

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GIRLS DROPOUTS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF MANGOCHI DISTRICT IN MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

A Study of the factors that influence girls' dropouts in Primary and Secondary schools were studied in two public primary schools and two secondary schools situated in Mangochi District, Malawi. It was observed that there are a lot of girls' dropouts, poor performance of girls in district level during primary school leaving certificate Examinations, administered by Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) in these schools, despite the awareness and interventions by Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations. The main purpose of the study is to find out the factors that lead to girls' dropouts in Mangochi District. A sample of respondents were interviewed and responded that girls face problems such as, child marriage, early pregnancy, and long distance from home to school, responsibilities, peer pressure, sexual exploitation, poverty and lack of proper facilities like toilets. Using Qualitative and Quantitative Methods of inquiry, data was collected from twenty teachers and four head teachers: ten teachers and two head teachers from two primary schools, ten teachers and two head teachers from two secondary schools respectively. Twelve parents and twenty students from a few catchment areas of those four sampled schools too were interviewed orally to strengthen the data collection. Data collection tools namely Questionnaire and Focus group discussion were used for the study.

Malawi Government and aid donor agencies worldwide have acknowledged the importance of girls' literacy as prerequisite for development. The importance of universal education was delineated in the policy "Education for all" (EFA). Indeed, EFA is seen as strategy for introducing children, especially girls, to convectional schooling. Several studies have been carried out as regards teenage pregnancies; however, very few in Malawi have focused on studying the factors that influence girls' dropouts in Primary and Secondary schools. Consequently purpose of this study is to explore the challenges that girls face in the selected schools with different factors in the catchment areas from where girls have enrolled.

The schools selected were Mawaka Primary School, under Koche educational Zone, Lulanga Primary School, under Lulanga Zone Ntonda Community Day

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Secondary School, belongs to Koche Zone and Namwera Community Secondary School which too comes under Koche Zone in Mangochi District.

KEY WORDS: Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB), EFA-Education For All, Child Marriage, Early Pregnancy And Long Distance From Home To School, Responsibilities, Peer Pressure, Sexual Exploitation, Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Malawi just as any country in sub-Sahara Africa is facing with challenges with regards to girls' drop outs in Primary and Secondary schools. However, it has been found that more girls discontinue schooling than boys such that there is a need for something to be done regards with girl's dropout from school. It has been found that gender still up down their source has caused the problem of dropout of girls in schools. Gender-stereotyped households and occupational roles presented in textbooks and curriculum also negatively affect girls' aspirations to further education. It is noted that many children more especially girls who reach the last grade in primary school are more likely to be from well to do families and children from poor family are less likely to be able to access the Secondary education.

Therefore in order to implement equality in the access of education Malawi in 1994 implemented free primary school education in order to increase the ratio of the number of children to access education, (Ministry of education, 1998). From this time more children have been continuing to assess the Primary Education but few continue up to Secondary School. This proposal will focus what the country Malawi attempts to develop her human resources through the strategy of increasing girls' involvement in girls' education. More specifically it will explore the challenges that the Malawi government faces whilst trying to implement a policy education for girls and subsequent negative impact that the international donor community has played in attempting to increase the participation of girls in schools (UNESCO, 2008).

The 2017 constitutional amendment raising the age of marriage to 18, for both boys and girls, was a significant milestone. However, many cases of girls' dropout persist despite the interventions by the Malawi government and Non-government Organizations. About 46 percent of girls are married before the age of 18, and 9 percent before the age of 15... The main drivers of child marriage are poverty, culture, religious and peer pressure. Adolescents are sometimes exposed to sexual activity at initiation ceremonies, which can lead to sex with peers and early pregnancy resulting in school dropouts. Malawi girls face educational barriers that are both culture and practical (Graome Robert, 2014). Educating girls are not only beneficial to the individual but also to the community, family, nation and economy. Over the past twelve years, evidence have been growing about how education on girls impacts and benefits all sectors of development, evident as follows female schooling levels played an important role increasing growth directly and through its impact on increase life expectancy and lower fertility rate and lastly female education is the single most important social and economic factor associated with a reduction vulnerability to natural disasters (2017, age Africa).

The right to education has been described as basic human rights since 1952. Article two of the first protocol to the European convention on human rights oblige all signatory parties to guarantee the right to education at world level. United Nation International convention on economic, social and cultural rights of 1966 guarantee this right under article 13. (Ibid).65

million girls around the world are not in school. Of that number, 39 million are between the age of 11 and 15. Without education, girls are more likely to marry young, have children early and spend their life in poverty. Yet when girls are given the opportunity to receive an education, they are more likely to improve their own life and those of their families, helping to break the cycle of poverty. (Plan, 2007).

Education for a girl, in particular, primary education, has important individual benefits in terms of her options and resources over her life time. The benefits to the society include enhanced economic development, education for the next generation, healthier families and fewer maternal deaths (World Bank, 2003). These benefits extend beyond the girl to affect her family and the society as a whole (UNICEF, 2004). Of more 110 million children not in school in the world, approximately 60 percent are girls. By the age of 18, girls will have received an average of 4.4 less education than boys. This is the present picture of girls through the globe (UN Cyber School, 2003), It is no longer a matter of debate that female constitute more than 50 percent of the world population (UNESCO, 2003), that is why it is important for countries to put much resources and effort in girls' education because educating a girl child it will mean educating more than half of the population.

According to UNESCO (2017) estimates, 130 million girls between the age of 6 and 17 are out of school and 15 million girls or primary school age half of them in sub Saharan Africa will never enter a class.

- Poverty remains the most important factors for determining whether a girl can access an education. For example, in Nigeria, only 4 % of poor young women in the North west zone can read, compared with 99% of rich young women in the south East studies consistently reinforce that girls who face multiple disadvantages-such as low family

income, living in remote or underserved locations, disability or belonging to a minority ethno-linguistic group-are further behind in terms of access to and completion of education.

- Violence also negatively impacts of access to education and a safe environment for learning for example, in Haiti, recent research highlights that one in three Haitian women (ages 15 to 49) has experience physical and sexual violence and that women who received money for sex before turning 18 years old 27 percent reported schools to be the most common location for solicitation.
- Child marriage is also one of the critical challenges child brides are much more likely to drop out of school and complete fewer years of education than their peers who marry later. This affects the education and health of their children, as well as their ability to earn a living. According to a recent report, more than 41,000 girls under the age of 18 marry every day and putting an end to the practice would increase woman's expected educational attainment and with it, their potential earnings.

Musungu (2010), concluded in his research on girls' education mainly on factors influencing enrolment and participation of girls in secondary education, Siaya, Kenya. The study set out to establish the factors influencing the enrolment and participation of girls in secondary education in Siaya District Kenya. The research revealed the individual as well as community and school factors that affect the enrolment and participation of girls in secondary education. It also clears that individual issues like menstruation affect participation of girls in secondary education especially if they are poorly informed it causes emotional discomfort and imbalance to the parties concerned hence reducing concentration in class. Teenage pregnancy and early marriages are among individual issues affecting enrolment of girls in

secondary education. The school in conducive environment is also a major hindrance to the enrolment and participation of girls in secondary education. For instance, the negative remarks made by teachers about girls in class and when releasing exam results discourage and demotivate girls in participation in secondary education.

Kobani (2014), concluded in his research on impact of girl child education on community. The analysis of the findings on the research question one reveals that girl child for the enhancement of development. This view supports the findings of Ocho (2005), when it was observed that education is the process through which the girl child is made to be a functional member of the society for transformation and development. This view supports the findings observed by Ocho (2005) when it was stated that in most societies, the girls have lower status than men. The disadvantages of the girl child begin at childhood from the cultural expectations of the sexes and the fact that the girl child is faced with limited access to education. Again most people are poor and they spend the available resources on the male children thereby neglecting girl child education.

Similarly, the finding on the research shows that girl child can be influenced by the need for political emancipation and economic empowerment. This view supports the view of Ballara (2002) when he observed the importance of the girl child education enable social development as the education of the girl child is academically qualified and grows into a woman, she will contribute to the political development of her community. The preceding section has attempted to state the current of affairs in relation to girl's persistence in school, it has been shown that while both boys and girls enter primary school roughly in same numbers, economic constraints, opportunity cost, quality education, social cultural factors, the street girls are the factors that hinder girl's enrolment.

This study thus emphasizes that the enrolment and participation of girls in secondary education can be improved if the community can be sensitized on the need to provide equal educational opportunities to both boys and girls and to realize the fact that girls can have same if not better abilities than boys. This can also be achieved if the stakeholders in the school setting can be sensitized on the need to make school conducive enough for girls to participate in secondary education too. Therefore, the study wishes to understand the conditions of girls' education in Primary and secondary schools and how the holistic approach will be helpful in such a way that the data collected will play a great role in assisting the Government, Nongovernmental and International donors to come up with effective intervention, policies and programmes so as to improve the state of girl child education in Primary and Secondary schools in Mangochi district and the nation of Malawi at large.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa with population density of 105 persons per square kilometer and estimated population of 12.8 million in 2006 and about 17 million in 2016. Women constitute more than half the population and are disproportionately represented amongst the poor and ultra-poor. Dropout is an issue in educational systems that have stimulated the interest of many professional academicians and the public in general. Most of the countries in the world are experiencing this phenomenon of dropout more of it is developing countries. Major factors affecting girls' education which result dropouts from child marriage, early pregnancy and long distance from home to school, responsibilities, peer pressure, sexual exploitation and poverty.

A recent analysis of 43 developing countries indicates that more than 30% of young people who have completed primary school do not have basic literacy skills, with girls more disadvantage.

In order to increase the school enrollment ratio, Malawi adopted a policy known as free primary education in 1994 which removed the school fees for the learners in primary school and therefore the enrollment ratio increased from 1.8 million in 1993 to 4.8 million in 2015 (MoEST. (n.d.-b), 2016). The FPE policy resulted in both boys and girls having access to education, in addition the gap between girls and boy's enrollment also decreased during this period (Kendal, 2006).

Malawi also adopted a policy known as Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) which aimed at increasing the educational opportunities for students in Malawi, reduce the inequalities across social groups and regions, enhance the quality and relevance of education, develop an institutional and financial framework to sustain schools in Malawi, increase funding and strengthen the financial management capacity of the education sector (MoEST, 2008b). The PIF included goals to support girls' access to all levels of education with the aim of achieving 50 per cent or more of female enrolments (Maluwa-Banda, 2003).

Malawi launched a strategy in 2014 to promote girls' education, and includes guidance to all stakeholders working in girls' education (MoEST, 2014c). The vision outlined in the strategy is that 'all girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable social, economic development by 2018' (MoEST, 2014c). The strategy aims to increase girls' access to and completion of primary, secondary and tertiary education, including through improving the quality of education; improving attendance and pass rates; and removing barriers to education for girls (Ministry of Labour, 2016; MOEST, 2014c).

Between 2011 and 2015 the number of secondary school enrolments was increased by 39.7 per cent. Of the total 358 033 students

enrolled in secondary schools in the 2014–15 school year, there were more boys than girls enrolled about 53% were boys and 47% were girls. While in 2015 GPI for primary schools was 1.00, this fell to 0.88 in secondary, indicating that there were more boys enrolled in secondary schools than girls (MoEST. (n.d.-b), 2016).

Low expectations for girls, Parents often have low expectations of the potential returns from educating their daughters. But when opportunities become more apparent, girls' enrolment can increase. In Bangladesh, when women's employment opportunities suddenly increased with the growth of the garment industry, girls' enrolment increased so that they could capitalize on the new opportunities (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). Gendered beliefs by communities, students and teachers can have a negative impact on their learning and persistence in school. Teachers often hold low expectations towards girls' academic performances (Global Partnership for Education(GPE), 2013). This can reduce girls' motivation and discourage them from continuing further education (UNESCO , 2012a).

Malawi is one of the countries that have highest rates of child marriage in the world (UN Women, 2017). Approximately 10 per cent of girls are married before age 15 and 50 per cent marry before age 18 (National Statistical Office, 2015a). In February 2017, the Malawi Government 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 on girls' education (UN Women, 2017) Marriage is one of the most common reasons for girls dropping out of secondary school in Malawi. According to (MoEST. (n.d.-c)), states that marriage accounted for 16.6 per cent of school dropouts and is the third most common reason for girls dropping out of secondary school after school fees and pregnancy. The Malawi Youth Status Report 2015 notes that marriage can take place for reasons

such as poverty, cultural expectations and pregnancy (Ministry of Labour, 2016). For example, in some areas of Malawi, cultural practices exist whereby some form of payment is made to the girl's family in exchange for her marriage, where the 'bride price' is known as 'lobola'.

Marriage has always been a prevalent cause for school dropout among female (Grant, 2013). Early and forced marriages are a common occurrence in African countries and this affect girls' education attainment. One of two Malawian girls will be married before her 18th birthday (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2014). Many Malawian scholars have agreed that early marriage contributes to higher rate of female school drop outs, which affects equal access to education for both male and females (HRW, 2014; Mkandawire et al., 2014; Verheijen, 2014; Archambault, 2011; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Human Right Watch (2014) noted that "children marriage in Malawi stands at thirty-seven percent, which is higher than the regional Sub-Saharan African average" (p. 15).

In order to avoid pregnancy out of wedlock, parents withdraw their children soon after puberty and force them to marry (Mzuza et al., 2013; Chimombo, 2005; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). Reporting on the study carried out on girl's education in Kenya, Siringi (2002) said that girls drop out at the age of twelve-thirteen for early marriages to wealthy men, because their parents fear that if they get old they may not get husbands. On the same vain, the study by Davison (1993) reported parents' concern that continued schooling might limit girls' matrimonial chances and that school subjects were not seen as relevant for the skills a young woman needed for married life.

Pregnancy, various research studies have clearly revealed that one of the major reasons that contribute to the dropout of girls is pregnancy (Maluwa-Banda, 2004). Human Right Watch

(2014) explains that reproductive health education is often inadequately taught in Malawi's school and does not prepare young people with the knowledge to make well-informed choices before becoming sexually active. Parents are also not willing to talk to children about how to protect themselves, often due to taboos. This puts girls at risk of getting early pregnancy due to lack of information. In some cases, some girls may choose to get pregnant and pregnancy is a planned lifestyle choice (Hunt, 2008). In addition, in some rural families in Malawi girls' pregnancy is viewed as a source of pride especially for mothers, because it reflects the maturity of their daughters and increases their standing in the community (Samati, 2012). Although many African countries for instance: South Africa, Malawi and Botswana, allow girls who have been pregnant to return to school after giving birth, it appears that many girls are not taking advantage of this.

This is partly because parents fear that their daughters will be impregnated again and also because they face intimidation by fellow pupils (Kadzamira & Chibwana, 2000). A UNICEF (2000) study in Malawi reports that over 50 percent of teen mothers interviewed a year after dropping out of school were not allowed by their parents to go back to school and many of them were forced instead to marry. On the other hand, there might be reluctance at the school level to girls' re-entry and "intimidating social context experienced by returners" (Dunne & Leach, 2005 p. 28). Similarly, while policies may allow re-entry, "this information may not be clearly conveyed throughout the system or communities may continue to adhere to their own cultural norms preventing these girls from attending school" (Kane, 2004). Early pregnancy and early marriages are some of the factors that may play a role in lack of parents' interest in educating female children. This may influence them to withdraw their female children from school.

School-related gender based violence (GBV) it includes various forms of physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment that girls suffer while in and around the school surroundings, including violence perpetuated by students and teachers. GBV has been reported to contribute to girls' absenteeism and dropout in Malawi, with girls staying away from school due to fear of harassment and abuse (e.g., Leach et al., cited in King & Winthrop, 2015; Burton, 2005, cited in UNESCO & UNGEI, 2015).

Furthermore, (King & Winthrop, 2015) discuss that little research has been conducted to examine the relationship between school-related violence and educational achievement as there are challenges in gathering accurate data on the occurrence of GBV, as it is often under-reported.

(Mellish, Settergren, & Sapuwa, 2015), conducted a literature review on GBV in Malawi and found four studies on GBV among school children. Many of these studies were small-scale; however, the authors noted the apparent high prevalence of school-related GBV. One study involved nine districts and sought to understand the impact of GBV on girls' education. The findings found that 61 per cent reported that their experiences of GBV had impacted their school performance (Bisika et al., 2009, cited in Mellish et al., 2015).

Many students in Malawi have to travel long distances to school. A World Bank Report on secondary education in Malawi found that in 15 of 34 educational districts, the average distance between households and the nearest school is over four kilometers (Ravishankar, 2016). Research on girls' education has often cited long distances to school as a challenge for girls' access to education, due to concerns around safety and due to the costs associated with transporting girls to school (King & Winthrop, 2015). Munthali, Mbendera, Mezuwa, & Banda, (2015) noted out that long distances to school were seen as a

challenge faced by many students, and affected dropout rates, attendance and academic performance.

A girl is more likely to enroll in school if the school is located at a reasonable distance from her home. When the distance to a girl's school is increased by a half-kilometer, her chances of enrollment decrease by 20 percent (UN Women, 2012). The absence of a middle school or secondary school close to a girls' home could negatively impact parents' and girls' motivation to pursue secondary education. (Burde & Linden, 2013) found that placing a formal school in a village dramatically improves academic participation and performance among all children, particularly for girls. Further, the distance to school can compound the effects of poverty, with poor households often unable to cover the cost, either of transport or of attending a boarding school.

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 greatly reduced the cost of accessing primary school. However, school fees still exist for secondary school and there are also associated costs for both primary and secondary, such as the cost of transportation, uniforms and school supplies. Because of this, families may not retain their children in school, enroll them late, or withdraw them prematurely from school.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- To find out the factors that lead to girls' dropouts in Mangochi district.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To investigate challenges that force girls to dropout from school.
- To suggest solutions to the challenges that force girls to dropout for school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a mixed method of inquiry with qualitative and quantitative methods being used. This study included a population of primary and secondary school teachers and head teachers, parents and students of a few catchment areas associated with the selected schools as sample for this study in Mangochi District, Malawi. Using simple random techniques, questionnaires were administered to twenty teachers in pursuit of getting quantitative data. For qualitative aspect, Focus Group Discussion was used in data collection from

teachers and head teachers. Data for the study was analyzed through the use of Microsoft Excel and presented in Tables, and description notes for qualitative data that emerged in the course of the study. Oral responses from 10 parents and 20 students enable the study innovative and successful.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tables were used in presenting data about number of girls’ dropout per school, and the challenges that girls face while in school. A total of 54 respondents were interviewed in order to have data sourced.

FACTORS / REASONS THAT LEAD TO GIRLS’ DROPOUT IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

GIRLS’ DROPOUT RATES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Table 1.Name of the School: MAKAWA Name of the Zone: KOCHE

Catchment Area	Reason for Dropout	2015- 2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
		Enrolment 1617	Dropout	Enrolment 1835	Dropout	Enrolment 2129	Dropout
MAKAWA	Pregnancy		10		4		5
MAKOKOLA	Marriage		04		7		20
KELLA	Poverty		0		0		47
MATUWI	Long Distance		14		11		35
MPEMBA	Family Responsibility		16		27		52
	TOTAL:		44		49		204

Table 1 shows, girls’ dropout rates at Makawa primary school of Koche zone. The school constitutes the following catchment areas: Makawa, makokola, Kella, Matuwi and Mpemba. Of the 1617 girls enrolled in Koche zone in the academic year 2015-2016, 44 of them dropped out of school at Makawa primary school; 49 girls

dropped out in the year 2016-2017 in which 1835 girls were enrolled in the zone, and 204 girls dropped out in the year 2017-2018 whose total enrolment at zone level was 2129. Respondents cited pregnancy, early marriage, poverty, long distance and family responsibility as reasons for girls’ school dropout.

Table 2. Name of the School: LULANGA Name of the Zone: LULANGA

Catchment area	Reason for Dropout	2015- 2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
		Enrolment	Dropout	Enrolment	Dropout	Enrolment	Dropout
		596		792		856	
LULANGA	Pregnancy		2		3		5
MILAMBO	Marriage		1		1		3
MAMBO 2	Poverty		2		1		3
KUMALUMA	Long Distance		14		5		8
UNDI	Sexual harassment		0		1		0
MDALAMALUM A	Family Responsibility		2		1		1
WONANI	Sickness		0		1		0
	TOTAL:		21		13		20

Table 2 shows, girls' dropout rates at Lulanga primary school of Koche zone. The catchment areas of this school include Lulanga, Milambo, Mambo 2, Kumaluma, Undi, Mdalamaluma and Wonani. The zone enrolled 596 girls in the academic year 2015-2016, and had 21 dropouts in Lulanga primary school; 792 girls enrolled in

the year 2016-2017 with 13 dropouts, and 856 girls were enrolled in the zone in the year 2017-2018 with 20 girls' dropouts at Lulanga primary school alone. Respondents cited pregnancy, early marriage, poverty, long distance, sexual harassment, family responsibility and sickness.

GIRLS' DROPOUT RATES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Table 3. Name of the School: NTONDA COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL ZONE- KOCHE

Catchment Area	Reason for Dropout	2015- 2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
		Enrolment	Dropout	Enrolment	Dropout	Enrolment	Dropout
		147		126		151	
MAKAWA	Pregnancy		1		0		0
MAKOKOLA	Pregnancy		1		0		0
MANGUMBI	Marriage		0		1		0
ULANDE	Pregnancy		0		1		0
MATUWI	Pregnancy		0		0		1
MPALE	Pregnancy		0		0		1
CHIDONGO	Pregnancy		0		0		1
MICHESI	Pregnancy		0		0		1
	TOTAL:	147	2	126	2	151	4

Table 3 shows girls' dropout rates at Ntonda Community Day School in Koche zone. The catchment areas of this school include Makawa, Makokola, Mangumbi, Ulande, Matuwi, Mpale,

Chidongo and Michesi. In these zone 147 girls were enrolled in the academic year 2015-2016 with 2 girls' dropping out of school due to pregnancy. In the year 2016-2017, 126 girls were

enrolled but only 2 girls dropped out of school due to marriage and pregnancy. In the year 2017-2018, 151 girls got enrolled in the secondary

schools of this zone, however, 4 girls dropped out of school as a result of pregnancy.

Table 4. NAMWERA COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL ZONE- KOCHE

Catchment Area	Reason for Dropout	2015- 2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
		Enrolment 85	Dropout	Enrolment 103	Dropout	Enrolment 126	Dropout
NAMWERA	Marriage		-		2		-
SUMAILI			-		-		-
MALOWA	Long Distance		2		3		2
KWIPUTI	Poverty		1		2		-
SIMBIRI	Marriage		-		2		1
NGAWO			-		-		-
MBALAME	Pregnancy		3		1		-
MAKUMBA	Pregnancy		2		2		-
CHIUMBA	Long Distance		1		1		-
CHIPONDE	Pregnancy		1		1		2
NGALANDE			-		-		-
	TOTAL:	85	10	103	14	126	5

Table 4 shows, girls' dropout rates at Namwera Community Day Secondary School in Koche zone. The catchment areas of this school are: Namwera, Sumaili, Malowa, Kwiputi, Simbiri, Ngawo, Mbalame. Chiumba, Chiponde and Ngalande. This zone enrolled 85 girls in the academic year 2015-2016 with 10 girls' dropping out of school. In the year 2016-2017, 103 girls were enrolled with 14 of them dropping out at Namwera Day Secondary school. In the year 2017-2018, 126 girls were enrolled in the secondary schools of this zone, but 5 girls dropped out of school. The rate of school dropout at Namwera Day Secondary was attributed by the following factors: marriage, poverty, early pregnancy and long distance from home to school.

SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES THAT FORCE GIRLS TO DROPOUT FROM SCHOOL

Cited solutions to the challenges that force girls to dropout from school in Mangochi district:

1. Parents should control their children, not the uncle as it is;
2. The initiations period of girls should be short;
3. Puberty should not be a license to marriage;
4. Increase number of schools in village to shorten distance from home to school;
5. Going to South Africa for work should be discouraged among the youth;
6. Girls' empowerment programmes should be established;
7. Need for civic education among the girls and their guardians on the dangers of early marriage;

8. providing loans and scholarships to the needy and deserving students; and
9. Ban some cultural activities that influence girls' dropouts.

In the light of this finding, the following suggestions were recommended:

1. The society should stop the discrimination of the girl child through the provision of equal education to both boys and girls.
2. Parents and guardians should give female children education and stop the imposition or early marriage on them.
3. The government should make policy statements that will make education of the girl child to be mandatory.
4. The society should encourage girl child education by awarding scholarships to them

CONCLUSION

The results revealed the challenges that influence the rate of school dropout among the girls in Mangochi district. These challenges include culture, poverty, long distance from home to school, early pregnancy, early marriage, sexual harassment, family responsibility and sickness. Peer pressure is also one of the causes that girl child marriage where by students indulge in moral practices which encourage them to have multiple sex partners just to release their feeling in exchange with money which then makes them to have unwanted pregnancies. Mangochi being one of the Yao, dominated districts influences much on girl child marriage through initiation ceremonies like Chinamwali. When the female children have attended the ceremony, they feel like they are now old enough, and ready to start having sex with men in no time to comeNo wonder, most of the girls get pregnant at a tender age.

The result of the study reveals that girl child education fails and faces perennial challenges despite awareness and interventions. However, a

holistic approach which will be helpful in such a way that the data collected will play a great role in assisting the Government, Non Governmental and International donors to come up with effective intervention, policies and programmes so as to improve the state of girl child education in Primary and Secondary schools in Mangochi District and the nation of Malawi at large.

Because of social, economic, cultural policy and administrative factors girls are forced to discontinue schooling and are subsequently robbed of much of their potential for achievement.

The Malawi government has shown an interest in doing something about this problem. Hence the establishments of projects, the scholarship scheme, the suspension of tuition fees in phases since 1992. Among the important factors is the government policy of Re admission which is now under way encourage girls education, and saving the human resource that Malawi could have lost when the pregnant girls were to be denied a chance to go back to school. More research is, however, required in certain areas to understand the course of action suggested its impact and modality.

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