

**Assessing the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult
learners in five literacy centres in Zomba district**

By

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, **John Ambali**, declare that this thesis titled “Assessing the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult learners in five literacy centres in Zomba district” is my own work and has been generated by me as a result of my own original research. I confirm that it has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for any other degree or professional qualification at this institution or any other institution.

Where I have consulted the work of others, this has been clearly indicated. I have acknowledged all the sources of help by complete references.

This work was done under the supervision of Dr. **Jim Chatambalala** of Mzuzu University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, my wife, Shaymah K. Ambali, my children, Zeinnah and Zaid, and my brother, B. Ambali.

ABSTRACT

Adults with disabilities in Malawi are considered as one of the vulnerable groups and often experience social exclusion and lack of education. They face various challenges in their quest to access education opportunities. The main aim of the study was to carry out an in-depth assessment of the effects of disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills among adult learners with disabilities in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district. Specifically, the study aimed to: establish common disabilities among adult learners, assess the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills, explore coping strategies used for effective teaching and learning, and examine barriers to literacy education for adult learners with disabilities. The study adopted a Qualitative Approach with a case study design. The study targeted adult learners with disabilities in five centres in Zomba District. Purposive sampling was used to identify 11 participants for the study. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews conducted with adult learners, instructors and Community Development Officers. Document review was also used to collect secondary data. Direct observation was employed to observe learning environments. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The researcher sought permission from Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) and Zomba District Community Development Office to conduct this research.

The findings of the study show that learners with disabilities face a lot of challenges in learning basic literacy skills. Therefore, the study recommends that the government and other stakeholders must prioritise promotion of inclusive education for adult learners with disabilities through policy intervention, specialised instructor training as well as provision of inclusive teaching and learning resources.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALC:	Adult Literacy Centre
REFLECT:	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
NALP:	National Adult Literacy Programme
NSO:	National Statistics Office
UIS:	UNESCO Institute of statistics
HI:	Hearing Impairment
VI:	Visual Impairment
SNE:	Special Needs Education
IT:	Itinerant Teachers

Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ABBREVIATIONS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter Overview	1
1.2 Background	1
1.2.1 <i>Global Adult Literacy Rate</i>	1
1.2.2 <i>Adult Literacy Rate in Africa</i>	2
1.2.3 <i>Adult Literacy in Malawi</i>	3
1.2.4 <i>Development of Adult Literacy Programmes</i>	3
1.2.5 <i>Common Literacy Approaches</i>	4
1.2.6 <i>Disabilities among Adult Learners</i>	5
1.3 Statement of the Problem	8
1.4 Aim of the Study.....	8
1.5 Specific Objectives.....	8
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Theoretical Framework	9
1.8 Chapter Summary.....	12

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1. Chapter Overview	13
2.2 Understanding Adult Learners	13
2.3 Factors Affecting Adult Learning.....	15
2.3.1 <i>Barriers to adult learning</i>	17
2.4 Forms of Disabilities	18
2.4.1 <i>Learning disabilities</i>	18
2.4.2 <i>Hearing Impairment</i>	20
2.4.3 <i>Visual impairment</i>	21
2.5 Strategies that Facilitate Effective Learning	22
2.6 Chapter Summary.....	23
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	24
3.1.1 Chapter Overview	24
3.1.2 Research paradigm	24
3.1.3 Research Design: Case study	25
3.1.4 Research Approach.....	25
3.1.5 Study Area	26
3.1.6 Target Population.....	27
3.1.7 Sampling Procedure	28
3.1.8 Sample Size	29
3.1.9 Data Collection Methods.....	29
3.1.9.1 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	30
3.1.9.2 <i>Document Analysis</i>	31

3.1.9.3 <i>Direct Observation</i>	31
3.2 Data Analysis.....	31
3.3 Ethical issues	32
3.4 Trustworthiness	32
3.5. Chapter Summary	33
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	34
4.1 Chapter Overview	34
4.2 Number of Adult Literacy Learners with Disabilities	34
4.3 Forms of Disabilities among Adult Learners in Zomba	37
4.3.1 <i>Mobility challenges: use of walking sticks</i>	38
4.3.2 <i>Mobility challenges: use of a wheelchair</i>	38
4.3.3 <i>Epilepsy</i>	39
4.3.4 <i>Albinism</i>	40
4.3.5 <i>Hearing Impairment</i>	41
4.4 The Effects of Disabilities on Learning Basic Literacy Skills among Adult Learners	42
4.4.1 <i>Effect of mobility impairment on learning of basic literacy skills</i>	43
a. <i>Long distance to a learning centre.</i>	43
b. <i>Participation in practical lessons</i>	44
c. <i>Poor learning environment</i>	48
4.4.2 <i>Effect of Epilepsy on learning of basic literacy skills</i>	49
a. <i>Difficulties in paying attention in class</i>	50
b. <i>Memory issues</i>	52
c. <i>Missing lessons due to seizures</i>	53

4.4.3 <i>Effect of albinism on learning of basic literacy skills</i>	54
<i>a. Problems with sight</i>	54
<i>b. Stress and anxiety</i>	58
4.4.4 <i>Effect of Hearing Impairment on learning of basic literacy skills</i>	59
<i>a. Communication challenges</i>	60
<i>b. Lack of teaching and learning materials that suit the hearing impaired</i>	61
4.5 <i>Coping Strategies used for Effective Teaching and Learning</i>	63
<i>a. Sitting plan</i>	64
<i>b. Use of informal sign language</i>	65
<i>c. Emotional and social support</i>	67
4.6 <i>Barriers to Literacy Education for Adult Learners with Disabilities</i>	68
<i>a. Lack of training of instructors and supervisors on handling learners with disabilities</i>	68
<i>b. Lack of specialised instructors</i>	69
<i>c. Lack of resource centres</i>	71
<i>d. No Special Centres for Adult Learners with Disabilities</i>	72
4.7 <i>Chapter Summary</i>	72
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND	
RECOMMENDATIONS	74
5.1 <i>Chapter Overview</i>	74
5.2 <i>Summary of major findings</i>	74
5.3 <i>Conclusion</i>	76
5.4 <i>Recommendations</i>	77
5.5 <i>Areas for further Study</i>	77

5.6 Contribution of the Study	78
REFERENCES	79
APPENDICES	97
Appendix 1: Interview Guide For Adult Learners With Disabilities	97
Appendix 2: Interview Guide For Adult Literacy Instructors And Community Development Officers (Supervisors)	99
Appendix 3: Checklist For Direct Observation.....	100
Appendix 4: Letter Of Approval From Mzunirec	101
Appendix 5: Letter Of Introduction: Mzuzu University	102
Appendix 6: Letter Of Introduction: Zomba District Community Development Office	103
Appendix 7: Informed Consent Form	104

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Forms of disabilities among the respondents.....	38
Table 4.2: Themes on the effect of mobility impairment.....	43
Table 4.3: Themes on the effect of epilepsy on learning of basic literacy skills.....	50
Table 4.4: Themes on the effect of albinism on learning of basic literacy skills.....	54
Table 4.5: Themes on the effect of Hearing Impairment on learning of basic literacy skills.....	59
Table 4.6: Themes on coping strategies.....	63
Table 4.7: Themes on the barriers to literacy education.....	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Experiential Learning Cycle.....	10
Figure 3.1: Map of Malawi showing the location of Zomba District.....	27
Figure 4.1: One of the adult literacy centres in Zomba.....	36

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a background for adult literacy, giving a global context, and narrowing it down to Africa and Malawi. Effort has also been made to locate the study within the area of special needs education. The background leads to the Statement of the Research problem. It has also described Experiential Learning theory which was used to guide the study.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Global Adult Literacy Rate

The study assessed the impact of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners. Adult literacy is considered as a human right that every adult must enjoy. Adult literacy is the ability of adult males and females to read, write and numerate. Adult literacy rate, therefore, has been defined as the percentage of the population aged 15 years and above who can read and write and possess simple arithmetic ability (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). According to UIS (2017), there are about 750 million people aged 15 years and above in the world who cannot read and write. This means that the global adult literacy rate is estimated at 86.3% (UIS, 2017).

Over the past five decades, there has been an increase in global literacy rate among adults from 67 percent in 1976 to 86 percent in 2019, with males having a higher adult literacy rate as compared to females (O'Neill, 2022). However, literacy rates vary from country to country. Nations which are developed have the highest adult literacy rate of 96% (World Population Review, 2022) as

compared to developing nations. Developed countries with high literacy rate of 99% include Canada, Germany, United Kingdom and Netherlands (World Population Review, 2022). Countries with lowest literacy rate are found in South Asia, West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (World Population Review, 2022). Most countries in these regions have an average adult literacy rate of 65% (World Population Review, 2022).

Literacy is the drive for individual progress, social development, and economic health. Having the ability to read and write offers more educational and employment chances to the population (Pariona, 2017). With the ability to read and write, people increase their household incomes and bring their family out of low-income conditions and also increases the participation in political life (Pariona, 2017).

Adult literacy has a direct bearing on every important social aspect such as health, gender equality and poverty among others. Illiteracy denies people the opportunity in health, active citizenship and empowerment.

1.2.2 Adult Literacy Rate in Africa

Some counties in Africa have progressively improved in adult literacy levels. Countries with the highest literacy rates include Seychelles, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa with a 95%, Sao Tome and Principe with 92%, while Libya, Namibia and Mauritius with 91% (World Fact, 2017).

On the other hand, Africa also has countries with the lowest literacy rates. It is reported that in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 1 in 3 adults cannot read and write (World Fact, 2017). Countries

which have the lowest literacy rates include Niger (19%), Guinea (30%), South Sudan (32%) and Mali (33%) (World Fact, 2017).

1.2.3 Adult Literacy in Malawi

Report by NSO (2019) indicates that adult literacy rate in Malawi is at 68.6%. The report further shows that there are over 2 million adult aged 15 and above who cannot read and write (NSO, 2018). This represents 31.4% of illiteracy rate among adult men and women. This is an increase in literacy levels as UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2005; 2016) reported that adult literacy rate was at 64% in 2005 and 65% in 2016. However, the increase is at a slow pace. Illiteracy is high among females as compared to males (NSO, 2019).

As seen, there has been a slow increase in adult literacy rate in Malawi. This trend summarily indicates that Malawi is at a critical juncture which requires swift and strategic interventions to combat illiteracy. Providing literacy education to adults remains one of the important interventions that Malawi government embarked on. The programme is run under the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Community Development.

1.2.4 Development of Adult Literacy Programmes

Realizing that illiteracy is dangerous for development, different countries introduced adult learning and education programmes to combat the problem. In India, for example, the government launched National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) in 1978 with the aim of providing education and promoting literacy among all illiterate persons, especially in the age group of 15-35 years (Smrutisikha, 2018). Kenya, with 38.5% of adult Kenyans who were illiterate, introduced

adult literacy education soon after gaining independence as many Africans in the country were illiterate due to colonial racial discrimination (Metto, 2014).

Fighting illiteracy among adults in Malawi started during the colonial period. The British government worked with UNESCO in establishing mass education pilot project in the late 1940s at Mponela in Dowa district. The project did not last long due to some administrative and technical challenges (Kishindo, 1994). During the era of Kamuzu Banda, efforts were made to increase literacy rate among adults. His government launched the National Adult Literacy Programme in 1986 with the aim of managing literacy interventions in the country and the National Centre for Literacy and Adult Education (NACLAE) was established to be the focal point of the programme (Kishindo, 1994).

Adult literacy classes, commonly called “sukulu za kwacha” were established to impart basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy to adults who could not read and write. Currently, there are over 10,000 adult literacy centres across the country with an average enrolment of 25 participants at each centre (National Adult Literacy and Education Policy, 2020). These centres are managed by District Community Development Offices which are under the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare.

1.2.5 Common Literacy Approaches

Several approaches are followed in the provision of literacy skills to adults. The first approach is Traditional Approach. This involves teaching adult learners the alphabet first, progressing to syllables and finally to meaningful words and sentences (Finish Refugee Council, 2016).

Secondly, there is Functional Literacy Approach. This stresses the immediate application of skills learned (Finish Refugee Council, 2016). It means the ability to read, write and calculate and use these skills in day to day activities in order to uplift their living standards (NALP, 1991). This is the approach that Malawi government has adopted since 1986.

The third approach is REFLECT. REFLECT is an acronym which stands for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. This approach focuses on the participants choosing the content of their education, and not experts setting the curricula for them (Finish Refugee Council, 2016). It aims at empowering local communities to engage in transformative development and in the course of learning literacy skills (Rogers, 2008). This approach is mostly used and managed by Non-Governmental Organisations. In Malawi, the approach has been supported by Action Aid, Oxfam, and ICEIDA among others (Rogers, 2008).

There has also been an introduction of another approach known as Integrated Approach for Adult Education Programme. This approach is aimed at incorporating relevant life skills, vocational training and entrepreneurial training in the regular adult education programmes, mostly targeting women and the youth (UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, 2013).

1.2.6 Disabilities among Adult Learners

Running adult literacy classes is a method that is aimed at providing illiterate adults and youths aged 15 and above with learning opportunities, which they missed out in their childhood (National Adult Literacy and Education Policy, 2020). In this case, a person who is eligible to attend adult literacy classes is one who is 15 years and older. However, a significant number of illiterate young people do not enrol for adult literacy classes for various reasons (National Adult Literacy and

Education Policy, 2020). This means that adult literacy classes are made up of people who are considerably old. In most cases, the patronage of the adult literacy classes is dominated by those that are advanced in age (Mauluka, 2018).

As people grow older, they tend to develop certain disabilities which might affect their learning. As Holland (2000) explains, ageing comes with biological and physical changes together with cognitive decline as well as psychiatric disorders. Barlow and Walker (2015) point out that one can either enter old age with a pre-existing disability or may develop a disability in later life because of age-related causes or other factors such as diseases and accidents. Adults with disabilities are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in society (UNESCO, 2019).

It is estimated that more than one billion people live with some kind of disability (WHO, 2020) which represents 15% of the world's population. WHO (2020) indicates that 3.8% of the world's population aged 15 years and older have significant functioning difficulties and require assistance from various services (WHO, 2020). Examples of such functioning difficulties include physical disabilities related to vision or hearing problems, mobility impairments and other health conditions (WVAdultEd Instructor Handbook, 2017).

They may also include learning disabilities that affect visual and auditory processing that cause difficulties in reading, expressive language, math, attention, memory, organization, social interaction, or a variety of other difficulties (WVAdultEd Instructor Handbook, 2017). Learning Disabilities Association of America (2015) identified common learning disabilities among adults including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and others such as disorganization and difficulty

adjusting to change. Learning disabilities may not be apparent, as such it is possible to create misunderstanding and little support by others may be needed (Knight, 2020).

Adults with disabilities are becoming the target group for adult learning and teaching in different countries (Díez-Palomar et al, 2021). Nevertheless, they are still poorly visible and continue facing barriers in accessing adult learning and education (Díez-Palomar et al, 2021).

1.2.7 Disabilities among Learners in regular schools

There is a lot of literature of how disabilities among learners in primary and secondary schools affect their learning. Children with disabilities encounter barriers which affect attendance, progress and learning in schools (Banks et al, 2022). Some common barriers which have been identified to have serious implication on learning among primary school students include inaccessible infrastructure which cannot accommodate wheelchairs (Kondowe, 2024). Kondowe (2024) also stresses lack of assistive technologies such as braille textbooks, sign language interpreter and a screen reader.

Students with disabilities require inclusive and supportive environment (Irema et al, 2010). Providing individualised support and promoting access to learning opportunities enables students to reach their full potential.

While a lot has been said about disabilities in regular schools, little is known about the challenges and experiences of adult learners with disabilities. There has been scanty literature on the same. There is need to dig more on how learning is affected due to their disabilities.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

As stated earlier, adults with disabilities are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in society (UNESCO, 2019). While other adults may have entered old age with a pre-existing disability, others develop a disability in later life because of age-related causes or other factors such as diseases and accidents (Barlow and Walker, 2015). These disabilities may have an impact on learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. A lot of research studies have been conducted on learners with disabilities in regular schooling. However, much is not known about adult learners who also have similar learning challenges. It is against this background of the gap in research in adult education which necessitated the current study. Also, while there are many disabilities worth investigating, this study focused on visual and hearing impairments, and other physical disabilities as well as learning disabilities which may have an impact on learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The study was conducted among adult learners with disabilities in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to assess the effects of disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners. It was carried out in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district.

1.5 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish common disabilities among adult learners
- To assess the impact of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills
- To explore coping strategies used for effective teaching and learning
- To examine barriers to literacy education for adult learners with disabilities.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study endeavoured to assess the impact of disabilities among adult learners on learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The findings of the study are envisioned to be worthwhile in improving teaching and learning among adults with special needs. The findings would also assist government and other stakeholders to follow up in providing accessible, quality and equitable education to adult learners with disabilities. The study would help policy makers to devise Adult Learning and Education programmes which are inclusive in nature. It would also help adult literacy providers to increase support in the provision of teaching and learning materials to cater for adult learners with special needs. Additionally, it would help in improving teaching practices in adult literacy as recommendations are envisioned to be useful in handling adult learners with disabilities.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the philosophical assumptions of Experiential Learning Theory by David Kolb (1984). This theory entails that the experiences of an adult learner become central to teaching and learning. Experiential learning is described as process whereby “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (*Kolb, 1984, p.41*). This experience may comprise of earlier events in the life of the learner, current life events, or those arising from the learner’s participation in activities implemented by teachers and facilitators (Andresen, Boud & Cohen, 2000). This explanation is echoed by Gutierrez (2021) who states that the essence of adult learning is creating sense of experiences and that adults learn best when they are directly involved with “experiencing” the learning instead of memorizing numbers and definitions.

The experiential Learning theory portrays four modes of learning. These are Concrete Experience, Abstract Conceptualization, Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation (Kolb and Kolb, 2011).

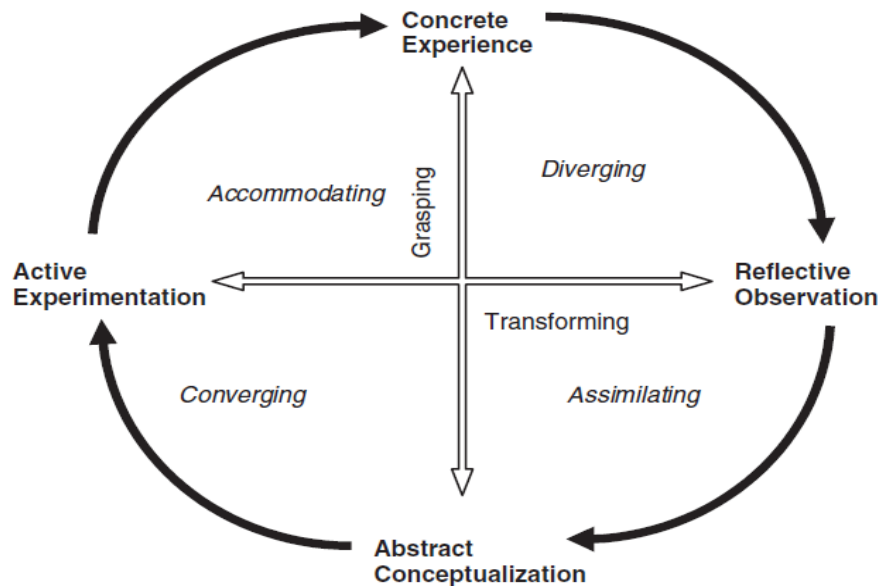


Figure 1.1: Experiential learning cycle (Kolb and Kolb, 2011)

McLeod (2017) has provided a clear description of these modes of learning. In Concrete Experience, the learner encounters a concrete experience which might be a new experience or situation (McLeod (2017)). The second mode of Reflective Observation entails that the learner reflects on the new experience in the light of the existing knowledge and notes the inconsistencies between experience and understanding. In these first two stages, the learner grasp new knowledge. In Abstract Conceptualization, the learner creates a new idea based on the new experience while in Active Experimentation, the learner applies the new idea to the world around him/her to see what happens (McLeod, 2017). In the last two stages, the learner transforms the abstract knowledge into reality. Experiential learning can be good for helping people explore their own strengths when

learning new things. The theory addresses how learners can play to their own strengths as well as developing areas in which they are weakest (Cherry, 2020). Experiential Learning Theory uses four learning styles which are diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating.

Active experimentation, which is the last mode of learning in Experiential Learning Theory, was central in informing this study. This is where learners are trying out what they have learnt. This stage requires active learner participation. Active Experimentation provides an opportunity to adult learners to immediately apply the knowledge learnt. This assists them to retain the information better (Cherry, 2020).

The theory was used based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that it could be possible that adult learners who have disability may not be actively participating in learning. This may lead to learning difficulties. Learners with learning difficulties may develop disciplinary issues and their performance is low (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Some may develop attention-deficit while others develop hyperactivity disorder (O'Neill et al, 2020). Therefore, it may not be surprising to see such learners shunning away from active engagement in learning.

The other assumption is that the theory of Experiential Learning can help to provide guidance on encouraging adult learners with disabilities to learn by doing. An innovative instructor or facilitator needs to create a conducive environment for adult learners with disabilities through the use of teaching methodologies which can influence learner participation. There is need to use a wide range of teaching methods and approaches to capture the attention of learners and get them involved in their learning by practicing what they have learnt.

Experiential Learning Theory was used in the study in monitoring hands-on learning among adult learners with disabilities. The theory emphasises active engagement in learning which can be particularly effective for individuals with disabilities.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter has provided the background to the study. It has provided the workable definition of adult literacy. It has also revealed that adult learners with disabilities exists in literacy centres. It has also outlined examples of forms of disabilities. It sets a stage for further exploration of the effects of disabilities on learning.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter has examined literature related to the area of study titled “Assessing the effects of Disabilities on Learning Basic Literacy Skills among Adult Learners in five Literacy Centres in Zomba District”. The literature review has focused on understanding of adult learner, factors affecting adult learning as well as review on disabilities among adult learners. It has also looked at some of the strategies followed for successful teaching and learning.

2.2 Understanding Adult Learners

Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines an adult as a person who is fully grown and responsible. According to Wikipedia (2022), an adult is a person who is regarded as independent, self-sufficient, responsible and has attained the age of majority. The definition of an adult may vary from country to country. However, 18 years has been widely accepted as the typical age of attaining legal adulthood. Under the laws of England, for example, an adult is someone who has attained the age of 18. Malawi has adopted the definition of The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) which defines an adult as someone who is 18 years and above.

However, when it comes to adult learning, it is not about age. In her paper titled “Understanding the Characteristics of an Adult Learner”, Kapur, (2015) has defined an adult learner, who is usually referred to as a mature student, as any person socially accepted as an adult who is involved in a systematic learning process. This definition of an adult learner does not put emphasis on age but rather one who is considered mature in status and experience. Other definitions emphasise on

age. According to National Center for Education (2022), an adult learner in the United States of America is any learner over the age of 25.

In the circles of Adult Literacy and Education, Malawi has adopted a UNESCO (2011) definition of an adult learner who is a person of 15 years and above who would like to participate in learning. In defining adult literacy rate, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020) refers to it as the percentage of the population aged 15 years and above who can read and write and possess simple arithmetic ability. Those who cannot read and write are considered illiterate. In his earlier research, Kishindo (1994) provided a number of factors that leads to illiteracy among the populace in Malawi. The factors include long distance to and from school that a child has to walk which leads to school dropout, poverty among parents and guardians which leads to failure to pay the prescribed school fees and other school necessities, among others (Kishindo, 1994). While in agreement with Kishodo's findings, Literacy New York (2022) stresses that illiteracy can be exacerbated by causes such as parents with little schooling who cannot encourage their children's education, lack of books at home and lack of stimulation as to the importance of reading, poor performance at school and consequently dropping out, difficult living conditions, including poverty and Learning Disabilities, such as dyslexia.

In order to alleviate the problem of illiteracy, the illiterates are given a chance to enrol in adult literacy classes so as to be equipped with basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. In some countries such as India, an adult learner is someone who has had no opportunity of formal education in their early years of life and is engaged in learning in order to enhance their personal life (Kapur, 2015). This is in line with the Adult Literacy policy in Malawi which is aimed at

providing illiterate adults and youths aged 15 and above with learning opportunities, which they missed out in their childhood (National Adult Literacy Policy, 2020).

In order to have a clear understanding of an adult learner, scholars have established their characteristics. Adults are more mature and understanding as compared to child learners (Kapur, 2015). The theory of andragogy by Knowles (1984) provides distinctive characteristics of adult learning. Adult learners are self-motivated, at the same time they need to know the relevance of learning specific materials (Knowles, 1984). Kapur (2015) stresses that adults have a definite result in their mind when they join a teaching-learning program and that if the outcomes they are anticipating out of learning are not achieved, they may even drop out of the learning program. In addition, adults come to a learning programme with a wealthy of life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities and previous education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). When handling adult learners, it is important to consider these distinctive characteristics as they may help in the choice of teaching methods as well as teaching and learning materials.

2.3 Factors Affecting Adult Learning

In his paper, Alhassan (2012) argues that although adults are self-directed and base their learning on experiences, there are a number of factors which can affect their learning. He stated that these factors can fall under the individual learner, the context in which the learning takes place, and the learning process itself (Alhassan, 2012).

In terms of the individual learner, he stated that adults may develop some biological changes, including loss of hearing and sight or disease, which seriously affect the learning process (Alhassan, 2012). This is in line with what Holland (2000) stated. He explained that adults may develop certain disabilities as they are advancing in age as ageing comes with biological, physical and psychiatric disorders (Holland, 2000). However, it should be noted that cognitive function does not decrease as one advances in age but due to some personal conditions, adults tend to take a long time to process information (Alhassan, 2012). On the issue of age, Merriam and Caffarella (1997) stressed that the effects of aging, such as loss of vision and hearing, pose a threat to learning as most institutions do not take into consideration the physical differences that adult learners have. Although the challenges that come with age have been mentioned in the paper, the issue has not been given much attention and as such it deserves further investigation particularly on how it can have an impact on learning basic literacy skills.

In terms of the context in which the learning takes place, Alhassan (2012) identified institutional and environmental factors which can affect adult learning. These factors include availability of teaching and learning resources and the status of physical facilities. This is in line with the study conducted in Kisumu Municipality in Kenya, where Oluoch (2005) found that adult learners lacked literacy support materials. The study also observed that teachers had no relevant materials such as guides, curriculum or reference materials which led to lack of detailed content, sequence, uniformity and standardised teaching (Oluoch, 2005). The findings of the study are similar to what Kishindo (1994) established in Malawian situation as regards adult literacy education. He observed that most learning centres did not have enough primers (Functional Literacy textbooks) to cater for all the students (Kishindo, 1994).

Alhassan (2012) also argued that for adult learning to be meaningful, it needs to be conducted in a supporting and conducive environment. However, this is not the case in many developing countries including Malawi. In Kenya, for example, adult learning took place at the centres which were not built for purposes of adult learning such as churches and mosques (Oluoch, 2005). This is not different from Malawi. Adult literacy classes are arranged in the villages on places provided by the community, which could be in a church, in a primary school classroom, under a tree and in some cases in someone's living room (Appelquist & Björkman, 2010). The status of physical facilities is a great concern in as far as adult literacy is concerned. Ajayi and Ayodele (2001) emphasized that the availability of physical facilities such as classrooms, library, toilet facilities and other resources are important in achieving effectiveness in instructional delivery. Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) asserted that availability and effective utilization of school physical facilities play a significant role in enhancing the academic performance of students and lack of such facilities could lead to poor students' academic performance. The environments in which the learning takes place have the potential for facilitating or hindering adult learning. Lack of teaching and learning materials can worsen the learning situation of those adults with disabilities.

2.3.1 Barriers to adult learning

In the paper titled "Barriers to Adult learning: Bridging the Gap", Falasca (2011) identified a number of barriers which can impede adult learning which include finance challenges, lack of time, ageing, emotional barriers and lack of motivation. On the issue of age, Merriam and Caffarella (1997) stresses that the effects of aging, such as loss of vision and hearing, pose a threat to learning as most institutions do not take into consideration the physical differences that adult

learners have. Although the challenges that come with age such as loss of vision and hearing, have been mention in the paper, the issue has not been given the attention it deserves.

2.4 Forms of Disabilities

The World Health Organization (2012) has defined disability as impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions that occur in people. National Baseline Survey on Disability (2011) has outlined a number examples of disabilities which include Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech Impairment, Physical Impairment, Learning Disabilities, Intellectual Disability, Mental illness (such as Schizophrenia, Mania, Depression), Autism Spectrum Disorders, Albinism (Colour Abnormality) and other Specific Disorders. Although there are many forms of disabilities, this study will focus only on few of them.

2.4.1 *Learning disabilities*

Little research has been carried out in relation to adult learners with disabilities (Clark, 2006). As such little is known about how disabilities may affect adult learners. What is documented mostly are learning disabilities. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [NINDS] (retrieved on 1st January, 2022) has defined learning disabilities as disorders those that “affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or direct attention”. This definition is similar to one by Learning Disability Association of America (LDA) which refers a Learning Disability as a disorder in one or more basic psychological processes in which learners have problems in understanding or in using language, spoken or written (LDA, Retrieved on 1st January, 2022). Learning disability (LD) may pose threats to effective learning. NASET LD reports that a learning disability can make a person

to have problems in learning and using certain skills (NASET LD Report, Retrieved on 1st January, 2022). The most affected skills are reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing mathematical calculations. It should also be noted that learning disabilities vary from person to person and the effects may not be the same in individuals. National Dissemination Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities [NICHCY], 2004) noted that one person may have trouble with reading and writing while another person with LD may have problems in understanding mathematics, and yet another person may have difficulties in all the areas, including understanding what people are saying.

In relation to what NICHCY (2004) mentioned, Namkung and Peng (2018) have identified common learning disabilities which include reading disabilities (dyslexia), Written Expression Disabilities (Dysgraphia), mathematical disabilities (dyscalculia) and Language Processing Disorder (LPD). These may have different effects on the academic performance of learners.

Jabareen-Taha and Taha (2016) have defined Learning disability as a heterogeneous group of disorders in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. The study will use this definition as it encompasses all the affected learning skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing mathematical calculations. In addition, learning disability is referred to as a hidden disability as children with learning disabilities do not look handicapped and their difficulties are not obvious (Jabareen-Taha & Taha, 2016).

A lot has been written on the effects of learning disabilities particularly in child learners. Little is known on the impact of learning disabilities among adults. More so, there is scanty literature on undiagnosed disabilities in adult learners. However, it should be noted that adults may develop

disabilities as they are advancing in age as Holland (2000) explains that ageing comes with biological, physical and psychiatric disorders.

2.4.2 Hearing Impairment

Studies have uncovered the effects of hearing impairment on academic performance of learners. They have also demonstrated the variety of needs of students with hearing impairment. Hearing impairment include both the hard-of-hearing (partially hearing) and the deaf. The commonly used definition of hearing impairment are that of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Hearing impairment and deafness are defined separately. IDEA (1990) defines Hearing Impairment as an impairment or loss in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating that adversely affects educational performance of a child. Deafness, on the other hand, is defined as an impairment in hearing which is so severe and affects the child in processing linguistic information through hearing (IDEA, 1990).

Hearing impairment can be caused by different factors. Okeke (2001) identified causes of hearing impairment which include hardened wax or external object blocking the external auditory canal; inflammation of the middle ear (otitis media); infection of the middle ear such as sinuses, adenoids, tonsils; heredity, such as otosclerosis, which is a hereditary condition that stiffens the small bones of the middle ear; infections such as German measles (rubella), small pox, mumps, influenza, cerebro spinal meningitis, maternal syphilis; birth injuries such as prematurity, prolonged labour, difficult birth, and anoxia (lack of oxygen); pathological conditions of the foetus; development anomalies; lack of the right vitamins; noise and blast; accident in the form of head injuries; brain tumors or abscess caused by condition such as birth injuries, degeneration of circulatory structures (Okeke, 2001).

The effects of hearing impairment are far-reaching. Students with hearing impairments have problems coping with the teaching and learning (Ndei, 2008). Learners with hearing impairment are unable to hear well in classroom with noisy surroundings (Mwaura & Wanyera, 2002). In addition, learners with hearing impairment lack acceptance and are socially isolated because of lack of communication (Mwaura & Wanyera, 2002). They may be unable to follow school routines because they do not hear well. This is compounded by the fact that regular teachers are not aware about them and if they are, they lack skills and techniques to help them (Ndei, 2008). Consequently, this problem can lead to poor performance in schools.

Most studies have concentrated on hearing impairment among school children. Little has been studied on the hearing impairment among adult learners. However, the effects of hearing impairment on learning and academic performance may not be completely different for school children and adult learners.

2.4.3 Visual impairment

Visual impairment (VI) is a condition of reduced visual performance (Naipal & Rampersad, 2018). WHO (2018) has outlined a number of causes of Visual Impairment which include age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and uncorrected refractive errors. WHO (2018) further states that ageing is expected to increase the risk that more people acquire vision impairment. This is in agreement with Alhassan (2012) who explained that adults may develop some biological changes, including loss of sight. Although the majority of people with visual impairment and blindness are over the age of 50 years, vision loss can affect people of all ages (WHO, 2018).

Several effects of Visual Impairment on learning process have been outlined. Maurya (2016), for example, explained that many learners with Visual Impairment have difficulties in reading standard prints. Learners may be unable to take their own notes and may need extra time to carry out some tasks (Maurya, 2016). In addition, learners with visual impairment may appear to be isolated in the learning environment and their participation and interaction in learning process may be limited.

Just like hearing impairment, studies on visual impairment have centred on school children. Little has been researched on the visual impairment among adult learners.

2.5 Strategies that Facilitate Effective Learning

Literature underscores the importance of inclusive and adaptable educational practices. Jameel and Bibi (2016) have emphasised the use of sign language for people with hearing impairment as effective method. However, this requires the knowledge of using the said language which many instructors and adult learners do not have.

Lynch and Lund (2011) outlined many strategies that were useful among children with albinism. These included allowing children with albinism to sit at the front of the classroom; allowing them to move close to the chalkboard where necessary; providing large print sheets for children with albinism; teachers writing in bold, clear, letters on the chalkboard and allowing pupils with albinism to wear their hats in class (Lynch & Lund, 2011). Just like many studies in Special Needs Education, Lynch & Lund, 2011 focused on strategies applied in regular schools.

Other practices have also been suggested. These personalized instruction, collaborative learning as well as use of assistive technologies (Gordon, 2021). It should be noted that these strategies were focusing on children. Therefore, there is need to investigate the strategies that are used in adult literacy classes to promote teaching and learning among adult learners with disabilities.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter has review existing literature particularly in the areas of general characteristics of adult learners so as to understand them. It has also examined the challenges and barriers that adult learners face. It has also assessed different forms of disabilities. Gaps in literature that have been identified include limited focus on adult learners with disabilities in non-formal education sector. The existing literature concentrates much on learners with disabilities in regular schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study. Methodology is defined as the systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods that are applied in the study (Igwenagu, 2016). Cohen (2007) defines methods as a “range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction” (p. 47). The methodology guides the researcher in determining the type of data required for a study and data collection tools to be used for study (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

3.1.2 Research paradigm

Research paradigm refers to a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods used in a study (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). In other words, it is philosophical framework that a researcher can base his or her study on. It provides a pattern of beliefs and understandings from which the theories and practices of the research study operate (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

The study adopted interpretivism. Those who follow interpretivism believe in socially constructed multiple realities and rejects the notion that a single, verifiable reality exists independent of our senses (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). With interpretivism perspective, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context as compared to generalising the base of understanding for the whole population (Creswell, 2007). This study used interpretivism because it wanted to get close to the source and understand the impact of disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills among adult learners. As such, qualitative methods

were employed. The researcher focused on generating meanings to subjective experiences and challenges of adult learners with disabilities. Additionally, qualitative method was used to gain deeper understanding of their lived experiences. As such, interviews and observation data collection methods were used.

3.1.3 Research Design: Case study

The study used a Case Study. Creswell (2014) defines case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection" (p. 485). The bounded system may include an activity, event, process, or individuals. A case study is used to analyse and describe in detail, each person individually, a group of people, individual institutions or a problem (or several problems), process, phenomenon or event in a particular institution (Starman, 2013). The study qualified to be a Case Study as it concentrated on a group of adult learners with disabilities. The study used the Case Study because it aimed at getting experiences of the supervisors, instructors and adult learners under their natural setting especially in relation disabilities among adult learners and the impact they have on learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. In this regard, the study adopted qualitative methods to generate data. Using a case study approach allowed the researcher for the possibility of gaining significant knowledge and insights about the impact disabilities among adult learners.

3.1.4 Research Approach

The study employed qualitative approach. Qualitative methods usually use open-ended questions and informal communication between the researcher and the participants. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on

building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (pp. 1-2). It seeks to understand phenomena in its naturalist context. The approach is based on interviews with the participants or observations so that the views of participants are not restricted (Creswell, 2014).

Use of qualitative approach allowed the researcher to interact with stakeholders who are directly involved in adult literacy activities. This was in line with Creswell (2014)’s thinking that qualitative approach helps to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

3.1.5 Study Area

Study area is a place or location where the research was conducted. Selection of a research site is important because it influences the usefulness of the information produced (Kombo and Tromp, 2013). This study was conducted in some selected adult literacy centres in Zomba District. Zomba is one of the districts in Malawi where adult literacy activities are vibrant. The study area was also chosen due to convenience as it is closer to the researcher’s home (Magomero College).

Zomba is a district in southern region of Malawi. Zomba District borders Machinga district on the north, Mozambique to the east, and on the south by Phalombe, Mulanje, and Chiradzulu districts, on the southwest by Blantyre district, and on the northeast by Balaka District (Wikipedia, 2023). The total land area is 2,363 km², which represents 3% of the total land area of Malawi (Wikipedia, 2023). The most common tribes found in the district are the Yao and the Lomwe.

The researcher collected data in Senior Chief Nkagula, TA Malemia and TA Mwambo. Five adult learners with disabilities, three instructors and three Community Development Officers were interviewed.

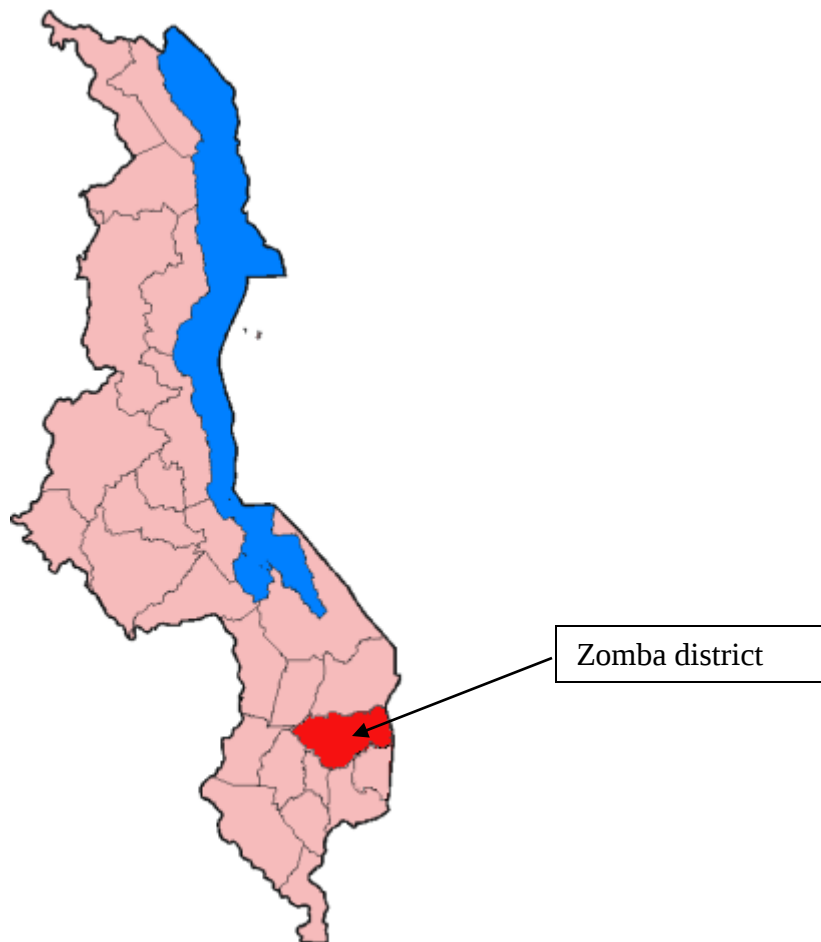


Figure 3.1: Map of Malawi showing location of Zomba District (Source: Wikipedia, 2023)

3.1.6 Target Population

The target population refers to the entire population, or group, that a researcher is interested in researching and analysing (DJS Research, 2020). Casteel and Bridier (2021) point out that Target Population creates boundaries for the scope of a study and provide environmental and context cues

for the reader. Knowing the boundaries of the research helps the researcher to clearly identify sampling frame, and sample, and to ensure that these two groups are aligned within the research (Salkind, 2010).

In the study, the primary target was a group of adult learners with disabilities. However, other people with valuable information were also targeted. These included the Community Development Officers and instructors. The rationale for selecting these participants was because they were the ones who coordinated, managed and supervised adult literacy activities (Community Development Officers) and facilitated adult learning (instructors), and experienced the learning (adult learners). These were the key participants in the study who supplied data necessary for making conclusions.

3.1.7 Sampling Procedure

In qualitative research approach, sampling refers to the “segment of the population that is selected for research” (Bryman, 2012, p.715). Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who provided qualitative data. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study (<https://www.alchemer.com/resources/blog/purposive-sampling-101/>). Cohen and Morrison (2007) assert that in purposive sampling, the researcher “handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (pp. 114-15). This is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses in that the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who might be willing to provide the information because they have the knowledge and experience (Bernard 2002). In this sampling technique, the researcher is at liberty

to choose participants to be included in his/her study as long as they will provide the necessary information. Purposive sampling helps to select participants who are most likely to be open and honest as they share their story with the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Purposive sampling was used as the study focused on a relatively small group of adult learners with disabilities. As such, the adult learners with disabilities were identified. Also, Community Development officers and instructors who closely work with adult learners with disabilities were also identified for interviews. The researcher visited Zomba Community Development office which guided in the participants to be included in the study. 11 participants were purposively sampled.

3.1.8 Sample Size

Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggests that between 10 and 50 participants are sufficient for qualitative approach depending on the type of research and research question. However, in this study, the researcher interviewed 11 participants which include adult learners (5), instructors (3) and Community Development officers (3).

3.1.9 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods are approaches that are used to gather information for research, analysis and evaluation purposes (Patton, 2015). These are the methods that are used to collect data during the study. The methods for collecting data can vary depending the nature of objectives, nature of data needed as well as availability of resources to conduct a research study (Babbie, 2016). The

current study used Semi-structured interviews, review of documents and direct observation to collect data.

3.1.9.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data which helped to assess the impact of the identified disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills among adult learners. According to George (2022), an interview is a qualitative research method that is based on asking questions during data collection. The researcher asks questions and participants respond to the questions. Interviews can take several forms such as individual, face-to-face interviews and face-to-face group interviewing (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are less formal type in which the interviewer freely modifies the sequence of questions, changes the wording and sometimes explains them or adds to them during the interaction (Annum, 2017).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with adult learners with disabilities, District Community Development Officer, Community Development Assistants and instructors. The interviews captured data concerning the impact of disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners. It also captured coping strategies used for effective teaching and learning. Use of semi-structured interviews is important in research for various reasons. Firstly, open-ended questions are essential if one wants to know the independent thoughts of each individual in a group (Adams, 2015). In addition, Semi-structured interviews prove to be of high validity as researchers can collect first-hand detailed accounts of perceptions, actions, and roles among practitioners (Ahlin, 2019). This study focused on the first-hand information from the people who were directly involved in adult literacy learning.

3.1.9.2 Document Analysis

Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material” (p. 27). Reports on adult literacy activities were reviewed. Analysis of documents was employed to complement interviews.

3.1.9.3 Direct Observation

Direct observation was also used to collect data. Kawulich (2012) has defined direct observation as observing without interacting with the objects or people under study in the setting. It involved systematic watching and recording of conditions of adult literacy centres which provided insights into the context in which adult learning takes place. The researcher observed the conduciveness of the learning environment, availability of teaching and learning materials suitable for adult learners with disabilities as well as use of assistive technologies such as wheelchairs, walkers and hearing aids. The researcher also observed learners’ engagements in lesson activities especially for those with disabilities. Further, the researcher observed if instructors communicated effectively with adult learners with disabilities and also if learners with disabilities communicated effectively with other fellow learners.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to studying the data to determine inherent facts (Ibrahim, 2015). It involves summarizing the collected data and organizing it in such a manner that yields answers to the questions (Ibrahim, 2015) or objectives.

Thematic data analysis was used to identify, analyse and interpret themes within the collected data. The general steps of qualitative data analysis described by Creswell (2007) were followed. The first step is transcribing interviews from audio to text format. Then the researcher read through the data in order to get a general sense of the overall meaning of the data. Thereafter, codes and themes were generated to organize the material into chunks to help make meaning from the information gathered (Rossman & Rallis, 2013). Interpreting the meaning of the themes followed. This stage was given a special attention as it is the core of the study. Creswell (2007) states that “qualitative research is interpretive research” (p. 177).

3.3 Ethical issues

The researcher sought approval from Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC). The researcher also sought permission from the Zomba District Community Development Office. In addition, the researcher also sought consent from the participants to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted upon being granted consent. The participants were also free to withdraw from the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, names of both the participants and participating adult literacy classes are not being disclosed. (See appendices)

3.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the credibility and dependability of the research findings (Creswell, 2013). To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed triangulation whereby multiple data sources and methods were used to validate the findings.

3.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the methodology that was used to study the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult learners. This ensures transparency in the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents results of the research findings and discussions of data collected. The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult learners in five literacy centres in Zomba. The findings sought to provide information to the following specific research objectives:

- To establish common disabilities among adult learners
- To assess the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills
- To explore coping strategies used for effective teaching and learning
- To examine barriers to literacy education for adult learners with disabilities.

4.2 Number of Adult Literacy Learners with Disabilities

The study found that there are currently 278 adult literacy centres in Zomba district, out of which 222 are Chichewa classes while 56 are English classes (Zomba CD Reports, 2023). Combined, the centres have 2748 registered adult learners, with 1972 female learners and 776 male learners (Zomba CD Reports, 2023). The reports available did not indicate the number of adult learners with disabilities in Zomba. However, National Adult Literacy Programme Monthly Reports (2022) indicates that there are few adult learners with disabilities who attend adult literacy classes across the country. For example, in 2022, Mwanza had a total of 2916 learners with 8 learners with disabilities. Dowa had 58 adult learners with disabilities out of 6776 while Balaka had 33 out of 4210. Mzimba North had 35 learners with disabilities out of 1889 (National Adult Literacy Programme Monthly Reports, 2022). This data shows that adult learners with disabilities are few in different districts. This could be the same with Zomba district.

The number of adult learners is indeed less considering that there are over 1.7 million persons who have one or more functional limitations or disabilities (NSO, 2018). However, there are no estimates of people with disabilities who attend adult literacy classes. This could make it difficult to establish the needs for policy and planning. Looking at the figures, it can be concluded that many adults with disabilities do not attend Adult Learning and Education activities (ALE) in Malawi.

The few numbers of adult learners with disabilities in various districts can be justified as research studies have established a number of barriers to education among people with disabilities. For example, Hagen (2016) in her paper titled *“Barriers to education for youth with disabilities in Malawi: A qualitative study of policy and practice in urban and rural areas”* identified a number of factors that lead to high school dropout rates among learners with disabilities. The research was carried out in Zomba and Lilongwe. She identified environmental barriers such as long distance to school, social stigmatization from peers and teachers as well as unfriendly infrastructures which were not conducive for learners with disabilities (Hagen, 2016).

Idrissa (2020) also identified discrimination towards learners with disabilities as a barrier to education for people with disabilities. He asserts that culture of many societies in the country tends to discriminate against learners with disability as they are considered less human (Idrissa (2020)). This makes some parents feel shy and reluctant to send their children to school. He further established that some teachers possess negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities (Idrissa, 2020). Teachers with negative feelings towards learners with special needs cannot effectively help them unleash their education potential. Idrissa (2020) agrees with Hagen (2016) that physical

infrastructures are not friendly for people with disabilities as such they become inaccessible to learners with disabilities.

While the Hagen's and Idrissa's papers concentrated on basic education, the factors can also apply to Adult Learning and Education. The five adult literacy centres that the researcher visited were in bad shape. One class took place in a primary school, another one met in a church which was in bad shape and used benches as chairs (and had no cement floor). Two classes met under a tree at their chiefs' residences, one of which had a shelter thatched with grass. The last one converged at a CBCC (Community-based childcare centre). All the centres were not conducive for learners, let alone adult learners with disabilities.



Figure 4.1: One of the adult literacy centres in Zomba (Source: the researcher captured the photo)

The conditions of the classes led to one adult learner to drop out. He was interviewed at his home. He stated the following as the reason for his withdraw:

“Sitting down on the floor is hard for me as I use walking sticks. There are no chairs at the centre. Here at home, I have a special chair which I use. I cannot carry this chair with me to the centre every day. With this, I decided to stop attending classes. In addition, I had to walk for a long distance to the centre, so I used to get tired.” (3rd December, 2023)

These factors and many others combined make it difficult for people with disabilities to continue with their education. As a result, there are high dropouts among learners with disabilities in many adult literacy centres in the country. This results in few numbers of adult learners with disabilities participating in Adult Learning and Education activities.

4.3 Forms of Disabilities among Adult Learners in Zomba

The study results showed that there are a variety of disabilities among adult learners under study. That's various disabilities were identified among adult learners in selected adult literacy centres in Zomba. Of the five adult learners with disabilities that were interviewed, four were females and one was a male. These respondents were found to have disabilities ranging from mobility impairment (use of a wheelchair and use of walking sticks), epilepsy, albinism and Hearing Impairment.

Table 4.1: Forms of disabilities among the respondents:

S/N	GENDER	AGE	TYPE OF DISABILITY
1	Female	47	Mobility
2	Female	64	Mobility
3	Female	37	Epilepsy
4	Female	40	Hearing impairment
5	Male	42	Albinism

4.3.1 Mobility challenges: use of walking sticks

The study found that there was one participant who uses two walking sticks as she has problems with her legs. Results revealed that this female adult learner was born with the condition. This condition was found to cause leg pains and prevented her from walking long distances hence the use of the walking sticks to increase stability and also offer support the weak legs.

The ability to move around freely is limited due to progressive weakness of skeletal muscles particularly of the legs.

4.3.2 Mobility challenges: use of a wheelchair

The other disability that was noted during this study was also a mobility impairment which resulted into the need for use of a wheelchair. This participant who was aged 47 was found to be paralysed from the waist down and hence uses a wheelchair. It was established that she did not attend primary school when she was young because she did not have means of transportation to school. A certain organisation supported her with the wheelchair when she was in the 30s. She

relied on her relatives to push her to adult literacy centre which was at a distance of close to a kilometre.

Mobility problem is one of the most common disabilities in Malawi (The Malawi Disability Directory, 2014). The Malawi Disability Directory (2014) outlines other common disabilities in Malawi as hearing loss, visual impairment and communication difficulties.

4.3.3 Epilepsy

Epilepsy was another disability which was identified during this study. The participant who was aged 37 was reported to be experiencing seizures. Epilepsy is a condition of the brain in which people experience recurrent unprovoked seizures (Taylor, 2011). It was revealed that the epileptic adult learner could experience uncontrollable jerking and shaking while learning was in progress. It was reported that this disturbed lessons as both the instructor and other learners would start caring for the learner. It was also noted that the participant needed assistance in her daily life activities. It was established that the participant did not have a chance to attend primary school as the condition started when she was young.

People with epileptic conditions are reported to suffer from “sudden and unpredictable seizures, and affective disorders are overrepresented, with a strong association to reduced quality of life” (Taylor, 2011, p. 33). It is however not uncommon for people with epilepsy to continue with the education.

A study in Norway found that learners diagnosed with epilepsy faced stigma and social challenges which contributed to their dropout from school (Syvertsen et al, 2020). The study reported that they had felt excluded because of epilepsy (Syvertsen et al, 2020).

In one study, McGrother et al (2006) discovered that epilepsy showed a significant association with low levels of understanding. The study also reported that people with epilepsy have specific morbid associations including wetting, soiling, poor daily living skills, poor speech, lack of empathy, mood swings, being uncooperative, seeking attention and disturbing others at night (McGrother et al, 2006).

4.3.4 Albinism

This study also identified a male adult learner aged 42 with an albinism condition. This participant was found to have a vision problem, preventing him from seeing properly especially when there is a lot of light.

Albinism is categorised as a disability because it is associated with various life-long physical impairments due to its effect on the skin and vision (Mswela, 2018). Mswela (2018) indicates that persons with albinism usually develop visual disabilities that have a profound impact on their participation in life activities (Mswela, 2018).

The participant reported facing social exclusion in the society including people talking ill things about him and also receiving derogatory messages about him. Related to this he lamented the following:

“Sometimes I don’t move around as call me some many derogatory names, especially when the issue of abducting people with albinism was rampant”.

“Some people call me yellow man because of my skin, I ignore them as am used to the name now”. (30th November, 2023)

This is not strange as Lund (2001) argued that lack of knowledge about albinism in the community can lead to many myths and superstitions, and this, combined with poverty, also magnifies problems related to light skin and vision. There are many stories and myths describing albinism in African societies. In a Sociological Study of Children with Albinism at a Special School in the Limpopo Province, Gaigher et al (2002) also found that albinism was seen as a condition surrounded by myths and superstition, and as a result of this children with albinism experienced a great deal of stigma and rejection. Such experiences of stigma or even rejection are perceived by the researcher as factors that can in one way or another negatively affect the education of adult learners with this disability, due to the fact that they may bring about issues of low self - image that correlate positively with poor performance in class.

4.3.5 Hearing Impairment

The research findings also identified one adult learner among the participants who had a hearing problem. This female participant was found to be unable to get most information and communication directed for her attention. She paid much attention on the speaker’s facial expressions and expressed some interest in what was perceived by the researcher as lip-reading. This participant was found to have no any hearing aids to assist with her learning or other everyday activities. A further scrutiny about this adult learner revealed her problem of following

verbal directions or oral expression. The learner was found to receive assistance when it comes to communication from the instructor. This adult learner reported issues of having communication gaps with friends and fellow classmates. It was also discovered that at one point, this participant contemplated of dropping out as she thought she was not getting the necessary academic help and social interaction.

In relation to hearing impairment findings above, a study conducted in Nepal, Aryal et al (2022) concluded that hearing loss is associated with reduced quality of life. Therefore, it is imperative to have proper measures to identify individuals with hearing loss and giving them support where necessary (Aryal et al, 2022).

The impact of hearing loss may be profound. *Monzani et al (2008)* stress that hearing loss can hinder the exchange of information, leading to communication breakdown in daily life, just as it was observed in this research. Additionally, hearing loss can also act as a hindrance to performing daily activities efficiently, causing “emotional reactions such as loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and fear; behavioural problems such as blaming and withdrawing as well as cognitive problems such as confusion, distraction, and decreased self-esteem” (*Monzani et al, 2008 p. 63*).

4.4 The Effects of Disabilities on Learning Basic Literacy Skills among Adult Learners

When it comes to the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills, it was discovered that each disability which was identified poses unique challenges to learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Taking this into account, this section will look at the effects of each disability separately.

4.4.1 Effect of mobility impairment on learning of basic literacy skills

The study found that adult learners with mobility impairment face a lot of challenges in their quest to learn to read, write and numerate. The study identified two kinds of mobility impairment, each of which presented a profound challenge to learning. One participant uses wheelchair while the other uses walking sticks. Three themes were identified.

Table 4.2: Themes on the effect of mobility impairment:

S/N	THEME
1	Long distance to a learning centre
2	Participation in practical lessons
3	Poor learning environment

a. Long distance to a learning centre.

The participant who used a wheelchair complained of long distance to an adult learning centre which is at a distance of almost 1 kilometre. It was further revealed that she relied on her relatives to push her to an adult literacy centre, and that if the relations were not around or were busy with other activities, it meant that she would miss the lessons of that particular day.

The study also established that the participant who used two walking sticks felt pain on her legs and could not walk for a long distance. The study noted that the walking sticks were used as the participant needed increased stability and support due to weakness on both legs. It was also discovered that sometimes the participant could not attend classes especially when she had leg

pains. Further revelations disclosed that she also could get tired and could usually come to class late.

These findings resonate with the findings of Banks et al (2022) in a study on factors affecting inclusion in education for children with disabilities in rural Malawi. The study centred on primary and secondary school learners with disabilities. It established that travel to school for learners with mobility limitation was a common barrier. Difficulties in getting to school led to frequent absences and lost learning time for some children with mobility limitations (Banks et al, 2022).

The findings of this study are also in line with another study conducted by Beckman (2014) in El Salvador on understanding local realities in developing countries, Early Childhood Development Task Force on Children with Disabilities. Beckman (2014) established that distance and transportation were barriers because they made getting to school or other activities difficult, time-consuming, and costly. The study focused on Early Childhood Development particularly children with disabilities. The study concluded that mobility issues were an immediate obstacle to learners with disabilities and can consequently lead to dropouts (Beckman, 2014).

b. Participation in practical lessons

During interviews with the instructors in two adult literacy centres, it was revealed that adult learners with mobility limitations find it difficult to participate in most classroom activities. It was stated by respondents, in this case instructors, that it is difficult to have such learners involved in activities that require movements from one place to another. On the same issue, one of the instructors said:

“You cannot tell a learner using walking cranes to come in front and demonstrate something to the class. It is unfair to the learner as she struggles with even standing up. It will also take a lot of time as she is slow in her movements”. (5 December, 2023)

The study also established three factors that hinder active participation of adult learners with disabilities in classroom activities. An interview with instructors revealed that they were not trained on handling adult learners with disability. It was discovered that instructors were trained for two to three days on how they can carry out their work properly using the primer called “Chuma ndi Moyo”. This is contrary to the official two weeks that government of Malawi recommends.

Going through the manual that is used to train instructors, the researcher noted that the manual does not have any element on disability. This means that instructors were not trained on handling adult learners with disability. With lack of knowledge on suitable methodologies that can excite learners with disabilities, it was discovered that it was extremely difficult to allow such learners to actively participate in lessons.

The importance of training teachers in special needs education was emphasized by Crispel and Kasperski (2019) in a study in Israel on the impact of teacher training in special education on the implementation of inclusion in mainstream classrooms. The study established that teachers trained in special needs education adopted teaching methodologies, instruments and strategies that were more appropriate for the special needs of the students in their classrooms (Crispel & Kasperski, 2019). The same was also established by Kuyini, et al (2016) in a study titled “Ghanaian teachers:

competencies perceived as important for inclusive education” in which they concluded that more training for teachers in special needs education coupled with appropriate teaching materials, collaboration, and parental and administrative support are essential and most important for the successful teaching of students with special needs (Kuyini, et al, 2016). Teachers who are knowledgeable about the diverse needs of their students can tailor their teaching methods and materials to meet these needs.

The other factor that was identified during the study which hinders active participation of adult learners with disabilities was lack of confidence amongst themselves. The two adult learners with mobility challenges interviewed explained that they did not consider themselves as gifted as other learners. They doubted their ability to succeed in the activity. It was learnt that adult learners with disabilities expected other learners to undertake all classroom activities and this undermined their sense of self-worth. This finding is in line with the study by Lestari and Fajar (2020) titled “Social support and self-esteem in people with physical disabilities” in which they discovered that people with physical disabilities develop low self-esteem because they tend to compare their physical abilities with others in the first meeting and sometimes doubt about others’ acceptance because of their imperfection. They also often feel ashamed, anxious, incapable, unfortunate, miserable, inattentive, and meaningless (Lestari & Fajar, 2020). With low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, adult learners with mobility disability find it difficult to be actively involved in lessons.

Lastly, it was discovered that adult learners with mobility limitations also feared that if they participate in activities that required movement from one place to another, they were putting themselves at risk. Related to this, one adult learner said:

“Some activities require movements, so I already feel pain in my legs and I cannot move up and down. Also, with my walking sticks, I have to be careful. So I just sit down and watch people.” (30th November, 2023)

Lack of active participation in class among adult learners with mobility challenges does not resonate well with Experiential Theory, which is one of the theories that guided this study. The theory which was developed by David Kolb in 1984, entails that the experiences of an adult learner become central to teaching and learning process. The experience in question is acquired through participation in the teaching and learning process.

Kolb (1984) has described experiential learning as a four-stage cycle with concrete experience as the first, followed by reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Active experimentation was central in informing this study. This is where learners try out what has been learnt. This stage requires active involvement of the learner. Active Experimentation provides an opportunity to adult learners to immediately apply the knowledge learnt. This assists them to retain the information better (Cherry, 2020).

Experiential Learning involves learning by doing. Active participation increases attention and focus and improves critical and higher levels of thinking skills and memory (Pratton & Hales, 2015). Thus, active involvement in the teaching and learning process was lacking among adult

learners with mobility disability in some adult literacy centres in Zomba district. This could consequently affect their attention, retention of information and interest.

c. Poor learning environment

The study also found that the learning environment for all the adult literacy centres which were visited were not conducive for adult learners with disabilities, especially those with mobility challenges. Findings revealed that adult learners sit on the floor in some centres which is not ideal for a learner with walking cranes/sticks. It was reported that the learner needed extra help to support her posture or physical comfort. It was further discovered that toilets were not good for the adult learner with such a disability. On the nature of the environment, one adult learner lamented:

“When I want to relieve myself, I go back home and I usually do not come back.” (30th November, 2023)

The same situation applied to the one who used a wheelchair. When she wanted to use the toilet, she would leave the wheelchair outside and crawls in. This adult learner argued:

“I feel embarrassed; I would rather go back home where there is no classmate watching me.” (30th November, 2023)

These findings are in line with the study by Chigunwe1 and Tembachako (2017) titled “Public school toilets: A curse or blessing for girls with physical impairment”. The study, carried out in some primary schools in Zimbabwe, revealed that access to school toilets was a challenge to most

pupils especially girls in wheelchairs. In the same study it was observed that girl children with disabilities were traumatized more if toilets were inaccessible.

The finding of this study is also consistent with the findings of study conducted in Botswana primary schools by Mukhopadhyay, Nenty and Okechukwu (2012). There, it was established that the majority of the classrooms were inaccessible to learners with physical disabilities including necessary facilities such as toilets (Mukhopadhyay, Nenty & Okechukwu, 2012). They concluded that structural barriers were limiting learners with disabilities to have independent access to classroom and school activities, and impacted negatively on participation and competence in school activities (Mukhopadhyay, Nenty & Okechukwu, 2012).

With poor learning environment and poor facilities in adult literacy centres, it is difficult for adult learners with disabilities to get motivated and strive to learn basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

4.4.2 Effect of Epilepsy on learning of basic literacy skills

This section will present challenges an epileptic person encounters in an endeavour to learn how to read and write. The challenges have devastating effects which could potentially interfere with learning of an adult with epilepsy. The learner with the problem experiences uncontrollable jerking and shaking and seizures. Three themes were developed.

Table 4.3: Themes on the effect of epilepsy on learning of basic literacy skills:

S/N	THEME
1	Difficulties in paying attention in class
2	Memory problem
3	Missing lessons due to seizures

a. Difficulties in paying attention in class

Research results indicate that epilepsy as a disability interferes with the learning of basic literacy skills for adult learners. For example, an interview with an instructor at one Adult Learning Centre revealed that a learner with epilepsy is always inattentive during lessons. Related to this finding, one male instructor argued:

“She seems to be thinking about something else outside class. She does not concentrate. She is just not with us”. (5th December, 2023)

The finding conforms to other evidence which suggests that epileptic learners have attention problems. Lemahafaka et al (2021) in their study titled *“Educational Impact of Epilepsy in Children”* revealed that there is lack of concentration among children from 5 to 17 years of age. The study, which took place in four Public Primary Schools of the rural community of Anjepy in Madagascar, established that Children with epilepsy have difficulty concentrating or paying attention and may lead to loss of motivation (Lemahafaka et al, 2021).

While the study by Lemahafaka et al (2021) and many other similar studies were carried out among children, the present study suggests that even adult learners may have attention disorders in classroom situations due to their epileptic conditions.

The study also revealed that learners with epileptic conditions experience problems in reading and writing. In the Adult Literacy Centre where such a learner exists, it was reported that despite attending to classes for lessons for the past two years, the learner still fails to read and write properly. It can therefore be deduced that this particular learner has learning difficulties.

Studies have linked epileptic condition to learning disorders. Many children with epilepsy can experience learning problems and seizures can contribute to these learning difficulties. Williams et al (2003) reported that children with epilepsy have academic weaknesses in a variety of subjects including math, spelling, writing to dictation, reading, reading comprehension, and general knowledge.

It was also noted in this study that due to lack of attention, the learner does not participate in most activities of the class. This is contrary to the theory of Experiential learning which entails active participation and active experimentation of whatever has been learnt in class. In experiential learning, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning (Cornelius, 2015). This was not the case with the learner with the epileptic condition as in most cases was not participating in lesson activities due to lack of attentiveness and concentration.

b. Memory issues

Concerning memory, which is the ability to remember things, it was revealed that the adult learner with epilepsy under study could not remember what was learnt before. Worth noting was that the learner also forgets to remember names of her classmates. Related to this, an instructor said:

“She does not remember most of the things that we discuss in class. Sometimes she even forgets my name as her instructor. I tend to remind her time and again. With this behaviour, it cannot work with learning.” (5th December, 2023)

This finding is not strange. Many research studies have found that people with epilepsy have memory issues. In a study by Menlove and Reilly (2015) in the United Kingdom, it was noted that children with epilepsy score lower than control and norms on measures of memory. The study concluded that children with epilepsy have a high frequency of memory impairments (Menlove & Reilly, 2015). However, the exact prevalence of memory difficulties was not clearly established (Menlove & Reilly, 2015).

In another study, by Fisher et al (2000), people with epilepsy frequently complain of memory difficulties. In the study, it was established that 81.7% of the children with epilepsy suffered from memory problems (Fisher et al., 2000). Different studies have also identified factors that affect memory function in epileptic person. These factors include seizure activity, medication, age, genetic background, and psychological factors (Busch et al., 2007).

While these and many other studies were investigating children with epilepsy in regular schools, the current study established that even adult learners with epileptic conditions have memory issues which affect their learning journey of literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

c. Missing lessons due to seizures

During the study, it was revealed that students with epilepsy often miss classes due to the disability. For example, confessions from both an instructor and other learners had it that sometimes the epileptic adult learner experiences uncontrollable jerking and shaking while the lesson is in progress. The seizures are unprovoked. However, they reported the seizures do not happen frequently. This causes abrupt stoppages to lessons as the other learners start caring for her. After that, she misses classes for two to three days.

If a learner experiences seizure episodes, they alter their consciousness. In this study, it was established that the Seizures experienced by adult learners interfered with their learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Thus, the learner misses what is being taught in class during seizure episodes.

Seizures in an epileptic learner were also found to increase the risk of accidents such as serious falls and burns. On this issue, one instructor argued:

At one point, she fell of fire while cooking. Her leg was partially burnt. She was taken to hospital where she received treatment. However, it took her a month to come back for classes. (5th December, 2023)

The study also revealed that the instructor and other adult learners helped the epileptic learner when faced with seizures. This is contrary to the study by Ali, Tomek and Lisk (2014) titled “*The effects of epilepsy on child education in Sierra Leone. Epilepsy & Behavior*” in which they discovered that **about** 60% epileptic children experienced negative attitude from their classmates. The study also found that some teachers believed that epilepsy was a demonic manifestation and that it was contagious (Ali, Tomek & Lisk, 2014). As such, the children did not get the much-needed help when they experienced seizures at school. Or maybe this trend is so because the ones in Malawi Literacy Centers are mostly adults as compared to those observed in Sierra Leone.

4.4.3 Effect of albinism on learning of basic literacy skills

Albinism was found to negatively influence the learning of adult learners in Adult Learning Centres under this study. At one of the adult centres was a male adult aged 42 years with albinism. In his interaction with the researcher, including the researchers’ interaction with other participants, to understand how his condition affects his learning, two themes emerged.

Table 4.4: Themes on the effect of albinism on learning of basic literacy skills:

S/N	THEME
1	Problems with sight
2	Stress and anxiety

a. Problems with sight

The study found out that the student with Albinism also has a visual problem. This student was found to having difficulties with seeing what has been written in books especially in environments

with bright light. The learner was found to have no any eye glasses to aid him as recommended by healthy personnel. It was found that due to the font size of Chuma ndi moyo, the primer, he had difficulties in seeing what is written in the book. In addition, he also had difficulties to see what was written on the board. It was revealed that this adult learner avoided activities that involved reading and writing because of sight problem. It was further revealed that the learner with albinism received support from the instructor and fellow learners. He was allowed to sit close to chalkboard.

The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings by Dart et al (2009) in their paper titled ‘Albinism in Botswana junior secondary schools – a double case study’. It was discovered that pupils with albinism were performing poorly during examinations. This was because pupils had conditions that also hampered their school life and presumably life in general. Poor eyesight was found to be the major issue which affected their education (Dart et al, 2009).

The findings also collate with the study by Lynch and Lund (2011). In their study titled “Education of children and young people with albinism in Malawi”, they found that learners with albinism experience a lot of challenges at school due to sight problems and that affect their learning. The study learnt that students with albinism do not use braille (Lynch & Lund, 2011). In addition, the study also discovered that there are few specialist teachers who help learners with vision challenges. This also has an impact on learners with albinism as they also need the help of iterant teachers. The study finally led to the production of a list of guidelines for helping learners with albinism which are inexpensive and easy to implement.

In the current study, however, it was established that there are no instructors who have been specially trained to help adult learners with albinism particularly on their vision problem and how they can succeed in learning basic literacy skills. This has impacted badly on learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy as there is no special help for them.

In the current study, it was also established that there was limited participation of the learner with albinism, both in reading and writing activities as well as in other extra curriculum activities such as singing. This is not uncommon for learners with visual impairment. Related to this, Maurya (2016) outlined various effects of Visual Impairment on students. For example, he explained that many learners with Visual Impairment have difficulties in reading standard prints (Maurya, 2016). Learners may also be unable to take their own notes and may need extra time to carry out some tasks, such as locating words in a text when shifting from one word one reading medium to another (Maurya, 2016). In addition, learners with visual impairment may appear to be isolated in the learning environment and their participation and interaction in learning process may be limited.

This resonates well with Experiential Theory which states that for learning to be meaningful, the learner must try out what he/she has learnt. In the current study, it was established that there was limited participation of the learner with albinism, both in reading and writing activities as well as in other extra curriculum activities such as singing.

Association for Experiential Education (2007) provided a clear description of experiential learning. The Association states that experiences for their learning potential are carefully selected

which include providing opportunities for students to practice and deepen emergent skills, encountering unpredictable situations that support new learning, or learning from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes (Association for Experiential Education, 2007). In experiential learning, the learner is actively engaged in “posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning, and is challenged to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results” (Association for Experiential Education, 2007). This was not the case in the current study as the adult learner with albinism was finding it hard to read or even participate in class activities. Vision problem in this study remained one of the reasons for lack of participation in class activities.

The findings of this study also resonate well with Sensory Stimulation Theory. The theory states that effective learning takes place when all the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste are stimulated (Gravells, 2020).

However, in this study, it was discovered that the sense of sight was not stimulated as the adult learner had problems with vision. Learners with low vision need other senses to be stimulated for learning to be effective. In the absence of vision, other senses of taste, smell, hearing, and touch need to be activated. This was also not present as seen in the methods of teaching that were adopted by the instructor. The instructor mostly preferred lecture method with emphasis on reading Chuma ndi Moyo, which the learner had problem with due to its small font size. The instructors’ teaching strategy was observed to be inappropriate for the learning of adult learners,

since students with vision problem rely much on other senses such as on hearing, touch, body position and movement sensations for everyday activities (Ricketts, 2008).

b. Stress and anxiety

In this study, the adult learner with albinism was found to face social exclusion in the society. Related to this issue of exclusion, the learner reported that he noticed that some people do not want to stay close to him. He also said that there were times where people talked ill things about him which made him stop from going to adult literacy class. The learner reported that he developed stress especially when issues of abducting persons with albinism were rampant. This made him stop concentrating in class and also to absent self from classes.

The issue of stress among people with disability has been reported by many scholars. For example, Tambala-Kaliati, Adomako and Frimpong-Manso (2021) in their study on “Living with albinism in an African community: exploring the challenges of persons with albinism in Lilongwe District”, identified stigma and discrimination as a cause for stress and depression among people with albinism. They revealed that people with albinism were given additional or derogatory names by their family members and the community in general such as "Mzungu," meaning “white person”. This tendency was reported to disturb their emotions (Tambala-Kaliati, Adomako, & Frimpong-Manso, 2021).

Mbonambi (2022), in a paper titled “The burden of depression in people with albinism”, identified bullying and discrimination as the main causes of mental health difficulties in people with albinism in South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal. He stressed that discrimination and bullying can lead

to psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety attacks and episodes of post-traumatic stress disorder (Mbonambi, 2022). Mbonambi (2022) identified signs of depression as isolation, poor inter-personal relationships, poor hygiene, and a lack of concentration, slowness and suicidal thoughts.

However, the papers did not report the extent to which this stress and anxiety can affect the learning process of adults particularly those learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The current study has however found that absenteeism and lack of concentration can affect learning how to read and write among adult learners with albinism.

4.4.4 Effect of Hearing Impairment on learning of basic literacy skills

Hearing impairment has impact on the learning of students. In this study, one female adult learner with hearing impairment who interacted with the researcher revealed to have problems with acquiring basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. This learner indicated having partial hearing and also usually asks people to speak louder to her so that she could grasp what they are talking about. On this matter, two themes which are discussed in the following paragraphs were developed.

Table 4.5: Themes on the effects of Hearing Impairment on learning of basic literacy:

S/N	THEME
1	Communication challenges
2	Lack of teaching and learning materials that suit the hearing impaired

a. Communication challenges

Communication was found to be one of the challenges that the adult learner with hearing impairment was facing. This learner was also found to have limited interaction with other learners due to her disability. The conditions of this learner have led to her dependency on sign language and due to lack of assistance of hearing aids requires others to speak loudly. The only person who easily communicates with this learner is her instructor and had this to say:

“I understand her quite well and we communicate easily. We come from the same home as she is my cousin. However, other learners have problems in interacting with her as they cannot understand each other well. Even in class discussions, she is left out. She could have dropped out long time ago if it was not because of me.” (6th December, 2023)

Communication challenges were found to make it difficult for her to learn better. It was discovered that the learner had difficulty in all areas of academic achievement particularly reading and numerical concepts. There is limited social contact and interaction with other students and this may have a negative impact on learning.

The result corresponded well with the findings of the study by Khomera, Fayiah and Gway (2020) titled “Challenges Faced by Learners with Hearing Impairments in a Special School Environment: A Case Study of Embangweni Primary School for the Deaf, Mzimba District, Malawi”. The study found that learners with hearing impairment were having problems in communicating with the surrounding community and neighbouring schools which affected their education. It denied them an opportunity to interact with different people around them as such they were failing to learn

other things from fellow learners and others without the problem (Khomera, Fayiah & Gway, 2020).

With communication barrier, it was disclosed that the learner did not participate in classroom discussions and other group activities. This is against Experiential Theory which stipulates that learning takes place when one is involved in the learning process. In experiential learning, students learn from the learning process and become open to change if there is less reliance on the instructor and more on fellow peers (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). They have to be involved in problems which are practical, social and personal.

Learning is through student-centred rather than instructor-centered experiences in Experiential Learning. Students learn better by doing, discovering, reflecting and applying (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). It is through these experiences that students develop better communication skills and self-confidence and can respond to and solve real world problems and processes (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). This was lacking in the adult learner with hearing impairment under the current study as participation in learning activities was not present.

b. Lack of teaching and learning materials that suit the hearing impaired

This research discovered that there were no teaching and learning materials that suit learners with disabilities in all the adult literacy centres that were visited. Specifically, there were no teaching and learning materials that could help learners with hearing impairment at the centre where an adult learner with hearing impairment patronized. The only teaching and learning resource which

was used was the primer, Chuma ndi Moyo. This is a text book which was used by both the instructor and learners.

The findings are in agreement with the study conducted in Botswana by Mukhopadhyay and Moswela (2010) which established that lack of appropriate materials for students with hearing impairments affected their education. The study stressed the need to provide appropriate and adequate teaching and learning materials for students with hearing impairments particularly in science subjects for them to excel with their studies. Although the study centred on science subjects in Botswana Primary Schools, the challenge is experienced across all subjects.

Learners with hearing impairment learn better through the use of pictures, graphics and other visual materials. As stated by Smith (1998), learners with hearing impairment learn better if the teacher clearly explains the concepts being taught with the use of visual and concrete teaching and learning materials. Students with hearing impairment prefer visual learning strategies and this can be a challenge in an environment where much essential information is conveyed entirely by word of mouth (Penda, 2017). However, the current study discovered that teaching and learning materials were absent and there was no use of visual stimulus. It was also noted that due to lack of teaching and learning materials, participation in learning activities was also limited.

On a positive note, it was discovered that the instructor communicated with the learner with hearing impairment through the use of sign language. This helped the learner not to be left out during lessons. However, it was established that this participant was a privileged individual, as

other adults with similar problems failed to enrol for classes due to communication challenges both with the instructors and fellow learners.

As seen, participation and interaction in lesson activities for the learner with hearing impairment was limited especially without the use of teaching and learning materials. As Hoffmann (2020) puts it, people with hearing loss are at risk of isolating themselves by avoiding social functions and meetings where interaction is crucial (Hoffmann, 2020). This can also prevent involvement in the lesson. This is contrary to the dictates of Experiential Theory which emphasizes that learning takes place when the learner is actively involve. The theory in question underscores the process in which the students learn by doing through active involvement rather than through only listening to the lecture or reading certain material (Balich et al, 2015).

4.5 Coping Strategies used for Effective Teaching and Learning

The study also explored coping strategies that both instructors and adult learners with disabilities adopted to improve teaching and learning. Through interaction with key informants, it was discovered that much is not done. Nevertheless, they use a couple of strategies to deal with the barriers they face.

Table 4.6: Themes on coping strategies:

S/N	THEME
1	Sitting plan
2	Informal sign language
3	Emotional and social support

a. Sitting plan

In this study, it was revealed that a number of copying strategies were used to deal with problems faced by adult learners with varying disabilities. One of the copying strategies that was adopted to help the teaching and learning process for learners with albinism and with hearing impairment was to make sure that they sit in front close to the instructor.

The same strategy has been adopted for students with those with sight problems due to albinism conditions. On this one, student with the condition said:

“I sit in front so that I should be able to see what is being written on the board”. (6th December, 2023)

This sitting plan strategy was also applied at an adult literacy centre where there was a learner with hearing impairment. The learner who did not use hearing aid mostly depended on sign language and needed the others to speak loudly. As such she was sitting in front so that she could be close to the instructor. She also wanted to be watching the mouth of the instructor as she was teaching so as to read what came out of the instructor’s mouth.

The findings are similar to the findings of the study that was conducted by Lynch and Lund (2011) on education of children and young people with albinism in Malawi. The study uncovered many strategies that were used among children with albinism to help them learn better. Among them include encouraging children with albinism to sit at the front of the classroom and allowing them to move close to the chalkboard where necessary; providing large print sheets for children with albinism; teachers writing in bold, clear, letters on the chalkboard and allowing pupils with

albinism to wear their hats in class (Lynch & Lund, 2011). While the study concentrated on children with albinism, its results are similar to the current study which concentrated on adult learners with albinism.

The same strategy, particularly on encouraging children with albinism to sit at the front of the classroom, was found working among adult learners with albinism. The other strategies, however, were not employed because the instructors had no knowledge of such strategies because they were not trained.

b. Use of informal sign language

It was established during this study that use of informal sign language was another strategy that was adopted to help an adult learner with hearing impairment. Sign Language has been defined as a visual language that utilizes hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements as a way of communicating with others by people with hearing loss or the deaf (Foggett, 2023). It develops naturally as a result of the need to communicate among people with hearing loss (Nendauni, 2021).

In this study, it was revealed that the instructor and the adult learner with hearing impairment communicated through informal sign language. The sign language has been clarified as informal because they used signs that do not have grammatical and lexicon elements but are naturally invented signs which helped them to communicate. This was easier as the instructor and the adult learner were related. The Community Development officer who supervises adult literacy classes commented the following:

“They communicate through signs. They did not learn to do formal sign language but because they are related and come from the same home, they understand each other.” (6th December, 2023)

It was noted that through sign language, the instructor was able to help the learner in all areas at the literacy centre. It was also reported that the instructor could also provide assistance to the learner especially with her homework activities since they stayed together.

The findings of this study are in line with a study conducted by Jameel and Bibi (2016) in Pakistan which shows that the use of sign language for people with hearing impairment is beneficial. The study found that sign language empowers individuals with hearing loss to communicate independently and autonomously (Jameel, & Bibi, (2016). With the use of sign language students get involved more keenly in learning and acquisition of literacy and new information (Tang and Yang, 2007).

In the current study, however, it was observed that both the instructor and the learner with hearing impairment were not proficient in sign language as they were not trained on the said language. As such, sometimes they could struggle to express their thoughts, emotions, and needs. In addition, the informal sign language they used is regarded as inadequate for the intellectual development and does not meet the standards linguists use to describe a complete language (Wikipedia, 2022).

c. Emotional and social support

Under this theme, it was revealed that adult learners with disabilities received support from the instructors, fellow learners and relatives. For example, it was noted that the learner who used the wheelchair was escorted to an adult literacy centre by a relative. Without the support of the relative, it meant that the learner could not continue with her learning endeavours.

On the same issue of support, the study found that the adult learner with epilepsy received the support from other learners particularly when experiencing seizures. Similarly, other learners with mobility challenges also indicated not feeling restricted or shy to talk about their problem to other learners. They felt they were supported at the centre both by the instructors and fellow learners. One learner confirmed the following:

“My fellow learners help me a lot. When I get to class late, I find that they have already reserved a place for me in front of the class.” (30th November, 2023)

These study results support the findings of a study by Kurth, Lyon and Shogren (2015) titled *“Supports provided to students with severe disabilities in inclusive schools: Lessons learned from schools”* in which they discovered that with proper support, students with disabilities thrive in their studies. The support that came from family, friends and the school helped students with special needs to improve their performance (Kurth, Lyon & Shogren, 2015). This was echoed by Brailovskaia et al (2018) in which they asserted that social support, derived from families, friends and the academic community, can directly impact student experiences during education, with positive impacts on both wellbeing and academic success.

The current study also found out that social and emotional support was a key to inclusive learning environment that allowed learners to continue participating in adult literacy classes. The study, however, found that despite the support, adult learners were still passive during lessons.

4.6 Barriers to Literacy Education for Adult Learners with Disabilities

The study also explored barriers to accessing literacy education among adult learners and also challenges the sector of Adult Learning and Education faces.

Table 4.7: Themes on barriers to literacy education:

S/N	THEME
1	Lack of training for instructors and supervisors on handling learners with disabilities
2	Lack of specialised instructors
3	Lack of resource centres
4	No Special Centres for Adult Learners with Disabilities

a. Lack of training of instructors and supervisors on handling learners with disabilities

As revealed by results above, instructors and supervisors of literacy activities do not receive any training in special needs education. The only training they receive which is supposed to last for two weeks is on how to teach adult learners using the primer, Chuma ndi Moyo. With lack of training, it was established that instructors had difficulties in handling learners with disabilities. On this issue, one instructor said:

We were trained for three days. A certain organisation sponsored the training. However, we did not learn how to teach adult learners with various types of disabilities”. (6th December, 2023)

Teachers who are trained to improve their inclusive teaching skills are said to be more likely to use best practices, leading to optimal learner outcomes (Malinen, Savoleinen, & Xu, 2012). Lack of training in special needs and inclusive education can result in a limited understanding of disabilities.

Without training, it is difficult for teachers not know how to identify and address specific learning challenges as such learners with disabilities may not get the necessary help. As a result, students with disabilities may feel marginalized and excluded from the learning process (Malinen, Savoleinen, & Xu, 2012). Brown & McIntosh (2012) underscores the importance of training in special needs for regular teachers. They established that lack of training led to poor teacher efficacy with regards to inclusion strategy implementation and classroom management, which can cause lifelong academic and social failures for students with disabilities (Brown & McIntosh, 2012).

b. Lack of specialised instructors

It was revealed in this study that there are no specialized instructors to help adult learners with disabilities learn effectively. This is different with the Ministry of Education which trains teachers in different areas of Special Needs Education. Such teachers usually known are Itinerant Teachers

(IT) move from one school to another, providing additional support to learners with special educational needs and mainstream teachers (Malawi Government, 2009).

The Itinerant Teachers travel around local mainstream schools and communities with the aim of offering advice, resources, and support to children with disabilities, their teachers, and their parents (Lynch, & McCall, 2007). The Iterant Teachers have been deployed in selected districts across Malawi to conduct community awareness around visual impairment and other disabilities so that it becomes easier for them to join mainstream schools (Lynch et al., 2011).

According to Lynch and McCall (2007), the Itinerant Teachers perform several duties including, but not limited to, providing individual tutoring to learners with special needs in reading and writing; identifying and assessing learners with special needs and making referrals where necessary; offering counselling; and providing practical support as well as advocating for the right to education for children with special needs. This indeed helps students with disabilities in different primary schools who cannot afford to go Special Schools.

While this practice is present in some primary schools, Adult Education sector is lacking the same initiative. It was established that there were no specialized instructors who could move in different adult literacy centres to help learners with disabilities. In the absence of trained instructors on how to handle learners with disabilities, specialised instructors would have provided adult learners with disabilities the support they needed in their learning process.

c. Lack of resource centres

The study also revealed a lack of resource centres in Zomba district specifically for catering the needs of adult learners with disabilities. This is contrary to basic education where resource centres to help students with disabilities were established in some schools. A resource centre is a centre where children with disabilities receive specialised instruction and extra teaching and learning resources to support their learning (Ishida et al, 2017).

The Educational Resource Centres, which were established by the Ministry of Education Special Needs Department in schools, target children with various kinds of disabilities. The roles of the resource centres include:

- Teach learners with special needs
- Identify and assess children with special needs
- Provide home and facility based rehabilitation when needed
- Raise awareness on the importance of education for children with disabilities
- Refer learners with special needs to the appropriate institute (The Malawi Disability Directory, 2014)

Lack of resource centres in the Adult Learning and Education subsector was found to have negative implication on learning and performance of adult learners with disabilities. The resource centres can help in ensuring that teaching and learning resources are accessible to adult learners with disabilities.

d. No Special Centres for Adult Learners with Disabilities

The researcher also found that there were no special adult literacy centres in Zomba. Having special centres where learners with disabilities can be accommodated would have been advantageous. Jordan and Stanovich (2004) stressed the advantages of special schools. Teachers in special schools are trained to handle specific type of disabilities and can adjust the teaching methods and daily schedule according to different situations of the students (Jordan & Stanovich, 2004). They provide tailored instruction, specialized support, and resources and services to support students with various types of disabilities. With specialised support, cases of dropout among learners with disabilities are minimized.

Other districts like Blantyre have special centres where adult learners with disabilities are provided with specialised support. One such a Community Learning Centre is in Namiyango, Blantyre, which is under an organisation called Forum for the Development of Youth with Disabilities (FDYD). The centre offers adult literacy lessons and skills development to people with intellectual disability, Down Syndrome, hearing impairment, epilepsy, visual impairment (blind) and various levels of physical disability (Malawi News Agency [MANA], 2022).

Lack of special adult literacy centres in Zomba deepens the challenges that learners with disabilities face as they do not have anywhere to go to receive specialised support.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the findings and discussions of the study on assessing the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners

with disabilities in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district. The results highlight challenges and barriers that adult learners with disabilities face. The findings also provide insights into the strategies and accommodations that can support learning for adults with disabilities. The findings highlight the need to create inclusive education to cater for the needs of adult learners with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter gives a summary of the major findings of the study on assessing the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult learners with disabilities in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district. It will provide a conclusion based on the research findings and offers recommendations for policy makers, educators and practitioners to provide necessary support for adult learners with disabilities to excel in their learning endeavours.

5.2 Summary of major findings

On the first objective, the study established several forms of disabilities among adult learners attending literacy classes. Mobility Impairment was one of them. The study revealed two forms of mobility impairments, with one which required the use walking sticks due to leg pain, and the other required the use of a wheelchair due to paralysis from the waist down. Epilepsy was another in which the participant experienced seizures during lessons. Seizures in learners with epilepsy are known to cause unpredictability, emotional distress, and can lead to stigmatization (Taylor, 2011; Syvertsen et al., 2020). Albinism was also another form. A participant with albinism experienced visual impairment which affected his learning process. Lastly was Hearing Impairment in which the participant relied on lip-reading and facial expressions for communication.

On the second objective, to assess the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills, the study found that adults with disabilities face numerous challenges which negatively affected their learning of basic literacy skills. Some of the challenges the study uncovered include physical

accessibility barriers, communication difficulties, seizure related disruptions and visual sensitivity which hindered their ability to fully engage and benefit from literacy instruction. For those with mobility challenges, the study revealed that they had problems walking to literacy centres. It also posed limitation in participating in class activities which is discouraged by experiential learning Theory. Those with epilepsy, the study discovered that they struggled with paying attention in class as well as remembering what was previously learnt. The study also established that a learner with albinism had difficulties with sight which affected the learning process as there were no specialised materials in adult literacy centres for those with visual impairment. Study findings also revealed that hearing impairment posed a threat to communication which is an essential element in learning.

On the third objective, the study uncovered three coping strategies which were used for effective teaching and learning. These include sitting plan where learners with disabilities sat in front for better visibility and communication. This strategy aligns with findings from Lynch & Lund (2011), though additional accommodations like large print materials were not implemented due to lack of instructor training. The study also found that that informal sign language was used. However, it was not adequate for intellectual development and usually caused occasional struggles. It was also revealed that emotional and social support was paramount. Support from instructors, peers, and relatives enabled learners with disabilities to attend classes. However, they remained passive during lessons.

On the last objective, examining barriers to literacy education for adult learners with disabilities, the study found lack of training for instructors and lack of specialized instructors to support

learners with disabilities. The study revealed that there was lack of resource centres in Zomba for adult learners with disabilities, unlike in basic education. Such centres provide specialized instruction, assessments, and resources that enhance learning outcomes (Ishida et al., 2017).

5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the effects of disabilities on learning basic literacy skills among adult learners with disabilities in five adult literacy centres in Zomba district. Malawi has taken many strides to improve adult literacy including the launch of National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP) in 1986, the development of National Adult Literacy and Education Policy (2020) as well as National Adult Literacy and Education Strategic Plan (2022-2027).

It has also taken initiatives in promoting inclusive education particularly in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The initiatives include the development of the Disability Act (2012), the National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2016) and National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2017-2021). The policies in question promote easy access to education for learners with disabilities.

However, the study has shown that government has done little to promote inclusive learning for adult learners with disabilities. The challenges that affect their learning in literacy skills are numerous. For some adult learners with disabilities, poor learning environment, lack of teaching and learning materials, and difficulties walking to a learning centre pose as challenges to their quest for knowledge of reading, writing and numeracy. For others, their disabilities affect their communication and memory.

The coping mechanisms they employed for effective teaching and learning were not meaningful to produce desired result. Therefore, there is need for the government and other stakeholders to seriously attend to the problems that adult learners with disabilities face in their learning process.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that government should take decisive action on inclusive learning. There is need to prioritize the promotion of inclusive education for adult learners with disabilities in order to address the gaps in current initiatives. There is also need to provide specialized training for instructors as specialized instructors would address diverse learning needs. The study also recommends that government and other stakeholder should develop inclusive teaching materials. For example, there is need to produce large print materials for visually impaired adult learners, such as Chuma ndi Moyo, would enhance accessibility. The study also recommends the improvement of teaching and learning environment as the research has established that the current learning environment is not conducive for adult learners with disabilities.

5.5 Areas for further Study

The following can be areas for further research:

- Inclusive curriculum design that cater for the diverse learning needs for adult learners
- Investigating factors that influence motivation among adult learners with disabilities
- Impact of educational policies on the experiences of adult learners with disabilities.

5.6 Contribution of the Study

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Adult Learning and Education. It has provided an in-depth understanding of the experiences faced by adult learners with disabilities. The study will also help in informing policy and practice especially in promoting inclusive literacy education for adult with disabilities. Additionally, the study raises awareness about the challenges that adult learners with disabilities go through.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADULT LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

PART A: Demographic information

Age of participant/zaka zanu:

Sex: Male/mamuna []

Female/ mkazi []

Village/Mudzi:

Traditional Authority/Mfumu yaikulu :.....

District/Boma:

PART B:

1. What is your disability?/Kodi muli ndi ulumali wANJI
2. How does it interfere with your learning in reading, writing and numeracy?/Kodi ulumali wanu umasokoneza bwanji maphunziro anu akulemba, kuwerenga ndi kuphaikiza

3. Are you comfortable in discussing your disability with fellow learners or the instructor?/Kodi mumakhala omasuka kukamba za ulumali wanu ndi anthu ena kuphatikizapo ophunzira anzanu kapena aphunzitsi
4. What are your academic strengths?/maphunziro amene mumachita bwino ndi ati
5. In what areas do you have difficulty or problems?/ndi mbali za maphunziro anu zomwe mumakumana ndi mavuto
6. What measures do you put in place to promote effective learning?/ ndi njira ziti zomwe mumakhazikitsa powonetseta kuti maphunziro anu akuyenda bwino

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADULT LITERACY INSTRUCTORS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (SUPERVISORS)

1. For how long have you been supervising adult literacy learners?
2. Do adult learners with disabilities report their disabilities to relevant authorities?
3. What are the common disabilities among adult learners in Zomba?
4. What are the common challenges that adult learners with disabilities face?
5. How do the identified disabilities affect learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners?
6. What are the measures your office has put in place to promote effective teaching and learning among adult learners with disabilities?
7. Does the office of Community Development provide teaching and learning materials suitable for adult learners with disabilities?
8. Do instructors receive training on handling adult learners with disabilities? If no, how do they help learners with disabilities
9. Are there organisations or stakeholders which support learners with disabilities? If yes, mention them and describe the support they render.
10. Are there special literacy centres for learners with disabilities?

APPENDIX 3: CHECKLIST FOR DIRECT OBSERVATION

1. Classroom environment: is the classroom organised and conducive for learning?
2. Is the sitting arrangement promoting interaction and classroom engagement?
3. Are seating and furniture arrangements conducive to learners with disabilities
4. Are teaching and learning materials available suitable for adult learners with disabilities?
5. Are the structures (facilities and buildings) at the centres accessible to learners with disabilities?
6. Are assistive technologies such as wheelchairs, hearing aids or walkers available?
7. Do instructors communicate effectively with adult learners with disabilities?

APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM MZUNIREC



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 548

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/23/83

26/07/2023.

John Ambali,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Luwinga,
Mzuzu 2.

ambalijohn@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Ambali,
**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR
PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/23/83: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF
DISABILITIES ON LEARNING BASIC LITERACY SKILLS AMONG ADULT
LEARNERS IN SELECTED LITERACY CENTRES IN ZOMBA DISTRICT.**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Committee Address:
Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele

SENIOR RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

APPENDIX 5: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MZUZU UNIVERSITY



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwingu
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722
Fax: (265) 01 320 568
mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw

4th August 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR JOHN AMBALI

Mr John Ambali is a registered Master of Education (Teacher Education) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study he is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,


Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

APPENDIX 6: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: ZOMBA DISTRICT COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

All communications should be
Addressed to
The District Commissioner
Cell: (+265) 0999869494
0888869494



District Gender Office
ZOMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL
P/Bag 61
ZOMBA

30th November, 2023

TO ZOMBA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Dear, Colleagues

REF: LETTER OF IDENTIFICATION FOR MR JOHN AMBALI

Zomba District Community Development Office is pleased to introduce to you Mr John Ambali, who is a registered student at Mzuzu University doing Master of Education Programme majoring in teacher education. He is collecting data for his research study under Adult Literacy Programme in Zomba District with a focus on learners with disabilities.

He has been referred to you for further support on the matter. The information to be collected shall be used for academic purposes.

Your timely support shall be highly appreciated

Yours faithfully

FRANCO TAONA LEMANI FOR



THE DISTRICT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

APPENDIX 7: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in Master of Education (Teacher Education)

Introduction

I am **John Ambali** from **Mzuzu University**. I am doing a research on “**Assessing the Effects of Disabilities on Learning Basic Literacy Skills among Adult Learners in five Literacy Centres in Zomba District**”. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of another researcher.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to assess the effects of undiagnosed disabilities on learning of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy among adult learners.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in a group discussion and/or individual interview.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are directly involved in adult learning either as a supervisor, instructor or an adult learner.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research takes place for a period of **ten (10) months**.

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.)

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Sharing the Results

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following, we will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Mr. John Ambali, Magomero Community Development College, Private Bag 3, Namadzi, Phone: 0884484288/0999109935

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwanga, Mzuzu 2, Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about “Assessing the Effects of Disabilities on Learning Basic Literacy Skills among Adult Learners in five Literacy Centres in Zomba District”.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

If illiterate ¹

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness_____

Thumb print of participant

Signature of witness _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was

1

A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____



Date _____

Day/month/year