007
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 16 th September, 2022	Expiry Date: 15 th September, 2023
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	15 th September, 2023
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	☐ English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled “late submissions” and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.
- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some

funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.

- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. J. I. Ziwa

DR. J. I. Ziwa

**ACTING CHAIRPERSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

CC: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

Appendix VII: Participant Information Sheet



HSSREC FORM 1b

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Telephone: +260-211-290258/293937
Fax: +260-211-290258/293937
Zambia
E-mail drgs@unza.zm

P O Box 32379
Lusaka,

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Informed consent form for the for-Head Teacher, Teachers and Parents who are stakeholders of the selected special education schools in Luapula province and are invited to participate in the research titled, '*Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*'

Name of Principle Investigator: Moses Chisala

Name of Organization: The University of Zambia

Name of Sponsor: Self

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am **Chisala Moses** a student at the University of Zambia in the School of Education and Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education. My research topic is on '*Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*'. This study is not sponsored by any organization or government, but it is for academic purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and your choice will not have an influence on your usual work schedules. If you have any questions, kindly ask me and I will take some time to explain to you or you may ask later as we progress in the discussion.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of the study is to explore how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. A well-protected school environment can provide well-coordinated, equal, comprehensive, reliable and sustainable responses to bullying, discrimination and neglect in school.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in face-to-face interview which might take 35 minutes to one hour.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a stakeholder who should ensure children are protected while in and out of school. I feel you can contribute ensuring that children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose to participate, that is all right. However, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

A. Provide a brief introduction to the format of the research study.

We are asking you to help us learn more on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. We are inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province

B. You are required to participate in an interview with myself.

During the interview, I will sit down with you in a comfortable place at your work place. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The entire interview will be tape-recorded, but no-one will be identified by name on the tape. The tape-recorded data will be kept in the computer. The information recorded is confidential, your name is not being included on the forms or anywhere else, only a number known by me will identify you, and no one else except my supervisor will have access to this information.

Duration

The research will be conducted for slightly over a period of eight weeks. During that time, at each school will have interviews with head teacher, six teacher and six parents for thirty-five minutes each and focus group discussions with learners will be taking place.

Uses of information

This information I will gather from you will be used to help make inform the educational practitioners to on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The information gathered is strictly for academic purposes. The findings will be written in the thesis and findings may also be disseminated in conferences and seminars.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools

in Luapula province. However, we do not wish for this to happen during this research. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion or interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help you and me and policy makers to find out more on how children with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province

Reimbursements

By participating in this study, you will not be provided with any incentive. However, you will be provided with travel expense (if applicable) when you are called upon to a seminar or training meeting for my study.

Confidentiality

Since this study will be conducted in your school and it will draw attention to the people within the school and outside, I will not disclose any information on this study regarding you and the procedure we shall be going through. No part of information that will be collected from you will be disclosed and it will be kept in separate folders of the computer. After the research and publication of results, all documents of data collection will be destroyed. With this, I can assure you that confidentiality will be observed in this study.

This proposal or protocol has been reviewed and approved by HSSREC which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, contact:

Chairperson, Humanities and Social Sciences, Research Ethics Committee,

University of Zambia

P O Box 32379

LUSAKA

Or

Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

University of Zambia

P O Box 32379

LUSAKA

"Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Zambia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

In addition, if you are/ or any person is not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the HSSREC on the address sated above.

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project."

Part II: Certificate of Informed Consent

I have been invited to participate in the research on ‘Exploring Child Protection Issues of Bullying, Discrimination and Neglect in Selected Special Education Schools in Luapula Province, Zambia’

(This section is mandatory)

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked and have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

If illiterate ¹

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant,

¹ A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

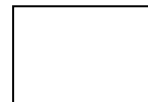
and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness _____ **Thumb print of participant**

Signature of witness _____

Date _____

Day/month/year



Statement by the researcher

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher: Moses Chisala

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS (Names, addresses and phone numbers of the following):

1. Principal Investigator

Names: Chisala Moses

Phone: 0977 603705

E mail: moschisala@gmail.com

Physical address: C/O MOE-CDC Box 50092, Lusaka.

Appendix VIII: Consent Form

UNZAREC



FORM 1b

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Telephone: +260-211-290258/293937
P. O. Box 32379
Fax: +260-211-290258/293937
Lusaka, Zambia
E-mail: drgs@unza.zm

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM

(Translated into vernacular if necessary)

TITLE OF RESEARCH: *Exploring child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia*

REFERENCE TO PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET:

1. Make sure that you read the Information Sheet carefully, or that it has been explained to you to your satisfaction.
2. Your permission is required if tape or audio recording is being used.
3. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, i.e. you do not have to participate if you do not wish to.
4. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty or loss of services to which you are otherwise entitled.
5. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of services and without giving a reason for your withdrawal.

6. You may choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. If there is anything that you would prefer not to discuss, please feel free to say so.
7. The information collected in this interview will be kept strictly confidential.
8. If you choose to participate in this research study, your signed consent is required below before I proceed with the interview with you.
-

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

I have read (or have had explained to me) the information about this research as contained in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I now consent voluntarily to be a participant in this project and understand that I have the right to end the interview at any time, and to choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

My signature below says that I am willing to participate in this research:

Participant's name (Printed):

Participant's signature: Consent Date:

Researcher Conducting Informed Consent (Printed)

Signature of Researcher: Date:

Signature of parent/guardian: Date:

Appendix IX: Permission from the Ministry of Education


THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Telephone: 291381
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370

PO Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Fax: +260-1-292702

Date: 29/09/2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS/ PhD STUDENTS

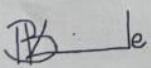
The bearer of this letter Mr./Ms. MOSES CHISALA Computer number 2019117622 is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

He/She is taking a Masters/PhD programme in SPECIAL EDUCATION

The programme has a fieldwork component which he/she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to him/her/.

Yours faithfully

 le

Bibian Kalinde (Dr)
ASSISTANT DEAN POSTGRADUATE STUDIES - SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

cc: Dean-Education
Director-DRGS

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
04 OCT 2022
PERMANENT SECRETARY (A)
P.O. BOX 50093, LUSAKA.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
ASSISTANT DEAN (PG)
29 SEP 2022
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 32379, LUSAKA

ATTENTION
PEO - LUSAKA

All Correspondence should be Addressed to
The Provincial Education Officer
Ministry of Education and not to
Individual Officer by name
Tel: +260 212 821209
Fax: +260 212 821483
E-mail: luapulamo@yahoo.com



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION OFFICER
P.O. Box 710196
MANSA

In reply please quote:

No.

18th October, 2022

Head Teacher
Mambilima Special School-Mwense District
St. Mary's for the Blind- Kawambwa District

**RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR RESEARCH FROM SELECTED
SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN LUAPULA PROVINCE**

Reference is made to the above subject matter.

This is to introduce Moses Chisala, a postgraduate student at the university of Zambia who is conducting a research in special education school with learners with disabilities.

This office is pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to him to collect data from Mambilima Special School in Mwense District and St. Mary's for the Blind in Kawambwa District for the postgraduate research purpose only.

AP

Fredrick Munchinyi
Provincial Education Officer
LUAPULA PROVINCE