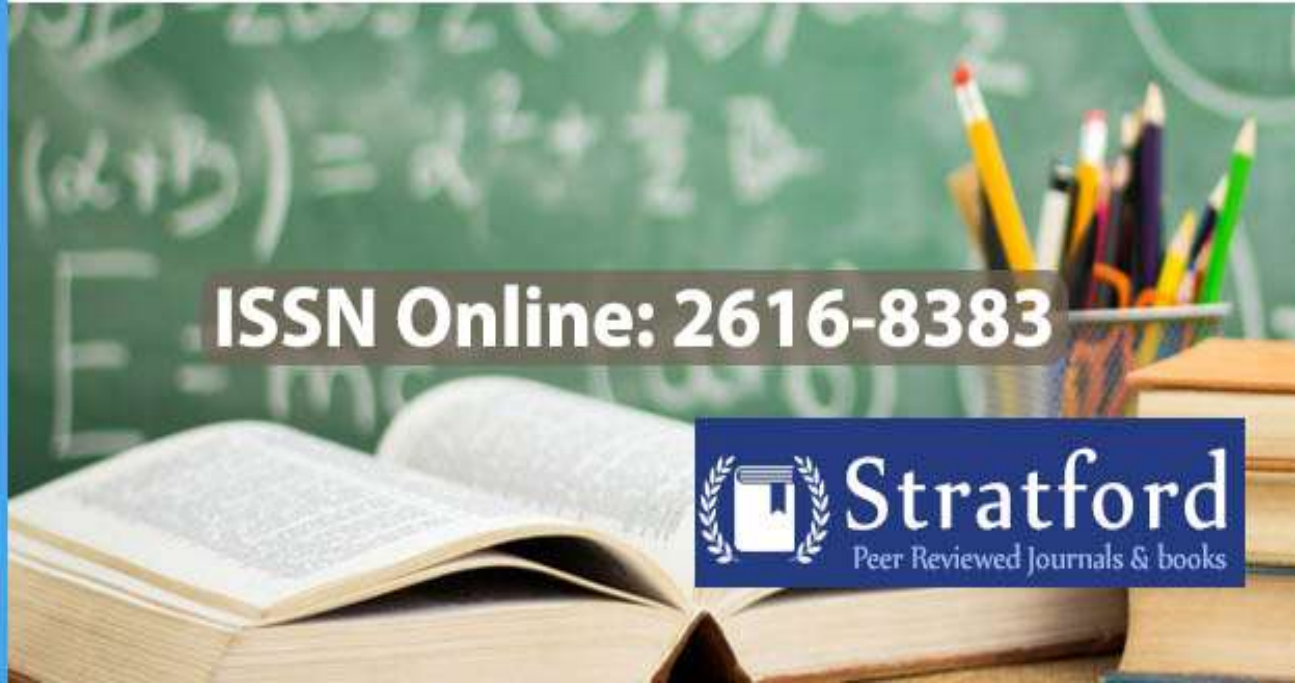


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The influence of the Headteachers' Provision of Security Measures on Retention of Girls in Community Day Secondary Schools in Mchinji District, Malawi

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether provision of security measures by the headteachers as strategy influence retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district. The study was triggered by the concerns emanating from the teachers on increase of school dropouts among girls in community day secondary schools in Malawi. The study was anchored on Tinto's theory of retention. The study employed explanatory sequential mixed method research design. The target population included: the students, teachers, headteachers, education officer and chief elders. The study purposively sampled 15 headteachers, one education officer and five chief elders. Additionally, the researcher sampled 80 teachers and used simple random to sample 315 girls, with a total sample size of 416 (12.4%) of the target population. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software Version 21. The study used descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarize the data and present it in form of tables. Qualitative data were manually analyzed by organizing into themes and interpreted in a narrative form and direct quotes. The findings revealed that community day secondary schools in Mchinji district did not have fences, security guards, hostels, locked gates, doors and windows to increase the security of the students and of the school, an indication that community day secondary schools lacked security measures to retain the students in Mchinji district. The study thus recommended that headteachers should cooperate with the board of

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management Parent teacher Association (PTA) to make sure that security measures are found in order to retain girls in Community Day Secondary Schools.

Keywords: *Headteachers', administrative strategy, provision of security measures. Retention of girls, dropout, Community Day Secondary Schools.*

1.0 Background to the Study

The retention of students in schools depends on the leadership or administration of the headteacher (Albert, 2010). This indicates that there is a link between education administrators and the retention of students in schools. The intervention of the headteacher is highly recommendable because they are considered both experts and custodians in schools as they influence students' retention (Hanover, 2014). Hanover mentioned that the head teachers are sources of encouragement to students to achieve their goals through their support, provision of safety environment, guidance and counseling. Albert (2010) explains that school administrators always identify the risk areas impacting student academic success and intervene through provision of security, teaching and learning materials, school facilities, guidance and counseling, curricular and co-curricular, role models.

The headteachers' administrative strategies mainly contribute towards the retention of students and creation of the effective schools (Mbuwawa, 2011). Therefore headteachers must have personal, administrative, and professional competencies, for the development of the school (Wilkey, 2013). Priva (2017) explains that headteachers organize and control everything at the school like learning programs and resources, school facilities, which assist students to achieve their educational goals. Mbuwawa (2011) states that in order to enhance retention of students, headteacher should focus on providing their needs like; fees, learning materials, sanitation facilities and creation of supportive atmosphere with the staff. Students do not concentrate in school activities if they feel insecure. Therefore school leaders should learn to provide safe and secured school atmosphere especially among student –teacher and community relationships (Victoria State Government, 2018).

Balyer and Gündüz (2013) explain that heateachers' have positive effects on students' education by being role models and establishing supportive teacher-student relationships and cooperation to enhance their retention. They can achieve this by being friendly, providing sanitary materials to the girl child, exposing the girl child to female role models to enhance their positive attitude towards education. Gondwe (2016) explains that many girls dropout of the school due to lack of fees and culture. The culture favours marriage to education. The headteachers have a responsibility to influence the community to adjust some social and cultural practices that lead to dropout among girls (Matanana & Gusav, 2016). Wallace Foundation (2011) also noted that the headteachers as administrators of schools play a key role in retaining learners and creating a conducive environment, security for learning, and cooperative spirit between teachers and students. They are agents for the success of all activities about teaching and learning (Alkarni, 2014). Therefore the administrative strategies used in schools determine students' retention (Wallance Foundation, 2011).

According to UNESCO (2015), secondary school fees has been abolished in some countries to enhance retention especially of the girl child but Chimombo (2013) points out that there are still

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many other barriers hindering girls to finish their education in the sub-Saharan countries. In Malawi, only primary school education is free and uniform is optional. This does not favor the poor girls in secondary school in male-dominated society where many parents prefer to send the boy child to school than the girl child. Although some organizations in Malawi support girls in education, accessibility is not so easy because of the high population of needy girls (Chimombo, 2013; Gondwe, 2016). In this case, needy girls opt to drop out of the school or rely on the initiatives of the headteachers in sourcing funds from organizations to pay their fees. A study carried out by World Bank (2010) explains that managing and retaining students especially girls in secondary schools has been a concerning challenge to school administrators and the entire society. This is due to the cultural practices that encourage early marriages, shortage of skilled teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials and facilities which demotivate students and lead to the increase of dropout in schools.

In India, Education Statistics of 2016 shows that the dropout rate has been reduced by 1.36 %. The dropout rate decreased after the government distributed enough teaching and learning materials in schools. This shows that there is a connection between students learning interests and the availability of resources in schools. Li and Qui (2018) point out that the quality of the school in terms of administration is seen by the availability of facilities that motivate and retain students. Therefore the ministry of education together with headteachers should be resourceful to provide enough learning resources and facilities to support learners in schools.

In Kenya, a study by Cheneket (2017) on the factors that influence dropout among boys in public primary schools in Saboti sub-county found that 7.5% of boys dropped out of school compared to 5.6 % of girls in Trans- Nzoia County. This indicates that some parts of Kenya manage to retain girls more than boys in schools. However, Kenya must work hard to reduce boy child school dropout to bring parity in education. Deducing from this study, Kenya is trying to empower the girl child education compared to Malawi. Teresiana, Timothy, and Ongoti (2015) conducted a study on administrative strategies used by the administrator to retain students in public secondary schools in Aldai Sub-County in Kenya. The research discovered that motivation of students, communication of teachers and parents, bursaries, grants, and school culture are some of the administrative strategies which retain students in secondary schools. The conclusion was that students are easily retained if they also feel supported by the school and interact well with staff members and peers. In Malawi, strategies such as bursaries, grants are also employed but are yielding very minimal results on school dropout among girls especially in rural areas (Kunje, 2012).

Malawi like any other country in Africa, experiences challenges in retaining girls in schools. United Nations Joint Programme on Girl Child Education (JPGE) (2018) revealed that 5.5% of girls dropped out of school in the year 2016 to 2017 in Malawi. According to Robertson, Cassity, and Kunkhwenzu (2017), 161,787 girls who enrolled in 2014, 8898 (5.5%) dropout school in the 2014 to 2015 school year. The percentage is higher than boys' dropout rate which is 3.3% only. This shows that the girl child school dropout rate is constant at 5.5% from the year 2014 to 2017. According to the research by Phiri (2018), on headteachers' administrative role in reducing school dropout in public secondary schools in Zomba district school, it portrays that a leader controls everything in an institution. Phiri suggests that headteachers must make sure that students are receiving guidance and counseling, a conducive-environment for learning, and are to value

education. Phiri also recommended that headteachers must make sure that they maintain strong cordial relationships with the parents and the community to retain them at the secondary school level. Studies on administrative strategies in education have not adequately addressed the administrative strategies employed by headteachers to retain girls in community day secondary schools in the Mchinji district. The current study filled the gap by focusing on the administrative strategies employed by the headteachers on the retention of girls in community day secondary schools in the Mchinji district.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Mchinji district, the Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) (2014) pointed that out of 77,111 girls registering for school, 4,234 (5.5%) girls drop out every year. Similarly, the head teachers' statistics report of 2018 shows that in the year 2015-2016, the total dropout rate of school among girls was 7.1% while in 2016-2017, the dropout rate increased to 7.2%. Banda (2018) pointed out that 37% of girls who enrolled in Community Day Secondary School in Mchinji district, drop out school every year.

Despite some favorable laws and policies put in place to boost education and ensure retention of girls in schools such as laws on marriageable age and bursaries, the efforts made by governmental and non-governmental organizations such as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) and United Nation Children Fund (UNICEF) (Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) 2014; Dream Weaver Foundation, 2018). The Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi (FAWEMA) (2012) and the Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) (2014) state that the dropout rate of girls keep increasing every year specifically in the Community day secondary schools in Mchinji district. This persistent and worrying trend of the high rate of girl dropout called for a study on administrative strategies, that the headteachers are using to retain, promote and support the girl child education in community day secondary in Mchinji district.

1.2 Research Objective

To investigate whether provision of security measures by the headteachers influence retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district.

1.3 Research Question

How do provision of security measures by the headteachers influence retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district?

1.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains diagrammatically the key variables and their assumed relationships (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The conceptual framework in Figure 1 explains the relationship between provisions of security measures by the headteachers and the retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district. The independent variable is provisions of security measures by the headteachers, while the dependent variable is retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district.

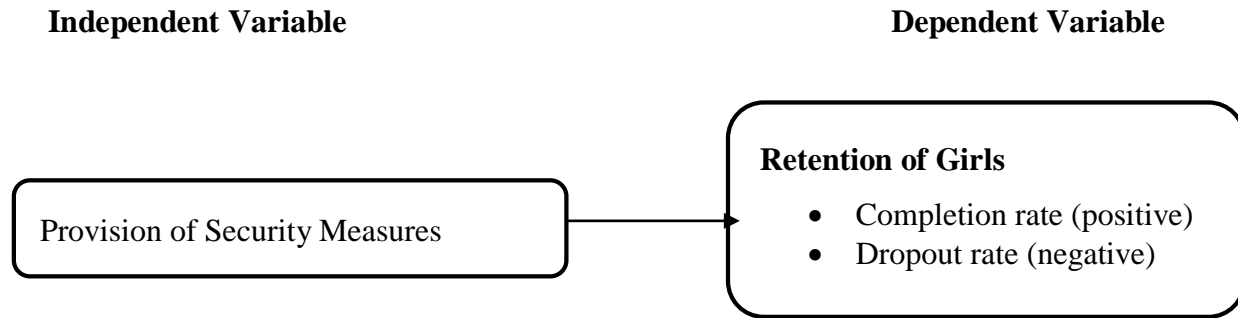


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors (2021)

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. The theory was developed by professor Tinto in 1987 and 1993 (Seidman, 2012; Braxton, Shaw Sullivan & Johnson, 1997). The theory states that interaction between students and school institution contribute to their departure. Various aspects such as institutional organizational structure goals, resources, student formal and informal interaction with the institution environment all contribute to retention of the students. Tinto's theory emphasizes that students' retention is dependent on the experiences of the students at school. The theory explains that students who are satisfied with the administrative mechanisms in formal and informal academic and social systems of the school tend to stay (Hanover 2010). On the contrary, those with negative experiences tend to withdraw and drop out from the school institution. Students also join school institutions with determination to succeed; therefore they set the goals which they want to achieve. School administrators and the institution also set their standards, requirements, and goals. When the two goals crush, mostly, students suffer their school interests begin to decline, and finally, they drop out (Rizkallah & Seitz, 2017). Therefore, for students to be retained at school need to be integrated into the college community, separate themselves from their past community, and be incorporated into the school as an institution.

According to Adoyo (2014), for the students to persist they need integration into institutional systems, have staff interactions and encouragement, participate in extra-curricular activities, and have peer-group interactions. In this case, the integration process cannot be successful unless, the school has good policies, an enabling environment, and enough resources to sustain the students in their secondary level. The interaction between the college and the students should aim at creating a supportive environment for them to survive at school. According to Mahan, Wilson, and Luthy (2014), school administrators, staff members, and school community relationships play a role in the retention of students at school. In this case, the school administrator as a leader of the institution plays a big role in integrating students at schools for them to survive until completion of their study period.

In one way or another, headteachers as leaders and staff members influence the retention of girls in schools. Girls need much support from the school administrator as well as from an institution to encourage and empower them to complete their secondary education. The failure of the students to integrate themselves into the school environment portrays a failure of the administrator to use administrative strategies in retaining them in schools (Teresiana, Timothy & Ongoti, 2015).

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Therefore, it is the responsibility of the headteachers to support and empower them to survive until completion of their secondary school level. However, it all depends on the administrative strategies employed by the headteacher for girls to survive at school. Clark (1996) explains that commitment of the institution members reflects the effectiveness of the institutional leadership and its effort to invest resources to support student retention. As such, the administrative strategies employed by a headteacher determine the success of the school.

The successful school administration is determined by the supportive relationship between staff members and students; availability of resources, organization structure in terms of policies; discipline, and the general performance of the school whereby all these moralize and retain girls at school. Headteachers must therefore be aware of the challenges girls face in schools and use the strategies which can retain them until completion of their secondary school level. The theory is important since it has a notion of how students integrate themselves at school therefore it applies to the retention of the girls in community day secondary school. Tinto's theory helps explain why students depart from school early before completion of their course, especially those on four years program. The emphasis on a four-year program is similar to the secondary school program which many girls drop out before its completion.

Secondly, the theory exposes ways in which institutions affect students' integration and retention at school. Mostly, Girls tend to drop out of school prematurely because of failure to endure the challenges they face at school. The theory emphasizes the importance of the support students receive from the school and how it encourages them to survive. Generally, the theory directs the headteachers on what to do to reduce girl child school dropout. The theory also recognizes the influence of the school as an institution on the retention of students. Tinto's theory recognizes that interaction between students and school institution, contribute to students' retention. It also emphasizes the point that students' retention is dependent on the experiences of the students at school. Hence for the school institution to function properly it needs guidance from the headteacher. The theory is an eye-opener to headteachers to be aware that school organizational structures, goals, resources, student formal and informal interaction with the environment contribute to retention of girls if used properly at the institution.

Thirdly, the theory exposes students as rational and social beings that need to be attended to, supported, and empowered according to their particular needs and circumstances at school. Mostly, girls who are satisfied with the formal and informal academic and social systems of the school tend to stay until the end of their education level. Many studies from other parts of the world such as; Rizkallah and Seitz (2017); Adoyo (2014); Mahan, et al (2014) have used Tinto's theory of students' departure but none of them connect it to the retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Malawi. Other theories of retention of students have focused on the cultural background and influence of the community where students come from. However, in this study, Tinto's theory of student departure reflects well on the impact of the school administrator and the whole institution on school dropout of students including girls. Tinto's theory is more applicable to the retention of students than to the administrative strategies of the headteachers.

2.0 Empirical Review

Schools should be safe places where parents can send their children without worry and students can learn without fear (Hanover, 2013). Therefore it is vital that school administrators should focus on security measures as their priorities in order to achieve its aim (Partner Alliance for Safer

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Schools, (PASS, 2017). Tanner-Smith and Fisher (2015) explained that school security measures include security cameras, metal sensors, security personnel and fence which are provided in an effort to keep schools safe and promote students' academic success. Zais (2011) mentioned that schools should promote the safety of the students, physical and mental health fairness, and adequacy of disciplinary procedures in order to assist students to achieve their goals in life. Therefore it is the responsibility of the headteachers to provide security resources like fence, rock gates, security guards, to improve the safety of their schools (Zais, 2011; Hanover, 2013).

The investigation conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2014) in the United States of America found that girls are more likely to continue schooling if they feel safe and secure at school. Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) (2017) explained that from 2000 to 2015, the United States of America experienced disturbances from shooter, and schools were the most common affected sites which resulted in the 578 deaths including 30 students at K-12 schools. The situation affected schools until the unarmed principals, teachers, other school staffs and students confronted the shooters to end the threat (PASS, 2017). PASS explained that schools face many security challenges due to the following reasons; gang activities, trespassing of the local people in school campus, bullying among students, unauthorized use of school facilities by the community members, threats before and after-school programs, disciplinary issues, vulnerability to kidnappers and sexual harassment. The reviewed study was done in the USA which has different security measures from Mchinji district in Malawi. The current study investigated if the same security measures contributed to the retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district in Malawi.

Glariana and Sola (2015) conducted a study on the status of the school safety and security among elementary schools in the fifth class municipality in Philippians. The findings show that educators have come to realize that the foundation of all learning is safety and security of the school. This implies that attendance and performance of the students are closely linked to the measures safety of the school such as: site, fence, furniture and campus security guards. In this case the school authorities should try to meet the security standard of the area to ensure safety of the students (Glariana & Sola, 2015). Glariana and Sola conducted their study in elementary schools while the current study was done in community day secondary schools. Glariana and Sola focused on the status of the school safety and security. This study was different because it focused on security measures as an administrative strategy used to retain students.

In United Kingdom (UK), the use of many security measures has evidently to increase the retention of students (Hanover, 2013). Hanover explained that nearly 70 percent of middle and high school students attend a school that has at least one security guard or assigned police officer for protection. The additional the security measures used in UK included: locking all exterior doors, except the main doors, introduction of a log to record the entry of each visitor and the use of identification badge for the employees and the visitors (Hanover, 2013). Arul (2012) commented that students spend more hours at school therefore it is important to provide a safe, healthy, and exciting environment for their learning and general development. Arul suggested that school leaders should provide a conducive and favorable school secured atmosphere, enriched with sufficient secured learning facilities in order to retain.

The findings from the study conducted by Hanover (2013) showed that many students prefer to register to schools which are more secured in United Kingdom. However, United Kingdom has

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different measures from Mchinji district in Malawi. Therefore the current study, investigated if the security measures like fence and security guards are also used in community day secondary schools and whether they influence the retention of girls in Mchinji district in Malawi.

Abiodun, Olawale, Adenira and Zuberu (2017) conducted a research on students' Kidnapping and Security Brouhaha: Implications on Secondary Schools in Lagos Metropolis, Lagos State, in Negeria. The findings show that robbery business is at rampart stake and kidnapping of student have become a bullish market in secondary schools. Kidnappers have created perpetual fear among the educational stakeholders in Lagos. School administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders and other education stakeholders are facing the security challenge to deal with kidnapping system. The study recommends that Lagos State Government should insured that life of all students is secured and be responsible for the ransom payment of every abducted student. Secondly, all private and public secondary schools should redesign their security techniques. Abiodun, Olawale, Adenira and Zuberu (2017) concentrated their study on the security resources and measures Negeria is trying to provide in order to deal with kidnapping in schools. However, this study concentrated whether security measures employed by the headteachers' in community day secondary schools influence retention of girls in Mchinji district, Malawi.

Komora (2014) conducted a study on challenges facing the education of the girl child in Kenya. The findings show that students feel uncomfortable with unfriendly teachers and unsecured environment such that they drop out of the school. Furthermore insecurity due to robbery, lack of fence and security guards, hostility of the community, negative attitude of teachers towards a student also create insecure feelings in learners and they drop out of the school (Komora, 2014; Kapur, 2018). Kapur (2018) also mentioned that some teachers have a belief that academically boys are better than girls so they give them more attention in class. Teachers should play a central role in the formulation and application of the policies of the school (Kukan, 2011). Therefore teachers should avoid showing negative attitudes towards girls in schools in order to retain them.

Komora (2014) conducted a study on the challenges facing the education of the girl child in Kenya. This study investigated on security measures head teachers employ to influence retention of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district, Malawi. Komora sampled both primary and secondary schools while this study sampled only community day secondary schools. Komora also sampled both boys and girls in schools while the current study sampled girls only.

Kunje (2012) looked at strategies employed by institutions and Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in enhancing students' retention in public secondary schools in Thyolo district in Malawi. The findings show that security measures such as fence, hostels within the school campus, friendly teachers and community members assist to retain students. Kunje mentioned that the availability of hostels within the school campus assists students not to walk long distances and participate in tiresome home duties. Furthermore, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), (2021) revealed that in Malawi especially in rural areas, students travel long distances to school and this make them vulnerable to kidnaping and other exploitation. Kunje (2012) adopted a qualitative research design, the population comprised of seven public schools in Thyolo and three Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Data was collected through interviews. The current study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed method research design and data was collected through questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews. The previous study was done in Thyolo which has a different environment to Mchinji district which is the current study area. The study also

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focused on strategies employed by NGOs as such there was a need to investigate strategies employed by head teachers' to retain girls in community day secondary.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed explanatory sequential mixed method research design. It is known as the sequential mixed method because it allows the collection of quantitative data first and after analysis the researcher collects data through interviews to help to explain the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014). The study employed questionnaires to collect quantitative data from the students and the teachers, then interviews from the headteacher, Education officer, and the Chief elders.

The study was conducted in community day secondary schools in Mchinji, one of the nine districts in the Central Region of Malawi. Mchinji district has 17 community district secondary schools and covers an area of 3,356 square kilometers (335,600 hectares) and it represents 3.6% of the total land of Malawi (Mchinji District Assembly Report, 2011; Mkumba, 2016). It borders with Kasungu District to the north, Lilongwe District to the east, and Chipata district the City of Zambia to the west, and Villa Ulongwe district of Mozambique to the south. The district headquarters is located along the main road (M 1) that connects Lilongwe and Zambia (Mkumba, 2016). It is 110 kilometers away from Lilongwe City, which is the Capital of Malawi, and about 10 km away from the Zambia border of Mwami (Mchinji district Assembly report, 2011). (See appendix L & M). This is the location with many community day secondary schools that experience challenges of retention that made it relevant for the study.

This study targeted 17 headteachers, 225 teachers, 3150 students, one education officer and five chief elders. The researcher purposively sampled 15 out of 17 headteachers representing 82.24%. The researcher also purposively included the five chief elders representing all the five traditional chiefs found in Mchinji district. The district has one Education Officer who is an overall in-charge of all the schools in Mchinji. The researcher also interviewed the only education officer of Mchinji district. Furthermore the teachers were stratified into male and female to ensure gender representation. The 169 were male while 56 were female teachers making of a total of 225 teachers. This represented the ratio of three male to one female teacher. Therefore the researcher used simple random to sample 80 teachers out of 225 representing 35.5% of the target population. Therefore the sample included: 60 male and 20 female teachers. Furthermore, Preece (2013) explained that the sample size of 10% to 20% is sufficient for a research study. Therefore the researcher used 10% of the total number of students. This gave a total of 315 students from the entire population of 3150 students. Both questionnaire and interview schedules were used in data collection. Therefore raw quantitative data was collected from the field, was cleared, coded, computed, generated, and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 21. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data and present it in form of tables. Likert scale questions were analyzed in a way that; Strongly Agree (SA) represented a high score which means favoring the item.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This study was conducted in 15 out of 17 community day secondary schools and questionnaires were administered to 315 students and 80 teachers. Out of these questionnaires, those successfully collected were from 307 representing 97.5%, 78 teachers representing 97.1% indicating an overall success 97.5%. The demographic results revealed that that 39.4% of students were in form one,

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29.6% were in form two, 16.0 % were in form three and 15.0% were in form four. The results also revealed that 0.7% of students were within the age range of below 12 years, 25.7 % were within the age range of 12-15 years, 72.3% were in the age range of 15-20 years, and 1.3% were in the age range of 21years and above. The results from the checked class registers showed that the majority of the students who dropped out of school were within the age range of 15-20 years. The study ascertained that there was gender disparity among the teachers in community day secondary schools. The analysis showed that 75% were male and 25 % were female in schools. This shows there were fewer female teachers than males ones in Community Day Secondary Schools. The findings further depicted that 34.6% of the teachers were aged between 41-50 years, seconded by 32.1% who were within the range of 31-40 years, followed by 15.4% of the age range of 51 years above and 14. 1% were within the range of 25-30 years and 3.8% were less than 24 years old. The majority of the findings of teachers were within the range of 41-50 years. The Malawi Government National Education Policy 2015 exposed that any civil servant is supposed to retire at the age of 60. Therefore all the teachers in Community day secondary schools are still at the recommendable age in teaching. The only implication is the generation gap that with the vibrant and adolescent age of the students, the teachers of the age of 41-50 years and above may not understand and compete with the emotions of the students. As a result, students might feel unsupported, hence drop out of school. The study found that 51.3% were bachelor's degree holders, 32.1% had diplomas while 16.7 % had Malawi School Certificate of Education and no teacher had Masters.

Regarding experience, the study found that 27.3% of teachers had teaching experience of 21 years and above while 20.8% had an experience of 6-10 years, 19.5% had taught of 16-20 years, 18.2% had teaching experience of 11- 15 years, 11.7% had an experience of 1-5 years and 2.5% had an experience of less than 5 years, The research results exposed that schools have different teaching experience. However, the majority (27.3%) have been in teaching for 21 years and above. This shows that community day secondary schools have experienced teachers.

The percentage of male headteachers was 86.7% while the female was (13.3%). The Malawi Education Policy emphasizes on has failed to implement the 50-50 both sex recruitment of teachers because of lack of gender sensitivity at the training institution-level due to infrastructure such as female students hostels which has affected enrolment figures (National Education Sector Plan 2007 -2018). Therefore there is a need to address the gender gap in leadership in schools as one way of motivating and retaining girls in schools (Education Sector plan 2020-2030).

On academic qualification, 53.3% had degrees while 7(46.7%) had diplomas. None of the headteachers had a certificate, master's degree, or attended any course related to management or leadership of the school. The results indicate that headteachers are well qualified to teach in secondary schools but not fully trained in management or leadership of the school. The finding concurs with the National Education Policy (2013) which mentioned that, although headteachers qualify to teach in secondary schools majority have no quality school leadership and management skills due to lack of training. Poor quality in secondary education also stems from a lack of training in school management and leadership of the headteachers. Poor management and leadership also lead to the intensification of inequalities in schools of which increases the dropout rate among students (National Education Policy 2013). National Education Policy (2013) and National Education Sector Plan 2008-2017 and Policy prioritize enrolment and retention of girls in school

however have failed to retain girls through leadership in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district.

The study results revealed that the teaching experience of the headteachers as follows; 6.7% had an experience of 10-15 years, 46.7% had an experience of 16-20 years and 46.7% had an experience of 21 years above. No headteacher had teaching experience of less than 10 years. Gondwe (2016) commented that qualifications and experiences contribute to the success of an organization. Therefore all headteachers interviewed are capable of developing administrative strategies on retention of girls using their long experience in teaching.

4.1 School Security Measures and Retention of Girls

The teachers and students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on security measures headteachers employ to retain girls in community day secondary schools. The findings are as shown on table 3: Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A), mean; positive or favouring the item, Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (DS) not to favouring the item. Neutral shows that the respondents were not sure of the answer. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Table for School Security Measures

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
Students					
Your school has security guards	1(.3)	4(1.3)	12(3.9)	102(33.2)	188(61.9)
Your school has fence	24(7.8)	56(18.2)	3(1.0)	77(25.1)	147(47.9)
Your school has hostels	23(7.5)	56(18.2)	1(.3)	78 (25.4)	149(48.5)
Your school has locked the doors, and gate	8(8.8)	58(18.9)	16(5.2)	60(19.5)	146(47.6)
Teachers					
Your school has security guards	4(5.1)	3(3.8)	0(0)	24(30.8)	47(60.3)
Your school has fence	5(6.4)	11(14.1)	0(0)	20(25.6)	42(53.8)
Your school provides students hostels	4(5.1)	8(10.3)	0(0)	18(23.1)	48(61.5)
Your school classrooms have locked gates, doors and windows	9(11.3)	9(11.3)	2(2.6)	18(23.1)	42(53.8)

The first item was to find out if the school has security guards for safety of the students. On the basis of the results in Table 1, the study found that 188 (61.9%) of the students strongly disagreed that they have security guards, followed by 102 (33.2%) who disagreed. The 12(3.9%) of the students were neutral, 4(1.3%) agreed and 1(0.3%) strongly agreed that their school has security measures. The results from the teachers concurred with the students such that 47(60.3%) strongly disagreed, while 24(30.8%) disagreed that schools have security guards. Then 3(3.8%) agreed and 4(5.1%) strongly agreed that school has security guards to safe guards the school to influence the students to complete their education level.

The results from the students and teachers showed that majority disagreed that their schools have security guards. The findings means that headteachers do not use security guards as a strategy of influencing girls to complete their school. This also means schools lack security measures to influence the retention of the students in Community day secondary schools in Mchinji district. Hanover (2013) revealed that in United Kingdom nearly 70 percent of the students like to register to a school that has security guard or a police office for their safety. Furthermore, Glariana and Sola (2015) in Philippines stated that presents of the security guards within the campus ensure the standard of the security at school. Lack of security guards create unsecured feelings in learners and some dropout school (Komora, 2014; Kapur, 2018). Furthermore, the students were asked whether their schools have fences for their security. The results showed that 147(47.9%) students strongly disagreed, followed by 77(25.1%) who disagreed, 24(7.8%) strongly agreed, 56(18.2%) agree and 3(1.0%) were neutral that schools have fences for security. The results from the teachers showed that 42(53.8%) strongly disagreed, followed by 20(25.6%) who disagreed, 5(6.4%) strongly agreed, 11(14.1%) agreed that schools have fences for security.

Basing on the results majority of the students and teachers, strongly disagreed that schools have fences. This exposed that headteachers do not use fences to influence retention of students. The results of mean that community day secondary schools lack fences to retain girls. According to Malawi National Education Policy (2013), head teachers with assistance from the Ministry of Education and the local community should make sure that all members of staff students and school property are secured to support learning processes. Chiwaula, Nampota, Meke, and Kunje (2013) mentioned that security provides safety of the teaching and learning materials for the students to concentrate on learning and complete their education level. The study also investigated if the school provides hostels to the students within the campus. The finding was; 149 (48.5%) students strongly disagreed, 78(25.4%) disagreed, 56(18.2%) agreed and 23(7.5%) strongly disagreed that schools provide hostels. The results from the teachers also strongly disagreed with 48(61.5%), 18(23.1) disagreed while 8(10.3%) agreed and 4(5.1%) strongly disagreed that that schools provide hostels.

The results portrayed that the majority of the students and teachers, strongly disagreed that their schools provide hostels to accommodate girls every term. The findings also mean that headteachers do not use hostels as a strategy to influence retention of girls in community day secondary schools. In this case, some students operate from homes to school, while others rent in the neighboring villages. The results were in-line with Kunje, (2012) who mentioned that hostels within school campus assist students not to walk long distances and be fresh in class. The researcher also investigated if head teachers use locked gates, doors and windows as a strategy of retaining students at school. The finding from students revealed that 146(47.6%) strongly disagreed,

60(19.5%) disagreed 58(18.9%) agreed, 16(5.2%) were neutral, 8(8.8%) strongly disagreed. The findings from the teachers also showed that 42(53.8%) strongly disagreed, which is the majority followed by 18(23.1%) who disagreed, 2(2.6%) neutral 9(11.3%) agreed, 9(11.3%) strongly agreed. The results showed that schools do not have locked gates, classroom doors and windows. This means that the headteachers do not employ locked gates, doors and windows in order to retain students in Community Day Secondary schools in Mchinji district.

After the likert scale questions, the researcher asked an open-ended questions for students and to the teachers to explain also how they felt about the security of their schools. All the respondents stated that they are not satisfied with the security of their schools because of thieves and riots which involve the braking of the school building like windows and doors. Students and majority of teachers complained. Teachers complained of high rate of students' absenteeism, poor concentration during classes to those learning outside and coming late to school especially during the rainy season. However, the headteachers have formulated time tables which start and finish daily classes in a time which accommodates students to be punctual in class and also reach home in good time. However this solution has its own disadvantages because it gives students few hours of learning compared to full boarding secondary schools.

The results concurred with Tinto's theory of departure which emphasizes that students' retention is dependent on their experiences at school. Hanover (2013) also emphasized that schools should be safe places where parents can send their children without worry and students can learn without fear. Therefore it is vital that school administrators should focus on security measures as their priorities in order to achieve its aim (Partner Alliance for Safer Schools, (PASS) 2017). Zais (2011) mentioned that schools should promote the safety of the students, physical and mental health fairness, and adequacy of disciplinary procedures, in order to assist students to achieve their goals in life.

Furthermore, the researcher interviewed the headteachers on how their school security measures influence the retention of girls. The majority of the headteachers explained that their schools lack security in order to retain girls. Many community day secondary schools do not have fences, security guards, hostels within the campus to accommodate girls. In addition to that community days mostly experience riots, demonstrations due uncontrollable indiscipline cases. On the issues of accommodation, headteachers explained that they do request the near -by villages to provide renting houses to the students. However, a number of them complained that renting in villages make it so difficult to apply disciplinary measures to students. Further, some also explained that students are not secured in the renting houses. Students complain of theft, landlords steal or frequently ask for food and borrowing of some material like: buckets, plates, basins pots and others refuse to give back to the owner. One headteacher lamented that:

The problem is that these schools are supposed to be supported by the community, and most of them are typically found in rural areas where it is difficult to source funds to build infrastructures like fences or parameter walls, hostels to accommodate students within the campus. (Head teacher A, 15th November 2020)

Another head teacher also expressed that;

Some students learn outside or in grass thatched classrooms or under the tree and without desks because schools have few classes. (Head teacher B, 10th November 2020).

The head teachers suggested other security resources the school can use to increase the retention of girls. The majority of the head teachers suggested; building fences and hostels within the school campus, opening of the police units close to the schools. Furthermore all the schools should have fence with locked gates and building to have locked doors and windows if not used. Finally, the findings showed that community day secondary schools lack hostels, fences, security guards, discipline in order to retain girls in Mchinji district. This means that majority of the headteachers do not employ security measures as a strategy to influence the retention of girls in Community Day Secondary schools. Therefore there is a great need of improving the security measures in order to increase retention rate of girls in community day secondary schools in Mchinji district.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that headteachers in community day secondary schools are still facing challenges to retain girls in Mchinji district. From the findings it is evident that they are various strategies which have been identified that headteachers can employ in order to influence retention however are not fully utilized. The provision of the security measures like security guards fences and hostels, locked gates doors and windows are not employed as strategies to retain girls in community day secondary schools. Majority of the respondents showed that their school have no fences, hostels, security guards and their class room doors remain unlocked. This means that schools have no security to safeguard students and school property.

6.0 Recommendation

The study found that there are inadequate security measures and sanitation facilities in schools. Therefore it recommends that headteachers should cooperate with the board of management Parent teacher Association (PTA) to make sure that security measure and sanitation are found in order to retain girls in Community Day Secondary Schools. The researcher recommends that further studies should be carried out in the following areas: Strategies employed to retain boys in community day secondary schools in Malawi, strategies adopted by class teachers to retain students in secondary schools, challenges faced by community members when participating in school activities.

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