



## Insights of Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework in Discourse of Maltreatment in Special Education Schools, Zambia

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### ABSTRACT

The emergent framework nicknamed Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) framework, were a result of three-four years of deep reflection on the constructs that interplay in effective prevention, intervention and supportive measures for learners with disabilities against maltreatment in special education schools. The researchers develop CCP framework insights based on the patterns and themes identified in the data collected from interviews with head teachers and specialist teachers, and focus group discussion with parents and learners with disabilities during PhD study that explored child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect for learners with disabilities in selected special education primary schools in Luapula province, Zambia. Constructivist/Interpretive paradigm and qualitative intrinsic case study design were employed because the case study outcomes were intended to provide insights to the researcher about experiences of learners with disabilities about protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in the selected primary special education schools. Data was collected from two head teachers and 12 teachers from semi-structured interview guide and 12 learners with disabilities and their parents from Focus Group Discussions Guide (FGD) and were analysed thematically. The CCP framework indicated that learners with disabilities were protected from bullying using the 3R's bullying prevention strategies; recognising, responding and reporting strategies. Then, safety, disciplinary and prevention measures were used to address incidents of discrimination in Special education schools. The CCP framework also showed that in case of neglect in selected special education school, material support, social and emotional support and capacity building measures were provided. These strategies would help in addressing bullying, discrimination and neglect against learners with disabilities in selected special education primary schools. Based on these findings, the study recommends for the school to have rules and regulation (policy), and provide up-to-date professional development training needed among teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in schools for the purpose of identifying, reporting and addressing all forms of direct or indirect bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities in school.

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

### Introduction

In the context of this study, maltreatment takes any form of abuse, neglect, bullying, or discrimination experienced by students with special needs. It is the responsibility of every individual in the society to protect learners and provide them with an environment that caters for their healthy development. In the face of the international mandate for safe learning environments, the reality for many children in school is quite different. The reality of a safe learning environment from a global perspective is that many learners with disability do not fare well (UNICEF, 2017). United Nations (2019) reported that despite important progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mistreatment remains a harsh reality for millions of learners including those with disabilities around the world. An estimated 246 million children experience violence in school every year, which is approximately 1 in 4 students (UNESCO, 2021) Bullying in special education schools may go unnoticed or unaddressed by school staff due to inadequate training, lack of awareness, or a failure to take complaints from students with disabilities seriously. UNICEF (2019) revealed that close to one in three students with disabilities between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide experiences bullying on a regular basis. Similarly, UNESCO (2019) reported that almost one-third of school students have been bullied by their peers at least once in a month. Further, UNESCO (2019) found that persons with disabilities face the worst discrimination, affecting their right to go to school and within school. Clement et al., (2016) investigated the prevalence and risk factors of child neglect in Canada and the findings revealed that 21% of children aged between 10 to 15 years were victims of neglect. UNICEF (2017) estimated that children with disabilities experience three to four times the level of violence compared to children without disabilities. Sharley (2022) also, confirmed neglect to be the most common form of child abuse in schools, but frequently goes unrecognized and threaten well-being of children while in school. In recognition of the importance of child protection, the school should have a legislative framework and protection system that encompasses a range of prevention and response mechanisms in case of bullying, discrimination or neglect occur in school. Against this background, it is no surprise that children with disabilities usually experience more bullying, discrimination and neglect at school, relative to their peers. To address the bottlenecks requires schools to implement child-safeguarding procedures; provides for access to justice and services for victims of abuse and neglect; and details children's rights to social protection, health care, education, and parental care (Chibwili, 2023).

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

Further, access to education, violations and breaches of the right to education persist, illustrated perhaps most starkly by learners who are still out of school (UNESCO, 2021). WHO (2019) confirmed that persons with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who face the worst discrimination, affecting both their right to go to school and their rights within schools. Learners with disabilities mostly face challenges like discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school. This also evident by Dankyi et al. (2021) who found that discrimination in school encourages the tendencies that distinguish, exclude or restrict individuals or groups with disabilities from having access to quality education. Additionally, the incidents of neglect have perpetrated educational settings (Lucinda 2021). Numerous studies indicate that neglect, contributes to the risk of learners coming late, being absents or drop out from school (Matulac & Zamora, 2020; LeCroy & Milligan-LeCroy, 2020). Learners in school lack access to quality instruction, appropriate learning materials, educational technology, or special education services for students with disabilities, but frequently goes unrecognized within the school-aged population and represent major threats to child health and well-being (Sharley, 2022). This contribute to academic underachievement, low graduation rates, and limited opportunities for future success.

With the increasingly concerned, with the increasing cases of bullying, discrimination and neglect amongst learners in schools (UNICEF, 2018); MYSCD et al., 2018; Likumbo et al., 2021; Dankyi, et al., 2021; Nakamba & Kaani, 2023). Bullying, discrimination and neglect has remained a long-standing social depravity facing learners in schools. Almost one-third of school going learners with disabilities have been bullied, discriminated or neglected by their peers with or without disabilities on daily basis (UNICEF 2019; Njelesani & Swarm, 2022). Further, UNESCO, (2017) reports that learners with disabilities face challenges of bullying and discrimination from their colleagues, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the school about three times more than their peers "without" disabilities. Similarly, Republic of Zambia, (2018) reports that learners with disabilities are vulnerable to bullying compared to their non-disabled peers, with rates as high as two to three times greater. Additionally, they face peer rejection, teasing, name-calling, derogatory remarks about their disability, or hurtful language to belittle or demean them. They are also excluded from group activities, ignored by peers, or marginalized within the school community, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Protection of these children with disabilities is therefore necessary if they have to participate in the school activities including academic work. However, it is not known how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. If these acts of bullying, discrimination and neglect remain unchecked among learners with disabilities in schools, they have far-reaching consequences that may impact negatively on their physical health, mental well-being, academic achievement, and social development. In addition, they may be characterised with decreased motivation, absenteeism, and declining grades. It therefore, becomes imperative to conduct a study to explore how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education primary schools in Luapula province. The findings may have important implications for future policy and practice in the delivery of school-based child protection measures against bullying, discrimination or neglect.

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## Methodology

The study adopted a constructivist approach, focusing on understanding the perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders involved in protecting learners with disabilities. The themes which emerged as prevention, intervention and supportive measures were subjective and socially constructed by participants experience and perspectives. Further, the constructivist paradigm was chosen because it enabled the researcher to have in depth understanding of the subjective world of head teachers, teachers, parents and learners on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The study had chosen an intrinsic case study design. An intrinsic case study is a research design where the primary interest lies in understanding the specific case itself, rather than using it as a means to generalize data to a broader population or theory. In this case the child with disability and special education school was of primary interest in the study. The outcomes were internalized on how learners with disabilities are protected from bullying, discrimination and neglect in schools. Data was collected from two head teachers and 12 teachers from semi-structured interview guide and 12 learners with disabilities and their parents from Focus Group Discussions Guide (FGD) and were analysed thematically.

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## Presentation and Discussion of Findings

**Protection Measures for Learners with Disabilities from Bullying.** The first research question focused on the measured to protect learners with disabilities from bullying in selected special education schools. The measures included Recognizing, Responding and Reporting. In order to protect learners with disabilities bullying, schools put up measures. One of the measures that came up was recognising bullying behaviour and acts. It included noticing sudden changes in behavior, such as withdrawal from peers and school activities, noticing sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork, identifying harassment and bullying acts in school, noticing fearful behaviours or avoidance of certain locations in the school. One head teacher from School 2 during interviews said that: "to protect learners from bullying in the school, we first notice if there's a sudden decline in academic performance or a loss of interest in schoolwork, then we find a way to address the act" This was in line with Bibou-Nakou and Marko (2017) who indicated that teachers who receive training in bullying prevention are better prepared to identify warning signs, address incidents promptly, and

create inclusive classroom environments where all students feel safe and valued. It was essential for teacher, parents, and other stakeholder in special education school to be vigilant for those signs bullying and act if bullying is suspected. This finding agreed with Chirwa (2019), who found that if you know or suspect bullying has occurred, learn how to find out what has happened to a child. Understanding what has happened may also help in communicating with class teachers or school officials about the situation. Similarly, Falla et al. (2021) pointed out that the teachers and administration need to recognize the warning signs of bullying in schools that learners are involved in.

Regarding how schools respond bullying findings revealed the following measures were in place: child protection rules in schools, involving parents in the education of learners, holding meetings with learners to reinforce positive behavior, guidance and counselling on how to respond to bullying, anti-bullying programmes in the school, peer support groups to sensitise learners. training programmes for staff on how to respond to incidents of bullying and programmes for teaching learners anti-bullying social skills. In conformity with the above findings, one head teacher during interviews said that: “the school has responded to bullying behaviours and acts of bullying by formulating child protection rules that protects learners with disabilities from bullying in school” This was in agreeable with Downe and Cefai (2016), who indicated that at school level, policies can be formulated and guide organisational practices, such as establishing bullying incident reporting procedures and creating school safety teams tasked with developing and executing school safety plan. Therefore, special education schools typically should have rules and regulations in place to prohibit acts of bullying as part of their broader efforts to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. Similarly, the results were in line with Amanda (2019), who noted that schools should identify and train staff to be responsible for monitoring bullying and to whom learners with disabilities can talk about bullying for example, a school counsellor or a teacher who needs to be trained in bullying prevention and intervention and in inclusive education. The special education schools need training of all staff in bullying prevention and intervention and need to provide support services for learners with disabilities affected by school bullying. Analogous findings were reported by Mohan and Bakar (2021), who revealed that teachers needed to be competent in order to prevent and respond to the bullying acts that affected learners with disabilities. For schools to protect learners with disabilities and respond to bullying in school need to conduct intensive guidance and counselling with the victims of bullying and bullies.

The findings of the study showed that schools had several ways in which bullying could be reported. These included, having a supportive and non-judgmental environment for reporting all forms of ill-treatment, allowing multiple ways of reporting bullying incidences in schools, creating awareness to learners, staff, and parents about reporting procedures for bullying acts. In crossing checking the truth of the data from the two head teachers, data from learners was triangulated with that from the head teachers. The above views were reflected in a response from one male learner during the focus group discussion 1 who confirmed that: “all forms of ill-treatment concerning bullying are reported to the teachers and in turn teachers also report to the administration for action on the offenders. This has helped reduce the rates of bullying in the school” These findings were in conformity with the study by UNESCO (2021), which revealed that establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and policies and referral services, are key component of child protection program in schools. These findings agree with Antwi (2021), who stated that incidents of bullying should always be reported so that actions were taken to address the situation. Similarly, UNESCO (2021), who advocated for establishing reporting mechanisms for learners affected by bullying, together with support and referral services, as key components of child protection programs in schools.

**Intervention Measures against Discrimination for Learners with Disabilities.** The second research question of this study focused on intervention measures against discrimination put in place for learners with disabilities in selected special education primary schools. These were; Safety, Disciplinary and Prevention measures.

The study findings indicated that schools had put in several measures to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in the selected special education primary schools. These measures included developing schoolchild protection policies, reacting to acts of discrimination in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts. These findings were supported by one female Specialist teacher participant from School 1 during interviews who noted that: “As teachers we conduct routine checking to stop harassment and discrimination acts in the school” Similarly, the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017), who indicated that policies were needed to specifically support and protect members from different forms of discrimination within the school. Schools needed to make it clear that they have a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination. Schools should be engaged in development of written policy that defined procedures and rules as deterrent to discrimination in schools. However, the study by Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) focused on teachers’ experiences and perceptions of child abuse and neglect, while the present study focused on child protection measures on bullying, discrimination and neglect in selected special education schools.

The findings of the study also indicated that learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using disciplinary measures. These measures included having a child amends through an apology, calling a child’s parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, or suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. In support of this, one female Specialist teacher-participant from School 1 during interviews, noted that: “we usually ask child using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks amends through an apology” These findings resonate with the study by Rijbroek et al (2019), who argued that school should avoid punitive measures that disproportionately affect students from marginalized groups and instead focus on restorative approaches that promote accountability, repair harm, and foster learning and growth. Learners fear punishment, therefore, when they hear that all those with unwanted social behaviours would be punished, they stop misbehaving. These findings were in line with the report by UNESCO (2019), which unveiled that there should be laws and policies to protect the rights of learners and young people with disabilities, prohibit violence against them, and support inclusive education. The report identified the need for robust laws and policies, including policies at the school level, to prevent and address school bullying. However, the report by UNESCO (2019) focused in ending school violence and bullying, not necessarily discipline intervention measures to protect learners with disabilities from discrimination in special education schools.

Concerning the findings of the study on how learners with disabilities were protected from discrimination in selected special education schools using prevention measures, participants revealed that some of the prevention strategies employed included in-house training for staff on discrimination issues, engaging in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners and provision of Guidance and counselling. One other male Specialist teacher participant from School 2 added that: "As a school we are engaged in Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) and teacher group meeting on handling learners is one-way learners with disabilities are protected from discrimination in selected special education schools" These findings were in line with the report of Maciver et al (2019), which reported that schools provided training for school personnel, discussing ways to care for those with disabilities and prejudice in the classroom, raised awareness of the necessity of fair and just classrooms, and closed the achievement gap between marginalized and non-marginalized learners. This finding was in line with Deuchet et al. (2017), who indicated that most important thing for guidance and counselling teachers in school to deal with discrimination is to be aware of the signs of discrimination, talk to the students who are being targeted, speak out against discrimination and promote inclusion in classroom or school. However, the study by Deuchet et al. (2017) was carried out in higher education in Switzerland, whose prevailing conditions may not be the same as the present study, which was conducted in special education schools in Luapula province, Zambia. However, it can be settled that by integrating and scaling up counselling services into the support framework for learners with disabilities, special education schools would create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students can thrive.

**Supportive Measures to address Neglect among Learners with Disabilities** The third research question for the study was aimed at establishing supportive measures put in place to address neglect in selected special education schools in Luapula province. The study revealed that learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in special education schools using Material Support measure, Social and Emotional Support measure and Capacity Building measures.

The study findings indicated that learners with disabilities who experience neglect in selected special education schools were supported through material support services. These measures included providing mobility aids, auxiliary aids and services, financial and material support, accommodating learners in the boarding and provision of the school requirements to learners. Other strategies included providing school requisites like washing and bathing soap, exercise books and pencils or pens to learners, provision of bursaries to learners and providing medical or mental-health treatment. One other female Specialist teacher participant from School 2 during interviews pointed out that: "The school helps in providing school requisites to those in need and the school go a mile further in providing assistive devices and aid to this learner like walking can, computer with JAWS. The findings are supported by Avdibegovi and Brki, (2020) who revealed that learners in school who experience neglect in school need material support because the availability of learning resources and other school requisites influence the stay of the learner in the boarding school. However, the study by Sharley (2020) was limited, as it did not provide a detailed explanation on how learners with disabilities are protected from neglect in schools. Thus, the present study explored how learners with disabilities were protected from neglect in special education schools in Luapula province. Similarly, Daro (2019) who revealed that learners with disabilities were neglected due to lack of support service, which resulted in them engaging in various risks. Thus, for learners who lacked support service, teachers were to provide equitable access to quality universal services for learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, the study by Daro (2019) was conducted in the United States of America whose prevailing conditions were not the same as Zambia, where the present study was conducted.

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

Regarding the findings of the study on how learners with disabilities were supported against neglect in selected special education schools through Social and Emotional Support, participants revealed that some of the Social and Emotional Support measures employed included provision of guidance and counselling sessions, providing motivational talks, acceptance and commitment therapy and engaging in religious activities. One Head teacher participant from School 1 during interviews who noted: "Regarding support, we conduct disability-awareness training in school through teacher group meeting. This gives learners with disabilities who are neglected some hope". The current study findings are in conformity with the works of Asio et al. (2020) who indicated that access to supportive counselling services in schools can mitigate the negative effects of neglect on students' academic performance, social-emotional development, and overall well-being. Special education schools should prioritize the provision of counseling services to ensure that neglected learners with disabilities receive the support and guidance they need to thrive. Other Social and Emotional Support measures that were employed to address neglect in special education schools for learners with disabilities were providing encouragements to learners, psychological care and involving parents. The findings are supported by Al-Qaysi, N. (2018) who noted that successful protection requires carefully coordinated and communicated actions. The school must be a community which encourages family and community participation in all matters related to children's welfare.

The findings of the study also indicated that to address the underlying issues of neglect in special schools among learner with disabilities and to provide support and resources to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals affected school embarked on capacity building among teachers and stakeholders in school. These intervention measures included conducting disability-awareness trainings, orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners. These findings resonate with the study by Rusteholz et al (2021), who found that to protect learners with disabilities from bullying, the school needs to put up awareness program, support and capacity building trainings that would help combat bullying behaviours in schools. If a school was unaware of a bullying problem, it would

be impossible for such an incident to be resolved. Hence there was need of teachers and parents to understand how awareness help to protect learners with disabilities from neglect in special education schools. Similarly, supporting the findings of the study, Ng'andu and Chilufya (2019) reported that staff within schools hold a particular advantage because they possess long-standing interactions with learners. Teachers and other school staff play a consistent role in learners' lives through the provision of universal services. However, the cited studies were limited as they did not explore supportive measure to control neglect in special education schools.

Further the training was not only orientation of new staff on how to handle learners and how to report neglect cases. The finding showed that the trainings equip teacher with skills of recognising signs and symptoms of neglect, such as poor hygiene, unexplained injuries, chronic absenteeism, and emotional withdrawal and it create safe and confidential reporting channels for learners to report concerns about neglect to trusted adults, such as teachers, school counselors, or administrators and makes them feel empowered to speak up on their concerns. In agreement with the findings above, one male parent participant during the third Focus Group Discussion articulated that: "Teachers conduct workshops and counselling sessions on how to handle learners in the school. Learners with disabilities require love, friendship protection, guidance and much help, at the same time they need much guidance and sensitization on how-to live-in love with one another" Binou-Nakou and Markos (2017) indicted that support strategies should prioritize early identification and response to instances of neglect. By identifying and addressing signs of neglect promptly, schools can help prevent further harm to students and families and promote their well-being.

These were in line with the principles of the ecological model, which guided this study. The model suggests that safety and well-being of learners, is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors, these factors must be considered in terms of their existence at each level, as well as their interaction across each level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher is potentially able to provide a crucial link to many of the bullied, discriminated or neglected child's needs. Learners with disabilities spend a large amount of their time in school where teachers have close and constant interactions with them. Teachers have the prospective not only to help tend to the emotional wellbeing of the child, but also aid the family in gaining access to the services they need to help avoid any future bullying, discrimination and neglect.

### Insights of Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) framework

The extension of the findings and discussions the emergent Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework.

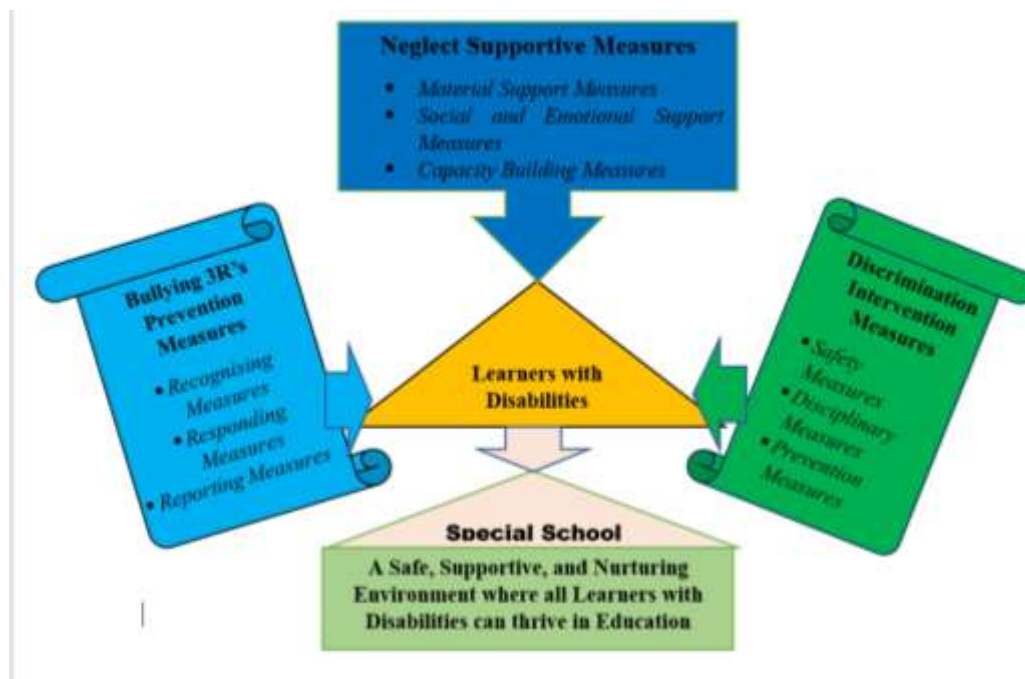


Figure 1: Proposed Chisala's Child Protection (CCP) Framework (2024)

CCP framework insights based on the patterns and themes identified in the data collected from interviews with head teachers and specialist teachers, and focus group discussion with parents and learners with disabilities. The framework provides an integrated prevention, intervention and supportive comprehensive strategies that can be employed both preemptively and responsively in special education schools to combat and mitigate instances of bullying, discrimination, and neglect among learners with disabilities. At the center of the CCP framework, are learners with disabilities who are the beneficiaries surrounded by three strategies to protect them from bullying, discrimination and neglect in special education schools. These include the 3R's bullying prevention strategies (recognising, responding and reporting strategies); discrimination intervention measures (safety, disciplinary and prevention measures); and neglect supportive measures (material support measures, social and emotional support and capacity building).

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

The second section focuses on intervention measures that may be used to address discrimination in schools for learners with disabilities. The CCP framework states that to address discrimination in selected special education schools, teachers should employ safety strategies, disciplinary measures and prevention strategies. Examples of safety strategies that should be employed by teachers include developing school child protection policies, reacting to acts of bullying in schools, reporting all forms of ill-treatment to the administration and routine checking to stop harassment and bullying acts. Regarding disciplinary measures, teachers should ensure a child amends through an apology, calling a child's parents or sending a note home, giving verbal warning, written reprimand, or suspension of learners using discriminatory language or derogatory remarks and imposing appropriate consequences for individuals found guilty of discrimination. Further, interventions influenced by this arm of intervention measures aim to raise awareness of discrimination, privilege, and power dynamics, challenge stereotypes and biases, and empower students to become advocates for equity and inclusion. These interventions measures promote formulation policies and procedures for preventing and responding to discrimination, providing training on legal rights and responsibilities, conducting investigations into allegations of discrimination, and implementing corrective actions when violations occur.

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

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

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

Then, under capacity building measures, supportive measures should include training and awareness efforts to ensure school personnel are knowledgeable about neglect, its impact on learners, and how to respond effectively. Training should include orientation of new staff on how to handle learners, recognizing signs of neglect, mandated reporting requirements, trauma-informed practices, and strategies for supporting students and families. It also

covers counselling sessions on how to handle learners as well as encouraging teamwork and love amongst learners. The CCP framework affirms that when these neglect supportive measures were employed, learners with disabilities would be protected in schools and it would help create a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where all learners would thrive.

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

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

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## Conclusion

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

Absolutely, protecting learners with disabilities from bullying, discrimination, and neglect is not only ethically imperative but also legally mandated in many jurisdictions. Every individual deserves a safe and supportive learning environment that fosters their growth and development regardless of their abilities. Bullying, discrimination, and neglect can have devastating effects on anyone, but they can be particularly harmful to learners with disabilities who may already face additional challenges. Hence, providing staff with training on recognizing and addressing these issues, creating a culture of inclusivity and respect, and offering support services for affected learners are essential components of a comprehensive prevention, intervention and supportive measures to promoting a safe and supportive learning environment in special education schools for learners with disabilities.

### 1.1.1 6.4. Recommendations

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

- i. Due to the rising incidence of school bullying, discrimination and neglect as well as other types of harms including abuse in special education schools, it is critical that Ministry of Education come up with policies outlining the additional vulnerability of children with disabilities to such acts and how these incidents should be addressed.
- ii. The Head Teacher should ensure that the school create and enforce clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying, discrimination or neglect and provide up-to-date professional development training for teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in schools for the purpose of identifying, reporting and addressing all forms of bullying, discrimination and neglect among learners with disabilities in school.
- iii. The Head Teacher should ensure that the school implement recognizing, responding and reporting measures against bullying, as well as promoting intervention measure such as safety, disciplinary and prevention strategies to address discrimination, and provide supportive measure inform of material support, social and emotional support, and capacity building in addressing incidents of neglect among learners with disabilities in special education schools.

- iv. The Head Teacher should ensure collaboration and engage with specialist teachers, parents and learners with disabilities in a non-punitive and supportive manner to address underlying issues contributing to bullying, discrimination or neglect and connect them with appropriate resources and services, including access to counselling services and peer support groups.

#### Conflict of Interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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