

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
PRACTICES: A CASE OF SOME PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF
CENTRAL EAST EDUCATION DIVISION IN MALAWI**

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

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

MAY, 2019



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(Policy, Planning and Leadership)

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DECLARATION

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

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Steriah, and to our daughters; Linda, Nancy and Tiyamike, all of whom sacrificed their comfort to ensure that I successfully venture into this intellectual vineyard.

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices in some selected public secondary schools in Central East Education Division. Guided by Choice Theory of William Glasser (1998), the study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were generated through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with schools' head prefects and general students respectively. The rationale for the study followed other studies' findings that students' views had for so long been neglected despite teaching and learning centering around them. The data which were thematically analysed, revealed that students understood what constitutes effective school discipline practices and causes of students' indiscipline in schools. However, it has also been shown that there are barriers to effective school discipline which do not originate from students only, but also from teachers, school managers and the ministry of education. The study concluded that students are aware of, and need effective school discipline practices in their schools; and that they should participate actively in decision-making of the school if effective discipline in schools is to be achieved. By implication, it was noted that teachers, school managers and the MoEST need to be pro-active rather than reactive when dealing with students' indiscipline; periodically evaluate the school discipline policies to suit the present situation and promote fairness; and need to train both students and teachers on holistic approach to discipline.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEED	Central East Education Division
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
EAZ	Education Action Zones
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
G & C	Guidance and Counselling
GTSCR	Government Teaching Service Commission Regulations
MGDS	Malawi Growth Development Strategy
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MPSCR	Malawi Public Service Commission Regulations
SSMH	Secondary School Management Handbook
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on contextual background of the study. It also provides the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study as well as limitations and delimitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Our society is made up of organisations which have goals to fulfill. However, among other factors, without proper discipline, none of these would be realised. For them to operate smoothly, all have a set of rules and regulations by which all members of the organisation are expected to abide by (Atieno, 2014). The same applies to educational organisations. Students are seen in compliance when they adhere to established rules and positively respond to adult requests. When they do not, some form of discipline often is applied. An often stated assumption is that stopping a student's misbehavior using social control practices will make her or him amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so (Basic Education Department, 2012). However, the assumption ignores all the research that has led to understanding psychological reactance, that is, the need for individuals to maintain and restore a sense of self-determination (Glasser, 1998). Moreover, it belies two painful sets of data: the number of students who continue to manifest poor academic

achievement and the staggering dropout rate in too many schools (Basic Education Department, 2012).

Students are key stakeholders and the most essential resources in education (Ndeto, 2013). It is of paramount importance to direct students to exhibit acceptable attitude and behaviour within and outside the school. For effective learning to take place, effective discipline practices have to be employed in schools in order to promote quality education to the youth as provided for in section 5 of the Malawi Education Act (2013). Telep (2009) describes effective school discipline as the one that helps children learn to control their behavior so that they act according to their ideas of what is right and wrong, not because they fear punishment. For example, they are honest because they think it is wrong to be dishonest, not because they are afraid of getting caught.

Schools have a number of objectives to achieve in a student or learner. Malawi's national goals of education clearly state that education should provide knowledge and skills in learners so as to enable them become useful citizens (MoEST, 2008). Equally so, schools are also there to produce learners with character which is acceptable in the society they live or exist. Thus, education should 'inculcate acceptable moral and ethical behaviour' in learners (MoEST, 2008, p.50). However, many issues countering these objectives continue to arise in public secondary schools, one of which is students' indiscipline. Students' indiscipline often appears to be the most prevailing problem affecting schools (Temitayo et al, 2013). Discipline has been addressed from many angles; administrators, parents and teachers (McMaster, 2002). Administrators and teachers blame parents and students for school indiscipline while parents blame teachers (Jinot, 2018).

The issue of indiscipline among students in schools is global and perhaps the most discussed in the literature worldwide (Gaston, 2015; Ndeto, 2013; Upindi, 2016). Indiscipline cases may include but not limited to: not doing their homework, class shirking, truancy, out of bounds, consuming alcoholic drinks, smoking, being verbally and physically aggressive towards their peers and members of staff, vandalizing school property, late coming to school and other forms of student unrest (Maluwa-Banda, 1995; Zubaida, 2009). Such cases have not spared Malawi public secondary (Kuthemba-Mwale, Hauya & Tizifa 1996). Following rampant cases of indiscipline, the Ministry of Education commissioned a study into secondary school discipline conducted by Kuthemba-Mwale, Hauya and Tizifa (1996) to determine and describe the impact of indiscipline on school and school property, pupils' life and society in general. The study vindicated the existence of the problem in secondary schools. Among other things, the study found that indiscipline cases are rampant in Malawi due to misunderstanding of democracy, pupils' reaction to teacher-pupil communication and quality of teachers in secondary schools. The study however, did not seek the views of students regarding what they considered as effective school discipline practices.

The prevalence of indiscipline problem in secondary schools of Malawi was also vindicated by the Circular letter of March 2000 by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). The circular on discipline quoted incidents of indiscipline in Rumphi, Robert Laws, Chaminade and Dowa Secondary Schools. In this circular, MoEST, outlined Policy Guidelines on Discipline to harmonise the handling procedure of

indiscipline cases in secondary schools. Among other issues, the Discipline policy detailed the offences that require internal corrective measures and the types of these corrective measures. As cited by Kayira (2008) in Moya (2000), cases of indiscipline were also reported in schools such as Dedza government, Stella Maris Girls, Mulunguzi, Dzenza and Mzuzu Government (Kayira, 2008). In his study, Kayira found that students' participation in school issues is minimal.

The indiscipline cases have not spared secondary schools in Central East Education Division (CEED). Evidence of cases of indiscipline in CEED is rampant. For example, at Nkhotakota, secondary school, form four students were all suspended for refusing to write the school's mid-term examinations. The students' action came as a protest strategy as they claim that they were far behind in learning to complete their syllabi to sit for mock examinations four months before national examinations arguing they wanted to prepare for Malawi National Examinations (Nyasa Times, 2015). At Tchawale Community Day Secondary School in Dowa, students vandalized school property to force the authorities send away their head teacher out of the school on unconditional posting for failure to control the transfer of 'critical' teachers from the school (Kambewa, 2016). In addition, four students at Matenje Community Day Secondary School in Salima were arrested by the police on suspicion that they were part of six students whom gang-raped their female colleague at a self-boarding compound (Maingo-Mana, 2018). These cases disrupted teaching and learning in these schools as they brought not only fear and anxiety among both teachers and students, but time was also wasted in trying to arrest these cases instead of teaching and learning.

The frequent occurrence of indiscipline cases works against the value of education which is to educate students to develop good character (MoEST, 2008). Therefore, school indiscipline has become a major worry to teachers, parents, school authorities, students and the entire community. Hence, there is need to explore effective school discipline practice to curb indiscipline. The aforementioned cases seem to indicate that students are all responsible for cases of riots and vandalism in schools. In fact, research has shown that teachers usually consider students to be the source of school disciplinary problems (Edwards, 2004). Perhaps, seeking the views of students on why they engage in disruptive behaviours will be a key to resolving school indiscipline. Seeking the views of students in promoting effective school discipline practices is important because most of the blame on indiscipline is placed on students; yet, little effort has been applied to hear their side.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Managing students' behaviour has been a great challenge and concern to many teachers, parents and entire society (McMaster, 2002; Mwale, 2006; Chazema, 2007; Lewis, 2007; Upindi, 2012; Chatambalala, 2010). The disruptive behaviour of students hampers the atmosphere for teaching and learning in school. This leads to loss of time for classroom learning, affect academic performance of students, threaten school safety and ruin students' chances of becoming successful in their academic pursuit and life in general (Temitayo, 2013). For a school to be very productive and effective, the discipline of both the students and teachers are very important. On the other hand, Blomberge (2012) expressed that school that is safe, supportive and gives an opportunity for students to learn and grow is a top concern for everyone in the field of education.

School authorities have attempted to use policy through school rules and regulations to, send home students with unruly behavior as well as beating among others, to curb students' indiscipline (Kayira, 2008). However, indiscipline continues to worsen in CEED. Teachers cannot teach in an environment that is volatile; parents are worried with unruly behaviour of their children, and the performance of students themselves is dwindling due to these behaviours. Since the issue of student indiscipline in schools in Malawi has become a major worry to teachers, parents and the public at large, there arose a challenge to school management too. However, numerous studies that have been undertaken in this area in Malawi (Mwale, 2006; Kayira, 2008; Sakala, 2009; Wanda, 2009; Lewis, 2007; Atieno, 2014; Gaston, 2015) have not specifically looked at the views of students regarding effective school discipline practices. Therefore, the study seeks to undertake an in-depth exploration into students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices in selected public secondary schools in CEED.

1.4 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices in some selected public secondary schools in CEED.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by a main and subsidiary research questions.

1.5.1 Main Research Question

What are students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices?

1.5.2 Sub-Research Questions

- i. What do students consider as effective discipline practices in public secondary schools?
- ii. What are the causes of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools?
- iii. What do students perceive as barriers to effective school discipline practices?
- iv. What changes in discipline practice should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of students?

1.6 Significance of the Study

In Malawi very little has been done to understand the problem of indiscipline in schools, particularly with a specific focus on students' perception of effective school discipline practices. The findings of the study will therefore, shed more light to educational stakeholders on the significance of involving students to uphold school discipline than just relying on views of teachers, parents, and school management. Using the findings of this study, schools would perhaps effectively evaluate their discipline practices and use some of the findings of the study to promote effective school discipline. The study further, adds more depth on existing body of knowledge on managing school discipline effectively. Therefore, the study contributes to the body of knowledge as it provides the specific views of learners on effective discipline practices, causes of indiscipline as well as barriers to effective school discipline practices.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study focused on students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices in Central East Education Division (CEED). The other limitation was that some head teachers were reluctant and suspicious to allow students participate in the study arguing students would only talk negative about teachers. However, to ensure that head teachers

grant consent to researcher, specific purpose of the study was explained to them and confidentiality and anonymity were assured to them. Finally, allocating time to engage the participants was difficult especially during the official school hours because of academic commitments of students. The researcher therefore engaged the respondents after the official school hours.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

This section provides definitions of key terms used in this study for easy understanding. Below is a list of terms and their definitions.

1.8.1 Discipline

Practice of teaching or training a person to obey rules or a code of behaviour in the short- and long-term to teach children self-control and confidence by focusing on what they are capable of learning so that they understand their own behaviour, take initiative, be responsible for their choices, and respect themselves and others.

1.8.2 School discipline:

Degree of order and structure in the school as well as the extent to which the school community views the learner behaviour as the appropriate socially accepted behaviour.

1.8.3 Effective discipline:

Discipline that helps children learn to control their behavior so that they act according to their ideas of what is right and wrong, not because they fear punishment.

1.8.4 Effective school discipline:

Discipline displayed by a learner/student to control his/her behavior so that he/she acts according to his/her idea of what is moral or immoral, not because he/she fears

punishment by from the teacher. That is, all activities that contribute to students' intrinsic motivation, self-management and decision-making skills.

1.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the problem under investigation has been introduced and highlighted in terms of its nature and scope. The chapter has provided the background to this study, statement of the problem as well as purpose of the study. Furthermore, the chapter has outlined the research questions guiding the study, its significance and limitations. Finally, it has provided definitions of key terms used in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on reviewing literature of the study. It starts with a review of literature related to effective school discipline practices in public schools. This is followed by a discussion of causes of students' indiscipline in schools; perceived barriers to effective school discipline practices and later, changes in discipline procedures in schools to ensure positive behaviour change in students.

2.2 Effective Discipline Practices in Schools

Some studies at both global and national level revealed numerous discipline practices that are considered effective in schools. Effective discipline in this discussion is a form of positive discipline that focuses on discipline rather than punishment (Telep, 2009). It aims to teach children to understand and follow social rules, both within the classroom and outside it, without using physical or emotional violence. It emphasises teaching children to do things right rather than punishing them for doing wrong. It aims to encourage self-discipline and mutual respect within a non-violent and caring environment (Basic Education Department, 2012). This section discusses use of guidance and counselling, creating an atmosphere of trust and team work, respecting students as individuals with rights, praising students when they have done something good, promoting students' participation and effective use of discipline and punishment policy as some forms of effective discipline practices in schools.

2.2.1 Use of Guidance and Counselling

According to a study carried by Atieno (2012) on factors influencing indiscipline among students in public day secondary schools in Makadara district, Nairobi County, the use of guidance and counselling (G & C) was found to be the common practice mentioned by teachers and teacher counsellors as a practice that can promote effective discipline in schools. In agreement, the Wangai report of the task force on student discipline and unrest (2006) as cited by Mikaye (2012) gave a strong recommendation for the appointment of teacher counselors for every public school. Perhaps, G & C is the most suitable method of instilling discipline among students, since it challenges the self and proposes alternative behavior to the children without hurting their ego. This is similar to the findings of the study carried out by Ndung'u (2002) who advocated the use of G&C more often since it advocated for dialogue, discussion and reasoning together with students. This made them understand themselves and discover their strong and weak areas. Guidance and counseling should therefore be intensified in schools as a preventive disciplinary measure.

2.2.2 Consulting Students on School Decisions

Another discipline practice that came out of the literature reviewed is the need to consulting students when making decisions of the school that affect them. It transpired that students should be allowed to actively participate in school activities and decision-making. In a study conducted by Whitehead and Clough (2004) to explore what could be learned from pupils in Education Action Zones (EAZ) in England to inform practice and raise attainment, the study found that the majority of pupils responded positively to being consulted about their learning environment. The researcher then concluded that if the

zone schools are set to empower people and communities, decision-makers need to listen to pupils' views. This would allow the possibility that the policies can be informed by, owned by and supported by the pupils. Similarly, Osler (2000) in his study conducted in England whose purpose was to identify practices and principles which schools might adopt to promote good discipline and guarantee the rights and responsibilities of pupils, found that pupils' responses showed that they see school discipline as related to teacher and pupil relationships and to school cultures that permit them to participate. They further argued that their involvement in decision-making increased their motivation to achieve and made them feel part of the school. Hence, if schools are to promote effective discipline, they need to allow students get involved in decision making of issues that affect them.

A study by Mulford and Johns (2004) in Australia, also supports the practice of consulting students as it found that student participation in decision-making and management resulted in a range of positive benefits such as greater connectedness and a sense of community within the school, reduced levels of vandalism and an overall improvement in students' behaviour and attitude. By implication, this entails that a student who is involved in decision-making of the school cannot engage in acts of indiscipline as he or she develops a sense of ownership. The importance of consulting students was further echoed by Kayira (2008) who quoted Adams (1987) by arguing that students' consultation firstly, makes students feel part of the school community and believe that their interests and wishes are not completely ignored; and secondly,

participation gives an insight into democratic processes and the difficulties of arousing interests in decision-making.

2.2.3 Celebrating learners for their Positive Contribution

Although students have been mostly considered to be on the negative side of the behavior, sometimes students who were once considered unruly may display positive behaviour at school. To this end Sheri (1998), as cited by Nthebe (2006) suggests that celebrating learners for their positive contributions to the school and school community is an effective tool to promoting effective discipline. In a study, ‘Positive Discipline Practices in Schools: A Case of Mzilikazi District Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe’ conducted by Sibanda and Mpofu (2017), they noted that there is also need to reward positive behavior of a student rather than focusing on rewarding academic performance only. He argued that sometimes, schools put more emphasis on rewarding performance on academic aspect and ignoring the issue of positive behaviour. Further, some teachers do not appreciate the change of behaviour which their student might have shown (ibid). This implies that if teachers and parents are able to appreciate change in their students or children, no matter how small it may be, students will feel recognized and motivated by the recognition. This may minimize indiscipline and at the same time promote discipline in schools.

2.2.4 Teachers Displaying Modelling Behaviour

Another effective discipline practice discussed in the available literature is the ability of the teachers to model positive behaviour to students. This was noted in a study conducted by Sibanda and Mpofu (2017) that if teachers display good manners through behavior, students are likely to imitate them. In other words, teachers are expected by the society to

model positive behaviour to learners so that learners too, take after their behaviour. However, this has not been always the case as some teachers have been accused by learners as being habitual drunkards (Rono & Gichana, as cited in Murithi, 2010). Murithi (2010) cited an incident in Kenya where more than one hundred learners at a school rioted citing indecent dressing by some of the teachers which disrupted learners' concentration during lessons. This concurs with a study carried by Mumthas et al (2014) in a study, 'Students and Teacher perception of Disciplinary Practices: Types, Reasons, Consequences and Alternatives'. The study revealed that as discipline practices, teachers used to send learners away from the class, beating, reprimand, making learners stand on the bench, laughing at them etc. These teacher behaviours show how cruel teachers can be. Since a teacher is an authority and a role model to students, students tend to imitate their behaviour (Sibanda and Mpofu, 2017). Consequently, the school environment may not have a health discipline environment. Therefore, teachers need to display a positive role modelling behavior to promote effective discipline in schools.

2.2.5 Effective Use of Discipline and Punishment Policy

The review of literature in Malawi revealed that effective use of discipline and punishment policy is an effective tool to promoting discipline in schools. Sakala (2009), in his study conducted to single out the main opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the Discipline Policy in the Malawi Secondary schools, observes that schools need to have clearly defined rules and regulations and also clear penalties for their breaches of offences. In other words, if the school can have well defined rules and regulations with clear penalties for the breaches of offences which are well understood by students themselves, effective discipline in schools can be achieved. In his study, "The

Role of Punishment in Ensuring Discipline and Order in Selected Secondary Schools in Central West Education Division in Malawi, Chatambalala (2010) found that schools have discipline and punishment policies on which they base their discipline and punishment decisions. Some of these are documents such as; charge of offence sheet, rules and regulations and student discipline code of conduct. How effective this practice is, depend on the implementation of it. However, using social control mechanisms to control students' behavior may not necessarily bring discipline on permanent basis but temporal, as this ignores students' needs of autonomy and self-determination (Glasser, 2009).

According to Robbins (1998: 77), the essence of effective discipline can be understood as fair if authorities respond more quickly to a discipline issue; issue a warning before initiating the disciplinary actions; state the problem specifically by giving the date, time, place and individual involved and any mitigating circumstances surrounding the violation; allow the person to explain his/her position regardless of what facts you have uncovered; and keep the discussion impersonal and penalties should be connected with a given violation not with the personality of the individual violator among others.

2.3 Causes of Students' Indiscipline in Secondary Schools

In order to deal with any problem effectively, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the underlying reasons behind the problem (Lochan, 2010). No amount of teaching or respect will make discipline effective unless reasons for misbehaviour are understood. This section discusses parental or home factors, school environment and peer related factors as the major causes of students' indiscipline.

2.3.1 Parental/Home Factors

In the study by Temitayo et al (2013) titled “Management of Disciplinary Problems in Secondary Schools: Jalingo Metropolis in Focus”, the researchers conducted a study to among other things, investigate the causes of disciplinary problems being experienced in these schools. The study found that indiscipline of students in schools was as a result of bad behavior that emanated from parenting at home; troublesome parents had problems with children; neglected children were troublesome at school; and most parents could not pay attention if their children were absent from school. Similarly, Atieno (2014), agrees that all students are products of the society since they are born and reared there, hence, the home environment plays a very big role in influencing their behavior at school. Atieno (ibid) found that if the parents are poor they cannot provide the basic needs of their children including school needs such as school uniforms and textbooks. The temptation to steal from others to make ends meet is therefore indeed great. Assignments may not be done too, due to lack of space and lighting equipment, all of which are perceived as indiscipline in schools. Besides, students from poor families who cannot afford to pay for transport costs, walk long distances to school, thereby arriving late and exhausted. These studies are also in agreement with the findings of the study by Nkhata and Mwale (2016) titled, “An Investigation of the Contributing Factors to Adolescent Deviant Behaviours in Rural Community Day Secondary with Respect to the Social and Environmental Aspects” in which parenting techniques as a home factor came out strongly. The study unravelled that adolescents nurtured by a single parent are more prone to deviant behaviour than those who have both parents. The study concluded that single parenting weakens social control hence increasing deviant tendencies. Therefore,

various family circumstances may exert more powerful influences over learner's behavior than anything that happens in school.

2.3.2 School Factors

Salifu and Agbenyega (2012) carried out a study on “Impact of Discipline Issues on School Effectiveness: The Views of Some Ghanaian Principals” to explore the causes of indiscipline among the staff and students of senior high schools in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The study found that indiscipline was as a result of absenteeism and late coming of teachers to classroom; inappropriate teaching methods; inconsistent application of school rules by teachers; and large classes. Through this study, it was noted that the school does not only promote misbehaviour in students but contributes also to the creation of conditions that put children at risk, generally. It was also discovered that teachers and administrators can invite disciplinary problems if they fail to encourage the development of individual thinking pattern in students, establish rigid conditions for students to meet in order to feel accepted, exercise excessive control over students and fail to provide an environment in which children can become autonomous and independent, and use disciplinary procedures that are punitive. The school factors were also confirmed by the findings of Waithaka (2017) in his study, “Indiscipline in Public schools: The Case of Nairobi County”, who contended that teachers’ leniency to wrong doers, poor relationship between students and school administrators and lack of clear school rules cause students’ indiscipline. This demonstrates that indiscipline behaviour from students may be the result of normal reactions to deficiencies in the school as an institution, and to teachers and administrators as directors of the educational enterprise.

2.3.3 Peer-related Factors

The peer group influences what the child values, knows, wears, eats and learns. According to a study by Temitayo (2013) to investigate causes of disciplinary problems in the schools, indiscipline was as a result of students imitating the unruly behavior of their colleagues; some students having many friends that do not go to school regularly; and some students being regularly pushed by their friends to misbehave. This was also in agreement with the findings of Salifu and Agbenyega (2012) that student-peer influence causes indiscipline. Peer group influence as a factor causing misbehavior of students was also noted by Nkhata and Mwale (2016) who opined that many adolescents were involved in deviant acts because they see their friends doing the same. Therefore, for the sake of conformity other adolescents find themselves involved in deviant behaviours. It was suggested that many adolescents copy and behave antisocially in order to be accepted and associate with their fellow adolescents. In this case, they learn deviant acts from their friends as they are exposed to them. It is therefore, of paramount importance to guide these learners to understand their role in a school so that they understand why some behaviours are bad while others are good, not out fear, but understanding.

2.4 Barriers to Effective School Discipline Practices

The review of literature regarding barriers to effective school discipline practices showed an array of themes such as lack of respect for students by teachers as individuals with rights, inability to consult students on school decisions, as well as failure by school authorities to follow laid-down procedures. The following paragraphs discusses such a literature.

2.4.1 Teachers' Lack of Respect for Students as Individuals with Rights

A number of studies showed that teachers do not pay attention to students' rights when discharging their disciplinary duties. According to the study conducted by Mumthas et al (2014) titled 'Student and Teacher perception of Disciplinary Practices: Types, reasons, consequences and alternatives', students reported that teachers used more undesirable than desirable practices to manage and control the behavior of students such as sending away from the class, beating, standing upon the bench, laughing at, giving prizes, pinching, using mind breaking words, and hitting on the head are. These measures violates the rights of the students to a greater extent. Similarly, Kamanyi (2012) conducted a study on children's right awareness among teachers and students in secondary schools in Nairobi province. The study established that children's rights continue to be violated in secondary schools by both teachers and students themselves. The study revealed that, rising cases of students' unrest in secondary schools stemmed out from students' rights violations. It was established that intra-student rivalry, which has resulted to a lot of suffering and sometimes death, is associated with those violations. For instance, sending a student away on any discipline issue denies the student the right to education while beating and making a student stand up undermines the dignity of the student as an individual. It can be concluded therefore that, perhaps, acts of students' misbehavior are a reaction to violation of their rights by teachers and other school authorities.

2.4.2 Inability to Consult Students

Another barrier to effective school discipline is inability by teachers and school managers to actively consult or involve students in the making of crucial school decisions, for

example, school rules. The study conducted in America by McMaster (2002), ‘Student and teacher perceptions of discipline at the middle school level’, revealed that only 29% of the students surveyed agreed that the principal listened to students when discussing discipline referrals with them. This implies that school managers regard students as mere recipients of decisions made by them and have to accept them whether they like them or not. The findings by McMaster (2002) contradicts what Peel (1967) described as the major aim of education. For Peel (ibid), the main aim of education is to produce well integrated citizens who are self-disciplined and who obey laws not as a result of fear but out of the desire to do what they believe is right and the desire to live harmoniously with others. This brings resentment among students.

2.4.3 Failure by School Authorities to Follow Laid-down Procedure

Another barrier to effective school discipline practices noted in Malawi was failure by school authorities to follow the laid down procedures. The circular letter reference number C31/1/1 dated 18th June, 2014, released by MoEST to all educational stakeholders regarding rampant riots and vandalism by students in secondary schools in Malawi, further suggest that previous strategies to arrest indiscipline have worked against effective school discipline practices. According to the circular letter, the causes of such indiscipline cases emanated from petty issues which could otherwise been resolved amicably with school authorities following the laid down procedures for presenting grievances. This concurs with the findings of the study by Sibanda and Mpofu (2017) who noted that lack of support from members of staff greatly contribute to promoting these barriers. For instance, some teachers deliberately go against the code of conduct which promote effective discipline instead; they use harsh and punitive measures. These

lead to resentments by students. The findings of this study affirm the results of the study by Mugabe and Maposa (2013) which revealed that some staff members protected learner offenders in disciplinary committees; and ill-educated teachers discouraged prefects from “overcommitting” themselves to prefect duties under the pretext that it negatively affected learners’ academic performance. In addition, some teachers used abusive language to restrain improper behavior among learners. All these practices go against promotion of effective school discipline practice because the actions do not make the learner understand why he/she should behave that way.

2.5 Changes in Discipline Practices to Bring Effective Change of Students’

Behaviour

In his study, Nakpodia (2010, p. 144) concludes that “the increasing wave of misconduct and its resultant effect showed that students’ misbehavior has become a major problem of educational management”. Therefore, stakeholders need to go back to the “drawing board” to find better and alternative disciplinary methods and practices that will help promote effective discipline in schools. The following paragraphs discuss some of them.

2.5.1 Use of Guidance and Counselling

One method of maintaining students discipline is through guidance and counseling. Mbiti (2007:90) defines guidance as ‘professional advice given to someone to enable him to make informed choices so as to adjust or cope with different challenges in life’. The purpose of guidance is to promote the growth of the individual in self-direction and to facilitate personal development. In a study, ‘An Investigation of the Contributing Factors to Adolescent Deviant Behaviours in Rural Community Day Secondary Schools with

Respect to the Social and Environmental Aspects’ conducted by Nkhata and Mwale (2016), majority of students who participated in the study agreed on counselling as a remedy for deviant behaviours. Through the study, it was suggested that through counselling, discipline would be installed in secondary schools. In this case, it was indicated that adolescents in secondary schools must be advised and directed towards good and proper behaviours. Again, it was argued that school-going adolescents should be guided as to what is good and bad, and healthy and hazardous to their lives. As a result, good and acceptable behaviours will be promoted among adolescents. It was suggested that adolescents should be counselled on the values associated with behaviours that conform to the law so that they can adhere to such values. Therefore, G & C in schools inculcates important values in students which they would want to cherish and safeguard thereby refraining from any form of misbehavior. This is because any form of misbehavior becomes a threat to the fulfillment and realization of their values.

2.5.2 Need for Schools to have Clear Rules and Regulations

Literature reveals that if effective discipline is to be promoted in schools, schools need to have clear rules and regulations. These are rules and regulations students can easily understand with their corresponding punishments. This was confirmed by the study by Sakala (2009) whose purpose was to single out the main opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the discipline policy in Malawi secondary schools. The other purpose was to establish whether the discipline policy has effectively been communicated to and accurately been understood by students, teachers and head teachers. The study suggested that to ensure effective school discipline practices, schools need to have clearly defined rules and regulations and also penalties for their breaches of offences. This will

ensure that students are able to appreciate the extent of punishment with the offence committed.

2.5.3 Students' Active Participation or Involvement

Various studies reveal that if effective discipline is to be enhanced, students ought to be actively involved in school activities and decisions that affect them. For Smith (1995), a powerful strategy for fostering reflection is to engage with another person in a way which encourages talking with, questioning, in order to examine plan, implement, and evaluate. It is a technique which can be structured to provide a safe environment within which self-revelation can take place (ibid). This creates an opportunity for giving voice to one's own thinking while at the same time being heard in a constructively critical way. In other words, there should be participatory process involving even students in the formulation of school policies as well as school rules and regulations as the choice theory suggests. This is supported by UNESCO's School Management Training Manual (2005) that holds that ensuring healthy discipline in a school calls for a total approach that includes the school as a whole, every classroom and the various role players. In a nutshell, every stakeholder including students need to be involved in order to promote effective school discipline policy.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Choice theory of William Glasser (1998), a renowned American psychologist and psychiatrist. Choice theory was developed as an explanation of all human behaviour based on internal motivation. It is a psychological model that explains why people behave as they do and how we can build positive relationships with the people who are important to us. He theorised that behaviour is a choice made by an

individual based on his or her feelings and needs, and is therefore not determined or controlled by external circumstances. Hence, Glasser teaches that “the only person whose behavior I can control is me”. That is, as individuals, we cannot control another person’s behaviour but we can only influence it.

For Glasser (1998), the choices people make are driven by five basic needs namely basic survival needs, need for belonging, need for power, need for freedom and need for fun (Glasser, 1998). The basic survival needs are physical and biological needs such as; food, water, air, shelter, warmth, and so on. If not met, our flight or fight response may be triggered. Need for belonging include feeling loved, loving others and feeling unconditionally accepted. Need for power is about feeling of control over own life, feelings of competency and feelings of achievement. People need recognition and self-efficacy in order to feel a sense of power over their own lives. Individuals also need freedom. This is about having control over one’s own life and being free from the control of others. Finally; is need for fun. Everyone desires fun including children. In other words, the power lies within each person to determine how he or she will respond to the demands of the social and physical environment. Humans thus should not be perceived as victims or slaves of circumstances, but as self-determining beings who take responsibility for the consequences of their choices. Our five basic needs drive our choices, we choose to behave in a way that will satisfy one or more of these needs (Glasser, 1998).

The Choice Theory is pertinent to the problem revealed in this study in that teacher’s ability to promote school discipline depends on how he/she views learners or students. If

the teacher views learners as passive recipients of already made decisions, disruptions in school will not cease but if he/she understands and respect the needs of learners with respect to school rules and regulations, the teacher will respect learners and guide them in realizing their role in school. At the same time, if both learners and teachers understand their roles, they will both respect each other. In turn, barriers to effective school discipline will be minimized. Literature has revealed that acts of misconducts and discipline amongst educators and students in schools occur due to educators' dependence on external control psychology in which teachers try to control learners using punishments based on specific rules or rewards (Chris, 2007). All behaviour is intended to satisfy one of the five basic needs mentioned.

Therefore, the theory was chosen because it has been found to be successful in reducing disciplinary problems and inappropriate behaviour in schools (Pease and Law, 2000). This is because behaviour management theories and practices are gradually moving away from a teacher-directed-controlling orientation to discipline. Further, as school curricular change to reflect the view that students need to have greater control over their learning experiences and that learning is facilitated when students are given the opportunity to reflect on and construct their own understanding, behaviour management approaches have moved away from the stance that children need to be managed because they are capable of controlling their own behaviour (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). Choice theory recommends a pastoral care model of managing and modifying challenging learner behaviours consisting of; positive reinforcement, support and counseling which are aimed at increasing desired behaviour, over the disciplinary model of practice which consists of

tasks such as; detention and exclusion which are more traditional techniques to discipline (Bush, 2011).

The theory has however, attracted a number of criticisms. Among others, the application of this theory needs coordinated effort (whole school approach); otherwise, inconsistencies can arise if not properly implemented (McDonald, 2013). In addition, it involves a radical shift in thinking. That is, from an interventionist to a more interactive approach of management); school community including students need to undergo hours of professional development and training which can be laborious, time consuming (Bourbon, 1994). Last but not least, it might also be financially unviable to implement, particularly for schools with limited resources.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature by discussing effective school discipline practices such as use of guidance and counselling, active consultation of students on school issues, celebrating learners in their positive contribution, teachers displaying modelling behaviour as well as effective use of discipline and punishment policy. It has also discussed causes of students' indiscipline such as parental, school and peer-related factors have also been discussed. What is more, barriers to effective school discipline practices in schools both globally and locally have been highlighted. The section has also discussed ways of reforming students' behaviour before exposed and discussing the Choice theory by Glasser (2002) as the main guiding theory of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the methodology that was used to conduct the study. It discusses the research design, selection of site, sample and sampling techniques, data generation tools, data generation procedure that was used, data analysis techniques and limitations of the study. It further elaborates on ethical issues that were considered.

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore and understand students' perception of effective school discipline practices, a phenomena, in this study (Gray, 2014). A qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning, individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Cresswell, 2014). Data was gathered by actually talking directly to participants and seeing them behave and act so as to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of effective school discipline (Gray, 2012).

3.2.1 Research Design

The study employed a case study design to uncover the relationship between students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices and students' indiscipline in public secondary schools (Ary et al, 2010). Multiple units were studied as I hold that the phenomenon is not idiosyncratic to a single unit and studying multiple units can provide better illumination hence, the use of four schools. According to Yin (2009) as cited by Gray (2014, p.266), a case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Therefore, in this study, case study was useful to gather detailed information of students’ perceptions regarding effective discipline practices in schools using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Cresswell, 2014).

3.3 Sample Selection

The study was conducted in the Central Education Division of Malawi. Which comprise five districts namely Kasungu, Ntchisi, Dowa, Nkhotakota and Salima. However, this study was conducted in some selected public secondary schools in Nkhotakota and Salima. In this study, the site was chosen because of the great magnitude of students’ indiscipline cases. This prompted me to seek the views of learners regarding what they consider as effective school discipline practices so as to minimize disruptive behavior by students. In addition, the choice of both a boarding and day secondary school was done to appreciate the perceptions of students regarding effective school discipline practices in both categories of public secondary schools.

3.3.1 Sample Population

This study purposively sampled four public secondary schools, one boarding secondary school and a community day secondary school per district as the study wanted to make an in-depth analysis about students’ perceptions of effective school discipline practices. It was believed that by purposively sampling these schools, I would gain important information that could not be gained from other sampling designs (Gray, 2014). The participants to the study were the head prefects (a head boy and a head girl per school) as well as the forms three and four students of all sex. These were also purposively sampled

because I believed that these could provide the required data to the study. Purposive sampling in this study involved the selection of those participants who had stayed in schools for over two years and had the potential of yielding the right information (Gray, 2014). The selection of forms three and four students served a two-fold purpose: (1) participants were those knowledgeable of the strategies and practices being used in their schools to ensure discipline, and (2) participants were those in possession of knowledge of the barriers to effective school discipline practices in their schools. This was so because of their long stay in schools. The head prefects were selected because of their interaction with both teachers and fellow students on numerous school issues including discipline. Girls and boys were separated during the study to allow those who could be shy to freely express their views. There were eight prefects and sixty-four general students who participated in the study. Therefore, a total of seventy-two (72) participants took part in the study. The tables below provides a summary of participants in the study:

Table 1: Summary of Participants According to Responsibility

Gender	Number of Prefects	Percentage (%)
Male	4	50
Female	4	50
TOTAL	8	100

Source: Data from field study, 2016

Table 1 shows that both head girls and head boys equally participated in the study.

Table 2: Summary of Participants According to Gender:

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	36	50
Female	36	50
TOTAL	72	100

Source: Data from field study, 2016

Table 2 above indicates that there was equal representation of participants of both sexes in the study.

Table 3: Summary of Participants According to School Category:

School Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
A	36	50
B	36	50
TOTAL	72	100

Source: Data from field study, 2016

3.4 Data Generation Methods

In this study, multiple sources of data generation were used to enhance collaboration of the findings (Cresswell, 2014). In this study therefore, data was generated using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews involved a series of open ended questions based on the topic under study (Ary et al, 2010). The open-ended nature of the question defined the topic under investigation but also provided opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail (Cresswell, 2014). In some instances where the interviewee had difficulty answering a question or provided only a brief response, I used cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further (Gray, 2014).

In this study, the interviews were significant when exploring the perceptions of head prefects. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted at each school for the purpose of obtaining various individuals' perceptions regarding effective school discipline practices. Therefore, a total of eight (8) interviews were conducted in all the selected schools. The interviews were audio-recorded using a phone which was later listened to carefully, documented and transcribed. The interviews were conducted at a time and place that was convenient for each of the participants. The recording of the interviews was done to smoothen the progress of transcription and to allow the researcher to concentrate and listen carefully to their responses (Yin, 2014). The recording of the interviews also provided a complete record of the responses to the questions that were asked during each interview. The length of time for each interview was a maximum of thirty (30) minutes. The interviews involved head prefects, boys and girls separately to ensure both sexes freely express issues they could not when mixed.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

The study also used two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) per school involving students to generate data from the group focusing also, on their perceptions of effective school discipline practices to allow me explore the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, reactions and experiences of students regarding effective school discipline practices in a way that would not be so accessible through other approaches such as observation or interviews (Gray, 2014). Sometimes, these views could be held individually and be independent of a social setting, but often they could emerge from social interactions with other individuals and groups (Cresswell, 2014). Furthermore, when participants realized they shared common experience with their fellows, and felt that their views were validated and supported by others, they began to open up and talk about their experiences. Boys and girls had different FGD so that they freely talk on issue they could not when mixed. Therefore, a total of eight FGDs were conducted in the selected schools. Each FGD was given a maximum of one hour (60 minutes). I acted as a moderator introducing topics for discussion and helped the participants to be involved in a lively and natural discussion among themselves (Gray, 2014).

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Data was also generated through analysis of documents in targeted sites to gain an understanding of students' perceptions (Ary et al, 2010). In this study, policy documents such as MoEST circulars, schools Code of Conduct, discipline files, class registers and secondary school management handbook were analysed. For example, the discipline file could be checked to check if students' perception of effective school discipline practices and barriers marched with what was actually being practiced in the schools. Therefore,

the information gathered through the review of documents enabled me to cross-check the consistency of the information gathered through the focus group discussions and interviews (Cresswell, 2014). If the documentary evidence was contradictory rather than corroboratory, I would investigate further. When there was convergence of information from different sources, I was confident enough in the trustworthiness (credibility) of the findings (Yin, 2014).

3.5 Data Analysis

For this study, I used thematic data analysis because of its flexibility (Cresswell, 2014). In the process, patterns or themes within the generated data were identified and analysed (Gray, 2014). I categorised schools from where data was collected into Category A (government boarding secondary schools) and Category B (Community Day Secondary Schools). The category A schools were identified with pseudo names, Usipa and Mbaba Secondary Schools while category B schools' pseudo names were Kamodzi CDSS and Lero CDSS. I then coded schools' head prefects' interviews as SHP1-SHP2 per school where SHP1 represented an interview with a male head prefect and SHP2 with a female prefect. Students' Focus Group Discussions were coded as SFGD1 and SFGD2 involving boys and girls respectively. All the data collected was summarized and organized under four main themes: effective discipline practices in schools; Students perceptions of causes of indiscipline, students' perceptions of barriers to effective school discipline practices; and changes in discipline practices to ensure effective change in students' behavior.

3.6 Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility refers to how confident a researcher is in the truth of the research study findings while trustworthiness in qualitative research is about how the research study findings are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable (Cresswell, 2014). The following paragraphs discuss credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

3.6.1 Piloting of the Instruments

To be trustworthy, qualitative studies must satisfy the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Gray, 2014). To ensure trustworthiness, all interview questions were piloted. I carried out a pilot of the semi-structured interview guide and focus group interview guide at one of the selected secondary schools in the division which was not part of the targeted areas in agreement with Yin (2014) who contended that piloting help to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the instruments guides. The results of the pilot study indicated that the research instruments were valid for the study and that the majority of the items were understood by the respondents. The pilot study also revealed that there was a need to revise some parts of the instruments. Two questions were dropped from the semi-structured interview schedule while three questions were dropped from the focus group discussion schedule following the pilot. These questions were found to be redundant, as the information sought through them was also being provided by the other questions in the interview schedule. After dropping the three questions, the data gathered from the pilot school was integrated with the data from the other schools for analysis. Administering the instruments during the pilot study was necessary because it accorded me an opportunity to evaluate the type of responses given and revise and adjust questions

in the implementation of the data collection phase of the proposed research study. The changes made to the instruments following the comments of the participants when responding to the questions, also gave me confidence and courage to go on with the research.

3.6.2 Triangulation

The focus group, open-ended interviews and document analysis guide were checked for their credibility and dependability through triangulation. In triangulation I adopted two approaches of triangulation which includes method triangulation and the use of data triangulation (Cresswell, 2014). In method triangulation, I used interview guide, document analysis and open ended questions from the focus group to explore the different perceptions of students regarding effective school discipline in CEED. The same questions in the interview guide were crosschecked for consistency with similar questions in open ended questions in the focus group discussions. In data triangulation, I gathered data from both participants and my experience as a teacher, and the responses recorded thus, were used to test its dependability by checking on the consistency of responses given (Patton, 2002). The two methods used produced consistency of responses which indicated that the instruments are credible and dependable.

3.6.3 Use of verbatim quotes

The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to describe in depth the perceptions and thoughts expressed by the students concerning effective school discipline practices. The primary data sources used were interviews and focus group discussions. The data collected through the focus group discussions were reported in the participants' own words through the process of audio phone recordings and transcriptions. The text of the

interviews and focus group discussion questions served as the primary source for interpreting and analyzing data (Cresswell, 2014).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

According to Israel and Hay (2006) as cited by Cresswell (2014), any research study demands research ethics to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems. Thus, the study adhered to the following ethical concerns:

3.7.1 Obtaining Necessary Permission

The researcher obtained consent from the Education Department, Chancellor College (Appendix A) to proceed with face-to-face interviews and discussion session involving the established focus groups. I also sought permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through Division Manager for CEED to do research in the selected secondary schools in the division (Appendix B). All these letters were sought to assure the authorities that no harm such as embarrassment, ridiculing or belittling, is to be caused on any participant (Gray, 2014).

3.7.2 Ensuring Informed Consent

The participants were provided with sufficient and accessible information about the study so that they could make an informed decision as to whether to become involved or not (Cresswell, 2014). For example, detailed information about the purpose of the study, who would be undertaking it, who is being asked to participate, what kind of information is being sought, voluntarism to participate in the study and how anonymity would be

preserved among others, was provided to the participants. After understanding all about the study, participants were requested to participate in the study without being forced. In that respect, the participants were informed about their freedom to respond to questions posed to them by the researcher (Gray, 2014).

3.7.3 Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality of Participants

Before generating any data, participants were allowed to give their informed consent in giving information. It was made transparently clear to participants by the researcher that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time (Ary et al, 2010). This was clearly stated in the preamble (see appendix C and D) before the interview, discussion or in the introduction to the interview guide. I also made sure that confidentiality is maintained by ensuring that no names were requested from the participants to protect participants from becoming victims of their participation in the study. Again, the generated data were kept in such a way that no unauthorized individual could access it (Gray, 2014).

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter therefore, has discussed the methodology that was used to conduct the study. The study used a qualitative research approach adopting a qualitative case study design. The chapter also discussed the selection of site, sample population, data generation and data analysis and their justification. The chapter also discussed piloting of instruments, triangulation and use of verbatim quotes to justify dependability and credibility of the study. Finally, ethical considerations in the study were also discussed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The study sought to answer four research questions as follows: What effective discipline practices are in place in schools as perceived by public secondary school students? What do students perceive causes of students' indiscipline in schools? What are students' perceptions of barriers to effective school discipline practices in schools? What changes in discipline procedures do students feel should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of students in public secondary schools? The Choice Theory has been used throughout by considering views of head prefects and general students to investigate perceptions and interpret as well as discuss findings of the study.

4.2 Effective Discipline Practices in schools as perceived by students

The first question of the study was 'What effective discipline practices are in place in public secondary schools?' Responding to this question, participants identified the following as effective school discipline practices in schools as provided in the following paragraphs:

4.2.1 Guidance and Counselling

The study found that guidance and counselling can promote effective school discipline in public secondary schools. They said,

“We prefer guidance and counselling when we misbehave because it is done in a friendly manner and we understand our mistakes. Again, we respect teacher counsellors because they show care to us” (SHP1, Usipa, 2016).

“...there is no intimidation by teachers during counselling” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“I enjoy guidance and counselling because we are freely allowed to express our thoughts” (SFGD, Usipa, 2016)

In the excerpts, it is noted that guidance and counselling can promote a friendly atmosphere between students and teachers in the school. This is because students consider the process as friendly to them and aimed at changing their behaviour positively so that they achieve their educational goals. School counseling therefore, is designed to help students understand and clarify personal views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and a resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature.

This view is in line with Choice Theory of Glasser (2009) which describes teachers' role as that of helping students to learn to responsibly control their own lives as well as guiding students to change their behaviour for the better, resulting in positive school environment. By providing choices to students through guidance and counselling, they will take on increasing responsibility for themselves. In turn, students will always recognize the consequences of their behaviour. The use of guidance and counselling is further supported by Mikaye (2012) who contended that school guidance and counselling programmes are introduced to assist students overcome the number of challenges they experience both at home and at school including students' indiscipline. This is further

supported by Cheruiyot (2015) who called for more resources into guidance and counselling arguing it recognizes every individual including learners as having the potential for self-growth, self-development and self-actualisation. Therefore, it can be concluded that schools that actively promotes guidance and counselling have the potential to improve their students' social and emotional skills and positive social behaviours, and a decline in disruptive behavior.

4.2.2 Teacher's Impartiality

The study also showed that fairness or impartiality when dealing with students may lead to effective school discipline. As observed below,

“...if all students are treated fairly, they always accept the decisions of the school when they are on the wrong side of the law” (SFGD1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Fair treatment of students by teachers makes all students happy” (SFGD2, Usipa, 2016).

“When we are considered equal by teachers, we feel all loved” (SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016).

The observations are in agreement with the Choice Theory by Glasser (2009). That is, when students feel justly treated, they feel their safety and security is safeguarded. This therefore does not come as a threat to their basic survival needs which include safety and security. Therefore, if students are comfortable or feel that they are safe, they can learn effectively. The excerpt further implies that if students are given the opportunity to be heard during disciplinary hearing without bias, they may conform to the judgement of the case. This is supported by section 43 of the Malawi Constitution which stipulates that “every person shall have the right to lawful and procedurally fair administrative action, which is justifiable in relation to reasons given where his or her rights, freedoms,

legitimate expectations or interests are affected or threatened...” In other words, the accused must be given the opportunity to be heard and must also be given proper notice of the hearing. The learner who has been accused must be given the opportunity to present his/her side of the matter and to call witnesses. Further, the student and the parent must be given the freedom to even ask questions. In that case, students feel fairly treated.

4.2.3 Consultation

The study also revealed students’ consultation as an effective school discipline practice. As observed from the following excerpts,

“... Students should not be considered as passive recipients of already made laws which they do not understand themselves, yet the administration expects students to adhere to such rules” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“When we are asked to choose prefects on our own, we feel good” (SHP1, Usipa, 2016).

“When we are involved in any changes at the school” (SFGD2, Lero, 2016)

The observations in the above excerpts clearly indicate that students believe consulting them as equally important stakeholders to school discipline can lead to effective school discipline. It further implies that students do not want to be treated as passive receivers of already made up decisions. Students will negatively react to decisions made without consulting them. This revelation is in agreement with Glasser (2009) on importance of students’ participation in school activities including making and reviewing of school rules and regulations if students are allowed full participation in school activities, they will develop a sense of ownership and will conform to the rules and regulations. This again, augments well with findings of the study by Osler (2000) which also found that the

involvement of students in decision-making increases their motivation to achieve and make them feel part of the school.

The studies by Curwin (2000) and Whitehead and Clough (2004) all agree on the importance of consulting students in promoting effective school discipline practices. Curwin points out that if children are afraid because of school violence, they cannot learn, and if teachers are afraid, they cannot teach. Educators should keep in mind that for any school discipline program to work, everyone within the learning environment must participate. For Whitehead and Clough (2004), when students are consulted, policies can be informed by, owned by and supported by the students. A study by Mulford and Johns (2004) in Australia found that student participation in decision-making and management resulted in a range of positive benefits such as greater connectedness and a sense of community within the school, reduced levels of vandalism and an overall improvement in students' behaviour and attitude.

4.2.4 Positive Teacher-Student Relationship

It was also noted that both teachers and students need to develop positive mindset about each other. Some participants argued,

...for a student to do well in class, your relationship with teachers should be good, but, imagine a teacher tells you that when you see me, I am a lion. How can you consult him or her on issues that affect you as a student? When our relationship with teachers is sour, teachers do not come in class to teach us. Consequently, it is us who suffer academically because our performance during national examinations goes down. This is also true with students. They would not want to be taught by a teacher who is always a nuisance to them (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

“When teachers and students work together without problems, there is no problem at school” (SHP2, Usipa, 2016)

The preceding excerpts suggest that teacher-student relationship needs to be good if effective discipline in school is to be achieved. This is because poor relationship of the two creates unhealthy environment for teaching and learning and this disturbs smooth running of the school. Therefore, teachers need to meet the five basic needs of students as propounded by Glasser (1998) to ensure effective school discipline practices. For instance, Glasser (ibid) said students’ needs related to survival is met when the school environment is kept free from personal threat; they sense belonging when they are involved in school matters, receive attention from teachers; they sense power when the teachers ask them to participate in decisions regarding discipline; they experience fun when they are able to work and talk with others and they sense freedom when the teachers allow them to make responsible choices.

4.3 Causes of Indiscipline in Public Secondary Schools

This section attempted to answer the third research question, “What are the causes of indiscipline in public secondary schools?” The following sub-themes as responses from both face-to-face interviews and FGDs emerged: peer-related factors, home-factors and school factors.

4.3.1 Peer-related Factors

The following were some responses from participants:

“Some students misbehave in order to make their friends happy” (SHP1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Some engage in indiscipline to for the sake of company...so they can drink because their friends also drink” (SFGD2, Usipa, 2016).

“When my friends tells me that we should not enter into class, I do that so that I should not disappoint them” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“I started bullying form ones because my classmates were doing the same” (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

From the preceding excerpts, it can be concluded that peer pressure is one of the contributing factors to students' indiscipline. This was also noted by Nkhata and Mwale (2016) who opined that that many adolescents were involved in deviant acts because they see their friends doing the same. They concluded that many adolescents copy and behave antisocially in order to be accepted and associate with their fellow adolescents. The finding was further supported by the findings of Jinot (2018) in his study, “The Causes of a Lack of Discipline among Secondary School Learners in Mauritius. This study found that learners manifest a lack of discipline due to the influence of peers at schools. The leader-follower relationship mostly prevails in secondary schools. The influence is often negative; learners imitate the negative behaviour of peers in an attempt to prevent exclusion from the peer group. Peers influence their classmates to dress differently from what the parents educate them about the dress code; they view pornographic films in class; they smoke marijuana at school when they are in group and they incite them to verbally confront the educators and the principal. Therefore, students sometimes engage in indiscipline for the sake of conformity.

4.3.2 Home Factors

The following responses transpired:

“Some students arrive at school late because they travel long distances.
They run away from classes because of hunger since they do not

eat in the morning because of lack of food. But teachers do not listen to them” (*SFGD1, Usipa, 2016*).

Sometimes our parents buy us mobile phones but teachers snatch them. If the phones are bad, why do our parents buy them for us? (*SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016*).

“Some parents do not support their children. They do not have interest in school’s welfare for their children” (*SHP2, Lero, 2016*).

The above observations imply that some indiscipline behaviour originates from homes. Parents are not interested with academic performance of their children because of work commitments and lack of interest (*Abidoye & Onweazu, 2010*). Therefore, parental lack of responsibility towards their children prevents teachers from promoting and maintaining effective school discipline. For example, while schools prohibit the possession and use of mobile phones to promote effective discipline, some parents buy the children phones. Consequently, students consider teachers harsh and their parents loving. Similarly, *Jinot (2018)* argued that compensating their children for a lack of love towards them by giving them money or material things is also an unreasonable habit of parents that influence their children’s behaviour at school.

The findings of the study pointing to home factors also confirmed the findings of the study by *Sibanda and Mpofu (2017)* that some parents do not model good behaviour to their children. In this study by *Sibanda and Mpofu (2017)*, it was found that some parents or members of the family who were involved in drug and alcohol abuse would give their children marijuana to sell to other learners at school. Some parents if they sell beer at home would ask their children to sell beer to the customers. The findings of the study also concurs with the results of the study by *Mugabe and Maposa (2013)* that some

parents received stolen properties from children while others sent children to buy cigarettes and alcoholic drinks exposing them to temptation to consume them. Therefore, due to their irresponsible attitude, parents lose their children who look for other people and ways to get affection, attention, care and love. The observations above resonates with Glasser's Choice Theory (1998) in that, it calls for concerted efforts to implement it. Therefore, if effective discipline is to be achieved at school, both parents and teachers must work together to make the child understand why he/she needs to behave in a particular way.

4.3.3 School Factors

On school factors, the following responses came out:

“When some teachers are in class teaching, we choose to remain outside because they always shout at us when we give a wrong response in class” (SFGD2, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Some teachers do not know how to teach. They just make noise in class. As a result, we choose to abscond their classes (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“Since the school has no fence, it is easy for students to go outside of the school” (SHP1, Usipa, 2016)

“Students sometimes misbehave because some teacher use harsh rules to punish students. Because of this, students may vandalise school property” (SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016).

The above excerpts shows that blame on indiscipline could be laid squarely at the feet of schools, specifically, teachers. It shows that some teachers create uninhabitable environment for students to learn because of their bad behaviour. It also implies that poor methods of teaching is another source of indiscipline in schools as it makes students to not to concentrate or shun such classes. The findings of the study contradicts what UNESCO (2007) considered the duties of a teacher in a school in a school that

emphasizes a human rights-based approach to education. For UNESCO (2007), the teacher has the duty to promote the respectful environment by making sure that schools develop policies that promote such an environment. These policies should be developed through collaboration with all stakeholders, including learners. Jinot (2018) attributed indiscipline to educators' lack of classroom management skills and of learner discipline management skills, feeling of disempowerment to use their authority over the learners, and their unwillingness to discipline learners. This is in line with Glasser's Choice Theory (1998) that the duty of the teacher is to help the learner meet the five basic needs in a responsible manner.

4.4 Students' Perceptions of Barriers to Effective School Discipline Practices

This section addresses the second sub- research question of the study, "What do students perceive as barriers to effective school discipline practices. Responses to this question were classified into students' related barriers, teacher-related barriers, management-related barriers and Ministry of Education-related barriers.

4.4.1 Student-Related Barriers

These include students' underrating of authority of prefects, misinterpretation of human rights and technological advancements. Some responses are discussed below:

4.4.1.1 Underrating and Intimidating Prefects

The study revealed that students undermine prefects' role as well as intimidate the prefects themselves. As was observed,

“Some unruly students underrate us and threaten to beat us if we report to the head teacher cases of indiscipline. We are labelled as spies, so we sometimes just choose to give” (SHP2, Lero, 2016)

“Some fellow students threaten to beat us if we report them to teachers” (SHP1, Kamodzi, 2016)

“Some boys undermine our authority because we are girl leaders” (SHP2, Mbaba, 2016).

The preceding excerpts indicate that much needs to be done to make the entire student community in public secondary schools appreciate the role of prefects in ensuring effective school discipline. What is more, more need to be done to make learners aware of the importance of gender equality so that all student’ leaders are equally respected. It also implies that most students do not comprehend the role of discipline in promoting quality education. Responsibilities for the prefects and all other positions in schools are not mostly publicly displayed in school notice boards. The observation further points to the lack of deliberate efforts to equip prefects and the entire student body with knowledge of the important role prefects play in schools. Unless students know and understand the role of prefects, discipline among them will still be a problem since their behaviors will still not be informed. This is supported by UNESCO (2005) on school management. In its observation, UNESCO noted that teachers should devise a comprehensive system for identifying student leaders that are ready to work for the school regardless of the situation. Among other qualities of good student leaders, they should have the ability to communicate clearly and persuasively; should have good interpersonal skills, including listening skills; should be accepted and respected by students; should be strongly motivated to work towards the benefit of students; should be self-confident and show potential for leadership by being decisive in making decisions; and should have the

potential to be role models for students. The observation partly contradicts the Choice Theory by Glasser (2009) in that much as it gives freedom of choice to students, there are situations teachers can intervene by identifying potentials of leadership in students that were overlooked by students themselves. This is supported by the philosophy of Plato on education who also believed in giving all students opportunity in schools and teachers' role is that of identifying potentials in them (Allen, 2006).

On their part, students acknowledged to have underrated the powers of prefect council arguing as follows:

..."These prefects do not represent our views as students but those of teachers. They do not fight for our grievances; instead, they come to spy on us on every little mistake we make. So we see no need to respect them".(SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016)

"Some prefects are imposed by teachers to punish innocent students...so we see no need to respect them" (SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016)

The views indicate that sometimes cases of indiscipline are on the rise due to petty issues that could have been resolved by teachers and the school administration in time. In addition, it shows that some students are just fond of causing trouble deliberately in schools instead of concentrating on their studies. This observation is supported by the circular letter reference number C31/1/1 dated 18th June, 2014, where the MoEST bemoaned increasing riots and vandalism by students in secondary schools. In this circular letter, the MoEST noted that causes of these riots and vandalisms in most cases emanate from petty issues which could have otherwise been resolved amicably with school authorities following the laid down procedures for presenting grievances. The

ministry therefore, blamed students' negligence to follow procedures when presenting grievances. It can also be inferred from the preceding excerpts that if effective discipline is to be promoted in public secondary schools, student' leaders should not be imposed by teachers.

4.4.1.2 Misinterpretation of Rights

It was also observed that students misunderstand democracy and human rights. As observed from the following excerpts,

“We are usually denied our right to demonstrate... For our problems to be quickly attended to, we resort to our democratic right to demonstrate and vandalise school property... otherwise, they do not respond to our grievances” (SFGD1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Teachers violate our right to demonstrate yet it is only when we destroy some school property that they help us well” (SFGD1, Usipa, 2016).

The observations from the preceding excerpts inform that much as democracy and democratic principles have been incorporated in the school curriculum, little has been done to ensure students understand them. In addition, much has not been done to ensure that the MoEST collaborates and coordinate well with human rights organisations on what should be done to promote both discipline and understanding of human rights among students in public schools in the division. The findings concur with a study that was done by Kuthemba-Mwale et al (1996) as quoted by Chigeda (2004). Among the findings, the advent of political pluralism affected both pupil and teacher discipline in secondary schools due to misconceptions of democracy and human rights. The study observed that most teachers saw the advent of political pluralism as a liberation for them to do what they liked and thought right. This observation is also true with the findings of

this study where students are seeing the advent of multiparty and democracy as a relief for to them to do whatever they like.

4.4.1.3 Technological Advancements

It was also observed that advancements in technology have proven to be a barrier to effective school discipline practice. Some participants argued,

We are denied possession and using of cell phones, yet we need to access information on the internet. Again, we cannot use irons despite installing electric sockets in our hostels. Why do we have them in our hostels? They should remove them! (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

“Cello phone is a basic need these days. Why deny us?” (SFGD1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“There are no books in the library for us to read, but they do not allow us to use phones to access information” (SFGD, Usipa, 2016)

The above excerpts show that technological developments are also negatively affecting the promotion of effective school discipline practices in the division. While there is proliferation of electronic gadget such as cell phones and radios, the rules and regulations still bar students from possessing and using them. Unless there is a review of student code of conduct, indiscipline cases as a result of technological innovations will continue to be on the rise. How ethical and moral it is, to allow students in secondary schools to possess and use cello phones is not known. Analysis of school documents such as school discipline files, in most schools under study, showed that most offences committed by students were those of possessing and using cell phones. This implies that the issue of technological advancements versus education in public schools is a major concern requiring immediate attention. This is because despite punishing or sending many

students on rusticating them, students continue bringing and using electronic gadgets in public secondary schools.

The preceding observation concurs well with the choice theory that sometimes teachers need to understand the needs of students with the changing times. Glasser (2009) argued that the behaviour we display in any context is the behaviour that would provide the most satisfaction at that point in time. Our five basic needs drive our choices, we choose to behave in a way that will satisfy one or more of these needs. Essentially the only behaviour we can control is our own. This, however, raises questions on the practicality of the choice theory in relation to promoting effective discipline in schools. Sometimes, it requires more than giving students a choice to promote good discipline in schools.

4.4.2 Teacher-Related Barriers

In this study, respondents reported that teachers were barriers to effective discipline citing reasons such as teachers' failure to model positive behavior in students, absenteeism and laziness, scheduling of disciplinary hearing as well as public shaming of students.

4.4.2.1 Teachers' Failure to Model Positive Behaviour in Students

It was revealed during the study that indiscipline cases in public secondary schools are as a result of some teachers' behaviour. The following responses emerged from participants,

“Some teachers do not lead by example. They take students to drinking joints” ((SFGD, Lero, 2016).

“Some members of staff show unbecoming behaviour in the presence of learners, for example, smoking cigarette or drinking beer at a nearby bottle store during lunch time” (SFGD, Usipa, 2016).

“Some members of staff do not dress according to the dress code (SHP2, Mbaba, 2016).

Some members of staff do not conduct themselves properly in front of learners and sometimes the type of language being used is not good for learners” (SFGD2, Kamodzi, 2016).

The findings of the study are in line with the results of the study conducted by Mugabe and Maposa (2013) which revealed that there were some teachers who flouted school regulations by sharing alcoholic drinks and cigarettes with learners. The findings also correspond with observation from literature reviewed that some teachers have been accused by learners as being habitual drunkards (Rono & Gichana, 2006) as cited in Murithi (2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that some teachers are themselves a source of indiscipline in schools. Unless teachers understand their role in schools, indiscipline cases among students in schools will continue. The behaviour of such teachers is not supported by Glasser’s Choice Theory (2009) who holds that indeed, a student has a choice but the duty of the teacher is to guide the student to achieve quality education by making right choices. When teachers are taking students to drinking places, discipline in school is compromised thereby promoting a chaotic environment where students will not have respect for the rules and regulations of the schools.

The findings above further show that the Choice Theory by Glasser (1998) is itself weak and difficult to achieve. This is because while some teachers are trying to promote effective school discipline, others are demoting it. It can therefore be concluded that the Choice Theory in a school setting needs a coordinated effort (whole school approach) to achieve it; otherwise, inconsistencies can arise if not properly implemented. Therefore,

unless there is a radical shift in thinking, school community which is inclusive of teachers, undergo hours of professional development and training, which is laborious and time consuming, indiscipline in public secondary schools will continue.

4.4.2.2 Absenteeism and Laziness

It was also revealed during the study that teacher absenteeism acts as barriers to effective school discipline in schools. Some participants argued,

...sometimes teachers are frequently absent from work thereby leaving the students with little or no learning at all. This forces students, to resort to indiscipline cases such as noise making, truancy, going out of school boundaries as well as leaving school for home before knocking off (SHP1, Lero, 2016).

“Other times, teachers may avail themselves for work but just collect themselves under trees chatting. They bemoaned that in most cases head teachers do not discipline such teachers” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

The preceding excerpts show that teacher absenteeism promotes students’ indiscipline in public secondary schools in CEED because students engage in indiscipline issues as they have nothing to do since teachers are not there. This therefore, implies that unless Ministry of Education intensifies supervision of teachers in schools to curb absenteeism, indiscipline cases in schools will not die. They also inform that other teachers are lazy to teach. This laziness promotes indiscipline as it leaves students idle thereby giving them time to engage in indiscipline cases. Laziness of the teachers may suggest failure of the government (MoEST) to discipline its staff. Perhaps, there is laxity by MoEST to ensure that teachers conform to their code of conduct (MoEST, 2013). The frequent occurrence of cases of teacher absenteeism is strengthened by the MoEST’s circular letter of 15th

May, 2013, reference number EDU/HRD/37 in which the Ministry showed concern over increasing cases of absenteeism. In the circular letter which was addresses to all heads educational stakeholders, the MoEST reminded all teachers that absenteeism is an act of misconduct in terms of Regulation 1:201 (1) of the Malawi Public Service Regulations.

To deter officers from absenting themselves from duty without permission from their responsible officer, they were reminded of the measures to be taken as stipulated in the Government Teaching Service Commission Regulations (GTSCR) and the Malawi Public Service Commission Regulations (MPSCR). The continued absenteeism of teachers as noted by students perhaps indicates government failure to implement the laid down procedures. In agreement with this thinking, document analysis in schools under investigation revealed that supervision by the MoEST officials is uncommon. However, analysis of staff returns does not indicate rampant absenteeism of teachers. This may further confirm students' observation that the head teachers shield some teachers even when they misbehave. According to Chigeda (2004), some head teachers do not report teachers' misconduct for fear of losing teachers who are already a scarce resource.

4.4.2.3 Scheduling of Disciplinary Hearing

It was also noted that the scheduling of disciplinary hearing can be a barrier to effective school discipline if not handled properly. It was found that discipline committees in public secondary schools mostly meet during class time. As noted from the following excerpts,

“A teacher may terminate the class prematurely when instructed by the head teacher in order to attend to a disciplinary hearing that affect one student leaving the majority of us students unattended to”(SHP1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Disciplinary hearing takes place during class time thereby disturbing our learning” (SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016).

Our classes are always disrupted as our teacher is a member of discipline committee” (SFGD2, Lero, 2016)

This observations show that some indiscipline cases in public schools are teacher-related. Therefore, it can be concluded that students indulge in more indiscipline cases such as noise making in class, truancy, going out of bounds and even smoking marijuana; not out of choice, but because of teachers’ misbehaviour.

4.4.2.4 Public Shaming of Students

The study identified that an angry rebuke or reprimand was one remarkable disciplinary measure teachers in all schools used in managing school indiscipline. Most participants lamented,

“My teacher told me in class, when I did not perform well in her lesson, ‘What kind of brain do you have?’ and this made me cry” (SFGD 1, Usipa, 2016).

“Our teacher calls us ‘supporters’ of intelligent students. Imagine, that happening to you, how can you feel?”(SFGD2, Kamodzi, 2016).

“When I failed a question, my teacher told me, “Don’t worry, you will marry a truck driver” (SFGD2, Mbaba,2016)

“When I failed a question, my teacher said even my father was not better off during his time” (SFGD2, Lero, 2016).

The excerpts indicate that some teachers are fond of embarrassing students in public by making provocative remarks against students leading to conflicts. Such scolding remarks may leave students bitter against such teachers. In addition, students tend to condemn themselves as failures in life if teachers shame them publicly, hence, resort to misconduct out of frustration. This perhaps explains why, students react negatively to the teacher's comment to avoid further embarrassment. This usually result into tension between the two, hence, the teacher always has bad feelings about the student. In the same way students also develop negative attitude towards such teachers. Consequently, they may choose not to attend to his or her lessons thereby promoting indiscipline.

4.4.3 Management-Related Barriers

The findings of the study also revealed an array of management-related barriers to effective school discipline practices such as lack of student consultation by school management and poor communication.

4.4.3.1 Failure to Actively Consult

It was revealed during the study that the school administration 'tokenistically' consult students when making some crucial decisions about school yet, such decisions affect them in the end. The following are some responses that transpired:

In the past, cell phones were snatched from us and given back to us at the end of the academic year. However, these days, we've just seen the administration smashing them in the presence of the owner. How this practice started, we do not know and we are not happy about it (*SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016*).

Even us prefects, we are sometimes not consulted on some decisions of the school... we just receive them" (*SHP2, Usipa,*

2016).

“We are consulted only when we threaten to riot” (SFGD2, Lero, 2016).

Much as we, students are allowed to hold meetings to discuss some issues that affect us and report to the head teachers, our resolutions are not usually considered by the school administration. We are not usually consulted when making major changes or decisions of the school... As a result, most of us do not adhere to decisions we were not consulted on (SHP1, Mbaba, 2016).

The preceding excerpts show that students feel bad when they are not consulted in any issues that affect them including review of school rules. It can therefore, be concluded that this tendency of not allowing students to participate in the making of decisions on issues that affect them more than teachers, may create an angry student community which can in turn, promote indiscipline practices such as vandalism of school property. This observation is supported by Osler (2000) who concluded that denying students chance to participate or be consulted demotivates them and they do not feel part of the school. Consequently, they may even engage in indiscipline acts out of lack of sense of ownership. Students' views in this regard, imply that how good a decision seem to be, the school managers need to consult the students to promote a sense of ownership. The paradox of traditional discipline practices such as reaching a decision without consulting the students is that they tend to produce feelings of being compelled and coerced, and this leads to psychological reactance and further misbehaving. Avoiding such reactance requires a respectful approach that focuses on individual choice and preference and builds on a student's strengths, gifts and abilities to help the youngster gain a meaningful and empowered role at school and in society.

4.4.3.2 Ineffective Communication

The study also reveals that school rules and regulations are not regularly and effectively reported to students by the school management. It transpired from the responses that,

School rules and regulations are given to us at form one so that we read, understand and sign against them in agreement. However, we forget them and the signing in form one is just ceremonial in that most of us are just excited to start a secondary school life not that we understand the rules. No wonder, it is the upper classes that are always on the wrong side of the school rules and regulations because by this time, we have forgotten them. It is injustice to leave us without being exposed to the school rules and regulations for three years, yet the school expects us to abide by something we do not know or have forgotten (SFGD1, Usipa, 2016).

“We are communicated about school rules at assembly when opening school” (SHP2, Lero, 2016).

“Schools rules are not seen in school’s notice boards” (SFGD1, Kamodzi, 2016)

The observations in the preceding excerpts are in agreement with Straughan (1989: 10), as cited by Chigeda (2004), who observed that "One cannot properly be said to have learned a rule or to be following, or obeying a rule, unless one knows that there is such a rule". Knowing in this case also entails that students have a better understanding of the rules. The excerpt therefore, implies that something has to be done to ensure students are regularly informed of the school rules and regulations.

It was also appalling to learn that even most prefects especially in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) were not knowledgeable of the school rules and regulations. Document analysis of the school rules and regulations by comparison indeed showed that

in most boarding secondary schools, school rules were pasted in notice boards while the same were absent in CDSSs save for head teachers' offices. The disparity might be because most boarding secondary schools seem to be materially and financially stable compared to most CDSS's where both material and financial resources seem to be a challenge. This was confirmed during the focus group discussions where it was reported that in most CDSS's head teachers just resort to reading of the rules and regulations during the opening assembly for each term. The disparity therefore, exposes the major weakness of Glasser's Choice Theory. That is, it is financially unviable to implement the choice theory particularly in most CDSSs where resources are very limited. Therefore, if all students are to be aware of effective school discipline practices there may be need to provide enough resources for production of copies of school rules and regulations and even for training of both teachers and students regarding the same. Even if school rules and regulations are read during the opening assemblies of the term, it was however, observed through analysis of attendance registers that students do not come in large numbers during the opening weeks. Since only few students report for classes during the opening weeks, it may be assumed that only very few students learn of the regulations during opening assemblies. In addition, students may easily forget rules and regulations they learn during assemblies.

4.4.4 Ministry's-Related Barriers

This sub-section describes barriers to effective school discipline practices emanating from the MoEST itself. The two notable barriers observed by respondents are inadequate resources and delays (negligence) in concluding disciplinary issues.

4.4.4.1 Inadequate Resources

It was observed during the study that inadequate or lack of both human and material resources affect school discipline. Respondents expressed that they resort to indiscipline in their schools due to lack or shortage of teachers in their schools. It was reported,

“How do you expect students to behave when they are not being provided with enough teachers and books so that they effectively learn just like in other schools? When we peacefully demonstrate to the DEM’s office, they do not respond in time, but if we do it violently, they do” (SFGD2, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Teachers are not enough. We learn two subjects per day” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“When teachers are not teaching, students just play because there are no good books in the library” (SHP1, Kamodzi, 2016)

The observations inform that if enough resources are available, students’ indiscipline can be slowed down. It therefore, entails that curbing indiscipline in public secondary schools is the responsibility of the Ministry by providing adequate resources for effective teaching and learning. Information in the head teacher office on the board indicated that at Kamodzi, there were only eight teachers to teach forms one to four, but no physical science and Mathematics specialists. This again exposes the weakness of the Choice theory. In other words, promotion of effective school discipline practices can only work well if resources are enough. That is, little or lack of resources affect the implementation of the Choice theory itself and indeed effective discipline practice itself (Glasser, 1998). For example, to ensure that students do not make noise in class, there ought to be enough teachers for all subjects teaching in class so as to keep students busy. Absent or failure of this will leave students idle, hence, prone to indulging in cases of indiscipline.

4.4.4.2 Delays (Negligence) in Handling Discipline Issues

The study revealed that school matters that are referred to the ministry by schools take long time to be concluded. Girl student 6 from Lero CDSS observed as noted in the following quotation:

“When students’ indiscipline is referred to the Ministry of Education, it takes long time to be concluded... leaving students bitter against the administration” (SFGD2, Lero CDSS, 2016).

“The Ministry are slow to conclude discipline issues” (SHP1, Usipa, 2016).

“I feel really bad because my issue took too much time to end. Today, I am repeating because of them” (SFGD1, Mbaba, 2016).

The observations in the preceding excerpts informs that unless disciplinary issues are timely concluded, they will continue to haunt the schools in the division. Delaying a student justice is injustice and unfairness itself. Therefore, students are annoyed by the Ministry’s act of not concluding the matters in time as they keep them waiting for justice to be delivered. This is supported by section 43 of the Malawi Constitution which stipulates that...

“every person shall have the right to lawful and procedurally fair administrative action, which is justifiable in relation to reasons given where his or her rights, freedoms, legitimate expectations or interests are affected or threatened...” (The Republic of Malawi Constitution, 2010).

In this case, delaying to deliver justice to students affects the students’ rights, freedoms, legitimate expectations or interests. Student’ right to education is greatly affected as he or she may spend long time without attaining education. Even if he or she is able to go to

school, such a student is psychologically affected as he or she continues to think about the outcome of the matter.

4.5 Changes in Discipline Practices to Ensure Effective Change in Behaviour

The section discusses the third and last sub-research question, “What changes in discipline practice do students feel should be implemented to bring effective behavior change in students? The following response emerged from both face-to face interviews and the FGDs:

4.5.1 Guidance and Counselling

The study observed that effective guidance and counselling can promote effective school discipline. The following are some responses:

“Guidance and counselling is better, but teachers are always busy” (SHP2, Usipa, 2016).

“There is need to have an active school guidance and counselling committee with a permanent counsellor to guide and counsel students frequently. Though teacher counsellors are available at our school, they are not active; hence, students are not helped” (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

The excerpts show that guidance and counselling in schools is present but not active. This entails that guidance and counselling should be practical and unconditional if effective discipline is to be promoted in schools. Schools need to include guidance and counselling sessions on the calendar of events and implement it. This is supported by Miller and Nash (1999); Galvin (2002); and Pamela (2005) who described counselling as an appropriate strategy for working with difficult learners. This counselling session is being conducted by full time school teachers who are sometimes not qualified as counsellors or do not

have enough time to implementing the work (Pamela, 2005). In unison, SHP2 from Kamodzi CDSS made the following suggestion:

The administration should intensify guidance and counselling sessions frequently not only when they have heard that students are about to show their anger. In addition, the composition of the guidance and counselling committee should exclude members of the discipline committee because these are ‘spies’ to note unruly students. Therefore, as students, we cannot express our views freely (SHP2, Kamodzi, 2016).

The suggestion to intensify guidance and counselling concurs with Mikaye’s (2012) findings that guidance and counselling is the third force in education along with instruction, and is therefore an integral part of educational system. Guidance programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. Guidance and counseling programmes of youths in secondary schools is essential in enhancing discipline as they assist students to appreciate themselves and their role as workers and to develop right attitudes towards discipline (ibid). From the participants’ observations, it can therefore be implied that through counselling sessions, learners undergo through numerous behavioural disciplines where they will learn and be advised of their behavioural misconceptions. Further, new ideas are enforced on the learners to behave better. In this way, resentments by students during disciplinary hearing will minimize since they will be well informed of what constitute a virtue or a vice.

4.5.2 Re-scheduling Time for Disciplinary Hearing

The respondents suggested that there is need to change time for disciplinary hearing if effective discipline is to be promoted. They said,

Disciplinary hearing should not take place during official school time. This affects our learning since most teachers leave their classes unattended to, to attend to disciplinary issues. I suggest these should be held during official class time to allow teaching and learning to effectively take place without any disturbances (SFGD2, Usipa, 2016).

“Teachers should handle discipline cases after class” (SHP2, Lero, 2016).

“Discipline committee should meet during weekends to avoid disrupting classes” (SFGD, Mbaba, 2016).

The excerpt suggests that untimely scheduling of disciplinary hearing may promote indiscipline in public secondary schools. This is so because teachers leave the whole class unattended to, in order to resolve a discipline issue that affects one or few students. Consequently, students who are left unattended to resort to noise making, truancy and absconding classes as they have nothing to do.

4.5.3 Fairness during Disciplinary Hearing

It was further noted that students’ behaviour can positively change if there is fairness during discipline committee hearing. It was observed that,

“When we are called before the discipline committee for hearing, we need to be accorded the right to be heard before the disciplinary hearing and judgement should be uniform” (Boy student 4 from Lero CDSS, 2016).

“When called for disciplinary hearing, we are only told to pack and go without hearing from us” (SFGD1, Kamodzi, 2016).

“Teachers should give same punishment to students committing same offence” (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

The observation implies that there is need for uniformity in the application of the rules during hearing if effective discipline is to be promoted. That is to say, no student should get punished while another one escapes punishment when both of them have committed

same offences. This observation is consistent with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which establishes that children are entitled to express their views on all matters of concern to them and to have these given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This ensures common understanding, consistency and fairness in managing all kinds of indiscipline cases. The sentiments also indicate that there is lack of consistency in the maintenance of discipline in public secondary schools studied. This brings resentments and anger in students who feel unfairly treated. As a result, they resort to indiscipline. It is therefore imperative that schools should learn to consistently apply rules and regulations in the school.

4.5.4 Students' Consultation

The study also revealed that students need to be consulted and be involved in the making of school decisions. It was reported as follows:

We need to be consulted as students in the making and reviewing of school rules and regulations periodically. If a student is justifiably punished by a rule he or she participated in its making or reviewing, he or she may not resent because he or she owns it (SHP2, Lero, 2016).

“Teachers should allow us to choose the prefects we want” (SFGD1, Usipa, 2016).

“The head teacher should not impose food on us” (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016)

The preceding excerpts entails that students want to be involved in all issues that affect their life before implementing them. In other words, just like Glasser (1984) argued, students develop a sense of ownership of the rules they participated in the making and reviewing. Consultation promotes participation. Therefore, students need to actively participate in school issues that usually affect them more than teachers themselves so that

they develop a sense of ownership. In human rights based approach to education, this is called the principle of participation (UNESCO, 2007). These rights apply to all aspects of their education and have profound implications for the status of children throughout their education system. Participation rights do not simply extend to the pedagogical relationships in the classroom but also across the school and in the development of legislation and policy.

According to the Secondary School Management Handbook (2014), prefects have the duty of promoting effective school discipline practices by performing duties such as participating in formulation of school rules and regulations; holding regular learner meetings and discussions; and using proper communication channels to discuss learner frustration and fears. On the other hand, the SSMH (2014) stipulates that implementation is in the hands of the administration through the head teacher. The head teacher should ensure that the policy regarding disciplinary measures is implemented and that student behaviour and student issues are discussed and resolved immediately. The researcher observed that the implementation in most cases is not done because the administration undermines the views of students, taking them as useless. Therefore, it can be concluded that students have a minimal or no say in determining discipline procedure in secondary schools of CEED that were studied. However, previous studies carried on discipline shared similar sentiments on the important role consultation plays in promoting effective discipline in schools (Osler, 2000; Curwin, 2000; Mulford & Johns, 2004; Whitehead & Clough, 2004; Kayira, 2008). The study by Osler (2000) found that pupils' responses showed that they see school discipline as related to teacher and pupil relationships and to

school cultures that permit them to participate. They further argued that their involvement in decision-making increased their motivation to achieve and made them feel part of the school. This was echoed by Curwin (2000) who found that educators need to keep in mind that for any school discipline program to work, everyone within the learning environment must participate. A study by Mulford and Johns (2004) in Australia found that student participation in decision-making and management resulted in a range of positive benefits such as greater connectedness and a sense of community within the school, reduced levels of vandalism and an overall improvement in students' behaviour and attitude. This was also confirmed by Kayira (2008) who suggested need for active students' participation if indiscipline cases are to be curbed.

4.5.5 Timely Response to Discipline Issues

The study also revealed that students are happy to see discipline issues concluded and decided in time other than delaying them. The following responses emanate from both face-to-face interviews and FGDs,

“Discipline cases should be concluded in time by school management and the Ministry of Education so that we are not negatively affected. If we are negatively affected and stressed, we feel bad” (SFGD1, Lero, 2016).

“Discipline cases should not be delayed” (SFGD2, Kamodzi, 2016).

“I wish that teachers should consider discipline issues that affect us like those of their children. Would they take long time to resolve them? I don't think so” (SFG 2, Usipa, 2016).

The excerpts show that discipline issues sometimes delay to be resolved. This does not go well with students as they feel that they are being denied justice because of the delay in judgments. Out of stress, some students just stay in hostels (truancy) without attending

classes. Consequently, they may develop negative attitude about school and against school administration thereby engaging in unruly behaviour.

4.5.6 Gender Sensitivity in Decision-Making

Participants reported that there was need for school administrators to be more gender sensitive when making disciplinary decisions in schools. This came out during focus group discussions as follows:

...girls are not given equal opportunities as boys. For instance, during evening study, girls are locked in their hostels by 20:30 while boys are given the freedom to continue studying, yet they expect us to compete at the same level with boys during national examinations. This frustrates us and is the source of our poor performance (SFGD2, Mbaba, 2016).

“Teachers should make sure that decisions of the school should also support girls, for example, even boys should clean the school, given equal time of study” (SFGD2, Usipa, 2016)

The excerpt suggests that indiscipline in school may arise in public secondary schools if decision-making on gender issues is not properly looked into. It shows that girls want to compete with boys in class but they are sometimes denied by the attitude of the decision-makers in the school regarding them. Unless girls are allowed to contribute and push for this change, girls will not take education seriously and will continue to slide behind in their performance.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This Chapter dealt with analysis, presentation and interpretation of the findings of the study. The analysis, presentation and discussion were based on the research questions as presented in Chapter One. The Chapter has highlighted effective school discipline practices in public secondary schools of CEED as perceived by the students themselves

as well as discipline practices actually present in public secondary schools in the division. In addition, students' perceptions of causes of school indiscipline have been presented and discussed. Furthermore, perceptions of what students consider as barriers to effective school discipline practices have also been highlighted. In this vein, it has been observed that the barriers to effective school discipline practices may be student, teacher, school management as well as ministry-related. Finally, the Chapter has presented students' suggestions regarding changes in discipline procedure to ensure effective change in the behaviour of students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

The preceding four chapters dealt with several aspects pertaining to the research problem. This chapter presents a summary of the study, the major findings, conclusions and pertinent implications with respect to the main findings of the study.

5.2 Conclusions of the Study

The following conclusions were drawn from the research questions and the findings of the study:

Students are aware of effective school discipline practices to be implemented in public secondary schools and consider effective school discipline practices as essential to their ability to attain quality and successful education. The study showed that students perceive guidance and counselling, fairness in handling disciplinary issues, students' active consultation or participation, positive teacher-student relationship and timely handling of discipline issues as effective discipline practices. Therefore, cases of indiscipline can minimise in schools where these practices are frequently implemented.

The findings of this study also showed that the causes of students' indiscipline originate from the attitudes of the people who form part of the school lives of the learners in the school setting and at home. These includes teachers, school managers, parents and

students themselves. The factors that causes indiscipline of students were found to be parental/home-based, school-based and peer influence.

The study further opined that there are many barriers to promotion of effective discipline in schools. These barriers emanate not only from students, but also from other stakeholders such as, teachers, school management and the Ministry of Education itself. Some of the students-related barriers include students' underrating and threatening of school prefects, misinterpretation of human rights as well as possession and use of technological gadgets. Some teacher-related barriers include rigidity of some teachers to modern discipline Code of Conduct as opposed to traditional one, frequent absenteeism of teachers, non-compliance by teachers to respect students' rights, teachers' absenteeism and laziness as well as public shaming of students. It has also been established that school management does not only rarely consult students when making crucial decisions of the school, but also, it does not effectively communicate issues to students. For MoEST, it has not been effective in providing both human as well as material resources.

Finally, the study has shown that if students' behaviour is to positively change, guidance and counselling has to be enhanced in schools. A well organised guidance and counselling services could contribute significantly to effective discipline in schools. In addition, its composition should not include members of the discipline committee because that makes students not to freely express their views. Both teachers and students need to be trained in positive approach to discipline. The study also revealed the need to allow students to participate in all school activities, consistency in the application of

school rules and regulations as well as enhancement of gender sensitivity in decision-making at school.

5.3 Implications of the Findings of the Study

From the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, the following implications are drawn:

- The head teachers and teachers should be pro-active rather than reactive when dealing with students' indiscipline cases. Making students know what is expected of them before hand, rather than after misbehaviors happen, is a crucial step in dealing with indiscipline.
- Schools should continuously evaluate their discipline policies and practices to ensure fairness and equity and promote achievement for all students. Schools should ensure that discipline is applied fairly and should continually monitor and improve discipline policies and practices.
- There should be frequent guidance and counseling in schools to enhance effective discipline. This should also be included on the calendar of events for the school. Further, its composition should not include members of the management and discipline so as to allow students to open up during discussions.
- The Ministry of education should promote training and awareness among teachers and students regarding discipline policy and effective discipline practices. Teachers need to be constantly reminded about proper handling of discipline issues in schools. Students too, need to be educated on their role in promoting effective school discipline practices

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

Although this study was limited to 72 participants in four public secondary schools of Central East Education Division, questions have developed that may lead to further research regarding effective school discipline practices. Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions were made:

- This study concentrated on public secondary schools of CEED. Research should be conducted to find out the students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices in private secondary schools in CEED in order to find out if students' perceptions of effective school discipline practices are the same.
- Research should also be carried out in both public and private institutions of learning on challenges facing education managers in enhancing effective school discipline practices in order to have more comprehensive approach of dealing with indiscipline cases in schools.
- Research may also be conducted on the influence of support staff on students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in CEED.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter of Introduction from Chancellor College

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19
Your Ref.:

11th November 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

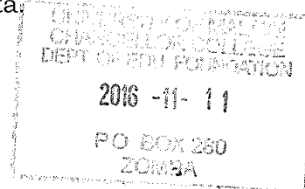
INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

Geoffrey Ndevuzinayi (MED/PPL/27/15) is a student of Education in the Department of Educational Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Mr. Ndevuzinayi is working on his thesis, "***Student's Perceptions of Effective School Discipline Practices***". This is meant to be a request to your institution or organization to assist our student in his endeavor to collect data.

Thank you

Symon Ernest Chiziwa, PhD
HEAD DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS



Appendix B: Permission from Central East Education Division to Generate Data



Private Bag 233
Kasungu

Tel: (265) 01253227
All correspondence be addressed to
The Education Division Manager

REF. NO: CEED/2/12/2

21st November, 2016.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Mr. Geoffrey Ndevuzinayi has been authorized to collect data for his research study which will culminate in a thesis in partial fulfillment of requirements for his program of study.

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Mgunda'.



Paul Mgunda

For: **EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (CEED)**

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Schools' Head Prefects

I am a student from University of Malawi, Chancellor College, carrying out a research entitled: *“Students’ perceptions of Effective school Discipline Practices’*. This research is meant for academic purpose.

Kindly, you are requested to provide responses to the interview questions as honestly and precisely as possible. The interview is voluntary and the researcher will respect your rights including your right to withdraw. Responses to these questions will be treated as confidential. I also wish to ask for your permission to record this interview.

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION AND PERSONAL DETAILS

Age of prefect: _____

Gender: _____

Form/Class: _____

Perceptions of effective school discipline practices currently in public secondary schools

1. What are the current discipline practices used in your school?
2. How do the discipline practices in your school affect students’ attitudes about school?
3. What would you consider as the most effective discipline practices used by your school?
4. In what ways are you involved in promoting effective school discipline practices?
5. How satisfied have you been with the disciplinary process in your school?
6. What are the rules and regulations used by your school to bring discipline?

Causes of students indiscipline in public secondary schools

1. State the common disciplinary problems in your school frequently referred to.
2. Why do you think students misbehave in schools?

Barriers to effective school discipline practices in public secondary schools

1. What do you consider as barriers to effective discipline practices in your school?
2. To what extent do the perceived barriers to effective school discipline practices affect the teaching and learning process?
3. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

Changes in discipline practice to ensure effective change in the behaviour of students

1. What is your role in promoting effective discipline in school?
2. To what extent, if any, do you think that prefects need input in effective school discipline practices? If so, how should this be implemented?
3. In what way(s) do you think prefects' input in school discipline practices is important?

Thank You

APPENDIX D: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students:

I am a student from University of Malawi, Chancellor College, carrying out a research entitled: *“Students’ perceptions of Effective school Discipline Practices’*. This research is meant for academic purpose.

Kindly, you are requested to provide responses to the interview questions as honestly and precisely as possible. The interview is voluntary and the researcher will respect your rights including your right to withdraw. Responses to these questions will be treated as confidential. I also wish to ask for your permission to record this interview.

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION AND PERSONAL DETAILS

Name of School:	Age:	Gender:	Form/Class:
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____

Perceptions of effective school discipline practices currently in public secondary schools

1. What are the current discipline practices used in your school?
2. How do the discipline practices in your school affect students' attitudes about school?
3. What would you consider as the most effective discipline practices used by your school?
4. In what ways are you involved in promoting effective school discipline practices?
5. How satisfied have you been with the disciplinary process in your school?
6. What are the rules and regulations used by your school to bring discipline?

Causes of students indiscipline in public secondary schools

1. State the common disciplinary problems in your school frequently referred to.
2. Why do you think students misbehave in schools?

Barriers to effective school discipline practices in public secondary schools

1. What do you consider as barriers to effective discipline practices in your school?
2. To what extent do the perceived barriers to effective school discipline practices affect the teaching and learning process?
3. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

Changes in discipline practice to ensure effective change in the behaviour of students

1. What is your role in promoting effective discipline in school?
2. To what extent, if any, do you think that prefects need input in effective school discipline practices? If so, how should this be implemented?
3. In what way(s) do you think prefects' input in school discipline practices is important?

Thank You