SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF PUPILS WITH LOW VISION IN SELECTED REGULAR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LUSAKA AND MBALA DISTRICTS, ZAMBIA

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Abstract:

The study sought to investigate the social experiences of pupils with low vision in Lusaka and Mbala Districts in Zambia. The study used qualitative approach and case study research design. The sample size was 52 consisting: 16 pupils with low vision, 16 sighted pupils, 14 teachers, 2 head teachers and 4 heads of department. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select participants. Data from pupils was collected using focus group discussion guides, while data from head teachers, heads of departments and teachers was through use of interview guides. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study revealed that, the attitude of majority of teachers and sighted pupils, was negative in the two study districts. Pupils with low vision were not easily socially accepted either in rural or urban schools. The study further showed that, pupils with low vision were often; discriminated, teased and bullied in regular class and school settings, hence, finding it difficult to participate effectively in social activities. Additionally, teachers and sighted learners were of the view that pupils with low vision were, pretenders, while head teachers and heads of department, disagreed with this view. Interventions, schools had put in place to help improve social experiences of pupils with low vision in regular schools, ranged from: sensitization and advocacy; creation of positive social environment; modification of social activities in order ensure social acceptance of pupils with low vision. In view of these findings, the study recommended that, the strengthening of sensitization and advocacy initiatives on social inclusion of pupils with Low vision in order to reduce stigmatization, discrimination, teasing and bullying practices.

Keywords: visual impairment; low vision; social experience, attitudes; regular school

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1. Introduction

The 1994 Salamanca World Conference on Special Education attended by 92 governments which included Zambia and 25 international organizations dealing with children and adults with disabilities, reaffirmed the right to education of every person as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration (UN, 1948). It also renewed the commitment made by the 1990 World Conference on Education For All (EFA) to ensure the rights to education for all children regardless of their differences. The right to education is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 2006). This is equally articulated in the International Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990; 2000) as well as in the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1994). Further, the Salamanca Conference on Special Education in particular, recognized the need to work towards developing 'Schools for All' in all countries. The report on the conference encourage member countries to find ways and means of increasing access to education, promoting equalization of educational opportunities as well as improving the quality of education not only for children with disabilities but for all children including those with low vision.

Denier (2010) cited in Kabeto (2015) explains that a low vision individual is one who is visually impaired even after optical correction, but who may increase the visual function through the use of optical devices, use of non-optical devices, require environmental modification and or techniques to support function. Low vision training often is recommended and helps to prepare Learners with Low vision (LLV) to become active learners. It enables them to access information from a variety of sources to support learning despite vision limitations. Denier (2010) claims that, low vision is poorly understood by the majority of teachers, including those who have learners who experience low vision in their classrooms. This causes a family to be left on its own to figure out how best to raise a child with low vision. Educationally, LLV have enough residual vision to read large print or regular print with special assistance such as magnification (Chikopela; Ng'ambi; Mandyata & Ndhlovu, 2019). Their limitation however, may be greater in their distance vision. These learners may not technically be referred to as blind and indeed this type of condition affects the performance of the LLV in social and academic sphere although the extent may vary, among individuals.

Akakandelwa and Musanje (2011) reveal that the 2002/2003 Living Condition Survey indicates that 2.4 percent of the Zambian population is of persons living with disabilities (Central Statistical Office, 2004). Of this group, 0.9 percent is listed as being either blind or low vision, the Ministry of Health National Eye Strategic Plan of (2007-2011; Central Statistical Office, 2010) estimated Zambia to have 120,000 blind people and five times as much of those with low vision by 2020. Ministry of Health National Eye Strategic Plan of (2007-2011 report further, childhood blindness was estimated at 5.5 percent, affecting around 6,689 children under 15 years and experiencing social exclusion in the society. In Zambia, learners with low vision (LV) are educated in special and of late regular schools. In regular schools, most teachers are not trained on how to help nor

support such learners benefit socially and educationally form their presence (Mandyata & Kamukwamba, 2018). The study reports that, learners with visual impairment and low vision, had continued to perform poorly socially and academically in school communities. Despite the policy directives put in place through 1996 education policy-Educating Our Future and indeed through the current regulation on education - Education Act of 2011. Disability Act of 2012 and National Policy on Disability 2015, equally have supported increased access to social services such as education, health; equalization of opportunities and improving the quality of social services available for the disabled, but it has been report for example, Corn and Koenig, (1996); Mandyata, (2011) learners with low vision, appear to continue to experience social exclusion in regular school settings. It against this background, the study was conducted in order to explore the social experiences of pupils with low vision in a regular school setting in rural and urban secondary schools in Lusaka and Mbala districts in Zambia.

2. Review of Related Literature

Mbiti (2012) observes that, the impact of social experiences on academic performance of LLV in integrated schools in Nairobi county was evident in their low academic achievements. The study used descriptive survey research design. Target population was of learners with low vision of classes 5, 6, and 7, teachers in these classes and head teachers. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study showed that the level of peer and teacher interaction had the highest influence on academic performance of pupils with low vision. Further, the study noted that, support given by the school for example, teaching resources and environment did not seem to have positively influence academic performance of the LLV but social and psychological support did have a significant influence on school success or failures. Other findings included that, the curriculum had not adapted to suit social needs of learners with low vision and that most of the teachers had no training on how to deal with social expectations of the LLV. While Mbiti (2012)' works focused on the social experiences and academic performance of pupils with low vision in integrated primary schools in an urban setting, the social experiences of LLV and how such experiences impacted on their academic life in rural education settings remained unknown, hence, the need for the present study.

With regards to social, economic and cultural challenges and how they influenced social life of learners with visual impairments in regular schools, these were investigated by Agesa, (2014). The study used a mixed approach. The study to place in Trans-Nzoia County Kenya on 110 learners, 20 classroom teachers and 6 itinerant teachers. Data was collected through use of questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis. The study found out that most learners with visual impairments performed poorly in academics due to lack of social support and a differentiated curriculum. These findings were attributed to social, economic and partly cultural factors. The nature of varied differences in needs of learners with visual impairments calls for more teachers in special needs

education, so that at least each regular school has one. Parents to learners with visual impairments and community also requires sensitization on education and socialization as a way of preparing children with LLV for them to become socially functional in a school system.

Joab (2008), adds by stating that, to promote social interaction and inclusion, children with VI need to develop their awareness of themselves and acquire a wide range of social skills through a variant of experiences for them to function in a school social environment. Opportunities to interact with others need to be embedded in everyday whole life class activities and also taken as and when they emerge within the school community. Planning for social integration of learners with different abilities, however is important so that environments and strategies that are conducive to positive learning experiences are encouraged. There is need to have opportunities to practice skills that are difficult to access, particularly when children cannot learn as easily from imitation of others. Webster and Roe, (1998), points to the need to provide opportunities to LLV to take part in extra-curricular activities, school clubs and consultation to enhance social integration among learners in a school. This is because, visual impairment as a condition, change the way children obtain information about the social world around them and limit social opportunities to learn through observation of visual elements in the school and elsewhere. This means that, in addition to regular classroom studies, children who are blind or visually impaired need to learn social skills through frequently referred to as the expanded core-curricular from teachers and other pupils in the school. The America foundation for the blind, (2004), adds by noting that the specialized skills which LLV need to acquire include: social interaction, understanding body language and other visual concepts, and independent living skills.

Educators in the field of special education have however, acknowledged that students with visual impairments (those who are blind or have low vision) who are in general education as well as in special education settings can lack social competence and require support to acquire such skills (Halten, Sacks and Silberman, 2000). For a person who is visually, impaired social competence is a key component of a positive self-concept, more assertive behaviour, and the ability to accept one's ability as a part of one self (Wagner, 2004). Information on the conventions and rules that are generally observed by sighted people are strategies that reinforce proper behaviour and correct inappropriate behaviour need to be taught as the basis for adapting and adjusting to living with a visual impairment (Sacks and corn, 1996).

In a study conducted by, Halten (2004), it was observed that blind or visually impaired learners in education settings often did not become socially integrated. A reason for this is that visual information plays a role in the refinement and acquisition of social skills that are necessary for social acceptance by peers. Learners with low vision, therefore, tend to have challenges in initiating and maintaining social interaction with people around them because of limitation in visual experiences. It is against, this background, the present study sought to explore and compare the social experiences of

learners with low vision in selected urban and rural inclusive secondary schools in Zambia.

3. Problem

Social experiences of learners with disabilities in schools are clear indicators of the levels of equalization of educational opportunities especially for learners with visual impairment (Kalabula, (1991). MoGE (1996), basically believes that all learners regardless of their physical, sensory and intellectual capacity have equal chances to access social integration, equity and indeed experience academic success. Previous studies done such as Mandyata (2011; 2015) and Akakandelwa & Musanje (2011) have provided vital information on perceptions of teachers on presence of pupils with disabilities in regular schools, called for regular supply of instructional resources and nature of learning environment available to support the learning of pupils with disabilities in regular schools, not necessary, the social experiences of pupils with low vision. It appears that, the pupils with low vision seem to continue experiencing social exclusion in a regular school system. Less seems to be known as to what the social experiences were of pupils with low vision in regular schools in Zambia. The study, therefore, sought explore the social experiences of pupils with low vision in selected urban and rural regular secondary schools in Lusaka and Mbala Districts in Zambia. The following objectives guided the study:

1) Establish the views of participants on the social experiences of pupils with low vision in the study schools
2) Assess the determinants of social experiences of pupils with low vision in urban and rural regular schools
3) Explore the interventions instituted to improve social experiences of pupils with low vision in study schools.

3.1 Significance

It was hoped that the study would generate information on the social experiences of pupils with low vision in regular schools. Hence, it was believed that information might be useful to educational policy makers, administrators, curriculum specialist, teachers and parents to guide the promotion of social integration involving pupils with low in the school system. Further, it was anticipated that, the study might have some influence on the daily planning of teaching and learning activities in regular schools involving LLV in that would ensure social and academic integration of all pupils. The Ministry of Education may also find the results useful and encourage teachers to take keen interest in the promotion of social skills among pupils with low vision in Zambia.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the cognitive social learning theory by Bandura (1983) which holds the view that social learning approach is the way of understanding human

behavior in which people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modeling. Bandura maintains that cognitive social learning theory has implications for the social experiences of learners in that it explains interaction between the environment and one's behavior. The theory, therefore, fitted well with this study as it focuses on the social experiences of learners with LLV as they learn from each other through observation, interaction and imitation through inclusive rural and urban school settings.

4. Materials and Method

The study employed an interpretive research design supported by qualitative approaches. The selected research design allowed an in-depth study of social experiences of LLV in regular schools. The study used qualitative methods to generate the required data on social experiences of pupils with LLV in strategies teachers used to manage the classes. Qualitative inquiry, according to Mudau (2004), gives a researcher the opportunity to enter into a person's experience, and by so doing, one gets a different response regarding particular aspects of concern in a study. The ideas, motives feelings of participants and lead to yielding useful descriptive data to support to support this kind of study.

The study population consisted of pupils with low vision, sighted pupils, teachers, head teachers and heads of departments in two districts in Zambia. This population was carefully and purposefully chosen in that had direct involvement in the implementation integration policy in regular schools in Zambia. The two pilot districts were Lusaka and Mbala in Lusaka and northern provinces of Zambia. Due to logistical challenges the study opted to base the study on two districts in 2 provinces instead of all 72 districts in the nine provinces in Zambia (Central Statistics Office, 2010). A sample size is a smaller group with the relevant characteristics derived from the target population as a representative of the whole population from which the data is obtained for the study (Best et al, 2005). This simply means that a sample depending on research design chosen, should be large enough to be representative of the population. In the present study, the sample comprised: 52 participants of which: 16 were pupils with low vision, 16 were sighted pupils, 14 teachers, 2 head-teachers and 4 were heads of department. The table below provides a profile of the participants who were drawn from the study districts.

Table 1: Profile of the Participants

S./N.		Personal Profile of Participants			
1	Gender	Male		Female	
		24		28	
2	Location of study school	School (U) – Urban District		School (R) – Rural District	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
		8	19	9	16

3	Age	Below 15 years	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54	45-54 years	55 & above
		5	29	7	5	3	2	1
5	Socio-economic Status of participants	Pupils with Low Vision LLV	Sighted Pupils		Head teachers	Heads of Departments (HODs)	Teachers in Regular Classes	
		16	16		2	4	14	

In this study, gender was one of the major elements considered during. The views held by male and female stakeholders of LLV were considered to be significant in appreciating the social experiences of pupils with low vision (LLV) in regular schools. There were 24 (46%) male participants while 28 (54%) were females. The location of participants was yet another factor that was significant for the study. Out of the 52 participants, 27 (51.9 %) were from a urban study district while, the remaining 25 (48.1%) were from a rural setting. The idea of selecting participants from urban and rural locations provided an opportunity to have a balanced in the information on social experiences of LLV in regular schools. Age of the participants was yet another factor that was considered. Age of participants was seen to have a potential of contributing to diverse views on social experiences of pupils with LLV. Further, it was evident from the study that, majority of participants 29 (55.7%) interviewed were aged between 15–24 years, while the least was of those aged between 45-54 years who were 2 (3.8%) 55 years and those 55 years and above made up 1 (1.9%) of the sample size.

It was considered important to establish socio-economic status of participants since it had some bearings social experiences pupils with LLV were exposed to in regular schools. The study believed that their knowledge of regular education practices and how best teachers could manage and assist LLV socially, had a significant influence on social experiences of pupils. It was believed that the socio-economic livelihood for some of the participants, had a bearing on the quality of social support available to pupils with LLV on issues on socialization. Majority of the participants 32 (61.5%) were pupils with and without low vision while, 20 (38.5%) were heads of department; teachers and head-teachers. these participants had vast experiences in working with pupils in regular schools. Data analysis was done using qualitative approaches. Participants were coded and thematic analysed. The process involved grouping and categorizing of the emerging themes which were them presented descriptively. The focus group interview recordings were first transcribed to provide a complete record of the discussion. The researchers them analysed the content of the discussion by closely examining the emerging trends and patterns. In the same way, data from interviews was categorized into common emerging themes for purpose of understanding what was common social experiences. Qualitative data citing findings was believed arise from field notes on focus discuss as well as content analysis of the interview data that was collected. The results were then presented descriptively.

5. Results and Discussion

We now present the findings of the study conducted from 20187 to 2019 on social experiences of pupils with low vision (LLV) in selected urban and rural regular secondary schools in Lusaka and Mbala districts of Zambia. The findings as well as discussion are presented before making recommendations and a conclusion. Further, the study does provide highlights on how the results have addressed the knowledge gaps earlier identified on social experiences of LLV in regular schools in the two study districts in Zambia.

5.1 Views of Participants on the Social Experiences of Pupils with Low Vision

With regards to views held by various participants on social experiences of pupils with low vision in regular secondary schools, the researchers took time to interact with the participants in order to appreciate their social experiences of LLV faced in urban and rural regular schools in Zambia. In line with this thought, a question was asked to head teachers, heads of departments, teachers and pupils with and without low vision as what they thought were the social experiences of LLV in their regular secondary schools. It was evident from the results that, although the locations from which participants were drawn from were different, views on social experiences of LLV were not significantly different. The LLVs were seen to anti-social, faced challenges in accessing social interactions, were often teased bullied, denied access to social events and indeed, lacked support have social experiences in their respective regular schools as evidenced below:

5.1.1 Lack of Social Skills

The study revealed that participants (37 out of 52) felt that LLV lacked social skills to socially interact with the teachers and sighted peers in urban and rural regular schools. In support of this view, one female head teacher (HT2) from school (U= urban) observed that: Excerpt 1: *"My teachers often trying to involve learners with low vision in social and learning activities in their classes but they often feel shy to freely participate."* On the contrary, school heads and teachers would want such pupils to be free and socially integrated through social activities. In support of this results, Chikopela; Ngambi; Mandyata & Ndhlovu, (2019), see conflicts of focus among educators and pupils. While, educators feel LLV ought to be involved in social activities, pupils with low vision themselves, feel insecure and question safety of their participation in social activities. Because of lack self-confidence to socially participate in social activities, pupils with low vision are seen to be anti-social by their peer and educators in regular schools.

5.1.2 Teasing and Bullying

On the question of teasing and bullying as a sign of unwelcoming social environment, teacher and pupil-participants were asked as to whether pupils with low vision were socially teased or bullied by teachers and peers in the schools. The results were that at times although not always teachers and sighted peers teased or bullied the LLV. It was

also evident that such actions often were negative and affected the level social interaction among pupils with and without low vision. Contributing on the same, one female teacher (TR3) from school (R= Rural) observed that LLV were teased and bullied about their physical appearance, inability to see clearly and slowness in doing social or class work assigned to them as evidenced in Excerpt 2, *"LLV find it very difficult to relate well with the sighted learners and the teachers in the sense that they feel they are not accepted at all.'* In supported of this view, one male learner (LR 1) from school (U) reported that Excerpt 3: *'I think sometimes to me I feel I can't communicate with my friends because in our class if I talk to others, they say this one is looking like this…shani…nashani."* (Meaning that *"her face does not look appealing because she has problems with her eyes"*) so it affects me…ee as my oneself, yes.). Making a Contribution on the same, another female pupil (LR4) from school (U) felt that: Excerpt 4: *"Madam bambi ama teachers naba sighted balanda ati, ama problems yaba Visually Impaired…ba low vision yesa mulandu wa HIV and AIDS nangu amalwele ayashaishibikwa so ba sighted na ma teachers balabatina ati aba bantu tapali efyo bakacita mu laifi yabo"*. (translated: *"madam, some teachers and the sighted learners say that the problems for the LLV occurs because of their HIV and AIDS or unknown diseases hence, some teachers and sighted pupils fear and they say these people will do nothing in their lives"*).

In support of the views above, one female pupil (LR 5) from school (R) observed that: Excerpt 5: *"Madam… we play with them it is only that most of the LLV isolate themselves and don't want to mix with us. They will always give excuses that they are busy with other things."* Responding to the above views, one male head teacher (HT1) from Schools (R) noted that Excerpt 6: *"LLV socialize with people who accept the way they are not those who laugh at them because of their eyes."* From the above findings it was evident that LLV from schools (U) and (R) did not socialize easily with teachers nor with sighted peers due to teasing and bullying practices in regular schools. Because of these practices, LLV were often experienced negative attitudes, teasing and bullying negatively affected socialization. These results, was in agreement with Corn and Sacks (1996) who reported of learners with deaf/blindness being laughed at, shunned and teased by sighted peers. These situations contributed to inability to have access to positive social experiences in regular school settings. Bullying directed towards the learners with low vision was common as the result of their cognitive, behavioural and or physical challenges which made them *"easy target"* for teasing and social discrimination (Mandyata & Kamukwamba, 2018). The study further reports of bullying and teasing taking many forms ranging from: discrimination; rejection to isolation thereby affecting self–concept and self-confidence to ably socially interact with other learners in the schools. Beale and Scott, (2005) reports to the contrary. Head teachers, heads of department and teachers however, argued that, school social environment was quite accommodative and sensitive to the social needs of all pupils regardless of physical, sensory and mental capacities and wondered why LLV continued to slow inability to have positive social experiences. These results were in line with Swart and Pettiepher (2005) in Human (2010) who argued that regular schools with their orientation tended to have more negative effective on social well-being of differently abled pupils because of their discriminatory nature. In support

of the above results, Dyson, (2001) believes that social integration of the LLV would only have the positive social and academic effects when the school social environment, are modified and adapted to accommodate pupils with diverse social needs such as of the pupils with low vision (LLV).

5.1.3 Lack of Social Support

With regard to social support, 12 of the 16 sighted pupil -participants were of the view that the LLV did not receive the social support they required to function socially because of the negative views people around them. This view was also echoed by 14 of the 16 pupils with low vision LLV who felt that, peers and educators did not provide sufficient social support for them to effectively benefit from the social events regular schools provide from time to time. In support of this view, one female L7 from school (U) noted that, Excerpt 7: "*Madam I think…aah most of them do not receive any social support because nowadays when you wear specks people will think you are…intelligent as a result people run away from sharing information with you thinking you are more knowledgeable than them.*"

To the contrary, those who believed they received enough social support were supported by views such as what one male sighted pupil- participant L4 from school (R) observed Excerpt 8: "*Nganaluba visually impaired teshibe ukwakwingila wamusendako nanguteshibe word wamwafwako pantu… tabamwenekesha pa board*". (translated: "*if the visually impaired doesn't know where to go, you assist or you help them with words because they can't see properly on the board)*". These views were further supported by the contributions made during Focus Group Discussions both sighted and LLV pupil- participants, who felt that head teachers were helpful and supportive to the LLV as was evidenced by observation of one female sighted pupils, L9 from school (R) who said that: Excerpt 9: "*Madam…ba head support balabapela bena ngatabeshile mukulemba balaya mukubamona babaleta limbi baipusha ba madam ati nabalemba ama notes? Limbi ba madam basuminishafye filyafine limbi tababapele so ninshi ba head balaisa mukukalipa. Filyaba head nolo tuli mu class nangu ati balipela test limbi ngacilika balatweba ati balamupela icilambu bamupelela pa assembly bambi balikwata amano saana.*" (Translated: "*Madam… the head gives them support if they have not come to write... he goes to see them, bring them and asks the madam if they have written the notes. May be the madam agrees meanwhile she has not done it in this case the head gets upset. When we are in class or the test was given and a pupil with low vision does very well a present will be given to him or her at the assembly. Some are very intelligent*").

There were contrary feelings however, from other pupil–participants over social support services for LLV available in the study schools. Pupil-participants strongly felt that the schools were not doing enough to socially provide social support to pupils with low vision, a situation which limited the social experiences. This view was evidenced by the statement from one male TR 4 from school (U) who observed that: Excerpt 10: "*In class it depends much with the teacher, others are good to you, others are rude. Aaah...aah its like for example you didn't write the notes…eeeh… you are using Braille you had no one to dictate the notes then you come the following day she will come and tell you that you are…are not serious*

meanwhile she is forgetting that you have no one to dictate to you and school does nothing and some teachers feel bad if you keep on asking the words which you can't understand".

It was clear from the findings that participants had mixed feelings on social support available for LLV for them to develop social skills. The study showed in the majority of circumstances schools did not provide adequate social activities to support the acquisition and development of the much desired social skills to LLV while, a minority of the participants, disagreed with this notion. The findings were in line with Sharma (2019) who noted that students with low vision often miss or misinterpret social cues given by peers, family or teachers because they are usually not adequately oriented to unable to accurately see them. Mandyata, et all (2017) linked the challenges in acquisition of social and academic skills among the LLV to negative attitudes teachers and sighted learners have towards the learning of learners with disabilities. Mandyata, *et all* (2015) identified social development of learners with disabilities as significant in the promotion of social inclusion. The study concluded that there was a need to have teachers trained in how to teach social skills for learners with disabilities including those with low vision to benefit. Hatlen (2004), comments by stating that the teacher for LLV did not seem to have time to either teach or coordinate the social activities that promoted the learning of social skills necessary for social inclusion of the LLV. The study felt that it would be difficult for LLV to socially and learn to participate in social activities.

5.1.4 Unfriendly School Extra-curriculum to Support Social Skills

With regards to accommodativeness of school extra-curriculum and supportiveness for social acceptance, the study identified social acceptance as a basis for improved social and academic skills. The study saw investment in social development of learners as an advantage inclusive education, brings to the learning and development of LLV. For example, regular involvement and participation in social activities such as sports, games such chess and drama and debate related activities as areas most learners with low vision can ably participate in. There were, however, significant concerns in using sports as a platform for promotion of social inclusion. These ranged from: lack of appropriate sports materials and equipment to support participation of learners with LLV; unfriendly learning environment, to a selective school extra-curriculum. In support of these views, some LLV expressed lack of interest in sports for LLV among teachers and ill-preparedness of teachers to successfully teach social skills through sport and games. Most teachers did not support the involvement of learners with low vision (LLV) to participate in social activities, events and sports for them to acquire and develop social skills. In support of these views, one female L12 from school (U) had this to say: Excerpt 11: *"Mostly LLV here participate in activities like debate because debate needs one to speak rather than do physical activities. Teachers often discourage us from sport and games which require use of much force. We are less involved sporting activities and so limit our social interactions with friends."* Contributing on the same, one female L1 from school (U) made the following observation: Excerpt 12: *"Even in sports… we were asking the head…Mr. A last year so that we can also do sports. For example, football and athletics, he said if you want to do that go and ask*

Mr. P and when you go to Mr. P he will tell you just go and ask the head teacher. Madam we can appreciate if they can give things we can enjoy in sports even if we can't see properly. We do not participate in football, netball and running."

These views were not different from those obtained through focus group discussions with LLV from schools (U) and (R). The LLV felt that they were denied opportunities to acquire social skills by making them hardly participate extra curriculum related activities such as sport, in and out-door games like chess and debate. The pupil from school (R) however, acknowledged increased participation in choral music, cultural dance, drama and poetry which gave them an opportunity to socially interact with the sighted learners in the study schools as evidenced by one female L5, appreciated as follows: Excerpt 13: *"Madam….us we participate in coral music, cultural dance, drama and poetry we often feel appreciated by sighted learners unlike when we participate in football, netball and running."* The findings on the unfriendliness of the extra curriculum in the promotion of acquisition and development of social skills among the LLV, were in agreement with Freeman-Green, et al (2018)' study. The study observed that benefits of the initiatives taken in the school system to promote the teaching of social skills included: increased social acceptance, improved health, easy adaptation in new social environment, increased training opportunities and indeed employment satisfaction.

5.1.5 Poor-preparation of Teachers to Teach Social Skills

During interviews with a male head teacher from school (U), he observed that, LLV did easily get frustrated in school because the school did not offer sports, like football and netball with ringing bells inside for them to effectively participant in these games. This view was supported by the following statements from one male head teacher HT2 who said: Excerpt 14: *"Sports is the field where learners with visual impairments are excluded the most. The learners in the hostels are the most frustrated, because apart from reading the books they just sit in the hostel".* A male sighted learner L12 from school (R) agreed with the head teacher HT from School (R) who had this to say: Excerpt 15: LLV would like to do sports, but the school does not cater for this need. They do take part in cultural dance, but they would like also to participate in sports. A male HoD 1 from school (U) observed that: Excerpt 16: *"Most ordinary teachers feel it is a sheer waste of time to mingle with LLV although the specialist teachers encourage them to participate in activities that they can manage. On the whole, the findings show that although LLV were generally excluded in extra curriculum activities such as sports, they periodically participated in selected sports such as chess."*

The results are similar to Dakwa (2014) in which teachers indicated that there was little participation by children with VI in sport. They confessed that they concentrated on sighted children for the sake of progress. Shapiro *et al*. (2005) explains that learners, who have difficulty performing sports and physical activity skill, often have lower self-perceptions. These poor perceptions are likely to lead to a reduction in confidence in movement and often extend beyond the athletic domain resulting in adverse psychological and social consequences. Webster & Roe (2008) observed that opportunities to socially interact with others, need to be embedded in everyday, whole

class-activities and also to be taken as and when they emerge. Further, Bandura, (1982), noted that opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, school clubs and consultation about issues that are relevant to the individual child needs considered (Webster & Roe. 2008). It is through interactions with others that humans we learn and make sense of our social environment world over

6. Recommendations

Arising from the results of the study, we recommend that: firstly, schools should adopt the best practices in their promotion of socialization among pupils with low vision in order to have a guaranteed access to quality social experiences. Secondly, efforts be made to strengthen initiatives being used to promote sensitization and advocacy on social inclusion of pupils with low vision. Thirdly, since quality management, is critical to the creation of a successful social environment which allows pupils to socialized more effectively, adequate training on teaching of social skills should be provide to teachers and managers for purpose of increasing opportunities for socialization. Lastly, practice and simulations through social events in the schools, should be encouraged for pupils with low vision to have a guaranteed and successful social experiences.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the study concludes that social experiences of pupils with low vision in Zambia, are influenced by several factors ranging from: attitude of head teachers, teachers, pupils with low vision themselves, and sighted pupils. Negative attitudes towards social inclusion of LLV, seem to driver segregation, discrimination, teasing and bullying experienced by pupils with low vision in regular schools. Further, it is evident from the study, that negative social experiences noted among LLV, were not restricted to urban but to rural learning environment as well and might have contributed to pupils with low vision lagging behind in their acquisition of social skills to support social inclusion.

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