

Inclusive Cultural Games as a Medium for Socio-Emotional Development in Early Childhood Learners With Disabilities

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Abstract

Developing socio-emotional skills of Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners with disabilities is very crucial. Early childhood education aims to empower all learners with skills to regulate their emotions, build strong lasting relationships, socio-emotional intelligence, and resilience among other skills. This qualitative study done in Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo aimed to explore the influence of inclusive cultural games in developing socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities. It used a case study research design. A sample of six purposively selected qualified ECD teachers was used. ECD teachers were interviewed to solicit information about their individual experiences on the use of inclusive cultural games to develop socio-emotional skills in learners. Additionally, participants were observed to witness the strategies they used to mitigate challenges they encountered when using inclusive cultural games in regular classrooms. A thematic approach was used to identify patterns, organise, interpret, and analyse data. This study revealed that ECD teachers rarely used inclusive cultural games during the teaching and learning process in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, it was found that they lacked training on how to modify inclusive cultural games to cater for disabled learners hence lamented over the shortage of materials and time constraints due to congested timetables. The study recommended that in-service or staff development programs be done to equip ECD teachers with practical skills and knowledge to integrate inclusive cultural games and facilitate the development of socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities. The study also recommended collaboration between schools and the community to support inclusive cultural games.

Keywords: inclusive cultural games, early childhood development, socio-emotional development, disabilities

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Introduction

Incorporating inclusive cultural games into the ECD curricula offer a unique approach to fostering socio-emotional development among ECD learners with disabilities. Inclusive cultural games deeply rooted in community traditions, not only foster social interaction, emotional expression, and cultural understanding but also contribute to the development of essential skills such as empathy, respect, cooperation, and self-regulation (Smith, 2020). Such games are integral to learner's development, promoting community values. However, while inclusive cultural games have the potential to enhance socio-emotional development, their effectiveness hinges on appropriate selection and modification to accommodate the diverse needs of learners with disabilities (Garaigordobil et al., 2022). Without careful adaptation, these games can inadvertently create barriers leading to exclusion rather than inclusion. Most often ECD learners with disabilities in inclusive ECD settings, encountered barricades to fully participate in social activities due to limited accessibility and inadequate socio-emotional support (Saura & Zimmermann, 2021). For example, cultural games that require specific physical abilities would not be accessible to learners with mobility impairments unless modified accordingly. Additionally, cultural games that are not inclusive in design would not promote the intended social interactions, potentially hindering the development of socio-emotional skills among ECD learners with disabilities (Cavioni et al., 2017). International bodies such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and United Nations Conventions of the Rights of Children (UNCRC) underscore the right of all young learners to inclusive education, aiming for full development of human potential and a sense of dignity and self-worth (UNESCO, 2021). Sustainable Development (SDG 4) further emphasises the importance of the right to "inclusive and equitable quality education" through Early childhood education (UNESCO, 2017). In Zimbabwe, the National Early Learning Policy advocates for inclusive ECD programs that cater for the diverse needs of all learners including those with disabilities (MoPSE, 2023). Despite this emphasis, achieving truly inclusive educational environments remains a challenge, particularly for Early Childhood learners with disabilities. It has been noted that ECD teachers and learners prefer to engage in digital games over cultural games.

Several research studies on how inclusive cultural games promote socio-emotional development in ECD learners with disabilities have been conducted. Research done by Baradaran Bazaz et al. (2018) emphasised the role of culturally relevant play activities in enhancing socio-emotional development for learners with disabilities. It concluded that culturally based inclusive games could improve peer relationships, boost emotional regulation, and increase self-esteem for learners with disabilities by fostering group participation and social inclusion. In the same vein, research done by Ashar et al. (2024) which looked at how inclusive cultural games supported the development of socio-emotional skills among learners with disabilities, especially in diverse, multicultural classrooms. They revealed that inclusive cultural games were an effective way of teaching learners about empathy, perspective-taking, and social norms while promoting social cohesion and reducing stigma. It is against this background that this research sought to explore the use of Inclusive Cultural Games as a Medium for Socio-Emotional Development in ECD Learners with Disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

Despite inclusive cultural games being hailed for promoting socio-emotional development in ECD learners with disabilities, research has indicated that culturally rooted, inclusive games

were currently less recognised and increasingly being replaced by modern technological games (Nasrulloh et al., 2024; Saura & Zimmermann, 2021). The fact that inclusive cultural games are critical in promoting socio emotional skills during early years, lack of such games hindered ECD learners with disabilities to engage with peers and develop necessary skills. Therefore, this study sought to explore how inclusive cultural game could be used in daily class activities to help ECD learners with disabilities develop socio-emotional skills.

Research Objectives

This study sought to:

- i. Assess the influence of inclusive cultural games in promoting socio-emotional development in ECD learners with disabilities.
- ii. Establish challenges faced by teachers in integrating inclusive cultural games to promote socio-emotional in ECD learners with disabilities.
- iii. Suggest strategies enhancing effective inclusion of cultural games in promoting socio-emotional ECD learners with disabilities.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How do inclusive cultural games influence the development of socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities.
- ii. What are the challenges faced by teachers in integrating inclusive cultural games to promote socio-emotional in ECD learners with disabilities.
- iii. What strategies can be used to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive cultural games in promoting socio-emotional ECD learners with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

This research study was anchored on sociocultural theory and socio-emotional learning theory. These theories assisted in exploring the intersection of inclusive cultural games in promoting socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities. By weaving together these complementary theoretical perspectives, the proposed study explored the multifaceted ways in which inclusive cultural games could be used meaningfully by ECD teachers in inclusive environments to help ECD learners with disabilities develop socio-emotional skills within the selected district.

Firstly, the socio-cultural theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky emphasises the crucial role that cultural and social contexts play in shaping the learning and development of ECD learners through the following aspects Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, social interaction, and use of cultural tools (Sukabumi & Syekk, 2023). This theoretical lens underscored the importance of integrating culturally relevant content, pedagogical approaches, and learning environments. Of interest to this research is the aspects of social interactions and use of cultural tools to support the socio-emotional growth and identity formation of young ECD learners with disabilities (Sitti et al., 2024).

Inclusive cultural games inherently involved social interaction, offering learners with disabilities opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and learn from their peers. These interactions could promote the development of socio-emotional skills such as empathy, cooperation, respect, following rules, initiative taking, emotional intelligence and conflict

resolution (Mania et al., 2024). Through these games, ECD learners observe and model social and emotional behaviours, leading to enhanced socio-emotional growth. Cultural tools embedded in inclusive cultural games such as language, symbols, songs and play material that are essential for socio-emotional development. They mediate and shape how ECD learners interact with their environment and each other. These inclusive cultural games function as cultural tools that convey social norms, values, and practices. They provide a familiar and culturally relevant context for ECD learners with disabilities to develop and practice socio-emotional skills (Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019). By engaging in these games, they did not only learn the rules and strategies but also internalised socially accepted roles and behaviours.

To complement Vygotsky theory, was the Socio-emotional learning theory (SEL) by Jones and Bouffard which had a positive influence on a wide range of outcomes, including promoting emotional regulation in young learners, empathy and perspective-taking, building positive relationships and social skills, enhancing self-awareness and confidence, cultural relevance and identity formation, fostering resilience and coping skills (Cipriano & Mccarthy, 2023). Jones and Bouffard's SEL model emphasises the importance of integrating SEL skills into daily educational practices (Watson, 2013). Applying this model to this research, the focus was on using inclusive cultural games as suggested by Vygotsky to promote the development of socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities. These games would help ECD learners with disabilities identify different feelings, manage their emotions, and practice calming techniques to cope with negative emotions (Zieher et al., 2024). Cultural games integrated with the principles of SEL are key to an inclusive socio-emotional personality in an ECD learners with disabilities.

Review of Related Literature

Influence of Inclusive Cultural Games on the Development of Socio-Emotional Skills in ECD Learners With Disabilities

Socio-emotional development plays a pivotal role in both academic and well-being of every child. It is against this background that the domain needs to be developed in young learners including those learners with disabilities as early as ECD level. Cipriano and Mccarthy (2023) assert that recent studies have reported that social-emotional competence is a strong predictor of school readiness, academic achievements, and the psychological well-being of a child. In these studies, conducted in Asia, learners who are high in social-emotional competence were reported to have the ability to form positive relationships with others and regulate and express emotions in a culturally appropriate way. This calls for culturally, responsive ways to enhance such development of socio-emotional skills and one way to foster such skills is using cultural games.

Furthermore, traditional cultural games have profound influence in learners' socio emotional development as the games in ECD settings were noted to involve teamwork and some developed values in learners (Tarashika & Jairo, 2023). As learners will be playing in groups, chances are that even learners with disabilities will be engaged and their socio-emotional will be developed all because of the use of cultural games.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Integrating Inclusive Cultural Games to Promote Socio-Emotional in ECD Learners With Disabilities

While cultural games offer valuable opportunities for promoting socio-emotional development in Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners, their implementation for learners with disabilities presents unique challenges. ECD teachers face a variety of challenges when attempting to integrate inclusive cultural games into Early Childhood Development (ECD) curricula to promote socio-emotional growth among learners with disabilities.

One significant hurdle is the lack of training and resources necessary for adapting traditional cultural games to suit the diverse needs of learners with disabilities (Duncan, 2024). Cultural games often rely on physical movement, sensory engagement, or verbal communication, all of which may be inaccessible to learners with mobility impairments, sensory processing issues, or communication challenges (Mawere & Mawere, 2018). Teachers may struggle to find creative ways to modify these games to ensure they remain inclusive, engaging, and educational for all learners (Kong & Ereky-Stevens, 2023). Additionally, many teachers lack the specialised knowledge required to understand the specific developmental needs of learners with disabilities, which makes it difficult for them to assess and address those needs effectively during play. Research conducted by (Mpu & Adu, 2021) in South Africa revealed that the main factors contributing to teachers' struggle to use cultural games in an inclusive ECD classroom were inadequate training and a lack of knowledge and skills.

Another challenge is the tension between maintaining the cultural integrity of traditional games and ensuring that they are inclusive and accessible for learners with disabilities (Grant & Jones-Goods, 2016). Cultural games often have specific rules, roles, and ways of engagement that reflect the traditions and values of a community, and adapting these elements without diluting their significance can be complex. Research done by (Dewi, 2024) in Indonesia discovered that many ECD teachers do not have the required knowledge or skills to modify the cultural games to meet the diverse needs of learners. Teachers must strike a balance between respecting the cultural aspects of the game and modifying them to create a safe and welcoming environment for learners with diverse needs. However, research done by (Saminder Singh et al., 2023) in Malaysia found out that failure to strike a balance makes it difficult for the teacher to provide balanced support for each child. Moreover, there is often a lack of materials or tools that can help facilitate these adaptations, making it difficult to implement culturally relevant and inclusive activities on a consistent basis (Philpott et al., 2019). Teachers may also face resistance from parents or communities who perceive adaptations as a departure from tradition, adding a layer of complexity to their efforts.

Consequently, while cultural games hold significant potential for promoting socio-emotional development, the challenges teachers face in making them inclusive can hinder their effectiveness in fostering social interaction, empathy, and emotional regulation for learners with disabilities.

Strategies That Enhance the Effectiveness of Inclusive Cultural Games in Promoting Socio-Emotional ECD Learners With Disabilities

Research studies approve several inclusive strategies that can be used to mitigate challenges in promoting socio emotional development that are as follows, modification of cultural

games, provision of culturally relevant games, parental involvement, and teacher training (Tlili et al., 2022).

Culturally relevant games are key in promoting socio-emotional development of learners with disabilities. Jubhari et al. (2022) allude that learners with disabilities face several limitations that result in isolation and loneliness. Therefore, cultural relevant games often reflect learners' cultural backgrounds that are embedded in societal values and practices that allow learners with disabilities to develop social and emotional skills connected to practices and traditions (Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019). Exposure to such cultural games promotes vital social-emotional such as self-awareness, collaboration, empathy, and communication among peers (Sitti et al., 2024). For instance, findings of an American study Lai et al. (2023) show that incorporating cultural cooperative games in educational settings enhanced peer relationships, interaction, and reduced feelings of isolation among learners with disabilities. Situationally, culturally relevant games provide opportunities for learners with disabilities to practice several skills that include turn-taking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving in a way that resonates with their experiences, hence a relevant means to socio-emotional development. Apart from being culturally relevant, games need to be modified to address learners' socio-emotional needs.

Research indicates that modification of cultural games is vital in promoting socio-emotional development in ECD learners (Tlili et al., 2022). Such games are fun, engaging and culturally relevant to support the development of skills in learners with disabilities. A study done in South Africa by Giese et al. (2023) revealed that the introduction of data tools in early childhood development is an effective intervention strategy that promotes socio emotional skills in learners from diverse backgrounds including those with disabilities. Thus, teachers may develop several cultural game activities using computer applications. Therefore, through the modification of games, teachers create a platform that allows learners to develop socio-emotional skills. Teacher training brings change of teachers' negative attitude towards the integration of inclusive cultural games.

Teachers' knowledge on how cultural games promote socio-emotional skills of learners with disabilities has a significant role. Lyu et al. (2024) noticed that professionally trained teachers may create an inclusive and supportive learning environment by selecting games and activities that are culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate. For example, adapting the games to the individual learners' needs. This may involve simplifying rules, using adaptive equipment, or providing additional support. With the teacher overseeing the ECD classroom he or she can amend the rules of some cultural games that can develop socio-emotional skills in learners. Findings of a study by Gladh et al. (2022) indicate that special needs learners taught by trained teachers were guided to socialise with peers whilst those taught by untrained teachers lacked guidance and were attracted to toys instead of interacting with peers. These results were confirmed by (Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019) who found out that most Indonesian ECD teachers rarely used cultural games due to lack of knowledge, training, and negative attitude towards the use of cultural games. Thus, through training teachers may develop empathy and respect learners' cultures. Accordingly, teachers need training so that they can develop a positive attitude and implement interventions that promote socio-emotional development of learners with special needs through cultural games.

Another intervention strategy that can be used by teachers is parental involvement. A study by Roy and Giraldo-garcía (2018) revealed that parents offer a supportive environment both at home and in ECD settings. Furthermore, it shows that parental involvement enhances

social skills and reduces behavioural problems in learners with special needs. Thus, parents may reinforce, create consistent routines for learners to practice socio-emotional skills through cultural games played at home. Further emphasis is that parental involvement is key in supporting learners with disabilities to develop feelings of belonging and security that are usually a challenge to them (Liu et al., 2022). Situationally, collaborating with parents would make teachers learn socio-emotional skills valued by the society and be in the position to support learners with disabilities through culturally responsive games. Again, teachers may instil in parents an awareness of the importance of cultural games in managing their learners' emotions.

Methodology

This study was largely located within the interpretivist qualitative research approach. Interpretivists believe in understanding social phenomena and its complexities in its unique context (Lewis, 2024). This allows the researchers to have a bigger picture and deeper understanding of the topic under study (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Furthermore, in this research a case study design was adopted because it allowed researchers to explore and analyse three schools in one district in-depth (Swift, 2022).

Population and Sample

Population of this research was composed of qualified early childhood teachers from three primary schools in Matabeleland region Bulawayo Province Mzilikazi district. On average each school had 4 early childhood teachers giving us a population of approximately 12 teachers. Due to minimal time resources, a sample of 6 purposively selected teachers was used (Thomas, 2022). Purposive sampling was ideal for this research because it allowed researchers to select participants who had in-depth knowledge on the topic under study (Isaac, 2023). Teachers with most experience and attached to classes with learners that had disabilities were targeted. The aim was to collect data on strategies they used to integrate cultural games in the teaching and learning process including challenges they encountered. Furthermore, Mzilikazi district was chosen as it had many big schools that accommodated learners with disabilities in mainstream classes. This selection allowed researchers to explore how inclusive cultural games were used to support the development of socio-emotional skills among ECD learners with disabilities.

Research Instruments

To gather information from the participants, this research used semi-structured interviews and observations. ECD teachers were interviewed and observed on how they integrated inclusive cultural games in daily activities to promote the development of socio-emotional skills in children with disabilities (Fix et al., 2022).

Data Collection and Analysis

Before conducting research, all necessary groundwork concerning the initial processes was done. Permission to conduct research was sought from the Provincial Education Director. Furthermore, before conducting interviews with ECD teachers, researchers made their intentions known to the participants, convenient date and time were set. This procedure was very critical as it allowed the researchers to build a relationship with their participants (Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews were face-to-face and they took around 10 to 15 minutes long per

interviewee. Interviews were done between 2pm and 3pm when learners had dismissed, we choose this time to avoid disrupting classes. Data collected was presented and analysed in themes.

Data Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Results

Influence of Inclusive Cultural Games on the Development of Socio-Emotional Skills in ECD Learners With Disabilities

The researchers through interviews and observation noted that cultural games had a great influence on the development of children's socio-emotional skills. This was evidenced from the participants responses. *ECD A Teacher 1* had this to say:

Some cultural games are played as a team and enable children to be collaborative in nature even if they are not used to the game, what they only request to know are the game rules. Hence the children will start to play and collaborate for the benefit of the team. During play children tried to play by the rules for the benefit of individual recognition and group as well.

A Grade 1 teacher said, "Some learners with speech difficulties express themselves better through rhythm-based games. This non-verbal communication improves their peer relationships and emotional regulation."

From observations done in ECD B class, researchers observed that, when learners engaged in game called "*Ngubani iqhude elikhulu*" (who is the strong cock?). We observed that child with a physical disability was seated in a circle with peers. The game was adapted so that rest of the learners could participate using claps and vocal responses rather than physical movement. Peers spontaneously took turns helping the child clap in rhythm and encouraged their participation.

The data from interviews and observations in ECD classrooms highlight the positive impact of inclusive cultural games had on learners with disabilities, emphasising three interconnected themes. Participation in culturally familiar games enhanced social interaction and peer relationships and this significantly supports emotional development and self-esteem, boosting learners' confidence, promoting emotional expression, and reducing anxiety by instilling a sense of belonging and worth. Observations confirm that peers assisted ECD learners with disabilities without prompting, creating a collaborative and respectful environment, while learners with disabilities demonstrate visible signs of joy, comfort, and active engagement.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Integrating Inclusive Cultural Games to Promote Socio-Emotional in ECD Learners With Disabilities

Data collected from interviews and observation revealed several challenges that ECD teachers encountered in trying to use inclusive cultural games. Firstly, Grade 3 teacher indicated that; "Lack of resources is a big issue. We don't have enough materials or support staff to assist learners with special needs during these games. For example, visual aids or tactile materials they would need during the game."

ECD B Teacher 1 shared the following sentiments, “There’s limited training on inclusive practices in our teacher development programs. I often feel unsure how to modify a game appropriately for all learners.”

Grade 2 teacher had this to say, “some parents view inclusive cultural games as non-essential and do not support such activities.”

Grade 1 Teacher said,

I rarely engage my children in cultural games because they are time consuming, I have syllabi to cover therefore I cannot waste time by engaging in games. Furthermore, the timetable is congested with several activities that do not allow us to do so. Lastly, with high ratio of learners I even fail to cater for the few learners with disabilities that I have in my class.

From observations, researchers noted that most teachers struggled to support learners with disabilities because time constraints and curriculum. Teachers often have pressure to cover academic content, leaving limited time for games especially inclusive adaptations. Also, teachers have very high teachers-learner ratio and congested timetables.

Emerging Themes

The themes emerging from both interviews and classroom observations reveal a complex set of challenges that hinder the effective inclusion of cultural games for promoting socio-emotional development in learners with disabilities. A key issue is the lack of training and adaptive knowledge, as many teachers are willing but unequipped to modify traditional games or handle diverse learner needs effectively. This is compounded by inadequate resources and support, including limited access to teaching aides, assistive materials, and the strain of overcrowded classrooms, making individualized attention during play activities difficult. Additionally, managing inclusion in large, mixed-ability groups presents logistical and engagement challenges, often resulting in unintentional exclusion. A lack of peer sensitisation and parental involvement further alienates learners with disabilities, affecting their social confidence and emotional well-being.

Strategies That Enhance Effective Inclusion of Inclusive Cultural Games in Promoting Socio-Emotional ECD Learners With Disabilities

Data collected from interviews and observations on strategies used by teachers indicate different views from teachers. Some teachers were of the view that use of cultural games benefit learners with disabilities to develop socio emotional skills. *ECD B Teacher 1* responded by saying:

I use several strategies that include assigning roles that match with the child's disability. For example, a child with mobility difficulties, when others engage in vigorous cultural song activities like jumping and dancing the child claps to the rhythm. I also improvise play material for learners with disabilities.

Another *ECD A Teacher 2* said; “I always encourage learners to work in groups although I will not be targeting learners with disabilities.” Teamwork and cooperation are key in developing socio emotional skills in learners with disabilities. Although teachers engaged

learners in group activities, observations indicated that emphasis was not on accommodating learners with disabilities.

An outstanding response from a Grade 1 Teacher was noted, “Even though I do not use these games, I suggest that teacher ask parents to designing home-based versions of cultural games by so doing it will help them participate in their children’s education.”

This study findings further revealed that grade 1,2 and 3 teachers rarely engaged learners in cultural game activities. The above views on strategies used by teachers were validated by observations carried out with interviewed respondents. From observations it was noted that teachers rarely used inclusive games in daily activities.

Emerging Themes

Foster peer support and inclusive grouping. This strategy promotes peer buddy system to support learners with disabilities. Parental involvement is another theme that is emerging. Lastly, provide appropriate activities for learners with disabilities so that they do not get frustrated or bored during play time.

Proposed Framework to Enhance the Integration of Cultural Inclusive Games

The study recommended a framework to integrate cultural games into teaching, especially for learners with disabilities. Teachers should be empowered to adapt games that support active participation and socio-emotional development. Instructional strategies and assessments must be inclusive and culturally relevant. Learning objectives should reflect diverse needs and promote cooperation, communication, and emotional growth. Teachers should be encouraged to work with parents and communities, attending cultural events to better understand relevant norms and values. Technology could be used to document cultural games for educational purposes. Involving parents as resource persons strengthens teacher-parent relationships, supporting positive behaviour and ensuring cultural continuity for learners with disabilities.

Discussion

Number of studies acknowledge the use of inclusive cultural games in promoting socio-emotional skills of learners with disabilities (Sitti et al., 2024; Stančin et al., 2020). The development of children's emotions is embedded in their cultural context. Mcelelwa and Musarandega (2024) argue that disregarding cultural upbringing frustrates learners and hinders discourse in class, which intern interferes with the socio emotional development of learners with special needs. An American study by (Lai et al., 2023) showed that incorporating cultural cooperative games in educational settings enhanced peer relationships, interaction and reduced feelings of isolation among learners with disabilities. It becomes a challenge to effectively promote socio emotional development of learners with disabilities without the inclusion of cultural inclusive games. Early childhood teachers therefore need to appreciate cultural games played in Mzilikazi district, Bulawayo.

Mzilikazi early childhood teachers need to be equipped with knowledge and skills on how to integrate cultural inclusive games. Although several games contribute to socio-emotional development of children with disabilities, these should be culturally inclusive. Studies confirm that teachers who lack knowledge skills, rarely engage learners in culturally inclusive games (Saura & Zimmermann, 2021; Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019). Holistic

development of socio emotional is often compromised when teachers fail to select proper games. This could be due to lack of key socio emotional skills such as, self-awareness, collaboration, empathy, and communication among others. However, if teachers are equipped with necessary skills, they will be able to include culturally relevant games within the school curriculum leading to the development of socio-emotional skills in learners with disabilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The development of socio-emotional skills of learners with disabilities depends on many activities and among them are cultural inclusive games. Studies reveal that learners develop skills such as empathy, cooperation and self confidence among other skills. Despite, the crucial role played by the integration of inclusive cultural games, teachers struggle to engage ECD learners with disabilities in cultural games due to lack of knowledge and skills to modify the games, teaching and learning resources, negative attitude of parents and teachers towards cultural games and lack of parental involvement. Therefore, for support and intervention strategies, the study proposed the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should prioritise the integration of inclusive cultural games in mainstream classes through policy formulation.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should provide assistive devices or materials for learners with disabilities to fully participate in inclusive cultural games.
- Teachers' colleges must empower early childhood teachers with skills and knowledge on how to modify or adapt and integrate cultural games in the teaching and learning process.
- Policies that would make teachers and the community play a partnership role in promoting the integration of inclusive cultural games in schools need to be designed
- Provide in-service or staff development program for qualified teachers to empower them with knowledge and practical skills to modify games and other activities that enhance the development of socio-emotional skills in ECD learners with disabilities.

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Declaration of Using AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

We, the authors declare that we used AI tools to proofread and correct grammar in this document. These tools were employed to enhance the clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. All ideas, analysis, and conclusions presented are entirely our own. No part of the content was generated or re-written by AI beyond surface-level language corrections.

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