

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO DISCRETIONARY POLICIES AND
PRACTICES USED BY TEACHERS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TO
ADDRESS SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN SELECTED PUBLIC DAY
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZOMBA DISTRICT**

M.Ed. (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

NOVEMBER, 2023



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By

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Submitted to the Department of Education Foundations in the School of Education, in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Policy,
Planning and Leadership)

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November, 2023

DECLARATION

I the undersigned declare that an investigation of discretionary policies and practices used to address violence in selected public day secondary schools in Zomba is my original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Acknowledgements have been made where other people's work has been used.

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that the thesis represents the student's own work and has been submitted with our approval

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my husband James Mkandawire who supported me financially, psychologically, and emotionally and our children Jemimah, Jayden and Jesslyn who endured the mother's absence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to several people who supported and encouraged me throughout my time of study. Special thanks go to my supervisors Dr. Richard Nyirongo and Dr. Elizabeth Tikondwe Kamchedzera for their untiring support during the whole period I worked to complete this thesis.

I am also indebted to the head teachers, teachers, prefects, and parents from the schools I visited for their support and corporation during data collection for this study.

To Juliet Magombo and Wilfred Katunga, I appreciate the support you gave me during data collection.

To my PPL colleagues, especially Angellah Msowoya, thank you for your support. Your timely feedback made the whole process simpler.

To my husband James, words fail me, thanks for everything. To my children Jemimah Jayden and Jesslyn, thank you for enduring my absence throughout the time I was studying. You are the reason I have worked so hard. To my nieces, nephews and cousins who looked after my children when I was studying, may God bless you for everything.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated discretionary policies and practices that are used to address violence in public day secondary schools. A review of literature has revealed that most studies on school violence focus on assessing teachers' and students' knowledge and prevalence of school-based violence. Not much has been done to explore discretionary policies and practices aimed at addressing the vice. Thirty-six participants from four public day secondary schools in Zomba were purposively selected for the study. The participants included 4 Head teachers, 4 form teachers, 4 parents, and 24 prefects. Data was generated through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and analysis of punishment books. The Stages Model (SM), which is clearly aligned with the processes of policy formulation and implementation, underpinned this study. The study findings indicated that participants knew of school violence and its prevalence in their schools. Secondly, it revealed that perception of school violence differed amongst the study participants. Furthermore, it revealed that the schools did not have discretionary policies and practices that address school violence. In addition, implementation of policies is hindered by favouritism, fear, ignorance, rights, workload, and lack of teacher involvement. In order to address these challenges, it was recommended that there should be an open display of policies in schools, civic education, and teacher involvement in all stages of policy process. It may be interesting to conduct a similar study focussing on whether school contexts have a bearing on approaches for dealing with school violence. Another study that would investigate the causes of school-based violence which would inform policy and practices development at school level.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPYS	Bully Proofing Your School
BrB	Breaks are Better
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CR/PM	Conflict Resolution Peer mediation
D.A.R. E	Drug Abuse Resistance Education
DEM	District Education Manager
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FGD's	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoM	Government of Malawi
IDI	In-depth Interview
MG	Mother Group
MGDS	Malawi Growth Development Strategy
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NES	National Standards of Education
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGES	National Girls Education Strategy
NSO	National Statistics Office
OBPP	Olwen's Bully Prevention Program
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SFT	Solutions Focused Therapy

SMART	Students Managing Anger Resolution Together
SM	Stages Model
SMC	School Management Committee
SS/HS	Safe Schools Health Students
SWPBIS	School Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support
TGFV	Too Good For Violence Prevention Program
UNAID	United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UKaid	United Kingdom Aid
VPP	Skill Based Violence Prevention Program
WFP	World Food Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter is an introduction to the study that investigated discretionary policies and practices that are designed to address school violence in 4 selected day secondary schools in Zomba District. It presents the background to the study, problem statement, significance of the study, the research questions, the definitions of the terms used in the thesis, and the chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the study

Evidence from different studies shows the existence of violence among youths globally. According to UNICEF (2018) about half of the world's teens experience peer violence in and around school. The violence is in form of physical fights or forms of bullying in and around school. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, 48.2% of students experience bullying, 36.9% experience physical fights and 36.4% experience physical attacks (UNESCO, 2018).

Violence in Sub Saharan Africa has been reported especially in schools despite the schools being regarded as a “safe haven” as Beninger (2013, p. 282) puts it. Beninger (2013, p. 282) has reported these cases for countries like Malawi, Lesotho, Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, and, others.

For instance, a study conducted in Malawi, Ghana and Zimbabwe in 2003 concluded that sexual aggression was common from male classmates but schools just tolerated it (Amnesty International Safe Schools, 2008) cited in Beninger (2013, p. 282). Of the 28 girls that were interviewed in-depth in Ghana, 27% indicated that they had propositions from their teachers and in Malawi, 50% of the girls that were interviewed reported that they knew someone who had a proposal from a teacher.

There are conflicting findings on the effect of violence on school outcomes. For example (Psaki, et al., 2017, p.14) report that violence does not disrupt schooling, but Robertsons, Cassity and Kunkwezu (2017, p. 23) assert that violence contributes to student absenteeism and dropout in Malawi. School dropout and absenteeism are a barrier to quality education and these affect the targets of other instruments which target it like the Malawi's National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008 – 2017, Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS) III (2017 – 2022), the National Standards of Education (NSE), the National Girls Education Strategy (NGES) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG'S) 2030. According to EMIS data, about 200 to 300 students in Malawi drop out of school each year due to violence in school (Malawi Education Statistics -2015/16, Malawi Education Statistics -2017, Malawi Education Statistics 2020 & Malawi Education Statistics - 2022).

A study by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social welfare in 2014 on “violence against children” found that more than 1 girl in 5 girls experience sexual abuse before they reach 18 years of age and 50% of these girls experience it before the age of 13. A third of all children of 13 – 17 years who had experienced sexual abuse reported that the abuser was a classmate or schoolmate, and between 10 – 20% of all sexual abuse

incidents reported occurred at school (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, 2014 cited in UNICEF, WFP & UNFPA, 2014, p. 12). The National Statistics Office (NSO) in 2012 also revealed that 26% of rape and defilement cases were reported to have taken place in schools, and 23% of cases of unwanted sexual touching and 17% of cases of unpleasant remarks and sexual harassment (NSO, 2012 cited in UNICEF, WFP & UNFPA, 2014, p. 12). The above statistics are a clear indication that schools are prone to violence and that there is need for schools to have their own ways of dealing with such incidences.

As other countries are coming up with plans to reach the SDG'S 2030 especially goal number 4 which talks about ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Leach, Dunner & Salvi, 2014, p.2) Malawi also has a number of initiatives put in place to achieve these lifelong opportunities. For instance, there is a national plan of action that has been put in place that involves several stakeholders like the Ministry of Education (MoE), which is expected to “promote positive discipline programmes to replace the use of corporal punishments (GoM, 2014). In addition to this, there is also the “National Gender Policy” priority area objective 1, strategy 2, which advocates for the “development, implementation and enforcement of sexual violence and harassment laws and policies” (National Gender Policy, 2015). All these efforts are there to help create a conducive learning environment, which is free from any kind of violence.

Furthermore, MoE as a stakeholder has some plans as contained in ESIP II that are intended to combat violence in schools (GoM, 2013). Another document that has plans that deal with violence is the National Girls Education Strategy-NGES (MoE, 2018). One of the priority areas for NGES is to increase safety and security for girls in school. Although the NGES only focuses much on girls, but it still helps in making the school environment safe.

Looking at evidence from strategy papers and research, there seem to be commitment from stakeholders to address this issue. But the question is, are schools committed to making their environment safe? Research shows that although the authorities in schools are aware of the existence of violence, instead of acting on it, they usually just tolerate it (Psaki et al., 2017). This makes it difficult for the schools to come up with discretionary policies that can directly deal with the violence.

Studies have been conducted on this topic in Malawi, for example the study by Bisika, Ntata and Konyani, (2009) focussed on violence against girls as an obstruction to universal primary school education. Another study done by Mellish, Sehergrens and Sapuwa in (2015) focussed on the national response to gender- based violence. And another study was done by Psaki et al (2017), this one focussed on the associations between violence in school and home and education outcomes in rural Malawi. However, to the best of my knowledge and from the reviewed studies we did not find studies that have directly investigated the discretionary policies and practices that are designed to curb violence in schools.

1.3 Problem statement

Mellish, Sehergren and Sapuwa (2015) cited in Robertsons, Cassity and Kunkwenzu (2017, p.23) note that there is high prevalence of violence in schools. In 2012, NSO reported that 26% of rape and defilement cases took place at school, 23% of unwanted sexual touching and 17% of unpleasant remarks also took place at school (NSO, 2012 cited in UNICEF, WFP & UNFPA, 2014). In addition, 10 to 20% of the sexual abuses reported in a quantitative study by the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Welfare occurred at school (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, 2014 cited in UNICEF, WFP & UNFPA, 2014). Violence is frequently mentioned as one of the factors that affect education in Malawi (Robertsons, 2017). Other policies in the education sector like ESIP II, National Girls Education Strategy (NGES) and National Education Standards (NES) indicate that violence in schools is an important issue because it affects students' attendance and retention, which ultimately affects their performance. In addition, one of the recommendations by Psaki et al (2017) is the implementation of effective programs and policies to curb school violence. Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) (2015) recommends the use of a whole school approach where one of the ways is to promote the development and implementation of school policies and action plans on how to address all types of violence. Every child has the right to education but we learn from literature that some students drop out of school because of violence. What is concerning is that authorities know of this problem but they just tolerate it (Psaki et al, 2017). However, it has been noted from literature that as much as studies have been conducted and reported regarding the prevalence of different forms of violence in schools, none of these studies has investigated the availability of discretionary policies that are used to govern and manage these incidences of violence. These policies provide guidance, consistency,

accountability, efficiency and clarity on how to deal with issues of school violence. This is what this study attempted to achieve. It investigated whether participating schools had, in place discretionary policies and practices that addressed the stated existing violence in schools.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the existence of discretionary policies and practices and the way they address school violence in selected public day secondary schools in Zomba.

1.4.1 Specific research questions

The following were the specific research questions for the study.

1. What knowledge do parents, teachers and students have regarding school violence?
2. How do school participants (parents, teachers, and students) perceive school violence?
3. Which discretionary policies and practices address school violence
4. How are the discretionary policies and practices that address school violence implemented
5. What are the challenges in implementing policies and practices that address school violence in selected day secondary schools?
6. How are the challenges in implementing policies and practices that address school violence resolved?

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of the study findings is as follows: firstly, the findings could expand literature on knowledge base as regards to discretionary policies that address school violence in public Day Secondary Schools and could provide base for further studies. Secondly, the findings could be beneficial to the policy makers at school level-in that they will inform the process of formulating effective discretionary policies that would address school violence, and consequently, creating a better and conducive learning environment for students. Thirdly, the findings could help the officials like teachers and other school stakeholders to have an improved understanding on how school violence is regarded in schools and how discretionary policies evolve in order to meet the changing needs of the schools. In addition, the study findings would contribute to the development of positive and inclusive cultures that would promote respect, empathy and healthy relationships among students, staff and parents, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing the likelihood of school violence.

1.6 Definitions of the terms used in the thesis

The key terms in the study are defined as follows:

Knowledge: “familiarity, awareness or understanding of something” (Hornby, 1995:857).

School violence: this refers to any acts of violence whether by students, teachers, directors, staff or parents that take place inside an educational institution, when travelling to or from school or school-related event or during such an event (Gittins, 2006:13). This can be physical or non-physical.

Discretionary policies: “this refers to the additional policies a school setting might wish to have in place but are not required by law (Sorensen, Bushway & Gifford, 2022)

Perceptions: “the ability to become aware of something” (Hornby, 1995:1188).

Practices: “expected procedure or procedures of doing something” (Hornby, 1995:1125). These can be deliberate programs within the school.

1.7 Outline of the chapters

Chapter one has provided background information to the problem under study with focus on contextual background. Chapter two is the review of related literature on school violence and policies and practices. Chapter three is the description of the research paradigm, research design, methodologies and data generation procedures employed in the study. Chapter four presents findings and discussions of the findings of the study. Finally, chapter five presents conclusions and implications derived from the study. Suggestions on areas for further studies are also presented in the chapter.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the background to the problem under investigation and that it is a global issue and schools in Malawi especially the secondary schools are not exceptional. EMIS data indicates that almost 200 to 300 students drop out every year from secondary school due to violence (Malawi Education Statistics -2015/16, Malawi Education Statistics -2017 & Malawi Education Statistics 2020). To address the problem, as a nation, there are instruments developed that target addressing violence in schools by making the school environment safe. These instruments include the NESP, MGDS III, NSE, NGES and SDG’s 2030. The chapter has also highlighted the significance of the study that the findings could expand literature on knowledge base

as regards to school-based policies that address school violence in public Day Secondary Schools and could provide base for further studies. In addition, the findings could help the officials like teachers and other school stakeholders have an improved understanding on how school violence is regarded in schools and how school-based policies evolve in order to meet the changing needs of the schools. And lastly, the findings could be beneficial to the policy makers at school level to come up with effective school-based policies that would address school violence, and consequently, creating a better and conducive learning environment for students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides literature review from studies done by different scholars on school violence, issues related to it and the policies as well as practices used to address school violence. The categories of literature reviewed are from relevant reports, journal articles, theses and various studies carried out on school violence in and outside Malawi. The structure of the chapter is based on the main themes derived from the research questions, the themes from the analysed data and guided by the theoretical framework discussed at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Knowledge of school violence

Different scholars like Beninger (2013), Robertsons, Cassity and Kumkwezu (2017) and Psaki, Mensch and Soler-Hampejsek (2017) have researched occurrence and effect of school violence both in and outside Malawi. Literature about knowledge of school violence shows that school participants are knowledgeable of school violence but there is a variation in terms of how they regard or respond to it as a serious matter in their schools. In addition to this, the stakeholders are usually aware of the perpetrators and victims of school violence.

This is evidenced by the different academic studies that were conducted in different countries like Malawi, Lesotho and Zambia (Beninger, 2013).

Participants' knowledge of school violence in this study is very important because it means that the participants, especially students and teachers are aware that the issue of school violence exists and regard it as an agenda, which might influence them to make policies and practices to address it. This is in line with the Stages Model (SM), which identifies agenda setting as the first stage in the policy making process after the emergence of an issue (Birkland, 2011).

There is some evidence from research, which supports the fact that some school participants are aware or have knowledge of the existence of violence in their schools. The following studies illustrate this assertion: Beninger, (2013) in his study about "combating sexual violence in Sub Saharan Africa: Legal strategies under regional and international human rights law" noted that in Sub-Saharan Africa teachers and students are aware of school violence and that most cases of violence are reported to have been experienced. A study about "Every girl's right" that was conducted in Malawi, Ghana and Zimbabwe in 2008 concluded that sexual aggression was common from male classmates and the schools just tolerated it (Amnesty International Safe Schools, 2008, cited in Beninger, 2013, p. 282). Of the 28 girls that were interviewed in-depth in Ghana, 27% indicated that they had propositions from their teachers and in Malawi, 50% of the girls that were interviewed reported that they knew someone who had a proposal from a teacher. The above research indicate that the issue of violence is well known by students and even teachers only that it is not regarded as a serious matter in many schools (Beninger, 2013). This revelation by Beninger's study that violence was

regarded as not a serious matter might affect the schools' ability to come up with the policies that address violence because it is only when an issue is considered as serious that the interest groups take it up and it becomes an agenda (Dye, 2002).

Most studies have focussed at assessing the knowledge of teachers and students in relation to prevalence of school violence but not much has been done to explore discretionary policies and practices aimed at addressing the vice. Therefore, this study aims at studying the availability of discretionary policies and practices at school level aimed at addressing the violence. Understanding the knowledge of school violence from school participants is very important in the sense that it helps one to make sense of the new ideas and experiences. In this case, it will help the researcher understand why the schools have the policies and practices that they have that address school violence or why they do not have them.

2.3 School participant's perceptions of school violence

There are several participants or parties in the school whose perceptions of school violence are equally important to consider. These include teachers, students, and parents because they are part and parcel of the school. Literature by scholars like Anderson (2016) on "Teacher's perceptions of school violence"; Mohapi (2014) on "views on school violence by stakeholders of four schools in Nkangala District of Education in South Africa" and Chestnut (2016) on "US teacher's perceptions of school violence prevention programs" show that school violence is perceived differently in different contexts by different stakeholders. Some participants perceive it in terms of major and minor behaviour problems and some participants perceive it in terms of measures of curbing violence.

How participants perceive school violence impacts on the effectiveness of policies and practices because from their perceptions originates ways of addressing violence. For example, if school violence is perceived in terms of behaviour, during alternative policy selection and policy enactment, the policy makers will not have many problems in the whole process of policy process as SM suggests.

There are a number of studies that were conducted on the above topic and here are some of them: Anderson (2016) conducted a study in North Eastern US urban school district in which she researched on “Teacher’s perceptions of school violence” and found out that teachers perceived violence as major and minor violence problems such as misbehaviour, constant disciplining, disrespectfulness, and not paying attention. Another study by Mohapi (2014) on “views on school violence by stakeholders of four schools in Nkangala District of Education in South Africa” found out that stakeholders’ perceptions on violence were based on the measures to curb violence like code of conduct for learners, safety policies that aim at inhibiting violent acts and safety and security committees in schools which consist of parents, teachers and learners. Chestnut (2016) conducted a study in the US which focused on “US teacher’s perceptions of school violence prevention programs” in the urban high school. He found out that teachers were in support of prevention programs such as the uniform program and that security officers are helpful in the reduction of school-based violence. In addition, teachers perceived that an increase in funding could strengthen prevention programs, community support and professional development. Teachers also perceived those collaborative efforts by parents, educators, students, and community members could create a safe school environment. It was also found in the study that teachers perceived

that Internet, television, video games, environment, and parental support influence student's violent behaviours.

From the above studies, it is clear that various stakeholders perceive school violence differently. Perception of school violence varies between stakeholders, what is perceived as school violence by one stakeholder may not be perceived the same way by another. However, these varying perceptions might be helpful because in the end one might be able to formulate a well-coordinated policy or practice that may help curb violence in schools. Because what matters is to understand how school violence is perceived and then come up with ways of curbing it so that schools have a conducive learning environment, which is free from any form of violence.

Although several studies have been conducted on some school participant's perceptions towards violence, it was equally important to investigate parents, teachers and student's perceptions towards school violence since the contexts where the studies were conducted were different from the one where this research was done in terms of the type of the institution. The researcher decided to investigate how different stakeholders in selected schools perceive school violence because from the reviewed studies, it shows that school violence is perceived differently. So, interviewing different stakeholders helped the researcher understand how school violence was perceived in these schools. Whether it was perceived the same way as the studies have indicated or not.

2.4 Discretionary policies and practices that address school violence

Literature about policies and practices of addressing violence in schools show that there are several ways that are employed in order to address violence in schools. The reviewed studies do not necessarily call the ways of addressing violence as policies and practices, but the studies have used synonymous words such as strategies, programs, and ways. As such, this study has also done the same. These policies and practices differ in different settings. Among the strategies used, there is use of positive and negative rewards, instilling special skills in school participants (teachers and students) through Continued Professional Development (CPDs) and counselling and designing special programs that aim at curbing violence. As observed from the literature, these strategies are in line with SM. Stages Model uses the agreed solutions (implementation) to address a problem, in this case violence. It is only when the issued regulation/ formal decision has been put to use (implemented) would lead to effectiveness. In this case, the implementation of the discretionary policies that address violence is what would lead to the effectiveness of addressing school violence.

Several studies have been done focusing on ways of addressing violence. For instance, Bourne, et al. (2015) conducted a study in Jamaica. In this study they looked at the strategies that are used to deal with violence in schools and found out that some strategies are: retention, counselling, detention and parenting liaison conferencing depending on the nature of deviance done by a student. Another study by Hughes (2016) listed some evidence-based programs that help to prevent violence in schools such as developing children's life skills, building knowledge around safe behaviours, challenging social and cultural norms and promote equitable relationships and

developing teachers' skills to manage behaviour and promote positive interaction with children.

From the above studies, it is explicit that the schools play an important role in addressing violence. However, it is important to note that it is significant to involve many school stakeholders, if possible, for these strategies to be effective. As seen in the study by Bourne et al, (2015), the strategies that are used involve more than one party, these include; teachers, students and parents. This is in line with the policy making process, many actors are involved from agenda setting moving forward. This is a clear indication that the involvement of many stakeholders helps the policies and practices to be effective. The knowledge of who are involved in implementing the measures of curbing violence will help the researcher understand why the measures in place are effective or not and also understand the role of the stakeholders in making the measures to be effective.

In addition to this, the study about "School violence prevention" by Hughes (2016) indicates that the strategies should put students at the core because they are the ones that are the victims of school violence in most cases, although, they may also be the perpetrators of the same. Furthermore, these strategies should give the students lifelong skills that may not be left behind in case they leave the school premises. Although studies indicate that students must be put at the core because most of the times they are the victims, the researcher understood who is placed at the core in these schools and why, as it is possible to have different victims of school violence in other contexts.

Another study about “Methods for reducing violence in schools: A systematic review” conducted in USA found out programs that helped in the reduction of school violence. The following are some of the programs: the Olweus Bully Prevention Program (OBPP), Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support (SWPBIS), Safe Schools Healthy Students (SS/HS), Conflict Resolution Peer Mediation (CR/PM), Skill Based Violence Prevention Program (VPP), Solutions Focused Therapy (SFT), Breaks are Better (BrB), Too Good For Violence Prevention Program (TGFV), D.A.R.E. Plus, Bully-proofing Your School (BPYS) and Students Managing Anger Resolution Together- SMART (Kelly, 2017).

The above study suggests that schools must have a number of strategies and programs to help them curb violence. These strategies and programs must target the whole school. Thus, students and teachers must all be involved in the programs for the strategies to work. Having a number of programs might be effective in curbing violence because if one program fails then may be another one might work. However, it is not always that the schools participating in the study will have a number of strategies or programs to curb violence. They may have one, two or nothing depending on how serious they perceive violence as an issue.

Chestnut (2016) conducted a study in the US in which he researched on “US teachers’ perceptions of school violence prevention programs” in urban high school and found out that the following programs were helpful in preventing violence; using school uniforms and dress code policies, having school security, combating bullying in schools and adoption of better technological measures like sophisticated cameras which are able to detect weapons and drugs.

UK Aid (2018) in their thematic review on addressing school violence in a number of countries including Malawi used the following strategies among others to address violence in schools; reporting mechanisms in which mechanisms were developed for children to report violence safely and capacity building of teachers and school management in which school violence was a core part of the training. For instance, the training focussed on introducing and strengthening use of non-violent disciplining methods and introducing code of conduct or child protection policies. Thus, it is important for schools to take into consideration the things to be included in their programs that can help their developed strategies to be effective. For instance, capacity building for teachers might go a long way in curbing violence since the capacity building equips teachers with skills and techniques that remain in them for a long time. Thus, the researcher understood the things that schools consider when coming up with a measure of addressing violence if at all they think of that since what to consider may depend on what is regarded as violence in that particular context.

Although these studies have been done in schools, it is equally important to investigate policies and practices that address violence in Malawian secondary schools since they provide a different context altogether. Therefore, this research's interest was to investigate the discretionary policies and practices that address violence in selected public day secondary schools. It is important for schools to evaluate the programs and strategies that they develop that aim at curbing violence because it is not every program that works. The schools should be aware of the programs that are effective and those that are not. In this way, schools might leave the ones that are not working and only focus on the ones that are working and in the process curb school violence effectively.

Thus, the researcher will understand if schools do take time to evaluate their measures or not and the reasons why.

2.5 Challenges of implementing policies and practices that address violence in schools

Literature by Viennet and Pont (2017) on “the determinants that hinder or facilitate the process of education policy implementation” shows that there are a number of challenges that affect the implementation of discretionary policies and practices that curb school violence. These challenges include poor policy design, not involving the stakeholders, unfavourable context and lack of coherence during implementation. These challenges are the ones that make policies and practices that curb violence not to be effective. Looking at some of these challenges, one would go back to SM and look at some of its propositions to come up with effective policies and practices that curb violence, for example, involvement of different actors during the policy process.

Several studies have been done on challenges of implementing policies and practices and the following are some of them: Viennet and Pont (2017) conducted a study in which they analysed the determinants that hinder or facilitate the process of education policy implementation. They grouped their findings into four dimensions that support effective implementation. These findings are smart policy design, which is concerned with the way the policy is designed and framed, inclusive stakeholder engagement, which is concerned with how policies are implemented by individuals and organisations. Individuals and organisations should be made central in the implementation process. Conducive context is another dimension that support effective policy implementation process and it is concerned with the institutional setting which

is comprise of the formal and informal constraints that regulate the implementation process in a given education system. Lastly, the study also found out that a coherent implementation strategy, which is concerned with how policies in the institution are implemented to avoid hindering other policies implementation supports effective policy implementation process. This means that the opposite of the above-mentioned dimensions hinders policy implementation.

In addition, Gyang, Ndupuechi and Gogwim (2022) in their study titled “challenges of educational policy implementation in Nigeria: the implication for national development” found out that in adequate resources and poor working conditions are some of the challenges that hinder policy implementation.

The findings from the reviewed studies indicate that there are several challenges that hinder the implementation of policies and practices that may curb violence in schools. It was therefore necessary to also investigate the same in a different context such as Malawi.

The above literature has provided valuable insights into the current state of knowledge on an investigation into discretionary policies and practices used by teachers and school management to address school violence by looking at participant’s knowledge, perceptions, ways of addressing school violence, challenges and ways of resolving the challenges.

2.6 Conceptual framework

Building upon the insights gathered from the literature review, the following section introduces a conceptual framework that guided this study. A conceptual framework is a network or “a plane” of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” (Jabareen, 2009, p.51). To understand the discretionary policies and practices that address school violence, the conceptual framework in this study constituted concepts related to school violence and discretionary policies, for example, knowledge of school violence and school participant’s perceptions of school violence. In terms of the discretionary policies, the study discussed the concepts such as ways of addressing school violence and challenges of implementing policies and practices that address school violence and ways of resolving the challenges.

The above concepts constituted the basis of this study's literature review. Below is the representation of the conceptual framework in a figure form:

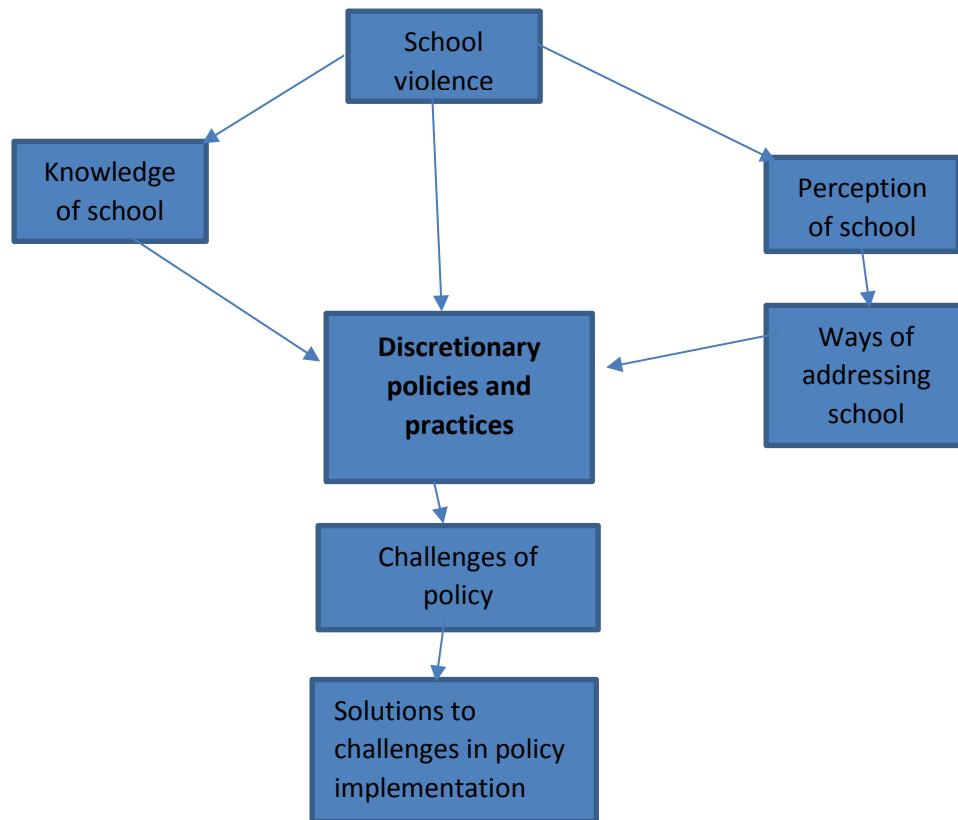


Figure 1: Presentation of the conceptual framework

2.7 Theoretical framework of the study

For the purpose of this study, Stages Model (SM) was selected because it is clearly aligned with the processes of developing and implementing policies. According to SM, the process of producing public policies can be divided into several stages from agenda setting to evaluation (Birkland, 2011). Thus, for the schools to come up with the policies that address violence need to follow the same stages as stipulated in the above model.

According to Birkland (2011, p. 26) SM has five stages. These stages are agenda setting, which is the first stage after an issue emerges. The second one is selection of alternatives in which several solutions to an issue are put forward. The third stage is enactment whereby a formal decision is made on the solutions provided. The fourth one is implementation whereby the chosen solutions are applied and the last one is evaluation whereby a systematic determination of the policy's significance is made.

These stages are equally in line with what the schools would follow if the discretionary policies and practices are to be enacted and effective, otherwise any policy would not be effective if the steps in the SM are ignored. The use of theory in this research will guide the researcher in answering how discretionary policies and practices are formed and implemented since it is both the policy formulation and implementation model. However, the model is criticised that it implies that policy making proceeds step by step starting from the beginning and ending at the end (Birkland, 2011). Nevertheless, the researcher deliberately chose the above model because it comprises very important concepts that provide a clear direction that relate to the major variable in the study, which is discretionary policies and the model has provided a researcher with a starting point (Creswel, 2009, p. 64).

2.8 Chapter summary

The above chapter has looked at knowledge of school violence amongst participants, which shows that they are knowledgeable but there is variation in terms of how violence is regarded as a serious matter. Another issue that has been discussed in this chapter is the ways of curbing violence, which show that there is a variation in different settings. The ways of addressing violence include giving positive and negative rewards to

students, instilling special skills in both teachers and students and designing special programs aimed at curbing violence. Challenges of implementing policies and practices have also been discussed in this chapter, which include poor policy design, not involving the stakeholders, unfavourable environment, and lack of coherence in the implementation process. Perceptions of school violence have also been discussed which show that different stakeholders have different perceptions in different contexts, like others perceiving it in terms of problems in behaviour and others in terms of measures of curbing violence. Lastly, the chapter has discussed the conceptual framework, and the theoretical framework guiding this study, which is the Stages Model.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The chapter describes the approach and related processes that were followed to conduct the study. These include, the research paradigm, approach, research design, research methodology, research site, sample and sampling procedures, data collection procedures, research tools, data analysis procedures, pilot, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

The study was guided by an interpretive paradigm because it provided a means for in depth exploration and understanding of the school-based policies and practices, which aim at addressing school violence. The main aim of interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The motivation of research in interpretivism is understanding and interpreting everyday events, experiences and social structures including the values people attach to the phenomena. The belief of interpretivists is that social reality is subjective because the participants are the ones that shape the perceptions, values and aims of the researcher (Creswel, 2009).

Interpretive paradigm was suitable for this study because the issue of discretionary policies is not the same for all individuals since cases of school violence are not the same in all schools. Discretionary policies to be formulated depend on the type of violence that the schools face. As such, this paradigm provided a suitable platform to understand the subjective world of the participants.

3.3 The Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. The researcher arrived at this choice because it is concerned with developing explanations of a social phenomenon. Furthermore, this helped the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the idea being explored. It also helped the researcher to discover new thoughts and individual views about discretionary policies and practices that address violence. (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016; Neuman 2014). Use of qualitative methodology enabled the researcher to have a comprehensive understanding (Creswell, 2009) of discretionary policies and practices that address violence in selected day secondary schools. In addition to this, the qualitative research is concerned with finding answers to questions, which begin with why, how, and what (Hancock, 2002).

On the other hand, qualitative research approach has its own limitations. One of the limitations of the qualitative approach is that “the process is time consuming” (Taylor et al, 2016). This is so because qualitative research involves a great deal of data collection and analysis which sometimes takes an extended period of time to complete. To overcome this, the researcher took time and planned in advance by familiarising herself with the data collection tools and data analysis process which overcame the challenge mentioned above

3.4 Research design

The study adopted a case study design to address the issue of discretionary policies and practices that address school violence. Case study as a research design offers a richness and depth of information that are not usually offered by other methods (Hancock, 2002). Case studies can identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a manifestation by capturing as many variables as possible. The case study design was chosen for this study because it provides a suitable context for the research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2008).

Table 1 presents the types of case study designs including the one that was adopted for this study.

3.4.1 Types of case studies

Table 1: Case study types and definitions

CASE STUDY TYPE	DEFINITION
Explanatory	This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. In evaluation language, the explanations would link program implementation with program effects (Yin, 2003).
Exploratory	This type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003).
Descriptive	This type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003).
Multiple-case studies	A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2003).
Intrinsic	Stake (1995) uses the term intrinsic and suggests that researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use

	this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. The purpose is NOT to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon. The purpose is NOT to build theory (although that is an option; Stake, 1995).
Instrumental	Is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, and because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases (Stake, 1995).
Collective	Collective case studies are similar in nature and description to multiple case studies (Yin, 2003)

Note. Adapted from “Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers” by Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008), *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 547 – 549.

3.4.2. Descriptive case study

As defined above, this research adopted a descriptive case study design because it fits well with the research's design, which is to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). In this research, the phenomenon of addressing violence needs to be described and the schools in which it occurred.

However, one of the limitations of descriptive case studies is that they are time consuming since data collection is very intensive and long (Yin, 2003). To deal with this, the researcher had other people who helped her to collect data so that the time taken for data collection was lessened.

3.5 Sample and sampling techniques

The study used purposive and convenient sampling, which is non-probability sampling techniques (Creswell, 2009). A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In addition, with purposive sampling a researcher uses his or her judgement to select a sample that believes will provide the needed data based on prior information. (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). Purposive sampling was used to sample schools, head-teachers, form teachers and class monitors.

Creswell (2013), states that in purposeful sampling, the inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. In addition, Cohen et al. (2007), says that although purposive samples may not be representative and generalisable, the primary concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it. Likewise, in this study, participants were those who could provide the information required because they were able to articulate issues.

Convenience sampling in this study was used to select parents/guardians in the selected day secondary schools. The sample was selected according to the convenience of the investigator in convenience sampling (Reswell, 2009). The researcher in this study assumed that the parents/guardians that were selected conveniently provided the useful information as long as they had their ward/s learning at the sampled secondary school.

3.5.1 Study site

The study was conducted in four selected day secondary schools in Zomba district namely: Likangala Day Secondary School, Zomba Urban Day Secondary School, Chichiri Day Secondary School and Songani Day Secondary School because literature shows that Zomba is one of the districts with average dropout rates of about 3% as of 2022 (EMIS, 2022), although violence is not the major factor of dropout but just one of the factors. In addition to that, due to limited resources (financial and time) the researcher felt that Zomba was ideal since she lives there.

3.5.2. Participants

Participants in this study included prefects, head teachers, form teachers and parents. From the four categories, this study had a sample of 36 participants as explained in the next few sections.

3.5.2.1. Prefects

Prefects are in control of the other students and sometimes handle cases of violence if it occurs. Four FGD's were conducted with 6 learners from each school bringing the sample to 24. Prefects were purposively selected after the head teachers recommended that they are the ones that are involved with most of the things including issues that have to do with violence. Information from them provided more information to triangulate with the information generated from other In-Depth Interviews (IDI's).

3.5.2.2. Head teachers

As the overall seer of the school the head teachers were interviewed to provide all the necessary information regarding school violence and school-based policies that address violence. Four head teachers were interviewed.

3.5.2.3. Form teachers

The form teachers being the custodians of the learners in classes, they hear issues of violence, which happen in their classes and even around the school since they directly interact with the prefects. They were interviewed to provide more information concerning school-based violence and school-based policies and practices that address violence. One form teacher was interviewed at each school bringing the sample to 4.

3.5.2.4. Parents

Four parents were interviewed, 1 from each school because they also hear reports of school violence from their wards and sometimes are called to the school when such issues arise. Additionally, they provided more information that was generated from the other stakeholders.

3.6 Data generation methods and tools

Data generation in qualitative methods usually involve interactions with individuals or groups. Data was generated through in-depth interviews with school head teachers, form teachers and parents/guardians and Focus Group Discussions (FGD's) with class prefects in the selected schools. Since there were 4 enumerators during data collection, the FGDs, IDIs with the head teacher, form teacher and the parent/ guardian were conducted concurrently to minimise the time spent at one school. On average, the FGDs took about 1 hour and the IDIs took the average time of 30 minutes. In addition to the above interviews, the researcher also reviewed any relevant documents (desk review) that helped her understand the school-based policies and practices that address school-based violence like punishment books. The punishment books were reviewed at the end of all the interviews and it took about 20 minutes to review them. The three methods were used to enhance the data generated and to address the limitations each instrument could have. Triangulation in this study was achieved in terms of multiple data generation methods and multiple data sources used.

The interviewer had interview guides containing a list of questions that covered the areas she was focusing on. Similar questions were asked to the participants of the same category while others were asked during FGDs. Follow up questions were asked to make sure that optimal responses were corrected from the participants (Krueger, 2002). The FGDs and IDIs were recorded on a recorder and later transcribed. Verbatim quotes from participants were reported to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

3.6.1. In-depth interviews (IDI)

Westat (2010) explains that “the use of interviews as a method of generating data begins with the assumption that participants’ perspectives are meaningful, knowable and can be made explicit, and that their perspectives can affect the study’s success”. Interview guides were used to conduct face to face interviews with 4 school head teachers, 4 form teachers and 4 parents/guardians in selected day secondary schools. Bates, et al. (2008) stipulate that, face-to-face interviews provide greater detail and depth following insight into how individuals understand and narrate aspects of their lives and that the interviewer and interviewee can directly react on what the other say or does. In addition, there is no significant delay between question and answer. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2007) states that the interviews permit participants to express how they regard the situations from their own point of view and are a flexible tool for data generation which enable multi-sensory channels such as, verbal and non-verbal to be used. The researcher in this study developed interview guides (appendix 3 - 6) for each group of participants to generate comprehensive data on their perceptions about school violence and school-based policies that address violence. However, the challenges with face-to-face interviews are that; firstly, interviews are time consuming, open to interviewer bias and make some respondents uncomfortable

(Cohen et al). Secondly, due to the words used in the questions sometimes this leads to substantially different responses from different perspectives (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). These challenges were reduced by paraphrasing the questions, asking clear short and open-ended questions, using appropriate prompts, listening carefully and asking for clarification. Appointment for interviews were made in advance to avoid inconveniences.

3.6.2. Focus group discussions (FGDs)

A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds and experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest (Hancock, 2002). Participants are asked questions about their perceptions, attitudes, belief, opinions, or ideas. The recommended number of participants in an FGD is six to twelve. The group should be small enough to allow all members to talk and share their opinions and yet large enough to create diversity (Frankel et al., 2012). In addition, data collection was done when there were Covid 19 restrictions in place. So, we felt that 6 prefects would still provide necessary information. FGD's were conducted with 6 class prefects from each school in the selected day secondary schools. The researcher developed an FGD guide in advance to make the discussions focused (appendix 6). The researcher added some prompts and follow up questions depending on the direction of the discussions.

The disadvantages with FGDs were that some prefects were not expressing themselves freely due to shyness and low proficiency in English. In addition, others were afraid of their teachers once they get to know what they said about their conduct. To overcome the above challenges, the researcher allowed the use of both English and vernacular during the discussions. The researcher also made sure that everyone has spoken by giving each one

of the learners' a chance to speak. Additionally, the discussions were conducted at a venue that was away from other students and staff members to avoid inconveniences and make the participants free to express themselves and that no one was overhearing them apart from the facilitator. The discussion was audio recorded.

3.6.3. Document analysis

According to Ritchie & Lewis (2003), "documentary analysis involves the study of existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage". In this case, the researcher's role is limited to gathering, reviewing, and interrogating relevant documents. Document analysis was used in this study as a triangulation tool to confirm and supplement the data generated through IDI's and FGD's. The school punishment books were used in this study. The researcher's focus in these books was on the type of offences learners committed and the punishments given. The reason was to see how different cases of violence are dealt with. The documents were sought from the head teachers.

The main challenge with document analysis was that the school's records contained the general discipline records not necessarily cases of school violence. This agrees with what Creswell (2007) states that the disadvantage of document analysis is to locate the materials and obtaining permission to use it. In addition, other schools were reluctant to produce the books because it is considered as confidential. The researcher got permission from the headteachers and assured them that the information will not be shared with anyone and it will be used for research purposes only. Additionally, the researcher just took down some notes in a journal from the records she observed and returned the books while she was

doing other interviews. Further, the researcher was able to sort the cases that she saw fit for her study.

3.7 Data collection tools

Data collection procedures refer to the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established systematic fashion that then enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In this study, three categories of instruments were developed. These were semi structured interview guides for IDIs with the head teachers, form teachers and parents, FGD guide for class prefects and a journal that was used to record information from school punishment books. Recorders were used during all interviews to make sure that nothing was missed and then the recorded information was transcribed and translated verbatim.

The challenge with the tools like recorders was that sometimes they could just not record the interviews either because it was full since they had other information in them or just jammed. To overcome this challenge two recorders were used for one interview to make sure that everything was recorded, and the interviewer kept on checking the recorders performance just to make sure that they were working.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the study

According to Holloway and Wheeler, Macne and McCabe 2008 as cited in Anney (2014, p. 276) credibility is defined as “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings”. In other words, credibility means that the study should represent the true picture of the studied phenomenon. Trustworthiness is where the study is satisfying credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Therefore, trustworthiness means the ability of the study to produce the same results even if it is done on other respondents or repeated by other researchers and that those results would be confirmed or corroborated if other researchers conducted the same study (Anney, 2014, p. 276).

There are many ways of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. This study used triangulation, pilot study and use of direct quotes to make sure that the research is trustworthy.

3.8.1. Triangulation

Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2006, p. 141) defines triangulation as “the process of comparing different sources of data or perspectives of different participants. The above explained process helps to reduce the researcher’s bias hence distortions of the findings are minimised. In addition to that, the researcher’s confidence is increased that the generated findings reflect the true experiences of the participants as described by (Alexander, 2001 as cited in Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012).

“By combining multiple observers, theories, methods and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single methods, single observer and single theory studies. Often the purpose of triangulation in specific contexts is to obtain confirmation of findings through convergence of different perspectives. The point at which the perspectives converge is seen to represent reality”

From the above citation, it is clear that triangulation requires the use of more than one method, which can complement each other to reduce biasness. Bryman (2010) supports this by stating that triangulation involves the use of more than one approach to the investigation of research question in order to enhance confidence in the subsequent findings. Shenton (2004) adds that triangulation may involve the use of different methods, especially observations, FGD's and individual interviews.

This study used combined levels of triangulation, which were the IDIs with head teachers, form teachers and parents/guardians and FGDs with class prefects in selected day secondary schools in Zomba. In addition to this, documentary analysis was also used to support the information that was generated through IDIs and FGDs. Triangulation enriched the generated data because more in-depth data was generated and viewpoints and opinions from different participants were obtained.

3.8.2. Pilot

The researcher conducted a pilot study at Permunt Secondary School. As one of the Day Secondary Schools in Zomba, Permunt was appropriate for a pilot study because its participants had similar characteristics with the schools to be studied and it was not part of the selected schools. Pilot has a number of functions like principally to increase the reliability, validity, and practicability of the questions (Oppenheim, et al. as cited in Cohen, 2007, p.47). Turner (2010) adds that pilot testing assists in determining if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to make necessary revisions prior to implementation of the study (Kvale, 2007).

In this study, a pilot was used to test suitability of procedures in order to revise the instruments and ensure the method chosen would collect relevant data. Participants from each category of the interviewees were interviewed and a focus group discussion was done with a group of six learners, two from each class – a boy and a girl. From their responses, some amendments were made to the interview guides and FGD guide. Some questions were removed, others rephrased and others were added to the guides. For instance, the question about causes of school violence was removed from all guides because it was not capturing what this study wanted. In addition, the first question about knowledge of school violence in the head teachers guide was paraphrased by adding a question that was asking about violence in general. We also requested for punishment books to ensure that it would be possible to access them during the study.

3.8.3. Use of direct quotes

Corden and Sainsbury (2006), states that the use of direct quotes provides evidence for interpretations and claims that readers who see some of the original data could make their own judgements about the fairness and accuracy of the analysis. The researcher in this study used direct quotes from the interviews during discussions to bring in the voice of the participants. The direct quotes were used as further evidence for the study's trustworthiness.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Upholding ethical expectations throughout the study was taken into consideration because it is argued "an ethical study is the one that takes responsibility for integrity in the production of knowledge; acknowledges responsibility for the researched; and ensures that the mental, emotional, and physical welfare of respondents is protected" (O'leary, 2004, p. 151). As such the first step was getting an introductory letter from University of Malawi (UNIMA). This was submitted to the Education Division Manager (EDM) of Zomba who stamped the introductory letter as a request to the head teachers from the participating schools to support the study. The head teachers assisted by requesting the form teachers and the prefects to be cooperative. The purpose of the research and issues of informed consent were explained to the participants. Verbal consent was taken from all participants to make sure that they participated without coercion. Their freedom in case one wanted to withdraw was allowed (Creswell, 2003). They were also assured of their confidentiality. To maintain this, their names were not used throughout the discussion. They were treated with respect and dignity. Suitable venues to the participants were used to conduct all the

interviews and discussions. Lastly, the schools from which data was collected have not been mentioned and in some cases pseudo names were used.

3.10 Data analysis procedures

Qualitative data from the interviews and focus group recordings were analysed using the procedure that Creswell (2007) recommends. The researcher translated and transcribed the recorded interviews and FGDs and then read and re-read the transcripts in order to familiarise herself with the data generated. The researcher then coded the transcripts using deductive method. Predetermined codes were applied to the transcripts in order to have a clear understanding of the topic in question. The following were the predetermined codes in this study: knowledge of school violence, perceptions of school violence, strategies of addressing school violence, implementation of ways of addressing violence, challenges of implementing the strategies and solutions to challenges. After coding, code frequency was counted and predominant themes were assessed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher also read the notes from the journals several times and sorted out items, which matched the questions which needed to be answered.

After that, themes were organised based on the following research questions: What knowledge do parents, teachers and students in selected day secondary schools have on the existence of school violence? How do school participants' (parents, teachers, and students) perceive school violence? Which discretionary policies and practices address violence in schools? How are they implemented? What are the challenges that exist in implementing

discretionary policies and practices that aim at addressing violence in selected day secondary schools and how are the challenges resolved?

From the first question, which aimed at finding out what knowledge parents, teachers and students in selected day secondary schools have on the existence of school violence, there were three sub themes, which helped to determine their knowledge. The themes were; meaning of “school violence” which determined if the participants understood what the researcher was talking about, “perpetrators”, which helped to find out the people or groups of people who perpetrate school-based violence and “victims”, which helped to find out the people or groups of people who are the sufferers of school violence. All these sub themes helped the researcher to understand if the participants really had knowledge of school violence.

Two sub themes were generated from the second question, which aimed at finding out how school participants' (parents, teachers, and students) perceive school violence. The sub themes were perception in terms of both teacher's and learner's behaviour and reporting which focussed on the processes of the reporting procedures. Their perception helped to understand how the school participants become aware of school violence.

Two sub themes were generated from the third question, which aimed at finding out the discretionary policies and practices that address violence in schools. Availability of the policies and practices that aim at addressing violence and sources of the policies and practices.

The fourth question aimed at finding out implementation of the discretionary policies and practices in the schools. This question focussed on how the policies and practices are employed in the school.

The fifth question aimed at finding out the challenges that exist in implementing discretionary policies and practices that aim at addressing violence.

The last question aimed at finding how the challenges of implementing policies are resolved in the schools. .

The findings on the themes were then interpreted in relation to the stages model of policy process and literature review. The results either concurred or argued with the assertions of the theoretical frameworks and the research findings of other researchers in the literature review.

In terms of challenges experienced during data analysis, the first was the issue of the audios from the recorders where sometimes the voice was not audible enough during transcription. The researcher had to listen from the other recorders to get what an inaudible voice said since during data collection more than one recorder were used. This delayed the progress of transcription. The other one was on deciding the relevant sub themes to be considered. This was dealt with by identifying consistent and synonymous phrases, expressions and ideas that were common among the responses of research participants (Kvale, 2007).

3.11 Limitations of the study

The limitation of the study was that the schools did not consider school violence as a special and serious issue which made them not to have documented discretionary policies and practices that aim at addressing school violence. Schools having a special consideration to school violence and having documented discretionary policies would have provided rich data. Use of paraphrases and prompts helped to generate as much information as required, therefore credibility and trustworthiness of the study were not affected.

3.12 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed the research design and methodology. The study used the interpretive paradigm because it provides an in-depth approach for exploring the discretionary policies and practices that aim at addressing school violence. A case study design was used because it offers a richness and in-depth information that helped to understand the discretionary policies and practices that aim at addressing school violence and specifically, a descriptive case study was used because it describes a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. The chapter also looked at the data generation methods, which were IDIs, FGDs, and document analysis. Issues of ethical considerations and limitations of the study have also been explained. Finally, the chapter described how data was analysed and interpreted.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter overview

Chapter four presents and discusses the findings of the study guided by the Stages Model (SM) theoretical framework of policy process by Birkland. Stages Model gives the overview of the policy formulation and implementation at any organisation and schools are not exceptional. In this model, problems emerge in a society (school in this case) through various means. If the issue gains sufficient attention, then it is said to have reached the agenda. After that, an issue moves up on an agenda to the development of alternative solutions. Then the choice of the solution that will be used to address the problem, enactment and evaluation which gives feedback on the whole process and it begins anew. Similarly, when schools want to come up with their policies and practices in addressing problems, the same stages that the SM outlines must followed in both formulation and implementation.

The study was conducted in four public day secondary schools in Zomba. These schools have been identified as school A, B, C and D in the discussions for purposes of confidentiality and ethical issues. The labelling does not mean order of superiority or preference of the schools by the researcher. Data was generated through IDIs with the head teachers, form teachers and parents, FGDs with class prefects and document analysis. Learners who participated in the FGDs were assigned number 1 up to 6, head teachers were assigned HA, HB, HC and HD to match their schools. Form teachers were assigned FA, FB, FC and FD and parents were assigned PA, PB, PC and PD. The findings and discussion are presented by the main themes from the research questions and emergent sub themes from the analysed data.

4.2 Knowledge of school violence

The first question investigated the knowledge of school violence in day secondary schools. The study wanted to find out if learners, form teachers, head teachers and parents were familiar with school violence. Knowledge of school violence would help in giving school participants sufficient attention and reach an agenda since it is this knowledge that would prompt schools to come up with their policies to address it. In relation to the first question, the study also wanted to find out the meaning of school violence, examples of school violence, perpetrators and victims of violence.

4.2.1. Meaning of school violence

Meaning of school violence would help to determine if the participants understood what, was being researched in this study. Findings showed that students understood it as something that is done to you by force or making someone do something that she/he does not want, anything that hinders someone's rights and teacher's bad attitude towards learners while at school or on your way to and from the school. For instance, during FGDs, participant 1 from school A, 4 from school C, 5 from school B and 6 from school D explained:

“Violence is anything that someone does to you by force when at school.”

(Participant 1 from school A, 12/01/21). “Violence is doing something to someone that she or he does not want when at school or on your way to school.” (Participant 4 school C, 14/01/21). “Violence is anything that one does to someone that hinders one's rights at school.” (Participant 5 from school B, 13/01/21). “Violence is teacher's bad attitude towards learners at school.” (Participant 6 from school D, 15/01/21).

The definitions by prefects show that school violence is any form of maltreatment that happens while at school or to and from school. In some instance's learners gave an example of which showed that school violence is any irrelevant action by the teacher. They explained that when a learner does something wrong like coming to school late; teachers give an irrelevant punishment such as making a learner dig a pit latrine while other learners are in class learning. During interviews, learner 3 at school B said:

“ukangochedwa pangónongóno mwina ndi minutes ochepa chabe, kaya popita ku zochitika za ku sukulu, pa nthawi ya zochitika za sukulu kapenanso mwina pochokera ku break, aphunzitsi ena amakubweza kuti wachedwa nde ukakumbe chimbudzi anzako akuphunzira” (when you are late by just a few minutes, when you are on your way to a school activity, during a school activity or from a break, other teachers send you back that you should go and dig a pit latrine while your fellow learners are learning) (13/01/21).

The findings show that learners understood school violence as any violent act that happens while at school and/or on one’s way to or from the school. This shows that learners were aware of school violence but did not know that even violence that happens at a school related event is also considered as school violence.

However, research findings through the IDIs with head teachers, form teachers and parents show that they were aware of school violence as any kind of maltreatment from teachers to students, students to students, parents to students or students to teachers at school, on their way to school or at a school related event. Despite the diverse range of perspectives expressed by participants, a careful analysis of their responses reveals certain underlying concepts that serves as points of convergence like any kind of maltreatment linked to school. The findings concur with Beninger (2013) who states that cases of school violence are reported at school though he did not tackle what the

school participants regarded as school violence. In whatever case, school violence is any violence that is linked to school.

4.2.2. Examples of school violence

On the sub theme of examples of school violence, participants responses showed that any form of maltreatment whether physical or non-physical is regarded as school-based violence. The results from IDIs with head teachers, form teachers and parents, FGDs with prefects and document analysis indicated that physical violence like fighting amongst students, and teacher's bad attitude towards learners and use of bad language (bullying) by teachers and fellow students or non-physical violence were the common examples of school violence. This is seen from the response that student 3 of school C gave during the FGD:

ana a sukulu tokha tokhanso penanso timapangana nkhanza monga ngati kumenyana nthawi zambiri tikapanda kumvetsetsana. Mwachitsanzo, mwina mu kalasi anthu amalongolora nde aphunzitsi akafunsa tonse timakhala chete. Nde aphunzitsi aja amatha kutiuza kuti satiphuniztsanso tonse. Poopa kulangidwa osalakwa ukangotchula dzina la munthu amapanga phokosoyo amapezeka kuti amati tionana poweruka. Akatero amatha kukumenya and zimenezinso ndi nkhanza. (We fight most of the times amongst ourselves as students when we have a misunderstanding. For example, may be some learners were making noise and when the teacher asks, we all remain quiet. So, the teacher says he or she will not teach all of us. For fear of being punished innocently, when you mention the name of

the one who was making noise; that one says we will see when knocking off. He or she ends up beating you and this is also violence). (14/01/21).

This corroborated with what we observed during documents review. In almost all the punishment books, the most common school violence that was observed was fighting between students.

In relation to violence perpetrated by teachers on learners, a form teacher of school D during the IDI said:

“Some teachers just have a foul attitude towards learners. Our learners are just kids and as teachers we are like their parents when we are at school. When they do wrong, we are supposed to guide them. But you will see that other teachers are so vengeful. Once a student makes a mistake, they say we will see, or I will show them that am the teacher and just students. So, they do all sorts of things like not teaching the class just to show that they are in authority.” (15/01.21).

Further, student 5 from school A, made this comment during FGD: “*aphunzitsi pena satiyankhula bwino. Mwina walakwa muja eti, moti angokuphunzitsa bwino bwino amatha kumakulalatira. Pena amatha kumakuuza kuti umadzitenga ngati ndani, kukunyoza mu kalasi moti akuthandize. Zimene zonso ndi nkhanza.*” (Sometimes teachers do not talk to us nicely. When you are wrong may be, they shout at you instead

of guiding you properly. Sometimes they ask you who do you think you are? Despising you in class instead of helping you. That is also violence). (12/01/21).

The above findings of this study corroborate with the findings presented by UNESCO (2018) which revealed that physical fights and bullying were among the examples of violence that took place in schools. In addition to that, this current study's findings concur with Beninger (2013) who asserted that schools are not a "safe haven" as they are regarded because of violence. Furthermore, the issue of proposals from teachers and male students was also mentioned as an example of school violence. This is in support with the findings from Amnesty International Safe Schools (2008), cited in Beninger (2013:282), which revealed that 28 girls that were interviewed in Malawi said that they had propositions from their teachers. As observed from this study's findings, schools are not completely safe if we consider the above-mentioned examples of school violence.

4.2.3. Perpetrators of school violence

On the sub theme of perpetrators of school violence, participants responded in terms of one's status at school whether is a teacher or a student, sex in terms of boys and girls and class in terms of seniority. The evidence from the FGDs with learners and IDIs with parents, headteachers and form teachers revealed that teachers, fellow learners especially those from upper classes and males were the main perpetrators. This can be seen from the following statement that came out from prefect 5 from school C during the interview: "pena aphunzitsi sabwera kudzatiphunzitsa yikakhala nthawi yawo kuti atiphunzitse. Tikapita ku staffroom kuti tikawafunse timapeza angokhala kucheza ndi

anzawo kapena ali pa WhatsApp.” (Sometimes teachers do not come to teach us when it is their time to do so. When we go to the staffroom to find out what is going on, we find them just seated there chatting with fellow teachers or may be on WhatsApp (14/01/21).

Another example is a comment from participant 2 from school B during FGD who said; “ana asukulu anzathunso amatipanga nkhanza maka anyamata. Pena akatifunsira ife nkukana amatiopseza kuti tiona cholinga choti uchite mantha. Nde munthu pa sukulu umakhala ndi mantha. Ngakhalenso aphunzitsi amatha kunfunsira mwana wasukulu” (our fellow learners sometimes perpetrate violence on us especially boys. When they propose to us and we deny them, they threaten us with the aim of making us fearful. So, one is afraid when is at school. Even teachers do propose to students), [13/01/21].

In addition, during FGD at school D, participant 3 commented: “tikabwera kumene form 1 ana a asukulu a makalasi akulu akulu monga form 3 ndi 4 amatiopseza pena kutilanda zinthu monga zakudya, zimenezinso ndi nkhanza chifukwa amatiuza kuti tikakanena atimenya poweruka.” (When we have just reported for form 1, our fellow learners especially from upper classes like form 3 and 4 threaten by getting things like food from us. This is also violence because they tell us that once we report the incident, they will beat us when knocking off), [15/01/21].

Further, a teacher from school C during an IDI commented that;

Sometimes learners also perpetrate violence on teachers. For example, learners not following instructions from the teacher which in turn affects what the teacher wanted to do like making unnecessary noise or moving out of the class aimlessly because it affects our plans especially what we planned to achieve on that period (13/01/21).

From this study's findings, it is clear that everyone at school can be a perpetrator of violence. Even the teachers who are regarded as parents to students when they are at school and are supposed to protect them, are also mentioned as perpetrators. The findings also show that no one at school is completely safe since students are also mentioned as perpetrators of violence. The issue of male learners being the perpetrators of school violence concurs with the study that Beninger (2013) did and concluded that sexual violence was common from male classmates.

4.2.4. Victims of school violence

On the sub theme of victims of school violence participants responded in terms of one's status at school whether is a teacher or a student, sex in terms of boys and girls, class in terms of seniority as they did on perpetrators and added individual character in terms of reservedness and outgoing. The results from the FGDs with learners and IDIs with parents, headteachers and form teachers revealed that teachers, all learners regardless of sex especially those from lower classes and dependent on type of violence, females and shy learners were the main victims. This can be seen from the following statement that came out from a headteacher of school D: "ana a sukulu enanso amapanga nkhanza aphunzitsi,

ana a mwano, otukwana umachita kudabwa kuti ndi ana otani. Pena mphunzitsi amachita kukanika kuphunzitsa bwino chifukwa cha ana otere zotsatira zake amati mphunzitsi ndi wankhanza.” (Some students also perpetrate violence on teachers. rude students, so offensive; you even wonder what type of students they are. Sometimes a teacher fails to teach properly because of such type of students and as a result they say the teacher is violent (15/01/21).

Another example was a comment from student 4 and 5 of school B:

I feel like girls are the victims most of the times. When it comes to issues of sexual relationships, its male teachers proposing girls.” “Boys are affected the most when it comes to issues of punishments. The way boys are punished is different from girls. For example, during rainy season boys are told to slash a very big yard but girls are given a small yard (13/01/21).

In addition, student 1 of school A commented:

The students from upper classes take advantage of form 1 students. I saw one form 1 student walking in the corridors and the students from upper classes started teasing him, forcing him to do things and in the end, he did not feel comfortable (12/01/21).

Furthermore, a form teacher from school C made this comment:“Most of the times ana ofatsa nda amene amakhala ma victims a school violence. ochenjeretsawa amangowapezerera.” (Most of the times reserved students are the victims of school violence. The outgoing students just take advantage of them) [14/01/21].

The findings above indicate that anybody at school is a victim of school violence. Whether one is a student or a teacher, school violence is experienced by everyone. Generally, the findings on knowledge of school violence in the four Community Day Secondary Schools revealed that all the participants understood that school violence was acts of maltreatment whether physical or non-physical. They were also able to give examples of school violence, perpetrators and victims of school violence. The only difference was the choice of words that they used to define school-based violence. In some instances, it was understood as maltreatment from teachers to students or from students to teachers without considering that both teachers and students could be affected. Although participants showed knowledge of school violence, the punishment books, which were seen, did not show any case related to school violence as special cases. All cases in the punishment book were recorded the same way, which might mean that all cases were treated in general.

With regard to the Stages Model, knowledge of the problem is very important because it is what leads to it reaching the agenda, which is the first stage of the policy process (Birkland, 2011). This means that because there is knowledge of the problem (school violence) that would trigger agenda setting. Teachers' and students' knowledge of school violence is very important at this first stage because they are the interested groups or the concerned people in this whole issue. Without their knowledge, it would be very hard for school violence to be taken as a serious issue and reach an agenda. As Paski et al (2017) asserts in one of their studies, some authorities are aware of school violence,

but they just tolerate it. Lack of knowledge, denial of the presence of school violence and toleration of it by authorities that are also one of the interest groups at a school level would make it very hard for schools to come up with their own policies to address school violence. However, if they regard it as a serious matter, then it would be easy for schools to come up with their own policies that would help in addressing school violence.

The punishment books that were viewed did not really show special cases of school violence and that would mean that it is not treated as a serious or special matter but just as any other discipline case. Consequently, this would lead to schools not having discretionary policies and practices that address school violence. According to Stages Model, without an issue reaching an agenda, the policy process cannot continue. This is so because the subsequent stages depend on the emerging issue to reach an agenda. However, the findings above provides a better insight for policy makers to have a starting point if they would want to take up the issue to the other level.

4.3 Participants perception of school violence

The second question in the study explored the participants' perception of school violence. The question intended to find out how the participants became aware of issues of school violence. Under this theme, participants responded in two ways. Others responded in terms of behaviour of both teachers and students and others in terms of the reporting process.

4.3.1. Behaviour

From the analysis of the FGDs and IDIs, it was revealed that both teacher's and learner's behaviour play a vital role in school violence perception. The two are discussed as follows:

4.3.1.1. Teacher's behaviour

The research findings show that other participants became aware of school violence when they focussed on the students. As much as teachers have a lot of work to do but focus on learners help them to perceive school violence. For instance, at school C, during the IDI, HC commented:

kungoti masiku ano aphunzitsi anasintho zochita. Akabwera amangophunzitsa phunzitsa akamaliza amanyamuka nkumakapanga zawo. Alibe nthawi yokhala ndi chidwi ndi ana kuti adziwe zomwe akudutsamo. Chifukwa ukamakhala ndi nthawi yocheza nawo mpamene amamasuka nkumakuuza zomwe akudutsamo ndipo zina mwa izo ndi nkhanza mukuzinenazo. (It's just that nowadays teachers have changed their conduct. When they come, they just teach and off they go when they are done. They do not have time to focus on what learners are experiencing. Because when one has time to chat with the learners, learners end up feeling free to express what they are passing through and some of the issues are about school violence you are talking about (14/01/21).

Concurring with the above comment, a parent from school D (PD) said almost the same thing; *“Aphunzitsi akakhala ndi chidwi ndi ana amawamasukira nkumawauza za nkhanza zomwe akukumana nazo, akatero nde kuti adziwa za nkhanzazo.”* (When teachers are focussed on learners, they feel free and tell them about the school violence they are experiencing, in that way, they become aware of school violence) (15/01/21).

A form teacher from school A (FA) also made a similar comment;

“When you are focussed on your learners, you observe some changes and that makes you curious as to what the learner is going through. So, you call on that learner and inquire what she or he is going through. They tell you that maybe they were bullied or teased, and, in that way, you know what a learner is going through.” (12/01/21)

4.3.1.2. Learner’s behaviour

Although the above findings show that violence to some participants is perceived as teacher’s behaviour, some participants also responded in terms of learner’s behaviour.

During an IDI with the HA, here is what he said;

Most of the times learner’s behaviour will tell you what the learners are going through. You will note that a once happy learner is looking withdrawn. You call him or her and ask what the matter is; they tell you that this is what I am going through. And most of the times they are issues of violence whether from teachers or even from fellow learners. (12/01/21)

Concurring with the above comment, a form teacher from school D (FD) said:

“Sometimes you just notice how the learner looks, withdrawn and not happy but is among other students” (15/01/21).

These findings reveal that teachers need to pay much attention to their learners for violence to be perceived. Their focus on learners will help them notice that there is something wrong with a learner. On the other hand, learner’s behaviour tells if there is something wrong and, in this case, if a learner is going through school violence.

4.3.2. Reporting

Under the sub theme of reporting, the findings revealed that other participants perceived violence after the issue was reported and they also explained the reporting channel. Both FGDs with learners and IDIs with headteachers and teachers revealed that the first person that the victim reports to is the form teacher since he or she is in charge of the class. Form teacher from school B (FB) commented:

nthawi zambiri oyamba kuuzudwa ndi a form teacher ngati mwini class. Nde kutengera ndi nkhani momwe yilili, a form teacher amatha kukayitula ku discipline committee zikakanika mpaka kwa a head, zikavuta apo ku ministry yimakafika. Monga nkhani ya mphunzitsi kupanga chibwenzi ndi mwana wa sukulu yimakafika ku ministry. (Most of the times the first person to report to is the form teacher as the in charge of the class. Depending on the case, the form teacher leaves the matter to discipline committee, if it fails to be resolved, it reaches the headteacher and when it

fails too it reaches the ministry. For instance, the issue of a teacher being in a sexual relationship with a learner reaches the ministry) [13/01/21].

Concurring with the above statement, headteacher from school D (HD) also made similar comment:

“If it happens, they report. If it happens in class between learners, they report to the form teacher and the form teacher weighs the extent of violence. If it is physical fighting, it goes straight to the deputy head and depending on the situation sometimes the initiator might be suspended. If it is between a teacher and a student, it goes straight to the head of department and then he or she might take it to the head teacher and is the one who deals with the teacher. Most of the times it is just advising him or warning him that he or she should change” (15/01/21).

From the FGDs at school A, here is what learner 3 said: “nthawi zina timawauza a form teacher ndi omwe amathana nazo. Zikawakulira amatha kutumiza kwa a hedi nthawi zina ku ministry.” (Sometimes we report to the form teacher and he or she is the one who deals with the situation. When it is beyond him or her, he refers it to the head teacher sometimes to the ministry) (12/01/21).

The research findings revealed the reporting process that is followed in schools. Though it is not uniform, but one thing that is obvious is that the form teacher is the first person who is involved when reporting the issues of school violence. This means that if schools need

to come up with interventions, the form teacher should not be left out since is the one who is involved much. Additionally, the findings also reveal that the discipline committee also plays a very big role in issues of school violence. Thus, interventions should also consider this committee since it is also involved much in many issues including violence.

These findings concur with what other scholars have already found out in different studies that participant perceptions of school violence differ from context to context. The findings from this study have revealed that the perception of school violence is indeed different from other study's findings since this study's participants responded in terms of behaviour and reporting process. This is different from the findings of the study by Anderson (2016), which revealed that other participants perceived school violence in terms of major and minor violence problems such as misbehaviour and disrespectfulness. While findings from the study conducted by Mohapi (2014) revealed that participants perceived it in terms of ways of curbing violence.

According to SM, after the matter moves up on an agenda, the next stage is to come up with the alternative policy, which is the solution to the issue that has emerged (Birkland, 2011). As such, the perception of an issue would help in coming up with the right people to be involved in policy implementation since the policy makers would be aware of those who are at the core when it comes to solutions that have to do with the issues of school violence. According to this study's findings, the form teacher and the discipline committee would be the right people to be used to address school violence.

4.4 Discretionary policies and practices that address violence

On the question of discretionary policies and practices that address violence in schools and how they are implemented, the study was interested to know the availability of discretionary policies that address violence in the schools and programs and how they are implemented. In addition, the study questioned the sources of these policies. Further, the study questioned the process of coming up with the discretionary policies. The findings are discussed in the subsequent sections as sub themes to the question.

4.4.1. Availability of discretionary policies and practices

The research findings from the analysed documents revealed that there were no discretionary policies and programs that adequately addressed school violence but there were indeed school rules from the Ministry of Education available. Cases of school violence were not documented separately meaning that school violence is not treated as a serious issue in schools but as a general discipline issue.

However, the findings from the FGDs with prefects and IDIs with form teachers, parents and head teachers indicated that there are no discretionary policies that adequately address school violence specifically but all discipline issues. When asked about the availability of discretionary policies and practices, here is what student 6 from school B commented: “Am not sure if it is specifically for school violence but we are told that if we start a fight we will be suspended”. (13/01/21).

Student 3 from school D commented: “We are also told that everyone has the right to education and if one feels that he or she has been abused he or she should report to the relevant authorities so that they can deal with the abuser” (15/01/21).

A head teacher from school A (HA) said the following on the issue of availability of school-based policies and practices:

“We do not have special policies per say but what guides us are the school rules and regulations, and as we follow them, they prevent violence from occurring. Apart from that, when we have a student who is regularly involved in troublemaking, we sometimes refer that student to counsellors. We have teachers here who did counselling and guidance” (12/01/21).

FC from school C said on the same:

“There are no special policies or programs, but as a school we have rules that reduce violence. For example, if a form 3 student beats a form 1 student, is supposed to be suspended. Normally, every school has to have rules. But I do not know if we have special policies”. (14/01/21)

Similarly, PB from school B made the following comment: “sindikudziwa ngati pa sukulupa alipo malamulo a paderadera olimbana ndi nkhanza pa sukulu. Tikauzidwa za nkhanza pena timaopa kukanena kuti mwina nkhanza pa mwana wathu zipitirira akdziwa kuti anenezedwa maka aphunzitsi.” (I don’t know if there are special policies that address school violence. when we are told about school violence, we do not pursue

the issue because we fear that our child may continue facing violence if it has been realised that he or she has been reported especially teachers) (13/01/21)

The above comments show that the schools do not have discretionary policies or programs that adequately address violence. Absence of discretionary policies and practices or programs that adequately address violence in schools shows that the schools do not regard school violence as a serious matter and they just tolerate it. These findings are concurring with Psaki et al (2017) whose study found out that though the authorities in schools are aware of the existence of violence, but they just tolerate it. Having school rules that cater for discipline issues and sometimes referring the students to counsellors, is not enough, but schools need to have discretionary policies and practices or programs if school violence is to be adequately addressed. However, the findings from this study gives policy makers a starting point in case they would want to make a move on the issue of school violence.

4.4.2. Sources of policies

On the sub theme of sources of policies, the study was interested on the source of the policies that participants mentioned that guide the schools. Even though these policies are not specific for school violence, but they are the ones that are used in the schools. Participants mentioned the Ministry of Education (MoE) as the main source of the school rules. However, schools just customise them to fit their context. In addition, the process of how these rules are customised was also researched.

4.4.2.1. The Ministry of Education as the main source

The findings from the IDIs with the head teachers and form teachers revealed that the main source of the general policies used is the MoE and schools customise them so that they fit their context. The headteacher from school B (HB) made the following statement when asked about the source of the policies:

The MoE provides each school with the rules that guides the school, and the same rules are the ones that guide us. For example, in the rules they say, do not tease, vandalism is not allowed, and all these prevent violence from occurring. We take these rules and add other things that we see fit as an institution because schools are in different contexts. (15/01/21)

Concurring with the above statement, headteacher from school A (HA) commented:

“It’s combined, we have a general policy of how to handle discipline cases on schools such as cases of theft, rudeness, drug and alcohol abuse from the MoE and others were customised by the school in consultation with the parents” (12/01/21).

On the same, FC from school C made the following comment, “I know there is a school management handbook from the ministry where we refer when coming up with school rules. The handbook guides us on how to handle cases” (14/01/21).

The results above show that the MoE is the main source of the school rules and schools just tailor them so that they fit their environment. Further, the findings indicate that there is a process that is followed when customising the rules and this process is discussed below.

4.4.2.2. The process of customising school rules

On the sub theme of the process of customising the school rules, the study was interested to know who is involved in this process. The findings from this study show that the school authorities in consultation with other school stakeholders customise the school rules provided by the MoE. The findings from IDI with headteachers and form teachers revealed that PTA, SMC, and mother group (MG) are the main committees that are consulted to offer their insight on the school rules. The headteacher from school C (HC) on this issue made the following comment:

As already said, apart from teachers here, we consult the PTA, SMC and MG to give us their input on the issue of the school rules because they also know their children better. We call a meeting may be once a year or any time we want to make amends to the rules. After that then we discuss and conclude how we want the rules to be. (14/01/21)

A form teacher school D (FD) made a similar comment: “I know that the PTA, MG and SMC are consulted when coming up with school rules. A meeting is called where this issue is tabled and discussed” (15/01/21).

The results from this research show that the main school stakeholders are involved in the process of school rules customisation. Consultation in policy process is very important it leads to better outcomes and greater acceptance in the community, particularly among stakeholders (Birkland, 2011). Thus, consultation with PTA, SMC

and MG can lead to greater acceptance since these are the main stakeholders of the school community.

4.5. Implementation of school-policies

On the theme of implementation of school policies, the study was interested in how the available policies are executed. The evidence from the FGDs with prefects, IDIs with the headteachers and form teachers revealed that most of the times when any case of discipline including issues of school violence are noted, there is a process that is almost similar in all schools that is followed. Most of the cases at the school, rules are referred to the deputy headteacher, headteachers and discipline committee to make a decision by applying the available school rules.

Furthermore, the evidence from FGDs with prefects and IDIs with headteachers and form teachers revealed that there was a channel that was followed when cases arise be it a mere discipline case or cases of school violence. The only difference that was noted was who gave what type of punishment. For instance, most of the times learners just end up being given a punishment such as mopping the classrooms and sweeping the surrounding. This is how school authorities deal with mere discipline cases. However, other learners may end up being suspended for 2 to 3 weeks depending on the severity of the case at hand. Other cases that are regarded as very serious offences like fierce bullying and fighting may require a learner to be expelled and if it gets to that point, the school through the discipline committee and the headteacher writes the recommendations to the MoE which then makes the final decision. But it was reported

that although the schools write to the MoE, the MoE does not give feedback on the recommendations, as a result, the decision by the schools stand. Thus, according to this study's findings, we did find that the school authorities apply school rules to deal with discipline cases and school violence inclusive.

The findings of this study show that there are school rules that help schools to address school violence partially but there are no discretionary policies or programs on the same which is contrary to what other studies found. For instance, a study by Bourne et al (2015) found out that schools use strategies like parental conferencing and detention to address school violence. In addition, a study by Hughes (2016) found out that building children's life skills, building knowledge around safe behaviours, developing teacher's skills to manage behaviour are among the strategies schools use to address violence. Furthermore, Kelly (2017) in his study found out that programs like OBPP, SS/SH and VPP were used to address school violence. Similarly, UKaids (2018) thematic review revealed that reporting mechanisms were developed for children to report violence safely and capacity building for teachers and school management in which school violence was a core part of the training. All these studies have one thing in common, programs that address violence in schools.

In SM, implementation is the fifth stage, and it involves application of the solutions that were enacted. Solutions in this case may be guidelines, policies or rules among others that address school violence. It is only when the solutions are available that implementation can take place. Since schools do not have specific policies or programs that adequately address

school violence, the only implementation we see here is of the school rules from the MoE, which are then customised by individual schools. Lack of discretionary policies and practices that address school-based violence is resulting from the issue of schools not regarding school violence as a serious matter.

4.6. Challenges in implementing policies that address violence

The fifth research question intended to find out the challenges experienced in implementing school-based policies that address violence.

4.6.1. Challenges encountered in implementing policies that address violence in schools

All the participants were asked to identify the challenges encountered in implementing policies that address violence, since schools reported that they do not have discretionary policies and programs that address violence, this question was answered focussing on policy in general such as discipline policy, gender policy and inclusive policy. The study found that favouritism, fear to report, ignorance, rights, workload, and not involving some stakeholders were mentioned as the encountered challenges.

4.6.1.1. Favouritism

On the challenge of favouritism, the research findings revealed that there was a kind of unfairness in the way the adapted rules were applied by the authorities. This challenge was mentioned during the FGDs with prefects and IDIs with headteachers, teachers and parents. For instance, student 4 from school D made the following statement: “chimavuta

nchoti mwana wina akalakwa amapatsidwa chibalo mwinanso kuyimitsidwa sukulu, koma mwana wina kupanga chinthu chomwecho uona akungomutchetchetsa. Pamenepo sikukondera?” (The problem is that when one learner is punished when he or she commits an offence and sometimes is suspended, but the same offence if committed by other learners they just send him or her to slash grass. Is that not favouritism?) (15/01/21)

A parent from school B (PB) made the following comment on the same: “aphunzitsi amakondera. Umva mwana wina amuchotsa sukulu akalakwa mwina watiza mnzake koma winanso akateronso ampatsa chibalo chosiyana. Nde limenelo ndi vuto ndithu.” (Teachers are unfair, you will hear that learner x is suspended because he or she has teased a fellow learner but if learner y does the same, he or she is given a different punishment. (13/01/21).

The headteacher from school A (HA) made the following comments on the same:

Sometimes us as teachers are unfair in implementing these policies. What I mean is, learners who commit similar offence are supposed to be punished the same way. But you will find that one learner comes late and is told to sweep, and the other one does the same next time and you give him or her a whole different punishment, even bigger than the other one. So, learners tend to wonder and sometimes it may lead to misunderstandings. (12/01/21).

A form teacher from school C (FC) made the following comment:

As I already said, this is a day secondary school, when students make a blunder, they may decide not to come here, or others will make you forget. So, if students see that you did not do anything to one of them, they say you did not do this to learner x, so it is hard for a teacher to treat the other learner differently. (14/01/21)

These findings reveal that favouritism is a hindrance to policy implementation since all participants mentioned it. This may be because teachers reported that most of the times, they are not clearly told of the policies that are there and that policies are not even displayed for them to see.

4.6.1.2. Fear

On fear as a hindrance to policy implementation, the research findings revealed that there is a kind of fear to report to authorities whenever something is noted. This hindrance was mentioned during the FGDs with prefects and IDIs with parents. For instance, a parent from school C made the following statement: “pena sitipangapo kanthu kuopa kuti timuyika mwana pa mavuto, mwina amuchotsa sukulu kapena adzimusala kuti ngovuta. Penanso sitidziwa kuti tingamufikire ndani. Nde timangosiya.” (Sometimes parents do not act because of fear that if we take it up, we would be putting our child on a risk, maybe he or she can be expelled from school or may be discriminated that this student is troublesome. Sometimes we are ignorant of whom to report to. So, we just leave it like that (14/01/21).

Learner 1 from school B made a similar comment: “pena timaopa kuti mwina tikakaneneza aphunzitsi nde kuti adzitida.” (Sometimes we fear that if we report a teacher, he or she may hate us.” (13/01/21)

From the above findings, fear is seen as a hindrance to policy implementation because the authorities are not told of what is going on for them to implement the relevant policies. For example, even if policies that address school violence may be available, they cannot be implemented if the ones that note them do not report the issue to the authorities.

4.6.1.3. Ignorance

On ignorance as a hindrance to policy implementation, the research findings revealed that sometimes authorities are not aware of some of the policies. This hindrance was mentioned during the IDIs with teachers. For instance, a form teacher from school A made the following statement:

Sometimes as teachers we do not know some policies. You know these policies are not displayed, even the school rules are with the headteacher. So, we just act as we see fit not necessarily implementing the policies and that is why we have issues of favouritism. (12/01/21).

These findings reveal that it is hard for anyone especially teachers to implement the policies that they do not know. It is only possible to implement any policy if one is aware of it.

4.6.1.4. Rights

On rights as a hindrance to policy implementation, the research findings revealed that sometimes other policies are not implemented because they may look like infringing other people's rights. This hindrance was mentioned during the IDIs with teachers. For instance, form teacher from school B made the following statement:

You know these days the issue of rights is also a hindrance. We have YONECO here in Zomba and most of the times learners will say I am going to report you to YONECO. For instance, the issue of minority rights makes it hard for some guidelines to be applied. The school rules may say every learner should be in short hair for example. And you will find that a Bible believer learner says she cannot cut her hair because her religion does not allow that. If you force her, she says I will report you that you are infringing my rights. So, what if another learner decides to keep her hair also in the name of religion. Are you going to force her to cut her hair? No! And in the end, we just leave it like that as long as we are working, that is it (13/01/21).

The research finding of this study agree with the findings of Viennet and Pont (2017) who found out that one of the hindrances of policy implementation is coherent implementation strategy which talks about how policies are implemented to avoid hindering other policies. In this case, how policies would be implemented to avoid infringing learner's rights.

4.6.1.5. Workload

On workload as a hindrance to policy implementation, the research findings revealed that sometimes authorities have a lot of work to do especially in schools where there is shortage of teachers. This hindrance was mentioned during the IDIs with headteachers and teachers. It was mentioned that since there are no enough teachers in other schools, they have a lot of class work to do which results to other things like attending to discipline cases including school violence not being taken seriously unless it is something very serious. These findings reveal that the environment is not conducive for other policies to be implemented.

The findings of this study concur with Viennet and Pont (2017) study, which found out that a context that is not conducive, can hinder policy implementation. Thus, in this case, schools that are understaffed do not have a conducive environment to implement some policies since the authorities are very busy with other things.

4.6.1.6. Non-involvement of Teachers

On teachers not being involved as a hindrance to policy implementation, the research findings revealed that sometimes teachers are not asked for their input when coming up with policies. This hindrance was mentioned during the IDIs with teachers. For instance, a form teacher from school D made the following statement: “ifetu sitifunsidwa akamapanga malamulo. Bwezi nafe tikumawauza maganizo athu.” (We are not consulted when coming up with policies. We would be telling them our insight) [15/01/21].

The results of this study reveal that sometimes other stakeholders are not engaged when coming up with policies. These findings corroborate the findings of the study conducted by Viennet and Pont (2017), which revealed that inclusive stakeholder engagement reduces hindrances to policy implementation. Non-involvement of stakeholders leads to problems when it comes to acceptance of the policy. For instance, some policies may have problems to be accepted in schools if teachers are not involved since they are also the interested parties of the school community.

4.7. Strategies to address the encountered challenges

On the fifth and last theme, the evidence from the headteachers and teachers indicated the following as the strategies to address the challenges: open display of policies, civic education, and stakeholder engagement. Since the question about challenges was answered in general, the solutions to challenges were also answered in general.

4.7.1. Open display of policies.

The evidence from IDIs with form teachers revealed that open display of the guidelines would help in making all teachers as policy implementers and even students become aware of them. Since the guidelines are most of the times kept by the headteachers, teachers said it becomes difficult for them to ask the headteachers so that they can have a look at them. For instance, teacher FC from school C commented that “it is not easy to access the things or documents that are kept in the headteachers office” (14/01/21). As such, everyone can have access to them if they can be pasted openly like on the noticeboards and staffrooms.

4.7.2. Civic education

The evidence from IDIs with headteachers and form teachers revealed that there was a need to educate students, teachers and even parents on other things like issues of school violence. Since others fail to act due to lack of knowledge, it is important that they are educated so that they should be able to act when there is need. The following statement by the headteacher from school C point towards this evidence:

Sometimes as authorities we fail to act because we are not aware of what is going on. If parents, learners do not report to us, we cannot act. They need to be educated on what to do if they note something. For instance, learners need to be educated on the right channels to follow when they have experienced violence. Even parents need to be educated on what they should do if their child reports to them. (14/01/21)

The findings show that without civic education, the authorities will continue being ignorant of what is going on and seem like they do not want to do anything.

4.6.3. Stakeholder engagement

The study found that authorities are supposed to be involved when coming up with policies because it leads to high public acceptance. This is evidenced by the following statement from a form teacher from of school D:

Policy makers just come with policies without consulting the people. We are just the policy implementors. For example, re opening of schools, they came up with policies and just told us to implement. No congestion in class

yet we have 12 classrooms with over 900 students. Do you think that's possible? It's hard. Imagine, we were given two days to notify the stakeholders and after that the students must resume classes. We need to be consulted so that we can also tell them what can work in our context (15/01/21).

These findings show that stakeholder engagement is very crucial if policies are to be accepted publicly without hindrances. These findings concur with the findings of the study by Viennet and Pont (2017) who found out that inclusive stakeholder engagement is one of the factors that lead to the policies to be accepted publicly. Without consultation especially with the implementers, policies will be facing hindrances in their implementation.

4.8 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings of the study “an investigation of discretionary policies and practices used to address violence in selected day secondary schools in Zomba.” The study found out that the issue of school violence is well understood in all day secondary schools and that it was perpetrated by both teachers and learners. The study also found out that the participants perceived school violence differently. Others perceived violence in terms of behaviour while others in terms of reporting. The study further revealed that schools do not have discretionary policies that adequately address school violence but are guided by general school rules from the Ministry which are customised at school level to suit the context. Lastly, the study found out that there were

challenges in implementing policies in general due to a number of reasons including favouritism, fear, ignorance, rights, workload, and teacher involvement. The suggested strategies to address the challenges included open display of policies, civic education, and stakeholder engagement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the conclusions and implications drawn from the research findings in chapter 4. Suggestions for areas for further studies in line with the findings have also been outlined.

5.2 Conclusions and implications

The purpose of this research was to investigate the discretionary policies and practices in the way they address school violence in selected public day secondary schools in Zomba District. The study was guided by the following specific questions: What knowledge do parents, teachers and students in selected day secondary schools have on the existence of school violence? How do school participants' (parents, teachers, and students) perceive school violence? Which discretionary policies and practices address school violence? How are they implemented? What are the challenges that exist in implementing policies and practices that address school violence in selected day secondary schools and the suggested solutions?

In terms of the knowledge of the existence of school violence in public day secondary schools, the study concludes that the participants had knowledge of school violence. This is so because the participants were able to explain what is regarded as school violence, the perpetrators, and the victims.

Since teachers and students were mentioned as both perpetrators and victims of violence, it implies that both teachers and students are not very safe when it comes to the issue of school violence. The only difference is the extent to which each one of them is affected. Although both were mentioned as perpetrators and victims of school violence but then class, sex, status, and individual character brought in differences on whom is much affected by school violence. In terms of class, students in upper classes are mostly perpetrators of violence and those in lower classes are mostly the victims. In terms of sex, male students are mostly the perpetrators of school violence and female students are mostly the victims. In terms of status, teachers are mostly the perpetrators of school violence and students are mostly the victims. Lastly, in relation to individual character, outgoing students are mostly the perpetrators of school violence and shy students are mostly the victims.

Knowledge of school violence is the first step that would get an issue to reach an agenda. As Stages Model stipulates, prior to the policy process is an emergency on an issue and in this case emergency of the issue of school violence. Stakeholder's knowledge of an issue often influences its journey through the policy process. Thus, knowledge of school violence is very crucial if schools are to come up with discretionary policies that address school violence.

On the second question, which intended to find out how school participants' (parents, teachers and students) perceive school violence, it was revealed that others perceived school violence in terms of behaviour while others in terms of reporting. The difference on how school violence is perceived in schools may be attributed to the fact that schools are in different contexts, which may affect their perception. For instance, what may be regarded as violence in one environment may not be the same in the other. How one school might perceive school violence may not be the same with other schools. In addition, schools do not regard this issue seriously and as a result, in terms of reporting there are no clear channels to be followed. The study therefore concludes that the difference in perception of school violence is as a result of how schools define seriousness of the violence. Consequently, each participant perceives it differently.

Regarding the third and fourth questions, which sought to find out school-based policies and practices that address school violence and how they are implemented, the study established that there are no discretionary policies in schools that adequately address school violence apart from the general school rules from MoE. Schools just customise them by specifying some of the things that suit their context. Thus, issues of school violence are not handled in a special way but in general as any other issue at the school. The implication therefore is that the school might continue to face school violence, which interferes with discipline and the students' education. The absence of discretionary policies that address school violence may still be attributed to schools not regarding the issue of school violence seriously or they just tolerate these issues as Psaki et al (2017) found out in his study. Consequently, this affects the implementation stage in the SM model since there are no

discretionary policies that address school violence. However, the findings provides a starting point for policy makers if they would want to prioritize the issue of school violence. With regard to the fifth and sixth questions which intended to find out challenges that exist in implementing policies and practices that address school violence and suggested solutions, the study concludes that there are a number of challenges faced in implementing policies in general since the schools do not have discretionary policies that adequately address violence. Despite the fact that schools do not have discretionary policies that address violence, but there are challenges in the implementation of other education policies such as discipline policy, gender policy and inclusive policy due to favouritism, fear, ignorance, rights, workload and teacher involvement. This could possible mean that even if schools were able to develop policies to deal with school-based violence, their implementation might meet the same challenges being met by the other policies.

On the suggested strategies to address the encountered challenges, the study established that open display of policies, civic education and stakeholder engagement would solve most of the challenges faced in policy implementation. This also has affected the last stage in SM of policy process which is evaluation, since there are no challenges that affect implementation of discretionary policies and practices that address school violence. This would have helped in evaluation of the policies and improve on them by going back to the first stage in SM model.

5.3 Suggested areas for further studies

Since the study focused on discretionary policies and practices that address violence in public day community secondary schools, the researcher proposes the following areas for further research:

- The similar study to be conducted in boarding secondary schools by investigating discretionary policies and practices that address violence since it is a different context the study there might produce different results.
- Other studies would investigate the causes of school violence by investigating the underlying factors that contribute to school violence, which would inform policy and practices development at school level.
- The other study would focus on the impact on students by assessing the short-term and long-term effects of school violence on students' academic performance.
- The other one would focus on technology and media by investigating the role of technology, social media and online platforms in fostering school violence.
- The other study would focus on school climate and culture by investigating the role of school climate and culture in relation to violence

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Clearance and Approval for Data Collection

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3rd November, 2021

To Whom It May Concern

CLEARANCE AND APPROVAL FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter is written to authorize Ms Lusungu Chirwa to go and collect data for her project. This is after she has satisfied the requirement (acceptable work accomplishment) in her dissertation proposal that she can now proceed to collect data for the next phase of her project work.

Thank you,



Dr Richard Nyirongo
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Please attach

Appendix 2: Interview guide for head teachers

- Have you ever heard about violence? What about school violence? What is it?
- How do you view school violence?
- What kinds of violence do take place at your school? Who are the perpetrators and the victims?
- What happens when violence takes place at your school? How do you deal with the perpetrator and the victim?
- How do you handle violence at your school? E.g. a case where the perpetrator is a teacher?
- How do you handle it where a victim is a teacher?
- Does the school have special policies and practices for managing violence? Who is involved in making them? What are they?
- How are they enforced?
- What are the sources of these policies and practices?
- What challenges do you face in managing violence at your school (enforcing the policies and practices)?
- How can these challenges be overcome?
- Are their policies from the ministry or division level for managing school-based violence?
- How helpful are they?
- Do you face any challenges in using them?
- How do you hope to overcome them?

- **NOTE:** ask if the head teacher has any book for the school where he/she records cases of offences and check the documentation in there and record the kinds of offences that relate to violence, the perpetrators and victims and how they dealt with it.

Appendix 3: Interview guide for form teachers

- How would you describe school-based violence at this school?
- What kinds of violence do take place at your school? Who are the perpetrators and the victims?
- Who are the main perpetrators?
- Who are the main victims?
- How do you manage violence at your school? i.e. How do you deal with the perpetrator and the victim?
- How do you view school violence?
- What is it that you regard as violence in school and what you don't regard as violence?
- Does the school have special policies and practices for managing violence? Who is involved in making them? What are they?
- How are they enforced?
- What are the sources of these regulations and practices?
- What challenges do you face in managing violence at your school (enforcing the policies and practices)?
- How can these challenges be overcome?
- Are their policies from the ministry or division level for managing school-based violence?
- How helpful are they?
- Do you face any challenges in using them?

- How do you hope to overcome them?
- **NOTE:** ask if the teacher has a punishment book and check the documentation in there and record the kinds of offences that relate to violence, the perpetrators and victims and how they dealt with it

Appendix 4: Interview guide for parents

- There are so many cases of violence in our country such as families fighting, politicians fighting, sexual abuse etc. Do you think schools also suffer similar violence or any other kind? What are these? Have you ever heard about violence? What about school violence? What is it?
- How do you know about this violence in school? Who usually reports violence that happen at school between boys and girls?
- How do you perceive school violence? Do you think violence has an influence on what goes on at school? What type of influence (positive or negative)?
- What happens when a parent/s receive/s a report of violence?
- Imagine you receive a report that your child has experienced violence at school, how would you handle it?
- How common are this school-based violence at the school your child/ren go to?
- Who are the perpetrators and victims?
- What happens if a teacher is involved as a perpetrator or victim?
- Do you know if the school or community has regulations to guard school violence? How would you describe them?
- What do you think are the facilitators and hindrances to the implementation of these regulations and practices?
- How can these challenges be overcome?
- Do you think you adequately participate in managing violence at school?

Appendix 5: FGD guide for class monitors

THEME	MAIN QUESTIONS (<i>high priority</i>)	PROBES (<i>low priority</i>)
Knowledge of school violence	• Have you ever heard about violence? - How would you describe school-based violence? Who are the perpetrators? • How is school violence different from other kinds of violence?	• Where? • Who suffers the most between girls and boys?
Perceptions of school violence	• Why should you pay attention to violence? • How is violence regarded at your school (its importance)? • What kinds of violence do take place at your school? • How can you describe your relationship with the authorities? (attachment and commitment to the school) • Why does violence exist in schools?	• What is it that you regard as school violence? • Have you ever seen or heard about someone being a victim or perpetrator of violence at your school?
School-based policies and	• How is violence detected at your school?	• How do authorities deal

practices and implementation	• What is the process of managing discipline? • Are there particular rules and regulations/guidelines for managing violence at your school? • Who is involved in making these rules/regulations? • How are they enforced?	with cases of violence? • What are the regulations • What is your role in the implementation? • What role do students take?
Challenges and solutions to implement the policies and practices	• What are the challenges of managing violence at your school? • How does your school hope to overcome these challenges?	