

**ANALYZING GRIEVANCE HANDLING MECHANISMS AND EMPLOYEE
PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF ZOMBA CENTRAL PRISON**

**MASTER OF ARTS (HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) THESIS**

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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Relations)

University of Malawi

September 2024

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

GEORGE PARRY FELAZAKO CHIBWE

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I, the undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's work and effort and has been submitted with his approval.

Signature _____ **Date** _____.

Mustafa Hussein, PhD (Professor)

Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses grievance handling on employee performance at Zomba Central prison. It shows the extent to which the militaristic thinking of handling grievances affects employee performance. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research design. A self-administered questionnaire and structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data from a sample of 90 for the analysis of grievances. The results of the study show that there are several causes of grievances among officers chief of which is the working condition largely attributed to neglect by the authorities. The lack of policies and alternative grievance handling mechanisms and procedures has further exacerbated the situation as employees opt to vent their frustrations through unchartered means like the media and sometimes “industrial action” for fear of reprisals due to an autocratic system. It thus considers employing various grievance handling mechanisms like the open door policy, the standard step ladder procedure, peer review or grievance committee, ombudsman and hearing officer as the current system falls short of the context as employees at the facility suffer in silence suggesting resistance by management to recognise grievances. Various challenges compound grievance handling dominant of which are lack or poor systems for handling grievances, supervisors’ incompetence, bad attitude towards grievances, unnecessary bureaucracy and weaknesses in the grievance handling system. These challenges ultimately affect employee contextual performance especially interpersonal facilitation behaviour as employees mainly focus on satisfying interpersonal behaviours unlike job dedication behaviours, therefore, impinging on task performance. It is consequently imperative for management to take a special interest in employees’ grievances as this paper highlights the need to make improvements in the current system.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides an introduction, a definition of the relevant terms, the problem statement, the main and specific objectives, and the justification for carrying out the study.

1.2 Introduction

The need to maintain a harmonious relationship in the workplace in order to improve employee morale, enhance organizational effectiveness and boost organizational productivity has made the management of employees' grievances a vital organizational concern (Onyebuch & Uchechi, 2019). Organizations are made of diverse individuals of different age groups, education backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and social status, brought together to further the attainment of both group and individual goals. In workplaces of this nature, misunderstandings are inevitable and this requires an organized way of managing or resolving conflicts. This considers that the most widely recognized benefit of grievance procedures is as a conflict management and dispute resolution mechanism which provides a conducive atmosphere for workers to effectively manage employee grievances against management or the organization thereby improving the morale and hence employee performance (Salamon, 2000; Nurse & Devonish, 2007).

In this regard, the grievance process provides a peaceful means to reduce the pressures and fears of employees and to settle workplace disputes without stoppage of work or making employees resort to economic sanctions (Banes, 2004). Furthermore, the grievance procedure improves perceptions of fairness and equity as it empowers employees to have a voice at high levels of policy-making authority and this also increases the morale of employees as the grievance procedure enables them to

perceive management as considerate (Lewin & Peterson 1988). Furthermore, the grievance process serves as a force against haphazard or discriminatory unilateral actions and as a mechanism for the equitable and just interpretation and application of the negotiated collective agreement ultimately furthering group cohesion which is an important aspect of team work. In addition, grievance procedure benefits management with the guarantee which provides uninterrupted production during the life of the labour agreement, and a systematic source of information about problem areas in the workplace which can be used for subsequent evaluation and corrective action (Banes, 2004). This results in a fair and just system of discipline and grievance management which is a catalyst for effective public administration. Conversely, faulty handling of grievances produces unhappiness, discontent, indifference, and frustration which ultimately affect employees' concentration, efficiency and productivity (Mahapatro, 2010). The employees of the Malawi Prisons Service could not be immune from the effects of grievance handling. In this light, effective grievance handling could be a motivational tool to boost the performance of employees making it important for organizational effectiveness.

According to Jones (2004), the most valuable resource of an organization is its employees as machines cannot operate themselves without human assistance. Consequently, for workers to perform efficiently, they must have the motivation to perform. This means they must be satisfied. An unsatisfied worker usually has a grievance (Jones, 2004). Like in other sectors, conflicts and disputes are inevitable in the security sector. To address these situations, each collective agreement in an organization should contain provisions for grievance handling procedures to guide handling the dispute arising between the employers, the union or the individuals (Daud, 2010). Therefore, the management of employee grievances deserves attention because a prompt response that leads to quick resolution of a grievance will boost employee morale and productivity and could forestall costly legal action (Jones, 2004).

According to Monapa et al (2000), the choice of an effective way of managing an employee's grievance ensures justice in the management of employee grievances as managers base their decisions on ethical codes of conduct. In this regard, the existence of grievance procedures and the practice of grievance management express the reality

that conflict is inevitable in the management of workplace relations between workers and employees as the use of grievance procedures institutionalises conflict by providing an orderly means of settlement of grievances.

Thus, employees have the opportunity to use the voice mechanism thereby creating upward communication channels to management and the conditions under which workers and their unions can assert and protect job rights (Lewin, 1983). As such, workers can legitimately protest contract violations as well as bring the attention of management to problems at the workplace before they cause serious trouble since grievance procedures provide a vehicle through which employees and unions channel their grievances. This is especially necessary for large organizations with numerous personnel and many levels of management which result in managers' failure to keep a check on each individual or get involved in all aspects of working (Jones & Heinz, 2004). This shows that conflict in an organisation is inevitable. As such taking this assertion into account and further considering the size of Zomba Central Prison as a large institution, it is imperative that management in large organisations like Zomba Central Prison create voice mechanisms to facilitate upward communication in the workplace and further encourage workers to follow the laid down procedures if the causes of grievances are to be resolved amicably and ensure optimum performance of workers. It is therefore important to study grievance procedures in the context of employee performance at Zomba Central Prison to ascertain its effectiveness.

1.3 Problem Statement

The Malawi Public Service Management Policy (2018: 42) states that “most grievances are often handled without regard to laid down procedures and laws and that Ministries, Departments and Agencies use different procedures for handling grievances”. It further states that “the Malawi Public Service Act is lacking in terms of fundamental principles for administrative justice which is critical in guiding administrative decision making as provided for in the Malawian Constitution. Consequently, there have been decisions made in the public service which have not been consistent with principles of administrative justice resulting in costly legal challenges”.

In line with the above assertion, the management of employee grievances in the Malawi Prisons Service has been viewed as a challenge as one of the problems facing the department is the issue of labour - management conflict (MPS, 2019:1). Management has perceived the workers as uncooperative in airing their grievances and that they are usually against management and threaten various drastic actions against the organization's management (MPS, 2020:1). On the other hand, the workers perceive management as being exploitative in labour relations management as in their view the authorities deliberately ignore their grievances which they believe to a large extent would be solved if the same is escalated to Government (Pondani, 2020). Furthermore, the Inspectorate of Prisons (2022) noted that there were "a myriad of administration and management challenges within the Malawi Prisons Service that infringe on the prison officers' rights to fair labour practices as stipulated in section 31 of the Constitution like excessive workload, poor infrastructure, and poor system of promotions". This, in officers' view, is considered that they were being treated as prisoners themselves considering that management takes the "I don't care" attitude (Inspectorate of Prisons, 2019). This resentment has resulted in several spontaneous labour conflicts. For instance, in 2005, junior officers staged a "sit-in" demanding that their salaries be revised upwards in line with their police counterparts and management was taken by surprise. This recurred in 2017 as junior prison officers staged three days "sit-ins" in protest against the disparity in remunerations with their police counterparts (Bisani, 2017). Furthermore, in 2019, junior officers within the Prison department cancelled a planned strike after the Homeland Ministry assured them that their grievances would be looked into (Kadzanja, 2019). Another "strike" was carried out in 2020 where officers demanded Covid-19 risk allowances and promotions after their colleagues in the Malawi Police were massively promoted (Pondani, 2020).

In view of the conduct by prison officers to resort to surprise "sit-ins" and "strikes" despite being a paramilitary organisation barred from such actions as the Malawi Labour Relations Act (2010) with such provisions does not apply in their context, raises many questions: What essentially is the cause of grievances among employees in the Prison department? How are prison officers supposed to address their grievances? What strategies/policies or mechanisms are in place to address grievances? What is the influence of the grievance handling mechanisms on employee

performance and what challenges do the grievance mechanisms face within the department? This study, set out to understand these questions. It further hypothesized that ineffective grievance handling procedures have demoralised employees resulting in ineffective employee performance.

1.4 Main and specific objectives of the study

1.4.1 Main objective

The main objective of the study was to analyse the effectiveness of grievance handling mechanisms on employee performance in the Malawi Prisons Service using Zomba Central Prison as a case.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Analyse the causes of grievances among employees
- ii. Assess the grievance handling policies and strategies/mechanisms
- iii. Analyse the influence of grievance handling on performance
- iv. Explore the challenges the grievance system faces

1.5 Significance of the study

The study was worth undertaking because it adds new knowledge to the existing literature on the handling of grievances among employees and in particular in the prison setting. It also acts as a research foundation in the area of institutional grievance management from which research of a similar nature would be based. Thirdly, this study enables managers at all levels in the Malawi Prisons Service to recognize employee grievances in general and possibly find out if the efforts they make in dealing with employees' grievances yield desired results or not and therefore take appropriate measures.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

Chapter one commences with an introduction to the concept of grievances and employee performance. The chapter includes the definition of relevant terms, the statement of the problem, the main and specific objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature presenting a discussion of findings of past studies related to grievance handling in general and also specific to prisons and related jurisdictions, a presentation of the theoretical framework and a conceptual framework guiding this study. It further unveils the factors contributing to employee grievances in general which guides the discussion of grievance handling strategies and policies. The literature review then discusses the influence of grievances on employee performance as a way of explicating the discussions on the challenges faced in handling grievances. The chapter terminates with a presentation of the Procedural and Distributive justice theories as the theoretical framework guiding the study. It ends with an explanation of the conceptual framework for the study, and as a conclusion, a summary of the whole chapter.

Chapter three describes the design and methods which were used in carrying out this study. The chapter is organized under the following sections: the research design, area of study, population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data generation, data analysis and ethical considerations processes.

Chapter four is one of the main chapters. It is concerned with the presentation as well as the discussion of the results. The chapter presents and discusses the result of the four research questions which were aimed at analysing the effectiveness of grievance handling mechanisms on employee contextual performance at Zomba Central Prison. The findings are presented in line with the research objectives stated in chapter one comprising an analysis of the causes of grievances, an assessment of grievance handling policies, strategies, and mechanisms and the influence of grievance on employee performance and an exploration of the challenges facing the grievance system. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter five covers the implications, recommendations and conclusion of the study. This includes the implication of the study findings, the recommended plans for the action of the study and finally the conclusion.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented an introduction of the entire study, a definition of the main terms, a statement of the problem, the main and specific objectives, and the

significance of the study. The core of the chapter, however, has been to establish the problem and clarify the link between grievance management and employee performance. The next chapter reviews related literature on grievance procedures and employee performance at the global, regional and local levels and also reviews the theoretical foundations and conceptual framework guiding the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the findings of past studies related to grievance handling in general and also specific to prisons and related jurisdictions. Thus, the chapter provides definitions of relevant terms used in the study and introduces the general factors contributing to employee grievances which guide the discussion of grievance handling procedures, strategies and policies. It then discusses the influence of grievances on employee performance as a way of expounding the discussions on the challenges faced in handling grievances. The chapter then discusses the Procedural and Distributive Justice theories as the theoretical framework guiding the study. It concludes with an explanation of a conceptual framework guiding this study.

2.2 Definition of terms

2.2.1 Grievance

According to D'Cruz (1999), a grievance is defined as a matter raised by an employee to express dissatisfaction with management behaviour and is an attempt to bring out changes. This is similar to Cole (2002) who defines a grievance as an individual dispute between an employee and his or her employer. In line with Cole's definition, Mahapatro (2010) views grievance as a claim initiated by an employee alleging his or her employment or productivity has been adversely affected by the unfair application of business policies and procedures on which remedial action is desired. On the other hand, Ivancevich (2010) defines a grievance as a complaint, whether valid or not, about an organizational policy, procedure, or managerial practice that creates dissatisfaction or discomfort and the complaint may be made by an individual or the union. Mthombeni (2005) defines a grievance in line with the South African Department of Correctional Services grievance procedure as any feeling of dissatisfaction of an employee with regard to any aspect of his/her work situation, or

any cause for dissatisfaction experienced by an employee or groups of employees arising from the work situation. Similarly, Opatha (1994) defines a grievance as any discontent or dissatisfaction arising from a feeling or a belief of injustice felt by an employee or a group of employees in connection with the work environment. Furthermore, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines a grievance as a complaint of one or more workers with respect to wages and allowances, conditions of work and interpretation of service conditions covering such areas as overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority, job assignment and termination of service (ILO, 2015). These definitions show that grievances can emanate from all aspects of the work environment and may affect all workers regardless of position.

2.2.2 Grievance handling procedure

According to Armstrong (2009), a grievance handling procedure is defined as a policy and practice which spells out the processes and approaches to handling grievances. Similarly, Dessler (2008) states that a grievance handling procedure is a process of step by step method an employee should follow to obtain his or her dissatisfaction addressed satisfactorily. In the same way, according to Mthombeni (2005), a grievance procedure is a protocol translated from the primary legislation that applies to the work environment as a resolution or collective agreement with regard to handling grievances.

The definitions provided suggest that there is no generally accepted definition for the terms grievance and grievance procedure. The definitions however agree that there has to be dissatisfaction by an employee or group of employees with the way managers are handling employee relations for the same to qualify as a grievance and this affects their work performance. These definitions further entail that a well-formulated grievance handling procedure can enhance positive organizational outcomes and contribute to the effectiveness of management and employees. This paper, therefore, adopts the definitions by Ivancevich (2010), Opatha (1994), Mthombeni (2005) and Dessler (2008).

2.2.3 Employee performance

Employee performance is defined as how well a person executes their job duties and responsibilities to achieve the goals of both the employees and the companies (Bacal,

1998). Many companies assess their employees' performance on an annual or quarterly basis to define certain areas that need improvement and to encourage further success in areas that are meeting or exceeding expectations. According to Armstrong (2009), performance is an important factor in organizational success which helps improve overall productivity, profitability, and employee morale. As such, by assessing employee performance regularly, companies can identify areas that need improvement, provide support and training to employees, and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals.

In the context of this paper, the focus is on employee contextual performance rather than task performance. This is in line with Borman and Motowidlo's (1997) two-factor theory of job performance consisting of task performance and contextual performance. . Thus, when employees use technical skills and knowledge to produce goods or services or accomplish a specialized task that supports the actual functions of an organization, the employees are involved in task performance. On the other hand, when an employee is involved with voluntarily helping colleagues, putting in extra effort to complete a given task and putting in extra hours to get work done on time, an employee engages in contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Thus, in addition to fulfilling job-specific tasks; employees have to constantly communicate, work together and work in a way that goes beyond their routine job descriptions.

2.3 Causes of grievances

A survey of the literature shows that the key causes of workplace grievances are ineffective grievance procedures, poor working conditions, violation of agreement over administration of the contract, unclear company rules and policies, poor supervisory skills, lack of knowledge regarding company policies among employees, organisational change management and personal maladjustment (Mahapatro, 2010; ACAS, 2009). However, for this study, organizational grievances have been classified into three major typologies which are grievances associated with organizational working and service conditions, managerial policies as well as grievances emanating from individuals' peculiarities and factors (Locke, 2013; Opatha, 2001).

According to Opatha (2001), the reasons grievances arise can be classified into four groups. Firstly, there are grievances arising out of working conditions like very tight production standards which employees cannot meet. Furthermore, a mismatch of the worker with the job in terms of knowledge and skills leaves employees frustrated as they fail to achieve their job roles. This leads to frustration and filing of grievances since employees have limited time and expertise to finalise their tasks (Gorvie, 2019). Furthermore, poor working conditions also entail the non-availability of proper tools and machines whereby employees fail to execute their jobs as planned which ultimately undermines their job performance and in the long run affects their performance appraisal and career development (Armstrong, 2009). Additionally, unplanned organisational changes in schedules and procedures which do not provide adequate time for employees to execute their jobs also result in grievances amongst employees who are not prepared to accept change.

According to Gorvie (2019), most of the grievances which arise as a result of employee working conditions are mainly centred on the management's inability to make adequate provisions to cover for losses which could be capital losses or physical that an employee might be faced with in the process of performing his or her task in the organization. Gorvie (2019) further notes that this lack of management willingness to cover employee losses is mostly prevalent in developing countries where the rate of unemployment is very high and on the increase as such an employee may not be willing to discuss the safety conditions of the employment because he or she is only concerned about providing for the family. In this regard, employers often take advantage of this vulnerability to disregard considerable safety measures that would benefit employees. As such, it leads to grievances in the organization when employees begin to feel dissatisfied with the unbearable conditions of work (Zhou, 2018).

Secondly, there are grievances arising from management policy (Opatha, 2001). These include wage rates and method of wage payment, overtime and incentive schemes, seniority, transfers, promotion, demotion and discharge, lack of opportunities for career growth, penalties imposed for misconduct, leave and hostility towards trade unions (Rollinson, 2000 as cited in Assafuah, 2017). Similarly, Hook, et al. (1996) note that grievances in organisations arise as a result of a lack of clarity

in the explicit company rules an assertion augmented by Wright (2003) who posits that grievances result from employee disagreement with the company's policy. Essentially, when a company policy is not clear to an employee as it does not specifically state what and how things should be done, earned, or ways to express dissatisfaction, a grievance is likely to result. For instance, ineffective grievance procedures are considered a cause for grievances in organisations (Mthombeni, 2005). In this light, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2003) notes that too many grievances may indicate that there is a problem with the organisation's systems and also too few grievances. Thus, a very low grievance rate may suggest fear of filing a grievance, a belief that the grievance procedure is ineffective or a belief that representation is inadequate. Similarly, Kafidi (2003) found out that some officers within the Namibian Police Service feared raising grievances for fear of victimisation by supervisors who considered airing grievances as insubordination towards management. This was observed to be a result of poor procedures for submitting grievances which did not provide alternative routes in cases employees face hostile supervisors.

Thirdly, there are grievances arising from the alleged violation of the agreement (Opatha 2001 cited in Gorvie 2019). Salamon (2000) also observed that grievance is bound to occur when management fails to honour or live up to the terms of the agreement it entered with the employees and, or their representatives. In the same way, Kafidi (2003) in his study of grievance handling in the Namibian Police Service found out that as a component of collective bargaining, grievance procedures are necessary to give effect to the contract. As such, most grievances arise from a dispute over the administration of the contract. Thus when the original contract is supplemented by other agreements like the "sidebar" agreement in handling grievances, conflicts arise when this does not go in favour of employees.

Furthermore, the poor supervisory ability is also noted as a cause of employee grievances (Armstrong, 2009). This is evident when supervisors are not aware of how they are supposed to handle their roles as it results in frustration among employees who lack supervisory direction in the performance of their duties. For instance, a lack of these skills may also result in discrimination emanating from insensitive decisions which deviate from company policies (Salamon, 2000).

Moreover, poor channels of communication within organisations contribute to grievances as employees who lack information tend to speculate on matters that affect their welfare and the policies of companies (Randolph & Edjeta, 2011). In this regard, in cases where employees' views are in conflict with the policy direction of the employer and the employees lack information in that regard, frustration builds up leading to grievances (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010).

Fourthly, there are grievances arising out of personal maladjustment and these include over-ambition, excessive self-esteem, and an impractical attitude to life (Opatha, 2001). These grievances mostly impact the interpersonal relationships in the organization. Some of the interpersonal sources of conflict in the organization include poor interactions among members of a team or group, fallouts of an autocratic leader either by a team leadership or organizational managers, unruly disposition towards fellow workers and even towards superior colleagues as well as incessant complaints and conflict with customers, employment associates and other colleagues (Armstrong, 2009)

In the light of the discussion on the causes of grievances, it is clear that most grievances are systemic and arise from a failure by management to come up with systems that would address or identify the causes of grievances before workers submit the same. As such, whatever form of grievances that exists in the organization, the need to systematically address these grievances rests in the growth and development plans of the organization (Cole, 2002). In this light, management systems have to be strategically structured in such a way as to ensure that the various sources of grievances are identified, recognized and efficient and effective processes are instituted to prevent grievances as well as reduce the time spent in addressing these grievances.

The foregoing section has discussed the various causes of grievances in an organisation chief of which are ineffective grievance procedures, poor working conditions, unclear company policies, violation of agreement or contract, poor supervisory ability and poor communication channels. These causes of grievances are largely systemic and would best be dealt with by management systems with clear directions on how such matters can be addressed. In view of the foregoing, the next

section of this study examines the various grievance handling mechanisms and strategies in use in organizations.

2.4 Grievance handling mechanisms and strategies

According to Cole (2002), a worker grievance mechanism is a procedure through which a grievance can be raised, assessed, investigated and responded to in an organisation. It is also a framework through which workers can gain access to remedies for adverse impacts or damage they have suffered as a result of business activities. Therefore, management has to identify various suitable measures to handle various employee grievances to ensure that the commitment and decisions of employees are sustained toward improved performance and productivity (Gorvie, 2019). Consequently, for a grievance mechanism to be effective in managing worker grievances it must be legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, a source of continuous learning, and based on engagement and dialogue with existing stakeholders (ACAS, 2011; Cole, 2002).

Grievance handling procedures and strategies differ from one corporate entity to another depending on the nature, capacity as well as managerial practices and leadership styles prevalent within organizations (Gorvie, 2019). The most conventional company-controlled route for workers to raise grievances on a worksite is direct contact with human resource management or written notes in complaints boxes (IPEACA, 2019). However, various other mechanisms are available to provide workers with the ability to raise grievances. According to Onyebuchi and Uchechi (2019), there are five types of grievance handling mechanisms which are typically identified in the literature as open-door policy, step ladder, peer review or grievance committee, ombudsman and hearing officer. These could be considered reactive grievance-handling mechanisms as they are activated only when an employee intends to file a grievance. On the other hand, there are grievance handling procedures which could be considered proactive as they may be used to identify grievances within organizations (IPEACA, 2019).

To begin with, trade unions and labour forums are important element in worker and employee relations as they are used by workers as a route to file grievances (Monapa et al., 2012). Thus, grievance procedures are often referenced in collective agreements

during site-level agreements where a trade union is present at the workplace and there is a collective bargaining or labour agreement between the company and the union (Dzimhiri, 2016). When functioning properly, trade unions can be an effective means of providing a grievance process and remedy to workers. Furthermore, site-level collective agreements can establish a means for individual workers to raise an employment-related grievance through the trade union or with trade union assistance. Where agreements and mechanisms of this nature are available, there may be less need for a company to supplement this with an additional internal procedure when the mechanism provided through the collective agreement accommodates individual grievances and is accessible to all workers on the site regardless of trade union membership (IPEACA, 2022). If this is not the case, supplementary grievance routes are recommended. However, in other jurisdictions, there may be restrictions on trade union rights or low levels of trade union membership and in such cases, alternative means of raising grievances are necessary. Non-unionised services like the Malawi Prisons could fall under this category. One option in these circumstances can therefore be for companies to engage with labour forums or worker committees. These can provide a company with a useful, non-adversarial means of consulting with the wider workforce on issues related to the workplace and allow individual employees to raise particular concerns (IPIECA, 2022).

In relation to military and paramilitary organisations, Hellenbeck (1977) as cited in Heineken (2017) argues that unionization of the military personnel as a grievance mechanism is seen as conflicting with national security and public order as these would subvert military discipline and obedience and consequently disrupt the chain of command by creating the “us-them” situation and undermine unit *esprit de corps*. However, this was refuted by countries with a long-standing tradition of some form of military unionism like Denmark, Sweden and Norway which considered belonging to a trade union as a right that belongs to all citizens of which the military personnel is no exception (POPCRU, 2015; Heineken, 2017). This is to ensure that the human rights and welfare of military personnel can be accommodated without undermining military effectiveness or national security.

An additional concern for military trade unionism was that it disrupts the chain of command. However, it was noted that there was no evidence of the same effect in

countries like South Africa and Norway where unionism is practiced (Heineken, 2017). According to Peak and Glensor (1996) as cited by Mthombeni (2005), though the unions attempt to help democratise the police, they are often viewed by police managers and the public as a negative force focusing only on financial gain and control over the management. However, Mthombeni (2005) found out that trade unions put pressure on employers to redesign their organisations to provide for employee involvement in fostering the achievement of organisational goals.

The open door policy is another grievance handling procedure where the aggrieved employee is free to meet the top executive of the organization and get his or her grievance redressed (Armstrong, 2009). This procedure works well for small or departmentalized organizations as it takes less time and gives timely and proper settlement of grievances but may be difficult to enforce in large organizations as management most likely will not have time to attend to all grievances (Armstrong, 2009). This is the case because in some cases, the office of the top manager is most often not located in similar locations to other employees as such employees often engage in representative grievance handling procedures and practices (Kashyap, 2021). However, in organisations with this arrangement, employees may feel reluctant or threatened to approach the top managers to present their grievances because some organisations demand specific ways of communication according to their nature (Kafedi, 2005).

According to Mahapatro (2010), the step review method is a grievance handling procedure which often revolves around a policy that ensures a step-by-step organizational grievance handling policy to ensure that employees' grievances are addressed. This process ensures that employees are presented with the option of reporting their grievances directly to the closest supervisor who most often engages in a series of processes that ensure that these grievances are addressed (Bamberger, 2013). Thus, this mechanism allows for grievances to be settled at the lowest level closest to the occurrence of the grievance before they are escalated to the next manager up the ladder. It is argued that this mechanism could be abused by inconsiderate managers who would victimize employees they are not on good terms with through distortion and delay in processing the filed grievance. This method is therefore not liked by employees who would want to file grievances against their

immediate managers. It is therefore argued that this system is important for submitting insensitive matters and group grievances (Kafedi, 2005).

Moreover, the peer review method also called the grievance committee or roundtable is a grievance handling method whereby a grievance handling committee is set up to handle the issues raised by a grievant (Mahapatro, 2010). This committee comprises the representatives of management and workers who are appointed in equal numbers. Managers refer the cases of grievances to the committee for recommendation and the committee provides suggestions for recommendations to management for addressing the grievances (Kashyap, 2021). Thus, grievance committee members, especially for large organizations with regional branches are normally drawn from staff or management staff who work outside the branch where the grievance took place. In smaller organizations, it may comprise staff from other departments. Grievance committee members are usually well-experienced and can handle issues which the departmental head may not have the required experience or skill to handle (Ochieng & Juma, 2019).

The ombudsman is another grievance handling procedure in organisations which involves a neutral and capable person assigned by an organisation to help employees process their complaints (Juneja, 2018). Ombudsman is a Scandinavian term for a person who helps citizens process complaints against the government and cut through red tape. In this regard, the ombudsman must be skilled in resolving conflict and knowledgeable about organizational procedures. This type of grievance procedure is highly dependent upon the skills of the ombudsman as this person must be impartial and highly trusted with the ability to balance the interests of the company and employees (Juneja, 2018). Since the ombudsman mediates between the employee and the management and other employees, it is believed that by remaining outside the normal chain of command the ombudsman is more open to both the interests of employees and the organisation. Usually, the Ombudsman does not have the right to arbitrate a decision but acts as a mediator who knows how to get complaints resolved.

The ombudsman grievance procedure can work well as employees have access to someone who is genuinely concerned and who can be helpful. A compromise satisfactory to both sides often results when the ombudsman acts as a mediator.

However, Ombudsman is at risk too as it is not uncommon for an ombudsman to be fired for advocating a cause that is unpopular with management. (Dubrin, 1987)

Contrary to grievance procedures discussed in the preceding paragraphs, there are grievance handling procedures that could be considered proactive as they address the factors responsible for the emergence of grievances (IPIECA, 2022). First, is the exit interview whereby information is collected from the exiting employee on various aspects of working conditions which have forced the employee to quit (Khatoon, 2014). This interview is believed to be more credible than those expressed by existing workers as the exiting employee would be considered to say the truth without prejudices (Mahapatro, 2010).

Another proactive method is the gripe box or complaint box through which employees are encouraged to drop anonymous complaints for fear that revealing their identities would invite victimisation especially when they complain against management. It is noted that this method is more appropriate where there is a lack of trust and understanding between employees and supervisors (Kafedi, 2005).

In addition, opinion surveys like job satisfaction surveys, attitude surveys, grievance surveys or comprehensive surveys reveal important inputs about the undesirable aspects of the functioning of the organisation (Cole, 2002). The information for the survey is collected by persons and not supervisors and the identity of the respondents is not insisted upon and therefore likely to be reliable.

Further to that, company hotlines are worker hotlines that also serve as a common entry point for workers to raise grievances (IPIECA, 2022). Companies can use specific telephone numbers or email addresses that those with grievances can use to raise their concerns related to working conditions. These are often operated at a global level rather than by a specific project site's management, but they can also be developed for the needs of a specific project, or in a specific geography where companies may have multiple projects. Companies can also opt to use an independent third party to operate hotlines and to act as an intermediary between the complainant and the company.

Moreover, some worker grievance mechanisms allow for grievances to be raised through an external party and to be received by a person other than a worker or their representative (IPIECA, 2022). This could, for example, include allegations made in the press or reports from NGOs. Additionally, in countries with a large number of migrant workers, allegations or information about poor treatment may be brought to a company by a labour attaché in the diplomatic representative body of a country where migrant workers are employed. When a worker's grievance mechanism include these avenues for raising grievances, the grievances must be assessed, investigated and responded to in the same manner that they would have been if they had been raised directly by the affected workers.

According to Balfour (1984), the predominant and preferred method of grievance settlement in the public sector however is the step review method. He argues that this is because management has control of the grievance process with an interest in the outcome which it equally wants to control. For instance, the Namibian Police service follows the step ladder grievance procedure Kafidi (2003). Thus members raise their grievances through their immediate supervisors during station meetings, the consultative committees through which non-commissioned officers present their grievances following the redress of wrongs procedure through which employees express their grievances to the top management through their immediate commanding officer. In this regard, all grievances anonymously submitted are not entertained by the management. This is in contrast to the South African Correctional Service and the British prisons in which grievances can also be routed through the trade union (Mthombeni, 2005; Kafidi, 2003).

According to Dzimbiri (2016) study of three ministries in Malawi, it was observed that all the organizations in the public sector follow the same grievance handling procedure which is characteristic of the step ladder method. The steps include oral grievance, written grievance, grievance advanced to industrial relations and arbitration. This procedure requires that firstly employee presents an oral grievance to the immediate supervisor and then the supervisor provides a written response to the oral grievance within the time frame specified by the organization's policy (Dzimbiri, 2016). Secondly, if the oral grievance is not satisfactorily settled, the aggrieved can submit the grievance in writing to the department head. Thirdly, if the written

grievance is not satisfactorily adjusted, the aggrieved can submit the grievance in writing to the human resources department. Fourthly, if the aggrieved is not satisfied, he/she can submit the grievance in writing to the managing director. Fifthly, if the grievance is not resolved the aggrieved can submit the grievance in writing to the Ministry of labour or Industrial Relations Court for arbitration.

It is therefore the interest of this paper to understand grievance handling procedures and their implications on employee performance at Zomba Central prison since the last two steps are covered under the Labour Relations Act of 2006 which clearly states that it does not apply to members of the Prisons department except those employed in civilian capacity contrary to Dzimbiri's (2016) assertion that all departments in the public sector follow the same grievance handling strategies.

2.5 Employee Contextual performance

Ensuring that employees are effective in performing their duties is an important function of an organisation (Armstrong, 2010). In recent years, therefore, contextual performance has been viewed as an integral part of overall job performance. In this regard, practitioners and researchers view job performance as moving beyond what is generally considered effective for performance on a task (Bowman & Motowidlo, 2006). Thus, considering the changes in the global market and increased competition, employees are expected to perform beyond their routine job descriptions. Consequently, contextual performance captures the ability of employees to engage in activities that ensure that they contribute to the overall well-being of the organisation and this aspect of job performance is equally viewed as important as task performance (Motowidlo & Schmidt, 1999).

Job performance is considered multi-dimensional and consists of task performance and contextual performance (Motowidlo & Schmidt, 1999). Thus task performance is important as it relates to producing job-specific goods and services and as such requires that employees acquire and demonstrate the core technical skills in the context of their jobs. On the other hand, much as task performance is important, contextual performance is considered to boost the organisation's climate by strengthening the social networks (Thom, 1974). That is, when the employees engage in contextual performance, this contributes to and transforms the culture and climate

of the organisation whereby employees are comfortable to volunteer for extra work, persist in hard conditions, and cooperate with others with ease as contextual performance involves behaviours that depart from routine job descriptions of employee's, for instance, volunteering for additional work, being a good citizen, cooperating with co-workers and other discretionary behaviours (Motowidlo, 1996).

The contextual performance consists of two types of behaviours namely, interpersonal facilitation behaviour and job dedication behaviour (Van-Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996). Interpersonal facilitation behaviour includes behaviours that are connected to the interpersonal orientation of an employee that contributes to an organization's goal achievement. These are behavioural acts that aid in maintaining the social and interpersonal environment required for effective task performance in an organization. Such acts are associated with improving employee morale, encouraging cooperation and helping co-workers with their tasks. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1996), these behaviours are shown by employees who are satisfied with their jobs and align with the social exchange theory with the proposition that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations.

On the other hand, job dedication behaviours revolve around the self-discipline of the individual (Van-Scotter & Motowidlo (1996). Such behaviour enables employees to act in a way that promotes the organization's best interest and further indicates that job dedication is the inspirational underpinning of job performance. Thus, when an employee is satisfied with their job, they will tend to work harder than required, put in extra shifts, exercise discipline and self-control and tackle problems with more enthusiasm as well as follow rules and procedures and defend the organization's objectives (Motowidlo, 1996).

According to Motowidhlo (1996), employee contextual performance is rarely measured by the unit of output or the number of resources utilized but by the willingness of the employee to go the extra mile in helping to achieve the organizational goal. Several authors have used seemingly the same variables to measure employee contextual or organizational citizenship behaviour. For example, Organ (1988) as cited by (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) introduced the concept of five dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviour namely: altruism, courtesy,

sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness and Borman and Motowidlo (1997), proposed a three-factor model that includes; interpersonal support, organizational support and conscientiousness activities. This paper, however, measured contextual performance on the two variables of interpersonal facilitation and job dedication behaviours in line with the list of items as developed by Borman and Motowidlo to establish its relation to how employee behaviours contribute to social connectedness and promote positive work climate and therefore employee performance in the context of grievances in an organisation.

2.6 The influence of grievance handling on employee performance

According to Desmond and Zwingina (2019) in their study of the Nigerian National Assembly, grievance handling procedures have a positive effect on employee performance in terms of employee commitment, teamwork, morale and workplace satisfaction. Similarly, Assafuah (2017) observes that there is a significant inverse relationship which reflects greater discrepancies between reported and effective labour hours as grievance rates increase. In this regard, employees simply make themselves available for work but do not really commit to the job losing manhour in the process (Desmond & Zwingina, 2019) This is similar to Sloan (2008) who also notes that there are significant links between economic and industrial relations performance by documenting a significant inverse relationship between plant production and grievance rates. As a result, effective management of employee grievances against management or the organization helps in improving the morale and hence productivity of employees. This entails that there is a positive relationship between the increase in grievance handling and the performance of employees at the workplace.

Furthermore, Onyebuch and Uchechi (2019) argues that effective management of employee grievances is essential for harmonious workplace relationships. Conversely, lack of or poor employee grievance management in organizations gives rise to negative organizational outcomes such as reduced productivity, absenteeism, disobeying of orders, indiscipline behaviour, reduced quality of work, quarrels, suspicion, lack of commitment and accidents at the workplace with its serious consequences on productivity and performance (Onyebuch & Uchechi, 2019). Thus, when a good grievance management procedure is in place, the organization is more

likely to experience high employee morale, commitment, and harmonious management-employee relations vital to improve organizational performance. In this regard, when employees realize that they are being recognized and their grievances, complaints and disputes are being effectively resolved without bias, they become satisfied with the organization as a result absenteeism is minimal (Torrington & Hall, 2001). Similarly, Ubeku (1975) observes that an employee cannot do effective work if he or she is aggrieved against his supervisor or the organization in general. Consequently, a fair and just system of discipline and grievance management is a catalyst for effective administration.

Additionally, in his study of grievance procedures in the South African Correctional Service, Mthombeni (2012) notes that an aggrieved employee in the security organisation would constitute a weak link which could be detrimental to the performance of the department. Some studies show that under effective dispute resolution, employees are likely to be more cooperative and productive if they know that their grievances will be taken seriously by the employer and there is an opportunity for an independent party to assist in resolving the dispute if it cannot be resolved at the workplace (Marchington, 2005).

2.7 Challenges facing grievance handling

Several challenges impinge on grievance handling within organisations but the ones highly noted in literature are lack or poor systems for handling grievances, supervisors' incompetence and bad attitude towards grievances, unnecessary bureaucracy and weaknesses in the grievance handling system (Mahapatro, 2010; Daud, 2013; Garima, 2017).

According to Kafidi (2003), the lack of proper systems for handling grievances in the Namibian Police service was noted as one of the challenges to the handling of grievances within the organisation. Mthombeni (2005) concurs with this view observing that for instance in the military and paramilitary organisations without union representation, processing grievances through the chain of command presents a problem as employees fear victimisation since the ones to handle the grievances are sometimes the ones whose grievances are filed against. Equally, Arie (2015) notes that many employees are afraid to raise grievances with management for fear of

reprisal or punishment as they believe that filing a grievance would limit opportunities of being recognised for promotions and other benefits enjoyed by other employees. Furthermore, the fear of being labelled as trouble-makers and the impression of gaining the reputation of complaining about rather than just complying with the requirements of the job makes employees not file grievances (Kafedi, 2005).

According to (Dzimbiri, 2016), some managers also develop an attitude towards those who file grievances and regard them as bad workers. For instance, in his study of the grievance handling mechanism in the Malawi public service, the bad attitude of management towards employees filing grievances was noted as one of the main challenges. He notes that most often when a complaint is lodged to management, the management portrays the “I don’t care attitude” whereby they are not interested to solve employees’ problems. Mthombeni (2005) also found that management is sometimes not interested to resolve grievances as it does not provide feedback when employees refer their grievances to top management entailing a non-welcome attitude which eventually scares away employees willing to lodge a complaint. Consequently, some employees do not believe in grievance systems where representation is inadequate as such they either quit or just suffer in silence.

In addition, management incompetence in resolving grievances is also considered a challenge as some managers victimise employees who file their grievances to hide their incompetence in resolving employees’ grievances (Kafedi, 2005). Thus some supervisors who rose to positions of authority without the relevant training and qualifications fail to handle grievance matters due to lack of capacity. Mthombeni (2005) thus suggests training and orientations for both staff and supervisors as one way of dealing with the supervisors’ incompetence when handling grievances.

Furthermore, unnecessary bureaucracy is another challenge associated with grievance handling as in some cases the procedure is very long resulting in more time taken to resolve the grievances resulting in some instances whereby grievances are even forgotten (Cole, 2002). Mthombeni (2005) notes that much as the bureaucratic procedures ensure that the employees follow the laid down procedures as in the step ladder mechanism, this frustrates employees who face delays because some managers are not willing to escalate grievance issues due to the incompetence to handle the

issues, the lack of the time to handle the matters and also that the ones to handle the matters could be located in faraway locations due to the organisational structure especially in centralized organisations.

These findings are consistent with Dzimbiri (2008) who argues that a big number of organizations in the public sector of Malawi have internal procedures for dispute settlement however, employees are not satisfied with the procedures due to a number of reasons which include management's tendency to ignore decisions made by the disciplinary panel, weaknesses in the decisions made and delays in the procedures. Dzimbiri (2016) notes that most employees do not trust the grievance handling procedure as evidenced by some employees who opt to use other internal mechanisms to have their grievances resolved. On the other hand, as noted by Dzimbiri (2008), the effectiveness of the grievance handling procedure has been questioned by the majority of employees. However, despite their ineffectiveness, nothing much has been done to improve their efficacy hence the need to also study the same at Zomba Central Prison.

2.8 Theoretical foundation of the study

The study was based on the theories of Equity and Organizational Justice which helped to explain the results. Organizational justice theories comprise three diverse perspectives that include: distributive justice theory by Homans (1961) procedural justice and interactional justice theories by Thibaut and Walker (1975). However, of interest to the study were procedural justice and distributive justice theories.

2.8.1 Theory of Equity

Equity theory focuses on explaining how human beings strive to ensure fairness and justice in collective or give-and-take relationships. As a process theory, it describes how an individual's motivation to act or behave in a particular way is driven by feelings of inequity (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). It additionally expounds on the social comparisons that individuals make when they assess their inputs for instance work efforts, time spent in a job, qualifications and talents with outputs such as salary, recognition and job promotion (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). The equity theory postulates that an employee evaluates his or her work inputs against what he or she gets (outputs) and compares it with a different worker's ratio of inputs and outputs.

As such, various problems result when the employee makes comparisons and perceives some form of inequity.

Equity theory stipulates that one of the techniques that employees incorporate to restore equity in the instance of perceived unfairness is to alter their inputs, specifically behaviour or attitudes in response to eliminate inequalities (Hellenbeck, 1997). Thus, the higher an individual's perception of equity, the more motivated they will be and when they perceive an unfair environment, they will be demotivated and predicted to make the following choices: change their inputs, change their outcomes, distort perceptions of self, distort the perception of others, choose a different referent or leave the field. The theory of equity promotes a concept of inclusion which advocates that every employee in the workplace must be afforded fair and equal opportunity to take part in the processes and procedures of the organization (Ambrose & Arnound, 2005). Additionally, equity requires the provision of effective remedies when rights are violated. That is, individuals in similar situations should receive similar treatment and resolutions. Additionally, an equitable system handles employees with respect, kindness, and privacy. Thus, equity includes the presence of safeguards - for instance, the ability to petition decisions to a neutral group or individual and transparency to stop arbitrary or unreliable decision-making and improve accountability (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007). This theory is relevant as employees at Zomba Central Prison who sense inequity are likely to have grievances and if the grievances are handled unprofessionally, they might equally alter their inputs towards the organization resulting in poor employee performance.

However there is a number of criticisms of equity theory. According to Romer (1977), people may have different perceptions of what constitutes a fair input or outcome and this makes it challenging to establish a universal measure of equity (Romer, 1977). Furthermore, it ignores individual perception of fairness since it does not sufficiently account for how individuals perceive fairness. Nevertheless, there a number of merits of the theory for instance, it promotes perceived fairness as it underscores the significance of fairness in relationships (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987). It recognizes that individuals naturally evaluate the fairness of inputs and outcomes. As such by addressing equity considerations, organizations can cultivate a sense of fairness among employees leading to increased job satisfaction

and engagement. Huseman et al, (1987) further state that, equity theory drives motivation as the theory suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain equity in their relationships. In this regard, when people perceive an inequity, whether it is being underpaid or overpaid, it acts as a powerful motivator for behavioural change. Individuals strive to restore balance by seeking appropriate rewards for their contributions or adjusting their efforts to align with outcomes, thus promoting motivation and productivity.

2.8.2 Distributive and Procedural Justice Theory

Distributive justice in the workplace refers to the perceptions of fairness regarding job input and outcome (Homans, 1961). Thus, employees experience fairness when perceived equivalent job inputs such as education, performance, tenure, and skills result in equivalent job outcomes in the forms of compensation, promotion, recognition, and job security. Employees are usually sensitive to outcome issues and they are often subject to grievances at the workplace. Equity is perceived when employees with the same or similar work experience and time on the job are promoted or transferred equally.

The equity theory is upheld in many organisations by standardised human resource management policies such as predetermined grades and salary bands, universal training and development opportunities and avoidance of favouritism (Mthombeni, 2005). However, in occasions where employees feel that there has been an unfair distribution of benefits, they would reduce their efforts when their grievances are not addressed resulting in reduced performance (Baldwin, 2006). Similarly, employees in the Malawi Prisons Service could face unfair situations which would result in reduced performance.

The Procedural Justice theory is concerned with the fairness of the decision process leading to a particular outcome (Tyler, 1988). It argues that when the right procedure is applied, the outcome is automatically assumed to be just (Tyler, 1988).

The theory is concerned with studying individuals' subjective perceptions of the fairness of procedures whether they are biased or unbiased, humane or inhumane, and reconciling with people's perceptions of just processes for social interrelation and resolution (Tyler, 1988).

The four principles of procedural justice are voice, respect, neutrality and trustworthiness (Tyler, 1988). That is, individuals are given a chance to express their concerns and participate in decision-making processes by telling their side of the story, all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, the decisions are unbiased and guided by consistent and transparent reasoning and that decision-makers convey trustworthy motives and concern about the well-being of those impacted by their decisions. The theory further predicts that both complainants and observing disinterested parties will be more satisfied with procedures giving them process control. The decisions resulting from procedures offering process control are considered fairer and better accepted than those resulting from procedures denying process control (Greenberg, 1987; Tyler, 1988). Thus, the perceived justice of the grievance procedure is emphatically connected to the level of employee satisfaction with grievance handling practices, unions and the organization's leadership (Thibault & Walker, 1975).

According to Baldwin (2006), well-designed systems that promote distributive and procedural justice profit both the individual who will be satisfied that they have been fairly treated and the organisations which will maintain control over potential challenges and threats from its staff. Sheppard et al. (1999) as cited in Baldwin (2006) state that equitable pay improves individual performance, equal treatment raises group spirit, voice creates commitment to a decision, and justice promotes positive attitudes of job satisfaction, commitment and trust in turn breeding healthy, constructive, professional and interpersonal behaviour. On the other hand, employees who are unjustly treated would exhibit four possible responses as exit behaviours, withdrawal behaviours, voice behaviours like filing a grievance and loyalty behaviours like ignoring or trying to rationalise the situation in the process lowering the organisation's success (Turnley & Fieldman, 1999) as cited by Baldwin (2006).

According to Greenberg (1987), these theories share an important common orientation in explicitly stating that people will respond to unfair relationships by displaying certain negative emotions which they will be motivated to escape by acting in a way to redress the experienced inequity. Furthermore, they focus on how people react to unfair distribution of rewards and resources thus theorized to prompt changes

in job satisfaction and performance. Workers perceiving an inequitable state may react behaviourally by altering their performance levels, and cognitively by attempting to justify the outcomes received (Greenberg, 1987). Similarly, employees at Zomba Central Prison would respond to unfair employment relationships through negative emotions as a way of addressing inequality.

However there is a number of criticisms for distributive and procedural justice theories. For instance, the main criticism of distributive justice is that there is no need to achieve further equal distribution of resources since all human beings are born with the basic rights. In addition, there is no specific principle to direct the allocation of resources which is the main notion of distributive justice as there is a lack of specific guidelines and this might create conflict in different social justices (Samajpati, 2022). Much as there are limitations of distributive justice, there are merits as it helps eradicate differences between the rich and the poor and it helps all members of a particular society have equal rights and consideration on resources (Samajpati, 2022). In this regard, this theory applies in the context of Zomba Central since it would ensure equal treatment of officers regardless of rank and post.

On the other hand, the principles of procedural justice theory postulates that they contribute to the relationships between the authorities and communities in which the community has trust and confidence in its organisations as they are to be honest, unbiased, benevolent and lawful (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Furthermore, the community feels obliged to follow the law and the dictates of legal authorities. In the context under study, when the officers at Zomba Central Prison view the procedures in use at the institution as legitimate, they are more likely to be cooperative as such cases of impromptu strikes would not arise.

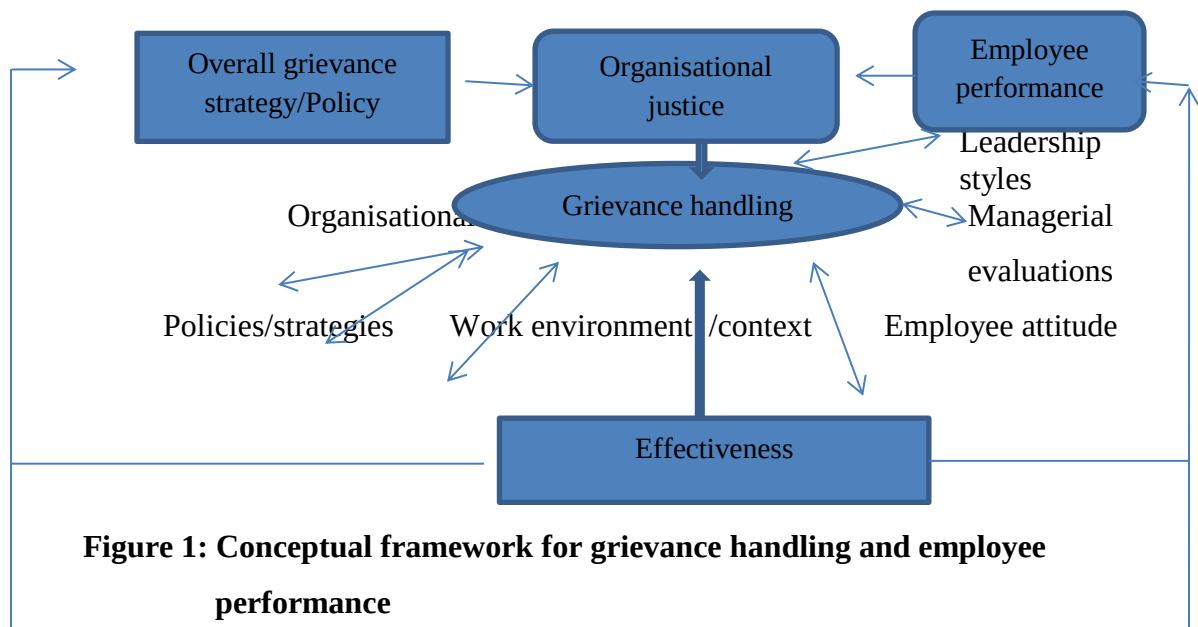
The three theories of Equity, distributive and Procedural Justice complement each other in the analysis of grievance handling and employee performance in the context of Zomba Central Prison given that that equity deals with fairness among members of an organisation and therefore should be considered distributive. Distributive justice refers to how outputs received from the organisation are fair and thus another type of fairness is procedural justice which applies well to the context of Zomba Central Prison as central to this thesis is the matter of how grievances ought to be dealt with in a fair

manner to ensure that grievances do not arise. For instance, the literature review indicates that there were instances where some officers got promoted yet other with the same qualifications and experience got promoted leaving others wondering the criteria used (Kadzanja, 2017).

2.9 Conceptual framework

In an organisation where individuals and groups work together to achieve a common objective, differences of opinion might occur. These lead to complaints which when not promptly attended to lead to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is the cause of grievance (Mammoria, Satish & Gankar, 1999). Grievances can be against a supervisor, about a machine, against the working environment or even against workload. When grievances are not properly addressed, the result would be unhappiness, frustration, discontentment, inefficiency and therefore low job performance.

Based on the relevant literature, the following conceptual framework for analysing the factors influencing grievance handling and their impact on employee performance at Zomba Central Prison was developed and presented in diagrammatic form in figure 1.



The conceptual framework underlies the centrality of grievance handling in organizational justice. Thus grievance handling as evident in literature can be affected by among other things, the managerial evaluations of workplace issues, the work environment, employee attitudes, supervisors' knowledge, organizations' policies and strategies, leadership styles, organizational culture and employee knowledge in addition to the context in which grievance handling is being discussed. All these factors combined have varying effects on grievance handling and therefore independent variables and these variables will be analysed using content analysis . Grievance handling itself is a dependent variable whose effectiveness is influenced by these independent variables. Therefore, the effectiveness of the grievance handling process would likely affect employee performance as well as provide feedback to the overall organizational grievance strategy.

2.10 Chapter conclusion

The literature review chapter provided definitions of relevant terms used in the study and discussed grievance and grievance handling mechanisms. It also covered a number of studies carried out on employee grievance handling focusing on the causes of employee grievances, grievance handling procedures and strategies and the link to employee performance. Finally, the chapter considered the challenges facing

grievance handling systems as well as the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework guiding this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter deals with the description of the design and methods which were used in carrying out this study and is organized under the following sections: the research design, area of study, population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data generation, data analysis, and ethical considerations processes.

3.2 Research Design

This research study was underpinned by the pragmatic research paradigm hence it adopted a mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm was used to enable the researcher to not only be limited to one worldview or method but also allow the researcher holistically address and respond to the research questions which necessitated the study to generate enough data for examining employee grievances and performance at Zomba Central Prison. Pragmatism involves research designs that incorporate operational decisions based on “what will work best” in finding answers for the questions under investigation and this further enables the researcher to conduct research in innovative and dynamic ways to find solutions to research questions (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) further argues that pragmatism is the most appropriate epistemology since it is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. With pragmatism, the researcher was free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best met different needs and purposes of various objectives of the study. This is because pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis for mixed methods research which this research adopted (Creswell, 2014).

According to Plano Clark and Creswell (2015, p. 392), convergent parallel mixed methods design is one of the numerous ways used by the researchers to “concurrently collect both quantitative and qualitative data, analyse the two datasets separately, compare and synthesize their results, and make an overall interpretation as to the extent to which the separate results confirm and/or complement each other”. In this study, using convergent parallel mixed methods design, the researcher simultaneously generated both quantitative and qualitative data from close and open ended questions, semi-structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and, observation data, and thereafter, merged and used the results to understand grievance handling and employee performance at Zomba Central Prison. Within the mixed methods research approach, this study utilised the convergent parallel mixed methods design, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were generated and used concurrently.

This research design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to capture in-depth information as the design is more appropriate in understanding human action with the researcher taking a central role in the interpretation of observed behaviour (David & Sutton, 2004). On the other hand, the quantitative approach was used to evaluate objective data consisting of numbers as it focuses more on reliability and replication (Bryman, 2008). In this study quantitative method was used to measure employee performance about grievance handling procedures.

3.3 Population

Bryman (2008) defines a target population as a specific proportion of the entire population that can be narrowed to achieve research objectives. The target population for this study was all members of staff at Zomba Central prison which is the number of established posts at the facility - targeting both junior and senior officers totalling three hundred and twenty. Senior officers were included as they are the ones with the mandate of handling grievances and were expected to provide necessary information on how grievances are processed while the rest of the junior officers were included in the study because they are the beneficiaries of the process of grievance handling through their managers.

3.4 Study Setting

This study was conducted in the Malawi Prisons Service, specifically at Zomba Central prison which is the department's central prison (Prisons Act, 1955). This study setting was ideal considering that it is the largest prison in Malawi housing over two thousand inmates and also that it has all cadres of staff - both male and female thus likely to gather the required information and also because it would be convenient during data collection. Furthermore, the area of study is believed to be one of the hot spots as regards "industrial action" by prison officers whenever they have grievances to channel to management hence ideal for this study (Malawi Prisons, 2019). It further, has all functional sections in line with the prison establishment structure ranging from general administration; the operations and offender rehabilitation – with several sub-sections. Several studies undertaken in this area across the globe are predominantly in the areas of employees' general level of performance which does not address contextual factors as determining indices of workplace behaviours among employees. Further, other studies have focused on grievance handling practices in other sectors and none according to my knowledge in the Malawian prison context.

3.5 Sample

A sample is a segment of the population in which a researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusions (Babbie, 2011). This study involved a total of 120 respondents from the institution. This was necessary to enable the generation of more detailed qualitative and quantitative data to have more representative results of the whole facility. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) observe that the larger the sample, the healthier it is since it gives greater reliability to the results of the study. Furthermore, this was done to ensure the adequacy of the study. Adequacy, according to Morse (1994), refers not only to a particular number of respondents to the study but to the amount of data that is generated. Adequacy is attained when "sufficient data has been generated that saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood" (Morse, 1994, p. 230).

3.6 Sampling procedure

This study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select the respondents.

3.6.1 Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling was employed in selecting one hundred officers of various ranks as well as sections at the facility. Following this selection method, each member of the population had an equal chance of being included in the sample (Singh, 2006). The sampling frame for the simple random sampling was established from the staff returns which were accessed from the station administration office. To select the officers, all officers were given number codes which were written on paper and mixed in a container. Participants were therefore selected by drawing one name at a time out of the container until the total of respondents had been selected. Simple random sampling was used to avoid subjectivity and bias in selecting representatives from the entire population. According to Cohen et. al. (2007), when using simple random sampling the probability of a member of the population being selected to take part in a study is not affected by the selection of other members of the population.

3.6.2 Purposive sampling

Using this technique, respondents for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher depending on the data he or she intends to generate (Singh, 2006). This technique was chosen for the researcher to have access to specific people having in-depth knowledge about grievance management at the facility and the department as a whole by virtue of their professional roles, power, expertise or experience. As such using this technique twenty respondents who were identified to possess in-depth knowledge about grievance handling processes were selected. Kumar (2005) defines purposive or judgemental sampling as the sampling technique that enables the researcher to use his or her judgment to select the cases that would best enable him or her to answer researcher questions and meet his or her research objectives. Thus to arrive at the respondents who would provide the required information to be used for the study until a saturation point is reached and conclusions can be drawn, senior officers involved in the management of grievances and performance management at the facility were deliberately included for in-depth interviews due to the roles they play, their expertise and experiences.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

In line with a mixed methods research approach, both secondary and primary data generation methods were used.

3.7.1 Secondary data generation

Secondary data from materials such as the Malawi Prisons Service Act, the Malawi Prisons Service Standing Orders, the Public Service Act, the Labour Relations Act, Government Circulars, reports, and the Prison Order was read, interpreted and analysed, and was used to especially find out more about the grievance management process to explain and complement data generated through primary sources.

3.7.2 Primary data generation

The study collected primary data using a questionnaire to generate both qualitative and quantitative data, and interviews to generate qualitative data. A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent (O’Leary, 2014). Part of the questionnaire was constructed based on a typical Likert scale, which is the most widely used scale in survey research. Dawes (2008) notes that Likert scales use numerical descriptors where the respondent selects an appropriate number to denote their level of agreement.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts with part one looking at the demographics and part two looking at causes of grievances, grievance handling practices, the influence of grievance handling on contextual performance in the department and the challenges facing the grievance process. The study administered the questionnaires through drop and pick method whereby the questionnaires were left to the respondents to be filled in at their own suitable time to provide a chance for them to objectively give their opinion and it also enabled data to be generated over a large sample size (Kumar, 2005). The questionnaire was pre-tested to rectify potential issues with questions which ensured clarity and validity of the responses (Kumar, 2005).

Interviews were conducted with sixty officers of all ranks from the lowest position of Sergeant to that of Assistant Commissioner within the prison establishment structure to ensure that data is collected from individuals who might have different views on the subject matter depending on their positions. O’Leary (2014) states that data gathered from fifty respondents is enough for research. Furthermore, Saunders et al (2009) define interviews as a purposeful discussion between two or more people.

They state that interviews enable researchers to gather valid and reliable data which are relevant to their research questions and objectives. The use of semi-structured interviews means that the researcher had a list of themes and questions that were covered during the interviews. Interviews were employed because it is generally likened to prospecting for the facts and feelings residing within respondents (Hostein & Gubrium, 2002). Furthermore, interviews can be conducted in private to ensure that the respondents speak directly from the bottom of their hearts to narrate their experiences and perspectives on issues not influenced by the presence of others. This was done considering the nature of the topic which also required personal responses from the employees' experiences.

In addition, since unstructured interviews use a list of topics to be covered with a series of questions that are in the form of an interview schedule, more questions can be asked in response to what seem to be relevant answers to check the respondents' commitment to the exercise (Bryman, 2008). Interviews which were conducted with fifty respondents enabled the researcher to reach a saturation point. According to Dworkin (2012), interviews between five and anywhere up to fifty respondents are enough to generate enough data because in-depth interview work is not as concerned with making generalizations to a larger population of interest and does not tend to rely on hypothesis testing but rather is more inductive and emergent in its process. As such, Mason (2010) argues that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when mulling over sample size decisions in qualitative research. Saturation is defined by many as the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data. Another way to state this is that conceptual categories in a research project can be considered saturated "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical category. Thus, both open-ended and close-ended questions were put to the interviewees in the same order. This involved reading out the questions from the guideline and then transcribing the responses from each of the participants.

3.7.3 Documentary review

Desk research was used to collect secondary data on policies and strategies for grievance handling to ensure that all necessary information was collected from

relevant policy documents. Desk research refers to data which can be collected without fieldwork (Bryman, 2003).

3.8 Data analysis/Processing

Data analysis is a critical part of the research process which involves working with data, organising, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns to discover what is to be learned and finally deciding what should be reported (Bryman, 2003). During data analysis, the researcher read the responses on the transcribed notes and questionnaires and wrote down the emerging patterns. The larger volume of data in this study was in qualitative form. Qualitative data from some parts of questionnaires, interviews and observations was analysed through content analysis and presented in narrative form with specific highlights on distinct themes related to the research problem.. According to Bryman (2008), in this method, coded data is broken down into parts which are given names. Thus, data were systematically coded, selected, and grouped and later summarized the descriptions and provided a coherent framework that explained the aspects of the social world that respondents portrayed and make an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other to successfully inform the conclusion of the study (Creswell, 2012)

To analyse the quantitative data, the data was organized into categories and then coded. After coding the data was analysed manually to produce tabulations and graphs on grievances. The relevant quantitative data collected in the questionnaires which was already entered in Excel was used in form of tables, graphs, means and sums in various sub-topics to compliment and compare the findings. No complicated statistical procedures were employed since percentile scores adequately described the data to check the effect of grievances on performance.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Cooper and Schindler (2008) as quoted in Saunders et al. (2009) defines ethics as the norms or behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others. Saunders et al. (2009) associate research with questions about how a researcher clarifies his or her research topic, designs his or her research and gains access to data, collects data, processes data, analyses data and writes up his

or her findings morally and responsibly. The researcher,, ensured that he got a clearance letter from the Prisons department considering that the department is a security organ with its protocols and also sought consent from those to collect data to ensure that all formal ethical approvals are obtained. Furthermore, the respondents were assured verbally that the information obtained from them would be treated with ultimate confidentiality as such they were requested to provide the information truthfully and honestly.

In addition, considering the importance of preventing the spread of Covid-19 during the data collection process, the researcher followed all laid down guidelines for the prevention of Covid-19 like ensuring that all respondents were provided with face masks, hand sanitisers, and that there was recommended social distancing during interviews and when collecting and submitting questionnaires.

3.10 Study Limitations

It was envisaged that some officials would be reluctant to provide data and delay in answering questionnaires. But the researcher spent a considerable amount of time following the selected respondents to follow up the collection of the questionnaires to ensure that an adequate number of questionnaires are returned to make the study valid. Furthermore, considering the Covid-19 pandemic, it was envisaged that respondents would be reluctant to be interviewed but this was prevented by following Covid-19 prevention measures. In this respect out of the one hundred and twenty respondents, sixty were interviewed and thirty-six submitted usable questionnaires totalling ninety-six.

3.11 Conclusion

The third chapter of this paper has covered the methodological approach to the study. In this section, the following operational designs and processes were explained in detail: the research design, area of study, population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data generation methods, analysis and processing and ethical considerations processes and study limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter is concerned with the presentation as well as the discussion of the results. The study was carried out along four research questions which were aimed at analysing the effectiveness of grievance handling mechanisms on employee contextual performance at Zomba Central Prison. The findings were obtained from data generated through mixed methods research tools such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Tables and graphs have been used for clarity, ease of understanding and interpretation. The findings are presented based on the research objectives stated in chapter one comprising the analysis of causes of grievances, an assessment of grievance handling policies, mechanisms or strategies, an analysis of the influence of grievance on employee performance and an exploration of the challenges facing the grievance system.

4.2 Analysis of the causes of grievances among employees

The data collected indicated that there are several causes of grievances among staff at Zomba Central Prison. However, this study analysed only the prominent ones as follows: poor work environment; low salaries, rewards and incentives; poor system of promotions and staff appraisal; poor system of communication; inadequate laws and policies, inadequate finances, and long working hours as illustrated in the graph below and further analysed:

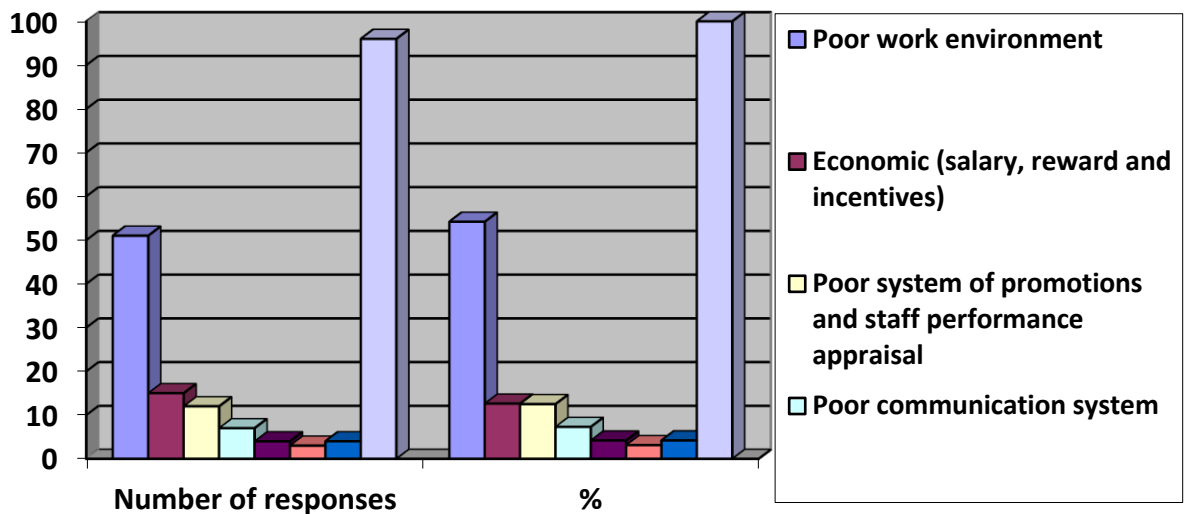


Figure 2: Analysis of the causes of grievances

4.2.1 Poor work environment

The data analysed indicate that poor work environment is the major cause of grievances at the facility with 51 respondents representing 54.2% of the responses. The study revealed that much as every worker has the right to satisfactory, safe, healthy and good working conditions as provided for in the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act of 1997, the respondents indicated that the physical infrastructure of the prison facility and staff houses are in extremely dilapidated state posing a danger to both staff and prisoners. This was observed to be not conducive for security, rehabilitation and reformation it is meant to serve as staff work in an environment with a constant fear for their safety in the process impacting on employee morale, workplace satisfaction and productivity. This is in line with the 2003 Malawi Inspectorate of prisons report which declared the facility inhabitable yet decades down the line it is still being used to house offenders. Regarding the facility one officer had this to say:

As one of the officers working at this facility, I feel the system (the criminal justice sector) considers us as equal to prisoners. Just imagine, there are no proper places that one can safely stay when it rains and when it is extremely cold yet we are required to provide security to the facility all the time. Is this fair? This leaves an impression that staff is equally considered prisoners themselves and I doubt one can concentrate on the job (C12).

The study also found out that as a security entity, the dilapidated facility further posed a threat to staff as the weak infrastructure could facilitate prison breaks exposing staff to danger as they prevent the escapes. Interestingly, when prisoners escape even under these circumstances a discipline offence is levelled against the officers on duty. In this regard, officers would be disciplined for matters that would otherwise be avoidable had management taken the responsibility to renovate the dilapidated infrastructure.

The study also highlights the continued operation of the facility with inadequate sanitation compounding the risk of disease transmission, for instance skin diseases and tuberculosis. Furthermore, water and waste disposal systems are poor and insufficient. One could see open sewers that had taken a long time without being fixed, poorly ventilated and heavily congested cells and poor waste disposal. This is in line with Gadama et al (2015) who noted that the prison system required improvements to make the working environment safe for both inmates as well as correctional staff. According to Armstrong (2009), a healthy and safe working environment is one that is free from health hazards, accidents and poor air and water pollution. In the same vein, Mahapatro (2010) indicates that health and safety and organisational effectiveness are intertwined to a great extent. However, the data gathered at Zomba Central Prison shows that the Malawi Prisons Service efforts are directed at fighting diseases only, yet occupational health is not about the absence of disease only but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being (Kafidi, 2005)

Much as occupational health or the work environment's impact on employee wellbeing may be linked to two separate causal clusters which are material or physico-chemical causes that can lead to workplace accidents and occupational diseases through toxic emissions and psycho-social causes that can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, and alcohol among others, it was noted that there are no health and safety programmes targeting prison officers at the facility in this respect rendering them vulnerable to the aforementioned circumstances. Similarly, Kafedi (2005) observed that this is contrary to other organisations like the South African Correctional Service where there are units specifically established for health and safety purposes with the most important programmes being stress and burnout programmes. Although the Malawi Prisons Service and Zomba central prison in particular does not have such

programmes (Gadama et al. 2015), these programmes are important as the organisation is responsible for creating and maintaining a work environment free from unnecessary hazards that can lead to injury, illness or death. In this regard, the employer has the responsibility to ensure that its workers are not exposed to unsafe and inhuman treatment, but rather to satisfactory and healthy working conditions. This finding correlates with Nicole (2001) who posits that all employers have a statutory duty to take care of the health and safety needs of all their employees. In this regard, management at Zomba Central Prison need to ensure that, they issue first aid kits and protective clothing, the buildings should be well ventilated and have fire escape facilities, proper sewer systems and the employers should make sure that proper training is provided to all employees before utilising any equipment to ensure that employees work in a good working environment.

According to Palmer (2000), workers have the basic right to refuse work should they believe that their work presents a danger to themselves or other workers. However, this argument does not hold for the Malawi prison service as a security entity which does not have procedures to remedy the situation similarly as doing so would be a discipline offence (Prison Act, 1955). For instance, one officer said,

during search of inmates on entry and during stay officers are not provided with proper protective gear like masks and gloves yet it is a requirement that we work in such dirty and congested environments posing a risk to disease transmission but with no means of dealing with the situation as we only end at submitting the reports to our seniors as such we suffer in silence(C4).

This has resulted in employees' grievances as they are not satisfied with their work environment.

4.2.2 Poor system of promotions

The results indicate that 12 (12.5%) of the respondents highlighted poor system of promotions as a cause of grievances. It was observed that it appeared normal for an officer to remain in the same position for several years or even the entire period of employment a situation which was noted to be unfair as every employee expects

progress in the career. Furthermore, it was noted that officers with little job experience, as well as low academic qualifications, received promotions while others with higher academic qualifications remained in the same positions for long periods without hope of being promoted. One officer said, *“If the department feels that we are useless as if they contribute nothing to the progress of the department, why not relieve us of our duties rather than treating us like trash, this is painful”* (C7).

The study found that there was no promotion policy and performance management system in place which caused uncertainties about the reliability and fairness of promotions as this remained the prerogative of the Chief Commissioner. According to (Haji, 2013), promotion policies and practices provide employees with an understanding of where they are going to start in their careers and provide clear directions as to what they are expected to do in the course of their careers to ensure that they progress in their careers. One respondent noted that lack of clarity in promotions criteria leads people to make assumptions as the general employees would consider the promotions as subjective and based on favouritism or discrimination.

According to Arie (2015), poor promotion policies and practices can create dissatisfaction and this is also a breach of officers' right to fair labour practices and an area viable for grievances. This is in line with the proposition by the distributive justice theory which posits that equity is perceived when employees with the same or similar inputs like education and experience receive similar outcomes. For instance, employees with similar work experience and time on the job should be promoted or transferred equally (Thom, 1974). Thus, in occasions where employees feel that there has been an unfair distribution of benefits, they would reduce their efforts when their grievances are not addressed resulting in reduced performance. This is a reflection of the status of employees at Zomba Central prison. The findings also indicate that there is no clear transfer and deployment policy for the department of prisons and this remained at the discretion of the Commissioner. This is one of the aspects of the employment conditions as specified in the Malawi Prisons regulations which state that “officers would be required to work anywhere within Malawi”. However, various respondents including senior officers consider some transfers as a way of punishing officers who are not in good books with management or are suspected to have committed misconduct. Thus, senior officers are sometimes transferred to remote

areas to occupy lower posts without explanation resulting in assumptions of punishments for the affected officers.

One officer had this to say regarding transfers:

“Even when you consider the frequency of the transfers, one would wonder what management would want to achieve as some officers stay at a station they are transferred to for just three months before they are transferred to another station, this is disturbing because as individuals there is also a need to balance our work life and individual life with several aspirations which have to be achieved as individuals”.

It is therefore argued that this could be a result of a lack of transfer policy. According to Kafedi (2005), a transfer policy would have an integrative or bargaining approach as activities leading to the accomplishment of objectives for both parties that are not in fundamental conflict could define common problems and work out solutions.

As such management need to come up with clear promotion and transfer policies to ensure objectivity as regards promotions and transfers. The next section therefore analyses inadequate laws and policies as a cause of grievances.

4.2.3 Inadequate laws and policies

The study revealed that 4 respondents representing 4.2% of employees in the study mentioned the continued use of outdated legislation as another cause of grievances amongst employees in the department. It was noted that the department of prisons was using old legislation - the Prisons Act of 1955 which was developed before the department's paradigm shift from a punitive to a correctional approach to prison management as enshrined in the republican constitution. This confused employees as regards the application of the law making it difficult for officers to operate effectively as there was no clear direction on some matters. For instance, as regards the discipline of prisoners, it was noted that some of the 'old' laws of the Prison Act contained provisions of corporal punishment, reduced diet, a lack of direction on prisoner reform activities, and retrogressive rations metrication for inmates which affected operations as they conflicted with the constitution leaving the officers in dilemma. However, the lack of a systemic approach to grievance management left employees with no option but to operate under these hard conditions. *“You tend to wonder as to the existence of*

the department if we cannot achieve or move in the direction of our very existence”(C8). This finding suggests continued grievances amongst employees unless there is a change in legislation to enable workers perform their activities in a new environment supported by relevant legislation.

4.2.4 Long working hours

This paper also found out that working hours at Zomba Central Prison were not properly regulated as 4 respondents representing 4.2% hinted at the same as a major cause of grievances. These respondents complained of working for more than eight hours a day as compared with employees in the general public service. The Labour Relations Act and the Employment Act which have provisions regulating working hours do not apply to the Malawi Prisons Service as a security entity. This lack of a clear regulatory framework has created a loophole so that the officers can work more than eight hours a day in excess of the internationally accepted normal working hours (ACAS, 2011) and are not entitled to claim overtime payments or allowances.

The study found that section 16 of the Prisons Act which states that “Every prison officer shall be deemed to be available for duty at all times and may at any time be detailed for duty in any part of Malawi”, coupled with the traditional saying that “uniformed officers work twenty-four hours a day”, prison officers are found to be working for long hours. As noted by Kafedi (1995), long working hours have been noted as a cause for the rise of unions in the police services to lobby for the improvement of the conditions of service. All junior officers interviewed complained of long working hours and that if there are any grievances on the same could be put forward later, the results of which never come forth. This entails a need for management to come up with deliberate policies to ensure that employees do not work for more than required. This could suggest a review of the establishment warrant of the department that could create additional for junior officers as a way of reducing the working hours.

4.2.5 Inadequate finances

The study also found that inadequate finance was another major cause for grievances among officers at Zomba Central Prison with 3 respondents 3.1%. It was revealed that officers were unable to discharge their constitutional mandate of reformation and

rehabilitation of inmates as they did not have the proper tools and materials to facilitate rehabilitation programmes for inmates. This made well-qualified officers entrusted with duties to provide rehabilitation programmes left idle losing morale for work in the process as they were thus being diverted to security duties which are not in their interest.

The study also found out that due to inadequate funding staff were sometimes left with no option but to use personal finances to carry out official duties for instance during out-of-duty station duties like court escorts and prisoner transfers with little prospect of refunds. All this happened because of the nature of work where officers are directed to perform the works which seem to be critical and immediate in the line of duty but without the necessary financial resources. As such officers feel obliged to ensure that they accomplish the tasks provided. In view of this finding one senior officer had this to say:

...just imagine, there are times when our suppliers have failed to supply us rations and provisions for inmates but there is still a need to feed inmates... what do you do in such a situation? Lock up the inmates and proceed home comfortably? We are human and inmates are human too and they have to be treated as such. In these scenarios, you end up using your resources just to salvage the situation (C9).

This finding shows that there is a need for management at the facility and the department at large to be open enough where there are financial challenges and continue lobbying for increased budgetary allocation from government.

This finding indicates a clear gap as relates to prison officers' grievances management as even senior officers seem not to know how best these grievances can be best addressed demonstrating a lack of a concrete platform or forum where such matters can be dealt with suggesting challenges with the current mechanism. This further shows that the effectiveness of grievance management can also feed back into overall grievance strategy and policies leading to organisational justice as developed in the conceptual framework for the study.

Furthermore, staff indicated a lack of staff development programmes to enable them to sharpen their skills to cope with the global changes in the working environment as well as the expectations of their managers. It was noted that management demanded more in employees' delivery of prison services than what they were initially trained on during their basic training. As such the developments that come with management as changes in policy direction are usually new knowledge that staff has to be oriented on if they are to deliver accordingly. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. Nevertheless, the inadequacies of the staff in this regard are levelled on them. For instance, one officer cited a scenario in that management required staff to implement a unit management system for management prisoners which he was never trained on but his immediate officer directed that he proceeds with implementing the system. His failure was regarded as insubordination and he was ultimately wrongly labelled. His finding also resonates with the Malawi Inspectorate of Prisons report (2018) which unravelled that inadequate funding affected the smooth operations of the Malawi Prisons service making the administration function dysfunctional as it could not provide even education loans to the officers. This also agrees with Rose (2004) who asserts that the absence of opportunities for career development can cause a rise in grievance and Marchington (2005), who states that inadequate finance is the main cause of grievance amongst members of staff as it impinges on the core business of their work much as this is largely understood by senior officers. In this regard, the next section discusses poor communication as one of the causes of grievances among officers.

4.2.6 Poor communication

Poor communication between subordinates and management was noted as another major cause of grievances with 7 respondents (7.3%). It was argued that access to information affecting employees' welfare like promotions, changes in work standards and practices, and access to loans among others were treated like privileged information yet they were supposed to have easy access to such information. This was summarized by one respondent as follows:

When we lack information on matters that are affecting our work and welfare, we feel neglected and rumour mongering becomes the order of the day. For instance, the "strike or sit in" that took place in 2017 was partly due to lack of information because officers were

kept in the dark regarding the functional review and consequently lack of promotions within the department whilst colleagues in the sister department of police were being promoted. This prompted the juniors to fight for the betterment of their work conditions although it later transpired that management had already made strides on matters of promotions.

According to Nurse and Devonish (2006) controlled, poor and one-way communication makes employees feel inferior and this generates misunderstanding between workers and management. Giri and Kumar (2009) as cited in Zhou (2018) highlighted the significance of communication as the heart bit of every organisation as effective communication between management and employees keeps both parties informed about what is happening in the organization as well as promoting a healthy working environment.

In conclusion, the study notes that there are several factors which cause grievances among employees at Zomba Central prison like poor working environment, poor system of promotions, long working hours, lack of transfer policies, inadequate laws and policies and inadequate finances. However, chief among the factors is poor work environment which featured highly among the respondents. In line with these findings, Bowman and Motolwidhlo (2006) assert that employees who are not satisfied with their jobs are unlikely to show contextual performance. This is also in line with Armstrong (2009) who noted that poor conditions in the physical workplace and poor employee relationship with the management causes an increase in grievances among employees and this reflects the condition of employees at Zomba Central prison.

Considering the finding discussed above, the need to improve the working climate which is the major cause of grievances for officers at Zomba central prison cannot be overemphasised. The fact that officers even complained of being equalled to prisoners as regards their work environment indicates that the environment is really in a pathetic condition. Therefore, management needs to come up with deliberate strategies and policies to improve the welfare of officers at the facility as stipulated in the relevant

laws like the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1997 (No. 21 Of 1997) which applies to all work places in Malawi.

This paper, therefore, concludes that the causes of grievances highlighted in this paper hinge on employees' evaluations of the leadership of the facility and the department policies at large and this could be dealt with by proper policies and strategies as the following sections endeavours to analyse the policies and strategies of grievance management.

4.3 Grievance management policy and strategies

This study also sought to assess the grievance policies and strategies in use at Zomba central prison to ascertain their effectiveness in the daily activities of members of staff at the facility the results of which are presented and discussed below:

4.3.1 Grievance Handling Policy

In this study, all respondents showed ignorance of any explicit policies guiding grievance management at the facility and the Malawi Prisons Service as a whole. When asked if they knew of any policies guiding the management of grievances, one officer said: "I am not aware of any document in that respect. In case you have such a document, please share it with me". This was also agreed by his colleague who noted that:

Apart from the Malawi Prisons Act, Regulations and Standing Orders which indicate that an officer would be responsible to his immediate senior, I am not sure I have read any document which specifies or outlines policies or strategies as regards grievance management. I think that the department lacks the capacity to develop such documents or there is simply a lack of willingness in this regard. This could be due to the traditional thinking that officers are not supposed to complain but rather perform their duties and complain later. This status quo suggests that it favours managers as they easily manage even in times of resource constraints as juniors have no option but just work. This is rigidity as we need to change with the change in the departments' mandate viz a viz prison reform

from punitive to corrections which also calls for a human touch when handling staff grievances.

The above assertion that no clear policies are guiding the management of grievances in the Malawi Prisons service was noticed and agreed upon by all senior prison officers interviewed in this study. One of the senior prison officers observed that *“currently there are no clear policies, things are mostly done ad-hoc as each situation is dealt with as a case”*. This was echoed by another senior officer who said: *“...grievance management in prison is lacking internal policies to properly guide officers as such there is sometimes chaos when officers reach breaking points”*.

The researcher also confirmed through observation that the Malawi Prisons Service did not have specific policies regarding the management of staff grievances. Apart from the Malawi Public Service Management Policy spanning 2018 to 2022 (2018), which emphasised the need for government departments and agencies to have grievance management policies, there is no other documentation in this respect in relation to prisons. The main purpose of a grievance policy is to give employees an easy way to bring up troubling or potentially sensitive issues with their managers about their work environment or interpersonal relationships at the workplace so that employees know exactly what to do when they run into an issue and that the employer cares about the feelings of employees (Armstrong, 2009). This was noted not to be the case at Zomba Central Prison which suggests that there is a lack of direction on matters of grievance management among employees at the institution and it can therefore be concluded that the strikes and sit-ins that started from Zomba Central Prison and spread to other prisons could have been averted had there been clear policy on how grievances could be addressed. This situation relates well with the South African and Namibian contexts where, as opposed to Malawi, there are specific grievance policies, although they were reported to have been lacking proper implementation (Kafedi, 2005). This further entails that the development of comprehensive systems such as the grievance policy, grievance handling procedures and manual would be necessary for the current setting to ensure that employees have a voice, are respected, the decisions are neutral and there is trust with the system as highlighted in the procedural justice theory for equity to be established which is core in systems that employee centred.

4.3.2 Grievance Handling Strategy/ Procedure

The paper found that all respondents also showed a lack of knowledge of and could not explain any grievance-handling strategy in use at Zomba Central Prison. All they knew was that the organisation uses the Prisons Act and Standing Orders for instance regulation 167 which reads: *“Should an officer consider that an otherwise lawful order is unfair or unjust to him and he feels aggrieved, he shall first obey the order and then make a complaint through the proper channels to his senior officer”*. The proper channel in this case means the chain of command with the grievant's immediate senior officer as the first point of contact. According to Kafidi (2005), this way of handling human relations is characteristic of autocratic regimes which provide little room for employees to express dissatisfaction as harm would already have been done by the time the grievance is heard. As such, some officers opt not to further escalate their grievances long after the situations have already passed. Accordingly, it was noted that there were no typical systems in place for the identification of grievances at the facility like interviewing employees, employee performance monitoring and assessment.

The study however found out that Zomba Central Prison followed a version of grievance handling similar to the step-ladder grievance management procedure. Thus, members of staff raise their grievances through their immediate superiors during daily morning parades, station meetings, and top management lectures during station visits. This is the procedure as outlined in the Malawi Prisons Standing Orders. The meetings are held at the station level between the Officer in Charge and his or her subordinates. Matters discussed at these meetings including grievances are communicated to the Regional Commanding Officers and, if necessary, to the Chief Commissioner. Thus, the only noted way of grievance redress among the methods is the step ladder procedure. Many of the staff agreed that when unresolved grievances move from one step of the resolution level to another, the system would be seen to be more transparent and fair. This will make employees believe in the process and want to air their grievances. However, all respondents emphasised that the system is effective for unimportant matters only and that they cannot discuss sensitive issues that are affecting their social and economic life because of the fear of victimisation.

Consequently, the respondents emphasised that they would not want to be seen as trouble makers or just fond of complaining and therefore suffer in silence.

This paper further observed that apart from the Malawi Inspectorate of Prisons which is an oversight institution constitutionally mandated “to monitor the conditions, administration, and general functioning of penal institutions, investigate any matters connected to penal institutions, visit all institutions within Malawi with or without notice and propose legal reforms to the minister responsible,” the respondents interviewed argued that this institution though having such mandate had not influenced any changes for the betterment of prison staff working conditions as they only report their findings to Parliament. In this regard, one officer said, “*Management should develop strategic instruments designed specifically for dealing with grievances. These instruments should be composed of elements of the standard grievance process through which grievances are accordingly investigated and made known to management*”.

Furthermore, according to the Procedural justice theory (Tyler, 1988), employees are satisfied with systems that provide them with an opportunity for process control. However, this is contrary to the findings of this study as the grievance procedure has been described by employees as inhumane considering that it does not give employees process control as there is little room for them to follow up on matters regarding their conditions of employment due to lack of systemic procedures as such it leaves them to suffer in silence thus rendering the system unjust. According to Baldwin (2006), employees who are unjustly treated would exhibit four possible responses as exit behaviours, withdrawal behaviours, voice behaviours like filing a grievance and loyalty behaviours like ignoring or trying to rationalise the situation in the process lowering the organisations’ success. This is also evident with employees at Zomba Central prison as officers withdraw from job dedication behaviours and focus much on interpersonal relationships.

An analysis of the study findings shows a lack of explicit employee grievance handling procedures at the facility as the current systems are not in line with the international standard principles and processes for handling grievances as developed by ACAS (2018). Accordingly, the first major practical contribution of the present

research is that it provides much-needed empirical data on the handling of employee grievances in the prison setting in Malawi and thus builds on the available literature as regards the causes, strategies, policies and mechanisms, and challenges of grievances. This information is important given that there is no other comparable study on the topic as such relating to this subject matter would allow policy-makers, consultants and others to design initiatives, tools and actions on what prisons need to fix considering the current situation in terms of grievance handling practice. For instance, authors of the department's policy documents could take note of a lack of standard procedures and processes like the time frame for handling grievances, specific offices or individuals and their roles to handle grievances, the alternative routes for handling grievances and the lengthy bureaucratic processes which delay the resolution of grievances. This would therefore respond to the call by prison management for employees to follow procedures when submitting their grievances as the same would be systemic. As such frustrations and consequently spontaneous "strikes and sit in's" that have been evident much as the same is not supposed to be the case in a disciplined organisation would be averted.

In this respect, a change of management policy to accommodate standard grievance handling procedures and processes that would see employees submitting their grievances without fear of victimisation would be ideal as this would enable managers at all levels in the Malawi Prisons Service to recognize employee grievances in general and possibly find out if the efforts they make in dealing with employees' grievances yield desired results or not and therefore take appropriate measures. In line with this paper's conceptual framework, an analysis of the grievance procedure would feed into the development of policies and strategies necessary for the improvement of the working environment (Armstrong, 2009).

Finally, the study noted that grievances were not being dealt with appropriately under the guise that officers in military and paramilitary organisations need not complain about matters that affect their work and welfare. This reasoning is misplaced as it conflicts with the constitution of the republic which emphasises fair labour practices and this need also to apply to the uniformed offices as officers are human too and they need to be treated as such like any other worker. Therefore, the need to orient and train officers at the facility on grievances and grievance handling is imperative.

According to ACAS (2011), grievance handling procedures with well-detailed processes for handling employee grievances facilitate early and satisfactory resolution of grievances and this ultimately has a positive influence on their performance. In view of this result, the following figure provides employees' satisfactory levels with the grievance procedure at the facility.

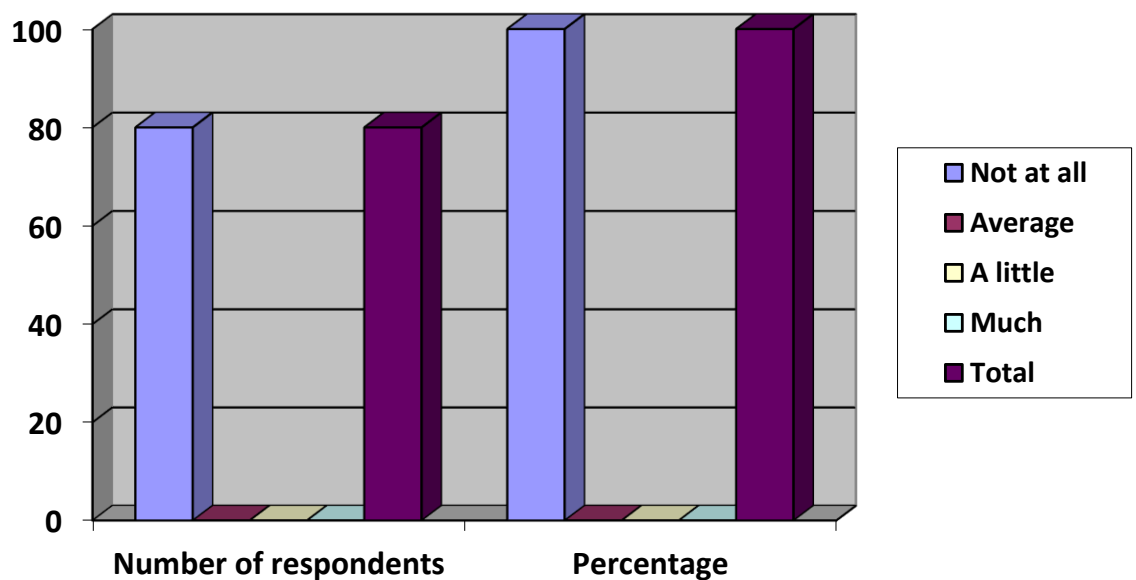


Figure 3: Satisfaction with the grievance procedure

The results indicate that all 80 junior officers interviewed representing one hundred per cent of the interviewees (100%) indicated that they were not satisfied with the current grievance procedure being followed at Zomba Central and the department in general because normally when a grievance is reported to the first line of management, such person does not have the mandate to settle the matter but mostly refer the matters to the next level. According to Arie, (2015) referring to matters that could have been settled by the first-line manager contributes to the backlog of cases as such other cases are even forgotten. Given this observation, the stepladder procedure faces similar challenges as even the trivial matters that some staff submit through the chain of command are either forgotten or take too long to be settled as managers are either overloaded with work or simply ignore the grievances and proceed with the “I don’t care attitude”.

It was further noted that some of the supervisors have either little understanding of grievance handling in general or are scared to challenge the status quo which then results in the referral of grievances to the next level. Furthermore, some seniors feel intimidated and undermined by grievances as this exposes their lack of knowledge or management skills and thus try to hide their inadequacy by resorting to hostility with employees. This often resulted in the grievance not receiving the attention it deserves a continuation of which makes staff lose their faith in the perceived internal processes as means of addressing their concerns.

Furthermore, the study found that most senior officers believe in the unspoken saying that “an order from the commander is unquestionable” which resulted in ignored and overlooked employee grievances. This is further aggravated by the so-called “no bypassing principle” of management which is highly practised at Zomba Central prison through the chain of command. According to Harris (1977), “the formal channels of communication coincide with lines of authority as such no manager or supervisor in the vertical chain should be bypassed as the message moves on its way”. In this respect, there are hence those officers who, because of their seniority undermine grievances from their subordinates nevertheless the employees have to submit their grievances through the same officers as there are no alternative channels.

The study also found that the current Prisons Act of 1955, empowers the (Chief) Commissioner with absolute power to the extent that other officers have little or no power to make their own decisions. The Prisons Act is fraught with clauses characteristic of autocratic, and militaristic-style of management. The decisions made by the Chief Commissioner can be appealed to the Minister responsible but this is a lengthy process which still needs to pass through the chain of command. Thus the current Prisons Act lacks the principles of good governance. In addition, the Prison Act challenges the national constitution by denying Prison officers their constitutional right of freedom of association. Unlike in organisations with trade unions through which members can channel their grievance appeals (Salamon, 2000) the same opportunity is not available at Zomba Central Prison which is not a unionised organisation.

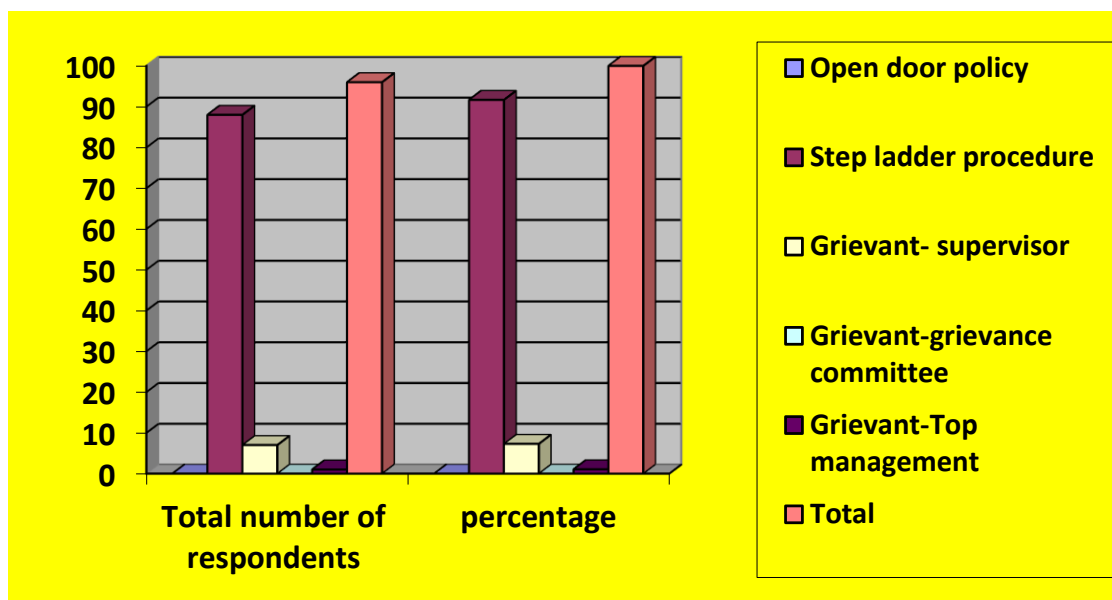


Figure 4: Grievance handling procedure at Zomba Central Prison

Figure. 4 show the methods that the department uses in handling grievances. The step ladder procedure is the one that is highly rated at 91.67%. This was attributed to the requirements of the system which demands that all communications should be made through the chain of command as indicated in the Malawi Prisons Service Communication Strategy 2019-2024 (2021). Still, many of the staff agreed that when unresolved grievances move from one step of resolution level to another, the system would be seen to be more transparent and fair and consequently make employees believe in the process and therefore want to air grievances. However, it was noted that the current grievance system is used to channel unimportant or insensitive matters as it lacks confidentiality. As such, staff fears victimisation when they bring out sensitive grievance matters to management. As a result, many employees have a fear of raising their dissatisfaction with management for fear of reprisal or punishment. The belief amongst these employees is that filing a grievance would limit their opportunity of being recognised for promotions and other benefits enjoyed by other employees. The employees also fear that they would be labelled as trouble-makers and gain the status of complaining rather than simply complying with the job requirements a thing they detest.

The study also found that another method of grievance handling in use at the facility is the grievant - supervisor method with 7% of the respondents where the supervisor

handles the grievances. However, it was noted that staff did not prefer this method considering the bureaucratic nature of the organisation where still the matters would be referred to the top for decision-making. Furthermore, the staff contacted acknowledged the fact that grievances handled through this method are those of insensitive nature as they also fear victimisation if they submit grievances considered an attack on management. In addition, grievances against the supervisor are usually not submitted as they are no alternative routes laid down as to how they can be dealt with. In this regard, it was observed that staff would appreciate incorporating the grievance committees as they noted this would make the grievance handling process more transparent (Mthombeni 2005).

Furthermore, the respondent observed that the open door policy though much talked about in some lectures by top management, was noted that this worked for members of the general public and not for staff as members of staff are still required to follow the chain of command and this procedure seemed alien to the organisation. In addition, the Grievant – top management at 1% though in use is rarely used as this would only be utilised at the discretion of management since staff would air out their grievances only when top management visits the stations for lectures and no other procedure is in place to utilize this method.

In conclusion, the study noted that very sensitive matters concerning the work and staff welfare were not being addressed through all the procedures discussed as staff found it difficult and insecure to submit their grievances for fear of victimisation as some managers develop an attitude towards those who file grievances and regard them as bad employees. In relation to procedural justice theory, this finding entails that staff lack a voice in the process of handling grievances as the current system hinders their voice for fear of being labelled bad employees. As noted by Baldwin (1996), grievance systems of this nature are unjust and negatively impact the welfare of employees and ultimately organisational performance. Thus, all respondents showed dissatisfaction with the current system of submitting grievances.

In view of the study findings, the ineffectiveness of the current “step-ladder-like” grievance procedure in practice at Zomba Central prison, management could consider introducing the element of freedom of association through unionisation or officers

association as is the case in the South African context (Mthombeni, 2005). This suggests that employee relations could be handled differently by providing alternative grievance-handling procedures for employees as literature has shown that unions play important roles in creating opportunities for sharing power, and decreasing managerial prerogatives (Monapa et al, 2012). This affirms knowledge already generated in other similar jurisdictions and this could be applied in the Malawian context. Thus, this would necessitate a change of laws to accommodate the Prisons in the Labour Relations Act of 2006 as a gateway to enable employees' right to freedom of association as enshrined in the Malawian constitution.

4.3.3 Influence of grievances on work performance

This study also sought to examine the effect of grievance handling on employee contextual job performance. This was achieved using a questionnaire developed by Borman and Motolwidlo (1996). The results indicated that the grievance handling dimensions have different effects on the two forms of contextual performance which are interpersonal facilitation and job dedication as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Effect of grievance on employee contextual performance

Contextual Performance	Average number of respondents	Percentage
Interpersonal facilitation	76	79.1
Job dedication	29	31.84

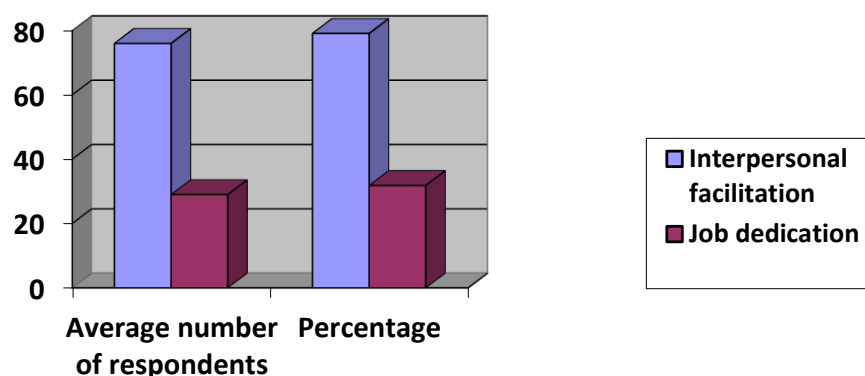


Figure 5: Effect of grievances on employee performance

4.3.4 Interpersonal facilitation

Considering interpersonal facilitation, the results presented in figure 6 indicate a high mean of positive responses for all the questions about interpersonal facilitation behaviours with a mean for all the interpersonal facilitation items standing at 76 out of the total number of 90 respondents.

This study, established that much as employees are generally not satisfied with the way grievances are handled at the facility; this does not harm employee interpersonal facilitation behaviours. It was observed that employees at Zomba Central Prison were more concerned with interpersonal harmony to enhance group solidarity. Thus, employees had higher ratings for interpersonal elements, such as maintaining good working relationships and cooperating with others, helping co-workers perform their task-oriented job and helping others who are absent. Since interpersonal facilitation encompasses deliberate acts that improve morale activities (Borman & Motolwodlo, 1996), respondents indicated that they engaged in interpersonal activities for the survival of the group. Thus employees focused on enhancing group cohesion that is required in military and paramilitary services to ensure that fellow officers receive the moral support required to achieve their jobs. This corroborates with Tyler (1987), that people from collectivistic cultures are more concerned about interpersonal harmony and group solidarity as such they are more inclined to place higher importance on the process of making outcome allocation decisions, especially the interpersonal facets of procedural justice. Thus, employees at Zomba Central prison indicated that they engaged in interpersonal facilitation behaviours as they wanted to be seen to be available for work to ensure that they get the outcome allocations as they would even cover up those absent from duty.

4.3.5 Job dedication behaviours

On the other hand, considering job dedication and contrary to interpersonal facilitation, figure 3 indicates a low average of positive responses for all the questions in line with job dedication with a mean score of 26 suggesting that employee contextual performance at Zomba Central Prison tilts more towards interpersonal facilitation than job dedication.

The study found that the low average score for job dedication behaviours amongst employees was a result of their dissatisfaction as expected from the outcomes of their relationship with the department much as they channelled their grievances to the authorities. For instance, the respondents considered the process of determining rewards to be inequitable as some employees with low qualifications were promoted leaving behind those with high qualifications and experience, as such, they responded by not engaging in job dedication. Thus they did not dedicate themselves towards the success of the organisation but rather to the success of fellow officers in achieving their interpersonal needs and goals at the work place. This finding is in line with Blau (1964) cited in Nasurdin and Khuan (2007) that when employees define their employment relationships as that of economic exchange, they are likely to reciprocate by engaging in discretionary, extra-role behaviours. Furthermore, consistent with the Procedural Justice theory, the use of fair procedures and processes help communicate the fact that the employee is a valued member of the group; as a consequence employees may be motivated to behave in a manner that ensures the welfare of the group. This, suggests that the reactions to unresolved grievances by employees at Zomba Central prison who resorted to “strikes” and “sit-ins” (MPS, 2017) were a group value which reacted to unfair procedures and processes in handling their grievances to ensure that they survive as a group. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with equity theory which posits that human motivation is affected by the outcomes people receive for their inputs, compared to the outcomes and inputs of other people (Greenberg, 1987). Thus, when employees feel that they are being treated unequally, they will try to restore equity by altering their behaviours, attitudes, or both to be less productive.

Since the findings show that employees were more concerned with the interpersonal facilitation aspect of employee contextual performance as opposed to job dedication emanating from the fact that their grievances were not being resolved as desired, this entails that employee job performance suffers as employees focus more on the attainment interpersonal goals as opposed to the larger goals of the organisation which gets suffocated. This, suggests that management should come up with standard performance management procedures to check employee performance since it is evident that employees at the facility do not necessarily put in much effort to achieve organisational goals. According to Vilela et al. (2015), contextual performance has a

significant impact on organisational, social and psychological contexts and serves as catalyser for the efficient undertaking of the entrusted tasks.

The employees were also asked to respond on how grievances affect their working performance in general and the views from workers explained that the level of grievance affected the working performance as follows: much affected were 75 (78.12%), the average was 14 (14.56%), a little was 7 (7.29%) as in illustrated in the graph below:

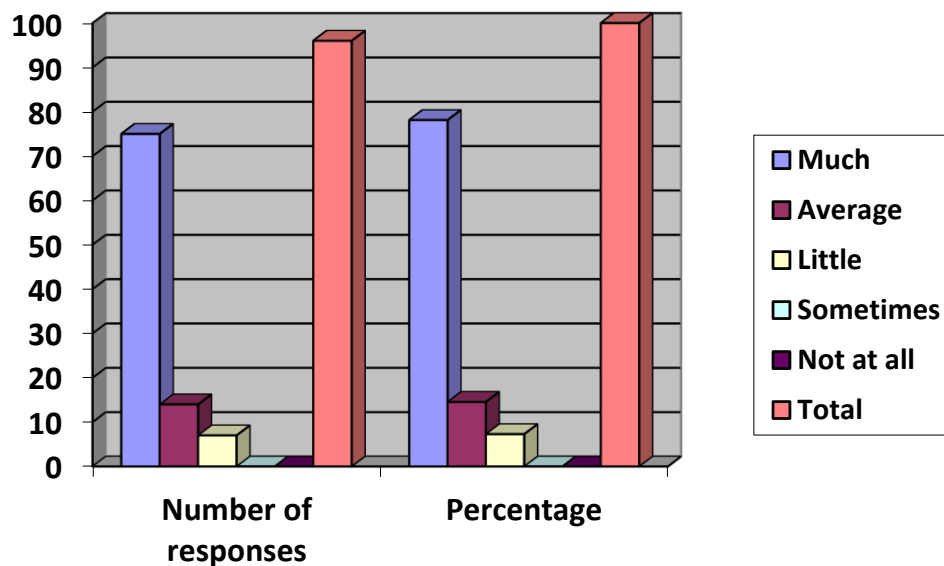


Figure 6: Extent of effect of grievance on performance

All the interviewees (100%) rated the grievance procedure as very poor since most of the grievances could not be resolved at lower levels as they are referred up the ladder as such they observed a strong negative relationship between unresolved grievances and employee performance. Thus all junior staff indicated that they were not satisfied with the grievance procedures as they were never resolved within the shortest time possible and some could even be forgotten. In this regard all respondents indicated that grievances impinged on their work performance consequently they reacted to unresolved grievances by feigning illnesses and going slow affecting their creativity, job dedication, persistence, initiative and self-discipline on the job as illustrated below:

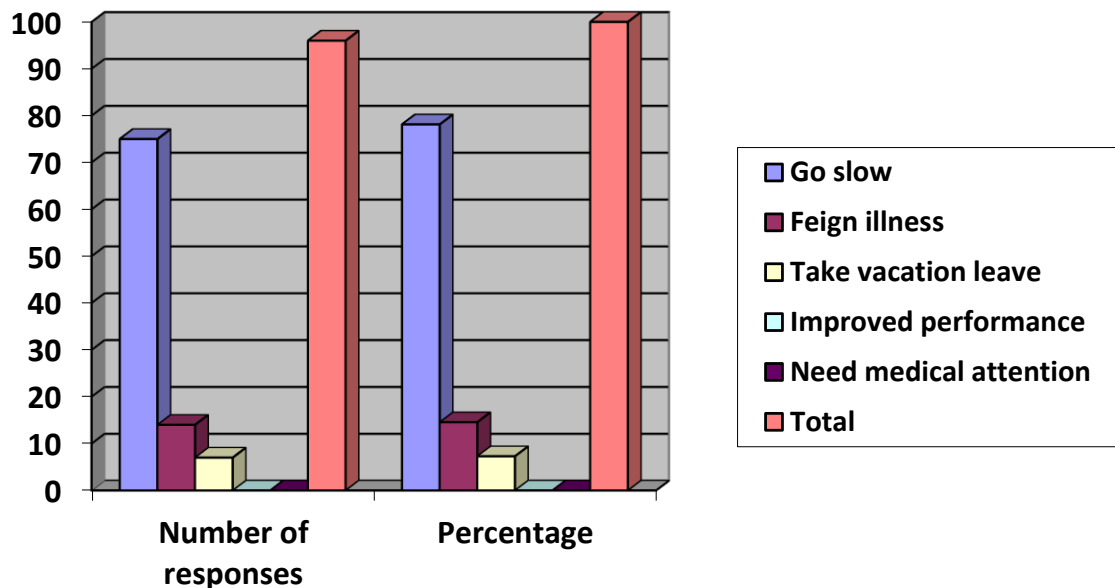


Figure 7: Reactions to unresolved grievances

Figure 7 shows the way staff react when management does not resolve their grievances as expected. It was noted that most staff reacted by demonstrating behaviours related to “go slow” where they do not work as expected by management to show their anger. Furthermore, staffs react by feigning illness and proceeding on vacation leave. When asked why they show such behaviours, it was noted that since there are no other ways of submitting their grievances, staff opt to react in silence to avoid reprisals. This is similar to Kafedi (2005) who also noted similar behaviours in his study of the Namibian police service.

4.4 Challenges facing grievance handling

Under this objective, the study sought to obtain responses on factors which hinder the management of employee grievances. This study, therefore, established the following as challenges facing grievance handling at Zomba Central Prison: Lack of explicit grievance management system, poor communication, poor human resource management skills, bureaucratic procedures, management’s lack of interest to resolve grievances (the selfish I don’t care attitude), fear of victimisation, unfair handling of grievances – others do not submit grievances as they do not trust the system as indicated in table 6:

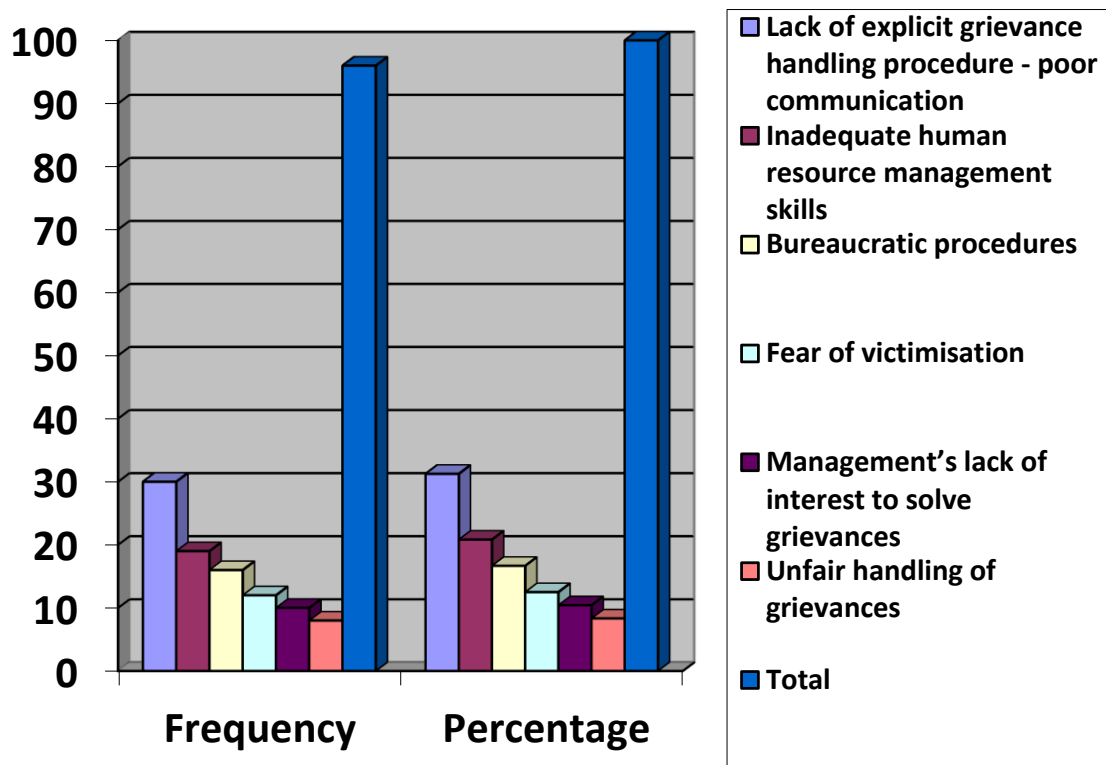


Figure 8: Challenges affecting grievance handling

The findings presented in the graph show that 30 respondents (31.25%) indicated the lack of explicit grievance handling procedure as the main challenge to handling grievances at the facility. Thus, staff revealed that since there was no clear or explicit policy or procedure on the handling of grievances contrary to the international standards as noted by ACAS (2018) which spells out the need to have individuals or offices to handle grievances, the time limit for handling grievances and what employees need to do if not satisfied with the handling of grievances as critical to any grievance handling procedure. Thus, in the context of Zomba central prison, it was difficult for staff to channel their grievances and make appropriate follow-ups as there were no specific individuals or offices designated to handle grievances, no specific time frame for handling the grievances, no procedure to allow the grievant to be accompanied by a fellow worker and no standard appeal processes. This considers that all the Prison Act and regulations (1956) indicate is that an officer will be responsible for his seniors. Therefore, once the senior ignores the grievance this becomes a challenge as the officer will have difficulties ignoring the seniority procedures and the principle of chain of command. As a result, employees opt to use

the media and other undesignated routes to vent out their grievances as evident in the 2017 prison “strikes” (Kadzanja, 2017). This is similar to the findings by Kafedi (2005) who observed that members of the Namibian police complained through the media due to a lack of explicit grievance policies and procedures which raises a question about fairness and justice in the organisation’s labour relations.

The study also found that 19 respondents representing 20.83% considered inadequate human resource management skills as a problem in handling employee grievances because due to a lack of human resources management skills, some senior officers fail to respond adequately to the problems facing their subordinates. Accordingly, it was noted that human resources management skills on the part of supervisors should include good communication skills and an understanding of the context of communication. Thus, supervisors should be able to listen to problems aired by their subordinates, use polite language, involve their subordinates in the grievance decision-making, ability to relate equally with their subordinates irrespective of their ranks, academic achievement, gender and work experience, among others. However, this study found that not all supervisors lacked professional human resources management skills. It was noted that those officers with higher education qualifications, though very few, related well with their subordinates unlike those with the lowest academic qualification like PSLCE and Junior Certificate of Education. This, therefore, implies the need to ensure that those in management should be professional human resources managers to mitigate this problem (Armstrong, 2009).

The study also found that 16 respondents (16.67%) stated that the bureaucratic procedure through which grievances are channelled was the challenge hindering the effective handling of employee grievances. In this regard, the respondents explained that it was not easy for employees to reach out to those officers in high levels of decision-making to have their grievances resolved as it was found out that the decision-making process from the point of grievance submission to the point when senior managers handle the submitted issues is too slow to the extent that some grievances are submitted to top management with distortions or even forgotten. This status was mainly because officers need to submit their grievances through the chain of command with the first point of contact being their immediate seniors and that immediate supervisors did not provide an opportunity for employees to meet higher

authorities. This finding is similar to Arie's (2015) in his study of the South African Police Service which due to the nature of their protocol emphasized the seniority-dominated rank structure created an environment of inequality. Thus junior officers are not encouraged to challenge their superiors on the hostile treatment as it would be viewed as a lack of discipline on the part of the junior officers.

Furthermore, the study found that 12 respondents (12.5%) indicated the fear of victimisation among staff as a challenge to grievance handling. It was noted that the inexistence of freedom of association in the Malawi Prisons Service makes it impossible for members to participate in decision-making activities as the current participation mechanisms through management tours, station meetings, and the submission of grievances through the chain of command are reportedly ineffective. As such members of staff fear raising sensitive matters to management for fear of victimisation as they would be considered rising against management. One respondent had this to say:

You simply cannot seriously and genuinely raise sensitive issues like poor work environment, shortage of equipment, anything related to funds, and ill-treatment by senior managers as doing so you would be considered “kasongo” (traitor) deserving punishment such as transfer to remote areas.

From the literature studied, it is clear that in unionised organisations participation and communication mechanisms are spelt out in the contract which serves as a basis for grievance should one of the parties involved violate the principles of labour relations (Salamon, 2000). Thus, with unionisation, members at the local level are involved through the workplace forums, and their grievances are forwarded through the shop stewards. This mechanism decreases the fear of victimisation among the members. This is similar to the findings of Kafidi (2003) in his study of Namibian police who noted that:

Despite the importance of employee participation, it is found worldwide that police are the last people to have been granted the rights of freedom of association, usually with a limitation of their

activities. Labour relations are unilaterally controlled by employers. As such grievances, whether "collective" or "personal" in nature are dealt with on an individual basis by higher-ranking police officers, with the Minister of Home Affairs acting as an arbitrator. This situation is different from that of unionised organisations where the aggrieved employee has a right to choose a person from outside to act as an arbitrator(C9)

The study also found that management's lack of interest as regards the handling of grievances at Zomba Central Prison was a challenge with 10 respondents representing 10.42%. In this light, it was noted that supervisors could sometimes show the "I do not care" kind of attitude towards grievances presented as grievances were considered unmilitary. In respect to this assertion, respondents explained that sometimes supervisors did not take into consideration the interests of their subordinates during the process of trying to solve the problems they faced making this "military" thinking be considered the reason their supervisors were unable to come up with an appropriate resolution to the grievances. This was summarised by one respondent who said senior officers who were supposed to deal with grievances could respond like: *"complaining is unmilitary you simply have to work or obey orders otherwise that is lack of discipline"* as such employees get discouraged to present grievances as doing so is considered indiscipline behaviour.

Finally, general unfairness in handling grievances was noted as a challenge with 8 respondents representing 8.33%. The respondents claimed that when a few officers especially those close to management submit grievances, the same was being treated with urgency and deserved to have the matters resolved at the earliest time possible and oftentimes with the interests of the grievant taken into consideration. However, those working as general duties officers felt discriminated against or ignored when they submit their grievances as some of their cases could even be forgotten with grim chances of being followed up. Others complained of their seniors making hasty decisions even before collecting facts on the matter resulting in frustration among general duties officers in the process lowering their work morale as they feel considered unimportant. This is in contrast to Armstrong (2006) who argues that management should ensure that when a grievance is received there is always a need

to avoid deciding until all the relevant facts are gathered to find the root cause of the grievance and reach an amicable solution. This is also observed by Onyebuchi and Uchechi (2019) who noted that the suppression of grievances has far-reaching implications for the survival, growth and performance of industrial organizations as suppressed workers' grievances can give rise to informal strikes, sabotage, high degree of absenteeism, low morale, quarrels, suspicion, lack of commitment and accidents at the workplace with its serious consequences on productivity and improved performance.

Considering the aforementioned challenges, the grievance policy and procedures at Zomba Central prison would therefore serve as a vehicle through which employees would seek justice under unfair treatment as oftenthe employees are sceptical when it comes to filing a grievance against their seniors for fear of victimisation. This is also in line with Mahapatro (2010) who states that “the purpose of the grievance procedure is aimed at promoting sound labour relations in the workplace. It is also intended to empower employees with the opportunity and procedure to raise issues of dissatisfaction with the employer as the grievance procedure is in accordance with labour principles such as consistency, transparency and the resolution of grievances as close to the point of origin as possible”.

In light of the foregoing, when asked to comment on the cause of sit-ins and strikes at the facility in 2017 all respondents including those in management pointed out ignored grievances regarding lack of promotions and discrepancies in salaries with police counterparts as the main cause of the “sit in” that took place at Zomba Central Prison in 2017 and which spread to the rest of the prison formations.

According to Peterson and Lewin, (2001), the success of the grievance handling procedure is reliant on the employees' trust and confidence in the grievance handling procedures. They state that the perceived fairness of the grievance system is positively associated with the use of the system and overall effectiveness ratings. Thus grievant and their management have poorer performance following grievance settlement than non-grievant and their management because the grievance process greatly involves human resource practices positively associated with organizational performance. This study, therefore, suggests that the challenges facing grievance management at Zomba

central prison have been caused by the Prison Act which empowers the Chief Commissioner with absolute power. If there were other avenues of handling grievances like staff unions or associations matters would have been handled differently. The literature has shown that unions play important roles in creating opportunities for sharing power, and decreasing managerial prerogatives (Salamon, 2000). Presently, all labour-related issues are regarded as the prerogative of the Chief Commissioner. This is further exacerbated by a discriminatory Labour Relations Act of 2006 which keeps prison officers isolated from the rest of the public servants by denying them their constitutional freedom of association which has resulted in members not having a voice in their work environments. In the absence of unions, upholding democracy at the workplace is undoubtedly unachievable as human resources matters are dispensed with in an autocratic and militaristic manner.

One senior officer had this to say: the Prison Act of 1956 121 (1) (m) gives the minister the powers for the “*establishment, constitution, functions, and procedure of a prison officers’ association and matters incidental thereto. It is therefore interesting that despite all the challenges noted regarding management-employee relations, management has not pushed for the establishment of the association which could help address some of the challenges*”. This coupled with Article 9 of Convention 87 of the ILO which does not prohibit prison officers’ freedom of association, advancing prison officers' rights in this regard would be ideal to facilitate the introduction of appropriate policies to address the challenges. This, therefore, suggests that management is not interested in ensuring the establishment of mechanisms to deal with staff members’ grievances as they are satisfied with the current status quo.

4.4.1 Chapter conclusion

This chapter was concerned with the presentation as well as the discussion of the results. The study was carried out along four research questions which were aimed at analysing the effectiveness of grievance handling mechanisms on employee contextual performance at Zomba Central Prison. Tables and graphs have been used for clarity, ease of understanding and interpretation. The findings are presented based on the research objectives stated in chapter one shows that there are several causes of employee grievances most of which revolve around the systemic challenges the department face and require a holistic approach towards their resolution ranging from

policies to finances, an assessment of grievance handling policies, mechanisms or strategies, an analysis of the influence of grievance on employee performance and an exploration of the challenges facing the grievance system.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction of the Chapter

This chapter covers the conclusions and recommendations of the study which sought to examine grievance handling and employee performance at Zomba central prison. Due to the importance of grievance handling on employee performance, employee grievances must be regarded as one of the areas worth attention in employment relations, especially in organisations like prisons where employees occupy an inferior bargaining position due to the nature of their work which follows a strict chain of command reporting structure. As such deliberate efforts should be made to come up with systems that help address grievances at the earliest time possible to ensure that the system enhances the employees' position as a better partner to contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. This chapter, therefore, considers the key conclusions of the study findings, the recommended plans for action for the facility on grievances and employee performance and the future areas for research.

5.2 Key Conclusions

5.2.1 Analysis of the causes of grievances

The causes of the grievances among employees at Zomba Central prison are so numerous and largely systemic generally leading to the poor welfare of the employees. As such, employees desired improvements in the operating climate to be in line with the standard policies and laws like the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act, of 1997. That is, the grievances were consistent with the job requirements as per the statutes and government policies and required correction. As such, the need to understand the underlying causes of the grievances was paramount if the institution is to come up with relevant policies and strategies to address the same.

5.2.2 Assessment of the grievance handling policies and strategies/ mechanism

An assessment of employee grievance handling procedures and policies shows that due to the lack of explicit policies and strategies that could be used to handle employee grievances, employee relations are handled in a militaristic and autocratic manner with implications that grievances may not be handled fairly and democratically. This was evident at Zomba Central prison as such employees lacked direction to deal with sensitive employee relations as the current grievance handling system which follows the chain of command is marred with several challenges like delay and sometimes ignored grievances. Furthermore, the results suggest a lack of freedom of association with the absence of unions and staff associations rendering the need for a mindset change amongst senior officers to change their attitude on grievance management to further consider employees as part of the general community and hence not be denied their right to fair labour procedures and processes. The current grievance management system is observed to be archaic and discriminatory as it isolates members of the prison service from the general public service as filing of grievances is linked with the discipline system rendering the grievant vulnerable to victimisation; as such not free to use the current system for fear of reprisals as those who submit grievances are considered trouble makers and against the organisational culture.

5.2.3 Explanation of the influence of grievance on employee performance

The results of the study show that much as employees may have grievances, their desire to enhance militaristic group values of operating in groups and avoiding disintegration is not affected as these values are heavily embedded within the system and this speaks to employee performance in relation to interpersonal behaviours of employee contextual performance. On the other hand, the results show a lack of job satisfaction amongst employees as grievances affected job dedication behaviours which influenced employee performance as the respondents rated their job dedication poorly due to the belief that the prison system lacked equality and therefore was unfair. As such they could not commit themselves to the goals of the organisation.

5.3.4 Exploration of the challenges affecting grievance handling

As the research has demonstrated, the several challenges that affected grievance handling at Zomba central prison are systemically rooted in the military traditions that

employees simply have to abide by the commands issued by their seniors and those behaving, on the contrary, are considered traitors who would want to destabilize the system. It was established that lack of explicit and systematic grievance handling procedure was the most important challenge deliberately created with an intention of management having total control of employees and that employees should not have process control. Further to that, inadequate human resource management skills arose due to management's lack of attention on grievance matters still due to militaristic thinking and this exacerbated the challenges as a few officers along the chain of command could ably handle grievances. Thus victimisation of the grievant was related to disciplinary matters as such they simply resigned to fate and were considered a norm. Therefore, a change to the structure, organisational policies, knowledge attitudes and legislation could alleviate the challenges.

5.3 Recommendations

The study has revealed that the present step ladder-like grievance handling mechanism that the department of prisons follows and channelled through top management's consultative meetings during visits to prison formations, lectures by officers in charge, station meetings and daily morning parades are reportedly ineffective in the sense that they do not produce the desired results as expected by employees. In this regard, this study recommends that the department should develop systematic grievance handling policies and practices. This would enable employees to submit their grievances to their immediate supervisors as well as provide alternative routes to top management without fear of reprisals. In addition, the policy should outline clearly the roles and duties of the various offices in the grievance handling process.

Furthermore, the study recommends grievance handling training and development for both managerial and non-managerial workers designed at educating them that grievances are inevitable and need to be managed well to promote industrial harmony as this would provide a conducive environment for employee effective performance especially when employers adopt an integrated style in solving employee's grievances. As observed in this study, grievance handling often has managerial advantages as it increases the level of commitment and dedication of the employee as well as creates a sense of belongings among the employees. In the same vein, efficient

grievance handling procedure ensures that the managerial system is perceived as fair and depicts a sense of equity in the entire decision-making process.

Moreover, since most grievances at the facility are related to the working condition, rewards and incentives, salary, and general working conditions, management should ensure that it improves the working conditions of the employees.

5.4 Future areas of research

This study raises several opportunities for future research in terms of concept validation. Thus, more research is necessary to refine and further elaborate the novel findings. First, while this study has generated many new and useful conceptual categories given the in-depth sampling strategy focused on analysing grievance handling and employee performance at Zomba Central Prison, very little can be said of the nature of grievances and employee performance of the larger population of employees in the prison department in Malawi. This study could thus be extended in search of statistical and analytical generalizability obtained by this study and the conclusions which came along.

Secondly, this study found out that employees in related jurisdictions like the South African Corrections service have an opportunity to channel their grievances through trade unions considering that trade unions have a role to play almost in all aspects of employees' labour life and further that labour relations had more to do with human resources management. As such, unionism is one of the most effective grievance-handling mechanisms, especially in cases where there are hindrances and victimisation of grievants as found out at Zomba Central Prison. Since the literature reveals that labour unions are needed for regulating personnel management issues as the roles of trade unions include the creation of an atmosphere conducive for managers to be committed to their jobs and also insuring fairness over pay, recruitment, promotion and other matters concerning employee development, further research could focus on proving if human resources management could be handled differently if the prison service was unionised.

However in the context of Prisons in Malawi, this paper notes that the exclusion of prisons officers by the Labour Act of 2006 and the employment Act of 2000 is a contributing factor to the unfair labour practices in the department as labour relations

are unilaterally controlled by the department's management. This is a reflection of the colonial era where military and paramilitary officers were completely regarded as not being part and parcel of the community. It has however been concluded that prison officers are like other government employees, who deserve fair and equal treatment like their fellow government employees. As such future studies could focus on the establishment of unions or associations for prison officers to ascertain if through unionisation labour relation issues could be dealt with differently and produce the desired results. Unions have been charged with the responsibility of fighting for the rights of the workers and democratising workplace environments (Monapa et al. 2012). It is therefore imperative to study the same in the context of the Malawian setting as is the case with the South African Police and Correctional services. As noted by Salamon (2000) unions came into being following the escalation of poor working conditions and of course, the unfair labour practices in work environments as found out in this paper.

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APPENDICES

Tool 1: Questionnaire for all respondents

Introduction

This research is for academic purposes. It is done in partial fulfilment of a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations at the University of Malawi.

You have been selected to participate in the study because you are an important stakeholder in the Malawi Prisons Service and we would like to hear your comments on grievance handling and employee performance at your institution. The study is guided by strict ethical considerations thus confidentiality will be strictly adhered to. Your name will remain anonymous and will not appear in the narrative of the study report. You are therefore being requested to provide your honest and candid views on the matter under study. If you consent to take part in the study, you may please continue to fill in the questionnaire.

Note to the respondent: This is a self-administered questionnaire. It has a total of ... questions and statements. You are required to either tick or write a short answer on the spaces provided.

For the purpose of this research, a grievance denotes any dissatisfaction by employees regarding work and the workplace.

Rank Category

- (a) Junior (b) Subordinate (c) Senior

Objective 1. Analyse the causes of grievance in your organization.

(i) How often do you face grievances in your organization?

- (a) Mostly
(b) Rarely
(c) Always

- (d) Sometimes
- (e) Not at all.

(ii) In your opinion, what are the major causes of grievances in your organization?

- (a) Poor work environment
- (b) Work overload
- (c) Poor infrastructure
- (d) Poor communication/policies
- (e) Lack/ inadequate equipment
- (f) Inadequate laws and policies
- (g) Inadequate finances
- (h) Poor supervision
- (i) Workgroup
- (j) Economic (salary, reward, incentives, promotions)
- (k) Performance management process
- (l) Social injustice
- (m) Other causes (mention)

(iii) What is the nature of grievances at this institution? (Explain)

.....

.....

.....

2. Grievance management policy and strategies

(i) Explain how grievances are identified at your institution?

.....

.....

.....

(ii) Explain any policies or strategies in place that are followed to handle grievances at your institution.

.....

.....

.....

(iii) What is the grievance management policy applied in your organisation? (Explain)

.....
.....
.....

(iv) Explain the grievance handling procedure followed in your organization?

.....
.....

(v) To whom do you report if you have grievances in your at your institution?

(a) Immediate supervisor.....

(b) Superior bosses

.....

(c) Colleagues

(d) Function Head.....

(e) Head of HR department.....

(f) Others (Please explain).....

.....

(vi) Where can employees further take their grievances to if not satisfied?

.....

(vii) How does the grievance management procedure reflect the grievance management policy?

.....

(viii) Are the decisions taken by the top management on grievances satisfactory? Explain.

.....

.....

(ix) How does the grievance management procedure in your organization reflect the grievance management policy applied in your organisation?

(a) Mostly

(b) Rarely

(c) Once

(d) Sometimes

(e) Not at all. Explain

- (x) Are you aware of the measures that have been put in place to ensure that employees utilize the grievance handling procedure?
Explain.....
.....
- (xi) What are the channels of receiving employees' grievances
.....
.....
- (xii) What is the basis for resolution of grievances at your institution?
.....
- (xiii) What are the grievance handling strategies at your institution?
.....
- (xiv) Are the procedures mentioned above effective? Explain
.....
- (xv) At what level are most grievances settled?
(a) Immediate supervisor.....
(b) Heads of sections.....
(c) Middle Management level.....
(d) Top management level.....
(e) Trade Union.....
(f) Not at all.....
.....
- (xvi) Describe the grievance handling structure of your organisation?
.....
.....
- (xvii) How flexible are the strategies and policies in handling employee grievances?
.....
- (xviii) Explain the link between grievance policy and your organisation strategy
.....
- (xix) How much time does your superior take to handle a grievance (duration of handling process)?
(a) 2 Weeks
(b) 6 Weeks

- (c) Indefinite
- (d) Depends upon level
- (e) Not known

Objective 3. Examine the influence of grievances on work performance

- (i) How do you measure performance at your organization
.....
- (ii) In your opinion, do the above mentioned causes of grievances have an effect of employee performance? Explain
.....
- (iii) What is the relationship between unresolved grievances and employee performance?
.....
- (iv) How do employees react to the way management handles their grievances?
 - (a) Take vacation leave
 - (b) Needed medical attention
 - (c) Desired to improve performance
 - (d) Feign illness
 - (e) Others, explain
- (v) In your opinion, to what extent are you satisfied with the way management handles grievances at your institution?
 - a) Much
 - b) Average
 - c) Little
 - d) Not at all
 Explain
- (vi) Are grievances resolved within the acceptable time frame in the MPS?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
- (vii) Explain as per above response
 - (a) Supervisors not interested in speedy processing

- (b) Grievances are discouraged
- (c) Claimants are ignored and considered confusing
- (d) Employees at lower level cannot make decisions as everything is referred

(viii) How would you rate the Malawi Prisons service grievance procedures/processes?

- (a) Excellent
- (b) Good
- (c) Not very good
- (d) Poor
- (e) Very poor

(ix) To what extent do grievances affect your working performance? How?

- (a) Much
- (b) Average
- (c) Little
- (d) Sometimes.
- (e) Not at all

(x) Reactions to grievance handling and employee contextual performance in line with the questionnaire designed Van Scotter and Motowildo 91996)

(i) Interpersonal facilitation

- (a) Do help orient new people even though it is not required
- (b) Do you help others who have heavy workloads
- (c) Are willing to help others who have work related problems
- (d) Do you help others who are absent?
- (e) Are you always willing to lend a helping hand to those around you?
- (f) Do you feel that you are one of the vigilant employees?

(i) Job dedication

- (a) Do you believe in giving an honest day's work for any honest day pay?
- (b) Is your attendance at work above the norm?

- (c) Do you have extra breaks at work?
- (d) Do you obey departmental rules and regulations even when no one is watching?
- (e) Do you keep abreast of the changes in your organisation?
- (f) Do you attend meetings that are considered important but not mandatory?
- (g) Do you read and keep up with organisation announcements, memos, reports, messages?

4. Examine the challenges grievance handling faces

- (i) Are members of staff aware of the grievance management system at your institution?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

- (ii) What is your view of the grievance handling at your organisation in relation to:
 - (a) Management
 -
 - (b) Policies
 -
 - (c) Staff
 -

- (iii) Explain what you would consider to be the most important shortcoming/challenge to the grievance procedure in the MPS?
 - (a) Management is not interested to solve grievances
 - (b) It takes too long to process the grievances
 - (c) There unfairness in the way grievances are handled
 - (d) No feedback when employees refer their grievances to top management
 - (e) There is lack of communication within the department
 - (f) There is fear of victimisation among employees

- (iv) Explain the reasons you think the Malawi Prisons Service grievance procedure is good or bad?
 - (a) Management is poorly trained in grievance handling
 - (b) There is poor feedback
 - (c) Favouritism in handling grievances
 - (d) Some grievances are hidden and then thrown away
 - (e) Incompetence in handling grievances
 - (f) Grievances are associated with high levels of victimisation of employees by supervisors
 - (g) Employees do not care hence there is no follow up

- (v) Explain what you would consider to be the barriers to the effective handling of grievances?
 - (a) Lack of explicit grievance procedure manual – nothing to refer to
 - (b) Incompetent supervisors
 - (c) A culture of “I don’t care”
 - (d) Gossip among fellow employees

- (vi) According to your experience, are grievances resolved at the correct levels in the department?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

- (vii) Give an explanation to the above
 - (a) Lowest have the tendency to suppress grievances
 - (b) Increased victimisation of employees at the lower level
 - (c) Takes long before grievances are taken to the appropriate office
 - (d) Employees do not have the a clear policy on grievances

- (vii) Explain your response to the above question

.....

.....

.....

(viii) Explain how easy is it to file a grievance?

.....
.....

(ix) Do you think enough effort is being done to address the challenges?

Explain.....
.....

(x) What do you think can be done to address the challenges?

.....
.....

Tool 2: Interview Guide selected respondents

Introduction

This research is for academic purposes. It is done in partial fulfilment of a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations at the University of Malawi.

You have been selected to participate in the study because you are an important stakeholder in the Malawi Prisons Service and we would like to hear your comments on grievance handling and employee performance at your institution. The study is guided by strict ethical considerations thus confidentiality will be strictly adhered to. Your name will remain anonymous and will not appear in the narrative of the study report. You are therefore being requested to provide your honest and candid views on the matter under study. We may proceed with the interview if you consent to take part in the study.

For the purpose of this research, a grievance denotes any dissatisfaction by employees regarding work and the workplace.

Objective 1. Analyse the causes of grievances among employees in your organization.

- (a) How often do you face grievances at this facility?
- (b) What are the causes of grievances at your institution?
- (c) In your view, explain the major causes of grievances at this institution?
- (d) What is the nature of grievances at this facility? (Mention)

Objective 2. Grievance management policy and strategies

- (a) How are grievances identified at your institution?
- (b) Do you know of any policies or strategies in place that are followed to handle grievances at this institution and the Malawi Prisons as a whole?
- (c) What is the grievance management policy applied at your institution? (Explain)
- (d) Do you know the grievance handling procedure followed in your organization?
- (e) To whom do you report if you have any grievances?
- (f) Where can employees further take their grievances if not satisfied?
- (g) How does the grievance management procedure in your organization reflect the grievance management policy applied at your institution?
- (h) Are the decisions taken by the top management related to grievance satisfactory?
- (i) Are you aware of the measures that have been put in place to ensure that employees utilize the grievance handling procedure?
- (j) What are the channels of receiving workers' grievances at your institution? (Mention)
- (k) What is the basis for resolution of grievances at your institution?
- (l) What are the grievance handling strategies applied in your organization?
- (m) Are the procedures mentioned above effective? Explain
- (n) How much time does your superior take to handle a grievance (duration of handling process)? At what level are most of the grievances in your organization settled?
- (o) Describe the grievance handling structure of your organization
- (p) How flexible are the strategies and policies in handling employee grievances?

- (q) Can you explain the link between grievance policy and your organizational strategy?

3. Examine the influence of grievances on work performance

- (a) How do you measure performance in your organization? (Explain)
- (b) In your opinion, do the above causes of grievances have an influence on staff satisfaction (morale)? Explain your response.
- (c) What is the relationship between unresolved grievances and employee performance?
- (d) How do employees react to the way management handles grievances at your institution?
- (e) In your opinion, are you satisfied with the way management handles grievances?
- (f) Are grievances resolved within the acceptable time frame in the MPS? Explain as per above response.
- (g) How would you rate the Malawi Prisons Service grievance procedures/processes? Explain as per above response
- (h) To what extent do grievances affect your working performance in your organization? How?

4. Reactions to grievance handling and employee contextual performance in line with the questionnaire designed Van Scotter and Motowildo (1996)

I. Interpersonal facilitation

- (a) Do you help orient new people even though it is not required
- (b) Do you help others who have heavy workloads
- (c) Are willing to help others who have work related problems
- (d) Do you help others who are absent?
- (e) Are you always willing to lend a helping hand to those around you?
- (f) Do you feel that you are one of the vigilant employees?

II) Job dedication

- (a) Do you believe in giving an honest day's work for any honest day pay?
- (b) Is your attendance at work above the norm?
- (c) Do you extra breaks at work?
- (d) Do you obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching?
- (e) Do you keep abreast of the changes at your institution?
- (f) Do you attend meetings that are considered important but not mandatory?
- (g) Do you read and keep up with organisation announcements, memos, and wireless messages?

4. Examine the challenges the grievance system faces

- (a) Are members of staff aware of the grievance system at your institution?
Explain
- (b) What is your view of grievance handling in the MPS in relation to:
 - a. Management
 - b. Policies/Strategies
 - c. Staff
- (c) Explain what you would consider to be the most important challenges in handling grievances in the MPS?
- (d) Explain the reasons you think the Malawi Prisons Service grievance handling procedure is good or bad?
- (e) Explain what you would consider to be the barriers to the effective handling of grievances in the MPS?
- (f) According to your experience, are grievances resolved at the correct levels in the department?
- (g) To what extent is the above effective?
- (h) How easy is it to file a grievance at your institution?
- (i) Give an explanation to the above
- (j) Do you think enough effort is being done to address the challenges?
- (k) What do you think can be done to address the challenges?

Thank you....

