



## Teachers' Experiences in Managing Pupils with Disabilities in Tanzania Inclusive Primary Schools: Challenges and Coping Strategies

<sup>1</sup>Lilian Samwel, <sup>2\*</sup>Alphoncina Pembe  and <sup>2</sup>January Marco Basela 

<sup>1</sup>Primary School in Muleba District, Kagera Region, Tanzania, <sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Psychology and Curriculum Studies, College of Education, The University of Dodoma, Tanzania.

\*Corresponding Author: [pembealpha@gmail.com](mailto:pembealpha@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study assessed teachers' experiences in managing pupils with disabilities in inclusive primary schools in Muleba District in Tanzania. Specifically, the study assessed challenges faced by teachers in managing pupils with disabilities and strategies to overcome them. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews and observation and analysed through thematic analysis. A purposive non-probability sampling technique selected three schools from three wards. Ten participants appeared in each selected school. The findings revealed that most teachers faced challenges in managing pupils with disabilities in inclusive primary schools. These challenges were pupils' isolation that caused teachers to face difficulty in teaching them, drop out, insufficient professional teachers, shortage of teaching and learning materials, and poor infrastructure. Educating teachers and society at large on inclusive education and improvisation of teaching aids were adopted by the teachers to manage pupils with disabilities in the schools. It was recommended that the government provide professional development to teachers on inclusive education. Moreover, in collaboration with the school management and education stakeholders, the government has to promote inclusive education practices and create inclusive learning environments for pupils with disabilities in primary schools.

**Keywords:** Teachers, pupils with disabilities, inclusive education, challenges, coping strategies.

## Introduction

Inclusive education is increasingly drawing attention as an educational requirement for all persons, to include children with disabilities. As of 2021, approximately 240 million children worldwide live with disabilities (UNICEF, 2021a). The situation is particularly severe in developing countries, where nearly 80% of people with disabilities, including around 150 million children, reside (Groce & Trani, 2009). While it is estimated that 29 million children live with disabilities in Africa, more than half a million children and youth aged 5 to 24 are living with disabilities in Tanzania (UNICEF, 2021b; UNICEF, 2021c). These children face significant challenges, including limited access to education. Children with disabilities in low-income countries are significantly less likely to attend school, with some estimates indicating that up to 98% receive no formal education (Groce & Trani, 2009). In addition, they often



encounter barriers such as social stigma and a lack of accessible services, particularly in the education sector.

Inclusive education emphasizes the policy that intends to provide equal education to all persons, including those with disabilities (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). It ensures equal opportunities, fosters diversity, and promotes every individual's full participation and development regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) ensures inclusive and equitable education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. This has been emphasized by Article 24 of the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that, states should ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning by persons with disabilities for development of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential (UNCRPD, 2006). IE seeks to ensure that all individuals participate in social and economic opportunities and contribute to personal and national development initiatives.

In the context of this study, pupils with disabilities (PwDs) are referred to as any pupil with impairment. These pupils have limited health conditions, physical conditions, psychological and mental problems, which hinder education accessibility through processes, procedures, and the teaching environment (Msekawanthu, 2023). Despite the condition of the children with disabilities, they had the opportunity to be educated through the special education system (Islam, 2021).

The education for pupils with disabilities in many parts of the world emanated from special education that originated in Europe during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was spearheaded by murder, exploitation, and being kept apart, which increased the threat to society (Makuya, 2021). According to Education for All (EFA), inclusive education is one of the most important approaches in tackling the problems of marginalisation and exclusion of PwDs (Bhatt, 2021). For instance, in Canada, the government formulated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), a law against discrimination that guarantees PwDs to uphold their civil rights. The charter ensured free public education for PwDs (Jacobs, 2018). It guaranteed early identification of PwDs and extended specific support to each province regarding teaching challenges for pupils with disabilities that emanated from inclusive environments, differentiated instruction, and assistive technology in developing social skills.

In China, the government has allocated funds since 2008 for the education of PwDs and emphasized a favourable infrastructure for providing education to them (Qu, 2024). Despite the efforts made by the government, teachers continue to face several challenges that interfere with the implementation of inclusive education in China; for that reason, PwDs have failed to be effectively absorbed in the special education system (Xie et al., 2024). In Japan, the School Education Act of 1947, amended in 2009, also confirms that PwDs should receive suitable skills and knowledge to develop daily living and promote their independence (Cho & Park, 2024). Despite the efforts, teachers still face challenges in managing pupils with disabilities in the learning process (Yada et al., 2018).

Similarly, Germany adopted the Basic Law in 1949, which has been updated several times (Lee, 2023). One of the significant changes in education was promoting inclusive education (Ganner et al., 2021). The new plans aimed at protecting the PwDs affirmed difficulties in federal schools. Within this inclusive education system, teachers and support staff in special education frequently work together and use cooperative learning strategies such as the European Agency for Pupils with Disabilities and Inclusive Education [EASNIE] (Anastasiou et al., 2020). Teachers implementing inclusive education are reportedly concerned about educational settings that offer limited support for PwDs (Ahrbeck & Felder, 2020).

In Africa, for instance, Ghana has strengthened its Education Service's capacity with the support of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The dimension of teachers' skills in identifying and managing PwDs to learn while they are in school is highly emphasized (Okine, 2021). Despite this emphasis and support, teachers in Ghana have been faced with challenges in managing PwDs in inclusive settings (Asamoah et al., 2022). Moreover, the government of Kenya has been implementing actions to improve the participation of PwDs in inclusive schools. Pupils with disabilities are given capitation grants under the free primary education initiative to remove barriers that make the learning setting unfriendly (Elder & Kuja, 2019). Despite the efforts made by the government, teachers are still facing challenges in managing PwDs in inclusive education in the context of existing physical resources (Nyimbi & Kajiru, 2024).

In Zimbabwe, the research findings show that the adoption of inclusive education has a concern of limited support, including teachers, schools, and physical resources (Mazuruse et al., 2021). The Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was urged to take into account expanding the availability of special needs courses and workshops to enhance inclusive education (Mazuruse et al., 2021). Besides, Swaziland Nation has put more effort into training teachers to help pupils with disabilities to include scholarships to teachers on special needs education in various institutions, such as the University of South Africa, the University of Swaziland, and Southern Africa Nazarene University (Shongwe, 2021). Despite significant efforts, challenges in managing PwDs are evident, and the adoption of inclusive education in Swaziland's primary schools is increasingly difficult.

In Tanzania, the acceptance of the inclusion agenda dates back to 1997, but challenges remain during practical implementation within classrooms (Bhalalusesa, 2023). Like many other countries worldwide, Tanzania has transitioned from denial to inclusive education by implementing various initiatives to ensure an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all. For example, in 1989, Tanzania ratified the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was approved in 1991. Similarly, in 2007, Tanzania signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Tanzania also signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability of 2006 in 2008. These actions were taken to ensure that every child has the right to education in the country.

Nevertheless, the challenges teachers face are in the effective implementation of inclusive education (Braun, 2022). The National Strategy for Inclusive Education 2021/2022-2025/2026 has emphasized and affirmed that teachers and other staff should receive education and training to develop the core values and competencies for creating inclusive learning environments. Unfortunately, the majority of primary school teachers in Tanzania are facing challenges in inclusive settings (Kimaro & Kileo, 2023). The effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the instructor's knowledge and skills within an inclusive setting. However, in the majority of Tanzania's primary schools, PwDs struggle with numerous challenges (Mkama, 2021).

Inclusive education philosophy in Tanzania was emphasized through several initiatives, and it was stated that the Universal Primary Education of 1974 seeks to provide education for all, regardless of individual differences. The 2002 Primary Education Development Plan relied highly on establishing a plan to reach all pupils regardless of disability. The Secondary Education Development Programme was established in 2004. It seeks to establish an effective plan to ensure that secondary education is accessible to everyone, promoting the principle of 'No Child Left Behind' and supporting Education for All. All these policies were enacted to ensure access and equity in the education system of Tanzania. This was the commitment to ensure PwDs are accommodated in inclusive settings. However, despite these efforts, the successful implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania still faces numerous challenges in managing learners in teaching (Nyoni, 2022).

Numerous studies, such as that conducted by Nyoni (2022) on the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in Tanzanian primary schools, asserted that challenges that limit inclusive education are evident in teaching and learning. Again, the study by Bhalalusesa (2023) focused on parents' and teachers' engagement in education for pupils with special needs. It is revealed that this engagement is not straightforward; rather, it is a complex process fraught with significant financial and emotional challenges. The complication of these challenges is enormous, which adversely hinders inclusive education. Without well informed teachers, it is impossible to achieve inclusive education goals, resulting in a limited number of pupils with disabilities completing their education (Bhalalusesa, 2023). Despite the Tanzanian government's efforts to develop programmes and conduct studies to reduce the challenges of managing the PwDs in inclusive primary schools, these challenges remain inhospitable. Teachers continue to face challenges in managing these pupils in learning.

In summary, the reviewed studies describe that inclusive education aims to provide equal access, participation, and learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their physical, psychological, or mental abilities. In global frameworks such as Education for All, Sustainable Development Goal 4, and Article 24 of the UNCRPD, inclusive education has evolved from special education models to a global priority that supports academic inclusion and full societal participation for PwDs. While many countries have adopted inclusive education policies and legislation, common challenges persist, particularly in teacher preparation, infrastructure,

and public awareness. Globally, countries differ in their approach and capacity to implement inclusive education, whereby developed nations like Canada and Germany benefit from strong legal frameworks and collaborative teaching methods. In contrast, developing countries like Ghana and Tanzania face resource constraints and limited teacher training. To address these barriers, this study is grounded in the social model of disability, which views societal barriers as the main challenges to inclusion, rather than individual impairments (Oliver, 1990). This framework guides exploring teachers' experiences in Tanzanian primary schools, where this study examining teachers' challenges and strategies in managing PwDs remains limited. Therefore, this study explored teachers' experience in managing PwDs in inclusive primary schools in Muleba district, Kagera region, Tanzania. The following research objectives guided the study:

1. To identify the challenges teachers face in managing pupils with disabilities in inclusive primary schools.
2. To explore the strategies teachers employ to address the challenges they encounter when managing pupils with disabilities in inclusive primary schools.

### ***Theoretical Foundation***

The Social Model of Disability, developed by Mike Oliver (1990), argues that disability results from societal barriers rather than individual impairments, emphasizing the need to eliminate physical, attitudinal, and institutional obstacles to achieve inclusion (Oliver, 1990; Barnes & Mercer, 2010). For instance, a pupil with a mobility impairment is not disabled by their condition but by the absence of ramps in a school, which prevents classroom access. In Tanzanian inclusive primary schools, the Social Model frames teachers' challenges, such as inaccessible classrooms, limited training in special needs education, and societal stigma toward pupils with disabilities as barriers that hinder effective inclusion (UNICEF, 2021d). Teachers' coping strategies, such as improvising materials, reflect efforts to mitigate these barriers, aligning with the model's call for inclusive environments. Supported by Tanzania's National Strategy for Inclusive Education (NSIE) and the Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30, which prioritizes accessible infrastructure and teacher training (URT, 2021; 2025). This model highlights the need for systemic reforms to support inclusive education.

The Social Model is relevant to this study as it provides a lens for analysing teachers' experiences by contextualizing systemic barriers. This model guides the study's exploration of challenges, such as resource shortages and inadequate infrastructure, and coping strategies, such as community engagement, in Tanzanian inclusive primary schools. By grounding the research in this model, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of inclusive education in low-resource settings like Tanzania.

## Methodology

This study applied a qualitative research approach to data collection and analysis to allow a comprehensive exploration of its complexities, context-specific understanding, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. It provides an in-depth and comprehensive description of the informant's views, experiences, and emotions, and interprets the meaning of their activities in natural settings (Mbunda, 2017). This study adopted a descriptive case study in qualitative research to describe teachers' challenges and strategies for managing pupils with disabilities within their natural settings, utilizing multiple data sources.

The study was conducted in inclusive public primary schools in Muleba District, situated in Kagera Region. Purposive non-probability sampling was employed to select three (3) primary schools from three (3) wards in Muleba District. One ward was selected from an urban area, and the other two were selected from rural areas. From each ward, one inclusive primary school was selected, and from each school, ten (10) teachers were involved. That means 30 teachers were involved in this study. The selection of the two (2) rural schools was based on the criterion that the school has practised inclusive education for a long time and another that has started in recent years. Teachers who teach in inclusive classes were selected purposively since the study intended to examine the challenges and strategies of teachers in managing PwDs in those classes. Teachers who had taught PwDs in an inclusive class longer than others were given priority, assuming they had the intended answers to the study.

Interviews and observation were used to collect data in this study. This study used semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in the school environment. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with each teacher once and took fifteen to twenty minutes. Data on teachers' challenges and strategies in managing PwDs in inclusive schools were collected during the interviews. The interview guide was written in Kiswahili, and participants provided data in the same language. Later on, the data were translated from Kiswahili into English. Moreover, observation was used to ascertain and understand what teachers were doing inside and outside the classrooms. The observation checklist was used as an instrument of data collection, and the study managed to observe the school environment and teaching and learning activities, which proved the existence of challenges in managing PwDs.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to analyse, summarise, and report the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). The analysis followed the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as described in the following paragraph.

The first stage was data familiarisation, followed by creating initial codes. After becoming familiar with the data, the study organized them methodically. The selected schools were given labels: A, B, and C. Teachers from school A were labelled numbered from one to ten, A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, and A10. This was done for all teachers, depending on the letter assigned to their school. Theme searching was another step; once the first codes had been created, the study looked for the patterns and relationships between these codes. Then, various themes were developed from the data in this stage, followed by a review. Moreover,



the identified themes were defined and named. This involved providing clear and concise descriptions of each theme and ensuring they aligned with the data. The last step was theme reporting. Thematic analysis was used to accomplish all objectives based on adaptability and accessibility. The key findings were presented verbatim, whereby direct quotations of the information are featured in the study.

Trustworthiness was ensured throughout the data collection and analysis process. Likewise, ethical procedures for conducting research were highly observed, including seeking research clearance from the respective offices. Besides, confidentiality among the participants was observed, and the study ensured the absence of bias, abuse, misconduct, or fraudulent acts.

## **Findings**

This study investigated the challenges faced by teachers in managing pupils with disabilities (PwDs) in inclusive primary schools and the coping strategies employed to address these challenges in Muleba District in Tanzania. The findings are presented based on the research objectives: identifying challenges and exploring strategies.

### **Challenges Faced by Teachers in Managing PwDs in Inclusive Primary Schools**

The first research objective explored teachers' challenges in managing PwDs. Challenges were categorised into pupil-based and institution-based challenges, with each forming sub-themes. However, societal challenges like stigma were noted; this study prioritizes pupil- and institution-based challenges to focus on teachers' direct management experiences, with societal factors addressed in the discussion.

#### ***Pupil-based challenges***

Pupil-based challenges relate to behaviors and situations of PwDs that complicate classroom management. These challenges are isolation and dropout from school.

#### ***Isolation among pupils with disabilities***

Teachers reported that PwDs often isolated themselves from school activities, both inside and outside the classroom, due to feelings of disrespect or exclusion. This isolation hindered their participation and teachers' ability to engage them effectively. For instance, observations revealed that pupils with physical disabilities rarely participated in outdoor tasks like digging, despite being capable of activities such as sweeping. These findings are evidenced by teacher C1 from School C, who stated:

Pupils with disabilities isolate themselves from their peers and see themselves as being disrespected. Some have completely given up in the classroom, and when doing outside activities, they seem overwhelmed with thoughts, leading to isolation. Once they isolate themselves, we fail to control them because we do not know the good ways to help (Interview, May 2023).

This quote highlights how isolation stems from perceived social stigma, complicating teachers' management efforts. This shows that there is a need for better ways to include and help pupils with disabilities to feel respected and part of the group.

### ***Dropping out of school among pupils with disabilities***

Dropout was also a challenge, caused by repeated class retention due to slow learning paces. Teachers noted that PwDs often struggled academically in inclusive settings, leading to frustration and disengagement. Teacher A1 from School A explained:

Most pupils drop out of school after repeating one class for several years. Most pupils with disabilities are slow learners, and they study in inclusive classrooms with pupils without disabilities, talented, and those who are gifted. Some pupils with disabilities are disadvantaged in learning. They range widely in examination with an unsatisfactory average for further studies, and they are to repeat the class many times. This disappoints them, and they decide to drop out of school (Interview, May 2023).

The quote indicates that academic disparities intensify dropout rates, posing a management challenge for teachers. When pupils struggle to keep up with their peers due to their disabilities, their motivation often declines, leading to dropout.

### **Institution-based challenges**

This section presents challenges focused on institutions. Institution-based challenges stem from systemic issues within schools that hinder effective management of PwDs.

#### ***Insufficient professional teachers***

The findings revealed that inadequate competent teachers with experience in teaching and managing PwDs were a significant challenge, with only nine teachers in the three sampled schools. Many teachers in the sampled schools were not trained; as a result, they struggled to address diverse needs, particularly for pupils with hearing impairments requiring sign language. Teacher C<sub>10</sub> from school C reported:

Due to the insufficiency of teachers, I help PwDs inside and outside the classroom. However, I always fail to help PwDs in classrooms, especially those with hearing impairment. ...This situation led to a lack of a good way of helping them. The government has to ensure that teachers are educated on special needs to ensure good services in inclusive schools (Interview, May 2023).

This quotation implies a need for professional development to enhance teachers' capacity to manage PwDs. The limited number of specialized teachers forced untrained teachers to rely on common sense, further complicating classroom management and inclusion efforts.

#### ***Shortage of teaching and learning materials***

Teachers reported a lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials, particularly for pupils with hearing impairments or intellectual disabilities. Observation confirmed that



available materials, often improvised drawings and pictures, were biased toward pupils with physical disabilities and those without disabilities. In line with these findings, teacher A<sub>10</sub> from school A had this to say:

The lack of learning materials for pupils with hearing impairments and multiple disabilities results in these pupils failing to catch what is being taught. Teachers are putting more effort into ensuring that all pupils receive the same knowledge. However, the lack of teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities hinders them from getting what is intended (Interview, May 2023).

The statement above indicates a shortage of teaching and learning materials. This shortage hampered effective teaching and assessment, reducing engagement for PwDs.

### ***Poor infrastructure***

Unfriendly infrastructure, such as inaccessible toilets and stairs, posed significant barriers, particularly for wheelchair users and pupils with intellectual disabilities. Teachers often had to assist PwDs with basic tasks, increasing their workload. Regarding this issue, teacher C<sub>3</sub> from school C had the following to say:

... I see the state of the toilets here at school is in a dangerous situation, while we have pupils with disabilities who cannot use them. It is easy for these pupils to get diseases. For example, pupils with physical disabilities drag themselves to the urinals, and those with mental disabilities can play with the dirt. It would be good to get toilets that meet the needs of pupils with disabilities. This situation will reduce the diseases and discomfort we experience and make teaching easier (Interview, May 2023).

This quote implies that the school had poor infrastructure, which could affect the pupils. Generally, it is imperative to have friendly infrastructure for all people in schools, including those with disabilities, as poor infrastructure hinders inclusive engagement and management.

### **Strategies to Overcome Challenges Facing Teachers in Managing PwDs in Inclusive Schools**

The second research objective examined strategies teachers used to overcome the challenges. Two main strategies emerged: educating teachers and society, and improvising teaching and learning aids.

#### ***Educating teachers and society at large***

Teachers lacking formal training in inclusive education sought informal learning opportunities, such as social media, and shared knowledge with colleagues. Moreover, special education teachers provided guidance during free time, and parent-teacher meetings were used to educate parents on supporting PwDs. The following response from teacher C<sub>3</sub> of school C during the interview supports the findings:

Sometimes, we learn through social media how to manage PwDs in inclusive classrooms, but not all teachers do this, as it requires having an internet bundle

to access the source. This helps us to gain more knowledge on how to deal with PwDs and consider their inabilities and differences. There is a need to educate teachers whose knowledge of PwDs is insufficient to eliminate negative attitudes and ironic situations. This can be done through professional development (Interview, May 2023).

The quote indicates the significance of social media as a resource for teachers to learn about managing PwDs in inclusive schools. It stresses the need for continuing professional development to equip teachers with sufficient knowledge about PwDs, which can help eradicate negative attitudes and misunderstandings.

Moreover, teacher C<sub>2</sub> from school C had this to say about educating parents:

During our school meetings with parents, we prioritize educating parents on how to best care for their children with disabilities and provide them with school necessities. Also, we insist that the parents encourage their children to attend school every day (Interview, May 2023)

The quotes above indicate that the aim was to enhance parents' competence and reduce stigma, while addressing challenges like isolation and dropout.

### ***Improvisation of teaching aids***

To address the shortage of teaching and learning aids, teachers improvised aids like drawings and objects to engage PwDs. The comment made by teacher A<sub>10</sub> of school A shows a clear picture of the problem and how they intervene:

Teaching without teaching aids is a challenging task, especially when it comes to PwDs. In our school, we have various kinds of PwDs, and teaching them needs to have teaching aids in order for them to understand what is taught. For example, my PwDs, especially those with mental disabilities, enjoy a lesson once teaching the pupils using teaching aids. Teachers prepare teaching aids to reflect what they see regularly, which makes them actively participate during the teaching and learning process (Interview, May 2023).

However, improvisation had limitations, as untrained teachers sometimes created inaccurate aids, potentially confusing pupils. Despite these limitations, the strategies reflect teachers' proactive efforts to mitigate school constraints and enhance inclusion.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The challenges faced by teachers in managing pupils with disabilities (PwDs) reflect the systemic barriers outlined in the social model of disability. Instead of attributing difficulties to individual impairments, the model highlights institutional and environmental obstacles that hinder inclusion in Tanzanian schools. For instance, it revealed that isolated pupils struggle with classroom engagement, reinforcing the Social Model's argument that exclusion arises from societal barriers rather than individual impairments. This is in line with

Armstrong et al. (2016), who emphasize that isolation stems from negative interactions, which aligns with the Social Model's emphasis on reducing attitudinal barriers to promote inclusion. Dropout was one of the pupil-based challenges, reflecting attitudinal and institutional barriers. Slow learning paces and repeated retention, as noted by Teacher A1, marginalize PwDs, leading to disengagement (Mapunda et al., 2017). Addressing the dropout requires personalised academic support, as emphasized by the National Strategies for Inclusive Education (United Republic of Tanzania, 2021)

Moreover, the study acknowledges that many teachers in the studied schools have limited knowledge of managing PwDs, affecting classroom interactions. The social model of disability interprets this as an institutional failure rather than a personal deficiency, emphasizing the need for professional development and systemic reform. This perspective is supported by Mbunda (2017) and Possi and Milinga (2017), who highlight the importance of specialised training for inclusive education. Likewise, studies (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; Kachweka & Rupia, 2022) reported that educating teachers on managing pupils with disabilities is very relevant to enhance interactions in the classroom. Besides, Makuya (2021) and Braun (2022) link low knowledge with a lack of confidence in inclusive education.

Shortage of teaching and learning materials, which reduces engagement for PwDs is another challenge noted in this study. The study by Makuya (2021) and Possi and Milinga (2017) emphasize that inclusive education efforts remain incomplete without sufficient resources. Tanzania's National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021/2022-2025/2026) and the Education Sector Development Plan (2025/26-2029/30) recognize this and prioritize investment in inclusive infrastructure and learning resources, aligning with the model's advocacy for institutional support.

Furthermore, the physical inaccessibility of school infrastructure, including classrooms, toilets, and stairs, directly illustrates the Social Model's argument that disability results from environmental barriers rather than individual impairments. These findings align with Mapunda et al. (2017) and Mazuruse et al. (2021), who underline that poorly designed schools restrict PwDs' mobility and participation, making their exclusion a result of inadequate planning rather than their disabilities. Efforts to renovate and design accessible learning spaces are essential for inclusion, a principle supported by Tanzania's education policies.

The societal stigma and lack of parental awareness negatively affect PwDs' education (Odongo, 2018; Kirby, 2017), which is connected to attitudinal barriers within classrooms and communities. Strategies such as community engagement and parental education (Kirby, 2017; Robinson et al., 2019) align with the social model's focus on changing societal perceptions rather than "fixing" individuals. By fostering inclusive mindsets, teachers counter stereotypes and promote meaningful interactions between pupils with and without disabilities.

Despite these barriers, teachers committed themselves by adapting their methods to support PwDs. Their coping strategies, including improvising learning materials and advocating for inclusive education policies, reflect the model's emphasis on creating accessible environments. Tanzania's government, NGOs, and educators are encouraged to collaborate in promoting inclusive reforms, ensuring that PwDs can fully participate in education without facing exclusionary obstacles.

Managing pupils with disabilities (PwDs) in inclusive schools is complex and, per the Social Model of Disability, requires a holistic approach to remove societal barriers through enhanced teacher competence and an inclusive environment. Practical strategies for managing PwDs in inclusive schools involve enhancing the competence of the teachers in adapting teaching methods to diverse needs and fostering these pupils' academic and social development. Individualized plans, teamwork, and a culture of acceptance are crucial to ensure that PwDs fully participate and succeed in the inclusive classroom. Success in this field depends primarily on investing in teacher training, adapting context-specific strategies, and ensuring meaningful engagement from all educational stakeholders.

### **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that teachers take more proactive measures by enhancing their professional competence in inclusive education pedagogy through professional development and collaboration among teachers and other education stakeholders. This will address diverse learning needs, adapt teaching methods, and create an inclusive classroom environment.
2. For schools, it is recommended to facilitate a conducive environment for pupils with disabilities to learn. Also, to liaise with the government and education stakeholders to ensure that the inside and outside classroom school environment and infrastructure are improved to enhance inclusivity and management of pupils with disabilities
3. Government and policy-makers, to improve inclusive education policies to create and advance a more equitable and inclusive learning environment through enhanced awareness and inclusivity initiatives at the family, society, school, and national level. Also, ensure adequate budget for the constant supply of relevant teaching and learning materials, and improved infrastructure to enhance inclusivity, learning, and management of pupils with disabilities.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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