

Perception Of Primary School Teachers On Mainstreaming Of Psychological Support Services At Primary Schools In Shiselweni Region In Eswatini

Buyisile Clementine Dladla Simelane, Hlengiwe Romualda Mhlongo,
Nzima, Kofi Nkonkonya Mpuangnan

This study aimed to explore the perception of primary school teachers on the mainstreaming of psychological support services in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The study focused on understanding how primary school teachers perceive the integration of psychological support services in mainstream education, including the extent to which they perceive these services as helpful, accessible, and sustainable. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including questionnaire (open-ended & close-ended) and semi-structured interviews, to collect data from a sample of ninety (90) Teachers, and fifteen (15) Principals in the region. The quantitative data that were collected were analysed by using descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages whereas the qualitative data was analysed qualitatively according to themes that emerged. Findings include; conditions of teachers like experience, age, gender and qualifications had played a significant role in development and the performance of learners at primary schools in Shiselweni region. Also, conducive environment had a positive effect on students' learning and growth. However, it was revealed that lack of resources was the greatest barrier to the implementation of mainstreaming psychosocial support. Therefore, a recommendation was given that primary school teachers should collaborate with school counsellors, social workers, and other mental health professionals to identify students who may require psychological support services and develop appropriate interventions

Key words: *Mainstreaming, Psychological-Support-Services, Teachers, Primary School, Perception, And Eswatini*

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Introduction

Education is one of the most effective tools for moulding the human race as it is the only solution to socioeconomic problems of any nation. Several global organizations have emphasized the importance of universalizing primary education. This is partly because basic education teaches foundational skills that address the cognitive, emotional, moral, physical, and spiritual growth of students. Psychological support services in primary schools are required by the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhance mental health and prevent mental health disorders in learners and adolescents (WHO, 2018). For this reason, successive governments of Eswatini have given the highest priority to primary education because this is the stepping stone of children to pursue higher education. Therefore, programmes have been developed to offer in access to and support for children and adolescents with psychological difficulties. One of such programmes is The Inqaba Schools Programme in 2011.

In the Swazi context, psychosocial support is one of the pillars in the Inqaba Schools Programme which addresses children's social and emotional health and it has a beneficial impact on their academic performance, retention and progression. Fazel, Hoagwood, Stephan and Tasmin (2015) point out that the introduction of the Inqaba Schools Programme also helped in extending the support to all the children in all the schools in Eswatini. In the same vein, Skodval, Morten and Campbell (2015) assert that, the school setting have since been given the task of attending the challenging social problems troubling learners and the youth. This can be the aim of extending learning through collaborative and accessible education or teaching learners to become responsible citizens. It can also be with the aim of promoting their psychosocial and physical health, or of addressing particular child protection issues.

Despite the relevance of psychological support services in primary schools, there are several barriers to their implementation (Al-Yagon&Mikulincer, 2004; Kim et al., 2020). The successful mainstreaming of these services in primary schools depends on various factors that need to be taken into account. Therefore, understanding the factors that hinder teachers' effort in the mainstreaming of psychological support services in primary schools is essential for developing effective interventions to improve the mental health of students. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to conduct this study. This study's findings can contribute to the development of policies and practices that promote the successful implementation of psychological support services in primary schools.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories via Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Positive psychology, were the foundation upon which the researchers developed this study. The details of each of the theories are presented as follows.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a type of psychological intervention that tries to change harmful patterns of thinking and behaviour in order to enhance mental health outcomes. CBT is based on the premise that our ideas, feelings, and behaviours are all linked and that changing our thoughts can result in positive changes in our emotions and behaviours. CBT assists individuals in identifying and challenging harmful ideas and beliefs, developing coping mechanisms, and practicing new behaviours. CBT has been thoroughly researched and proved to be useful for a variety of mental health illnesses such as anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A meta-analysis of 269 studies, for example, revealed that CBT was more effective than no treatment or placebo in lowering symptoms of anxiety disorders (Hofmann et al., 2012). Another meta-analysis of 163 trials revealed that CBT was more effective than no treatment or placebo in improving depressive symptoms (Cuijpers et al., 2016). Individual or group sessions are commonly utilized to deliver CBT, and the number and length of sessions varies based on the individual's needs and the style of CBT used. CBT can also be provided in a variety of modalities, such as in-person, telephone, or internet-based interventions.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is the study of positive experiences, feelings, and characteristics such as happiness, well-being, optimism, resilience, and character strengths. It seeks to foster the flourishing of individuals, groups, and communities by improving their positive characteristics and giving them with the resources they need to deal with challenges and adversities. Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association at the time, developed the Positive Psychology hypothesis in 1998. Seligman, in his book "Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life," challenged the traditional understanding of psychology as a science primarily concerned with the treatment of mental diseases and psychological issues. The author further contended that psychology should also investigate and promote good aspects of human life. Positive Psychology has now become a fast expanding field of study, with countless researchers, practitioners, and scholars contributing to its growth. Barbara Fredrickson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Tal Ben-Shahar, and Angela Duckworth are among the most prominent figures in the discipline. Positive psychology has been used in a variety of contexts, including schools, workplaces, and clinical settings. According to research, interventions based on Positive Psychology concepts can improve mental health, happiness, and performance.

Review of related literature

Psychological Support Services in line with differentiated curriculum

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region is facing an escalated increase in the number of learners and youth who do not have access to the essential services which they need to grow up well, especially, food, shelter, education and vital skills, health care, clean water and sanitation, protection from situations of abuse, denial of their basic liberties and emancipation from extreme poverty. Deprivation and vulnerability of children and youth in the region is largely caused by HIV and AIDS which have been recorded to be more prevalent in the SADC than in any other region globally, high levels of poverty, and in some cases conflict and natural disasters. As a result, they are engaging or are more likely to engage in socially deviant and risk behaviours such as criminal activities, transactional sex, conflict and violence, early marriage, alcohol and substance abuse, as well as depression and suicide (Salamao, 2011).

According to the Arc Resource Pack (2009), problems or troubling situations can have a negative impact on children's social and emotional well-being. Exposure to violence or disaster, loss of or separation from family members and friends, deterioration in living conditions, and lack of access to services can all have immediate and long-term consequences for children's balance, development, and fulfillment. In the same vein, Adrianopoulos and Brennan (2017) posit that growing up today have since become too difficult than it was before, nowadays learners and the youth face a lot of challenging situations than it used to be in the past and it is difficult to comprehend that. They also believe that schools should be welcoming and supportive in order to promote relevant structures to address the disturbing currents that can set us back. However, they further assert that, for schools to be successful in assisting learners; priorities for the nation must be readjusted and the education setting must balance out scholarly culture and emotional welfare. This is what all the stakeholders deserve more than anything.

The Inqaba Schools Implementation Programme (2011) concurs with Adrianopoulos et al. in stating that children come from a range of diverse cultures displaying distinct social, cultural and religious backgrounds. When the

learners come to school, they come with different painful experiences since they have gone through a lot of negative things, such as painful experiences, and children with negative experiences find it difficult to pay attention to their scholarly work. The Inqaba Schools Framework, therefore, points out that it is very important that educators have a good foundation on children. The teachers also need to make their children to calm down by involving them in various light-headed activities. These activities could be taken as important components of psychosocial support. People are said to be completely developed when they are meaningfully engaged socially, mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The Ministry of Education in Eswatini is appreciative that these components are complementary and add value to the welfare of all the learners.

The Inqaba Schools' Framework is a component of the new Education Sector Policy (2018); it points out that all educational institutions in Eswatini should promote the schools to the status of being a fortress for all children; paying special attention to orphans and vulnerable children. Protecting learners' means, catering for the diverse needs for all the children by providing them with opportunities for expressing their views and feelings freely. This programme promotes effective and worthwhile participation of children, teachers, school committees and parents in all the levels of development and management. This collaboration entails, promoting awareness and transmitting information, conferencing and nurturing; building upon the current conditions. Inqaba schools are required the involvement of the members of the society in order to collaborate and develop working relationships with all the important partners, such as administrators, teachers, parents, Non-governmental Organisations, Ministry of education officials and parents. The main theme of this course is the development of healthy lifestyles, integration of gender perspectives, equal opportunities and equality and respectability. This is confirmed by differentiated curriculum in the South African context. According to Huebner (2010), nowadays, there are a lot of diverse learners in the classroom with who are diversified philosophically linguistically. They also differ in their psychological understanding, fundamental knowledge and learning styles. Due to the diversity of the learners, a lot of schools have decided to adapt learning to the needs of individual learners.

According to Gregory and Chapman (2013), in South Africa, curriculum differentiation is guided by the diverse abilities of the students in the classroom. It acknowledges the singleness of individual learners in relation to the way they interact, areas of origin, cultural and religious traditions, socio-economic status according to their language of communication, place or origin, cultural and religious practices, socio-economic status, family background, learning strategies, and learning needs, without taking into account the learner's capabilities. It is a mentality or ideology that empowers educators develops a master plan that will accommodate the diverse needs of the learners in order to accomplish specific goals. They also revealed that understanding the diverse needs of the learners is not something new, but it calls for deliberate effort from the educator in order to review the available knowledge to take decisions on how these needs can be adapted to the available information. UNESCO (2004) agrees with Gregory and Chapman that when curriculum is differentiated, the level of expectation in terms of content, process, product, and learning environment is altered based on an assessment of student readiness, interest, and learning profile, in order to meet the learning needs of all students in the class. Because students are not all the same, teachers must employ a variety of instructional strategies in the classroom to ensure their full participation. Such strategies include using different questioning strategies, varying the complexity of questions and tasks, developing a variety of activities that combine assessment and instruction, and establishing multi-layered centers or situations in the classroom. In the same vein, Sternberg and Zhang (2010) posit that while curriculum differentiation may be a more difficult challenge for the instructor, it can greatly benefit the learners at all levels, giving them enough chances to develop and learn at their own space. By using differentiated instruction strategies, educators can meet the needs of all students and help them to meet and exceed the established standards. Inclusion of students in the mainstream curriculum is said to depend on adequate differentiation of the teaching approach to match individual learning characteristics of the students.

Levy (2010) also noted that students enter classrooms with different capabilities, learning styles, and personalities. Educators are commanded to make sure all the learners meet the required standards set by the department. Differentiated teaching strategies will enable the teachers to cater for needs of all the learners so that they meet the required standards to see that all students meet the standards of our district and state. Marishane and Mahlo (2015) agree that the teaching staff must be the foundation for any school improvement. This implies that teacher development for better teaching practice should be a prerequisite for effective learning in an inclusive classroom environment where such improvement can be pursued and sustained.

To improve this development, long-term and consistent approaches to empowering all school-level educators are required. The emphasis on teacher development at the institutional or school level is critical because it reinforces the idea that classroom practices influence teaching and learning. In the same vein, Marishane and Mahlo (2013) assert that, curriculum differentiation is a strategy that involves modification, adaptation and extension of methodologies, instructional and assessment strategies and curriculum content. They also mentioned that curriculum differentiation is about the teacher responding to the needs of the students. For such response to occur, the teacher should have an in-depth understanding of learner diversity, the principles that should guide such response, the elements of a differentiated classroom, and relevant strategies to be applied to achieve success in the process.

UNESCO (2007) agrees with Marishane and Mahlo that curriculum delivery to students in the classroom through differentiated instruction is central to these practices. Differentiated instruction consists of inclusive instructional practices and teaching strategies that allow all children, including those with disabilities, to access and succeed in the

general education classroom and curriculum. The classroom is emphasized because it is where teaching and learning processes, learners, teachers, and the curriculum interact. The significance of differentiating curriculum for students with varying educational needs, abilities, and behavioral issues has been recognized for many years and documented in numerous studies. This recognition resulted from the lack of empirical evidence supporting segregation education.

According to Ledwaba (2017), most countries, including South Africa, have witnessed a growing recognition of the importance of curriculum differentiation as a key strategy to make the curriculum accessible to all learners in schools. However, increasing recognition has not been proportional to the number of opportunities provided to learners to access quality education. In general, schools in South Africa are faced with a diverse learner population that demands a shift from traditional teaching to a more inclusive approach. South Africa has been hailed for developing a comprehensive and progressive Inclusive Education policy that requires the implementation of curriculum differentiation to meet the diverse needs of learners in schools. However, in spite of this policy, a huge percentage of learners in need of additional learning support are not able to access the curriculum effectively.

There are other compelling reasons to support the differentiated curriculum. Concurrently, de Jager (2016) posits that, African teachers encounter numerous challenges in the creation of differentiated activities to include diverse learner needs in effective teaching and learning. These challenges include the inability to identify learning barriers and adapt the curriculum, teaching and assessment methods according to the learning styles and readiness levels of learners. Opertti (2009) also stated that teachers should be equipped with the necessary skills and materials to teach diverse students and meet the needs of all types of learners. Furthermore, there is a need for teachers to develop a common sense of purpose, which may require a paradigm shift in their mindset about schools and their pedagogies, re-examining the practice to make it more tolerable, flexible, and responsive. Morgan (2013) concurs with Opertti that, today teachers are responsible not only for meeting the diverse needs of all students, but also ensuring improved educational outcomes. Accordingly, school personnel are seeking proven ways to strengthen traditional classroom practices. Rock, Gregg, Ellis and Gable (2010) highlighted that students enter the classrooms with different abilities, learning styles, and personalities, hence, educators are mandated to see that all students meet the expected standards. Through the use of differentiated instruction strategies, educators can meet the needs of all students and help them to meet and exceed the established standards. According to UNESCO (2004), because students are not all the same, teachers must use different instructional strategies in the classroom to ensure maximum participation in the curriculum being implemented. Such strategies include using varying questioning strategies, varying the complexity of questions and tasks, and designing multi-level activities that blend assessment and instruction in the classroom.

Lee, Gragouda, Theohari, and Wehmeyer (2006) also emphasized that addressing the needs of all learners in schools requires teachers to not only be positive about learners who are perceived to be performing below their peers, but also to be able to differentiate the curriculum to meet their learning needs. To provide learning support to a diverse group of learners, adequate curriculum differentiation is required for better individual support and integration, regardless of any learning barriers they may face. According to the Department of Education (2011), curriculum differentiation entails modifying, changing, adapting, extending, and varying teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, resources, and curriculum content. Curriculum differentiation includes assessment, content, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, learning environment, and learners' products to meet the diverse needs of individuals and maximize their learning opportunities in the classroom.

The differentiation is guided by variation in individuals' learning abilities, learning needs and learning styles. In this instance, the teacher or the facilitator differentiates his or her way of teaching, assessment of learners' activities, time allocation to complete an activity, environmental settings as well as teaching and learning resources for learning to take place. Curriculum differentiation has long been identified as the most logical way to respond to learners' diversity in their learning environment as it promotes the progress of each learner in a general curriculum (DoE, 2011). Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) point out that differentiating content allowed students to use a variety of real life examples, anecdotes and simple content more meaningfully.

When teachers differentiate instruction according to interests, such students are motivated to connect what is being taught with things they already value, differentiation also encourages students to discover new interests. For example, teachers may choose to differentiate key skills and materials to be learned, with particular students' interests in several areas such as music, sports, or wild life. Interest-based differentiation is directly linked to studies in motivation which show enhanced student engagement with the task, great student creativity and productivity, as well as higher level of intrinsic motivation when instruction caters for student interest. In agreement, Alvarez (2018) pointed out that differentiating instruction in the classroom has many benefits, some of which are obvious, and some less so. Teachers can see these benefits without burning out from working extra hours on creating separate lessons for students at each level. Students can learn and demonstrate knowledge in different ways. There are opportunities to learn and practice alone, in groups, by reading, by watching videos, by completing projects and more. Students all learn differently, and every student has an opportunity to learn in a way that works for them. Alvarez (2018) further said that differentiation teaches learners that there is not just one right way to learn, everyone is different, and everyone has different strengths. Instead of seeing others as simply good in school or bad in school, students can see value of their peers' individual interests and strengths. In a differentiated learning environment, students have an opportunity to explore topics that interest them and they can choose their own article to read and then share what they learned with the class. Students might choose articles, or choose topics that make them excited about learning.

Differentiated instruction allows all students to participate in and contribute to classroom activities. No students are left out of learning opportunities simply because the reading assignment was above their level. Teachers can tell at a glance how each student is performing in each skill and quickly assess when intervention is needed. Tomlinson and Alexandria (2017) assert that in a differentiated classroom, teaching is evolutionary. Students and teachers are learners together. While teachers may know more about the subject matter at hand, they are continuously learning about how their students learn. On-going collaboration with students is necessary to refine learning opportunities, so, it is effective for each student. Teachers monitor the match between learner and learning, making adjustments as warranted. Differentiated classrooms operate on the premise that learning experiences are most effective when they are engaging, relevant, and interesting to students. A corollary to that premise is that all students will not always find the same avenues to learning equally engaging, relevant and interesting. Further, differentiated instruction acknowledges that later knowledge, skill, and understandings must be built on previous knowledge, skills and understandings and that not all students possess the same learning foundations at the outset of a given investigation.

Masten (2017) points out that those teachers who differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms seek to provide appropriately challenging learning experiences for all their students. These teachers realise that sometimes a task that lacks challenge for some learners is frustratingly complex to others. Teachers who understand that teaching and learning approaches must be a good match for students look for every opportunity to know their students better. They see conversations with individuals, classroom discussions, student work, observation, and formal assessment as ways to keep gaining insight into what works for each learner. What they learn becomes a catalyst for crafting instruction in ways that help every student make the most of his or her potential and talents. Masten (2017) also noted that in a differentiated classroom the teacher assumes that different learners have differing needs and proactively plans lessons that provide a variety of ways to get at and express learning. The teacher may still need to fine-tune instruction for some learners, but because the teacher knows varied learner needs within the classroom and selects learning options accordingly, the chances are greater that these experiences will be an appropriate fit for most learners. Effective differentiation is typically designed to be robust enough to engage and challenge the full range of learners in the classroom. Stetson, Stetson and Anderson (2019) confirm that differentiated instruction allows teachers to provide those opportunities without labelling or obviously isolating individual learners in the classroom. Differentiated instruction is one way to deal with students' individual differences. This approach focuses on individual students' or a small group's academic success. To use this method, a teacher must understand the students' learning history, interests, and readiness to learn, among other factors. This knowledge is useful in developing individual lessons and activities that maximize each student's personal growth.

Differentiated instruction leads to better classroom management and discipline and cuts on distractions and interruptions to teaching. On the same note, Joy (2019) pointed out that, differentiated instruction is a teaching method tailored to students' needs. Differentiation may involve individualising content, the process, the materials used, or the learning environment. An important element of differentiated instruction is on-going assessment and necessary adjustments, as well as flexible grouping of students by readiness level and interests. She also mentioned that differentiated instruction or curriculum is when teachers maximise the learning potential of a classroom by modifying curriculum, teaching methods, learning resources and activities to address the needs of the students, as individuals or small groups gathered by learning level or readiness. The teacher adjusts the pace of the teaching according to the needs of the students as well as their interests and learning styles. Logsdon (2018) posits that, in a differentiated classroom, teachers recognise that all students are different and require varied teaching methods to be successful. Instruction is adapted across subject areas to allow students to embrace the teaching method most appropriate to them. These include students with learning disabilities who might otherwise fall behind in a traditional classroom setting. The aim of differentiation is to employ a variety of teaching styles to ensure that students can approach learning in different ways, but with the same or similar outcomes. Differentiation is meant to stimulate creativity by helping students make stronger connections, understand relationships, and grasp concepts in a more intuitive way.

Kostyukova and Revyakina (2016) concur with Logsdon (2018), in stating that learners experience a unique scholastic journey which leaves an important impact throughout their lives. During these educational years, children acquire the opportunity to develop themselves in a holistic way. Thus, it is important that the school sets up structures for the creation of a safe environment by providing means of protecting children from negative influences that might hinder this holistic development of the learner. In the same vein, the Special Education Needs-A Continuum of Support (2016) reported that, the problem of the child who lags behind in his school work is one of the most difficult situations that teachers have to face. It is a problem which can arise in almost any school. In primary schools there are children who are not performing well in their capabilities to such an extent that they may be seriously handicapped in their relationship with society. The deficiencies are built on a foundation of persistent failure to achieve what other children are achieving. Therefore, any teacher who has reason to think that a child may be having special difficulties in class should take steps to ascertain the nature of the difficulties and whether the child needs remedial treatment in an ordinary school or special education in a special school or class.

Needed Support for the Mainstreaming

Scholars such as, Reynolds, Zuphanick and Dombeck (2013) have variously highlighted that the best educational set up is the one that effectively assist the learners to attain their academic goals. All the learners have different goals,

abilities and needs and there is no one best setting for all children. Therefore, parents and teachers must ideally upgrade the educational set up and materials available in their societies. Thereafter, they can make a good choice that exactly corresponds with the needs of the learners' needs, situations and placement decisions. For that reason, decisions should be re-evaluated timeously because learners' needs keep on changing over and over again.

UNICEF (2009) also reported that international, regional and national policies provide the context and mandate for care and support in teaching and learning, thereby addressing significant causes of children's vulnerability. Internationally, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals commit countries around the world to get key global educational growth goals such as alleviating extreme poverty, hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equity and the training of women, decreasing the numbers of child mortality, preventing HIV and AIDS and other diseases from spreading fast and making sure that the environment is sustained.

The report also highlighted that SADC Member States are party to these international declarations emphasising particular development needs of vulnerable children across the region, Eswatini included. These regional declarations and protocols provide guidelines to the building of capacity and enabling environments for the implementation of national policies which include: improving school enrolment quality, education, access to shelter, nutrition, health services and child protection. The report further advocates the integration of rights, protection, care and support for children in member countries' National Plans of Action as encapsulated in the Eswatini Vision 2022. The Eswatini National Response to Psychosocial Support Programme addresses the challenges confronting both young people and teachers concerning issues of children's rights, protection, care and support for children. Support is a detailed welcoming setting for catering for holistic needs for an individual learner to promote wellbeing. Notably, the SADC Strategic Plan set standard for mainstreaming psychosocial support for children in different sectors of development while also strengthening the conditions of service. It addresses challenges confronting both young children and teachers concerning issues of children's rights, protection, care and support for children.

An educational institution is a setup which looks after individual learners making them successful. It is a setting where the learners' needs are met whilst they are safeguarded and confident and they enjoy learning. It is a place where children should feel all their needs are met, whilst they are protected, confident and enjoy learning (Inqaba Schools Implementation Programme, 2011). Therefore, the concept of mainstreaming psychological support services in primary schools is used as a basis for ensuring that children feel socially and emotionally supported in every area of their life.

The Special Education Needs-A Continuum of Support (2016), states that in order to be successful in giving support to all the learners the mediation strategy should be placed in the natural context and resources and the current culture and social virus. The strategy for helping the learners should center on developing societies, families and other social structures such as the school which is a supportive environment for learners. REPSSI (2018) articulated that the teacher is supposed to utilise to use key Psychosocial Support theoretical concepts and assessment to scrutinize the school's psychological framework in order to come up with a strategy to make it better. The teacher may also be able to implement social and psychology concept and capabilities to assess personal character to review self-identity and harmonize specific, experienced and national requirements. The teacher is enabled, capacitated and encouraged to collaborate with their learners in order to assist them to develop culturally, intensely and mentally to become hygienic and more satisfied.

The teacher also displays cultural and sensitive teaching abilities in promoting a tender and warm classroom practice which encourages effective learning, communication, collaboration, explanation and support by all learners. Furthermore, the teacher also demonstrates capabilities and expertise to organize school administration, politics and executive to enhance the school's cultural and natural environment and apply guidelines to comprehend the capability of the school as a heart and soul of learning and care. Therefore, the teacher is able to use capabilities and expertise of their role as a community development in exchange and record and distribute the stories of change in their school community. UNICEF (2009) also noted that the development of teamwork among staff is equally important, as it is promoting of self-assurance in school administration and good classroom management. Academic performance in schools can be improved by structuring the school in such a way that the responsibility of teachers is enhanced to include delegated authority which should enable them to make critical decisions, facilitate, collaborate with the head teachers in the school's management and decision making process. Collegiality results into collective responsibility and good governance of the school.

Education and psychosocial support are purported to have a dynamic and mutually reinforcing relationship. Effective child-centred learning is important in promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of both learners and teachers. To strengthen it, efforts in promoting psychosocial support within educational programming in emergencies, UNICEF, Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, amongst others, have emphasised the importance of training teachers and school counsellors. Furthermore, UNICEF (2013) asserts that teachers are supposed to have the require experience, capabilities, expertise and support to take in a wide spectrum of diversification among learners in the classroom. They must be able to choose the suitable pedagogies in order get good results because learners' academic performance is not just an issue of what is happening in the education sector, but it is also an outcome of high participation amongst all the stakeholders. Even though the schools make a huge difference in supporting the learners, there are different factors which alter learners' success, such psychosocial support which influences the wellbeing and

rights of the child as a learner and the main beneficiary of teaching, while improving other school duties in the process. Salomao (2011) avers that psychosocial support services are important all learners and the in order to develop into a balanced human being who can develop and display their complete human potential so that they become industrious and answerable compatriots throughout their entire life cycle. A failure to gratify the fundamental psychosocial needs can lead to unfavourable developmental results among which are anxiety, depression, delinquency, low self-esteem, poor relationships, risky sexual and other behaviours, suicidal tendencies, low educational achievement, poor health and low productivity.

The existence psychological support services may successfully negate some psychological and social pathological factors or permit them to be educated. When psychosocial support services are flourishing, a child or youth will feel culturally, temperamentally and religiously supported in every form of their lives. Salomao further says that, psychosocial support services develop adaptation strategies, speed up wholesomeness, psychological and direct defenceless learners and the youth, pass on responsibility and administrative capabilities for controlling their positions and make them to add value to the advancement of their families and societies.

Research questions

1. To what extent has the conditions of teachers affected the performance of learners at Primary Schools?
2. What challenges are confronting teachers during mainstreaming of psychological support services at primary schools?
3. To what extent can creating an environment that is conducive to learning and growth promote mainstreaming of psychological support services at primary schools?

Methodology

In this study, a mixed method design was adopted where both qualitative data and quantitative data were collected to address the research questions. Carey (2012) posits that a qualitative research depends largely on non-numeric data, such as interviews and observations while quantitative research is applied in situations where it is necessary for an investigator to draw numerical conclusions to collect practical judgments. The researchers collected quantitative data to respond to research question 1 as the qualitative data were meant to answer research question 2, and research question 3 respectively.

Population of the study comprises of all primary school teachers, students, inspectors, principals and school nurses of Shiselweni region in Eswatini. The sample of the study include ninety (90) Teachers, and fifteen (15) Principals. The teachers were selected by using simple random sampling technique while the principals, were selected through purposive sampling technique due to their knowledge and experience in providing the required data. The instrument used for data collection were questionnaire which made up of both open-ended questions and close-ended questions and semi structured interview.

The items on the questionnaire were about the bio data of the teachers including; age, qualification, years of work experience, and their career choice. The teachers were asked to indicate YES or No on the items. These data were used to determine the conditions of teachers affected the performance of learners. The qualitative data were collected from principals, and teachers (10) through interview. The interview questions were about the challenges confronting teachers during mainstreaming, and creating an environment that is conducive to learning. The instruments were given to three experts for validity. The experts validated the content consistency, language clarity, grammatical errors and provided suggestions for modification. To administer the instruments, permission was sought from the principals of the schools involved and upon the approval, it was administered to the participants. During the interview, the consent of the participants were sought and the sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed into a notebook. The quantitative data that were collected were analysed by using descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages whereas the qualitative data was analysed qualitatively according to themes that emerged. The themes were determined by following the six steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013) as follows.

- i. Familiarisation: during this phase, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data. The audio recordings were subjected to transcription.
- ii. Generating Initial codes: A code is a brief description of what was being said in the interview. The code for the ten selected teachers for interview were given as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10 while the fifteen principal were assigned P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, and P15.
- iii. Searching for themes: the codes sorted into themes. The researchers looked at the list of codes and their associated extracts, and then collated the codes into broader themes.
- iv. Reviewing Themes: During this phase, the identified themes were reviewed and refined.
- v. Defining and naming themes: During phase the researchers named and described each of the themes identified in the previous steps.
- vi. Producing the report: the researchers presented results in a clear and unambiguous language.

Findings

The extent to which the conditions of teachers has affected the performance of learners at primary schools.

The bio data of the teachers were used to determine the extent to which the conditions of teachers has affected the performance of learners at Primary Schools. The details of the findings are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Bio data of Teachers

Variable	Category	Frequencies (N=90)	%
1. Age	0 – 25	2	2.2
	25 -29	7	7.7
	30 -39	46	51.1
	40 -49	19	21.1
	50 – 59	15	16.6
	60 or above	1	1.1
2. Gender	Female	47	52.2
	Male	43	47.8
3. Teaching experience	0 – 10	27	30.1
	11 – 19	31	34.4
	20 – 29	20	22.2
	30 – 39	12	13.3
4. What is your qualification?	O 'Level	1	1.1
	Certificate/ Diploma	61	67
	B.Ed./BA or any equivalent degree	26	28.9
	MA/ PhD	2	2.2
5a. Teacher training certificate	Yes	90	100
5b. Duration of training	0 -2	1	1.1
	3 – 4	76	84.5
	4 – 5	13	14.4
5c. Was teaching your first choice?	Yes	67	74.4
	No	23	25.6
6. Do you think society appreciates your work?	Yes	76	84.4
	No	14	15.6
7. Do you think learners appreciate your work?	Yes	84	93.3
	No	6	6.7

Table1 shows the frequencies of teachers' age, gender, teaching experience, qualification, teacher training certificate, duration of training, career choice, and appreciation by society and learners. The results showed that out of 46 teachers, 51.1% were between the ages 30 - 39, 19 teachers (21.1%) were between 40 - 49, 15 teachers (16.6%) were between 50 and 59, 7 teachers (7.7%) were between 25 and 29 years, 2 teachers (2.2%) were between 0 and 25 years, and 1 teacher (1.1%) was between 60 or above. Amongst these teachers 47 (52.2%) were females and 43 (47.8%) were males. The results also showed that 27 (30.1%) had a teaching experience that ranged between 0- 10 years, 31 (34%) between 11- 19 years, 20 (22.2%) between 20- 29, and 12 (13.3%) between 30- 39.

About teachers' certificate, it can be observed that One (1.1%) teacher had an Ordinary Level Certificate, 2 (2.2%) teachers had a master's degree in education, whilst 26 (28.9%) had a bachelor's degree in education and 61 (67%) had a diploma in education. The results also indicated that all (100%) the teachers had a training certificate, but 23 (25%) said teaching was not their first choice, 76 (84.4%) indicated that society appreciated their work, whilst 14 (15.6%) said the society did not appreciate their work. Eighty-four (93%) of the teachers said the learners appreciated their work and only 6 (6.7%) said the learners did not appreciate their work.

Challenges experienced by teachers during mainstreaming of psychological support services

Lack of resources in the schools

T3: "There is lack of involvement from the teachers towards their learners. The lack of knowledge to some parties, e.g. parents and other community members, makes it tough for the implementation of the programme". **T2:** said, "Finances are a big barrier, because we know that these days' children don't live with their parents and they don't have that financial muscle for themselves, but they depend on the government and the government takes time to provide money for the learners. Hence, the schools fail to implement psychosocial support, because most of the things need money". **T1:** said, "There is no support at all, support should start from the top, the principal and the inspectors must be well versed with what is entailed in psychosocial support". The government, communities and the schools have not done much to identify the weak areas in this circle in order to improve the quality of life to all people, particularly those facing diverse challenges in life.

Lack of training and professional development

T1: “Teachers should be capacitated; this is very important, in particular, not only those who are responsible for the specific psychosocial support programme, but also other teachers. I feel the whole team in the school set up should be capacitated”. **T2:** “Most teachers have not been properly introduced to psychosocial support, they don’t know much about psychosocial support. And, as a result, they don’t adequately respond to the diverse needs of the learners”. **T3:** “The teachers in the school don’t have a full understanding of what really is psychosocial support; they don’t know much about psychosocial support. So, I think they should be work shopped on this in order to gain full understanding”. **T4:** “Most teachers in the school are not so very sure about psychosocial support and; as a result, some of the teachers don’t spend much time with the learners in the school. They focus most on the academic performance of the learners rather than their social life”. **T5:** “The teachers need to be educated about psychosocial support, because if that is not the case, the child facing problems will just come to school and be a visitor, since the teachers can’t handle the child and they are not well versed in handling such cases”. **T6:** “The teachers need to be sensitised about psychosocial support and how it will improve the lives of the learners”. **T8:** “There is a lot that needs to be done; some teachers don’t have a welcoming attitude towards the learners, which might be difficult for a learner to open up to such a teacher”. It can be learned from the findings that many teachers feel unprepared to provide the psychosocial support their students need, highlighting a gap in training and professional development. They express concerns that without proper guidance, they’re unable to fully address the diverse challenges learners face beyond academics. Some mention that most teachers haven’t been introduced to psychosocial support, leaving them unsure of how to respond effectively. As a result, they believe learners’ social and emotional needs are often overlooked. Teachers agree that workshops and training are necessary to help them understand and support students’ well-being, ensuring they can offer more than just academic instruction.

The principals had these to say; **P2:** “There is lack of involvement of teachers towards their learners. The lack of knowledge to some parties, e.g. parents and other community members makes it tough to implement the programme”. The old crop of teachers has a negative attitude towards the learners who have problems, they don’t care and that seems like a barrier to the learners. So, they need to be trained on psychosocial support”. **P3:** “According to me, ignorance and lack of knowledge among the teachers, learners and parents, as well as the shortage of funds for implementing psychosocial support activities such as outreach programmes, is a barrier to implementing psychosocial support in primary schools”. **P4:** “Most teachers have not been properly introduced to psychosocial support and, as a result, they don’t adequately respond to the diverse needs of the learners”. **P5:** “I think more awareness should be made to make sure that every teacher has an understanding of psychosocial support and what is expected. I think that more workshops should be conducted where the new generation of teachers and the old generation will be put together to discuss psychosocial support issues and to bring to the fore their experiences and from those experiences a strong psychosocial support will come”. **P7:** “Another thing is the capacitation of teachers on psychosocial support. This is very important. When capacitated; the child is now a person, the whole person whereby you don’t only impart only knowledge to the child. They even conduct research about the child’s environment”. The findings showed that, although psychosocial support is an important element in education, most teachers have not been capacitated on this concept. Teachers indicated that they were stressed, because they properly capacitated to address problems challenges faced by the learners in their classrooms.

Creating an environment that is conducive to learning and growth in which the vulnerable children can thrive

P1: “creating a conducive environment for learners is a rights- based concept - it fosters the progressive realisation of children’s rights to a quality education with the support and involvement of parents, community and stakeholders. Each individual child has to develop to his or her full potential through the creation of the most desirable learning environment”. **P2:** “This is a good idea; it will enable all the stakeholders to work together in order to improve the living conditions in the school”. **P4:** “I think that one is very important. Actually, schools were supposed to be centres of care and support, but because of the economic liquidity of the government, we are failing as schools to provide the care and support that is expected from us. Some learners are on ARVs, it is not easy to help and provide the care and support that they need, such that the children end up dropping out of school. **P6:** “This can be developed through the provision of material resources and financial resources and the infrastructure should be modified to cater for all learners in the school, irrespective of who they are”. **P7:** “Everyone in the school should participate in all activities meant to promote the wellbeing of the learners in the school. Resources should be adequately provided in order to cater for the diverse needs of the learners”. **P8:** “Learners should be given support irrespective of their challenges, gender and backgrounds. Instructions should be differentiated in order to cater for all the learners in the school”. **P9:** “Teachers, parents and everyone else who work with children need to be taught about the importance of working together in order to create a better place where all the children will feel safe and protected”. **P10:** “It is a very interesting and exciting concept as it is not just a subject, all human beings have needs which need to be met. It is for that reason this we need to make schools a place that welcomes all children”. The findings highlighted that teachers need to understand the learners beyond the normal academic requirements in order to support them holistically and everyone in the school should participate in all activities meant to promote the wellbeing of the learners in the school.

Discussion

It can be learnt from the data presented above that conditions of teachers like experience, age, gender and qualifications had played a significant role in development and the performance of learners at primary schools in Shiselweni region. These results are in agreement with Mohamed, Al-Agili, Mamat, Abdullah and Maad (2012), who averred that, teachers' characteristics, experiences and behaviours in the classroom contribute to the educational environment of the students, which in turn will have an impact on student achievement. There is a common assumption with regard to the association among teacher experience and student achievement that was, students who were taught by the most experienced teachers achieved higher levels. This was because their teachers had mastered the content and obtained classroom management skills to deal with different types of classroom problems. Studies on the relationship between the teachers, experience and student's performance showed contradictory results. Moreover, Swart and Pettipher (2011) consider teachers as the most important people to necessitate change, because their behaviour have a great influence on the entire education context. Schools, together with the teachers have a responsibility for providing care and support to the learners. The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) (2015) emphasizes that the teachers' experience was critical because they demonstrated social and emotional teaching skills in creating a caring and protective classroom culture that encourages learning interaction, participation, expression, and support for all children. Teachers guarantee that students have the necessary educational, cultural, and emotional foundations. The teacher's source of information and abilities are extremely valuable in developing schools and increasing educational quality. Higher teacher qualifications, according to Manning, Garvis, Flemming, and Wong (2017), are positively associated with higher quality in implementing psychosocial support, because poor quality education can be detrimental to the development of learners, potentially leading to poor social, emotional, educational, economic, and behavioural outcomes. Highly qualified teachers frequently exhibit more sensitive and less harmful behaviours.

Concerning challenges experienced by teachers during mainstreaming, it was revealed that the largest impediment to mainstreaming psychosocial support was a lack of resources. This made it difficult for teachers to support students' needs in their classes. The findings are consistent with Thompson's (2014) study, which found that community-led mechanisms such as Parents Teachers Associations and School Improvement Plans can provide the most effective support for teachers and the school environment in general. Furthermore, Smith (2010) stated that regardless of how the teachers attempted to implement some of the strategies, there isn't much that can be accomplished without the assistance of the relevant authorities in the school system. Teachers believed that assistance from people in positions of authority was critical in implementing new programs or activities. In whatever is done within the school, the governing body of the school as a whole should meet with the teachers. As a result of the absence of assistance, particularly coaching and support from experts, teachers are unsure of what they are required to accomplish in order to teach all pupils. Teachers require adequate time, ongoing assistance, and further training to effectively integrate all of the components and concepts of an inclusive educational system. As a result, there is a need to embrace advancements in order to provide continued support for the program's successful execution. In agreement, Smith (2010) also noted that teacher education in such areas develops collaboration and re-modification efforts together with teacher determination. In servicing the teachers will improve their participation skills and this will make them to be ready to apply all the strategies to support the learners.

Furthermore, it was found that there were insufficient professional development programs for teachers, which was why they couldnot be effective because they weren't properly equipped to deal with the challenges that students faced in their daily lives. All personnel involved in providing assistance, whether formally or informally, need to be trained in order to give effective support. They must have relevant professional training that incorporates the concepts of psychological support services. This is congruent with the findings of Operti (2009), who discovered that instructors should be equipped with the necessary abilities and resources to accommodate various types of learners. The findings are also consistent with O'Brien and O'Sullivan (2016), who believe that training and development of teachers and practitioners will ensure that they are highly qualified and have the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills to effectively deliver this curriculum. This training should include skills for dealing with behaviors and developing healthy relationships. Educational institutions are increasingly seen as crucial facilities for providing quality education that embraces and promotes the welfare of all learners, particularly those with emotional, mental, and behavioural issues, without discrimination. According to Sinclair's (2013) study, instructors need training and support to identify students who need psychosocial care and to give that support skilfully.

Data about creating a conducive learning environment showed a positive relation between a conducive environment on students' learning and growth. Gray and Weare (2013) established that the most important component that supports emotional and social competence and the welfare of teachers and learners is the school context. In general, an environment that emphasizes and welfare in order to establish healthy relationships, promotes involvement by expanding learners' and teachers' freedom, and fosters a clear demarcation, norms, and positive expectations. In order to support professional freedom, schools are encouraged to develop suitable circumstances in which they work with emotionally secure, cooperative, and focused routes. Schools that choose to collaborate with community partners have discovered that they can increase the academic performance of individual students. According to Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, and Moolla (2014), schools have the responsibility to provide a warm and inviting environment in which learners are respected, curriculum and pedagogy support the learner's readiness to learn, and educators appreciate the uniqueness of each learner. To ensure that students succeed in their academic endeavours, the school

must increase the education support services that are central to the teaching learning process as the primary approach for resolving teaching problems and impediments to learning.

Recommendation

- i. Primary school teachers should work with school counsellors, social workers, and other mental health experts to identify pupils who may need psychological help and design appropriate interventions.
- ii. Teachers should foster a welcoming and inclusive learning atmosphere that encourages positive mental health and emotional well-being. Encourage open communication and create opportunity for pupils to express their opinions and feelings.
- iii. The Minister of Education should provide frequent training and professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their understanding of psychological support services and to build the skills needed to support the mental health of their students.
- iv. School administration can collaborate with parents and caregivers to provide resources and assistance to improve their children's mental health and well-being.

Conclusion

The integration of psychological support services into primary schools is a vital step in ensuring learners' well-being and academic performance. With the rising prevalence of mental health issues among children and adolescents, giving early access to psychological support services can help prevent long-term mental health problems and guarantee that learners are better prepared to face challenges. Learners can obtain the required treatment and support in a timely manner by offering psychological support services at primary schools in the Shiselweni district of Eswatini, rather than having to wait for referrals to external mental health services. Therefore, teacher's characteristics like age, experience, qualification, and commitment to teaching profession are essential for achieving a goal. This can be particularly beneficial for students who may be reluctant to seek help or face barriers to accessing external services, such as transportation or financial constraints.

However, it was difficult for primary school teacher to incorporating psychological support services in Shiselweni region in Eswatini due to challenges like lack of resources in schools, lack of training, and inadequate professional development programmes. Therefore, schools were encouraged to create conducive learning environments to make sure they worked with emotionally stable, cooperative and focused pathways in order to encourage professional freedom of teachers and improve learning outcomes. This approach can help reduce the stigma associated with mental health concerns and students may be more willing to seek help when they need it.

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Author Information

Buyisile Clementine Dladla- Simelane
University of Zululand

Hlengiwe Romualda Mhlongo
University of Zululand

D.R. Nzima
University of Zululand

Kofi Nkonkonya Mpuangnan
nkonkonya@gmail.com
University of Zululand