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## Girls School Dropout Rate in Malawi: A Threat to National Development

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aims to explore the key factors contributing to girls' school dropout rates in Malawi and its impacts on national development. It seeks to identify the root causes, understand the socio-economic implications, and propose potential solutions that could mitigate the issue.

**Methods and Materials:** The study utilizes secondary data from various sources, including United Nations reports, Malawian statistical data, newspaper articles, and conference proceedings related to female education in Malawi. Data were systematically collected and synthesized to provide a comprehensive view of the causes and consequences of female dropout rates in both primary and secondary education.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that the primary causes of school dropout among girls in Malawi are poverty, early marriage, long distances to school, teenage pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, and gender-based violence. These factors significantly contribute to the disproportionate dropout rates between girls and boys. The study highlights that the high dropout rates among girls negatively affect national development by limiting women's participation in leadership roles and the economy.

**Conclusion:** Girls' dropout from school presents a critical challenge to Malawi's socio-economic development. While policies have been implemented, such as the National Education Sector Plan and readmission policies for school-aged mothers, more targeted interventions are necessary. The study recommends improving school infrastructure, providing scholarships, and initiating nationwide awareness campaigns to encourage female education.

**Keywords:** School dropout, Girl child, Absenteeism, Education, Malawi

## 1. Introduction

Globally, education plays a critical role in enhancing social, economic and human capital development in any society. For instance, it serves as an influential tool in poverty reduction and also acts as the strongest healthy predictor worldwide. Malawi, a southern African nation, considers girls education as a critical development pillar for the current and future generation (Naunje, 2004). At the national level, the girl's educational goals have been outlined in the Malawi National Girls Educational Strategy. The strategy articulates that all girls in Malawi must access, participate in, complete and excel at all stages of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable, social and economic development (NGES, 2014). In 1994, for example, a free quality education scheme was adopted for all Malawian children and saw a surge in enrollment of about 63% nationwide (IRIN Africa English Service, 2001). Nonetheless, this incentive has not stopped the drop out of school-going pupils, especially the girl child. A report by (EMIS, 2015) confirmed that the dropout rate for girls in Malawi far exceeds their counterpart in both primary and secondary school across the country. The dropout rate of students in Malawi is more common among girls as compared to boys, especially in rural areas (IRIN Africa English Service, 2001). As noted by UNESCO, (2009), drop out is defined as the "number of pupils from a cohort registered in a given grade at a given school year who are no longer enrolled in the following school year" (UNESCO Country Reports on Malawi Education, 2009). There are basically two primary types of dropout in the school cycle, and they include; (1) Permanent school dropout and (2) Temporary school dropout respectively. He further classifies temporary dropout into sporadic, long term and eventual dropout while the permanent was categorized into settled and unsettled dropout respectively (Nzangaya, 2017)

Over the past decades, girl's dropout rate in developing countries like Malawi is on the increase but yet has received very little attention as compared to the global emphasis on access to education (Mzuza et al., 2014; Nzangaya, 2017). Gender equality in terms of educational enrollment and school completion for girls across the globe still proves to be a daunting task with multiple complications (UNESCO, 2017). According to the UNESCO (2012) report, the dropout rate for girls across 49 countries was higher for girls as compared to boys in these countries. Hunt (2008) stated that the dropout rate of students differs between and within

countries as well as with specific age and grade range. Across Sub Saharan Africa for example, about 50% of the 77 million girls who were enrolled in schools dropped out of school (Hunt, 2008). Recently, UNICEF estimated that 121 million students drop out of schools globally with 65 million of this number being girls with South Africa alone accounting for 80% of the 65 million female dropouts. In South Africa, for instance, dropout among students, especially the girl child, has reached a national crisis status (UNICEF, 2019). Ethiopia reported a 61.8% dropout rate of primary school students in 2014, making it Africa's highest in terms of dropout (UNICEF, 2019).

The belief by many parents across Africa especially Malawi, that schooling is of no significance for girls is strong and dogmatic in nature. Mzuza et al. (2014) suggested that cultural belief, poverty, religion and socio-economic factors are the root cause why girls are educationally marginalized around the globe. The problems associated with massive schools dropout has been categorized into parental and school problem (Mzuza et al., 2014). The parental problem is mainly connected with economic factors such as transportation, petty trading to support livelihood, cost of textbooks, extra classes fees and other household activities. Alternately, Connelly and Zheng, (2003) suggested that educational service and household demand for education are closely linked with dropout rates globally. In Malawi, poverty, teacher's attitude towards students and school infrastructure were reported to be the significant problems leading to school dropout (Naunje, 2004). However, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) opined that inadequate and incompetence of teachers, poor learning environment and lack of classrooms contribute equally to the dropout rate of students across Malawi. Among the significant challenge faced is the high rate of school dropout, which is higher for girls as compared to boys in most parts of the world (Kadzamira, 2003). The school dropout rate, especially for girls, is on the increase and is considered a global crisis. Unfortunately, this practice is not a one-time event but a continuous process that is complicated and difficult to comprehend. Despite several interventions put forward by different global stakeholders, especially in Africa towards enhancing continuous girls' education, yet its actualization is being faced with a lot of challenges (Naunje, 2004).

### 1.1. Consequences of girl's dropout in society

The economic and social development of nations greatly depends on human capital as the engine of growth through educational knowledge (Abotsi et al., 2018; Galor & Moav, 2003; Goldin, 2001; Lucas, 1993). School dropout is synonymous to illiteracy and illiteracy in the 21 century is considered a curse to the socio-economic development of humanity. Malawi is a developing country struggling to attain a middle-income status and that can only be achieved through the collective efforts of all citizens via education. Girls dropping out of school mean their positive national contribution will be untapped and their economic potential will be left out and considered useless. The global trend in illiteracy is decreasing with preceding generation better than previous. However, among the 85 developing countries on earth, 43 of these countries have women with illiteracy rate above 50% (Stromquist, 1990). Illiteracy especially in women poses a socio-economic vulnerability from one generation to another and women are the most impacted as compared to men (Thengal, 2013). In Malawi, girls who drop out of school can only find a maid job where they earn far less than what other Malawian earn and there is no social security or compensation for any eventuality during the job. Many scholars across Malawi have published articles within the scope of education. However, only few scholars pay attention to the challenges facing the girl child education quest in Malawi. This review is designed to explore the dropout rate of girls across Malawi and hence answer the following research questions:

1. What is the overall trend of school dropout over the past three decades in Malawi?
2. What is the rate of girls drop out across Malawi?
3. What are the reasons for school dropout rates among girls in Malawi?
4. Does dropout rate among girls a threat to national development in Malawi?

## 2. Methods and Materials

Malawi is a land locked country located in the South-East of Africa. Its current population stands at 17, 563, 749 people (Population and housing census of Malawi, 2018). Synthesizing the dropout rate among girls in Malawi is essential for the planning of policies by decision-makers and other relevant international organizations.

The data for this study was derived from secondary sources such as published articles, United Nations reports, Malawian Statistics reports, Ministry of Education Science

and Technology reports, Newspapers, workshop and conference proceedings connected with education. Unpublished and observational sources of information were also solicited for this article. Keywords like dropout rate of students, causes of dropout rate, girl's education in Malawi were used to find data needed for the article. The collected data was thorough crosscheck for pertinent information on girls dropout rate was utilized and analyzed to form the basis of literature, results and discussions. The article is organized in the following order; introduction; consequences of girls dropout in society; materials and method; results and discussion; obstacles of girl child education; impacts of girls education on national development; resolutions taken by authorities to mitigate dropout rate, conclusion and recommendations.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

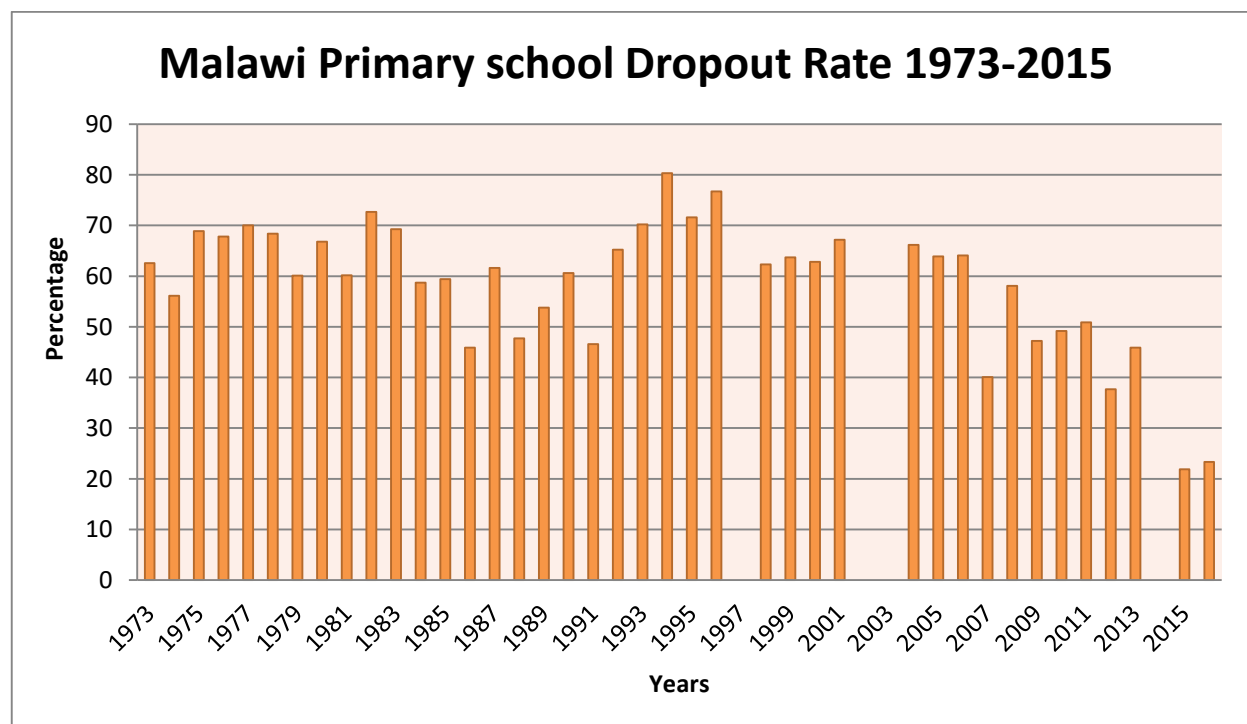
A recent World Bank survey estimated that; 89% of girls across the globe complete primary education but only 77% of that percentage complete lower secondary learning (World Bank, 2018). In Malawi, primary school education is the bed rock foundation for educational advancement, social and livelihood improvement (Mzuya et al., 2014). Dropout rate in both primary and secondary schools in Africa is on the increase especially in Malawi. Among the 13 countries assessed in terms of school dropout rate in Africa, Malawi was among the countries with the highest dropout rate followed by Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia (UNESCO Country Reports on Malawi Education, 2009). Although the United Nations flagship agenda, the Sustainable Development Goal number four is geared towards quality education for all (UNESCO, 2017) yet Malawi and other African countries are far from achieving this goal within the stipulated timeframe. The recent population and housing census conducted in Malawi unearth the actual reality of the number of pupils that are out of school in Malawi. The report stated that; 24.5% girls and 25.3% boys age between 6-13 years that were supposed to be enrolled in primary school were out of school. Similarly, 82.3% of girls and 83.8% of boys within the age range of 14-17 years were out of secondary school across Malawi (Malawi Housing and Population Census, 2018). Figure 1, presents the primary school dropout rate of Malawi from 1973 to 2015. From 1973 the dropout rate ranges from 45 to 80% across the country with the exception of 1986, 1988 and 1991 respectively (Figure 1). However, the dropout rate started to decline in 2000 and by 2015 it was barely around 20% across

the country. Several factors may have been attributed to the increase in the dropout rate in primary schools across the country. One possible factor may have been the limited number of schools across the country as at that time as well as poverty rate among others. However, as the civilization and standard of living began to improve in the early 2000s, the number of dropout in primary school began to shrink

drastically. In particular, school dropout rate is more is higher for girls than boys across Malawi. The 2018 census in Malawi reported that there are more women than men. However, the percentage of student dropout in both primary and secondary school is higher for girls as compared to their counterpart (Table 1 and Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The overall trend of primary school dropout over the past three decades in Malawi (Source)*



**Table 1**

*Dropout rate in (%) of primary school students from 2004 to 2017; Source: (Ministry of Education and National statistics Office of Malawi Year Book, 2003-2017)*

| Dropout/year | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Dropout (F)% | 10.2 | 10.2 | 18.1 | 16.3 | 10.5 | 11.9 | 11.5 | 12.2 | 4.0  | 4.0  | 4.2  |
| Dropout (M)% | 9.7  | 9.8  | 14.4 | 12.1 | 6.6  | 8.5  | 9.8  | 9.9  | 3.6  | 3.8  | 4.0  |
| Repetition % | 15.6 | 19.1 | 24.7 | 23.4 | 25.3 | 24.6 | 24.7 | 22.9 | 21.9 | 23.3 | 23.2 |

A study conducted by Naunje, (2004) stated that; approximately 10% of pupils who enrolled in schools across Malawi dropout in barely six months after enrolment whereas the completion rate of those who continued was barely 25% (Naunje, 2004). Besides high dropout rate among girls; even the enrolment rate in school stand at 46% for girls as of 2015 (EMIS, 2015). According to a study by Mzuza et al. (2014) and Milner et al. (2001), girl's dropout

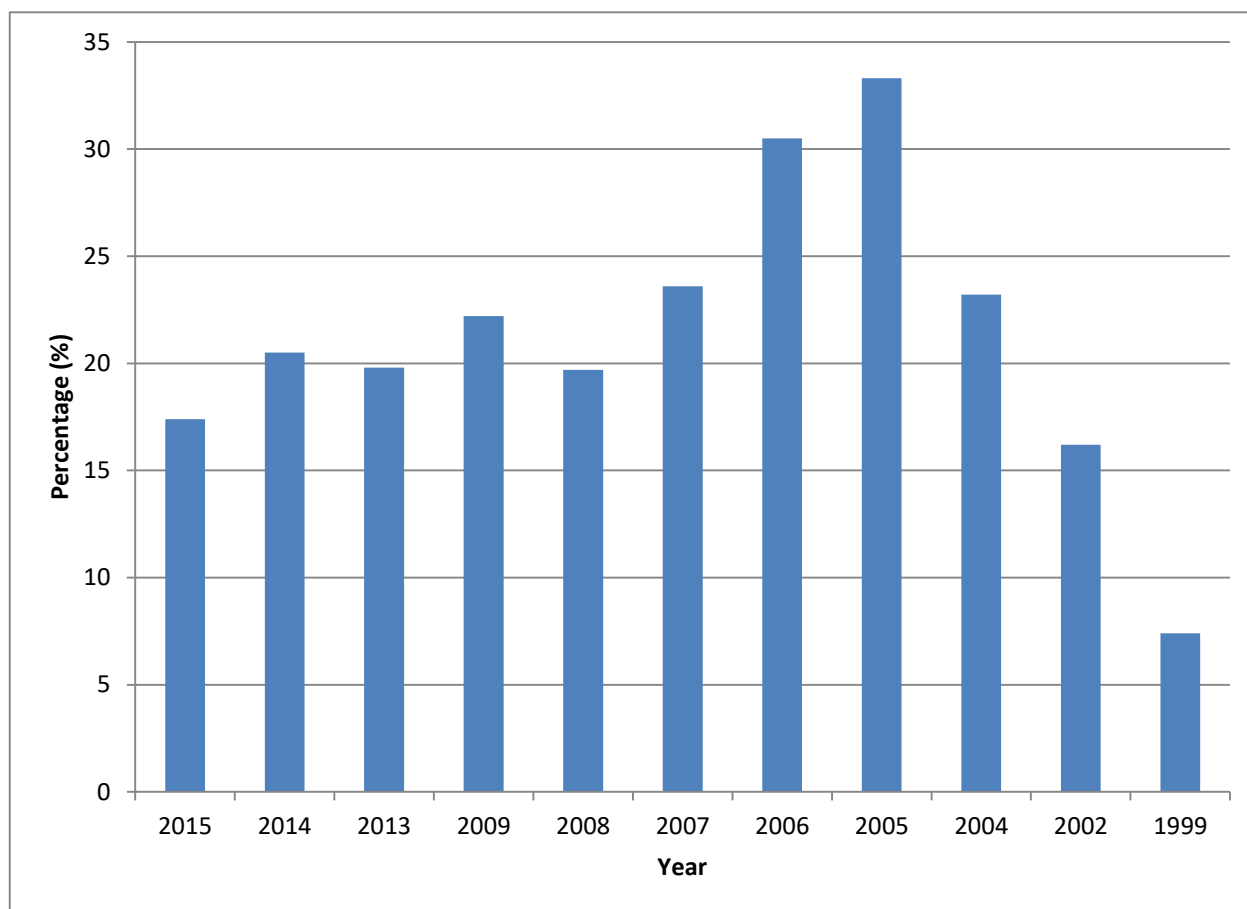
rate from school in Malawi is among the highest in the Southern African region (Milner et al., 2001; Mzuza et al., 2014). From 2004 to 2017, the percentage of girls who dropped out of primary school was higher as compared to their boy's counterpart (Table 1). Likewise, the repetition rate across the Malawi; ranges from 15.6 to 25.3% from 2004 to 2017. It is obvious that most of the pupils who repeat end up dropping out of school eventually. A study by Mzuza

et al. (2014) detected a positive relationship between poor performance in examinations and the rate of dropout across schools in Malawi (Mzuza et al., 2014). Unlike boys, girls who perform poor in examinations quickly adopt the concept of getting married as an alternative to continue schooling. Figure 2 present the dropout percentage of lower secondary student across Malawi. The dropout rate peaked between

2005 and 2006. The lowest dropout rate was detected in 1999, 2002 and 2015. The fluctuations in the dropout rate of students in the lower secondary may be linked to both social and economic challenges across Malawi. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2011) report estimated that 13.7% of girls drop out of school from standard 1, while 15.98% dropped out in standard 8 in 2011.

**Figure 2**

*Percent dropout rate for lower secondary age students in Malawi from 1999-2015. Source*



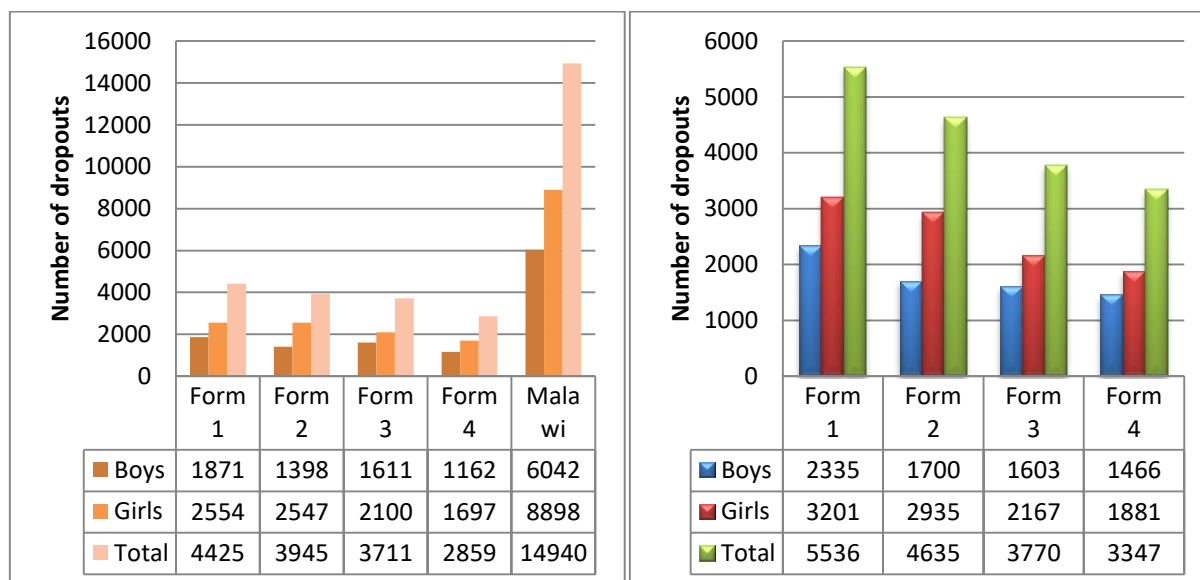
Recently, Malawi reviewed the secondary school curriculum and introduced an outcome-based curriculum which advocates for learner-centred approach. However, drop out in schools across Malawi is still a cause for concern, especially for the girl child. The problem of girl child dropout in Malawi has been around for decades (EMIS, 2015). The UNICEF, (2019) reports estimated that girl's net enrolment rate in primary schools was 89%, but their secondary school enrolment rate stood at 15.5% only (UNICEF, 2019). It is observed that the number of girls who

dropped out of school from form one to form four outnumbered the boys respectively. The most dropout rate was recorded in form 1, and the least was in form 4. The same pattern of dropout rate was observed in the 2014/2015 academic year (Figure 3). The average dropout rate for girls from (2010-2015) for standard 7 alone was 19.5% while male's dropout accounted for 11.2% (McConnell & Mupuwaliywa, 2016). School dropout rates are considerably higher among girls in Malawi as compared to boys (EMIS, 2015).



**Figure 3**

Secondary school dropout by form and sex in Malawi from 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic year. Source: Modified from EMIS Report 2015 and Malawi Education Sector Performance Report, 2015/2016).



### 3.1. Obstacles stimulating girl's dropout from schools across Malawi

In Africa, girls are considered the most vulnerable set of people in the society due to the fragile and human rights abuse communities most find themselves in. Therefore, attaining the required educational status in society is very challenging for girls as compared to their boy's counterpart. In Malawi for example, girls are faced with the cultural barriers, religious belief, early marriage syndrome, household chores responsibilities, rape, HIV infection, violence, societal injustice and gender inequality among others. According to EMIS (2015) report, the principal cause

for the high dropout rate among girls in Malawi was the unavailability of school fees, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage (EMIS, 2015). Robertson et al. (2017) categorized the major challenges facing girl's child education in Malawi into three main groups. They include (1) sociocultural factor (2) overall infrastructure of schools and (3) Economic factors (Robertson et al., 2017). The Maravi Post News (2018) however, groups the dropout rate causes of Malawi into two categories (1) Poverty and (2) the lack of parental care. An assessment by World Bank (2010) suggested that the dropout rate in primary school is due to incomplete school infrastructure. A summary presented in (Table 2) highlights the challenges facing girl's education in Malawi in detail.

**Table 2**

Summary of challenges facing girl's education in Malawi

| Row | School dropout challenges for girls             | Sources  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   | Pregnancy and early marriage                    | (Chimombo et al., 2000; Goldin, 2001; McConnell & Mupuwaliywa, 2015; Mzuza et al., 2014; Readmission Policy, 2018; Robertson et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2017; UNICEF, 2019; Wanikpun, 2018; World Bank, 2017) |
| 2   | Long distances to the school                    | (Chimombo et al., 2000; Mzuza et al., 2014; Naunje, 2004; Ravishankar et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2017) (Readmission Policy, 2018)   |
| 3   | Poverty (lack of school fees, food, clothing, ) | (Chimombo et al., 2000; Gondwe, 2016; Kadzamira, 2003; McConnell & Mupuwaliywa, 2016; Mzuza et al., 2014; Naunje, 2004; Readmission Policy, 2018; Robertson, 2017; Rutakinikwa, 2016; Wanikpun, 2018)    |
| 4   | Lack of feminine facilities in schools          | (Readmission Policy, 2018; Robertson et al., 2017)   |

|    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 5  | Violence (home and school)   | (Gordon et al., 2019; McConnell & Mpuwalyiwa, 2015; McConnell & Mpuwalyiwa, 2016; Mzuza et al., 2014; Robertson, 2017; Robertson et al., 2017) |
| 6  | Sexual harassment at school  | (Naunje, 2004)   |
| 7  | Domestic chores  | (Chimombo et al., 2000; McConnell & Mpuwalyiwa, 2016; Mzuza et al., 2014; Ravishankar et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2017)                    |
| 8  | Negative attitudes towards education (lack of interest and laziness) | (Chimombo et al., 2000; Gondwe, 2016; Nzangaya, 2017; Rutakinikwa, 2016)   |
| 9  | Orphan hood  | (Jere, 2017; Naunje, 2004)   |
| 10 | Employment/child labour  | (Jere, 2017; McConnell & Mpuwalyiwa, 2016; Wanikpun, 2018)   |
| 11 | Effects of HIV/AIDS  | (Gondwe, 2016; Jere, 2017; Readmission Policy, 2018)   |
| 12 | Parents education and occupation                                     | (Ravishankar et al., 2016)   |
| 13 | Addictions (alcohol, drugs, solvents etc.)                           | (Rutakinikwa, 2016; Witte et al., 2013)  |
| 14 | Cultural beliefs (initiation ceremonies)                             | (Banda, 2018; Kadzamira, 2003; Ravishankar et al., 2016)   |
| 15 | Prostitution among girls   | (Chimombo et al., 2000)  |
| 16 | Lack of role models for girls  | (Crenson, 2012; Robertson, 2017)   |
| 17 | Community video centres  | (Ravishankar et al., 2016)   |

Mzuza et al. (2014) found that most girls in Malawi face numerous challenges like unwanted pregnancies that lead to their eventual dropout from school at an early age. School dropouts as a result of pregnancy accounted for 27.6 per cent of all female dropouts in Malawi (Mzuza et al., 2014). According to the UN Women (2017) report, Malawi was found to register the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Approximately 10% of girls are married before age 15, and 50 % marry before age 18 (Witte et al., 2013). Nonetheless, Malawi is not the only country Africa where Teenage pregnancy is rampant. For instance, Illo et al, (2014) reported that almost 30% of Nigerian teenagers' drop out of school because of pregnancy. Similarly, Kenya reported 41.7% of teenage pregnancy, while Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania are no exception (Rutakinikwa, 2016).

Poverty is also a big challenge and threats towards girls' education in Malawi. In 2013–2014, about 50.7% of the populations in Malawi were found to be living below the national poverty line whereas 70.9 % were below the purchasing power parity (PPP) of \$1.90 per day (UNDP, 2016). Because of this wealth and poverty gap, most parent can't afford to send their children to school (Benard et al., 2016; Keraita, 2016; Küçüker, 2018; Shahidul & Karim, 2015). Poor or lack of feminine facilities within school vicinities is also another cause for the high dropout rates among girls in Malawi. Malawi is still struggles with basic school infrastructures and facilities that meet the needs of girls while in school. School schools lack water and toilet facilities. These inadequacies have been found to affects girls' turnout rates, particularly when girls are experiencing their menstruation (Gondwe, 2016; Naunje, 2004). UNICEF (2003) report also noted that 10% of girls skip school during their menstruation or drop out entirely because of the lack of

decent sanitation. A report done by UNICEF (2006) stated that in Africa, the lack of basic sanitation had been the primary culprit for the massive dropout of girls in schools.

Another challenge facing girl's education in Malawi is gender-based violence. Studies conducted across Malawi on challenges facing girls education concluded that high prevalence of such actions against girls in both primary and secondary is high and that 61% of girls have experienced such either in primary or secondary school in Malawi (Sperling et al., 2016). Also, a study conducted by USAID (2014) also found that teachers were being harsh and using offensive language on students, particularly to over-age girls and repeaters. Such an attitude by teacher's mainly male teachers stimulated the thought of dropping out of school in most girls. The insufficiency of schools across Malawi especially in rural areas greatly impact girl's education in these regions. Most schools in rural Malawi are located 4 to 10 km away from some villages and are even not accessible during the raining season. Investigations have found that almost 900 girls across Malawi dropped out of school annually as a result of long-distance to school (Ravishankar et al., 2016). According to reports, long-distance was found to affect attendance and academic performance of students living far away from school subsequently leading to increased dropout rates (Abotsi et al., 2018). However, Malawi is not the only country facing dropout in schools problems due to long distances. Countries such as Tanzania, Uganda Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique etc. have high rates of dropout (UNESCO Country Reports on Malawi Education, 2009) due to similar problems in rural areas. Ainsworth et al. (2005) established that the probability of girls attending schools that are far away from their homes diminishes with greater distance as compared to those living closer to the schools (Küçüker,

2018). Additionally, matured girls covering long distances to school easily get distracted by men on their way back home in most cases, and this eventually leads to unwanted pregnancies. Household chores serve as a barrier for most girls in realizing their educational dreams in Malawi. According to the (EMIS, 2015) report, household chores such as fetching water, firewood, food preparation, cleaning and looking after siblings as well as the sick were the most common reasons for girls dropping out of primary school. Most girls in schools across Malawi are often overburdened with domestic and family chores which mostly results to constant school absenteeism and eventual dropout from school (Gondwe, 2016; Naunje, 2004). According to the local government performance index report, about 22% girls were twice as likely to drop out of school because of household work compared to boys 11% (Robertson, 2017). Also, child labor and petty trading tasks force girls in less privilege homes to quit school. Furthermore, the presence of few female teachers across schools in Malawi affects girl moral support for schooling. Most girls in rural Malawi for example do not have role models in the form of teachers who can inspire them to continue with their education; hence, the high rates of dropout. As of 2015, about 42% of primary teachers in Malawi were female, with only 22% of secondary teachers being female (UNICEF, 2019). A study conducted in Afghanistan, stated that; the lack of adequate number of female teacher discourage most girls from continuing school (Shahidul & Karim, 2015). The root cause of girl's dropout in society is mostly connected with the type of environment they find themselves and the economic status of that country. Girls in developed countries are likely to complete school than those in less developed countries. A reviewed done by Latif et al. (2015) highlighted all the above challenges facing girls education and added other challenges such as security problems, improper teaching language, overcrowded class rooms among others as the major culprit of girls dropout across different countries on earth (Latif et al., 2015). World Bank (2018b) added that gender roles and social norms force girls to quit school in most homes (World Bank, 2018a, 2018b).

### 3.2. *The impact of girl's dropout in the social and economic development of societies*

The impacts of girl's dropout in schools have direct impact on the society, their future marital homes and the economy as a whole. In Africa, most girls who drop out of school early end up having many children and poor homes to look after. Research has proven that education is a great

tool in developing any nation on earth (Latif et al., 2015). Education is vital in the development of every aspect of society and helps improve the standard of living of mankind. In developing countries like Malawi, education has the potential to stir economic growth, improve the welfare of citizens and enhance infrastructural development. There is a strong correlation between personal earning and educational status of individuals around the world (Belfield & Levin, 2007). According to Abotsi et al. (2018) education support individuals and help people realize their capabilities, dreams, and talents leading to economic productivity in society. However, dropping out of school jeopardizes one future and give rise to social problems in society. In the case of women, dropping out of school leads to compounded social and economic implication for society and her home. Physically, women are not as strong as men; therefore, they are unfit for most heavy-duty jobs that involve physical strength to execute. Alternately, men who drop out of school can easily secure jobs that require only physical capabilities. Therefore, most drop out women end up becoming permanent house wives with sole responsibility of child bearing (Abotsi et al., 2018). A recent investigation by World Bank (2018) estimated that girls who fail to complete 12 years of schooling risk losing earning and lifetime productivity prospect of \$15 to \$30 trillion dollars annually. The investigation further stated that girls who attain secondary education earn twice than what a primary school dropout get in any work place (World, 2018; World Bank, 2018a). Educated girls make inform decision about their social, economic, health, birth control, early marriage, prevent child malnutrition, contribute to societal development and attract serious partners (World, 2018; World Bank, 2018a). According to Somani, (2017) educated girls plays a crucial role in the overall development of society in diverse ways. For example, educated women in politics are more trustworthy than their counterpart men. Also, education serves as a powerful tool in eliminating gender imbalance, leadership empowerment, societal stability and peace, promote human rights, ensure children education, bring about positive societal change, poverty and economic loss reduction, birth control, ensure social justice and etc. in any society (Somani, 2017). Alternately, girls who drop out of school are unable to make informed decision in society neither do they contribute to it development economically.



### 3.3. *Resolutions taken to keep girls in school across Malawi*

The Malawian government has adopted number policies that are geared towards the advancement of girl's education while halting the dropout rate among girls. These policies are serving as an intervention to discourage girls from dropping out of school, especially in rural areas. For instance, the National Education Sector Plan (2008) has been developed to support girls in isolated areas from standard 6 to 8. Also, a parent group was established in primary schools in 2017–2018 academic years to support girls' education. Further to this, the policy is also trying to improve the infrastructure of secondary schools and including the construction of girls' hostels. Another important agenda for this policy; is to maintain an enrolment quota of 50% in government schools. Additionally, the Education Sector Implementation Plan, Policy Investment Framework, National Girls Educational Strategy and the National Girls Education Communication Strategy were also implemented in 2004. The primary focus of these policies were to enhance girls' education through the allocation of funds in primary school to improvement grants as well as reduce gender based violence and retain girls in schools. The resolution furthermore, seeks to add more female teachers that could serve as role models for young girls across government schools in the country. Currently, the Malawian government is constructing girls' hostels to ensure that girls have adequate accommodation in order to reduce the distance for girls coming from far away. Additionally, girls are being provided with bicycles to reduce the travel time to schools. Another policy adopted to discourage girls dropping out of schools is the re-admission policy of 1998. This policy allows school-aged mothers to return to school after having a child ([Readmission Policy, 2018](#)). The Non-Governmental Organizations with funding from international bodies have also been established to work hand in hand with the Malawi government in order to enhance girl's education.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the efforts being applied by the Malawian government and the international community, girl's education is still a big challenge in Malawi. Malawi is still among the countries with a high rate of girl's dropout across schools in Africa. The performance of girls in both primary and secondary schools is far below that of boys in all national examinations conducted each year. The principal factors behind the massive dropout rate of girls across

Malawi are connected with early marriage, long walking distance to school, pregnancies, poverty, household chores, absence of motivation, gender violence, religious and cultural belief etc. Other social factors, such as HIV infections and prostitution, are contributing to school dropout in many parts of the country. However, with the adoption of a new school curriculum together with a number of sound policies being adopted by the government; the future of girl's education is certain if the implementation is enforced. For a complete change of the current education dropout trend of girls across Malawi, a paradigm shift of parents, society and government authorities is needed to make education attractive to girls of all social and economic background.

### 4.1. *Recommendations*

1. The government of Malawi should institute substantial penalty on men impregnating girls below 18 years. Jail terms and other public punishment should be introduced.
2. The government should adopt a loan scheme for girls coming from poor background yet want to continue schooling and should pay after the completion of University.
3. The education authorities should improve on the current schools' infrastructure and take into consideration girls' privacy when constructing new school facilities.
4. Authorities should provide attractive incentives to girls and their parent to supplement any possible challenge that might lead to school dropout, especially for rural girls.
5. A nationwide campaign and awareness-raising should be conducted to attract and motivate young girls to attend school.
6. International organizations should help support the government initiative in encouraging girls to stay in school by giving brilliant students scholarships each year.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

## Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all individuals for participating and cooperating us in this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

## Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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