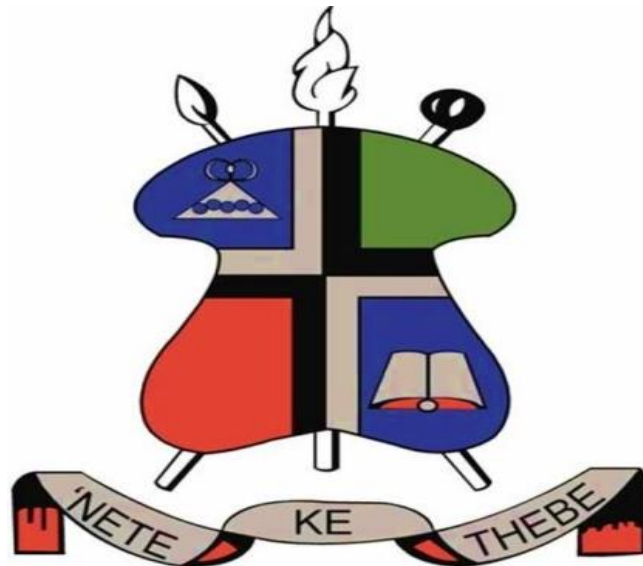


**TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY IN LESOTHO: A THEOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

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Roma 180

Declaration

I, Molise Stephen Koloko, declare that the work offered in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text, and has not been submitted either whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

.....

Signature

(MR MOLISE S KOLOKO)

.....

Date

Signed at Roma, Lesotho

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to all participants whose time and oomph made all this possible. This study is especially dedicated to my Sisters Neo Evodia and Mpho Anna Koloko for their support throughout this study, and my Brother, Mojalefa Jeremiah Koloko, who is my role model. Following in his footsteps, I was motivated to carry on with this study despite all the challenges I came across.

Abstract

This study explores the societal discourses of disability and its dominant beliefs and practices in the Basotho society. It challenges a long-standing notion among the Basotho that being disabled necessarily means being punished for moral failure, sick, vulnerable, in need of support from non-disabled counterparts. It investigates how dominant discourses of disability namely the moral, medical, and charity, marginalizes and discriminates on people with disability. On the contrary, through social construction theory, a narrative theory, twin-track approach, participatory approach, and mainstreaming approach, the study argues that the societal discourses about disability are socially constructed through historical and cultural practices. It is in these practices that disabled people have been and continue to be marginalized, discriminated, and even excluded from the mainstream society. The study has adopted qualitative methodology which included data collection through interviews as a primary data.

The study has challenged this situation by laying bare the societal discourses of disability in the Basotho society so that they could be seen for what they truly are and how they impact on the lives of people with disability. The study argued that disability does not mean inability. In this way, it invited the participants to talk about their experiences when their disability is made into those discourses and to also voice out what they wish could change and how they would benefit when they are dismantled. The study also highlighted how people with disability would benefit when the discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled. It was seen from people with disability that they do not want to be categorized under the moral, medical, and charity discourses of disability because that is not who they are. The study would conclude with highlighting that people with disability could benefit when they are included in the mainstream society when the discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled

Key Words

Theology of Disability, Contextual Theology, Mainstreaming Disability, Social Constructionism, Narrative Theory, Deconstructionism, People with Disability, Social Attitudes, Human Rights and Dignity

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVI	Australian Volunteer International
CDR	Centre for Disability Rights
HRW	Human Rights for Women
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
ISPD	The Importance of Self-advocacy for People with Disability
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations
LNFOOD	Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of Disabled
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NDRP	National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy
NMDS	National Manpower Development Secretariat
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVU	World Vision Uganda

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CHAPTER ONE: EMBARKING ON A NEW JOURNEY OF DISABILITY

1.0 Introduction and Background to Study

Disability is one of the broad phenomena, which can be approached from various entry points. For instance, one could talk about disability in the context of education as espoused by the UNICEF (2013:41), in family context by Murphy (1982) and in the health system by Report (2014). Within the religious frameworks, disability is examined through the notion of the image of God (Michael, 2012). In most cases, we talk about disability due to the exclusion of persons who possess some form of disability. That is, they are in the margins of the societal processes. From a theological perspective, this study explored how disability groups could be included in the mainstream society.

Some people have talked about mainstreaming, while others have put emphasis on their dignity and human rights. Femberk (2013:69); Groce and Kett (2014:10); Ortoleva (2012:75) Wapling and Downie (2012) mean that the issue of human rights of people with disability raises questions about how society is arranged. Society is arranged in such a way that people with disabilities are almost invisible; like they don't exist. As noted above, this study sought to explore how people with disabilities experience life in Basotho society.

According to Bruijn (2012:21-22); Heymann (2014:6); UNICEF (2013:11); Wapling and Downie (2012:21), the exclusion of people with disability from the mainstream society raises issues about societal attitudes. This means that mainstreaming of disability into a societal discourse is at the heart of this study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Given the experience I have with people in the Basotho society, I think our society is challenged. The exclusion of people with disability would highlight how the Basotho society is arranged. Until a critical thought is given on how our society is arranged, people with disability would remain in the margins of the mainstream society. Until the societal discourses about disability are critically analysed, people with disability would remain invisible. Life would go on as if such people don't exist. Leshota (2015) brought into focus the notion of disability into the mainstream. For this reason, this study sought to create awareness about the plight of people with disability among the Basotho. Following in the

footsteps, this study raised the following questions meant to help people with disability be in the mainstream society in Lesotho:

1.1.1 Which societal discourses about disability make the Basotho insensitive to the dignity and human rights of people with disability?

1.1.2 How can such discourses be challenged and dismantled?

1.1.3 How would people with disability benefit?

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In light of the above specific research questions, the study set out to achieve the following objectives:

1.2.1 Contribute to mainstreaming disability in the Basotho society by challenging exclusive societal attitudes towards people with disability in Lesotho.

1.2.2 Highlight the importance of human rights of people with different disabilities in our society.

1.2.3 Empower people with disability in Lesotho.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in uncovering the life of the disabled people in this country. Further worth considering is awareness about the experiences of such people who have been put in the margins of the society. It is going to explore factors that make people not to be so keen about people with disability.

This study challenges the dominant narrative of disability as a deficit or impairment, and instead proposes a narrative of disability as a form of diversity and difference. It also introduces a new conceptual framework for understanding disability that is based on the principles of equality, dignity, and justice. It would further challenge the existing societal discourses of disability by proposing a new understanding of disability that emphasizes inclusion and acceptance.

The study could also build on existing theoretical frameworks, such as the social constructionism, social model of disability, and critical disability studies, and offers a new

perspective that integrates the insights of these frameworks with a focus on the cultural and social contexts of Lesotho. It could contribute to existing theories of disability by highlighting the role of social factors in shaping experiences of disability.

The study is hoped to contribute to empirical knowledge by providing a new data and insights into the experiences and perspectives of people with disabilities in Lesotho. The data collected through this study will possibly be used to inform policy and practice aimed at promoting disability rights and inclusion in Lesotho and other similar contexts. The findings of this study will probably be used to challenge and revise existing assumptions about disability and to promote greater understanding of the complexities of disability experiences.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This section highlights the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study in the context of disability. Included are theories as social constructionism, narrative theory, twin-track approach and contextual theology. These are examined in turn below.

1.4.1 Social Constructionism

According to Subramanian (2010), social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that clutches that characteristics typically thought to be absolute and solely biological include gender, race, class, ability and sexuality. These are products of human definition and interpretation as shaped by cultural and historical contexts.

At the heart of social construction of disability lies the assumption that:

1.4.1.1 People with disability are useless; they cannot put anything to the table. As such, the Gospel of Luke 14 v12-14 says ‘when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return to be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For will be repaid at the resurrection of the just’.

1.4.1.2 People with disability are subjects of pity; relatives should be ashamed of them, and should hide them. For instance, recently we heard on the radio about the mother who had tied her child to the bed so that the child could not go anywhere or be seen because that would only bring shame and criticism to the mother. Therefore, this theory could be viewed as helping us to reflect critically on the experiences of people with disability.

1.4.2 Narrative Theory

By combining insights from social constructionism and narrative theory, this study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of disability. According to Ryan (2015:3-5), the narrative approach helps to understand the ways in which individuals and groups construct and share stories about their experiences. The author argues that the theory can shape people's identities, beliefs, and behaviours. As such, it can be used to challenge and transform societal discourses and practices.

1.4.3 Twin-track Approach

Building on narrative theory, we can also see the importance of twin-track approach. According to UNESCWA (2012), twin-track approach incorporates disability-sensitive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, providing disability-specific initiatives to support the empowerment of persons with disabilities. This approach could help to answer the question how we can mainstream disability in society. Based on the narratives of the disabled people who are participants in this study, this theory dovetails with the narrative approach.

1.4.4 Contextual Theology

Another framework of this study is contextual theology. Reding (2024) defines contextual theology as a theology which has responded to the dynamics of a particular context. In this study, theology is done in the context of disability.

According to Howard and Patton (2019:63), contextual theology is a theological perspective that recognises that religious beliefs, practices and doctrines are formed by the specific cultural, social and political contexts in which they ascend. It emphasises the need to understand and interpret religious teachings in light of the specific experiences and needs of individuals and communities.

This study is positioned within the discourse of practical theology. Osmer (2008:4) defines practical theology as an academic discipline that observes and reflects on religious practices in order to understand the theology indorsed in those practices and in order to consider how theological theory and theological practices can be more fully aligned, changed or improved.

For Bevans (2002: xvi), practical theology is a contextual theology which is a theology done in a contextual way; by paying special attention to context; disability in this case. He argues that doing contextual theology is taking... seriously the experiences of ...the present, that is, context (individual and social experience, secular or religious culture, social location and social change). Bowers (2014:63) suggests that practical theology bridges the gap between theology and practice by examining how religious beliefs and practices can be used to address social problems such as inequality and injustice. He argues that it emphasises the need for social transformation.

1.5 Preliminary Literature Review

This section reviews the literature on the subject of disability in terms of disability and human rights, social attitudes, educational system, human dignity and theology of disability.

1.5.1 Disability and Human Rights

Groce and Kett (2014:10); Lewis and Ortoleva (2012:75); Femberk et al. (2013:69) pointed to the issue of human rights of people with disability. In this view, people with disability are deprived of the right to marry or have families of their own, from playing an active part in the political process in their home countries and wider international development processes. Balmas et al. (2015:11-13); Groce et al. (2011:1499) took issue with their exclusion from the mainstream society, thereby being side-lined from exercising their fundamental right as citizens to vote in elections. Additionally, people with intellectual disabilities are often prohibited from voting as they are perceived as having ‘limited capacity to vote.’

According to Balmas et al. (2015:13); Penca (2013:11); and WHO and World Bank (2011:171), existing laws can cloud and discriminate against the political rights of people with disabilities. This means that people with disabilities are in the margins of the existing laws that allow one to vote.

1.5.2 Social Attitudes

The issue of disability and human rights brings us to the other issue of social attitudes. According to Groce and Kett (2014:5), negative attitudes of government officials, policy makers, community members, and even family members towards people with disabilities, result in their exclusion from the mainstream society. This means that people with disabilities are forced by the negative attitudes to be in the margins of the mainstream society.

In the same vein, Groce et al. (2011:1499); Groce and Kett (2014:10), 11; Burns et al., (2014: 39-41) explore that negative attitude can result in the disabled people's families keeping them hidden at home or sending them to certain institutions. The implication is that families that have a member with disability end up hiding them to avoid the negative attitudes and discrimination from the society. They are stigmatised for having a person with disability in their family.

1.5.3 Educational System

It is also worth considering the educational system concerning social attitudes. As the HRW (2012:10) observed, some parents of children with disabilities say that without school, they have no choice but to lock up or tie up their children while they go to work or complete daily chores. Studies across the world have also found that children with disabilities are less likely to go to school than children without disabilities, and are more likely to drop out. This implies that children with disabilities are not accommodated in schools; hence they are left at home while parents go to work.

Morgon Banks and Polack (2014:34); Trani et al. (2011:1200); WHO and World Bank (2011:205) argue that exclusion from schools denies children with disabilities a chance for social networking and community participation, as well as medical, social, nutritional and developmental resources, which can lead to isolation, decreased autonomy and lower quality of life. This means that when children with disabilities are isolated, they are deprived of an opportunity to network with other children at school.

1.5.4 Human Dignity

The issue of educational system brings us to the issue of human dignity. According to Waltke (2011:6), all disabled persons regardless the severity of their disabilities are bearers of God's image because their disabilities have not made them less than human. This means that, they must therefore always be treated with dignity and respect as he puts it:

God shapes every human being, including the malformed... Furthermore, the Bible contains no thought that some of the malformed creatures of a woman's womb are less than human or that the imago Dei is relative to some standard of normalcy. All are the image of God entitled to love and impartial justice.

It could be noted that people with disabilities would have manifested their full right to such dignity were the following provided: equal dignities due to all human beings by virtue of their ability to construct themselves, as Pico Della Mirandola (1996) maintained; Immanuel Kant's (2002) view as in by virtue of their competence to behave as moral independent agents; or if there were self-respecting members of society characterised by just principles of fair social co-operation, as posited the political philosopher, John Rawls (1972).

1.5.5 Theology of Disability

Having considered human dignity, it is also worth considering theology of disability. According to Creamer (2012); Eiesland (1994); Swinton (2011:274), disability theology is an effort by disabled and non-disabled Christians to understand and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ, God and humanity against the backdrop of the historical and contemporary experiences of people with disabilities.

Disability theology begins with the observation that experiences of impairment (physical, intellectual, psychological and social) are a significant and relatively unsurprising element of human life and as such are worthy of theological reflection. Thus, disability theology enables both people with disability and people without disability to engage the Gospel, God and humanity in the light of people with disability, thereby giving a voice to the diverse theological meaning of the human experience of disability (Creamer, 2012:339).

1.6 Methodology

This section presents the methodology used to carry out this study. Based on the qualitative research method, this study used the following tools: data collection method, primary data, and data analysis and interpretation.

1.6.1 Qualitative Research Method

Jurgens (2016) defines qualitative research method as a process of realistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. Adding, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:58) see a research design as the technique for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies.

1.6.2 Data Collection Methods

According to Kothari (2004), data collection is a systematic approach to precisely collect information from various sources to deliver insights and answers, such as testing a hypothesis or evaluating an outcome. Hence, the study will collect data from the social location of disabled people.

1.6.3 Primary Data

Kothari (2004:95) explains primary data as the data which are collected anew and for the first time, and thus, happen to be original in character. Thus, I collected data from differently abled people. In this study, the researcher used primary data focusing on primary methods such as questionnaires and interviews. A questionnaire is a method of gathering data which uses a set of questions for collecting data (Kothari, 2004). I used both open-ended questions and closed-ended questions when asking people with disability. This study did not intend to enquire theological questions upon disabled people however; the questions related to the identity and lived experiences underlying a theological enquiry.

According to Tegan (2022) interview is a qualitative research method that relies on asking questions in order to collect data. An interview involves two or more people, one of whom is the interviewer questioning, the other an interviewee, answering the questions. In this study, I interviewed people with disability because of being information-rich about the subject matter of disability. This study also focused on physical, sensory and intellectual disability.

1.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Drawing on Luther (2008) and Marshall and Rossman (1999:150), data analysis is described as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is the activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorising data that signifies a research for general statements among categories of data (Schwandt, 2007:6). In this study, I used social construction theory to analyse and interpret the data collected because disability is socially construed; it is the society's perceptions about disability and their attitudes that make up the term disability.

1.8 Chapters Overview

Chapter One introduced the study carried out for this topic, briefly discussing background to the study, and introducing the title *Towards mainstreaming disability in Lesotho: A theological perspective*. It dealt with the statement of the problem, viewing the Basotho society as arranged in such a way as excluding people with disability, as if they don't exist, they are in the margins of the mainstream society. Given these issues, the study aimed at highlighting the importance of human rights of people with disability and it challenges their marginalisation. Understanding these issues would help to uncover the life of the disabled people.

Considering the exclusive way of the Basotho society of the people with disability from the mainstream, I set out to explore the societal discourses of disability which make Basotho insensitive to the dignity and human rights of people with disability. Exploring this has had implications for the discourses of disability and the participants' own voice about such discourses of disability as in Chapter Two. The chapter entails the moral, medical and charity discourses of disability and highlights how they infringe on the dignity and human rights of people with disability.

Chapter Three considers how the discourses of disability in Lesotho could be challenged and dismantled. It deals with deconstructing and dismantling the discourses of disability that were explored in Chapter Two. Chapter Four examines how people with disability could benefit if the discourses of disability were challenged and dismantled. Also noted are the benefits of challenging and deconstructing the discourses of disability to people with disability. The fifth chapter concerns my personal reflections on the research and the conclusion of the entire study.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLORING SOCIETAL DISCOURSES OF DISABILITY IN THE BASOTHO SOCIETY

2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I stated the research problem explored in this study: that is how Basotho society is arranged, thereby disfavours people with disability. Such groups seem to be left in the margins and rendered invisible from the mainstream society. The mainstream society apparently conflates disability with morality, medical and charity discourses.

This chapter reveals how these discourses marginalise people with disability in the Basotho society. Exploring them will shed light on the role of stigma and discrimination against people with disability. Social construction theory was used to analyse and interpret such discourses, thus helping us to uncover social attitudes among the Basotho society towards people with disability and the theological implications of such. The information from the participants has helped to reveal the effect of discourses of disability among the Basotho society on the people with disability.

2.1 Discourse

Critical to the above-mentioned discourses is the meaning of the concept of discourse itself. Burr (2003:61-63) defines discourse as an instance of located language use which means that discourse is always according to a given situation. She emphasizes that discourse provides a context of meaning. She argues that language and social action are inseparably linked, and that the way we use language is not just an echo of our thoughts and feelings, but also shapes our social interactions and relationships. For her, language is not simply a tool for communication, but it is also a form of social action that helps to create and maintain social structures and relationships. Based on Foucault's view, 'discourses are practices which form the object of which they speak.' She emphasizes that discourses can be anything ranging from a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements that in some way together yield a particular version of events.

In the context of this study, discourse draws attention to meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements about disability. For instance, if we only speak about disability in terms of illness or tragedy, then that becomes the way people with disabilities are seen and understood. In this way, there is a relationship between the notion of discourse and social construction. For instance, one of the people living with disability said something about what charity discourse of disability means. He mentioned a case where

someone with disability was interpreted as a ‘beggar’ because he could not do anything for himself. The implication is that people with disability are dependent on other people for survival. The concept of ‘beggar’ precisely means that this person cannot do anything for himself. However, such conception is actually a construction of charity discourse.

As defined above, discourse is linked with language, both of which are considered inseparable. That is discourse is essentially language in use (Gergen, 1999). He argues that discourse is the way language is used to represent, construct and communicate meaning. So understanding the relationship between language and discourse is central to understanding how we use language to talk about the realities of life. For him, the implication is that social language shapes reality. Gergen’s conception points to how language is used in the context of disability which is the concern of this study. Language we use influences our understanding and the world.

Another notion of discourse entails that of social construction. As Burr and Penny (2017:1-2) noted, language is an influential tool in creating and reinforcing social meanings. That is, what is deemed to be defining discourses of disability is actually a product of language and this is what the concept of social constructionism is all about. In the case of this study this means that discourses of disability are a result of language in use. That is, for them, discourses do not simply describe the world, an event or a person as they are in themselves. What they do as a matter of fact is that they actually influence what we do and how we act. This means that discourses influence how we perceive the realities of life out there in terms of our perceptions. With this in mind, let us analyse the discourses of disability in the Basotho society which are moral, medical and charity as mentioned in the introduction. In what follows is the concept of moral discourses of disability.

2.2 Moral Discourses of Disability

The notion of moral discourses of disability has been prevalent throughout history, leading to discrimination and marginalisation of the people with disabilities. Put simply, those discourses are discriminatory because they construct disability in a way that people with disability are as if they are invisible. Berry (2022:22-23) defines morality as that natural aspect of human cognition and behaviour, and emphasises that it is shaped by an array of factors including culture, religion and personal experiences. Within this framework, the moral discourses of disability are not an inherent truth; rather, they are a socially constructed phenomenon. He further argues that morality is a set of principles that guides our values and

judgements for right and wrong. Berry's conception has implications for morality as a social construct which means that morality is moulded by social environment and norms we live in. In the case of this study, we concentrate on moral discourses of disability in the Basotho society.

Besides, Smith (2020:25) anchored the moral discourse of disability in the construction of the idea that disability is a result of moral failing or bad behaviour. That is, people with disabilities are accountable for their own condition, and that they should be 'fixed' or 'cured' in order to conform to the social norms. On this basis, Smith sees morality as a self-inflicted disability for not following the norms and regulations of Basotho culture.

Also noted is Brock's (2021:134) observation that the moral discourses of disability have often resulted in dangerous views that link disability with suffering, punishment and moral failure. He argues that historically they have played a substantial role in shaping societal attitudes towards disability. Bogart (2021) added saying not only can this perceived punishment pose social barriers and perpetuate damaging stigma to the individual with disability, but it also targets the whole family, often leading to acts of oppression and prejudice from members of the surrounding community. In the context of Lesotho, the harmful attitudes manifest themselves in this way the Basotho recognise disability as a result of punishment to a person with disability.

In the same vein, in the context of Lesotho, Retief and Lets'osa (2018:2), highlight that disability is associated with punishment from God for witchcraft and sinning. They argue that in this sense, disability, stigma, and discrimination coexist because of underscoring witchcraft. Within this framework, Amponsah-Bediako (2013:127) offers its major impact on the dignity and human rights of people with disabilities. For him, the model's focus on moral 'blame' can lead to the idea that people with disabilities are less deserving of human rights and dignity. It follows that morality is a social construct that people with disabilities are sinners less deserving human rights and dignity.

Central to the Sesotho discourses of disability is understanding that links disability with punishment from God as confirmed by the interviewees. One of them cited a long history in the Basotho society which viewed being disabled as a curse by the gods and seen as unworthy of normal life. She stated the perception of disability still as persisting to date, leading to exclusion and marginalisation of people with disabilities. Their families have been shamed for having a child with a disability, something which impacts negatively on their human

rights and dignity. Chitereka (2010:83) thus views disability as a curse from the gods and a source of shame for families always lies at heart of morality discourse. He emphasises how it stigmatises and marginalises people with disabilities, denying them their right to dignity and non-discrimination.

One of the people living with disability reported something about moral discourses of disability. She mentioned a case where someone with disability was interpreted as '*seqhoala*' because culturally people who have not observed cultural norms get punished, resulting in disability which is seen as a moral discourse. Therefore, disability is a result of not keeping up with cultural norms. The concept of '*seqhoala*' precisely means that this person is physically disabled, but this concept is actually a construction of a moral discourse of disability.

2.2.1 Theological Implications of Morality Discourses of Disability

As seen above, the central concept of moral discourses of disability ties the concept with cultural morality and cultural morality, now put under the spotlight of theological reflection. As discussed in the forgoing section, they are sometimes justified through the way people think about theological principles. For instance, some religious texts and teachings may suggest that disability is the result of sin or divine punishment. (John 9:1-3). This type of discourse can lead to discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities on the basis on religious beliefs. Brock (2021:123) also shares the sentiments of John that disability is actually a punishment for wrongdoing or a sin. This belief can be traced back to the biblical passages like Leviticus 21:16-23, which states that people with physical disabilities are 'unclean' and 'unworthy of worship'. This view has been used to justify the exclusion of people with disabilities from religious institutions and communities, and has also been used to justify their mistreatment and oppression. Brock highlights this view as harmful, needing to be rejected in favour of a more inclusive and loving view of people with disabilities.

The intersection of morality and disability raises important questions about the value and worth of people with disabilities. According to Nickerson (2017:55-56), the moral discourses of disability can be damaging by leading to the view that people with disabilities are lesser or in need of safety. He suggests that this interpretation stems from a theological framework that fails to acknowledge the dignity and humanity of people with disabilities, which is harmful both to individuals and to society as a whole.

In the context of Lesotho this means that the Basotho are treated as if they are lesser than other people. One of the people living with disability said something about morality discourses of disability. She mentioned a case where someone with disability was interpreted as the 'chosen' so that the power of God may manifest in him. What this means is that disability is a result of being 'chosen' to show the power of God.

For this participant, disability is just a social construct meaning that people with intellectual disabilities have the same inherent dignity as everyone else. Creamer (2015:11) argues that this dignity should be recognised and respected and that people with intellectual disabilities should be treated as full and equal members of society. Creamer sheds light on the plight of disabled people in Lesotho in terms of their human rights and dignity.

2.3 Medical Discourses of Disability

Having considered morality discourses of disability in the Basotho society, there is yet another discourse which constructs disability in the negative ways. They need our consideration and that is medical discourses of disability. As Retief & Lets'osa (2018:2) posited, medical discourse of disability has a long history from mid-1800s onwards and has assumed power and begun to gradually replace the moral discourse of lieu of significant advances in the field of medical science. That is, there was a shift in understanding of disability as a moral discourse to the medical discourse. Merriam-Webster (2024) defines a medical concept as that which is concerned with the science or practice of medicine as used in medical treatment. This means that the medical concept relates with disability in that medical professional strive to cure people with disability because they believe that they are sick, hence the practice of medicine on people with disabilities.

Davis (2021:17-18) also defines the concept of medical as the practices, beliefs and theories that are related to health and healing. This includes the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, as well as preventative measures and wellness programmes. He further asserts that the medical discourses of disability emphasise a person's deviation from the 'normal' or 'typical' and views disability as something that should be fixed or cured. For him, this approach often ignores the social, political and environmental factors that contribute to disability, leading to dehumanisation and discrimination of people with disabilities. From Davis' perspective, a person is disabled, that is interpreted as having deviated from the 'normal', thus having to be cured.

According to Evans (2022:39-40), there is a relation between the concept of medicine and disability in that medicine refers to the ways in which medical practices and beliefs nature the experiences and understandings of people with disabilities. Evans suggested that disability is constructed through the medical practices and beliefs that when people with disabilities are not cured, the medical professional belief that they have disability.

Bennet and Volpe (2018:121) highlight that the medical discourse of disability tends to focus on an individual's medical needs, raising concerns for a person's pain and desire to enable a person to participate actively in society. While Jenson, (2018:52) and Mander (2022:345) acknowledge the validity of the medical discourses of disability, they caution that the medical discourses of disability focus on impairment and ignore the experiences and knowledge of people with disabilities and their families.

During the conversation with one of the people living with disability in Lesotho, I gathered something about a medical discourse of disability. He mentioned a case where disability was interpreted as something to be 'cured' because it deviates from what is considered 'normal'. The concept of 'cure' precisely means to bring back the state of an individual to 'normal'. What this means is that disability is perceived as something that is 'abnormal' and needs to be changed. However, this concept is a construction of medical discourse of disability.

According to the LNFOD (2020:40), medical discourses of disability see the impairment as the problem. This means that it focuses on the impairment as the obstacle, seeking cure to improve an individual's life to fit into society. For instance, students from St Benedict and St Catherine's were given devices used for recording which helps them to remove communication barrier at school (MoafrikaFM, 2023). In this view, the impairment as the problem, however, is negative as it violates the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. In this light, we could further reflect on the theological implications of the medical discourses of disability.

2.3.1 Theological Implications of Medical Discourses of Disability

Having explored the theological implications of moral discourses of disability, I would like to reflect on the theological implications of medical discourses of disability. Hirshbein (2021:71-72) offered the concept of medical discourse of disability as a theological discourse denoting the ways in which religious beliefs, values and perspectives shape the language, practices and assumptions of medicine. This means that the theological assumptions of medical professionals influence their practices.

According to Creamer (2008:12), the medical discourses of disability focus on what the body is not able to do, with such labels as invalid or cripple deviation from the norm. What Creamer says resonates with the response by one student at National University of Lesotho in the interview about his disability. For instance, when I engaged with one participant who is visually impaired, he told me that while he was still a student at National University of Lesotho, one lady approached him and asked him why he could not go to the shopping complex alone while other visually impaired students could do.

In the same vein, Eiesland (1996: 76-77) argues that the medical discourse of disability has often been based on a theological understanding of the 'normative' body. Within this framework, people with disabilities are seen as 'defective' because of not conforming to the 'ideal' or 'normal' body. Parens (2006:6-7) shares the sentiments of Eiesland arguing that the medical and theological discourses of disability are linked by mutually emphasising 'normalization' or the idea that people with disabilities should conform to a certain standard of 'normal' behaviour or appearance.

Another aspect to consider according to Dreyer (2011:63-64) is that the medical and theological discourses of disability share a number of common features, including the idea that people with disabilities are in need of 'healing' or 'fixing'. She argues that these discourses often place emphasis on the idea of 'redemption' through suffering.

The conflation of medical and theological discourses of disability that sustain each other as first seen above raises serious theological issues. First, the view that people with disabilities are not normal and need to conform to the standard of normal people Bennet and Volpe (2018:121) in Section 2.3 clashes with what God made in the beginning in Genesis 1:31. He created everything and beheld it was good. Second, the medical discourses focus on the idea of healing and curing, which suggests that people with disabilities are somehow broken and needs to be fixed in order to be accepted. Lastly, viewing people with disabilities as inherently unhealthy, needing medical intervention is not only inaccurate, but it is also dehumanising. That is, it reduces people to their medical condition rather than seeing them as full human beings with multiple identities and complex lives.

Murphy's (2015:1-2) argument is that the medical discourses of disability can lead to a 'reductionist' understanding of the human person, where a person is seen only in terms of their body and its functions. This means that it can lead to a 'reification' of the body, where the person is reduced to their physicality and this can be damaging to a person's spiritual life

and relationship with God. What Murphy provided has implications for how people perceive others with disability in the context of Basotho.

While Anderson (2014:14-15) acknowledges the validity of Murphy's point, he cautions that the medical discourses of disability can lead to a 'dualistic' understanding of the person, where the body is seen as detached from the soul or spirit. This dualism, Anderson argues, can lead to a devaluation of the physical body and its needs. He further argues that the medical discourses of disability often neglects the physical needs of people with disabilities, focusing, instead, on the 'spiritual' or 'immaterial' aspects of the person. For him, this can have a dehumanising effect on people with disabilities, who may feel that they are not important or worth addressing. Therefore, he suggests that we should rather adopt a 'corporeal' or 'incarnational' understanding of the person, which sees the body and soul as inseparably linked.

In Carter and Taliaferro's (2014:36-37) opinion, the theological implication of the medical discourse of disability is that people with disabilities are seen as 'broken' or 'defected' in the eyes of God. For them, this can lead to feelings of shame, guilt and self-blame among people with disabilities. Additionally, the medical discourses of disability can lead to a focus on 'curing' or 'fixing' people with disabilities rather than on acceptance and inclusion. What Carter and Taliaferro imply is that this can lead to people with disabilities being pressured to be 'cured' or 'made whole' in order to be accepted by religious communities.

In addition, we could consider the medical discourses of disability to be causing a sense of 'otherness' or 'separation' from God among people with disabilities, the feature which can be harmful to a person's spiritual and religious development. Nickerson (2017:55-56) shares the sentiments of Carter and Taliaferro arguing that the medical discourse of disability has led to a 'triumphalist' view of disability, where people with disabilities are seen as needing to be 'overcome' or 'healed' in order to be considered fully human. He argues that it is a harmful and damaging view of disability. Swinton (2014:101) disagrees with this view, stating that the 'fixing' approach to disability can lead to a reductive and dehumanising view of people with disabilities. The scholar also argues that a more holistic and time-based approach allows us to recognise the full humanity and dignity of people with disabilities. This includes their spiritual, emotional and social needs, as well as physical needs. He suggests that this approach is consistent with teachings of Jesus, who would emphasise the importance of patience and compassion.

For Smit (2016:47), the idea of miracle healing where God is seen as miraculously curing a person of their disability can be seen as a way to bring a person closer to God, despite being a source of pressure to endure the disability. Smit implies that people should back to God for healing. According to Blum (2014:129), the medical discourses of disability often fail to take into account the diversity of the human experience. He highlights that the Bible teaches us to see all people as being made in the image of God, regardless of their physical or mental abilities. This means that the Christian faith teaches us to value all people as equally deserving dignity and respect including people with disabilities.

2.4 Charity Discourses of Disability

Just as the discourses of disability were explored in the foregoing section, I would like to continue with the charity discourse of disability. Doehring (2018:89) defines charity as a benevolent act of giving to those in need, something which has often been associated with disability because people who are in need of help are people with disabilities. Edelman, (2020:389) also defines charity as the giving of time, money, or other resources to those in need. Donnelley (2021:99) acknowledges the work of Edelman and continues to see charity as indeed a form of response to disability. This means that there is a relationship between charity and disability in that, people with disabilities who cannot do anything for themselves receive acts of kindness and support from those who are able to do things and take care of themselves.

The need to cure people with disabilities as discussed in the foregoing section, has led to feelings of compassion for people with disabilities. According to Becker (2013:72-73), what is considered straight in charity discourse of disability is that people with disabilities are victims of circumstances who should be pitied. For the author, this view fails to spot the agency and autonomy of people with disabilities, resulting in a lack of respect for their dignity and worth. Becker's view implies awareness-raising about the agency and autonomy of the people with disability.

According to the LNFOD (2020:41), disability is seen as a problem in a person; they are seen as unfortunate, dependent and helpless. As such, people assume that people with disabilities cannot add anything to the society, thus considering them to be long-term recipients of welfare and support. One of the people in the Basotho society said something about meaning of charity discourse of disability. She mentioned a case where someone with disability was interpreted as '*sono*' because she cannot do anything for herself, only having to beg for

survival from other non-disabled people, that is why disability is seen as a charity discourse. What this means is that disability makes a person vulnerable and helpless. The concept of '*sono*' means that this person is in need of help from other people to survive, and this could also impact on the human rights and dignity of people with disabilities. When people with disabilities are treated as less human, unfortunate, and people who cannot do anything for themselves, such labels could violate their right to non-discrimination and equality and self-worth and lower their dignity.

Nyota (2012:437) provided an analysis of the way that disability is understood and experienced in Lesotho. He argued that the charity discourse of disability is based on the idea that people with disabilities are in need of charity and support from others. That is, it is rooted in the idea that people with disabilities are 'less than' others and that they are not capable of being fully independent. Within this framework, the Basotho charity discourse of disability has a negative impact on people with disabilities.

In the same vein, Molapo (2014:14-15) explored the way Basotho culture shapes the understanding of disability. He argued that the Basotho charity discourses of disability is based on a cultural discourse of disability that underlines the idea of people with disabilities as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of assistance. He further argued that this discourse is based on categorised understanding of disability, which positions people with disabilities as 'lower' than others. For him, this cultural discourse is harmful, and needs to be replaced with a more inclusive and understanding discourse. Molapo sees classification of people with disabilities according to their disability as dehumanising to them.

Lebohang (2015:70) highlights that charity discourses of disability can be seen in the ways in which people with disabilities are often treated as 'objects' of charity. He argues that this is based on the idea that people with disabilities are seen as 'less than' and 'needy' and that they need to be 'helped' or 'cared for'. For him, this discourse often leads to people with disabilities being seen as 'pitiabile'. As such, it can make them exploited or taken advantage of. For instance, one of the people with disabilities told me that people with disabilities in the township of Maseru, who live by begging people, are often victims of abuse. We should thus continue considering the theological implications of the charitable discourses surrounding disabilities in light of the debates in this section.

2.4.1 Theological Implications of Charity Discourses of Disability

Looking into what has been said above; one would note the personal experiences of charity for helping us to understand the theological implications of charity discourses of disability. As Doehring (2018:17-18) observed, charity discourse of disability is often seen as a theological discourse of disability as it is rooted in religious teachings about the significance of charity and helping those in need. She argues that it views people with disabilities as ‘objects’ of charity, to be pitied and cared for, rather than as people in the society with rights and agency. What Doehring implies is that people with disabilities are perceived as not rights holders.

Rosile (2020:36-37) shares the sentiments of Doehring arguing that the charity discourse of disability is rooted in Christian theology, and that it has a harmful impact on the way people with disabilities are viewed and treated in a society. For instance, one visually impaired participant told me that other students at school would make fun of her, giving her food as if she is a charity case.

Eiesland and Batchelder (2015:97) argue that theological discourses of disability often emphasize the idea of ‘redemption’ through suffering. They argue that this can be used to justify acts of charity, as people with disabilities are seen as ‘worthy’ of help because they are suffering. However, this can lead to a paternalistic view of people with disabilities, and it can lead to exploitation of the people with disabilities, that is ‘worthiness’ of help. In this framework, this can reinforce the idea that people with disabilities are ‘less than’ others and does not allow for a more complex understanding of disability.

While Weise (2016:175-176), acknowledges the validity of the idea of ‘redemption’ through suffering, and ‘worthy’ of help because of their ‘pity-inducing’ suffering, she cautions that it can be harmful to people with disabilities, as it reinforces the idea that they are ‘less than’ others. She argues that this discourse denies such people their agency and individuality. Instead, they are seen as objects of pity or charity, rather than as complex individuals with their own desires and goals. For her, this can lead to people with disabilities being demoralised or taken advantage of, as they are seen as ‘projects’ for others to ‘fix’ or ‘help’.

In Mallet (2014:39), there is a relationship between charity discourse and theological discourse of disability. That is, the two discourses share a number of underlying assumptions, including the idea that people with disabilities are in need of help from others, and this help is

a form of moral obligation. He argues that both discourses often rely on the idea of 'pity' as a motivator for helping people with disabilities.

The conflation of charity and theological discourses that sustain each other as first seen above could raise theological issues. Nickerson (2017:45-46) puts that the charity discourses of disability often centre on concepts of benevolence and charity. Also, the idea that people with disabilities are lesser than others and need to be saved by those who are more fortunate, can lead to power imbalance making people with disabilities see themselves as less deserving God's love and attention than the able-bodied people. This suggests that people with disabilities are in need of help and support from others, often in the form of financial donations or other forms of assistance. We have seen it in the story of Peter healing a beggar in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. (Acts 3:6) From theological perspective, this may raise questions about the role of charity in creating a just and an equitable society. It may also raise questions about the motivations behind charitable giving and the responsibility of individuals to help those in need. For instance, in the Christian tradition, the biblical story of the Good Samaritan is often cited as a discourse of charitable giving. In this story a man who is beaten and left for death on the side of the road is helped by a Samaritan, despite the fact that Samaritans were generally not respected by the Jews at the time. This story suggests that we have a responsibility to help those in need, regardless of our personal feelings or beliefs.

Wildman (2011:162) argues that charity discourses of disability are often seen as a way to show compassion and kindness to people with disabilities and when look at the author's saying, charity discourses of disability with theological discourses of disability may create problem for the participants. The theological implications that create power imbalance, where people with disabilities are seen as passive recipients of charity, rather than active participants in their own lives could have been concealed here.

2.5 Participants' Own Lived Experience of Discourses of Disability

Having explored the discourses of disability in the foregoing sections, I would like to highlight how those discourses have affected their lives.

Peek (2022:100-101) tells us about the importance of participation. In this section, I want to concentrate on the stories from the people with disabilities, hence their interpreting their experiences of the discourses we have just explored in the foregoing sections. As Warburton and Draper (2022:31-32) emphasised, they give us information about their lives, that is, an

idea of what it is like to be them. In what follows are three stories that represent many stories that I have heard.

Listening to one local radio, heard one of the people with disability, the visually impaired say, *'ever since I was born, I have never seen the sun but for this policeman to say that I act as if I am special is too much. I only know the sun through its presence by feeling warm and I could tell when it is in the clouds, so for people to discriminate against me on the basis of my disability saying that I want special treatment is too much.'*

According to the moral discourses of disability, this story could mean that people with disability are accountable for their disability. This could mean that their disability is looked at as an individual problem. Further suggested is that they seek special treatment and casts themselves as selfish and manipulative rather than as individuals with genuine rights and needs.

When saying this, the person was actually implying that because of his disability, people construct their disability as an individual problem, something that requires a special treatment. This could mean that this person is sick because only sick people require special treatment like those in an intensive care unit (ICU). The medical discourses of disability focus on deficiencies and abnormalities of an individual. This means that they focus on what is wrong with them rather than on societal barriers and discrimination that they may face.

According to the charity discourses of disability, this story could mean that people with disability are seen as people who need special treatment. This reflects the charity discourse of disability in which they are seen as people who should be pitied all the time. This story implies that they are not seen as capable or deserving equal treatment; rather, they are seen as people who should be grateful for any assistance they receive.

During an interview with one of the people with disabilities, when I asked about his experience with disability and how he felt it, he said, *'I face a major challenge every time when I need to access services that I need because of being deaf. Everywhere I go there are no sign language interpreters, not even the service providers know my language. For instance, I know a student who had to hire someone who would be their interpreter at a higher institution. This means that her education was dependant on a sign language interpreter, meaning when there is no sign language interpreter, there is no education for her.'*

According to the moral discourses of disability, this story constructs disability as an individual problem. This means that people with disabilities are depicted as people who are responsible for overcoming any barriers they encounter, without expecting society to accommodate them.

From the medical perspective on disability, this could mean that his disability is evidence of his impairment of deficiency. That is, his request for sign language interpreters might be seen as a symptom of his disability rather than as a legitimate need for communication access. The author sees such a barrier as interfering with his rights in every respect.

For the charity discourses of disability, this story could view people with disability as constructed as people who are dependent on other people for their survival. In this way, they are seen as less than other people, something which deprives them of their dignity and rights.

Another participant interviewee said, *'as a young boy with a disability in the Basotho society, I feel like I am being denied the opportunity to fully participate in my community and to be recognized for who I am. I have been told that I cannot undergo the traditional rites of passage that are an important part of becoming a man in our culture, because of my physical limitations. I feel excluded and left out, as if I do not belong. It is difficult to cope with the discrimination and stigma that come with disability, especially when it prevents me from fully engaging with my culture and traditions.'*

When asked, the young man actually implied that people believe when a person is disabled, it is because of the moral failure that he is being punished with disability. For this reason, he is not worthy to undergo what boys go through in order to become men because of having already failed one of the teachings from initiation school which is that of morality. The implication was that people construct disability as a negative, unfortunate circumstance that should be avoided; hence people from initiation school deny him the opportunity to participate in traditional ceremonies.

According to the medical discourses of disability, this story could mean that the boy is sick and is not eligible to perform cultural ceremonies because of his physical limitation. The Basotho could thus be tying disability with being sick and not capable to perform certain duties that a man would do that is why he was marginalised not included in the education that would teach him how to be a man. This boy is actually saying that people see disability as an individual problem rather than a product of societal barriers and discrimination. He is actually

implying that people with disability are seen as objects of pity or charity rather than as full members of society with rights and abilities. This could mean that they are fundamentally different from and inferior to people without disabilities.

On this issue Nickerson (2017:45-60) highlight the idea that people with disabilities are lesser than others and need to be saved by those who are more fortunate, the feature which can lead to power imbalance making the people with disabilities see themselves as less deserving God's love and attention than the able-bodied people.

2.6 Summary

In concluding this chapter, I would like to highlight the main arguments raised in the discussion. This chapter dealt with societal discourses that marginalise people with disability in the Basotho society. Emerging from this exploration is the concept of morality discourses of disability which perpetuates stigma and discrimination towards people with disabilities. It has been argued that disability is a punishment from God for witchcraft and sinning. For this reason, this study views disability as associated with an individual problem for not following the commandments of God.

In the same vein, in the context of Lesotho, this chapter has argued that there is a relation between disability, sin and witchcraft. This means that disability is a result of sinning and witchcraft brought upon an individual.

In the Basotho society, disability is also seen as a form of bad luck or curse leading to people with disabilities being treated as outsiders. The theological implication of this discourse is that people with disabilities are excluded from the society and religious life. These make them face major challenges such as attitudinal barriers which hinders them from full participation in a society.

As I have highlighted in the arguments above, alongside the moral discourses of disability, there are also the medical discourses of disability in the Basotho society. The main takeaway from the discussion is that people see disability as a problem in an individual, considering it be cured or fixed. This suggests that people with disability are sick.

In this discourse, the main focus was on impairment rather than on the experiences and knowledge of people with disabilities. It was argued that the medical discourses of disability see impairment as the problem. It also focused on the impairment as the obstacle and sought

to cure or improve individuals to fit into society. The theological implication of this discourse emphasised normalcy and presumed a stable vision of the body against all people, especially against whom the disabled could be assessed.

In the foregoing section, we saw disability as a problem in a person, having to be corrected through medical interventions. In this last part, which is the charity discourses of disability, it was argued that the charity discourses of disability could lead to a paternalistic view of people with disabilities, where they are seen as helpless and dependent on others for support. That is, this view, failed to recognise the agency and autonomy of people with disabilities, resulting in a lack of respect for their dignity and worth.

The main takeaway from this discourse that resonates with the medical discourses of disability in the foregoing part is that the problem is seen in an individual; they are seen as unfortunate, dependent, and helpless. This means that they cannot contribute anything to the society; hence they become long-term recipients of welfare and support.

In the context of Basotho, as noted earlier, the charity discourses of disability can be seen in the way in which people with disabilities are often treated as ‘objects’ of charity. This is based on the idea that people with disabilities are seen as ‘less than’ and ‘needy’ and that they need to be ‘helped’ or ‘cared for’. I have argued that this discourse often leads to people with disabilities being seen as ‘pitiable’, and it can lead to their being exploited or taken advantage of.

It was also argued that the theological discourses of disability often emphasize the idea of ‘redemption’ through suffering which can be used to justify acts of charity, as people with disabilities are seen as ‘worthy’ of help because they are suffering. However, it has been argued that this can lead to a paternalistic view of people with disabilities, also leading exploitation of people with disabilities, making them worthy of help. The authors argued that this theological discourse reinforces the idea that people with disabilities are ‘less than’ others, thus overlooking complexity of disability. In this framework, the implication is that people with disabilities are somehow ‘lesser’ than others and should be ‘saved’ or ‘helped’ by the able-bodied.

It was argued that this discourse, just seen above, lead to a ‘superiority’ complex among able-bodied people, who may see themselves as deserving God’s love and attention over people with disabilities. In this view, such a discourse should be rejected in favour of a more

inclusive and loving view of disability. It is these three discourses which have formed an interdependent opposite against people with disability in Lesotho as demonstrated in this study.

The participants' voice contributed to this study by making it more credible and reliable through their first-hand experience in living with disability. Of great importance is the exposition of experiences of people with disabilities, highlighting their feelings, rights and dignity regarding the societal discourses of disability. The main takeaway from the participants is the significance of social construction theory in understanding and challenging dominant narratives of disability, dependency and cure. These narratives shape our view on disability, identity construction and perpetual inequalities. The social construction theory emphasises the need for intersectional and justice-centred approach that challenges ableist structures and empower people with disabilities.

CHAPTER THREE: CHALLENGING THE SOCIETAL DISCOURSES OF DISABILITY IN THE BASOTHO SOCIETY

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter centred around the discourses of disability in the Basotho society. We discussed how such discourses marginalise people with disabilities in terms of their rights and human dignity, and how they relegate them to margins of the mainstream society. In this chapter, I want to challenge those discourses for their negative impact on everyday lives of people with disabilities in our society. They often lead to inaccurate and damaging attitudes that reinforce their exclusion and marginalisation. Hence, it is very important to explore different ways of challenging them in view of dismantling them in our Basotho society. The aim is to uncover how such discourses are discriminatory and undermine the human rights and dignity of people with disabilities in our society.

The narrative theory has been used to deconstruct and dismantle the dominant discourses of disability in the Basotho society as explored in the previous chapter. We have seen how such discourses are oppressive, discriminatory and stigmatising people with disabilities in specific and general ways. Deconstructing them amounts to unleashing the voice of the people with disabilities, to speak for themselves from their lived experiences of disability. Such a voice is captioned by the slogan 'nothing about us without us'.

3.1 Deconstruction

Understanding the notion of deconstruction itself is necessary in order to comprehend the discourses mentioned above. The Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines deconstruction as the act of breaking something down into its distinct parts in order to understand its meaning, especially when this is different from how would have hitherto been understood.

Burr (2003:18) defines deconstruction as a self-evident example of social constructionism, since it is the structures of socially shared language that are seen as producing phenomena at both the social and personal levels. For her, the way that discourses build the experience can be examined by ‘deconstructing’ texts taking them apart and showing how they work to present a particular vision of the world, thus rendering it challengeable.

In Culler’s (2020:63-64) view, deconstruction is a philosophical and critical theory developed by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. He argues that it is a method of analysing texts and cultural artefacts that challenges traditional assumptions about meaning, truth and knowledge. He views it as aiming to discover the instability and contradictions inherent in language and discourse, and showing how texts are shaped by social, historical and political contexts. Caputo (2022:97) defines deconstruction as a philosophical approach that challenges traditional notions of truth, knowledge and identity. He argues that deconstruction exposes the instability and diversity of meaning in texts, and shows how language and discourses are shaped by power, ideology and cultural context. Also noting narrative theory within social constructionism, I interviewed people with disabilities about their experiences of living with disabilities. From their stories, I could pick the discourses that shape their lives in the Basotho society. Those discourses are often derogatory marginalising and excluding a disabled person from the mainstream society.

3.2 Deconstructing the Basotho Cultural View of Disabilities

With this mind, we should explore and deconstruct those discourses in the Basotho society. Worth highlighting is something common between them as articulated in relation to each discourse. It is their central concepts which have to be deconstructed and dismantled because they have constructed people with disability in a way that deprives them their dignity and human rights. These are ableism, inability, personal tragedy, moral failing or bad behaviour, ‘*seqhoala*’, curse or bad luck, punishment from God or ancestors, medicalization of disability, disability as a problem, medical diagnoses, abnormality or deficiency, cure or fixing, invalid or cripple, discriminatory language, vulnerable, helplessness, less than others,

dependent, deserving or undeserving binaries, objects of pity, individual impairment, victims of circumstances and charity cases.

To explain the above concepts within the Basotho cultural context, I would narrate a story from one of my interviewees' experience of disability. Basically, he challenged some of these concepts using Sesotho language and religious experience. When I asked about his own experiences with disability in the Basotho society, he revealed, 'The Sesotho language has classified nouns in groups; under the first group are nouns given to human beings that begin with a prefix 'mo', 'motho', 'molisana', 'mosali''. These are nouns that distinguish human beings from things, for instance, look at *Sebopeliso-puo* book by Keenane (2012:18) '*Because I am visually impaired, I fall under the seventh group of nouns, which begin with a prefix 'se', 'sethotsela', 'sefofu', 'setulo' and the plural of those nouns begin with a prefix 'li' which fall under the eighth group of nouns*'.

This person was actually referring to a textbook that is taught at schools where you have classifications of nouns so that when you distinguish personal nouns, you distinguish them from nouns given to things specifically disabled people. The interviewee implied that even in the educational system, the book that explains the Sesotho nouns, which is something taught at school, instils in the students' minds the perception of not seeing people with disabilities as human beings, and that is why they will see their disability before seeing them and they will say it might be a tragedy or a punishment.

'You see this white walking stick that I walk with, it doesn't mean I don't see the way but we see differently, you see it, I sense it and this thing make people to have pity when they see us. Immediately when you hit a tree, you'll be pitied'. He asked me a few questions, *'don't you hit things? You do, why do you hit them yet you have eyes? Why do you feel pity for me and not think just like you hit them, I do too? Because I sometimes don't sense things the way I am supposed to just like when you have eyes but don't see properly'*.

Speaking from his religious experience, he said quoting the Bible in Luke 6:39-49, 'Jesus said there is no way a blind man can guide another blind man; instead, they will both fall'. He challenged this quote by saying, *'Haven't you seen us walking in the streets of Maseru guiding each other, where do you take that we will fall? You use my disability to expose your weakness and inability of seeing'*.

The respondent also challenged another text in the Bible in the Gospel of Luke 14:12-14. *'When you want to show that you're a Christian, when you make a feast, don't invite the rich people lest they invite you back, but when you make a feast, invite the blind, crippled, mute because they have nothing to repay you with. This people use disability as a stepping stone to Heaven because when you do that, you will see the Kingdom of God'*. In this story, it is not difficult to see how those concepts are embedded in his story for instance, let us take ableism.

3.2.1 Ableism

The Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines ableism as discrimination in favour of able-bodied people. Shakespeare (2024:243) defines ableism as a form of prejudice and judgement that favours able-bodied individuals, and undermines the abilities, experiences and rights of people with disabilities. According to Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2021:4), in terms of moral discourses of disability in the Basotho society, the use of ableist language and imagery perpetuates dangerous stereotypes and assumptions about disabled people. They deconstruct this by providing education and training on ableism, disability rights, and inclusive language which will help people to recognise and avoid the use of harmful language and imagery. Alongside this discourse, Jumoke (2021:1-6) deconstructs it through the use of slogan 'my disability does not mean inability'.

According to ableism, for instance, the Basotho would say disability is an act of God and that they are lucky to be chosen for the work of God, quoting the Bible, 'and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). This means that Basotho as Christians, believe that there is a blessing in weakness because it nourishes dependence on God.

Landis, Dominick and Aalai (2024:68) argue that in terms of medical discourses of disability, this could mean that people with disability are inherently less valuable or capable than people without disabilities. They highlight his view as problematic because it leads to systematic bias against people with disabilities in the healthcare system, which manifests in disabled people being subjected to unnecessary medical interventions or treatment. Landis, Dominick, and Aalai imply that people with disabilities are valuable just like the non-disabled people.

According to ableism, the Basotho would say when referring to a person with intellectual disability, *'motho enoa aka loka haka fumana tlhabollo le meriana'*. (This person can only be healed using medicine and therapy). People perceive disability as a sickness to be healed by medication regardless of it being psychological or physical. This can be deconstructed through raising awareness that disability is not a sickness. In terms of charity discourses of disability, ableism manifests as the idea that people with disabilities are dependent, helpless, or in need of charity from non-disabled people. This discourse interferes with the rights of people with disabilities; it leads to paternalistic attitudes and policies that strip them of their autonomy and self-determination (McNeil, 2024:169).

Someone with disability to whom I was talking said, *'batho ba rata ho re haba bona motho a nang le bokooa bare ke 'mosali''* In some parts of the Basotho society, disabled people are referred to as 'mosali', meaning a 'useless person', perpetuating negative stereotypes and stigma. This can be deconstructed by highlighting that people with disability are not useless. We should also consider deconstructing the discourse of seeing disability as a personal tragedy.

3.2.2 Personal Tragedy

The Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines personal tragedy as a very sad event or a situation. For Reardon (2024:471), personal tragedy is an intensely upsetting event or an experience that affects an individual's life in a profound and lasting way. He argues that it can be something that a person experiences directly, like the loss of a loved one, or it can be a situation that a person is born into, like a severe illness or disability. In terms of moral discourses of disability, this view could consider that people with disabilities as less than other people, something which I challenge here. This can be deconstructed through shifting the emphasis away from what a person can't do; instead, we recognise their strengths, abilities and unique perspectives (Garland-Thomson, 2021:4-5).

From the personal tragedy viewpoint, the Basotho would say, *'motho enoa o tena aba tjena hobane 'ma'e ke mopholoso, ha ka etsetsa ngoana 'meetlo' esita leho mohlaisa ka pela batsoali le hore aka hate mabala ha 'ma'e a ile 'setsoetse''*. (This person is disabled because his mother is a born-again by faith, she did not do the rituals for the child by revealing him before her parents, nor did she go to her home during a maternity leave). *'Meetlo'* is a cultural practice done to a Mosotho person and *'setsoetse'* means a mother after birth goes to her home place to raise a child there for some time before going back to her husband's home.

In terms of medical discourses of disability, this could mean that disability is a personal, individual tragedy for a disabled person and their loved ones. Medical professionals may express compassion, treating them as objects of medical intervention. This discourse deprives people with disabilities of their right to autonomy and violates their dignity (Mader, 2024:839). This could be protected and dismantled by educating people that disability is not an individual problem.

In terms of charity discourses of disability this could mean that charitable organisations of disability rely on emotional appeals to pity and sympathy, depicting disabled people as awful figures in need of support. Pearson (2024:791). These violate the right to respect for dignity and it is worth challenging. People with disabilities are not tragic beings because they have inherent dignity and that they are made in the image and likeness of God.

In light of the above, Nijs (2024:56) argues for deconstructing such a discourse by promoting visibility and representation of disabled people in media, education, and other areas of society. We can challenge the assumption that disability is a problem; instead, any disability is normal aspect of human diversity. A notable example in the Basotho society is the firm called Johnson-Johnson which hired a group of people with disabilities hundreds of them. The firm focused on what they can do, thereby using the slogan ‘my disability does not mean my inability’ (Jumoke, 2021). As a result of this, we should also do away with the discriminatory language, implying disabled people as unable.

3.2.3 Discriminatory Language

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2024) discriminatory language comprises words used to discriminate against others. Hill (2024:125) defines discriminatory language as words, phrases, or symbols that communicate bias, prejudice, or hatred against a particular group of people, often based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or disability. This brings us to the issue of discriminatory language, in terms of moral discourses of disability, the ‘*seqhoala*’ concept is central. It can be deconstructed by highlighting that the language used is discriminatory. Instead Leshota and Sefotho (2020:5) argue for a different label such as a person with physical disability because it encapsulates positive attitudes in it.

In terms of medical discourses of disability, the ‘*seqhoala*’ concept mean that medical professionals may use language that stigmatises disabled people, such as referring to them as deficient such as ‘*seqhoala*’, abnormal or lagging. Such a derogatory language violates the right to respect, dignity and non-discrimination, and this is what I challenge. To deconstruct

this, people should use the language which is non-discriminatory to people with disabilities (Smith, 2024:214). In terms of Charity discourses of disability, this could mean that the language used implies pity or condescension towards disabled people, such as describing them as ‘victims’. In the Basotho society, you would hear the language such as, ‘*mosutheleng a fete hle, ke seqhoala otlala sokola*’. (Please let him pass, he is incapacitated). This discourse infringes on the rights of people with disability violating their right to dignity, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities. This can be challenged by highlighting the importance of seeing disabled people as fully human beings with dignity and rights. This also involves seeing them as normal and not deficient.

3.2.4 Abnormality or Deficiency

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2024), abnormality is a condition or a characteristic that deviates from what is distinctive or expected, often regarded as a deviation from a perceived ‘norm’ of human functioning. Deficiency, on the other hand, is a lack of something that is considered essential or desirable, often used to describe perceived limitations or weaknesses in disabled people’s abilities. Rogers (2011:798) defines abnormality as a characteristic that is statistically rare, unwanted, and harmful. Adding, the WHO (2018) sees deficiency as a state of shortfall in the level of function necessary for optimal health. Looked at from the moral discourses of disability, abnormality or deficiency can be deconstructed by educating people on disability that it is not a deviation from some perfect norm, but rather a natural part of human diversity that should be recognized and valued (Davis, 2022:57-58). Sefotho (2021:2) also deconstructs this discourse, stating that the Basotho perceived disability traditionally as *bo-bopuoa*, meaning God’s creation.

This means everyone is created equally and deserves to be treated as an equal human. Alongside this, the LNFOOD (2020:42) deconstructs this discourse by regarding disabled people as part of society, rather than distinct. According to abnormality or deficiency, the Basotho would say, ‘*o tena aba tjena hobane ‘ma’e ha ka roala ‘thapo’ ea monna oa hae*’. (He’s disabled because his mother did not mourn for the husband). ‘*Thapo*’ in this sense means a cultural practice of mourning the deceased for a period of time, the practice having strict regulations and rules given to the person mourning; such a mourning person cannot arrive home after the sunset.

In terms of medical discourses of disability, this means that medical professionals may use these terms to diagnose and categorise disability as a medical or a pathological condition.

This discourse violates the rights of people with disabilities, especially the right to non-discrimination. These concepts also emphasise stigma and negative attitudes towards disabled people, reinforcing the idea that they are ‘broken’ or ‘defective’. Therefore, educating people that disabled people are not sick and through the social model of disability could help to change attitudes and environmental factors (Cox, 2024:84).

Also noted is that charity discourses of disability sees disability as a deviation from ‘normality’, highlighting disabled people’s differences and ‘abnormalities’ to elicit pity or sympathy from non-disabled people. It also reinforces the idea that disabled people are ‘deficient’ or ‘incomplete’ without the help of non-disabled people, perpetuating the stereotype that disabled people are inherently dependent. Further violated is the right to respect for dignity, non-discrimination and equal opportunities. Gorman (2024:453) deconstructs this discourse by promoting the rights of disabled people to equality, autonomy and dignity which can help to shift the discourse away from pity and dependency, implying that they are less than other people.

3.2.5 Less than Others

According to Tulle (2024:585), this is a concept that expresses the idea of inferiority or lesser value. It suggests that people with disabilities have lesser social worth or are less proficient than non-disabled people. Mallett (2024:221) defines ‘less than others’ as a concept that implies inferiority or less valuable than non-disabled people, perpetuating the idea that disability is a hostile characteristic.

Considering the above account the preceding Adams (2024:8) challenges this discourse in the moral discourses of disability. The author stated that a person with disability is not capable of being independent by providing education that people with disabilities are equal and valued members of society. In this view, experiences and contributions of such people should be recognised and respected, protecting their rights to access and participation in society. This argument is that disability is a reflection of the diverse ways in which people experience and interact with the world.

This idea is captured in Basotho traditional practices like herding the cattle. According to Sefotho (2013:3), young men would go out in duos until they could look after the cattle alone and a young man with dysarthria speech was paired with the able-bodied person and he became independent and went out grazing the cattle alone. This practice alone dismantles the assumption that people with disabilities are not capable of becoming independent.

In terms of medical discourses of disability, this could mean that medical professionals can prioritise treatment that ‘fixes’ disabled people’s bodies or minds, implicitly reinforcing the idea that disability is inferior to non-disability. This discourse marginalises people with disabilities, something could be challenged. Vehmas and Watson (2021:2) argue that by educating people about the rights and dignity of people, this can be dismantled.

During an interview with one of the participants the following arose, ‘ *the problem of not seeing started when I was in Form B, that was when my parents took me to the hospital and I was told that my eye sight is incurable and that is when I started to be fully blind.*’ In the Basotho society, disability is perceived as something to be cured, curing means to restore to the ‘normal’ body according to the societal standards.

In terms of charity discourses of disability, this could mean that disabled people are portrayed as needing help or pity, reinforcing the idea that they are inferior to non-disabled people. It emphasises the differences between disabled and non-disabled people, framing disabled people as ‘others’. This discourse could be viewed as problematic because it marginalises people with disabilities. As such it could be challenged by the human creation that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:27).

Also noted was what another participants stated, ‘*when I was a student at Lesotho High School, I was staying at the school’s boarding and I made a reading schedule for myself. I would read my notes in the evening after 7pm study. I worked hard to top some of the students who looked at me as someone who wouldn’t top them just because of my visual impairment. I would be happy when the electricity went off because they would sleep as a result of not being able to read in the dark, yet I was able to do myself. Who is disabled here, who is unable to read in the dark?*’

The participants basically challenged the idea that people with disabilities are less than other people that they are incapable of doing great at school and she showed them that her disability is not necessarily her inability.

All of these discourses have one thing in common which is discrimination against people with disabilities.

3.3.1 How Morality Discourses of Disability in the Basotho Society Constitutes

Discrimination and the Issue of Human Rights and how they can be Deconstructed

Having explored the discourses of disability that often reinforce harmful stereotypes and stigma, perpetuating discrimination against disabled people and undermining their human rights in the proceeding sections, I would challenge and dismantle any such attitudes in the Basotho society in this section. The discourse of ableism constitutes discrimination through the idea that non-disabled people are superior to disabled people. This could lead to power imbalance and the denial of opportunities and rights to disabled people in the Basotho society. To deconstruct this discriminatory discourse in the Basotho society, I would raise awareness that people with disabilities are not inferior to non-disabled people. Rather, the two are equal because they have the same rights.

In addition, we consider the discourse that disability is a punishment in the Basotho society which creates stigma and negative attitudes towards people with disability. In the ensuing, such people's right to respect for dignity and non-discrimination because of the belief that they did something wrong is violated. To deconstruct this discriminatory discourse, I would educate the Basotho that disability is not a punishment; rather, it is human diversity. There is a story of a man born blind, suggesting negative discourses of disability seeing such as a sign of punishment from God for sinning. According to the Gospel of John, 9:1-12, Jesus saw a man who had been blind since birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus replied, telling them that neither the man nor his parents had sinned. Rather, that had happened to display the works of God in him'.

Another discourse that is discriminatory in the Basotho society is the name 'Tutu' which refers to a person who is unable to speak or hear. This name constitutes stigma and violates the rights of a person with disability, a right to non-discrimination, in particular. Instead of using such a derogatory name, people with education, should use non-derogatory names such as a person with speech and hearing impairment, something which respects the dignity of such people.

3.3.2 How Medical Discourses of Disability in the Basotho Society Constitute

Discrimination and the Issue of Human Rights and how they can be Deconstructed

Having considered how the moral discourses of disability in the Basotho society constitute discrimination and human rights violation and ways of deconstructed such, it instructive to examine medical discourse. The issue of medicalization constitutes discrimination through

dehumanisation of people with disabilities by reducing them to their medical condition. This act stigmatises people with disabilities, marginalises them through separation from the non-disabled counterparts and violates their right to non-discrimination. I would encourage self-advocacy so that people with disabilities speak for themselves.

Also noted is the discourse of abnormality and deficiency which constitutes discrimination in the Basotho society through calling people by their disability. Such naming stigmatises people with disabilities and excludes them from the mainstream society, leading to a violation of their right to participation and inclusion. I propose that this can be dismantled through recognising that people with disabilities are capable of doing anything like the so-called 'normal' people.

Building on this, we can also see the discourse of seeing people with disabilities as invalid or crippled to be discriminatory. Suggesting that a person with disability is not fully human could bring shame to such a person. It also brings negative attitudes such as unequal treatment and stigma leading to violation of the right to respect for difference and the right to dignity. I believe that this discourse can be deconstructed by educating people about the human creation, that we are all made in the image and likeness of God that is we all have inherent dignity.

3.3.3 How Charity Discourses of Disability in the Basotho Society Constitutes

Discrimination and the Issue of Human Rights and how they can be Deconstructed

Just as the discourses of disability that constitutes discrimination and the issue of human rights and how they can be dismantled were explored in the forgoing sections, I would like to continue with the charity discourse. The discourse of vulnerability constitutes discrimination in the Basotho society. Worth mentioning is that people with disabilities are deemed to be inherently vulnerable and at the mercy of other people for help, thus being stigmatised and excluded. With such an understanding, they would be denied autonomy and agency with their rights to equal opportunities and a right to employment violated. I suggest that this can be challenged and dismantled through raising awareness that people with disabilities are not incapacitated, as they are capable of working in informal careers.

According to the Gospel of Mark, 10: 46-52, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar was told by the crowd to be quiet. In their opinion, he did not deserve to have Jesus listen to him. Bartimaeus refused to be quiet and shouted as loudly as he could in an attempt at meeting and/or seeing Jesus. Jesus, on hearing his insistence, called and asked him what he wanted.

Another aspect to consider is viewing people with disabilities as objects of pity in the Basotho society. Such an attitude can contribute to discrimination and violation of human rights by reinforcing the idea that people with disabilities are pitiable or ‘lesser’ than non-disabled people, leading to negative stereotypes and stigma. Pity also reinforces power imbalance between disabled and non-disabled people, leading to marginalisation of people with disabilities. This discourse violates the right to non-discrimination. To deconstruct this discourse, I would first change the language narrative from seeing disabled people as ‘objects of pity’ to considering them as people with agency and dignity. Secondly, I would give the people with disabilities a platform to speak for themselves and share their experiences and perspectives. Lastly, I would highlight their strengths and capabilities.

This brings us to the issue of viewing people with disabilities as dependent. It can lead to the denial of their autonomy and decision-making abilities, with others making decisions for them without their input. It can also lead to lack of equal opportunities and treatment in areas such as education and employment. This can be deconstructed through empowerment of people with disabilities and self-advocacy. I believe they serve to deconstruct the present discourses of disability in the Basotho society.

When asked one participant stated, *‘one person while I was standing near the road waiting for a taxi to take me home, came to me and took me to the other side of the road without even asking me if I wanted to cross the road, he simply made a decision on my behalf, he thought just because I am visually impaired, I need help.’* This implies that people perceive disabled people as people who need to be helped in decision-making for their lives and that is not the case because they have the right to autonomy and decision-making for own self.

3.4 The Voice of People with Disabilities on how they feel about the Discriminatory Discourses of Disability

Having explored discourses of disability in the Basotho society in constituting discrimination and human rights, and ways of deconstructing them, in this section, I turn to the participants’ feelings. People with disabilities shared similar sentiments when their condition is turned into a moral issue, medicalised, and made into charity. Attention is drawn to the ideas about emotions such as shame, anger, feeling like outsiders, less than others, helpless or hopeless, incapable of making of their own decisions and low self-esteem. The narrative theory has been used to analyse and interpret the experiences of people with disabilities.

3.4.1 Disabled People' Feelings about having their Disability Moralised

3.4.1.1 Shame

In terms of moral discourse of disability, this could mean that people with disabilities feel ashamed of their disability as if it is a personal failing or a sign of moral weakness. In her own words, *'I was born deaf and I am the only child at home who is deaf. During my childhood time, people would discriminate me on the basis of my disability; saying that the ancestors are not happy because of my parents did something in the past and I would be ashamed of what they say about my parents'*. For the participant, this attitude makes her feel ashamed of herself, leading to self-exclusion from the mainstream society. Some parents of disabled children hide them from society in order to avoid shame to the family and the mother.

One of the people with disabilities said something about what it is like to be viewed from the morality discourse. She reported, *'I was born with a physical disability that made it hard for me to walk and use my hands. From a young age, I was told that my disability was a sign of God's punishment, and that I must have done something wrong to deserve it. People in my community avoided me and treated me like I was a burden. They said I was cursed and that I should pray for forgiveness. It was hard to hear those words every day, and I began to believe that I was cursed too. I felt ashamed of myself and my disability.'* Observed from this story is that seeing how hurtful is like for people with disability could live in a society that perceive disabled people as having been cursed or punished. As a result, this woman is stigmatised by her community, who view her disability as a sign of moral failure. She may be excluded from social and religious events, and even being denied access to healthcare and other resources.

3.4.1.2 Angry

In terms of moral discourse of disability, this concept is central. The Basotho people with disabilities become angry when people define their disability through the assumptions of moral discourses of disability. One participant said, *'in the context of Lesotho, you wouldn't understand how people came to use the language that discriminate and violate my rights'*. He considered discrimination of other people on the basis of their disability wrong because they have rights like everyone else. Through the participant's own voice, one could detect his fury about people using discriminatory language that classifies them under the moral discourse of disability.

3.4.1.3 *Feel like Outsiders or Less than Others*

Moralised discourses can contribute to the social marginalisation and exclusion of people with disabilities, making them feel like outsiders or less than others. *‘All my problems started when I had to go to high school. I would be accepted based on what they saw on paper but would be rejected as soon as they saw me physically’*. He explained that people think disability affects the mind too and that they are not capable of obtaining good grades, He said some people are intimidated by his abilities despite having disability. One could draw conclusions from this that the participant felt like an outsider when the school board rejected him on the basis of his disability.

3.4.2 *Disabled People’ Feelings about having their Disability Medicalised*

3.4.2.1 *Helpless of Hopeless*

People with disabilities feel helpless and hopeless when their disability is medicalised. Their desire to be well is completely shuttered. *‘The medical professions focus on the things that we cannot do such as not being able to see and are discriminatory, excluding us from the society that is arranged as normal and abnormal.’* When the disability of the disabled people is medicalised, people feel hopeless because disability cannot be cured; instead, it can be accommodated.

3.4.2.2 *Incapable of making their own Decisions*

Medicalised discourses of disability in the Basotho society may emphasise the dependency and vulnerability of people with disabilities, leading them to feel that they are incapable of being independent. Recalling one incident in which he had at school with another ‘normal’, the participant thus put it: *‘There is this book that a lecturer used to refer to it every time when lecturing and I would be left behind so I took an initiative to ask one student to read it to me during her free time and she would ask if I want her to read it to me and then explain it to me and I would tell her that I only want her to read and that I might me the one to explain it to her. People think being disabled affects the mind too’*.

3.4.3 *Disabled People’ Feelings about having their Disability made into Charity*

3.4.3.1 *Low Self-esteem*

In her own words, *‘people didn’t call me by my name, they called me by my disability, and this was painful, felt offended’*. The act of naming a person that is derogatory lowers self-esteem of a person. She said that people should not treat them as if they are nothing because

they are also human beings with rights. One could draw conclusions that the participant did not like being looked at from the perspective of her disability.

3.4.3.2 Hurt

People with disabilities feel hurt when their disability is made into charity because that encourages the injustices to them. He explained that this act of classifying their disability under charity disempowers them because it suggests that they are incapable to do the things that other people do and that they are constantly in need of help from others. In his words, *'I've experienced discrimination in various aspects of my life because of my disability. From being passed over for job opportunities, to being treated as less capable than others, it's something that I've had to deal with on a regular basis. One particular incident that comes to mind is when I was denied a promotion at work despite my qualifications and experience. When I asked my manager why I was passed over, he made a comment that I 'wouldn't be able to handle the increased workload' because of my disability'* One could pick up from the participant's own voice that this must have really hurt him, when denied the rights to equal opportunities on the basis of his disability.

3.5 Summary

Concluding this chapter I would like to offer its summary. In terms of the research question and the aims of this study in general, this chapter suggested ways of challenging and dismantling the negative discourses of disability in the Basotho society. Using social constructionist theory this chapter has deconstructed and challenged the underlying discourses of isolating mainstream people with disability from the mainstream people in Lesotho.

We have seen how different discourses of disability have emerged in different periods. In the first part which dealt with deconstructing the moral discourses of disability, for instance, we challenged it by recognising that disability is not a punishment or divine judgement, but rather a complex human experience shaped by various factors. I have proposed a move away from the belief that disability is a punishment from ancestors or a higher being towards acknowledging diversity and value of disabled people's lives. Thus, challenging the moral discourses of disability, we promote more inclusive and respectful attitudes.

We critiqued the medical discourses of disability by exposing its limitations in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of disability and challenging the notion of curing or overcoming disability as the ultimate goal. It was argued that by adopting more nuanced and inclusive

models of disability, we could challenge the medical discourse of disability and recognise the agency and resilience of people with disabilities. In my opinion, they can serve to deconstruct the present discourses of disability.

It was also argued that should Sesotho pay attention to some of the taken-for-granted ideas of naming disability, it could be seen for what they are and be treated accordingly. In this way, people could heed and challenge how Sesotho discriminates and marginalises people with disabilities, so as to make them enjoy an equal life and rights to non-discrimination with the non-disabled people.

In the foregoing part, we acknowledged disability as a natural part of human diversity; thereby challenge the tendency to view disability as the defining characteristic of a person. This part has challenged the charity discourse of disability by questioning the assumption that people with disabilities are helpless objects of pity and emphasising their agency, resilience and potential. It was argued that by promoting disability pride and empowerment movements, we can challenge the charity discourses and foster greater inclusion and respect for people with disabilities.

Of great importance in this study has been exploration of the three categories of discourses of disability in the Basotho society. These, as noted, constitute discrimination and issues of human rights and their deconstruction. First, I have highlighted ableism which constitutes discrimination in negative ways leading to power imbalance. I have proposed a need to raise awareness that non-disabled people in Lesotho are not superior to people with disabilities; rather they are both equal. Secondly, paying attention to the Sesotho language could expose and question some of the commonly accepted ideas about labelling disabilities. Lastly, it was also argued that seeing people with disabilities as invalid constitutes discrimination, suggesting that a person with disability is not fully a human being which lead to a person feeling ashamed. These discourses were deconstructed by educating people that we are all made in the image and likeness of God and that we have an inherent dignity.

The participants' voices contributed to this study by making it more credible and reliable through their first-hand experience in living with disability. In the participants' accounts lied the narrative theory in deconstructing and challenging dominant discourses of disability. They have also highlighted their dislike of having disability made into charity, with people feeling pity for them.

As already argued, the meaning of disability has changed in the sense, the so-called disabled people do not want to be referred to as such, because they see themselves as equally abled. Therefore, this study has argued for calling people according to the way they want to be called so as to avoid any discrimination. In general, deconstructing and challenging these discourses, we can create a more inclusive and empowering understanding of disability that values and respects the experiences and potential of people with disabilities. This involves an on-going critical reflection, advocacy, and dialogue to align our perspectives and practices with the principles of inclusion, equity and respect.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BENEFITS OF CHALLENGING THE SOCIETAL DISCOURSES OF DISABILITY TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the discourses of disability that are derogatory marginalising and exclusive of people with disabilities, affecting their human rights and dignity were challenged and dismantled. In this chapter, I explore how people with disabilities benefit when those discourses are challenged and dismantled. On this basis, the society should know the experiences of people with disabilities in the Basotho society and benefit from such awareness. With such knowledge, advocacy for policies and practices that promote the rights and dignity of people with disabilities is critical.

The narrative theory has been used to analyse and interpret the discourses on the change and benefits of people with disabilities, thus challenging negative discourses of disability in the Basotho society. From the participants' information, the discourses on people with disabilities would be considered for change so as to benefit and make people with disabilities part of the mainstream society.

4.1 Mainstreaming

In order to understand the benefits of challenging the discourses of disability, the concept of mainstreaming is crucial. According to the LNFOD (2021:5), mainstreaming means to ‘include in the mainstream. It is a systematic consideration of the differences between the different conditions, situations and needs of disadvantaged groups in all policies and programmes at the point of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation’.

The MoSD and LNFOD (2015:3-4) define disability mainstreaming as a method for addressing precise disability issues and barriers that exclude disabled people from equal participation in society aiming to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream society. DeAngelis (2024:22) defines mainstreaming as a process of bringing something or someone into a mainstream or dominant system, group or culture.

4.2 The Basotho Benefits of Deconstructing Discourses of Disability to People with Disability

From the above-mentioned concept of mainstreaming, we look at different benefits of mainstreaming disability in Lesotho. Particular attention is paid to ‘raising awareness about disability’, ‘acceptance of people with disabilities’, ‘inclusion’, self-representation: ‘media representation’, ‘self-advocacy’, accessibility: ‘physical environment’, ‘information and communication’, and ‘quality and essential healthcare’.

Examining each of the above concepts within the Basotho society, one could offer a story of sign language interpreters in Chapter Two. Basically, the story highlights some of the benefits of challenging the discourses of disability in the Basotho society on people with disability. These are presented in turn below.

4.2.1 Awareness-raising

According to Hunt (2024:89), awareness-raising refers to the process of informing, educating, and engaging people on a particular issue or a topic in order to promote understanding, acceptance and action. In the context of disability, awareness-raising may involve efforts to challenge negative stereotypes, educate about the experiences of people with disabilities, and promote acceptance and inclusion in society. That person with speech and hearing impairment was actually saying when people know their needs and rights, they can enjoy equal opportunities like accessing services without limitation.

When I asked one of the people with disability about the things she wished could change regarding how they were perceived by society she responded, *‘sometimes I feel helpless and weak as how people treat us out there, we even try to hide that we are disabled but we cannot always keep hiding, that thing makes us feel lonely, so the society needs to be aware of people with disabilities.’* Also asked how she would benefit when the society were aware about them, she replied, *‘I think I will have a high life because that’s my wish for them to change because as for now I’m feeling really incapable of doing anything.’*

During an interview with one of the people with disability at National University of Lesotho, the following emerged, *‘when I asked one lady to read a book for me that we were asked to read for the second topic test she asked me if I want her to explain it to me after and I told her that it is not necessary, that I might even be the one to explain it to her.’* Implied here is that people think being disabled affects the mind too, with the participant striving towards changing such a perception about being disabled by raising awareness that disability does not affect the mind.

Schweik (2024:117) argues that greater awareness can help to reduce negative stereotypes and prejudices against people with disabilities, leading to more respectful and dignified treatment. In response to the question about any benefits should the negative discourses of disability be dismantled, the people with disability observed, *‘when society is more aware of disability issues, disabled people will have more control over their own life and be more empowered to pursue their own goals and aspirations and we will be able to exercise our right to autonomy’.*

When asked about the same question, the other participant said, *‘disability awareness can create more inclusive and supportive communities that are enriched by the contributions of people with disabilities and recognize their full humanity’.* It is not difficult to see that when the society is aware of people with disabilities, it will not be difficult to accept them.

4.2.2 Acceptance

Another aspect to consider is acceptance. Sarker (2023:18) defines acceptance as a process or state in which a person or a group recognises, understands and values the existence of something or someone, despite their differences or perceived shortcomings. She argues that it involves an individual or a group acknowledging, understanding and appreciating the qualities and attributes of others, even if they are different or challenging to understand.

In the context of disability, acceptance refers to the process of acknowledging and respecting the experiences, needs, and contributions of people with disabilities. It involves valuing and including disabled people as full members of society, rather than treating them as ‘other’ or inferior. Another participant with disability proposed the following change about them, *‘people think that we are useless. We tried to show the world that we are equal and this is what we still advocating, so that society can accept us and see us as equal members of society.’* It is easy to see that the participants want people to change the way people look at them as useless because they are equal to non-disabled people.

When societal discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled through raising awareness about disability that automatically helps to reduce stigma and discrimination, thus fostering their acceptance, participation and inclusion in the society. In addition, the rights of persons with disabilities would be advocated (MoLSP, 2018:5). On the same view, the other interviewee stated, *‘when the perceptions about disability are changed, a lot could change, people would start to accept us as fully functioning human beings who have needs and wants, for instance, having a girlfriend will not pose as a surprise to people’*. What the participant implied here is that people with disabilities are human beings with feelings and emotions like the non-disabled people.

Brock (2021:44-45) argues that people with disabilities may experience a greater sense of self-worth and dignity when they are accepted by the society. That is, they may have increased opportunities to participate in society and access resources and services. They may also have more support and understanding from others in their community. From the story on the local radio about the man who said people think he wants special treatment is too much. He actually meant that when people accept them for who they are, they will have a peace of mind.

Oliver (2009:3-4) states that in terms of human rights, people with disabilities may benefit from increased access to legal protection and safeguarding when they are accepted by the society. For him, this may include protection against discrimination, equal access to public services and programmes, and the right to make their own decisions about their lives.

One the people with disability declared on the benefit regarding human dignity when the discourses of disability are challenged, *‘we may benefit from increased respect and recognition of their inherent worth and value’*.

For Albrecht and Yong (2014:23), the benefits of challenging and dismantling the moral discourses of disability include the significance of seeing people with disabilities as equal members of the community, with the same rights and dignity as everyone else. For them, this can increase understanding of the importance of social justice and inclusion, as well as working towards equality for all people. Additionally, it can also foster a greater understanding of the role of faith and spirituality in the lives of people with disabilities, and how this can be a source of strength and hope. Regarding education, people with disabilities may have access to more inclusive education, more adaptive technology, and improved support from educators.

Also on the benefits of dismantling discourses of disability in Lesotho, one of the participants said, *'dismantling the medical discourses of disability could improve the lives of people with disabilities in a number of ways. It could lead to a greater acceptance of disability as a natural part of the human experience; it could lead to development of new assistive technologies that could encourage the development of new and more effective ways to provide support and services for people with disabilities. It could lead to a change in the way society views and treats people with disabilities, which could improve their overall quality of life'*.

According to Cameron (2014:42-43), the benefits of challenging and dismantling the medical discourse of disability can include a greater understanding of the relationship between faith and healing. This means that it can also lead to a more nuanced understanding of healing and wholeness, and the role of faith in the process.

As Tiefenbrun and Samaniego (2024:27-28) argue, people with disabilities often want to be seen as individuals with unique abilities and experiences, rather than as objects of pity or charity. For instance, having explored in Section 3.2 above in the story of one participant with visual impairment, I gathered that people should move away from feeling pity for them when they hit something because even non-disabled people do hit things all the time with their eyes wide open. This change in perception can lead to more dignity and respect for people with disabilities.

According to Robinson and Erevelles (2018:3), in terms of the human dignity, people with disabilities may benefit from being seen as full and equal members of society rather than as objects of pity or charity. That is, their dignity will be restored. Davis (2012:110-111) argues that when the charity discourses of disability are dismantled, people with disabilities may

benefit in terms of their human rights by being able to live more independent and self-determined lives. This means that they will benefit from equal opportunities just like the able-bodied people. In terms of education they may benefit by accessing more inclusive and individualised educational opportunities.

Carter and Brock (2018:139-140) highlighted the benefits of challenging and dismantling the charity discourses of disability as enhancing a greater understanding of the need for justice and equality, rather than simply providing charity and aid. For them, this can lead to a more holistic and empowering approach to disability, recognising the dignity and worth of each person, regardless of their level of ability. This notion can also help to shift the focus from what people with disabilities ‘need’ to what they ‘want’ and allow them to take ownership of their own lives and decisions.

In the same vein, Linkon (2024:101-102) argues that when society is more aware of the experiences and needs of people with disabilities, they are more likely to be accepted and included in social, economic and political life. In this way, it can give more opportunities for education, employment and community participation.

4.2.3 Inclusion

In addition, we should consider inclusion. Jones (2023:634) defines inclusion as the state of being welcomed, accepted and valued as member of a group or society, without discrimination or exclusion based on factors such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ability. It means recognising and embracing diversity, promoting equal opportunities and participation, and respecting the inherent dignity and worth of all individuals. According to Brown (2024:17-18), people with disabilities want to see more inclusive education, including mainstream schooling and support services for disabled students. They also want to see a shift away from ableist language and tropes towards more respectful and inclusive ways of talking about disability.

Still the other participant with speech and hearing impairment said, ‘*it is very wrong to say people with disability instead say disability people.*’ From this I realised that people with disabilities prefer to be called differently according to which group they belong. People with speech and hearing impairment prefer to be called ‘disability people.’ This can help to challenge negative stereotypes and promote more respectful interactions with disabled people.

Other researchers like Tiefenbrun and Samaniego (2024:40) noted that people with disabilities want to be included in all aspects of society, from education and employment to leisure and culture activities. This means that they could enjoy socialisation and integration. In the same vein, Booth (2023:1-2) argued for integrating children with special needs into children without special needs to help to benefit both parties. The reason is that children learn from each other, with those without special needs learning to accept and understand that each person has unique abilities. As such, including children with special needs allows them to have equal opportunities to participate in the same programmes and activities as do others. In addition, friendship, skills, peer models, problem solving skills, positive self-image, and respect for others are crucial for children at the younger age, as an adage goes '*thupa e otolloa esale metsi*' a person is disciplined at the younger age) my emphasis.

Tuggar (2014:107) shares the sentiments of Booth stating that, challenging and dismantling the negative discourses of disability can stimulate friendship among both students because they learn from each other. Children also become aware of the human difference and learn to accept children with disabilities which consequently develop personal principles and friendships. According to Ralejoe (2016:183), challenging negative discourses of disability helps to eliminate stereotypes and misconception that often lead to prejudice and discrimination. By promoting precise and diverse portrayals of people with disabilities, society can become more accepting and inclusive in education.

According to the LCN (2021:3), challenging and dismantling the negative discourses of disability can lead to greater inclusion of children with disabilities in various aspects of society. That is, they can participate more actively in educational institutions, which not only increases Lesotho's human resource base, but also drastically reduces the number of out-of-school children, in turn, reducing the social burden of unproductive and unskilled population. Dismantling negative discourses of disability can add to transformation of societal attitudes towards people with disabilities by recognising and valuing the unique experiences, perspectives and contributions of people with disabilities, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society (Ralejoe, 2016:158).

4.2.4 Self-representation

Having focused on inclusion in the previous section, we now consider self-representation. According to Chandler (2022:495), representation refers to the act or course of portraying, depicting, or symbolising someone or something in a particular way. That is, it involves the selection, portrayal and interpretation of information, ideas, or experiences through various forms, media or expressions. In the context of disability, representation refers to the depiction and portrayal of people with disabilities in the media, culture and society.

From the interview with one of the people with disabilities, the following came out, *'I even wrote a book titled 'Bokooa ha se bokulo', the purpose of writing was to raise awareness about Deaf people that they are not sick so that people can be aware of this but there is a huge challenge about printing it.'* The participant could be suggesting that challenges she faces when she is about to publish her book should change. People still look at them from the medical and charity point of views, that they are incapable. There should be equal opportunities for them just like the able-bodied people do publish their books with ease.

According to the UNDP (2023:29), self-representation benefits people with disabilities in that it challenges and dismantles the negative stereotypes and myths formed towards disability. It further conveys the genuine experience of disability, and allows people with disabilities to express their opinion. Additionally, disability is reflected as part of the human experience through self-representation.

The role of media representation has also been significant in this study. Brown (2024:17-32) argues that people with disabilities want to see more realistic representation in the media and popular culture. These include greater diversity in characters with disability and more opportunities for disabled people to work in the entertainment industry. In the context of Lesotho, a man popularly known by the name 'Shorts', works at one of the biggest radio station in Lesotho named *MoAfrika FM* as a radio presenter. He also participates in acting on numerous movies as a comedian. The popular movie in which acted is *Lilaphalapha*, which is locally produced.

According to the UNDP (2023:31), when the societal discourses of disability are challenged through self-representation of the disability experience in the media, it allows the public to know the authentic experience of disability and increases the confidence of people with disabilities themselves, as well as promoting an inclusive culture. This means that charity discourses of disability in the media representation are challenged, so as to create a more

accurate and respectful portrayal of people with disabilities, reducing any stigma and creating more opportunities for them.

According to Kittay (2010:25-26), for human dignity, the benefits may include more precise representation in the media, a greater sense of worth, and more support from their communities. This means that their dignity would be restored through the media representation. The CDR (2016:3) argues that ‘when disabled people are truly included in the media, only then would representation change; only then would the disable[d] people have access to the support and integration they need’. This implies that when people with disability represent themselves in the media; the way people perceive them would change, thereby also creating employment for them.

4.2.5 Self-advocacy

Turning our attention to self-advocacy, Gerner and Forlin (2020:35-36) define self-advocacy as the act of promoting or representing one’s own interests, needs or desires. That is, it involves taking an active role in expressing oneself and asserting one’s rights or inclinations in a variety of contexts, such as education, employment, healthcare or personal relationships. For them, it concerns empowering individuals to speak up for themselves, to have a say in decisions that affect them, and to engage in a positive dialogue with others to achieve their desired outcomes. In the context of disability, self-advocacy refers to the act of speaking up for oneself and one’s own rights, interests and needs as a person with disability (Tiefenbrun, 2020:229).

Pelletier (2024:63-64) argues that people with disabilities want to see more opportunities for disabled people to lead advocacy efforts, rather than being excluded from decision-making or spoken over by non-disabled advocates. In the context of Lesotho, minister of gender, youth, sports, art-culture and social development, Hon. Pitso Lesaoana, who has physical disability, is one of the members of parliament and he is able to advocate for people with disabilities. The LNFOD, as an organisation, also advocates the needs of people with disabilities in Lesotho. This leads to more effective and authentic advocacy that truly reflects the needs and experiences of people with disabilities leading to more equitable and effective policies for them.

According to the ISPD (2023), self-advocacy can have numerous benefits for people with disabilities. These are increased self-confidence, and self-esteem, improved communication skills, greater independence and control, improved access to resources and opportunities,

increased social connection and support, and better mental health and well-being. By dismantling negative discourses of disability, people with disabilities can gain a more positive and empowering understanding of their capabilities. This can enable them to be more confident in advocating their rights, needs and equal opportunities.

Another participant with disabilities said the following about benefit of challenging and dismantling the discourses of disability, *‘people with disabilities will become more independent and take up challenges beyond the expectation of our own and other.’* This implies their possible freedom from being dependent on other people for survival. As Ryan and Griffiths (2015:31) observed, the most influential benefits of self-advocacy for adults with Developmental Disabilities are increased leadership capabilities and the evolution of new self-concepts leading to increased respect for human rights and dignity. This means that adults with developmental disabilities will be able to take a leading role in their lives, with their dignity reinstated. Ralejoe (2016:77) highlights that dismantling negative discourses of disability can add to a catalyst for change, which advocates awareness of human rights and reduction in social discrimination of people with disabilities.

According to Sefuthi and Sekoankoetla (2018:33), when the National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (NDRP) is adopted and implemented in Lesotho, people with disabilities will appreciate their full potential. The aim of the policy is to eliminate all barriers to people with disabilities in terms of job opportunities, social protection, education and physical access regarding infrastructure and information.

4.2.6 Accessibility

Furthermore, it is also worth considering accessibility. According to Stein (2024:147), accessibility refers to the quality of being one, available, and easily usable by as many people as possible, regardless of their abilities and disabilities. In the context of disability, accessibility refers to the quality of being available, usable by as many people as possible, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Ferns (2023:39). According to Mallett (2024:3-4), people with disabilities want to see more opportunities for social and community engagement, including more inclusive social activities, sports and recreation, and employment opportunities. Badenoch (2024:471) argues that people with disabilities want to see greater employment opportunities, including more accessible work environments, workplace accommodations and fair hiring practices.

When asked about how they would benefit when they are mainstreamed in society in Lesotho, one of the people living with disability said, *'I think mainstreaming disability in Lesotho could create employment for disability people as most of us stays home doing nothing because our government can't hire us at their offices due to lack of access or think we can't do the job properly so yes, this could benefit us just like us teaching sign language, it's more the same I guess but on a whole different level.'* This can create a more financial stability and a sense of purpose and fulfilment for people with disabilities in Lesotho. The LNFOD (2021:22) highlights that when societal discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled, people with disabilities would enjoy their quality of life within own community with available equipment, skills and services to all persons with disabilities. Adding, Linkon (2024:116) argues that awareness of disability issues such as high unemployment of people with disabilities can lead to more operative policies and services meant for the disabled people. For him, this can include more accessible infrastructure, communication, improved healthcare, and targeted social programmes.

4.2.6.1 Physical Environment

This brings us to the issue of accessibility of physical environment. On the issue about the perceptions of society about disability, one of the people with physical disability wished, *'people think that the problem is our disability that we can't access certain building and that is not the case because we have no problem but the buildings are made in such a way that they are inaccessible. There is a policy on buildings that they should be accessible to people with physical disabilities through making ramps and elevators but people don't obey it. It is high time that we get justice we deserve.'* The implication was that when the buildings are accessible, the disabled would use them just like the able-bodied people do.

According to Plantier-Royon, Geiser and Nouvellet (2009:1), people with disability encounter numerous barriers in their physical environment, including physical barriers that prevent them from participating in social, cultural, and professional life on an equal basis with other citizens fully exercising their rights. For them, when this is challenged, people with disabilities would be accommodated and live in a barrier-free environment. Additionally, participation and mobility of people with disabilities would increase due to accessibility. On the same question on the benefit of challenging and dismantling discourses of disability in Lesotho one respondent said, *'we will have increased access to the physical environment through accessible ramps and elevators, which can allow us to access buildings*

and public spaces that we may not have been able to do so before'. The participant implied inclusion in the mainstream society.

According to the LNFOD (2021:24), removing physical barriers for people with disabilities improve their independence, self-esteem, and indeed productivity. In addition, when negative discourses of disability are dismantled in Lesotho, people with disabilities will become self-reliant, and consequently enjoy their quality of life within own communities.

4.2.6.2 Information and Communication

Another considerable aspect is accessibility of information and communication. When interviewed, one of the people with disability, speech and hearing impairment, told me all they want to see is more accessible environments and services, from buildings and public spaces to transportation and translation services. In her words, *'I want people to know that we are equal and they have to give us respect the way we do to them especially on services such as hospitals, shops, etc. because that is where we always get more challenges.'* This means that their dignity and respect would be reinstated.

By promoting access to communication and information technology for persons with disabilities in all development sectors, they would not only access information for their empowerment, but they would also consume information for their awareness of the current affairs, easily engaging modern information-dissemination gadgets (LNFOD, 2021:27). One participant has highlighted that, *'challenging the negative discourses of disability helps individuals with disability to access services on an equal basis with others for instance, when watching the news on Lesotho Television, we can access information that is broadcasted on Television through watching the person interpreting the news'*.

4.2.6.3 Quality and Essential Healthcare

Closely related is accessibility of quality and essential healthcare. Brown (2024:455) argues that people with disabilities want to see more accessible healthcare, including greater access to affordable and appropriate treatment, rehabilitation, and support services. According to the LNFOD (2021:31), when attitudinal and communication barriers in Lesotho are challenged and dismantled with the objective of strengthening health care system to include people with disabilities, they will access health care services on an equal basis with others. Through the Australian Volunteer International (AVI), people with disabilities were included in many streams of services in Lesotho, such as access to passports so as to access treatment in South

Africa (Harrington, 2015:16). According to Shakespeare (2006:23-24), in terms of the human rights, the benefits of people with disabilities may include increased access to healthcare, improved treatment from healthcare providers, and better representation in healthcare policymaking.

4.3 Desired Outcomes of Dismantling Dominant Disability Discourses

Having explored the concepts on how people with disabilities will benefit when the discourses of disability are challenged in the preceding sections, this section highlights the desired outcomes of challenging and dismantling such discourses. Narrative theory has been used to capture the thoughts of people with disabilities on the desired outcomes of challenging and dismantling them in the Basotho society. Three themes emerged from analysing data, social inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunities.

4.3.1 Social Inclusion

Through narrative theory, the participants have shown that mainstreaming disability in Lesotho can promote the integration of people with disabilities into society. When disability is mainstreamed, individuals with disabilities feel a stronger sense of belonging, participating in social activities and experiencing reduced stigmatisation. One participant has highlighted how they would benefit when the discourses of disability are challenged, *‘Firstly, by challenging stereotypes, people with disabilities are more likely to be included in various aspects of society, such as education, employment, and social activities. Secondly, challenging negative discourses of disability empowers individuals with disabilities, fostering a sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities. Thirdly, challenging discourses encourages advocacy efforts, leading to policy changes and improved accessibility, creating a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities. In addition, people become more aware and educated about the diverse abilities within the disability community, promoting understanding and breaking down barriers. Lastly, challenging stereotypes helps create a society where individuals with disabilities are seen for their abilities, fostering social integration and reducing stigmas.’*

The other participant, when asked about the benefit of challenging and dismantling the negative discourses of disability said, *‘inclusivity will be possible for people with disabilities and for it to be done the right way, people should understand what is meant by being disabled’.*

One other participant highlighted that people with disabilities will benefit when they are included thus saying, *'again, inclusivity in all aspects of life requiring advocacy, people with disabilities should be part of that so that we can make our own choices. There will also be one nation; inclusion and belonging instead of having two different groups, people with disabilities and people without disabilities and that could help us save the resources of the government to achieve one goal, so we have to start first by making sure that everyone is included'*.

4.3.2 Accessibility

The theme of accessibility such as physical modifications, technological advancement and changes in attitudes and behaviour reveals how the social environment can be structured to accommodate people with disabilities. When I interviewed one of the people with disability in Lesotho, he highlighted how mainstreaming disability led to improved accessibility such as ramps, accessible transportation, and assistive technologies, facilitating equal participation and independence for people with disabilities. *'When the negative discourses of disability in Lesotho are challenged and dismantled, accessibility of services on an equal consideration will be available to us for instance, looking at the buildings in Lesotho, most of them are not accessible to us but when they are built bearing in mind accessibility to everyone, they will have ramps with rails so that people with mobility impairment and the visually impaired will access the building like the rest of the society. When the physical and communication barriers are challenged, people with disability could participate in the village and access services on an equal basis with other people.* Consequently, this shows a need for accessible services and institutions for people with disabilities in Lesotho.

4.3.3 Equal Opportunities

The main issue here is that when the negative discourses of disability are dismantled, people with disability will benefit equally like the rest of the people with human rights and dignity in Lesotho. The Basotho view people with disabilities as incapable of working, hence employers having lower expectations for them. However, the WVU (2015) highlights that when this social norm is challenged, the expectations of employers will be raised because disability does not imply inability. This could make more people with disabilities getting hired and have more opportunities to contribute their skills and abilities to the workforce. One participant explained, *'I think this (mainstreaming disability in Lesotho) could create*

employment for people with disabilities as most of us stays home doing nothing because our government can't hire us at their offices due to lack of access or think we can't do the job properly so yes, this could benefit us just like us teaching sign language, it's the same I guess but on a whole different level.

Also, one of the people with disabilities in Lesotho stated this about the benefit of challenging and dismantling the discriminatory discourses, 'addressing negative attitudes towards disability can lead to fair treatment and increased opportunities for people with disabilities, reducing discrimination in various aspects of life.' The data on equal opportunities underscore how societal beliefs and norms influence the availability and distribution of resources. Mainstreaming disability aims to challenge and transform those beliefs, providing equitable access to education, employment, and other opportunities. Additionally, mainstreaming disability leads to access to career advancement, promoting equality and enabling individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential.

4.4 Summary

As already argued, the benefits of addressing societal discourses of disability could be far-reaching and impactful. By challenging and dismantling the discourses of disability in the Basotho society, there could be a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable society, whereby people with disabilities have equal rights, opportunities and recognition. By working towards a more inclusive and accessible society, we can create a better world for everyone where people with disabilities can actively participate, thrive and contribute their unique abilities and perspectives.

In the first part dealing with raising awareness, that people should be aware of the capabilities of people with disabilities that they should be accepted for who they are. The second part dealt with acceptance. For instance, one of the people with disabilities mentioned the perceptions about disability as having to change, so that people would start to accept them as fully functioning members of society capable of engaging in relationships. The third part dealt with inclusion, arguing that integration of children with disabilities into non-disabled children could benefit both parties because children learn from each other. It was also argued that when people with disabilities are included in the mainstream society, they could enjoy rights and opportunities like the non-disabled people in Lesotho.

In the fourth part we dealt with self-representation. It focused on people with disabilities as having a representative to advocate their needs and rights. It was argued that people with disabilities should have a representative in major decision-making that affect them and benefit. In this way, one such a person would remember as their own disability community. Mr Pitso Lesaoana, who is physically disabled, is a Minister of Parliament. It was also argued that when the societal discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled, self-representation of the disability experience in the media allows the public to know the authentic experiences of people with disabilities and increases the confidence of people with disabilities themselves.

Besides on self-advocacy, people with disabilities could want to see more people with disabilities advocate their own rights and take part in decisions for their lives.

In the last part, which dealt with accessibility, for instance, it was argued that people will enjoy equal rights and opportunities and access services like the non-disabled people. It was also argued that when the buildings are accessible, communication, and healthcare services, people with disabilities will enjoy their rights too on an equal basis with the non-disabled counterparts. The chapter also explored the voices of people with disabilities on perceptual changes by the non-disabled people. In this view, people should change the ableist language that discriminates and marginalises people with disabilities, relegating them to the margins of the mainstream society. Further, people should shift from seeing people with disabilities as useless and dependent on other people.

Of relevance to this study was to explore the voices of people with disabilities on how they would benefit if the discourses of disability were challenged and dismantled. It has been argued that people with disabilities could be included in the mainstream society, which is one of the aims of this study. We have seen how people with disabilities highlight that they will have access to services on an equal basis like the able-bodied people. It was also argued that there will be equal opportunities regardless of the ability of an individual.

In the next and final chapter, I offer some reflections on the study as a whole and the conclusions drawn in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this last chapter, I make general conclusions and personal reflections on this study. First, I will make final arguments and conclusions reached. Finally, I will offer some personal reflections on how I have been affected or changed by this study.

5.1 General Conclusions to the Study

In chapter one, I introduced the study, giving the background, theoretical framework and methodology. The study exposed how people with disabilities are excluded from the mainstream society, highlighting the structure of Basotho society. This indicates the set-up of having the disabled on the periphery of society thus raising questions that guided this study.

Chapter Two specifically answered this question, which societal discourses about disability make Basotho insensitive to the dignity and human rights of people with disability and we have seen how specific discourses emerged in specific periods. As a result, the morality discourses of disability perpetuate stigma and discrimination towards people with disabilities, emanating from the view that disability is a punishment from God for witchcraft and sinning. For this reason, this study highlights disability as an individual problem for not following the commandments of God.

In the same vein, in the Basotho society, disability is also equated with a bad luck or a curse thus treating people with disabilities as outsiders. The theological implication of this discourse excludes people with disabilities from the society and religious life and renders them suffering negative attitudinal barriers to full participation in a society.

As highlighted above, alongside the moral discourses of disability are the medical discourses of disability in the Basotho society. Here, people see disability as a problem in an individual, something like a problem which should be cured or fixed. This suggests that people with disability are sick. The theological implication of this discourse emphasised normalcy and presumed a stable vision of the body against all people, especially from where the disabled must be measured.

We also saw that disability was seen as a problem in a person and that needed to be corrected through medical interventions. It was argued that the charity discourses of disability appear paternalistic viewing people with disabilities as helpless and dependent on others for support.

It was also argued that in the context of Basotho, the charity discourses of disability can be seen in the way in which people with disabilities are often treated as ‘objects’ of charity. This is based on the idea that people with disabilities are seen as ‘less than’ and ‘needy’ for ‘help or care’. I have argued that this discourse often leads to people with disabilities being seen as ‘pitiabale’, and exploited or taken advantage of.

It was further argued that the theological discourses of disability often emphasize the idea of ‘redemption’ through suffering which can be used to justify acts of charity, as people with disabilities are seen as ‘worthy’ of help because they are suffering. However, it has arguably led to a paternalistic view of people with disabilities, rendering them exploited for their ‘worthiness’ of help.

It is these three discourses which have formed an interdependent opposite against people with disability in Lesotho as demonstrated in this study. The participants’ own voice contributed to this study by making it more credible and reliable through their first-hand experience in living with disability. Critical in this study are the experiences of people with disabilities, highlighting how those discourses have affected their lives. The main takeaway from their stories is how those discourses are discriminatory on them.

Chapter Three tackled the second question, how can those discourses be challenged and dismantled and concluded that deconstructing such discourses could mainstream people with disability in Lesotho. Based on social construction theory, the chapter has attempted to challenge the underlying dominant discourses of disability in Lesotho. This means that the discourses of disability that marginalise and discriminate against people with disabilities were challenged and deconstructed under the three parts; moral, medical and charity.

As we have seen, several discourses surrounding disability have evolved. In the first part which dealt with deconstructing the moral discourses of disability, we challenged it by recognising that disability is not a punishment or a divine judgement; rather, it is a complex human experience shaped by various factors. I have proposed that there is a need to move away from the belief that disability is a punishment from ancestors or a higher being.

In the second part which dealt with the medical discourses of disability, we critiqued those discourses by exposing its limitations in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of disability and challenging the notion of curing or overcoming disability as the ultimate goal. It was argued that by adopting more nuanced and inclusive models of disability, we can challenge

the medical discourses of disability and recognise the agency and resilience of people with disabilities. Also argued was that if Sesotho language is noted, some of the taken-for-granted ideas of naming disability could be seen for what they are and be challenged.

In the part, which is on deconstructing the medical discourses of disability, we saw that by acknowledging that disability is a natural part of human diversity, we can challenge the tendency to view disability as the defining characteristic of a person. This part has challenged the charity discourse of disability by questioning the assumption that people with disabilities are helpless objects of pity and emphasising their agency, resilience and potential. It was argued that by promoting disability pride and empowerment movements, we can challenge the charity discourses of disability and foster greater inclusion and respect for people with disabilities.

Equally relevant to this study have been the three categories of discourses of disability in the Basotho society. These constitute discrimination, human rights and their deconstruction. I have highlighted ableism which constitutes discrimination in negative ways, culminating in power imbalance. I have proposed a need to raise awareness that non-disabled people are not superior to people with disabilities; instead, they are equal in Lesotho.

The participants' own voice contributed to this study by dismantling those discourses in the Basotho society. The main takeaway from the participants is the significance of the narrative theory on deconstructing and challenging dominant discourses of disability. As revealed, neither would the participants like having their disability made into charity, with people feeling pity for them.

A story one member of the participants told me during an interview on challenging the societal discourses of disability demonstrates how the Basotho's discourses about disability can be challenged and dismantled. According to this participant, who is visually impaired, people should refrain from feeling sorry for them and pity when they hit something because even we too, hit things all the time with our eyes open. He also challenged the idea that disability equals inability by highlighting that disability does not mean inability. That is, people with disabilities are as a matter of fact, able to do certain things just in their own way.

As already argued, the meaning of disability has changed in the sense that those labelled as disabled people would not necessarily want to be referred to as disabled because they see

themselves as equally abled. Therefore, this study has argued that it is important to call people according to the way they want to be called so as to avoid any discrimination.

Chapter Four explored the question how people with disability would benefit, which is the last question and concluded that the benefits are far-reaching and impactful. This chapter was explored by challenging and dismantling the discourses of disability in the Basotho society, suggesting a more inclusive, accessible and equitable society, whereby people with disabilities have equal rights, opportunities and recognition. It was highlighted that by working towards a more inclusive and accessible society, we can create a better world for everyone where people with disabilities can fully participate, thrive, and contribute their unique abilities and perspectives.

It was also highlighted that by raising awareness of capabilities of people with disability, they could be accepted as fully functioning members of society. As such, they should be included in the mainstream society to enjoy the benefits and opportunities of representing and advocating certain issues, themselves. It was further highlighted that they can access services on an equal basis with the non-disabled counterparts.

Also important is that this chapter sought to explore the voices of people with disabilities together with things they could change in terms of how able-bodied people perceive them. It was highlighted that people should change the ableist discriminatory language that marginalises people with disabilities, relegating them to the margins of the mainstream society. Further highlighted is that people should shift from seeing people with disabilities as useless and dependent on other people.

Of relevance to this study was exploration of the voices of people with disabilities in relation to their benefit when the discourses of disability are challenged and dismantled. The people with disabilities have been highlighted for inclusion in the mainstream society, which is one of the aims of this study. It was also argued that there would be equal opportunities regardless of the ability of an individual. We have seen how people with disabilities would access services on an equal basis with the able-bodied people.

5.2 Enhancing My Perception about People with Disability

Finally, I offer my personal reflections about the whole study. Before engaging in this study, I was like a fish born and raised in the sea of cultural beliefs, unaware that it is wet. Similarly, I was immersed in the societal discourses of disability unaware of the harm and discrimination they perpetuated. I believed that people with disabilities were weak, pitiable or inferior. I thought they needed special treatment and accommodation, and that they could not contribute to the society in meaningful ways. For instance, I perceived them as less intelligent and capable than we, and that they cannot contribute anything to the society through working or making business ideas.

But as I dove deeper into my research, I began to see the water around me like the fish in the water swimming in the sea of cultural beliefs. I began to recognise the harmful stereotypes and attitudes that shaped the way people with disabilities were viewed and treated in society. I believed they were helpless, cursed and sick because my mind was influenced by the prevailing discourses of disability just like a fish in the water.

However, through this study, I now understand that people with disability are not cursed, helpless and sick. They are simply human beings with different abilities and experiences. I realised that those beliefs were wrong and harmful. I learned that people with disability have unique talents, strengths and experiences that make them valuable members of society. I also realized that my own biases and assumptions had prevented me from seeing humanity and worth of them. This realisation was both eye-opening and emotionally difficult. I felt sad and angry that they were treated in this way; I also felt guilty to have been part of the problem in my ignorance.

From this study I have learned the extent of my limited understanding of disability and the experiences of people with disabilities. This study has made me confront my own biases and assumptions, thus challenging me to rethink my views on the notion of disability.

The experience of conducting this study has had a profound impact on me personally. It has broadened my horizons and given me a greater awareness of the struggles and experiences of people with disabilities. It has also made me more conscious of my own privilege and the ways in which my identity shapes my experiences and perceptions. This awareness has encouraged me to become a more reflective empathetic person, thus using my position to advocate a change and promote justice. Overall, this study has been a powerful learning experience and has shaped my personal and professional development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY IN LESOTHO: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I wish to thank you for your interest to contribute in this project for your disability stories and experiences in a society arranged in such a way that it is as if you don't exist. The appropriateness of the terminology to be used will be discussed at our first meeting. I will also, with your consent be inviting a significant other to journey with us.

The Aims of the Research

This research is undertaken as part of the requirement for the master's degree in Practical Theology. The aims of the research are as follows:

1. To contribute in mainstreaming disability in the Basotho society by challenging societal attitudes that exclude people with disability in Lesotho. It investigates those societal attitudes and discourses that maintain those attitudes.
2. It aims at highlighting the importance of human rights of people with different disabilities in our society. It challenges their marginalization.
3. It aims at empowering and supporting people with disability in Lesotho.

Participants needed for the study

Ten people with disabilities will form the core of this research. They will articulate their stories and share their experiences of living with disability. Because this study is in the field of theology, pastors of the research participants will be invited to journey with us but will be included with the permission of the research participants.

What will be required of participants

If you choose to participate in this study, your consent will be required for the use of any information gathered during the meetings and sessions. Should you agree to be part of this

research, it is expected that you will schedule meetings at mutually agreed-upon times with the researcher. Following each meeting, you will receive a session summary in Sesotho, wherein you can provide feedback, corrections, and comments. However, it is important to note that the final report will be written in English.

Free participation

You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time without any consequences to you.

Confidentiality

The data collected during the meetings will be utilized in the project and will be accessible to my supervisor for reviews and discussions. If you would rather not have the sessions recorded, written notes will be taken during the meetings instead. These notes will be securely stored and locked in a filing cabinet. Once the research is completed, the data will be appropriately disposed of in agreement with privacy guidelines.

Questions of participants

If you should have any questions or concerns to raise before, during, or after the research, feel free to contact me at the following:

Cell: +266 67994629

Or my supervisor Dr. Phohlo at the National University of Lesotho

Tell: +266 58860749

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I have read the information Sheet regarding the research project and I understand what the project is all about. All my questions have been answered to my consummation. I understand that I am free to demand further information at any stage. I know that:

1. My participation in the research project is completely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any drawback.
3. I am conscious of what will happen to my personal information at the completion of the project; that the information will be kept confidential and that raw data that the project depends on will be reserved for three years after which it will be destroyed.
4. I will receive no payment or compensation for participating in the study.
5. All personal information supplied by me will stay confidential throughout the project.
6. I am aware that Koloko's supervisor will read the material.

I, therefore, give consent to be interviewed and the interviews be tape-recorded. I understand that the tape-recordings will be transcribed and used for material for a master's thesis. I agree that I do not have to answer any question that I choose not to answer.

I understand that my name will not be used, but a code name or penname will be given and that confidentiality will be maintained. I also agree that, after consultation with me on the interpretation of what has been said on the recordings, the transcribed recordings may be used for the thesis.

.....

.....

Signature of participant

Date

.....

.....

Signature of witness

Date

Appendix C

**TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY IN LESOTHO: A THEOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

CONSENT FORM FOR CO-RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I am in agreement with the aim of the study as pronounced and explained to me.

I agree that my story should be used during discussions of the research participants in my presence as well as in my absence.

I agree that I shall have access to the summary notes of the discussion and that I shall have to respond to these.

I understand that I reserve the right to alter or delete any information about me that I may wish not to be included in the report.

I prefer that the following pseudonym could be used for the purpose of the discussion:

.....

OR

I prefer that my own name (as indicated below) could be used during the discussion.

.....

.....

.....

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix D

THE RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS SEMI-STRUCTURED INTREVIEW

Questions to People with disabilities

1. What is like living with disability for you?
2. What hurts you more when people talk about disability? Who are those people who like to talk like that?
3. How do you feel when your disability is perceived from the moral, medical and charity perspectives?
4. What is it like to live in a society arranged as if you don't exist?

Translation to Sesotho

1. Ho phela le bokooa ke eng ho oena?
2. U ye u utloe bohloko ha ho buoa joang ka batho banang le bokooa? Ke bo mang ba ratang ho buoa joalo?
3. U ikutloa joang ha Basotho ba talima bokooa ba hao ele taba ea boits'oaro bo bobele, bokulo, le hoba sono?
4. Ntate/'Me', kea lemoha hore u na le bokooa bona, hoba oena, ho phela le bokooa bo tje ka hare ho sechaba sa Basotho ke ntho e joang?

Questions to People without disabilities

1. What are your thoughts about people with disability?
2. What is disability to you?
3. What do you think when talking about people with disability?
4. How is a life of a person with disability in Lesotho?

Translation to Sesotho

1. U nahang ka batho banang le bokooa?
2. Bokooa ke eng hantle ho oena?
3. Ho ferallang ka kellelong ea hao ha ho buoa ka batho banang le bokooa?
4. U bone batho banang le bokooa bophelo ba bona bole joang?