

Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Selected Primary Schools in Luanshya District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of teachers who work with learners with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) in Zambian primary schools. Its goal was to highlight the challenges these teachers face in inclusive classrooms. The research used an interpretivist approach and an interpretive phenomenological design to gather detailed qualitative data. A total of 15 participants were chosen through purposeful sampling, including 3 senior teachers and 12 class teachers, to focus on their experiences. Data collection involved several methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and an observation checklist. Thematic analysis of the data revealed important challenges these teachers encounter. Key issues included overcrowded classrooms that made it hard to give individual attention, as well as a lack of teaching materials that affected their ability to teach effectively. Teachers also shared their struggles with high emotional stress and feelings of inadequacy in meeting the needs of learners with mild intellectual disabilities. Other challenges included learner absenteeism, disruptive behaviors, and heavy workloads, which made teaching even more difficult. These negative experiences impacted teachers' job satisfaction and effectiveness with their learners. The study highlights the urgent need for support and resources to improve teaching practices for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. By addressing these challenges, policymakers and educational leaders can improve educational outcomes in Zambia, creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This research adds to the ongoing conversation about inclusive education and stresses the importance of considering teachers' insights in educational reforms.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, experience, teachers, learners, primary school

INTRODUCTION

In the current educational landscape of Zambia, the shift toward inclusive schooling has successfully brought a significant number of learners with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) into mainstream classrooms. However, true inclusion encompasses much more than just physical presence or sharing a desk; it requires a deep and transformative change in our understanding of human potential and the diverse ways in which it manifests. For teachers in Luanshya, this means looking beyond the label of "disability" and recognizing the distinctive cognitive profiles that these learners possess, which often interpret the world through alternative perspectives. As noted by Chanda and Mumba (2021), teachers who work in these contexts without proper training or adequate resources can find their classrooms shifting from spaces of potential to environments filled with collective fatigue and frustration. Consequently, this disillusionment threatens to derail the very principles of inclusivity that these policies strive to uphold.

When teachers lack the necessary tools and strategies to bridge the gap between their eagerness to help and the learners' challenges in comprehension, it generates considerable frustration for both parties. This disconnect can stifle the vibrant, engaging learning atmosphere that is essential for all learners' progress. Recognizing and addressing this challenge is crucial for fostering an environment where every learner feels valued and capable. Intellectual disability is fundamentally a neurodevelopmental journey that typically begins in early childhood and often becomes apparent before the age of eighteen. According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2019), it is important to consider two key aspects when viewing this condition: intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Intellectual functioning refers to cognitive abilities needed for abstract reasoning and problem-solving, while adaptive behavior encompasses essential everyday

skills required for effective social interaction and personal independence. Clinicians commonly use an IQ benchmark of 70 to categorize this spectrum, with the "Mild" category (IQ around 50–70) including learners who may possess significant, though often unrecognized, potential.

These learners are frequently on the brink of major academic breakthroughs; with the right support and instruction tailored to their needs, they can thrive within a mainstream curriculum. It is vital for the educational system to adapt through advanced, differentiated instruction that respects each learner's individual pace and style. By fostering a more inclusive approach that recognizes and nurtures their unique abilities, we can unlock the potential of these learners, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their communities. However, in Zambia, there remains a considerable disparity between the government's ambitious "inclusive education" policies and the actual experiences of teachers working within the classroom environment (Smith, 2020). On paper, the ideal of inclusive education champions the notion that every child deserves the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment, regardless of their abilities or challenges. Yet, when you step into a bustling classroom filled with eager, diverse learners, the reality often tells a different story.

Many teachers find themselves grappling with the weight of expectations, feeling unprepared to effectively incorporate learners with mild intellectual disabilities into their teaching practices (Jones, 2021). This sense of inadequacy frequently stems from a lack of essential training and resources—an absence that creates significant barriers to fulfilling the promise of inclusive education. Teachers express feelings of disillusionment, as their aspirations to help every learner achieve their best are often thwarted by their inability to address the unique cognitive and emotional needs of these learners. As a result, ineffective teaching practices emerge, and self-confidence among teachers begins to erode, leaving them feeling more like custodians of order rather than facilitators of learning (Brown, 2019).

Furthermore, the introduction of special education courses in teacher training colleges has been erratic at best, often lacking coherence and depth. This inconsistency results in newly trained teachers stepping into their roles without the critical skills necessary to devise individualized support plans for learners with intellectual disabilities (Davis, 2022). Imagine a newly qualified teacher, enthusiastic about making a difference, suddenly faced with the reality of a classroom where some children require tailored strategies that they have never learned. The hope of inclusive education becomes a bittersweet experience, with many children merely occupying a seat in the classroom while their emotional and educational needs go unmet (Taylor, 2023). For these learners, inclusion may sometimes feel like an illusion; their physical presence does not translate into emotional engagement or effective learning opportunities. Instead, they might experience neglect, leading to feelings of isolation and disengagement. The stark contrast between policy intent and classroom reality highlights the urgent need for systemic changes that equip teachers with the knowledge, resources, and confidence to create genuinely inclusive learning environments where every child is recognized, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Despite Zambia's endorsement of the Salamanca Statement (1994), which emphasizes the importance of inclusive education for all learners, and the subsequent development of an inclusive education curriculum by the Ministry of General Education (MoGE, 2016), the implementation of these policies remains inconsistent and uneven across the country. Many teachers entering the profession do so with inadequate training in specialized instructional strategies aimed at addressing the unique needs of learners with mild intellectual disabilities (Mumba & Mwewa, 2020). This lack of preparation poses significant challenges for teachers seeking to create inclusive classrooms where all learners can thrive.

Recognizing the critical need for effective teaching practices, this study aimed to explore into the lived experiences of teachers who work with learners with mild intellectual disabilities in the Luanshya District. By capturing the nuances of these experiences, the research seeks to shed light on the day-to-day realities faced by teachers in inclusive settings. Understanding these challenges is essential to identifying gaps in support systems and resources, thus paving the way for more tailored and effective interventions. The guiding objective of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers in primary schools as they teach learners with mild intellectual disabilities. This exploration will not only highlight the obstacles teachers face but also uncover the strategies they employ to foster learning in a diverse classroom environment. Through this qualitative investigation, the findings are expected to inform improved support systems, enabling educational stakeholders to address the

needs of both teachers and learners more effectively. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute valuable insights that can lead to enhanced educational practices, making inclusive education a reality for every learner in Zambia

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of intellectual disabilities

Intellectual disability (ID), once called intellectual impairment or mental retardation, is a condition that affects how a person thinks and behaves. It is defined by significant challenges in both intellectual abilities and everyday skills. According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2013), these challenges usually show up during childhood or adolescence, specifically before age 18. This timing highlights how important early help and support are, as these years are critical for a child's mental and social development.

Intellectual disability includes a range of difficulties that can impact how someone thinks, learns new information, and handles daily activities. Typically, we measure intellectual functioning through IQ tests, while adaptive behavior refers to everyday skills like communication, self-care, social interactions, and the ability to live independently. These challenges can greatly influence a person's education, job opportunities, and overall quality of life.

Over the years, our understanding of intellectual disability has changed a lot. Terms that were once widely accepted, like "mental retardation," are now seen as hurtful and outdated. Many advocates, professionals, and individuals with ID have called for kinder and more accurate language that focuses on the person first, rather than labeling them by their disability. This change reflects a larger movement toward treating all individuals with dignity and respect, encouraging society to see them as people with unique talents and contributions, rather than just as disabilities.

Today, we understand that intellectual disability encompasses a wide range of abilities. Research shows that people with ID can have different levels of intellectual and adaptive skills, leading to a variety of life experiences and outcomes. Recognizing these differences is essential for shaping educational and support services. It ensures that assistance is personalized to meet each individual's needs, helping them grow and thrive. Overall, the changes in how we define and talk about intellectual disability reflect a significant move toward empowerment and respect for all individuals.

Teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild Intellectual Disabilities in schools

According to Colman (2015), experiences refer to the present content of consciousness. In this study, experience refers to teachers' current content of consciousness with regard to the way of doing, seeing and having things happen to them because of working with learners with mild intellectual disabilities. Experiences can also mean what teachers pass through, whether positively or negatively when teaching learners with mild IDs in Zambian primary schools.

Behavior challenges

Globally, a study by Prakash, Sudarsanan, and Prabhu (2007) on behavioral problems in mentally retarded children in Asia revealed that there is a higher prevalence of behavior problems in children with moderate mental retardation than those with mild mental retardation. Externalizing behavior problems were much more common than internalizing ones. Common behavior problems reported were impulsivity, concentration difficulties, and sudden changes in mood or feelings. Participants in the study mentioned that intellectually disabled children tended to be moody, which required a lot of patience because they could easily develop hatred. The study further revealed that learners with Intellectual disabilities tend to be bullies and hypersexual. Due to such behavior, their teachers and peers usually reject them. These children are rejected because of their behavior in classrooms, playgrounds, and outside the school environment. It was observed that the challenge had to do with getting these

learners to behave like typical children, as they seemed to have no control over their hormones, and half the time they hardly noticed the impact of their behavior. Hence, they continued to behave as they pleased.

In affirmation, Hess et al., 2015 stated that cognitive limitations significantly influence the behavioral challenges faced by learners with intellectual disabilities as impairments in memory, attention, and executive functioning hinder their ability to process information, often resulting in confusion and frustration that can manifest as maladaptive behaviors such as aggression or withdrawal (Hess et al., 2015). These challenges are compounded by social communication deficits that make it difficult for individuals to express their needs, leading them to resort to inappropriate behaviors when communication fails (Kirk & Gallagher, 2018). Environmental factors also play a crucial role; stressful family dynamics, negative peer interactions like bullying, and unwelcoming school settings can exacerbate behavioral issues and hinder emotional regulation (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018; Simonsen et al., 2008). Emotional dysregulation is prevalent among individuals with ID, as many struggle to recognize and manage their feelings, which contributes to problematic behaviors (Eisenhower et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, while the studies mentioned above primarily focused on the behavioral problems of learners with intellectual disabilities in general, the present study specifically centers on teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities in primary schools. This shift in focus allows for a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by teachers working with this specific group of learners, thereby contributing valuable insights into the educational practices and support systems necessary for their success.

Overcrowded Classes

Teachers in overcrowded classrooms encounter significant challenges that hinder their ability to effectively support learners with intellectual disabilities. One of the primary issues is the insufficient individual attention that educators can provide due to high learner-to-teacher ratios, which compromise personalized instruction (Murray, 2017; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). In such environments, the quality of education is diluted, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful learner-teacher interaction and tailored support. Furthermore, managing disruptive behaviors becomes increasingly complex in overcrowded settings, exacerbating the challenges teachers face in maintaining a conducive learning environment (Miller & D'Angelo, 2019). High learner numbers often result in chaotic classrooms that detract from the overall educational experience, particularly for those who require focused and individualized instructional approaches (Munn, 2015). This dynamic leads to teachers struggling to effectively implement essential strategies like differentiated instruction that are crucial for helping learners with intellectual disabilities thrive. In contexts such as Zambia, where classrooms frequently experience high learner-to-teacher ratios, these issues are particularly pronounced, highlighting the need for systemic changes to create more equitable learning conditions (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2016).

Despite these challenges, many educators adopt strategies such as differentiated instruction and collaborative teaching models to better engage and support their diverse learner populations (Tomlinson, 2014; Friend & Cook, 2013). Collaborative teaching allows general and special education teachers to combine their expertise, which can foster a more supportive environment for learners with disabilities. However, the emotional toll of working in demanding environments often leads to high levels of stress and burnout among teachers, adversely affecting their mental health and overall effectiveness in the classroom (Wong & Wong, 2019). Therefore, addressing the emotional and professional support needs of teachers is crucial not only for their well-being but also for ensuring the success of their learners. By acknowledging and responding to the needs of both teachers and students, it becomes possible to create a more effective and inclusive educational environment, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders involved.

Emotional Burnout

Brunsting and Sreckovic (2014) identified teacher burnout as a significant challenge for teachers working with intellectually disabled learners, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. This burnout often results from the heightened demands placed on these teachers, who frequently engage in more intensive work than their counterparts in mainstream education. Many teachers expressed feelings of emotional fatigue, citing that their learners' expectations often exceed what they

can realistically provide. This lack of acknowledgment for their efforts further exacerbates their emotional strain, leading to doubts about their effectiveness and minimizing their sense of accomplishment. Brunsting and Sreckovic (2014) emphasized that when the stress experienced by teachers overwhelms their resources and coping abilities, it results in exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of inadequacy in their roles. Adding to this perspective, teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities often form close emotional bonds with their learners, which, while rewarding, can lead to significant emotional exhaustion (Baker et al., 2020). The unique challenges associated with addressing diverse needs require considerable emotional investment, and without effective coping strategies, teachers are particularly vulnerable to burnout (Jackson & Garrison, 2021).

Furthermore, inadequate support systems, such as limited administrative backing, insufficient resources, and a lack of professional development, intensify feelings of isolation and helplessness among these teachers (Rosenblatt & Puryear, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Increased workloads from individualized lesson planning and behavior management further disrupt work-life balance and elevate stress levels (Billingsley, 2004). Additionally, challenging learner behaviors, including aggression and communication difficulties, create emotionally taxing interactions that compound teachers' frustration and feelings of incompetence, significantly contributing to burnout (Gunter et al., 2008; Speziale et al., 2019). Collectively, these factors highlight the pressing need for systemic support and effective coping mechanisms to mitigate the emotional toll on teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities.

However, the studies mentioned above highlight emotional burnout among teachers in various contexts but do not specifically address primary schools in Luanshya. This distinction is important, as the unique challenges and experiences faced by teachers in that particular locality may differ significantly from those in other regions. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate experiences of teachers within the context of primary schools in Luanshya to better understand its specific causes and implications for teachers working with learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

Teacher Attitude

Adams (2017) examined the experiences of teachers working with learners with intellectual disabilities in three special schools in South Africa and found that these experiences were largely positive. Teachers reported feelings of contentment and fulfillment despite the exhaustion that accompanied their workload, describing the work as humbling and interesting. Supporting this, research by Nalbant et al. (2013) revealed that younger physical education teachers familiar with intellectual disabilities and possessing less teaching experience held more favorable attitudes than their more experienced counterparts. In contrast, Rawlins (1983) highlighted that special class teachers exhibit more favorable attitudes towards learners with intellectual disabilities compared to mainstream teachers, with those in special education reporting greater satisfaction and positive attitudes about having these learners in their classrooms. Rawlins also found that special education courses increased acceptance of learners with disabilities among teachers. However, participants in both age groups acknowledged the demanding nature of their work, as learners with intellectual disabilities often require more attention due to their unpredictable behavior.

In the context of Zambia, cultural beliefs and societal attitudes significantly influence teacher perceptions of learners with intellectual disabilities, where traditional views often associate disabilities with supernatural causes, leading to stigma and misunderstanding (Chanda et al., 2020). Research indicates that many Zambian teachers hold preconceived notions about the capabilities of learners with intellectual disabilities, resulting in lower expectations and inadequate support (Ng'andu & Bwalya, 2019). Moreover, teacher training and professional development are crucial, as a lack of adequate training can foster feelings of inadequacy among teachers, while those who receive training in inclusive education typically develop more favorable attitudes (Banda & Kiboko, 2021; Phiri & Chirwa, 2022). Additionally, teachers' experiences with learners with intellectual disabilities shape their attitudes; positive interactions promote acceptance, while a lack of exposure can lead to apprehension and negative perceptions (Mbewe & Nkhama, 2021; Gunter et al., 2008). Teacher attitudes directly impact learner outcomes and classroom dynamics, with positive attitudes fostering inclusivity and collaboration, while negative perceptions may result in isolation for learners with disabilities (Adams, 2017). To improve these attitudes, implementing targeted professional development programs and awareness campaigns is essential for reducing stigma and promoting acceptance (Banda & Kiboko, 2021; Mbewe &

Nkhama, 2021). Ultimately, fostering a more inclusive environment can enhance the educational and social experiences of learners with intellectual disabilities in Zambia and beyond.

The studies above explored teachers' attitudes toward learners with intellectual disabilities without specifying particular categories of intellectual disability. In contrast, the present study focuses on a specific group of learners with mild intellectual disabilities. This distinction is significant, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by both teachers within this particular subset, ultimately contributing to more targeted strategies for support and intervention in educational settings.

Learner class absenteeism

Stigma associated with intellectual disabilities has long been recognized as a burden not only for individuals but also for their families and teachers. Adams (2017) found that learners with intellectual disabilities faced significant stigma, experiencing greater rejection in special classes compared to their peers in regular classes, where they often held a lower social status. This discrimination can manifest in various harmful ways, negatively impacting emotional well-being and support systems for both learners and their teachers. In Zambia, cultural beliefs significantly shape societal perceptions of individuals with intellectual disabilities, where traditional views frequently attribute disabilities to supernatural causes, such as witchcraft or ancestral curses (Chanda et al., 2020). Such beliefs can lead families to perceive having a child with intellectual disabilities as a source of shame, prompting social exclusion and withdrawal from community interactions. Ng'andu and Bwalya (2019) further elucidate how these cultural attitudes instill deep fears among families, leading to embarrassment, low class attendance and isolation that reinforce negative stereotypes and limit opportunities for meaningful participation in school and society.

Societal stigma also adversely affects parental attitudes toward education, fostering doubts about their children's academic potential, thereby lowering enrollment rates and educational opportunities (Banda & Kiboko, 2021; Phiri & Chirwa, 2022). Moreover, negative perceptions permeate educational environments, where teachers and peers may exhibit unwelcoming attitudes that deter full participation by learners with ID (Gunter et al., 2008). Nevertheless, encouraging shifts are emerging due to advocacy efforts from NGOs and government initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the rights and capabilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities. These campaigns are beginning to alter perceptions, motivating families to embrace their children and seek supportive resources, while community initiatives work to reduce stigma and enhance social acceptance (Mbewe & Nkhama, 2021).

The studies discussed earlier primarily focused on the stigmatization faced by children with intellectual disabilities and their families. In contrast, the present study examines the various experiences of teachers who are teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities in primary schools in Luanshya. This shift in focus is important, as it allows for a deeper exploration of the challenges, perspectives, and practices of educators in this specific context, thereby contributing valuable insights into the educational environment and support systems for these learners.

Inadequate Support System

Ruteere et al. (2015) conducted a study on the challenges faced in teaching Daily Living Skills (DLS) to learners with mental retardation in Kenya, revealing setbacks such as a lack of teaching and learning materials, negative attitudes, and inadequately trained personnel. Teaching materials are crucial for motivating learners and facilitating learning, particularly for those with intellectual disabilities who require tailored resources. A report from the UN (2003) noted that inadequate educational provisions for children with disabilities further complicated the teaching landscape in Kenya. While Ruteere et al. (2015) focused specifically on the challenges associated with teaching Daily Living Skills, the present study centers on teachers' experiences with learners who have mild intellectual disabilities in primary schools.

Similarly, in Zambia, resources for teaching learners with intellectual disabilities are scant. Teaching aids, tailored curricula, and specialized educational materials are often unavailable in schools. Research by Mwansa

(2020) indicated that inadequate funding and resource allocation for special education further exacerbates the challenges these learners face. Many schools operate with a “one-size-fits-all” approach to teaching, which fails to accommodate the unique learning needs of learners with intellectual disabilities. This lack of resources not only hampers the educational experience but also mirrors the challenges identified in the Kenyan context, highlighting a broader issue of insufficient support for teachers and learners alike across the region.

The studies referenced earlier focused on schools with learners with intellectual disabilities as a broad category, whereas the present study specifically targets those with mild intellectual disabilities. This distinction is significant, as it enables a more in-depth exploration of the specific needs, challenges, and educational experiences of this group. Consequently, it enhances the understanding of effective teaching strategies and support systems that are specifically designed to meet their unique requirements.

Teacher inadequate training

Multiple studies highlight the pressing need for enhanced training for teachers working with learners with developmental disabilities. Udobu (2014) observed a lack of training quality in Tanzanian primary schools for teachers dealing with these learners, resulting in poor educational outcomes. Furthermore, the primary education frameworks implemented were not fully realized due to insufficient teacher preparation. Despite the existence of rising policies promoting inclusive classrooms, many teachers report feeling inadequately equipped to implement these directives effectively. Kalima and Chikonde (2020) noted significant feelings of inadequacy among teachers, who often resort to outdated methods because they lack specialized training.

This context aligns with findings from other research, where studies such as those by Chanda and Phiri (2019) illustrated insufficient pre-service and in-service training for teachers in special education methodologies. As a consequence, teachers frequently express a lack of confidence and competence in addressing the diverse needs of learners with intellectual disabilities, further contributing to inadequate support within the classroom setting. Collectively, these studies underscore the critical gap in training and experience concerning learners with mild intellectual disabilities in primary education, highlighting the urgent need for improved teacher preparation to foster better educational outcomes.

The studies mentioned earlier analyzed teachers' inadequate skills in teaching learners with intellectual disabilities broadly. In contrast, the current study specifically explores teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities. This focused approach facilitates a more profound understanding of the specific challenges and viewpoints of teachers working with this particular group, ultimately offering insights into the effectiveness of teaching strategies and support systems designed to meet their distinct learning needs.

Curriculum Adaptation

Several studies highlighted the challenges related to curriculum adaptation for learners with developmental disabilities. Faiz et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study examining teachers' insights on curriculum adaptation for primary school learners with developmental disabilities in Lahore, Pakistan. The study found that a lack of teacher training on how to adapt the curriculum, including adjusting teaching materials and methodologies, made learning difficult for these learners. Some teachers attributed the issues to the government's failure to establish proper policies regarding curriculum adaptation. Moreover, very few special education teachers provided the extra time and attention needed as part of curriculum adaptation, which underscores the gap between expectations and teachers' capacity to adapt effectively.

In Zambia, Kandimba et al. (2023) revealed similar challenges for teachers working with learners with moderate intellectual disabilities in special schools, such as time constraints, poorly prepared teachers, and a lack of supportive learning environments. These factors culminate in difficulties for teachers in effectively engaging with learners, a sentiment echoed by Asaaju (2015), who noted general incompetence in curriculum adaptation. However, it is important to recognize that these studies primarily focus on moderate intellectual disabilities, whereas the current study emphasizes the experiences of teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

Despite these challenges, some teachers have successfully adapted their pedagogical approaches. Zulu and Phiri (2020) highlighted innovative methodologies, such as project-based learning and hands-on activities, that effectively engage learners with intellectual disabilities. These adaptable teaching strategies foster a more inclusive environment, benefiting all learners. Furthermore, Kabubo and Kanyongo (2020) suggest that building positive relationships creates a supportive learning atmosphere, encouraging active participation among learners with intellectual disabilities. This highlights the potential for innovation and adaptability in teaching practices within the context of curriculum adaptation.

The studies examined the difficulties teachers face in adapting the curriculum for learners with developmental and moderate intellectual disabilities, but they did not specifically address the challenges related to mild intellectual disabilities. This gap in the research underscores the need for further investigation into the unique experiences and strategies of teachers working with learners who have mild intellectual disabilities. Understanding these specific challenges is essential for developing effective support systems and teaching methods tailored to this particular group.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of teachers working with students with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) in inclusive classroom settings. Conducted across three primary schools in Luanshya District, known for their inclusive educational practices, the study recruited 15 participants through purposive sampling, comprising 12 class teachers and 3 senior teachers. Despite the limited sample size, it was sufficient to achieve data saturation within the phenomenological framework, which emphasizes the depth of individual experiences over generalizability. A triangulation approach was implemented to enhance data richness, incorporating in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and classroom observation checklists. Semi-structured interviews allowed teachers to express their insights, while FGDs encouraged group interaction and idea sharing. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Zambia and local authorities, ensuring informed consent and participant confidentiality. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, involving various stages such as transcription, coding, and theme development. Themes were rigorously verified against original data to ensure accurate representation of participant voices. While the findings yield valuable insights into teachers' challenges the limited sample size restricts generalizability, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias.

FINDINGS

The study revealed several themes regarding the experiences of teachers handling learners with mild intellectual disabilities:

Overcrowded classes

The study revealed that primary school classrooms were often overcrowded. This posed significant challenges for teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities, hindering their academic progress and overall learning experiences. These difficulties were made worse by the nature of intellectual disabilities, which require individualized attention and specialized instruction to address each learner's unique needs

To support the finding, one teacher participant <SCH 3FG1> shared that:

"Having learners with intellectual disabilities in my class is really challenging. It's very hard to make different lessons, materials, and assignments for each student's needs. Because of this, I often end up teaching the same way to everyone, which doesn't seem to help my students with intellectual disabilities."

Along the same lines, teacher participants <SCH 1FG 4> agreed that:

"I find it really challenging to teach in overcrowded classrooms, particularly when it comes to my learners with intellectual disabilities. These students require a great deal of individual attention, and with so many learners

in class, I struggle to provide the one-on-one support they need. This makes it difficult for me to fully understand how each learner best absorbs information, what their strengths are, and where they face difficulties."

Comparably, a senior teacher participant <SCH 2> varied that

"I genuinely believe that overcrowded classrooms have a negative impact on my learners with intellectual disabilities. I can see the challenges they face when learning; many struggle to handle the noise and find it hard to stay focused. With so many students in the class, it's difficult for me to give them the attention they need, and I'm often dealing with disruptions that eat away at our valuable teaching time"

Furthermore, the information gathered from observations indicated that primary school classrooms were overcrowded. In some cases, the number of learners in classrooms was excessively large. Desks and chairs were crammed together, which limited movement, made group work challenging, and caused discomfort for everyone. Teachers often had to rely on traditional whole-class teaching methods because there simply wasn't enough space. They also found it difficult to introduce new and engaging activities that could really capture the learners' attention.

Supported by the findings, it is evident that teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities in crowded classrooms presents significant challenges that hinder their academic progress and overall school experience. This difficulty is compounded by the inherent need for personalized attention and specialized instructional strategies for these learners. Overcrowding makes it challenging for teachers to identify individual learning styles, strengths, and areas requiring support. Limited classroom space further restricts the implementation of crucial accommodations such as flexible seating arrangements, small group instruction, and movement breaks, all of which are essential for effective learning among learners with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, overcrowded environments often lead to increased stress and frustration for all learners, potentially resulting in more disruptive behavior. This creates a strenuous situation for teachers, who must manage a diverse group, including learners with intellectual disabilities who often struggle in noisy or busy environments, have difficulty maintaining focus, or struggle with self-regulation.

Material inadequate

The findings of the study presented that, teaching and materials were in inadequate schools. Not having enough teaching materials can make learning much harder for learners with intellectual disabilities.

In supporting this finding, a teacher participant <SCH1 FG 2> lamented that

"We face a significant challenge due to the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials. The teaching materials available are insufficient for all the pupils in school. For instance, there are not enough textbooks, which forces large groups of pupils to share them."

Another teacher participant <SCH 3 FG3> complained that:

"We are currently experiencing a shortage of teaching and learning materials at our school, which makes it particularly challenging to effectively teach learners with disabilities. I believe that having adequate materials is essential, especially considering the diverse needs of students in our classrooms."

Furthermore, data gathered from observation corroborated the inadequacy of teaching and learning materials in most schools, even though many classrooms had a large number of learners. As a result, lessons primarily consisted of verbal instruction with little to no practical application. This approach left many learners, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, feeling disengaged and bored. The lack of interactive and hands-on learning experiences is a significant factor contributing to these learners' difficulties in understanding and retaining information. Without the opportunity to engage with the material in a meaningful way, learners often struggle to grasp essential concepts, leading to frustration and a lack of motivation.

The findings highlighted a significant problem in numerous primary schools regarding the lack of sufficient teaching materials for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. This deficiency plays a crucial role in these learners' struggles to understand and retain information effectively. For learning to be truly effective, teachers require access to a diverse range of resources that cater to various learning styles and enable learners to progress at their own pace. However, when such resources are unavailable, teachers are often forced to implement a uniform teaching approach, which tends to be ineffective.

Emotional demanding

The study revealed that teaching learners with intellectual disabilities can be really emotionally taxing for teachers. This emotional strain can influence their mood, how content they are in their jobs, and ultimately, their ability to teach effectively. Those teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities specifically reported various emotional struggles. Teacher participants regretted that they experienced emotions such as frustration, stress, self-doubt and burnouts.

Agreeing with findings, one teacher participant <SCH 3 FG4> echoed that:

"Teaching learners with intellectual disabilities has been an emotional journey for me. I often have to repeat instructions several times to help them understand, which slows down our progress. I also need to change my teaching methods frequently and deal with challenging behaviors from some learners. All of this can be very stressful and sometimes feels overwhelming."

Another teacher participant from <SCH 2FG2> narrated that:

"I feel frustrated watching my learners struggle with classwork despite my efforts. It's disheartening after all the dedication I put into their success. At times, I feel ineffective, emotionally drained, and overwhelmed by the demands of teaching learners with intellectual disabilities. I often feel fatigued and like I have nothing left to give."

Furthermore, one more teacher participant <SCH 1FG1> had this to say:

"At times, my learners with intellectual disabilities display challenging behaviors, such as aggression, self-harm, or intense emotional outbursts. Encountering these situations on a daily basis leaves me feeling emotionally drained and stressed, which weighs heavily on my mind. I often find myself questioning whether I'm doing enough to support them or not, and this uncertainty adds to my anxiety"

The study found that teaching learners with intellectual disabilities poses significant emotional challenges for teachers, impacting their effectiveness and often leading to stress and burnout. Many teachers feel frustrated when these learners progress more slowly than their peers or show little academic advancement, despite the considerable time and effort they invest in lessons. The emotional strain is worsened by daily challenges, including managing difficult behaviors like aggression and self-harm, which increase anxiety and concern. This unpredictability requires teachers to remain vigilant in ensuring a safe environment, contributing to heightened stress levels and a sense of constant pressure. The emotional demands of teaching in these situations often spill over into teachers' personal lives, leading to emotional exhaustion. When teachers feel they're not meeting their learners' needs, they may struggle with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, creating a cycle of stress that worsens their burnout. Additionally, insufficient resources and support can intensify these emotional challenges. Teachers without the necessary materials or training may feel overwhelmed and unprepared. A lack of professional development means they often lack effective strategies to manage their emotional burdens, negatively impacting their well-being and the overall learning environment.

Teacher incompetence

The study revealed teacher deficits in knowledge, skills and right attitudes necessary for effectively teaching learners with intellectual disabilities.

Confirming the findings, one teacher participant <SCH 2FG4> echoed that:

‘Teaching learners with intellectual disabilities has been quite challenging for me, I know it requires a range of knowledge and skills to support them in a regular classroom, but I didn’t get the training I needed to feel prepared. I often struggle to create suitable lessons for my learners. I truly try my best, but it can feel overwhelming. What I learned in college doesn’t always match the realities I face each day in the classroom, which makes it a difficult experience.’

Another teacher participant from <SCH1FG3> affirmed that:

‘For me, the biggest challenge is my lack of skills and knowledge in preparing for both groups of learners. I often find myself unsure about how to design tests and activities for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. I believe our school should offer training on effectively teaching these learners, as it would help alleviate many of the challenges we face. Right now, we truly need more support in this area.’

United in opinion, a senior teacher <SCH1> lamented that:

‘As a supervisor, my main challenge is dealing with resistance from some teachers. Many of them are reluctant to accept learners with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms. Their primary concerns revolve around feeling unprepared and lacking the necessary knowledge and skills, especially when it comes to lesson preparation and delivery. It often feels like they are being forced to teach these learners, which makes it even more difficult for everyone involved.’

In addition, the data collected from the observation checklists indicated a significant lack of essential skills among teacher participants regarding their ability to teach learners with intellectual disabilities. This deficiency in expertise creates a substantial barrier to providing effective and meaningful instruction for these learners, who often require specialized methods to succeed in an educational environment.

The findings revealed that many teachers use limited teaching methods that do not cater to the diverse learning styles of learners with intellectual disabilities. Effective teaching should incorporate various techniques, like visual aids, hands-on activities, and collaborative learning, to help keep these learners engaged and motivated. Without individualized educational plans (IEPs), teachers struggle to meet the specific needs of their learners, resulting in generic instruction that can hinder academic progress and impact self-esteem. Additionally, the lack of IEPs often leads to a one-size-fits-all teaching approach that fails to account for individual learning paces. This situation highlights the urgent need for professional development to provide teachers with the skills to effectively support these learners, emphasizing the importance of diverse teaching strategies and the creation of IEPs that recognize each learner’s unique strengths and needs.

Class absenteeism

The study unveiled that; learner absenteeism is common with intellectual disabilities in primary schools. Some teacher participants consented learner absenteeism as common trend among learners with intellectual disabilities citing negative school climate, parental mindset and academic failure.

Validating the finding, a senior teacher participant <SCH 3> observed that:

‘I’ve noticed that bullying and stigma are serious problems for my learners with intellectual disabilities at our school. Most students who struggle academically tend to become targets for bullying, which creates an atmosphere that feels unwelcoming and unsafe. I truly believe this is one of the reasons why some of them might choose to avoid coming to school.’

In addition, one teacher participant <SCH 3 FG2> echoed that:

‘In my opinion, the limited education of parents and their daily struggles for survival often result in a lack of focus on regular school attendance. Many parents in our school community are unaware of the support services available for learners with intellectual disabilities, which I believe makes it more challenging for them to motivate their children to attend school consistently.’

Another teacher participant <SCH3 FG 4> highlighted that:

"I think that student absenteeism, particularly among those with intellectual disabilities, often stems from ongoing feelings of failure, low self-esteem, and a sense of disconnection, which can make school a negative experience they wish to avoid. Another contributing factor might be that some parents are facing financial challenges and tend to prioritize their limited resources for their children without intellectual disabilities."

The study revealed a troubling pattern of absenteeism among primary school learners with intellectual disabilities, linked to several related factors highlighted by teachers. A major issue is the negative school climate, marked by bullying and stigma, which makes these learners feel unwelcome and less willing to attend school. One senior teacher noted that academic difficulties often lead to bullying, pushing these learners further away and increasing absenteeism. The findings also pointed to the impact of parental attitudes, as many parents struggle with limited education and financial issues, making it hard for them to focus on ensuring their children attend school regularly or to be aware of support services. Additionally, teachers observed that low self-esteem and a sense of disengagement among learners with intellectual disabilities make school feel unpleasant, leading them to avoid it. This analysis indicated a pressing need for actions that improve the school environment, engage parents, and provide tailored support to boost attendance among these learners.

Learner disruptive behaviors

The study revealed that teachers struggle with managing disruptive behavior exhibited by learners with intellectual disabilities. This difficulty arises from the learners' distinct learning and behavioral patterns, in addition to the particular conditions present in the classroom environment.

Affirming the findings, one teacher participant < SCH 2 FG4> had this to say:

"When I have to stop teaching to address misbehaving students, it really eats into our valuable class time. Because of this, we often don't manage to cover everything I had planned, or I have to rush through the lessons. This isn't just a problem for those with intellectual disabilities; it affects the whole class. The disruptions make it hard for everyone to concentrate, understand the material, and learn effectively."

In with the same, another teacher participant < SCH3 FG2>asserted that:

"Madam, lessons are meant to flow smoothly, building on each step as we go. However, disruptions from learners really interrupt this flow, making it challenging for me to keep the lesson moving and for learners to grasp the concepts. I feel like I'm constantly stopping and having to start over, which is frustrating for me and the learners."

In a similar manner, another teacher participant <SCH 3 FG 3> claimed that:

"I find that I spend so much of my energy managing the class that I struggle to focus on planning engaging lessons. This situation gives me a lot of stress, leaving me feeling exhausted, and at times, I even start to dread coming to work. This emotional strain makes it difficult for me to be patient, think creatively, and give my best in the classroom."

Additionally, observational data highlighted a significant challenge in classroom management regarding learners with intellectual disabilities. Teachers reported heightened stress levels and a lack of clear strategies for managing disruptive behaviors, which directly impacted their emotional well-being.

The study found that teachers have significant challenges when dealing with disruptive behaviors from learners with intellectual disabilities. These disruptions are caused by the unique ways these learners learn and act, as well as the conditions in the classroom. Teachers reported that these interruptions waste valuable teaching time, forcing them to rush through lessons and making it difficult for all learners to stay engaged and learn effectively. Many teachers mentioned that constantly managing these behaviors distracts them from creating interesting

lessons, leading to stress and burnout. This creates a vicious cycle: the more energy teachers spend on managing behaviors, the less they can focus on quality instruction, which adds to their frustrations and emotional strain.

Overwhelming work loads

The study found that many teachers working with learners who have mild intellectual disabilities frequently experience overwhelming workloads. This excessive amount of work was identified as the primary factor contributing to their feelings of stress and burnout.

In support of findings one teacher participant <SCH1FG3> voiced that:

I've noticed that teaching learners with intellectual disabilities significantly changes how I approach my work. I need to adapt my teaching methods, the content I deliver, and even the materials I use to meet each student's unique needs. It's really about discovering the best way for each individual to learn. However, this level of personalized planning takes much more time and effort than simply providing the same lesson to everyone. Honestly, it can feel overwhelming and exhausting at times."

Another teacher participant <SCH 3 FG 2> added that:

"Since I'm not a specialist in teaching learners with intellectual disabilities and haven't had the chance to learn from those who are, my job becomes much more challenging. I frequently spend extra time trying to figure things out on my own, which can be really frustrating and overwhelming. It would be immensely helpful to have more guidance and support in this area. I believe that with the right resources and mentorship, I could improve my teaching and provide better support for my learners."

Furthermore, one teacher participant <SCH 1FG3> added that:

"I often find it hard to manage the behavior of learners with intellectual disabilities. To support them, I need to pay close attention and step in before any problems happen. This extra effort makes my workload much heavier."

The study revealed that teachers working with learners who have mild intellectual disabilities often face heavy workloads, which contribute to their stress and burnout. Participants reported that they need to change their teaching methods, materials, and ways of managing behaviors to meet each learner's unique needs, which takes a lot of time and effort. One teacher mentioned that this personalized approach can be tiring and demanding, while another pointed out that a lack of specialized training makes it hard for them to handle the complexities on their own. Furthermore, the requirement for constant monitoring and intervention to manage learner behavior adds to their workload. These findings highlighted the urgent need for better support and professional development to help teachers cope with these challenges, aiming to reduce stress and enhance the educational experience for both teachers and learners with intellectual disabilities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examining teachers' experiences in educating learners with mild intellectual disabilities revealed several significant challenges that teachers encounter. These challenges greatly hinder the ability of teachers to create a supportive learning environment, which in turn affects the educational outcomes for these learners.

One of the major concerns identified in the study is the problem of overcrowded classrooms, particularly in primary schools. Large class sizes make it challenging for teachers to provide the personalized attention that learners with mild intellectual disabilities require. As a result, teachers tend to rely on traditional whole-class teaching methods, which do not effectively meet the diverse needs of these learners. A report from the Zambia Ministry of Education (2016) indicated that high learner-to-teacher ratios decrease the quality of instruction and limit opportunities for personal interaction between teachers and learners. This situation contradicts the core idea of inclusive education, which aims to provide fair learning opportunities and support tailored to individual needs. To genuinely adhere to Zambia's inclusive education policy, it is crucial to address the issue of class sizes.

Reducing the number of learners in each classroom can enable teachers to use various teaching methods effectively and create a more engaging and supportive environment. By allowing teachers to focus on the needs of learners with mild intellectual disabilities, the education system can move closer to its goal of inclusivity. Addressing overcrowded classrooms not only meets the needs of all learners but also supports Zambia's commitment to a fair and effective education system. This change is not merely an administrative task; it is a vital step toward achieving an inclusive and accessible education system for every child in Zambia.

In addition to overcrowding, the lack of adequate teaching materials remains a significant barrier for teachers, hindering their ability to provide instruction that meets learners' needs. Many teachers express frustration over the shortage of essential resources, such as specialized books and visual aids, which are crucial for enhancing learning, especially for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. This shortage underscores a broader systemic issue, as highlighted by Kandimba et al. (2023), who reported similar resource deficits in special schools. In these settings, the scarcity of appropriate teaching materials often leads to primarily verbal and disengaging instruction, which can discourage learners and diminish their overall educational experience. Consequently, this shortfall not only undermines the quality of education but also negatively impacts learner engagement and retention rates. To address these challenges, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) presents a framework that encourages innovative and creative use of available resources, empowering teachers to navigate material shortages more effectively. Teachers are thus urged to adapt their instructional approaches by leveraging community resources and incorporating technology, allowing them to enhance learning experiences even with limited resources. By fostering creativity and collaboration, teachers can create more inclusive and dynamic classroom environments that cater to the diverse needs of all learners.

Furthermore, the emotional burdens faced by teachers responsible for teaching learners with intellectual disabilities in Zambia are profound. Teachers often experience significant stress, frustration, and burnout due to the emotional demands of their roles, which are exacerbated by the lack of support from the school system. This combination of emotional strain and the slow progress of learners can lead to feelings of inadequacy, as noted by Brunsting and Sreckovic (2014). Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies could help alleviate some of these challenges by fostering a collaborative and supportive teaching environment. This approach not only focuses on the needs of learners but also recognizes and addresses the emotional well-being of teachers. Additionally, gaps in training among teachers serve as a major barrier to effective teaching for learners with intellectual disabilities in Zambia. Many teachers feel unprepared and often use inadequate teaching methods, highlighting a clear need for professional development focused on special education. The lack of individualized educational plans (IEPs) further complicates the ability of teachers to meet the needs of their learners. However, a study by Zulu and Phiri (2020) provides a more optimistic perspective, as some teachers reported positive experiences despite the challenges they face. These teachers have found effective ways to cope and have become more creative in their teaching methods, utilizing project-based learning and hands-on activities to engage learners with intellectual disabilities in meaningful ways. This indicates that, with appropriate support and encouragement, teachers can develop effective strategies to improve the educational experiences of all their learners.

Moreover, learner absenteeism remains a significant issue that highlights broader systemic challenges, including negative school climates and societal stigma. The findings indicated that learners with mild intellectual disabilities frequently encounter barriers to attending school, primarily due to bullying and a prevailing sense of hopelessness among parents regarding the effectiveness of school support. This situation reflects widespread perceptions and treatment of individuals with disabilities in Zambian society, which can lead to exclusion and isolation. Such attitudes contradict the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocates for an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all learners. UDL promotes the idea that education should be accessible and effective for every learner, regardless of their abilities or challenges. By addressing barriers that contribute to absenteeism and fostering a culture of inclusivity, we can create a more supportive educational landscape where all learners, including those with mild intellectual disabilities, have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Managing disruptive behaviors in the classroom is another significant challenge for teachers, impacting their ability to teach effectively. Inclusive education is about creating an environment that meets the needs of all

learners, including those with disabilities. When teachers are overwhelmed by disruptions, they struggle to focus on engaging lessons that benefit everyone. This situation not only lowers the quality of education but also limits learning opportunities for the whole class, especially for learners who need additional help. Research by Prakash and Prabhu (2007) indicates that disruptive behaviors are common among learners with disabilities, leading to frustration and disengagement. To address these challenges, teachers need to implement specific strategies that encourage positive behavior and improve classroom management. By creating a supportive and organized environment, teachers can enhance their teaching and foster an inclusive learning space where all learners, especially those with disabilities, can succeed. This approach aligns with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasize the importance of collaboration, flexibility, and responsiveness to each learner's needs.

Finally, the heavy workloads faced by teachers contribute significantly to stress and burnout. Their numerous responsibilities, ranging from lesson planning to managing learner behavior, along with the need for flexible teaching methods, lead to increased stress levels. Rawlins (1983) noted that special education teachers often experience similar exhaustion, highlighting the need for systemic solutions to alleviate their burdens. To foster resilience among teachers, it is crucial to address the systemic issues that contribute to their overwhelming workloads. Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can provide a practical framework for alleviating some of these pressures. UDL encourages the design of flexible and inclusive teaching methods that accommodate diverse learners and promotes teamwork among teachers. By collaborating and sharing responsibilities, teachers can distribute their workload more equitably, potentially reducing feelings of isolation and overwhelming stress. This shift toward a more collaborative approach not only helps reduce stress but also enhances job satisfaction. When teachers work together, sharing strategies and resources, they create supportive professional communities that can foster resilience. This collaboration can also lead to improved educational outcomes for learners, as a more satisfied and less stressed teaching staff is better equipped to engage with learners and adapt to their needs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges identified in the study, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, emotional strain on teachers, gaps in training, learner absenteeism, disruptive behaviors, and heavy workloads, create major barriers to effective teaching for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in Zambia. These problems not only make it hard for teachers to deliver good instruction but also lead to the ongoing exclusion of learners who need individual support. This lack of help perpetuates a cycle of exclusion that goes against the principles of inclusive education. Therefore, it is essential for education policymakers to take immediate and comprehensive actions to address these systemic issues. By solving these challenges, we can create a more supportive learning environment that helps both teachers and learners, ensuring that every learner has a chance to succeed.

School managers and policymakers must prioritize implementing policies that limit the number of learners in each classroom. Smaller class sizes are essential as they enable teachers to provide personalized attention tailored to the diverse learning needs of their learners. This adjustment fosters more engaging and effective learning environments, ensuring that all learners receive the support they need to thrive academically. Additionally, investing in resources such as specialized books, visual aids, and technology tools is crucial for supporting the learning of learners with disabilities. Policymakers should ensure that all schools, particularly those serving marginalized populations, have access to the necessary materials for effective instruction, which will enhance the educational experience for all learners.

In conjunction with these structural changes, developing professional development programs focused on special education strategies, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), is vital for improving teacher effectiveness. By equipping teachers with the skills to address diverse learning needs, it can boost their confidence and lead to better educational outcomes for learners of varying abilities. Furthermore, initiating programs that reduce teacher workloads and provide emotional support is imperative for fostering a healthy work environment. Addressing the mental health needs of teachers helps prevent burnout and enhances job satisfaction, resulting in more dedicated and effective teachers.

Creating a supportive atmosphere for all learners also involves addressing societal stigma surrounding disabilities through awareness campaigns and community engagement. Building a positive school climate will

reduce bullying, encourage regular attendance, and ensure that every learner feels valued and included. Additionally, promoting a collaborative teaching approach allows teacher to share resources and strategies effectively, enabling them to support each other in overcoming challenges. School managers should cultivate a culture of collaboration that encourages teamwork and resource sharing among staff, ultimately benefiting the entire school community and promoting inclusivity for all learners.

Lastly, this study was conducted solely in Luanshya, one of the many districts in Zambia. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) in primary schools, it would be beneficial to carry out a regional or nationwide study. Such research could provide valuable insights into the challenges and successes faced by teachers across different contexts, ultimately contributing to more effective strategies and policies for supporting these learners throughout the country. Additionally, the study focused solely on teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs). It would be valuable to conduct further research that explores teachers' experiences in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities as well as those from other disability groups in primary education. Expanding the research in this way can provide a fuller understanding of the diverse challenges and experiences teachers face, enabling the development of more inclusive and effective teaching strategies to support all learners with varying needs

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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