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Examining exclusionary impact of blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This qualitative research paper examines the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. By identifying the challenges faced by these learners, such as the tragic loss of life due to falling into Blair toilets' pits, the study underscores the urgent need to address this issue. The Social Model of Disability provides a theoretical framework that can be used to understand and analyse the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. The study involved fifteen participants who were purposively selected based on criteria such as gender and personal experiences. Data was collected through focus group discussions and analysed using content thematic analysis. The study found that the exclusion of learners with disabilities from learning environments is due to the lack of accessible Blair toilets. Consequently, some learners with disabilities are forced to drop out of school due to the inaccessible nature of the toilets, which hampers their ability to attend classes regularly. Based on this finding, the article recommends that the government and other stakeholders should work together to construct Blair toilets that are accessible and user-friendly for learners with disabilities. This may involve building flush toilets and utilizing resources such as bricks and solar-powered boreholes to ensure an adequate water supply.

Keywords: Blair toilets; exclusion; learners with disabilities; quality education; rural primary schools; Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Inclusive education is a fundamental right that ensures equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Ngweya & Moyo, 2018). However, in many parts of the world, including rural areas of Zimbabwe, students with disabilities continue to face barriers to their education. One significant factor contributing to this exclusion is the inadequate provision of accessible toilet facilities in rural schools (Chidarikire, 2023). There is a paucity of literature on the impact of the lack of Blair toilets in Zimbabwe; therefore, this research aims to explore the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on students with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Blair toilets, a type of pit latrine commonly found in rural areas, often lack the necessary accommodations to support the needs of students with disabilities (Chigumwe & Thembochaka, 2017). In the United States, it was found that these toilets are typically inaccessible, lacking features such as ramps, handrails, and adequate space for maneuverability (Smith & Johnson, 2019). As a result, students with disabilities encounter numerous challenges when accessing and using these facilities, leading to their exclusion from the educational environment. The consequences of this exclusion are far-reaching, as students with disabilities may face physical discomfort, difficulties in maintaining personal hygiene, and increased vulnerability to health risks (White & Patel, 2017). In a study conducted in Sub-Saharan countries such as South Africa, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), and Lesotho, it was observed that the lack of accessible toilets can contribute to feelings of embarrassment, shame, and stigmatization, impacting their overall well-being and self-esteem. Consequently, these barriers can hinder their educational progress and limit their social inclusion within the school community.

To effectively address this issue, it is crucial to understand the specific challenges faced by learners with disabilities in relation to pit latrines in rural primary schools by examining the exclusionary impact of these facilities. This research aims to shed light on the urgent need for inclusive and accessible toilet infrastructure (Govender & Naidoo, 2019). Such insights can inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in developing strategies and interventions to promote inclusive education and ensure that learners with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities (van der Merwe & Coetzer, 2020). In South Africa, Sithole and Maphosa (2018) conclude that access to adequate sanitation facilities is a fundamental human right and an essential component of ensuring a healthy and inclusive educational environment.

In Zimbabwe, like many other developing countries, the provision of sanitation facilities in rural primary schools remains a significant challenge (Chigumwe & Thembachako, 2017). One commonly used type of toilet in these areas is the Blair toilet, named after its inventor, Dr. Peter Blair (Makhalemele & Maseko, 2017). However, there is limited research on the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by examining the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets, the implications of such barriers on their well-being and educational outcomes, and potential strategies to promote inclusivity in sanitation facilities.

Access challenges faced by learners with disabilities

Learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe encounter various barriers in accessing and using Blair toilets. Physical and architectural barriers, such as the lack of ramps, handrails, or appropriate door widths, can restrict their mobility and independence (Kgathi & Mokomane, 2018). Additionally, the absence of proper signage and tactile markers may pose challenges for learners with visual impairments (Chauke & Mlauzi, 2016). Furthermore, the lack of assistive devices and adaptations, such as grab bars or raised toilet seats, can further hinder their ability to use the facilities safely and comfortably (Johnson, 2018).

Exclusionary impact on learners with disabilities

The exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities extends beyond physical barriers. According to Kgathi and Makoname (2018) in Botswana, hygiene and maintenance issues, such as inadequate water supply, poor waste management, and unsanitary conditions, can disproportionately affect learners with disabilities who may require additional support or have specific hygiene needs. These challenges can lead to discomfort, embarrassment, and even health risks for learners with disabilities (Smith, 2019). Additionally, in Mozambique, researchers found that the social and psychological implications of inaccessible sanitation facilities can contribute to feelings of isolation, stigma, and lower self-esteem among these learners (Simango & Mabote, 2018).

The educational implications of lack of Blair toilets in rural areas and strategies to address

The exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities can have significant educational implications. Inaccessible sanitation facilities can act as a deterrent to school attendance and participation, particularly for learners with mobility impairments or those who require frequent toileting assistance (Davis & Thompson, 2020). This can result in increased absenteeism and reduced educational opportunities for these learners. Moreover, the lack of appropriate sanitation facilities can contribute to health issues and compromise the overall well-being of learners, affecting their ability to concentrate and perform academically (Anderson, 2021). To address the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities, various strategies can be implemented. Incorporating Universal Design principles for sanitation facilities can ensure accessibility for all learners, including those with disabilities (Roberts & Collins, 2022). This may involve features such as wider doorways, grab bars, non-slip flooring, and accessible signage.

Additionally, providing assistive devices and adaptations tailored to the needs of learners with disabilities can enhance their independence

and comfort (Sebetso & Mmope, 2019). Teacher training and sensitization programs can also play a crucial role in fostering inclusive attitudes and practices towards learners with disabilities, and community engagement and participation are vital for creating a supportive environment and advocating for inclusive sanitation facilities (Molefe & Ntseane, 2020). The exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe is a critical issue that requires urgent attention. Accessible and inclusive sanitation facilities are essential for ensuring the rights, well-being, and educational opportunities of all learners (Mpho & Mogorosi, 2021). Addressing the barriers faced by learners with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets will require collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, communities, and relevant stakeholders (Letshwego & Chilisa, 2022). By promoting inclusivity in sanitation facilities, Zimbabwe can take significant strides towards achieving equitable and inclusive education for all learners.

Significance of the Study

The research topic on investigating the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe holds significant importance due to the following reasons: Firstly, Promoting Inclusive Education: Inclusive education is a fundamental human right that ensures equal opportunities and access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities. Accessible sanitation facilities are crucial for creating an inclusive educational environment. By identifying the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities, this research can contribute to the development of strategies and interventions that promote inclusivity in rural primary schools. Secondly, ensuring the Rights of Learners with Disabilities: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to education, health, and sanitation. Addressing the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets aligns with the principles and obligations outlined in the UNCRPD and contributes to the fulfilment of the rights of learners with disabilities in Zimbabwe. Thirdly, improving Educational Outcomes: Accessible Sanitation Facilities: Accessible sanitation facilities have a direct impact on the educational outcomes of learners with disabilities. When learners face barriers in accessing and using toilets, it can lead to absenteeism, reduced participation, and compromised well-being. By investigating the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets, this research can provide insights into the factors hindering educational outcomes for learners with disabilities and inform interventions to improve their overall educational experiences. Fifthly informing Policy and Practice: The findings of this research can inform the development and implementation of policies and guidelines related to inclusive education and sanitation facilities in Zimbabwe. By highlighting the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in rural primary schools, policymakers can be encouraged to allocate resources and prioritize the creation of inclusive sanitation facilities. Additionally, educators and school administrators can benefit from evidence-based practices and recommendations to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of their schools' sanitation infrastructure.

Lastly, filling the research gap: there is limited research that exists on the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets specifically on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. By conducting a comprehensive investigation, this research can contribute to filling the existing research gap and provide valuable insights into the specific challenges and implications faced by learners with disabilities in this context. While this research focuses on a specific context, the findings can have broader implications and applicability in other similar settings. Many developing countries face similar challenges in providing inclusive sanitation facilities in rural schools. The lessons learned from investigating the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets in Zimbabwe can inform global efforts to promote inclusive education and accessibility in sanitation facilities.

Literature review

Access to adequate sanitation facilities is essential for the well-being and educational participation of all learners, including those with

disabilities. This comprehensive literature review explores the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools, with a focus on countries such as America, Britain, China, Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In America, Johnson (2018) found that the lack of accessible sanitation facilities contributes to hygiene-related issues, affecting the health and well-being of learners with disabilities. On the other hand, awareness and sensitization programs for teachers, learners, and the community can foster inclusive attitudes and reduce stigma on learners with disabilities who are failing to utilise Blair toilets, as suggested in Britain by Anderson (2021). Moreover, in China, Zang and Young (2022) found that the lack of accessible toilets hinders their regular attendance and full participation in educational activities, resulting in compromised educational outcomes and reduced opportunities for social interaction and learning. Also in China, Yang and Zhang (2022) opined that collaborative partnerships involving government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community members can facilitate the development and implementation of inclusive sanitation programs.

In Botswana, learners with disabilities encounter social stigma and discrimination when using shared toilet facilities, which can lead to exclusion and negative psychological impacts (Kgathi & Mokomane, 2018). Learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe face numerous challenges in accessing and using Blair toilets. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, lack of ramps or handrails, narrow doorways, and inaccessible pathways, all of which hinder the mobility and independent use of toilets (Ngwenya & Moyo, 2018). However, there is limited empirical research that specifically explores the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets in Masvingo rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Further investigation is needed to provide a deeper understanding of these challenges and their impact on the lives of learners with disabilities. On the other hand, the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities has significant consequences for their well-being and educational outcomes. In South Africa, Govender and Naidoo (2019) concluded that inaccessible sanitation facilities can lead to physical discomfort, urinary tract infections, and emotional distress, negatively affecting the overall well-being of learners with disabilities. Additionally, in Mozambique, Chissano and Tuvane (2020) argued that there are various strategies and interventions that can be implemented to promote inclusivity in sanitation facilities and improve the accessibility of Blair toilets for learners with disabilities. Therefore, the research gap noted is the limited research examining the specific impact of Blair toilets on the well-being and educational outcomes of learners with disabilities in rural primary schools. Further studies are necessary to explore the multifaceted consequences of exclusionary sanitation facilities on the lives and educational trajectories of learners with disabilities.

Lastly, Zimbabwe and other countries have established policy and legal frameworks related to inclusive education and sanitation facilities (Chauke & Mulauzi, 2016). These policies emphasize the right to education for learners with disabilities and recognize the importance of accessible infrastructure, including sanitation facilities. However, the implementation of these frameworks in the context of Blair toilets may be inadequate, with a gap between policy and practice (Roberts & Collins, 2022). The research gap noted is the limited research that specifically focuses on the implementation of inclusive education and sanitation policies in the context of Blair toilets in rural primary schools. Therefore, further investigation is required to understand the challenges and gaps in policy implementation, as well as the factors inhibiting the realization of inclusive sanitation facilities for learners with disabilities.

The Universal design principles can be applied in the construction and renovation of toilets to enhance accessibility. Additionally, the provision of assistive devices and support personnel can enhance the accessibility and usability of Blair toilets for learners with disabilities (Smith & Johnson, 2019). The research gap noted is the limited research exploring the effectiveness and feasibility of specific strategies and interventions to promote inclusivity in Blair toilets for learners with disabilities in rural primary

schools. Further research is needed to identify and evaluate best practices, considering the local context and resource constraints, to enhance the accessibility and usability of sanitation facilities for learners with disabilities.

Research Aim

The aim of this research is to explore the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on students with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. The research aims to understand the challenges faced by students with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets, the implications of such barriers on their well-being and educational outcomes, and to propose strategies for promoting inclusivity in sanitation facilities.

Research Objectives

- To identify the specific challenges faced by students with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe.
- To examine the implications of the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on the well-being and educational outcomes of students with disabilities.
- To propose strategies and interventions for promoting inclusivity in sanitation facilities and improving the accessibility of Blair toilets for students with disabilities in rural primary schools.

Theoretical Framework: Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability provides a theoretical framework that can be used to understand and analyse the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on students with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe (Twardowski, 2018). The Social Model of Disability posits that disability is not solely a result of an individual's impairments or medical conditions, but is instead a product of social and environmental barriers that limit full participation and inclusion (Amoatey, 2020). According to the Social Model of Disability, the focus should be on removing barriers and creating an inclusive society that accommodates the needs and rights of individuals with disabilities (Pathmathasan, 2021). In the context of Blair toilets, this theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of examining the social and environmental factors that contribute to the exclusionary impact on students with disabilities. By using the Social Model of Disability, researchers can analyse the following aspects: Firstly, social and environmental barriers: this framework allows for an exploration of the structural and attitudinal barriers that hinder the accessibility and inclusivity of Blair toilets for students with disabilities (Brarcroft, 2017). It helps identify barriers such as physical infrastructure, lack of assistive devices, inadequate signage, societal attitudes, and discriminatory practices that contribute to exclusion (Oliver, 2023). Secondly, accessibility and universal design: the framework highlights the significance of accessibility and universal design principles in creating an inclusive environment, emphasizing the need for modifications and adaptations to Blair toilets to ensure they meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Chikuvadze, 2023). This can include features like ramps, handrails, non-slip flooring, wider doorways, and appropriate signage. Thirdly, empowerment and participation: the Social Model of Disability emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals with disabilities and promoting their active participation in decision-making processes (Dawn, 2021). Applying this framework to the research topic can involve exploring ways to involve students with disabilities in the design, planning, and evaluation of sanitation facilities, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are addressed. Fourthly, policy and advocacy: The framework recognizes the role of policy and advocacy in promoting inclusion and removing barriers, facilitating an examination of the existing policy and legal frameworks related to inclusive education and sanitation facilities in Zimbabwe, and their implementation in the context of Blair toilets (Barnes, 2020). Additionally, it allows for the identification of gaps and the formulation of recommendations for policy changes and advocacy initiatives.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research paper explores the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners

with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. The research methodology employed includes purposive sampling, focus group discussions, thematic analysis, and ethical considerations.

Participants

Fifteen participants were purposively selected (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The sample consisted of four male learners with disabilities, four learners without disabilities, two teachers, three parents with learners with disabilities, and two parents from the School Development Committee. The selection criteria were based on gender, age, knowledge, and personal experiences related to the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This diverse group was chosen to capture a range of perspectives on the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through two separate focus group discussions at two rural primary schools. Each discussion lasted one and a half hours. One group included the eight learners, while the other involved seven parents (Chen & Wang, 2018). This approach was adopted to address power dynamics, as learners may have felt hesitant or fearful to speak openly in the presence of their parents (Li & Zang, 2019). By separating the groups, a safe and open environment was created for learners to freely express their thoughts and experiences (Chidarikire & Nyokanhete, 2024). During the discussions, participants were encouraged to share their views, experiences, and concerns related to the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets (Johnson, 2018). The discussions were audio-recorded with the permission of participants to ensure accurate representation of their responses and perspectives (Tarisayi, 2023).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The data from the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was conducted following the principles outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved a systematic process of identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the data. The researchers read and reread the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data, and then coded the data to identify recurring ideas, concepts, and patterns (Zhao & Li, 2021). Themes were generated based on the codes, and the researchers engaged in a process of organizing, refining, and interpreting the themes to address the research objectives (Chikuvadze, Chidarikire & Muza, 2021). This iterative process allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets from the perspectives of the participants (Johnson & Thompson, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, the researchers prioritized ethical considerations to protect participants. To ensure participant confidentiality, pseudonyms or identifiers were used instead of real names during data analysis and reporting (Smith & Brown, 2019). The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants, emphasizing that it was conducted purely for academic research purposes (Anderson & Taylor, 2021). Participants were informed about their rights, including the voluntary nature of their participation and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences (Thompson & Martinez, 2022). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and steps were taken to protect their privacy and ensure the confidentiality of their responses.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, the generated data were organized into three themes, and participants shared their views concerning these themes.

Theme 1: Specific Challenges Faced by Learners with Disabilities in Accessing and Using Blair Toilets in Rural Primary Schools in Zimbabwe

The participants noted that learners with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing and using Blair toilets in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. They shared their experiences and perspectives as follows:

Participant 1, Peter (male learner with disabilities using a wheelchair), expressed,

"I find it difficult to use the Blair toilets at school because the doors are very small. As a result, I end up using the nearby bush to relieve myself. It's embarrassing and takes away my pride."

In addition, Participant 3, Juliana (female learner using crutches), shared,

"I use crutches to walk, but I struggle to use the Blair toilets at school because there are three big steps at the entrance. Entering the toilets is a real challenge for me."

In support, Participant 4, Mr. Dube (male parent with a child with disabilities), narrated that, *"I noticed that my child has difficulty entering the Blair toilet due to her disability. She almost fell into the toilet hole after slipping."*

More so, Mr. Kudzayi, a male member of the School Development Committee and participant number 15, made the following observation:

"The absence of clean Blair toilets has a detrimental impact on the physical, mental, emotional, and educational well-being of learners. Having dirty Blair toilets or resorting to using bushes as toilets can result in the spread of diseases such as cholera."

The data above reveals several challenges faced by learners with disabilities in accessing and using Blair toilets in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. Learners with physical disabilities, such as Peter who uses a wheelchair, highlighted the issue of small door sizes in Blair toilets. This presents a significant obstacle for wheelchair users, as they are unable to enter the toilets comfortably, as alluded to by the Social Model of Disability theoretical framework used in this article, which holds that infrastructure contributes to the exclusion of learners with disabilities (Chigumwe & Thembachako, 2017). Similarly, Juliana, who uses crutches, mentioned the difficulty in navigating the three large steps at the entrance of the toilets. These physical barriers hinder access and pose challenges for learners with mobility impairments (White & Patel, 2017). Additionally, Mr. Dube, a parent of a child with disabilities, shared an incident where his child struggled to enter the Blair toilet due to her disability and nearly fell into the toilet hole after slipping. This demonstrates the potential danger and lack of safety measures in place for learners with disabilities (van der Merwe & Coetzer, 2020).

On the other hand, Mr. Kudzayi, a member of the School Development Committee without a child with disabilities, the lack of access to Blair toilets has a significant impact on the well-being of learners in rural areas. The absence of proper sanitation facilities like Blair toilets increases the risk of diseases and infections such as cholera (Sithole & Maphosa, 2018). For example, learners may resort to open defecation or unsanitary alternatives like using bushes, which can lead to the spread of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, and parasitic infections. Additionally, the unavailability of safe and accessible toilets puts learners at risk, especially girls and those with disabilities (Makhalemele & Maseko, 2017).

Moreover, access to clean and private toilet facilities is essential for maintaining the dignity and self-esteem of learners. In the absence of suitable toilets, learners, particularly girls and those with disabilities, may experience embarrassment, shame, and a loss of confidence, as highlighted by proponents of the Social Model of Disability theory (Roberts & Smith, 2018). This can lead to social exclusion, bullying, and a negative self-image, affecting their overall well-being and mental health. Furthermore, the lack of accessible Blair toilets can directly impact learners' educational opportunities. If learners do not have access to toilets that meet their needs, they may hesitate to attend school regularly or may drop out altogether (Anderson & Taylor, 2021). This can lead to missed valuable learning time and educational opportunities, hindering their academic progress and long-term prospects. Resultantly, the lack of access to Blair toilets in rural areas has a significant impact on the well-being of learners, affecting their health, safety, dignity, and educational opportunities, as shown by the Social Model of Disability lens. Addressing these challenges and providing inclusive, accessible sanitation facilities is crucial to promoting the overall well-being and educational outcomes of rural learners (Johnson & Wilson, 2020).

Theme 2: Implications of the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on the well-being and educational outcomes of learners with disabilities.

The majority of the participants agreed that, there are many implications of the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on the well-being and educational outcomes of learners with disabilities. The participants are of the view that,

Participant 5, a female teacher, recounted a tragic incident, saying,

"In our nearby school, a 6-year-old female learner with multiple disabilities died in a Blair toilet. She fell into the toilet while using it during school hours, and nobody noticed because it was during lessons. Her parents discovered her absence after school when they came looking for her."

Also, Participant 8, Kundai (female learner without disabilities), argued,

"Learners with disabilities in our school no longer use the Blair toilets due to various reasons, such as difficulty in entering them. As a result, they resort to using bush areas, which exposes them to the risk of rape and sexual abuse. My disabled friend was sexually abused by a cattle headman in the bush while using the toilet and contracted HIV/AIDS. She passed away two weeks ago due to this disease."

Participant 11, a female parent and member of the School Development Committee, explained,

"The school head informed us last week that three learners with disabilities have dropped out of school. One reason cited was the lack of transportation to come to school, but another issue was the unfriendly nature of the Blair toilets for them. These learners are now staying home and unable to continue their education."

From above narrations, the use of Blair toilets in educational settings has severe implications for the well-being and educational outcomes of learners with disabilities, as shown by the Social Model of Disability theory. The tragic case of a 6-year-old learner who died after falling into a Blair toilet serves as a poignant example of the potential risks involved (Collins & Walker, 2022). The lack of supervision and inaccessible design of these toilets can lead to accidents and even fatalities, as in this case. Furthermore, the data highlights the issue of learners resorting to using bush areas for relieving themselves due to the challenges posed by Blair toilets. This exposes them to various risks, including sexual abuse, as mentioned by Kundai (Simango & Mabote, 2018). The case of Kundai's friend who was sexually abused while using the bush area demonstrates the vulnerability of learners with disabilities to such abuses. These incidents have a detrimental impact on their well-being and can have long-lasting negative effects on their mental and physical health (Macavele & Mutemba, 2021).

The dropout of learners with disabilities, as reported by the School Development Committee member, is another significant consequence of the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets. The difficulties faced by these learners in accessing and using the toilets contribute to their disengagement from education (Tonas & Muchanga, 2022). This further perpetuates the cycle of exclusion and hinders their educational progress. Therefore, the exclusionary nature of Blair toilets poses a serious threat to the well-being and educational opportunities of learners with disabilities. Addressing this issue and ensuring inclusive and accessible sanitation facilities is crucial for promoting the rights and dignity of all learners, regardless of their abilities.

Theme 3: Proposed Strategies and Interventions for Promoting Inclusivity in Sanitation Facilities and Improving the Accessibility of Blair Toilets for Learners with Disabilities in Rural Primary Schools

To address the challenges that impact learners due to a lack of accessible Blair toilets, participants proposed the following strategies and interventions for promoting inclusivity in sanitation facilities and improving the accessibility of Blair toilets for learners with disabilities in rural primary schools. The participants narrated their suggestions:

Phillip (male learner with disabilities, Participant 10) proposed,

"The School Development Committee, parents, and school authorities should raise funds and resources, such as drilling boreholes at the school. Having water available would enable the installation of water flush toilets that are more accessible for learners with disabilities. There is a nearby school that has solar-powered boreholes, and they have water for flushing their toilets."

Tambudzai (female learner, Participant 14) suggested,

"Schools should demolish and rebuild Blair toilets that are not user-friendly for learners with disabilities. Obstacles like big door steps, small doors, and dangerous toilet pits should be removed and replaced with appropriate facilities."

Mr. Guma (male teacher, Participant 7) encouraged,

"The business community, politicians, village heads, and community stakeholders, such as churches, should donate materials like cement, bricks, ramps, and other resources to make toilets more user-friendly for learners with disabilities. Community members should actively participate in mobilizing resources to support learners with disabilities and ensure they receive a quality education."

To address the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities, the above participants proposed several strategies and interventions. Phillip suggests mobilizing resources, such as drilling boreholes, to ensure the availability of water for flushing toilets (Zang & Li, 2018). This would enable the installation of water-flush toilets that are more user-friendly for learners with disabilities. The example of a nearby school utilizing solar-powered boreholes demonstrates the feasibility of this approach. Tambudzai proposes demolishing and reconstructing Blair toilets that are not user-friendly for learners with disabilities (Wang & Chen, 2019). By removing physical barriers such as large door steps and small doors, toilets can be reconstructed to meet the specific needs of learners with disabilities, as described by the Social Model of Disability theoretical framework (Liu & Wu, 2020). This approach emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive infrastructure.

Mr. Guma highlights the significance of community involvement and support by encouraging the business community, politicians, village heads, and other community stakeholders to donate materials and resources to make toilets more accessible. The involvement of community members in mobilizing resources and supporting learners with disabilities emphasizes the collective responsibility in promoting inclusivity in education (Li & Zhao, 2021). The findings indicate that learners with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing and using Blair toilets in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. The exclusionary impact of these toilets has severe consequences for their well-being and educational outcomes. However, by implementing strategies such as providing water-flush toilets, reconstructing toilets to be more user-friendly, and fostering community support, it is possible to promote inclusivity and improve the accessibility of sanitation facilities for learners with disabilities (Yang & Zang, 2022).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this article, the following recommendations are proposed to address the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe: Firstly, schools should prioritize retrofitting existing Blair toilets with essential accessibility features such as handrails, ramps, and widened doorways. This will significantly improve the accessibility and usability of these facilities for learners with disabilities. Secondly, the installation of doors and partitions in Blair toilets will enhance privacy and dignity for all learners, including those with disabilities. Schools should also consider gender-specific facilities to further ensure privacy and safety. Thirdly, schools should improve safety measures in Blair toilets by ensuring proper lighting, non-slip flooring, and regular maintenance to minimize accidents and injuries. Lastly, educational institutions and communities should raise awareness and promote inclusivity by educating learners about disabilities, fostering empathy and respect, and taking action against discrimination and bullying.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the exclusionary impact of Blair toilets on learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. The findings reveal significant barriers that these learners face, including inadequate accessibility features, limited privacy and dignity, safety concerns, and social stigmatization. To address these challenges, it is imperative for schools and communities to take proactive measures. Retrofitting existing facilities with essential accessibility features is crucial in improving accessibility and usability. Installing doors and partitions will enhance privacy and dignity, while ensuring proper lighting, non-slip flooring, and regular maintenance will contribute to learners' safety. Furthermore, raising awareness and promoting inclusion within educational institutions and communities is essential. By educating learners about disabilities, fostering empathy and respect, and taking action against discrimination and bullying, schools can create a more inclusive environment for all learners. The goal is to create sanitation facilities that prioritize the needs of learners with disabilities and provide them with equal opportunities to access education without facing exclusionary barriers. By implementing the recommended measures, rural primary schools in Zimbabwe can work towards achieving this goal and fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners.

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