



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th May, 2023
Received in revised form
10th June, 2023
Accepted 26th July, 2023
Published online 15th August, 2023

Key Words:

Child Protection, Material Support,
Professional Development,
Neglect, Social and Emotional Support,
Special Education Schools.

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the The purpose was to to explore, how protected are children with disabilities 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 well-being within the school-setting.

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 & Brrki (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

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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 (Hayness 2015). 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 absent 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 protected are children with disability, as very little is known on the child protection measures on neglect applied in special education schools. Because 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 (Haynes, 2015). 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 protected are children with disabilities 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 protected are children with disabilities 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 protected are children with disability 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 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 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 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 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:

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

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

Themes	Codes or Near Codes
1. Material support strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Source: Researcher's illustration based on fieldwork

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 resonate with .. 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 fell 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 behaviors 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.

Acknowledgements: I wish to sincerely acknowledge the professional and moral support of my Supervisors; Prof. Ndhlovu Daniel & Dr. Joseph Mwape Mandyata for the guidance throughout my work. I would further like to extend my appreciation to the respondents who willingly helped in data collection as they responded to my interviews

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