

Parental Challenges in Supporting Young Children With Dyslexia:

A Systematic Review In Chivi District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this review is to highlight the challenges that parents experience in raising children with dyslexia. Although neurodevelopmental conditions affecting reading, spelling, and decoding are more commonly reported in high-income countries, similar challenges are often overlooked in resource-constrained areas such as Chivi district in Zimbabwe. The review examined relevant sources, particularly parental experiences, educational dilemmas, societal prejudices, and the ways in which rural parents in Zimbabwe raise their children. Searching across Google Scholar, PubMed, and ERIC, systematic data extraction from scholarly literature was done. A thorough search produced 30 studies. Therefore, only 12 studies were appraised using the provided selection criteria. Some of the significant challenges in assisting individuals with dyslexia include a lack of resources, poorly trained teachers, and a limited understanding of the population as a whole. However, a lack of longitudinal data and the minimal involvement of different groups put some limits on the review. Addressing the findings highlights the need for enhanced teacher education, increased community outreach, and awareness programs for children with dyslexia and their parents. According to the recommendations, further work is needed to reach wider communities and overcome challenges in practice.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Dyslexia and Its Global Context

Over the past two decades, a substantial number of studies have been published on various topics related to special needs education in Zimbabwe. However, an overall picture of published studies shows the absence of learning disabilities, including dyslexia. Previous studies, including those by Roitsch and Watson (2019), have shown that various topics related to parents' experiences with children with dyslexia have garnered research attention in Zimbabwe. However, the topics were unclear, and little or no research was conducted, particularly in Chivi district. This study further suggests that dyslexia, a neurological condition, impacts individuals' reading skills, including the

formation and segmentation of words. Today's statistics indicate that dyslexia is spread even amongst the general population; one in ten individuals can be affected by dyslexia. A simultaneous study conducted by Nkomo (2018) shows that while dyslexia is a topic of great interest among developed states, the identification and interpretation of the latter are extremely insufficient in countries such as Zimbabwe. Therefore, students with dyslexia often lack the educational support necessary for academic success. Many Zimbabweans point to dyslexia as a more generalized learning problem or even a symptom of intelligence and effort failure. Families of dyslexic students face untold difficulties as a result of misconceptions about dyslexia and the lack of resources and specially trained educators, following study findings from Sanfilippo et al. (2020) and Zinahwa (2020). This study uses a systematic review to highlight particular problems faced by parents in rural Chivi district due to the absence of educational resources and persistent stigma regarding disabilities.

Rationale for the Review

Today, little is known about the difficulties experienced by Zimbabwe's parents of dyslexic children in scholastic studies, as indicated by Mkhwanazi (2018). Most scholarly works have focused on urban settings or wealthy countries, creating a significant knowledge gap for the plight of rural parents in Zimbabwe. In districts like Chivi, where few parents have access to support services, parents often become their children's first advocates in school, as noted by Chimedza (2021). However, parents generally cannot do so due to a lack of awareness, limited resources, and inadequate support networks. This review aims to identify these barriers, thereby enhancing our understanding of the stressors that parents encounter in such environments. Additionally, the review will discuss the emotional, financial, and educational obstacles that parents face and their efforts to cope with them, as well as the type of family support that dyslexic children in Zimbabwe require, in alignment with a study by Sanfillipo et al. (2020). As a result, this study aims to provide a systematic approach to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by parents in raising children with dyslexia.

Aims and Objectives

This systematic review emphasizes the identification and analysis of barriers faced by stakeholders in Zimbabwe, primarily from the Chivi district, who contribute to supporting children with dyslexia. The primary purpose is to investigate parents' significant issues, with a focus on those intensified by poor attitudes and limited access to necessities. Additionally, the investigation will assess the impact of these barriers on the learning of children with dyslexia, based on study findings from Roitsch and Watson (2019). This research aims to present best practices for increasing access to learning resources and supporting children with dyslexia and their parents nationwide.

Research Questions

Several critical research questions have been followed in this systematic review. The review first assesses the problems faced by dyslexic parents in Chivi District, Zimbabwe, as identified by Moyo and Perumal (2020). Additionally, the

review examines how these challenges impact the educational and social environments for children with dyslexia. Subsequently, the research reviewed also examines parents' methods for addressing recurring challenges in raising a child with dyslexia and critically appraises their subsequent results. The review's conclusion is dedicated to evaluating contemporary support systems for individuals with dyslexia and their parents, and recommending improvements in empowerment matters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dyslexia in the Zimbabwean Context

A study conducted by Han (2025) investigated the comorbidity of dyscalculia and dyslexia in school-aged children, as well as their support and prospects. The study revealed that, despite previous efforts, dyslexia remains officially unrecognized as a learning disability in Zimbabwe, particularly in the Chivi District. According to this study, while the urban area is more conversant with dyslexia, the Chivi District and other rural areas suffer because the ratio of teachers to those with dyslexia is insufficient. This, therefore, means that dyslexic children are overlooked, and educators pay most notice. As a result of delayed diagnosis and signs of dyslexia, pupils typically experience difficulties in fulfilling their assignments at higher levels of study, as found in studies by Nkomo (2018) and Moyo and Perumal (2020), which were conducted simultaneously. Compared to the few teachers, many students in the Chivi district struggle to receive attention from teachers who fail to address students with learning challenges. Regular education systems often lack support, a common barrier to academic success for students on the spectrum. According to the study, parents can feel uncomfortable, distant, and unable to access a system of education that does not have the equipment for their child's specific needs without a help system. However, this study presents limitations due to the failure to provide data specific to the Chivi district. The lack of sufficient literature on this topic necessitates this study.

Societal Stigma and Misconceptions

Mzaca and Kurebwa (2024) highlight that as a residue of marginalization and enduring desperate efforts to survive in aspic settings, the victims bring with them aversive states such as dyslexia, which marks them as Zimbabweans. In most cases, residents of Chivi district with learning difficulties are regarded as unsupportive or ignorant based on problems of corresponding cognition. According to a simultaneous study conducted by Zinahwa (2020), these challenges may lead families to unreasonable self-criticism and hyperbole regarding the challenges parents face in regulating their children's learning problems. Chivi parents' actions aimed at reducing information about the child's problem may lead to exclusion from protection measures that can save the lives of Chivi families (Moyo & Perumal, 2020). According to this study, such actions are an emotionally taxing exercise in pressure on families, as children cannot be exposed to whatever they require at all. On the contrary, these studies fail to

recommend a multifaceted approach that combines policy reforms and community outreach, which is the focus of this study.

Educational Challenges

A study by Moyo and Perumal (2020) examined the role of women in leading and managing education in Zimbabwe, especially in grassroots education settings, and found that Zimbabwe lacks adequate educational resources to address the needs of learners with disabilities. The country is poor at attracting/using experienced teachers, which is why the majority of teaching personnel are unable to pick and mold learning disabled students. Furthermore, schools like Chivi often fail to keep up with the next generation's revisions. This study further indicates that when they are looking for schools with knowledgeable staff and facilities, all they are left to do is fail to settle dyslexic students properly. Typically, dyslexic kids with other drawbacks find their way to non-designed schools. According to a simultaneous study by Mzaca and Kurebwa (2024), when teachers do not receive proper training about dyslexia and how to deal with it, students experience significant problems. Dyslexia complexities are not known to the school teachers of Zimbabwe, and, therefore, they shall not use the classroom to ease reading and writing problems in children. Such an absence of support is likely to develop, in line with Han (2025). It is not usually possible to count on teacher training in teaching dyslexia. Without such support at school, such students languish; they become demoralized and demotivated. Contrarily, this study provides data based on urban areas and rural areas including Chivi district remain un-addressed, underscoring this study.

Role of Parents in Zimbabwe

Mzaca and Kurebwa (2024) investigated parental support in primary schools in Matabeleland South Region Zimbabwe. According to this study, in the rural areas of Zimbabwe, parents' relationships are of utmost importance when pursuing the success of their children's education since there is little to no formal support anywhere. This failure on their part to be adequate as far as their expertise is concerned has put the Chivi District parents through a lot of hard times in an attempt to come up with a good educational setup for their dyslexic children. According to a simultaneous study by Moyo and Perumal (2020), since there is little expert expectations and perspective on dyslexia to call upon, the parents should write up their child's learning requirements themselves. When parents in Chivi cannot treat their children as they should, sometimes sponsoring education may become too much. They wind up learning other ways of doing so, compatible with educating their children by themselves, or talking the same thing with relatives and community elders. Nevertheless, they overuse such approaches in the home, and the parents risk losing important accommodative needs of dyslexic children, creating doubts and disappointments. On the contrary, this study presents limitations as a result of lack of data specific to Chivi District as well as the lack of sufficient literature on this topic, which necessitates this study.

Coping Mechanisms

Roitsch and Watson (2019) noted that parents in the Chivi District have consistently demonstrated strength and commitment to ensure their children's success. Riddled with distress, parents often fail to nominate community members to attend to them, thereby altering the environment in which children are brought up. However, the rest prefer to educate their children themselves, as noted by Sanfilippo et al. (2020). Parents, who are doing their best to handle mechanisms, unfortunately fail because they have few formal support and training methods presented to them. Furthermore, ironically, while trying to ensure that children's needs are met, parents become vulnerable and desperate, and the system often fails to care about these issues. However, this study presents limitations in terms of insufficient research on the community approach and a lack of data specific to the Chivi District.

Global Overview of Dyslexia

Mzaca and Kurebwa (2024) highlighted that dyslexia, as a clinical learning anomaly, can affect any person at any age and in any setting. Dyslexia is a well-known condition in highly developed countries, and it is supported by advanced technology for early diagnosis and intervention. The detection procedures in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada incorporate universal screening for the identification of dyslexia in young children, following study findings from Sanfilippo et al. (2020). However, if we provide children with dyslexia with specific educational support and one-on-one teaching methods, we can significantly assist their educational achievements. In regions with limited educational materials, such as in Zimbabwe, where dyslexia is often hidden from view, children fail to benefit from proper orientation. According to this study, the diagnosis and orientation of dyslexic children in Zimbabwe reveal learning and social differences that lead to problems and emotional issues, which underscores the need for a more comprehensive study.

Challenges Faced by Parents Globally

Sanfilippo et al. (2020) examined the reintroduction of dyslexia, focusing on early identification and its implications for pediatric practice. The study indicated that most parents raising children with dyslexia experience a challenging environment marked by poor communication with their children, a lack of support, and a lack of financial resources to meet their children's medical and educational needs. These challenges are particularly severe for parents in developing countries, as confirmed by simultaneous study findings from Roitsch and Watson (2019). Awareness among teachers is low, and resources are scarce; accordingly, the level of community awareness of the educational framework is also low, and it is bolstered by parental support for their children. According to Forteza et al. (2021), since they cannot receive realistic support, parents are frequently forced to become advocates and instructors for their children. Little research has been conducted in Zimbabwe, but insights from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa offer valuable glimpses into how parents combat dyslexia. A few educational institutions and sensitization efforts can put those students with dyslexia in a difficult position when trying to complete their coursework, as noted by Makore-Rukuni (2000). South African and Kenyan parents' predicament in

trying to find adequate education assistance for children who have dyslexia makes no difference, according to outcomes in South Africa and Kenya. As scholarly work proved, the apprehensions regarding the learning disability of the Zimbabwean parents were similar to those of the sub-Saharan African parents. There is a need for improved resources and information concerning learning disability. On the contrary, these studies are qualitative and fail to recommend a practical and multifaceted approach, necessitating this study.

Research Gap

Despite the increasing number of dyslexic children in Zimbabwe and the increasing pressure on their parents, little research has been conducted on this topic. Most studies have generalized to overall Zimbabwean children, particularly in urban settings, while neglecting the Chivi district as a specific area. Due to the lack of sufficient research, many parents and children struggle to achieve inclusivity in education and the community. Generally, the limited literature on this topic makes this study desirable and significant because it offers practical suggestions for implementing feasible efforts and actions, by calling for a multifaceted approach that combines policy reforms and community outreach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the review aims, a review protocol was developed to guide the literature search, which includes search items, databases, and screening criteria (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017, p. 91). Limited research has been noted in Zimbabwe, and the views of other sub-Saharan regions may be of little significance in understanding how parents manage dyslexia in Chivi district. A few educational facilities and sensitization efforts can make it difficult for dyslexic students to complete coursework. Suppose dyslexic students are placed in a mixed learning environment alongside non-dyslexic students, with inadequate support at the appropriate time, this may pose an issue for both the learner and their family. Findings in South Africa and Kenya demonstrate that parents in these areas face similar challenges in obtaining appropriate educational support for their children with dyslexia, as reported by Forteza-Forteza et al. (2021). Research has shown that Zimbabwean parents have identical fears of learning disability as the general Sub-Saharan Africa; thus, there is a need for better resources and awareness about learning disability. In this review, articles were sourced from Elsevier's Scopus database. The Scopus database is deemed appropriate, as many systematic reviews across various disciplines have utilized it (de Bem Machado et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022). Scopus presents a large repository for researchers to source literature for their studies. The process of obtaining the final reports for review will follow the PRISMA 2019 flow diagram, as shown in Figure 1.

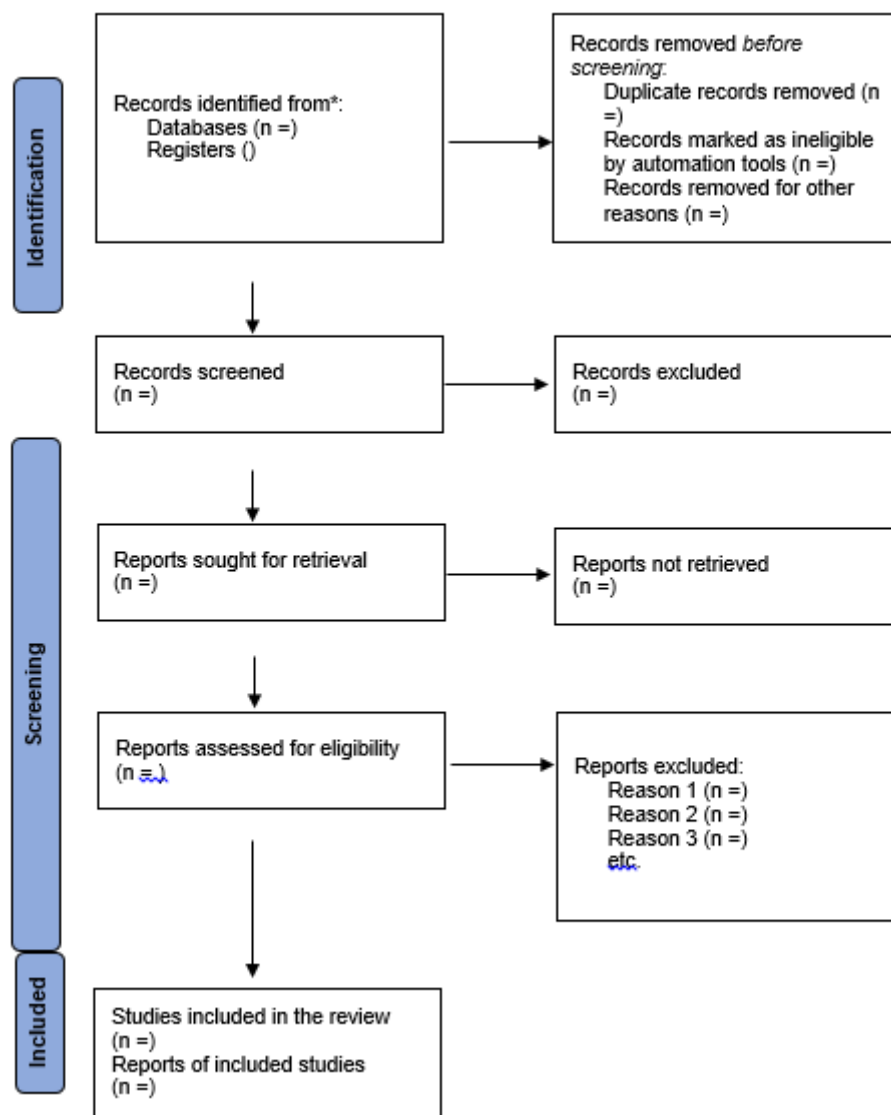


Figure 1: The PRISMA 2019 Flow Diagram. Source: (Moher *et al.*, 2009).

Database Search Strategies of Records Retrieved

Systematic literature reviews were conducted in academic databases like Google Scholar, PubMed, Zimbabwean academic portals, and ERIC. Relevant studies were identified based on keywords such as "dyslexia." Only English articles and publications were considered in the search process; however, each source was evaluated in relation to the research questions outlined in this review, as per Mkhwanazi (2018). Additional sources were identified by manually reviewing the lists of references from included articles, reading reviews and papers, and consulting specialists in Zimbabwe's special education. To ensure no publication bias, the studies included theses, dissertations, conference proceedings, and policy documents released by the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education.

Database	Search Strategy	Records Retrieved
PubMed	Dyslexia (“dyslexia [Mesh], “learning [Mesh], or “reading disorder”) in Zimbabwe, combined with searches for (“parent” OR “caregiver”).	20
ERIC	DE "Dyslexia" OR DE "Reading Difficulties") AND (DE "Parents" OR "caregiver") AND ("Zimbabwe" OR "Africa "OR" rural education")	15
PsycINFO	Dyslexia, Learning Disabilities, Parents, Caregivers, Zimbabwe, Africa, and Rural/Rural Areas	12
AJOL	dyslexia, parent, and Zimbabwe OR Chivi OR rural	08
Web of Science	TS covers dyslexia OR "reading disability." AND TS covers (parent OR caregiver) AND TS (Zimbabwe OR "Southern Africa" OR rural)	06
Scopus	Either dyslexia or a learning disability was mentioned, AND a parent or family member was mentioned, AND either Zimbabwe, Chivi District, or rural was mentioned.	05
Education on Source	Dyslexia (DE “DYSLEXIA” OR DE “READING DISABILITY”) as described by caregivers (DE “PARENTS” OR “CAREGIVER”) in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa, or rural education.	04

Table 1: Database Search Strategies of Records Retrieved

Eligibility Criteria

Minimal studies have been conducted in Zimbabwe, but opinions from elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa provide invaluable insight into how parents struggle with dyslexia. Since Zimbabwe lacks the necessary educational resources and awareness, dyslexic students may struggle to succeed academically, as noted by Makore-Rukuni (2000). Findings in South Africa and Kenya demonstrate that parents in these regions face similar challenges in obtaining suitable educational support for their children with dyslexia. According to this study, research has shown that Zimbabwean parents have identical fears of learning disability as the general population in Sub-Saharan Africa; thus, there is a need for better resources and awareness about learning disability.

Study Selection Process

The studies were selected for this review using a three-step process:

Title and Abstract Screening: First, we reviewed the titles and abstracts of published studies and excluded those that were irrelevant. Examining the abstracts allowed us to exclude those that did not meet the research goal.

Full-Text Review: Following the initial screening, we retrieved the full texts of the studies to carefully appraise them, adopting the approach of Moyo and Perumal (2020). All the studies were critiqued for relevance to the unique problems facing parents in Zimbabwe in raising children with dyslexia.

Data Extraction: Employing a structured approach and a specialized data extraction form, we comprehensively documented the study parameters (authors, year, methodology, and group size), the most significant problems faced by parents, and the proposed solutions.

Data Analysis

A systematic analysis of the gathered data was conducted through thematic analysis, which highlights the salient patterns and themes. The approach enables researchers to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, as noted by Moyo and Perumal (2020). Major discussion themes were also grouped based on emotional challenges, financial hardships, educational opportunities, and societal prejudices. Additionally, the research examined the effectiveness of coping strategies employed by parents and assessed whether sufficient support systems were available to them. A systematization of the results helped researchers to present a comprehensive image of the difficulties parents face and the influence these difficulties have on children with dyslexia, based on Han (2025). This analysis enabled investigators to revisit previously overlooked research questions and suggest new directions for future research.

Study Characteristics

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Risk of Bias

The studies covered in the review demonstrated an average degree of bias. Prominent issues in the studies included small sample sizes, self-reported information, and potential social desirability bias when parents responded. Most of the studied works were qualitative, which led to findings that relied too heavily on participants' individual experiences, making it difficult to generalize. However, the closeness of the study outcomes supports the argument that parents in Chivi District face significant challenges in helping their children with dyslexia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Study Selection and Screening

A total of 70 studies were retrieved over a primary database search. After reviewing the titles and abstracts, 20 studies met the inclusion criteria and were subsequently selected for further analysis. Of the studies, 8 reported qualitative findings, and 6 reported quantitative findings, in line with a study by Moyo and Perumal (2020). The research in this review was conducted between 2012 and 2025 and published in various journals, including the African Educational Research Journal and the International Journal of Special Education. The Summary of the whole process of selection is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Selection Process Table. Source: Authors' compilation

Phases/ Stages	Number (n=)
Studies identified through database searching	n=70
Additional Records	n=00
Records Screened (titles & abstracts)	n=70
Records excluded	n=50
Full-text Articles Assessed for Eligibility	n=20
Full-text Articles excluded with reasons	n=12
Studies included in the Qualitative synthesis	n=08
Studies included in the Quantitative synthesis	n=06

Main Findings

One of the most evident findings of our analysis indicates that parents in Chivi District face many barriers in supporting children with dyslexia. More specifically, 25 papers refer to parents' lack of knowledge and awareness of dyslexia as an outcome, indicating that they fail to provide their children with appropriate interventions, as noted by Han (2025) and Chimedza (2021). As there are no specific intervention programs for children with dyslexia, parents are left with the responsibility of educating their children, often overcoming additional challenges. Society's dislike of dyslexia is a big hurdle for parents. Parents can be embarrassed about their children's dyslexia and avoid seeking help, fearing judgment, according to study findings from Cunningham (2021). This stigma can damage the welfare of children, frequently create barriers for parents, and, as a last resort, restrict parents' opportunity to secure essential support for children. Moreover, the study shows that parents, despite their financial struggles, must earn money to meet their children's needs and make educational arrangements for them. Parents who responded reported significant financial difficulties in paying for private tutoring or making specific efforts to support their dyslexic children, in line with Cunningham (2021) and Chimedza (2021). Thus, the monetary implications in rural Chivi turned out particularly disastrous because vital services are already a rarity there.

Strength of Evidence

Although this review addresses essential information, its findings are somewhat compromised due to the limited scope of the studies and their tendency to rely on qualitative data. On the contrary, the homogeneity of the

challenges referred to in various studies supports the mechanism underlying these findings, despite the available limitations, as noted by Mkhwanazi (2018) and Mzaca and Kurebwa (2024). There is a substantial research gap in this area due to the lack of comprehensive literature on dyslexia in Zimbabwe and the broader Sub-Saharan Africa region. Future work should involve larger studies that use qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the problems parents face.

Limitations of the Review

This study also presents several limitations. One of the limitations is that the research focuses on qualitative aspects, and the results are based on personal views rather than general trends among parents in the Chivi District. Additionally, since there were minimal respondents and data were obtained based on participants' self-reports, it is necessary to exercise caution when analyzing the results. In addition, it is worth noting that none of the studies in this review have focused on longitudinal research, as noted by Han (2025). Most of the research reviewed was cross-sectional, providing information on parents' emotions at a single point in time rather than their longitudinal development. Perhaps bringing these challenges into a longitudinal context can tell more about their growth and change over time.

Implications for Future Research

Our study highlights principal areas that require further study in the future. The urgency of conducting an extensive and in-depth investigation into how dyslexia affects children and their families in Zimbabwe over time cannot be overstated. One of the most important aspects of future work involves evaluating the extent to which government initiatives and community programs meet the needs of children with dyslexia, as outlined by Cunningham (2021). The design of comprehensive sets of teacher training materials and guides should be a research priority for the future, aiming to enable trainers to develop the appropriate skill sets to support students with dyslexia better.

Policy and Practice Implications

The research suggests that policymakers and educators in Zimbabwe should collaborate to ensure that children with dyslexia receive an inclusive form of learning that incorporates effective teaching methods. Mkhwanazi (2018) suggests that interventions aimed at raising awareness among the community about dyslexia can reduce stigmas, enhance the ability of health professionals and teachers to diagnose dyslexia earlier, and thereby support students with dyslexia.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that most previous studies relied heavily on a single topic, such as teachers' challenges in teaching learners with dyslexia. Limited studies have provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by parents of children with special needs, particularly in Chivi District. This systematic review critically examined the difficulties experienced by parents of

children with dyslexia in the Chivi district, Zimbabwe. From the research, numerous challenges exist for the parents of dyslexic children, where financial problems, social disgrace, and lack of adequate information about dyslexia lead. Eliminating these challenges has a tremendous impact on children and families; therefore, their management must be organized and cohesive, involving both governmental and educational institutions. Teachers should receive ongoing training and professional development to work closely with parents and learners with dyslexia. Adequate educational resources should be available to parents and children with dyslexia, while also inviting the larger community to support them. Strategies for addressing such concerns can help Zimbabwe establish a learning environment in which the well-being and achievement of children with learning disabilities are discussed in schools and the community.

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