FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENTS' DROPOUT IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN EDUCATION DIVISION IN MALAWI

Towera Jane Bywell Kafunda

(MEDLM 0518)

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DECLARATION

I, Towera Jane B. Kafunda, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work, and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Mr. Chokocha M. Selemani Mbewe. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university. All the sources cited herein, have been duly acknowledged by and referenced.

Signature……………………………….   Date: ……………………………

TOWERA JANE B. KAFUNDA

CANDIDATE

Signature……………………………   Date: …………………………

MR. CHOKOCHA M. SELEMANI MBEWE

SUPERVISOR

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Lastly, my appreciation goes to all the participants who completed the questionnaires and accepted me to interview them. I do not take this gesture for granted; I thank you for that.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family, that is: my dear husband, Kezzie Kasambala Msukwa; my lovely children, Fortunate, Kitty, Tupokiwe and Kezzie Junior who are all my greatest inspiration and pride. These people encouraged me to push on even when I felt like giving up. May the almighty God continue blessing you.

ABSTRACT

Drop out of students from schools is a widespread problem globally. This research was a comparative study aimed at investigating factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi. The study adopted the Social and Academic Integration theory by Vincent Tinto (1975) who argues that students drop out of school if they are insufficiently integrated into different aspects of the school culture due to several traits.

The study employed a pragmatic paradigm which advocates the use of mixed methods, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods when collecting data. This study used convergent mixed method design and was conducted in four grant-aided national and four district boarding secondary schools. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used, particularly data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The research study sample comprised 254 participants that were selected using purposive, simple random and snowballing sampling: four Education Officers, eight head-teachers, three PTA members, 16 form teachers, 215 form three government selected students, four school dropouts and their parents (4). Descriptive statistics in form of frequency were used to analyse quantitative data using SPSS version 20 and Microsoft (MS) Excel. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

The study findings revealed high dropout rates of students in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools with most boys dropping out. The study also found that poverty, direct and indirect costs of school significantly influenced drop out of students from both school types. Early marriages and pregnancies were also one of the major factors for high dropout rates for girls. However, it was found that girls had more opportunities to access funding for their studies from various organizations than the boys.

The study suggested some intervention measures to the challenges. The suggestions made included urging the government to come up with deliberate policies that would help reduce male student's dropout rate. The study recommended making secondary education free to all deserving students amongst many other recommendations.

Key Words: dropout, grant-aided, district boarding, secondary schools, poverty

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ACEM	Association of Christian Educators in Malawi
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
EMIS	Educational Management Information Systems
GABLE	Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
GENET	Girls Empowerment Network
GPF	General Purpose Fund
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
NED	Northern Education Division
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
PTA	Parents Teachers' Association
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TRF	Textbook Revolving Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
WVI	World Vision International

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background to the study. It also presents the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the main research question, sub-research questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations and limitations of the study, definitions of the terms used, organisation of the study and conclusion of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is one of the tools which can level the gap between the rich and the poor since educated individuals are equipped with knowledge and skills which can enable them think critically and do well in life. Hall and Midgley (2004) observe that education is one of the vital elements that can help combat poverty, empower women, promote human rights and democracy, protect the environment and control population growth. Caillods and Hallak (2004) on the other hand, contend that education is regarded as a necessary condition but not sufficient enough to empower the poor as other measures such as information sharing, infrastructure, political will, and legal protection are also required. Caillods and Hallak further observe that it is still possible to argue that education has an empowering potential that can steer political processes, and in turn, transform the existing conditions within society. For this reason, nations strive to educate their citizens because they view education as a key to political and socio-economic developments.

Education is also cited by early economic experts as the corner-stone for all economic and social stability within any country (World Bank, 2005). Across the globe, education has been said to have the ability to alleviate poverty through developing skills in people which increase individuals' income and help them become self-reliant and independent (World Bank, 2004). In short,

education is vital for equipping citizens with values, knowledge and practical skills that are essential for empowering individuals socially, socio-economically and politically in societies.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in its vision articulates that the education sector in Malawi is to be a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless (MoEST, 2013). As a tool for empowerment and development, education is meant to equip individuals with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that can help them perform various roles effectively. In turn, such individuals will   contribute towards the socio-economic development and growth of the nation. MoEST further states that its mission is to provide quality and relevant education which will provide students with the right knowledge and skills necessary for gainful employment in the formal, private and public sectors (MoEST, 2013). The MoEST adds that such education should also prepare students for further studies according to their abilities and aptitudes.

Further evidence, suggests that the Malawi Government recognizes education as a basic human right as indicated in Section 25, subsection 1 of the Constitution of Malawi, which asserts, 'all persons are entitled to education' (Republic of Malawi Constitution, 1999; 25: 1). Recognizing education as a right, Malawi introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 which, in a way, sorted out problems of accessibility to education as many children could not afford it due to lack of school fees. While FPE was assumed to have sorted issues of access to education, other challenges emerged from this development. For instance, issues of teacher shortage, learning and teaching materials shortages and lack of classroom space became serious issues. Above these, FPE automatically meant having more students wanting spaces at secondary schools and other subsequent levels (Mgomezulu & Wamba, 2014; Chimombo, 2005). Accordingly, transition from primary school into secondary school became very competitive and difficult as observed by

McConnel and Mupuwaliya (2016) who indicated that transitioning from primary to secondary schools in Malawi is not easy as there are limited spaces for the large number of students who qualify for secondary school education. In addition, statistics in EMIS Report of 2017/18 indicate that transition rates from primary school to secondary was at 38.4 % and over a period of five years (2014 to 2018) it increased from 36.0 % to 38.4% which appeared a good indicator but was still on the lower side (MoEST, 2018).

Operationally, the Malawi government under MoEST has the mandate to select students into secondary schools when they have passed their Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PSLCE) administered by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). While there are more qualifying students from the PSLCE, only the "cream" of the students is selected to National Secondary Schools. Students are ranked based on their scores in the PSLCE, with the highest scoring students entering Conventional Secondary Schools while those with lower scores go to Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) and Open Day Secondary Schools (De Hoop, (2010) and UNESCO (2010)). Normally, national secondary schools are in two groups: those fully owned by the government and those owned by churches. Those owned by churches are jointly run by government and the churches through special guidelines. These guidelines are stipulated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is signed by the Malawi government and the Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM). According to the MOU, the church is to provide infrastructure, support staff while the government provides qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials, grants and salaries (Government of the Republic of Malawi and Association of Christian Educators in Malawi, 2006).

The second category of students who come second from the cream are selected to District Boarding Secondary Schools mostly at district level. These schools are ranked second from the grant-aided

national secondary schools in terms of infrastructure and staffing. While the majority of these schools are owned by the government, there are some which are merely grant-aided such as those under the church. This means they receive their subvention from the government on a monthly basis. These schools are also ranked second in terms of the Malawi Secondary Certificate of Education (MSCE) examination results and school fees payable. The list of government national, grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools is given in Appendix 1.

As indicated above, the rest of the students are placed in District Day and CDSS according to their feeder primary schools. Essentially, CDSSs evolved from what used to be called the Malawi Correspondence Colleges (MCCs) which began around 1965. MCCs changed to Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) in 1972 before they were rebranded into CDSSs in 1998 (Chimpololo, 2010). Generally, CDSSs are established by the community to address their needs for secondary education. This means that the community builds the classes and offices on self-help basis, and mostly these schools lack some social amnesties such as portable water, electricity and furniture among others. In extreme cases, some CDSS especially those located in remote areas have no qualified teachers as such they simply use primary school teachers (Mgomezulu & Wamba, 2014; Chimombo, 2005). School fees is much lower in CDSSs compared to that charged by the national and district boarding secondary schools. Besides, the examinations results in CDSSs are usually poor compared to those in the national secondary schools.

As it is common in other parts of the world, academic achievement of a child in Malawi may be determined by the category of the secondary school a child has been selected to (Chimombo, 2005). Right from the time the PSLCE selection is out, the future of the child is already predicted and decisions are made by both the child and the parents on what the child should do. Some students repeat standard eight to have a chance to be selected to a better secondary school while others opt

to go to private secondary schools which is another better option in Malawi (Chimombo, Meke, Zeitlyn, & Lewin, 2014).

There is a lot of panic when the PSLCE results are out since government policy does not allow anyone to put children in public secondary schools after the selection is done. However, there is a chance for some students to land a place after the second selection and these students usually report in the schools in the second term. Second selection is meant to fill the gaps which may have been created by some students who failed to take up their offers due to other reasons. For instance, some parents may prefer private schools to government schools, while others may fail to report because they have no financial resources or the student is taken ill especially those girls who may be selected while pregnant among many other reasons. Like McConnell and Mupuwaliywa (2016) observe, both at primary and secondary school levels, dropout rates get high because of difficulties in finding school fees, early marriage and pregnancies. However, according to the MOU between ACEM and the Malawi Government, government cannot select children to grant-aided national secondary schools after the first selection as priority is given to the church who selects their own candidates as replacements.

There is high expectation from the public that a child selected to a grant-aided national secondary school will get an excellent grade during MSCE, seconded by those from district boarding secondary school as opposed to those in district day and CDSS (Sandikonda, 2013). Although, this can be debatable, as there may be other factors that can hinder the students' performance in the first-rate schools, experience shows that few students from CDSS perform better than those in national and district boarding secondary schools. One of the reasons for this trend could be that the students in the national and district boarding secondary schools come from different levels of socio-economic status across the country, and mostly are those that scored best grades at their

PSLCE. Like Chimombo (2005) argues, given the high fees and good funding levels in the first-rate secondary schools, these schools usually have adequate resources which, in turn, provide conducive learning environments and subsequent improved achievements.

The issue here is that whether factors such as economic differences; lack of family support and/or poor academic achievements would contribute towards attrition (dropout) or not at secondary school levels remain under-researched in Malawi (Chimombo, 2005; Mgomezulu & Wamba, 2014). Given the lack of research in this field, it is not clear how scholars, educators and policy-makers access literature for informing their research and policy decisions. This is the reason this study is being undertaken: to investigate the factors that contribute to attrition in grant-aided national secondary schools and district boarding secondary schools.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Malawi Education Statistics (MoEST 2018) shows that in the academic year of 2017/2018 there were 830 public secondary schools in Malawi that were categorized as grant-aided national, district boarding and CDSSs. In the same academic year, the total enrolment stood at 387,569 students and a total of 22,069 (nearly 5.7%) students dropped out of school for various reasons. Considering this number as loss of human capital, one can appreciate the degree of tragedy to the development of the individuals, their families and the country. By failing to complete their education, Malawi would potentially have created 22,069 people who may become overly dependent on relations, less productive because they may not acquire the necessary skills, and be a burden to the social services of Malawi. According to Chugh (2011), failure to complete high school does not only produce negative outcome for the individuals, but also widens the existing socio-economic inequalities.

National and district boarding secondary schools are considered to be the best schools in Malawi as such the government through MoEST select students who have performed very well during PSLCE examinations into these schools. These students are expected to take advantage of this opportunity and make the best of it by completing their studies and achieving the best results during MSCE examinations. Despite the government efforts to achieve the education for all (EFA) goals and broadening access for boys and girls through school infrastructure development and establishing projects such as increasing infrastructure and non-state actors' bursaries, there is a general observation that such initiatives have not fully met the needs of the students who are selected to these secondary schools hence an increase in attrition.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to compare the factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi. To achieve this, the study sought to answer the main and sub-research questions indicated in section 1.5 and 1.6 respectively in order to understand and explain the situation better.

1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the factors contributing to students' drop-out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi?

1.6 SUB-QUESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The following were the sub-questions that guided this research:

a. What is the extent of students' drop-out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

b. What are the factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

c. What measures can be put in place to address the factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There are a number of studies conducted on students' drop-out from secondary school education in Malawi, but most of them concentrated on girls' education which has resulted into girls getting more interventions than boys. Experience has shown that both boys and girls drop out of school before completing their studies especially those from grant-aided national secondary schools and district boarding secondary schools. Ironically, these are the schools that receive a lot of support and resources from both government and the public making them the preferred destination for students who have passed their PSLCE examinations with good grades. While the expectation would have been that with such great support from the government and the public, coupled with their top results at PSLCE level, students should not have been dropping out of these schools. This then is the case that prompted the researcher to probe into the underlying factors that militate against students' completion from schooling in the context under study, and find the solutions that can help reduce this trend.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was important because it unveiled the challenges students face in trying to attain education in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi. This study would serve as a mirror for various stakeholders in education as it will guide them on how they can meaningfully assist students to achieve the best results from their schooling experiences. The study will also assist policymakers to improve the admission policy of students into secondary

schools. The findings of this study will further, assist government to re-examine the MOU between ACEM and itself on the policies guiding the running of grant-aided national secondary schools so that the core purposes of these schools can be accomplished with nominal conflicts in the cases of students' dropout and replacement policies. It also envisaged that this study will contribute to the already existing body of knowledge on students' dropout and completion levels in Malawi's secondary schools upon which students, scholars and researchers can base their studies on.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is defined as a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relationships among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena (Gabriel, 2008). The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study (Swanson, 2013). In line with these definitions, this study is guided by the theory of Social and Academic Integration developed by Vincent Tinto in 1975. This theory focuses on individual characteristics prior to entering the university and his/her experiences upon entering the university as well as the effect of external factors that interfere with his/her academic performance. This theory has been adopted by this study because retention of students in secondary schools is also affected by individual traits and factors prior to entry into the secondary school. These factors include socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school-based factors and individual factors as revealed by literature (Gatsi, 2018). The students' performance is also interfered with the experiences they get upon entering the secondary school system.

Tinto drew upon the work of Spady (1970) who was the first to apply Durkheim's theory of suicide to student retention. Durkheim's theory is based on the assumption that the likelihood that an individual will commit suicide is predicted by the level of their integration into society (Tinto,

1975). While Durkheim's model of suicide assumes that individuals commit suicide because they are insufficiently integrated into society, Tinto asserts that school dropout occurs when students are insufficiently integrated into different aspects of the schooling culture. Tinto further contends that school dropout could also occur due to lack of integration in either the academic or the social systems of the school (Tinto, 1975). For example, if a student is not provided with adequate support on his/her education socially or academically, he/she is likely to drop out of school.

Based on further research, Tinto revised the theory in 1987 by including the three stages of moving from one community to another. These stages for example included separation, transition and incorporation. Precisely, the first stage, 'separation,' refers to the student's parting ways with one group to join another one. In this case, the student is separated from family members and his/her peers in the primary school to meet with new members in the secondary school. In the second stage 'transition,' students deal with the stresses of acclimatizing to the new and unfamiliar environment such as the secondary school. In the third stage, 'incorporation,' students have been acclimatized to the new system and are now competent members of the new environment (McClanahan 2004; Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003).

A further revision of this theory in 1993 added other variables affecting the social and academic integration of students in the school system. These variables included adjustment, difficulty, incongruences, isolation, finances, learning and external obligations or commitments of the students in the school (Tinto, 1993). For this reason, Seidman (1996), McCubbin (2003), and Berge and Huang (2004) in trying to explain Tinto's model, they observed that students' pre-entry school attributes' such as family background, academic ability, race, sex and prior schooling will determine their academic and social integration into the new secondary school environment, and subsequently their academic performance and decisions to persevere and/or drop out of the school will be determined by such factors. Tinto's Model is shown in Figure 1.1.

Family Background

Individual Attributes

Pre-institution schooling

Goal Attainment

Institutional Commitment

Grade Performance

Intellectual Development

Academic Integration

Peer-group Interactions

Faculty Interactions

Social Integration

Goal Attainment

Institutional Commitment

Dropout Decision
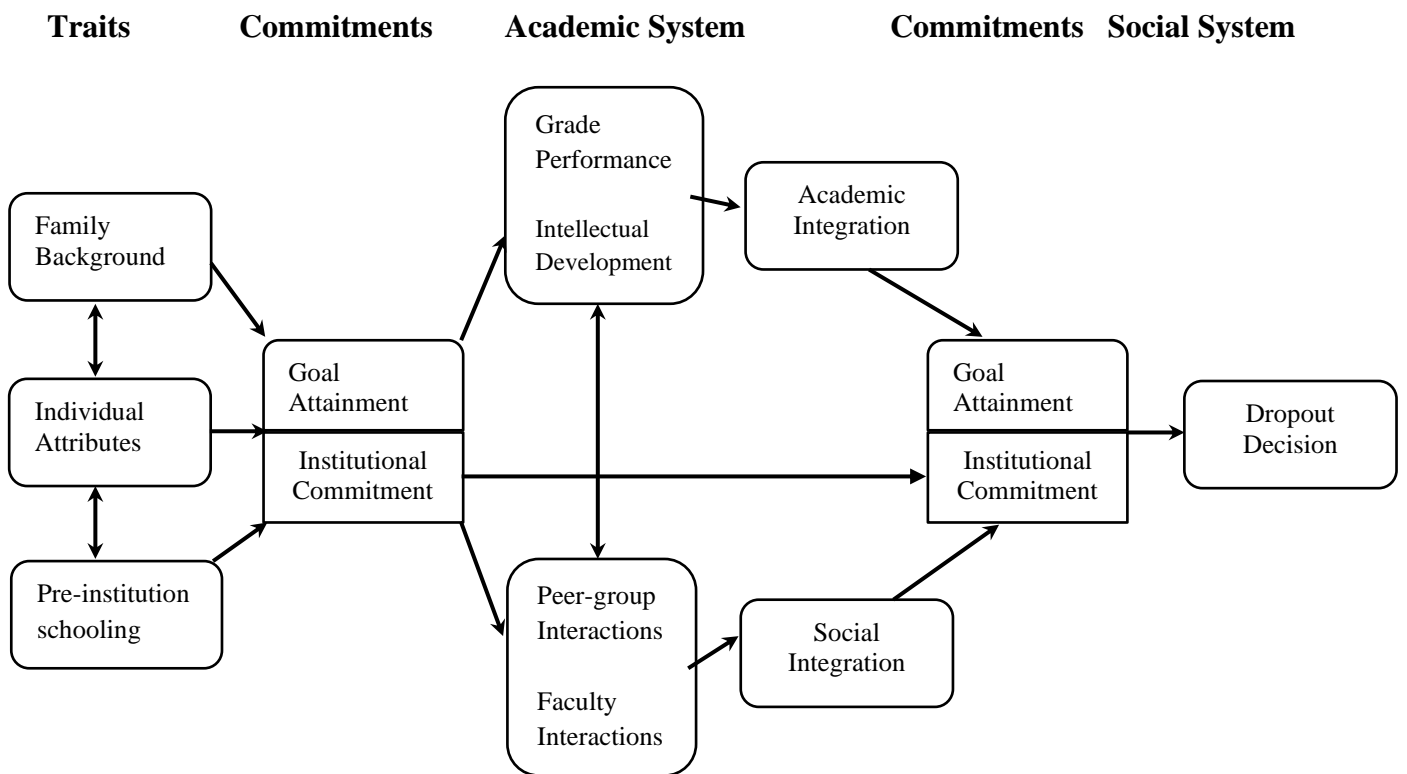
Figure 1.1 Tinto's Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1975)

Tinto's Student Integration Model re-developed an explanatory and longitudinal model on student's persistence and/or attrition processes, based on the degree of fit between the individual student and institutional environment (Tinto, 1987; 1993; 1994). It asserts that the dropout process usually involves elements of academic and social integration within the institution. The model suggests that students come to a particular institution with a range of background traits such as race, primary school achievement, academic aptitude, family background, family education, and financial contexts. These characteristics lead to initial commitments, both to the goal of completion from the institution and to the specific institution attended. Coupled with background characteristics, these initial commitments are assumed to steer, not only how well the student will perform academically, but also how he/she will interact with and subsequently become integrated into, the institution's social and academic systems. All these being equal, the greater the individual's level of social and academic integration, the greater his/her subsequent commitment to the institution and commitment to the goal of completing school will be. These commitments

alongside the levels of integration are seen as having a positive influence on persistence. Simply put, the more a student integrates, the less likely the student is to drop out of the institution. Precisely, Tinto's Student Integration Model attempts to understand the factors that contribute to students' decisions to drop out of schooling based on their social and academic integration.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS

This study focused on investigating factors that propel students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools within NED in Malawi. It excluded day secondary schools which might be facing the same challenges as grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools deliberately. Grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools possess almost the same characteristics which might mean that they are experiencing similar challenges.

The study collected information from head-teachers and form teachers minus other lay teachers for the reason that the former had rich information to contribute to the study better than the latter. Nevertheless, there might be some teachers who were dealing with the issues this study targeted including discipline and counselling etc., and such teachers would have been relevant if included. Beyond this, only Form three government students were selected for the study leaving all the students from other forms hoping that these sampled students had stayed longer than the Form ones and Form twos, hence they had adequate information on why their peers dropped out of schooling. Even then, the excluded students might equally have some knowledge about someone who withdrew from the system even though this study ignored them. On the other hand, Form fours were not included although they would have been the most reliable source given their length of stay in the schools had it not been for their busy schedules as they were writing national examinations.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was about investigating factors that influence students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools, and therefore, the study required literature which was directly related to this level of study. However, the study did not find any related literature specifically related to these schools. Accordingly, the study utilised literature on public boarding secondary schools in general.

Another limitation was that some participants who were purposively chosen to participate in the study were difficult to locate; as a result, fewer numbers than those intended were interviewed. These respondents were PTA members, dropout students and parents of the dropped-out students as shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.4. This was because grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools had students who were coming far from these schools. This meant that PTA members, students who dropped out of schools and their parents also lived far from the schools. However, this did not affect the results as the researchers were convinced that the numbers that were interviewed were a good representation to give adequate information for the study.

There were also challenges for most participants involved in the study except the students, to comfortably release information to the researchers. This was the case because most of them were in key positions meant to deal with these problems as such, they would be crucifying themselves for not doing their job right. This way, the researcher had to convince them that the information collected would be used for study purposes only and that their names would be kept anonymous.

The researcher targeted ten schools but ended up involving only eight schools that are four grant-aided national and four district boarding secondary schools. There were challenges to visit the two schools because the time when the data was being collected, it was time of National Presidential

and Parliamentary Elections, and these schools were located in politically volatile areas. Nonetheless, this did not compromise the results as it was deemed adequate that the eight schools were quite representative for this study. There was also another setback on the number of students to respond to the questionnaire. Most schools had fewer numbers of students than the ones originally targeted as summarized in Table 3.2. That aside, the results were not compromised in any way since the available numbers were a good representation to give adequate information for the study.

1.12 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Child labour refers to work that is done by children under the age of 18 that may affect their physical, social, intellectual or emotional development, and which extensively affect their schooling process.

Cohort refers to a group of students whose attendance or participation can be tracked from the time they started schooling to completion of a full school cycle.

Completion refers to when a learner has finished a school's full cycle.

District boarding secondary schools refer to those public secondary schools which offer boarding facilities for students, and whose population are the students selected on merit within the district.

Enrolment refers to a process of admitting new students into the school.

Grant-aided national secondary schools refer to those public boarding secondary schools which are owned by churches but are run by both churches and government based on a memorandum of

understanding. It offers boarding facilities for students, and its population comprises students selected by the church and the government. The government selects these students on merit from across the country.

Household refers to persons or a group of people living together under one roof or within the same compound and sharing the community way of life and resources.

Influence refers to a course of events pushing or prompting a child to drop out of public secondary school.

Needy student refers to a boy or girl enrolled in a public secondary school, and is willing to learn but is financially challenged.

Primary school is a stage in learning that begins with class one and ends at class eight. It is concluded with an award of Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE).

Public secondary schools refer to those secondary schools that are supported and maintained through use of public funds obtained from government.

Secondary schools refer to the institutions of learning between the primary or elementary education and higher education. In the 8-4-4 cycle of education system of Malawi, it constitutes the middle (4). It is concluded with an award of the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE).

Students' dropout refers to an act of a student withdrawing from schooling indefinitely before completing full school cycle. It is also an action of a student enrolling for secondary education in a particular school and for some reason other than death leave the school before completing their studies in the school they were selected to.

1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one has presented the background information to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the main research question, research sub- questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and definitions of terms used as well as the organisation of the study. Chapter two deals with review of related literature on the factors that influence students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. The factors included socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school related factors, individual related factors and others. Chapter three presents the research design, and methodology comprising target population, sample and sampling techniques, types of data used, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis techniques, validity and reliability of the study for quantitative data, trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative data, and ethical considerations. Chapter four contains the analysis of data findings for this study and discussion while chapter five gives a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study, and suggested areas for further research.

1.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the introduction of the study on the factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in NED in Malawi. The chapter has also presented background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, main research question, sub-questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study,

theoretical framework, delimitations and limitations of the study, definitions of the terms used and

organisation of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the introduction to the study of factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in NED in Malawi, background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, main research question, sub-questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations and limitations, definitions of the terms used in the study and organisation of the study. This chapter reviews related studies on factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in NED in Malawi. According to Anson and Schwegler (2010), literature review aims to convey knowledge and ideas that have been established on a topic and what their strengths and weaknesses are. This study focused on the literature by various scholars which answers the research questions. The work in this chapter has been arranged into headings in line with the sub-questions in this study such as: To what extent do students drop out from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi? What are the factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi? What measures are being used to reduce students' dropout problems in grant aided national and district boarding secondary school in Malawi?

To answer these questions effectively, the literature review focused on specific factors that contribute towards students' dropout as envisaged by Tinto Models under the following broader themes: socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school related factors, individual related factors and other factors as identified by the literature.

2.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS DROP OUT OF GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI

Dropout also known as attrition refers to students' withdrawing from school indefinitely before completing their studies. In this study, students' dropping out of schooling means students who enrolled for secondary school education in a particular school but for some reason other than death decided to quit schooling even before they complete their studies in that school. Dropout rate is the percentage of dropouts in a given programme out of the total number of those students who enrolled at the beginning of the programme. Retention as opposed to attrition was another word which is frequently used in this study, and in this context, it refers to the period students continue to learn in a particular school until they complete their studies. Within secondary school contexts, students are supposed to learn for four years and obtain the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). According to Seidman (2012) retention of students refers to the length of time that students continue to study at a particular institution, and the word is often used as a metric, measuring the percentage of students that remain in the schooling system until they have completed a particular qualification.

The problem of attrition in schools in many countries including Malawi still remains one of the greatest challenges (Katahoire 2014). This comes against the backdrop that countries and organisations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF and others are increasingly concerned with reducing the problem of limited access to education at various levels including secondary education. To this end many countries have been urged to design and pursue effective economic growth and development strategies that will help increase and sustain funding opportunities for the expansion of secondary school education (World Bank, 2005). Despite these developments, students' attrition from schools still remains a big issue for most nations. New York Times (2005) reports that school dropout issues are persistent crises in the United States of America

(USA) wherein about one million students drop out of school every year. Furthermore, in the USA, educational systems are losing half of the students through school attrition as noted by the study by the US Department of Education (USDE). The USDE established that almost 3% of American students were dropping out of schools in the nation's largest public district schools. Similarly, Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) reveal that the United Kingdom (UK) has one of the worst dropout rates in the developed world. The dropout problem is also persistent in the Indian education system, where nearly 57% of the children who enter school are unable to complete their secondary school education (Chugh, 2011).

Conversely, retention and participation rates for secondary school education in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have been reported to be lower than any region of the world, with access biased towards the wealthier populations (UNESCO, 2001). In Kenya, retention and access to secondary school education is still low with a transition rate of 50% from primary to secondary schools with the attrition rate that lie between 10% and 50% (Gachugi, 2005). For Malawi, students' attrition from secondary schools is said to be a nationwide issue. According to the report termed the 'Malawi's Education Statistics' prepared by the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in 2018, the total number of dropouts in the period between 2016 and 2017, was 18,042. This figure increased by 754 dropouts from the total of 17,288 in the previous year. NED in particular accounted for 19 percent of all dropouts (EMIS, 2018).

Some studies have revealed that dropout (attrition) of students from public secondary schools may differ by gender in many countries. Other studies for example have shown that there are more girls who drop out of schools than boys. On the other hand, Njeru and Orodho (2003) have observed that there has been a considerable decline in gross enrolment rates by gender, and severe discrepancies in access and retention of secondary school education in the Arid and Semi-Arid

Land (ASAL) areas of Kenya. Relative to this, UNESCO (2014) states that the three regions that has the highest proportions of girls who drop out of school include the Arab States (65%); Sub Saharan Africa (64%) and South and West Asia (55%). Different countries also show a considerable variation in the cumulative dropout rates. For example, Malawi, Central Africa Republic and Niger have the highest dropout rates as compared to Mauritius, Sudan and Ivory Coast which have the lowest attrition rates (UNESCO, 2012). In addition, UNESCO (2012) has specified that dropout rate is higher for girls in 49 countries compared to dropout rates for boys. Holmes (2003) also reveals that, in most cases, girls achieve less education and tend to drop out of schools earlier than boys do. In Malawi, some studies have shown that female learners drop out of school more than their male counterparts. Chimombo (1999) for example, observes that though enrolment in school is almost equal for girls and boys in Malawi, girls have lower chances of remaining in school compared to boys. Likewise, the World Vision International (WVI) (2010) reports that the dropout rate for those attending schools in Malawi is high among girls. Agreeing with the above scholars, Valentini (2008) observes that in Malawi, nearly 11% of girls, who enrolled in schools each year, dropped out of school against 8% for boys.

Nevertheless, some studies have shown that more boys than girls drop out of schools each year worldwide. According to the Indian Secretariat Report of 2010, school dropout rates for boys have remained high, and are said to have contributed towards low literacy levels in India since boys are considered as breadwinners for their families. The report, further indicates that the rates of attrition between boys and girls lie between 62% and 59% respectively. Similar studies have revealed that in Kenya, more boys than girls do drop out of public secondary schooling (Oteyo & Kariuki, 2009; Mwaniki, 2008). In addition to this, Kimondo (2007) and Gatere (2007) affirm that boys' education has been endangered because of dropout rates. Their argument like that of the World Bank is that

globally, countries and funding institutions have emphasised increasing girls' education at the expense of boys (World Bank, 2005).

2.3 FACTORS THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENTS' DROPOUT IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI

Literature has shown that despite the efforts made by the government and various stakeholders in education to promote secondary school education, many boys and girls do not remain in schools to complete their studies (Chimombo, 1999; 2005). Similarly, Cervantes (1965) observes that in the USA problems of high students' dropout rates were also common in its schools. The USA dropout cases were blamed on student family factors, peer pressure, culture and school experiences. Likewise, in Ghana, studies on access and retention have revealed that although their government is committed to providing quality education to its citizens, children from poor families continue to drop out of school (Akyeampong, 2009; Rolleston, 2009). Ironically, in Malawi, dropout rates are still high although primary education is free and this casts doubt at the view that fees could be the sole reason for students' attrition in schools (Siddhu, 2011).

According to Todaro (1994), the causes for school attrition varies from region to region, country to country, and school to school hence there could be an allay of factors that lead to this rather than a single factor. Shahidul and Karim (2015) also agree that students' dropout does not occur through a single factor but rather through multiple factors. Many studies point to socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school related factors and individual related factors as key reasons that propel attrition in schools (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990; Kadzamira & Chibwana, 1999; Maluwa-Banda & Kholowa, 2002; Keraita, 2016). Maluwa-Banda (2003) observes that there existed disparities in completion rates based on gender, geo-location and status. For example, the

completion between boys and girls was 9%; between urban and rural students stood at 26% while between rich and poor students, remained at 29%. According to the Malawi Education Statistics (MoEST 2018), there were four major causes of students' dropout namely: fees, pregnancies, distance and family responsibilities. As already indicated in section 1.3, the reason of fees was the worst accounting to 8540 dropouts, seconded by pregnancies at 3335, followed by distance at 1712, and family responsibility at 1396. EMIS (2018) further indicates that 8.46% boys dropped out and 13.35% of girls dropped out while EMIS (2016) indicates that more boys 3498 (51%) dropped out than girls 3300 (49%). Due to these disparities in dropout rates between boys and girls, there is great need to investigate the factors that influence students' dropout from public secondary schools, and further establish why boys' participation and retention seem to be compromised.

2.3.1 Socio-economic Factors

Socio-economic factors are factors that originate from societies' social and economic way of life that affect children's schooling (Kimondo, 2007). According to Mueni (2015) and Amdany (2017), there are many socio-economic factors that may cause children to drop out of school. For example, factors such as poverty (lack of finances to support education), direct and indirect costs of the school, child labour, orphanage, HIV and AIDS, parental level of education and many more are some of the factors in play. These have been explained below.

2.3.1.1 Poverty

Poverty, which includes lack of finances to support child's education, may poorly affect the chances of students remaining in school. Kadzamira and Rose (2001) and Samati (2013) assert that the major cause of school dropout is poverty. The authors confirm that primary and secondary school data do indicate that children from the poorest households are underrepresented at the primary school level and are almost absent at secondary level in Malawi. They also indicate that

primary school completion among rural students is almost 34% lower than that of urban students. According to a 2018 integrated household report which emerged as a result of a joined effort between the Malawian government and UNICEF indicated that in 2016, Malawi's poverty rate reached 51.5% which remained slightly unchanged at 52% (EMIS, 2018). The report suggests that this poverty contributed towards students' attrition from schooling. Concurring with this observation, Chimombo (2009) adds that studies on education access in Malawi have revealed that children from poor households cannot enroll and complete education due to poverty. He argues that this may equally influence parents to become wary on investing in children's education and who this child should be. Given such choice dilemmas, most parents in Africa opt to invest in boys' education rather than girls. Chimombo (2009) further, argues that when questions of quality in education arises, poor parents find it easy to withdraw their male children from schooling for income generating activities than waste their hard-earned resources for an education that is worthless. The question of quality and its influence on dropout and attrition is one of the key areas that call for substantive investigations even though is beyond the scope of this study. That aside, there is substantive evidence that parents' preference for their children education largely depends on an allay of factors including gender, future benefits and education quality and relevance. This could be the case then that Leung and Zhang (2008) argued that most parents find it necessary to invest more in boys than girls hoping that these boys will help them in future unlike girls who will most likely be under their husbands and mother in-laws.

Corroborating with Chimombo (2009) other scholars have argued that due to poverty, most children prefer to seek employment to earn money to take care for themselves and their families. Thus, these children go to work as garden boys and maids in urban areas of Malawi and/or in South Africa. Likewise, in some African countries, boys engage in motorcycle (pick pick/boda-boda, kekeke) and bicycle (kabaza/sakalamento) business, while others become minibus/taxis callers to

get money from the drivers for having called customers for their vehicles. Hamasi (2013) reports that many boys in Kenya have dropped out of school to engage in economic activities such as "boda-boda" business. Like Chimombo (2009) establishes, many parents in Malawi and other parts of Africa have, out of desperation, forced their daughters to get married as early as possible so that the husband can provide for them while others have engaged in prostitution to get money to provide for themselves and their family needs. In Zimbabwe, because of the crippled, ailing economy and social problems, there has been high levels of young school girl's prostitution (Gatsi, 2018). Munene (2013) comments that nearly 150 million children have been forced to drop out of school due to the pressures of their family's poverty.

2.3.1.2 Direct and indirect school costs

Direct and indirect school costs are a central reason for early dropout from schools of most children. In Kenya, most children from poor households drop out of schools before completion since many families are unable to provide for the rising costs of education (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). The report from an Integrated Budget and Household Survey 2009/2010 by the Republic of Kenya (2010) reveals that 66% of boys drop out of school, due to failure to meet the rising costs of education.

In Malawi also secondary school education regardless of the school category, has a cost attached. Different schools charge different amounts of school fees and tuition which is also the case with grant-aided national secondary schools on the lead. The findings from EMIS Report of 2017/18 indicate that most male and female students dropped out of secondary schools mainly due to lack of school fees (EMIS, 2018). According to the report, school fees accounted for 39% of the total dropouts. This is not surprising because Malawi is a poor nation having most of its population living below almost 52 % of the poverty line who survive on less than one dollar a day (NSO,

2018). Additionally, a very small proportion of Malawi's population lives in urban areas such as Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu; while the rest of the population who are ultra-poor live in the rural areas (NSO, 2005; Maluwa-Banda, 2003).

Looking at the magnitude of the fees issue, the Malawi Government through MoEST, in 2019 acknowledged in the Daily Times of January 15, 2019 that it had removed a good portion of school fees which children were supposed to pay in all public secondary schools, and declared that no child should be denied access to education due to fees (Maleke & Kaluluma-Phiri, 2019). Maleke and Kaluluma-Phiri (2019) further indicated that the government carried out the move in the spirit of empowering people of Malawi through education as stipulated in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDSs) and also in line with the global agenda of ensuring that education is inclusive for all, fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 (Government of Malawi, 2017). To this end, government also exempted students from paying General Purpose Fund (GPF) and Textbook Revolving Fund (TRF) (Maleke & Kaluluma-Phiri, 2019). Even then, students are still paying huge amounts of school fees in all categories of schools in Malawi such as Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fees, development fees which is used for school projects and payment of support staff, examinations fees, and boarding fees for board and lodge in boarding secondary schools.

Apart from school fees mentioned above there are other school requirements such as uniforms, writing materials and others which a child is supposed to have for them to learn efficiently and these still may impede smooth schooling opportunities for children. Based on this, Mueni (2015) contends that while it is imperative to pay school fees for the smooth running of the schools, the high costs associated with schooling may still hinder access and participation to education which can then lead to attrition.

Some studies have also revealed that schooling costs may be linked to the gender of the children especially when parents are unwilling to meet these costs. Brown and Park (2002) for example argue that in rural China, 47% of girls as compared to 33% of boys dropped out of school due to parents' inability to pay school fees. Similarly, Hunter and May (2002) state that in South Africa about 27% of the boys and 30% of girls drop out of schooling before secondary school graduation due to poverty. These authors imply that parents' preference to pay schooling costs is biased towards their male children. In Kenya, Lloyd, Mete and Sathar (2000) also, established that higher school fees increase the likelihood of attrition among girls but not boys. However, Amdany (2017) in her study that investigated factors that influence the participation and retention of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya concluded that financial constraints hinder the participation and retention of boys in public secondary schools due to the fact that the meagre resources that are available are channeled to catering for their basic survival and families (Amdany, 2017).

2.3.1.3 Household work

Studies have been conducted to find out the impact of child-labour on educational outcomes which have shown that most girls start working at an earlier age than boys especially in rural areas, and they also tend to do more household chores than boys (Mutua, 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Farah, Upadhyay & Elliott, 2017). Fuller and Liang (1999) indicate that if mothers work for wages outside their homes, children take some responsibilities of the household, which then, causes them to drop out of schools. In some rural areas, young boys are forced to assist their families to look after livestock and gardening. Generally, girls do more household chores than boys do under any context. Conversely, girls in rural areas do more household chores than girls in urban areas (Ersado, 2005).

2.3.1.4 Child labor

Persons whose age is under 18 years old are considered to be children of underage by many nations' constitution and as such are not supposed to be employed in any work (ILO, 2018). However, it is established that children who are underage are involved in paid and unpaid labour in many developing countries. These children are involved in activities such as household chores, farming, street hawking, selling in shops, transportation of people and goods (for example kabaza, boda-boda, driving oxcarts etc.) in many African countries. According to Republic of Kenya Report on Child Labour (2005), these boys and girls accept to drop out of school so as to play their role to help their families survive since poor families usually rely on each family member's contribution for their survival. While child labour is reducing globally, it is actually on the rise in the sub-Saharan Africa and many developing countries (Otieno, 2016). In Malawi, child labour is intensively used in tobacco farms, coffee farms, tea estates, households and other places despite the government barring the malpractice. It has been argued that in most societies, child labour is indispensable to the survival of some households, and schooling represents a high opportunity cost to those sending their children to school (Polesel, Nizi, & Kurantowicz, 2011; Chimombo, 2009). Child labour limits children's participation and access to education consequently leading to attrition. According to Gatere (2007), child labour is one of the worst forms of employment and could be ranked amongst the worst form of problems towards the achievement of education.

2.3.1.5 Parental levels of education and aspirations for their children

Initial academic skills go hand in hand with the home environment where low literacy levels and intense stress affect the children negatively in their academic experiences. Regarding this, the World Bank (1988) argues that there is a positive link between the education of children and that of their parents. This is essential because the level of education of parents plays a major role in the education of any child. Ersado (2005) adds that the education level of parents can determine the

period their children will stay in school, and how they will perform and excel in the future. He further argues that educated parents are likely to motivate, inspire and be good role models to their children because they know the benefits of education, and therefore can emphasize the importance of education. This in turn maintains their children in schools, thus reducing children dropout of schooling. Similarly, educated parents may reason differently from the uneducated parents. If parents are uneducated and have survived in that uneducated state for years, they will most likely not see the value and benefits of education for their children (Siringi, 2012). If those who are to guide and bring the children up see no value in education, then children will be strayed. There is a common belief that parent's attitude on somethings including education may influence children's behaviours. This means children brought up within uneducated contexts may be less likely to pursue education. Kiptekwei (2014) states that children whose mothers are uneducated have a 40% dropout rate since uneducated parents may give inadequate advice and counseling to their children on the importance of education. A study by the MoEST (2007) revealed that in Malawi parents with professional qualifications ensured that their children remained in schools. On the other hand, parents with low levels of education had a negative attitude towards education because they did not see its value.

In Malawi, illiteracy rate is pegged at 27% as indicated by Integrated Household Survey of 2016/17 which means that a great number of Malawian parents are uneducated (EMIS, 2018). Some statistics show that about 42% of girls get married by the age of eighteen which implies that these girls do not go further with their education as they rush to make children (Girls Not Brides, 2017). Given these developments one would conclude that the cycle of illiteracy and poverty would not be easy to break in this context. This could also mean that poverty becomes intergenerational is it will be passed on from one generation to the next. This becomes the case as the way of thinking

and doing things are passed on from one generation to another hence, they remain trapped in that poverty cycle.

2.3.2   Socio-cultural Factors

The other factor responsible for students' attrition from schooling is socio-cultural factors. Socio-cultural factors include pregnancies and early marriages; initiation practices, parental attitudes and aspirations for children; household chores, puberty-related issues, death in the family, and caring for sick parents or relatives.

2.3.2.1 Early marriage

Early marriage among girls is a common tactic used by poor families to conquer poverty in their families. Parents expect that the husband to be will bring extra income into the family. Kasente, Nakanyike and Balihuta (2003) state that many girls perceive marriage as an escape route from family poverty. This culture is commonly encouraged by some tribesmen who charge bride wealth (dowry/lobola) for their daughters to bring back quick income to the family. This influences parents to encourage their daughters to drop out of school for marriage. Shahidul and Karim (2015) have demonstrated that girls at puberty age may be forced by their parents to get married through arranged marriages hence withdrawing from school.

Holcamp (2009) also found out that, in rural areas, girls' dropout rate became higher because parents considere their education as valueless especially when they get married and live with their husbands away from home. In Afghanistan, on the other hand, it was reported that early marriages were the biggest cause of school dropout for girls, (Mansory, 2007). Furthermore, Shahidul (2012) also found out that in Bangladesh, girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds withdrew from secondary schooling because they did not want to go to universities as such institutions were

considered to be inflaters of dowry for girls which could potentially push men away from marrying them. Experience has shown that most educated girls who attain university education have limited chances of getting married because men fear them. Apart from being charged high dowry (lobola), some parents have high expectations of benefiting from the couple's education when she starts working, this in turn may scare the man from marrying highly educated women since the mother in-law will be justified to make unreasonable demands in her daughters' name. This then prompts girls to drop out of school at an early age to avoid losing marriage opportunities. In Malawi, results from EMIS (2018) report, reveal that 38% of the girls dropped out of school due to pregnancies and early marriages.

2.3.2.2 Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a major cause of drop out from school amongst girls. Several researchers have found out that teenage pregnancy is a major cause of attrition in schools (Shahidul & Karim 2015). Most girls indulge in sex at an early age because of poverty. They accept to sleep with men to satisfy their day-to-day needs. Some do it because they want to look modern and attractive and therefore need money to buy nice clothes, cosmetics and perfume among others. Researchers have established that many teenagers who are pregnant as well as those who are already mothers and have come back to school, face a lot of challenges from teachers, peers, parents and the community at large. Siringi (2012) asserts that even though the law now allows girls who have given birth or are pregnant to go back to school and continue with their education, respectively, social attitudes still create a barrier to re-entry. Stigmatisation, bullying, mockery and abuse by teachers, peers and parents reduce their self-confidence and force them out of schooling. Consequently, these girls may stay out of school to marry and/or look after their babies, while boys continue with education even when they impregnated someone (FAWE, 2001). Others have argued that although some countries allow readmission of girls into school after giving birth, most of them do not return to

school for fears of ridicule. According to Grant and Hallman (2006), re-entry to school after pregnancy depends on some conditions such as finding someone to look after their child surety that they will not be subjected to tonnes of challenges because of their new status. Some girls may not even know the existence of the readmission policy and as such may remain out of schooling.

2.3.2.3 Cultural beliefs

Cultural beliefs and traditional practices have been identified by many researchers as significantly contributing to high attrition rates in schools. Save the Children (2005) indicates that cultural norms and beliefs limit girls' education especially in many developing countries. These limit boys and girls from making independent decisions regarding their future. Some societies practice initiation ceremonies that require children to be separated from the rest of the community for a period of time, which bring a negative impact on the education. Kamlongera (2007) comments on some cultures, like among the Senas and Mang'anjas of Chikwawa district in Malawi, of which at the end of the ceremony, the girl is forced to have sex with a man called "fisi" (hyena) to show that she is now ready for marriage. Valentini (2004) shows dissatisfaction with this practice as he suggests that it may be promoting early pregnancies, early marriages, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV and AIDS). Kapakasa (1992) asserts that initiation ceremonies have a significant effect on girls' dropout rate from schooling especially where parents prefer to spend on initiation ceremonies instead of the girl's education.

In most districts in the Central region of Malawi, adolescent boys go through a ceremony of 'gule wamkulu' initiation which result in most of them losing interest in education hence they just drop out of schools. Gule wamkulu is a secret cult, involving a ritual dance performed by the Nyau brotherhood (a secret society of initiated men who represent the world of the spirits) among the

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Chewa tribes of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. It prepares young boys into adulthood preserving traditional values. It is also a dance that accompanies initiation ceremonies, weddings, funerals and the installation of chiefs (Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). There is a general assumption that Gule wamkulu heavily depends on the use of magic to command a large following at its gatherings as well as scare people who are not initiated. They are such fears that force young boys to get initiated so that they 'buy the route' (kugula njira) and stay away from the trouble of being harmed by the charms as well as being physically assaulted. Beyond this, boys who are not initiated are mocked by their peers as backward and young kids even when they grow old. In fact, in the not-so-distant past, Nyau used to target non initiated students both in schools and or from schools to unleash terror on them. Such acts could as well keep boys and girls away from schooling in fear of their lives.

There are also some cultural beliefs that may influence inferior position for girls in the society which may automatically find their way into the schooling environment. There are general perceptions that boys are more intelligent than girls which eventually influence teachers to be biased against girls. Many families in rural areas prefer educating boys to girls while preparing girls for marriage life. For example, in Kasungu, young girls are confined in the houses for two weeks being taught Chisamba dance preparing them how they can satisfy their male counterparts in bed (Malongo, 2015). These events do not only expose girls' reproductive dangers like vesical vaginal fistula diseases but also distracts their thinking within the schooling environments (Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Atayi, 2008). When girls begin to day dream about men while in school, the end result is that most of them will withdraw from that school.

2.3.3 School-related Factors

School-related factors include school financial demands, distance to school, non-conducive school

environment, discipline issues, religious issues, attitudes and perceptions of teachers, lack of female teachers to act as role models, academic performance, resource allocation within schools, curriculum length and quality of teaching time (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990; Kadzamira & Chibwana, 1999; Maluwa-Banda & Kholowa, 2002).

2.3.3.1 Non-conducive school environment

The nature of the school environment itself plays a greater part in facilitating drop out of students. According to Davison and Kanyuka (1990), school environments are at times not conducive to effective learning, and this may ultimately lead to underachievement, repetitions and/or attrition. Lack of professionalism among teachers may also force students to drop out of school. Some teachers, for example still use corporal punishment even though it is outlawed and this forces students to withdraw from schooling. There are also some teachers who indulge into sexual relationships with students which may result in pregnancies that force students to drop out of schooling. Lack of professionalism increase intimacy between teachers and students, consequently students and teachers may find themselves drinking together leading to disciplinary cases when caught. Under such circumstances, the child may be expelled or dismissed from schooling and this can further result into withdrawing from schooling.

According to Tembo (2015), some administrators may incite students to riot and destroy the school property because of the way they handle the students, and under such situations, students may be expelled from school thereby denying them chances of completing their education for breaking school rules.

2.3.3.2 Student's discipline

Every system is governed by rules and regulations and schools are not exceptional. Members of staff and students operate under rules, and if these rules are broken punishment is applied. Rules to offences like going out of school boundaries, teasing and bullying, consumption of alcohol and drugs are reinforced in the schools. Many studies have revealed that students most of the time break these rules hence they are punished through expulsion and or dismissal from schooling depending on the gravity of the offense (Nthiga, 2014; Wandera, 2007). This way many have failed to complete their secondary school education through dismissals in most countries. Agreeing with this assertion, Nthiga (2014) observe that indiscipline which involves engagement in criminal activities within gangs, was a significant factor towards school dropout rates. Tembo (2015) further argues that these actions are inevitable because the time students enroll for secondary school education, they are at adolescent stage in human development psychology and this is a stage exploration, rebellion, egoism and defiance to any forces that stand their way including rules and regulations (Wadsworth, 1996). This means disregarding this reality, authorities can significantly facilitate students' attrition.

2.3.3.3 Distance to school

School distance is one of the contributors towards school drop out for many students. This is because when students are selected to boarding secondary schools, they are exposed to a high expenditure like school fees, uniform, learning materials, extra clothes, groceries and cots which poor parents cannot afford. Now with long distances, parents and guardians may be discouraged to send their wards to these schools hence sanctioning their drop out. Also, in some areas when going to schools that are away from home, students may be exposed to many dangers such as accidents, bullying, sexual harassment, prostitution and drug abuse among others. Parents and guardians, fear for the safety of their wards when they have to travel longer distances to school.

Juneja (2001) observes that if school distance is considered too far from home, young girls tend to drop out of schooling for fears of sexual harassment. Many researchers have argued that in African regions, attendance of secondary school education by girls decreases with the distance they have to cover when going to school (Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000; Ainsworth, Beegle & Koda, 2005).

2.3.4 Individual-related Factors

Individual-related factors include health, absenteeism, peer pressure, learners' attitude towards school, discipline issues, lack of motivation, alcohol and drug abuse. Some of the factors are both school and individual related.

2.3.4.1 Frequent absenteeism

Otieno (2016) observes that not attending classes regularly can be disastrous to education achievement to students regardless of their gender. He further, argues that absenteeism may influence students' drop out from school since when students are absent from school, they miss out on what is being taught that day which then negatively affects their overall academic performance. Ouma, Ting and Pesha (2017) observe that apart from ill health, lack of interest in school, students frequently absent themselves from school because they engage in income generating activities to fend for their families. Nthiga (2014) emphasizes that such students cannot attend school because they are supposed to perform these activities during school hours. Kadzombe (1998) argue that many children in Malawi begin work at very early stages, and are not enrolled in school at all. He also argues that such girls spend most of their time looking after their siblings while their parents are away working in the farms.

It has also been revealed that most female students frequently absent themselves from class because of menstruation either because of some illnesses associated with it and/or because of the unavailability of facilities like pads and toilets in the school. Otieno (2016) contends that availability of toilets and access to feminine hygiene supplies such as pads have an impact on girls' school attendance. Ngales (2005) indicates that in Ethiopia, female students were often absent in class during menstruation, and this made them withdraw from school. Maluwa-Banda (2003) further observes that many studies have shown that in Malawi, the quality of schooling is very low as evidenced by the high rates of school dropout, repetition and absenteeism, amongst others.

2.3.4.2 Peer pressure

Peer pressure can cause students to drop out of school and itis one of the most critical issues being emphasized by the developing governments of the world (UNICEF, 2001). There are behaviours which students engage in only to please their peers without even considering the consequences. According to Omollo and Yambo (2017) peer influence among secondary students, which is a kind of a social pressure on them to adopt a type of behavior, dress, or attitude in order to be accepted as part of a group, affects them either positively or negatively. Castillo (2010) suggested that there are students who influence others positively as they display discipline and become role models for others to emulate or negatively as they portray social problems like immoral behavior because at this level, the youths seek to establish their independence from their parents due to new life styles, growth of unruly character characterized by drug addiction, alcoholism, strikes in schools and casual sex behaviors. Most of these drugs lower the concentration of the students during studies. Some of them affect the brain by lowering its ability to tackle questions and problems or even make the students become confused, hence lowering their academic performance leading to failing, repetitions and eventually attrition (Tembo, 2015). Omollo and Yambo (2017) comments that most girls end up getting pregnant leading some into early marriages or just being abandoned without

any academic accomplishment. Similarly, boys are equally endangered because when they drop out of school, they engage in some activities which are detrimental to their lives and prone to poor health hazards (Kadzamira and Schiwana, 2000).

2.3.4.3 Learner's attitude towards school

Literature has shown that learner's attitude towards schooling plays a role on whether children should remain in school or not. According to Mueni (2015), many students in Malawi lost interest in schooling when free primary education (FPE) was started soon after 1994. This led to high enrolment which bred poor education quality due to lack of qualified teachers to handle the students (Chakwera, 2008; Chimombo, 2005; Banda, 2012). This prompted government to employ temporary teachers to curb the problem. It thus implied that teachers must be qualified enough to provide quality education and restore the trust of learners and parents. According to Amdany (2017) and Chimombo (2005) students dropped out from school because they did not find school interesting and meaningful.

Students may also lose interest in schooling if they are subjected to harsh treatment and unprofessional teachers who handle them irresponsibly. Smith (2011) concludes that the main reason children drop out of schools in Malawi is lack of interest in learning. He argues that when learners are subjected to corporal punishment, negative labelling, sexual abuse, and teachers' failing to report for duties anyhow, learners will develop negative attitude towards school and therefore will withdraw from schooling. The Malawi Public Service Regulations (MPSR) clearly stipulates that it is an act of misconduct for a teacher to be absent from the duty station without any reasons and without any communication to the line manager (Malawi Public Service Regulations,1991). It further condemns sexual relationships between teachers and students as a

punishable offence. Moreover, such a teacher does not only kill the child academically and physically, he also kills her by impregnating her which can cost her education as well as life

2.4 INTERVENTION MEASURES THAT CAN BE USED TO ADDRESS THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS' DROPOUT IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Failure to retain children in secondary schools can be considered as a waste of potential human, material and financial resources. In the first place, there is a lot of money from the public purse that is spent on these students from primary school to secondary schools (EMIS, 2018). Besides, there is a lot of time that is invested in these students both by the state as well as parents and guardians. Together these resources could have been used towards other equally important areas such as health, agriculture, climate change, and others. The reason for this investment on the part of the state is to ensure that these students once educated may become productive citizens who will be able to develop and grow the socio-political landscape of the nation (INEE, 2010; EMIS, 2018; World Bank Report, 2005). It is therefore important to find mechanisms to deal with the problem of students' dropout from schools.

A number of studies have ranked poverty as the major factor that influences attrition of students from schooling in most countries. According to Mueni (2015) and Mudemb (2013), governments have a role to play if problems of school dropout due to poverty are to be minimized. The authors proposed giving parents' incentives such as food stipends in order to lower the level of opportunity cost of sending children to secondary schools; designing long-term plans and strategies that would help eradicate poverty to empower the locals financially, and work in collaboration with various ministries and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and communities to empower them financially. A report carried out by Malawi News Agency (MANA) (Kayira, 2018) observed that

Fundraising for Irrigation and Sustainable Development project (FISD) an NGO in Malawi, which aims to improve rural livelihood through adoption of comprehensive food security measures; water and sanitation measures, and environmental management strategies is helping in education through community empowerment activities. For example, FISD is working with smallholder irrigation farmers by training them in irrigation techniques, and providing them with irrigation and construction equipment. FISD is also providing money to the youths for them to use it as business start-ups in the farming area and other critical areas. The assumption is that when communities are empowered this way, they may be able to meet different basic needs such as educational costs for their children thereby enabling the children to remain in schools (Nthiga, 2014).

Similar to the above views, Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti and Takavarasha (2011) proposes the introduction of programs that reduce financial barriers to secondary schooling especially for females and students from disadvantaged families. For these authors programs such as merit scholarship programs and conditional cash transfers for students from poor backgrounds who gain admission to a national or provincial secondary school may help alleviate the financial barriers and mitigate students' attrition from schools.

According to Mueni (2015), financial constraints hinder participation and retention of many students in secondary schools, hence there is need for concerted efforts by the government, local communities and councils, NGOs, politicians and business people to step-up their efforts to help needy children acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships. Corroborating with Mueni, Nthiga (2014) reports that in Kenya, secondary schools' bursary schemes were introduced by the Government in the 1993/1994 financial year. There is indeed evidence that many countries in Africa including South Africa and others are providing various forms of loans, grants, bursaries and scholarships for the students who come from poor background.

While the Malawi government is providing bursaries and social-cash transfers to the needy students in secondary schools, such efforts are not enough given that there are many needy students who still need this support. Besides, the students wanting such support come from those families categorised as ultra-poor which constitute over 80% of Malawi's population. Additionally, the tuition fees charged in the secondary schools is too high especially in grant-aided national secondary schools for an ordinary citizen to afford. On this, UNESCO reports that poverty in Malawi still remains a significant obstacle to children's education hence requiring the intervention of the state, and other non-state actors to ensure that children from poor families do not fail to complete their education due to this fact (UNESCO, 2007).

A study by Gachugi (2005), on factors that influence students' attrition Kenyan secondary schools revealed that poverty of the parents was key to students' dropout as parents could not meet schooling cost. It then recommended for an increase in bursary allocation which would help minimize schooling costs. For Malawi, many organisations such as United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), Campaign for Female Educators (CAMFED), World Vision International (WVI) and many Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are providing bursaries and scholarships to needy students (EMIS, 2018). While these cases may suggest that many are receiving adequate support from all educational stakeholders, a second look at this support demonstrates that most of these bursaries are targeting girls not boys. Again, these bursaries and scholarship are mainly from the non-state actors rather than the state raising the questions over government's commitment in making sure all children receive equal and quality education despite any other conditions including poverty. This could be the reason Amdany (2017), recommends that the measures should be put in place to ensure that boys also receive financial aid towards achieving their educational goals since education is an equaliser and a human right.

On the other hand, some studies have shown the setbacks that encounter the bursary scheme. For example, it has been argued that in some countries, the amount made available to needy students does not match with the demand out there. In Kenya for instance 58% of the applicants could not access these bursaries even though they qualified as needy (IPAR, 2008). Another issue challenging the bursary scheme is delays in disbursement, transparency when identifying beneficiaries (Mwangi, 2006; Onuko, 2012). It is further argued that the money keeps on fluctuating such that students have had to top up fees because they got limited funds. And, when the funds are delayed school managers have often sent home the beneficiaries making them miss out on their education.

Given these challenges, other scholars have suggested that government should consider making secondary education free just as they have done with free primary education (Werunga, Musera & Sindabi, 2011). Nthiga (2014) observes that several governments across the regions have now begun to universalize primary and junior secondary education. Conversely, UNESCO (2008) report observes that in the sub-Saharan Africa, only twelve countries including Malawi do not include lower secondary education in the basic education segment. In Kenya, primary and secondary education were declared free following international pressure and the need to reduce dropout rates in schools. Provision of free education assumed that children would be interested in schooling since they would not be sent back home for lack of school fees. All these efforts were being made due to the understanding that secondary school education may equally contribute towards individuals' chances of gaining entry into the formal employment and informal sector employment as well as gain skills for livelihoods (Appleton, 2001).

2.5 SUMMARY

The literature review has revealed that students' drop out from schools is rampant globally for both boys and girls. Some studies have showed that girls drop out of schools more than boys. Others have shown that more boys drop out of school than girls do. It has also been demonstrated that most students drop out of school due to students' family factors (socio-economic factors), socio-cultural factors, school-related factors, individual factors and others. Amongst these, socio-economic factors have been ranked high as the major factors that force students to drop out of schools. Further, studies have suggested some interventions to reduce the factors that contribute to students drop out from schools. These have included governments' collaboration with other education stakeholders to empower communities economically; and increasing bursaries and scholarships for needy students among others.

However, the studies that have been reviewed have not given any information specifically on students' dropout for the category of schools under study. Moreover, literature has shown a contradiction on who between the male students and the female students is more affected with the dropping out phenomena hence the need to conduct the study to establish the extent of the drop out, the causes of the drop out while comparing the grant aided national secondary schools and the district boarding secondary schools in Northern education Division in Malawi.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This Chapter has reviewed literature on students' dropout in public boarding secondary schools that was aligned with research sub-questions. The next Chapter will look at the research design and methodology used in conducting this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed various literature on factors that contribute towards students' drop out in public boarding secondary schools. It also looked into previous studies that sought to establish measures for curbing the factors that lead to student dropout from these schools. This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was used in the study. It explains the research paradigm, research approach and research design. It also gives a description of the target population, sample and sampling techniques; types of data used; data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis tools. Furthermore, it describes the validity and reliability of quantitative data, trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative data, ethical considerations and conclusion.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Schwandt (2001), a paradigm is a shared worldview that characterises the beliefs and values in a discipline and that guides how problems are resolved. Paradigm leads the researcher to ask certain questions and use appropriate approaches to systematic inquiry (methodology). Methodology is where assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, values, and theory and practice on a given topic come together (Chilisa & Keluchi, 2009). This study used the pragmatic paradigm because it allows a combination of methods that can, in their combination, shed light on the actual behaviour of the participants, their beliefs behind those behaviours and the consequences that follow those behaviours (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Pragmatic paradigm advocates for the use of mixed research methods (quantitative and qualitative) as a practical way to understand human behavior (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

In line with the pragmatic paradigm, a mixed research methods' approach was used in this study. Mixed methods approach combines both quantitative and qualitative methods when collecting information for the research. Creswell (2015) defines mixed method research as an approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health sciences in which the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretation based on the strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. Methods are the means used for gathering data. Thus, mixed method research is more than simply collecting data and analysing both kinds of data; rather it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Since this study investigated the factors that influence students' dropout from public boarding secondary schools, therefore mixed research methods assisted to reveal the magnitude of the problem in the schools through the lenses of qualitative and quantitative data. Beyond this, the method helped collect rich information on the causative factors from a bigger number of participants which was accomplished through quantitative data collection. Due to the nature of the issue at hand, there was a need to deeply understand the contextual factors that influence students' dropout from school so as to properly establish solutions to the problem. To ably do so, there was need to collect qualitative data on attitudes, behaviours and practices. That is the reason data was collected from teachers, current students, education officers, PTA members, secondary school dropouts and parents making sure that both side of the issue is thoroughly investigated before making conclusions.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the technique for gathering, examining, interpreting, and reporting data in a research study (Creswell & Clark, 2012). Research designs are commended to be useful, because

they help guide the methods and decisions that researchers must make during their studies, and set the logic by which they make interpretations at the end of their studies. Creswell and Clark (2011) argue that integrating methodological approaches strengthen the overall research design, as the strengths offset the weaknesses of the other, and can provide more comprehensive and convincing evidence than mono-method studies. For them 'integration' refers to how one brings together the quantitative and the qualitative results in a mixed methods study. This study adopted the convergent mixed method design. This is a strategy in which the intent of the research is to collect quantitative and qualitative data, analyse both sets of data, and then merge the results of the two (Creswell, 2015). In this case, quantitative and qualitative data were collected at about the same time, and were given equal emphasis. The data were then merged such that the results of both data were analysed and used concurrently in order to understand the problem (Mertler, 2014). Mertler (2014) further explains that their results could then be informally compared in order to see if they have yielded similar results, which then would lead to greater credibility in the overall findings to the extent that the two sets of data have converged and indicated similar results. This allowed the researcher to equally combine the strengths of each form of data.

Creswell (2007) indicates that quantitative method is the use of sampling techniques of which findings may be expressed numerically and mathematically enabling the researcher to estimate future events or quantities. The convergent mixed research design was considered appropriate for this study because qualitative method helped in getting in-depth information from the respondents through interviews, while quantitative method assisted in collecting information from the respondents through questionnaires and from school records. The design was therefore appropriate for the study because it was used to explore and evaluate in detail the factors inducing drop out of boys and girls from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools, and sought suggestions of solutions to the problem from the research subjects.

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3.5 RESEARCH SITE

This study was carried out in the Northern Education Division (NED) in Malawi in eight boarding secondary schools four of which were grant-aided national secondary schools and another four were district boarding secondary schools. The grant-aided national secondary schools comprised of single sex students that had three males and one female only secondary schools; while the district boarding secondary schools comprised four coeducation secondary schools. By design, the grant-aided national secondary schools are single sex while the district boarding secondary schools are co-education. For the sake of anonymity, the grant-aided national secondary schools have been labelled A1g, A2b, A3b and A4b, while the district boarding secondary schools have been labelled B1m, B2m, B3m and B4m. The list of government national, grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools are shown in Appendix 1.

3.6 TARGET POPULATION

A target population is a group of people who share specific characteristics, and who the researcher is interested in testing (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). In this study, the education officers, PTA members, dropped-out students, parents for dropped-out students, head-teachers, form-teachers and students from ten boarding secondary schools in NED were targeted. The form three government selected students were involved because these were the students who were found in these schools not by choice. The other students were admitted to the schools by choice because they applied for the places, and therefore were prepared to be in the schools. In addition, the form three students were chosen because they were in the schools from the time they were selected by government while some of those who were not selected by the government might have been admitted into the schools at different times therefore might not have enough information to contribute to the study. Furthermore, form three students were selected for this study because they had stayed in the school long enough to understand the problem of students' dropout, and were

assumed to have the right information to contribute to the study. Form fours were equally qualified to participate in the study but at the time of data collection, they were busy preparing for their MSCE. Also, the research targeted head-teachers and teachers who had worked in the schools for more than one year because their one-year experience would enable them gain enough information to contribute to the study. Furthermore, the study involved students who dropped out from school and their parents, PTA members and the proprietors of the schools which were the government education officers from the division office and education secretaries of CCAP Synod of Livingstonia and Roman Catholic Church, they too were considered relevant sources for providing rich information on this topic.

3.7 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The participants in the study constituted of four Education Officers; ten head-teachers because there were ten schools and each have one head-teacher; six students who dropped out from any of the selected schools; six parents for the students who dropped out from the selected schools, four PTA members from any of the participating schools; twenty form teachers, two from each school, and 382 form three students (see Table, 3.1).

In summary, samples of 30 participants were involved in collecting qualitative data, and 402 participants were involved in collecting quantitative data respectively (see Table 3.1). According to Merriam (2000) in qualitative research, a small distinct group of participants is investigated to understand the problem in depth, and a large number of participants can be investigated using quantitative research.

Table 3.1 Summary of Sample Size

Participants	Male	Female	Total
Education Officers	4	0	4
Head-teachers	9	1	10
Form teachers	12	8	20
PTA representatives	2	2	4
Parents of dropout student	3	3	6
Drop-out students	4	2	6
Students (form 3)	220	112	382
Total	**254**	**128**	**432**

On sampling techniques, the study used purposive sampling, random sampling and snowballing. Purposive sampling was used to select the number of schools involved in the study. Grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools were selected to participate in the study because they are both boarding public schools hence fall into different categories, making them easy to compare. Purposive sampling was also used to choose the education officers; PTA members, head-teachers and form teachers from the selected schools, form three government selected students who dropped out from the selected schools and the parents of the students who dropped out from the selected schools. These participants were purposively chosen because they were perceived to have a direct encounter with the problem of students' dropout and therefore had rich information to contribute to the study.

Form three students who participated in the study were selected using simple random sampling to allow each one of them to have an equal chance of participating in the study. Snowballing method was used to locate PTA members, students who dropped out and their parents from the selected schools. Snowballing was chosen because students in national secondary schools are selected from across the country, and those of district boarding secondary schools are selected from across the district therefore, it may be difficult to locate them. The researcher relied on the information from

head-teachers and students on their knowledge of the students who had dropped out of the schools and the parents of such students.

The number of students who participated in the study at the school was arrived at by calculations using Cochran's Sample Size Formula (Glen, 2019). The formula allows a researcher to calculate an ideal sample size which would represent the target population. For example, given a margin of error, *(e)*, desired confidence level and the estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population.

The Cochran's formula is:

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_o is the ideal sample size
- e is the margin of error
- p is the estimated proportion of the population which has the attribute in the population
- q is $1 - p$
- Z-value is calculated when the desired confidence level is determined.

However, this study used Cochran's modified formula to suit the targeted population of ten secondary schools which were purposively chosen to be involved for the study as follows:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \dfrac{n_0 + 1}{N}}$$

Where: $n = new\ adjusted\ sample\ size$;

$$n_0 = p(1-p) \left(\frac{\frac{Z_\alpha}{2}}{E}\right)^2;$$

N = targeted population size,

P = 0.5; E = 0.05;

if level of confidence = 95%, α =1- 0.95 = 0.05

$$given \quad n_0 = p(1-p) \left(\frac{\frac{Z_\alpha}{2}}{E}\right)^2$$

$$n_0 = 0.5(1-0.5) \left(\frac{1.96}{0.05}\right)^2 = 0.25(39)^2 = 0.25(1521) = 380.25$$

N = 282 for grant-aided national secondary schools

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1+\frac{n_0+1}{N}} = \frac{380.25}{1+\frac{380.25+1}{282}} = \frac{380.25}{1+1.35195} = \frac{380.25}{2.35195} = 162$$

Grant-aided national secondary schools had a sample of 162 student participants

N = 525 for district boarding secondary schools

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1+\frac{n_0+1}{N}} = \frac{380.25}{1+\frac{380.25+1}{525}} = \frac{380.25}{1+0.72619} = \frac{380.25}{1.72619} = 220$$

District boarding secondary schools had a sample of 220 student participants

Additionally, to find the number of students to participate in the study from a particular school the following

algebraic formula was used:

$C = \left(\frac{a}{b}\right)k$ where c= number of students to participate in a particular school

a =number of form 3 students in the school; b =total number of form 3 students in ten schools

k = number of students to participate in the study calculated above.

Table 3.2 Form three student participants per school

School	Category of secondary school	Target population	Expected participants	Participants Found
A1g	Grant aided national	48	27	24
A2b	Grant aided national	52	30	28
A3b	Grant aided national	52	30	25
A4b	Grant aided national	52	30	23
A5b	Grant aided national	78	45	0
Total		**282**	**162**	**100**
B1m	District boarding	65	27	26
B2m	District boarding	100	42	30
B3m	District boarding	120	50	31
B4m	District boarding	120	50	28
B5m	District boarding	120	51	0
Total		**525**	**220**	**115**

3.8 TYPES OF DATA USED

In this study, both primary and secondary data were used.

3.8.1 Primary Data

Primary data is information gathered directly from research participants through questionnaire, interview, focused group discussion, observation and experimental studies (Shuttleworth, 2008). The primary data for this study was collected using the interviewer-administered questionnaires to form teachers and form three students selected into the schools by government, and using an interview guide through face-to-face interviews with the EDM, ESs, head-teachers, students who dropped out from school and their parents, and PTA members.

3.8.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is the kind of data which has already been gathered by someone else and is already documented and published (Shuttle-Worth, 2008). In this case, document analysis was also used to gather secondary data from the schools.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT AND METHODS

3.9.1 Data Collection Instruments

This study used a number of instruments to collect data. Mbuta (2015) states that there is no single instrument which is adequate on its own in collecting valid and reliable data. Therefore, triangulation methods were important to be used when conducting this research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) states that triangulation involves the use of a combination of different methods, and instruments in data collection. This study employed questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to collect data for the research. These have been shown in Appendices 6 -13.

3.9.1.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the form teachers and form three students in the schools. Two different sets of questionnaires were used to collect data from the form teachers and students. The questionnaire asked both closed and open-ended questions because they suit statistical analysis. Questionnaires are good instruments in data collection because they are an appropriate way of collecting information needed from numerous respondents as they can be used to gather information from an extensive area. They are also suitable in finding out about attitudes and opinions of people (Taylor, Sinn & Ghosal, 2008).

Questionnaires for form teachers firstly, explained the purpose of the questionnaire. Secondly, they gave instructions to be followed when responding to the questionnaire. Thirdly, they required the

form teachers to give information about their gender, number of years they have been in the school and the number of years they have been form teachers. They were also required to state the extent of students' drop out in the school and explain the factors that lead to students' drop out from school. They were further, asked to indicate the measures the school has been using to resolve problems of students' dropout. Lastly, they were asked to suggest possible measures that the schools can put in place to curb the students' drop out pandemic (See Appendix 6).

Questionnaires for form three students also explained the purpose of the questionnaire; gave instructions to be followed when responding to the questionnaire and required the students to give information about their gender, age, family background in terms of education, employment and income. They were also required to state the extent to which students dropped out of school, and explain the factors behind this. Lastly, they were asked to indicate measures the school is already employing as well as suggesting, possible measures that can help mitigate this problem (See Appendix 7).

3.9.1.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the education officers, head-teachers, PTA members, students who dropped out of school and their parents. Interview guides were used to carry out interviews, and an audio recorder was used to record the interviews. A different interview guide was used to collect data from different participants. It is believed that interviews have an advantage over other tools of data collection because the interviewee can be probed further for more details (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). The data obtained from the interviews were used to supplement data obtained through questionnaires and document analysis.

The interview guide contained a part where the researcher explained to the respondents the purpose of the study and assurance of confidentiality. The researcher also inquired about the respondents' backgrounds such as gender, education, and teaching and administrative experiences, respectively. The interview guides also required respondents to state the extent of students' drop out in the schools; explain the factors leading to that. They also asked them to indicate and explain interventions the schools are employing. Lastly, they were required to suggest measures that can be put in place to curb this problem. They were also asked to come up with recommendations to relevant stakeholders of education to help end the students' dropout from schooling. The samples of interview guides have been shown from Appendices 8 - 13.

3.9.1.3 Document analysis

Document analysis involved a thorough scrutiny of documents such as selection books, class registers, policies, school rules and regulations; letters from students and guardians on issues of students in relation to their retention in school and others. Documents such as transfer lists, letters requesting transfers, withdrawal, and exclusion from school were also analyzed. Enrolments records for four cohorts such as those for 2012/13 – 2015/16; 2013/2014 – 2016/17; 2014/2015 – 2017/18 and 2015/2016 -2018/2019 were all examined. In addition, documents from the division office, and those from the education secretaries at the church secretariat were also analysed. The main purpose was to establish the trend of students' enrollment in form one and understand dropout rates in the schools. This was also meant to access other relevant information that would help understand and explicate the problem better. The MOU between the Government of Malawi and ACEM was also consulted. The information gathered from all these documents was meant to supplement data which was collected using the questionnaires and interviews.

3.9.2 Data Collection Methods

The researcher followed protocols of identification to the research respondents before commencing data collection. A letter of permission was sought from the Department of Educational Foundations at Mzuzu University and the EDM to grant permission to the researcher for conducting the research. The researcher also sought consent from head-teachers to meet participants and collect data. The researcher further, provided an introductory letter to the participants which introduced the topic of the study and explained its relevance. It also explained the ethics required such as explaining to the respondents their obligation and their ability to withdraw if they felt the need to do so.

The researcher visited schools to administer the questionnaires and collected them back. She also visited the Education officers, head-teachers, PTA members, dropout students and their parents at their places where one to one interview was conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time. The interviews were conducted using different interview guides for each group. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews so that the researcher could gain access to the interviews later. Documents on enrolment-selection books and registers, policies, school rules and regulations, application letters for transfers, and students' expulsion letters were analysed to collect useful data for the research. Arrangements of dates to visit the schools and offices were done in advance so that the participants would not be taken by surprise.

Eight schools were visited, which were four grant-aided national secondary schools and four district boarding secondary schools. A total of four hundred and two (402) questionnaires were targeted to be administered to the students and form teachers, 20 of which were targeting form teachers and 382 targeted students. Instead, 16 and 215 were administered representing 80 and 75 percent of the targeted questionnaires, respectively. However, there was a good return rate of

questionnaires which was 100% for form teachers, and 96% for students as shown in Table 3.3. The return rate was seen to be adequate for quantitative data, and hence brought confidence in the conclusions of the study as regards the targeted population.

Table 3.3 Participants' Response Rate of Questionnaires on Quantitative Data

Participants	Targeted	Expected	Administered	Administered	Returned	Return rate
Form teachers	20	16	16	80%	16	100%
Students	382	286	215	75%	207	96%
Total	**402**	**324**	**231**		**223**	

On qualitative data, there was a great challenge in locating the students who dropped out of school and/or their parents as well as the PTA members. Only four dropouts and four parents of students of dropouts were located and interviewed. Only three PTA members were located and interviewed. This was because grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools had students who were coming far away from these schools meaning these people lived very far away from these schools and probably were only called to school occasionally whenever there was an issue (see Chapter 1, Section 1.10). The Education officers and eight head teachers were interviewed. The participation of these participants has been summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Participants Interviewed on Qualitative Data

Participants	Targeted	Interviewed
Education officers	4	4
Head-teachers	10	8
PTA representatives	4	3
Parents of dropout students	6	4
Dropout students	6	4
Total	**30**	**23**

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Data analysis involves taking what you have apart, examining it in detail and putting it back again in a more condensed and meaningful way (Sharp, 2012). An effective data analysis process involves a clear exposition of complex arguments and issues, identifying causal relationships, comparing, contrasting, identifying and challenging the assumptions (Burton, Burdett & Jones, 2008). This study gathered data that required both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data was analysed soon after collection.

3.10.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The software assisted to carry out statistical tests on the numerical data. It helped to compute inferential statistics which allowed generation of conclusions on the data gathered and beyond. The software in collaboration with Microsoft Excel also assisted to generate descriptive statistics which allowed data to be presented in form of frequency distribution tables and bar charts.

3.10.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The data was transcribed, coded and then categorized into similar themes. These were identified by making connections between the data and research sub-questions before they were organized into emerging themes to report data thematically.

According to Thomas (2003), the researcher must make decisions about what is more important and less important in the data to make the findings practical. Accordingly, the researcher made decisions in gauging which information in the data was more important and which one was less

important to establish factors that influenced students' attrition from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools.

As alluded to earlier in Section 3.4, this study adopted the convergent mixed method design, which enabled the study to collect quantitative and qualitative data, analyze both sets of data, and then merge the results of the two (Creswell, 2015). According to Mertler (2014) both results can then be informally compared to see if they have yielded similar results, which then led to greater credibility in the overall findings such that the two sets of data could be converged and indicate similar results. The design was therefore appropriate for this study because it helped explore and evaluate in detail the factors that led students' attrition from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools, while also seeking solutions to the problem.

3.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY FOR QUANTITATIVE DATA

Validity encompasses the entire experimental concept, and establishes whether the results obtained meet all the requirements of the scientific research method (Mbuta, 2015). More specifically, validity refers to how well an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure, and performs as it is designed to perform (Oso & Onen, 2009). As a process, validation involves collecting and analysing data to assess the accuracy of an instrument. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results and/or data after repeated trials. A measure is said to be reliable if it can be repeated with minimum deviation. The questions for the questionnaires and the interview guide were formulated by the researcher. They were later discussed by colleagues, the research supervisor and other experts to determine their clarity, grammar and relevance hence improving instruments validity.

In this study, a pilot study was conducted to check how well the selected instruments were set to answer the research sub-questions before collecting the main data. Wandera (2007) describes piloting as a small preliminary investigation that is conducted to develop and test measures or procedures that will be used in the research study. After conducting the pilot study, the researcher improved the data collecting instruments where necessary to ensure clarity of the items and instructions. The school for conducting pilot study was not involved in conducting the actual research. The reliability also was established by using multiple research instruments to check how well they were consistent, thus triangulation of results. Triangulating methods and sources in a mixed methods approach provided for a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon, and it also provided a greater confidence in the conclusions that were generated (Johnson, Anthony, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). This study used questionnaires, interview guides for semi-structured interviews and document analysis research instruments. Samples for questionnaires and interview guides have been presented from Appendices 6 – 13.

3.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY OF THE STUDY FOR QUALITATIVE DATA

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative data. This was achieved by using triangulation methods and sources. Similarly, data was also collected from credible personnel who were professionals in the field of education. Peer debriefing was used by giving the data collection tools to colleagues and supervisors to verify if it was done according to what it was meant to achieve.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues may arise when conducting a study, therefore it is essential to consider them at each stage. To this end, it is imperative to reflect on the issues that can emerge at each stage, and how

they can be addressed. Creswell (2007) acknowledges such issues may arise prior to the study, at the beginning, during collection, during the data analysis and reporting stage, and finally at the publishing stage. This study looked into ethical issues which included informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation among others.

3.13.1 Informed Consent

It was essential at this stage to gain approval from participants that were to be interviewed for the study. In this case, the researcher was required to be transparent with the participants about the purpose of the study, and inform them of the expectations for being a research participant. Creswell (2009) urges the researcher to obtain a participant's informed consent to participate in the research study. Gaining informed consent from participants is a central aspect in conducting any research study because participants must have the right to decide whether they want to participate if they are fully informed on the matter (Oliver, 2003). The researcher obtained each participant's informed consent, through a letter of consent which was issued to the participants for them to sign before their engagement. In the case of semi-structured interviews, the participants were requested to give their consent to be interviewed as well as having their responses audio-recorded (See Appendices 20 and 21).

3.13.2 Confidentiality

Participants were informed verbally and in the consent letter that there were no known risks to the study, and that they were free not to answer any question that made them uncomfortable. The researcher reassured the participants that their information would be treated with utmost confidentiality, and that their identities would always be anonymous. In this case, pseudonyms were assigned for individual names and schools. In addition, all data and audio recordings collected

were securely stored under a password and were only available to the supervisors and the researcher (See Appendices 14 – 19).

3.13.3 Voluntary Participation

The participants were invited and met in their places. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that no reward was attached. They were also informed that they had an option to withdraw at any time during the course of the research study if they felt like doing so (See Appendices 14 – 19).

3.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology used to conduct the study. The study used a pragmatic paradigm which advocates the use of a mixed research methods' approach. This approach combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study also adopted the convergent mixed method design. The quantitative data was analysed and was augmented by qualitative data. The study was carried out in NED in Malawi involving grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. The study targeted education officers in both the government and the proprietors of grant-aided national secondary schools. It also involved head-teachers, form teachers, form three students, PTA members, dropouts and their parents. Purposive, simple random and snowballing sampling techniques were employed to select participants for the study. The study also used questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis as research instruments for collecting data. Descriptive statistics in form of frequency were used to analyse quantitative data using SPSS version 20 and Microsoft (MS) Excel, while qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis where themes were generated from categories that were manually coded. Reliability in this study was established by triangulating the methods and sources in gathering information while using multiple research instruments. Trustworthiness and credibility of

qualitative data was achieved through collecting data from credible sources only and peer debriefing. Lastly, ethical considerations were ensured through availing informed consent document, confidentiality clause and voluntary participation. The next chapter presents the research findings and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has presented the research design and methodology of the comparative study on factors that lead to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi. This chapter presents the research findings and discussion. These findings and discussion have been presented according to the research sub-questions which guided the study. In order to answer the research sub-questions, both quantitative and qualitative data have been presented. Qualitative data has been used to inform and complement quantitative data. The chapter has been structured as follows: Section 4.2 presents demographic characteristics of the participants. This is followed by Section 4.3 which presents the findings and discussion of the first research sub-question: the extent to which students' dropout from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Section 4.4 ushers in the research findings and discussion on the factors that lead to student's dropout from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Section 4.5 has outlined the findings and discussion on the interventions that may be used to address the factors that propel students' attrition in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Lastly, Section 4.6 presents the conclusion for the chapter.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

There were 28 officers who participated in the study. The team comprised four Education Officers, eight Head-teachers and 16 form teachers, 23 of which were males while five were females. Understanding professional qualification of participants was crucial since it availed skills, knowledge and attitude that enabled them deal with issues that may encourage drop out issues in these secondary schools.

Out of the four education officers, three had masters' degrees and one had a bachelor's degree. All the head-teachers had bachelors' degrees. Out of 16 form teachers who took part in the study one had a masters' degree, 12 held bachelors' degrees while three had diploma certificates. These findings show that most of the officers who participated in the study were professionals who were knowledgeable enough to contribute to this study. Thus, their understanding of the factors that influence students' dropout was superlative in their respective schools.

Education officers, head-teachers and form teachers who participated in the study had worked for over one year at these positions, which could be concluded that they had enough experience on their job and could be counted on as ideal sources to provide necessary information regarding students' dropout in the secondary schools they were serving, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of participants (Education Officers, Head Teachers and Form Teachers)

		Education officers	Head teachers	Form teachers	
Variables		Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Total
Gender	Male	3	7	12	22
	Female	1	1	4	6
Total		4	8	16	28
Qualifications	Diploma	0	0	3	3
	Education degree	1	8	12	21
	Master's degree	3	0	1	4
Total		4	8	16	28
Experiences	0 – 2 years	2	1	5	8
	3 – 5 years	2	3	5	10
	Above 5 years	0	4	6	10
Total		4	8	16	28

There were 96 student participants in grant-aided national secondary schools, 66 of which were males representing 69%, and 30 participants were females representing 31%. In district boarding secondary schools, there were 111 students who participated in the study; 55% of which were males and 45% were females.

There were few females in the study in all categories because all grant-aided national secondary schools were single sex schools. This is because most of these schools were boys only schools hence fewer female teachers. District boarding secondary schools were mixed sex secondary schools with the number of boys being more than that of girls during PSLCE selection.

The form three students who participated in the study were purposively selected because they had stayed long enough in their respective schools. Their long stay gave them ample time to interact with some of the students who dropped out of the schools hence had right information on the factors that made their peers withdraw. Form four students were equally qualified to participate in the study but they were busy preparing for their national examinations, the time data was being collected.

Most students from grant-aided national schools who participated in the study were aged between 14-16 years representing 46% while 40% were from district boarding schools. Conversely, 17 - 19 years participants (53%) were from grant-aided national, while 59% came from district boarding schools. Those above 19 years (1.0%) came from both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools.

These statistics show that the majority of students who participated in the study were in the age bracket of 17-19 years from both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. This

age group is in adolescent stage which is characterized by egoism, rebellion, arrogance, inquisitiveness and peer pressure that can stimulate their bend decision towards dropping out from schooling. It is also a necessary group for this study as they are old enough to contemplate and provide relevant information for the study (Tembo, 2015). The demographic characteristics of the participants have been summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Students)

Variables		Grant-aided National		District Boarding	
		Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	66	69	61	55
	Female	30	31	50	45
Total		96	100	111	100
Age	14-16 years	44	46	45	40
	17-19 years	51	53	65	59
	Above 19 years	1	1	1	1
Total		96	100	111	100

4.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS' DROPOUT IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The first research sub-question aimed at finding out the extent to which students drop out from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. In trying to answer this question, form teachers were asked if they knew or remembered any students in the school who dropped out in the past four years, and were asked to state the numbers by form and sex. The responses to this question have revealed that out of 150 students who dropped out from school in grant-aided national secondary schools, 146 (97%) were boys while only four (3%) were girls. While in district boarding secondary schools out of 149 students, 103 (62%) were boys while 46 (38%) were girls. Both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools registered a bigger number of boys who withdrew from schooling than that of girls. Grant-aided national secondary schools

showed a much higher percentage of boys dropping out from school (97%) than that in district

boarding secondary schools (62%) as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 The extent of dropout in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools

Form Teachers

Grant Aided-National Secondary Schools				District Boarding Secondary Schools		
	Boys	Girls	Total		Boys	Girls	Total
Form 1	13	2	15	Form 1	32	11	43
Form 2	30	0	30	Form 2	21	7	28
Form 3	46	2	48	Form 3	17	12	29
Form 4	57	0	57	Form 4	33	16	49
Total	**146 (97%)**	**4 (3%)**	**150**	**Total**	**103 (62%)**	**46 (38%)**	**149 (100%)**

Document analysis also showed that some students had indeed dropped out of school as shown in

Figure 4.1a and 4.1b in which 63% of the boys and 39% of the girls from grant-aided national

secondary schools had dropped out. In district boarding secondary schools' dropout rate for boys

and girls reached 48%. By comparison, it is clear that students' dropout rate was greater among

boys in grant-aided national secondary schools than that of girls in grant-aided national secondary

school and that of boys and girls in district boarding secondary schools.

Dropout Percent in Grant Aided National Secondary Schools
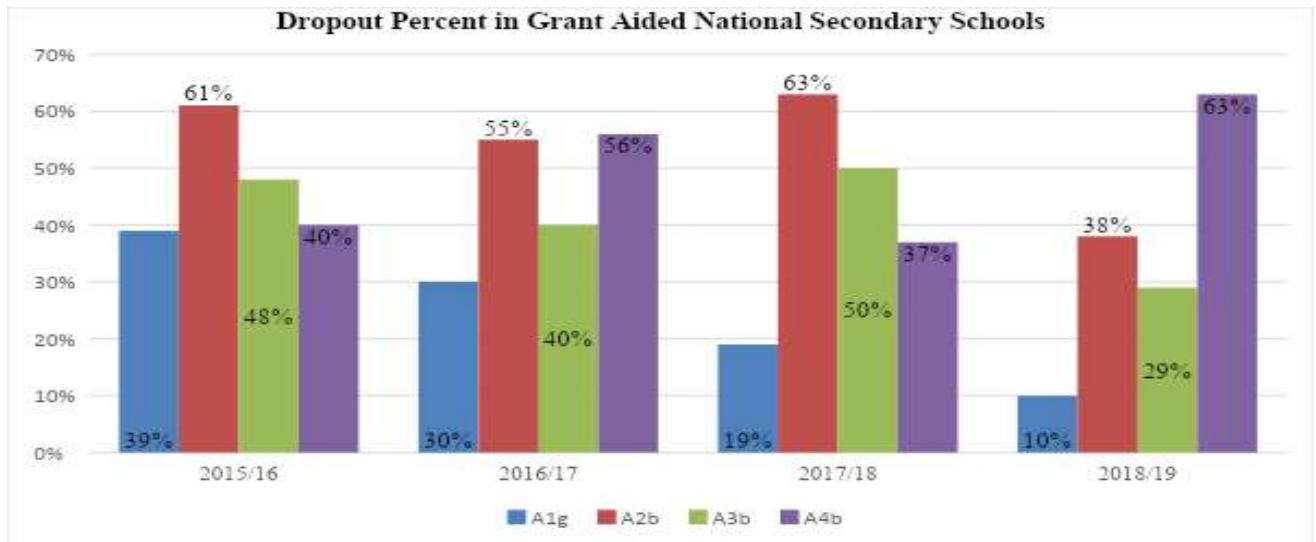
Key:

A1g means girls' grant-aided national secondary school 1

A2b means boys' grant-aided national secondary school 2

A3b means boys' grant-aided national secondary school 3

A4b means boys' grant-aided national secondary school 4

Figure 4.1a. Extent of boys and girls drop out from Grant-Aided National Secondary Schools

Dropout Percent in District Boarding Secondary Schools
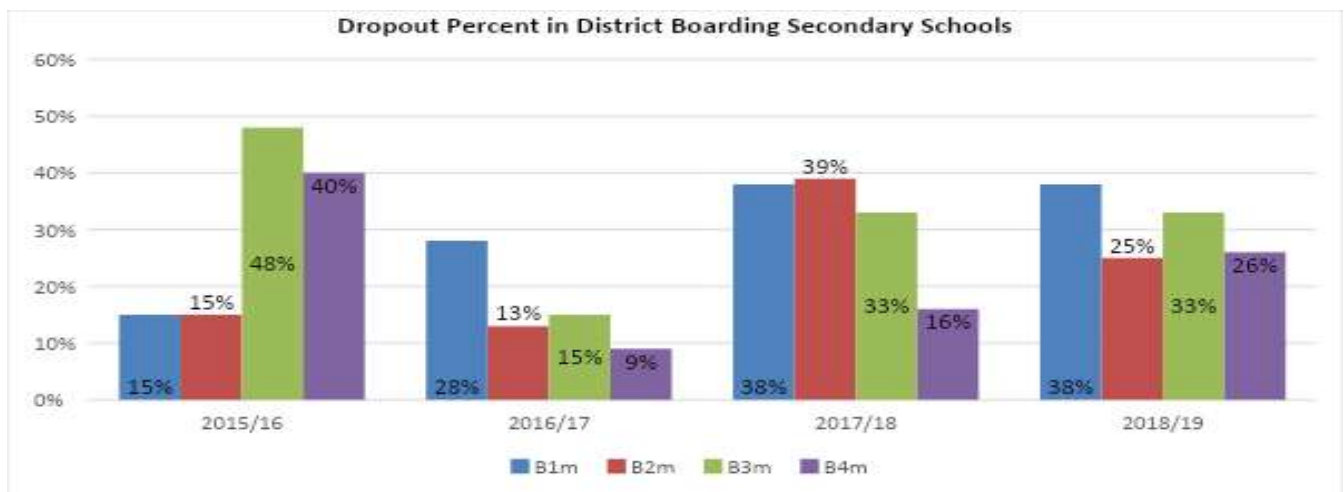
KEY

B1m district boarding secondary 1

B2m district boarding secondary 2

B3m district boarding secondary 3

B4m district boarding secondary 4

Figure 4.2b. Extent of boys and girls drop out from District Boarding Secondary Schools

These findings were also supported by some of the education officers who revealed that they were aware that students were dropping out from schools. One of them, explained that some needy students and guardians had written the MoEST through his office requesting to be transferred. He also indicated that some even visited his office to present the challenges they face in the schools. The letters asking for transfers from grant-aided national secondary schools to other schools were enough evidence that many students selected by government to grant-aided national secondary schools withdrew from schooling along the way. Furthermore, transfer lists from MoEST also demonstrated that there were a lot of students selected into grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools who migrated to schools which charge lower fees. Some of the letters and transfer lists have been attached as Appendices 4 and 5, respectively.

The Education officer further indicated that due to gravity of the problem, in February 2019, his office decided to collect data regarding students' attrition in grant-aided secondary schools in the 2018/19 academic year. The findings showed that dropout rates in these schools were high, reaching as far as 50% (see Appendix 2). This was also corroborated by the sampled response below:

> *"Regarding learners leaving school before completion in the schools they were selected to, we did a small survey last year and I can give you the figures. It is true that learners who were selected into grant-aided national secondary schools did not complete school in these schools, and dropout rate was very high for boys grant-aided national secondary schools as compared to other grant-aided secondary schools."* (Education Officer 1)

However, when some of the education officers were asked about the extent of dropout problem on government selected students in their schools, they feigned surprise over the problem. They indicated that according to the MOU, the government selects 60% while them select 40% of the total number, each academic year. One of them retorted that their office neither received any

reports from the head-teachers nor from the government itself that the students selected by the government were dropping out of the schools. Here is how he responded:

> *"I do not know this, what our office usually does is to ask the head-teachers if they have any places for new students in the school, if they have the places, we give them more students."*
> (Education Officer 2)

When asked if he ever wondered where the places for new students came from. This is how he responded:

> *"I think that maybe our 40% is being reduced and, in my understanding, I thought the government is also doing the same, filling their 60%. Because to us, it does not sound like a problem because we are still helping the nation. I think this should be the government's issue, it should come back to us, and try to sit down with us and pave the way forward."* (Education Officer 2)

The consternation expressed by the Education Officer on the issue of government selected students' dropping out of schools indicated that there was lack of coordination between the school proprietors and the government as stated below:

> *"If the government feels that the agreement is not working on their part, they are supposed to come for a discussion with us for a way forward, since they are quiet, we think everything is fine."*
> *(Education Officer 2)*

Findings from this study are in agreement with the assertion by Kataihore (2014) who observed that students' dropout problems from secondary schools were a common challenge in many countries worldwide. Goldscmidt and Wang (1999) also revealed that in the developed world the United Kingdom, had the worst dropout rates. Chugh (2011) also found out that the attrition problem was persistent in India wherein about 57% of the children who entered school were unable to complete secondary education.

This study also, revealed that the dropout rate was higher in the boys' grant-aided national secondary schools as it ranged from 29% to 63% as compared to 10% to 39% for the girls in grant-aided national secondary school. On the other hand, in district boarding secondary schools, attrition rates ranged from 2% to 48% as shown in Figure 4.1b. On overall, dropout rate for boys was found to be higher than that of girls in these schools which was in agreement with some studies that showed that more boys drop out from school than girls worldwide. According to the Indian secretariat report (2010), school dropout rates for boys have remained high and that have contributed to low literacy levels. The report asserts that nearly 62% of the boys drop out more than the girls who stand at about 59%. Moreover, in Kenya, studies have also indicated that more boys drop out from public secondary schools than girls do (Oteyo & Kariuki, 2009; Mwaniki, 2008). Similarly, Kimondo (2007) and Gatere (2007) affirmed that in Kenya, boys' education has been endangered because of high dropout rates. These findings corroborate with what one of the Education officers found out in February 2019 when a survey was carried out in NED grant-aided secondary schools. The survey revealed that dropout rates for boys ranged from 13% to 50% while that of girls ranged from 6% to 39%.

Contrary to the above findings, Holmes (2003) established that in India, more girls mostly achieved less education and ended up dropping out of schooling than boys. In Malawi, some studies have also shown that more girls drop out of school than boys (Chimombo, 1999). Chimombo observed that, though the enrolment in school is almost equal for girls and boys, girls have lower chances of completing their studies. Concurring with Chimombo, Valentini (2008) and World Vision International (2010) also observed that there were more girls (11%) than boys (8%) who dropped out of schooling each year in Malawi.

While there were two contradictory sets of findings from the previous studies, the studies did not show these differences according to categories of schools. The findings were about public secondary schools in general. This current study has revealed the problem of students' attrition from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools to be great issue. It is graver in grant-aided national secondary schools than it is in the district boarding secondary schools and mostly affecting boys as confirmed by various participants and the analysed documents.

4.4 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTRITION IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The second sub-question sought to find out the factors that lead to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. In answering this question, participants were presented with a list of factors which were gathered from the literature review in Chapter two whereby they were requested to state if they strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), undecided (U), disagreed (D), or strongly disagreed (SD). In the analysis, the strongly agree and agree responses were merged to make agree. Similarly, the strongly disagree and disagree were merged to make disagree. The factors were grouped in five categories namely; socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school-related factors and the individual-related factors. The responses have been presented in Appendix 3 which has been broken down into Tables 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; 4.7 and 4.8.

4.4.1 Socio-economic Factors

The student participants were asked if socio-economic factors such as poverty, direct and indirect school costs, household work, child labour and low parental level of education had any influence on students dropping out from school.

On poverty, 96 students representing 100% of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools conceded that poverty caused students to drop out from school while 98 students representing 88% of the respondents in the district boarding secondary schools conceded to it. On direct and indirect school costs, 83 students representing (87%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools agreed that students dropped out from school because they were not able to meet direct and indirect schooling costs while in district boarding secondary schools, 69 (63%) of the students' participants agreed. Besides this, 39 (40%) and 43 (39 %) of the respondents agreed that students were dropping out of school in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools respectively because they were engaged in household work. Likewise, 54 (56%) and 54 (49%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools and district boarding secondary schools respectively agreed that students dropped out of schools because of child labour, while 59 (61%) of the respondents agreed that students dropped out of school from grant-aided national secondary schools because of low parental level of education and aspirations on their children. On the other hand, 72 (64%) of the respondents agreed that students in district boarding secondary schools dropped out of school because of low parental level of education and aspirations on their children. (Refer to Table 4.4)

Table 4.4 Factors influencing drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
SOCIO ECONOMIC												
Poverty	96	100	0	0	0	0	98	88	6	5	7	7
direct and indirect school costs	83	87	6	6	7	7	69	63	19	17	23	20
household work	39	40	17	18	40	42	43	39	10	9	58	52
child labour	54	56	19	20	23	24	54	49	13	12	44	39
low parental level of education and aspirations of their children education	59	61	22	24	15	15	72	64	15	14	24	22

These findings agreed with the responses from the Education Officers, head-teachers, students who dropped out, parents of students who dropped out and members of PTA when they were asked to locate the factors that led to students' attrition in the schools as regards the socio-economic factors. They stated that poverty and school costs were the major factors that prevented students from completing school in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools as evidenced by the following sampled responses:

"Most students fail to complete school in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools because they have to pay exorbitant school fees, the cheapest fees being at MK92,000 and MK52,000 respectively." (Education Officer 1)

"Our fees are much higher than the fees charged in the government national secondary schools, and this causes some students to fail to pay fees and drop out from school." (Education Officer 2)

"Some students do not report to school, and some leave school prematurely because they fail to raise money to pay boarding fees and other school costs." (HT A2b)

"I passed my PSLCE and I was selected to start form one at a grant-aided national secondary school in the North, but my mother could not afford a pair of trousers for me to put on when going to secondary school. There was no money for transport to take me to school and my mother admitted that she could not find fees as a result I just stayed at home the whole first term when my primary school head-teacher discovered and helped me to enroll at a nearby open/night school". (Male dropout from grant-aided national secondary school).

"I dropped out of school because my parents were very poor, and could not manage to meet my school costs especially school fees. When I passed my standard eight and got selected to join secondary school, my parents did piece work (maganyu) to pay my school fees in form one. They were allowed to pay by installments. When I got into form 2, my parents started finding it difficult to raise money for my school fees. They failed to pay school fees for term 1 of my form 2, and when

I came to second term, I had arrears. I was later chased from school to go and look for fees. I never managed to find it as a result I decided to apply for a transfer to a community day secondary school closer to my home. (Male dropout from a grant-aided national secondary school).

"I got selected to a district boarding secondary school and when I reached form 3, my dad lost his job and was unable to pay my school fees. There was no one else to help me with fees. I tried to apply for a bursary but I was not picked. I applied to an open school where I am learning now." (A dropout from district boarding secondary school).

"We were very happy when our son got selected to a national secondary school, we did not know that school fees were high, we failed to pay even half of the amount of the fees required. We ended up enrolling our child at a CDSS." (Parent of a dropout from grant-aided national secondary school).

"We have many students leaving our schools everyday due to failure of school fees payment. Most of these students are the ones who were selected by the government as a result we face a lot of challenges in running the school, and therefore we chase them away." (PTA Member)

The study revealed that due to failure to pay school fees, some students never returned whenever they were chased from the school to go home and get the fees. They ended up staying home and engaged themselves into household work and child labour. On household work, it was also stated that most students in the lakeshore area, left school to help their parents in the fishing business while those from the inland helped with herding animals, gardening and baby-sitting as shown in the sampled responses:

"Some stay even for the whole term before they return. Some never even return." (HT A2b; HT B3m)

"Most of our students are lost when they are sent home to collect school fees, they give up schooling, and engage themselves in assisting their families with household work." (HT B2m, HT B3m)

On child labour, the study revealed that some students in district boarding secondary schools gave up schooling to go and fend for their families due to poverty as shown in the following responses:

"Some students stay home to help their parents work in farms as tenants while some run away to South Africa to go and look for jobs to assist their parents with income." (HT B4m)

"Because of the matrilineal system in Malawi, most students are raised by mothers only who because of their low income cannot support their children with education costs which are much higher in our schools hence children drop out of school. Some of these students end up as house maids, house boys and garden boys." (HT A3b)

However, in the girls' grant-aided national secondary schools, findings revealed that no student in this school had dropped out from school because of lack of school fees as evidenced by the response below:

"No! no! no! our students do not leave school because of lack of fees, there are so many scholarships given to our girls." (HT A1g)

The head-teachers of the district boarding secondary schools concurred with the head-teacher of the girls' grant-aided national secondary school that no female students dropped out of these schools because of lack of school fees. This is what they said:

"It is only our male students who drop out of school because of school fees. The female students have many donors who sponsor them." (HT B1m, HT B3m)

"As I am talking now, all needy female students have been funded, while many boys have not paid their fees and have been sent home to go and collect school fees." (HT B4m)

This corresponded very well with the response from the ES and the EDM who said that girls, unlike boys, have more donors who pay school fees for them in the form of bursaries. This is how they responded:

"Apart from government bursaries which pay school fees for both boys and girls, there are many bursaries which pay school fees for girls only provided by NGOs like CAMFED, UNICEF, Mummy Martin Fund and many others. Apart from fees, they are also provided with personal necessities like school uniform, stationery, school bags and others." (Education Officers 1, 2 and 3)

From the responses above, amongst the socio-economic factors, poverty is the most prominent cause of students' drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Poverty caused students to fail to meet direct and indirect schooling costs such as school fees, school uniform, writing materials amongst others, forcing them to drop out of school. In addition, the findings have revealed that boys are the ones who are hit the most by poverty since they do not get much assistance from donors. This concurs with the situation in Kenya, where most children from poor households dropped out of school before completion due to family poverty and high school cost (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). This is also indicated in the report from an Integrated Budget and Household Survey 2009/2010 in Kenya (2010) which revealed that 66% of the boys dropped out of school, due to failure to meet the rising costs of education.

4.4.2 Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors were the other category of factors which students were asked if they thought these factors had any influence on students' dropout. The socio-cultural factors included pregnancy, early marriages and cultural beliefs. On pregnancy, 68 (71%) of the respondents agreed

that students dropped out of school because of pregnancy in grant-aided national secondary schools while 90 (81%) of the respondents agreed that students dropped out of school because of pregnancy in district boarding secondary schools. On early marriages, the study revealed that 69 (72%) of the respondents in grant-aided national, and 95 (86%) from district boarding secondary schools agreed that students dropped out of school because of early marriages. On cultural beliefs, 46 (48%) of the students' participants in grant-aided national secondary schools, and 60 (54%) in district boarding secondary schools showed that some students dropped out of school due to cultural beliefs. (Refer to Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Factors influencing chronic drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
SOCIO CULTURAL												
early marriages	69	72	8	12	19	20	95	86	3	3	13	11
Pregnancy	68	71	5	5	23	24	90	81	10	9	11	10
cultural beliefs	46	48	21	22	29	30	60	54	8	7	43	39

From the findings on socio-cultural factors such as early pregnancies and early marriages were the ones which emerged to be leading in causing students to drop out of district boarding secondary schools than in grant-aided national secondary schools. This is in agreement with the findings from the interviews where it was revealed that students, mostly girls, dropped out of schools because of pregnancy and early marriages as evidenced from the following responses:

> *"Some of our girls drop out of school because of pregnancy and early marriages. So far two*
>
> *have already dropped out in a space of four years."* (HT A1g)

"Many girls drop out of our schools because of pregnancy and early marriages, so far 8 have dropped out in a space of four years." (HT b2m)

These findings agree with several studies which established that teenage pregnancy was among the major causes of school dropout for girls (Shahidul & Karim 2015). In Malawi, the results from EMIS (2016) report, revealed that a lot of girls dropped out of school, due to pregnancies and marriage accounting for 38% of all female dropouts.

4.4.3 School-related Factors

Students were also asked if school-related factors, such as non-conducive school environment, student discipline, religious issues and school distance contributed to students' attrition from schools.

In a non-conducive school's environment, 53 (55%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools and 61 (55%) of the respondents from district boarding secondary schools agreed that students dropped out of school because of a non-conducive environment in their schools. On students' discipline, in grant-aided national secondary schools 58 (60%) of the respondents agreed that students dropped out of school due to discipline issues, while 82 (74%) agreed in district boarding secondary schools. On religious issues, 34 (36%) of the respondents agreed that students dropped out of schools due to religious issues in grant-aided national secondary schools, while 47 (43%) agreed in district boarding secondary schools. On distance to school, 64 (67%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools reported that students dropped out from school because of distance to school, while 56 (50%) in district boarding secondary schools stated that distance to school was one of the factors that influenced students' attrition. (Refer to Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Factors influencing chronic drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
SCHOOL RELATED												
non-conducive school environment	53	55	13	14	30	31	61	55	20	17	30	28
students' discipline	58	60	14	15	24	25	82	74	22	12	16	14
distance to school	64	67	17	18	15	15	56	50	15	14	40	36

From the findings, amongst the school-related factors, the non-conducive school's environment and discipline issues were highly ranked as causing students to drop out of district boarding secondary schools, while in grant-aided national secondary schools, non-conducive school's environment and distance to school were prominent. This concurred with the responses given through interviews as follows:

> *"Some students do not report and some leave the school prematurely because of the non-conducive school environment such as lack of comfortable accommodation, furniture and dirty water."* (HT A1g)

> *"Some students do not report to school while others just leave the school prematurely because they fail to meet transport costs due to long distances to reach our school."* (HT A1g)

> *"Students call the EDM office to complain that they cannot go to the schools they have been given because they cannot afford transport since the schools are far away from their homes."* (Education Officer 1)

> *"Some students report to school very late, sometimes after four weeks due to failure to raise transport money. And when it is closing time, they become stranded since they cannot go home due to lack of transport money and this becomes a very big inconvenience for the school."* (HT A4b)

"When I got selected to one of the grant-aided national secondary schools up North, I could not go to start form one because my mother could not find money for my transport to school, so I never went." (Dropout student from grant-aided national secondary school).

"Some students dropped out of our school because of indiscipline issues. They were caught drank, some were found smoking Indian Hemp (chamba) and at a certain point they became disgruntled because of some decisions made by the administration as a result they resorted in instigating others into riots, causing damage to the school. These students got expelled from school" (PTA member 2)

4.4.4 Individual-related Factors

Individual school related factors that comprised frequent absenteeism, peer pressure and learners' attitude towards school was another element which student respondents were asked to endorse if it influenced students to drop out of school.

On frequent absenteeism, 43 (45%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools agreed that some students dropped out of school due to frequent absenteeism from school, while in district boarding secondary schools 70 (63%) indicated that some students dropped out of school due to frequent absenteeism. On peer pressure, 56 (58%) of the respondents in grant-aided national secondary schools agreed that students dropped out of school because of peer pressure, while 85 (77%) of the respondents in district boarding secondary schools agreed that students dropped out of school because of peer pressure. Besides, 50 (52%) of the respondents in grant-aided national and 66 (62%) from district boarding secondary schools agreed that students dropped out of school because of learner attitude towards school. (Refer to Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Factors influencing chronic drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
INDIVIDUAL RELATED												
frequent absenteeism	43	45	18	19	35	36	70	63	16	14	25	23
peer pressure	56	58	15	16	25	26	85	77	14	13	12	10
learners' attitude towards school	50	52	19	19	27	29	66	62	25	23	20	15

The findings revealed that most students in district boarding secondary schools dropped out because of individual-related factors than those students in grant-aided national secondary schools. Amongst the individual-related factors, peer pressure and frequent absenteeism was more prominent in contributing towards students' drop out in district boarding secondary schools more than in grant-aided national secondary schools. Maluwa-Banda (2003) and Chimombo (2005) observed that in Malawi, the quality of schooling is very low as evidenced by high rate of wastage due to school drop out before completion, rates of repetition and absenteeism, amongst others. The participants who were interviewed did not mention individual related factors as one of the key causes of students' attrition.

4.4.5 Other Factors

There were other factors which participants identified on top of the factors examined above. Those who mentioned other factors were 21 (22%) in grant-aided national secondary schools, and 19 (17%) in district boarding secondary schools.

Table 4.8 Factors influencing chronic drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Others	21	22	69	72	6	6	19	17	72	65	20	18

These data imply that the major reasons were the ones which had already been mentioned in the questionnaire. The other factors which were commonly mentioned, as factors that led students to drop out from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools were student illness and student attacks associated with some students who were practicing satanism and witchcraft. These findings concurred with the findings from responses through interviews with participants as follows:

> *"If a student is sick and the school cannot manage the child properly, the students are sent home to be close to their parents where they may spend a long time and sometimes, they take transfers to schools close to their homes where they can be close to their parents."* (HT 1Ag)

> *"Some students are sick only when they are in school and are well once they get to their homes. Sometimes when they are in school, they have hallucinations, and behave very strangely claiming so many things including satanism and witchcraft."* (HT A1g; HT A3b)

There are many factors that cause students to drop out from school as testified by Shahidul and Karim (2015) who argued that dropout does not only occur through a single factor but also through a composition of factors. Cervantes (1965) also observes that the United States of America had experienced a high rate of students' drop out from its schools which was attributed to student family factors, peer pressure, culture and school experiences. This study also revealed that many factors influenced students dropping out from school. These factors were socio-economic factors, socio-

cultural factors, school-related factors, individual-related factors. Amongst these factors, this study revealed that poverty which was a socio-economic factor was leading students into dropping out of school in both secondary schools, but was highest in grant-aided national secondary schools.

Due to poverty, parents were not able to raise enough money to pay for boarding and transport of their children to school. Children were forced to leave school prematurely to engage in house work and child labour because of their parents' poverty. They wanted to assist their parents since parents were not able to take care of them, and meet their primary needs let alone secondary needs. This corresponds with what research studies have indicated, that the cost of schooling, including fees, is one of the main reasons for dropping out of schooling for most students (Brown & Park, 2002; Colclough, Rose & Tembon 2000; Mukudi, 2004; Chugh 2011). It was for these reasons that Mueni (2015) argued that, while it is imperative to pay school fees for the smooth running of schools, the high cost of schools and other school requirements hinder access to education and may lead to students drop out of school. She specified that this was common among children from rural poor families. In Kenya, most children from poor households dropped out of schools because their families could not afford to provide for the rising costs of education (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). Also, in Malawi, the results by EMIS Report (2018) demonstrated that both male and female students dropped out of secondary school mainly because of school fees. This accounted for 39% of the total students' dropouts (EMIS, 2018). According to Kenya Report (2005), these boys and girls dropped out of school so as to play their role to help their families. This is the case since Kenyan poor families usually rely on each family member's contribution to the family's survival. Children engaged in premarital sex and became pregnant, and some were forced into early marriages because of poverty. This was higher in district boarding secondary schools than in grant-aided national secondary schools. Kasente, Nakanyike and Balihuta (2003) state that many girls perceive marriage as an escape route from family poverty. This then is more encouraged by the common

culture practiced in some tribes of charging bride wealth (dowry/lobola) which brings quick income to the family.

The findings of the study are also, in line with Vincent Tinto's theory of Social and Academic Integration which guided this study. The theory focuses on a student's characteristics prior to entering an institution; the students' experience upon entering the institution and the effect of external factors that interfere with students' academic performance. This study revealed that the students in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools, were affected by the socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, school-based factors, the individual-factors and other factors as mentioned above. Amongst these, socio-economic factors dominated in influencing the students' chronic drop out. This was because the students' family background was not considered when selecting them into the grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Moreover, after selecting them not all of the needy students were assisted with finances to cater for their boarding fees and other school necessities. Tinto further, in his revised version of his theory in 1993, added other variables affecting the social and academic integration of students into the school. These variables are adjustment, difficulty, incongruence, isolation, finances, learning and external obligations or commitments of the students in the school (Tinto, 1993). Tinto further contends that dropout occurs through lack of integration in either in the academic or the social systems of the school (Tinto, 1975).

4.5 INTERVENTION TO THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' DROPOUT IN GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL AND DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Vincent Tinto's theory of Social and Academic Integration which guided this study asserts that dropout occurs because students are insufficiently integrated into different aspects of the school.

The third sub-research question sought to find out interventions which can be used to mitigate the factors influencing students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. In trying to address this question, students' participants were asked to state if any intervention measures were used in their school to help students not to drop out of schooling. It was found that 62 (65%) of the participants in grant-aided national secondary schools said that measures were there in their schools while 34 (35%) reported that there were no interventions in their schools. In the district boarding secondary schools, 68 (61%) of the participants asserted that intervention measures were there in their schools while 42 (38%) said that interventions were not there and one (one percent) did not say anything. The results have been presented in Table 4.9. This meant that in both schools, intervention measures were employed to stop students from dropping out from school.

Table 4.9 Do schools Have any Intervention Measures?

	Grant-aided national		District boarding	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	65	68	61
No	34	35	42	38
Missing	0	0	1	1
Total	96	100	111	100

4.5.1 Interventions Which Existed in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools Given by Different Participants

Further, the students' participants were asked to list down intervention measures which existed in their schools to stop students from dropping out. The interventions mentioned were offering of bursaries to students, role modelling, rules and regulations, career talks, guidance and counselling and discipline measures.

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The findings showed that 65 (68%) of the participants in grant-aided national secondary schools asserted that there were various interventions which existed in schools to reduce students' drop out. For example, offering of bursaries to students was identified by 30 (31%) of the participants while role modelling was mentioned by seven (7%), and guidance and counselling by six (6%). The other interventions which were also mentioned were rules and regulations three (3%); role modelling and career talks one (1%); role modelling and discipline measures mentioned by one (1%) of the students' respondents. 17 (18%) of the students' mentioned all the stated measures. Likewise, in the district boarding secondary schools, 67 (61%) of the student' participants listed down the interventions that were taking place such as giving bursaries to students 29 (26%); guiding and counselling 19 (17%), rules and regulations 10 (nine percent); role modelling and career talks one (1%); role modelling and discipline measures two (2%), career talks two (2%), and two (2%) of the students' participants mentioned all the stated interventions. There were more interventions mentioned in the district boarding secondary schools than in the grant-aided national secondary schools but there were some which were common like offering of bursaries to needy students, guidance and counselling, role modelling, discipline measures and rules and regulations. Out of these, offering of bursaries to needy students, guidance and counselling were more prominent. These results have been summarised in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Interventions being used to stop students from dropping out of Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools as Indicated by Students Participants

	Grant-aided national		District boarding	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Offering of bursaries	30	31	29	26
Role modelling	7	8	0	0
Guiding and counselling	6	6	19	17
Rules and regulations	3	3	10	9
Role modelling and career talks	1	1	1	1
Role modelling and discipline measures	1	1	2	2
Career talks	0	0	2	2
Suspension	0	0	2	2
All	17	18	2	2
None	31	32	43	38
Missing	0	0	1	1
Total	96	100	111	100

From these findings (interviews) on the measures which were already being used in the schools to reduce students' attrition, the responses given collaborated with the responses which were given by students' respondents in Table 4.6. The following were the responses:

> *"Most parents are not able to pay boarding fees at once, as a result, we just carry them along by allowing them to pay the fees in many instalments."* (HT B2m)

> *"Head-teachers are advised to allow students who cannot afford to pay the full amount of boarding fees at once, to pay the fees in instalments." (Education Officer 1, 2)*

> *"There are bursaries provided in the schools but are not enough to cater for all the needy students; as a result, we force ourselves to resort into looking for bursaries for the neediest students from different corners like NGOs, students' alumni, individuals and many others."* (HT A2b, HT A3b)

"MoEST is committed to fund the needy students, but there are too many of them as a result, some are not able to access the help." (Education Officer 1)

"We have planted maize mills; we rear livestock and we have an orchard as income generating activities of which the proceeds are used to run the boarding and pay boarding fees for neediest students." (HT A4b)

"We sometimes let out school premises like the dining hall and classrooms to the community to be used for activities such as weddings, prayers and others, for us to generate extra income." (HT A2b)

"To ensure that students are disciplined we have formed guidance and counselling committees to assist students with discipline issues like breaking school rules and regulations, influenced by peer pressure." (HT 3bm)

These responses are in agreement with what many scholars have established. For example, many countries have been reported as providing bursaries for their learners especially for females and vulnerable groups, such as orphans and the poor. The government was also committed to help the students achieve secondary education but it was faced with numerous challenges (Mwangi, 2006; Onuko, 2012). These challenges included the amount of funds available not matching with the huge number of the needy applicants; delays in disbursement of funds, and transparency in identification of beneficiaries, among others. Kenyan government found 58 % of the demand by needy students unmet (IPAR,2008).

Akyeampong (2009) and Rolleston (2009) also, observed that although the government of Ghana is committed to giving education to its citizens, children from poor households continued to stay out of school. Despite the challenges the schools were facing, some of them were trying their best

to assist the needy students not to drop out of school. The efforts they applied in trying to keep the students in schools, were in line with Vincent Tinto's theory of Social and Academic Integration which guided the study. The theory indicates that students who are selected into schools, carry along with them many characteristics and some of them being their families' socio-economic status being high, medium or low. If they are coming from low socio-economic status and are not well integrated by accommodating them or allowing them pay the boarding fees in many installments or assisting them with some bursaries and scholarships, these students would leave these schools prematurely. Those who were well integrated, were able to complete in time at the same school they were selected to.

4.5.2 Measures on Factors That Influenced Students' Dropout from School as Presented by Student Participants

The 34 (35%) and 41 (38%) student participants in grant aided national secondary schools and district boarding secondary schools, respectively who said that there were no intervention measures employed in their school were requested to suggest intervention measures which would help reduce dropout of students from their school. The interventions suggested were finding enough bursaries and other financial support for needy students. They also proposed reducing the amount of boarding fees and increasing grace period for fees payment. In addition, they also suggested talking with students, parents and guardians regarding payment of fees. They also proposed that school leaders should try to understand problems relating to fees. They further urged authorities to refrain from suspending students for unreasonable grounds, and changing school standards. Almost, all the suggested interventions were pointing towards helping needy students pay their boarding fees. These were pointed out by 32 participants out of 34 in grant-aided national secondary schools and 29 participants out of 41 in district boarding secondary schools respectively as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Suggested interventions indicated by students who said that there were no interventions in their school

	Grant-aided national		District boarding	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Finding bursaries and other support for students	22	23	17	15
Reducing school fees	2	2	2	2
Increase grace period for paying fees	3	3	0	0
Talking with students, parents and guardians on the importance of paying school fees in time	2	2	8	7
Understand problems relating to school fees	0	0	2	2
Guidance and counselling	1	1	8	7
Stop suspending students on unreasonable grounds	1	1	1	1
Changing school standards	0	0	2	2
All	3	3	0	0
None	62	64	70	63
Missing	0	0	1	1
Total	96	100	111	100

Some of the interventions suggested above collaborated with the findings from the responses from interviewed participants. The suggestions which corresponded with those mentioned by the student participants were finding enough bursaries and other financial support for needy students; reducing the amount of boarding fees; increasing grace period for fees payment; talking with students, parents and guardians regarding payment of fees; understanding problems relating to fees, and guidance and counselling. Participants suggested that there should be a paradigm shift from advocating for girls' education only to advocating for boys' education also because boys seem to lag behind due to many challenges. This is what was suggested:

> *"Everyone is able to see these days that girls' education has received enough interventions; it is time for us to start thinking of ways of intervening in the education of both girls and boys."*
>
> (Education Officer 1, 3 and 4)

This agrees with the recommendation made by Amdany (2017) who suggested that measures should be put in place to ensure that boys also receive financial aid towards achieving their educational goals.

It was also, suggested that there should be a political will by the government to make education a priority so that it is made accessible to every child as evidenced in the following responses:

> *"When allocating funds in the budget MoEST should be allocated more funds which can be used to subsidise boarding costs to make it affordable so that students should stop dropping out from school."* (Education Officer 1)

> *"As a matter of fact, the government should make secondary education free and compulsory."* (HT A3b, Student dropped-out 2)

This agrees with the suggestion made by Werunga, Musera and Sindabi (2011) that the government should consider making secondary education also free just like primary education is. This also, corresponds with Nthiga (2014) who commends governments across regions who have universalised primary and lower secondary education. Similarly, a report by UNESCO (2008) states that in sub-Saharan Africa, only twelve countries do not include lower secondary education under basic education.

It was further, suggested that there should be concerted efforts by the government, the Church, political leaders, the local community and Councils, NGOs, and business people to assist the needy students for them to acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships. In line with this suggestion, some schools stated that they engaged secondary school alumni to assist the needy students as follows:

"We have lobbied the alumni who are coming up with a fund which they would give the school so that they can pay boarding fees for the neediest students. In addition, we are encouraging them to pick up one of the neediest students as their son and pay boarding fees for them from form one to form four." (HT A3b)

Furthermore, it was suggested that the government should come up with a long-term plan which should be initiated to eradicate poverty by instituting strategies that would financially empower the parents of the needy students. This is what was said

"The government should identify families which are living in dire poverty and give them farm inputs and cash. They can then use that cash on investments and produce income which they can use to alleviate their poverty, and also remain with some money which they can use to finance their children's education" (HT A4b, HT B1m)

Mueni (2015) agrees that financial constraints hinder participation and retention of many students in secondary schools, and recommends the need for concerted efforts by government and other stakeholders in education to enhance efforts to assist the needy children to acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships. Nthiga (2014) also supports the idea of empowering communities with activities which could help them generate income which could then boost their family's financial status. She argues that if communities are empowered, they would be able to meet different costs including school costs thereby retaining children in secondary school till completion. Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti and Takavarasha (2011) also suggest the introduction of programmes that reduce the financial barriers to secondary schooling especially for females, and students from disadvantaged families. She put merit scholarship program and conditional cash transfers for students from poor backgrounds who gain admission to a national or provincial school which could alleviate the financial barriers and reduce student drop out from schools.

In addition, it was suggested that schools should intensify guidance and counselling to reduce attrition of students from school due to pregnancy and early marriages. It was alleged by many participants that most students were ignorant on the importance of being educated due to community cultural values, hence they engaged in activities that led them to drop out of school. Participants also acknowledged the existence of guidance and counselling in the schools but they said that they were not intensively done as evidenced in the following responses.

> *"Guidance and counselling are there in the schools and are even time tabled but most schools are not practicing it. Most of them claim that they concentrate more on examinable subjects. Ways should be found to see to it that it is done."* (Education Officer 1)

> *"We have teachers who are assigned to teach guidance and counselling in our schools but most of them do not teach it. They only provide guidance and counselling to students when there is need. Therefore, it should be seen that teachers are teaching this subject as they do with other subjects."* (HT A2b, HT B3m)

Nthiga (2014) agrees that use of guidance and counseling services in secondary school institutions was found to be weak, despite various recommendations from various reports such as The Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest by The Republic of Kenya in 2001, and The Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005. These reports recognised the use of guidance and counseling in the management of student discipline in schools due to its proactive approach, and its provision of general guidelines on guidance and counseling services in schools, respectively. The findings of study also were supported by Nyaga (2005) who argues that lack of guidance and counselling in dealing with student issues have contributed to their state of mind and negative reaction to secondary education. Nthiga (2014) recommends for reinforcement of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools as per the Ministry of education recommendations. He also argues

that these would assist in dealing with discipline issues by adopting proactive approaches such as peer counselling and mentorship.

Some suggestions on the interventions which the study established were not related to the literature reviewed. These have been explained in the following paragraphs: The participants suggested that the government, besides the criteria which it is currently using in the selection of students to secondary school should find a mechanism of selecting students to secondary schools which they could afford both boarding fees and transport costs. The government should also find a way of identifying needy students who should benefit from bursary even before they are selected into secondary school. They explained that the government could accomplish this by generating data of student's socio-economic status from their primary schools at an early stage. This was arrived at when the interviewed participants were asked if there were any considerations on the students' background during selection of students into secondary schools. It was explained as follows:

> *"No considerations are made on a student's background when selecting students into different categories of secondary schools in Malawi. In Malawi, only marks and grades of the learner are considered, [laughter]. Not even MANEB knows the background of the learner, and it is only the school the child is coming from which knows the background of the learner."* (Education Officer 1)

> *"We do not look at the background of students during selection, since selection is based on how much the student has scored."* (Education Officer 4)

When asked to explain how the government selected students into different categories of secondary schools in order to understand how these needy students found themselves in these high-profile public secondary schools. The following was the response:

"To explain how students are selected into different categories of secondary schools in Malawi, it is very complicated to explain but I will try. It is as follows: learners are selected according to the marks they score in PSLCE. Students who score the highest marks are selected to national secondary schools then to district boarding *then to CDSS. They are selected basing on their district of origin."* (Education Officer 1)

There was another suggestion that schools should engage or intensify projects for generating extra income to help with boarding costs and paying boarding fees for the neediest students. It was indicated in one of the grant-aided national secondary school that there were plans of investing in more income generating activities as follows:

"We would plant more mills in the area for milling maize, cassava and rice; build a bigger school entertainment hall and erect some rooms which would be used as shops which we would let out to the community in order to generate extra income for the school of which the revenue collected would be used in the school operations, especially in boarding. (HT A2b)

In addition, it was suggested that the government and grant-aided national secondary schools' proprietors should collaborate so that they are able to regulate school operations. They cited operations like replacement of students who dropped out; funding for the school; selection of bursary beneficiaries and many others which they said would be regulated if they worked together. It was also mentioned that the school proprietors collected a 12% levy on the amount of boarding fees collected which reduced the income which would be used in running the schools as evidenced below:

"The levy which is remitted to the proprietors of the grant aided national secondary schools would help to subsidise the boarding costs." (HT A2b)

"The government would easily know that the students that they select in the grant aided national secondary schools face a lot of challenges such that they do not complete their secondary education in these schools." (HT A3b)

Besides, it was indicated that the matrilineal system was affecting most students since most fathers do not take responsibility to raise up their children; instead, they leave them to be raised by their mothers only. Most of these mothers also do not take any responsibility over their children. For instance, it was reported that when children from such families are selected into secondary schools, the mother would call to tell the head-teacher that she just managed to source transport money only to take the student to the school but she could not afford boarding fees.

"Mwana uyo ndamutumiza alibe bambo, bambo ake anamuthawa ali mwana wakhanda adakakwatira kwina, ine ndilibe china chilichonse kuti ndikhoza kukwanitsa kulipilila mwanayo fizi" (HT A3b speaking for the mother of needy student)

Meaning that:

"I have sent that child to school. He does not have a father, his father abandoned him when he was still an infant, he went and married another wife. Therefore, I have nothing and I cannot manage to pay boarding fees for him." (HT A3b speaking for the mother of needy student)

Participants suggested the following, in order to reduce the behaviour.

''Parents following the matrilineal system should take responsibility for their children's education failing which the government should enforce a law on them." (HT A3b)

"The community should be sensitised so that they should be able to ensure that men take responsibility for the children they bear and if some run away, they should be punished." (PTA member)

Other interventions suggested were that the government should allow sexual reproductive health to be taught in teacher training colleges and secondary schools to reduce the number of pregnancies and early marriages amongst students. The government should also enforce the law on those parents who marry their children at a tender age. The men who impregnate or marry school going girls should also be held accountable. This is evidenced in the following responses:

> *"The topics on sexual reproductive health are there in the syllabus but the problem is how they are taught. Some teachers are shy to teach these topics as a result they skip them and some teach them partially"* (HT A4b)

> *"The community should be sensitised so that they should be able to punish the men who impregnate school going girls, and also the parents who marry their young children should be brought to book."* (PTA member)

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed data, and presented the findings of the study on the factors that contribute to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi which were collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. These were discussed alongside the literature review and Vincent Tinto's retention theoretical framework. The findings and discussions directly addressed the research questions which the study had set to be answered. The data of the quantitative findings have been presented and discussed alongside the findings in the qualitative part of the study. The next chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusion of the findings, recommendations, areas for further studies and conclusion of the chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed data and presented findings of the comparative study of the factors contributing to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the NED in Malawi. The findings of the study were based on answering the three research sub-questions which guided the study. Precisely questions such as: To what extent do students drop out of school in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? The study found out that there was a great extent of students dropping out from school in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools and mostly affecting more boys than girls. The study also revealed that this was more serious in grant-aided national secondary schools than in the district boarding secondary schools. On the second question: What are the factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? The study revealed that poverty, direct and indirect school costs under socio-economic factors contributed enormously to drop out of male students from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. This was followed by pregnancies and early marriages under socio-cultural factors for girls in grant aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Students' discipline and distance to school under school related factors contributed to students' dropout in district boarding and grant aided national secondary schools, respectively while peer pressure under individual related factors contributed to students' dropout in district boarding secondary schools. On question number three: What interventions can be used to address the factors that lead to students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? The study established that government should come up with policies which would improve selection of students into secondary schools. It should help in identification of rightful bursary beneficiaries and increase bursary and scholarship funds for needy students regardless of their gender. It should make secondary school education free. It should initiate long-term plans which would help to eradicate

poverty by instituting strategies that would financially empower the poor and intensify guidance and counselling opportunities in schools amongst others.

This chapter presents a summary of the study in section 5.2, conclusion of the findings of the study in section 5.3, recommendations of the study in section 5.4 suggested areas for further research in section 5.5 and finally conclusion of the chapter in section 5.6.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study sought to find out the factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the NED in Malawi. The study dwelt on answering three sub-research questions which were: To what extent do students drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? What are the factors that contribute to students' drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? What interventions can be used to address the factors that influence students drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools? Literature review was done in line with these sub-questions. The study was also guided by Vincent Tinto's theoretical framework of Social and Academic Integration (1975).

This was a comparative study which targeted four grant-aided national and four district boarding secondary schools in the NED in Malawi. The study also used pragmatic paradigm, and was conducted using mixed method research design where both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The data was collected from 254 participants which comprised Education Officers (four), head-teachers (eight), form teachers (16), form three government selected students (215), dropout students (4), parents of the dropout students (4) and PTA members (3). These participants were then selected using purposive and random sampling techniques. In addition, the students who

dropped out from school and their parents, and PTA members were located using snowballing method.

 Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews as main research instruments for collecting data. Questionnaires were administered to students in form three and form teachers while interviews were used to get information from head-teachers, education officers, PTA members, dropouts and their parents. Data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods where descriptive statistics and SPSS version 20 computer software and Microsoft (MS) Excel were used to analyse quantitative data, and thematic content analysis to analyse qualitative data.

The first sub-research question aimed at finding out the magnitude of the dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. The findings of the study revealed boys were, to a large extent, the victims of attrition in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. The dropout rate for boys was even higher in grant-aided national secondary schools than in the district boarding secondary schools. The study has also revealed that girls also dropped out from school but not as much as boys did.

The second sub-research question focused on finding out the factors that militate students' dropout from schools in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. The findings revealed that socio-economic factors contributed enormously to the problem in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. This was followed by socio-cultural factors, school-related factors, and individual related factors.

Socio-economic factors constituted poverty, direct and indirect school costs, household work, child labour, low parental level of education and aspirations of their children's education which had a very big impact on students' dropout from school. Amongst these, poverty was found to be the key

barrier to achievement of education among students in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. Most of the students dropped out of schooling because they could not afford direct and indirect school costs. Poverty also forced students to turn to house hold work and child labour. Poverty also forced parents to have low aspirations on their children education because they compared the long-term benefits of education against short-term benefits of sending their child to do income generating activities. They were convinced that child labour was more valuable than education hence influencing attrition.

The study has further revealed that girls were having many sponsors to their education as compared to boys resulting in more boys dropping out of school than the girls. Most of the sponsors provided support for both direct (boarding fees) and indirect school costs (school uniform, writing materials, school bags etcetera) for girls. Boys, on the other hand, had very few sponsors and mostly it was just the government which sponsored them and catered for only direct costs (boarding fees).

Social cultural factors with categories of early marriages, pregnancy and cultural beliefs also influenced students to drop out of school. This was highly exposed in girls' grant-aided national secondary school and the district boarding secondary schools. The study extracted pregnancy as the only factor amongst the many socio-cultural factors that was featured in the girls' grant-aided national secondary school. In district boarding secondary schools, early marriages and pregnancies were also ranked highly. The study revealed that in district boarding secondary schools, poverty was the key cause for pregnancy and early marriages as girls venture into premarital sex to be supported financially, and in the process, they get pregnant while young and some end into early marriages.

School related factors which included non-conducive school environment, students' discipline, and distance to school had an impact on students' attrition. Amongst these, distance to school was featured to have the highest impact in grant-aided national secondary schools since students were coming from far away districts, while in district boarding secondary schools this was not a very big problem because students were coming within the district. This way, due to poverty, poor parents failed to finance transport costs for their children to go to school hence students resorted to be transferred to nearest district boarding and other public secondary schools. Non-conducive school environments also influenced girls to drop out of schooling in grant-aided national secondary school as the school was located in the rural remote area. Student discipline was also another factor that caused some students to drop out from school. This happened in both grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools where some students were involved in breaking school rules and regulations and were expelled. Moreover, religion in grant-aided national secondary schools was used as an exclusionary factor because such schools had some regulations that contradicted other faiths beliefs and traditions. Mostly, students were not allowed to freely practice their religion or wear certain attire in these schools. In district boarding secondary schools, this was not a big problem since students were allowed to follow their religion.

Conversely, individual related factors considered absenteeism, peer pressure and learners' attitude towards school. Thus, students in the district boarding secondary schools were more affected by these factors than students in the grant-aided national secondary schools. Peer pressure and learners' attitude towards school influenced truancy among students in the district boarding secondary schools.

Although there were many categories on the factors influencing students' attrition from schooling, the study revealed that generally, students were greatly influenced by socio-economic factors and

that all other factors blossomed from it. To this end, we can conclude that socio-economic factors have proved to be the major cause of the challenge of dropout from school among the students in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the NED in Malawi.

The third sub-research question of the study aimed at proposing ways of decreasing factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in NED in Malawi. The proposals included improving the method of selection of students from primary school into secondary school. On this, it was proposed that students should be selected into secondary schools where they can afford boarding fees, and those closer to their homes for them to manage transportation costs. Devising a mechanism which can help to easily identify rightful bursary beneficiaries such as generating data of a student's parents' socio-economic status from their primary schools at an early stage would also be helpful. It was also proposed that government should initiate long-term plans which would help eradicate poverty by designing strategies that would financially empower the parents of the needy students. It was also proposed that stakeholders such as the government, the church, the local community and councils, political leaders, NGOs, business people and many others should pull resources together in order to help the needy students acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships in these schools regardless of their gender. It was also suggested that schools should be provided with extra funding to allow them intensify in projects which can help them generate more income to subsidise boarding costs. In addition, government should make education a priority so that it is accessible by every child irrespective of their age, sex, economic position, politics, religion and race. The government and grant-aided national secondary schools' proprietors should collaborate in their operations in order to regulate schools' operations such as collection of levies, boarding fees charges, selection of students into secondary schools, replacement of students who dropped out from these schools; funding schools, selection of bursary beneficiaries and many others. The

government should look into how Teacher training colleges and secondary schools are teaching sexual reproductive health so that they equip prospective teachers and students with necessary information on how they can best handle themselves on matters of sexual reproductive health to reduce the number of pregnancies and early marriages. The government should also intensify sensitization and implementation of laws that punish parents who allow their children to get married at a tender age and those men who impregnate or marry school going girls. It was finally proposed that guidance and counselling in schools should be intensified to make sure that students realise the importance of being educated.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The study has established that the problem of drop out of students in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools is a major issue for concern. Most students who are selected to grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools are faced with numerous challenges that they are not able to complete their education. The government selects the most capable students into grant-aided national secondary schools so that they get the best education and achieve the best results which can take them into higher education since these schools have the best facilities. These most capable students are lost on the way before they complete their secondary school education in these schools. The study has also established that boys drop out from grant aided national secondary schools more than their counterparts in the girls' grant-aided national secondary school and district boarding secondary schools. This study has further, established that this could be the case because in grant aided national secondary schools most students are failing to pay boarding fees which is much higher than in district boarding secondary schools. Additionally, most students in grant-aided national secondary schools are not able to meet transport costs because these schools are located very far from their homes as compared with students in the district boarding secondary

schools. Importantly, girls have many institutions which are helping them to meet their financial challenges than boys.

As INEE (2010) argues, failure to retain children in secondary schools is as good as the waste of potential human resources and money already spent on them in primary education. Time too spent on them, goes down the drain because such dropouts may become a breed of illiterate citizens in the society who are less productive economically, socially and politically. This does not only affect the dropouts themselves and their families but it also affects the communities and the nation. More dangerously so, students' dropout leads to waste of the meagre resources which could have otherwise been directed towards other priority areas such as health, agriculture and climate change. Essentially, this weakens the educational system and brings negative effects on the country's economy because these dropouts may turn to criminal acts such as robbery, drug abuse and other requiring government to spend on them through rehabilitation or medical provision. Going by these realities, there is urgent need for coming up with interventions that can help curb attrition problems in schools in Malawi targeting boys who are admitted into grant aided national secondary schools.

This study suggested some intervention measures of reducing or eradicating attrition problems among students in the national and district boarding secondary schools in Malawi. The government should improve the mechanism of selection of students into secondary schools by selecting students to secondary schools which they can afford to pay boarding fees and transport costs. It was suggested that the government should identify needy students at an early stage that is when they are still in primary school and get prepared for them. This identification will also help government placement plans for the needy students. For example, since there are two categories of national secondary schools in Malawi: those which are pure government and those which are grant aided. And since pure government national secondary schools charge very low fees such as

K25,000.00 therefore, most of the needy students could be placed in these schools. Those who are economically advantaged could then be sent to grant aided national secondary schools because they can afford the costs. But this is only possible if an early socio-economical assessment is done at basic education level.

Vincent Tinto, in his theory of Social and Academic Integration which guided this study, puts family background as one of the traits which affects the road map to student's school completion (Tinto, 1975). He states that if the socio-economic status of the student is taken care of, he/she would be well integrated into the institution and therefore, would not drop out. The study further, calls upon the concerted efforts of all stakeholders of education to take part in improving the socio-economic status and general welfare of students and their parents. In addition, it was suggested that the government, the church, the local community and councils, politicians, NGOs, and business people should step up their efforts to help the needy acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships. Other suggested interventions were that schools should intensify projects that can generate income to help with boarding costs and payment of boarding fees for the neediest students. Added to this, there was a call for intensifying guidance and counseling in the schools so that students can have knowledge about schooling and its values and how to avoid misconducts. Guidance and counselling would also help counter peer pressure in the process reducing pregnancy and early marriages among others. The study finally proposed that if the socio-economic factors can be resolved first, then the other factors can be reduced automatically.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of students' attrition from grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools has been established by the study to be very serious, and therefore has to be looked into critically in order to develop a good nation. This study therefore, has come up with some recommendations

to different stakeholders of education: parents, head-teachers, government and NGOs politicians, the community, individuals and others.

5.4.1 Policy Related Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends the enactment of policies in addressing the following areas:

  - ➢ Government should design a deliberate policy to know the socio-economic status of the students before they are selected into secondary schools so that all those with low socio-economic status selected to grant aided national and district boarding secondary schools should be provided with bursaries.

  - ➢ Government should design a policy which should moderate the amount of boarding fees in both grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools so that all the needy students can also be included.

  - ➢ Government should put in a policy that secondary school education should be made free for all so that secondary education becomes accessible to every child.

  - ➢ Government should devise a policy and long-term plans that can empower poor communities economically through eradicate strategies.

5.4.2 Practice Related Recommendations

The government, the Church, the local community and other stakeholders should intensify efforts to assist the needy students acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships in these schools.

  - ➢ A good mechanism should be devised to help easy identification of rightful bursary beneficiaries in the schools.

➢ Government should intensify sensitization on the law on parents who allow their children to get married at a tender age and men who impregnate or marry school going girls.

➢ Government should check out how topics on sexual reproductive health are taught in all the teacher training colleges and secondary schools.

➢ Government should strengthen teaching of guidance and counselling in schools.

➢ Government and ACEM should help schools with extra funding to allow them intensify in projects which can help them generate more income to subsidise boarding costs.

➢ Government and ACEM should review the MOU that binds their relationship so that attrition problems in these schools can be reduced and the intended purpose of the schools can be accomplished.

5.5 SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This comparative study on the factors that influence students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi was intended to highlight factors that contribute towards students' dropout from the aforementioned secondary categories. Since there are altogether six educational divisions in Malawi with the same type of schools, it is recommended that similar studies should be conducted in the other divisions to determine if there are similarities with the findings from this study.

This study has revealed that female students are still dropping out of school especially in district boarding secondary schools regardless of so many interventions provided for them. Therefore, it is recommended that a study exploring factors that propel girls' attrition from secondary school amidst many interventions be conducted.

Lastly, the study has revealed high dropout rates among male students in the nation. Therefore, it is recommended that a study exploring the socio-economic and political impact of high male students' dropout rate to the society be conducted.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a summary of the comparative study of the factors that contribute towards students' dropout in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi. It has provided conclusions to the findings of the study. This chapter has also provided recommendations for the study before it finally suggested areas that require further research.

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APPENDICES

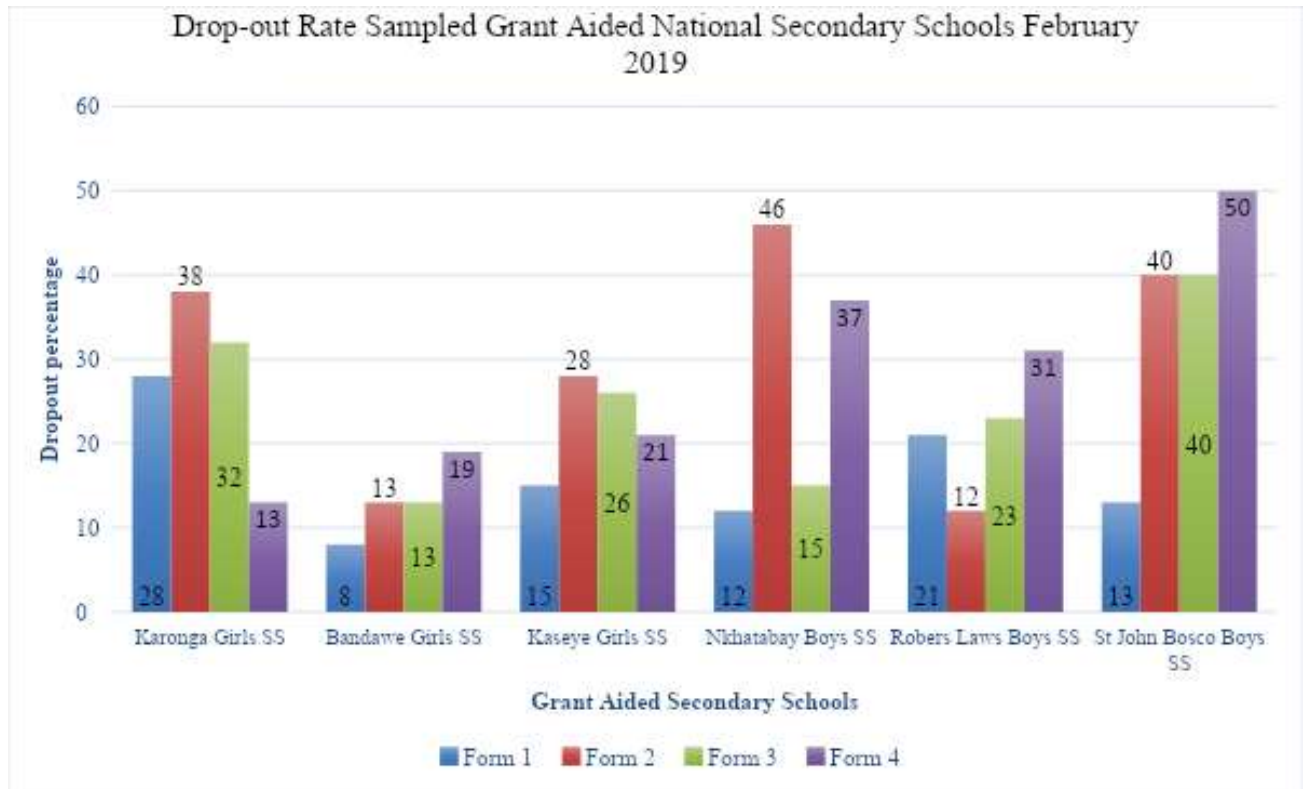**Appendix 1: Northern Education Division grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools**

	DISTRICT	NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL	TYPE	DISTRICT BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOL	TYPE
1	CHITIPA	KASEYE GIRLS	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL	CHITIPA	GOVERNMENT
				WENYA	GOVERNMENT
				ST IGNATIUS	GRANT-AIDED
2	KARONGA	CHAMINADE	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL	CHILUMBA	GOVERNMENT
		ST MARYS KARONGA GIRLS	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL	KARONGA GIRLS	GRANT-AIDED
3	RUMPHI			RUMPHI	GOVERNMENT
4	MZIMBA NORTH			EUTHINI	GOVERNMENT
5	MZIMBA SOUTH	ST JOHN BOSCO	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL	MZIMBA	GOVERNMENT
		ROBERT LAWS	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL		
6	NKHATABAY	NKHATABAY	GRANT-AIDED NATIONAL	BANDAWE	GOVERNMENT
				BANDAWE GIRLS	GRANT-AIDED
7	LIKOMA			LIKOMA	GOVERNMENT
8	MZUZU CITY	MZUZU GOVERNMENT	GOVERNMENT NATIONAL	-	

Notes:

St Mary's Karonga Girls Secondary School and St Ignacious secondary school are new schools.

They have not completed one full cycle.

Appendix 2: Drop-Out rate in sampled grant-aided national secondary schools February 2019 in northern education division

Figure 3. Drop-Out Rate in Sampled Grant-Aided National Secondary Schools February 2019 in Northern Education Division

Appendix 3: Factors influencing chronic drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools

|	Grant-Aided National						District Boarding					
	A		U		D		A		U		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
SOCIO ECONOMIC												
Poverty	96	100	0	0	0	0	98	88	6	5	7	7
direct and indirect school costs	83	87	6	6	7	7	69	63	19	17	23	20
household work	39	40	17	18	40	42	43	39	10	9	58	52
child labour	54	56	19	20	23	24	54	49	13	12	44	39
low parental level of education and aspirations of their children education	59	61	22	24	15	15	72	64	15	14	24	22
SOCIO CULTURAL												
early marriages	69	72	8	12	19	20	95	86	3	3	13	11
Pregnancy	68	71	5	5	23	24	90	81	10	9	11	10
cultural beliefs	46	48	21	22	29	30	60	54	8	7	43	39
SCHOOL RELATED												
non-conducive school environment	53	55	13	14	30	31	61	55	20	17	30	28
students' discipline	58	60	14	15	24	25	82	74	22	12	16	14
distance to school	64	67	17	18	15	15	56	50	15	14	40	36
INDIVIDUAL RELATED												
frequent absenteeism	43	45	18	19	35	36	70	63	16	14	25	23
peer pressure	56	58	15	16	25	26	85	77	14	13	12	10
learners' attitude towards school	50	52	19	19	27	29	66	62	25	23	20	15
Others	21	22	69	72	6	6	19	17	72	65	20	18

Appendix 4: Student transfer letters

FROM :

TO : The Education Division Manager (N)

P.O. Box 133

MZUZU

THR : The Head teacher

St. John Bosco Secondary School

Private Bag 2

Champhiria

MZIMBA

Date : 2nd May, 2019
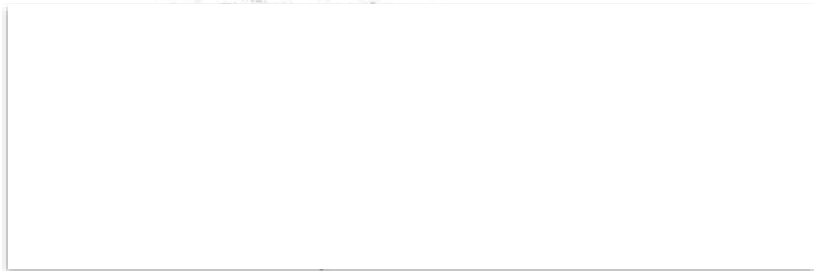
Dear Sir,

RE: REQUESTING FOR A TRANSFER FOR   PRIMARY SCHOOL LIVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION NUMBER: FORM 2 FROM ST. JOHN BOSCO TO CHIPASULA SECONDARY SCHOOL IN LILONGWE

I, Kennedy Nkhoma, guardian for   write to apply for the transfer of Chikumbutso Moyo Form 2 from St. John Bosco Secondary school to Chipasula secondary school in Lilongwe. His Primary School Living Certificate examination number is

The reason for requesting this transfer is that Chikumbutso Moyo is an orphan and cannot afford to pay school fees at St. John Bosco Secondary school which is currently at Ninty five thousand kwacha.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated

Yours faithfully

Appendix 5: Students transfer lists

STUDENTS TRANSFERS IN BOARDING AND CITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR THE MONTHS OF JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2020

LIST WITH VALID REASONS FOR TRANSFER

DIVISION: NORTHERN EDUCATION DIVISION (NED)

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for form teachers

Thank you in advance for accepting to answer this questionnaire.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

a) Please answer all the questions in the spaces provided after each question.

b) Please do not write your name on the questionnaire

1. i. Sex: M………...   F…………...

   ii. State number of years you have been teaching in this school …………………... years.

   iii. State number of years you have been a form teacher in this school ………………years.

2. Have you experienced any cases of students leaving this school before completion within the last four years? a) Yes …………   b) No ………….

If **yes** state the Form and number of students who left.

Form 1 Boys …………… Girls ……………. Form 2 Boys …………….. Girls ……………….

Form 3 Boys …..……... Girls ……………. Form 4 Boys ……………… Girls ……………….

3. Do you have any idea as to where these students have gone to?

   a) transferred to another school …………. b) at home ……………………

4. If transferred to another school, what category of school did they go?

   a) District boarding or city day ……. b) District day or CDSS ……… c) private ……………

5. If at home, what is he/she doing? a) married ……. b) nursing a baby ……. c) working …….

6. Do you make any follow ups for students who have left school with no reason or have gone on some reason and have failed to come back to the school? a) yes …………… b) no …………….

If there are no state reasons why you do not follow up …………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

7. What are the reasons why these students leave school before completion? You are required to select one response for each statement by putting a tick in the selected response. Answer according to your own opinion the responses are as below:

a) Strongly agree (SA) b) Agree (A) c) Undecided (U) d) Disagree (D)   e) Strongly disagree (SD)

	Factors that influence students to leave school		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Socio-economic factors	poverty (Low parental Income)					
		Direct and Indirect school costs					
		Household work					
		Child labour					
		Low parental level of education and aspirations for their children					
2	Socio-cultural factors	Early marriages					
		Pregnancy					
		Cultural beliefs					
3	School related factors	Non-conducive school environment					
		Students' discipline					
		Distance to school					
4	Individual related issues	Frequent absenteeism					
		Peer pressure					
		Learners attitude towards school					
5	Others						

9. Does the school have intervention measures to stop students from leaving school before completion?   a) Yes ……………….   b) No …………….

If yes, state the measures ……………………………………………………………………

………

If no, suggest the measures that should be put in place to ensure that the students do not leave school before completion ……………………………………………………….………

10. How do you relate with your students such that they can open up to you and share their problems?

a) Very well ……..… b) Well …… c) Fair ………... d) Poor …………. e) Very poor ………….

11. How frequently do you guide and counsel you students?

a) Daily ……… b) Weekly ……… c) Monthly ……... d) Termly ……... e) Not at all ……...........

12. If not why? ……………………………………………………………………………….....

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 7: Questionnaire for form 3 government selected students

Thank you in advance for accepting to answer this questionnaire.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

a) Please answer all the questions in the spaces provided after each question.

b) Please do not write your name on the questionnaire.

1. Sex: M………...   F…………...

2. How old are you? a) 14 – 16 years ………. b) 17 – 19 years ……... c) Above 19 years ……

3. Are your parents living? a) both ……… b) father only………... c) mother only ………...

4. Who supports you with your educational needs like school fees, pocket money and so on?

a) father and mother …... b) father only …… c) mother only…… d) guardian … e) other ……...

5. If other, state …………………………………………………………………… and explain

…………………………………………………………………………………………………...

6. Do you have brothers or sisters who were selected by the government into any secondary

school and they left school without completing form 4 a) Yes ……... b) No ……...

7. If yes, why did they leave school before completion? Explain? …………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

8 i) Are there any of your schoolmates who were selected by the government and have left school without completing form 4? a) Yes………………… b) No …………...

ii) If **yes** state the Form and number of students who have left.

Form 1 Boys …………… Girls ……………. Form 2 Boys ……………... Girls ……………….

Form 3 Boys …..……... Girls …………… Form 4 Boys ……………… Girls ……………….

9 i) Do you have any idea as to where these students have gone to?

10 a) transferred to another school …………... b) at home ……………………

iii) If transferred to another school, what category of school did they go?

a) District boarding or city day ……... b) District Day or CDSS ……… c) Private ……………

iv) If at home, what are they doing?

a) married ………… b) nursing a baby ………… c) working ……………….

11. Do the teachers follow up students who leave school with no reason or have gone away for some reason and have failed to return to the school?

a) yes ………………………... b) no……………………… c) I do not know …………………….

12. What are the reasons why these students leave school before completion? You are required to select one response for each statement by putting a tick in the selected response. Answer according to your own opinion the responses are as below:

a) Strongly agree (SA) b) Agree (A) c) Undecided (U) d) Disagree (D) e) Strongly disagree (SD)

	Factors that influence students to leave school		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Socio-economic factors	poverty (Low parental Income) Direct and Indirect school costs Household work Child labour Low parental level of education and aspirations for their children					
2	Socio-cultural factors	Early marriages					

		Pregnancy						
		Cultural beliefs						
3	School related factors	Non-conducive school environment						
		Students' discipline						
		Distance to school						
4	Individual related issues	Frequent absenteeism						
		Peer pressure						
		Learners attitude towards school						
5	Others							

13. Does the school have intervention measures to stop students from leaving school before completion?   a) Yes ……………….   b) No …………….

If yes, state the measures ………………………………………………………..…………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

If no, suggest the measures that should be put in place to ensure that the students do not leave school before completion

……………………………………………………………………….………………………

……14. How do you relate with your teachers such that you can open up and be able to share your personal problems?

a) Very well ……..… b) Well ……… c) Fair ………... d) Poor ………. e) Very poor ………….

19. How frequently do they guide and counsel students?

a) Daily ……… b) Weekly ……… c) Monthly ……... d) Termly ……... e) Not at all ……..........

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 8: Interview guide for head teachers

Thank you in advance for accepting to attend my interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. i) Sex: M………...   F…………...

   ii) What is your highest Qualification?

   iii) How many years have you worked in the education system as a teacher?

   iv) How many years have you worked as a Head teacher?

   v) How many years have you been head teacher of this school?

2. What is the average number of children per family of students indicated in their entry forms?

3. What is the average level of education of the parents who have children in the school as indicated in admission forms?

4. What is the average level of income of the parents who have children in the school as indicated in admission forms?

5. Do the parents experience hardship in the payment of school fees? Explain how the payments are made. Explain how you help students with challenges in school fees payment so that they stay in school despite the challenge. Are there any scholarships given to needy students? Are they paid in time? Are most students catered for?

6. Have you experienced any cases of students leaving this school before completion within the last four cohorts? That is from 2012/2013; 2013/14; 2014/15; 2015/16 academic year selection.

Cohort	2012/13 - 2015/16		2013/14 - 2016/17		2014/15 - 2017/18		2015/16 - 2018/19	
Sex	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Entry								
Completion								

7. Do you have any idea as to where these students have gone to?

   a) transferred to another school b) at home

8. If transferred to another school, what category of schools did they go to?

   a) District boarding or city day b) District Day or CDSS c) private

9. If at home, what are they doing?

10. Do you make any follow ups for a student who has left school with no reason or have gone home for some reason and have failed to come back to school? a) yes b) no

If no state reasons why you do not follow up such students

If yes how many have you followed up so far and by what means?

11. Are there any formal structures put in place through which students can be able to open up and talk about their problems which may contribute to their leaving school before completion?

12. How are these problems handled?

13. What are the factors influencing these students to leave school before completion? Rank them according to frequency of occurrence of the factor? Are there any problems arising from religion issues since schools are owned by churches and also since there are some which may not be present in the schools?

14. Does the school have intervention measures to stop students from leaving school before completion? a) Yes   b) No

If yes, what are the measures?

If no, suggest the measures that should be put in place to ensure that the students do not leave school before completion.

15. What recommendations can you make to policy makers, proprietors of the schools and other partners in education so that schools can retain students up to completion of their secondary school education?

15. Do you have anything to add from what we have discussed which you feel could be of importance to the research?

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 9: Interview guide for education officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Thank you in advance for accepting to attend my interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. i. Sex: M………...   F…………...

   ii. How many years have you worked in the education system?

   iii. How many years have you worked as Senior Manager in the education system? Specify

      positions?

   iv. How many years have you worked at the current position?

2. May you please explain how students are selected into different categories of secondary schools?

3. May you please explain considerations made on a child's background when selecting them to different categories of secondary school, if any?

4. Observations have shown that many students leave secondary schools before completion of form four especially in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools to a lower-level schools or completely drop out. How can you verify these observations? What is the magnitude of this migration? Explain?

5. What are the factors influencing students to leave schools they were selected to before completion of their secondary education?

6. What role have you played to assist these students to remain in the schools and complete their secondary education or have you facilitated for their proper migration?

7. Is the ministry of education headquarters aware of this problem?

8. I understand that if students have been selected to grant-aided national secondary schools and fail to report or leave the school for any reason the government is not able to replace a child in that place but continues to do business as usual, supporting the schools. Does the government accomplish its goals as it intended from these schools? If not, can you make suggestions of how the government can do better so that every child selected to these schools benefit according to the original plan.

9. What are they doing to help schools retain these students or help them to attain their secondary education in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

10. Are there any discussions taking place to find a way forward to curb this problem of students' drop out in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

11. May you make any suggestions to the education planners, proprietors and other stakeholders what role they can play to help reduce these students' drop out problem in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools?

12. Are there any documents in the division related to drop out of students in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools which can help contribute information to the research which I can look at?

13. Do you have anything to add from what we have discussed which you feel could be of importance

to the research?

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 10: Interview guide for educational officers at the church secretariate

Thank you in advance for accepting to attend my interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. Sex: M………...   F…………...

2. How many years have you worked at the current position? …………………………………

3. May you please explain some major elements in the memorandum of understanding between the church and the government on selection of students into grant-aided national secondary schools?

4. May you please explain some major elements in the memorandum of understanding between the church and the government on the operations of the grant-aided national secondary schools?

5. May you please explain your objectives of allowing government to select students into the grant-aided national secondary schools?

6. Is there any agreement on what type of children in relation to their socio-economic background should be selected to these schools?

7. What factors do you consider when fixing the amount of school fees in your schools?

8. Is there any considerations made on a child's background when selecting them to these schools?

9. Observations have shown that many students leave grant aided national secondary schools before completion of form four? How can you verify these observations? What is the magnitude of this migration? Explain?

10. What are the factors influencing students to leave these schools?

11. What role have you played to assist these students to remain in the schools and complete their secondary education?

12. I understand that if students have been selected to grant-aided national secondary schools and fail to report or leave the school for any reason the government is not able to replace a child in that place but continues to do business as usual, supporting the schools. Do you think the objectives of the church and the government are being accomplished with the leaving of these students selected into these schools before completion? If not, may you make suggestions of how the government and the church can do better so that every child selected to these schools benefit according to the original plan.

13. What measures can be put in place to help these students to remain in school and complete their secondary education in these schools?

14. Have there been any serious issues on students leaving school because of issues of religion?

15. Have there been any discussions taking place to find a way forward to curb this problem of students' retention in these schools?

16. May you make any suggestions to the education planners, proprietors and other stakeholders what role they can play to help reduce this retention problem in the grant-aided national secondary schools?
and also, in district boarding secondary schools?

17. Are there any documents in your office related to students' drop out in grant-aided national secondary schools which can help contribute information to the research which I can look at?

18. Do you have anything to add from what we have discussed which you feel could be of importance to the research?

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 11: Interview guide for students who dropped out from their school

Thank you in advance for accepting to respond to this interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sex: M………...   F…………...

2. How old are you? a) 14 – 16 years ………. b) 17 – 19 years ……... c) Above 19 years ……

3. Are your parents living? a) both b) father only c) mother only

4. Who supported you with your educational needs like school fees, pocket money and so on?

a) father and mother. b) father only c) mother only d) guardian e) other

5. If other, state and explain

6. What is the occupation of your parents/guardian?

7. What is the level of education your parents/guardian have attained?

i) Father ii) Mother iii) guardian

8. What is the estimate of your parents' income?

i) Father ii) Mother iii) guardian

9. How many are in your family?

10. How many of your brothers or sisters are still in school?

iii) If not in school, where are they and what are they doing? Explain?

11. Do you have brothers or sisters who were selected by government into any secondary school who left school without completing form 4   a) Yes   b) No

12. If yes, why did they leave school before completion? Explain?

13. What reason did you leave school before completion? Explain?

14. What did you do after leaving the school you were selected to?

15. Have you achieved your dream in life about your education attainment?

16. What do you think you can do to achieve your dream?

17 i) Are there any of your schoolmates who were selected by the government and have also left school without completing form 4? a) Yes b) No

ii) If **yes** state the Form and number of students who you may know who did not complete their education in the school they were selected.

Form 1 Boys …………… Girls ………………. Form 2 Boys ……………... Girls …………….

Form 3 Boys …..……….. Girls ……………. Form 4 Boys ……………… Girls ……………….

iii) Do you have any idea as to where these students have gone to?

a) transferred to another school b) at home

iii) If transferred to another school, what category of school did they go?

a) District boarding or city day b) District Day or CDSS c) Private

iv) If at home, what are they doing?

18. Did the teachers follow up any students who leave school with no reason or have gone away for some reason and have failed to return to the school?

19. What are the reasons why these students left school before completion? Explain?

20. Did the school have intervention measures to stop students from leaving school before completion?   a) Yes b) No

If yes state the measures

If no, suggest the measures that should be put in place to ensure that the students do not leave school before completion

21. Was the school helpful in any way to make you not leave the school? Explain?

22. Did you ever try to confide in any teacher your intentions to leave school before completing?

23. Were you properly assisted?

24. What advice would you give to a student who has intentions of leaving the school before completion? Explain?

25. What would you do better if you were given a second chance to go back to the school?

26. Give any recommendations to the education stakeholders on retention of students into the schools.

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 12: Interview guide for parents of students who dropped out from school

Thank you in advance for accepting to respond to this interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. Sex: M………... F…………...

2. How many children do you have?

3. How many of them are still in school? On what level are they?

4. How do you support your children with their educational needs like school fees, pocket money and so on?

5. What is your occupation?

6. What is the level of your education?

7. What is the estimate of your income?

8. Your child was selected to a grant-aided national or district boarding secondary school. Why did she/he not complete his/her secondary education in the school?

9. How do you think your child should have been assisted to complete his/her education in the school?

10. As a parent how do you think you contributed to the failure of your child?

11. May you suggest ways of assisting these children so that they complete their education in the schools they are selected to?

12. How do you think the schools can best assist these children not to leave school before completion?

13. What advice can you give to other parents whose children are still in school so that they do not also leave school before completion?

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 13: Interview guide for members of Parents, Teachers' Association

Thank you in advance for accepting to respond to this interview.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data for a study on factors contributing to students' drop out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. Sex:　　　M………...　　　　　　　F…………...

2. What is your occupation?

3. What is the level of your education?

4. How long have you been serving in the PTA executive?

5. What position do you have?

6. Observations have shown that many students leave this secondary school before completion of form four? How can you verify this observation? What is the magnitude of this migration? Explain?

7. What are the factors influencing students to leave this school?

8. What role have you as PTA played to assist these students to remain in the school and complete their secondary education?

9. May you suggest ways of assisting these children so that they complete their education in the schools they are selected to?

10. How do you think the schools can best assist these children not to leave school before completion?

Thank you for your time and patience to contribute to my study.

Appendix 14: Information sheet for education officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant-aided national secondary schools, head teachers, form teachers, and form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you and I will use an audio recorder to record the interview. A chance will be given to review the discussion and make amendments if need be. I would like to also examine some documents in relation to the topic which can contribute information to the study, if there are any.

Your contribution will be very essential since you are the key and the eye of the whole division and you handle issues of schools on daily basis, and the problem of students' drop out should be a thorn in your fresh as well as the ministry of education, science and technology, as the operations of the schools are concerned. I have the belief that you have much information needed for my study. This research will benefit the schools in that the responses will unveil the magnitude of the students' drop out problem in the schools, the factors influencing it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out problem in secondary schools in Malawi.

If you will accept to be interviewed, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 15: Information sheet for education officers at the church secretariate

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant-aided national secondary schools, head teachers, form teachers, and form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you and I will use an audio recorder to record the interview. A chance will be given to review the discussion and make amendments if need be. I would like to also examine some documents in relation to the topic which can contribute information to the study, if there are any.

Your contribution will be very essential since you are the owner of grant-aided national secondary schools and you handle issues of schools on a daily basis, and the problem of students' drop out

should be your big concern as the operations of the schools are concerned. I have the belief that you have much information needed for my study. This research will benefit the schools in that the responses will unveil the magnitude of the students' drop out problem in the schools, the factors influencing it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out in secondary schools in Malawi.

If you will accept to be interviewed, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only. Your identity will remain anonymous.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 16: Information sheet for head teachers

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant aided national secondary schools, head teachers, form teachers, and form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to administer a questionnaire to form teachers and form three students. I would like to have a face-to-face interview with you and an audio recorder will be used to record the interview. A chance will be granted to review the discussion and make amendments if need be. I will need to examine some documents on enrolments, class registers, school rules and regulations and others in the school, as well.

The information you will contribute to the study will be very important because you are at the helm of the school and an eye of the division and MOEST as regards the operations of the school and therefore, you hold the firsthand information on this study. You are the first person to know the problems of students in the school and help to handle them. The decision to have the students stay in school till completion partly lies in your hands. This research will benefit your school in that the responses from the participants mentioned above will unveil the magnitude of the students' retention problem and the factors that contribute to it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out problems in public secondary schools in Malawi.

If you allow your school to take part in this study, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only. Your identity and that of other respondents' and the name of the school will be kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms or letters in the documents to be used during the study as well as in the final report.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Respondents will have the right to withdraw at any time and will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 17: Information sheet for form teachers

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant-aided schools, the head teachers, form teachers, form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education in these schools and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to administer a questionnaire to you and form three students selected by the government.

Your contributions will be very essential to my study because you are the ones who interact with students on a daily basis and you should have firsthand information regarding students' drop out problems in your school. I have the belief that you have much information needed for the study. This research will benefit your school in that your responses and those of other participants mentioned above will unveil the magnitude of the students' drop out problem in the schools, the

factors that contribute to it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out problem in secondary schools in Malawi.

If you are allowed to take part in this study, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only. Your identity and that of other respondents' and the name of the school will be kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms or letters in the documents to be used during the study as well as in the final report.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 18: Information sheet for parents of students who dropped out from school

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant-aided national secondary schools, head teachers, form teachers, and form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you and I will use an audio recorder to record the interview. A chance will be given to review the discussion and make amendments if need be.

Your contribution will be very essential since you have a child who failed to complete his/her studies in these schools and therefore you have firsthand information as regards students' drop out problem in these schools since you faced the challenge. I have the belief that you have much information needed for my study. This research will benefit the schools in that the responses will

unveil the magnitude of the students' drop out problem in the schools, the factors influencing it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out problem in secondary schools in Malawi.

If you will accept to be interviewed, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only. Your identity will remain anonymous.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 19: Information sheet for students who dropped out from their schools

Research study of a Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I am **Towera Kafunda,** a student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Masters' degree in Education Leadership and Management. I am conducting research on a topic**:** *A Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi* as part of the degree attainment requirement.

I would like to conduct this research amongst the Education Division Manager, Education secretaries at the school proprietor's offices in the case of grant-aided national secondary schools, head teachers, form teachers, and form three students in grant-aided and district boarding secondary schools in the Northern Education Division. The students who failed to complete their secondary school education and the parents of such students will also be interviewed.

I would like to find out what factors are influencing some students to fail to complete their studies in these schools and what can be done to retain them. To accomplish this, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you and I will use an audio recorder to record the interview. A chance will be given to review the discussion and make amendments if need be.

Your contribution will be very essential since you failed to complete your study in these schools and therefore you have firsthand information as regards students' drop out problem in these schools since you faced the challenge. I have the belief that you have much information needed for the study. This research will benefit the schools in that the responses will unveil the magnitude of the

students' drop out problem in the schools, the factors influencing it and suggest solutions to policy makers and other stakeholders to bring appropriate interventions. Furthermore, the findings will contribute knowledge to the research of students' drop out problem in secondary schools in Malawi.

If you will accept to be interviewed, I would like to assure you that the information given in this study will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will be accessible to my supervisors and myself only. Your identity will remain anonymous.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. For this reason, upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign a consent form. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me at any time using the phone number or email address provided below.

If you may need further information about the study, consult my supervisor, Mr. C.M. Selemani-Mbewe on 0880536675.

Thank you.

Towera J.B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

Cell: 0998627333/0881507780

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

Appendix 20: Informed consent form for form teachers

Research study of **a e Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.**

I, _____, consent to participate in the study conducted by Towera Kafunda of **a** Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I realize that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving students' drop out problem in grant-aided national and district boarding secondary schools. I give permission for the information to be used for academic purposes only.

I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 21: Informed consent form for education officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and at the church secretariate, Head Teachers, PTA Members, the Dropped-Out Students and Parents

Research study of **a e Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.**

I, _____, consent to participate in the study conducted by Towera Kafunda of **a** Study on Factors Contributing to Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi.

I realize that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of reducing drop out of students in grant aided national and district boarding secondary schools. I give permission for the information to be used for academic purposes only.

I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews:

I further consent to being interviewed as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes or audios made of our conversations before these are used for analysis, if I so choose. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any persons I refer to in the interview and the name of the school (s) will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 22: Authorization letter from the Department of Education Foundations for data collection exercise

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u   2
M A L A W I
Tel.: (265) 01 320 722/575
Fax: (265) 01 320 505

Ref.: MU/1/D3.0

11th April 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA

Towera Jane Kafunda is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. She is supposed to collect research data for a study titled *Investigating factors influencing students' retention in Grant Aided national and conventional secondary schools in Malawi*. The Faculty of Education at Mzuzu university has approved and cleared this research proposal.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Associate Professor Victor Mgomezulu
Dean, Faculty of Education.

Appendix 23: Request letter to Education Division Manager

<div align="right">

Mzuzu University

Private Bag 201,

Luwinga,

Mzuzu.

Tel. 0881 507 780 / 0998 627 333

Email: tjmsukwa@gmail.com

15th April 2019

</div>

The Education Division Manager

Northern Education Division

P.O. Box 133

Mzuzu

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN EDUCATION DIVISION

I am a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education degree programme in Leadership and Management. I am carrying out **a** comparative study on Factors Contributing to Chronic Students' Drop Out in Grant-Aided National and District Boarding Secondary Schools in the Northern Education Division in Malawi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the Master's Degree. I am therefore writing to request for permission to carry out this study in some of the schools within your division and at the secretariat of the churches for the grant aided national secondary schools.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully,

Towera Jane B. Kafunda (MEDLM 0518)

29th April, 2019

FROM: The Education Division Manager (N), P.O. Box 133, MZUZU

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter is Towera Jane B. Kafunda pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Leadership and Management at Mzuzu University. She is carrying out a study on Investigating Factors Influencing Students' Retention in Grant-Aided National and District Conventional Secondary Schools in Malawi.

The purpose of this letter is to introduce her to you and allow her collect data, to help her in her research. The information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and solely used for academic purposes.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

E.A.M. Luhanga
For/ Education Division Manager (N)

EDUCATION DIVISION
MANAGER (NORTH)

2 9 APR 20 9

P.O. BOX 133, MZUZU