



FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

# THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON THE IMPACT OF INDISCIPLINE ON STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

**A case study of public secondary schools in Kasungu district Malawi.**

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Supervisor:	Ernst Thoutenhoofd
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# Abstract

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**Aim:** The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of teachers and students on the impact of indiscipline on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Malawi.

**Theory:** The social learning theory of Albert Bandura guided this research. It emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others.

**Method:** The study used a qualitative approach based on convenience sampling whereby semi structured interviews were held with eight teachers while focus group was done with 16 students from four secondary schools in Kasungu District.

**Results:** The interviewed teachers and students foreground indiscipline in the form of absenteeism, fighting, rudeness to teachers, late reporting, truancy, noise making in and outside the classroom, promiscuity, and stealing, among other things. The interviewed teachers believe that indiscipline in schools has a detrimental impact on learning and disrupts the learning environment. They also think that abolition of corporal punishment has contributed to increase in indiscipline in most of the secondary schools. On the other hand the focus group with students revealed that behaviour among teachers, such as drunkenness, sexual relationship with students as well as lateness and absenteeism trigger indiscipline in schools. They also note that failure to address students complaints and grievances contribute to students misbehaviour and vandalism. Students complained that they are given hard punishments which do not much with the offence committed. This research concludes that both students and teachers have a role to play to curb indiscipline in schools. The study recommends that Moral education should be emphasized in schools. Head teachers should devise effective staff training strategies in aid of school discipline, with disciplinary committees also being tasked with setting targets and monitoring progress that school staff collectively and individually make towards achieving a peaceful, respectful and conflict-free education environment.

# Foreword

I am grateful to God for allowing me to further my education through the International Master in Educational Research (IMER) program.

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## Abbreviations

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
EDM	Education Division Manager
IMER	International Masters In Educational Research
JC	Junior Certificate
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
STL	Social Learning Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TUM	Teachers Union of Malawi
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is at the core of our today's education, and good educational performance asks considerable discipline from both learners and teachers (Gitome et al., 2013). Researchers appreciate that discipline is an important component of human behaviour and assert that without it an organization cannot function well towards the achievement of its goals (Simba et al., 2016). In the context of a school system, a disciplined student is that student whose behaviours, actions and inactions conform to the predetermined rules and regulations of the school (Simba et al., 2016). However, many educators and parents are concerned about disorder and lack of discipline in school (Nelson, 2002). Discipline ideally means more than adhering to rules and regulations and entails the learner's ability to self-consciously discern and assess right and wrong. According to Simba et al., (2016) discipline is widely acknowledged to be essential for creating a positive school climate conducive to sound academic performance.

Indiscipline, the opposite of discipline, is viewed as all behaviour that is contrary to school rules and regulations. Indiscipline brings about calls for corrective measures aimed at instilling desired behaviour in learners and maintaining order in schools (Richard, 2003). Researchers have shown that student indiscipline is a global phenomenon. According to Gitome et al., (2013) for example, students in secondary schools are still in the age of rapid physical, social, psychological and physiological developments and so prone to act contrary to discipline. Students' maturation into young adults is often accompanied with variety of physical, emotional and contextual changes which can bring about indiscipline, which in turn can negatively affect students' concentration on their studies. Lack of school discipline however makes it difficult to teach effectively (Stanley, 2014). One of the effects of student indiscipline on teaching and learning is poor performance. Where too much time is spent on discipline and too little time on teaching, curriculum contents may be insufficiently covered, which means that students' may be inadequately prepared for examinations (Simba et al., 2016).

School indiscipline is one of the problems faced by Malawi. There has been an increase in indiscipline in most of secondary schools in Malawi today. For instance Munthali, (2012), noted that the general public has been complaining of moral decay in the society, especially with the acts of violence in schools. In most of the reported indiscipline in the media, students and school level authorities blame each other over the cause (Munthali, 2012). The causes of students' indiscipline are not well known and this makes it more difficult to tackle indiscipline. The perceptions and ideas of teachers and students about effective school discipline may reasonably be assumed useful in clarifying the nature of both school discipline and indiscipline, while the experiences of present teachers and students may also alert researchers to both good and poor school discipline practice.

## 1.2 A PROBLEM STATEMENT

Academic performance of students in Malawi for the past three years has been a major problem. For instance, the results of the Malawi School Certificate of Examinations (taken at the end of form four of secondary school when students are (12–19 years old) indicate a notable drop in pass rates over the most recent three years on record.

YEAR	NUMBER WROTE	WROTE PASS RATE	PASS %
2015	136,296	75,296	55% ____
2016	139,606	81,414	58% (UP)

2017	136,247	84,009	66% (UP)
2018	197,286	124,745	63% (DOWN)
2019	92,837	46,771	50% (DOWN)
2020	138,310	57,293	41% (DOWN)

**Source:** Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB)

This trend coincides with an increase in vandalism and other sources of indiscipline in several schools which has seen some of the schools closed for some time. According to Khamula, (2019), the government of Malawi has, through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, issued a national statement which warns all students to resist from school vandalism. This came after students from various secondary schools vandalised school properties. While few studies have to date examined whether a clear relationship exists between school discipline and academic performance in Malawi, it seems reasonable to suppose that a general rise of disorderly behaviour in schools will negatively affect students' school performance. This supposition is what triggered my research intention: to explore with teachers and students whether they see a relationship between school indiscipline and academic performance.

### 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of school indiscipline on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Malawi. I would like also to try to determine if the views of teachers and students are consistent with published research on school discipline practices. Data will be collected from teachers through individual interviews, and from students through focus group interviews. The perceptions presented in this study from those who are presently teaching and learning in Malawi schools may bring about a better understanding of interaction between school indiscipline and academic performance and may also identify good school discipline practice.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What are the factors contributing to student's indiscipline in secondary schools in Kasungu District Malawi?
- b. What are some common indiscipline acts exhibited by students in schools in Kasungu District in Malawi?
- c. Do indiscipline behaviours affect students' academic performance in schools?
- d. What challenges are faced by secondary schools management to curb indiscipline?

### 1.5 A STATEMENT OF RELEVANCE

Indiscipline among students, particularly at the secondary level of education, is a global concern that both public and private schools in various regions of the world are grappling with. Secondary school students, often known as in-school teenagers, make up a higher percentage of a country's total population, and their abilities and potentials are crucial to the country's future (Castillo, 2010). It is a well-known truth that constructive disciplinary actions can help a nation's potential human resources reach their full potential. Students' indiscipline has long been a source of concern for educators, policymakers, and the general public, as a result of peer aggression, violence within the teacher-student

relationship, and vandalism, all of which contribute to the problem of dropout, deviant behaviour, examination malpractice, lateness, and poor academic performance among students (Atieno, 2014). The rising occurrences of student indiscipline in schools have posed a threat not just to teachers' safety, but also to effective school management and the achievement of educational goals. It also raises questions about whether what is taught in schools is reflected in students' actions and habits. Indiscipline is complex in nature and has the potential to interrupt routine classroom operations, instil fear in teachers, and create an unhealthy environment. The aforementioned troubling issues elicit a wide range of opinions and perceptions about teachers' knowledge and efficacy in their career, particularly among those in specialized fields such as trained teachers.

Instructors in general, and teacher trainers in particular, curriculum planners, educational institutions, organizational entities such as the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM), and policymakers will benefit from the study's findings. The findings will aid teachers, particularly those in the training field and practicing teachers, in reconciling and harmonizing the level of knowledge delivered to pupils with expected behaviour. It would also assist teachers in bridging the gap between learned information and required behaviour. The findings will undoubtedly offer teachers with enough chance to trace the core causes of rising student indiscipline in secondary schools. The results would be used by curriculum planners to adapt the secondary school curriculum to include relevant measures that would help to control the rate of indiscipline in schools. The findings of the study will be used by policymakers to design new policies or reinforce existing ones in respect to disciplinary actions appropriate for situations of indiscipline in secondary schools. The TUM would use the findings to improve teachers' abilities and skills in controlling indiscipline in schools, as indiscipline is a threat to attaining educational goals.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

##### **2.1.1 The Concept of School Discipline and Indiscipline**

School discipline refers to students adhering to a set of rules known as the school rules (Koomson et al., 2005). They also mention that some school rules may include the anticipated standards for attire, punctuality, peer relationships (both instructors and students), and schoolwork. They ended by stating that every school has multiple such rules. Koomson et al., (2005) went on to say that the word "school discipline" does not always refer to the code of school rules. They argue that the term can also be used to describe punishment for violating the school's code of conduct. As a result, using school discipline may occasionally imply punishment for disobeying school rules. Discipline is described as mental and character training that produces self-control and obedient habits as a result of which standards of conduct and methods of training are established (Ayertey, 2002). On the other hand, indiscipline is a type of behaviour that deviates from commonly accepted norms and may be found in practically every aspect of society, including the household, schools, government, and religious institutions (Ayertey, 2002). In addition, according to Keoreng (2004), indiscipline among schoolchildren has become a global issue. He stated that cultism, vandalism, test malpractices, student wasting of school money, and truancy, among other things, are all rampant among schoolchildren. He underlined that illegitimate offspring can be found anywhere. Indiscipline is a type of behaviour that necessitates the imposition of penalties. Indiscipline is a type of human behaviour that is completely unethical and contrary to society's norms and ideals.

### **2.1.2. Factors Contributing to Indiscipline in Schools**

Students rationalize their indiscipline by blaming it on many elements in their environment. Students in Central Trinidad, for example, in a study of three primary schools on their perceptions of indiscipline, blamed their actions on peer pressure, teachers, the environment, and their communities (Lockan, 2010). Because of the popularity and admiration associated with the undesirable behaviours among their classmates, the students succumbed to peer pressure. According to the findings, teachers' actions, attitudes, tone of voice, and vocabulary lead to student misbehaviour. Some teachers' use of vocabulary and tone of voice, for example, embarrassed students and thereby sparked revolt. Furthermore, when a teacher bores the students, they engage in inappropriate behaviour. The students also stated that the media, particularly television, teaches them undesirable actions and values. Students' views and behaviours were impacted by role models in their home environment and community, leading them to engage in indiscipline behaviours such as cussing, smoking, and consuming alcohol. The study used a purposefully sampled group of 36 students as subjects. Group interviews were used to collect data, which was then analysed using thematic analysis (Lockan, 2010).

In Nigeria, students blame their indiscipline at school on family influence, peer, teacher influence, and government views. Truancy, tardiness to school, cultism, drug misuse, insulting/assaulting, theft, rioting, and other antisocial vices are all prevalent among secondary school pupils in the country (Ologbane, 2011). This was stated in a study conducted in Nigeria's Rivers state's Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government regions. The study looked into the causes that cause indiscipline in secondary school pupils, as well as the necessity for all stakeholders to work together to solve the problem of indiscipline in the educational system. The study was a survey that collected data from 200 randomly selected students using questionnaires, and mean scores were utilized to analyse the data (Ologbane, 2011).

Peer pressure has also been noted as a significant influence to be aware of among girls in Malaysian schools, particularly as technology and modernisation advance. The girls try to make each other look like the supermodels they see on the internet and in publications (Mzuza et al., 2014). Peer group influence is a major contributor to discipline issues. Because they spend more time together, the students were found to easily affect each other negatively. They also succumb to peer pressure because they are terrified of what will happen to them if they refuse. As a result, pupils engage in activities such as fighting and theft, which feeds further issues such as murder, robbery, and vandalism. The severity of the discipline issue was discovered to be high. Students who excelled academically were also prone to disciplinary infractions. The findings came from a study of discipline issues among secondary school students in Malaysia's Johor Bahru area. A descriptive quantitative design was adopted, with questionnaires being given to 90 teachers of various races, including Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Cluster on cluster sampling was used to identify the participants (Yahaya et al., 2009).

In schools, policies for dealing with indiscipline result in even more indiscipline. One such strategy is the United States' zero tolerance policy, which was implemented in the mid-1990s (Bankole Adeyemi et al., 2019). This is defined as "a school discipline policy or practice that results in an automatic disciplinary consequence for any student who commits one or more stated violations, such as in-school or out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or forced school transfer." Its purpose was to safeguard the safety of students in schools. The policy's implementation has resulted in a significant increase in exclusionary punishment methods, such as school suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions. According to a report released by the National Education Policy Centre in October 2011, 95% of all national suspensions were for disruptive behaviour and other reasons, with only 5% for drugs and weapons. When children return to school following suspensions or expulsions, indiscipline increases because they have lost their academic ground and thus engage in indiscipline, concluded the report.

### **2.1.3 Global perspective of indiscipline in Schools.**

According to (Blandford, 1988), there appears to be a visible disintegration of school discipline around the world. The annual Gallup Poll on the people's attitude of public schools in the United States of America indicated that a 'lack of indiscipline' has been highlighted as the most serious problem confronting the nation's Educational system (Cotton, 1990). Many educators and students are stated to be concerned about the level of disarray and danger in the classroom. It was also reported that school personnel, students, and parents draw attention to the high rates of drug use, cheating, sabotage, truancy, and intimidation in the school environment, which result in countless school and classroom destruction and nearly two million suspensions per year in the United States of America. In addition to school discipline difficulties, classrooms in the United States are frequently troubled by other, less serious forms of behaviour that disrupt the flow of classroom activities and obstruct learning. Furthermore, it was claimed that activities other than instruction take up almost half of all classroom time, with discipline issues accounting for a major percentage of this lost instructional time (Cotton, 1990).

In Britain, extreme cases of school violence have sparked renewed policy interest in the issue of indiscipline in British schools, due to increased media exposure. Violence in schools is on the rise and growing swiftly, according to a powerful message currently pervading public life. Reports in the media frequently portray schools as hostile environments where teachers are under siege and students are out of control (Soet, 2005). In England, there have also been reports of indiscipline. Under new plans, the government planned to crack down on school indiscipline by allowing schools to search students for weapons. Schools should be encouraged to arrange for surprise policy searches for the premises to alleviate the problem of indiscipline thus according to then-Education Secretary Hon Charles Clarke. The BBC published a version of this story in the United Kingdom on November 18, 2004. There have also been undercover television series that have shown disruptive behaviour in schools in the Classroom (Guardian July 5, 2005). The school problem is not limited to the United Kingdom; it is claimed to be a global phenomenon with significant and expanding implications (Waithaka., 2017). There have been numerous international conferences on school indiscipline. The very fact of these conferences and of the decision to create an international observatory on indiscipline and violence in schools is testimony to the increase concern worldwide about this phenomenon (Waithaka, 2017).

In Kenya, there has been a public outcry over indiscipline in secondary schools (Ndaita, 2009). For a long time, media reports on the topic of indiscipline and discontent in schools have been regular. Murithi, (2010) provides a timeline of public school demonstrations and destruction. The issue of unrest and indiscipline in schools is a major source of concern thus according to Murithi, (2010), It's been a concerning trend in that it's progressed from basic protests to property destruction and the burning of prefects. As a result, student unrest had a negative impact on academic achievement. According to a report issued by the Provincial Education Board (Central Province), indiscipline was widespread throughout the country, not just in the central province.

In Malaysia, indiscipline in schools is a big issue among elementary and secondary school pupils. Disruptive behaviour is a source of concern for schools, parents, and fellow students whose education may be jeopardized (Yahaya et al., 2009). Yahaya et al.,( 2009) conducted a study to determine the prevalence of discipline problems among secondary school pupils in Johor, Malaysia. The findings revealed that students who have family problems are more likely to hang out with friends and other peers, resulting in a higher level of indiscipline than students who do not have such issues. Some students with a history of indiscipline issues demonstrated that they had no difficulty in learning because they passed their exams, and the discipline issues were not related to their parents' educational backgrounds because discipline was not required of the children.

### **2.1.4 School Indiscipline and Academic Achievement**

Mendez et al., (2002) investigated the relationship between disciplinary results and academic achievement in a large Florida school district and found strong negative correlations between school suspension and achievement in math, reading, and writing across elementary and secondary schools. Arcia, (2006) investigated the effects of school discipline on academic achievement by analysing data from two student cohorts. The results demonstrate that students who got at least one out-of-school suspension were three grade levels behind in reading when compared to students who did not get any out-of-school suspension (Arcia, 2006). Caton, (2012) interviewed ten Black males who dropped out of high school during the 2010-2011 academic year due to suspension or expulsion. Participants reported falling behind in class and having to redo an academic year as a result of out-of-school suspensions throughout the interviews. Morris & Perry, (2016) looked at the influence of exclusionary discipline on reading and math achievement and discovered that frequent out-of-school suspension in punitive institutions resulted in a collateral damage effect that harmed both suspended and non-suspended kids' academic achievement. Morris & Perry, (2016) looked at the link between school discipline and academic achievement and found that out-of-school suspensions were responsible for up to one-fifth of the achievement gap between Black and White students. While each of these studies backs up the idea that school discipline hurts academic achievement, they don't go into detail on how this happens. As a result, the current study adds to the body of knowledge by elucidating how school discipline has a negative impact on academic attainment.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The social learning theory guided this research. The work of Robert L. Burgess and Ronald L. Akers in 1966 paved the way for the creation of this theory. Albert Bandura is one of the most prominent proponents of this theory (Ormrod, 1999). The consequences of watching others' behaviour and then copying it are the focus of social learning theory. Learning takes place in social situations and environments, thus according to this theory. It also considers how people learn from one another, as well as related ideas like observation, imitation, and behaviour modelling (Ormrod, 1999).

One can get a sense of how new actions are carried out in the future by simply watching others. As a result, this coded information acts as a guide (HLWIKI International, 2013). Observation, retention, motivation, and imitation are all important aspects of social learning. Anti-social or aggressive behaviour can be acquired by youngsters who routinely witness such behaviour among adults or between adults and children, thus according to (Docking, 1980a). Children blindly imitate what they see and hear, thus parents are urged to set a good example in front of their children. Imitation is vital in the acquisition of both aberrant and conforming behaviour (A Bandura & Walters, 1963).

They indicated that through studying others' conduct, new 11 reactions can be taught or the features of current responses can alter. In some circumstances, the amount of learning demonstrated by the observer is equal to that demonstrated by the performance. Other than real models, symbolic models may be communicated on social learning and personality development through oral, written instructions, pictorially, or a combination of verbal and pictorial techniques (Bandura & Walters, 1963 p. 49). Pictorially presented models are provided in films, TV or other audio visual displays while those in books are portrayed as fiction characters.

Therefore, Social learning theory is relevant in this study. This idea implies that students who misbehave at school are more likely to have picked up the conduct from their parents and peers. One of the reasons a teenager might sneak out of school or destroy school property is that others are doing so, and not doing so means being excluded from the peer group. Students in day schools are in continual contact with their families and society. This means that the setting in which these students grow can have a negative impact on their conduct. Students' behaviour has deteriorated as a result of inadequate role models in society.

Furthermore, children whose mothers are beaten by their fathers are more likely to become angry adolescents (Docking, 1980a). In addition, the majority of high school pupils read books, magazines, and watch TV (Soet, 2005). As a result, they are impacted by such characteristics and they copy them, since audio-visual mass media has a huge impact on changing behaviour. Children replicate exactly what their parents and teachers do, thus they are role models for them. That is why, when given a variety of play items such as food sets and dolls, a young girl can perfectly emulate her mother at work (Docking, 1980). Mbiti (2007 p. 84) urges that adults, in particular, should remember that their lifestyles are similar to a textbook that the youth read on a daily basis. Students' conduct changes as a result of peer and adult modelling and observation. As a result, indiscipline among students is mostly generated by pupils mimicking or emulating certain negative behaviours that have been observed and praised by their peers and the surrounding environment.

### **2.2.1 Recent studies on Social Learning Theory**

The work of Albert Bandura and other early pioneers of Social Learning Theory has generated recent studies into how social learning theory applies to criminology and deviant behaviour, advertising and consumer behaviour, health and exercise, as well as technology and social media, just to name a few. Brauer (2009) for example, claims that SLT can help us better understand how people learn criminal and deviant behaviour, which is learnt in the same way as noncriminal behaviour. Individuals might learn to emulate observed criminal and deviant behaviour through affiliations or social contacts with persons who serve as models for criminal and deviant behaviour over time, especially in the absence of competing positive effects or models to the contrary. Whether the viewer imitates or rejects the deviant behaviour is a result of directly or indirectly experiencing the patterned behaviour's incentives and punishments.

In addition, researchers are currently investigating SLT in the context of advertising. Kinard & Webster (2010) investigated the effect of advertising as well as Bandura's self-efficacy construct on adolescents' harmful consuming behaviour, namely their use of tobacco and alcohol. Advertising has long been regarded to have a considerable impact on individual behaviour by promoting attractive, successful, and healthy stereotypes. These inherently dangerous and unhealthy consumer behaviours, such as smoking and alcohol drinking, are often depicted using these favourable imagery (Pechman & Knight, 2002; Pechman & Shih, 1999, as cited in Kinard & Webster, 2010). Adolescents are especially vulnerable to these pictures, and as a result, they are more likely to start smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol as a teenager and continue to do so throughout adulthood. Furthermore, advertising has been demonstrated to operate as an extra model of behaviour, reinforcing the social influences of smokers and drinkers on adolescents' parents and peers. Adolescents are more likely to emulate seen behaviours (such as smoking and drinking alcohol) as a result of the additional reinforcement provided by advertising.

The core concepts of social learning theory continue to hold true as researchers continue to investigate the established foundations of social learning theory and their application across a wide range of domains. To put it another way, a lot of individual learning happens in a social environment, through observing and subsequently mimicking other people's behaviour (good or negative). Although other complex factors such as self-efficacy and the perceived rewards and/or punishments of the behaviour can influence the degree to which, if at all, the modelled behaviour is imitated by the observer(s), research (past and present) has shown that observation plays a powerful role in the learning process regardless of the domain.

This research therefore agrees with the recent studies that even learners have other agents in which they learn bad behaviour in addition to observing and miming adults and peers. This is why most secondary schools are unable to curb indiscipline since some behaviours are triggered by social media. Students learn a lot on social media and they try to do what they have seen in social media such as Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram as well as Twitter. Nowadays, most violent and deviant behaviours are posted on social media and students view this later they copy those.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter explains the methodology that was used to collect and analyse the data for the study. According to Wilkinson (2000), research methodology refers to the procedures or strategies used to find, select, process, and analyse topical data.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This is a case study that is qualitative in nature. When little is known about a topic, the research context is poorly understood, the boundaries of a domain are ill-defined, the phenomenon under investigation is not quantifiable, the nature of the problem is not explicit, or the researcher suspects that the phenomenon needs to be re-examined and the qualitative methodology of inquiry is appropriate (Morse, 2003, p. 833). Furthermore, researchers need a clear image of the issues and questions they wish to study, as well as a plan for how they will investigate them, but they must be willing to improvise, modify, and adjust their plans as needed (Klopper, 2008). According to Jones, (1995), qualitative research begins by accepting that there are a variety of ways to make sense of the world and that truth is only valid in a specific context, and it is concerned with discovering the meanings seen by those being studied and understanding their perspective of the world rather than the researcher's. This method is appropriate for investigating the occurrence in Malawi in this study. Qualitative approaches do not try to generalize findings; they may not be perfect in other circumstances or provide different outcomes.

This study also took a case study technique. They're often employed in educational research. Case studies are empirical investigations that "examine a current phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not readily visible," according to the definition by (Yin, 2009). In a manner that quantitative methodologies cannot, they allow the researcher to record or investigate the 'real world' - be it a situation, an organization, or a set of relationships – in all of its complexity. In educational research, a case study is a small-scale inquiry that is used to investigate a research question or theory (Hammersley, 2008). Most researchers will find that using a case study approach to investigate topics that are more complex than 'What?' or 'How many?' is beneficial. It allows you to look into connections, patterns, and context, as well as reflect on the broad picture and the small details.

### **3.3 AREA OF THE STUDY**

The study was carried out in Kasungu District in the central region of Malawi. The region was chosen for the following reasons: first, the region has a population of 7,523,340 according to Malawi national population census (2018) and has the highest population than any other regions of Malawi. Secondly, the region has the highest number of secondary school about 340 according to MoEST (2015). Kasungu District was chosen because it has a large number of both high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in the country, with the majority of the schools being government-owned. The research has focused on both high and low-performing schools. Because of the unique characteristics of these institutions, the researcher was able to collect the necessary sample for investigating and analysing teachers' and students' perspectives on the impact of student discipline on academic performance. Furthermore, it is alleged that some students in most secondary schools participate in confrontations with teachers, absenteeism, skipping school, and the usage of alcohol, among other undesirable behaviours (Munthali, 2012).



## 3.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The study employed convenience, purposeful and random sampling techniques. Convenience sampling technique was chosen because is the most common form of qualitative sampling and occurs when people are invited to participate in the study because they are conveniently (opportunistically) available with regard to access, location, time and willingness (Violet & Whitehead, 2012). Purposeful sampling on the other hand was chosen because it shows some feature or process in which the researcher is interested, for instance the technique demands that we think critically about the population requirements we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on this basis (Sanders, 2016). Purposive sampling therefore has been used since the study wants to collect data from teachers and students only. In addition, the choice of the purposive technique is appropriate because the teachers are the people who have been teaching the pupils and have adequate knowledge of the indiscipline behaviours the students have been showing in the classes. While random simple sampling has been chosen because each participant will have the same probability as other participants to be selected to serve as a representation of the whole population (Violet & Whitehead, 2012).

## 3.7 METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

According to Sanders, (2016), data are the recorded, factual material commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to validate research findings. In this study, the type of data that has been used is qualitative data. This data has been presented in words and descriptions. This type of data has been collected through the following data collection methods; focus groups, personal interviews, or using open-ended questions and questionnaires.

### 3.7.1 Focus group discussions

A focus group discussion is a small group discussion in which participants respond to a series of questions focused on a specific topic (Lange, 2002). An interviewer typically meets with a group of five to twelve people to collect in depth qualitative information about the group's ideas, perceptions, attitudes and experiences on the defined topic (Lange, 2002). According to Morgan, (1998) focus group discussion has several advantages as it is comparatively easier to conduct. It also allows to explore topics and to generate hypotheses. In addition, it generates an opportunity to collect data from the group interaction, which concentrates on the topic of the researcher's interest. It has high face validity and that it has low cost in relation to other methods. Morgan, (1998) also notes that, focus group discussion has some shortfalls as well, for instance it is not based on a natural atmosphere as the researcher has less control over the data that are generated. In addition, the data analysis is more difficult to be done. It also demands carefully trained interviewers. It also takes effort to assemble the groups. Finally, the discussion should be conducted in an atmosphere that facilitates the dialogue. In this study therefore, focus group discussions has been used to gather data from sixteen (16) students on their perception on the impact of discipline on academic performance. Each focus group had four (4) students from four (4) secondary schools that were selected.

### 3.7.2 Interviews

According to Bryman, (2001), interviews have long been the most popular method in qualitative research and are often used in the case studies. For the benefit of this case study, the researcher has used interviews to collect data from five (5) teachers. These teachers were drawn from four (4) secondary schools in Kasungu district. The main aim of the researcher was to design the interview questions that helped to probe deeper information from the participants to cover the main research questions. The researcher decided to use interviews because of the following advantages, firstly Gay, (1992) points out that when well conducted, interviews can produce in-depth data that are not possible with questionnaires. However, interviews also have a number of disadvantages. According to Cohen & Manion, (1989) Interviews can be extremely costly and are lengthy and time consuming. Interviews can be biased and

offers less assurance of anonymity than mailed questionnaires. Cohen & Manion, (1989) further notes that interviews lack accessibility to respondents if the respondents are busy, it won't be easy to access them for interviews. In this connection therefore, the researcher chose to use questionnaires as another data collection instrument because three (3) teachers who were also chosen to be part of the participants were busy and they opted to be given a questionnaire. The importance of this was that the three participants were given more time to consider answer before final response.

On the other hand, the researcher did not use structured interviews because the study is of qualitative in nature and there is a need to probe deep information which might not be the case with structured interview. According to Bryman, (2001) probing can be a problem area for structured interview. Respondents may not understand the question and unable to answer it or the respondents may not have received sufficient information to answer the question.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Jowell, (1986) observes that ethical considerations in research involve outlining the content of research and what would be required of participants, how informed consent will be obtained and confidentiality ensured. As the nature of this project entails, there were certain ethical considerations that need to be taken into consideration. In the first place, all participants were treated with respect and politeness. A strategy of 'informed consent' was adopted, with the aim and methods of this research being made as clear as possible to every participants. The anonymity and confidentiality of every respondent was assured, and consent was sought for the interviews to be audio-recorded. In addition, password in computers have used to protect information of participants. The students who participated in this research through focus group were not known to other teachers only one teacher who was organising them. No name was mentioned in this research only acronyms. The security of these student was observed by making this one teacher sign a form of secret keeper.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.2 Introduction**

This chapter presents presentation and analysis of research findings done through interviews and focus groups with teachers and students. The chapter is structured into two sections namely; demographic Information and the presentation of results of the research questions that the study attempted to answer.

#### **4.3 Demographic Information**

The participants of this study were secondary school teachers and students from 4 public secondary schools in Kasungu District. These are boarding, day as well as shift secondary schools. Boarding schools are those that students actually live on campus in dormitories while day schools are those that do not have boarding facilities and finally shift schools are those that exchange classes as others come in the morning and another group comes in the afternoon. To preserve their safety and avoid any sort of harm, the proper names of participants in this thesis were not displayed. As a result, you'll notice that they have pseudonyms ranging from teacher one to teacher eight as well as focus group 1 to 4 respectively. Some of their specifics are shown in the tables below.

**Table 1: Distribution of the teacher respondents.**

Pseudonyms	Gender	Type of school they teach	Work experience	Age	Education	Schools taught	Counselling courses attended	Students/class
Teacher 1	Male	Boarding	3 years	21-30	Bachelor's degree	1	0	55
Teacher 2	Female	Day	4 years	21-30	Diploma	1	0	140
Teacher 3	Female	shift	8 years	31-40	Bachelor's degree	3	1	150
Teacher 4	Female	Boarding	7 years	31-40	Bachelor's degree	2	0	45
Teacher 5	Male	Shift	6 years	31-40	Bachelor's degree	2	0	120
Teacher 6	Male	Shift	12 years	41-50	Master's degree	3	2	125
Teacher 7	Male	Day	8 years	31-40	Diploma	2	0	130
Teacher 8	Female	Boarding	2 years	21-30	Diploma	1	0	60

The table above shows that gender balance was observed as the number of male participants was equal to the number of female participants. Further study shows that majority of respondents had a bachelors' degree and few had diplomas while only one had Master's degree in teaching. This means that all the teachers are qualified.

Regarding working experience the study reveals that most of the respondents had served as teachers for more than 6 years. This shows that these are teachers who are conversant with how examinations come and are able to manage the academic success of the students. Students' performance is to some extent influenced by teachers experience with the subject matter. However, the table is showing that only two teachers attended counselling courses and the majority did not which means that, there is need for more teachers to be trained so that they can have adequate knowledge in counselling the students.

Regarding the age of teachers, the table is showing that most teachers are within the ages of 21 to 40, which means that most of them are young and energetic who can stand for one to two hours teaching unlike old teachers who cannot stand for a long time. The table is also showing that most of them have taught either or less than two schools which means that they have not yet experienced the different types of schools Malawi has thus boarding, day and shift.

Regarding the number of students they teach, the table is showing that teachers from day and shift secondary schools have large classes as compared to Boarding schools contrary to Malawi government teacher-pupil ratio which is 1:60 (Munthali, 2012). The Government of Malawi selects students to boarding schools in line with the number of beds that are there at that school (Munthali, 2012). Thus boarding secondary schools have limited number of students as compared to Shift and Day secondary schools.

**Table 2: Distribution of the students respondents.**

Focus group	Number Per group	Gender		Type of school they attend	Age range	Class	Members of guidance and counselling club	Location
		F	M					
Group 1	4	2	2	Boarding	13 to 18	1 to 4	2	Rural/Urban
Group 2	4	2	2	Shift	13 to 17	1 to 4	0	Urban
Group 3	4	2	2	Shift	14 to 19	1 to 4	1	Urban
Group 4	4	2	2	Day	13 to 18	1 to 4	0	Rural

Students between the ages of 13 and below 19 dominated the study. This is the common age in secondary schools in Malawi since the students join primary section at the age of five where they spend eight years.

Many students who participated lack guidance and counselling since most of them are not members of this guidance and counselling club as shown in the table. The study managed to study students from the three types of secondary schools found in Malawi and the table shows that most of these students are from Urban areas. The overall group of student respondents is gender-balanced, with each focus group including 2 males and 2 females.

#### **4.4 Presentation of the results**

Thematic analysis of the interviews with both teachers and student respondents revealed that there is lack of discipline among secondary school students and teachers face some challenges when teaching students in classrooms. Respondents collectively note that indiscipline is affecting students' performance in class as well as at the end of the terms examinations. Both teachers and students feel that if discipline were to be better observed, learning outcomes would be improved. They believe that students can make progress if all stakeholders that are involved in checking school discipline are doing their job well. The study further indicated the challenges that teachers are facing to curb indiscipline in secondary schools.

This study's findings are divided into three primary themes and subthemes. They all respond to the three key research questions in a logical order. As a result, the information supporting these themes is organized according to the order of the questions. The three main themes are Impact of indiscipline on academic performance, causes of indiscipline in Secondary schools as well as challenges faced by secondary schools management to curb indiscipline.

## 4.4.1 IMPACT OF INDISCIPLINE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### 4.4.1.1 TEACHERS PERCEPTION

#### 4.4.1.1.1 Drug and substance abuse

To begin, teachers highlighted that drug and substance use can impair cognitive development in students, which has an impact on academic achievement and growth. They said that these secondary students are in the ages of 13 to 20 which is an adolescent stage. Thus variations in adolescent brain activity can cause problems with working memory and attention in these teenagers.

In addition, the teachers said that drug and substance usage can have short-term consequences on school performance in which they can affect the students ability to focus for long periods of time in class as one may fall asleep in class missing what the teacher is teaching. This can result in low academic performance.

Finally, teachers said that drug and substance use can have a negative impact on social behaviour of students, such as studying with others, adhering to classroom rules and maintaining decent cleanliness. They said that regular drug users may also be more likely to engage in violent behaviour at school or engage in other harmful behaviours which may lead to their suspension or expelled from school which can affect their academic progress. They indicate that drug use is common in most of the schools which has seen some students being suspended of the same.

#### 4.4.1.1.2 Vandalism of school property

Most teachers argue that vandalism causes learning to collapse, since it infringes on the right of learners to be taught in clean, well-kept school buildings. Teacher 1 from a boarding secondary schools that was once involved in vandalism had this to say: *“Our school was once vandalised by students of forms 4 and 2 who were involved in fighting that led in the students setting fire to a multi-purpose hall and destroying other structures. They form 4 students protested over a disciplinary action that was taken against some of their colleagues after they allegedly harassed form 2 students. The students also destroyed teachers’ houses and learning materials. The police came and arrested some students where others were suspended from school. Most of these students failed the national examination since they spent most of their time at home and in police custody without learning.”*

Another teacher 2 from a shift school which had a similar incident from a previous school added, *“Our schools library and other learning materials were destroyed. Teachers had difficulties to teach. As a result, most teachers did not finish the syllabus and students had insufficient notes which did not match with the examination demands at MSCE level. There was a drop in the examination results as compared to the previous year.”*

On the contrary, another teacher 7 showed the other side of the subtopic in which he thinks that it is their right of the students to demonstrate and vandalise the school property in order to show their anger on issues that they have not gone well on their side. He said that sometimes teachers are to blame for not solving students problems in time. He put an example of a certain school where he was previously teaching in which students vandalised the school properties due to the negligence of teachers to change their diet which to them was poor. He said that some of these indiscipline cases are fuelled by teachers themselves. On academic performance he said that some students are genius, they cannot get affected by getting dismissed or expelled from school due to vandalism. *“You know some students are brilliant, they can read on their own and pass exams. For example, some people learn and read online and pass exams without the assistance of the teacher, do you think students cannot do the same? They can read on their own and pass the exams,”* he said.

Another teacher 5 partially agreed with teacher 7 on the conduct of some teachers for not solving students problems in time which contributes to indiscipline and explained what the headteacher of her previous school did regarding a certain planned demonstration by the students. *“At my previous school, students threatened to demonstrate demanding the removal of a certain teacher who was accused of practicing witchcraft. The head teacher quickly wrote to the EDM who in no time removed the teacher from the school. I think this helped to avoid the situation in which students would have demonstrated and in the process damaged the school property which could have affected their learning progress.”* She said.

All in all, most of the teachers interviewed agreed that vandalism of school property is indiscipline and affects students’ academic progress. They said that, when schools have been vandalised, teachers can become discouraged and demotivated by the circumstances in which they have to work. As a result some teachers absent themselves from duties. This means that students may not learn for some time which is not good for their academic progress. In addition, some teachers ask for posting to go to other schools and this lead to shortage of teachers in that school, which affects students’ academic progress as well.



**Fig 2.** Students going back home



**Fig 3.** One of the vandalised structures

**4.4.1.1.3 Not following school rules and regulations**

Most teachers said that some students don’t follow rules and regulations at the school deliberately with the aim of provoking teachers. The punishments that are given as a result may affect these students’ academic progress.

**The table below indicates indiscipline activities that teachers feel students do deliberately and affect their academic outcome.**

-Late coming	-eating in class
-Making noise in class	-not copying notes
-Bullying	-dating teachers
-fighting	-insulting teachers
-sleeping in class	-playing with phones in class
- Coming to school while drunk	-stealing
-Sexual relationships	-cheating during examinations

Most teachers noted that, classroom rules and other school regulations are established and supported by an ongoing social process in order to manage, govern, and organize students and their activities in school. They are a component of school's regular routine. In his contribution, teacher 4 noted that, school rules are prescriptions on how to behave in school situations that are legitimized by teachers standards by which behaviour in school is deemed to be proper, correct, and desired, or inappropriate, wrong, and forbidden. *"I think that if the school is to build and maintaining an environment favourable to learning in the classroom, school rules have to be put in place so that there is non-violence, and safety in the classrooms, playground, corridors, dining hall, and other areas of the school. I feel that if all these areas are free from indiscipline, learning can take place nicely and students can do well and their academic outcome can be of great admirable."* He said.

Concurring with teacher 4, teacher 8 looked at student late coming to school as another indiscipline case that affect learners performance in class. He observed that late coming of students is one of the issues that has plagued many schools. *"No institution is immune to this problem. The negative impact of this major threat cannot be overstated, as it has a significant detrimental influence on student academic progress and school operations. When students come late to school, they miss the first part of a lesson which has an impact on their learning outcome. Most students nowadays feel shy to ask their fellow students when they miss a lesson after coming late to school. I feel that late coming breaches the idea of punctuality and if not addressed right away, it can become a habit for the person concerned with negative effects."* he explained.

Teachers 6 on the other hand thinks that punishments which students are given for not following the school rules are the ones that lower the academic performance of the students. For instance, she shared some punishments that their school uses to deal with indiscipline cases.

<b>Offence</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
-Late coming and putting on clothes which are not uniform	-Sent back home to come the following day
-Making noise and sleeping in class	-Sent outside while others are learning
-Bullying and fighting	-4 weeks suspension
- Cheating during examinations	-sending them out of the exams room without finishing the exams
- Sextual relationships	-6 weeks suspension
- Coming to school while drunk	-digging a garbage pit
- insulting teachers	-calling their parents
- playing with phones in class	-confiscating the phone and 2 weeks suspension

*"How can a student catch up with his or her friends after missing lessons for 6 weeks during suspension?"* She questioned.

Asked if the punishments given to students are in line with those stipulated in the MoEST punishment regulations book, teacher 6 said that some are inline but others are being given by the teachers themselves on their own. He however pointed out that, some of these punishments more especially those given by teachers on their own are not good. *“I feel that some of the punishments like sending students outside while their friends are learning denies the right of the child to learn. The students miss what the teacher is teaching and this affect their performance in class. However the teacher blamed her fellow teachers for being behind some students bad behaviour in class. She had this to say; “I put much blame on teachers whose students sleep in class when they are teaching because sometimes the teacher does not plan well as a result students don’t understand what the teacher is teaching and they end up sleeping in class.”*

#### **4.4.1.2 STUDENTS PERCEPTION**

During focus groups students were on the same view that discipline affects academic performance. The following were their contributions

##### **4.4.1.2.1 Cheating during the examination**

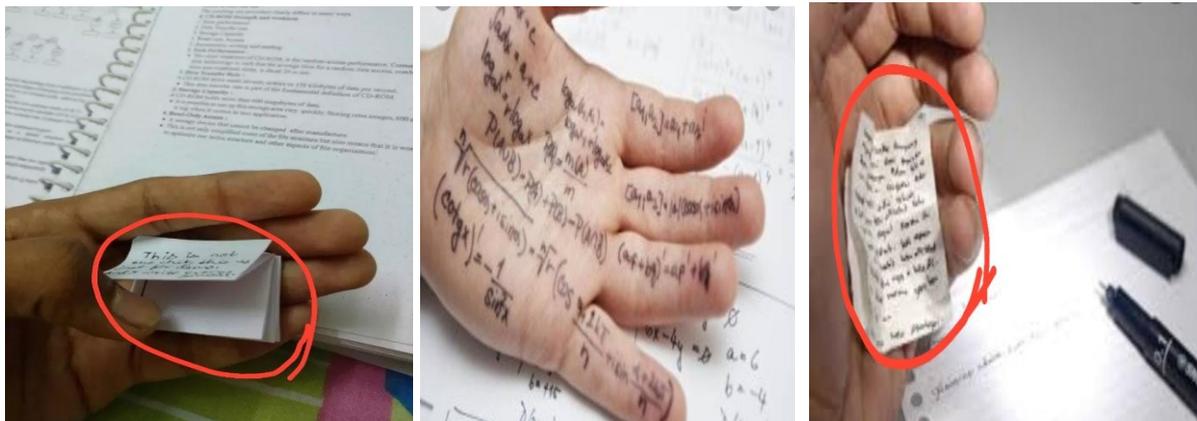
Cheating occurs when a student obtains or attempts to obtain some advantage or extra marks by any dishonest or deceptive means. This can include lying; copying from another's test or examination; interacting with other students during assessments and taking any unauthorised material into an examination venue (McCabe et al., 2001, Diego, 2017, Jordan, 2001). Group 3 of focus group identified cheating in examination as a serious indiscipline activity that affect learners academic progress. One student explained that *“most of the cheating is done during end of term exams. Teachers who are assigned to be invigilators in examination rooms don’t sit inside the classrooms, they sit outside and sometimes they chat with their friends instead of invigilating. So students take advantage of these and share information in the exam room. Others bring in reference materials like books where they refer as they write exams”*. He said.

Asked how this affect academic performance, one student who once cheated had this to say, *“I once cheated. It was a geography subject I remember. I didn’t know some of the answers to the questions so I wrote a note to my friend who was sitting next to me because I saw him busy writing and I thought he was writing correct things. He replied by giving me answers to the questions that I asked. I wrote the answers with whole heartedly thinking that I am writing correct things ha ha ha! When the papers were marked, I was surprised to see that I failed almost all the answers that I he assisted me. This reduced the total marks that I got that term. I was not happy because I did not pass the way I used to do. With this I agree that cheating indeed affect ones performance.”* Concurring with group 3, group 4 also agreed to the fact that cheating in examinations hinder academic performance. One member from this group said that some students do not study, they rely on bringing reference materials during examinations. This brings laziness and passiveness which result into lower standards of performance.

On the contrary, group 1 had a different view. Some members of this group did not agree with the fact that cheating in an exam makes students fail. They said that other students pass well during the examinations because of cheating. *“They know how to do this because some of those who do this are bad mannered students and they know how to play their cards well. They bring inside the exam room reference materials that match with the exam paper questions and pass the exams. Sometimes students steal exam papers from the printing room and discuss them the day before the exams in which they have no problems to answer the questions on the actual day of the exam paper”*. One member explained.

Groups 2 on the other hand agreed with the point that cheating affects ones academic performance. This group came up with another cheating technique in which a student hires an outsider to write the exams on behalf of her or him. So if the contractor does not know the answers definitely the owner of the paper

fails. They said this malpractice mostly happens during the national exams more especially the JCE and MSCE exams.



**Fig 4.** Cheating techniques in exams

#### **4.4.1.2.2 Romantic relationships amongst students**

Almost all the 4 focus groups agreed that this is another common indiscipline activity that most secondary school students do. One member of group 1 explained that most of the times girls are the ones that are greatly affected. He shared his experience; *“My sister was withdrawn from school after she got pregnant. She stayed at home for almost a year without going to school. When she delivered my mother told her to go back to school and she took care of the baby. Although she went back to school, she failed to catch up with her friends and was forced to repeat the previous class. With this experience, I totally agree that Romantic relationships amongst students affect academic progression.”*

In group 2, another member also explained that, when students are in love relationships, they always think of how to make the partner happy. *“Girls always make sure that they look good and spend much of their time thinking about ways of how to look beautiful instead of studying. They don’t pay attention to class activities; they do daydreaming of the love partner while classes are in progress. In so doing they miss class proceedings which affect their final exams.”* Another member from the same group 2 commented that, *“nowadays is a fashion to have a love relationship. If you don’t have a love relationship, your peers look at you as old fashion.”* In addition most romantic relationships ends up into sexual relationships and sometimes lovers may give each other sexually transmitted diseases that would make someone sick for some time without attending classes. This as well has an impact on the way the person progresses academically.”

#### **4.4.1.2.3 Absconding classes**

Absenteeism is a habit of failure to present himself or herself frequently in program or event without a reasonable excuse thus according to (Ahmad et al., 2018). Students more especially from shift schools admitted that absconding classes is very common amongst students more especially when the group is coming in the afternoon shift. *“How can one pass exams yet you were not attending classes?”* One student asked.

Asked on what causes abscondment of classes, students explained that lack of subject interest forces students to run away from that subject as it is being taught. This definitely put one at a disadvantaged of failing exams since he or she does not have interest in the subject. Sometimes student don’t love the way the subject teacher teaches as a result they become bored and run away when that teacher comes in class. Another student added that some topics of other subjects are very challenging as a result students don’t enjoy them and they run away as they are being taught.

Some students from group 1 blamed some teachers who do not make their subjects live. *“Some teachers are not friendly, when you ask some questions for them to clarify on some points we don’t understand they shout at you. As a result students run away from their subjects,”* one student said.

However some members from group 3 disagreed with the ideas of group 1 by noting that, students themselves are the ones to blame for absconding classes. Some students said, students go to video showrooms instead of attending classes. Others also felt that it is a lame excuse to blame a teacher for not making his or her subject live because teachers are different and the way they teach is different as well. They said that other teachers are clever and others are not and some teachers are creative and others are not.

## 4.4.2 CAUSES OF INDISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### 4.4.2.1 TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS

Teachers mentioned so many causes of indiscipline at school, however the researcher got 4 that were mentioned by all the 8 teachers as the most serious ones.

#### 4.4.2.1.1 Abolition of corporal punishments

Corporal punishment is a form of disciplinary measure that uses physical force with the intention of causing a learner to experience pain but not injury for reasons of correcting his or her behaviour thus according to (Shaikhmag & Assan, 2014). It is an old fashion method of punishment in which teachers nowadays feel that it was the best method of disciplining the students. Teachers expressed concern that the abolition of corporal punishments reduced their powers and is making the students not to fear them. They argued that without corporal punishment, discipline is difficult to maintain. Teacher 4 argued that students cannot show respect or develop the discipline to work hard unless they are beaten or threatened to be beaten. Teacher 6 agreed with teacher 4 that; *“our powers as educators had been taken away since corporal punishment was quick and easy to administer, whereas other methods required time, patience, and skill, which educators often lacked.”* Teacher 5 shared a memory. *“When I was at secondary school, our teachers used to beat us whenever we have done something wrong. We were afraid and no one dared to make any mistake because we were all afraid of being beaten. This practice helped to reinstate a learning culture. It was the only option to deal with students who were difficult or disruptive.”* Teacher 1 also concurred with teacher 4 pointing out that corporal punishment was a good method of punishment which maintained discipline among learners. He further noted that after the ban, the government did not put in place an alternative mode of punishment which could make children fear. As a result students don’t fear the teachers because they know the policy will protect them thus why they make all sorts of indiscipline. *“I believe that acts of corporal punishment were not intended to cause harm and hence should not be regarded as abuse,”* Teacher 7 said. However looking at why this punishment was abolished; one teacher thought that teachers were taking this too far. Teacher 8 assert that some teachers were putting harm on learners and other learners could get sick because of being beaten by the teachers. *“To me I think it was right to abolish this punishment. Some teachers were misusing the method and other students were dropping out of school more especially from the rural areas fearing of being beaten by a teacher. As a result of being beaten, children's eardrums were burst. Minor injuries like bruising and swelling were common; more serious injuries like huge wounds, sprains, fractured fingers, as well as teeth knocked out, were also encountered.”* In her contribution, teacher 3 supported teacher 8 on the idea that corporal punishment was wrong. She argued that physically punished students are more inclined to bully their friends and can grow up to be adults who have little or no empathy and will hurt without remorse.

However, most of the teachers are not happy with the abolition of corporal punishments which they feel has contributed to increasing indiscipline in most of the schools.

#### **4.4.2.1.2 Unwholesome social media**

Teachers noted that students spend more time on internet and they have little time for academic issues. Such excess has a negative impact on academic performance. They mentioned the following as some of the forms of media consumption that has an impact on academics. These include, television, movies, music, browsing the Internet, social networking, talking on a cell phone, texting, magazines, newspapers, non-school-related literature, and video games. One teacher 5 noted that, in the mobile phones of nowadays, there are some remarkable software driven application such as video conferencing, microblogging, watching and sharing videos, social networking, and playing video games in which users spend much of their times trying to play with. Teacher 2 also agrees with teacher 5 that students are spending too much time on Facebook and other social media sites like WhatsApp and are not getting enough time to study. He added that the presence of Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, Google as well as Skype on smart phones has allowed many students to communicate and create more friends whom they communicate different information which sometimes the communicated information is not good at all that such as pornographic materials as well as criminal scenes. Most of the teachers agreed with the fact that mass media affects academic performance negatively making students to become rude in class as they see such things from friends elsewhere. Teacher 8 noted that, *“since the Internet is full of all kinds of content, social media may be dangerous in many ways. One of the ways is that some information is fake and misleading which sometimes make students fail because they have wrong information.”* Adding to the same teacher 3 said that *“Most students are becoming lazy as they would rather sit at home and copy and paste the author's opinion from an article rather than go to the library to conduct research, inquire, and generate an independent opinion on such a topic or subject of discussion.”*

However teacher 7 had a different view, he said; *“Though I agree that social media has a role in students' low academic achievement, I believe it is only a small part of it. Social media, for example, provides several learning opportunities. There is a wealth of information, including scholarly journals, films, and discussions that help students to find more information that may help boost their academic performance.”*

#### **4.4.2.1.3 Parental over protection of children**

According to Romani, (2022), overprotective parents are those who hover over or control their children's actions. Overprotective parents want their children to grow up to be healthy, but their attempts can be obtrusive and even detrimental. These parenting methods can cause dynamic challenges in families, which can stifle a child's development. Overprotective parents want to keep their children safe from physical, mental, and emotional harm. They may cushion the pain of regular life or lessen the blow of a difficult road in order to ensure that their children prosper. Overprotection can have negative consequences for children's well-being, such as risk aversion, a reliance on parents, a higher chance of psychological disorders, a lack of effective coping strategies, and persistent worry.

Contributing on the same, teachers complained that students whose parents over protect them, view this situation at a certain level, for instance teacher 1 explained what happened at his school. *“We had a child who was sent out of the classroom by the teacher because he came drunk. He went home and brought his dad who shouted at the teacher without even hearing what happened from the teacher. So the school suspended him for 1 week.”*

Another teacher 3 added that *“some students whose parents overprotect them become too dependent to their parents, for instance, When children are given homework, for example, overprotective parents may feel compelled to either check that their child's work is proper or even complete the assignment for them. Such behaviour prevents the child from benefiting from homework practise or making mistakes. Additionally, because the homework was completed by the parent, the kid's instructor may be unaware that the child has not met the learning objectives.”* Parents create this indiscipline.

## 4.4.2.2 STUDENTS PERCEPTION

### 4.4.2.2.1 The presence of shebeens in the local area

Drivdal & Lawhon, (2014) defines a shebeen as an unauthorized establishment or private house that sells alcoholic beverages and is generally seen as rather shady place. Group 3 focus group from a shift secondary school mentioned the presence of shebeens in their local areas as having an impact in some students behaviour. One student from this group explained what happens and why students go there. He had this to say. *“In a shebeen, the owner sells beer, Indian hemp as well as cocaine. Since it is an authorised place, the owner sells these things illegally. Since our school is a shift school, meaning to say that one group has classes in the morning and another one has classes in the afternoon, some students more especially those attending the afternoon shift pass by these shebeens and drink beer or smoke Indian hemp and proceed to school. These students misbehave in class others sleep in class and some insult teachers. These students are then given punishments instead of attending classes. Other times they are suspended for 2 or 3 weeks while their friends are learning. This affects their academic progression.”* Another student from group 4 noted that *“the selling of cocaine in shebeens fuels the behaviour of students having early sexual activities. This contributes to early marriages and drop out of school. Some students also catch sexual transmitted disease and they spend some days at home or in hospital while their friends are learning. Cocaine also contributes to students committing criminal cases like bloody fighting and stealing which makes them to get arrested and spend years in jail without attending classes.”* Another student of group 1 commented that, *“some shebeens have table pools where students go to play on their way to school and they sometimes fail to attend classes. The sad part is that the owners only need money and they don’t chase them even if they know its school time.”*

Another student from group 3 however, put the blame on the government for allowing these illegal places to operate. He said this; *“government is to blame for allowing these places to operate. I wish these places were banned or if they could allow them to open after school hours. Parents from the community one time complained to the ward councillor but nothing happened.”*



Fig 4. Shebeens - source field data

### 4.4.2.2.2 Presence of Self boarding hostels and rental houses

Boarding schools serve as a substitute for home, but little is known about the impact of this change on students as observed by focus groups which the research had with students. Some schools have boarding facilities which are run by schools but others do not have so students who operate from distant areas find places near by the school for accommodation and they call them self-boarding. It is in these places where students find challenges which contributes to indiscipline.

#### **4.4.2.2.1 sexual exploitation.**

In the focus group 4 students complained that self-boarding fuels indiscipline as students do not have anyone to look for them at the hostels or houses which they rent. One student who is also a self-boarder had this to say *“Most self-boarding more especially in shift schools also known as CDSS, girls sell their bodies to make ends meet. As one of the self-boarders, We keep an eye on ourselves. Our school administrators are completely uninterested in us. We have to find money for our food and pay our boarding rent. Therefore the only option for most of the girls is to find **sugar daddies** or boyfriends who can give them money for food, accommodation and clothes. This then turn into prostitution of schoolgirls which is contrary to our school rules. They don’t have time to go for night studies, they only think of ways to make money for their upkeep. Sometimes girls don’t attend classes because they come late from their prostitution activities. As a result most of the girls do not do well in class.”* One student from the same group commented that, this prostitution of self-boarders also contributes to class retention and school dropout. She said most girls who engage themselves with this behaviour ended up getting pregnancy and drop out of school.

Focus group 2 also mention about self-boarding as one of the fuelling agent of indiscipline. However they blame parents for not providing enough resources to their children in order to survive at the self-boarding hostels. *“Our parents are unable to provide all of our fundamental requirements. As adults, we need to find a technique to assist ourselves in resolving minor issues. Gone are the days when a girl like me would beg her parents for sanitary items. These days, we buy on our own. So the cheapest way is to find a sugar daddy or a boyfriend to be giving you money.”* she said.



**Fig 5.** Self-boarding hostel- source Nyasatimes.com

#### **4.4.2.2.3 peer pressure**

Peers are persons who encourage others to modify their attitudes, mindsets, behaviours, or routines in order to fit in with the influential group. And 'Peer Pressure' refers to the pressure and tension that an individual feels in order to please and follow the rules of their peers (Omollo & Yambo, 2017) Focus group 1 accepted the fact that peer pressure contributes to indiscipline at a school. One of the students from focus group 3 said, *“Most of the times students lose individuality as a result of peer pressure. Most of the students develop habits that they would not have developed if their friends were not around in their lives. Because of peer pressure, students become hooked to things like drinking, smoking, drugs, and other risky behaviours. Such behaviours lead to negative decisions, such as breaching the law, sexual abuse and also fighting. These lead to having little attention to school activities and finally academic progression is affected.”*

## 4.4.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO CURB INDISCIPLINE.

### 4.4.3.1 TEACHERS PERCEPTION

Many secondary school management are having problems to end indiscipline in their respective schools. Teachers viewed the following as challenges faced by schools management to deal with indiscipline in their respective schools.

-political interference	-parents interference
-societal interference	-lack of support by supervisors
-teachers being poor role models	-inappropriate knowledge on disciplinary actions
-drug abuse by students	restriction by laws

However the following were seen as the major ones.

#### 4.4.3.1.1 Poor management skills by headteachers.

Teachers view that many secondary schools are faced with students indiscipline because of poor management skills by the administrators. Teacher 1 said that *“last year we had seen many riots in several schools which was triggered by poor administrative skills which resulted in the destruction of property worth millions of kwacha. The students were demonstrating against poor administration and living conditions. This could have been avoided if the management sat down with students and heard their grievances as earlier as possible. The degree to which students are allowed to participate in school decision-making processes and are involved in the creation of school programmes has an impact on the occurrence of vandalism. Vandalism is less common in schools where students believe they are a part of the decision-making process and that teachers care about them.”* He noted that sometimes the office of the EDM appoints teachers who have not gone for any management training to the position of the head teacher which most of the times lead to a lot of managerial problems. *I feel that, in their job as discipline givers within the school setting, head teachers require suitable training and preparation. This will enable them to acquire skills, knowledge, and traits,* “he said. Teacher 3 added that, *“some head teachers are laissez faire and the direction in which their school should be moving is unclear to them. There is ineffective supervision of teachers, other school staff as well as students.”*

On the other hand, some teachers view that, when headteachers have autocratic or authoritarian leadership, an autocratic climate develops in the school which also lead to indiscipline of learners. For instance teacher 8 felt that *“autocratic headteachers frequently expect complete obedience from everyone in the school, and members have no input in decisions that affect their well-being. Any headmaster who imposes his or her will on his or her personnel is regarded as an authoritarian leader and most of the times he creates fear among his subordinates which kills initiative and creativity while also causing high worker turnover, resistance, and a breakdown of discipline. As a result, poor leadership is a source of indiscipline in schools.”* He said.

Asked if they give incentives to good mannered students, most teachers say they don’t give anything to good mannered students, only good academic performance are rewarded. Guided by the Social Learning Theory, learning is also influenced by one’s mental state. According to Bandura (1977), learning and behaviour are influenced not only by outward reinforcement, but also by internal reward, known as intrinsic reinforcement. Internal reinforcement occurs when a person feels good after completing a task or activity successfully, resulting in a sense of accomplishment and greater self-confidence. In line with

this, teachers should also reward good behaviour so that this act can result into intrinsic reinforcement. In so doing students will be motivated to get a reward there by changing their behaviour.

#### **4.4.3.1.2 Parents interference**

Teachers observed that, some parents are known for threatening headteachers who take disciplinary measures against their children. Because some of the parents are powerful, they have utilised their positions to intimidate the headteachers, preventing them from enforcing reasonable disciplinary actions against their children. Teacher 5 noted that, in response to threats from some influential parents, Headteachers refrain from enforcing disciplinary measures such as suspensions for fear of the influential parents having the suspensions terminated and the student readmitted unconditionally. This sends the wrong message to the other pupils, as the lack of consistency in disciplinary actions undermines their goal. Teacher 7 related a personal story. *“For disciplining a student, one of our colleagues was mocked, humiliated, and punished in court after a form four student who was suspended for leaving school without permission sued the headmistress and the teacher in question. This was so sad and the teacher has since been transferred to another school.”*

On another note, teachers argue that they have been extremely wary of being accused of beating their students after corporal punishment was outlawed in Malawian schools. As a result, many of them are hesitant to take disciplinary action against their students, exacerbating the problem of school indiscipline. Many secondary schools in Malawi are understaffed as teachers run away to join other sectors, with a current need of 24,806 secondary school teachers (Daily Nation, May 13, 2021).

#### **4.4.3.1.3 Teachers being poor role models**

Teachers observed that, they are supposed to be role models or a shining example at all times. *“A good teacher needs to bear a striking resemblance to a good parent.”* Teacher 4 said. Among the qualities of a good parent that a secondary school teacher must exhibit is that of modelling behaviours. Unfortunately this is not usually the case and some behaviours exhibited by teachers have led to students’ indiscipline. Teacher 2 had this to contribute, *“at our school students went on rampage accusing some of the teachers of being habitual drunkards which to me I felt it was true. Many of the times I have seen teachers coming to school while drunk. Sometimes they don’t even come to school and students are left unattended to as a result they make noise or run away to nearby markets to buy snacks.”*

Teacher 5 commented that, *“other teachers date students up to the extent of giving pregnancy to the student. We had a case at our school in which a teacher fought with a student fighting for a girlfriend who happened to be a student at the same school. Students were furious and went to destroy property at the teachers house. He has since been transferred to another school.”* Teachers noted that such behaviour contributes to indiscipline in which the management can fail to act over it.

However, teachers views have shown that, there is a gap that exists between how school authorities perceive universal principles expressed in children's rights and the importance of local values. This has an impact on discipline in Malawi's primary and secondary schools, as school administrators are confused which set of principles to promote. In this situation, it becomes difficult for school officials to fully embrace the universalist view of children's rights. Advancing such a viewpoint may fail because it is based on the assumption that the local community will abandon its cultural norms, particularly its methods of maintaining school discipline. In the near term, it may be tough to abandon long-held habits.

The polarization of the two ideas encapsulates the incompatibility of the universalist worldview of children's rights and local cultural values as manifested in school punishment methods (Kaime, 2009). For example, according to article 16.1 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999), no teacher is allowed to inflict bodily or mental anguish on a learner. While the relativist viewpoint (local cultural in which the teacher may have grown up) permits the use of corporal

punishment by a teacher. Teachers are faced with a problem as to which of the two expectations they should match their practice with.

As a result, in order to avoid being deemed guilty of siding with one point of view, many teachers have resorted to overlooking or turning a blind eye to students' acts of indiscipline (Wilson, 1995). One of the repercussions of the dilemma is that it sends messages to the students that they can disobey without suffering negative consequences. As a result, there is an increase in indiscipline in schools these days, making it harder for authorities to control it.

#### 4.4.3.2 STUDENTS PERCEPTION

Students viewed the following as challenges faced by schools management to deal with indiscipline in their respective schools. They however put much blame on the teachers as the one who start it all.

Failure by school administration to address students complaints and grievances	Inappropriate use of teaching methodology
Lateness and absenteeism by both teachers and students	Strained relation among teachers
Teachers' hostility towards students	Improper dressing by students and teachers
Sexual relations of teachers with female students	Drug use and drunkenness by students
Improper use of punishment by teachers	

Students noted that, some of the indiscipline that they do is triggered by some bad behaviours of their teachers. One of the students from focus group 3 noted that failure to address students complaints and grievances by teachers and administrators causes indiscipline. *"Some teachers are unwilling to listen to us when we have concerns, which causes us concern. What are our options if this occurs? Some teachers don't teach well, and if you mention it, they won't like you. These have an impact on how most of us behave. So when we act badly, they get furious and send us out of the classroom or give us a punishment and in the long run affect our academic progression."* he said.

Another member of the same group who is a prefect verified this, saying, *"When we go to meetings with our administrators, we always emphasise the importance of students being listened to and supported. However, we frequently receive complaints about teachers who fail to do so, and when students become irritated, they misbehave and vandalism occurs in the process"*

The study also revealed some causes for the students' behaviour imitating that of the teachers: another member from focus group 4 said; *"We are not allowed to drink beer and enter classroom. But students tend to wonder why other teachers teach while drunk.? If teacher drinks and we drink what is wrong with it since all of us are breaking the school ethics. Thus why students opt to drink following teachers steps."* He continued saying that; *"Teachers are pursuing the school's new and gorgeous female students, though they know it's against the law. They're well aware that if they're captured, they'll be fired. Still more they do it and instil the same behaviour us students! We also have love relationships since we imitate our teachers."*

These observations by students appear to imply that the teachers do not act in the manner that is expected of them, negatively influencing the students' behaviour. As previously said, children and students learn by watching and copying adults, particularly those in their immediate surroundings (Albert Bandura, 1977). Bandura in his Social learning theory noted that people learn from one another, via observation,

imitation, and modelling This means that, because teachers are significant role models in their students' academic contexts, their bad behaviour may be copied by students.

In addition, teacher unfriendliness towards students was also mentioned as one of the triggering factors influencing indiscipline among the students. Some of the students interviewed said they had been subjected to harsh punishment and had teachers who were antagonistic to them. For instance, a student described her interactions with a certain teacher in this way: *“As for me, I dislike a certain teacher because he punished me last year by making me clean 3 female toilets for two weeks after coming to school late, but I know it was because I refused to fall in love with him and he does not ask me questions in class since then. I even want him to be kicked out of this school.”* This is evidence of a teacher abusing students physically or emotionally. Teachers' punishments of misbehaving students may harden them rather than rehabilitating them. Asked if they want corporal punishment to be re-introduced, students denied saying teachers will have more powers and will make life difficult for them. *‘Eeeeeee madam, re introducing corporal punishment will be the waste of them all, these teachers will kill us. If they are still giving us hard punishments in the absence of corporal punishment, what if that punishment is there eeeee it will be worse madam,’* one member from group 3 said. The findings also supports Parveen, (2007), who indicated that students' behaviour in class may be influenced if they have been physically or emotionally abused by an adult. As a result, the way teachers discipline resistant children may harden them rather than change them, leading to more immoral and violent behaviour in the classroom. As a result of the foregoing, it may be inferred that when teachers fail to conduct themselves in the manner expected of them in their capacity as leaders, they instead generate indiscipline among students which in turn hinder academic progress of the student.

These remarks appear to imply that teachers do not act in the manner that is expected of them which negatively influencing students' behaviour. As previously said, children and students learn by watching and copying adults, particularly those in their immediate environment (Albert Bandura, 1977). This means that, because teachers are powerful role models in their pupils' academic contexts, their behaviour may impact pupils behaviour as well.

The findings from the students above lead us to the conclusion that some teacher behaviours, whether purposefully or inadvertently, contribute to student indiscipline in the schools. Teachers, like any other adult, are required to exhibit appropriate behaviours because nearly all students regard them as role models. This isn't always the case, though. Some teachers are so careless that their students imitate them and use them as role models. Teachers' absence, intoxication, animosity toward students, inappropriate use of punishment, and sexual relationships with female students on campus have all been recognized as factors that encourage student indiscipline. This finding is in line with Antwi-Danso et al., (2018) findings, which identified absenteeism, tardiness, laziness, ineffective teaching, insufficient control over subject matter, smoking, drunkenness, improper dressing, flirting with students, undermining fellow teachers and superiors in front of students as teacher-related causes of student indiscipline in schools.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 DISCUSSION**

In the perspective of teachers and students in Kasungu District Malawi, undisciplined behaviour, such as tardiness to school and truancy, have an impact on students learning. The teachers and students that were interviewed in this study think and reason mostly in full accord with that widespread conception of a direct causal connection between unwelcome behaviour and poor learning. This study also discovered that teachers in Malawi suppose that social vices like sexual misconduct, stealing friends'

belongings, consuming alcohol, and fighting are likely to harm human relationships and create a hostile environment at school. Teachers and students who interviewed contend that students who drink alcohol are more likely to break school rules and demonstrate disrespect for school authorities. Furthermore, according to teachers, behaviours by students such as assaulting classmates, destroying school property, and breaking school rules are widely known to disrupt school programs and teachings. These findings are consistent with evidence that confirm the causal connection that teachers note. For example, a longitudinal study undertaken by Mullis et al., (2003), which involved 24,599 middle school adolescents and investigated predictors of academic achievement during early adolescence. Adolescence, according to Mullis, is the span of time during which students attend secondary school. His research found that a student's behaviour in school was one of the predictors of their academic performance. Poor attendance, stealing, fighting, and alcohol consumption were among the behaviours investigated in the study. Shekaru, (2008) concurs, claiming that many teenagers are prone to indiscipline acts due to a lack of parental supervision and a difficulty to acclimate to the school environment. These findings support those of Keoreng, (2004) and Ayertey, (2002), who claimed that indiscipline issues among students, such as cheating on exams, absenteeism, and vandalism, had become a global canker. Reid, (2006), Ponfua, (2015) and Ebontane, (2006) for example, reported violence and insubordination to administrative personnel, teachers, school prefects, and parents among secondary school students in Cameroon, Chicago, New York, Washington, and Detroit. They pointed out that these actions make school and class management difficult and do not promote a learning atmosphere. Hence the causal connection that interviewed teachers see between unruly behaviour and poor learning is not at all unfounded.

The various sources and causes of indiscipline discovered in this study are similar to those indicated by (Sekyere, 2009), (Mahadeo, 2008), (Ayertey, 2002) and (Koomson et al., 2005). Parents, teachers, schools, and adult role models in society have all contributed to the present wave of indiscipline among students, according to many studies undertaken by these researchers. In their research, they discovered that indiscipline behaviours had linked to students' poor academic performance. In relation to this, a study titled 'European voices on disruptive behaviour in schools: Definitions, concern, and types of behaviour', Lawrence et al., (2010) asked respondents to indicate by ticks those forms of disruptive behaviour which were said to be causing serious or very serious concern in their country. The results are identical to those of this study. Vandalism, truancy, unwillingness to obey teachers, extreme late arrival at lessons, alcoholism, and stealing were all ticked by respondents from France, West Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and England. However, teachers in another study titled 'Discipline via Dialogue' believed that there are certain underlying reasons why a student is misbehaving. According to a study done by Jonsson, (2011), who interviewed teachers from Sweden and Scotland, teachers in these two nations believe that there may be issues at home or with their classmates that are contributing to their misbehaviour. As a result, teachers must engage in discourse with students to learn more about their backgrounds. Positive discipline is better than punishments. Teachers need to have skills in conflict resolution rather than punishing students (Jonsson, 2011).

Second, the study also discovered that family, teachers, and school were the primary causes of indiscipline behaviours, in the opinion of teachers interviewed. The increase in indiscipline behaviours among secondary school students was attributed to factors such as the media, insufficient financial support from parents, terrible examples set by teachers, peers, and parents' incapacity to meet their children's psychological, emotional, and social needs. Focus groups with students revealed that teachers are thought to contribute to indiscipline as a result of their poor attitude toward work, absenteeism, and immoral relationships with schoolgirls. The students noted that teachers' illicit relationships with students, particularly girls, do not encourage compliance with school norms and regulations. In line with what students claimed, the researcher noted that this is a serious misconduct on the part of a teacher as it is against the ethics of teaching profession in Malawi and it can as well negatively affect students' academic progress. Some countries put strong measures to deal with teachers who sexually harass

students. For instance, in Kenya, sexually offences Act sec. 24(4) provides for a prison sentence of not less than ten years for:

*any person who being the head teacher, teacher or employee in a primary or secondary school or special institution of learning whether formal or informal, takes advantage of his or her official position and induces or seduces a pupil or student to have sexual intercourse with him or commits any other offence under this Act, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape or defilement (UN WOMEN, 2011).*

In addition, In the UK the Sexual Offences Act, Part 1, sec.16, 21-22, *makes any sexual relationship, sexual touching, and several other types of sexual activity criminal when an adult is in a position of trust in relation to a child, including a teacher or staff in an educational institution (UN WOMEN, 2011).* In this view, Malawi needs to have strong measures to put in place to deal with teachers who sexually harass students. It shows there are loose measures that were put in place to deal with teachers who violate their code of conducts. For example, when a teacher misbehaves, he or she is only transferred to another school which according to the researcher is a loose measure as some of the teachers who face this treatment continue with the same behaviour in the new school.

Next, this research looked into a variety of strategies for dealing with school indiscipline. It has also proposed other approaches that, if implemented, could help to improve discipline in secondary schools. Teachers claimed that corporal punishment is one of the most effective approaches for dealing with classroom indiscipline. Malawi government, on the other hand, abolished corporal punishment as it is a violation of human rights. Teachers told the researcher that since corporal punishment was abolished in schools, student indiscipline has increased. They also imply that they lack confidence in their abilities to maintain school discipline in the absence of corporal punishment. Teachers believe that lack of discipline and safety in schools has become one of the key difficulties since the ban on corporal punishment in schools was implemented when Malawi signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2008. As a result of the prohibition on corporal punishment, it has become increasingly difficult for teachers to maintain school discipline. They said that after eliminating corporal punishment, the government failed to provide an alternative.

However, corporal punishment has been discussed and implicated in a variety of studies as a factor in delinquent behaviours such as theft, truancy, running away, and school behaviour problems, as well as antisocial behaviours such as lying, cheating, and bullying (Straus & Donnelly, 2005), (Sugarman et al., 1997) (Rohner et al., 1991) and (Straus & Murray., 1991). When teachers and parents employ corporal punishment to try to minimize their child's antisocial behaviour, the long-term impact is usually an increase in antisocial behaviour (Laub & Sampson, 1995). Childhood aggressiveness is the best predictor of adult aggression, as longitudinal studies demonstrate that if patterns of violent behaviour have been established by the time a child is six years old, they frequently persist into adulthood (Eron et al., 1991). Children who are subjected to a lot of physical punishment as children are more likely to become physically hostile as adults (DuRant et al., 1994). Boys' experiences of a harsh parental disciplinary style predicted their incarceration rates at ages 17 through 45 in one longitudinal study on delinquency of (Laub & Sampson, 1995). Physical punishment throughout childhood was found to be substantially more common among drug addicts in another longitudinal investigation of (Sugarman et al., 1997). As also indicated in this study, administering of corporal punishment is also a violation to human rights as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. A child is a "minor". According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights Child (CRC), "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Therefore the students as minors since most of them are under the age of 18, need to be protected from any form of physical assault (*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989). In addition, Article 19 (1) of the Convention provides that "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative,

social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child". It is to this fact that all countries that abolished corporal punishment are protecting the children's rights. This is in line with what students in this study claimed that some teachers give them hard punishments which do not match with the offence committed. The students feel pain when given such punishments. They denied the reintroduction of corporal punishments as they feel that it is not a good way of punishing them. This study then concluded that corporal punishment should not be reintroduced as claimed by the teachers because it is a violation of human rights as indicated by the students.

## **5.2 A STATEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY**

According to Hwang & Kim, (2017), sustainable development is the keyword of the United Nations' post-2015 vision for the world. (Osborn et al., 2015) notes that, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are intended to be universal in the sense of embodying a universally shared common global vision of progress towards a safe, just and sustainable space for all human beings to thrive on the planet. They reflect the moral principles that no-one and no country should be left behind, and that everyone and every country should be regarded as having a common responsibility for playing their part in delivering the global vision.

As the aim of this research is to explore the perception of teachers and students on impact of discipline on academic performance, goal number 4 of the SDG is appropriate. According to (UNESCO, 2021) target 4.1 of goal number 4 of the UN concerns quality education, indicating that by 2030, that all girls and boys should have complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. On the same target number 4.2 says that by 2030, all girls and boys are to have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (UNESCO, 2021). Clearly, teachers in Malawi (alongside many teachers elsewhere) suppose that only a disciplined student can access education and progresses well with his or her academic journey—but still, important questions remain as to what is meant by a 'quality' education: is it one in which teachers need corporal punishment in order to attain discipline; or sooner one in which teachers need training in order to attain more peaceful classrooms in which both students and teachers are respected and all are treated with due attention to human and child rights? In addition goal number 8 of the SDG specifically calls on the international community to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". It thus captures two main economic themes that are strongly interlinked – economic growth and employment/decent work. More people in decent jobs and healthier workforce can lead to stronger and more inclusive economic growth, and vice versa (sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019). It is to this factor that only disciplined people can make this goal a success. Therefore school discipline is important to make sure that students are well mannered for the good progress of their performance so that they can become productive workers in work places. (A. C. Jonsson & Beach, 2017).

## **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- Firstly, Time was the main limitation experienced in this study. This is because, the researcher was carrying out the research study while abroad and had difficulties to find time which could suit her together with the respondents at the same time. Secondly, the researcher used WhatsApp video calls for the interviews and focus group which sometimes the network was the problem. However, through proper planning the researcher managed to collect the required data and proceeded with the whole process.
- Secondly, Sample Size was small as the researcher only interviewed 24 participants of which 8 were teachers and 16 were students. The results are inaccurate since the number of teachers and

students in Kasungu is high as compared to those that were interviewed. Therefore the perception of only 24 respondents doesn't adequately represent the perception of the rest.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Counselling activities in schools should be intensified and carried out by skilled individuals.
- Parents should be taught how to be responsible and work hard to meet their children's educational demands.
- Moral education should be emphasized in schools to help students and teachers develop good character.
- Parents, teachers, and the government should encourage good behaviour and counsel bad behaviour at home, school, and in society at large.
- A professional Guidance Counsellor should be present in every school.
- School rules and regulations must be reinforced and made widely known so that students can grasp them. These will aid in prescribing the expected behaviour of students and teachers. Students will learn to act like students, and teachers will learn to act like teachers.
- Head teachers should devise effective staff training strategies in aid of school discipline, with disciplinary committees also being tasked with setting targets and monitoring progress that school staff collectively and individually make towards achieving a peaceful, respectful and conflict-free education environment.
- The institutions must enlist the help of religious and traditional leadership in dealing with indiscipline students.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research was carried out in Kasungu District. However, the same research can be conducted out in many different districts across Malawi. For comparison study, more research can be done focused on the impact of discipline management on students' academic achievement in the district or throughout the country.

#### **5.6 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, many factors including school type variables such as lack of support services and guidance and counselling, lack of sufficient learning materials, bad teacher-student relationships, ignoring student complaints, and inattentive management, and teachers in some cases being poor examples and lacking the skills to attain peaceful and respectful classrooms, can all effect student discipline. Peer pressure, substance usage, and a lack of role models are all sociocultural factors that have an impact on students' discipline. It can also be concluded that indiscipline in schools has a detrimental impact on learning, wastes time for both undisciplined and disciplined students, impairs the teacher-student connection, and disrupts the learning environment as well as the school's and education system's overall efficacy. Indiscipline has also been linked to low academic performance in schools, as well as the students who perpetrate it, with the ensuing ripple effect affecting the learning and general academic performance of innocent students. Finally, students' academic performance, both in and out of school, depends on teachers' and students' *collective* ability and *shared*. This helps to reduce the fear that students may have over teachers.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Introductory letter



**GOTHENBURG UNIVERSITY**

**Box 100, 40530 Gothenburg**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**International Master in Educational Research (IMER) Programme**

**Ernst Thoutenhoofd**  
Reader in Education  
ernst.thoutenhoofd@gu.se

To whom it may concern

## Introductory letter for data collection

I am a Master's student at Gothenburg University currently studying International Master's in Education Research program in Sweden. As part of my studies, I am conducting an independent research project that will be examined in partial fulfilment for a Master's degree in educational science. Currently, I am collecting data aimed at exploring the perception of teachers and students on the impact of discipline on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Malawi.

Data will be collected through focus groups and interviews with teachers and students.

For further inquiries, please contact me using the following details: +46 (0) 760 60 47 64 or [olmusaya@gmail.com](mailto:olmusaya@gmail.com)

Signature of researcher: Olgakolleta Musaya

Date: 02/02/2022

## Appendix II: Consent form

### Research participation consent form

**Ernst Thoutenhoofd**  
Reader in Education  
ernst.thoutenhoofd@gu.se

To whom it may concern

Dear Participant,

I hereby warmly invite you to participate in my research study, that explores the impact of school discipline on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Malawi.

My study seeks to understand the relationship between discipline and academic performance. This will be done by getting information through focus groups and interviews. Interviews will be audio-recorded and can take approximately 60 minutes.

The information obtained from this study may help schools to combine discipline that is in line with the international child rights convention with optimal school performance.

If you agree to be interviewed, then you are free to use either English or Chichewa. Your identity and all personal data will be removed from the transcripts and the data in line with EU GDPR (general data protection regulations), after which audio recordings will be deleted. All information obtained will be handled securely to avoid disclosing your identity.

You will not get any kind of reward for participating in this research, but I will send you a digital copy of my final thesis to thank you for your contribution to it.

You can furthermore choose to withdraw your participation in my study without any consequences or stating a reason. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in my research, please contact me on +46 (0) 760 60 47 64 or via email to [olmusaya@gmail.com](mailto:olmusaya@gmail.com).

If you agree to join my study, then please sign this consent form below.

Kind wishes,

Olgakolleta Musaya.

## Appendix III: Guiding Questions For Interview With Teachers

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- Sex
- Age (21-30 A) (31-40 B) (41-50 C) (51-60 D)
- What is your highest teaching profession
- Work experience, how long have you been working
- Have you worked at another school outside this school?
- Which class do you teach?
- Which subjects do you teach?
- How many students do you teach per class?

### INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHERS

1. Does discipline of students affect their academic performance?
2. Are you satisfied with your school's regulations for pupil discipline? Why (not)? What do you think is most important for pupils to stick to school rules and regulations?
3. Do you think that the school rules at your own school help to maintain good discipline among students and teachers? Can you explain why you think that?
4. How does school discipline contribute to your teaching performance? And to your well-being as teacher (being happy to be in school)?
5. How many teachers does the school have? Are they generally good in terms of supporting good discipline—why?
6. Do you think the shortage of teachers affects discipline? Does it affect academic performance of students? If yes how? If not why?
7. Does the management of school rules and regulations affect students' academic performance?
8. What incentives do you give to your students when they behave and perform well? Which areas are rewarded? Is there a special criterion or standards guiding the provision of those rewards and incentives? If yes, what is it and how is it maintained?
9. What are the challenges that school management faces in curbing students discipline?
10. Is there any noticeable trend in the passing or dropping down of students performance in the Malawi School Certificate of Education for the past three years? What do you think is the cause of such a trend?
11. What do you think are the causes of indiscipline in secondary schools?

12. How do you think school leadership influences school discipline? Can you give an example?
13. Which students are most likely to misbehave, e.g. boys, or girls, and why? Can you give an example?
14. How do you think the community is contributing to school discipline? Can you give an example?
15. Have you ever had any training in guidance and counselling?
16. What measures do you think can be put in place to curb indiscipline in the schools?

## Appendix IV: Guiding Questions For Focus Group With Students

### INTERVIEW GUIDES TO STUDENTS FOCUS GROUP

1. Are you satisfied with the level of discipline of students at your school?
2. What are the common disciplinary cases related to students?
3. What kind of punishment is given to students when they misbehave? For example, cases of stealing, fighting, truancy and committing criminal offence.
4. Is the disciplinary action applied in order to correct unwanted behaviour affect the academic performance?
5. Do you have a discipline committee in your school? What is its role in school?
6. Sometimes school location can be a source of deviant behaviour in school. Do you agree with this statement? Give some explanations.
7. Are rules and regulations made clear and agreeable to students?
8. Do you think school rules and regulations have a contribution in disciplining students?
9. Can discipline influence academic performance? How?
10. Do teachers at your school teach their subjects to your satisfaction? Can this affect your academic performance?
11. Do you think school leadership style influence school discipline? Explain?
12. Is the school management managing the school properly? Can this affect your academic performance?
13. Have you ever had any riots at your school? If yes what caused the rioting? If not why is that the school has never had any rioting?
14. Is your school a boarding or day? Can that state affect the performance of student?
15. Have you ever been suspended? If yes why? if not why?
16. Do you think corporal punishment should be re-Introduced? Explain