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EDITORIAL NOTE

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From Policy to Practice: Governance, Education, and Social Transformation in Africa:

Welcome to the October 2026 issue of the Journal of Contemporary Society and Education (JCSE). The sixteen articles assembled in this volume reflect the journal's commitment to rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship on the pressing social, political, and educational challenges confronting contemporary Africa. Together, they illuminate a central tension of our time: the persistent gap between policy ambition and lived reality.

Several contributions in this issue grapple directly with the question of governance and service delivery. Motadi examines the opportunities and barriers shaping digital transformation in South African government departments, while Moloto and Pillay explore technology's influence on governance at the local municipal level. Akindele, Sanni, and Lamidi assess citizen satisfaction with public transportation in Lagos State, offering an important reminder that the legitimacy of the state rests on the quality of everyday services. Jutta and Alao interrogate the democratisation of the administrative state through South Africa's Government of National Unity, and Okudolo examines decentralisation and the effectiveness of local political leaders in Nigeria. Kambiri's analysis of governance challenges in managing internal displacement further underscores the consequences of normative commitment without implementation capacity. Agbor's critical perspectives on the operational independence of Elections Cameroon and the Constitutional Council round out this focus on democratic institutions.

Education remains a cornerstone of social progress, and this issue devotes considerable attention to it. Mtshali and Meyiwa assess the role of climate change education in maritime studies, while Modiba asks whether rural secondary schools are adequately managing learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/AIDS. Babalola interrogates the legal and policy complexities of foreign partnerships in Nigerian higher education, and Shabangu examines how school management teams respond to violence in rural South African schools. Nephawe and Mudimeli offer a distinctive contribution on the indispensability of English as a lingua franca in interpreting selected Pauline epistles.

The issue also foregrounds questions of gender, culture, and well-being. Nesane and Amaechi explore *Mamalo* as a resource for gender equality and women's empowerment in Limpopo, while Gudani, Khosa, and Nomatshila examine adolescents' perceptions of child support grant management through a family systems lens. Matheere offers an

exploration of the life journey of traditional healers in rural Limpopo, and Nkuna and colleagues provide an analytical study of compounding and naming in Siswati personal names. These articles remind us that social transformation is experienced at the level of culture, family, and community.

Collectively, these contributions demonstrate the vitality and breadth of contemporary social science research in Africa. They challenge scholars and policymakers alike to move beyond policy pronouncements toward meaningful implementation. We thank our authors and reviewers for their dedication and trust that this issue will stimulate further inquiry and debate.

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MANAGING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSOCIATED WITH HIV/AIDS: ARE RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS COPING?

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Abstract:

The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the experiences that rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in a mainstream schooling. The paper is both conceptual and empirical and it is positioned within the qualitative case study design. The question guiding this paper is: What are the adaptability experiences which HIV/Aids learner sufferers face when attending the mainstream schooling with other able-bodied learners? Interviewing technique and the narrative enquiry were employed to generate data from 12 research participants sourced from six public secondary schools. Out of the population of 14 public secondary schools in one of the circuits in Waterberg district in Limpopo Province, South Africa, six were conveniently sampled. In each of the six sampled rural secondary schools, only an HIV/Aids learner and a Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher were selected as research participants. Identification and selection of a Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers who were not necessarily HIV/Aids sufferers helped in the exposure of a Grade 12 HIV/Aids learners. Altogether, there were 12 research participants comprising six HIV/Aids learners and their Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers none of whom were HIV/Aids sufferers. Social Cognitive Theory underpins the paper. Findings revealed that HIV/Aids learners do harbour a hidden self-rejection attitude. Secondly, HIV/Aids learners frequently withdraw from classroom participation. Thirdly, HIV/Aids learners do display aggressive behaviour with no provocation. Fourthly, teaching special needs learners at rural mainstream secondary schools is a double burden. Finally, under-preparation of rural secondary school teachers for learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, becomes a disastrous experience. Based on the shared findings, the researcher recommends that prior to promoting full-scale inclusive education in the form of integrating learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in the mainstream schooling, sufficient capacitation on the part of teachers is indispensable.

Keywords: Coping, HIV/AIDS, Experiences, Rural, Special Educational Needs,

Introduction

Implementation of HIV/Aids policies in schools is crucial for promoting health education and preventing the spread of HIV/Aids among learners. Schools play an essential role in shaping the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of learners to make them decent citizenry of the future (Jakes, 2023). Despite acknowledging the importance of health policies, rural secondary school teachers often encounter significant barriers that hinder efficient roll out of the health policies. Those barriers could range from the lack of training and resources to cultural resistance and inadequate administrative support. Understanding the stated difficulties is essential for developing strategies to overcome them and ensure that HIV/Aids policies are promptly enforced in schools to protect learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate experiences which rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in mainstream schooling. Somewhat teachers face barriers in implementing HIV/Aids policies to protect learners who are not as able-bodied as the rest of learners in the classrooms (DBE, 2017). By employing the qualitative research approach, the paper will provide a comprehensive understanding of factors that influence teachers' ability to implement the mentioned policies and offer recommendations for improving policy

implementation. The theoretical framework for this paper is based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) that provides a lens to understand factors influencing teachers' attitudes and behaviours towards HIV/Aids policies and its application to protect learners with special educational needs in the mainstream schooling. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that individuals' perceptions of a health issue's severity, susceptibility to it, the benefits of preventive action and barriers to such action, influence their health-related behaviours. Applying such a theory into the context of HIV/Aids policy implementation in rural mainstream secondary schools, could help identify the specific beliefs and perceptions that may be acting as barriers on the part of teachers in protecting learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids (Eder et al., 2020).

Evidently, learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids deserve protection in the mainstream schooling, though the application of the HIV/Aids policies. Such efforts could promote health awareness and safeguard their well-being apart from enabling their adaptability in receiving teaching with their able-bodied counterparts. Considering the peculiarity of mainstream schooling, teachers often face various barriers that hinder the effective execution of policies. These obstacles range from insufficient training and resources to societal stigma

and lack of administrative support. For instance, a study by McLellan et al. (2018) reveals that many teachers feel inadequately prepared to address HIV/Aids related issues due to a lack of professional development opportunities. Furthermore, societal attitudes towards learners with special educational needs in the form of living with HIV/Aids within the mainstream schooling, can create an environment of fear and isolation, impacting unfortunately both teachers and learners' willingness to engage in open discussions about the disease and its attached stigma (Malan et al., 2020). That is why this paper seeks to evaluate experiences that rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in a mainstream schooling.

HIV/Aids remain a significant public health issue worldwide, particularly affecting young people who are often more vulnerable due to social, economic, and cultural factors. Hence, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS) states that approximately 1.7 million adolescents (10-19 years old) have been living with HIV globally in 2021, and youth is responsible for a large proportion of new infections almost everywhere (UNAIDS, 2022). This signifies the need to address HIV/Aids within the educational settings where youths spend a substantial amount of their time and where health education can even have a profound contribution and influence in

lowering alarming rates of infections that ultimately disrupt stable schooling especially in rural areas.

Schools play admirable role in providing HIV/Aids education and prevention strategies. They serve as a platform to engage young people in crucial health discussions, fostering awareness and understanding of HIV transmission, prevention methods, and the social stigma surrounding the disease. Research indicates that comprehensive school-based HIV prevention programmes significantly improve knowledge and attitudes about HIV/Aids as part of special needs package to HIV infected learners. Mainstream schooling is awaited to cater for special needs learners associated with HIV/Aids to enable those learners to display healthier behaviours necessary for coping with schooling demands in the midst of fellow able-bodied learners (Stangl et al., 2019). Moreover, mainstream schooling needs to remain accessible to youths, making them strategic locations for disseminating vital information and facilitating support services for those infected with HIV/Aids statuses.

The observance of comprehensive HIV/Aids policies in mainstream schooling is imperative in creating a supportive environment that promotes health education and addresses stigma. These policies should include clear guidelines for the integration of HIV/Aids education into the curriculum, staff training, and support services for

learners with special educational needs. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) reveals that mainstream schooling with well-observed HIV/Aids policies is more likely to provide adequate education and resources to learners, something which leads to, increased knowledge and reduced transmission rates among youths. Despite the recognised contribution of mainstream schooling to learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, diverse difficulties hinder effective observance of the HIV/Aids policies. These challenges include a lack of funding, insufficient educational training, parental resistance, and varying acceptance of sexual health education across different cultures (Mansour et al., 2020). Evidently, some rural secondary schools, may lack the necessary resources or infrastructure to support comprehensive health education initiatives, further complicating efforts to spread quality schooling to learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids.

Researching barriers faced by rural secondary school teachers in observing HIV/Aids education is crucial in developing practical solutions. Teachers in rural mainstream schooling do face myriad difficulties when attempting to make inclusive education a reality to learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. Among others, teachers encounter personal biases, a lack of confidence in their

knowledge about HIV/Aids and internal schooling constraints that can limit their effectiveness (Eder et al., 2020). Alertness to those obstacles can inform the creation of targeted training programmes and resources that could capacitate teachers to confidently roll out HIV/Aids education and effectively service learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids just like it is the case in servicing the able-bodied learners in rural mainstream schooling. Evaluating experiences that rural mainstream secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids is possible within the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Observing HIV/Aids policies in the rural mainstream schooling where inclusive education is being promoted with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, is a demanding task. For instance, research uncovers that teachers, who are often at the forefront of disseminating crucial health information, encounter a variety of barriers that impede their ability to roll out mainstream schooling successfully and inclusively. Empirical studies demonstrate that rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in sub-Saharan Africa reveal that limited training and resources are hindering teachers' confidence and competence in addressing the sensitive

topics related to the disease (Shisana et al., 2014). Moreover, the societal stigma surrounding HIV/Aids is further complicating teachers' roles, leading to fears of discrimination and social ostracism, which at times deter teachers from engaging openly in prevention efforts (Kowal et al., 2021). Teachers in rural mainstream schooling are also struggling with insufficient institutional support, lack of parental involvement, and inconsistent curricula that do not adequately address the realities of mainstream schooling where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are involved despite their minority numbers (Chin et al., 2020).

This gap in understanding teachers' unique perspectives and experiences, underscores the necessity for more focused research into the other specific obstacles they face in implementing HIV/Aids policies. It is in rural mainstream schooling where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are an essential integral part. In the absence of such knowledge and insight, education and prevention programmes could continue to fall short of their intended impact. Exposure of the mentioned barriers is critical, as it enables stakeholders to propose practical solutions tailored to the realities within educational settings, like that of mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. Largely, teachers are not

being adequately equipped and supported to roll out HIV/Aids education effectively in rural mainstream schooling for learners with special educational needs (UNAIDS, 2021). Analytically, this is the problem that triggered the undertaking of this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

- (i) To evaluate experiences that rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in the mainstream schooling,
- (ii) To report the adaptability experiences which learners with special educational needs make when attending mainstream schooling with their able-bodied counterparts,
- (iii) To expose the influence of community support on the observance of HIV/Aids policy in the mainstream schooling,
- (iv) To unveil the personal and professional barriers faced by teachers in the observance process of HIV/Aids policy in mainstream schooling, and
- (vi) To provide suggestions for the improvement of observance of HIV/Aids policy in rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids infections.

To sum up, in this paper, statement of the problem and objectives are informed by the contribution that the researcher seeks to make. This is the case because objectives narrow the overall focus of the paper to a specific area. A response to objectives culminates in a response of the general focus of the paper. In their current form, research objectives and statement of the problem are being informed by the knowledge contribution of the paper (Eke et al., 2020).

Literature Review

An analytical review of literature depicts that there are personal and professional barriers faced by teachers in the observance process of the HIV/Aids policy at the rural mainstream schooling where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are being taught. Personal and professional barriers faced by teachers in observing HIV/Aids policy significantly impede their ability to teach learners on the critical issue of HIV/Aids effectively. To buttress the stated point, myriad teachers report feeling unprepared to deliver the HIV/Aids education to rural mainstream learners owing to lack of training and resources, which can result in anxiety when addressing sensitive topics in a mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids (Broom et al., 2015). This sense of inadequacy by teachers, is often aggravated by societal stigmas

surrounding HIV/Aids, something that fosters rural mainstream schooling environment of silence and misunderstanding that further stifles consultative and transparent discussions (Stangl et al., 2019). Teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes regarding sexual health and reproductive rights do at times conflict with the objectives of rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. Such affects teachers' eagerness and readiness to engage with the HIV/Aids education in rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs rigorously (Campbell et al., 2020).

Analytic study of literature unveils that the effectiveness of rolling out rural mainstream schooling to learners with special educational needs, is dependent upon clarity; the well-structured nature of HIV/Aids policy guidelines that are free from confusing teachers about their roles, to prevent inconsistent operationalisation across the diverse mainstream schooling (Watkins et al., 2021). The level of support from school administration is of essence since teachers frequently depend on administrative backing for resources and dedicated time to deliver inclusive education in rural mainstream schooling for learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids and their fellow able-bodied counterparts. Analysis of the review of literature is emphatic that strong administrative support stands to cultivate a positive

teaching environment so much missed for the successful and the adequate delivery of rural mainstream schooling (Mthembu et al., 2018). Community norms and values regarding HIV/Aids especially as applied in the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, influence how teachers approach the subject, as they may feel the pressure to conform to prevailing beliefs in their community, which can impede open dialogue in the classroom where inclusive education occupies the centre stage (Dworkin et al., 2018).

Analytic review of literature constantly reminds that the practical operationalisation of health policies within the rural mainstream schooling especially where there are learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, is significant, to improve the well-being; of all learners requiring special educational needs and the rest. Diverse hindrances often obstruct these initiatives. Hence the systematic review of extant literature underscores several significant barriers to successful enactment of health policies in the rural mainstream schooling, particularly across the African continent. Countless studies divulge that both teachers and health personnel often lack the requisite training for the efficient execution of health policies such as the HIV/Aids one especially in the context of the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs. The

prioritisation of training within school curricula is often terribly inadequate, resulting in notable deficiencies in knowledge concerning critical issues such as nutrition, mental health, and general sexual education (UNESCO, 2017).

A study undertaken by Eke et al., (2020) in Nigeria unveils that teachers feel ill-equipped to deliver health education due to inadequate training and a lack of resources especially in the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. This adversely affects policy adherence (Eke et al., 2020). Analysis of the review of literature shows that cultural beliefs and practices can present formidable obstacles to health policy implementation, particularly when they conflict with contemporary health education strategies. In specific African communities, traditional customs could supersede established health practices and produce protests among parents and learners especially those involved or affected by rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs. Ndung'u (2019) in Kenya explicates how cultural beliefs about reproductive health complicate the teaching of sexual education especially within the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. As mentioned earlier, resource constraints, in the form of insufficient funding for health programmes and a scarcity of

educational materials significantly impede the feasibility of health policy operationalisation. Maimani et al. (2021) maintain that myriad rural mainstream schooling sector in sub-Saharan Africa lacks fundamental health resources, ranging from trained personnel to essential materials for inclusive education.

Analytic literature study unveils that in the context of rural mainstream schooling, where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are involved or affected, difficulties posed by stigma, discrimination, and fear further complicate the rural mainstream landscape. In South Africa, the ramifications of HIV/Aids policy as affecting the rural mainstream schooling where learners with educational special needs are part of the project, impact not only the health of learners but also the efficacy of rural mainstream schooling sector. Analytic review of literature shows that the stigma connected with HIV/Aids perpetuates discrimination against affected individuals within the rural mainstream schooling environment where learners with special educational needs are involved. Morrow et al., (2020) assert that rural mainstream learners living with HIV/Aids quite often experience bullying and social exclusion, which inhibit open discourse regarding the disease. Analytic review of literature shares that the bravery surrounding the disclosure of one's HIV status can serve as a considerable

obstacle, preventing learners from seeking assistance or accessing educational resources related to the restoration of their perfect health. The anxiety could be so overwhelming that it leads to avoiding health services. That is why Reddy et al., (2022) reveals that a substantial majority of learners especially in rural mainstream schooling where there is a mixture of the able-bodied learners and HIV/Aids learners, the latter could display hesitance in discussing their HIV/Aids status due to worries around confidentiality and potential repercussions from peers especially those who are not HIV/Aids sufferers from the rural mainstream schooling.

Clearly, the urgency of addressing the hindrances around the health policy operationalisation especially in rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/aids being part, cannot be stressed more. Obstacles worth paying attention to, to enable the functionality of rural mainstream schooling, include training deficiencies, cultural resistance, resource constraints, and stigma. All deserve to be addressed to cultivate supportive mainstream schooling environment capable of delivering a complete inclusive education to the HIV/Aids learners and others. Eke et al., (2020) advise that it is imperative to continue research and develop innovative solutions to facilitate the efficient delivery of health policies in rural mainstream schooling especially

where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are involved.

Analytic review of literature puts it plainly that the survival of rural mainstream schooling where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are being serviced, hinges upon others, the improvement of the operationalisation of the HIV/Aids policy. A point of departure has to be the provision of the comprehensive training programmes to teachers and school staff. Such training initiatives should incorporate essential topics such as HIV/Aids awareness, prevention, and response strategies that ascertain that teachers are well-prepared to address the subject matter in the classrooms of the rural mainstream schooling environment (World Health Organisation, 2016). Rural secondary schools need to design and enforce a curriculum that is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive, focusing on HIV/Aids education as manifested in the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs. Analytic review of literature stresses that such a curriculum should cover the biological aspects of the virus and highlight the significance of consent, healthy relationships, stigma reduction thereby, facilitating meaningful and informed discussions among learners especially of the rural mainstream schooling that is providing inclusive education to the HIV/Aids sufferers and others (UNAIDS, 2015). Creating a supportive

mainstream schooling environment with learners with special educational needs is advised. Rural mainstream secondary schools servicing learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids deserve to promote inclusivity and emotional support to all learners, particularly those living with HIV/Aids. This is realisable through the establishment of among others the peer support groups and rolling out the anti-discrimination policies to help ensure that learners feel secured, safe and accepted within their operational rural mainstream schooling environment where learners with special educational needs feature prominently (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2019).

Analytic literature review stresses that the participation of parents and the broader community in the teaching of learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids is a necessity. By involving parents in educational initiatives regarding HIV/Aids, schools could assist in destigmatising the epidemic and foster meaningful and fruitful discussions at home (Family Health International, 2008). Cooperation with local health professionals is essential. Rural mainstream schooling needs to partner with health organisations to provide learners with an access to accurate information, testing, and counselling services. Health professionals could promote awareness and support by participating in school health fairs and other informational events (Centres for Disease Control and

Prevention, 2020). Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of HIV/Aids policies are important for continuous improvement. Rural mainstream schooling needs to establish evaluation metrics and feedback mechanisms to assess the efficacy of their programmes and make the necessary adjustments to cater for learners' needs (UNESCO, 2017). Integrating life skills education into the curriculum could capacitate learners to make informed decisions about their health and relationships. Adopted educational approaches need to emphasise the development of communication, critical thinking, and negotiation skills related to sexual health (World Health Organisation, 2018).

Analytic review of literature advises that to enhance the operationalisation of HIV/Aids policy within the South African rural mainstream schooling, several strategic recommendations deserve attention. It is essential to provide comprehensive training for teachers to ascertain that teaching- staff possess sufficient knowledge regarding HIV/Aids awareness, prevention strategies, and stigma marginalisation and elimination. The training requires to incorporate cultural considerations that resonate with South Africa as a country (Mthethwa et al., 2016). The integration of HIV/Aids education into the existing curriculum presents an opportunity for a more holistic educational framework. By incorporating discussions related to sexual health, life skills, and relevant social studies, teachers could facilitate

age-appropriate dialogues surrounding the inclusive education in the mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Establishing peer education programmes represents another progressive strategy, empowering learners to educate their peers about HIV/Aids. Such efforts could foster an open mainstream schooling environment for discussion and encourage the adoption of safe practices among youths (Shisana et al., 2014). It is imperative for the rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids to provide access of support services to learners affected by HIV/Aids. Such services deserve to include counselling that addresses psychosocial concerns and health information to ascertain that rural mainstream secondary school learners have access to the requisite resources (Department of Health, 2016).

Apart from the collaboration with local health organisations, literature study reminds of the importance of forming partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and health clinics where schools could arrange for educational materials, workshops, and mobile health services for testing and counselling purposes (UNAIDS, 2016). Interacting with parents and guardians in HIV/Aids awareness initiatives can further reinforce the prevention framework. Information sessions and

resources directed at parents could facilitate open dialogue about sexual health within the home environment and the rural mainstream schooling setting especially where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are part of (Reddy, 2013). Operationalising the anti-stigma campaigns within the rural mainstream schooling has the potential of mitigating the stigma associated with HIV/Aids. Utilising educational posters and videos and organising school events could promote understanding and acceptance among the mainstream rural secondary school learner population (Zuch et al., 2014).

Constant review and assessment of the existing HIV/Aids policies within the rural mainstream schooling could be imperative in promoting their efficacy. Creating accurate accountability mechanisms is vital to encourage adherence to the operationalised HIV/Aids to enable the infected rural mainstream learners with special educational needs associated with the HIV/Aids to cope with their studies (South African National AIDS Council, 2017). Empowering youths through leadership roles and community projects for HIV/Aids awareness is also valuable (Mufune, 2015). Fostering a safe and supportive mainstream schooling environment, free from judgment and discrimination, is crucial for encouraging open discussions about health-related issues. The enforcement of clear anti-bullying policies related to

HIV/Aids status of mainstream learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids could significantly contribute to a more animated atmosphere (Human Sciences Research Council, 2018).

To sum up, analytic review of literature, emphasises that where rural mainstream schooling contains learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, then top-notch management is necessary. HIV/Aids learners experience moods-swing which at times meddle with their schooling activities, deserve a support and empathy. There are instances where learners with special educational needs from the rural mainstream schooling harbour a hidden self-rejection attitude of themselves. Such learners need to be managed uniquely especially in the midst of the able-bodied learners, to enable them to benefit from the provided schooling opportunities. HIV/Aids learners are also known to instantly withdraw from the classroom participation activities. When such behaviour is observed, some form of well-tailored management will be essential (Mufune, 2015).

Analytic review of literature shares that in other circumstances, HIV/Aids learners do showcase aggressive behaviour with no provocation. This is traceable to their condition of HIV Aids status. Individualised form of management could be necessary so that such learners are helped to reverse their aggression which could disrupt their

schooling progress. At the rural mainstream schooling where there are learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, teachers are awaited to go an extra-mile in supporting those learners to benefit from the mainstream schooling just like the rest of the able-bodied learners (Jakes, 2023). To sum up, the descriptive nature of literature review in the paper has been replaced with the analytical review of literature. This was essential in positioning this paper in the ongoing debate through generating new insights and experiences that add to the existing body of knowledge regarding how rural secondary schools grapple with the teaching of HIV/Aids learners in the midst of their able-bodied counterparts (World Health Organisation, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This paper that focusses on learners with special educational needs from the rural mainstream schooling, is underpinned by the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura (1997). One point that stands out about the relevance of the selected theoretical framework is due to evaluating the role of observational learning and social influences in shaping behaviour. This refers to behaviour of HIV/Aids learners as they are receiving instruction from the rural mainstream schooling as learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids. The Social Cognitive Theory posits that individuals learn through the interactions of

personal factors, behaviours, and environmental influences. That is why the theory is relevant in understanding how teachers' self-efficacy as operating in the rural mainstream schooling impacts the operationalisation of HIV/Aids policies in that schooling environment involving learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to effectively guide learners in learning and addressing sensitive issues such as HIV/Aids. Researchers have found that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to feel confident in engaging learners and enforcing educational policies well. For instance, Bandura (1997) emphasises that self-efficacy influences motivation, effort, and resilience, allowing teachers to navigate the difficulties presented by topics related to sexual health. When teachers perceive themselves as competent, they could actively participate in professional development and adopt effective teaching strategies. Cohen and Sandy (2007) confirm that such confidence directly correlates with the successful adoption of health education initiatives, including those focusing on HIV/Aids as associated with learners with special educational needs from the rural mainstream schooling.

The Social Cognitive Theory reminds that observational learning plays a crucial role in this context. Teachers

often look to their peers as role models; when they observe colleagues successfully addressing HIV/Aids topics, they may feel inspired to take similar actions. As noted by Smith and Smith (2006), vicarious experiences could improve teachers' confidence in their teaching practices, leading to a greater willingness to tackle complex aspects like how the HIV/Aids learners are being taken good care off within the rural mainstream schooling as learners with special educational needs. Progressive practices are modelled in collaborative environments where teachers share their experiences and self-efficacy. This exchange fosters support and growth, imperative for addressing complex school health issues like HIV/Aids and their impact on rural mainstream learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids.

The Social Cognitive Theory contains the environmental factors, such as available resources and community support that significantly affect the enforcement of HIV/Aids policies in rural mainstream schooling. Teachers could face difficulties when resources such as insufficient training materials or a lack of administrative support are limited. Fry and Wiggins (2006) contend that schools that provide teachers with comprehensive resources like up-to-date curricula and access to health professionals are more likely to operationalise HIV/Aids policies in rural mainstream schooling better than others.

Liaison with the community is helpful. Where mainstream schooling collaborates with parents and local organisations that creates a supportive framework which is mutually beneficial. This community involvement reinforces teachers' roles and boosts their self-efficacy by providing additional resources and support (UNESCO, 2017).

Insights provided by Social Cognitive Theory explicates how teachers' self-efficacy, observational learning, and environmental factors interplay to influence the enforcement of HIV/Aids policies in rural mainstream schooling with learners with special educational needs. Rural mainstream schooling could foster a supportive environment and enhance teachers' self-belief, through improving the health education efforts by servicing learners with special educational needs adequately. Clearly, the adopted theory in this paper, namely, the Social Cognitive Theory, is integrated into the abstract and introduction to enhance in the rigorous discourses of the paper. This was necessary to deepen the adopted theory's significance to the subject under discussion and in shaping the paper's contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Finally, the selected theoretical perspective remained interrelated to the statement of the problem, objectives and research question guiding the paper (Campbell et al., 2020).

Methodology

This paper is a qualitative case study design. The choice of the qualitative methodology was triggered by the reality that the paper is being undergirded by the Social Cognitive Theory to evaluate the experiences which rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in rural mainstream schooling (Bandura, 1997). The researcher saw a need to create a synergy between the Social Cognitive Theory and the qualitative approach as the overriding research methodology. The combination of the two assisted immensely in terms of evaluating the experiences which rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in rural mainstream schooling. With the Social Cognitive Theory and the qualitative research approach underscoring this paper, the researcher sought to decode the burden carried by the rural mainstream schooling in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in the same teaching space as the able-bodied learners (Okeke, Chinedu, Van Wyk & Michael, 2017).

Amalgamating the qualitative research paradigm and the Social Cognitive Theory aimed at maximising the strength of the two perspectives to understand in its entirety the raging

discourses about the operationalisation of the HIV/Aids policy in the rural mainstream schooling where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are taught together with the able-bodied learners. Combining the two enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how despite many years of self-rule in South Africa, precisely 32 years, there are still a myriad of secondary schools that persistently churn out poor scholastic learner results when learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are being taught in the same space as the able-bodied learners. Such an in-depth insight was more than necessary in order to operate from an informed position regarding the operationalisation of the HIV/Aids policy in the rural mainstream schooling to enable learners with special educational needs to benefit from the mainstream schooling just like their able-bodied counterparts. Out of the population of 14 public secondary schools in Waterberg districts in Limpopo Province, South Africa, six were conveniently sampled (Babbie, 2013). In each of the six sampled secondary schools, only an HIV/Aids learners and a Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher were selected as research participants. Identification of Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers who were not necessarily HIV/aids sufferers, helped in the accessibility of the HIV/Aids learners. Altogether, there were 12 research participants comprising six

HIV/Aids learners and their Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers (Mack, 2010). The justification of the small sample is informed by the point that qualitative studies allow small samples because generalisations are not prioritised. The interviewing technique and the narrative inquiry were applied to generate data for this paper. Both the six Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers sampled, and the six HIV/Aids learners were allowed to narrate from their individual angles, their experiences as regards learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids attending in the same space with the able-bodied learners in the rural mainstream schooling. The same two categories of research participants were allowed to narrate that which they regard to be the solution to the perennial discourses of how rural mainstream schooling struggles to cope in teaching the able-bodied learners in the same space with learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids (Babbie, 2013). To triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with those research participants who provided the narrative inquiry.

Both the narrative inquiry and the interviewing technique emerged very useful in accessing information constituting the empirical experiences which rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in a mainstream schooling (Neuman, 2003). To sum up, the

narrative inquiry and the interviewing technique uncovered the nuances of the identified research participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviours, which were likely to be difficult to quantify through quantitative methods which but with the qualitative school of thought was well captured for scholarly presentation in this paper. The two qualitative data collection methods enabled the comprehensive highlighting of teachers and learners' experiences on the operationalisation of the HIV/Aids policy particularly in the rural mainstream schooling space. In preparation for the interviews, the researcher developed a comprehensive guide outlining standardised research questions, ensuring consistency across discussions while allowing flexibility to pursue relevant topics that may arise organically. Audio recordings of the interviews were performed to capture the exact words of the research participants to enable accurate presentation and discussions of the participants responses later-on prior to transcription and analyses of themes and patterns in the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). The qualitative methodology aims to provide rich, qualitative insights into teachers' and HIV/Aids learners' lived experiences, contributing to a deeper understanding of their challenges and successes in the rural mainstream schooling. As regards the analysis of data, the paper employed thematic analysis as the primary methodological approach to systematically identify and highlight

recurring themes and patterns within the collected data.

The analysis involved a rigorous coding process, allowing for categorising and in-depth examination of the data-sets. Throughout this process, the researcher incorporated illustrative quotes from the data, enhancing the findings by providing concrete examples supporting the identified themes (Maree. 2016). As regards ethical considerations, informed consent forms were applied. In this paper, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants involved in the study. Before their participation, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the research purpose, outlining the specific objective the paper aimed to achieve and the significance of the paper. The researcher described the procedures involved, including how data were to be collected and analysed, ensuring participants understood their involvement very well. The researcher clarified how to manage the data, emphasising protocols for data storage and handling, to maintain security. The researcher assured participants that their confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly upheld throughout the research process. Their identities remain undisclosed in any reporting or publication of the results, fostering a safe and trusting environments for all involved (Creswell ,2014).

Findings

Findings arrived at in this paper are in relation to the research topic which focused on evaluating the experiences which rural secondary schools generate in teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in a mainstream schooling. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the narrative inquiry and the interviewing technique (Babbie, 2013). Responses of the 12 research participants were evaluated as regards how HIV/Aids learners who constitute pupils with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are being taken good care of within the rural mainstream schooling (Okeke, Chinedu, Van Wyk & Michael, 2017). As part of sharing and discussing the findings in a clear and free from ambiguity fashion, the 12 research participants are being referred to as Respondent A up to F referring to HIV/Aids learners and Respondents G up to L referring to Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers. That was done to protect the actual identities of those research participants. The context of this paper necessitated that the Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers be part of the research participants in order to get their assistance in accessing the HIV/Aids learners from their six sampled rural secondary schools. This idea and decision worked very well for the researcher. In this paper, the Social Cognitive Theory in partnership with the qualitative research paradigm were

adequately instrumental in helping in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings (Mack, 2010). The various themes that underscored the interviews were: HIV/Aids learners harbour a hidden self-rejection attitude, they frequently withdraw from classroom participation, they display aggressive behaviour with no provocation and under-preparation of rural secondary school teachers for learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids is disastrous (Maree, 2016).

Discussions

HIV/Aids learners harbour self-rejection attitude

One of the conditions to enable any learner in a classroom to make progress with his or her studies is the possession of the positive self -concept (Bandura, 1997). In a rural mainstream secondary school, learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, deserve full unconditional acceptance and admiration to enable such learners to view themselves in a new light. One of the findings in the paper relates to learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids harbouring a concealed self-rejection attitude. That kind of an attitude could be a barrier for those learners to acquire sufficient knowledge in the teaching and learnings space. On this aspect, Respondent H who is the Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher shares that *“the combination of*

learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids with the able-bodied ones somewhat forces the former to deepen their low-level self-concept originating from the HIV/Aids infection they are suffering from”. Respondent F who is one of the HIV/Aids learners from one of the six sampled rural secondary schools contends that *“the spirit of denial about the reality that one has contracted the fearful disease of HIV/Aids when one is still a learner, leads to self-rejection attitude which is simply too bad to one who still has the school-work to do in order to progress at the end of the year”*. Views of the research participants regarding the existence of the self-rejection attitude by some learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are a sad reminder of how much HIV/Aids infections are not only a health concern but a developmental concern as well on the part of learners (Munongi, 2023). The researcher’s analytic interpretation of views shared by participants is that they are valid and very likely in the rural mainstream secondary schooling space.

HIV/Aids learners withdraw from classroom participation

Plentiful evidence in research attests that learner involvement in the lesson delivery by a teacher changes the teaching and learning atmosphere inside a classroom into a healthy one. In that kind of the learning space, the acquisition of knowledge by learners could be greatly enriched by a teacher

whose enthusiasm is at its highest peak. This signifies that learner participation in the classroom activities and beyond is irreplaceable. One of the findings in the paper is about HIV/Aids learners withdrawing from classroom participation. This is unfortunate. On the said point, Respondent I who is the Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher asserts that *“facing passive learners inside a classroom is one of the monotonous and tiresome teaching experiences which could drive a teacher to even an early teaching retirement”*. This is the case because unresponsive learners kill the teaching and the learning vibe required to keep both teachers and learners inquisitive in the journey of knowledge sharing and acquisition. Respondent C who is one of the HIV/Aids learners from one of the six sampled rural secondary schools is emphatic that *“where learners take a decision of not being involved in the lesson delivery processes inside a classroom, the teaching and learning mood there is instantly compromised and that learner behaviour converts the learning space into a burden for both teachers and learners”*. That the HIV/Aids learners withdraw from the classroom participation at the rural mainstream schooling, has to be the cause for concern for everyone. That withdrawal complicates the gesture of integrating and supporting them to their fellow able-bodied learners in the mainstream schooling to learn together and to flourish together (Jakes, 2023).

HIV/Aids learners display aggressive behaviour

Indications are that contracting an HIV/Aids infection somewhat affects the temper and moods of many learners. This is better expressed by one of the findings divulging that HIV/Aids learners do display aggressive behaviour at times with no slightest provocation. Regarding the stated finding, Respondent J who is the Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher, declares that *“the change of temper by HIV/Aids learners who instantly become easily angered even when not provoked becomes a worrisome anti-social behaviour which becomes a serious learning hurdle in the enterprise of teaching and learning which in this context aims at helping the HIV/aids learners to benefit from the mainstream schooling like their able-bodied counterparts”*. On the very same point of the HIV/Aids learners demonstrating aggressive behaviour, Respondent D who is the sufferer herself notes that *“yes, it happens that at times the behaviour of HIV/Aids learners are different from the rest, the cause being the pressure carried by those learners considering that the infection of HIV/Aids could claim life”*. Views of the research participants point to the fact that an HIV/Aids learner can never be expected to have a stable and the predictable learner behaviour expected from the able-bodied learners at the rural mainstream schooling (Dwokin et al., 2018).

The under-preparedness of some mainstream teachers

The concept of inclusive education as rolled out at the rural mainstream schooling where there are learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, requires that teachers delivering lessons to diverse learners be adequately capacitated to be accommodative of all learners. In line with the mentioned point, one of the findings in this paper is about the under-preparedness of some of the teachers at the rural mainstream schooling. Regarding that issue, Respondent G who is the Grade 12 Life Orientation teacher remarks that *“teaching learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, requires that the mainstream rural secondary school teacher be properly trained and skilled to cope when teaching learners with diverse individual learning needs”*. On the debated matter, Respondent A who is the HIV/Aids learner advises that *“before the bold statement could be uttered to the effect that inclusive education is progressing with few hindrances in the rural mainstream schooling where there are learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, prioritising the deployment of sufficiently trained and skilled teachers should occur”*. Views of the research participants echo the idea that with the crop of under-prepared rural mainstream teachers, learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are not likely to be fully accommodated and be taken educationally good care off in the rural mainstream secondary schooling (Munongi, 2023).

Recommendations

The basis of these recommendations is the discussed findings which are as follow: there is a need to tackle the problem of learners with special educational needs associated with the HIV/Aids within the context of the behavioural, economic, socio-cultural and the environmental factors that are driving the HIV/Aids infections or epidemic. This could contribute in terms of lessening HIV/Aids learners from harbouring self-rejection attitude against themselves. In addition, there is a need for collective awareness by the society at large about the point that the HIV Aids epidemic places additional stress on both learners and teachers inside a classroom to the level of disrupting and disturbing the Department of Basic Education from delivering quality basic education to all members of the society without discrimination and exclusion. Furthermore, there is a need by the society serviced by schools that when HIV/Aids learners display strange and totally unfamiliar aggressive behaviour when at school, that could be due to being overwhelmed by the pressure of being victims of HIV/Aids epidemic. As part of resolving the HIV/Aids problem especially in the space of mainstream schooling, South Africa as a country deserves to prioritise prevention of HIV/Aids, especially among the most at-risk groups, while at the same time providing access treatment, care and sufficient support and ongoing counselling to those infected and affected by HIV/Aids epidemic. There is a need to stress without equivocating the

message that HIV/Aids learners in the mainstream schooling, could continue to lead normal and productive lives when using Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). Finally, the Department of Basic Education and South Africa as a country need to strive to realise quality basic education for every school-going learner and an HIV/Aids free generation among the under- 20 age group by 2030. To sum up the recommendations shared, it is the business of everyone in the education sector and landscape to prevent HIV/Aids and to promote health and wellbeing of every learner and other vital internal and external stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the mainstream schooling. This is where learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids are being brought up educationally with their able-bodied counterparts.

Conclusion

As it has been demonstrated in the discussion of the findings of this paper, both the review of literature as well as the selected theoretical framework underscoring the paper, namely, the Social Cognitive Theory, played a critical role in talking to the findings of the paper. In addition, the narrative inquiry and the interviewing techniques together with the

selected theoretical perspective, provided the better context within which the entire paper had to be located and comprehended. Small wonder that the findings uncovered that HIV/Aids learners do harbour hidden self-rejection attitudes which when not addressed could lead to such learners dropping out of school. Drop-out is likely to turn and project the Department of Basic Education as a failure in terms of retaining all the admitted learners until completion of their studies. Fundamentally, HIV/Aids learners are as capable as leading a normal life as other able-bodied learners in the mainstream schooling, on condition that they apply the Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). The conclusion arrived at in this paper is being informed by the perspectives and experiences of Grade 12 Life Orientation teachers and their HIV/Aids learners as regards whether such learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids in the rural secondary mainstream schooling, are coping or not. Findings reveal that such learners are in the main, not coping in the mainstream schooling. Evidently, for the mainstream schooling to successfully roll out inclusive education to benefit learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/Aids, under-preparation of teachers as vital actors has to be addressed.

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