

An exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District

By

Clement Nyirenda

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DECLARATION

I, Clement Nyirenda, hereby declare that the work contained herein, including the organisation and writing of this thesis entitled “An exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District” is entirely my own work and has been carried out at Mzuzu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Education Foundations under the supervision of Dr. Marisen Mwale.

This thesis has been specifically submitted as partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Leadership and Management of Mzuzu University. All reference materials as used in this thesis have been acknowledged.

Candidate Name : Clement Nyirenda

Signature :  **Date : 31st August, 2023**

Supervisor : Dr. Marisen Mwale

Signature :  **Date : 31st August, 2023**

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Jean Mhone, my parents (Loyid Nyirenda and Grace Chipeta), all beloved brothers and sisters in South Africa and Malawi, classmates, relatives and workmates for their support. Indeed, they have endured and persevered the hardships during my studies at Mzuzu University.

In a special way, I salute God the Almighty who is ever living, loving, caring, guiding and probably has answered the long awaited prayer. With God's intervention, anything is possible.

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ABSTRACT

Education is a key investment in any country's social-economic development. Every person irrespective of economic status, gender, religion or disability has the right to education. Many African countries, Malawi inclusive, face problems to achieve retention of girls in secondary schools. In Malawian perspective, attempts have been made by the government, organisations and well-wishers, to retain girls in secondary schools through provision of bursaries, entitlements and sexual reproductive health. Dropouts occur even when bursaries, entitlements and sexual reproductive health support were provided. The purpose of the study was to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi using selected public secondary schools in Dedza District. The study used mixed methods approach guided by interpretivism and post positivism philosophical paradigms. A sample size of 109 participants comprising 10 head teachers, 50 students, 10 mentor teachers, 10 parents, 10 mother groups, 10 chiefs, 1 CAMFED coordinator, 1 Director for Education, Youth and Sports, 1 Education Division Manager, 5 Civil Society Organisation Leaders and 1 UNICEF education specialist from Dedza District in Central West Education Division and Lilongwe was selected through systematic and purposive sampling techniques. Qualitative data was recorded, transcribed, coded and thematically analysed while quantitative data was analysed using the Microsoft Word Excel to complement the qualitative data. The study had found out that combination social protection, political, socioeconomic, social cultural and individual related structural interventions in a multisectoral approach could address both proximate and distal underlying root cause factors for girls' dropout. Bursaries, psychosocial support and entitlements alone do not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school. The study recommends that government and all education related donors should work as a team, share areas of focus when empowering the education of the girl child, rather than providing the same or related support living out crucial factors not addressed.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS OF TERMS

CAMFED:	Campaign for Female Education
CLEI:	Chinese Local Education Institutions
CSEC:	Civil Society Education Coalition
CWED:	Central West Education Division
DEN:	District Education Network
DEYS:	Director for Education, Youth and Sports
DFID:	Department for International Development
EDM:	Education Division Manager
EFA:	Education for All
FAWEMA:	Forum for Africa Women Educationists in Malawi
GABLE:	Girls Attention in Basic Literacy and Education
GBV:	Gender Based Violence
HIS:	Integrated Household Survey
KOICA:	Korea International Cooperation Agency
LCD:	Link for Community Development
LGPI:	Local Government Performance Index
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MDHS:	Malawi Demographic and Health Surveys
MoEST:	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MSCE:	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MSCTP:	Malawi Social Cash Transfer Programme
NGES:	National Girls Education Strategy
NGO:	Non- Governmental Organisations
NSOM:	National Statistical Office of Malawi
PI:	Plan International
PTA:	Parent Teachers Association
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
SMC:	School Management Committee
WASH:	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YECE:	Youth Empowerment and Civic Education.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- Conceptual frame work:** An end result of bringing together a number of related broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest.
- Detrimental:** Harmful
- Enrolment:** The total number of pupils or students who have registered in a class or during the current school year.
- Envisaged:** Visualised
- Girls' retention in School:** Refers to female students being sustainably retained in school.
- Piecemeal support:** A support whereby funding, resources and programmes are allocated for only a short period of time and or focused on particular sectors(s).
- School dropout:** Temporary or permanent withdrawal from education or school before its completion.
- School readmission:** Process of bringing back learners to school. These learners may have dropped out of school because of different reasons or challenges.
- School withdrawal:** A situation where a learner voluntarily decides to leave school.
- Sustainability:** Continuity for a long time
- Teenage mother:** All girls who bear children below the age of 18.
- Tertiary education:** The level of education covering post- secondary and higher education
- The status quo:** The present situation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS OF TERMS.....	v
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xvii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background information	1
1.2. Problem statement.....	6
1.3. General objective	8
1.4. Specific objectives	8
1.5. Assumptions.....	8
1.6. Significance of the study.....	9
1.7. Theoretical framework.....	10
1.8. Tinto’s Student Integration Model.....	11
1.9. Conceptual framework of the study.....	13
1.10. Delimitations.....	15
1.11. Chapter summary	15
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	17

2.0. Introduction	17
2.1. Factors that hinder girls’ retention in secondary schools	17
2.1.1. Sociocultural factors	18
2.1.1.1. Teacher related factors	19
2.1.1.2. School related Gender-Based Violence	20
2.1.1.3. Early marriages	22
2.1.1.4. Pregnancy.....	24
2.1.2. School infrastructure and facility factors.....	25
2.1.2.1. Long distances girls travel to school.....	25
2.1.2.2. School facilities and resources	26
2.1.3. Economic factors	27
2.1.3.1. Poverty and hunger	27
2.1.3.2. Domestic work.....	29
2.2. Conclusion.....	30
2.3. Interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in Dedza District	30
2.3.1. Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED).....	33
2.3.2. Other actors that enhance girls’ education access and retention in Dedza District	35
2.4. Conclusion.....	36
2.5. Structural intervention strategies that could sustainably promote girls’ retention in secondary schools.....	37
2.5.1. Combination social protection options	37
2.5.2. Economic and education interventions.....	38
2.6. Managers role on the retention of girls in secondary schools	40
2.7. Chapter summary	41

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	42
3.0. Introduction	42
3.1. Research approach	42
3.2. Research design	44
3.3. Research paradigm	45
3.4. Study site	47
3.5. Study population	48
3.6. Sample size and sampling techniques	49
3.6.1. Sample size determination formula	49
3.7. Methods for data collection and instrumentation	52
3.7.1. Methods and instruments for quantitative data collection	53
3.7.2. Methods and instruments for qualitative data collection	54
3.8. Document analysis	55
3.9. Pilot testing.....	55
3.10. Methods of data analysis	56
3.11. Validity and reliability of quantitative data	57
3.12. Trustworthiness of qualitative data	58
3.13. Ethical consideration	59
3.14. Chapter summary	61
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ...	62
4.0. Introduction	62
4.1. Data presentation.....	62
4.1.1. Respondents' biographic data.....	62
4.1.2. Respondents' age range	64
4.1.3 Respondents' class levels	66

4.1.4. Respondents' school type	67
4.2. Research findings	72
4.2.1. Objective 1: Analyse factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.....	72
4.2.1.1. The extent of girl's dropout cases from 2018 to 2022.....	72
4.2.1.2. Economic factors	76
4.2.1.2.1. Direct and indirect costs (school fees and basic needs).....	77
4.2.1.2.2. Poverty and hunger	79
4.2.1.2.3. Domestic work (household work and or child labour).....	80
4.2.1.3. Sociocultural factors	81
4.2.1.3.1. Pregnancies or unwanted pregnancies.....	82
4.2.1.3.2. Harmful cultural practices and early marriages	83
4.2.1.3.3. Teacher related factors	84
4.2.1.3.4. School related gender based violence	85
4.2.1.4. Other factors.....	86
4.2.1.4.1. School infrastructure and facility factors	88
4.2.1.4.1.1. Distances girls travel to school.....	89
4.2.1.4.1.2. School facilities and resources	90
4.2.1.4.2. Political factors.....	90
4.2.1.4.2.1. The education structure	90
4.2.1.4.2.2. Pre-education school entry age.....	91
4.2.1.4.2.3. Marriage entry age of 18 years	92

4.2.1.4.3. Individual related factors.....	92
4.2.1.4.3.1. Peer pressure and girls’ negative attitude towards school.....	93
4.2.1.4.3.2. Lack of mindset change and exposure to role models.....	93
4.2.1.4.3.3. Low levels of parental education and aspirations.....	94
4.2.1.4.3.4. Lack of inclusive and effective guidance and counselling sessions ...	94
4.2.1.4.3.5. Marriage break up and death of parents	95
4.2.1.4.3.6. Summary on factors that hinder girls’ retention in secondary schools	97
4.2.2. Objective 2: Examine interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.	98
4.2.2.1. Organisations, donors and well-wishers that attempt to improve girls’ retention in secondary schools in Dedza District.....	100
4.2.3. Objective 3: Explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.....	106
4.2.3.1. Interventions being done in schools versus dropout rates; (from 2018 to 2022, 5 years).....	109
4.3. Discussion and interpretation of the findings.....	123
4.4. Application of Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto’s Student Integration Model to the findings	149
4.5. Chapter summary	151
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	153
5.0. Introduction.....	153
5.1. Summary of findings.....	153

5.2. Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto’s Student Integration Model role to the findings.....	157
5.3. Limitations of the study	158
5.4. Conclusion.....	159
5.5. Recommendations	160
5.6. Suggested areas of further studies	164
REFERENCES	165
APPENDICES	178
Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Director of Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS)	178
Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the Education Division Manager (EDM-CWED)	182
Appendix 3: Questionnaire for the Civil Society Organisations Representatives.....	185
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for students	188
Appendix 5: Questionnaire for CAMFED coordinator and UNICEF specialist.....	191
Appendix 6: Semi structured interview guide questions for teacher mentors, Traditional Authority and mother group.....	194
Appendix 7: Focused group discussion guide questions for chiefs, parents, head teachers or deputy head teachers and students	196
Appendix 8: Reference letter from Education Division Manager.....	198
Appendix 9: Reference letter from the director for Education, Youth and Sports.....	199
Appendix 10: Reference letter from Mzuzu University	200
Appendix 11: MZUNIREC Ethical approval letter.....	201
Appendix 12: An extract of questionnaire showing respondent’s response	203

Appendix 13: Request letter to UNICEF, CAMFED, TA, parents, EDM, DEYS and Civil
Society Organisations to seek for permission to participate in the research project .204

Appendix 14: Consent letter205

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1. Respondents' category (N=109).....	63
Table 4.2. Respondents' age range (N=109).....	64
Table 4.3. Respondents' gender.....	65
Table 4.4. Respondents' class levels (N=50).....	66
Table 4.5. Respondents' school type.....	70
Table 4.6. Codes assigned to schools and respondents.....	69
Table 4.7. The extent of girls' dropout.....	75
Table 4.8. Respondents' responses (N=109).....	74
Table 4.9. Respondents' responses (N=109).....	76
Table 4.10. Other factors that hinder girls' retention to school.....	87
Table 4.11. Interventions being done to retain girls in school.....	98
Table 4.12. Suggested structural intervention strategies (N=212).....	106
Table 4.13. Interventions being done in schools against girls dropout rates.....	110

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Transformational Leadership Theory Model.....	11
Figure 1.2. Tinto's Student Integration Model	13
Figure 1.3. Conceptual framework of the study.	14
Figure 4.1. Respondent's gender	65
Figure 4.2. Respondents' class levels.	67
Figure 4.3. Respondents' response category.....	75
Figure 4.4. Economic factors that hindered girls' retention in secondary schools.	77
Figure 4.5. Sociocultural factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools.....	82
Figure 4.6. Other factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools.....	88
Figure 4.7. Flow diagram showing factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District	97

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Director of Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS).....	178
Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the Education Division Manager (EDM-CWED).....	182
Appendix 3: Questionnaire for the Civil Society Representatives	185
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for students	188
Appendix 5: Questionnaire for Camfed and Unicef Coordinators	191
Appendix 6: Semi structured interviewguide questions for Teacher Mentors, Traditional Authority and Mother Group	194
Appendix 7: Focused group discussion guide questions for chiefs, parents, headteachers or deputy head teachers and students	196
Appendix 8: Reference letter from Education Division Manager	198
Appendix 9: Reference letter from the Director for Education, Youth and Sports	199
Appendix 10: Reference letter from Mzuzu University	200
Appendix 11: Some of the girls respondents of the study	201
Appendix 12: An extract of questionnaire showing respondent's response	203
Appendix 13: Request letter to UNICEF, CAMFED, TA, parents, EDM, DEYS and Civil Society Organisations to seek for permission to participate in the research project	204
Appendix 14: Consent letter	205

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the background information to the study by describing the historical background of structural intervention strategies, the progress of the education of the girl child in Malawi and Dedza District in specific, general objective, specific objectives, assumptions, significance of the study, Theoretical Framework that guided the study, Conceptual Framework and delimitations.

1.1. Background information

Structural intervention strategies in the education perspective as described by Blankenship, et al. (2006) refer to education interventions that sustainably promote education by altering the structural context barriers to education and create a supportive environment within which education is produced. These interventions are in the form of building economic opportunities, expanding access to education, and promoting collective action towards factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools. Structural interventions are generally actions taken purposefully to address a particular risk or a problem, i.e. girls' dropouts in this case, to create a sustainable output, i.e. retention of girls in secondary schools. Sampa, et al. (2021) categorise structural intervention strategies into four main types such as community mobilisation, integration, contingent and economic, and education interventions.

They further acknowledged that structural intervention strategies empower marginalised people such as women, vulnerable girls from poor household resources and are at risk of dropping out of school, orphans, disabled in low and middle income countries. This implies that structural intervention strategies empower marginalised young women and girls to sustainably improve their education, mobility, and financial intervention; i.e., the capacity to make and act on decisions independently. As outlined by Psaki, et al. (2022) structural interventions enable women and girls develop self-efficacy, self-reliance and self-confidence

which help them to challenge norms, barriers, values and attitudes that hinder their progress in their lives. This was witnessed by Blankenship, et al. (2006) in a peer reviewed journal article entitled “*Structural Interventions: Concepts, Challenges and Opportunities for Research*”, whereby economic and education interventions such as micro-credit programmes worked to promote girls and women’s household bargaining power in South-West Uganda. Women and girls enhanced not only high levels of independence, mobility, social interactions and active participation in financial and sex decision making processes in their families, but also education in the process (Blankenship, et al (2006). It is worth noting that as much as the interventions targeted specific individuals, it is also important to consider, or even anticipate the potential unintended consequences of these interventions. For example, interventions that help women gain economic independence by providing loans to start their own businesses may lead them to pull their daughters out of school to help with the work, which in turn, may impact the risk of their daughters in the education perspective.

According to Evans and Yuan (2019), despite dramatic global gains in access to education, 130 million girls of school age remain out of school. Among those who do enter, too many do not gain the essential skills to succeed after they complete their schooling. Previous efforts to synthesize evidence on how to improve educational outcomes for girls have tended to focus on interventions that are principally targeted to girls, such as girls’ latrines or girls’ scholarships rather than general, non-targeted interventions i.e. those that benefit both girls and boys, which could significantly improve girls’ education. Focusing only on girl-targeted interventions may miss some of the best investments for improving educational opportunities for girls in absolute terms (Evans & Yuan, 2019).

Internationally, school dropout rate has been noted to be a universal challenge. As UNESCO (2022) Global Education Monitoring Report puts, 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide were out of school in 2021, of which 118.5 million were girls and

125.5 million were boys. The estimate confirms that even before the onset of COVID 19, progress in reducing the out of school population had slowed down. The report further states that 258 million children and youth were entirely excluded from education, with poverty as the main obstacle to access (Psaki, et al., 2022).

According to Ministry of education (2021), the Malawi Education Statistics shows that in 2021 out of 100 students aged 17 years (the age supposed to be in form 4 from the population) in the population, only 19.8 percent of them completed secondary education. A closer look at the gender, it shows more male completed secondary education relative to their female counterparts (MoE, 2021). Dropouts across the education districts in Malawi, Mangochi registered highest dropout rate of 10.6 percent, seconded by Mchinji with 9.0 percent, then Nkhhotakota which registered 8.6 percent dropout rate followed by Dedza district 8.0 percent.

From the report it was discovered that 49.5 percent (27.6% males and 21.9% females) dropped out of school because of poverty while about 3 percent of the learners dropped out because of violence, unavailability of teachers and school expenses (MoE, 2021).

Likewise, in 2022, the Education statistics reveal that 36.4 percent of the students that dropped out did so because they could not afford to pay school fees while 15.8 percent of the girls dropped out due to pregnancy. Violence (GBV) accounted for 0.5 percent of all secondary school dropouts (MoE, 2022).

This shows that bursaries and entitlements alone did not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school. Other interventions were needed to sustain the current interventions to address both immediate and root cause factors of dropouts so that girls were retained in schools. This should be the case because dropouts occurred especially to girls even when financial, entitlement, sexual reproductive health support were provided.

This justifies that no single or few intervention strategies can address all factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools, but a range of multisectoral structural interventions in an effective and interactive manner, could sustainably retain girls in schools.

The status quo in Malawi is that both male and female children begin school, especially primary, in their large numbers unlike in secondary and tertiary education where the enrolment of girls is lower than that of boys. The survival and academic achievement rates are much lower for girls than boys because after standard 4, girls' dropout in large numbers than boys and probably perform poorly during the end of term and year examinations (UNESCO, 2014).

At world level, retention of girls in schools remains a challenge. As Katahoire (2014) states, in the United States, one million students dropout of school every year, and more than two million American girls and women between the ages of 14 and 24 were high dropouts. UK registered worst dropout rates of girls in the developed world. UNESCO advocates three regions with the highest proportions of girls out of school which include the Arab States (65%); Sub Saharan Africa (64%) and South and West Asia with 55%. To count out children out of school was determined on the condition that the students never expected to enrol, dropped out or if they are expected to enrol late (UNESCO, 2012).

According to UNESCO (2012), Sub Saharan Africa, has the highest dropout rates of any region in the world. Across the region, about one in six pupils (17%) leave school before reaching grade 2. At the national level, the highest dropout rates in 2009 were found in Chad (72%), Uganda (68%) and Angola (68%). These rates suggest that in 2009, more than two in three entering primary school pupils, were expected to leave before reaching the last grade. In contrast, the lowest dropout rates were in Mauritius (2%) and Botswana (7%) in 2009. In Malawi and Togo, the dropout rates fell from 64% to 47% and from 54% to 41% respectively. In 1994, Malawi abolished primary school fees, which led to a dramatic expansion of

educational opportunities. The rapid changes appear to have had negative impact on the quality of education, which led many children to leave school early (UNESCO, 2012).

In Malawian perspective, it is well established that pregnancy has been a major cause of dropout amongst girls in upper primary and secondary levels across the nation (MoE, 2022).

In the past, girls in the majority of countries faced permanent expulsion from school once found pregnant. A good number of countries including Malawi, have now introduced the readmission policy that allows teenage mothers to complete school. In Botswana, Zambia and Malawi for example, pregnancy policy has been reviewed to allow girls to go back to school after delivery.

In an effort to keep older girls and young women in school, the government no longer expels pregnant students and guarantees a classroom seat for returning mothers (MoEST, 2019).

However, it is not well known to what extent girls are taking advantage of this policy initiative and return to school after giving birth. Basing on MoEST (2019) new pregnancy policy assessment, it is revealed that the policy was not adequate in dealing with the problem of teenage pregnancy. It had been more of reactive than a preventive strategy. Pregnancy cases are usually on the rise annually, for example, as it was advocated by Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) online in 2014, Machinga alone registered 5000 pregnancy cases. Readmission policy in Malawian perspective, was not widely publicised and also failed to meet the needs of teenage mothers on issues regarding guidance and counselling and sex education needs among girls and teenage mothers.

According to MoEST (2014), Malawi National Girls Education Strategy (NGES) identifies sociocultural (impact of teachers, marriage, pregnancy and household responsibilities), school infrastructure and facility factors (lack of adequate sanitation facilities, school resources and distance girls travel to school) and economic factors (direct costs and perceived opportunity costs) bring about gender disparity and failure to retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

Education Rigorous Literature Review on Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality by Unterhaiter, et al. (2014) acknowledges the need for combining a range of interventions in order to enhance girls' participation in school, quality of education they receive and the extent to which this empowering to them promote broader gender outcomes.

For example, the effectiveness of infrastructural interventions is enhanced when they are linked with processes associated with learning and teaching. A range of infrastructure interventions combined with institutional change interventions can be important in developing girl friendly schools, with positive learning outcomes. The review further recommends the need for an investigation on interconnections of different sorts of interventions, how they interact with reforms in other social development sectors such as health, social protection, democratic governance and their relationship with gender equality (Unterhaiter, et al. 2014).

Attempts have been made in Malawi by the government and organisations like GABLE, DFID, FAWEMA, CAMFED, UNICEF, Plan International, Malawi Social Cash Transfer Programme to intervene with short term interventions to empower and retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi, but little progress has been realised because once these organisations stop funding the education of girl child due financial constraints, donor fatigue or others reasons, the dropout issues resume (Lake, 2015). This shows that most of the support rendered are short term basis, attached with specific conditions and once the donors pull out, high dropout rate resurfaces. This justifies the need for sustainable structural intervention strategies to improve retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi such that if donors pull out, as a country, we have to maintain the retention rate of girls in secondary schools.

1.2. Problem statement

Problems affecting girls' education in Malawi are multifaceted and prevalent at all levels of girls' life, i.e. at home, school and community (MoE, 2022). The government of Malawi along with donors and NGOs play a vital role to educate the girl child through provision of bursaries,

sociocultural support, sexual reproductive health and entitlements for them to stay in school, complete and succeed their secondary education.

Despite such efforts to retain girls in schools, there is prevalence dropout of girls in schools even when financial, sexual reproductive health and entitlements are provided. It is worth noting that bursaries, reproductive health and entitlements alone do not meet all girls' needs to stay in school because they are unsustainable, piece meal support, address specific challenges, stop funding in times of donor fatigue and leave out other barriers unaddressed (Robertson,2017).

As argued by Psaki et al, (2022), at the regional, country and subnational levels gender gaps remain, with girls in many settings less likely to complete primary and secondary school and often less likely to be literate than boys.

According to Ministry of Education (2021), 2020/21 school year, Malawi enrolled a total of 5,419,637 secondary school students of which 2,676,575 were male students and 2,743, 062 were female students. In terms of dropouts, the country registered a total of 236,135 students of which 124,861 were female students and 111, 274 were male students, representing 4.6% and 4.2% respectively (MoE, 2021). In 2020/21 school year, Dedza District registered a total of 242,524 secondary school students, of which 119,043 were male while 123,482 were female students. Out of 242,524 students, the district registered 9,788 girls' dropouts, (7.9%) of the total 123,482 female students enrolled against 9,699 male students dropout out of 119,043 students enrolled (MoE, 2021). Furthermore, Ministry of Education (2022) Education Statistics Report, shows that the ministry registered a total of 20,063 dropouts in 2020/21 academic year. Of these, 13,973 were female students representing 61%, while 39% dropouts were male students.

Female dropout by district, Dedza District in 2020 registered 7,630 female secondary school students against 7,563 male students while in 2021, the district registered 9788 female students' dropouts against 9,699 male students (MoE, 2021). Likewise, 2012/2013 school year, the district registered 11,227 dropouts with 5760 (51.3%) girls (CSEC,2014). So far, no structural intervention strategies have been explored to retain girls in schools in the district.

It was against this background that the study explored structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District to address both proximate and distal underlying root cause factors that hindered retention of girls in secondary schools in the district.

1.3. General objective

The main objective of the study was to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

1.4. Specific objectives

The study sought to:

1. Analyse factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.
2. Examine interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.
3. Explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.

1.5. Assumptions

The underlying assumption was that there was no correlation between the provision of bursaries, scholarships, sociocultural support, entitlements and sexual reproductive health to sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District as girls still more dropout of school despite the support given. Piecemeal interventions donors provide focus on specific

challenges to address, rather than a holistic, structural interventions or multi-sectoral approaches to retain girls in secondary schools in the district (Robertson, et al. 2017 & MoE, 2021). That is why dropouts occur even when financial and entitlement support are provided to the girl child. On the other hand, there is a correlation between the structural intervention strategies and sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools. The structural intervention strategies in a holistic and multi-sectoral approach could sustainably address proximate and distal underlying root cause factors that hinder retention rate of girls in secondary schools because each intervention might address a specific challenge in a collaborated manner.

1.6. Significance of the study

The findings of the study will help the Malawian government, the education system, scholars, policy makers, organisations, schools, donors, girls and stakeholders to strategise, adjust and employ the structural intervention strategies to improve the access to education and retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi as a whole. Besides this, the findings will also enhance the need for addressing both immediate and root causes of girls drop outs in a multisectoral approach whereby all the stakeholders should be actively involved rather than relying on one cup fits all approach.

In a related note, the study findings will enable those in decision making positions to appreciate the dropout status quo the district and country face, and critically review the current protective mechanisms the district and country use to retain and empower the education of the girl child.

The availed information will act as a blue print to donors, NGOs, academicians and other stakeholders to acknowledge the need for structural intervention strategies to reduce the fertility rate of young women by spending more years in school, thereby reducing population to manageable levels to meet sustainable utilisation of limited resources. For example, National Statistical Office of Malawi (2008) advocates that after completing secondary school, woman's fertility rate drops from 6.2 to 4.3 children.

1.7. Theoretical framework

The study adopted Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto's Student Integration Model. The theory and model deemed suitable for the study because the theory emphasises on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of both, the leader and followers to succeed the intended goals in times of uncertainty (Northhouse, 2016). The theory was first coined by Downton in 1973, expanded by James Burns in 1978 and later on revised by Bernard Bass in 1985 (Northhouse, 2016). Transformational Leadership Theory changes and transforms people's emotions, opinions, values, ethics, attitudes, standards, and perceptions towards a common goal to be achieved. The theory was adopted because retention of girls in secondary schools is affected by socio-economic factors, social cultural factors, school based factors and individual related factors. As such, there was need to transform all stakeholders, including girls to change their expectations, perceptions, mindset and develop critical thinking, sense of loyalty, and self-service towards sustainable retention and education accessibility of the girl child.

As indicated in Figure 1.1., for effective access to education and retention of girls in school, it depends on a cordial integration among all stakeholders (leaders) and girls (followers) in terms of attributes, relationship and the environment girls are. These in turn, enhance uniformity actions towards goals achievement (education accessibility and retention) through stakeholders' empowerment, shared vision, integrity, interdependence, harmonised culture, self-reflection, ethical, and charisma. For girls' retention sustainability, there is need for accountability, transparency, vigilance and continuously monitoring the progress in girls' retention by all the stakeholders in a collaborative and coordinated effort as shown in figure 1.1.

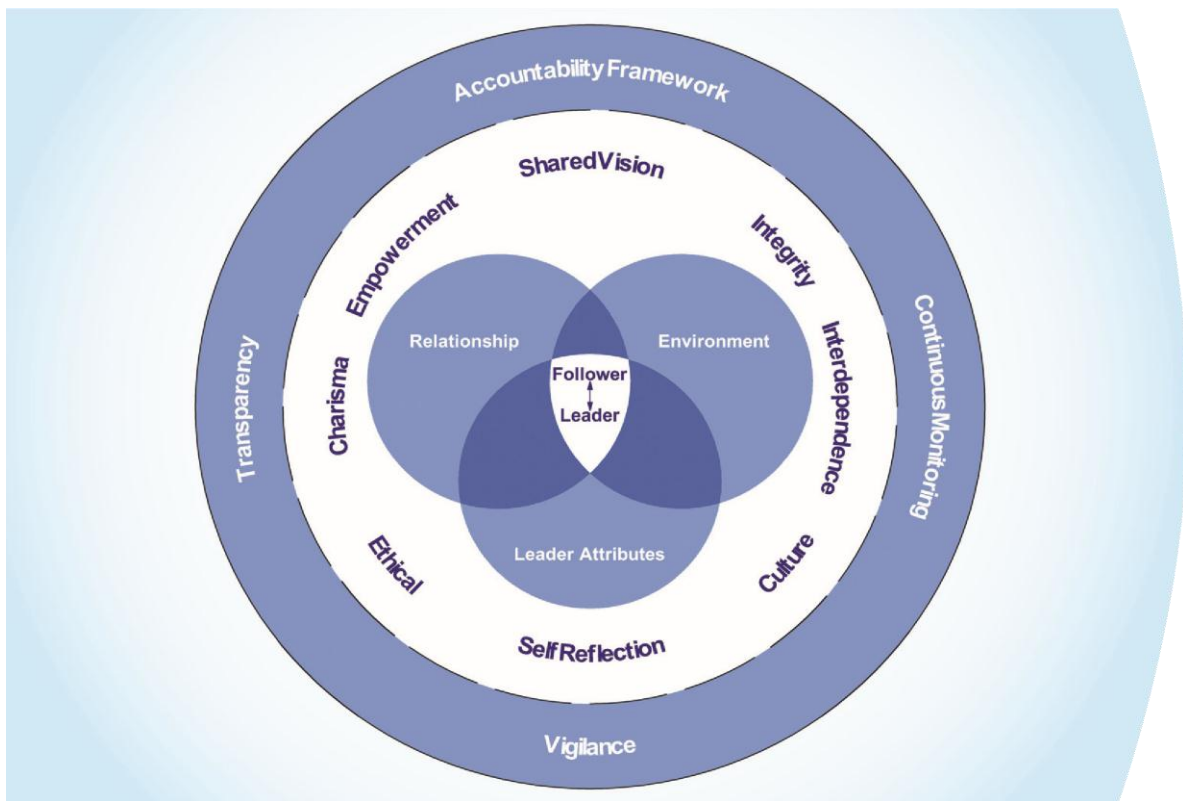


Figure 1.1: Transformational Leadership Theory Model, by Rolfe, P. (2011)

1.8. Tinto's Student Integration Model

Tinto's Student Integration Model was adopted to complement Transformational Leadership Theory in attempt to find structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools. The model was developed by Tinto in 1975 in an attempt to understand which factors contribute to a student's decision to dropout of an institution based on their social and academic integration.

The model suggests that students come to a particular Institution with a range of background (race, primary school achievement, academic aptitude, family background, educational and financial contexts). These characteristics lead to initial commitments and goal completion from the institution attended. Together, background characteristics and initial commitments are

assumed to influence not only academic performance, but also interaction and integration into social and academic systems (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 1994 & Kafunda, 2019).

The greater the individual's levels of social and academic integration, the greater his or her subsequent commitment to the institution and goal completion. Such commitment and integration in turn, bring about positive influence on persistence. In other words, the more a student is socially and academically integrated, the less likely the student is to dropout of an institution (Arnekrans, 2014).

According to the model, there are three major sources of student departure an institution namely; academic difficulties, individual's inability to solve his or her educational and occupational goals, and failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution (Tinto, 1997; Draper, 2008 & Arnekrans, 2014).

On the other hand, the model indicates three principles of effective retention. These include; the institutional commitment to students whereby the programmes offered meet and get committed to serve the needs of the students especially girls in this case and put students' welfare ahead of other institutional goals. Educational programmes must first and foremost commit to meet the education of all, not just for some of the students. It also advocates social and intellectual community integration whereby programmes offered must be committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members (Draper, 2008).

This implies that girls' persistence or dropout of an institution is strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration. Academic integration includes academic performance of students, intellectual development, their school performance, subjects learnt, while social integration involves student-staff association, students' self-esteem and quality of his or her relationship with fellow students and teachers. These enables her to make a decision

either to persist the situations or dropout of school as shown in Figure 1.2.

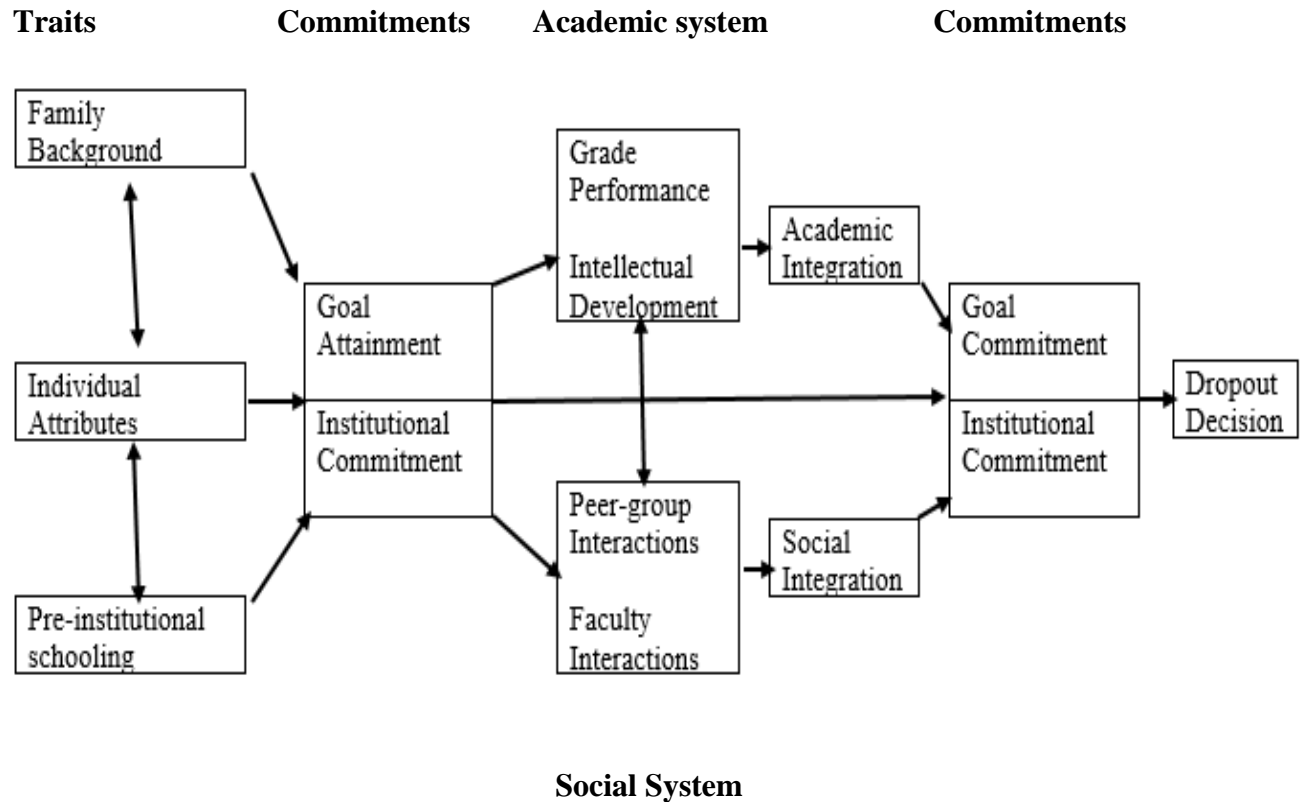


Figure 1.2: Tinto's Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1975)

1.9. Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual frame work of the study was used to categorise factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools. These factors include: social cultural factors (impact of teachers, marriage, pregnancy, initiation ceremonies and household responsibilities), economic factors such as (direct costs and perceived opportunity costs) and school infrastructural and facility factors like (lack of adequate sanitation facilities, school resources and distance girls travel to school) (Tawa, 2004, Ajwang, 2010, National Statistics Office, 2015a, United Nation Development Plan, 2016, Robertson, 2017, & UN Women, 2017).

These factors affect education accessibility, academic achievement and retention of girls in secondary schools. Besides the above factors, loss of parents through death, marriage divorce,

drug abuse, religious factors, political factors and lack of individual interest also affect girl child’s retention in secondary schools. Conceptual framework as described by Ravitch and Riggan (2017) is the total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation of the entire research project. It comprises researcher’s thoughts on identification of the research topic, the problem to be investigated, the questions to be asked, the literature to be reviewed, theories to be applied, methodology to use, methods, procedures and instruments, data analysis and interpretation of the findings, recommendations and conclusions to be made (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). Figure 1.3, shows conceptual framework.

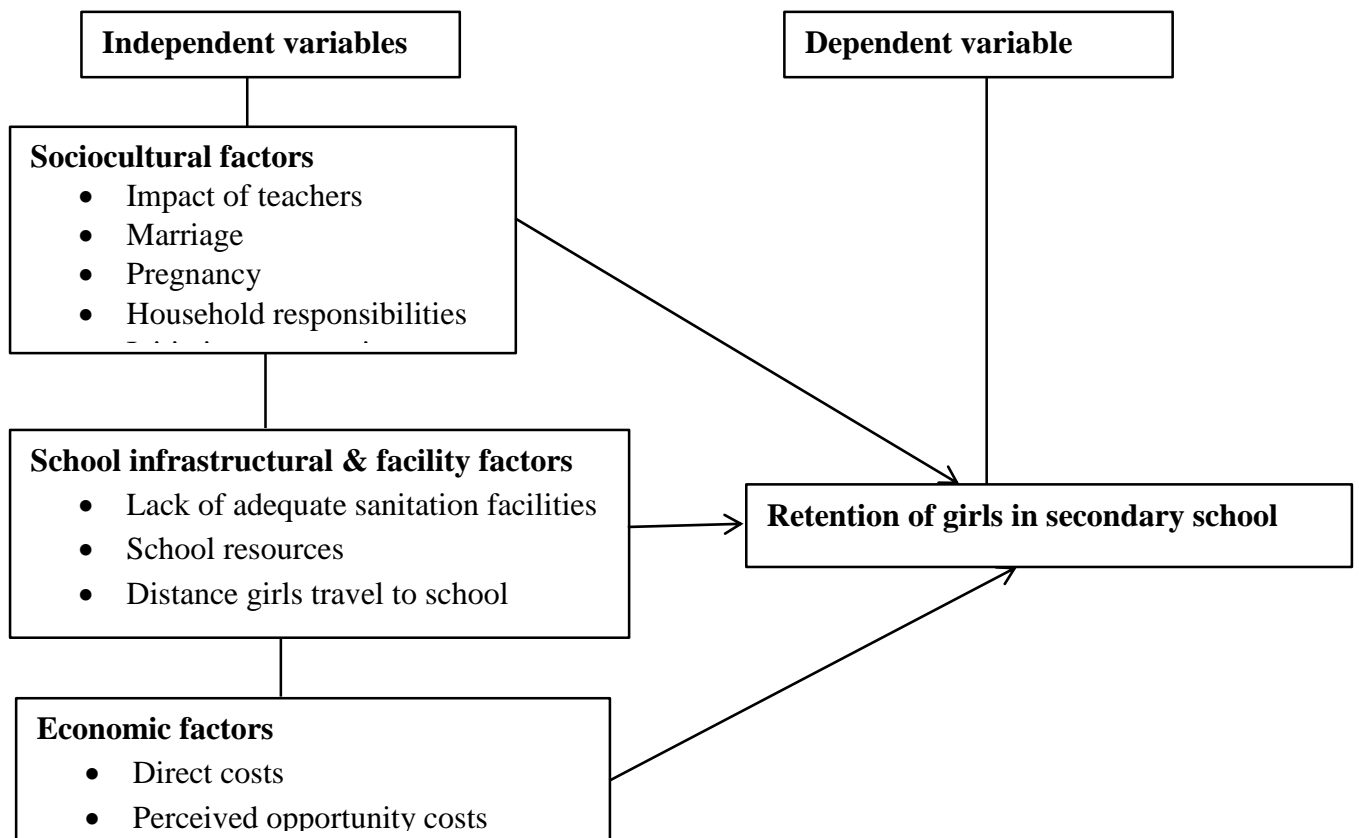


Figure 1.3: Conceptual framework of the study

It is worth noting that from the conceptual frame work above, there are two types of variables namely, dependent variable and independent variables. Retention of female students is

dependent variable while factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools are independent variables. Some of these independent variables are economic factors, sociocultural factors, and infrastructural and facility factors. Independent variables are the ones manipulated to illicit dependent variable.

1.10. Delimitations

Generalisability of the findings, under reporting and over reporting were addressed using purposeful sampling for convenience and manageability of data collection. In line with Mgonezulu and Kalua (2013), probing from participants was also done during semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions for clarifications of the data given by going deeper into the concepts and expressions being discussed for comprehensive data.

On poor girls drop out records by the school managers, the researcher volunteered to assist such managers to look for the records upon being guided where normally they keep administrative records. Other managers requested ample time to look for the records at their convenient time. Others based their records on CAMFED and UNICEF termly reports. Hence, such time was given and during the collection of the results, the researcher verified that the given records were not tampered with and reflect the exact date such records were written down.

1.11. Chapter summary

The chapter has presented background information of the study which traces the structural intervention strategies and historical development of the education of the girl child in Malawi, interventions currently being done in an attempt to retain girls in secondary schools and a gap that still exists. The chapter has acknowledged that much as the provision of bursaries and entitlements are vital for the girl child to access and complete secondary education, however, the support given does not meet all the needs for the girl child to remain in school. Other

structural intervention strategies should be explored to complement the current interventions. The problem statement has justified the rationale for the study.

Further to that, the chapter has also explained the problem statement, general and specific objectives, the underlying assumptions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, Tinto's Student Integration Model and conceptual framework that guided the study. The next chapter focuses on related literature review from scholars, academicians, government documents, peer reviewed journals, reports, from world-wide on factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools, the current interventions being done in an attempt to retain girls in secondary schools and structural intervention strategies that worked in other countries in specific departments and ministries in retaining girls to secondary schools and prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the prevalent areas. Lastly, the chapter has also presented the managers role on the retention of girls in secondary schools.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0. Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature from scholars in several countries including Malawi, on factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools, current interventions that are being done in an attempt to promote retention rate of girls in secondary schools and structural intervention strategies that improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools. The study has been guided by the research objectives, Transformational Leadership Theory as a theoretical framework, supported by Tinto's Student Integration Model and also a conceptual framework with deep insight on how sociocultural, school infrastructural and facility factors and economic factors hinder girls' retention in schools in Malawi.

2.1. Factors that hinder girls' retention in secondary schools

It is quite good that the Malawi Vision 2063 envisage a youth-centric inclusive wealth creating and self-reliant nation by 2063 through agricultural productivity and commercialisation, industrialisation and urbanisation whereby children shall have attained true economic freedom and development. They shall walk tall in the corridors of the global economy while no longer relying on the goodwill of others to survive and thrive (National Planning Commission, 2020).

However, this cannot be the case with the girl child if no immediate attention is taken at national, district and community levels to retain them in schools. According to Ministry of Education (2022) Malawi Education Statistics Report, the ministry registered a total of 20063 dropouts in 2020/21 academic year. This was a drop from 29122 reported in 2019/20 academic year. Of these, 13973 were female students representing 61% while 39% dropouts were male students. The common barriers that prevent girls from participating effectively as boys in secondary education in Malawi, as outlined in the Ministry of Education (2022) include; family responsibilities, pregnancy, marriage, unable to pay school fees, employment, sickness, poor facilities, inadequate teachers, long distances, and Gender Based Violence and general lack of

interest, among others. These barriers in turn, lead to girls' poor learning achievement, high repetition and eventually dropping out of school unlike their counterparts under the same situation (MoEST, 2018 & MoE, 2022).

Problems affecting girls' education in Malawi are multifaceted and prevalent at all levels of the girls' life whether at school, community, or even at home. Some of the aforementioned barriers are cultural and traditional values, such as (negative attitude towards girls' education, exposure to teen marriage and early childbearing); economic factors (household poverty or household chores and responsibilities); school system and policy related, i.e. poor learning environment, poor sanitation, and long distances to school (MoEST, 2019).

In Malawi, the education sector's mandate, as outlined in the NESP 2008–2017, is to promote quality education for all irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or any other discriminatory characteristics (MoEST, 2008a). In order to promote and enhance educational outcomes for girls in Malawi, it is important to assess factors that hinder their educational accessibility, opportunities to stay in schools, their school experiences and their learning outcomes in order to come up with appropriate structural intervention strategies that could sustainably retain them in schools.

As outlined in the ESIP II, there are three overarching factors that the Malawi National Girls' Education Strategy (NGES) identified as contributing factors to gender disparities in Malawi. These factors include; sociocultural factors, school infrastructure and facility factors, and economic factors (MoEST, 2014a).

2.1.1. Sociocultural factors

Tawa's (2004) study conducted on factors influencing high drop-out rates among the girls across learning institutions in Kenya depicts that social-cultural aspects of most communities

in Africa have always discriminated against women even in areas of education. This has contributed greatly to low transition of girls across all levels of education.

Likewise, Robertson, et al. (2017) report on Girls' Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review final report submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reveals that there are some key factors within sociocultural factors such as teacher related factors, school related gender-based violence, early marriages, cultural beliefs and pregnancies that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools as explained below;

2.1.1.1. Teacher related factors

Shortage of qualified teachers and lower number of female teachers compared to male teachers at both primary and secondary schools in Malawi affect the retention rate of girls in schools. Qualified or trained teachers as described by MoE (2022) are those that have attained diploma in education, degree in education, master's in education and those with University Certificate in Education (UCE). As pointed out by the MoEST (2019) and MoEST (2020) the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology experience prevalent shortages of female teachers in rural schools compared to urban schools.

According to MoE (2022) there is a high disparity between male and female teachers across all education divisions with more male relative to female teachers. The gender disparity among secondary school teachers gives an insight to the gender disparity in pupil enrolment. It is speculated that higher rates of female teachers in rural areas lead to increases in female student enrolment because it is commonly believed that female teachers who are deployed in rural schools act as role models to girls in these schools. MoE (2022) Education Statistics Report indicates that 65 percent of the teachers were trained while 35 percent were untrained. In comparison with the previous year, the percentages were the same between the trained and the untrained. However, there has been a slight increase in the number of trained teachers from

10954 in 2022 relative to 10457 in the previous academic year. The report further indicates that the number of untrained teachers also shows a slight increase where it was at 5793 relative to 5581 in the previous academic year.

On a different note, Malongo, (2016) stipulates misconduct of male teachers who are involved in making love affairs with female learners which is against the Malawi Public Service Regulation (MPSR) and affect the retention of girls in secondary schools. This implies that in such teacher–girl love relationship, there is no social distance observed between the teacher and female students. In such essence, the girl child is academically murdered because girls now become too preoccupied with the love affair than the lessons being offered by those teachers. This in turn accelerates school dropout cases among female learners than retaining them in school because girls end up being impregnated and, or continuously failing their examinations.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that teacher related factors such as high teacher-pupil ratio of qualified teachers makes teachers fail to address the needs of all students in a class room set up. Likewise, lower number of female teachers in schools compared to male teachers and unprofessional behaviour of some teachers who propose love to girls deter students, especially girls, to stay in school due to stigmatisation and discrimination instances. This has also been recommended by Ajwang (2010) who indicates that societies perceive girls as objects for sexual gratification and even educated men treat attractive girls and less learned ladies lavishly with the intention of exploiting them, and doom their future provided they meet their sexual needs.

2.1.1.2. School related Gender-Based Violence

School-related Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in forms of physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment that girls suffer while in and around the school environment, including violence perpetuated by students and teachers, hinder the retention of girls in

secondary schools in Malawi. According to UNESCO and UNGEI (2015) and Robertson, et al. (2017), Gender Based Violence has contributed to girls' absenteeism and dropout of school in Malawi, as many girls stay away from school due to fear of harassment and sexual abuse.

Basing on the USAID study conducted in Mzimba North, Ntchisi, Balaka and Thyolo Districts on grade repetition and dropouts in primary schools, it was discovered during interviews with community school leaders that teachers were harsh and used offensive language to over-age girls and students repeating grades. In this study, 35 percent of students cited that one of the reasons for absenteeism was being afraid of their teachers (USAID, 2014).

In a related literature review on Gender Based Violence in Malawi conducted by Mellish, et al. (2015) using four studies, revealed that the high prevalence of school related Gender Based Violence had impacted girls' academic performance in school. Many of these studies were small-scale involving nine districts sought to understand the impact of GBV on girls' education. Questionnaires were provided to girls who were both enrolled and out-of-school. Sixty-one percent reported that their experiences of GBV had impacted their school performance.

According to King and Winthrop (2015) research conducted to examine the relationship between school related Gender Based Violence and educational achievement, shows that there were challenges in gathering accurate data on the prevalence of GBV because it was often under-reported. It can therefore, be acknowledge that Gender Based Violence exist in schools, though others are not reported for appropriate action. According to MoEST (2019), these school related gender based violence are in different forms such as physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment from fellow students, teachers or people from the community. The existence of school related Gender Based Violence hinders retention of girls in secondary schools because the over age girls and those who repeat their grades choose to dropout rather

than being harassed. It is therefore, vital to explore structural intervention strategies that could address school related gender based violence so that girls sustainably stay in school and excel with their education.

2.1.1.3. Early marriages

Studies conducted by UN Women (2017) and National Statistical Office (2015a) show that Malawi is one of the countries having the highest rates of child marriages in the world. Approximately 10% of girls get married before the age of 15, and 50 % of the girls marry before the age of 18. According to UN Women (2017), the Malawi government in February 2017 adopted a constitutional amendment that raised the legal age of marriage from 15 years to 18 years for boys and girls to reduce child marriages and its impacts, including girls' education. According to the study conducted by Robertson et al. (2017) on girls' Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review final report shows that marriage takes place for reasons such as poverty, cultural expectations and pregnancy. The report further indicates that in some parts of Malawi, cultural practices like bride price known as "lobola" where payment is made to the girl's family in exchange for her marriage and female initiation practices, encourage pregnancies and early marriages (Ministry of Labour, Youth and Manpower Development, 2016).

Robertson, et al. (2017) observe that nearly half of all girls in Malawi get married by the age of 18 and one in 14 girls has a child. This happens possibly because of the belief among many people in Malawi that education is for boys and not for girls because women are culturally keepers of homes. The girl child takes such belief as true reflection of reality in real life situation.

Although education is taken as a basic requirement for human development, and the right to education is a fundamental human right without exception. Every person irrespective of sex, class, creed or religion or physical challenge has the right to education. The right to education

is guaranteed by the Malawi constitution and the state is mandated to adopt and implement policies or legislation that promote gender equality and make primary and secondary education accessible to all learners (MoEST, 2018).

However, the Malawi constitution on the other hand, value family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Each member of the family is entitled to enjoy full and equal respect and be protected by law against all forms of neglect, cruelty or exploitation (Malawi's Constitution of 1994 with Amendments through 2017, 2022). It further states that no person over the age of eighteen years shall be prevented from entering into marriage. For persons between the age of fifteen and eighteen years, a marriage shall only be entered into with the consent of their parents or guardians. All men and women have the right to marry and found a family. No person shall be forced to enter into marriage. The State shall actually discourage marriage between persons where either of them is under the age of fifteen years (Malawi Constitution, 2022).

This brings about confusion on the right direction to take, especially stakeholders like Traditional Authorities, chiefs and organisations that empower the education of the girl child when a girl reaches 19 years and above when she wants to dropout of school and get married. This is being the case because education policy advocates girls to remain in school and complete their education, at the same time the constitution empowers the same girls to get married as long as they are above eighteen years old regardless of being at school or not. Perpetrators take advantage of marriage entry age of 18 years, poverty and community expectations to marry, and exploit these adolescent school going girls because they challenge before the accusers that she is above 18 years. Through the government, there is a need to revise the marriage entry age so that girls are protected and enter marriage when they are mature enough to make wise decisions on their own, and possibly completed their secondary level.

2.1.1.4. Pregnancy

Pregnancy is another key factor that affects girls' retention in schools. Basing on the National Statistical Office (2014b), 5 percent of women aged between 15 and 49 had given birth before the age of 15 years and around 35 percent of women aged between 20 and 49 had given birth before the age of 18 years. The 2015–16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey found that 22 percent of women aged between 15 and 19 had given birth and teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile were more likely to become pregnant at a younger age compared to those in the highest wealth quintile (National Statistical Office & ICF International, 2017). Although readmission policy as a way of retaining school-age student mothers to recommence school after dropout due to pregnancy was implemented in 1993 and revised in 2006, there have been always challenges on the part of its implementation (Rugimbana & Liwewe, 2013).

The current procedures for readmission are not user friendly, follow complicated steps and bureaucratic procedures for learners to be readmitted in school. Such cumbersome procedures hindered learners from being readmitted in school after dropping out due to pregnancy and child marriages. When readmitted in school, especially girls and teenage mothers, they are bullied and discriminated from their fellow learners and teachers because some teachers were unfamiliar with the readmission policy procedures.

According to MoEST (2018), Readmission Policy for Primary and Secondary Schools, shows that most of the learners especially girls, are engaged in early unprotected sex with male youths and adults in their communities and at school. Unprotected sexual activities later on result into early pregnancies and early marriages. This shows that all stakeholders including community members and teachers have a crucial role to play to ensure that such incidences are reduced or ended so that girls stay in school. Teachers are mandated to deliver the curriculum which addresses issues of reproductive health and Life Skills to provide knowledge and basic skills to learners for sustainable livelihood. Though in some cases cultural issues and religious beliefs

affect some teachers in the delivery of the curriculum, resulting in learners not having comprehensive understanding of reproductive health (MoEST, 2018).

This implies that there is need for structural intervention strategies that could address challenges of early pregnancies, early marriages, stigma, basic needs and anxiety so that girls are retained in schools and excel with their education and live independent lives.

2.1.2. School infrastructural and facility factors

The school environment as observed by Ministry of Education (2022) plays a great role in either increasing girls' dropout of school or retaining them in schools. The Ministry's report recommends that gender disparity in secondary schools can be improved by making sure that the school environment is safe and conducive with improved toilets, sanitary facilities, hostels, and water facilities for the girl child to stay in school. The overarching factors within the school infrastructure and facility factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools include sanitation facilities, school resources and distance girls travel to school as discussed below;

2.1.2.1. Long distances girls travel to school

Ministry of Education (2021) and (2022) has cited long distances girls travel to school as a challenge for girls to access education, retained in school, safety and meet their daily costs associated with transportation and food while at school. Long distances girls travel to school was seen as a major challenge faced by many students especially girls, and this in turn affected their retention rate, attendance and academic performance because they arrive late at school while tired, and they also encounter gender-based violence on the way to school (MoE, 2022; Munthali et al., 2015; King & Winthrop, 2015). Sometimes, long distances are compounded by the physical features such as hills, forest reserves, valleys, mountains and rivers.

As part of ESIP II, MoEST (2014c) suggested that building girls' hostels as well as piloting the provision of bicycles can help to contain the problem of long distances girls travel to school,

promote access to education and retain them in schools in the process. The ministry further supports the initiatives focusing on constructing schools closer to communities to address the problem of long distances students travel to school though it also highlighted that it can be difficult for the Government of Malawi to deploy enough teachers and resources to smaller remote schools (MoEST, 2019).

In the context of long distances girls travel to school, it can be concluded that parents and guardians get discouraged to send their wards especially girls, to far away schools from their homes for safety reasons from accidents and sexual harassment, unlike those in boarding secondary schools. It would be better if the Ministry of Education could take an initiative to construct more girls' hostels, boarding and day secondary schools or use other interventions like provision of bicycles to shorten long distances girls travel to school. Otherwise more girls in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi will keep on dropping out of school due to long distances.

2.1.2.2. School facilities and resources

Increasing the number of toilets and enhancing water facilities as identified in the ESIP II by (MoEST, 2014a) create a conducive environment for girls to access education and stay in schools. Likewise, lack of adequate toilets and water facilities have an impact on girls' attendance and retention rates, particularly girls once they reach puberty (Psaki, et al. 2022). Programmes such as UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Programme (WASH) provides toilets and water facilities to schools in need as one way of retaining girls in schools. This concurs with, a study conducted by USAID on student retention and absenteeism which acknowledges that poor infrastructure contributed to students missing school during the rainy season where students registered high cases of absenteeism (USAID, 2014, p. 17).

Apart from toilets and water facilities, shortages of female teachers, qualified teachers, classrooms, desks, instructional materials and stationery also affect the retention of girls in

secondary schools. For example, the 2015 EMIS report indicates that students often share one English and Mathematics textbooks between two or three students at secondary school whereas the desired ratio is one textbook for every student (MoEST, 2019).

It is worth noting that it is not just the need for the availability of school facilities and resources that is important for the girl child to stay in school, but also the quality and appropriateness of these facilities and resources. As such, more intervention strategies must be explored to meet the quality and quantity of school facilities and resources if retention rate of girls in secondary schools is to be achieved.

2.1.3. Economic factors

Education is an investment and the most vital form of sustainable inheritance that parents stand to give to their children much more than any other material wealth. Due to socio-economic constraints in most families, education opportunities is in preference for boys to girls (Evans & Yuan, 2022). It is worth noting that girls face a lot of economic challenges while in an institution of learning and are readily frustrated when they experience financial difficulties and consequently, drop out of school. Economic factors can be broadly categorised into direct costs (poverty and hunger) and perceived opportunity costs (domestic work) as explained below;

2.1.3.1. Poverty and hunger

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 greatly reduced the cost of accessing primary school in Malawi. However, school fees and associated costs such as transportation, uniforms and food, among others still exist in secondary schools. Results from the Local Government Performance Index (LGPI), a survey implemented in 2016, found that 23 per cent of students dropped out of school for financial reasons, such as inability to pay for uniforms, or school fees (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016). Families therefore, choose either to enrol their children in school or not, or enrol them late, or withdraw them prematurely from school due to poverty or hunger.

In 2013–2014, around 50.7% of the population in Malawi lived below the national poverty line and 70.9 percent lived below the purchasing power parity (PPP) of \$1.90 per day (UNDP, 2016). This can make it very difficult for families, particularly large families, to afford to send all of their children to school. If a family can only afford to educate some of their children, likely, they may educate their sons rather than daughters.

According to Juma (2010) study conducted in Kisumu Rural District (in Kenya) on girls' retention, it shows that inadequate funds had forced many young girls than boys to dropout of school. Girls were busy looking for financial engagements in Kisumu city and other neighbouring urban centers, just to make ends meet. He was quick to point out that should society fail to invest in girls' education, such semi-educated would turn into dangerous vermin with negative consequences on stable families being on the receiving ends.

In conformity to the views of Jacky (2011), girls face a lot of challenges while at an institution of learning. They are readily frustrated when they experience financial difficulties and consequently, dropout of school. Jacky believes that, due to unique financial needs of girls, society should be ready to spend much more to keep them in schools, a thing which most parents generally find hard to accomplish.

On a different note, Hemmy (2008) observed that among rural communities in the Chinese Local Education Institutions (CLEI), there was only a biological difference between boys and girls. Local communities valued both sexes equally in the education perspective because they were steadily spending resources equitably regardless of gender differences to enhance retention rate. The gains from such a strategy were also being realised even in the labour industry in China.

In Malawian perspective, the third Integrated Household Survey IHS 2010/11 as portrayed by the National Statistical Office (2014c) showed that around a quarter of the population in

Malawi were unable to meet the minimum recommended daily food requirement. School feeding programmes have been implemented in some schools in Malawi to address child hunger, with the aim of enhancing enrolments and student achievement by providing students with the energy needed to focus on school (National Statistical Office, 2015a). This however, worked only in primary section. Studies have also shown that United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) attempt to retain girls in schools through addressing poverty by providing financial and material resources such as school fees, writing materials, (i.e. pens and pencils), sanitary pads or wear, school uniform, pair of school shoes, pairs of socks, scientific calculators, college exercise books i.e. 10 hard covers and 10 college exercise books, school bags, and mathematical sets/instruments among others (Lake, 2015). However, it is worth noting that such help does not capture the majority of the marginalised girls, and the support mainly focuses on financial and material items.

This therefore, still calls for multisectoral intervention strategies that could address all factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools, other than financial and material interventions only. It is also essential for donors to increase their target to reach the majority of the marginalised girls who are intelligent and needy, lack financial, basic needs and entitlement support.

2.1.3.2. Domestic work

Domestic work is valued as the opportunity cost rather than direct costs that contribute to challenges that girls face in school attendance and retention (King & Winthrop, 2015). For example, girls in Malawi are often required to contribute to household chores such as fetching water, firewood, preparing and cooking food, cleaning the house and looking after siblings while boys are more likely to spend a greater amount of time on school activities than girls in economic activities.

According to the EMIS 2015 Report, family responsibilities was the most common reason for girls dropping out of primary school (MoEST, 2019). The Malawi Youth Status 2015 Report noted that girls often have heavy domestic workloads that can result in school absences, grade repetition and school dropout (Ministry of Labour, 2016). In line with these observations, results from the 2016 LGPI survey identified that girls were twice as likely to drop out of school because of household work compared to boys (22% girls; 11% boys) (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016).

This implies that girls do more household work than boys. These domestic tasks often compete with girls' time to attend school and to complete homework. With high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and or marriage divorce, girls may also play a crucial role in the household chores including the need to care for the sick parent(s) or siblings in case they have lost one or more parents or marriage divorce. In such situations, there is need for appropriate structural intervention strategies to address economic challenges and household chores girls do in order for them to concentrate on school rather than family matters.

2.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has to be acknowledged that the causes of girls' dropout of school are multi-sectoral in nature, hence, there is need for collaboration among various Ministries and stakeholders at national, district and community levels to address these factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools. Currently, there is weak collaboration, networking and uncoordinated efforts among various stakeholders in addressing the issue of school dropout, particularly for girls due to pregnancy and child marriages.

2.3. Interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in Dedza District

This section provides a comprehensive current overview about interventions being done in an attempt to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi, Sub Saharan Africa and the world at large. The section also advocates structural intervention strategies that

effectively worked in different countries in retaining girls in schools and possibly, the need for exploring and applying structural intervention strategies to improve girls' retention in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi at large.

Research study by Karondo (2018) on improving the retention of girls in Kavango schools in West Region of Namibia, reveals that retention of girls in secondary school is greatly affected by pregnancies, poverty and early marriages among others. The study further advocates that Kavango Girls' Education Project shifted its activities to FAWEMA after the donor agencies that funded the project ended its funding. As reported, the current office was operating with limited funds that were mainly obtained from basket selling that were made by the regional FAWEMA group and sold to source funds (Karondo, 2018). The generated funds were used to assist 11 girls who were orphans and vulnerable with good records of academic performance from grade 11 until they completed grade 12. Due to financial constraints, the initiative managed to cater for only school development funds and examinations fees, while FAWEMA's head office in Windhoek paid only development funds, examination fees, school uniforms, toiletries and transport fares using the same criteria of being orphans, and vulnerable with good performance but not including hostel fees or any tertiary fees. Their parents were responsible for hostel and tertiary arrangements.

However, the same study highlighted the need for more financial funds to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, to fund the schools with all the necessary fees so that students particularly girls, were not required to contribute any type of fee to school at any level, be it examination, hostel, stationery or any other fees. It further suggested the need for application of other interventions such as parent support and motivation, strong family background, hardship and self-realisation, vision with self-motivation, role modelling from professional teachers, funding and strengthening clubs in Kavango West Educational Region to effectively retain girls in secondary schools.

This shows that the funds from basket making by FAWEMA and financial support provided by FAWEMA head office in Windhoek was not enough, unsustainable and cater only for 11 girls. As such, other structural intervention strategies could be still more needed to maximise retention of girls in secondary schools. In a related development, a research conducted by Alivuai (2020) in Zanzibar on assessment of factors that influence female students' dropout of secondary schools, shows that retention of girls in most schools in Sub Saharan Africa and world –wide, remains a challenge which needs educational stakeholders work together to educate parents, girls and community members on the importance of educating the girl child and the need to improve both school social and physical infrastructure in order to make schools attractive and a conducive environment for learning. The government through the education sector, was also encouraged to provide enough learning materials, sanitary pads, guidance and counselling services to maximise girls' retention in secondary schools (Alivuai, 2020).

In view of these, it shows that at world-wide level, social- cultural factors, school related factors and home related factors among others, influence the majority of girls to dropout of school. When addressing these factors, there is need to apply several interventions by different stakeholders in a collaborative approach to sustainably retain girls in schools rather than living everything in the hands of donors. Donors usually provide piece meal support which are unsustainable and mostly address specific challenges observed instead of all factors in a multi-sectoral approach.

In Malawian perspective, studies conducted by different scholars explicitly explain factors such as poverty, early marriages, negative community values, lack of political will, social-economic factors, school factors, sociocultural factors, teachers' behaviour, lack of proper guidance and counselling that influence high dropout rate of girls in secondary schools (Malongo, 2016, Robertson et al., 2017 & Kafunda, 2019). Robertson and Kafunda emphasised on the need to plan for both short term and long term intervention strategies in a coordinated approach to

initiate accessibility, quality education and retention of students, especially girls in secondary schools. For example, fundraising for Irrigation and Sustainable Development (FISD) should sustainably empower food security, water, sanitation and conducive environment to improve the peoples including students' livelihood.

As suggested by Austria, et al. (2020), when addressing poverty, through provision of financial support in form of bursaries and entitlements for girls and cash transfers for families, it is worthwhile for the education planners, policy makers, communities and all stakeholders also to focus on addressing root causes of girls' dropout using sustainable strategies rather than just concentrating on short term remedies only. They have to acknowledge the need for mindset change towards positive perception of the education of the girl child. There is need to work hand in hand with organisations and donors to address factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools.

This is in line with the National Girl's Education Strategy which aims at increasing girls' access to and complete primary, secondary and tertiary education through improving the quality of education, attendance, pass rates and removing barriers to education for girls (Ministry of Labour, Youth and Manpower Development, 2016; MoEST, 2014c). The vision outlined in the strategy is that 'all girls in Malawi must access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education. The vision empowers girls to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable social economic development (MoEST, 2014c, p. 9). The related literature review shows some of the interventions that have been done by different donors, organisations and the Malawi government in attempt to improve retention rate of girls in schools as explained below;

2.3.1. Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED)

Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) is an international non-profit organisation that since 1993, has been dedicated to eradicate poverty, HIV/AIDS and inequality in Africa by educating girls and empowering young women to become leaders of change (Lake, 2015). The

project was founded by Ann Cotton and its head office is in Cambridge, United Kingdom (UK). The project targeted marginalised girls in rural areas of the Sub-Saharan Africa countries which include Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its rationale was to reach and empower the marginalised girls' education through the provision of school fees and entitlements. Marginalised girls were an important barometer for the transformed education system and for society and the nation at large. In Malawian perspective, CAMFED was launched in 2009, and worked in 17 districts across the country. Here, 62% of the population lives on less than \$1.25 per day. The majority works as subsistence farmers. The majority of girls in Malawi never enrol at conventional secondary schools due to limited spaces and poor performance of these marginalised girls. They usually go to CDSS hence, CAMFED enables such girls to excel in their education by providing school fees, sexual reproductive health and entitlements for their sustainability (Lake, 2015 & UNICEF, 2015).

Currently, it has extended and revised its selection criteria whereby intelligent and needy girls in boarding secondary schools have also been included in the beneficiaries to support and empower their education. This has been the case because previously the marginalised chosen beneficiaries' dropout of school and performed badly during their Junior Certificate Examinations and Malawi School Certificate of Education despite the full support provided. CMFED's underlying assumption is that by eradicating poverty, girls would be able to complete their primary, secondary and tertiary education. Young, educated women are supported through CAMA- Camfed Alumni- to become role models and leaders for change for the next generation. There are four stages of support that CAMFED offers and these include; primary education, secondary education, economic empowerment and leading change (CAMFED, 2015). In the education perspective, some of the financial and material support provided to girls include; secondary school fees, university scholarships, writing materials, (i.e., pens and pencils), sanitary pads, school uniform, school shoes and pairs of socks,

scientific calculators, exercise books, school bags, and mathematical sets, beddings and pocket money for those at boarding secondary schools (Lake, 2015; CAMFED 2014).

However, it is worth noting that despite such effort and support by CAMFED to retain girls in secondary schools, many girls dropout of school while in school uniform with all financial and material support at their disposal. This shows that it is not only financial and material interventions that could enhance girls' retention in secondary school, other factors such as long distances girls travel, psychological support, school related challenges and sociocultural problems among others, need to be addressed as well, if retention rate of girls in schools is to be achieved. Hence, this calls for additional structural intervention strategies that could promote sustainable retention of girls in schools.

2.3.2. Other actors that enhance girls' education access and retention in Dedza District

According to Civil Society Education Coalition (2014) report carried out in Mwanza, Machinga, Dedza, Mchinji, Nkhata-Bay and Mzimba North districts, shows that CAMFED, YONECO, ACTION AID and UNICEF are the most actors operating in these districts promoting children's rights and girl's education. Mchinji and Dedza districts for example, had registered the highest concentration of Civil Society Organisations working on girl's education access. The report further indicated that Dedza District alone had Concern Universal, Department of Social Welfare, WFP, TFAC, CAMFED, ACTIONAID, YECE, UNICEF, WOLREC, RAC, Link for Community Development (LCD) and Marriam Foundation as main actors that ensure girl's access to education through various strategies. For example, UNICEF facilitated initiatives to enhance girls' education access, school water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, media or radio programme "*Nzotheka*" on Zodiak (CSEC, 2014).

CAMFED provides girls with full scholarships including school supplies (entitlements) to facilitate girls' secondary education. ACTIONAID promotes rights-based approaches to education, i.e., 10 education rights. This is being done through facilitating partnership and

networks to provide care and support to vulnerable children at community level, community bursaries management, formation of girls' clubs, construction of female teachers houses and carrying out school rights sensitisation (CSEC, 2014). In a related development, the DEM's office through the gender coordinating office facilitates formation of female teachers' network in the district to act as role models to girls. The office also ensures that every primary school in the district has a female teacher. Link for Community Development strengthen local school structures such as Committees, Parents Teachers Association and Mother groups to act as catalysts for counselling, identification and readmission of out of school girls through training teachers, community school groups (Mother Groups, SMC, PTA and village leaders) to address specific needs of girls' education (CSEC, 2014). YECE on the other hand, advocates child rights sensitisation, civic education and peer education in Dedza District.

Basing on the report, it showed that Dedza District alone had twelve actors or organisations with one goal of empowering the education of the girl child at both primary and secondary sections using different strategies and interventions. However, the same report called for further research on structural intervention strategies that could promote accessibility and retention of girls in both primary and secondary schools in the district. This was the case because instead of having reduction in dropout cases of girls as a result of these organisations intervention, more girls still dropout of school (Civil Society Education Coalition, 2014). On the ground, there were few organisations in operation, others had stopped and or withdrawn on various reasons.

2.4. Conclusion

It can be concluded by emphasising that there is need for multi-sectoral approaches when addressing factors that hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools by these organisations, the government, donors, girls, community members and all stakeholders through grassroot participation other than working in isolation and focusing on only one or two specific

factors. Multisectoral approach as advocated by UNICEF (2010) would help to achieve retention rate, accessibility, quality, relevant education to both boys and girls to meet the Education for All goals (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

2.5. Structural intervention strategies that could sustainably promote girls' retention in secondary schools

Structural intervention strategies in education perspective as described by Blankenship et al. (2006) and Psaki, et al. (2022) refer to education interventions that sustainably promote education by altering the structural context within which education is produced and reproduced. These interventions are in the form of building economic opportunities, expanding access to education, grassroot participation and promoting collective action towards the retention of girls in secondary schools. Each type of structural interventions creates the conditions for change by reducing barriers and enabling people to make positive choices toward education (Austria, et al, 2020). These structural interventions empower marginalised young women and girls to improve their education, mobility, and financial agency: the capacity to make and act on decisions independently. This implies that through such interventions, women and girls may likely develop self- efficacy and self-confidence to challenge gender norms and lead to more gender-equitable knowledge, attitudes and positive perception towards school as discussed below;

2.5.1. Combination social protection options

Combination social protection options namely integrated behavioural, social and economic components could provide both cash and psychosocial care. As a multifaceted intervention, it is potentially more effective than single intervention. For example, in the health sector, the findings of the study conducted by Cluver et al. (2016) on Combination Social Protection for Reducing HIV-Risk Behaviour Among Adolescents in South Africa, shows that specific social protection interventions in three domains, cash, psychosocial support and education (i.e. cash,

care, and classroom), independently reduce specific HIV-risk behaviours among adolescent boys and girls. In particular, child-focused grants, parental monitoring, free schooling, school feeding, and teacher support show significant HIV prevention effects (Cluver et al. (2016).

A combination of social protection effects was also shown, effective on adolescent female pregnancy. According to Cluver, et al. (2016) past-year incidence of pregnancy when receiving none of the combination social protection interventions was 5.5%. With good parental monitoring alone, it was 3.0%; with free schooling, 2.5%; and with school feeding, 1.9%. But with both parental monitoring and free school, incidence of pregnancy was 1.3%; with parental monitoring and school feeding, 1.0%; and with free school and school feeding, 0.9%. Among all girls who received all the 3 interventions, the pregnancy incidence was less than 0.5%.

These findings not only demonstrate that combination social protection is likely to be more effective than stand-alone programmes but also show that specific combinations should be selected for effects on particular HIV risks and gender.

It can be recommended that Combination Social Protection technique can be borrowed in the education sector to address factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools. This can work in the sense that different types of social protection can simultaneously address different factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools. For example, a household cash transfer may reduce the financial need for an adolescent girl to have a sugar daddy, whereas access to education through free school may reduce her exposure to older men in the community, and good parenting may provide guidance and counselling solutions to reduce emotional, stress and anxiety challenges.

2.5.2. Economic and education interventions

When women acquire skills and opportunities to earn a living and retain control of their earnings, their decision-making abilities and sense of urgency increase. Most economic

empowerment programmes in conjunction with support from microcredit schemes focus on income generating activities. Livelihood training of girls and women in the basics of saving money, mentoring, social support and managing business may broaden their thinking and independent lifestyle. According to Sampa, et al. (2021) economic, education and collective structural interventions action create pathways for girls and women to enrol or re-enrol in schools and or vocational training programmes and eliminate barriers to formal education and create a supportive environment. Psaki, et al (2022) observed that women who receive loans, specifically from Women's lending groups and who are thereby allowed to have a separate account, they participate more in household decision-making regarding how money is to be spent. Such shift in intra household power relations and decision making may in turn provide women a basis on demand for safer sexual practices from their husbands.

Sampa, et al. (2021) acknowledge that in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal number 4.1, whose target is to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030, effective interventions are needed to ensure that both girls and boys stay in school.

This implies that the successfulness of girls' retention in secondary schools, depended on effectiveness of the strategies Malawi as a nation takes to empower, sensitise and involve girls, communities, families and all stakeholders towards the education for the girl child. There is need to transform and create a conducive environment that promote sustainable retention of these girls in secondary schools. These structural intervention strategies must ensure that there is effective link throughout the Early Childhood Development, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education. It is worth noting that girls' education is often interrupted by families' financial constraints, social norms that devalue girls' education, or norms of early marriages. There is also need for some collective interventions to empower disadvantaged girls to gain the leverage, knowledge, attitudes and life skills necessary for being successful in

advocating for their own rights and combat barriers that hinder them to stay in school. In a related development, a scoping review on interventions for keeping adolescent girls in school in eighteen low- and middle income countries by Sampa et al. (2021: 9) revealed that structural interventions such as provision of school fees, uniforms, sanitary products, cash transfer, school based helper, food supplements, youth information centres and exposure to mass media, collectively achieved girls' enrolment rate, school attendance, higher grades, chances of retention in schools, chances of transition from secondary to tertiary education, and reduced early marriages and pregnancy.

The aforementioned intervention strategies resulted into gender equality, high enrolment levels, increased autonomy, reduction in child and maternal mortality, increases social network, high social mobility, high literacy levels and an increase in access to quality medical health services (Sampa et al. 2021). Effective application of such interventions in Malawian education system can really help to sustainably retain girls in secondary schools because different factors can be effectively addressed by specific interventions, other than entitlements and financial support only provided by donors and government.

In summary, it can be concluded that structural intervention strategies have been proven elsewhere to create conditions for change by reducing barriers, and enabling people to make positive choices towards HIV-Risk behaviour in South Africa. Likewise, this can also work in the education sector whereby several interventions in a coordinated effort can positively retain girls in schools because no single strategy can sustainably retain girls in schools.

2.6. Managers role on the retention of girls in secondary schools

Managers or leaders as advocated by Northhouse (2016) must stimulate followers' intellectual (girls in this case) to be innovative and creative, provide supportive environment by listening carefully to their individual needs, motivate and inspire them to become committed to shared visionary goals ought to be achieved. Leaders must be exemplary to show high moral standards

and ethical conduct counted by their followers to do the right thing, i.e. retaining girls to school. This implies that leaders such as administrative managers, parents, chiefs and teachers among others are expected to turn girls into good and productive citizens. To achieve this, managers must balance administrative role and the needs of students, especially girls. For example, students expect their managers, parents, chiefs, community members and teachers to be sympathetic and kind, friendly and helpful, and protect them in time of need.

Students normally, prefer a certain kind of freedom where they can work on their own without the teacher's interference. This does not mean that they do not need teachers, but they wish to learn what interested them in their own way, and teachers should not be task masters, but merely helpers, friends and they should not be forced to learn but they should learn the way it pleased them to be like. Education managers and all stakeholders should therefore, put into considerations such preferences by girls and possibly counsel and guide them properly to achieve their intended goals and retain them in schools.

2.7. Chapter summary

Basing on related literature review from different scholars, it is worth noting that social-cultural factors, socio economic factors, lack of political will, evil acts, school and facility related factors and individual related factors hinder retention rate of girls in secondary schools. The Malawi government along with donors take important roles to educate the girl child through provision of bursaries and entitlements. However, bursaries and entitlements alone do not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school. They are insufficient, unsustainable, for short period of time and mostly focus on specific challenges to address. Hence, the need to explore structural intervention strategies that could sustainably retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi because dropouts occur even when financial support and entitlements are provided.

The next chapter focuses on research design and methodology employed in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

The previous chapter presented literature review related to the study. It exposed what had already been found out by previous researchers on the topic under study. This chapter now focused on the research design and methodology employed in the study. Such research design and methodology aspects captured in this chapter include; research approach, research design, research paradigm, research site, study population, sample size and sampling technique, methods for data collection and instrumentation, document analysis, pilot testing, methods of data analysis, validity and reliability quantitative data and trustworthiness of qualitative data. Concluding this chapter are ethical considerations and summary of the chapter.

3.1. Research approach

The research used mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative methods) of data collection to solicit much data from the respondents. According to Leavy (2017) mixed-methods research approach involves collecting and integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single project to enhance comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This is a problem centred approach to research in which methods and theories are used instrumentally, based on applicability to the present study. Leavy further states that methodologically mixed-methods approaches rely on combining deductive and inductive designs to generate both, qualitative and quantitative data, and integrating the datasets in some way (Leavy, 2017). Mixed methods approach was suitable for this study in the sense that the approach enabled the participants to describe, explain and evaluate factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools, the current interventions being done in attempt to retain girls in schools, as well as exploring structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. In terms of topology, as Creswell (2015, P.8) puts, embedding the data is one of the integrations in mixed approach

where one set of data is used for argument or support the other set of data. In this case, quantitative data has complemented the qualitative data by expressing the relationships or associations between dropouts of girls in secondary schools and socioeconomic status of parents or guardians, economic empowerment with retention rate, and structural intervention strategies with sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools. In line with Leavy (2017), questionnaires as instruments for data collection within the quantitative perspective enabled the researcher to collect comprehensive data within a short period of time from so many respondents.

A mixed-methods approach integrates philosophical frameworks of both post-positivism and interpretivism through interweaving qualitative and quantitative data in such a way that research issues are meaningfully explained. It also offers a logical ground, methodological flexibility and an in-depth understanding of smaller cases (Maxwell, 2016; Fetters, 2016). In this research, the use of mixed-methods enabled the researcher to answer research objectives with sufficient depth and breadth, and helped generalise findings and implications of the researched issues to the whole population. For example, the quantitative approach helped the researcher to collect data from a large number of participants through questionnaires; thus, increasing the possibility to generalise the findings to a wider population. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, provided a deeper understanding of the topic being investigated and honouring the voices of the participants (Enosh, Tzafirir, & Stolovy, 2014).

In terms of timing of data collection, the mixed methods approach used simultaneous designs in which qualitative (which had driven the study) and quantitative methods were simultaneously used with inductive theoretical thrust. i.e., the measured portion of the phenomenon enhanced the qualitative description or interpretation. In terms of topology, mixed methods design type, the study employed, convergence type where the findings (data + interpretation) generated through quantitative methods with findings generated through

qualitative designs (triangulations) have been corroborated. At first, the two data sets were collected concurrently, and secondly, they were analysed independently using quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches and emerged thereafter (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Shorten & Smith, 2017; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The integration of both data gave a clear picture of the structural intervention strategies that could improve retention of girls in secondary schools. This was the case because quantitative approach on its own did not portray the inner perceptions, emotions, and attitudes of participants. As such, combining it with focused group discussion, interviews and document analysis, within the qualitative perspective, enabled those elements that were left out in quantitative data like emotions, perceptions, and attitudes to be addressed through probing from the participants. Hence, comprehensive data was collected, presented, analysed and discussed.

3.2. Research design

The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. The design enhanced comprehensive data collection on the participants' attitudes, opinions, perceptions and feelings through probing from them on the topic under investigation. According to Creswell (2015) the design indirectly measures the nature and the rate of changes in the physical and intellectual development of samples of children drawn from representation age levels. In this study, cross-sectional survey research design enhanced the collection of comprehensive data on factors that hinder girls' retention in schools, current interventions being done to improve girls', the gap that exist and structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in schools. The design enabled the researcher to assess and give a true picture of real-life situation on the topic under investigation. The research design acted as a blueprint detailing the final outcomes and conclusions of the research which corresponded with the research problem.

3.3. Research paradigm

The study used a combination of interpretivism and post positivism paradigms to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. Interpretivism paradigm enabled researcher's in depth concepts understanding through probing from participants while Post Positivism paradigm complemented Interpretivism variables associations.

Interpretivist or constructivist paradigm posits that meaning does not exist in its own right; rather it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation (O' Leary, 2004; Lindsay, 2010 & Ndengu, 2012:14). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) point out that the central endeavour in the context of this paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. The problem was investigated and appreciated from within participants view. As argued by Lindsay (2010), research can be objectively observed from inside through the direct experience of the people involved. The role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm was to understand, explain and clarify social reality through the eyes of different participants. Since the researcher used tools such as interviews, focus group discussion, documentary analysis to understand the situation and explain the indicative findings. The researcher used interpretivism as a research paradigm on qualitative data. In this case, the researcher probed from participants to have a fuller understanding of how people perceive structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. As Ndengu (2012: P .14) underscores, interpretivism captures the lives of participants in order to understand and interpret the meaning they attach to social issues. This paradigm was complemented by post positivism paradigm.

Post-positivism, on the other hand, is a milder form of positivism that follows the objective route in research and advocates that knowledge is gained through a gathering of objectively verifiable facts using quantitative means. In this study, post positivism simply complemented

interpretivism through explanations about associations between dropout rate or retention rate and socio-economic status of their parents, financial and entitlements support girls receive from donors versus retention rate of girls in secondary schools and structural intervention strategies versus probability of sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools. These associations have been presented and described in frequencies, tables, percentages, pie chart and graphs.

The paradigm allows more interaction between the researcher and his or her research participants. Taylor & Medina (2011, p. 3) and Leavy (2017) define post positivist as the thinking after positivism, challenging the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge, and recognising that we cannot be positive about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans. Positivism reflects the determinist philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or sources. The problem studied by post positivists reflect a need to examine causes that influence outcomes such as issues examined in experiments. While positivism focuses on the objectivity of the research process, post positivism has room for subjectivity as well. It uses both quantitative (such as a survey) and qualitative methods (such as interviews and participant-observation).

Research studies are conventionally guided by a research paradigm(s) that refers to the researchers' underlying philosophical views concerning the truth and reality in general, and the research issue in particular. A research paradigm according to Maxwell (2005) and Creswell (2015) is a philosophical position about the world or the nature of reality and how we approach it to understand it. It includes researchers' assumptions about ontology and epistemology that guide the research process. Ontology is concerned with the nature of truth, i.e., what is the nature of reality? Whereas epistemology refers to the nature and forms of human knowledge, i.e., how do we know what reality is (Cohen et al., 2007). Lindsay (2010) defines research paradigm as an encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that define the nature of enquiry. It clarifies how one views the constructs of social reality and knowledge, affects

and gives the direction on how the researcher should go about uncovering knowledge of relationships between phenomena and social behaviour. Mertens (2005) viewed philosophical paradigm in four aspects such as positivism or post positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, critical theory and pragmatism that guide the research by determining what knowledge claims are being made by the researcher.

3.4. Study site

The study was conducted in Dedza District in Central West Education Division, covering ten (10) public secondary schools labelled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. The study area was chosen basing on Ministry of Education (2021) and (2022) Education Statistics Reports which showed that in 2019/20 school year, Dedza District registered 7,630 secondary school girls dropouts while in 2020/21 school year, the district registered 9,788 girls dropouts, out of 123,482 girls the district registered (MoE, 2021 & MoE, 2022). In terms of girls' dropout rate, from 2020 to 2021, the district registered an increase of about 2158 dropout cases despite a wide range of interventions by the government, donors, well-wishers and organisations to retain them in schools.

Likewise, the Civil Society Education Coalition's (2014) report on assessment of progress made in increasing girl's education, with focus on readmission policy and other related policies showed that during 2012/2013 school year, the district registered 11,227 dropouts with 5,760 girls representing 51.3% of the total dropouts due to family responsibilities, pregnancies, marriages, long distances girls travel to school, poor learning facilities and gender based violence (Civil Society Education Coalition, 2014). The report to a greater extent, advocated the need for further research study to explore appropriate strategies to deal with the challenges the district was facing to achieve sustainable retention of girls in both primary and secondary schools in the district. The report further showed that, financial and material interventions only did not address all factors that hindered retention rate of girls in schools because there were

many key issues affecting girls' education access and retention in primary and secondary schools in the district. As such, financial and entitlements interventions did not meet all the needs for the girl child to remain in school.

Although, organisations such as Concern Universal, Department of Social Welfare, WFP, TFAC, CAMFED, ACTIONAID, YECE, UNICEF, WOLREC, RAC, Link for Community Development (LCD) and Miriam Foundation showed interest to empower the education of the girl child and retain them in schools, it was proved ineffective because the interventions being done seemed to be unsustainable, insufficient and focused mostly on related specific sectors such as school fees and entitlements (material) support, leaving out other crucial factors unaddressed (CSEC, 2014). Hence, the need for this study to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in the district.

3.5. Study population

The term population refers to the large group of people, institution or things or elements that fit a certain specification (Wilson, 2011). Population comprises the group of interests to the researcher from which possible information about the study can be obtained.

Population as described by Creswell (2015), refers to all members of the defined class of people, events or objects which a researcher wishes to generalise. Examples of some common characteristics of population are age, sex, educational background, professional training e t c. The targeted study population of this study comprised school managers, (i.e., head teachers or deputy head teachers), the Director for Education, Youth and Sports, the Education Division Manager), parents, secondary school girls, teacher mentors, local leaders, (i.e. TA's and chiefs), Civil Society Organisation leaders or representatives concerned with the educational welfare of female students, UNICEF education specialist and CAMFED district coordinator. The population included such group of respondents because these were the right people who provided reasonable, rich and relevant information concerning the topic under investigation.

3.6. Sample size and sampling techniques

Population sample size as defined by Leavy (2017) is a smaller group of subjects drawn from the population in which the researcher is interested for purposes of drawn conclusions about the universe or population. The results from the sample can be used to make generalisation about the entire population as long as it is truly representative of the population.

Sampling technique on the other hand, is the process of selecting individuals who participate or be observed or questioned as part of study (Taherdoost, 2016). The strategies chosen for selecting samples varied basing on the logistics, ethics, and paradigms of the study. The study used a sample size of one hundred and nine (109) respondents derived from scientific approved published tables where confidence level = 95%, precision = ± 5 and Taro Yamen's (1966:886)

sample size calculation formula; $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision (Israel, 1992). Ten (10) public secondary schools from Dedza District in Central West Education Division were chosen basing on the fact that CAMFED, UNICEF, wide range of donors and organisations were operating in public boarding, day and Community Day Secondary Schools in the district to empower the education of the marginalised girls.

3.6.1. Sample size determination formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad \text{where,}$$

n = the sample size

N = the population size, which is **150**

e = the level of precision

Note: 95% confidence level and P = 0.05 are assumed and N = 150

$$\begin{aligned}
n &= \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \\
&= \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.05)^2} \\
&= \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.0025)} \\
&= \frac{150}{1 + 150 \times 0.0025} \\
&= \frac{150}{1 + 0.375} \\
&= \frac{150}{1.375} \\
n &= 109.09' \\
n &= 109
\end{aligned}$$

Systematic sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select one hundred and nine (109) participants and ten (10) public secondary schools. Systematic sampling technique, a probability sampling, was used to select fifty (50) students from ten (10) public secondary schools, i.e. five (5) girls) from each school, where every *nth* case after a random start was selected. At each school, girls were allocated numbers. The first individual was picked using a random number table and then subsequent girls were selected using a fixed sampling interval, i.e. every *nth* person. This technique gave an equal probability for each girl to participate in the study. This enabled the researcher to come up with the specific five (5) female students from each school to take part in the study, out of all female students available in specific schools during the time of study. The same technique and procedure was used to select parents to

participate in the study. Schools were asked to invite three parents irrespective of gender where only one parent was selected to participate in the study.

Participants were categorised into fifty (50) students from ten public secondary schools, ten (10) teacher mentors from ten schools, ten (10) parents from ten schools, ten (10) mother groups from ten schools, ten (10) Head teachers or Deputy Head teachers from ten schools. Besides these, ten (10) chiefs, comprising Traditional Authorities, Senior Chiefs, Group Village Heads and Village Heads participated in the research study, one (1) Director for Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS) from Dedza District, one (1) Education Division Manager (EDM) for Central West Education Division (CWED), five (5) Civil Society Organisation Leaders responsible for the education of the girl child in Dedza District, one (1) CAMFED district coordinator from Dedza District and one (1) UNICEF education specialist from Lilongwe.

In line with Gill, et al. (2010), simple random sampling technique, a probability sampling technique was used to select ten (10) public secondary schools out of 34 public secondary schools in Mtakatika, Umbwi, Linthipe and Chawa clusters. All thirty-four (34) schools were given code numbers. Thereafter, the numbers were mixed and shaken in closed box. Then, ten papers representing ten specific schools were randomly picked from the box to participate in the study. The selected schools were; Magomero CDSS, Matundu CDSS, Katewe CDSS and Chimphalika CDSS from Chawa cluster, Chitowo and Mphunzi CDSS from Linthipe cluster, Umbwi Secondary School and Bembeke CDSS from Umbwi cluster.

The study also used purposive sampling technique (non-probability sampling technique) to select ten (10) mother groups from ten schools, ten (10) head teachers or deputy head teachers from ten (10) schools, ten (10) chiefs comprising Traditional Authorities, Senior Chiefs, Group Village Heads, one (1) Director for Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS), one (1) Education

Division Manager (EDM) for CWED, five (5) Civil Society Organisation leaders empowering the education of the girl child in Dedza District, one (1) CAMFED district coordinator from Dedza District and one (1) UNICEF education specialist from Lilongwe.

The strategies chosen for selecting samples vary basing on the logistics, ethics, and paradigm of the researcher (Taherdoost, 2016). In this study, sampling techniques or strategies were categorised into probability and non-probability sampling. In the former, the researcher knows the exact possibility of selecting each member of the population while, the later the chances of being included in the sample was not known.

As Maxwell (2005) puts, purposive or judgmental sampling provides important information that cannot be obtained from other choices. In this case, the chosen participants were assumed to have the right and comprehensive data or information on factors that enhance girls' dropouts in secondary schools, current interventions have been done in an attempt to retain girls in secondary schools and the structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. In many cases as Cohen et al. (2007) outlined, purposive sampling is used to access knowledgeable people, i.e. those have in depth knowledge maybe by virtue of their professional role, access to networks, experience or expertise on the topic under investigation.

3.7. Methods for data collection and instrumentation

This section explains in detail how the research data was collected and the instruments used to collect data. Data collection is the process of gathering, measuring, and analysing accurate data from a variety of relevant sources to find answers to research problems, evaluate outcomes, and forecast trends and probabilities. Instruments in a research study, are measuring devices, tools or apparatus such as questionnaires, interviews or observations, group discussions that are used to collect and analyse data on a topic under investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this study, questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while semi structured

interviews, focused group discussion and document analysis were used to collect qualitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative data acknowledged a comprehensive understanding of real-life situation about people's experiences, opinions, attitudes and perceptions about structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools.

3.7.1. Methods and instruments for quantitative data collection

As the study was descriptive cross sectional survey in nature, not necessarily focusing on casual effect relationship, but showing associations or relationships between and or among variables. Prior arrangements and organisation of data collection process were made with the respondents before administration of the questionnaires, conduction of interviews and focused group discussions to hasten the data collection process. In the course of complementing qualitative data, questionnaires were self-administered to the DEYS, the EDM, Civil Society Organisation leaders, teacher mentors, students, CAMFED Coordinator and UNICEF Education specialist, followed by semi structured interviews and focused group discussions, within the same day at each school, office or residence. Prior to questionnaire administration, sampled respondents were briefed the objectives of the study and then asked to answer a 40 to 60 minutes' questionnaire. The questionnaire items were designed in such a way that they contained both open ended and closed questions to solicit comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data on roles played by the stakeholders to retain girls in secondary schools, factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools, current interventions being done to improve retention of girls in secondary schools and structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi as a whole. The collected data was processed first before engaging the next school or office. The entire process of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, took about two months.

3.7.2. Methods and instruments for qualitative data collection

Qualitative data was collected immediately after questionnaires in each case by using a voice recorder, interview guide, and notepad during face to face interview sessions with parents, mother groups, chiefs and head teachers on factors hindering the retention of girls in secondary schools and structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district. Semi-structured interviews as described by Creswell (2012), the researcher asked questions to participants and recorded answers from only one participant in the study at a time. This approach was ideal for the study because during interviews, participants were free and open to speak, discuss at length their perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and ideas on the topic under investigation.

During semi structured interviews, face to face 30-35 minutes' interviews with parents, TA, teacher mentors and mother groups were done. The researcher probed more information from the respondents on factors that hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools and also structural intervention strategies that could promote sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district. This acted as an interview whereby respondents freely expressed their opinions, perceptions, feelings and attitudes. The researcher was recording the conversation using a voice recorder and taking down short notes at the same time. As supported by Gill, et al. (2010), through semi structured interviews, the researcher became aware of the perception, feelings, and attitudes of participants and interpreted their meanings and intentions in relation to the topic under investigation. This enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive data on structural strategies that could sustainably retain girls in schools.

As for focused group discussions, a 40-45 minutes' session with the head teachers, students, parents and chiefs was conducted to solicit in- depth views, opinions, attitudes and perceptions from them on structural intervention strategies to retain girls in secondary schools. To ensure

this, as suggested by Johnson and Christensen (2008) guided questions for discussion were formulated, prepared and asked in a safe and conducive environment for confidentiality purposes and for open dialogue to seek information, opinions and clarity from the participants. Thereafter, the collected data was thematically analysed through transcribing, coding, generating themes and interpreting the collected data.

3.8. Document analysis

Document analysis was employed to collect data from schools' head teachers or Deputy head teachers termly and yearly dropout cases the schools registered, total number of organisations or donors empowering the education of the girl child and the type of donation or support the school received to support the study. The gathered data enabled the researcher to access the right information that could otherwise be unavailable for the right direction of the study and effective arguments on the status quo of girls' retention rate in secondary schools in the district.

3.9. Pilot testing

To ensure validity and reliability of the instruments for data collection in the main research, a pilot study was conducted. As outlined by Kumar (2011) and Creswell and Clark (2011), a pilot study is a small study conducted in advance of a planned project to test aspects of the research design. i.e. validity and reliability of instruments like questionnaires, semi structured and focused group discussions interview guides for the study.

The study was pilot tested on a total of thirty-two (N=32) respondents from Central East Education Division and Northern Education Division, Lilongwe and Blantyre. The categories of the respondents were as follow; twenty (N=20) students from ten public secondary schools, ten (N=10) teacher mentors from 10 schools, two (N= 2) CAMFED coordinators from central region (Lilongwe) and southern region (Blantyre) and ten (N=10) schools from Northern Education Division (NED) and Central East Education Division (CEED). The pilot study was conducted during Master Card Foundation Annual Scholars' (Leadership and Enrichment

Camp-Unleashing young women potential for sustainable development) camp hosted at Mzuzu University in 2021, organised by CAMFED Malawi. The thirty- two (N=32) participants were purposively chosen and willingness to participate in the study, while the ten (N= 10) schools were chosen out of convenience. The participated schools came from Mzimba North, Rumphu, Nkhata Bay, Chitipa, Karonga and Kasungu districts. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion guide items were set to answer the research objectives for collecting the main data.

Pilot study enabled the researcher to determine whether the data collection tools such as questionnaires and interview guide items test the objectivity and feasibility as well as clarity and applicability of the data to be collected in the main study. Pilot study therefore, gave the researcher room for improvement in the items of the questionnaires and or interview guides to yield usable data and establish validity and reliability of the instruments (Lodico et al. 2006 & Cohen et al. 2007). The pilot study therefore, enabled the researcher to identify and improve questionnaire items and data collection tools for the respondents to provide the right answers on the topic under investigation. It also enabled the researcher to improve in questioning and probing skills during the interviews and focus group discussions to solicit comprehensive data.

3.10. Methods of data analysis

According to Polit and Beck (2018), data analysis is the process whose main purpose, regardless of type of data is to organise, provide structure to, and elicit meaning from the data so that general conclusions are made and communicated in the research report.

Qualitative data collected by the voice recorder and note taking during the interviews with the participants was thematically analysed whereby data was manually analysed and categorised according to the developed themes. In this essence, the researcher familiarised with the data, verbatim transcribed it, generated codes, put words and sentences with similar meanings

together, followed by thematic development and interpretation of the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In line with Leedy and Ormrod (2001), this approach enabled the researcher to organise the qualitative data, scrutinise the entire data several times to get sense of contents, identify general categories or themes and integrate or summarises the data. As such, it was assumed that this was the right way of analysing qualitative data because it allowed sequential order of the presentation of the findings and easy analysis of collected data.

Quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Word Excel whereby all filled questionnaires were coded and entered into Microsoft Word Excel. The descriptive statistics; mainly percentages, tables, frequencies, graphs and pie chart were used in presentation of the findings.

Thereafter, the mixed data (quantitative and qualitative) were merged to assess whether the two results were congruent or divergent, and if they were divergent then data was analysed further to reconcile the divergent findings (Moore et al, 2013).

3.11. Validity and reliability of quantitative data

To ensure validity and reliability, a prior study pilot was conducted on ten schools during Master Card Foundation Annual Scholars' (Leadership and Enrichment Camp-Unleashing young women's potential for sustainable development) at Mzuzu University organised by CAMFED project. These schools were not included in the main study. They were used to check how well the selected instruments like questionnaires, semi structured interview guide, document analysis and focused group discussion guide items were set to answer the research objectives before collecting the main data. This helped the researcher to improve data collecting instruments where necessary to ensure clarity of the items and instructions.

Reliability was also enhanced by carrying out test-retest reliability, alternate form's reliability and internal consistency reliability from data collected in administered questionnaires. Validity was based much on evidence based on test content and response processes.

According to Ndengu (2012) and Creswell (2012) validity and reliability overlap and mutually exclusive at times, and bound together in complex ways. To ensure reliability, the scores from an instrument should be stable and consistent. The more reliable the scores from an instrument, the more valid the scores may be.

3.12. Trustworthiness of qualitative data

To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation, participants voice recording, member checking and participants' direct quotations were done to quantify similar responses together in line with the specific objectives of the study.

Data triangulation as described by Creswell (2012) is the process of cross-checking information and conclusion through the use of multiple procedures or resources and corroborate them once they are in agreement from different individuals. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher triangulated different data sources obtained from semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions, methods and theories to validate the accuracy or credibility of the findings of the study. The researcher examined each information source and found evidence to support a theme. This ensured the accuracy and credibility of the study because the information was drawn from multiple sources of information, individuals, and or processes.

Apart from triangulation, member checking exercise was also conducted to determine the accuracy of qualitative findings with participants in the study. In this case, verification and insight on the feedback and discussion of the researchers' interpretations and conclusions was done with the actual participants involved in the study. Thereafter, participants justified that the description of the data was complete, realistic, accurate, fair and representative.

Participants' voice recording and direct quotations in which rich and thick descriptions in conveying findings were used to justify the authenticity or credibility of the findings from the perspective of the reader.

3.13. Ethical consideration

To address social desirability biasness, participants were assured of upholding confidentiality, privacy and professionalism by ensuring that the topic and the rationale for the study were well clarified to them, participants were given freedom to willingly join the study or pull out at any stage or course of the study. It was also clearly elaborated that the study was solely for academic purpose, other than trivial matters.

In line with Polit and Beck (2018), participants were further assured of not being harmed in any way, be it psychological, physical and socio-economic; before, during and after their participation. As such, participants were advised not to indicate their names and particulars in order to maintain participants' privacy throughout the study and the collected data was treated professionally and with confidentiality.

Ethics in research are set of standards designed to guide the proper conduct of the research activities. As such ethical considerations promote research values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, human rights, compliance with the law, safety, and respect, avoidance of error like prohibitions against fabricating and falsifying. Gill et al. (2010) states that most academic specialities and professions have codes of ethics that set forth the principles of right or wrong of their respective groups. They further spell out that some of these codes are thoughtful and help sensitise members to dilemmas and moral issues they may face. Other codes are normally conceived and do more to protect the professional group from attack than to set forth a moral position.

Before going to the field for data collection, all ethical considerations were adhered to by: submitting the research proposal to MZUNIREC for ethical clearance approval to proceed with the study, obtaining consent letter of permission to conduct research from Mzuzu University. Apart from the university, consent permission was also obtained from Central West Education Division, head teachers, teacher mentors, EDM, DEYS, chiefs, UNICEF Education Specialist, CAMFED Coordinator, Civil Society Organisation Leaders, parents, mother groups and students who took part in the study and where the study was conducted.

Participants were assured of upholding confidentiality, privacy, professionalism and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. To ensure this, participants were informed about the nature of the topic under study, the rationale for the study, potential risks and benefits for them to make a rational decision either to participate, decline or withdraw in the course of study on voluntary basis. To justify their participation, they were given consent forms to append their signatures as evidence of their informed decision. The concept of informed consent, as stressed by O'Leary (2004) and Cohen et al. (2005), entails that the participant must fully understand the nature of the research and any potential risks must be explained so that the participants make an independent and informed decision to participate or not by signing the consent form. This freedom to make independent and informed decision means that the participant is neither induced nor coerced to participate in the research.

In this case, the researcher ensured that participants were assured of their personal respect in terms of wellbeing, privacy and or confidentiality by not writing their names, particulars and contact details on the questionnaires. The researcher had also the preliminary visit to the targeted schools, offices and concerned participants to seek permission to carry out the study with introductory letters from Mzuzu University, Director for Education, Youth and Sports and Central West Education Division as evidence that the data to be collected was solely for

academic purposes. Lastly, the information provided by the informants were treated with confidentiality and professionalism.

3.14. Chapter summary

The chapter has presented research design and methodology which comprised research design, research paradigm, research approach, the study site, the study population, sample size and sampling techniques, methods of data collection and instrumentation, document analysis, pilot testing, methods of data analysis, validity and reliability of quantitative data, trustworthiness of qualitative data and ethical consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District.

Data presentation starts with respondents' biographical data, followed by quantitative data, then qualitative data guided by the study specific objectives supported by the Transformational Leadership Theory and Tintos' Student Integration Model under interpretivism and post positivism philosophical paradigms. Each and every study objective discusses and interprets its own findings.

4.1. Data presentation

Data presentation section shows participants' biographical data which constitutes respondents' category, age, gender, class levels and school type for students (girls) among others. Quantitative and qualitative findings with their discussions and interpretation have certainly also been advocated.

4.1.1. Respondents' biographic data

This section portrays the total number of respondents who were involved in the study. This include those who completed questionnaires, those who participated in focused group discussions, and those who participated in semi structured interviews as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Respondents' category (N=109)

Category	Frequency	Percentages
Students	50	46
Head teachers plus Deputy Head teachers	10	9
Mentor Teachers	10	9
Chiefs (TA, SC, SGVH, GVH and VH)	10	9
Parents	10	9
Mother groups	10	9
DEYS	1	1
EDM	1	1
UNICEF Education Specialist	1	1
CAMFED Coordinator	1	1
Civil Society Organisation Leaders	5	5
Total	109	100

NB: TA means Traditional Authority, SC means Senior Chief, SGVH means Senior Group Village Head, GVH means Group Village Head and VG means Village Head.

Table 4.1 shows a total of one hundred and nine (N=109) respondents, representing 100% who participated in the study by answering questionnaires, semi structured interviews, and focused group discussion. Fifty (N=50) respondents, representing 46% comprised students (who were in the majority), participated in the study by answering questionnaires and through focus group discussion. This was followed by ten (N=10) head teachers or deputy head teachers, ten (N=10) teacher mentors, ten (N=10) parents, ten (N=10) mother groups and ten (N=10) chiefs each represented by 9 % of the total respondents who participated in the study through interviews, semi structured interviews and focused group discussion. Then, five (N=5) Civil Society Organisation Leaders, representing 5% of the total respondents who participated by answering

questionnaires and semi structured interviews. Lastly, one (N=1) DEYS, one (N=1) EDM, one (N=1) CAMFED coordinator and one (N=1) UNICEF Education specialist, each representing 1% in each case, who participated by answering the questionnaires. From table 4.1, categories of the respondents, it is worth noting that the study involved eligible participants who provided comprehensive data for the study.

4.1.2. Respondents' age range

The section presents the age range of the participants involved in the study. The age range of the respondents varied from 13 years to above 22 years as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Respondents' age range (N=109)

Years	Frequency	Percentage
13-15	11	10
16-18	29	27
19-21	10	9
22 Years and above	59	54
Total	109	100

The results in Table 4.2 shows that the age range of the participants in the study varied from 13 years to 22 and above. Out of one hundred and nine (N=109) participants, fifty-nine (N=59) respondents, representing 54% comprised the chiefs, head teachers, parents, mother groups, DEYS, EDM, Civil Society Organisation Leaders, CAMFED coordinator and UNICEF Education specialist. This age range had the highest representation. Those who were in the age range of 16 -18 years were twenty- nine (N=29) in number, representing 27% of the total participants. This age range came second and most of the respondents were girls in forms two, three and few in form four. Those within the age range of 13-15 years comprised form one girls. They were eleven (N=11) in number, representing 10% of the total participants while in

the last age range of 19-21 years, there were ten (N=10) respondents, representing (9 %) of the total respondents. They were all girls in forms three and four. There was none below the age of 13. This shows that the question of gender was considered in the study to ensure that both sexes were represented. Both sexes were involved because empowering the education of the girl child involves both sexes. Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1 show the study respondent's gender.

Table 4.3: Respondents' gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	24	22
Females	85	78
Total	109	100

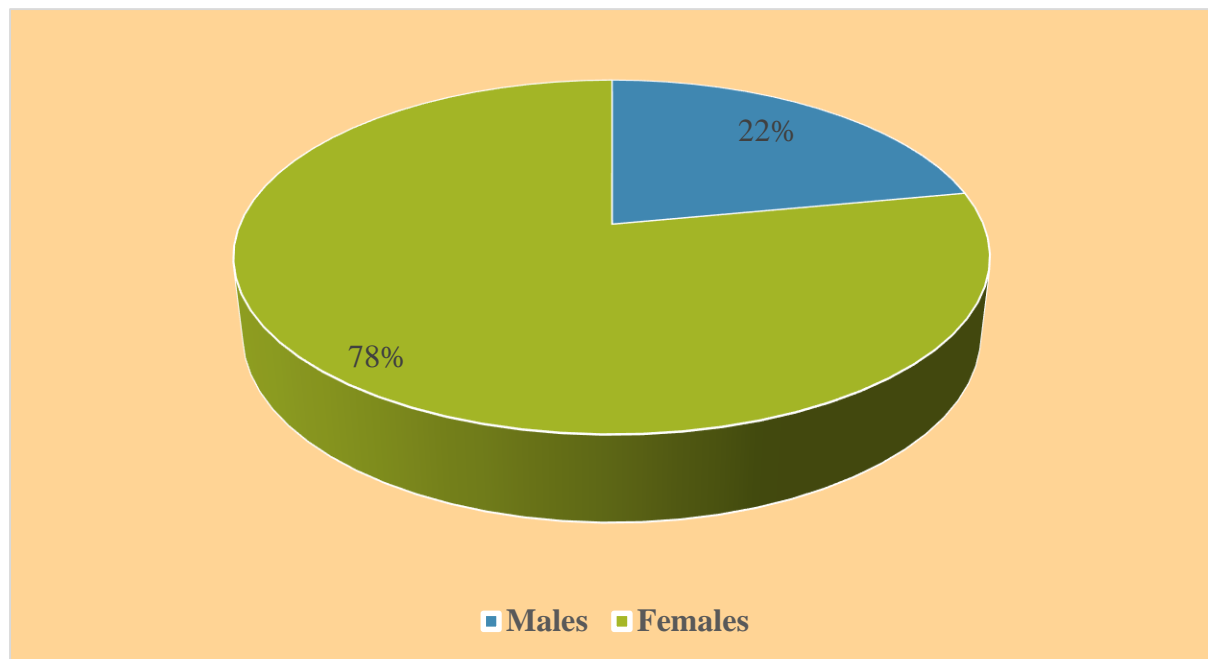


Figure 4.1 Respondent's gender

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1 indicate that the study included both sexes to justify that educational welfare of the girl child involves both sexes. From Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1, eighty-five (N=85) participants out of one hundred and nine (N=109), representing 78% were female respondents while twenty-four (N=24) of them, representing 22% were male respondents. It can therefore,

be deduced that female participants outnumbered their male counterparts because of being key respondents in the study as demanded by the nature of the topic under study for comprehensive data. In summary, the study was gender sensitive although there was no equal representation of both sexes since the female participants outnumbered their male counterparts.

4.1.3 Respondents' class levels

The study also shows the class levels of the respondents, especially girls who were involved in the study. A systematic sampling was used to come up with the specific number of girls to participate in the study out of all girls present at each school during the time of study. Systematic sampling, a probability sampling was used to select 50 students from ten schools where every *nth* case after a random start was selected. This sampling technique as advocated by Fox et al. (2009) and Taherdoost (2016) is more commonly employed method such that after numbers are allocated to everybody in the population frame, the first individual is picked using a random number table and then subsequent subjects are selected using a fixed sampling interval, i.e. every *nth* person. The sampling approach enabled the researcher to come up with specific number of female students to take part in the study out of all female students present at a specific school during the study. Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2 show respondents' class levels.

Table 4.4: Respondents' class levels (N=50)

CLASS LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Form one	9	18
Form two	9	18
Form three	12	24
Form four	20	40
Total	50	100

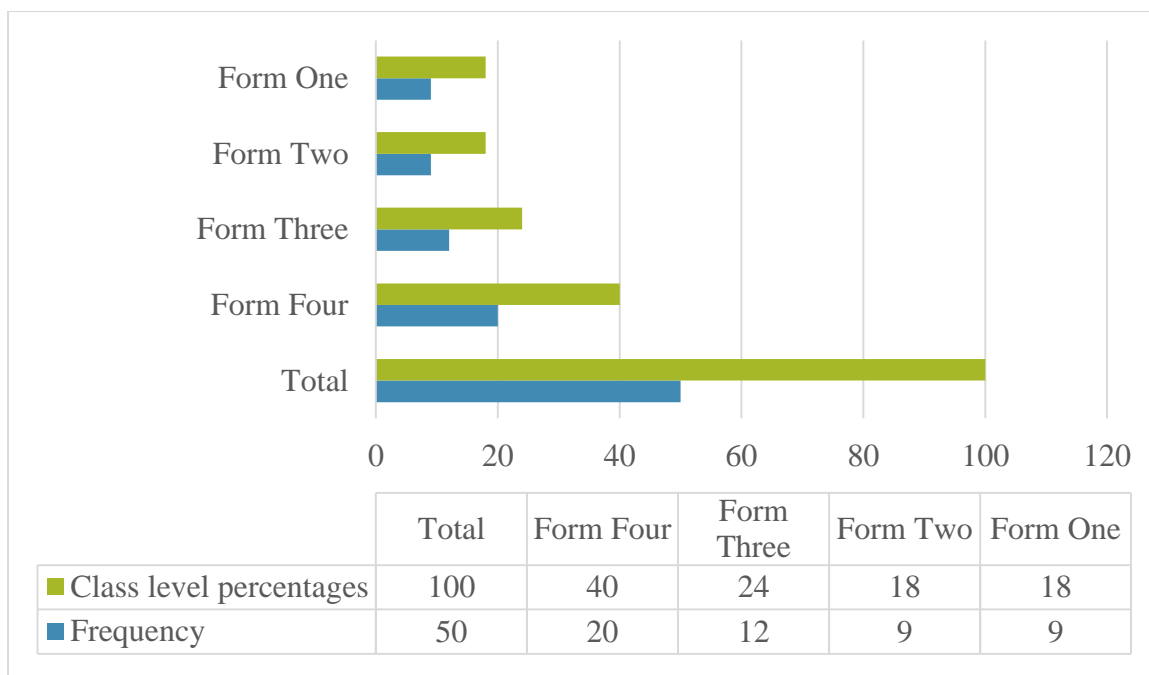


Figure 4.2: Respondents' class levels

The results in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2 show that out of fifty (N=50) girls who participated in the study through answering questionnaires and focused group discussion, twenty (N=20) of them, representing 40% were in form four, twelve (N=12) girls, representing 24% were in form three and nine (N=9) girls, representing 18% were in forms one and two, respectively.

Reflecting in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2, it depicts that there was equal representation of girls from all forms with different years of school experience, learning environment, economic statuses and different cultural norms irrespective of how many per class at each school.

4.1.4. Respondents' school type

In this part, the researcher wanted to find out the school type where these respondents, especially girls belong. The school type and school facility in one way or another affect the retention of girls in secondary schools. A simple random sampling, (a probability) technique was used to select these ten public secondary schools. It is worth noting that the representation of the schools was good in the sense that they were of different categories with different factors

that helped to determine the retention rate of girls. Learning environment, whether conducive or unfavourable affect learning of students either positively or negatively. With this due respect, the underlying assumption was that schools endowed with suitable learning facilities would retain more students in secondary schools in contrast to those hard to reach and with inadequate facilities. Table 4.5 shows respondents' school type.

Table 4.5.: Respondents' school type (N=50)

School Type	Frequency	Percentage
Girls boarding secondary school	00	00
Day secondary school	00	00
Co-education boarding secondary school	05	10
Community Day Secondary School without boarding facilities	30	60
Community Day Secondary School with boarding facilities	15	30
Total	50	100

From Table 4.5, it was noted that all fifty (N=50) girls who participated in the study, none of them belonged to either girl's boarding secondary school or day secondary school. Thirty (N=30) of them, (in majority), representing 60%, were learning in community day secondary schools without girls boarding facilities or services. As such, they were doing self-boarding services at nearby trading centres or school campus at their own risk. These CDSSs without boarding services include; Magomero, Matundu, Katewe, Chitowo, Mchisu and Bembeke. Only fifteen (N=15) students from Chimphalika, Chawa and Mphunzi Community Day Secondary Schools, representing 30% of the total girls involved in the study, were privileged to learn at Schools with boarding facilities. It is worth noting that out of these five secondary schools, Chimphalika and Chawa accommodated both boys and girls, while Mphunzi CDSS accommodates girls only. It was only five (N=5) girls from Umbwi Secondary School,

representing 10% of the total girls in the study were learning at co-education boarding secondary school with full boarding facilities, qualified teachers and enough teaching and learning resources.

For the confidentiality sake, the schools, chiefs, Traditional Authorities and students were given codes to be used throughout the study as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6.: Codes assigned to schools and respondents

(A). SCHOOL NAME	CODE GIVEN	STUDENT NUMBER	CODE GIVEN
1. Magomero Community Day Secondary school	A	1.	A
		2.	B
		3.	C
		4.	D
		5.	E
2. Matundu Community Day Secondary School	B	1.	A ₂
		2.	B ₂
		3.	C ₂
		4.	D ₂
		5.	E ₂
3. Katewe Community Day Secondary School	C	1.	F
		2.	G
		3.	H
		4.	I

		5.	J
4. Chawa Community Day Secondary School	D	1.	K
		2.	L
		3.	M
		4.	N
		5.	O
5. Chitowo Community Day Secondary School	E	1.	P
		2.	Q
		3.	R
		4.	S
		5.	T
6. Umbwi Secondary School	F	1.	U
		2.	V
		3.	W
		4.	X
		5.	Y
7. Bembeke Community Day Secondary School	G	1.	F ₂
		2.	G ₂
		3.	H ₂
		4.	I ₂

		5.	J ₂
8. Mchisu Community Day Secondary School	H	1.	K ₂
		2	L ₂
		3	M ₂
		4	N ₂
		5	O ₂
9. Chimphalika Community Day Secondary School	I	1	P ₂
		2	Q ₂
		3	R ₂
		4	S ₂
		5	T ₂
10. Mphunzi Community Day Secondary School	J	1	U ₂
		2	V ₂
		3	W ₂
		4	X ₂
		5	Y ₂
(B). CHIEFS		CODES GIVEN	
NAME OF THE CHIEF		CODE GIVEN	
1. Senior Chief Kachindamoto		01	
2. Senior Chief Kaphuka		02	
3. Senior Group Village head Moses		03	

4. Senior Chief Kachere	04
5. GVH Kasumbu (Acting)	05
6. Traditional Authority Kamenyagwaza	06
7. Traditional Authority Chilikumwendo	07
8. Senior Chief Tambala	08

4.2. Research findings

This section presents research findings, starting with quantitative findings followed by qualitative findings in line with the specific objectives. Thereafter, the chapter also presents discussion of the findings supported by interpretivism and post positivism philosophical paradigms, Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto’s Student Integration Model.

4.2.1. Objective 1: Analyse factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District

This section presents the overarching factors that hindered the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District despite the wide range of financial and entitlement support being given. The section also presents the extent of girls’ dropout cases within a duration of five years, and factors such as economic factors, direct and indirect costs, poverty and hunger and domestic work that hindered retention of girls in secondary schools. Thereafter, the findings for objectives two and three are also presented followed by discussion and interpretation of the findings, as well as how the theoretical framework and Tinto’s Student Integrated Model are linked to the study findings.

4.2.1.1. The extent of girl’s dropout cases from 2018 to 2022

This section presents both quantitative and qualitative findings on the extent of girls’ dropout cases from 2018 to 2022 and factors that hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools to justify the need for structural intervention strategies to address the retention rate problem in

the district as explained in the subsequent paragraphs below. Table 4.7 shows the extent of girls' dropout cases from 2018 to 2022, while Table 4.8 and Figure 4.2 show respondents' responses on whether the retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District remains a challenge which needs to be addressed or not.

Table 4.7. The extent of girls' dropout cases from 2018-2022

Name of School	Girls drop out of school from 2018 to 2022 (5years)						
Name of school	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total/school	%
Magomero CDSS	14	10	04	05	08	41	15.3
Matundu CDSS	13	09	17	07	03	49	18.3
Katewe CDSS	07	04	05	04	01	21	7.8
Chitowo CDSS	04	05	12	07	04	32	11.9
Chawa CDSS	01	02	00	01	01	05	1.9
Chimphalika CDSS	12	10	07	11	05	45	16.8
Mphunzi CDSS	09	07	08	06	04	34	12.7
Mchisu CDSS	06	02	01	03	04	16	6.0
Umbwi Sec School	04	03	01	01	01	10	3.7
Bembeke CDSS	02	04	05	02	02	15	5.6
Totals per year	72	56	60	47	33	268	100.0

The study findings reveal that a total of 268 girls dropped out of school from ten secondary schools within a period of 5 years. Each school experienced a dropout yearly except Chawa CDSS in 2020. Matundu CDSS recorded the highest dropouts of forty-nine (N=49) girls, representing 18.3%, seconded by Chimphalika which had a total of forty-five (45) dropouts, representing 16.8%, followed by Magomero CDSS which registered forty-one (N= 41) dropouts, representing 15.3%. Schools like Chawa CDSS registered the lowest dropout cases of about Five (N=5) dropouts, followed by Umbwi Secondary School, ten (N=10) dropouts, representing 3.7%, then Bembeke CDSS which registered 15 dropouts, representing 5.6%. Mphunzi CDSS registered thirty-four (N=34) dropouts, representing 2.7%, Chitowo CDSS registered 32 dropouts, representing 11.9% and Katewe CDSS registered twenty-one (N= 21) dropouts, representing 7.8% of the total dropouts. In 2018 the schools experienced the highest dropouts totalling to seventy-two (N= 72), representing 26.9% with a steady decrease of about 47 and 43 dropouts in 2021 and 2022, respectively. In a related development, respondents were asked whether the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi as a whole remains a challenge which needs to be addressed or not. Their responses have been summarised and presented in Table 4.8 and Figure 4.3 where (N= 109)

Table 4.8: Respondents’ responses (N=109)

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	45	41
Strongly Agree	64	59
Disagree	00	00
Strongly Disagree	00	00
Neutral	00	00
Total	109	100

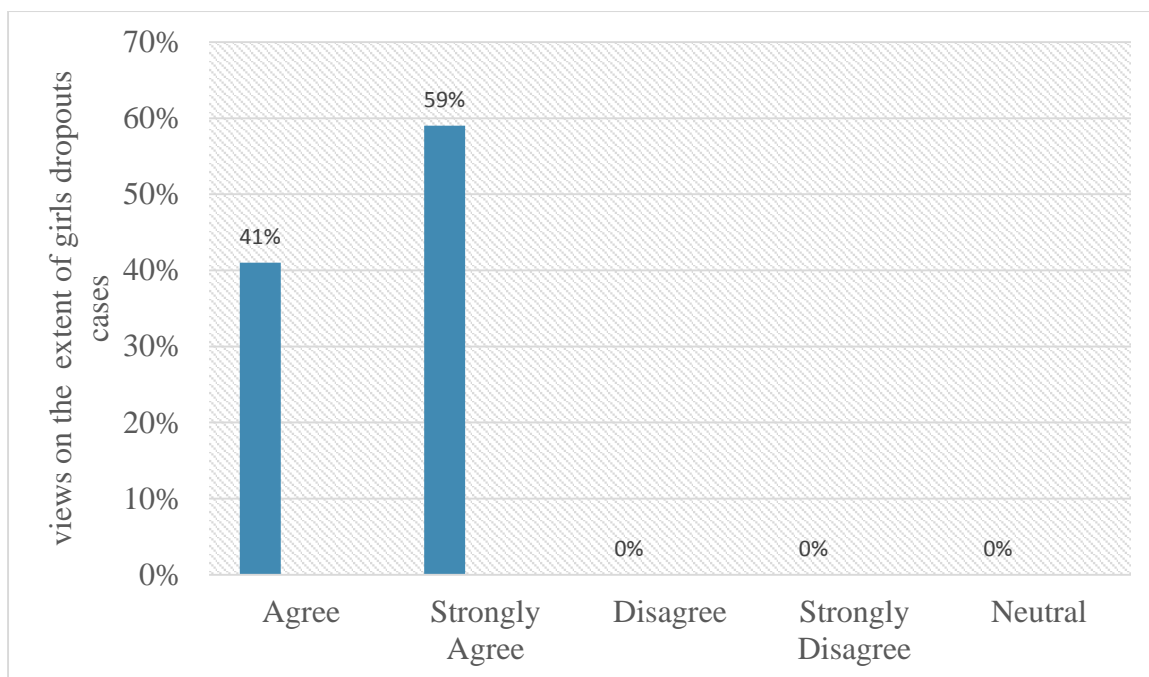


Figure 4.3 Respondents response category

Table 4.8. reveals that all respondents were in agreement with the notion that retention rate of girls in secondary schools remains a challenge which needs an immediate intervention. They only differ in the extent of agreeing as shown in Figure 4.3, whereby sixty-four (N=64) participants, representing 59% strongly agreed on the need for immediate interventions to address the problem, while forty-five (N=45) respondents, represented 41% simply agree on the need for interventions to be done to retain girls in secondary schools. None of them either disagree, strongly disagree or being neutral on whether the retention rate of girls in secondary schools remained a challenge or not.

Respondents were further asked whether financial and material support that girls receive from donors, organisations and bursaries were not enough to maximise sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools, hence, other structural intervention strategies were needed to maximise their retention. The responses given were summarised and presented in a table form as shown in Table 4.9, where (N= 109).

Table 4.9. Respondents' responses (N=109)

Response category	Frequency	Percentages
YES	109	100
NO	00	00
NOT SURE	00	00
TOTAL	109	100

From Table 4.9, all 109 respondents, representing 100% agreed that financial and material support only that girls receive from donors, organisations and government bursaries were not enough to maximise sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools, other structural intervention strategies were needed.

In this essence, the study proceeds asking respondents to explore factors that hindered the retention of girls in secondary schools. There were many factors advocated ranging from economic factors, sociocultural factors to other related factors as explained in the subsequent paragraphs below;

4.2.1.2. Economic factors

The research findings show that economic factors in form of poverty and hunger, domestic work, direct and indirect costs (lack of school fees and basic needs) hindered the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district. Quantatively, out of one hundred and nine (N=109) respondents who participated in answering questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions, sixty-one (N=61) respondents, representing 56% stressed on the economic factors as one of the main causes of girls' dropout of school. Basing on their descriptions, the economic factors were categorised into sub themes such as poverty and hunger, domestic work (household work and child labour), direct and indirect costs such as lack of school fees and basic needs as shown in Figure 4.4.

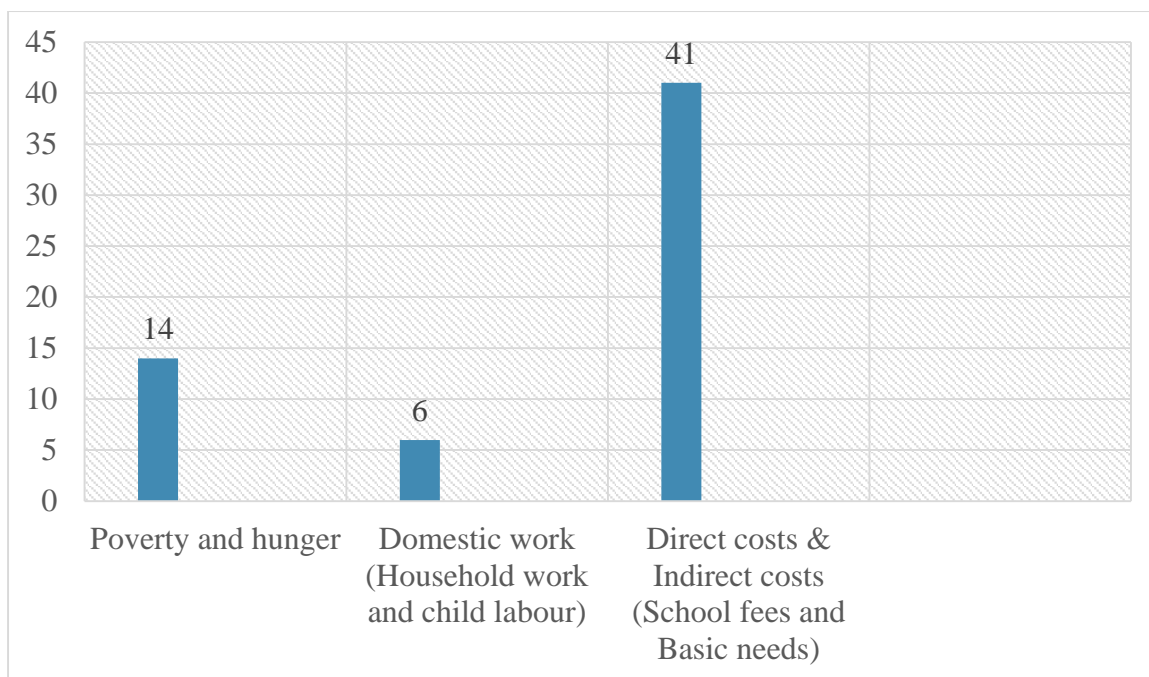


Figure 4.4. Economic factors that hindered girls' retention in secondary schools

Figure 4.4 portrays that forty-one (N=41) respondents out of 61, representing 67% agreed that within the economic factors, direct and indirect costs (i.e., lack of school fees and basic needs) to a greater extent, hindered retention rate of girls in secondary schools. Fourteen (N=14) respondents, representing 23% advocated for poverty and hunger while Six (N=6) respondents, representing 10% of the total respondents articulated for child labour and household work as the causative factors that hindered retention of girls in secondary schools. Qualitatively, the respondents justified different ways how direct and indirect costs, poverty and hunger and domestic work within the economic factors or realm, hindered the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district as described below;

4.2.1.2.1. Direct and indirect costs (lack of school fees and basic needs)

The results indicate that direct and indirect costs such as lack of school fees and basic needs hindered girls' retention in secondary schools in different ways. Some of the sixty-one (N=61) respondents who advocated for economic factors as the main hindering factor to retain girls in

schools, had similar explanations. Quoted from the head teacher of Bembeke CDSS and teacher mentor for Katewe CDSS said that;

“Donors do not give cash to beneficiaries, they pay for school uniform and other entitlements like; school uniform, pair of shoes, exercise books, pens, school bags, sanitary pads, school jersey and pairs of socks. Much as they may have these, but if they do not have money for other basic needs, they easily get engaged in love affairs with sugar daddies, boys, motor cycle operators called (a njinga zakabaza) and or business men to source money for other basic needs in exchange for sex. As such, they are impregnated in the process and drop out of school”. **(Bembeke CDSS Head teacher)**

“Apart from school fees and entitlements girls receive, they may also need basic needs such as soap, food, clothes, body lotion and money for upkeep allowance. If parents fail to provide them, they decide to go back home and eventually dropout of school. **(Katewe CDSS teacher mentor)**

In a related development, student B of Magomero CDSS, student Q of Chitowo CDSS and Traditional Authority (07) lamented that;

“Although we are paid school fees and entitlements by CAMFED and UNICEF, but if we don’t have basic needs like food, soap, cooking oil, body lotion and money for upkeep, it becomes difficult to stay in school because in self-boarding services, we form groups where each one is supposed to contribute food, relish, cooking oil and money. Then if you don’t have these basic needs and money to contribute, it becomes difficult to stay in school”. **(Student B of Magomero CDSS)**

“..... For example, if you are given K1000, for the school basic needs, for two weeks. This is not enough. As a result, girls accept love proposal from elderly people to find money for their basic needs in exchange for sex. This later on results into pregnancies and drop out of school”. (Students Q of Chitowo CDSS)

“For the beneficiary who has been given school fees and entitlement to drop out of school, there is one main problem, lack of food. For the girl child to learn properly, there is need for food. Previously, it also happened that I was paying school fees for certain girls, but they were still more not going to school despite the school fees that was paid. This was also the case with the needy girl from Magomero CDSS who did the same. Upon donating a bag of maize to this girl, it was also discovered that the maize was shared with family members who had nothing to eat”. (Traditional Authority, 07)

In contrast, the head teacher of Chawa CDSS differed with these excuses, perceptions, understanding and opinions by saying that;

“Some girls are old enough to seek piece work, gather some money for school fees or basic needs. But most of these current teenagers are lazy. They don't want to work, but being given money and resources. They are good at giving handouts. They believe that they cannot do things on their own. How can they expect to be given everything? No way.”. (Chawa CDSS head teacher)

4.2.1.2.2. Poverty and hunger

During interviews and focused group discussions, fourteen (N=14) participants out of 61 showed that poverty and hunger also hindered retention of girls in secondary schools. This was evidenced by the following expressions by few respondents who said that;

“Beneficiaries drop out of school because of poverty and hunger. Parents fail to provide other basic needs such as soap, lotions, cooking oil and relish, despite the school fees, and entitlements given by donors because they are poor. Because of this, these girls do love affairs with any man they come across provided he gives them money to find these basic needs. This later, results into pregnancy and dropping out of school”.

(District Education Network Officer, & CAMFED coordinator)

“Due to poverty, many people in these surrounding villages are not capable of educating and feeding their own children. This school being CDSS, they greatly rely on donation from donors, government bursaries and well-wishers to educate their children”. *(Chimphalika CDSS Head teacher)*

“Once the family has little financial stand to educate both, a girl and a boy child at the same time, they opt to teach the boy child rather than the girl child. They see that it is better to educate the boy than the girl”. *(Matundu CDSS teacher mentor & UNICEF education specialist)*

“At times, because of poverty, parents do share one tin of maize flour between the family members and the girl child at school. This too makes someone to stop school”.

(Student D of school Magomero CDSS)

4.2.1.2.3. Domestic work (household work and or child labour)

The study results reveal that most girls were burdened with domestic work in form of household chores and child labour. Heavy domestic workloads made girls to become very tired to concentrate on school work, absent themselves from school, keep them busy throughout the day, grade repetition and eventually dropout of school. This was witnessed by some of the respondents who said that;

“There was a certain girl, very intelligent, taking position one in class, under UNICEF bursary, operating from home and very quiet. Upon asking her why she is always quiet? she explained a lot. She was living with her father because her mother married another man. So, she was taking all motherhood responsibilities in the house. So, with her good performance and challenges she was facing at home, I was shocked and felt sorry for her. Upon agreement with the management, we provided her with all the required basic needs, and at that time in the presence of her father, we requested them (the girl and her father) to accommodate her within the school campus for her to concentrate on studies”. His father said that, “I am being assisted by this girl, she is doing all the work that is supposed to be done by her mother, so I cannot allow her to be here”. (Katewe CDSS teacher mentor)

4.2.1.3. Sociocultural factors

The results demonstrate that sociocultural factors also hindered the retention of girls in secondary schools in different ways. Basing on participants’ responses, sociocultural factors were categorised into early marriages, pregnancies, harmful cultural practices, school related gender based violence and teacher related factors.

Out of one hundred and nine (N=109) participants, 50 of them, representing 46% advocated for sociocultural factors as the causative factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools. Out of 50 respondents, 18 of them highlighted early marriages, 12 respondents indicated pregnancies, 9 of them indicated harmful cultural practices while 6 participants advocated for school related gender based violence, and only 4 respondents, declared teacher related factors as shown in Figure 4.5.

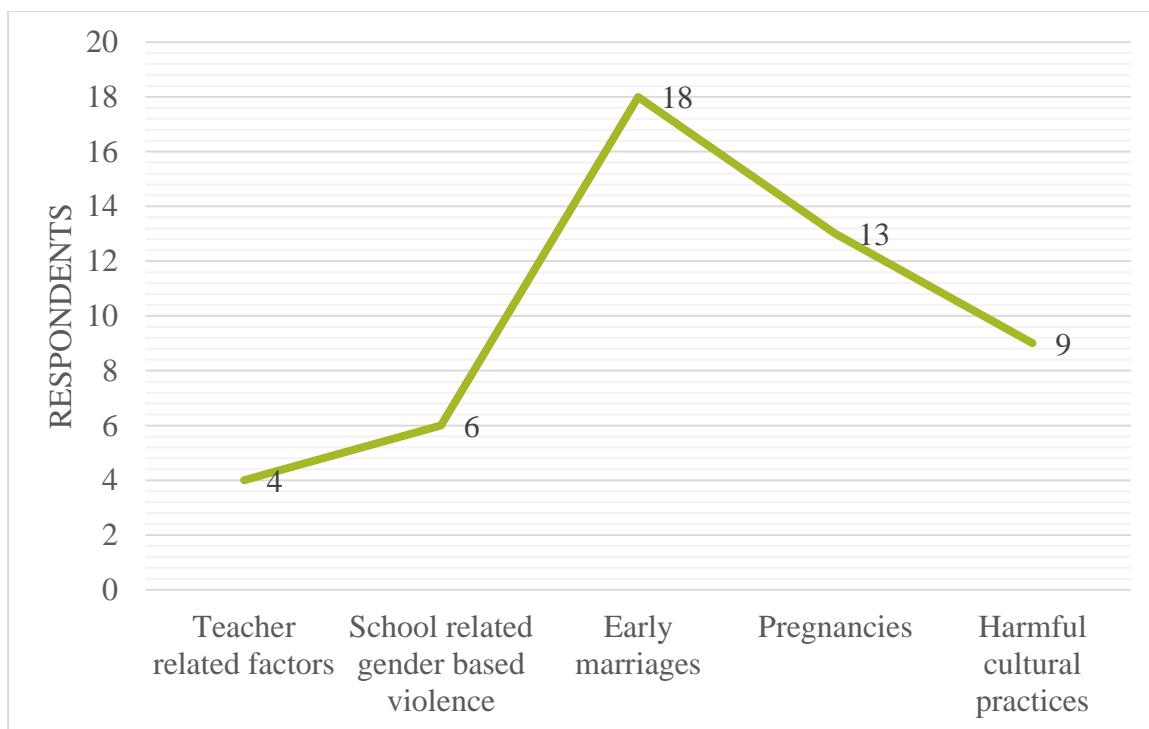


Figure 4.5. Sociocultural factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools

The findings in Figure 4.5 show that within the sociocultural factors, early marriages and pregnancies were the leading factors that hindered the retention of girls in secondary schools, followed by harmful cultural practices, school related gender based violence and teacher related factors, respectively. This was in agreement with the findings from semi- structured interviews, and focused group discussions whereby respondents revealed that unwanted pregnancies, harmful cultural practices, early marriages, teacher related factors and school related gender based violence, hindered girls’ retention in one way or the other as shown below;

4.2.1.3.1. Pregnancies or unwanted pregnancies

“During 2021/2022 academic year, during the first and second terms, 4 beneficiaries, 2 in form three and 2 in form four have dropped out of school due to pregnancies. Upon being provided with everything, beneficiaries looked attractive, beautiful and smart. Both boys and men targeted and go about with these young girls simply to impregnate or exploit them on the expense of basic needs and money given to them. Besides this,

boys exploit these girls because of jealousy and act as a revenge because most of these donors support girls only, even if there are some boys who are needy, hard workers and intelligent. They boastfully say “tithana nawo awonanso”. (we are going to deal/impregnate them; they will see). (Teacher mentor & mother group of school G)

“Once girls become pregnant, they choose to dropout of school because they think about who will take care and support their children and themselves? Who will be responsible for their school fees and basic needs because donors have stopped supporting them. Hence, they completely dropout of school as nobody could provide them with school fees, entitlements and basic needs”. (Student M of school D)

4.2.1.3.2. Harmful cultural practices and early marriages

Through interviews, focused group discussions and questionnaires, respondents highlighted that harmful cultural practices and early marriages hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi as a whole by saying that;

“Some chiefs and parents allow their children to early marriages due to harmful cultural practices like; Mtulangala, chilondola and chidzula minga”. (Benefits in form of monetary which girls’ parents, relatives and chiefs receive from the male side once a girl gets married). (Deputy Head teacher of school C)

“we are told that we are old enough to get married. Beyond this size, we shall not find a man to marry us”. (Girls of school D)

“Kutomera (a pre- marriage arrangement) is a pertinent issue here at Bembeke CDSS. Kutomera is done while that daughter is still in school. Even when she passes with good grades but when the time comes for the man to marry her, the girl simply drops out of school and gets married. They don’t see the importance of education; they value marriage to have the grandchildren. Instead of working hard in school, the girl knows

that I am already engaged and anytime I am supposed to marry once the boy or man is ready”. (Head teacher of school G)

4.2.1.3.3. Teacher related factors

During focused group discussion, students of schools A, D, E and senior chief (05) said that;

“Teachers must be sensitised on the importance of educating the girl child. It happens that as a student, you ask for resources, clarification of difficult concepts or questions from the teacher, eshiii!!! Instead of just helping you, they also propose love to you, then mmmm!”. (Student O of school D)

“Teachers propose love to girls and once she rejects or turns down the love proposal, she fears that teacher who is responsible to impart knowledge in the same girl child. Eventually, concentration and academic performance decrease. This eventually, forces the girl child to dropout of school”. (student R of school E)

“Teachers must stop proposing love to school girls. Once found, their job must be terminated and also get arrested for life imprisonment with hard labour for other teachers to get a lesson. In this case, the problem is that if the girl accepts the love proposal, when that teacher is teaching, she sees that teacher as her husband not as a teacher. How do you expect this girl to concentrate in her education? Laws must apply because the teacher doom the future of the girl child”. (student E of school A)

“To enhance girls’ retention in secondary schools, there is need for multisectoral approach whereby all stakeholders such as the police, courts, ministry of health, TAs, teachers, girls, parents, etc. must honestly work together to deal with all factors that deter the retention of girls in secondary schools. For example, At Mchenga primary school, a male teacher impregnated a school girl. Upon being discovered that the teacher bribed the nearby police officers and there was no proper action taken by the

police and ministry of education towards this teacher, community members complained to a certain organisation which took over the matter to Dedza police station for proper action. While the issue was still in the court of law, the Ministry of Education through Dedza DEM posted him to Mayani Zone safeguarding him, without considering the welfare of the girl child. Surprisingly, the teacher appeared before the court of law and was convicted for 10 years, but he served for only 3 years or so and got released, seeing him walking up and down”. (Senior Chief, 05)

In a related development, teachers’ bad comments to girls, especially when they consistently fail the examinations or questions to a certain extent, force girls to dropout of school. For example, **in school A**, teacher **X**, became angry and said bad comments to the girl child (**M**) who consistently failed continuous and end of term examinations by saying that;

“you would have just stopped learning and get married. Otherwise, there is nothing you are doing here. You cannot pass MANEB examinations”. (teacher X of school A)

In such situation, the teacher **X** was always against girl child **M**, instead of encouraging and assisting her accordingly. She definitely dropped out of school because of the stress she had due to bad comments from her teacher.

4.2.1.3.4. School related gender based violence

The treatment girls receive in schools and other domains would enable them to determine whether to stay in school or dropout of school. This was observed and confirmed by girls in questionnaires and during the focused group discussions by claiming that;

“Parents take girls as source of labour. They force them to engage in sexual activities in order to find money and basic needs for the family”. (Student N₂ of school H)

“The police and teachers must be heavily disciplined because if the girl child presented an incident of gender based violence to them for their assistance, they demand sex first before helping that girl, hence, girls become stranded about where to report such cases, and choose to drop out of school because some teachers, police officers and some parents seem to be perpetrators and exploiters than helpers”. (Student M of school D)

“Even when students, especially girls, try their best to prevent teachers who propose love to them, such teachers call the targeted girls by sending somebody to call them to fulfil their intentions. Hence, it remains a challenge for the girl child to concentrate on her education and eventually drop out of school”. (Student K of school D)

“Parents say, girls are not worth to go to school but boys because more opportunities are readily available to boys and are the ones doing fine”. (students of school A)

4.2.1.4. Other factors

The other factors comprised major factors such as school infrastructure and facility, political factors and individual related factors as summarised and explained in the subsequent paragraphs below;

Table 4.10 shows summarised school infrastructure and facility factors, political factors and individual related factors with detailed minor factors that hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district, where (N=109). This has been proceeded with graphically presented information in Figure 4.6 for easy interpretation and understanding before the presentation of qualitative data.

Table 4.10: Other factors that hinder girls' retention to school

FACTORS	Frequency	Percentages
SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITY FACTORS		
a. Distance girls travel to school	10	9.17
b. School facilities and resources	8	7.34
POLITICAL FACTORS		
a. Education structure	2	1.83
b. Pre- education school entry age	2	1.83
c. Marriage entry age of 18 years	13	11.93
INDIVIDUAL RELATED FACTORS		
a. Peer pressure & learner negative attitudes towards school	37	33.94
b. Lack of mind set change and exposure to role models	17	15.59
c. Low levels of parental education and aspirations	5	4.58
d. Lack of guidance and counselling sessions	10	9.17
e. Death of parents	2	1.83
f. Marriage break up	3	2.75
TOTAL	109	100.00

Table 4.10 shows respondents' different views on other factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in the district. Out of 109 participants, Seventy-four (N=74) respondents, representing 67.8% highlighted individual related factors, eighteen (N=18) respondents, representing 16.5 % opted for school infrastructure and facility factors, then seventeen (17) respondents, representing 15.6 % of the total participants recommended political factors. The data information in Table 4.10 has also been graphically presented in Figure 4.6;

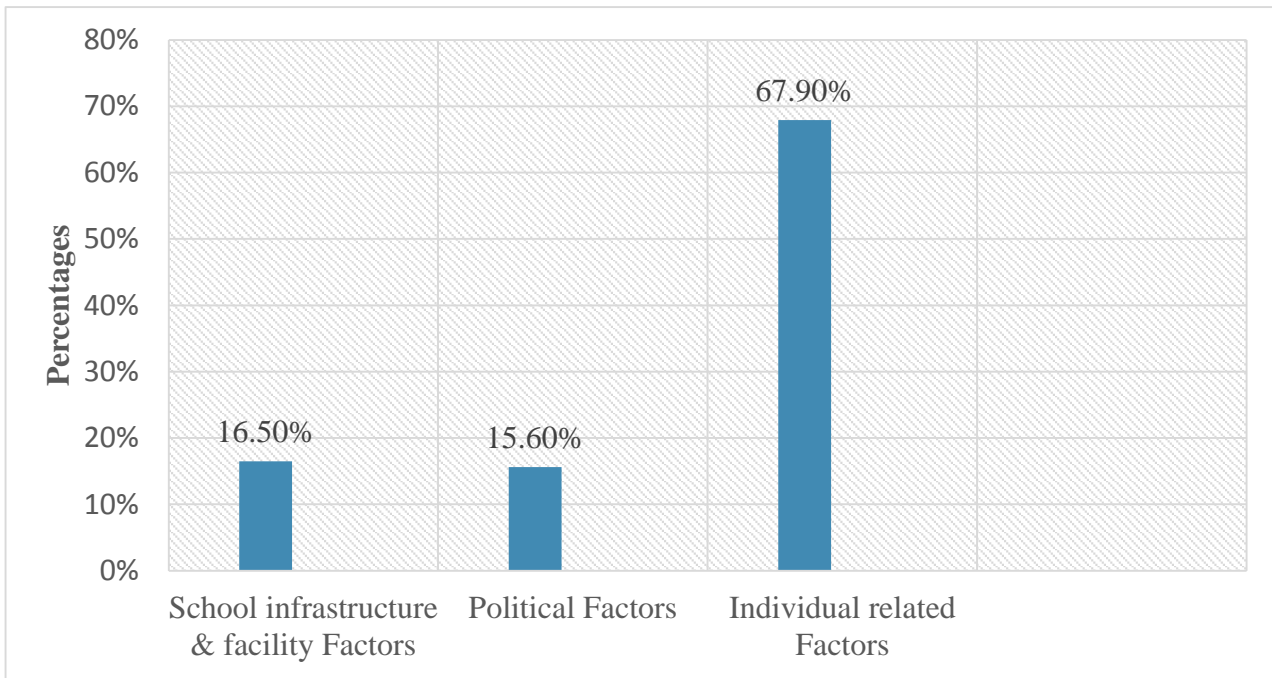


Figure 4.6 shows other factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools

In Figure 4.6, eighteen (N=18) respondents, representing 16.5% stated school infrastructure and facility factors, seventeen (N=17) respondents, representing 15.6% advocated for political factors and seventy-four (N=74) respondents who were also in the majority, representing 67.9% stated individual related factors as the main cause factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in the district.

Besides these, respondents to a greater extent expressed their perceptions, understandings and status quo on how individual related factors, school infrastructure and facility factors, and political factors hindered the retention of girls in schools as explained through the excerpts in each case.

4.2.1.4.1. School infrastructure and facility factors

In this part, the researcher wanted to find out from the mother groups, teacher mentors, Civil Society Organisations Leaders, head teachers, girls and Traditional Authorities, on how school infrastructure and facility factors hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district. The results revealed that distances girls travel to school and lack of or insufficient of

school facilities and resources, contributed to the girls' dropout of school in both primary and secondary schools, in different ways as explained below;

4.2.1.4.1.1. Distances girls travel to school

Most of the respondents had similar observations on the long distances girls travel to school. For example, as quoted from one of the teacher mentors and mother group who said that;

“Most of these girls travel long distances when coming to school, hence, they become tired walking such long distances, sexually harassed on their way, miss classes, do not come consistently to school and perform poorly in their academics. As such, they drop out of school”. (**Bembeke CDSS Mother group & teacher mentor**)

In a related development, during one on one interviews and focus group discussions, several respondents such as the District Education Network Officer, the head teacher of school C, girls of schools' J and E, and TA (06) had similar concerns on long distances girls travel to school. Some of the respondents seriously said that;

“Community Day Secondary Schools just help students who are just a kilometre away from school, to those who travel 10km and beyond, remains a challenge. They are forced to do self-boarding services surrounding the school campus or nearby trading centre, which is not a conducive environment for the girl child. Girls also need to have food, basic needs and to cook. Once they do not have money, they get tempted to meet men or boys who can give them money in exchange for sex. Hence, they get impregnated and drop out of school”.

(Head teacher of school C)

“In self-boarding residences, girls are free to bring in boys or men who spend the whole night together with girls doing sexual intercourse. This makes girls get pregnant and dropout of school”. (**Chitowo CDSS students**)

4.2.1.4.1.2. School facilities and resources

During semi structured interviews and focus group discussions, the teacher mentor of school B advocated that;

“Due to lack of boarding facilities or girls’ hostels, most of these girls are on self-renting around the trading centre, where they easily get cheated by men or boys with little money and goods at the expense of sexual activities. Thereafter, they get impregnated and dropout of school. This happens because they admire what married women or prostitutes receive from men at the expense of sexual intercourse. (Teacher mentor of school B)

The teacher mentor and students of school B, in a focused group discussion complained that;

“There are only 7 teachers against forms 1 to 4. We are learning only 7 subjects. For those willing to take 8 or 9 subjects, seems to be a burden to them. As a result, students leave this school for other better schools. We are just learning English, Mathematics, Chichewa, Biology, Agriculture, Physics and Geography. While subjects which seem to be simple to us like Social Studies, Bible Knowledge, Life skills, Chemistry and History are not taught here”. (Students of school B)

4.2.1.4.2. Political factors

The results also suggest that lack of political will by the Malawi government on the education structure, pre-education school entry age and marriage entry age of 18 years old, also contribute to the high dropout rate of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

4.2.1.4.2.1. The education structure

When formulating education policies, there is need for grassroot participation, especially representatives from the typical rural areas where there is true reflection of the challenges

marginalised girls face in the education system. This was emphasised by the Traditional Authority (06) and Senior Chief (04) during one on one interviews who explained that;

“In the education sector, no boarding in CDSSs policy betrays girls more than helping them. Distances girls travel to school are just very long. With this policy, even if you can find a donor willing to help, but upon reading such a policy, donors fail to construct hostels and provide boarding facilities in CDSSs”. (TA (06) and Senior Chief (04))

“Though, communities which do not take boarding in CDSS policy seriously, on their own attempt to intervene to help students especially girls, by constructing girls’ hostel, being the case at Katewe CDSS”. (TA 06)

4.2.1.4.2.2. Pre-education school entry age

The study findings show that pre-schools in rural areas do not have public pre-school educational impact unlike pre-private schools in towns and cities. In rural setting, children start standard one with zero (0) knowledge of school culture, whereas children in towns and cities have good school culture and possibly complete their secondary school at a tender age of 14 years or so. This was alluded to during one on one interviews with Traditional Authorities (06) who said that;

“There is a gap in the education structure of Malawi. Children from the typical village set up, start school late at exactly 6 years old, while children in towns and urban areas like area 47, 49 start standard one at an early age of either 3, or 4 or 5 years due to the presence of well-established private pre- schools in towns and cities than in rural areas”. (TA, 06)

To concur with the Traditional Authority (06), the head teacher of school (H) articulated that;

“Most of these pre- schools in rural areas are being managed by caregivers who have not been trained and were also impregnated and dropped out of school. This shows that they have not gone for with their education, then how can they teach girls to abstain from sexual activities and work hard in class? Yet, they are products of the same”.

4.2.1.4.2.3. Marriage entry age of 18 years

As regards to marriage age, the Malawi Constitution advocates that no person over the age of eighteen years shall be prevented from entering into marriage (The Malawi Constitution, 2022: P. 12). The family is taken by the constitution of Malawi as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. However, the 18 years’ marriage entry age stipulated in the constitution makes more girls dropout of school before their secondary school completion. Traditional Authority (06) commented on this by saying that;

“Marriage entry age of 18 years must be revised because at the age of 18 years, girls in rural areas are normally in standard six or seven, while their counterparts in urban areas are in third year at university. The constitution is silent once the girl child reaches 19 years and above in terms of marriage versus education rights”. (TA 06)

4.2.1.4.3. Individual related factors

Individual related factors that were commonly mentioned by respondents during one on one interviews, semi- structured interviews and focus group discussion were categorised into peer pressure, learner negative attitudes towards school, lack of mindset change and role models, low levels of parental education and aspirations, death of parents and lack of comprehensive guidance and counselling sessions as shown in the following excerpts;

4.2.1.4.3.1. Peer pressure and girls' negative attitude towards school

Peer pressure and girls' negative attitude towards school were also considered by respondents as other factors that cause girls' dropout of secondary schools. For example, the head teacher of school G and a parent from school D confessed that;

“Most girls feel that being at secondary school without love a partner is backwardness, laughed at, considered low self-esteem, hence, they copy and do what other girls do by having men or boy-girl love relationship. The first issue in their relationship is intimately knowing each other through unprotected sex. This makes many girls get impregnated in the process and dropout of school”. (The head teacher of school G)

“Beneficiaries drop out of school because they do not have interest in school. Most of them are rude, stubborn, don't obey parents even if the parents have interest to educate them. As a result, they show rudeness and disobedience if you force them to go to school. Such girls dropout of school despite the support they are given because they don't have interest in school”. (A parent from school D)

4.2.1.4.3.2. Lack of mindset change and exposure to role models

The results reveal that most of the communities expect girls to get married once they have reached puberty stage, without valuing their future in education. They do not see the importance of school as they value marriage more than education. In addition, it was also observed that in typical villages, girls are not exposed to role models who could encourage them to work hard in school, set achievable goals and share their ways of coping with challenges in their everyday situations. This was evidenced from respondents who said that;

“Beneficiaries at Chimphalika CDSS like in other areas are influenced by the parents from their communities to get married and have their babies who are taken as source of clan's pride and wealth. There is need to visit such parents, sensitise them about the

significance of CAMFED or UNICEF donation towards the education of the girl child, and possibly sue them if they resist to change their mindset of sending girls to marriage than to school”. (Teacher mentor of school I)

“Due to lack of role models in the communities to encourage girls to work hard, it becomes difficult for girls to proceed with school. We admire these role models because they set an example to us to work hard to reach the same positions they have acquired”.

(Katewe cdss girls)

4.2.1.4.3.3. Low levels of parental education and aspirations

The results confirm that some girls dropout of school as a result of low levels of parental education and aspirations toward girl child education. Once girls have been taken on bursaries, parents forget their responsibilities and ownership of these beneficiaries. As such, they expect the same donors to provide their wards with everything including basic needs such as food, soap and body lotion. A teacher mentor from Katewe CDSS justified this by saying that;

“Once parents have been called to provide the basic needs for their daughters, they said that they do not have anything to provide to their daughters. They could say that let CAMFED and UNICEF provide these basic needs such as food, soap and pocket money, otherwise they will let their girls’ temporary dropout of school and re-join later”. (Katewe CDSS teacher mentor)

4.2.1.4.3.4. Lack of inclusive and effective guidance and counselling sessions

The study findings reveal that girls, even if they received school fees and entitlements, they still more dropout of school because they lack inclusive and effective guidance and counselling sessions on how best they could cope with challenges and excel in their education. Respondents responses established that school fees and entitlements only could not automatically guarantee them to progress and excel in their education. An Inclusive and effective guidance and

counselling session to all stakeholders involved in dooming the educational future of a girl child would help to minimise the problem.

During focused group discussions and semi-structured interviews, girls from schools; D and H and the head teacher of school C recommended the need for consistent inclusive guidance and counselling sessions among all girls, including beneficiaries and boys plus other stakeholders to contain the problem. For example, one of the students recommended this by saying that;

“As donors come in and give the entitlements to these girls, it is good as well for them to enlighten these girls and all stakeholders about the intention of donations and entitlements given, why they have been picked out of all girls at that school? Donors expectations from the beneficiaries, terms and conditions attached to the donation. They should also advocate the significance of school over marriage and how girls can abstain from sexual feelings”. (Student L₂ of Mchisu CDSS)

4.2.1.4.3.5. Marriage break up and death of parents

The results reveal that marriage break up forces girls whether on bursary sponsorship or not, to dropout of school in the sense that it becomes difficult for the step father and step mother on both sides to fully support the step daughter(s). Even if the biological father is capable and willing to support the girl child, the new wife thinks that he would go back to the former wife and vice versa. Children including the girl child are forced to stay with either the father or mother or grandparents and assume all motherhood roles and responsibilities in that family. This eventually affects her academic performance, school concentration and she eventually may decide to dropout of school.

As evidenced at Katewe CDSS, a UNICEF beneficiary girl (**X= not real name**), who was intelligent, needy, scoring position one in class and she was operating from her home, was denied by her father to be freely accommodated on campus by the school management because

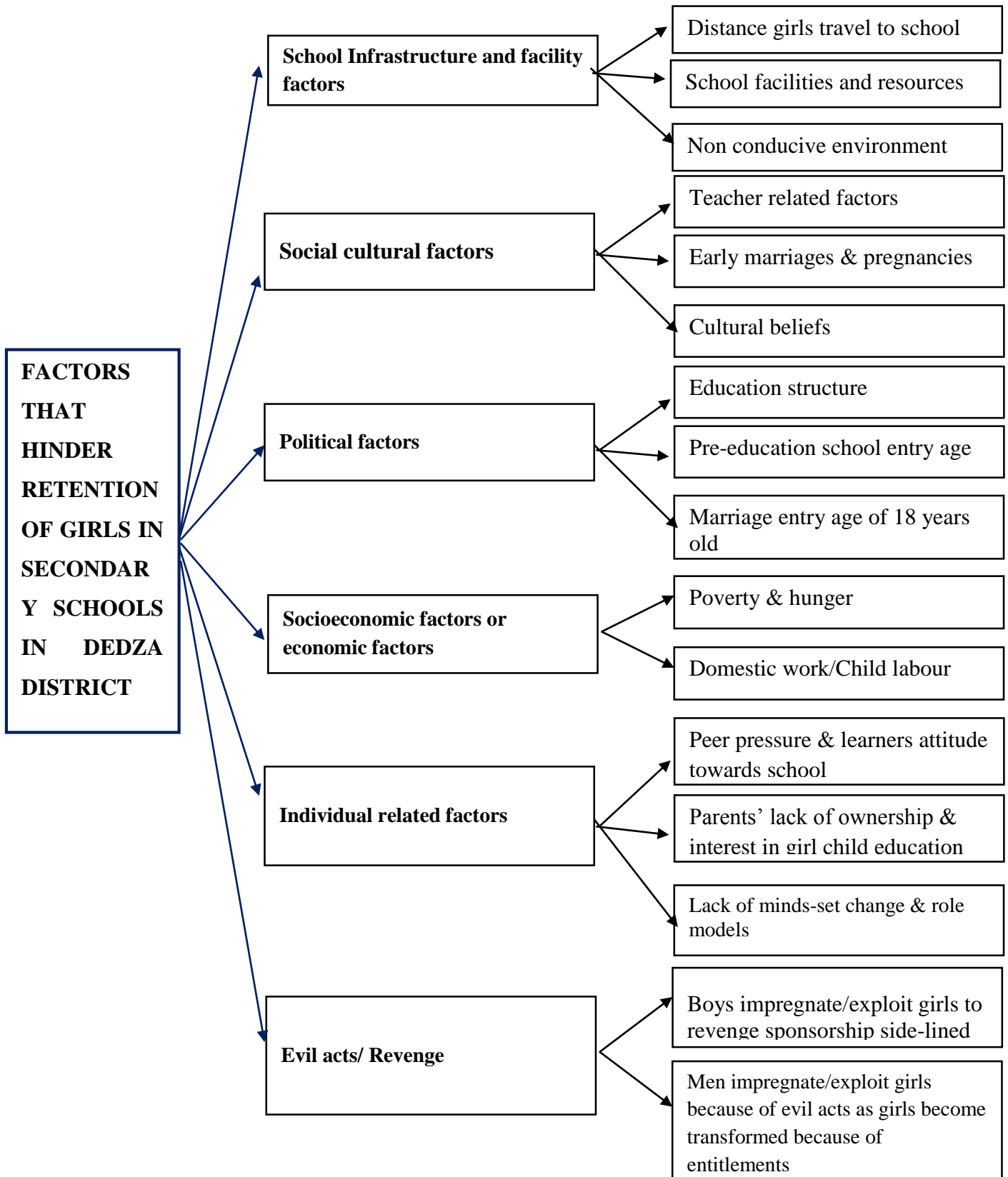
she was taking motherhood responsibilities at her home. She was always quiet but stressed. Upon being asked by the teacher mentor why she was always perplexed, it was discovered that she was staying with her father only. Her mother married another man. Because of this, she was taking all motherhood roles and responsibilities in the family. Basing on her good performance, and the challenges she encountered at home in relation to her education, the teacher mentor in collaboration with the school management decided and agreed to give her all the basic needs and accommodate her on campus. Surprisingly, her father refused by saying that;

“I am being assisted by this girl, she is doing all the activities that were supposed to be done by her mother who married another man. So, I can’t allow her to be accommodated here”. (Father of girl X)

Likewise, death of parent(s) as claimed by students’ V and Y₂ of Umbwi and Mphunzi secondary schools forced beneficiaries to dropout of school even when school fees and entitlements are given. In a situation where a single or both parents died, and the orphans have either been adopted by the relatives of the deceased or stay with the step parents, they are either forced to take all household roles and responsibilities of that family or sexually exploited by the same relatives or step parents instead of sending them to school. This was evidenced from one of the girls who said that;

“Once your parents die, you are forced to live with relatives who treat you differently unlike your biological parents. As was the case with (M= not real) who was CAMFED beneficiary. Upon the death of her biological father, she was forced to stay with the step father in the new family. Apart from overburdening her with all household work and responsibilities, the step father impregnated her and hence dropping out of school”. (Student Y₂ of school J)

4.2.1.4.3.6. Summary on factors that hinder girls' retention in secondary schools



Figurer 4.7. Flow diagram showing factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District

4.2.2. Objective 2: Examine interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.

Like in objective 1 above, this section presents quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data findings on interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in secondary schools before presentation of the findings of objective three.

The findings show various interventions existed in participating schools and how they attempted to retain girls in schools. The study revealed that most of the participating schools to a greater extent depended on the provision of bursaries, entitlements and guidance and counselling by donors, government and well-wishers as the major interventions being done to retain girls in schools. Other interventions though mentioned were not effective. Some of the mentioned interventions being done have been summarised and presented in Table 4.11

Table 4.11: Interventions being done to retain girls in secondary schools

Intervention	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of bursaries and entitlements	7	7.2
Guidance and counselling	17	17.5
Role models and career talks	3	3.1
Ending child marriages	3	3.1
Farming or Agriculture	13	13.4
Doing business	3	3.1
Employment	4	4.1
Doing piecework	4	4.1
Girls empowerment and leadership roles	25	25.8
Well-wishers	6	6.2
Formulation and enforcement of by-laws	4	4.1

Hardworking, setting achievable goals & withstanding pressure	3	3.1
Psychosocial support & ending gender based violence	1	1.0
Get back the entitlements from married beneficiaries & replace them with other needy girls	4	4.1
Total	97	99.9= 100.0

Out of 109 participants, ninety-seven (N=97) of them representing 89% advocated for various interventions being done in an attempt to retain girls in secondary schools, while twelve (N=12) participants, representing 11% did not mention any intervention. They said that these girls received essential resources for them to stay in school, yet they dropout of school. So, in short they suggested to prioritise compulsory education in Malawi.

From Table 4.11, twenty-five (N= 25) respondents, representing 25.8% pointed out girls' empowerment through leadership positions was one way of helping them to stay in school. The respondents believed that once girls were given leadership positions, they felt trusted, worth to lead their fellow students. In so doing, they worked hard in class and inspired their fellow girls to work hard and take over their positions once is due. Likewise, guidance and counselling sessions as advocated by seventeen (N=17) respondents, representing 17.5% thought that through guidance and counselling, some girls get trained to be focused to proceed with their education as was the case at Umbwi, Bembeke and Chimphalika secondary schools. Farming or agriculture was also recommended by thirteen (N= 13) participants, representing 13.4%. They observed that through farming, though at small scale, parents who had interest in the education of their daughters managed to source and provide the basic needs to them after selling their produce to supplement bursaries and entitlements given by supporters.

Other interventions also mentioned include; role models and career talks, ending child marriages, hardworking spirit, setting achievable goals and girls withstanding pressure. These

were mentioned by three (N=3) participants in each case, representing 3.1%. Interventions like employment, doing piece work, formulating and enforcing by-laws and getting back entitlements from the married beneficiaries and replaced them with new needy girls were also stated by four (N= 4) participants, representing (4.1%) in each case.

Seven (N=7) respondents, representing 7.1% did mention about the continuity of provision of bursaries and entitlements as the only way to retain girls in secondary schools because parents were poor and could not manage. They pointed out this with a condition that girls themselves must be determined to accept and work hard in class, minus this, retention of girls will still more be a challenge. Six (N=6) of them representing 6.2% supported well-wishers who also played an important role by providing either school fees or basic needs to those who did not benefit from any donor. It was only the District Education Network Officer, representing 1.0% who confirmed that psychosocial support and ending gender based violence, though being done at a small scale, assisted to retain some girls in schools within his catchment area.

In brief, the results in Table 4.11 show that out of 109 respondents, 97 of them, representing 89% advocated various short term interventions while 12 participants, representing 11%, argued that with the presence or absence of interventions, girl's retention remained a problem. Unless girls change their mindset and develop interest towards school.

4.2.2.1. Organisations, donors and well-wishers that attempt to improve girls' retention in secondary schools in Dedza District

The results revealed that most of the interventions done were of short term basis, with specific terms and conditions, and focused much on the provision of bursaries in form of school fees and entitlements by the donors, NGOs, the Malawi government and well-wishers.

Some of these include; CAMFED, UNICEF, Poverelle Sisters, District Education Network (DEN), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Constituency Development Fund

(CDF), MACOHA, Face Academy Foundation, Norwegian Aid, Chiefs Council, Mirriam Foundation in Malawi, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (YECE), Dedza Diocese Priest and well-wishers such as teachers, Bembeke Alumni and individuals from Dedza District and working in Dedza and those who were based in South Africa.

CAMFED and UNICEF for example in all participating schools, could provide school fees and entitlements such as pens and pencils, sanitary pads, school uniforms, pair of school shoes and socks, scientific calculators, 10 hardcovers and 10 college exercise books, school bags and mathematical sets, among others. Unlike CAMFED, UNICEF could also provide boarding fees for its beneficiaries in boarding CDSS and conventional secondary schools. This was evidenced at schools **I** and **J**. during the time of the study, CAMFED however, warned and alerted its 29 beneficiary schools about pulling out of its services in Malawi as its' operational time frame was over.

KOICA on the other hand, targeted teenage mothers who have given birth to their children and decided to go back to school. It was operating in selected secondary schools such as Magomero and Chimphalika CDSSs, among others. Beneficiaries (teenage mothers) were provided with radios, school fees, i.e. boarding and development fees, and entitlements such as, school uniform, exercise books, writing materials, pocket money and pair of school shoes, among others. Radios were provided to help the beneficiaries to learn at their own free time during Covid 19 pandemic. They were asked to pay K3000 which was paid back after a year to the teenage mothers.

In addition, the District Education Network targeted addressing harmful cultural practices, ending early marriages and dealing with gender based violence so that girls can proceed and complete their education. However, culture according to DEN officer, was identified as one of the biggest challenges that forced many girls to dropout of school. Through community

policing, DEN intended to bring to book all culprits found impregnating and marrying the school going girl child for prosecution and face the consequences of the law so that others should learn a lesson not to commit a similar offence.

The study findings revealed that once perpetrators impregnate the school girl, they critically and cleverly persuaded or cheated the girl, her parents and relatives such as uncle, either to marry the girl or support her caring for the child, while in actual sense they escape the prosecution against the crime committed. In such situation, DEN could investigate the matter and once proved that it was an organised plan, both the parents and perpetrators were being brought to book through community policing. However, it was pointed out that the drawback was lack of support from other organisations, donors, the government and community members for its comprehensive outcome services.

Poverelle sisters of Matumba Parish, Dedza Diocese Fathers, especially Bembeke Priest, also assisted needy students both boys and girls with school fees. Unlike Bembeke priest, Poverelle Sisters, apart from school fees, it could also provide boarding fees to beneficiaries at boarding CDSS, like at Chimphalika CDSS and thereafter, requested beneficiaries to do simple work for the parish every Saturday from 8:30 am to 10:30 am, and during holidays to show ownership and participation of the support given. The piece work was in form of farming and general cleaning. Guardians were mandated to find soap and other basic needs for their own daughters through doing piece work either at parish or anywhere. After completing form four, beneficiaries were given soft loans so that they could assist other needy students. During the time of study, as clarified by Sister (*X, name withheld*), there were 13 beneficiaries, i.e. 10 boys and 3 girls from Chimphalika, Magomero, Mtendere, Chawa and Mayani Secondary Schools who benefited from Poverelle Sisters Bursary Scheme.

Likewise, MACOHA, Face Academy Foundation, Norwegian Aid, Chiefs' Council, Mirriam Foundation in Malawi, Constituency Development Fund, Social Welfare, also provided either tuition fees only or both tuition and boarding fees depending on the availability of funds or a specific challenge they wanted to address. Due to Covid 19, financial constraints, donor fatigue and unknown reasons, organisations and donors like Norwegian Aid, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (YECE), Face Academy Foundation, Chiefs Council and MACOHA among others, stopped supporting girls as was observed in schools **G**, **H** and **F** in Umbwi cluster.

This implies that, as much as we appreciate the Malawi's government and donors' role to educate the girl child through the provision of bursaries and entitlements. However, it is advisable to intensify grassroots participation to both parents and students to be always in the forefront, alert and independent to educate the girl child as Poverelle Sisters encouraged them because bursaries, entitlements and scholarships are always insufficient, unsustainable and focus on specific challenges to address. This had witnesses from different respondents through questionnaires, one on one interviews, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. They would rather love these donors, organisations and government to improve some of their services if effective girls' retention is to be achieved in Malawi. To justify the ineffectiveness of the current interventions by donors and organisations on the retention rate of girls in secondary schools, some of the respondents said that;

“It is worth noting and appreciating that most donors and organisations like UNICEF, CAMFED, KOIKA, FACE Academy Foundation among others, target the education of the girl child in Dedza District. It would be worthwhile if donors and organisations should have also included boys who are also needy, intelligent, potential, fail to pay school fees in their support programmes. They impregnate these girls because of revenge for being completely left out by these donors”. (**Head mistress of school I**)

“In Mangochi’s CAMFED meeting, they put laws through the chiefs, that when the beneficiary just gives up school anyhow, she should be replaced by somebody else and surrender the entitlements she received to the school so that other needy girls who were not privileged at first should benefit”. **(Teacher mentor of school H)**

“Meetings held by all TAs in Dedza District during chiefs’ council, we share experiences on formulated by-laws that focus on ending teenage marriages and ensure that no girl below 18 years enter into marriage but atleast 18 years and above”. **(SC, 01)**

“Money paid by culprits of early marriages persecution helped the TAs to pay school fees and other basic needs for the needy girls in schools”. **(TA, 07)**

Apart from donors’ financial and entitlements given, effective by-laws, ending child marriages, leadership empowerment, guidance and counselling, role models and career talks, psychosocial support and ending gender based violence could also help to retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi. This was observed from few respondents who said that;

“Once girls are involved in decision making and leadership positions like head girl as being the case here at Katewe CDSS, girls weigh themselves worth enough in making decisions and lead fellow students. This in turn makes them get encouraged to like school and work hard”. **(Head teacher of school C)**

“In conjunction with teacher mentor, mother groups and community mentors, we have been counselling girls on appropriate dressing code so that they should not provoke men or boys to rape or propose love to them and work hard in school, set achievable goals and withstand the pressure encountered to achieve their intended goals”. **(Head teacher of school E)**

“District Education Network, being a network, we work with all organisations operating in Dedza District on education matters affecting the girl child. We provide psychosocial support and also prosecute perpetrators who impregnate, marry, rape or violate the education rights of the girl child through community members”. (**DEN, Officer Dedza**)

“Role models from different organisations, Bembeke alumni, CAMFED, lawyers, hospitals, agriculture among others, are invited to talk and encourage these girls. They talk about their experiences, careers, educational goals, importance of educating girls and ways of withstanding challenges girls face. Besides this, TA Kamenyagwaza, group village Heads, plus chiefs are also called to talk to students on how they can excel with their education during best awards presentation ceremonies to the outstanding students”. (**Head mistress of school G**)

Some respondents emphasised on the need for multisectoral interventions by all stakeholders when addressing factors that hinder girls’ retention to maximise their retention. For example, teacher mentor of school C said that;

“no matter how much fees and entitlements can be given, minus addressing other factors that deter girls to stay in school like; constructing hostels, punishing perpetrators, grassroot participation and provision of basic needs, girls will keep on dropping out of school....” (**teacher mentor of school C**)

This justifies the basis of study that addressing school fees and entitlements challenges only cannot effectively enhance girls’ retention in secondary schools, unless all factors that hinder girls’ retention are addressed in a multisectoral and coordinated approach by all the stakeholders.

4.2.3. Objective 3: Explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District

In this part, the researcher presents explored structure intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District from 109 participants who participated through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. Like other objectives, quantitative data findings have been presented first, followed by qualitative data and thereafter, discussion and interpretation of the findings for all the three objectives guided by Transformational Leadership Theory, Tinto's Student Integration Model and a combination of interpretivism and post positivism philosophical paradigms.

The respondents' views were critically analysed in such a way that out of 109 respondents, those who had related views on a specific intervention were transcribed, coded, developed into themes, interpreted and thereafter summarised and presented in a table format. For comprehensive data, respondents were free to explore and justify as many structural interventions as possible, with examples where applicable. Table 4.12 shows respondents' suggested structural intervention strategies in a multisectoral and coordinated approach which could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District.

Table 4.12: Suggested structural intervention strategies (N=212)

Serial Number	Intervention	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Doing or carrying out income generating activities or piecework, or small scale businesses or farming	27	12.7
2.	Construction of hostels, boarding and or more day secondary schools and the provision of boarding facilities	12	5.7
3.	Girls' hardworking, empowerment and formation of youth clubs	27	12.7

4.	Provision of loans, bursaries, entitlements, funding and basic needs till tertiary education	39	18.4
5.	Formation and enforcement of stiff laws, bye-laws and punishments to perpetrators to safeguard girls	33	15.6
6.	Stakeholders' mindset change, sensitisation and civic education	16	7.5
7.	Carrying out frequent inclusive guidance and counselling sessions and career talks	14	6.6
8.	Grassroot participation, government intervention and parents ownership responsibility to educate the girl child	17	8.0
9.	Deployment of female teachers, bringing in role models and carrying out education visits	8	3.8
10.	Revising marriage entry age and ending early marriages	10	4.7
11.	Ending gender based violence	1	0.5
12.	Restructuring the education system	2	0.9
13.	Multisectoral approach	1	0.5
14.	Abstinence	5	2.4
15.	Total	212	100.0

From Table 4.12, it is noted that several structural intervention strategies have been recommended by the respondents to be done by the government, parents or guardians, donors, girls, chiefs, communities, teachers, organisations, politicians and all stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child in an attempt to sustainably retain girls in schools ranging from, Early Childhood Development, primary school, secondary school and tertiary levels. All the 109 respondents were free to explore and justify as many structural intervention strategies as possible, and then justify how the strategies mentioned could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools.

The research findings as presented in Table 4.12 show that out of 109 participants, thirty-nine (N=39) of them, representing 18.4% asserted for the continuation and increase the provision of not only bursaries and entitlements but also loans, funding and basic needs to schools. This was followed by thirty-three (N= 33) respondents, representing 15.6% who emphasised the need for the formation and enforcement of stiff laws, bye-laws and stiff punishments to all perpetrators at all levels to safeguard the girl child.

Other interventions advocated include doing or carrying out income generating activities, piece work, small scale businesses and or farming to address economic, entitlements and basic needs challenges girls face while at school. This should cater for both beneficiaries and none beneficiaries. Girls' hardworking spirit, empowerment, and formation of youth clubs where girls would likely meet and share their experiences, challenges they face, solutions to specific challenges and ways of overcoming the hardships as recommended by twenty-seven (N=27) respondents out of 109 participants, representing 12.7% in each case.

Seventeen (N=17) participants, representing 8.0% suggested intensifying grassroots participation, government intervention and parents' ownership responsibility to educate their own daughters. Likewise, sixteen (N=16) respondents, representing 7.5% of the total respondents, centred on the need for stakeholders' mindset change, sensitisation campaign and civic education on the need to educate the girl child.

Inclusive guidance and counselling sessions and career talks in a holistic, collaborative and multi-sectoral approach whereby different stakeholders patronise as recommended by fourteen (N=14) respondents, representing 6.6%, would work to retain girls in schools. Twelve (N=12) participants, representing 5.7% highlighted the need for the construction of more hostels, boarding or day secondary schools and the provision of boarding facilities to sustainably retain them in schools. In respondents' views, this would help more girls access secondary education

and stay in schools because long distances could have been shortened and girls' security and study concentration are also maximised at the same time. Lastly, ten (N=10) respondents, representing 4.7% emphasised the need to revise the marriage entry age of 18 years to either 20 or 21 and end child marriages if the retention rate of girls in secondary schools is to be achieved.

Eight (N=8) respondents, representing 3.8% focused on deployment of female teachers, bringing in role models in schools and carrying out education visits. Five (N=5) respondents, representing 2.4% supported abstinence; two (N=2) participants, representing 0.9% asserted for restructuring of the education system and lastly, one (N=1) respondent, representing 0.5% claimed for multisectoral approach and ending gender based violence to effectively retain girls in schools.

In summary, findings in Table 4.12 depict that no single strategy is worth enough to sustainably retain girls in secondary schools in Dedza District, but Interdependence of several structural intervention strategies in a coordinated multisectoral approach by all stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child.

4.2.3.1. Interventions being done in schools versus dropout rates; (from 2018 to 2022, 5 years)

This section as shown in Table 4.13 shows an insight of the interventions that were being done in specific schools for a duration of five years to retain girls in secondary schools against the total numbers of girls' dropout rate from each school despite the support or interventions being done.

Table: 4.13. Interventions being done in schools against girls' dropout rates

School	Interventions being done	Total girls dropouts	Percentages (%)
A	<p>-Donors interventions (They provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (Supported girls only) • UNICEF (Supported girls only) • Social welfare (supported both boys and girls) • KOICA (Supported teenage mothers with school fees, entitlements & torch) • Government bursary (Supported both girls and boys with fees only) <p>-Other interventions include;</p> <p>-Guidance and counselling sessions (to girls only)</p> <p>-Girls withstanding pressure and doing piece work after classes to find money</p>	41	15.3
B	<p>-Donors interventions (They provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government bursary (provided fees only to both boys and girls) <p>-Other interventions include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers assisting girls with basic needs such as soap, relish • Protecting girls from early marriages by discussing effects of early marriages with stakeholders. 	49	18.3
C	<p>-Donors interventions (school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) • Government bursary (provided fees only to both boys and girls) <p>-Other interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and counselling sessions (to girls, then boys and to both boys and girls by CAMFED, community mentor, teacher mentor, head teacher and women surrounding the school • Mind set change sensitisation campaign to girls and parents about the significance of educating the girl child by role models and well educated people • Parents and landlords were given task to protect girls in self- boarding residences. • Empowering girls to overcome challenges they face in their education circles. 	21	7.8

D	<p>-Donors interventions (provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) • Social welfare, provided fees only to both boys and girls • Government bursary (provided fees only to both girls and boys) • Other interventions • Boarding and boarding facilities to both boys and girls • Guidance and counselling sessions to girls by the teacher mentor and mother groups. • Role models and career talks about educational experiences, challenges and successes to girls, parents and the entire school by Alumni girls of Chawa CDSS who were at various universities, colleges and work places. • Carrying out income generating activities, eg. Beer brewing • Formulation and enforcement of bye-laws by TA Kachere and school rules by the school • Ending child marriages and civic educating parents and communities about the significance of educating the girl child by mother groups. 	5	1.9

E	<p>-Donors interventions (They provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (It supported girls only) • UNICEF (It supported girls only) • Government bursary (provided fees only to both girls and boys) • TA Chilikumwendo bursary (was for both boys and girls fees only) however, it was just effective one term only due to funding problems. <p>-Other interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls empowerment through leadership positions • Guidance and counselling sessions (to girls only) • Administration, mother groups, teacher mentors followed up dropouts using a register • Checking teacher-girl love relationships 	32	11.9
F	<p>-Donors interventions (provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF (supported girls only) • Government bursary (supported both girls and boys with fees only) • CDF (supported both boys and girls with fees only) • PACE Academy Foundation bursary (supported both girls and boys with school fees only) • ZAKAT bursary (supported both girls and boys with school fees) • Other interventions • Boarding school and boarding facilities • The school raised chickens (broilers and layers) and they have a school farm to cultivate their own produce for the basic needs of the needy students • Enforcement of school rules to maximise discipline • Guidance and counselling sessions to both boys and girls, then girls • Role modelling, guidance and counselling and career talks to both girls and boys • Empowering students academically and leadership positions 	10	3.7
G	<p>-Donors interventions (Provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported a total of 32 needy students, girls only) 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF (supported 20 needy students, girls only) • Constituency Development Fund (supported 12 needy students, both boys and girls) • Milliam Foundation in Malawi (supported 40 girls with school fees) • Evans bursary, a well-wisher from Ngononda Village, but based in Addis-Ababa Ethiopia (supported 12 students from his village, 4 students from each class both boys and girls with school fees, and text books and summaries for the entire school) • Government bursary (supported both boys and girls, however, more chances were given to boys because girls benefited more from other donors.) • Father White (Bembeke priest) supported both boys and girls from his home village with school fees • TA Kamenyagwaza bursary (supported both boys and girls with school fees) • Dedza well-wishers based in Dedza district and South Africa school fees • Teachers (supported both girls and boys with accommodation, school fees, entitlements and basic needs) 	15	5.6
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other interventions • Bringing in role models from Bembeke alumni, CAMFED, lawyers, and those from hospitals and agriculture • Prizes best performance awards presentations where TA, group village heads mother groups, teacher mentors talk to students about the significance of school • Carrying out education visit in different places including Lilongwe • Teacher mentor visited girls homes and sensitised, parents and girls about the importance of educating the girl child 		
H	<p>-Donors interventions (provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) • Pace Academy Foundation (previously, supported girls with school fees, however, during the time of research, it stopped for unknown reasons) • MACOHA (supported disabled boys and girls with school fees) • Social welfare (supported both boys and girls with school fees) 	16	6.0

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other interventions • Carrying out casual days and mock wedding to source money • Carrying out girls guidance and counselling • Sensitising parents to take roles and responsibility of their children 		
I	<p>-Donors interventions (they provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) • KOICA (supported teenage mothers only with school fees, entitlements and boarding fees basic needs, radios and torch) • Poverelle sisters from Matumba parish (supported both boys and girls with school fees and boarding facilities) • Social welfare (supported both boys and girls with full boarding and tuition fees) • Other interventions • Boarding school and boarding facilities • Guidance and counselling sessions to girls 	45	16.8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set rules by the school, landlords, parents and girls safeguarding girls • Ending child marriages • School patrolling girls self- boarding residences and relocating them to conducive environments • Girls focusing on their planned goals to achieve 		
J	<p>-Donors interventions they provided school fees and entitlements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMFED (supported girls only) • UNICEF (supported girls only) • Government bursary (supported both girls and boys with school fees and boarding for girls only) • Other interventions • Boarding school and boarding facilities for girls only • Guidance and counselling sessions for girls • Girls empowerment through leadership positions. 	34	12.7
	TOTAL	268	100

The results in Table 4.13, show that CAMFED and UNICEF bursaries support girls with tuition fees and entitlements in all participating schools. Besides tuition fees and entitlement interventions, schools also use other interventions to supplement the support received in an attempt to retain girls in schools. Different schools registered different retention rates depending on the effectiveness of the interventions the school utilised apart from school fees and entitlements given.

The investigation showed that school **(D)** registered the highest retention rate of girls with only 5 dropouts out of 268, representing 1.9%. The school registered the lowest cases of dropouts because of coordination among stakeholders in dealing with the challenges girls face and effective application of multisectoral interventions to deal with several factors that deter girls' retention in schools. School **(B)** on the other hand, experienced the lowest retention rate of girls because it had registered the highest dropout cases of about 49 girls out of 268, representing 18.3%, because the school to a larger extent depended mainly on the bursary interventions alone to retain girls in school. Other interventions were not effectively implemented.

Apart from school **(D)**, other schools with reasonable dropout cases and good retention rate of girls include; school **(F)** with 10 dropouts, representing 3.7%, school **(G)** had 15 dropouts, representing 5.6% and school **(H)** with 16 dropouts, representing 6.0% of the total dropouts.

In brief, the results in Table 4.13, indicate that six schools had high dropout rates with low retention rate. Apart from school **B** which registered the highest dropout cases, other schools which also registered high girls' dropouts include; **I** with 45 dropouts, representing 16.8%, **(A)** with 41 dropouts, representing 15.3%, **J** with 34 dropouts, representing 12.7%, **E** with 32 dropouts, representing 11.9% and school **C** with 21 dropouts, representing 7.8%, respectively.

In order to gather in-depth understanding of how the suggested structural interventions would sustainably retain girls in schools, the researcher through semi-structured interviews and

focused group discussions probed from 109 respondents an in-depth understanding, attitudes and opinions about how the suggested structural intervention strategies could sustainably improve the retention of girls in secondary schools in the district. This is what some of the respondents said;

“For effective retention of girls in secondary schools, there is need for a must government and grassroot participation by the chiefs, parents, girls and the entire community in every project introduced in a community by committing themselves to do something on the same project introduced in an area for its sustainability. If the government, parents and the community members are not ready to participate in the project, the support, donation or bursary should not be implemented in that district, area or school. In this case, if the donors are paying fees and entitlements, parents and government should come in with basic needs such as food, soap, body lotion, and pocket money”. (Dedza District Education Network Officer)

As one way of addressing early marriages, students of Chawa CDSS during focused group discussions suggested that;

“The Malawi government through parliament, chiefs, parents, girls and other stakeholders should revise the marriage entry age of 18 years for girls. Girls should be allowed and accepted to get married either at the age of 20 or 21 when they are matured enough, completed their education with either degree, or diploma and probably started working”. (students, Chawa cdss)

A good number of respondents also emphasised on the need for the formation and enforcement of stiff laws, bye-laws and punishments to the perpetrators to maximise the security of the girl child. They advocated this by saying that;

“The Malawi government through parliament should make and enforce stiff laws, by-laws and stiff punishments like life imprisonment, dismissal from job without warning, and withholding or disqualifying their academic qualifications, thus perpetrators who exploit, impregnate and or marry the school going girls so that he is no longer seen exploiting other girls”.

“This will enhance sustainable retention of girls in schools in the sense that once the life imprisonment has been certified and implemented, some perpetrators intending to commit the same crime will refrain from doing it”. (**Girls of schools A, D and H, TA (01) and GVH (05)**)

To be precise, student (**M**) of school (**D**) emphasised that;

“Teachers, police officers and men from the community must be sensitised and heavily disciplined about protecting and valuing the significance of educating the girl child. This is being the case because in some cases, as we seek help, protection and guidance from these people, they either propose love to us or sexually abuse us before offering the services required. Such perpetrators deserve stiff punishment like dismissal, and at the same time, life imprisonment with hard labour for other perpetrators to learn a lesson”. (**Student M of school D**)

On a different note, Katewe CDSS mother group suggested that;

“Parents, chiefs and mother groups must agree to have a garden to cultivate cash crops, like Irish potatoes, soya beans and or groundnuts. They have to sell the produce and assist the needy students having problems with school fees, entitlements and basic needs for them to stay in school”. (**Katewe CDSS mother group**)

The study results further revealed that once girls are taken on bursaries, parents forget the ownership and responsibilities they have on their own daughters. They expected the same

donors to provide everything including pocket money and basic needs such as food, soap and body lotion to the beneficiaries because they have volunteered to educate them. For example, Katewe CDSS teacher mentor criticised the perception of “one cup fits all approach” which many parents had towards the donors’ role in educating the needy girls by saying that;

“There is need for mind-set change for parents who need donors like CAMFED and UNICEF to provide food and basic needs to the beneficiaries. Such parents have to know that even in the bible, God said that everybody must eat his or her own sweat. Hence, they have to take their responsibility to provide all other necessities not provided by the donors for their girls to get educated”. “Otherwise, these are not CAMFED or UNICEF daughters”. (Katewe CDSS teacher mentor)

Upon being asked on structural intervention strategies that must be taken and applied to improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in the district apart from the financial and material support girls receive, the head teacher of school A recommended the need to intensify boarding facilities, user friendly sanitation and exposing them to role models. He said that;

“Girls retention in schools can be enhanced through provision of boarding facilities, good usable sanitation facilities, deployment of more female civil servants to act as role models and exposing learners to some advanced places such as universities, media houses, courts, parliament where they can interact with some role models from different professions”. (Head teacher of school A, see appendix)

To ensure maximum protection and hardworking spirit of girls in secondary schools as a way of retaining them in schools, the head mistress of school (I) capitalised on the need for shortening the distances girls travel, eradicating sexual abuse and gender based violence

through the establishment of new boarding or just secondary schools, girls' hostels in rural secondary schools where marginalised girls, to a greater extent, were victimised. She said that;

“There is need to have one or more girls boarding secondary school(s) in Dedza District. For example, there is no boarding secondary school in Dedza North West Constituency, only few community day secondary schools which are far apart”. “There is also need to increase the number of community day secondary schools in the district because schools are far apart, as such it becomes difficult for girls to travel long distances, attend all lessons and concentrate on their lessons and studies due to tiredness, and sexual harassment they encountered on their way to and from school”.
(head mistress of school I)

As witnessed in Table 4.12, 39 respondents, representing 18.4% recommended the continuation of the provision of school fees and entitlements not only at secondary level, but also extended to tertiary education. In support of this, one of the respondents said that;

“Donors should continue supporting these girls up to university level, unlike focusing on only at secondary level only”. *(Head mistress of school I)*

4.3. Discussion and interpretation of the findings

This section interprets, integrates and discusses findings with relevant literature informed by interpretivist and post positivism paradigms guided by Transformational Leadership Theory, supported by Tinto's Student Integration Model.

The rationale for the first objective was to analyse factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District in order to explore appropriate structural intervention strategies that could sustainably improve the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district.

The study unveiled that there were so many donors and organisational interventions from diverse corners such as CAMFED, UNICEF, Korea International Agency (KOICA), Poverelle Sisters, Constituency Development Fund, Face Academy Foundation, Norwegian Aid, Mirriam Foundation in Malawi, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education, MACOHA, District Education Network and other stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child in terms of accessing quality education and retaining them in schools. The expectation was that with such diverse donors' interventions that included financial support and basic needs, girls should be retained in schools and complete their secondary education. Despite such efforts on the ground, there has been minimal or no meaningful change in terms of addressing the retention gap that existed, especially for the girl child because girls including the beneficiaries, continue to exponentially dropout of school while in school uniform even when financial support and basic needs were provided.

Questions arise as to what actually motivates the behaviour of dropout in girls and where are the efforts being missed? Is it really the lack of school fees and basic needs? Or are there other underlying factors or correlates on the ground that might be contributing to them dropping out of school? Are bursaries and entitlements given not meeting all the needs for the girl child to stay in school? Or are the financial support and entitlements girls received insufficient? Unsustainable? Or are interventions addressing specific factors but ignoring other pertinent underlying root cause factors unaddressed?

Results showed that all one hundred and nine (N=109) respondents, representing 100% who participated by answering questionnaires, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions, agreed that financial support in form of school fees and material support plus sociocultural support that girls received from donors, organisations, well-wishers and the Malawi government were not enough to maximise sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in the district. From the respondents' perspective, the donations were given direct to

the beneficiaries without consultations with the primary beneficiaries who understand girls' problems better because they were the ones who know what is needed. The support did not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school because donations were often insufficient, unsustainable and focused on specific problems ignoring the vital ones.

However, literature notes that to improve access and learning, general (structural) interventions deliver average gains for girls that are comparable to girl-targeted interventions. Many educational gains for girls may be achieved through non targeted programs. Girl-targeted interventions may make the most sense when addressing constraints that are unique to, or most pronounced for girls. that Many of the most effective interventions to improve access for girls relax household-level constraints (such as cash transfer programs), and many of the most effective interventions to improve learning for girls involve improving the pedagogy of teachers (Evans & Yuan, 2022).

As highlighted by Bembeke CDSS head teacher, Katewe CDSS teacher mentor, student B of Magomero CDSS, student Q of Chitowo CDSS, the District Education Network Officer and CAMFED coordinator, that as much as we appreciate the financial support, entitlements and sociocultural support provided by the Malawi government along with donors, organisations and well-wishers, to educate and retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi, it is worth noting as well that the support given leave out pertinent factors that contribute to girls dropping out of school. Some of these factors include; economic factors, sociocultural factors, school infrastructure and facility factors, political factors, individual related factors and basic needs such as soap, food, clothes, body lotion, cooking oil and upkeep allowance which both parents and donors do not provide despite school fees and entitlements given as reflected in this study.

It is worth arguing, that even if girls can be given school fees, guidance and counselling, and entitlements and leaving out pertinent issues like factors lack of, school infrastructure and

facilities, shortage of resources and qualified teachers, especially female models, long distances girls travel to school, political will, peer pressure, mindset change, lack of role models, guidance and counselling, culture, death of parents and marriage divorce unaddressed; it becomes difficult for the girl child to remain in school. It may be observed that the same beneficiaries may subsequently dropout of school despite the fees or basic needs support rendered. As such, other structural intervention strategies in a multisectoral approach are needed to fully capture these unaddressed correlates that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools.

The study has unravelled evidence showing that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were engaged in love affairs with sugar daddies, boys, motor bike operators and business men to source money for upkeep and basic needs at the expense of protected and unprotected sex. This situation was worse in self–boarding residences where girls formed groups and shared the basic needs. Each one was entitled to contribute basic needs such as food, relish, cooking oil, charcoal or firewood, among others. As quoted from one of the beneficiary girl who complained that she was given K1000 by her father to cater for all basic needs for a duration of two weeks. It was therefore, difficult for her to prioritised the basic needs and wisely spend the money because it was not enough.

On the contrary, as pointed out by the head teacher and girls of Chawa CDSS, it is not justifiable that once girls do not have basic needs and upkeep allowance, they should be engaged in love affairs with men and boys for their immediate rescue. Some of these girls are old enough to seek and do piece work, especially during holidays on their own, to solicit some money for school fees and basic needs. The findings reveal that the main problem is that most of the current teenagers are lazy, they don't want to work but prefer to be given handouts inform of money and resources. This implies that girls need mindset change to empower their own education from dependency syndrome on simple issues to active participation in finding their

own school fees and or basic needs to supplement what parents, donors and well-wishers give them rather than totally depend on parents and donors.

The study results also show that sociocultural factors also hindered the retention of girls in secondary schools in different ways. Out of 109 participants, 50 of them representing 46% advocated for sociocultural factors in form of early marriages, pregnancies, harmful cultural practices, school related gender based violence and teacher related factors that also caused girls to dropout of school in the participating schools. Out of 50 respondents, 18 of them highlighted early marriages, 12 respondents indicated pregnancies, 9 of them pointed out harmful cultural practices while 6 participants advocated for gender based violence and only 4 respondents emphasized teacher related factors. This depicts that, school fees and entitlements beneficiaries receive to a greater extent address proximate interventions like school fees and school related resources, leaving behind distal root causes of girls' dropping out of school.

As reflected in the study, entitlements such as school uniform, pair of shoes, school bags, pair of socks, among others make beneficiaries look attractive, beautiful and smart. This prompted both boys and men to target and go about with these beneficiaries to impregnate and exploit them, simply because of their attractiveness, beautifulness and smartness at the expense of the little money and or basic needs given to them. The study further unveiled that boys exploit these beneficiaries because of jealousy and acts of revenge because of sponsorship biasness as most of these donors except government bursary, support girls only, even if some of the boys are also needy, intelligent, and hard workers. As a revenge, they impregnate and abandon them. This leaves abandoned teenage mothers desperate about daily basic needs support, school fees and entitlements because at this stage, donors withdraw their support. This was evidenced at Bembeke CDSS during 2021/22 academic year whereby 4 beneficiaries had to dropout of school in first and second terms, 2 in form three and 2 in form four due to pregnancy related cases.

Existence of harmful cultural practices like *Mtulangala*, *Chilondola*, *Chidzulaminga* and *Kutomera* in some communities as alluded to by the deputy head teacher of school C, the head teacher of school B and students of school (A) betray girls to proceed with their education. It was revealed that the perpetrators of these harmful cultural practices were uncles, parents and chiefs who received money from the man or boy's parents or relatives who impregnated or married the school going girl. As cited in schools, A, B, C and D, intelligent and hardworking beneficiaries who passed their JCE dropped out of school and got married because of these harmful cultural practices.

Through focused group discussions, it was revealed that the essence of these harmful cultural practices were the communities where these beneficiaries were coming from. Girls were misled by elderly people in their communities basing on the cultural expectations that they were old enough to get married and beyond their present age or sizes, they would not find a man to marry. To cement the marriage bond, parents from either side visit each other to facilitate the payment charges of these cultural practices even if the girl child is still schooling. This in turn, discourage girls' hard working spirit in school because they know that they are already engaged and any time they will marry once the men or boys are ready. In this scenario, school fees, guidance and counselling, and sociocultural support given to girls do not actually target the distal root causes of harmful cultural practices which is the community's culture.

The findings of the study also corresponded to Psaki, et al, (2022) who advocate that in order to retain girls in schools, the focus should be more of contextual factors that might actually be drivers of behaviour change rather than focusing on immediate needs only

Behaviours of some teachers proposing love to girls, especially when they seek resources, clarifications of difficult concepts and any sort of help from such teachers was also a cause to some girls dropping out of school. As witnessed in schools A, D and H, teachers proposed love

to girls with the intention of exploiting them. The implication of this in the education of the girl child was that in the instance that the love proposal was accepted, the teacher was looked at as a husband, teaching his own wife. Likewise, when the love proposal has been turned down, girls failed to concentrate on their studies either because of fear or lack of peace in their minds due to reactions from such teachers towards the girls. Unless such behaviours were fully controlled, girls would keep on dropping out of school.

Underwood, et al. (2011) and Karim, (2016) also recommended that school related gender based violence in forms of physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment that girls suffer within and around the school surrounding and communities perpetuated by community members, students, parents and teachers to a certain extent therefore contribute to girls' dropout of school in the district. The findings established that parents to a certain extent, use girls as source of labour, money and family basic needs by forcing them to engage in sexual activities. Likewise, some policemen and teachers who were regarded as the hope for the girls' protection, deemed to be the first people demanding sex from the victim before helping her in case of an incidence of gender based violence presented to them for their assistance. In such situations, the girl child who is also a victim became stranded and hopeless and eventually decided to dropout of school. This concurs with USAID (2014) study conducted in Mzimba North, Ntchisi, Balaka and Thyolo districts in Malawi, investigating grade repetition and dropouts in primary schools. USAID report established that community leaders complained about harsh treatment of teachers and offensive language used towards over-age girls and students repeating grades.

Likewise, Malongo's (2016) in a study conducted in Nkhata-Bay, examining factors that influence high school dropout of female students in Nkhata-Bay, highlighted that teachers made ill remarks to girls, especially those with big breasts regarding their physique. The study

further pointed out that some teachers coaxed girls in establishing love relationships and impregnating them in the process.

Inadequate school infrastructure facilities, teaching and learning resources and lack of qualified teachers were the other factors cited by respondents contributing to girls including beneficiaries, to dropout of school even if school fees and entitlements were given.

Statistics showed that out of 109 participants, 18 respondents, representing 17% pointed out that due to inadequate school infrastructure facilities like girls' hostels, girls walk long distances to school. To lessen the distance travelled, some girls were forced to engage self-boarding services surrounding the school campus or nearby trading centres while others simply dropped out of school. Guardians or parents feared the fate of exploitation of their daughters by evil men or boys due to lack of security in self-boarding residences. They argued that in self-boarding residences, girls freely invite boys or men to spend a night with them because they were not supervised by teachers during the night.

Although the 2014 National Girls' Education Strategy aimed at ensuring that all girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable socioeconomic development by 2018, this has not been the case with girls especially in CDSSs. Such girls face problems of inadequate school infrastructure and facilities, teaching and learning resources such as text books, qualified teachers, laboratories, hostels and boarding facilities. For example, Matundu CDSS experienced a critical shortage of qualified teachers and improper subject matrix route taken. The school had only 7 teachers against forms 1 to 4 and offered only 7 subjects without a proper matrix route. As claimed by the students, teacher mentor and students during semi-structured interviews and focused group discussion, the school offered English, Mathematics, Chichewa, Biology, Agriculture, Physics and Geography which to students seemed to be difficult and leaving out Social and

Development Studies, Bible Knowledge, Life skills and Chemistry which were considered by students to be simpler. There was a barrier for those who wanted to take the sciences route because the school offered only Physics, not Chemistry and at the same time, the school had chosen the matrix route that proved difficult to students. Hence, it was likely for them to fail examinations, transferred to other schools or dropped out of school even if school fees and entitlements were given. This kind of scenario calls for a wide range of interventions including school infrastructure and facilities, qualified human personnel, proper matrix route taken and teaching and learning resources for girls to stay in schools and excel with their education apart from proximate interventions.

TA (06) argued that lack of political will by the Malawi government on education structure, pre-education school entry age and marriage entry age of 18 years, also contributed to girls' dropout of secondary schools despite school fees and entitlements given. As observed by Traditional Authority (06), the school entry age of 6 years betrays students, especially girls in rural set up than their counterparts in town and cities in Malawi. Students in rural areas start standard one very late at exactly 6 years or above with zero (0) knowledge of school culture unlike their counterparts in cities and towns who start standard one either at the age of 4 or 5 years with sound knowledge of school culture due to the presence of many private nursery schools. The TA's understanding concurs with the Malawi Education Sector Analysis which highlights that apart from low access to Early Childhood Development by Children, the services in ECD are quite different from site to site. These Early Childhood Development Centres especially in rural areas are not standardised such that communities use shift structures which are not long lasting. Caregivers are not enough, children are combined in a multi-age learning conditions (MoEST, 2019, MoEST, 2020).

Unlike rural areas, private nursery schools in cities, towns and semi-urban areas are standardised and use an international curriculum where learning is organised similarly to the

primary school setting. Although ECD's vision and mission is to develop children holistically and provide the Malawian child with high quality services in early childhood care that ensure his or her active participation in national development. The ECD faces numerous challenges in terms of limited guides and guideline materials in ECD centres, policies are not well known, caregivers are not trained, materials are hard to find and poor infrastructure (MoEST, 2020).

To embrace ECD so that girls start school earlier and get retained in schools, there is need for adequate funding to train the ECD personnel (caregivers) in pedagogy and child development, better infrastructure, enough resources, harmonised curriculum beyond just caregiving and maximum supervision of the programme.

In line with TA (06) thinking, it would be better if children start standard one at the age of 4¹/₂ years old rather than at the age of 6 years. This might enable girls especially in rural areas, to complete their secondary school at a tender age, while still in school mood and actively involved in school activities. Biologically, girls grow faster than boys. At the time they become sexually active, they might be finishing their secondary level, matured enough to make their own decisions about their future, and probably be at an advanced stage with their education, either second or third year at university. In so doing, it will be difficult for them to dropout of school anyhow as their focus will be achieving the set goals.

As regards marriage entry age of 18 years, the constitution of Malawi safeguards the girl child from early marriage while she is 18 years and below. The same constitution gives the mandate that no person over the age of eighteen years shall be prevented from entering into marriage (The Malawi Constitution, 2022, P. 12). This implies that the constitution takes the family as a natural and fundamental group (unit) of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state. The investigation has found that Traditional Authorities, chiefs, parents and other stakeholders failed to prosecute culprits who married nineteen years old school going girls.

This had been the case because the constitution is not clear once the girl child reaches nineteen years and above in terms of marriage versus education rights. The fact that girls in rural areas start school very late, and that they reach eighteen years either in standard eight or form one means that there is conflict between the law and the rural child education rights. This contradiction arises because once she gets married at 19 while in form two or three, it becomes difficult to prosecute the perpetrator because the constitution mandates her to get married without being forced or coerced.

Peer pressure was also identified by respondents to be one of the hindering factors for girls staying in school. The findings revealed that most girls including beneficiaries admire fellow girls who get married and have babies. They feel that being at secondary school without a love partner is being backward and were laughed at. Hence, they copied and engaged in unprotected sex to show affection to their loved partners. For example, in schools (I) and (D) order and clever girls used condoms during sexual intercourse, while those without experience, especially form one girls were easily cheated by fellow girls, men and boys to indulge in unprotected sex. As a result, they were impregnated and eventually dropped out of school.

Due to the same peer pressure, some girls further dropped out of school because of extravagant life style. Such students had no interest in school and with or without full support, they still more dropped out of school. To supplement the support given by donors and parents, they copied their friends' affluent and immoral behaviours and ended up being impregnated, and dropping out of school.

Lack of mindset change and role models also hindered the retention rate of girls in the participating schools. The results demonstrated that some girls and parents valued marriage more than education. They get discouraged upon seeing many children completing their secondary and university education, yet not getting employed. This made them take school as

valueless and time wastage because chances of securing jobs after school are rare. On the contrary, frequently exposing girls to role models as was the case with schools **F**, **G** and **I** made them get inspired, work hard, get determined and set up goals to achieve in their lives. This, to a certain extent, contributed a lot to low girls' dropout cases in these schools unlike schools **A**, **B**, **E** and **I** which registered high dropout cases.

Lack of mindset change to a certain extent was as a result of low levels of parental education and aspiration toward the education of the girl child. The study revealed that once girls have been taken on bursaries, parents expect the same donors, well-wishers and the government, to provide guidance and counselling, basic needs such as soap, food, body lotion and upkeep allowances to their daughters as if they are UNICEF, CAMFED and government daughters. With such mindset, it shows that more needs to be done in terms of mindset and behaviour change, to have girls retained in schools. Though it cannot be an overnight change, but more knowledge to the stakeholders, understanding and community mobilisation changes may be observed as time goes.

The results underscore that many girls including beneficiaries are naïve to the intentions of donation and entitlements given to them, the reasons why they are learning, the reasons why they have been picked out of all girls in specific schools and they do not have even set goals to achieve in their lives. This now calls for effective and consistent guidance and counselling sessions and career talks to girls, parents and other stake holders for the girls to cope with stress, anxiety and critical situations that endanger their education, while other stakeholders appreciate the need to educate the girl child apart from bursaries, psychosocial support and entitlements given.

Lastly, the results established that marriage break up and death of parents force girls to dropout of school in the sense that it becomes difficult for the step fathers and step mothers to fully

support the step children as was the case with biological parents. In case of marriage break up or death of parent(s), it is likely that parents remarry. Their children end up being raised by step parents or guardians. Usually, the relationship between the children and step parents or guardians becomes strained than that of their biological parents. The same step parents sometimes become culprits of exploiting step daughters instead of protecting them. As pointed out by TA (04), a group village head **X, (name withheld)** instead of protecting step daughter **M, (name withheld)**. He sexually exploited her for a while. Although the culprit was brought to court for prosecution, but the court did not find him guilty. Instead, he was interdicted from his chieftainship by T (06) on the condition of an abuse of his office such that people can no longer trust his services.

This shows that marriage break up and death of parents need to be considered when addressing factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools apart from economic and material interventions for them to stay in school.

In this particular objective, one of the main findings was that retention of girls in schools was hindered by a multiple range of factors, such that the provision of bursaries, entitlements and guidance and counselling alone did not actually reflect into having girls retained in schools. More structural interventions were needed to target both, proximate and distal root causes of girls dropping out of school.

The commonly reasons for the dropouts as outlined in the Ministry of Education (2022) include; family responsibilities, pregnancy, marriage, unable to pay school fees, employment, sickness, poor facilities, inadequate teachers, long distances, Gender Based Violence, general lack of interest and others. The report further indicated that in 2020/21 academic year, the ministry registered a total of 20,063 dropouts. This is a drop from 29,122 reported in 2019/20 academic year. Of these, 13973 were female students representing 61% while 39% dropouts

were female students. This justifies that when addressing factors that cause dropout of female students from schools, there is need for a wide range of structural intervention strategies to address both immediate and distal root causes in a collaboration, networking, and coordinated effort among all stakeholders, including the primary beneficiaries.

In terms of policy direction, there is need for policy makers to revise, consult and capitalise boarding policy in all Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi. There is need for the parliament to allocate budget, funding and donations specific for the construction of boarding facilities, including hostels. The government should also engage the same donors that empower the education for the girl child on the same project. In so doing, problems of long distances girls travel, self- boarding services, basic needs, maximum protection, and full concentration on studies can be solved.

Secondly, revision of the education policy should also consider changing the school starting age from 6 years to either 4 or 5 years with a good administrative structure for Early Childhood Development Centres in terms of curriculum, qualified teachers, administration and infrastructure development with maximum supervision as being the case with primary school section.

Furthermore, the constitution of Malawi should also be revised and amended on marriage entry age from 18 years to either 20 or 21 years. This will enable girls to finish their secondary level while at a tender age, and the time they become sexually active, they will be matured enough in terms of thinking and probably at college or university. At this level, it becomes difficult to dropout of school anyhow. In a related development, the constitution should also be clear on the protection of the girl child in marriage versus education on girls who have attained above 18 years. The study has revealed that primary stakeholders such as TAs, chiefs, parents and Civil Society Organisations failed to prosecute accordingly perpetrators who happen to marry

19-year school going girls. Their argument was that, the constitution is silent on girls who are above 18 years and they freely want to marry. The findings also revealed that due such silence by the constitution on the way forward, the chiefs are reluctant to act accordingly to rescue such girls from early marriages in relation to the constitution of the land.

Lastly, it could also be good for all donors, organisations within the same catchment area to coordinate, engage the primary beneficiaries and vary their interventions to address both, proximate and distal underlying root causes, depending on the needs of that society rather than one cup fits all. Engaging primary beneficiaries would help in mindset change and transformation of all stakeholders, including girls in their thinking, actions, expectations, perceptions and attitudes towards the education for the girl child by being committed to take part in every project introduced in the community by being committed to do something on the same project being implemented for its effectiveness and sustainability.

The second study objective was to examine interventions being done that attempt to improve retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. The results showed that various interventions existed in the participating schools that attempted to retain girls in schools by donors, government and well-wishers. However, most of the interventions were girl-targeted interventions that attempted to address constraints that are unique to or most pronounced for girls only rather than a mixture of general and girl targeted interventions (Evans & Yuan, 2022). Most of the interventions were just imposed on the beneficiaries without engaging the primary beneficiaries. As a result, they did not fully reflect the behaviour change among beneficiaries of being retained in schools.

As witnessed from the study, donors and well-wishers such as ; CAMFED, UNICEF, Poverelle Sisters, District Education Network (DEN), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Constituency Development Fund (CDF), MACOHA, Face Academy Foundation,

Norwegian Aid, Chiefs Council, Mirriam Foundation in Malawi, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (YECE), Dedza Diocese priest father and well-wishers like teachers, Bembeke Alumni and individuals from Dedza District and working in Dedza and others Dedza District but based in South Africa attempted not only to empower the education of the girl child but also retain them in school.

The results acknowledged that most of the interventions implemented were similar and comprised school fees, entitlements like school uniform, College exercise books and hardcovers, writing materials, i.e. pens and pencils, pair of school shoes and socks, sanitary pads, school bags, radios, mathematical sets, scientific calculators and pocket money in some cases. Some schools on their own, applied extra interventions such as role modelling and career talks, enforcement of by-laws and school regulations, mindset change, guidance and counselling to girls, grassroot participation and income generating activities in attempt to supplement the support given. Some schools privileged with the lowest number of donors like 3 donors while others had 4, 5, 6 and up to 10 donors as shown in table 4.13. Most of these donors except government bursary, ZAKAT and Constituency Development Fund targeted and assisted girls only. Government, ZAKAT and Constituency Development Fund supported both girls and boys.

From the findings, it was acknowledged that MACOHA, YECE, Face Academy, Mirriam Foundation in Malawi, Norwegian Aid operated in schools within Umbwi cluster covering schools like Umbwi Secondary School, Mchisu CDSS and Bembeke CDSS only for their own reasons while KOICA and Poverelle Sisters supported beneficiaries from Magomero and Chimphalika schools in Chawa cluster. ZAKAT worked with Umbwi Secondary School only. KOICA on the other hand, targeted teenage mothers who have given birth to their children and decided to go back to school. Beneficiaries (teenage mothers) were provided with radios,

school fees, i.e. tuition fees or tuition plus boarding fees and entitlements such as, school uniform, exercise books, writing materials, pocket money, school bags, and pair of school shoes at Magomero and Chimphalika secondary schools.

Unlike other donors, the District Education Network targeted harmful cultural practices, ending early marriages and gender based violence so that girls proceed and complete their education. However, culture from the perspective of DEN was identified as one of the biggest challenge that forced many girls to dropout of school. Through community policing, DEN brought to book culprits found impregnating and marrying the school going girl child for prosecution to face the consequences of the law once proved guilty for others to refrain from committing similar offences.

Despite the good motive by the DEN, the main challenge was that the perpetrators of impregnating or marrying the school girl, acted critically and cleverly persuading or cheating the girl, her parents, chiefs and relatives especially uncle, either to marry the girl or support her and the child, while in actual sense they escaped from the prosecution against the crime they have committed. In such situation, DEN failed to gather concrete evidence to prosecute the culprits.

Due to Covid 19, financial constraints, donor fatigue, expiring of the operational time frame and unknown reasons; Norwegian Aid, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (YECE), Chiefs Council, CAMFED, Face Academy Foundation and MACOHA among others stopped supporting girls as witnessed in schools G, H, and F in Umbwi cluster.

This was witnessed from different respondents through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. They would rather love these donors, organisations and government to improve some of their services if effective girls' retention is to be achieved in the district.

The study findings corresponded with Austrian's, et al. (2020) study conducted in Zambia on the Impact of the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program (AGEP) on short and long term social, economic, education and fertility outcomes, who acknowledged that when addressing long-term educational and fertility outcomes among very vulnerable adolescent girls, interventions that only target the girl child herself, may not be sufficient.

Likewise, the related literature review advocated that much as donors, organisations and the Malawi government are appreciated on good work of empowering the education of the girl child through the provision of tuition fees, entitlements, guidance and counselling; it is worth noting that such interventions do not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school. As such, there is need for multisectoral interventions by the concerned stakeholders to maximise girls' retention. Onuko established that although the Kenyan government was committed to help the female students, especially orphans and the poor, achieve secondary education through the provision of bursaries, was faced with numerous challenges. The amount of funds available did not match with the huge number of the needy applicants, there were also delays in disbursement of funds, and there was lack of transparency and accountability in the identification of the beneficiaries (Onuko, 2012).

In Malawian perspective, Ministry of Education (2022) report shows that a total of 57,661 students in Malawi applied for bursary in the 2022 academic year. Of these, 21,861 received the bursaries representing 37.9 %. This according to the report, is a statistical drop from the 2020/21 academic year where only 49.7 percent of students who applied for bursary received. Of the students that applied for bursary, 53 percent were female while 47 percent were males. Out of those students that received bursaries, 56 percent were females while 44 percent were males. The results show a similar situation across districts where the number of students that received bursaries were less than those that applied (MoE, 2022).

If beneficiaries were given the necessary basic needs for them to stay in schools, but they still more dropped out of school while in school uniform even when school fees, entitlements, guidance and counselling were given to them. Questions arise to “*what actually motivates the behaviour of dropout? Is it really lack of basic needs or there are other underlining factors on the ground that might contribute to them to dropout of school? what’s the way forward to sustainably retain them in schools?*”

In view of these questions, in the first place, the introduced support programmes must not be “one size fits all project”. If the project is effective in the country, America for example, it is not automatic that the project can be implemented exactly in the same way in the Malawian set up because Malawi and America are different countries and have different cultures. As such, the introduced project should meet the needs of the Malawian context or set up because different communities in Malawi have specific needs, culture and ways of doing things rather than just imposing the project like what most of these interventions on the ground do, that cannot work at all cost.

Secondly, there is need for primary beneficiaries’ participation in every project introduced in an area by being committed to do something for its sustainability. In this case if stakeholders such as government, parents, chiefs, girls and the entire community fail to take part in providing the basic needs and addressing other factors that hinder the retention of girls in schools, the support project should not be implemented in that area.

Likewise, the project or donations must be tailor made. This implies that donations or project should not assist a girl child as an individual but at household level. As they are supporting the girl child, they should also base their support at the family level so that if the environment at home is conducive, the same environment must be maintained at school level. Hence, she

cannot stop learning if the environment at both levels is the same, unlike when the environment differs, nothing will change.

The last objective was meant to explore from 109 respondents the structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. The objective was significant in the sense that the explored structural intervention strategies, would positively guide the relevant authorities, the education sector, and policy makers to strategise and apply them in addressing factors that hinder the retention rate of girls in schools so that quality education for all is achieved across the country.

Structural intervention strategies as advocated by Blankenship et al. (2006) and Sampa, et al. (2021) build economic opportunities, expand access to education, enhance grassroots participation and promote collective action towards the intended goal to achieve, i.e. girls' retention in this case. They create an environment for change by reducing the underlying proximate and distal root causes of dropout and enabling people to acknowledge a positive change through a collective action by all the stakeholders.

The results acknowledged and recommended the good work done by donors, organisations and the Malawian government on the financial support, material support not forgetting guidance and counselling sessions provided for the girl child to access quality education, and probably excel in her education. It is the expectation of everybody seeing these beneficiaries not dropping out of school because to a larger extent, the support being given would facilitate their education. However, the prevalence of dropouts after the support being given depict either the support does not actually reflect the beneficiaries' behaviour change in terms of being retained in schools or not addressing the gap in terms of retaining girls in secondary schools despite a wide range of interventions from diverse corners.

As a headway, there is need to understand the genesis of the problem, i.e. proximate and distal root causes, engage primary beneficiaries, explore sustainable interventions to address the gap, determine ways of addressing the causes and how best the stakeholders should be involved in addressing both immediate and underlying root causes of girls' dropouts in a participatory coordinated approach. In the health sector for example, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation successfully used community mobilisation strategy based on *Sonagachi* sex workers to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in India. As described by Blankenship et al. (2006), in 2003, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation launched a new initiative to Avahan- whereby \$200 million was committed to HIV prevention in India in the six states with highest HIV prevalence. A key component of Avahan was a community mobilisation strategy based on *Sonagachi* sex workers. Rather than treating sex workers as the beneficiaries of prevention programmes, the *Sonagachi* project emphasised their representation and active participation in all aspects of the programme. Although the programme often begun at the initiation of an outside Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or similar organisation, the ultimate goal was for the entire intervention to be run by sex workers themselves, at all levels eliminating the need for the NGO.

This can be adapted in the education sector whereby girls, parents, chiefs, community members and the entire nation in conjunction with the donors, organisations and the government may come together and address barriers that hinder girls' retention in schools for the betterment of their own daughters, rather than just relying on top-down interventions brought in by donors and organisations from outside Malawi. The interventions seem not making headway in terms of addressing the problem of girls' dropout of school on the ground.

If the suggested structural intervention strategies in Table 4.12, can be effectively implemented in a multisectoral and coordinated approach, sustainable retention of girls in schools could be achieved in Malawi as was the case with schools **D, F, G and H** which registered few dropout

cases as evidenced in Table 4.13. Different stakeholders with a wide range of interventions managed to address specific factors that hinder girls' retention in schools and uniformly, they managed to retain a good number of girls in schools unlike their counterparts who largely depended on donors' interventions only.

From the perspective of the beneficiaries, no single strategy is worth enough to sustainably retain girls in secondary schools but combination options. Combination options as described by Hankins and de Zaldondo (2010), Baxter and Karim (2016) and Underwood et al. (2011) denoted multi-component or multi-pronged approaches that integrate two or several intervention designs to mitigate the challenges in a community. In this case, combinations of donors' financial and entitlement interventions, readmission policy and Secondary Education Expansion for Development, together can sustainably retain girls in schools in Malawi.

Malawi as a country, has various frameworks and development instruments well positioned to support commitments to girls' education, but the challenge is that they are lacking effective implementation and monitoring. For example, the 2006 Readmission Policy, the 2011-2016 Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II, the 1994 Free Primary Education policy and the 2015 to 2020 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) (Civil Society Education Coalition, 2014).

Readmission policy for example, as described by the CSEC (2014) and MoEST (2018) was introduced to promote gender equity and advancement of girls in education. The policy was introduced because retention of girls was still a major challenge as more girls were dropping out of school due to teenage pregnancy. That was why the ministry introduced the readmission policy as early as 1993 to ensure that more girls complete school by addressing barriers that prevent girls from being retained in school and complete the education cycles at both primary and secondary schools. Since the inception of this policy, many girls have benefited from this

policy. However, emerging issues including policy shifts in both primary and secondary schools affected the proper implementation of the policy (MoEST, 2018).

Although the Ministry developed guidelines in 1996 to facilitate the comprehension of the policy, not all communities and head teachers understood the policy. Absence of comprehensive policy and its guidelines led to variation in the implementation of the policy in schools. The policy was more like punitive and apply reactionary measures as opposed to supporting the learner; lack of clarity in the readmission procedures and lengthy processes to readmit the learners; negative attitudes towards teenage mothers and socio-economic constraints which often lead to early marriages. These barriers, coupled with poverty and unprofessional teacher conduct, affected successful implementation of the readmission policy. Consequently, this led to poor retention of girls and lack of counselling and psychosocial support.

Likewise, the Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) project to expand secondary schools in urban areas and establish new secondary schools in rural areas would likely encourage students, especially girls to access quality educations and be retained in schools if the project would have also included construction of girls hostels in identified sites.

According to Ministry of Education (2022)'s Malawi Education Statistics Report, the Malawi government through the support from the government of the United States of America planned to expand 250 secondary schools and establish new secondary schools in rural areas across the country. The project was designed in such a way that a total number of 250 secondary schools were to be expanded and established across the country under the support of the Government of United States of America (MoE, 2022). Phase one of the project was designated to expand 30 urban CDSSs; 13 in Lilongwe, 9 in Blantyre, 4 in Mzuzu and 4 in Zomba. Phase two of the

project targeted the construction of 200 new secondary schools in rural areas across the country in four groups in this phase.

In phase two group one of the project, 38 sites were identified including school (A) which privileged to be among the chosen sites. The contractors came, collected samples and did all the logistics to commence the construction. To the surprise, the project experienced a natural death as there was no work done on the ground. Upon consultation, the head teacher of school A, Senior group Village Head (03), chiefs, mother group, teacher mentor and parents as part and parcel of the respondents of the study, they showed that they had no knowledge and direction on the progress of the project.

Implementation of such projects with the inclusion of hostels in schools would likely encourage students' retention, especially girls, to access quality education, work hard in school, protected from sexual abuse and gender based violence, among others. This can be the case due to the availability of infrastructure like hostels, library, laboratory, teaching and learning classrooms and resources. However, such natural death or politicizing the project entail that girls' dropout cases will keep on increasing unless tangible interventions must be applied.

Similarly, the National Girls' Education Communication Strategy (NGECS) intended to address the root cause of low participation of girls in education at various subsectors but little was observed on the ground. The strategy, as stipulated by Dr McPhail Magwira, Principal Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, outlined ways in which the ministry and its development partners intended to provide technical support to stakeholders to promote girls' education (MoEST, 2014d, P. v). Its' outcome was designed to create an environment that makes caregivers, families, leaders and communities to take action in prioritising the girl child. However, such action advocated in NGES was not observed in the participating schools. Combination options should also involve selection criteria of the beneficiaries. Apart from

including the boy child in the support programme, selection criteria of the beneficiaries should also focus on the academic performance of the needy students, engage chiefs in the selection process who have true reflection of real needy students deserving sponsorship. This will help to reduce instances of giving sponsorship to undeserving students as witnessed at school H whereby one of the selected students openly said that she was not comfortable and worth student to receive CAMFED bursary and entitlements because her parents were able to provide her with everything for her at school. Hence, she requested the school to identify somebody to replace her. She further criticised snap shots taken during entitlements giving. According to her, snap taking portrays that such girls were the poorest in Malawi. This would also help to reduce instances of beneficiaries' replacement whereby the real beneficiaries dropped out of school sometime back and were replaced by new girls bearing the name of the former beneficiary just for sake of securing the donation. Replacement cases were greatly observed during transition from primary school to secondary section, especially during dropout, pregnancies, early marriages or death cases of the real beneficiary. This happened as a result of a newly introduced system of the identification of CAMFED beneficiaries which happened while students were still at primary school.

Combination of effective development, monitoring and implementation of readmission policy by the policy makers and implementers, expansion and establishment of secondary schools plus hostels in urban and rural areas by the government, effective address of the root cause of low participation of girls in various subsectors of education by the National Girls' Education Communication Strategy and the usual provision of financial bursaries, entitlements and guidance and counselling by the donors, organisations and role models as a team together, surely, sustainable retention of girls in schools can be achieved. The results revealed that the factors that hinder the retention of girls in schools are contextual in nature, with different

dynamics from one area to another. As such, the combination options above would uniformly address the complication on the ground by coming up with positive outcomes.

The findings partially were consistent with the findings by Ochieng (2010). Oywa (2012) and Chacha (2012) who conducted similar studies in Kenya on retention of girls in schools and social-cultural factors in academic performance of female learners along the lake shore region. Their studies acknowledged the complexity of female students being retained in school as many of them dropout of school, instead of being retained. However, the studies did not go deep into exploring strategies of retaining them in schools. Oywa's (2012) study in Suba District in Kenya indicated that the district continued to register the poorest retention rates of girls due to early marriages, HIV/AIDS and lack of regard for girls' education. Even those few retained, their performance was worse.

Likewise, Chacha's (2012) study on parameters of access, transitions and retention of girls across educational levels in Gwasi (Kenya) showed that personal characteristics, distances girls travel to school, family networks and household chores negate the call for retention of girls throughout levels of learning in the region studied.

In conformity, Cardine's Homa-Bay District study on influence of social-cultural factors in academic performance of female learners along the lake shore region communities established that the number of girls retained in school reduced with age. At the age of 15 years, many girls were opting out of school for marriage, caring for orphans and siblings as a result of HIV/AIDS or giving way for their brothers first to be catered for in schools (Ochieng, 2010).

From the related studies carried out above, it can be acknowledged that retention rate of girls in schools remains a challenge because many female students dropout of school than their male counterparts for diverse reasons. As such, the interventions being carried out should always focus on behaviour change among girls towards liking school. Behaviour change is not an

overnight thing. It is a gradual process such that the impact cannot be currently seen as it is incremental and progressing, such that outcomes require a period of time with more knowledge, understanding and community mobilisation for change to be seen.

4.4. Application of Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto's Student Integration

Model to the findings

Transformational Leadership Theory as described by Northhouse (2016) transform both the leader and followers with a positive perception towards a common goal to achieve through interdependence, integrity, harmonised culture, empowerment, shared vision, self-reflection, ethical and charisma among stakeholders. For the effective retention of girls in schools as the theory suggests, there is need to transform peoples' mindset, expectations, perceptions, interest, attitudes, attributes, favourable relationships in a holistic and coordinated approach to educate and retain girls in schools.

The study revealed that retention of girls in secondary schools is being hindered by socio-economic factors, sociocultural factors, lack of government political will, school based factors and individual related factors. For effective retention, the theory suggests the need for cordial interdependence between the leaders (education managers, donors, organisations and other stakeholders) and followers (girls, primary beneficiaries and all stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child) through the aspects of Transformational Leadership Theory mentioned above to address both proximate and distal underlying root causes that hinder the retention of girls in schools. Working in isolation and one cup fits all approach currently being used by the donors, proves ineffective as girls still more continue to dropout of school despite the support being given. The current interventions seem to lack sustainability and they mostly target proximate factors to a greater extent.

Likewise, Tinto's Student Integration Model advocates three sources of students' departure from school such as academic difficulties, individual's inability to solve his or her education

goals and failure to become incorporated in the intellectual and social institution (Draper, 2008). The model on the other hand, indicates three principles of effective students' retention namely; institution commitment to students' needs, i.e. school programmes must meet and serve students' need. It also advocates social and intellectual community integration principles whereby programmes must be committed as well to develop supportive social and educational communities in which students are integrated as competent members (Draper, 2008).

The model further outlines that students join an institution with different background and commitments towards education. Positive background characteristics and initial commitments by students toward school do not only influence academic performance but also interaction and integration into social and academic systems. According to the model, students' persistence or dropout decision is determined by the degree of being academically and socially integrated. As such, the used interventions in Table 4.11 were just good and commendable. However, apart from addressing immediate factors, they were not effectively implemented because a good number of respondents justified that donors were operating in isolation and addressed the related challenges instead of varying their support to address underlying challenges that girls face.

Once the girl child on her own is committed to achieve specific goals in life and the institution and community are committed as well to empower her education, definitely academic integration, intellectual development, peer interactions and faculty interaction can be achieved. So the greater the individual's academic and social integration, the higher the commitment she becomes to achieve the intended goals supported by the institution, the lower the chances of dropping out of school and vice versa. Social and academic integration and effective application of the theoretical framework and the model on the explored structural intervention strategies in Table 4.12, Malawi as a nation would sustainably enhance the girl child surpass academic difficulties, solve her educational challenges and becomes intrinsically and

extrinsically motivated, and retained in school in the process. In such essence, it is unlikely for the girl child to dropout of school.

In summary, if more girls are retained in schools in Malawi and effectively empowered to achieve their educational goals, Malawi as a nation will have more experienced female human resource to achieve inclusive wealth creation and be self-reliant. The Malawi Vision 2063 advocates the intention of Malawi as a nation being committed to address the key challenges and barriers to youth development, protect their health and wellbeing through the provision and accessibility of quality education skills, development and decent work opportunities without leaving anyone behind (National Planning Commission, 2020). It is only the educated youth including girls who can actively participate in productivity, commercialisation, industrialisation and urbanisation pillars of development through decision making and governance systems.

As much as Malawi Vision 2063 is aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with aspirations and focus on people's inclusive wealth creation and self-reliance sustained across sectors and generations without leaving anyone behind, but if Malawi as a nation fails to retain girls in schools, it will be difficult to transform the economic and political systems that govern world societies. This will be the case because there will be few or none representation of experienced females with dynamic leadership skills and competency in various domains of development because many of them will have been dropped out of school than being retained.

4.5. Chapter summary

In the chapter, quantitative and qualitative data have been presented, analysed and discussed on the topic “exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi”. The discussed study objectives include; assess factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi, examine the

current interventions being done that attempt to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi and explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

In each and every objective, the quantitative data has been analysed using Microsoft Excel software, summarised and presented in form of tables, graphs, diagrams, pie chart, while qualitative data has been manually analysed, triangulated, transcribed, coded and categorised in themes in line with the study objectives. In each objective, the quantitative data has been presented and analysed first, followed by qualitative data, and thereafter discussion of the findings of all three objectives together.

In both cases, the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study have been supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, Tinto's Student Integration Model, specific objectives, conceptual framework and interpretivism and post positivism philosophical paradigms.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of the study on the exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District. It also presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study and hence, gives suggestions on areas for further research.

5.1. Summary of findings

The purpose of the study was to explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi. A case study of ten selected secondary schools in Dedza District, in the Central West Education Division.

The study identified the gaps in most of the studies that have been carried out, which mainly focused on factors that influence high dropout rates of female students in secondary schools without going deeper into exploration of structural intervention strategies that could sustainably retain girls in secondary schools.

The study adopted a cross-sectional case study survey research design supported by Transformational Leadership Theoretical Framework, Tinto's Student Integration Model and a combination of interpretivist and post-positivism paradigms with mixed approach in line with the study objectives.

Three study objectives were formulated to guide the study. Research objective one was to assess factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District, the research objective two was to examine interventions being done in an attempt to improve the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and, the last one explored structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in the district.

The related literature review has dealt with education and retention of girls in secondary education in Malawi and abroad. The areas covered by related literature review include; factors that hinder retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Malawi and abroad, which comprised sociocultural factors, school infrastructure and facility factors, and economic factors. The related literature review has also covered the current intervention status quo in Malawi, Sub Saharan Africa and in other areas in an attempted to improve girls' retention in secondary schools. Among others, the discussed interventions include donors that provided school fees and entitlements, and different organisations focused on combination social protection, economic and education interventions. Success structural intervention strategies in other departments in other countries, that if can be borrowed to the education sector, can bring about change in the education sector.

The findings revealed that there were several factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District, ranging from economic factors, sociocultural factors to other related factors such as school infrastructure and facility factors, political factors and individual related factors.

The findings revealed that economic factors which constituted poverty and hunger, domestic work (household work and child labour), direct and indirect costs in form of lack of school fees and basic needs hindered the retention rate of girls in secondary schools in the district. Lack of school fees and basic needs contributed enormously to the problem with 67%, while poverty and hunger registered the lowest with 23% of the total respondents.

Sociocultural factors which comprised early marriages, pregnancies, harmful cultural practices, school related gender based violence and teacher related factors, also hindered the retention of girls in the participating secondary schools in Dedza District. In sociocultural factors, early marriages were recommended by the respondents as the main factor that caused many girls to

dropout of school with 36%. Only 4 respondents, representing 8% advocated for teacher related factors.

On other related factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools, respondents focused much on infrastructure and facility factors, political factors and individual related factors such that 74 respondents, representing 67.9%, recommended individual related factors which needed to be addressed in order to retain them in schools.

The most recommended interventions as revealed by the study include; provision of bursaries in form of school fees and entitlements by organisations, donors and well-wishers, guidance and counselling sessions, role models and career talks, ending child marriages, farming, doing business or piece work, employment, empowering girls with leadership positions, formulation and enforcement of by-laws, hard-working spirit to withstand pressure, psychosocial support, getting back entitlements from married beneficiaries, ending gender based violence and replacement of married beneficiaries with new needy girls.

The investigation has shown that interventions done to retain girls in schools were somehow not effective because dropout cases still existed despite the interventions made in schools and upon being asked to justify how the mentioned interventions helped to retain girls in schools, some of the respondents openly disclosed *that “no matter how much fees and entitlements can be given, minus addressing other factors like constructing hostels, punishing perpetrators, grassroot participation, civic education, willingness of the girls to learn and providing basic needs, girls will keep on dropping out of school”*.

This showed that although few schools like F, G and H managed to retain many girls in school as they registered few dropout cases of girls due to several interventions done in a multisectoral approach, most of the intervention strategies in the participating schools were done in isolation by the stakeholders. They mostly depended on well-wishers, donors and organisations

empowering the education for the girl child to provide bursaries and entitlements, psychosocial support and also address all factors that deter girls to stay in school at all levels, something which was proved difficult.

Apart from school fees and entitlements provided by donors, government and well-wishers, the successful schools also engaged stakeholders to intensify other interventions to maximise girls' retention in their schools. For example, they formulated and enforced by-laws and school rules and regulations. They also raised chickens, cultivated school cash crops, carried out casual days and mock wedding, applied stiff punishments to the perpetrators, intensified role modelling and career talks and carried out educational visits to maximise the retention of girls in schools.

The overall donors, Civil Society Organisations and well-wishers that enhanced access and retention of girls in the participating schools include: CAMFED, UNICEF, Poverelle Sisters, District Education Network, Korea International Agency (KOICA), Constituency Development Fund, MACOHA, Face Academy Foundation, Chiefs Council, Miriam Foundation in Malawi, Bembeke priest father, Youth Empowerment and Civic Education, Bembeke Alumni (based in Ethiopia), Teachers and well-wishers from Dedza District and some who were based in South Africa. They provided school fees and entitlements such as school uniform, school bags, pairs of shoes socks, sanitary pads, exercise books, pens, mathematical sets, torch, and guidance and counselling, career talks and role modelling, among others.

The results demonstrated that, as much as donors, government, organisations and well-wishers were appreciated on good work of empowering the education of the girl child through provision of tuition fees and entitlements, it is worth noting that such interventions did not meet all the needs for the girl child to remain in school. There was also need for multisectoral interventions by all education stakeholders to maximise girls' retention.

Several structural intervention strategies were recommended by the respondents during semi-structured interviews and focused group discussion that could sustainably retain girls in schools. Among others include; formulation and enforcement of by-laws and laws safeguarding the girl child, stiff punishments to the perpetrator, income generating activities, inclusive guidance and counselling sessions to both boys and girls, civic education and sensitisation campaign, construction of hostels, boarding and or day secondary schools and the provision of boarding facilities, grassroot participation by all stakeholders on projects empowering the education of the girl child, career talks, bringing in role models, formation of youth clubs, ending early marriages and gender based violence, revising marriage entry age and girls being positive and focused towards education. The suggested interventions could sustainably retain girls in secondary schools if all stakeholders would work together with the same rationale of retaining girls in schools.

5.2. Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto's Student Integration Model role to the findings

Guided by Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto's Student Integration Model, the study findings established that the Malawi government, through ministry of education, scholars, policy makers, donors and schools need to strategise and transform peoples' expectations, perceptions, attitudes and motivation towards girls' education. Transformational Leadership Theory concepts like self-reflection, independence, integrity, shared vision, charisma and ethics- could make girls and all stakeholders develop sense of loyalty, critical thinking, self-service, commitment to achieve the goal to improve access and retention of girls in schools in Malawi.

Like Transformational Leadership Theory, Tinto's Student Integration Model acknowledges that students, including girls join an education institution with different family background traits, individual attributes and pre-institutional schooling traits. Their academic goals and

institutional commitments also differ depending on how they are academically and socially integrated. As such, there is need for those in decision making positions and all education stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child to appreciate the status quo regarding girls' dropout cases and critically revise protective mechanisms as a district or country, being used to empower the education of the girl child. This would help the district or country focused on multisectoral approach whereby all stakeholders should be actively involved in the education of the girl child through academic and social integration.

Transformational Leadership Theory and Tinto's Student Integration Model can help to reduce or eliminate both proximate and distal underlying root causes of girls' dropout through critical thinking, motivation, transformation, participation, mindset change and grassroots participation by the government, community members, parents, girls and all stakeholders empowering the education of the girl child in a multisectoral coordinated effort.

5.3. Limitations of the study

One of the limitations was social desirability bias. The nature of the study was socially unacceptable or socially undesirable as no one would like to associate himself or herself with dropping out of school or exploiting the education of the girl child because it is associated with negativity. The negativity comes in because of issues of teenage pregnancies, cultural practices, gender based violence and teacher-pupil love affairs that to a greater extent, hinder the retention rate of girls in secondary schools. Hence, participants to a certain extent, were uncomfortable to say the truth on the topic under investigation fearing that they were being spied on and the findings might be reported to the head teachers, police and civil society organisations that fight for the welfare of the education for the girl child for an immediate action on the perpetrators.

Another limitation was generalisability of the findings. One hundred and nine participants from only one district (Dedza) and one region (Central Region), and only one education division

(Central West Education Division) was a small sample such that it did not actually represent the whole domain of adolescent girls to cater for Malawi as a nation.

Another limitation was on data generated from self-reports from participants during interviews and group discussions. Respondents were likely to under report or over report issues under discussion which could lead to reporter's biasness in terms of the liability of the findings.

Lastly, some school managers or administrators were poor in keeping administrative records.

5.4. Conclusion

The study established that factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District are multi-sectoral in nature, hence, no single strategy is enough to sustainably retain girls in secondary schools. As such, there is need for collaboration among various ministries, all education stakeholders at a community, district and national levels to address factors that hinder retention of girls in secondary schools through structural intervention strategies.

The study findings also established that the Malawi government along with donors, organisations and well-wishers play important role to educate the girl child through provision of bursaries in form of school fees, entitlements and psychosocial support. It is worth noting that these interventions do not meet all the needs for the girl child to stay in school. They are insufficient, unsustainable, and possibly focus on specific challenges to address leaving out others pertinent factors unaddressed. Hence, for effective retention of girls in schools, there is need for intervention strategies that could sustainably retain girls in secondary schools rather than focusing on short term interventions only. Failure to retain girls in secondary schools is as good as the waste of potential human resources and money already spent on them in primary education. The time spent on them too 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 also

communities and the nation at large in the sense that these dropouts may turn to criminal acts such as robbery, drug abusers and prostitutes.

The study concluded by calling for the Malawi government, education sector, scholars, organisations, policy makers, schools and all education stakeholders involved in empowering the education for the girl child to strategise and employ political, individual related, social cultural and socioeconomic structural intervention strategies to address both immediate and root cause factors of girls' dropouts in a multisectoral approach.

5.5. Recommendations

In the light of the research findings, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations: -

- The introduced support programmes by donors must not be “one size fits all project”. If the project or programme is effective in Thailand for example, it is not automatic that the same project can be implemented exactly in the same way in the Malawian set up because Malawi and Thailand are different countries with different cultures. As such, the introduced projects should meet the needs of Malawian set up because different communities have specific needs, culture and ways of doing things rather than imposing the project.
- Projects or donations must be terra made. This implies that donation or projects should not assist the girl child as an individual but as a household level. If donors are supporting the girl child, they should also base their support from the family level so that if the environment at home is conducive, the same environment must be maintained at the school level, hence, she cannot stop learning if the environment at both levels is the same, unlike when the environment differs, nothing will change.

- Donors in liaison with the Malawi government and all education stakeholders should also embark on constructing more girls' hostels, boarding and community day secondary schools, plus boarding facilities to maximise girls' protection from perpetrators, and also for them to concentrate on their studies due to short distances to be covered.
- It is worth and appreciated that most donors target the education of the girl child, it is also worthwhile to include the boy child in their supporting project who is left out in most of their support programmes. Basing on the findings of the study, their inclusion would reduce the incidents of boy-girl pregnancies because boys impregnate girls as a revenge for not being considered in the education benefits by these donors. Results have shown that the majority of boys like girls, were also needy, intelligent, potential but failed to pay school fees and needed assistance as well, to boost their education.
- All education related donors should work together as a team with the government and share the areas of focus when empowering the education of the girl child, rather than working in isolation as it was discovered that they were providing the same or related support living out crucial factors not addressed.
- In their support programme, they should also include or consider provision of basic needs such soap, pocket money, body lotion and food related materials which sometimes acted as belt by the perpetrators to exploit them.
- CAMFED, UNICEF, KOICA, other donors and well-wishers should not sensitise and civic educate girls only but all stakeholders including parents, girls, chiefs and community members the rationale of their donation, their expectations from the stakeholders, punishments attached to girls' perpetrators, the intention of the support and terms and conditions attached to the sponsorship rather than doing it to girls only.

- Government and all education stakeholders at grassroots level such as parents, chiefs, girls, board of governors and others should participate in every project introduced in an area by being committed to do something on the same project for its sustainability. If they fail to participate, the project should not be implemented in that area.
- There is need to educate and empower board of governance, i.e. Parent Teachers Association, mother groups, School Management Committee and chiefs at school level, ways of finding money and economically empower them so that they should be generating income to support the needy girls with school fees or basic needs once students are stranded. They can cultivate cash crops, raise pigs, chickens, goats etc.
- Teachers, police officers, parents, chiefs and communities should be sensitised and heavily disciplined because most of the times, as girls seek help, protection and guidance from them, they either propose love to them or sexually abuse them before offering the services required.
- There is need for the establishment of National Council for Secondary Education where girls should be given soft loans with reasonable interest either in groups or individually by either donors, government or well -wishers to carry out small scale businesses, like what is being done with women bank mkhonde project, during holidays or after completing their secondary education.
- Government should intensify ending child marriages and give stiff punishment to the perpetrators including, parents, chiefs and the newly married couple for others to get a lesson, rather than living it in the hands of chiefs, organisations and parents only.
- There is need to revise the marriage entry age from 18 years for girls as stipulated in the Malawi's constitution to either 20 or 21 years. This should be the case because the findings of the study showed that once the girl child reaches above the age of 18, she is free to get married whether she is in standard 8 or form one provided she is not forced

to do so. The constitution is not clear when a 19 years old school girl wants to get married or is impregnated or gets married while at school. The study revealed that in such situation, it becomes difficult for the chiefs, TAs and parents to prosecute the perpetrator because the Malawian constitution advocates that no person over the age of eighteen years shall be prevented from entering into marriage if she wants to get married.

- Community mentors, mother groups and chiefs should sensitise parents and chiefs in communities about mind set change, ownership responsibility of educating the girl child, doing income generating activities and about the significance of valuing the education for the girl child than marriages.
- As a country there is need to enforce laws, prosecute and send to prison all perpetrators who exploit or marry school girls.
- No boarding in CDSSs policy should be reviewed and turn CDSS's into boarding secondary schools to reduce long distances girls travel and maximise girl child protection from all sorts of violence.
- Pre-school or nursery school should be restructured such that it should fall under Ministry of Education with full administration structure, teachers, curriculum and infrastructure. At the age of 3 years, children should be at nursery school while at the age of 4 or 5 years old, they should have started standard one unlike the current entry age of 6 years.
- Teachers at pre-schools should be well qualified with certificates, not just hand picking and employing anybody without basic teaching methods background.
- Pre-schools should be another section within the primary school where curriculum, teachers, and time table should be well structured. Teachers should be employed by the

government with full monthly salary and administrative structure like being the case with full primary schools.

- When formulating policies regarding education for the girl child, there is need for grassroot participation, especially representatives from the typical rural areas where true reflection of the ages advocated by the policy against their height and body growth of girls can be acknowledged.
- The Malawi government through parliament should make and assent stiff laws safeguarding the education of the girl child with stiff punishments like; life imprisonment, dismissal from work without warning, and withholding or disqualifying academic qualifications of the perpetrators to refrain others from exploiting girls.

5.6. Suggested areas of further studies

The researcher would suggest that the following areas need to be studied.

1. A replication of the same study could be conducted at a national level in all education divisions to take a broader view of the results for the whole country.
2. Investigate whether structural intervention strategies in a multisectoral coordinated approach by all education stakeholders could help to improve academic performance and sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Director of Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS)



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi**: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Instructions

1. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge.
3. Circle or tick the letter against your choice where necessary.
4. Provide brief and straight forward answers as honestly as possible.
5. Seek clarification where you feel confused.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name of the district _____ Education Division _____

SEX:

- (a). male
- (b). female

AGE:

Table 3 below shows age range of the District Education Manager, fill it correctly

20-29 years	
30-39 years	
40-49 years	
50 above years	

YEARS IN EXPERIENCE

Table 4 below shows years in experience of Director for Education, Youth and Sports, fill it correctly;

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16 years above	

SECTION B GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi remains a challenge which needs to be addressed. (a.) yes (b). no (c). yes, but not serious

(d). yes, with serious needs

2. Financial and material support that girls receive from donors, organisations and bursaries are not enough to maximise their sustainable retention in secondary schools, other structural intervention strategies are needed to maximise the retention, (a). yes (b). no

Give reasons for your choice

3. There is low retention rate of girls in secondary schools than boys in Dedza District.

a. yes b. no c. the retention rate is the same

4. Girls who are fully sponsored by donors, organisations and or on bursaries do not dropout of school any how; a. yes b. no

5. There has been an increase in dropout rate of girls in both primary and secondary schools in the district yearly?

a. yes b. no

6. Fill in table 5 below with appropriate information on girls' dropout of school for a period of 5 years in Dedza District, i.e. from 2017 to 2021.

Year	Total girls registered	Total girls' dropouts	Reasons for dropouts
2017			
2018			
2019			
2020			
2021			

SECTION C

5. As an administrator or a manager, what roles do you play to enhance **retention and leadership skills among girls** in secondary schools in Dedza district?

(i) roles to enhance retention

(ii) roles to enhance leadership skills;

6. Outline the organisations, donors and bursaries in Dedza District that attempt to retain girls in secondary schools;

7. Outline some of the resources/materials/ support these donors, organisations and bursaries provide to girls in an attempt to retain them in schools.

8. In what areas or ways would you like donors, organisations, government and educational stakeholders improve their services to achieve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools and maximise leadership roles among secondary school girls in Malawi.

10. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Malawi apart from the financial and material support that girls receive.

11. Explain how the mentioned strategies could improve sustainable retention rate of girls in schools.

THANKS A LOT FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the Education Division Manager (EDM-CWED)



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi**: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Instructions

1. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge.
3. Circle or tick the letter against your choice where necessary.
4. Provide brief and straight forward answers as honestly as possible.
5. Seek clarification where you feel confused.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

SEX (a). Male (b). Female

YEARS IN EXPERIENCE

Table 6 shows years in experience of the Education Division Manager, fill it correctly;

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16 years above	

1. Retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi remains a challenge which needs to be addressed. (a). yes (b). no (c). yes, but not serious (d). yes, with serious needs

2. Financial and material support that girls receive from donors, organisations and bursaries are not enough to maximise their sustainable retention in secondary schools, other structural intervention strategies are needed to maximise the retention, (a). yes (b). no

Give reasons for your answer;

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that even girls who are fully sponsored by donors, organisations and being on bursaries drop out of school despite the support that they are given

(a). strongly agree (b).disagree (c). agree (d). strongly disagree (e). neutral

4. There is low retention rate of girls in secondary schools than boys in Central West Education Division; (a). yes (b). no (c). the retention rate is the same

5. Fill in the 7 below with appropriate information on girls' dropout of school for a period of 5 years in Central West Education Division. i.e. from 2017 to 2021

Year	Total girls registered	Total girls' dropouts	Reasons for dropouts
2017			
2018			
2019			
2020			
2021			

5. As a manager, what roles do you play to enhance retention and leadership skills among girls in secondary schools in CWED?

6. Outline the organisations, donors and bursaries in the CWED that attempt to retain girls in secondary schools in the division;

7. Outline some of the interventions done by these donors, organisations and government to retain girls in secondary schools in Central West Education Division.

8. In what areas or ways would you like donors, organisations, government and stakeholders improve their services to achieve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools and reduce the dropout rate in Malawi?

9. Explain how the following factors can be addressed to enhance sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

a. Sociocultural factors; e.g. impact of teachers, marriage, pregnancy, household responsibilities, initiation ceremonies.

b. School infrastructural and facility factors; e.g. sanitation, school resources, distance girls travelled to school.

c. Economic factors; e.g. direct costs, perceived costs.

10. Suggest other structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Malawi apart from the financial and material support that girls receive.

11. Explain how the mentioned ways or structural intervention strategies could improve the sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Central West Education Division and Malawi as a nation.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for the Civil Society Representatives



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi:** A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Instructions.

1. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge.
3. Circle or tick the letter against your choice where necessary.
4. Provide brief and straight forward answers as honestly as possible.
5. Seek clarification where you feel confused.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Sex (a). Male (b). Female

2. Level of education (tick one)

- a) (a). Certificate
- b) Diploma
- c) Degree
- d) Masters
- e) Ph. D
- f) None

3. District.....

SECTION B: GENERAL INFORMATION

4. Retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi remains a challenge which needs to be addressed. (a). yes (b). no (c). yes, but not serious
(d). yes, with serious needs

5. Is your organisation committed to enhance high retention rate of girls in secondary schools?
(a). yes (b). no

If yes or no in 5 above, give reasons for your choice;

6. Multi sectoral approaches or interventions would help to retain girls in secondary schools;
(a). yes (b). no

If yes, outline these multi sectoral approaches or interventions.

If no, give reasons for your choice.

7. Suggest factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza District and Malawi as a whole.

8. As civil society organisation or organisation, what roles or interventions do you play or do to retain girls in secondary schools in Malawi?

9. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi?

10. If all donors which support the education of the girl child can stop supporting girls financially and materially today, **what strategies as a country, district, community, family take** to support girls' education **so that high dropout rate of girls in secondary schools in Dedza district and Malawi as a nation is reduced**

a. As a nation

b. As a district

c. As a community

d. As a family

THANKS A LOT FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for students



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi**: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Instructions.

1. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge.
3. Circle or tick the letter against your choice where necessary.
4. Provide brief and straight forward answers as honestly as possible.
5. Seek clarification where you feel confused.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name of school.....Name of Traditional Authority (TA).....

Name of the village..... Form..... District..... Division.....

Sex: (a). Male (b). Female

Age range: (a). 13 - 15 years

(b). 16 - 8 years

(c). 19 - 21 years

(d). 22 years and above

SECTION B: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Have you ever dropped out of school? (a). Yes (b). no

Give reasons for your choice

2. How many days per week do you go to school? (a). Daily, (b). I always miss one or two days (c). never (d). I am not sure (e) once a week.

3. Are your parents employed? (a.) yes (b). no

If yes, what is the type of employment? _____

If no, what are they doing to find the basic needs? _____

4. Whom do you stay with?

- a) both parents
- b) father only
- c) mother only
- d) relatives
- e) grandparents
- f) my sister
- g) my brother

5. Does your parents or guardians provide you with all the necessary materials for school?

(a). yes (b).no (c). partially

6. What is your main source of income? _____

7. What do parents or guardians do if you have not gone to school?

- a) Nothing
- b) Ask me the reasons for being absent
- c) Whip me
- d) Give me work to do.

8. Do your parents or guardians show interest on your education?

- a) Yes
- b) Sometimes.
- c) No, because they tell me to go to the garden to cultivate

9. Do you enjoy learning?

Yes, why? _____

No, why? _____

10. Why do you think girls' dropout of school?

10. Given a chance, what would you like parents, government, teachers and girls do so that girls do not drop out of school?

a. parents

b. government

c. teachers or school

d. girls

11. What leadership roles or positions are you given at this school?

12. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

13. Explain how the mentioned suggested structural intervention strategies could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi including your school?

THANKS A LOT FOR ASSISTANCE.

Appendix 5: Questionnaire for CAMFED and UNICEF Coordinators



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi:** A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Instructions

1. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge.
3. Circle or tick the letter against your choice where necessary.
4. Provide brief and straight forward answers as honestly as possible.
5. Seek clarification where you feel confused.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- a. District.....CAMFED OR UNICEF (circle the correct organisation) b. Education Division.....
- c. Total number of schools under CAMFED or UNICEF support.....
- d. Total number of years CAMFED project or UNICEF been operating in
- (i) Dedza District.....(ii) Malawi as a country.....

SECTION B: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi remains a challenge which needs multi sectoral approaches to be addressed.

(a). yes (b). no (c). yes, but not serious (d). yes, with serious needs

If yes or no, why?.....

2. Is your organisation committed to enhance high retention rate of girls in secondary schools?

(a). yes (b). no

If yes or no in 2 above, give reasons for your choice.

3. How many total girls benefited from CAMFED or UNICEF from 2017 to 2021

4. Financial and material support that girls receive from donors, organisations and bursaries are not enough to maximise their sustainable retention in secondary schools, other structural intervention strategies are needed to maximise the retention.

(a). yes (b). no

Give reasons for your answer.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that even girls who are fully sponsored by donors, organisations and being on bursaries drop out of school despite the support that they are given

(a). strongly agree

(b). disagree

(c). agree

(d). strongly disagree

(e). neutral

6. Outline some of the resources or materials or interventions that CAMFED or UNICEF gives or do to retain girls in secondary schools in Dedza district.

7. **Table 8 below** shows factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi. You are required to select one response for each statement by putting a tick in the selected response. Answer according to the best of your knowledge. Use these abbreviations; (a). Strongly Agree (SA), (b). Agree (A), (c). Undecided (U), (d). Disagree (D) (e). Strongly Disagree (SD)

Factors that hinder the retention of girls in secondary schools			SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Socio-cultural factors	Teacher related factors					
		School related-gender based violence					
		Early marriages					
		Pregnancy					
2	School infrastructure and facility factors	Distance girls travel to school					
		School facilities and resources					
		Students discipline					
		Religious issues					
		Non conducive environment					
3	Socio-economic factors	Poverty and hunger					
		Household work					
		Child labour					
		Low parental levels of education and aspirations for their children					
4	Others						

7. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve the sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

8. In what way do you think these structural intervention strategies could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi?

THANKS A LOT FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Appendix 6: Semi structured interview guide questions for teacher mentors, Traditional Authority and mother group



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University, pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi**: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Consent and declaration signature by respondents.

Sex...Date Name of the School.....DistrictDivisionSignature

Research questions;

1. Explain factors that hinder the retention of girls at this secondary schools.

Fotokozani momveka bwino zinthu kapena zifukwa zomwe zimalepheretsa atsikana kupitiliza maphunziro awo pa sukuluyi.

2. Explain the roles that you play or take as a teacher mentor/ Traditional Authority/ mother group to retain girls in secondary schools in Dedza district or at this school.

Fotokozani momveka bwino zomwe inuyo ngati /m'phunzitsi wolangiza atsikana, / Mfumu yayikulu ya dera lino/ mlangizi wa atsikana mukuchita m'boma la Dedza kapena pa sukuluyi polimbikitsa maphunziro aatsikana kapena kuti atsikana asasiyire panjira sukulu.

3. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza district and Malawi as a whole; How do you think these strategies will help in the sustainable retention of girls in schools?

Mukuganiza ndi njira ziti zokhazikika zomwe zingatsatidwe pochepetsa kapena kuthetsa vuto losiyira panjira sukulu ana atsikana m'boma la Dedza lino kapena

dziko la Malawi? Fotokozani momwe njirazi zingachepetsere vuto la kusiyira panjira sukulu atsikana lomwe tilinaloli?

4. Mukuganiza kuti njira zimenezi zithandiza bwanji kuti atsikana asasiyire panjira sukulu?

**THANKS A LOT FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE/ ZIKOMO KWAMBIRI CHIFUKWA
CHA THANDIZO LANU.**

Appendix 7: Focused group discussion guide questions for chiefs, parents, head teachers or deputy head teachers and students



I am Clement Nyirenda, a student at Mzuzu University, pursuing Master of Education in Leadership and Management Degree programme. I am carrying out this study to **explore structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi:** A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District, Central West Education Division. I will be grateful if you would help me by answering these questions and the information you will provide will be held confidential.

Consent and declaration signature by respondents.

Sex...Date Name of the School..... DistrictDivisionSignature

Research questions:

1. Explain the factors that hinder the retention of girls at this school.

Fotokozani momveka bwino zinthu kapena zifukwa zomwe zimalepheretsa atsikana kupitilidza maphunziro awo pa sukuluyi?

2. Explain what roles as a head teacher/deputy head teacher/chief /a student/parent do you take or play on the retention of girls in secondary schools, especially at this school?

Fotokozani momveka bwino zomwe inuyo ngati m'phunzitsi wamkulu kapena wa chiwiri kwa m'phunzitsi wamkulu, mfumu, kholo, kapena wophunzira mukumachita kuwonetsetsa kuti atsikana asasiyire panjira maphunziro awo makaka pa sukuluyi.

3. Explain the interventions done by organisations or donors or government at this school to improve access to education and retention of girls at this school?

Fotokozani momveka bwino zomwe mabungwe, kapena boma la Malawi kapena opereka thandizo akumachita kapena thandizo lomwe akumapereka pa sukuluyi ndi cholinga cholimbikitsa maphunziro a atsikana kuti asasiyire panjira sukulu.

4. Suggest structural intervention strategies that could improve the sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Dedza district and Malawi as a whole;

Mukuganiza ndi njira ziti zokhazikika zomwe zingatsatidwe pochepetsa kapena kuthetsa vuto losiyira panjira sukulu ana atsikana m'boma la Dedza lino komanso dziko la Malawi?

5. Provide the total number of girls drop out of school in the following years;

2018 _____ 2019 _____ 2020 _____ 2021 _____ 2022 _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Appendix 8: Reference letter from Education Division Manager

REF. NO CWED.ACADRESEARCH/03/2022

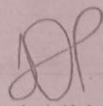
FROM: THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER, CENTRAL WEST
EDUCATION DIVISION, P.O. BOX 98, LILONGWE
TO : THE HEADTEACHER,

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN
CWED SECONDARY SCHOOL.**

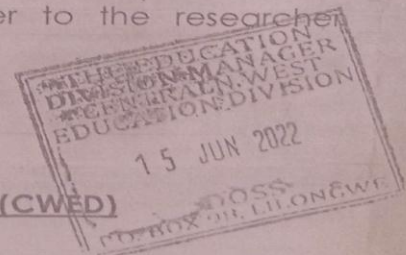
I write to advise that CLEMENT NYIRENDA has been granted permission to conduct an academic research to collect data for his MASTER OF EDUCATION dissertation in your school. His area of study is AN EXPLORATION OF STRUCTURAL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT WOULD IMPROVE SUSTAINABLE RETENTION OF GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MALAWI: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DEDZA DISTRICT.

However, the researcher will have to seek individual consent from the participants and that normal classes shall not be disrupted.

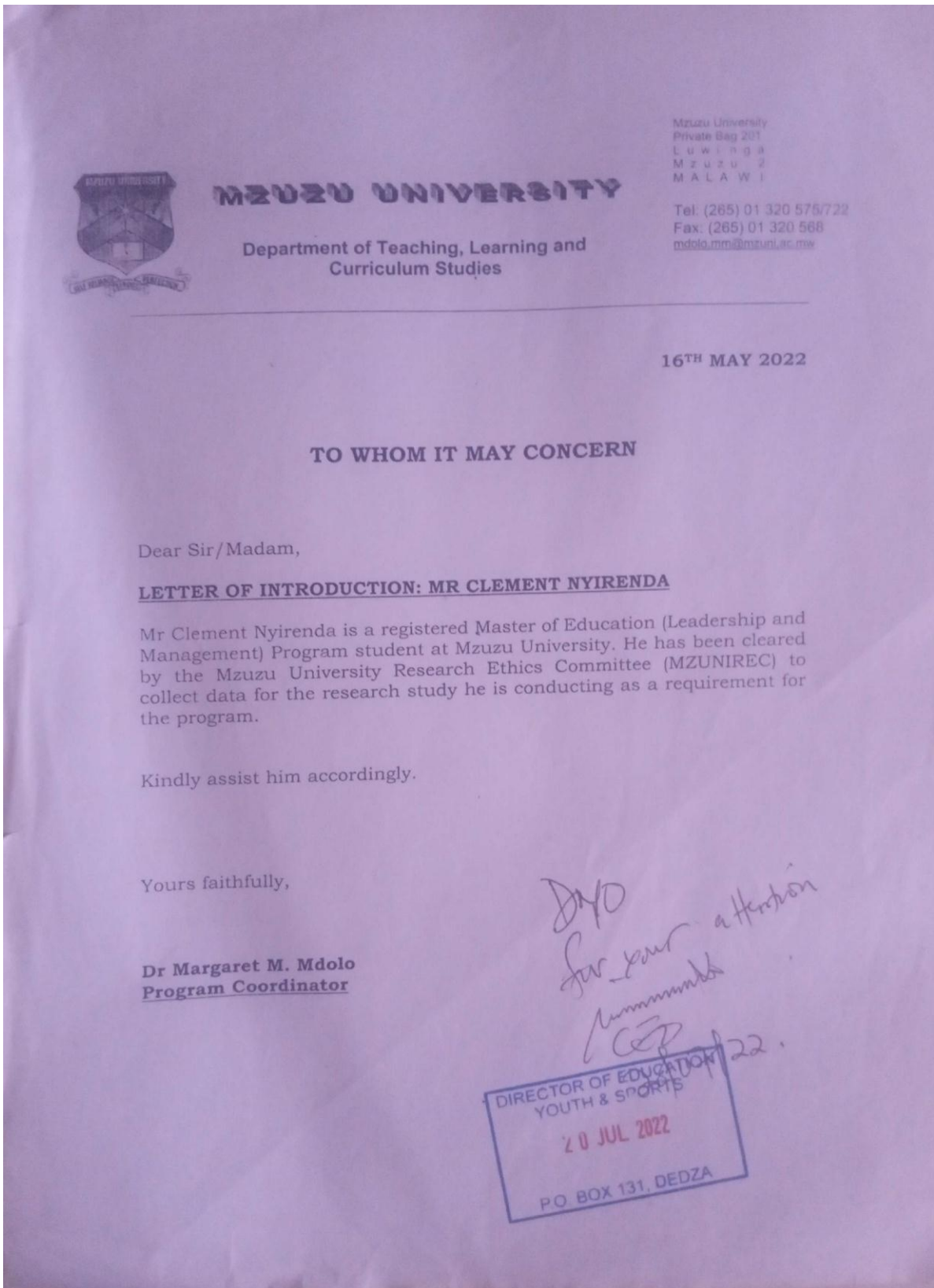
You are therefore requested to render to the researcher assistance required.

PP. 
J.J. Nkhata

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (CWED)



Appendix 9: Reference letter from the director for Education, Youth and Sports



Appendix 10: Reference letter from Mzuzu University



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

**Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies**

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u 2
M A L A W I

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

16TH MAY 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR CLEMENT NYIRENDA

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

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

Appendix 11: MZUNIREC Ethical approval letter



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u 2
M A L A W I
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 648

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

(MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/64

11th May, 2022.

Clement Nyirenda,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag201,
Luwinga,
Mzuzu 2.
nyirendaclement80@gmail.com

Dear Clement Nyirenda,

LETTER OF INTENT TO ISSUE A RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO. MZUNIREC/DOR/22/64: AN EXPLORATION OF STRUCTURAL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT WOULD IMPROVE SUSTAINABLE RETENTION OF GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI. A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DEDZA DISTRICT

The Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) reviewed your submission. The committee is now pleased to inform you that the protocol is at the stage at which the Principal Investigator is being required to pay the stipulated 10% regulatory fee of the actual budget as indicated in the research protocol being a regulatory **compliance and capacity building fee** before ethics approval and regulatory permit could be issued. This fee is required to be paid to the Committee. The mode of payment is either a cash or cheque deposit into the following bank account:

Description	Details
Beneficiary name and address	Mzuzu University, Private Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, Malawi
Beneficiary account name	MZUNIREC
Beneficiary account No.	1007578888

Bank name and address	National Bank of Malawi, Mzuzu Branch, PO Box 20, Mzuzu
Swift code or ABA number	N/A

Once payment is made, send a deposit slip/wire transfer slip for the verification of our Accounts

Committee Address:

***Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2;
Email address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw***

Department.

Yours Sincerely,



Gift Mbwele

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Appendix 12: An extract of questionnaire showing respondent's response

i. REDUCING LONG DISTANCES THROUGH BOARDING FACILITIES.
ii. PROVISION OF ENOUGH AND GOOD SANITATION FACILITIES.
iii. PROVISION OF ADEQUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES eg. TEXTBOOKS.

c. economic factors; e.g. direct costs, perceived costs

10. Suggest other structural intervention strategies (ways that must be taken and applied) that would improve the sustainable retention rate of girls in secondary schools in Malawi apart from the financial and material support that girls receive

- PROVISION OF BOARDING FACILITIES.
- PROVISION OF GOOD AND USEABLE SANITATION FACILITIES
- DEPLOYMENT OF MORE FEMALE CIVIL SERVANTS TO ACT AS ROLE MODELS
- EXPOSING LEARNERS TO SOME ADVANCE PLACES eg. UNIVERSITIES, RADIO STATIONS, THE PARLIAMENT WHERE THERE ARE SOME ROLE MODELS.

12. Explain how the mentioned ways or structural intervention strategies would improve the sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi.

- THERE WILL BE REDUCTION OF DISTANCE AND GIRLS WILL BE ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER RATHER MEETING PEERS WHO ARE MARRIED. AND SO
- GIRLS' PRIVACY WILL BE THE SAME AT HOME & SCHOOL SO NO NEED TO ABSENT ONESELF.
- GIRLS WILL FEEL THAT THEY CAN ALSO MAKE IT LIKE THE ROLE MODELS.
- THEY CAN MOTIVATE WITH WHAT THEY SEE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

4

Appendix 13: Request letter to UNICEF, CAMFED, TA, parents, EDM, DEYS and Civil Society Organisations to seek for permission to participate in the research project

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
25th January, 2022
Tel. 0999167726/0888789828
E-mail: nyirendaclement80@gmail.com

Dear Sir,

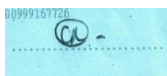
REQUEST FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby write to request for your permission to participate in the study either by answering the questionnaire, one on one interviews, semi structured interviews and or focused group discussions.

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education (Leadership and Management) degree programme. I am carrying out a study on **an exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza District** in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master of Education leadership and Management degree programme.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University for further details.

Yours Faithfully,



Clement Nyirenda.

Appendix 14: Consent letter

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in a research study entitled (**An exploration of structural intervention strategies that could improve the sustainable retention of girls in secondary schools in Malawi: A case study of selected secondary schools in Dedza district**) which is being conducted by Mr. Clement Nyirenda, student pursuing Master of Education (Leadership and Management) degree programme at Mzuzu University.

I declare that:

- I understand that the information I will give will be used strictly for academic purposes only and that such information will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.
- I understand that my name and that of my school will remain anonymous throughout the research findings and presentation of findings, and even in the final document. Instead the researcher will use pseudonyms.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that there are no direct benefits, financial or otherwise, from this study.
- I understand that I am free to inform the researcher of my intention to withdraw from the study at any point in time, I feel so. And that such act will not lead to any negative repercussions.
- I have read or he has read for me and understood the information pertaining to the study as given herein. My questions have fully been addressed.

Participant Signature or thumb: Date:

Interviewer's Signature:  Print name: **Clement Nyirenda**