Exploring emotional well-being of learners with visual impairment in inclusive education setting. A case study of Kadoma Urban schools in Zimbabwe

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore emotional well-being of learners with visual impairment learning in inclusive setting in Kadoma Urban schools in Zimbabwe. A phenomenological research approach was used to collect data from 8 participants, (3 males and 5 female) who were purposively sampled from leaners with visual impairments learning in inclusive education settings in Kadoma Urban schools. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and transcribed verbatim. Four themes emerged from the inductive thematic analysis of data sources. It was found that participants reported low level of contentment in their learning environment, poor stress management skills, low levels of psychological state and poor quality of life despite being exposed to this human right type of learning (inclusive education). The findings of this study have the potential for the inclusive education policy makers and researchers to better understand emotional well-being of learners with visual impairments learning in inclusive education settings.

INTRODUCTION

The disabling conditions with which learners with visual impairments learn in inclusive education setting causes them to react to it differently and this may affect their emotional well-being. Visual impairment identity and consciousness in learners with visual impairments and their environment may mediate responses to vulnerability (De Kleijn-De Vrankrijker, 2003; Dunn & Elliott, 2005). For instance, if a learner with visual impairments to lead to low emotional well-being, he/she might react with social withdrawal or diminished participation (Wright, 1997). This would result in reduced social participation and, potentially, a lower sense of emotional well-being. However, this might not be true in all cases. Some leaners with visual impairments may take into account their disability, but reframe their social situation and choose to engage in activities that are rewarding, (Fox et al., 2009).

Visual impairments

Visual impairment is defined by WHO (2004) as having a reduced vision or completely absent as a result of some impairment or eye structure. Visual impairment can cause psychological problems (Mpofu & Shumba, 2012). For instance, acquired visual impairment can cause a lot of traumatic emotional disorders and difficulty in coping. The loss of an eye during an accident means the person mourns the loss of his/her eyes and loss of pleasure of seeing as one used to. The degree of visual impairment also has some effect on emotional development. The partially sighted have more emotional stability because some of them have useful vision and can move easily. Total blindness causes anxiety in that the individual is unsure of his/her environment. A person's ability to cope with anxiety determines the extent of health behaviours such as emotional well-being.

Visual impairment inclusivity in developing country settings.

The general quality of life for learners with visual impairments in developing countries has shown some improvement over the last decade. This has been largely due to the involvement of these individual's learners with visual impairments in various inclusive education strategies (Choruma, 2006). The adoption of inclusive education practices by many developing countries has directly influenced the movement of learners with visual impairments from special schools such as schools for the blind to enrol in more inclusive education schools (Majoko, 2005; Makuyana, 2004; Mkandla & Matarutse, 2002). Those who remained behind in special schools are catered for by special institutions that are scattered in many developing countries (Hungwe, 2005; Mpofu & Shumba, 2012; Mpofu et al., 2012), as inclusion has its own. However, other school going age persons with visual impairments are kept at home by their parents for various reasons, including attitude-related reasons (Choruma, 2006). An example of an attitude-related

reason would be when family members consider their children with visual impairments as incapable of socialising with others (Choruma, 2006; Mpofu, 2003).

People with visual impairments tend to be less well accepted by the majority of people in some societies (Ndawi 2003). The rejection of minority status groups is described in terms of stigmatisation (Lazowski, Koller, Stuart & Milev 2012). Many people who share mainstream cultural values stigmatise learners with visual impairments; making statements about attributes of learners with visual impairments that are deeply discrediting. They consider learners with visual impairments as less than fully human (Corrigan & Watson 2002; Martz 2004). However, the more visible the attribute like being blind, the more stigma it attracts for the beholder, and the greater disruption it can cause to social relations, or personal relations with others (Mpofu 2003).

Inclusive education is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to school adjustment, development and participation (Ainscow, 2003). Inclusive education has the potential to serve as the context for the creation of sustainable and free support systems and a means of communication adapted to meet the diverse needs of every learner. Inclusion in education is about the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. Presence implies location, that is, where the individual is, and participation is concerned with the quality of his/her experience (Ainscow, 2003). Although inclusive communities are not uniquely designed for learners with visual impairments, they have been adopted by most communities as a basic strategy to influence and enhance the psychological well-being of their people with disabilities.

Emotional well being

Although learners with visual impairments report the lowest emotional well - being in many countries (Campen & Santvoort, 2012) the gap in emotional well-being compared with people without disabilities is smaller in some countries than others (Huppert et al., 2009). The level of emotional well-being, of learners with visual impairments in developed countries is much higher compared to those in developing nations (Helliwell, 2008). This is possibly due to the fact that developed countries have comprehensive policies designed to improve the emotional well-being of their citizens while most developing countries do not. In cases where comprehensive policies are present in developing countries, the implementation is often hindered by negative attitudes from the community and lack of resources (Campen & Santvoort, 2012; Frey & Stutzer, 2002).

However, inequality in emotional well-being among people with disabilities exists in both developed and developing countries (Campen & Santvoort, 2012). Levels of emotional well-being differ between learners with visual impairments as a result of variables other than policies, such as severity of disability, socio-demographic background and social participation (Huppert et al., 2009). However, literature

on the emotional well-being of learners with visual impairment (e.g. Campen & Santvoort, 2012; Diener et al., 2009; Dunn & Elliott, 2005; Frey & Stutzer, 2002) suggests that a visual impairment affects people with visual impairment in a number of ways.

Learners with visual impairment tend to experience emotional problems such as fear, disappointment and depression as a result of lack of effective rehabilitation services. Mobility and orientation would be an example of a basic rehabilitation service that may appear ineffective in most learners with visual impairment in developing countries. Such a service may be designed to assist learners with visual impairment to move independently in their communities with little assistance from the carers and/or family members of the person living with visual impairment -related condition (Simmons et al., 2000). For example, fear of what the result will be following the placement of a learner with visual impairment in a learning environment without his/he family member to guide is a common reaction of many learners with visual impairments, especially those who acquired disabilities such as removal of the eye. Learners with visual impairments learning in in inclusive education setting may experience a significant disruption of self-value (Mpofu& Harley, 2006). Similarly, learners with acquired visual impairments face challenges in aligning their personal values in ways that are relevant to community participation. According to Venes (2009), learners who with visual impairments who receive rehabilitation services such as mobility and orientation services must also receive psychoeducation. Psychoeducation offers pre-knowledge to learners with visual impairments when going for mobility and orientation services to prepare them for possible psychological difficulties as a result of being exposed to various mobility barriers.

The goal of the study

This study aimed to explore emotional well-being of leaners with visual impairment learning in inclusive education settings of Kadoma Urban schools in Zimbabwe. We specifically aimed to facilitate accessing marginalised experiences and voices of leaners with visual impairments

METHODS

Research design

This study was informed by the qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2012) and guided by the principles of thematic content analysis (Creswell, 2009; Creswell 2012,). Given that the aim of the study was to explore to explore emotional well-being of leaners with visual impairment learning in inclusive education settings, a qualitative research methodological approach in which the vulnerable and disadvantaged learner's experiences and voices are foreground in both design and analysis was appropriate.

Sampling and sampling techniques

The sampling frame for this study was 8 (3 males and 5 females) leaners with visual impairment learners. This purposively selected sample was able to yield credible data for the purposes of this qualitative research study. The sample was able to achieve data saturation (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000; Creswell, 2007). To be included in this study the learners must have been classified as being visually impaired and learning at an inclusive education school in Kadoma continuously for at least 2 years.

Data collection

Consistent with qualitative research methodology this study made use of open ended interviews (Baxter & Jacke 2008; Scholz & Titje, 2002) as the method of data collection. Participants responded to one on one interview questions which were based on prepared interview schedule on the emotional well-being of leaners with visual impairment learning in inclusive education settings. (Keyton, 2001; Punch, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001). Furthermore, the use qualitative research methodology approach on vulnerable and disadvantage learners' leaners with visual impairment experiences is associated with accessing marginalised experiences and voices (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone, with each interview lasting between 1hr and1hr 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed by the author

Data analysis strategies

Data analysis from this study was done using the thematic content analysis approach (Grbich, 2004). The fists stage involved familiarising with the data. This was done through listening to and transcribing of the interviews. The second stage involved creating codes linked to research questions by identifying key words and sentences. The third stage involved grouping codes into themes and the last stage involved reviewing themes labeling them and have suitable quotes to represent the themes identified from each transcript. In carrying out the analysis, coding was data driven but also influenced by the study's research questions.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Ethical principles of informed consent and voluntary participation, protection from harm, confidentiality and privacy, were adhered to throughout the research process and of data collection and analysis.

The researcher gave the study's participants all relevant information about the risks or harm that could arise if they participate in the research (Woodsong & Karim, 2005). However, the study minimised risks and enhance potential benefits to the greatest extent possible (Smith, 2003; Emanuel et al., 2000; Loue &

Okello, 2000). The researcher also gave participants options to pull out of the study at any point, should they wish to without any penalties (Loue & Okello, 2000). The researcher also sorted for consent from parents participate and assent for participants because their ages were below 16 (Beskow et al, 2004). Sixteen years is the legal age of majority in Zimbabwe (COPAC, 2014).

The study also ensured that respondents were not exposed to any undue physical harm or psychological harm (Beskow et al, 2004, 2003). The study provided pre and post interview counselling to the study participants to cushion the respondents against possible negative effects of taking part in this study (Emanuel et al., 2000).

The study also protected identities of our study the participants by using pseudonyms throughout the study and not having their names or location in the study (Emanuel et al., 2000; Loue & Okello, 2000). The study also kept private participant's information and responses shared during the study by anonymously presented them in the study's results (Makore Rukuni, 2003). The researcher deleted recorded interviews from the mobile phone to ensure that people who had access to the phone could not listen to them.

Rigour of the study

To ensure rigour of this study I checked for credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). To enhance the credibility of my study I prolonged engagement of my participants through engaging them in interviews that lasted more than one hour (Cohen, Kahn &Steeves, 2000; Creswell, 2007). I also triangulated the eight interviews held to produce a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). I also allowed peer debriefing in this study in order to see agreement in data labels and the logical paths taken to arrive at those labels. The study also allowed member checking in this study. It allowed participants to read the transcription of their interviews to ensure that these have been accurately recorded and are therefore credible (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In addition to credibility checking we also checked for the study's dependability and conformability by making an audit trail to the study and authors reflexivity. I also provided thick description throughout our study to check for the transferability of our study.

FINDINGS

The participants in this study (leaners with visual impairment) reported low levels of emotional well-being. They indicated low ccontentment in inclusive education setting, poor mmanagement of stressful situation in inclusive education setting, weak psychological state and poor quality of life, For the evidence, the study presents the verbatim information from participants` responses using pseudonyms so that names in these narratives are functional to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants.

Contentment in inclusive setting

On Contentment with inclusive education setting the participants has this to say

Jean (Partially Sighted, 13 years, male)
"Learning in an inclusive education setting is good to me but it has its own challenges. It takes a lot of time to master a concept because I hardly see what is written on chalkboard I am not provided with large prints materials which I can read clearly. I have limited control in everything because my peers and teacher do not trust that I can say something perfect. I also have fears of bumping into objects in my class as I am not informed about changes in arrangement every time."

Another participant Tino (Blind 15 years, male) said
"Learning in an inclusive education setting is a noble thing but one needs to be strong and move on. For example, *I always receive my Braille material while others had already started and no extra time is given to me when writing work. My teacher can't mark my work in time as others because he cannot read braille. It is first transcribed somewhere and then marked the following day. Braille material are sometimes unavailable, as a result my fellow students may be asked to read for me.*

Gladys (Blind 12 years, female) also said
"I don't like inclusive education settings. I am not being recognised as a learner because of my blindness. I have limited access to reading material. I'm no longer interested in learning at this school. Special schools are much better for me because they are better learning materials for us. My learning needs were catered much better at Jairos Jiri School for the Blind that here."

Walter ([Blind, 13 years, male) has this to say on contentment in inclusive setting.
"I am not fully included as learners with visual impairment; some of my peers associate my impairment as a punishment from God, so they distance themselves from me. Because of these beliefs my peers are afraid of me even the teacher treats me differently compared to other peers. However I am taking ist as another learning option available for me."

Betty (Partially Sighted, 14 years female) also added
"I am treated as a stranger at school and in class I belong because of my impairment. My peers seem to be given first preferred to in textbooks. Because of my impairment.

I feel isolated and rejected by my peers and my teacher as well"

Kate (Blind 16 years, female) also said
I am always behind my peers who gasp concepts faster than me because they can see what is referred to in textbooks, picture and charts of what is being said. Because of my impairment I don't belong to a group of sighted peers.

Management of stressful situation in Inclusive Setting

All the participants indicated that they   cannot manage stressful situation in inclusive setting. They assumed unfair treatment among learners with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.

Jean (Partially Sighted ,13 years, male) said
"I am not considered as a learner with visual   impairment . Even the teacher addresses us as if all are sighted, for example Look at this object This embarrassed me a lot as I cannot clearly see the object being referred to". This makes my performance to be poor since I miss lots of concepts due to how I am taught. This stresses me so much because my peers and teacher don't treat me as fair as others."

Tino (Blind, 15 years, male) added
", I am always behind my peers because I receive my work after others have already started and I am not given extra time. No one can correct me when making mistakes as they cannot read Braille even the teacher I receive my feedback later when others have their revision and corrections done. This makes me miss a lot."

Another participant Gladys (Blind, 12 years female) added
"My   peers avoids me   in   their accompany, be it in classroom   or outside. I grasp concept   later than my peers because of the way they are addressed to me as a learner with visual impairment. I am not provided with concrete media so that I can understand what is really referred to. I hardly participate in group work and this type of learning is not making me happy.

Walter (Blind, 13 years, male) has this to say on manage stressful   situation   in inclusive learning environment
"I hardly belong to a   group of my sighted peers. The environment is very stressing. It seems as if they are blaming me for being a learner with visual impairment or the associate my impairment as bad

omen as a results of bad doing 's I am not given the chance to participant fully because of lack materials in class or outside."

Joan (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) She responded by saying
"I feel out of place, especially when the teacher addressing the class by saying look at this. This makes me feel rejected. As a result of this I withdraw myself from the group. I miss a lot of concept as attention to what is being said is reduced."

Faith (Partially Sighted, 17 years, female) also said
"I feel rejected in class, sports and the school as a whole as a whole as I am not given the opportunity to fully participate as a learner with visual impairment . This stresses me so much."

Psychological state

All the participants indicated that they do not have a positive psychological state by learning in an inclusive education setting.

Gladys (Blind, 12 years, female) said
"I always feel belittled and out of place because I am not fully included in class and outside. I am not given influential roles as my sighted peers do, for example being a head girl may be because I am visually impaired. Even my teacher is not close to me as she did to my peers. Maybe they associate my impairment with other beliefs, as they belief it to be a punishment from God for a wrong doing."

Betty (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) added
"I feel being looked down upon. My teacher does not allocate duties to me because of my impairment."

Kate (Blind, 16 years, female) said
"Learning in an inclusive setting with peers having advantage over me makes me have a   negative   psychological   well-being because they look down upon me. It seems as if I am not considered as a normal being as I am always being left behind in whatever is done, thus group work discussion and outside in sporting activities"

One participant Joan (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) responded
"I usually seek assistance for clarification on other matters I cannot clearly see. This seems to be a burden to them. As a result, they distant them-selves from me and I don't know how they perceive my state. I end up hating myself for being a learner

with visual impairment and being in a class with sighted peers."

Quality of life

On quality of life as an attribute of emotional well-being they said

Jean (Partially Sighted, 13years, male)

"Yes my quality of life is affected by learning in an inclusive environment. I am not consulted in some decisions. People decide for me by I am mature enough to decide what to take part in or not".'

Another participant Tino (Blind, 15 years, male) responded by saying

"My peer does not consider me in their decision making because I am visually impaired, so my quality of life surely affected. I have no privacy since I am always with a sighted guide to help me but being not from my immediate family member and just learning mates you can tell that they are not much happy with the kind of assistance they give me. If I was very mobile It could be a better story but the situation is my mobility is limited hence my independence"

Gladys (Blind, 12years, female) also said

"Learning in an inclusive education setting t affects my quality of life as I cannot live independently and cannot make a choice of my own. No one asks a question direct to me even though it concerns me, but is directed to my guide, who seem to know everything I want at any given time. Really my quality of life is affected."

Betty (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) also added

"Yes inclusive education affects my quality of life. My sighted peers do not include me in every group they belong. They assume I cannot do anything. The curriculum itself does not suit me as a learner with visual impairment. I have to adapt to what the sighted do, because nothing is provided for me as a learner with visual impairment."

Joan (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) responded by saying

"I usually seek assistance for clarification on other matters I cannot clearly see. This seems to be a burden to them as a result they distance themselves from me and I don't know how they perceive my state. I end up hating myself for being a learner with visual impairment and being in a class with sighted peers".

Another participant Betty (Partially Sighted, 14 years, female) said

"The fact that I'm learning with people who sees differences between them and me makes me feel inferior to them. I TRY AS much as I can to overcome their wrong perception but the feeling that they are better than me won't go. This seriously affects my quality of life. However, I am not saying I should go back to special schools the place is fine with me."

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are divided into four main sections (1) Contentment in inclusive setting, (2) Management of stressful situation, (3) Psychological state and (4) Quality of life. These are the major attributes of emotional well-being as identified by this study.

Contentment in inclusive setting

Participants in this study indicated that's that they are not contented in an inclusive setting because they are not fully recognized. They indicated that they were being suggested that being looked down upon as they are not given influential roles at their schools. They also indicated that the lack of learning resources in their schools reduces restricts their learning spaces and hinders participation. The findings of this study are consistent with that of Mpofu, and Sefotho (2018)). Mpofu, and Sefotho (2018) found out that negative attitudes towards individuals with visual impairment often interfere with their acceptance and full inclusion into school and society. Mpofu and Shumba (2012) also found out that there was low contentment by learners with visual impairment in inclusive education settings and that contentment was affecting educational achievement of learners with visual impairment. Other studies carried out in Zimbabwe (Makuyana, 2004; Mtetwa, 2004 & Zingoni, 2004) also reflected limited contentment in learners with visual implement as a result of limited choices in curriculum. Another study conducted by Monoghann (2003) in Maryland United States of America indicated that learners with visual impairment are two to ten times as their sighted counterparts do not attend inclusive education school but special schools. This has been attributed to the challenges of learners with visual impairment experience in inclusive education settings.

Management of stressful situation

This study revealed that learners with visual impairment have difficulties in managing stressful situation in an inclusive setting. They reported that their peers and even teachers do not consider their presence in inclusive setting hence creating serious stressful situations for them This stresses hinders them from fully participating in inclusive learning activities and end up isolating themselves from their peers. The study findings are consistent with literature on inclusive education practice. Most

literature on inclusive education (Baker et al, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996 & Healey, 2013) suggests that most inclusive schools are not accommodative to learners with special needs and this expose them to negative experiences that leads to unmanageable experiences and stressful circumstances.

Psychological State

The results of this study indicated weaker psychological state in learners with visual impairments learning in in an inclusive education settings. The participants reported that ,they were treated unfairly in inclusive setting. They, reported that they were seeking a lot of assistance from their sighted peers including reading to read for them They felt that it makes them seem to be a burden to sighted peers who at times opt to distance themselves from learners with visual impairment. This study finding is consistent with Cimarolli et al (2012) research on visual impairment and psychological well-being. Cimarolli (2012) found out limited mobility in persons with visual impairments increased risk of social isolation and loneliness. Limitation in mobility affects positive relations with others which is a very key attribute of positive psychological state. Positive relationships with others are very important for successful adjustment and integration of people with disabilities. Experiencing positive relations with others also plays an important role in facilitating, social and moral development of human beings (Heward 2003).

Quality of life

This study results indicated learning in an inclusive education settings were not helping much in as far as quality of life to learners with visual impairment. They study indicated that inclusive education was not significantly enhancing self-determination, promotion of learners rights, and social inclusion of learners with visual impairment. These results are consistent with literature on inclusion and disadvantaged persons for example, a student with low vision may not be able to read text on the board and they could miss the funny faces and expressions that often accompany lively classroom discussions. Mpofu, Sefotho and Maree (2017) and Thomazet (2009) asserts that inclusive education depends on the capacity of the school and on the capacity of the teachers to innovate and put differentiation in place. Most curriculum and learning environment in most developing countries are not accessible for the individual with special needs such as learners with visual impairments (Kumsa, 2006). Learners with visual impairment experience multiple source, compounding each other to result in social isolation and being at off from sources of critical information and services (Mpofu, 2018)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research the researcher concludes that inclusive education settings in Kadoma urban is not

assisting much in enhancing emotional well-being of learners with visual impairments. Learners with visual impairment learning in Inclusive education in Kadoma Urban display low level of ccontentment in their learning environment, poor stress management skills, low levels of psychological state and poor qquality of life. Based on the complex nature of the interaction between aspects such as inclusion, visual impairment, emotional well-being and public policy, several recommendations can be made for populations with similar characteristics as the one covered by this study. This study recommends the need for further research on as inclusion, visual impairment and emotional well-being. Discourse analysis that investigates the relationship between inclusion and emotional well-being of learners with visual impairments could lead to improved implementation of inclusion. The findings of such studies could guide the development of inclusive policies that encourage community participation of non-dominant cultures such as people with disabilities in designing community activities that enhance their personal development.

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