

**DELINQUENT YOUTH SUBCULTURES AMONG DISPLACED YOUTHS: THE
CASE OF DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP IN DOWA DISTRICT**

MASTER OF ARTS (SOCIOLOGY) THESIS

THEMBA SHALOM NYAMBOSE

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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MASTER OF ARTS (SOCIOLOGY) THESIS

By

THEMBA SHALOM NYAMBOSE

BSoc – University of Malawi

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in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

University of Malawi

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DECLARATION

I, Themba Shalom Nyambose, declare that this thesis is a product of my independent research and that to the best of my knowledge, the findings have not been previously presented to the University of Malawi or elsewhere for the award of any academic qualification. Where other sources were used, it has been accordingly acknowledged.

THEMBA SHALOM NYAMBOSE

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We, the undersigned, certify that this thesis is a result of the author's own work, and that to the best of our knowledge, it has not been submitted for any other academic qualification within the University of Malawi. This thesis has been submitted with our approval in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Main Supervisor JUBILEE TIZIFA, PhD

Signature: _____

DATE: _____/_____/_____

Co-Supervisor FRIDA PALAMULENI KADZANDIRA, PhD

Signature: _____

DATE: _____/_____/_____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my Mother Hilda Daisy Chima Nyambose for her sacrifices, uncommon love and dedication in ensuring that I get educated so that I should be an independent and reliable person.

To my wife, Madalo Sabuni Nyambose for her unwavering support, care and love.

To my daughters, Hlengiwe Nyambose and Ayanda Nyambose for their smiles and laughs

To my late Dad, for his encouragement and hard work- you are still my model

To all my siblings for their love and kindness.

To my friends, for their kind support and encouragement

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ABSTRACT

Over time, sociologists and criminologists have studied youth gangs and in the process, have produced a large body of academic literature on youth gangs. The literature covers youth gangs in migration and refugee populations. However, there is little literature on youth gangs among refugees in refugee camps in low-income countries. This study used subculture, social disorganisation, and ecological systems theories to identify gangs and examine their causes in the Dzaleka refugee camp. The findings of the study indicate the presence of youth gangs within the Dzaleka refugee camp, characterised specifically as retreatist gangs. At structural level, the study found that poverty, a restrictive legal environment, and structural education barriers contribute to youth gang formation and gang affiliation in the camp. These obstacles prevent refugees from achieving their financial and academic goals, causing frustration. At the community level, exposure to violence and a lack of community support promote pro-violence behaviour and weaken social control mechanisms, which fosters youth delinquency and gang membership. Gang affiliation is also linked to poor parenting, weak school attachment, and strong peer support in delinquents, according to the study. The study found that current juvenile delinquency and gang affiliation interventions are insufficient. Thus, to address the gang issue in the camp, authorities should reduce poverty rates by relaxing restrictive legal measures, promoting social integration, and actively involving young gang members, particularly leaders, in order to suppress these gangs.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
OAU	Organisation of African Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RLO	Refugee Led Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This section gives the background of the study followed by the research problem and research objectives. The section also gives justification for the study by stating its significance. The section also outlines the boundaries of the study by delineating it from the wider deviance and crime scholarship. Finally, the section defines conceptual and operational definitions for the study.

1.2 Background

In recent years, Malawi has experienced a rise in youth gang problem. In 2015, two instances of youth gangs causing fear and distress among the populace in the cities of Lilongwe and Balaka were documented by online publications, namely Malawi24 and Nyasatimes. According to reports, the city of Lilongwe, specifically area 36, has witnessed the presence of over 18 youth gangs actively engaged in various activities. In the same year, a number of individuals affiliated with the infamous 11 Bongos gang were apprehended, and their leader was formally accused of committing a homicide (Malawi News Agency, 2015). In the district of Balaka, a group known as Ziwanda crew gained significant attention when 14 of its members were apprehended for engaging in an act of physical assault against a young woman (Chikoti, 2015).

In the same year, a separate group of juvenile males known as Boko Haram surfaced in Mchinji, terrorising students attending a primary school within the district (Munthali, 2015). Over the years, these cases have been on the rise. In 2016, residents of Mzuzu complained of increased criminal gangs among the youths that threatened their security (Mandala, 2016). Similar complaints resurfaced in 2021 in the township of Zolozolo in the same city (Kachinangwa, 2021). The central question surrounding this phenomenon is why there has been a rise in such cases.

Youth delinquency has always been a contentious issue among social scientists hence there are different explanations on such behaviour. Some attribute youth delinquency to biological factors, while others to social factors among other explanations (Smith & Ireland, 2009; Bernburg, 2002; Carrabine, et al., 2009; Kubrin, 2009; Williams, 2011). On social factors there are different schools of thought as well with some researchers arguing that lack of legitimate opportunities for them to achieve socially ascribed goals force them into such delinquent or gang life acts (Tibbetts, 2018; Williams, 2011). Therefore, it is argued that most of the youths involved in gangs or delinquent groups are those that are socially marginalised and have little or no access to socially accepted means of achieving social ascribed goals (Siegel, 2016; Bernburg, 2002).

Literature is replete of studies of disadvantaged youths that are involved in gangs or delinquent groups. Analysis of these groups has been of interests to sociologists and other related fields and these analyses have been at various levels depending on the interests of the researchers. Notable ones include race, class, gender, age, and citizenship status - immigrants and refugees or nationals (Goodrum, et al., 2015). On citizenship status, focus has been on comparing immigrants and natives or different generations of migrants (Van

Ngo, et al., 2015). Some studies have also compared refugee youths' involvement in delinquent acts (Goodrum, et al., 2015). However, there is a limited amount of research available on the involvement of refugee youths in delinquent activities.

Discussing why some immigrants and refugees are involved in deviant and criminal behaviour, researchers have argued that lack of legitimate opportunities for these groups compels them to get involved into illegal acts as means of survival (Van Ngo, et al., 2015). The strain theories of crime posit that deviance and delinquency can be attributed to the psychological and social strain experienced by individuals, as well as the broader societal strain resulting from structural limitations that hinder the attainment of socially prescribed goals (Tibbetts, 2018). The legal framework regarding refugee protection in Malawi systematically places refugees in a position of disadvantage by effectively prohibiting the majority of legal means of earning a living (Mvula, 2010). While there are studies on deviance and crime with respect to immigrants and refugees (Van Ngo, et al., 2015; Goodrum, et al., 2015), most of these studies were done in Western countries, where the living conditions and level of restrictions for refugees differ significantly from those in Malawi. Countries in which these studies were conducted do not follow the encampment policy and refugees have the right to movement as well as the right to engage in gainful activities.

1.3 Problem Statement

The study of youth delinquency has been an exciting subject for sociologists and criminologists, particularly those who are interested in crime and deviant behaviour.

Several extensive studies have been conducted on the participation of young people in criminal activities and deviant behaviour.

Some of these studies have resulted in the development of theories that explain crime as a consequence of the interplay between various components of the social structure (Siegel, 2016; Carrabine, et al, 2009; Thrasher, 1927; Goldsmith, 2021; Goodrum, et al, 2015). From this viewpoint, there is abundant data on the components of the social structure that have a crucial impact on the participation of young individuals in gang activities. Some researchers highlight the significance of social factors including race, citizenship, social status, poverty, employment rate, and social disorganisation, among others (Anderson, 2000; Bordua, 1961; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Tibbetts, 2018; Miller, 1958; Williams, 2011; Kubrin, 2009). Conversely, other scholars have ascribed the participation of criminal gangs and delinquency to the breakdown of interpersonal connections between youths and their families, communities, and educational institutions (Van Ngo et al., 2015).

The legal framework in Malawi that governs the refugee regime is commonly seen as restrictive because it imposes limitations on the freedom of movement for refugees and requires them to reside exclusively in refugee camps residence (Mvula, 2010). This policy imposes restrictions on the economic rights of refugees by explicitly prohibiting them from engaging in paid employment or establishing businesses outside of the designated refugee camp. Refugees face restrictions in their ability to attend public educational institutions, such as public universities, unless they apply as international students (Manda & Kufaine, 2018). These restrictions consequently foster an environment that is favourable for social tension, stress, insecurity, and violence (Crisp, 2003).

There are concerns about the rise of youth delinquent groups in the camp. These concerns were expressed during meetings with refugee-led organizations, protection partners, and other stakeholders. However, there is a limited understanding of the emergence of these deviant youth groups and the experiences of the young individuals involved. This is due to a lack of comprehensive information regarding the root causes, motivations, and operational dynamics of these groups. The main purpose of this study was to fill the existing knowledge gap regarding youth delinquency among refugees living in camps, specifically focusing on the formation of gangs in Dzaleka Refugee Camp. This was done by investigating the various manifestations, mechanisms, and underlying factors contributing to the formation of gangs among refugees in Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

1.4 Main Objective

To explore the delinquent youth subcultures among displaced youths at Dzaleka refugee camp in Dowa.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

The following were the specific objective.

1. To identify gangs in Dzaleka Refugee Camp
2. To understand the nature of gangs in Dzaleka
3. To explore factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

1.5 Significance of the study

The study will contribute to the better understanding of the youth gangs as well as factors that contribute to the emergence and sustenance of youth gangs in Dzaleka Refugee camp.

Lack of knowledge of the existence youth gangs and deeper understanding of the youth gang problems can lead to ineffective community responses (Howell, 2010; Howell, 2007). Therefore, information gathered from this study will also contribute to the youth delinquency debate by bringing in refugee issues which have less scholarly attention by social researchers.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

Deviance and crime is a broad subject and scholars study this topic from different perspectives. However, the interest of this researcher is on youth delinquency, therefore, the study is limited to issues concerning youth gangs.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The study was conducted in a refugee camp therefore its findings may not be generalised to other areas that have different conditions to the camp. Furthermore, the findings of this study should be understood in the context of the theories used. While in some interviews interpreters were used since most residents of Dzaleka are not fluent in English and Chichewa, to remedy the error of interpretation, another interpreter was involved to check on the accuracy of the initial interpretations and it was found to be accurate.

One additional challenge encountered was the prevailing preference among the interviewed youth engaged in gang activities for receiving monetary incentives as a form of motivation. On one hand there was no budget for such incentives and on the other hand, non-compliance to these demands would have affected the participation of the youth gang

members. In order to deal with this situation, the researcher discussed with the participants on the purpose of the study as it was misconstrued as an exercise to be used for soliciting funds. Another challenge encountered was the verification exercise by UNHCR where a few participants had to stop mid-way through the interviews to go for verification. The researcher rescheduled some of the interviews to allow the participants to go through verification exercise and participate in the study.

1.8 Conceptual and operational definitions

Refugee: Refugee is defined as every person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR, 2009).

Asylum-seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection and whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted (UNHCR, 2009). In this study, the term Refugee was used to refer to all persons UNHCR assist whether asylum seekers or refugees.

Gang: The Eurogang network defines a gang as any durable youth group that is street oriented, and its group identity is derived from the group's involvement in illegal activities (Fraser & Hagedorn, 2018). The study adapted the Eurogang definition and defined youth

gang as any durable youth group that is street oriented, has a structure and its group identity is derived from the group's involvement in illegal activities and has a name.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses general literature on deviance and crime in order to appreciate the general knowledge landscape of sociology of deviance and crime. However, before dwelling on these studies, a summary of the international refugee protection regime as well as a Malawi refugee protection regime is presented in order to understand the legal environment and conditions under which refugees live in Malawi for a better understanding of the applicability of some research findings as well as theoretical assumptions. Later the discussion dwells on studies on youth involvement in delinquency as groups. Finally, in order to arrive at a theoretical foundation for this study, we conclude with a discussion of theoretical issues related to the study of youth delinquency and gangs.

2.2 International Refugee Protection

According to the UN's 1951 Convention on status of refugees, a refugee is

every person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and

is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa extends the definition of a refugee by applying it to other causes of displacements. The AU's definition adds that.

The term refugee shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

In addition to the aforementioned instruments, there exist alternative international legal instruments, such as the 1967 protocol pertaining to the status of refugees, as well as various international human rights laws. There are a range of tools available to tackle refugee issues, operating at both regional and national scales. An example of a regional framework is the OAU 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which provides guidelines for addressing refugee issues in Africa. On the other hand, the Refugee Act of Malawi operates at the national level, focusing specifically on refugee matters within the country. The 1951 convention incorporates a number of important principles, including the obligation to afford refugees treatment that is at least as favourable as that provided to legally recognised aliens in their respective

nations (UNHCR, 1951). In contrast, it is incumbent upon refugees to adhere to the legal statutes and regulatory frameworks of the host nation (UNHCR, 1951). However, it is important to note that member states of the United Nations possess the freedom to both sign and ratify these conventions in their entirety, or alternatively and express reservations regarding specific articles within them. The endorsement of specific articles may vary among member states based on the prevailing political and social factors within each state. However, each member state that signed the 1951 convention is obliged not to return refugees to countries where they are at risk of persecution (UNHCR 1951).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN organisation mandated with international refugee protection and supervisory role in the implementation of the international refugee law (Volker, 2001). In trying to deal with the refugee problem, UNHCR has three main durable solutions which are voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration (UNHCR, 2009). Under voluntary repatriation, refugees wilfully return to their country of origin whether assisted or not. Under Resettlement, refugees are relocated to another country from where they initially sought refuge. Local integration is when the refugee receiving/hosting country provides citizenship or residential status to the refugees so that they stay in the country as locals. Depending on which of these three durable solutions is practical, UNHCR advocates with governments and refugee community for their implementation (UNHCR, 2009).

2.2.1 Protracted Refugee Situation.

The rising number of people fleeing armed conflicts has caused a humanitarian crisis that limits durable solutions resulting to protracted situations in many refugee hosting countries

(Crisp, 2003; Milner & Loescher, 2011). Protracted situation is defined as the condition where one stays for more than five years in exile and have no immediate prospect of finding a durable solution to his/her plight by means of voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement (Crisp, 2003). The protracted situation is additionally characterised by factors such as the geographical location of the designated location of residence, the demographics of the population, a decrease in international attention, and limited rights for refugees (Ibid). In terms of geographical positioning, the majority of these protracted situations pertain to camps situated in remote regions, in close proximity to the border and at a considerable distance from urban centers. In relation to population demographics, a significant proportion consists of individuals who are considered vulnerable, including women, children, adolescents, the elderly, and individuals with specific needs (Crisp, 2003). The international humanitarian community tends to allocate its resources primarily towards addressing emergent refugee situations, resulting in a decline of international attention towards protracted refugee situations. Consequently, refugees in protracted situations are deprived of the assistance they typically receive and their rights are not upheld. (Crisp, 2003; Milner & Loescher, 2011).

Protracted refugee situations have some undesirable consequences such as violation of human rights and insecurity that may lead to material deprivation, psycho-social and gender issues, social tension, and violence (Crisp, 2003; Milner & Loescher, 2011). Inadequate funding and donor fatigue are some of the current concerns by the international humanitarian community which in turn leaves refugees in protracted situations vulnerable to economic shocks (Thompson, 2017; Crisp, 2003). Most refugees in refugee camps are in a state of despair as they do not have control over their lives and consequently lose the

sense of purpose in their lives which results into psycho-social and gender issues, social tensions and in extreme cases, violence (Crisp, 2003).

In order to survive in such difficult situations, refugees engage in surviving strategies that are detrimental to their social wellbeing as well as the locals. These strategies include, sexual exploitation, exploitative employment, illegal and unsustainable farming, manipulating, and maximizing assistance, negative coping mechanisms, remittances, and mobility and migration (Crisp, 2003).

2.2.2 Refugee protection in Malawi

Malawi acceded to the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees as well as its 1968 protocol on 10th December 1987. At local level, Malawi passed the Refugee Act in 1989 in order to operationalise the international instruments and also provide administrative guidelines on refugee protection. However, like other countries, Malawi held consent to 8 Articles of the 1951 convention where it expressed that *Article 7-Exemption from Reciprocity*, *Article 13 -Movable and Immovable Property*, *Article 15 -Right of Association*, *Article 19 -Liberal Professions*, *Article 22 -Public Education*, and *Article 24 -Labour Legislation and Social Security* are not legally binding but mere recommendations hence the Malawi government opted not be bound such. The Malawi government further reserved its right to restrict movement of refugees within its territory with respect to national security and designate a place of residence for refugees, it also reserved the right to gainful employment more favourable than those to aliens (UNHCR 1951).

Ideally, the laws of Malawi prevent refugees from accessing public education, engage in gainful employment or businesses outside the camp and in a case where there are no

resettlement and voluntary repatriation options local integration is not an option as well. While UNHCR provide primary and secondary education to refugees in the camp, by law, refugees are not allowed to attend public primary or secondary schools. Those who are eligible for tertiary education are not enrolled in public tertiary institutions. Unless they apply as international students and pay high fees, they are not admitted to the public universities. This stand has been recently affirmed by the Malawi government through its directive to relocate all refugees and asylum seekers living outside the camp to Dzaleka (Tembo, 2022). These conditions therefore put refugees in Malawi in a precarious condition that may not offer hope to many refugees in the camp, particularly those who before their flight were economically active either through business or employment. The loss of life, economic livelihoods, social status in their home countries and restrictive environment in Malawi therefore limit refugees in terms of their social and economic wellbeing.

With reference to the definition of protracted situation and characteristics of such situation (Crisp, 2003), it can be argued that Refugees in Malawi qualify to be in a protracted situation. While the camp continues to receive asylum seekers on a daily basis, refugees stay in the camp for more than five years. Even though it is not located in the border district, the camp is located in a rural area. As pointed out above, the government of Malawi reserved some clauses of the 1951 convention that in turn restrict some rights of refugees while the demographic characteristics of the refugee population in Dzaleka is not made public women constitute 45% and children 48%. Globally UNHCR financial support has been on the decline mainly due to donor fatigue and international economy challenges. Since 2020, World Food Programme (WFP) the UN organisation that provide with food to

refugees reduced its monthly food ration due to funding shortages for food. In order to maximise its resources, the organisation resorted to cash-based assistance and not everyone is entitled as it is on targeted assistance basis.

2.3 Deviance, crime and youth gangs

The concept of deviance in sociology is subject to ongoing debate, as it lacks a universally agreed-upon definition (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). However, deviance can be loosely defined as behaviour, belief or condition that is contrary to or violates the cultural norms of a specific social group (Marsh & Keating, 2006). While deviance is a violation of social norms, crime borders on the violation of legal provisions such as written rules and laws (Macionis, 2012). One of the major aspects of deviance and crime has been on age where the youth has been the unit of analysis. Below is a discussion on major sociological approaches to youth delinquency and crime and empirical research on youth gangs. This review examines theoretical perspectives on youth delinquency, with particular emphasis on crime causation theories, specifically within the context of social structure theories and their application to youth delinquency and gang involvement.

2.3.1 Youth delinquency: Theoretical approaches

Researchers have employed various theories to systematically gather and analyse data on youth behaviour in order to understand the underlying factors that contribute to their involvement in delinquent activities and affiliation with delinquent groups or gangs. Below are some of the leading theories on youth delinquency.

2.3.2 *Anomie/Strain Theory*

The theoretical foundations of Anomie/strain theory can be attributed to the seminal works of Emile Durkheim on suicide and the division of labour. Durkheim asserted that a significant correlation exists between individual behaviours and the overarching social structure (Siegel, 2016). Durkheim, in line with the majority of strain theorists, posited that individuals are normative beings whose behaviour is influenced by cultural norms and values. He further argued that abrupt disruptions to these norms and values, brought about by social change, can result in a state of anomie. This state of normlessness, in turn, can contribute to deviant behaviour and criminal activity (Tibbetts, 2018; Siegel, 2016). Robert K. Merton is another prominent scholar who has made significant contributions to the Anomie theory. Merton's theory revolves around the premise that societal failure to regulate the methods of attaining culturally prescribed objectives is a key factor in creating a state of anomie (Bernburg, 2002). In contrast to Durkheim's emphasis on ambiguous cultural objectives as the underlying cause of anomie, Merton claimed that limitations on the means to attain these cultural goals are the primary drivers of anomie (Carrabine, et al., 2009).

With respect to youth delinquency and criminal behaviour, anomie/strain theorists examine the impact of cultural goals on marginalised and disadvantaged groups, whose access to socially accepted means of achieving these goals is limited (Tibbetts, 2018; Siegel, 2016). According to Keating (2006), anomie/strain theorists argue that individuals who belong to less privileged segments of society are more likely to engage in deviant behaviour and criminal activities due to the presence of inherent structural

inequalities. These individuals disregard established rules and regulations in their pursuit of social goals.

However, strain theories have been under attack for failing to account for deviance among upper class since the theory base its deviance concept on failure to meet society goals due to structural constraints faced by individuals belonging to the lower class (Tibbetts, 2018). Nevertheless, strain theories have faced criticism for their inability to explain deviant behaviour among the upper class. This criticism stems from the fact that these theories primarily focus on deviance resulting from the inability to achieve societal goals, which is attributed to the structural limitations experienced by individuals from lower social classes (Tibbetts, 2018). It is also argued that individuals may be involved in crime for pleasure and not strain as presumed by the theory (Carrabine, et al, 2009).

Despite these limitations, anomie/strain theories have demonstrated their utility in the examination of youth delinquency by providing an explanation for crime as a social phenomenon. The opportunities for achieving financial success within the context of a refugee camp and the legal framework governing refugees in Malawi are constrained. As evident from the aforementioned observations, refugees face constrained opportunities in terms of both entrepreneurial pursuits and educational endeavours due to the legal restrictions imposed by the Malawian government, which impede their access to these fundamental rights. Hence, the application of strain theory can be valuable in understanding the circumstances experienced by refugees residing in the camp.

2.3.3 *Social Disorganisation theory*

Social disorganisation theory's main tenet is that there is a relationship between crime and the organisation of the community (Kubrin, 2009). This theory is attributed to Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay who were also influenced by the works of Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess (Tibbetts, 2018). The theory relates crime to social neighbourhood structure and social control (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). Therefore, crime is not a function of individual characteristics or personal motivations only, but it also includes the neighbourhood within which an individual is situated which influence his or her criminal behaviour (Burke, 2009; Walker, 2009). Neighbourhoods with high levels of unemployment, poverty, economic inequality and whose social control institutions such as families, schools, and security agencies are broken, antisocial behaviours flourish (Burke, 2009; Siegel, 2016; Walker, 2009). These communities are further characterised by deteriorated housing, large numbers of single-parent households and high levels of social tensions among the residents (Siegel, 2016).

The fundamental tenet of social disorganisation theory is that there is a correlation between crime and the structural arrangement of a community (Kubrin, 2009). This theory is attributed to Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, who were also influenced by the scholarly contributions of Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess (Tibbetts, 2018). The theory claims a connection between crime and the structural characteristics of social neighbourhoods, as well as the presence of social control mechanisms (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). Hence, it can be argued that crime is not solely determined by individual traits or motivations but is also influenced by the surrounding neighbourhood in which an individual resides, as suggested by Burke (2009) and Walker (2009).

Neighbourhoods characterised by elevated rates of unemployment, poverty, economic disparity, and the breakdown of social control institutions, such as families, schools, and security agencies, tend to foster the proliferation of antisocial behaviours (Burke, 2009; Siegel, 2016; Walker, 2009). These communities exhibit distinct features such as dilapidated housing, a significant prevalence of single-parent households, and elevated levels of social tensions among the residents (Siegel, 2016).

Similar to strain theorists, social disorganisation theorists have faced criticism for their inability to explain delinquent and criminal behaviours by the youths in communities that are not socially disorganised (Tibbetts, 2018). It is further argued that the theory's analytical framework primarily concentrates on the macro level, neglecting to consider individual agency. Consequently, it fails to adequately address the presence of certain individuals within disorganised communities who abstain from participating in delinquent and criminal behaviours (Tibbetts, 2018). Despite the inherent limitations, the theory has garnered significant attention from contemporary researchers, whose investigations have predominantly provided empirical support for the theory (Tibbetts, 2018).

2.3.4 Subculture Theory

The emergence of the subculture theory can be traced back to the 1950s, with its origins attributed to researchers affiliated with the University of Chicago and Birmingham University's Contemporary Cultural Studies (Williams, 2011; Blackman, 2007). Prominent scholars who have made significant contributions to this theory include Albert Cohen, Dick Hebdige, and Water B. Miller, among other notable figures (Crawford, 2017; Williman, 2011). The prevailing assertion, notwithstanding minor variations among subculture

theorists, claims that youths who form delinquent groups or gangs often share certain characteristics. Primarily, these characteristics are associated with fulfilling their social needs that are not adequately met by the dominant culture, but rather through illicit and nonconventional methods (Tibbetts, 2018; Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955; Siegel, 2016; Carrabine, et al., 2009; Zembroski, 2011).

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) further classified these subcultural groups into three distinct typologies, namely criminal, conflict, and retreatist. Criminal subcultures emerge in relatively stable working-class communities where established patterns of crime prevail, primarily driven by utilitarian motives. Typically, the group exhibits a high level of discipline and organisation, with adult criminals assuming leadership roles. Conflict subcultures are characterised by the strategic use of violence and tend to arise in areas which are socially disorganised, marked by frequent population turnover and a resulting absence of social cohesion. Retreatist subcultures exhibit distinct features, namely engagement in unlawful activities involving substance abuse, such as drug addiction and alcoholism, which are financed through petty theft, shoplifting, and prostitution (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960).

Critics have argued that subcultural theories tend to neglect additional factors that may exert an influence on deviant behaviour within the lower class (Siegel, 2016). The theory has also faced criticism regarding its conceptualisation of mainstream culture as an objective concept, as it may vary depending on contextual factors and necessitates identification when examining subcultural groups (Williman, 2011). Nonetheless, the significance of these theories lies in their ability to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of deviant behaviour, thereby highlighting the inadequacy of solely examining the individual

as a means of explanation. Theoretical perspectives within subcultural theory emphasise the significance of shared norms and values in guiding social behaviour and shaping social identity (Crawford, 2017). Subcultural theory also brings in the values that delinquent groups stand for apart from what they are against (Bordua, 1961).

2.3.5 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, known as the ecological systems theory, was formulated by the scholar in the 1970s and underwent further refinement until the 1990s (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). The central proposition of ecological systems theory posits that the process of child development is a complex system characterised by interdependent relationships within different social settings. These relationships are subject to the dynamic interplay between immediate social environments, such as the family unit, and broader societal structures, including institutional frameworks such as cultural customs and legal systems (Gorman-Smith, et al., 2000; Goodrum, et al., 2015). The interaction among individuals is subject to influence from both their internal value system and the external environment in which they are situated (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017; Darling, 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the interplay between various systems in the social environment of a child in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the child's development (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000; Darling, 2007). Table 1 presents a concise overview of the five ecological subsystems.

Table 1 Subsystems of Ecological System Theory

Subsystem	Description
Microsystem	Made up of the groups that have direct contact with the child.
Mesosystem	The relationships between the groups from the first system
Exosystem	Factors that affect an individual's life but, the elements of this system don't have a direct relationship with the individual
Macrosystem	Contains those cultural elements that affect the individual and everyone around them.
Chronosystem	The stage of life that the individual is in regarding the situations they're going through.

Source: Bronfenbrenner 1994

The Ecological Systems theory has been applied to the field of youth delinquency and crime research and has demonstrated its efficacy as a valuable approach for comprehending the engagement of youths in criminal activities. This theory encompasses multiple dimensions of crime and delinquency, as evidenced by its successful implementation (Hong, 2010). Gorman-Smith et al. (2000) employed the ecological system theory as a framework to investigate the association between patterns of family functioning and patterns of offending. The study additionally aimed to investigate the correlation between family processes and neighbourhood factors, as well as the patterns of youth delinquency. The findings indicate a significant association between the type of neighbourhood and family characteristics (Gorman-Smith et al., 2000).

The research conducted by Goodrum and colleagues (2015) provides additional empirical support for the effectiveness of utilising the ecological systems theory in the examination of juvenile delinquency. This is because of the comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon across various levels, including the individual, family, community, and societal domains.

In contrast to the research conducted by Gorman-Smith and friends (2000) which primarily examined the interplay between family environments and neighbourhoods, the study conducted by Goodrum and colleagues (2015) encompassed a broader range of factors within the social system. However, Gorman-Smith and colleagues (2000) observed that irrespective of neighbourhood characteristics, families played an important protective role particularly when they emphasise on values that enforce emotional cohesion, strong family orientation, consistent parenting and organisation of family roles and responsibilities.

At individual level, Goodrum, et al (2015) found that there was a likelihood causal relationship between racial discrimination and gang involvement among immigrants and refugees, while at microsystem level, peer support was negatively related to gang involvement. Interestingly, Goodrum and colleagues' study found that peer support among migrants and refugees played a critical role in gang involvement which is in contrast to what Gorman-Smith and colleagues found. The explanation given is that family support is already minimal as parents are assumed to have little time for their adolescents and therefore the youths rely much on their peer support (Goodrum, et al., 2015).

Below is a Conceptual model displaying predictors of gang involvement among immigrant and refugee youth across multiple ecological systems.

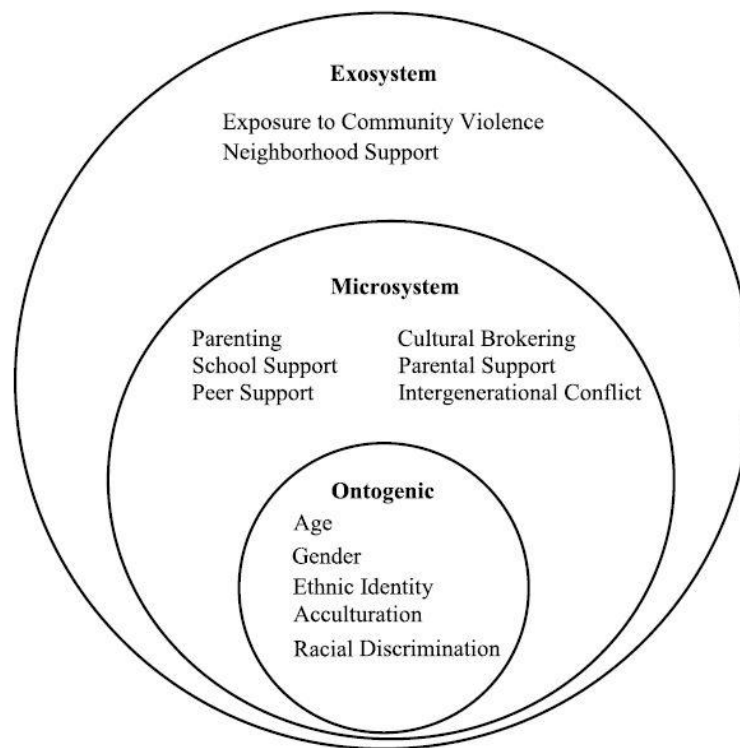


Figure 1 Conceptual model of predictors of gang involvement across multiple ecological systems

Source: N.M. Goodrum et al., 2015

Goodrum and colleagues' study attempts to address theoretical issues pertaining to the origins of youth delinquency and crime through the use of various levels of analysis. However, it is important to note that the study's empirical foundation is limited due to the small sample size employed. The authors of the study also acknowledge this fact. Furthermore, the aforementioned studies were conducted on immigrant and refugee populations residing in urban environments distinct from refugee camps. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the racial and socioeconomic attributes might show significant variation across various areas of the world. In his study, Hong (2010) employed the ecological systems theory as a framework to gain insight into the phenomenon of

Vietnamese youth gangs in the United States. In contrast to the approach taken by Goodrum et al. (2015), Hong (2010) embraced all five levels of systems outlined in Bronfenbrenner's theory. The following table provides a summary of the various systems and their corresponding factors.

Table 2 Factors for gang involvement

System level	Factors
Micro-system level	• Child characteristics • Parenting practices • Parent-Child conflicts • Peer Relationships • Schools
Meso-system level	• Processes of migration • Lifestyle challenges
Exo-system level	• Employment of parents • Diminishing role of men and fathers
Macro-system level	• Cultural values • Racism • Risk-benefit paradigm
Chrono-system level	• Changes in environment • Changes in individual

Source: Hong (2010)

Other researchers that have used ecological systems theory in deviance and crime include Verlinden and colleagues (2000), Garbarino (2009), Garbarino (2001) and Ettekal and Mahoney, (2017). Their work shows how embedded an individual is within their environment and how several factors simultaneously interact with each other and in so doing affect the individual's actions.

Examining how different researchers have used this model, it becomes clear that there are notable inconsistencies pertaining to the constituent elements or factors within the subsystem. For example, Hong (2010) situates racism within macro systems, whereas

Goodrum et al. (2015) position it within the ontogenic level, encompassing individual-level biological and psychological attributes. The same applies with child characteristics which Hong (2010) place it under micro system level while Goodrum and colleagues (2015) place it under ontogenic level. These disparities can be attributed to the perspective from which one examines the subject matter, such as racism being perceived as either institutionalized or based on personal encounters. However, this model and studies that adapted this model combined with other theories of crime deviance, can provide a deeper understanding of adolescent refugee youths' involvement in delinquent and criminal behaviour.

2.3.6 Youth gangs

Defining a gang has proved to be difficult among social scientists, this lack of consensus is attributed to *inter alia*, the continuous evolving of gang characteristics leading to differences structural and social differences (Lenzi, et al., 2014; Hughes & Short, 2009; Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006).

2.3.6.1 What is a gang?

Gang literature shows that there is no consensus regarding the definition of a gang (Wood & Alleyne, 2010; Esbensen, Winfree, & Taylor, 2001). In attempt to standardise the definition of gangs, a group of international experts in gang research from Europe and America known as the Eurogang network defines a gang as any durable youth group that is street oriented, and its group identity is derived from the group's involvement in illegal activities (Fraser & Hagedorn, 2018; Lenzi, et al., 2014). However, some researchers argue that the excessive emphasis on criminality of gangs ignores other equally important

determinants of youth gangs such as shared identity, solidarity and identified territory (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013). On the other hand, others argue that leaving out criminality in defining gangs, makes the definition too broad (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). It is also worth noting that literature shows that gangs characteristics are dynamic as they change over time or are different from one area to another (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Researchers have warned against developing stereotypes of gangs as overly criminal groups and well organised because not all gangs may be well organised and neither would all be criminal as some may only be engaging in deviant behaviours (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013). On the other hand, Wood and Alleyne (2010) support the inclusion of criminality or violence in defining gangs because it is the criminal elements or activities of these groups that make them to be of interest to both academics and security agencies.

Sharp and colleagues (2006) on the other hand suggest caution with the use of the term gang because of its negative connotation and distorted definition by the media and cultural factors. To avoid this problem, Sharp and colleagues (2006) opt to use delinquent youth group (DYG) to denote a group of young people who are involved in delinquent activities at a group level. For practical purposes, Hughes and Short (2009) suggest that researchers should be clear about the group they are studying by stating why they are interested in that particular group, who are their members, what is the membership criteria, behaviour and organisational structure of the group, cultural style and symbolic markers and location within social space (relationship with each other and community). In doing so, researchers will do away with the problem of defining what are gangs as the answers to these questions will assist them to understand gangs better.

2.3.6.2 Characteristics of gangs

While literature shows that gang characteristics are not static, neither are they uniform across different groups, conventional gangs are characterised by their group size, age of which mostly are described as young, and mostly male (Sharp, et al., 2006; O'Brien, et al., 2013). Scholarly works show that gangs are also characterised by the presence of institutional and structural features such as leadership, organisational structure, control of turf, membership criteria, relationship within and with community, meetings, rules and cultural style (Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013; Decker & Curry, 2000). They are further characterised by symbolic markers such as hand signs, tattoos, wearing gang clothes of specific colours (Leverso & Matsueda, 2019; Lewis, 2007; Callanan, 2001). Sometimes gangs are run like formal organisations with leadership structure with rules governing their day-to-day activities and punishment for breaking such rules (Wijewardhana, 2017). An alternative perspective is put forth by some scholars who argue that the level of organisation within gangs may not be as uniformly structured as portrayed in existing literature, they contend that certain gangs may exhibit a lack of clear leadership and overall disorganisation (O'Brien, et al., 2013; Smithson, et al., 2011).

On leadership, it is claimed that not all gangs have stable and permanent leadership as some may have multiple leaders, others have informal leaders with no clear structured leadership, others have situational leadership who only assume leadership roles on specific situations and others whose leaders are just functional (Decker & Curry, 2000; Ruble & Turner, 2000). Nonetheless, others have found evidence of permanent leadership structures among gangs who are responsible for the operations of their gangs (Wijewardhana, 2017; Venkatesh, 2008).

Another gang characteristics commonly mentioned in gang literature is recruitment and initiation of new members into the gang (Murer & Schwarze, 2022; Best & Hutchinson, 2006). It is claimed that it is characteristic of gangs to have new members go through an initiation ceremony or some form of rituals to show commitment to the gang and as a sign of toughness (Ruble & Turner, 2000; O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013; Best & Hutchinson, 2006). This may include enduring a beating from fellow members and in extreme cases, new members have to commit a serious crime like murder as a sign of commitment to the gang (Ruble & Turner, 2000; Best & Hutchinson, 2006). It is argued that initiation rites serve as a unifying factor among gang members as they reinforce and strengthen the social ties and bonds among them (Murer & Schwarze, 2022).

Cloward and Ohlin's subcultural theory categorises delinquent subcultures or gangs into three groups, which are criminal subculture, conflict subculture and retreatist subculture (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). According to Cloward and Ohlin (1960), criminal subcultures develop in places where there is an established pattern of crime, among working class and they earn their living through crime. They are well organised and provides a platform for career criminals, the groups are usually controlled by adults who enforce discipline among their members and have clear rules and codes for members as well as embrace group values (Decker & Curry, 2000; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Conflict subcultures on the other hand are described as those that develop in socially disorganised communities, usually involved in vandalism, commit non-utilitarian crimes, gang rivalry fights and use gang affiliation to gain status among their peers (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). The last group is the retreatist, this group comprise of individuals who have failed to succeed legitimately as well as in the

gang life, they resort to drugs and substance abuse, commit petty crimes in order to fund their drug and alcohol addiction.

Unlike Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) typology which characterises gangs with respect to their activities and reasons for their formation, Klein and Maxson's (2006) typology on the other hand is for criminal gangs only base their classification on number of members, duration of the gang's existence and structure. Klein and Maxson (2006), categorise criminal gangs into five groups which are Traditional gangs, Neotraditional gangs, Compressed gangs, Collective gangs and Specialty gangs. Below is a table of summarising these typologies.

Table 3 Klein and Maxson Gang Typologies

Gang typology	Description
Traditional gang	• Has usually been in existence for 20 or more years and continues to regenerate themselves. • Large, enduring, territorial gang with a wide age range and several internal cliques based on age or area.
Neotraditional gang	• Resembles the traditional gang and is very territorial. has not been in existence as long, often for 10 years or less.
Compressed gang	• Comprising of up to 50 members. • There is an absence of territorially and subgroups. • It is also unclear whether they would grow into the more traditional forms.
Collective gang	• Like the compressed form but is bigger and with a wider age range. comprises of 100 members or less. • Do not have developed sub-groups and may or not be territorial. • The form resembles shapeless mass of adolescents and young adults and has not developed the distinguishing characteristics of other gangs.
Specialty gang	• Small with 50 or fewer members. • It has developed a well-defined territory which may be based on residency or the opportunities for particular forms of crime. • The principal purpose of a specialty gang is more criminal

(Source Klein and Maxson 2006)

One of the principal elements or aspect of youth gangs is criminal activity which is why some gangs are referred to as criminal gangs (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). However, not every time criminal gang members meet commit crimes because sometimes they just spend time together (Ruble & Turner, 2000). Organised crime and drug trade are some of the common activities associated with gangs (Decker & Curry, 2000). On the other hand, other researchers have questioned this characterisation of gangs since selling drugs among gang members may be an individual activity and not necessarily an organised gang or group

activity (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). It has further been observed that not all gangs are well organised and commit serious crime, some gangs are just social gangs that are loosely organised to commit serious and organised crimes (Ruble & Turner, 2000).

2.3.7 Factors for gang involvement among the youth

The significance of early research on youth gangs cannot be overemphasised, as it has greatly influenced the field of contemporary youth gang studies in numerous ways. For example, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's study linked the weakening of social institutions such as families, schools, churches and social ties between community members to high levels of crime. Similarly, Thrasher's (1927) work contributed to gangs studies by linking the role of school, parents and social class and its associated culture in youth gang formation and affiliation. The initial research findings demonstrate the intricate nature of assessing the interplay between social and individual factors that contribute to the experiences of adolescents involved in gang activities (Melde, Diem, & Drake, 2012).

In recent years, studies on youth gang have focused on a range of factors that prevent or promote gang affiliation. Literature on youth gangs suggests that there are multiple factors that influence youths to associate with, form or join gangs. Furthermore, the role of these factors is quite complex because they often overlap and affect each other. Some researchers have classified these factors into three levels, Macro, micro and individual levels (Hughes & Short, 2009; Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013). At macro level, these studies focus on structural conditions or mediating mechanisms such as poverty, culture and social institutions that influence gang involvement and gang activities. Micro-level explanations on the other hand focus on how delinquent and non-delinquent behaviours are produced

and shaped by dynamic social interactions and group processes (McGloin & Collins, 2015). At individual level, studies focus on how personal traits influence gang involvement and these include personal or biological traits such as, self-control, age, sex, among others.

In practice, these analyses are combined or researchers may choose to focus on one level of analysis. For example, Higginson and her colleagues (2018) when studying factors for gang involvement, their analysis combined micro and individual factors which were, community, family, school, peer group, and individual factors. Similarly, Song (2020) and Lenzi and her colleagues (2014) categorised the factors into family, school, individual and peers but did not include community. Others focus on few factors like Mack and colleagues (2007) whose work focused on association of family and delinquency as well as incorporating economic factors while others like Gorman-Smith and colleagues (2000) and Goodrum and colleagues (2015) adapted the ecological development model and analysed the role of these factors at various levels.

2.3.7.1 Community factors

Community factors otherwise referred to as Exosystem by ecological development model proponents comprise of factors that do not have a direct relationship with an individual but indirectly affect their life (Goodrum, Chan, & Laztman, 2015). At community level, the most common risk factor suggested in gang literature is exposure to neighbourhood violence, studies show that there is a marginally significant positive relationship between exposure to community violence and gang involvement (Goodrum, Chan, & Laztman, 2015; Higginson, et al., 2018). In a study by Wolff and colleagues (2020), they found a positive relationship between adverse childhood experiences with gang involvement

among the youths. Exposure to violence has two effects that lead to delinquency and this is through depression, anxiety/PSTD, aggression and conduct disorder (Hong, et al., 2014; Ozer, 2005). Apart from community violence, it is argued that communities that are socially disorganised, lack social cohesion, have easy accessibility of drugs are positively associated with youth delinquency and gang activity (Hill, et al., 1999; Kubrin, 2009; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). It is further contended that community members in disorganised communities tend to have less community attachment which leads to low community social control and therefore adolescents are not adequately supervised or monitored leading to delinquency and ganging (Kubrin, 2009).

The existing body of literature on crime indicates that the community, functioning as a complex system consisting of interconnected formal and informal social networks, possesses the ability to exert control over criminal activities (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Hirsch et al., 1997; Mazerolle, Wickes, & McBroom, 2010). Thus, the response of a community to crime and gangs is determined by the interdependence of formal and informal networks gangs (Sampson & Groves, 1989). It has been observed that communities characterised by a lack of strong social bonds and weak interpersonal relationships often show a corresponding deficiency in informal social control (Jobes, Barclay, Weinand, & Donnermeyer, 2004; Wickes, Hipp, Sargeant, & Mazerolle, 2016). According to Jobes and colleagues (2004), it has been argued that social ties and relationships are undermined by factors such as ethnic heterogeneity or diversity, residential instability, low economic status, family disruption, and population. While exposure to crime may have long run effects on criminal behaviour on youths, community

support mediates these effects through informal social control (Wilkinson, Lantos, McDaniel, & Winslow, 2019; Brezina & Agnew, 2015; Sampson & Groves, 1989).

2.3.7.2 Family

Family is one of the most important social institutions in society as it is considered as a suitable environment for inculcating society's norms and values into children for them to grow into responsible adults (Macionis, 2012; Mwangangi, 2019). The role of family as a risk factor to gang affiliation or a protective factor is highly contested in gang literature (Lenzi, et al., 2014; Estrada, et al., 2018; Hirschi, 1969). From protection perspective, there are two aspects and these are supportive role and control role, and this is mainly on the role of parents (Walters, 2020). Parental control entails parents nurturing their children and providing them with necessary skills to avoid future delinquent involvement and that these skills help them to develop prosocial attitudes that are difficult to change or suppress (Walters, 2020; Mwangangi, 2019). Parental control can also be in form of disciplining, monitoring and supervising child's behaviour and providing proper guidance to the child (Walters, 2020). Parental social support on the other hand entails reinforcing positive behaviour in a child by creating a strong emotional bond between parent and child (Walters, 2020; Mwangangi, 2019). Therefore, on one hand, parents create a suitable environment for a child to feel loved, valued, and have a sense of belonging and attachment through social support and on the other hand, through control, they guide children through discipline and in turn reinforce prosocial values amongst them (Walters, 2020).

In his study, McDaniel (2012) found that among other factors, parental positive reinforcement, parental monitoring and family support is negatively related to gang

affiliation. Walters (2020) found that parental social support provides significant protective effect from gang affiliation than parental control especially when negative peer association is factored in. (Kochanska, et al., 2004) also found that when there is a strong bond between a child and care giver and it is based on trust, a child positively respond to the care giver's socialisation. Documented findings of delinquency research indicate that youths with less attachment to their parents, are exposed the influence of negative peer association and are more likely to join gangs (Hirschi, 1969; Walters, 2020; McDaniel, 2012). One of the motivating factor for gang membership often claimed in literature is that gangs act as substitute for family as individuals benefit from social and emotional support offered by their gang members (Akiyama, 2012). However, others have found no evidence to support this claim and hence refute that gangs are surrogates for family (Decker & Curry, 2000).

With respect to risk factors on delinquency and gang association among adolescents, evidence suggests that poor parenting such as child abuse, child neglect, low parent-child bonding as well as positive attitude towards antisocial behaviour, constant family conflicts between parents or with children negatively influence delinquency (Brezina & Agnew, 2015; Mwangangi, 2019; Wolff, et al., 2020). Further research reveals that there is a direct link between poor parenting and socioeconomic status of the family (Mwangangi, 2019). Literature suggests that economically stressed parents spend less time with their children and in turn fail to make follow ups on their children's behaviour or school performance (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). In addition, economically stressed parents may take their frustrations on their children by mistreating them and show no affection to them and in turn creating a social distance between them (Mwangangi, 2019; Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). With respect to migrants and refugees, studies show that separation from family members,

loss of social networks, exposure to traumatic events prior to departure or flight are common source of stress that may disrupt their parenting abilities leading to poor parenting and dysfunctional families (Chen & Zhong, 2013).

Research on the role of family structure on child delinquency remains contradictory. On one hand, others have found significant positive relationship between single parent families and child delinquency and gang affiliation than in families with both parents (Estrada, et al., 2018; Gyansah, Soku, & Esilfie, 2015). On the other hand, Mack and colleagues (2007) found no significant relationship between family structure and economic circumstances with delinquency, rather they found that parent–child attachment that has a stronger influence on delinquency among youth. Mack and colleagues’ study collaborated with Hirschi's (1969) assertion that a child’s involvement in delinquent behaviour, is determined by his/her parents’ psychological and emotional presence which he summed as quality of attachment between a parent and child. Mack et al (2007) further found that maternal attachment plays a significant role in predicting delinquent behaviour among youth. Icli and Coban (2012) on the other hand, found that male children whose fathers are high school graduates are less likely to commit serious crimes. Their results therefore suggest that in terms of educational levels and lifestyle, fathers are crucial in shaping the criminal life of the juvenile indirectly compared to their mothers. All in all, a body of evidence suggests that social bond between a child and parent or an adult, is key in preventing future delinquency because through this relationship, children learn the value of caring for others and the absence of this bond may lead to little resistance to delinquency (Sabatine, Lippold, & Kainz, 2017). This is why some children resort to gangs for a sense of belonging, protection and security (Strand, 2014; Miranda & Jacobsen, 2020).

2.3.7.3 School

As a risk factor, schools with high student failure rate and peer hostility may provide suitable environment for gang activities (Dishion, Nelson, & Yasui, 2005; Howell, 2010). In such school environments, studies show that students who obtain low grades, lack commitment to school and are more likely to be associated with gangs (Lenzi, et al., 2014; Van Ngo, et al., 2015). Furthermore, the presence of gangs in schools is a security concern to students and some may be forced to join gangs for protection from bullying while others may join through intimidation (Dishion, Nelson, & Yasui, 2005; Lenzi, et al., 2014; Howell, 2010; Van Ngo, et al., 2015).

As a protective factor, literature suggests that school attachment reduces the risk for youths to join gangs and it is argued that the more a child is attached to school, the higher the probability that the child will not be involved in gangs (Chen & Zhong, 2013; Morden, et al., 2014; Goodrum, Chan, & Laztman, 2015; Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; Wilkinson, et al., 2019). Through attachment, schools prevent young people from engaging in antisocial behaviours including gangs through internalisation of prosocial norms and behavioural control (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). In addition, studies show that with proper strategies in place, schools can provide love needs to students through family role modelling and enhancing belonging and identity through peers (Sharkey, Shekhtmeyster, Chavez-Lopez, Norris, & Sass, 2010). Schools can also provide other needs such as security, esteem and self-actualisation needs.

Studies further show that lack of access to education contributes to idleness and desperation which may compel some school going age children to engage in antisocial behaviours like

joining gangs (Mwangangi, 2019; Ensor, 2014). This is possible because students who do not go to school or rarely go to school are not exposed to the positive influence of school described above.

2.3.7.4 Peers

The role of peers in influencing delinquency and gang membership is well documented in gang literature (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013; Maxson, Whitlock, & Klein, 1998; Walters, 2020; Strand, 2014; Paat, 2013). In their study on Childhood Risk Factors For Adolescent Gang Membership, Hill (1999) and colleagues found a positive relationship between gang membership and association with delinquent peers. Icli and Coban's study supported this assertion as they also found that juveniles who commit crime are usually supported and encouraged by their friends to commit crimes (Icli & Coban, 2012). That is children who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to join gangs than those who do not (Walters, 2020; Strand, 2014; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999). For example, Wijewardhana (2017) found that 63% of male youths interviewed were connected to a gang through friends and 99% of the participants joined gangs to associate with friends. It is further explained that when adolescents spend more time with peers with antisocial behaviours and are involved in gangs, they tend to model after these gang members compared to when they spend more time with prosocial peers (Dishion, Nelson, & Yasui, 2005; O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013). Therefore, associating with peers involved in gangs confirms and reinforces antisocial beliefs in the adolescents. Some youths may join gangs to prove that they are tough, others may be recruited into gangs by

coercion and others may just want to be accepted by their peers (Akiyama, 2012; Miranda & Jacobsen, 2020).

In absence of family attachment and care, peers or gangs provide an alternative source of protection and emotional support (Akiyama, 2012; Goodrum, Chan, & Laztman, 2015). On the other hand, Goodrum and colleagues (2015) found that peer support is particularly important in prevention of gang affiliation among immigrants and refugees in the United States of America. Their findings seem to contradict the empirical evidence that peers influence gang involvement among adolescents (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013). This may not be a contrast per se, since Goodrum and colleagues (2015) did not define whether this is prosocial or antisocial peer support and it is highly probable that this form of peer support is prosocial peer support. Overall, both claims emphasise the fact that among adolescents, peers have strong social bonds and therefore easily influence their behaviour whether positively or negatively (O'Brien, et al., 2013).

2.3.7.5 Individual factors

Apart from community, family, school and peer factors, individual factors also play critical role when it comes to risk and preventive factors for youths to get involved in gangs. Studies show that individual attitude towards delinquency is significantly related to gang involvement (McDaniel, 2012; Hill, et al., 1999). Children with history of delinquency, high tolerance of deviance, low perception of guilty for potential deviance and holding nonconventional attitudes have been associated with a higher risk of being a gang member (Lenzi, et al., 2014). For example, Hill and colleagues (1999) found that children who smoked marijuana, engaged in violent acts such fighting were more likely join gangs in

adolescence. While other studies challenge the relationship between low self-esteem and gang membership (Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999), recent evidence suggests that low self-esteem is one of the push factors for gang involvement (Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Florian-Lacy, Jefferson, & Fleming, 2002; Farmer & Hairston, 2013). Goodrum and colleagues (2015) found no relation between age, gender and ethnicity with gang involvement. However, it is claimed that some individuals are attracted to gangs in order to earn respect from peers, to meet or impress girls, sense of belonging, seeking identity and self-esteem among others (Strand, 2014; Akiyama, 2012; Florian-Lacy, Jefferson, & Fleming, 2002; Howell, 2010).

2.3.7.6 Interaction of risk and preventive factors

As argued by ecological systems theory proponents, adolescents are faced with multiple risks whose interaction heightens the risks for the adolescents to get involved in deviant acts. On the other hand, the interaction of protective factors also reduces the chances for the adolescents to be involved in antisocial behaviour. For example, when children raised in families with poor parenting interact with their peers who are involved in delinquent behaviour or delinquent groups, they are more likely to be influenced by these peers (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998; Brezina & Agnew, 2015; Zembroski, 2011; Walters, 2020). Similarly, children and youth who already live in the context of accumulated risk are the most at risk for negative consequences associated with community violence than those also exposed to community violence but enjoy parental support or are attached to school (Garbarino, 2001). With reference to the ecological systems theory, subsystems do not operate in isolation, they are influenced by other subsystems. For example, parenting,

which is mostly considered as a micro level factor is affected by other Exo and macro level factors such as poverty as argued by Carrabine and colleagues (2009) who claim that poverty or deprivation leads to economic stress and economic stress has a negative effect on parenting.

In the same way, comparing the effect of crime prone neighbourhood and parental support on youth's involvement in crime, Weatherburn and Lind (1998) found that there was a positive relationship between deviant behaviour and children from families with poor parental support living in a crime prone neighbourhood. According to research on Sudanese gangs in the city of Cairo in Egypt, youth groups whose sole purpose was establishing social networks, planning social events among other things evolved to gangs (Lewis, 2007). Other gangs were formed to protect themselves from other refugee youngsters (Ensor, 2014). Therefore, parenting and neighbourhood factors, both influence child's behaviour.

In recent years, various researchers have demonstrated that children exposed to multiple risk factors and are more likely to get involved in gangs compared to those faced with a few risk factors (Wolff, et al., 2020; Weatherburn & Lind, 1998; Brezina & Agnew, 2015; Estrada, Huerta, Hernandez, Hernandez, & Kim, 2018; Farmer & Hairston, 2013; Hong, 2010; Icli & Coban, 2012; Florian-Lacy, Jefferson, & Fleming, 2002). Similarly, when there are multiple protective factors interacting and influencing a child, their interaction has strong protective effect on the adolescent and therefore reduces chances of delinquency (Sabatine, Lippold, & Kainz, 2017; Mack, Leiber, Featherstone, & Monserud, 2007). Decker and Curry (2000) also found the decision to join gangs by adolescents is influenced by multiple factors.

2.3.8 Youth gang Intervention and Prevention

To reduce gang affiliation and gang violence, it is recommended that gang prevention and intervention programs should aim at reducing gang involvement risk factors and increase the gang protective factors (Lenzi, et al., 2014). It is further recommended that to deal with gang problems, a more holistic approach is required, where programs should be individual based, family-based, school-based and community-based (Van Ngo, Calhoun, Worthington, Pynch, & Este, 2015; Smith-Moncrieffe, 2013; Welsh & Farrington, 2007). Some programs also focus on three areas which are prevention, intervention and suppression (Howell, 2010).

Research indicates that the implementation of early childhood programs is crucial in preventing at-risk children from engaging in gang activities (Howell, 2000; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Welsh & Farrington, 2007). These programs aim to cultivate prosocial values among children, thereby deterring their involvement in gangs. Intervention programs, in contrast, focus on engaging with youths who are already affiliated with gangs, while suppression efforts involve measures aimed at reducing gang activities, often through the involvement of security agencies (Howell, 2010). This may include putting strict probation conditions for arrested gang members or incarceration of gang leaders and the most violent members, rehabilitation during periods of incarceration or indirect strategies that aim to weaken or prevent the proliferation of gangs (Howell, 2010; White, 2004; Howell, 2000).

Some of the effective approaches to reducing gang affiliation and crime include strengthening families and schools, improving community supervision, training teachers and parents in managing disruptive and interpersonal skills training for the youths (Howell,

2010). It is further argued that gang intervention programs must use multiple approaches, which aim at enhancing participation and social inclusion of young people as well as making these programs attractive to them (White, 2004). Assessing gang prevention programs in Canada, Smith-Moncrieffe (2013) found that counselling, case management, arts (music & crafts), employment training and support, parenting skills, life management and decision-making training, gang risks and recruitment, drugs, alcohol and addictions education and cultural or community education contributed to favourable change in attitude, behaviour and risk factors for youths involved or at risk of joining youth gangs.

2.4 Theoretical framework of the study

In order to get an in-depth understanding of youth gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp, the study used three theoretical frameworks that specifically addressed various aspects of youth gangs. The theories under consideration include social disorganisation theory, subculture theory, and ecological systems theory.

The study employed social disorganisation theory to investigate the structural factors that contribute to the creation of an environment that fosters the emergence and sustenance of youth gangs within the camp. The theory of social disorganisation is widely recognised as a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between crime and the organisational structure of a community particularly on solidarity, cohesion, and integration among residents (Kubrin, 2010; Kubrin, 2009). The importance of this aspect in the study lies in the fact that a refugee camp presents a unique community configuration characterised by distinct structural and institutional arrangements that differ from those of the local community. Nevertheless, scholars contend that the social disorganisation theory's

capacity to comprehensively account for the individual motivations underlying criminal conduct is insufficient (Tibbetts, 2018). The theory has also encountered criticism due to its narrow emphasis on community characteristics, thereby overlooking other equally key factors associated with crime and deviance. Furthermore, the applicability of the social disorganisation theory in comprehending the characteristics of youth gangs is limited.

To address the question of other factors that contribute to gang formation in the camp, the Ecological Systems Theory was employed to conduct a systematic analysis of various social units within the community in order to consider the influence of micro elements within the larger structural context. The Ecological Systems Theory examines the roles played by different systems and their elements in influencing youth delinquency and gang affiliation. This theory views society as a social unit comprised of various interacting systems. Hence, employing the ecological systems theory, the research centred on examining the influence of community, family, school, peers, and individual factors on the emergence and association with gangs. Similar to the social disorganisation theory, the ecological systems theory is limited in its ability to comprehensively appreciate various manifestations of youth gangs and their operational dynamics.

To enhance comprehension of the attributes of youth gangs present in the camp, this study employed subculture theory. Subculture theories not only serve as a means of categorising youth gangs, but also offer insights into their operational dynamics and processes. Through this theory, the theoretical framework facilitates researchers in the process of delineating and classifying these youth gangs.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has looked at different theories on youth delinquency and crime and how these theories and perspectives influence researchers on viewing and analysing crime. From these theories and other studies reviewed, three theories have been adapted for this study to achieve the objectives of the study. These theories include, Social Disorganisation theory, Subculture theory and Social Ecological Systems theory. Empirical evidence suggests that gang involvement is an interaction of multiple factors. Youths who join or associate with gangs are mostly those exposed to multiple risk factors and the protective factors from gang are few or not strong enough to mediate the risk factors. Therefore, the use of more than one theoretical perspective is imperative for better understanding of why youths join gangs and how gangs operate.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research design and methodology of the proposed study. It includes the study approach, brief description of the location and target population, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection tools and methods, study period and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study was designed as exploratory research because its goal was to comprehend the subjects' subjective experiences, beliefs, and concepts. Data was gathered from primary sources using qualitative research techniques to effectively accomplish the study's goal. In order to identify key themes and gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied, qualitative methods offer a narrative or textual description of the phenomenon (Vanderstoep & Johnstone, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2014).

3.3 Study location

Since the study sought to investigate youth delinquent groups among refugees in a refugee camp, at the time of the study, Dzaleka was the only refugee camp in Malawi and therefore the only available study area for this study.

Dzaleka refugee camp, is situated in Dowa district, central region of Malawi. The camp is approximately 45 Kilometres away from Lilongwe city and it is home to 53,000 refugees and asylum seekers.

3.4 Study population

In this study, the study population were the youths at Dzaleka refugee camp and other relevant stakeholders such as community leaders, teachers, community members, NGO and government staff working at Dzaleka refugee camp. involved in gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp.

3.5 Sampling

This subsection outlines the sampling methods and techniques used in the study. It also gives an account of the sampling process and the sample size of the study.

3.5.1 Sampling methods and techniques

Youths involved in gangs may be hard to reach because of the negative labelling associated with their behaviour. For this reason, the study used non-probability sampling method and in this case snowball sampling technique (Neuman, 2014). Snowball sampling technique involves identifying initial participants who in turn recruit fellow participants in the study (Vanderstoep & Johnstone, 2009; Ary, et al., 2009). This sampling technique helps in identifying members of a network or social group that may otherwise be hard to identify and interview because of their unwillingness to participate in a study (Vanderstoep & Johnstone, 2009; Gordon, 2020; Neuman, 2014). This method also helps in identifying typical cases for a study (Vanderstoep & Johnstone, 2009). For the purpose of

generalisation to the larger population, snowball sampling is not an ideal sampling method because participants are not representative of the population (Vanderstoep & Johnstone, 2009).

In addition to this, individuals who are marginalised within the target population may not be accessed as they are not linked to those being interviewed (Ruane, 2005). Initially, two gang members were identified through a community leader. The members agreed to participate in the study and they were requested to recruit fellow members for the study as participants. Subsequent participants were therefore recruited through this process.

Purposive sampling was also used to identify key informants. Knowledge or experience in dealing with youth delinquency issues was the criterion for selecting key informants. They were drawn from Plan International Malawi- protection partner for UNHCR, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS)- education and psychosocial partner for UNHCR, Camp Management Office (Ministry of Homeland Security-Refugee Department), Katubzya Primary School, Community Leaders, one youth led organisation and one women led organisation representing Refugee Led Organisations (RLO). As for parents/guardians of youths involved in gangs only 5 participated in the study. Only five gangs had their parents/guardian available. Lastly, convenient sampling was used for selecting participants for focus group discussions (FGDs). Participants were drawn from different zones within the camp.

3.5.2 Sample size

Sample size determination in qualitative research methods is one of the critical issues that is yet to be resolved as there are different approaches to determining sample size and there

are no universal rules or recommendations for exact sample size (Mocănașu, 2020; Bryman, 2012). While other researchers have developed some approaches to predetermine sample size, these approaches still face some methodological and philosophical challenges (Sim, et al., 2018). Nonetheless, within academic environment, it is suggested that a small sample size of 6-12 individuals in case of limited access to subjects and where access to subjects is not limited, a moderate sample of 30 individuals or more is commendable (Mocănașu, 2020). Some scholars also argue that sample size can be determined once a point of saturation is reached (Sim, et al., 2018; Gordon, 2020). Saturation refers to a stage where subsequent interviews with new participants does not generate new evidence (Gordon, 2020; Williman, 2011; Stark & Torrance, 2005). Since it was not known how difficult it would be to access the target population, a sample size of 67 participants was proposed which included key informants and focus group discussion members. Individual interviews with gang members were planned to be above 12 for the limited cases (Mocănașu, 2020). However, after interviewing about 12 members, it was noted that no new significant information was generated from subsequent interviews. Therefore, the interviews were stopped after interviewing 15 gang members. Due to limited time and unavailability of some gangs, members from two groups were the only ones that the interviewer had access to. These two groups were 24hrs and Young Money Crew and from 24hrs 9 members were interviewed and Young Money Crew 6 members were interviewed.

In order to get views and insights from different social groups, four focus group discussions were conducted. Two groups were for the youths where by one group composed of students at Dzaleka Secondary School which is within the camp and one group was drawn from various location within the camp and comprised of out of school youths. Both these groups

had a mixture of boys and girls. Each group had 8 members. The other 2 groups of adult males and females were drawn from various zones of the camp. Therefore, 32 individuals were involved as participants in the focus group discussions. Participants for focus group discussions at the secondary school were selected from form one to form four with each class contributing at least one male and one female student.

From each organisation or institution that is involved in dealing with youth delinquency, except for JRS, each nominated one person who has experience and knowledge on the subject matter to be interviewed. JRS contributed 2 personnel as one deal with psychosocial issues and work closely with schools and child protection partners while the other works with girls in one of their projects. Therefore, total number of key informants interviewed was 12 and is broken down as follows. Plan Malawi International (1) UNHCR (1) JRS (2) Camp Manager's Office (1) RLO (2) Community leaders (2) parents/guardians of youths involved in gangs (3). The police refused to grant the researcher an interview because they considered permission from the Principal Secretary of Ministry of Homeland Security was not enough. According to the police, the instruction should have come from the Inspector General of the Malawi police. Due to limited time, the request was not submitted. Therefore, the study involved a total of 59 participants.

3.6 Data collection methods and tools

The study used multiple data collection methods as it helps in triangulation of results and thereby helping the researcher to obtain reliable data as well as to identify alternative explanation of the subject under investigation (Adams, et al., 2007). Thus, the study used face to face interviews and observations as data collection methods. The face-to-face

interviews were in form of in-depth individual interviews with youths involved in gangs, focus group discussions and key informants. Therefore, 59 participants were involved in the study where 15 were in-depth face to face interviews with gang members, 12 were KIIs and 32 participants from 4 FGDs. The focus group discussions comprised of youths in and out of school, adult males and females drawn from various zones of the camp.

In terms of data collection tools, an interview guide was prepared for the individual face-to-face interviews where the participants were given freedom to express their views and were not restricted to a set of predetermined responses (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, a focus group discussion guide was also used as tool for data collection during focus group discussions.

As for observations, a checklist was used to identify any physical appearance or demeanour of the participants who are involved in gangs. This was necessary in order to have an in-depth understanding of use of symbols among gang members. These observations were made during face-to-face interviews as well as transect walks within the camp. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder as well as notes taken during the interviews. The audio file for each interview were later transcribed for analysis.

3.7 Duration of data collection

Considering the sensitivity of the issue under investigation, and also to ensure quality data was captured, the researcher conducted the interviews by himself with the aid of an interpreter. This therefore affected the length of data collection. The study took three weeks. The first week was dedicated to Key Informant Interviews with staffs from NGO, government, and interviews with community leaders. The second and third week were for

interviews with youths involved in gangs, FGDs and interviews with parents/guardians of youths involved in gangs.

3.8 Data analysis techniques

Data collected from the interviews was organised and analysed using the Framework Approach. Framework approach is used for data management, descriptive and analytical accounts of the research (Smith & Firth, 2011). Framework Analysis approach entails familiarisation with the data, creating a thematic framework, coding and indexing of data, charting and mapping and interpretation (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009; Adams, et al., 2007). Familiarisation is the process whereby the researcher study all the data collected, get immersed in it with the aim of clearly understanding key ideas for easy identification of themes and patterns (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009; Gale, Heath, et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2021). After getting familiarised with the data, the next step is developing themes out the data which is followed by developing coding for the themes. The third step is indexing which involves aligning some portions or sections of the data with a particular theme (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). The fourth step is to organise the indexed data into charts of themes presented in a table format and this is followed by the last stage of mapping and interpretation of the data with respect to research objectives (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). Using the framework approach, data collected was familiarised with, where key ideas were identified and later developed into themes and later coded. The next stage was indexing the codes and followed by charting the themes. The last stage was mapping and interpretation of the data guided by the objectives of the study.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the study was in line with standard research ethics, the research proposal was submitted to the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee for review which was later approved. Further to this, the research concept-note as well as ethical considerations section was shared with the Ministry of Homeland Security's principal secretary who is the commissioner for refugees for review and clearance. The Commissioner for refugees cleared the study and granted permission to conduct the study.

Before commencing any interview, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and how the interview with them will help achieve that purpose. They were also informed of any benefits or harm due to participation in the study. Confidentiality was assured before the interviews and after explaining the issues above, their consent was sought before starting the interviews. They were also informed of their right not to participate in the interviews as well as their right to withdraw from the interview even when in session.

In order not to subject the participants and others involved in the study, the interviewer, translators, and participants wore facemasks during the interviews. However, there were some cases whereby the participants refused to wear masks as they believed Covid-19 was over at the time of the interviews. Nonetheless, the recommended 1metre physical distance was maintained. The recorder used was cleaned with sanitizer before and after every session. Hand sanitizer was also available for use during the interviews.

3.10 Data Management

To ensure that data collected was secure and to gain trust of the participants, the interpreter was trained on principles of research ethics as well as UNHCR's code of conduct. All field notes and audio collected were kept by the researcher and not shared with interpreters or third party. Recorded data was removed from the recording device and safely stored in the researcher's computer. Furthermore, transcription was carried out by the researcher himself thereby ensuring privacy and safe management of data.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The study was designed as an exploratory research which employed qualitative research methods. The target population includes youths and stakeholders involved in gangs. The study used non-probability sampling, snowball sampling, and purposeful sampling to identify key informants. The sample size was chosen based on the participants' knowledge and experience in dealing with youth delinquency issues. The sample size of the study was 59 where 15 were youths involved with gangs, 32 were FGD participants and 12 were key informants. An interview guide and a checklist were used for individual interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The study involved interviews with various stakeholders, including NGO staff, government officials, community leaders, and youths involved in gangs. The data was collected and analysed using the Framework Approach, which involves familiarization, themes development, coding, indexing, charting, and mapping. The study adhered to ethical considerations, with the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee reviewing the proposal and the Ministry of Homeland Security's principal secretary reviewing the

research concept-note. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, benefits, and risks, and their consent was sought. Data management was ensured through training of interpreters, secure storage of field notes, and transcription by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the study and a discussion within subculture theory, social disorganisation theory and ecological systems theory. The first part of this chapter reports and discusses findings on existence of gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp. The second part reports and discusses the nature of gangs identified in Dzaleka refugee camp. The Final section reports and discusses factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

4.2 Existence of youth gangs in Dzaleka

4.2.1 Introduction

The study confirmed the existence of youth gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp, as supported by key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Some individuals self-identified as gang members.

4.2.2 Youth Groups Perceived as Gangs in Dzaleka

A variety of youth groups were identified in the camp, ranging in activities, structure, and duration of existence.

While groups such as 24hrs and Young Money Crew conformed to the Eurogang definition, other groups, such as Bisodo, failed to meet these criteria despite engaging in individual illicit activities like drug abuse and prostitution. Table 4 provides a summary of these groups.

Table 4 Delinquent youth groups in Dzaleka

Name	Description	Membership details			Number of years active
		Nationality	Sex	Age	
24hours	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, Street fighting, Murder, Housebreaking, robbery & hanging out in groups	Rwandese & Burundians, few Congolese	Males	20-30	2005-
Super crew	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, Street fighting, Housebreaking, & hanging out in groups	Congolese	Males	15-25	2017-2019
Young Money Crew	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, Street fighting, Housebreaking, robbery, Dancing & hanging out in groups	Congolese	Males	15-25	2018-
Mafilu	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, Street fighting, Housebreaking, & hanging out in groups	Malawians & Refugees	Males	14-25	2019-
Bisodo Dzaleka	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, prostitution, gossiping	Refugee women	Females	16-30	2018-
Black G	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, Street fighting, Dancing, womanising & hanging out in groups	Congolese	Males & females	15-25	2016-2017
Unknown	Smoking chamba, Alcoholism, pickpocketing, Housebreaking & hanging out in groups	Congolese	Males	10-17	2019-

Source: Field research

In relation to the operational definition of the gang, it is important to note that not all groups identified by the participants met the criteria to be classified as youth gangs. To meet the criteria for classification as a youth gang, a group must exhibit a street-oriented behaviour, demonstrate a prolonged period of existence, demonstrate a cohesive group identity, and engage in illicit activities collectively. Groups like Bisodo, which consisted primarily of women engaging in individual activities like prostitution and drug use, did not display the collective criminal engagement typical of a youth gang. As one participant noted: *“Bisodo women meet to gossip about camp life, not to fight or break into homes like the boys do. They drink, smoke, but it’s mostly on their own.”* (Key Informant, November 2022)

Further, groups such as Super Crew and Black G had disbanded due to outmigration or the death of key members. In contrast, some unnamed groups operated without clear identities, making them difficult for participants to classify. As one informant noted: *‘Some of these groups don’t even have a name, they just hang around causing trouble, and you never really know who’s who’* (Key Informant, November 2022). However, participants did identify one group of young boys, primarily Congolese, believed to be involved in criminal activities. This group, reportedly led by older boys who used younger boys to break into homes, was also linked to security concerns in the camp. Although the group had no known name, its members were often seen moving together.

The popularity of Mafilu members within the camp was limited, as their name was mentioned only once during the interviews and their presence could not be established for further interviews. However, certain groups, such as 24hrs and Young Money Crew, had gained prominence for both their criminal activities and occasional involvement in socially beneficial acts, such as digging graves for bereaved families and dancing respectively. This

duality in their reputation was highlighted by another participant: *“24hrs is famous because they are known for both good and bad things. The bad things include smoking marijuana, drinking, fighting, and being hired to assault people. But they are also used to dig graves for families in mourning.”* (Key Informant, November 2022)

The notoriety of the 24hrs gang was echoed in several accounts, with participants pointing out their continuous presence in the camp: *“Everyone in the camp knows about 24hrs. They drink and smoke weed 24 hours a day, hence the name. They are everywhere, always drunk, some naked or half-naked lying in the streets”* (Key Informant, November 2022).

Moreover, former members of 24hrs spoke about the gang’s dominance in the past:

“We used to rule; no one would mess with us. When they heard the name ‘24’, people would shiver. If they knew you were 24, they respected you. 24 was more than a name, it was big then, very big. Now, I can say we are past our hay days, but maybe others will take over and make it great again.” (In-depth Interview, 24hrs member, November 2022)

These reflections suggest that the identity of gangs in Dzaleka is closely tied to their perceived strength and notoriety, with 24hrs emerging as the most recognized and feared group in the camp.

This study found that gangs like 24hrs and Young Money Crew met all criteria, possessing a well-defined identity, engaging in criminal acts, and existing for a prolonged period. The 24hrs gang and Young Money Crew, well-known for violent crimes and community services like grave digging, aligns closely with the Eurogang criteria and typologies discussed in the literature (Klein & Maxson, 2006).

4.2.3 Graffiti and Territorial Markings

Another feature of gang presence in Dzaleka was graffiti that marked their territories, further reinforcing group identity. Participants pointed out areas marked by specific gang symbols. For example, Figure 2 depicts graffiti associated with an unknown gang called “Kiza,” while Figure 3 shows the meeting place of Young Money Crew.



Figure 2 Kiza Gang, unknown group

Source 1 Field Research

Figure 3 Young Money Crew meeting place



Source 2 Field Research

This graffiti serves as a visible reminder of the gangs' presence and influence in the camp, even for groups that no longer actively engage in violent or criminal activities.

4.2.4 Gang Identity and Criminal Activity

The literature on youth gangs highlights several key factors that contribute to defining a gang, including group identity, engagement in criminal activities, use of violence, and the group's longevity (Lenzi, et al., 2014; Fraser & Hagedorn, 2018; Hughes & Short, 2009). An analysis of the reported youth gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp and their activities reveals that gangs possessing a designated name, engaging in criminal and violent behaviours, and maintaining a presence for over five years garner more notoriety compared to those lacking a name or abstaining from criminal and violent activities. The study confirmed that the identity of a youth gang in Dzaleka is often tied to both its name and its engagement in criminal and violent behavior. 24hrs, in particular, gained widespread recognition because of its sustained involvement in criminal activities. This aligns with research that emphasizes the centrality of crime and violence in the characterization of youth gangs (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Despite warnings from scholars like O'Brien et al. (2013) against focusing too heavily on criminality, participants consistently linked gangs like 24hrs to violence: *"24hrs would fight anyone, for any reason. They don't care. That's why people are afraid of them."* (Key Informant, November 2022) This suggests that in addition to group identity and longevity, criminal behaviour and violence play a significant role in how youth gangs are perceived, as these characteristics draw the attention of community stakeholders (Wood & Alleyne, 2010).

In contrast, other groups, such as Young Money Crew, while engaging in criminal acts, were less associated with violence and more with social behaviors like dancing and partying. Nonetheless, these groups still maintained gang identities by their involvement in petty crimes like housebreaking and robbery.

4.2.5 Summary of key findings on existence of youth gangs in Dzaleka

The study confirmed the presence of youth gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp, with notable groups like 24hrs, Young Money Crew, and others. While some groups fit the Eurogang criteria—exhibiting criminal behaviour, a clear identity, and longevity—others, such as Bisodo, did not meet these standards. 24hrs, recognised for both violent crime and community service, emerged as the most feared and well-known gang. Graffiti marking territories further reinforced gang identities. The study emphasized that gang identity in Dzaleka is often tied to a group's name, criminal involvement, and the use of violence, aligning with existing literature on gang characteristics.

4.3 Nature of youth gangs in Dzaleka

The study findings revealed two prominent themes regarding the nature of gangs in Dzaleka: their organizational structure and the overall behaviour exhibited by these groups. To gain a comprehensive understanding of how gangs operated in the camp, it was crucial to explore their organizational structure, their relationship with the broader community, their recruitment processes, and the existence of a code of conduct that served as a behavioural framework for their members. Equally significant was the understanding of the overall conduct displayed by individuals affiliated with gangs. This included elements such as cultural style and symbolic markers, the use of violence and intimidation, control

of specific activities within the camp, interactions within the group, and relationships between group members and the surrounding community. This aspect was important as it demonstrated the complexity or sophistication of the groups involved.

4.3.1 Brief background

4.3.1.1 Young Money Crew: From dance group to delinquent subculture

According to the study findings, Young Money Crew was founded in 2018 as a dance group, a splinter faction that emerged from the pre-existing group known as Black G. Initially, the group gained fame by performing during various recreational activities within the camp, generating income from these performances. However, poor financial management, substance abuse, and reckless spending on alcohol and girls led to their downfall. The group eventually stopped performing, and its members became disillusioned and frustrated. As one member stated, *“For that reason, most of us became frustrated, and we would disturb entertainment events when we were not invited and turn violent sometimes”* (In-depth interview, Young Money Crew 2022).

This frustration, combined with their economic struggles, shifted the group’s focus from entertainment to engaging in criminal activities. Without a source of income, the group resorted to begging and misdemeanors such as stealing. A female participant in the focus group discussion noted, *“Since they had no means of earning a living, they resorted to begging and committing other forms of misdemeanor such as stealing and coercing community members to give money to them”* (FGD, Female participant 2022). Eventually, they became known for intimidating community members and engaging in theft. A key

informant revealed, “...*When they beg money and you refuse, they will threaten you... You see, if they don't have something to sell, they break into houses to steal and sell it*” (Key informant interview, 2022).

The transformation of the Young Money Crew from a dance group into a violent gang illustrates how quickly a social group can devolve into delinquency when faced with economic deprivation and substance abuse. The group's shift from recreational activities to criminal behaviour underscores the influence of social and economic conditions on gang evolution.

4.3.1.2 24hrs: From Brotherhood to Delinquent Subculture

The *24hrs* gang, founded in the early 2000s, emerged from the shared experiences of young boys who had lived as street children in the city of Lilongwe before discovering Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Initially, the group formed to support and protect one another, acting as a family unit for boys without homes or parents. As one of the founding members explained, “*We were street kids...homeless, and... we needed a home, we needed family. So, the group was like family to us, and it is still the family to us*” (In-depth interview, 24hrs Member, November 2022). The group was formed a few months after relocating to Dzaleka refugee camp.

The name *24hrs* came from the group's constant activity, whether it was working, drinking, or engaging in criminal behaviour. Although initially formed as a support network, the group began engaging in criminal activities, including violent attacks on community members. Over time, however, the group's influence waned due to the departure of key

members who either reunited with family, resettled abroad, died or found employment. As one focus group participant noted;

“Before what they were doing was attacking people. They were doing a lot of bad things, if they were sent to beat someone, they would beat you. Now there is a change, since their leaders left and some died, they are no longer that fearsome. Now when we catch them, we send them to the police and some have even gone to prison in Maula and are serving their sentences there. UNHCR also helped that if one is involved in violence they would not be considered for resettlement.” (FGD participant, November 2022).

This narrative demonstrates the fluid nature of youth gangs, which may start with noble intentions but evolve into more dangerous groups due to external pressures. The 24hrs gang’s evolution parallels that of other youth gangs globally, where a lack of stable social support, combined with economic challenges, often pushes young people toward delinquency (Lewis, 2007).

4.3.2 Organisation structure

The findings of this study on the organisation of the Young Money Crew and 24hrs gangs in Dzaleka reveal key contrasts and alignments with existing literature on gang structure, particularly concerning leadership, membership, and the presence of formal rules.

4.3.2.1 Leadership and Organisational Structure

The study shows that neither the Young Money Crew nor 24hrs had well-defined or stable leadership structures at the time of research. On leadership, a Young Money Crew member claimed;

“...Right now, I cannot say we have a typical leader but when we used to dance, we had one whom we selected amongst ourselves however later on we had some issues on leadership and money that led to the group breaking up. Now we don’t have a clear leader we just live as a group...” (Young Money Crew Member, November 2022)

Similar findings were observed with 24hrs gang, although the organisation previously had leaders, during the study period, they lacked a recognisable individual fulfilling the role of a leader. Further to this, both groups lacked committees, subcommittees, or hierarchical frameworks, aligning with perspectives in literature that suggest gang structures can vary significantly. Some scholars argue that certain gangs may exhibit disorganisation, with no clear leadership, while others maintain a more formalised, hierarchical system (O’Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013; Smithson, Monchuk, & Armitage, 2011). In line with this, the Young Money Crew had experienced internal conflict over leadership, leading to a more informal and loosely structured gang dynamic. This reflects findings by Decker and Curry (2000) that leadership in gangs may not always be stable or permanent, and that leadership can be situational or informal, with some gangs experiencing disputes that undermine their structure.

The 24hrs gang, however, showed a different leadership pattern during their prime, where older members assumed leadership by default, demonstrating a form of functional leadership. Additionally, the power dynamics within the 24hrs gang, exemplifies a form of hierarchical influence despite the absence of formalized leadership as explained by 24hrs member,

“If you were asked to carry out a task by the older boys you wouldn’t refuse you just had to do it. You couldn’t even say you can’t because that meant you will let your brothers down in the crew. So, we respected our leaders as much as we feared them.” (24hrs Member, November 2022)

This reflects the idea presented by Decker and Curry (2000) that certain gangs may have leaders who gain authority based on their age or experience a concept supported by Ruble and Turner (2000), who argue that leadership in some gangs can be more implicit and informal, often based on seniority or situational authority.

However, the decline in leadership within both gangs led to a decrease in their influence, consistent with the argument by Wijewardhana (2017) and Venkatesh (2008) that gang leaders play a crucial role in maintaining the operations and influence of the gang. The literature also points to the importance of targeting gang leaders to weaken gang influence (Howell, 2000), suggesting that the leadership vacuum in the Dzaleka gangs may explain their reduced impact over time.

4.3.2.2 Membership and Initiation

The absence of formal initiation rites in both the Young Money Crew and 24hrs contrasts with findings from studies that highlight initiation rituals as a common feature of gang membership (Ruble & Turner, 2000; Best & Hutchinson, 2006). In many documented cases, initiation rituals serve as a means of bonding members and reinforcing social ties (Murer & Schwarze, 2022), yet neither of these gangs enforced such practices. Instead, membership in both groups was open, and there were no barriers or prerequisites to joining, which aligns with the idea that not all gangs require formal initiations (Ruble & Turner, 2000). This lack of formal initiation could be a reflection of the gangs' more fluid and informal organisational structures, as seen in other loosely organised gangs.

4.3.2.3 Rules and Regulations

Similar to their lack of structured leadership, both gangs had minimal formal rules governing member conduct. In the case of the 24hrs gang, members revealed that during the early stages of the group, there were some implicit rules, such as newly recruited or junior members being responsible for tasks like washing dishes and performing housekeeping duties. One member of the 24hrs gang elaborated on these informal rules, stating:

We didn't have special rules, but there were some things that apply in the community that also applied to us, like no stealing things from members, when one finds a piecework, you don't invite a non-member to work with, no snitching on each other, things like those. (24hrs Member, November 2022)

While the 24hrs gang had some rules during their peak these regulations were eventually abandoned due to the dissolution of leadership. The absence of rules in the Young Money Crew also points to a less organised and more casual form of association. This finding is consistent with Ruble and Turner (2000), who note that not all gangs are governed by strict codes of conduct, and some are more socially oriented than criminally organised. Additionally, the eventual abandonment of rules in both gangs echoes the findings of O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, and Thomas (2013), who suggest that gang organisation can become fragmented in the absence of leadership.

4.3.2.4 Evolution of Organisational Structures

The evolution of the organisational structures of both gangs—shifting from a more organised state during their early periods to a disorganised and leaderless form—reflects the dynamic nature of gang organisations. Literature on gang structures highlights that gang organisation is not static (Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; Decker & Curry, 2000). This transformation, from having clear rules and leadership to the absence of both, suggests that the disorganisation of these gangs might contribute to their diminished impact and control within the camp, a phenomenon supported by Venkatesh (2008) and Howell (2000).

4.3.3 Group Behaviour

The study identified four themes related to group behaviour: cultural style and symbolic markers, the use of violence and intimidation, control over specific activities in the camp, and the dynamics of intra-group relations as well as relationships with the broader community.

4.3.3.1 Use of violence, intimidation and criminal behaviour

The study revealed that the two youth gangs in Dzaleka—24hrs and Young Money Crew—exhibited distinct patterns of criminal and violent behaviour, which aligns with existing literature on gang typologies. As documented by Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) subcultural theory, gangs often emerge from social disorganisation and engage in criminal or conflict-driven activities. The 24hrs gang's behaviour during its peak fits the characteristics of a criminal subculture, as members engaged in serious criminal activities such as homicides, theft, and assaults. This is exemplified by the recollection of one participant who noted,

“There was one Rwandan leader who was using them to kill or assault people. This group was reporting to him. The meaning of 24hrs was that if you give them a mission to do something, the boys will carry out the mission within 24hrs” (Key Informant, November 2022).

This gang's notoriety for being hired to intimidate or even kill on behalf of others further emphasizes the group's violent reputation, as indicated by another participant: *“The meaning of 24hrs was that if they want to do something to you, they will do it within 24hrs* (Key Informant, November 2022).

Studies show that the use of violence and intimidation is common among gangs as it serves as a means to effectively manage contentious situations, deter victimisation and gaining respect among peers and the community (Lauger & Lee, 2020). This could therefore explain why 24hrs gang was more violent in its prime years due to its larger membership of young and vulnerable people who used violence and intimidation for self-defence or instil fear in others.

In contrast, the *Young Money Crew* did not achieve the same level of infamy. Their criminal activities were primarily limited to petty theft and burglaries, often to support their drug and alcohol habits. This suggests that *Young Money Crew* operated more as a retreatist subculture, as they withdrew from more severe forms of crime, a pattern consistent with Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) depiction of retreatist subcultures, where gang members resort to petty crime to fund their dependence on drugs and alcohol use.

At the time of the study, it became apparent that the 24hrs gang had significantly reduced their involvement in serious criminal endeavours, in contrast to their prime years. The group demonstrated a proclivity for alcoholism and substance abuse, participating in minor illicit behaviours, thus aligning themselves with the retreatist subculture gang. This shift from criminality to retreatist behaviors further supports the notion that gang behavior is fluid, reflecting the life circumstances and priorities of its members. As one participant noted, "*Most of its members turned into alcoholics and drug addicts, and are physically weak*" (FGD, November 2022). These findings echo the literature that suggests gangs may evolve over time, with levels of violence diminishing as members age (O'Brien, et al., 2013).

4.3.3.2 Cultural style and symbolic markers

Consistent with the gang literature, which highlights the importance of symbolic markers like tattoos, graffiti, and clothing in signalling group affiliation (Leverso & Matsueda, 2019), this study found that *Young Money Crew* initially adopted a distinctive dress code. Members would wear ragged trousers, known locally as pocket down, and expose parts of

their skin, while their leader bore a distinctive tattoo with the group's name and a snake. A focus group participant described it vividly:

“...The chief has to have the badness. The badness in the head, on the hand he drew a certain tattoo written black G and, in that word, there was a certain snake crossing the word. That snake was really scary...”

(Participant, FGD November 2022)

However, the influence of these symbolic markers waned over time, and by the time of the study, neither Young Money Crew nor 24hrs had an identifiable dress code or gang symbols. The only remaining marker was graffiti left by Young Money Crew, with no equivalent representation for 24hrs. This departure from traditional gang symbols may explain the difficulty some participants had in identifying gangs within the camp, a phenomenon documented in gang literature when groups become less organized (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993).

4.3.3.3 Intragroup Relations and Relations with the Community

The 24hrs gang was characterized by strong intragroup bonds, with members often viewing each other as family. One member shared, *“We are all one, everyone here is my brother...we eat together, we sleep together”* (24hrs Member, November 2022). This close-knit camaraderie helped them cope with the hardships of life in the camp, including hunger, homelessness, and exploitation. Their collective solidarity resembles the gang behaviours described by Decker and Curry (2000), where gang affiliation often substitutes for family, offering both emotional and material support.

In contrast, the Young Money Crew lacked the same level of solidarity, indicating weaker intragroup cohesion. This distinction is significant, as research highlights the role of strong social ties in enhancing a group's resilience and influence, both within the gang and the broader community (Wijewardhana, 2017).

The findings also suggest that while social bonds within 24hrs were strong, their relationship with the community was quite weak. A considerable number of 24hrs members displayed limited or non-existent social ties with adults in the community, which contributed to a lack of real connection. Conversely, Young Money Crew, predominantly consisting of adolescents, maintained familial ties, fostering a stronger sense of connection to the community. White (2004) points out that such connections can create ambiguous relationships, sometimes even evoking sympathy from the community.

The 24hrs gang experienced a dichotomous relationship with the community—feared for their violent actions but relied upon for tasks like grave digging. A key informant explained, *“They are known for both good and bad things...if you don’t pay them, it becomes a problem”* (Key Informant, November 2022). This fear-based respect, typical of gang dynamics, is evident in how the gang was treated in social settings. One 24hrs member recalled how they were feared, even at entertainment events: *“People wouldn’t dare to ask us to pay because they knew the consequences”* (24hrs Member, November 2022). Lauger and Lee (2020) highlight that violence and intimidation often serve as tools for controlling both group members and the broader community.

However, this fear also fueled significant stigmatization and marginalization. Many gang members felt targeted by the community and camp authorities. One member recounted a painful experience:

“But sometimes people beat us, they think we are thieves. If something is missing or a house is broken into, we are the first suspects. Look at my hand; it’s deformed because I was beaten... I almost died. People are cruel to us, especially now that there are only a few of us. Some get arrested for no reason” (24hrs Member, November 2022).

This reflects the complex dynamic between the gang and the community, where members often found themselves both victims and perpetrators of violence, consistent with Decker and Curry’s (2000) findings.

The study’s results indicate that a negative correlation exists between the strength of intragroup relations within gangs and their relations with the wider community. As the 24hrs gang’s power grew, so did the community’s animosity toward them due to their violent actions. However, when the gang’s power diminished, the gang itself became the target of violent retaliation from community members.

This highlights the importance of building rapport with tightly knit youth gangs, as establishing a connection with them can create a more conducive environment for positive engagement.

4.3.3.4 Control of specific areas and activities in the camp

The study also found that 24hrs group carved a niche in some menial jobs in the camp. These were collecting refuse, drawing water for some affluent households, loading and offloading goods from trucks and digging of graves. When the group was in its prime, digging of graves and loading and offloading goods from vehicles in the camp were the main jobs they were doing and they managed to gain control over it. Ordinary people were rarely seen doing these jobs and if one dared to give the jobs to a non-member, the group would demand payment even when they did not do the job. This was common within the Likuni Market where the group was operating from. However, as the group weakened, so did this control over these jobs. At the time of the study, most members were collecting refuse from households and other jobs but were no longer monopolising these jobs. On the other hand, Young Money Crew had no specific activity that it controlled in the camp.

By controlling the casual labour market inside the camp market, the 24hrs gang exhibited typical gang behaviour of controlling its turf for business or residential reasons (Leverso & Matsueda, 2019). This behaviour therefore reinforced their power over the community.

4.3.4 Summary of key findings on nature of youth gangs in Dzaleka

On nature of the gangs in Dzaleka, the study found that, while 24hrs started as a support network for former street children who were also unaccompanied minors while Young Money Crew was formed after a group of dancers failed to succeed with their dancing group. The study further found that youth gangs in Dzaleka are loosely organised as they do not have clear organisational structures such as leaders, neither do they have affiliate groups in other zones within the camp, they had no clear rules and membership was open

to anyone. On group behaviour, the study established that use of violence, intimidation and criminal behaviour was more common among 24hrs than Young Money Crew especially in the peak days of both groups but had gone down at the time of the study. It was also revealed that 24hrs members had strong intragroup relations than Young Money Crew but their ties with the broader community were strained, leading to fear, stigmatization, and occasional violence against gang members. The study revealed that 24hrs and Young Money Crew are no longer vibrant as they were in the last three years and were both been affected by attrition, alcoholism and lack of leadership. Consequently, the gangs have turned into retreatist subcultures.

4.4 Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

This section discusses some of the factors attributed to the development of as well as involvement in gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp. The factors are grouped into four main categories. Those that are structural, exosystem, microsystem and ontogenic.

4.4.1 Structural factors

In this study, structural factors refer to systemic factors that relate to social institutions and are beyond the control of the community members. From the study, three main factors were identified and these were poverty, education challenges and legal restrictions.

4.4.1.1 Poverty

One of the study's key findings is the role poverty plays in driving youth into gang activities. As observed in the participants' quotes, the frustration stemming from the lack

of basic necessities, coupled with restricted access to employment opportunities, fosters a sense of hopelessness among the youth. One key informant pointed out, "*There are no jobs in the camp...this frustration leads to drugs and substance abuse and eventually cause some to be involved in gangs*" (Key Informant, November 2022). According to the study's participants, most refugees residing in Dzaleka camp are economically disadvantaged, relying on assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) for non-food and food-related necessities, respectively. This becomes a problem when this support is insufficient, compounded by donor fatigue and subsequent reductions in funding, result into vulnerable groups plunging further into poverty (Crisp, 2003). Consequently, this situation increases the likelihood of youths engaging in delinquent behaviour and joining gangs.

Research conducted on youth gangs has demonstrated that the impoverished socioeconomic status of a family has a significant influence on parenting practices (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). This is primarily due to the fact that parents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often allocate a substantial amount of their time towards securing employment or obtaining basic necessities for survival. As a result, the needs of their children tend to be neglected as a result of these competing demands (Mwangangi, 2019; Carrabine, et al., 2009; Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). Advocates of Social Disorganisation Theory have posited that poverty serves as a catalyst for criminal conduct or affiliation with gangs (Chen & Zhong, 2013; Tibbetts, 2018). Hence, the prevalence of poverty within a community is regarded as a significant risk factor contributing to criminal activity and involvement in gangs (Howell, 2010). When considering refugees, specifically those in protracted situations, it is observed that poverty

levels and unemployment rates are usually high, resulting in feelings of frustration, despair, and the adoption of negative coping strategies such as engaging in utilitarian crime and prostitution (Crisp, 2003). Consistent with the conclusions drawn by previous scholars (Carrabine, et al., 2009; Mwangangi, 2019), this study concludes that high levels of poverty in the camp have contributed to the proliferation of youth delinquency and youth gangs in Dzaleka.

4.4.1.2 Educational challenges

The study established that access to education is a challenge in the camp. For example, at the time of the study, it was established that there were 19,426 school going age children of which 10,517 were in school. This therefore means that 54% were in school and 46% were out of school. Further to this, the study found that the camp has one secondary school and one primary school serving both the refugee and host communities. The school space is limited such that both the primary and secondary schools in the camp cannot absorb all the students. As a result, some students enrol in private primary and secondary schools within the camp. However, those who cannot afford to pay tuition in private schools and have failed to be enrolled in public schools due to space do not go to school.

For those who complete their secondary education, some enrol with online tertiary education institutions through an organisation called JRS while others go to a vocational school ran by There is Hope, an NGO within the camp. However, for those who score good grades do not have a chance to enrol with the national public universities in Malawi as local students due to legal restrictions. Commenting on the legal barrier to enrol in public universities and colleges, one key informant claimed that,

“Students who manage to get good grades at Malawi School Certificate of Education exams and qualify for admission to national public universities, could not be enrolled as local students since the law does not allow them. For example, in 2021, 131 sat for the MSCE exam (44 girls 87 boys) 36 passed (6 girls 30 boys) 16 students qualified for the university (3 girls 13 boys)” (Key Informant, November 2022).

Considering the extreme poverty levels in the camp, most students who qualify for public university admission cannot afford to pay the tuition fees in public universities. As a result, most refugee students remain idle after completing their secondary education.

The study findings suggest that the availability of educational opportunities within the camp is constrained by enrolment difficulties at both the primary and secondary levels, primarily attributed to limited space in public schools. Furthermore, the issue of accessing tertiary education is compounded by legal limitations. The consequences of these challenges are twofold: individuals who are unable to secure enrolment remain inactive, while those who successfully complete their secondary education often do not pursue further studies at the tertiary level and subsequently face a lack of occupation. As a result, the state of idleness among certain refugee youths creates a susceptibility to engaging in deviant behaviours, including alcohol and drug abuse. Consequently, this places some of them in a vulnerable position of potentially joining criminal gangs (Mwangangi, 2019).

Moreover, the absence of educational opportunities has long-term implications for the employability of young individuals. Research indicates that individuals in their youth who do not receive formal education may encounter limited prospects for employment and economic advancement due to their potential deficiency in fundamental skills necessary for the workforce. The absence of economic opportunities compels individuals who are deprived of such prospects to resort to engaging in illicit activities as a means of sustaining their livelihoods (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). Hence, it is common to observe that the majority of the youths engaged in gang activities within the Dzaleka community exhibit a limited educational background or a complete absence of formal schooling. The results of the study thus indicate that educational institutions play a significant role in deterring individuals from joining gangs.

4.4.1.3 Legal restrictions

The study found that the legal restrictions on some refugee rights led to frustration among refugees. In a focus group discussion with the youths from the camp, this issue emerged and one of the participant made the following claim:

If you could take a tour of the camp, will see that it is like a prison, whereby people are compacted in one place with no space.... when you want to get out you have to seek permission, if you find a business or job opportunity you can't take it because the law says you can't. So, people practically are living like in prison, they don't have anything to do, they don't have work, they don't have jobs. (Focus Group Discussion Participant, November 2022)

The study also revealed that due to challenges in accessing tertiary education in public institutions of higher learning, students at secondary school level are not motivated enough to work hard. Referring to the access to high education and right to work restrictions, one participant in a focus group discussion with students complained that,

“...and such things are making us who are still at school to even ah! You start even giving up before you write your form four exams, whereby you know even if I can write it or I cannot write it nothing will change (participants node in agreement) that make it even the score to be poor and one can lose focus...” (Focus Group Discussion Participant, November 2022).

Based on the aforementioned sentiments, a prominent concern highlighted is the perception among a majority of refugees regarding the restrictive nature of the legal system in Malawi, which poses a significant obstacle to their attainment of success. As indicated by the interviews conducted, the study reveals that a majority of refugees express dissatisfaction with the existing legal framework, leading to feelings of powerlessness and a loss of hope. The study results thus provide empirical support for Crisp's (2003) assertion that legal mechanisms which restrict the freedom of movement, business activities, employment opportunities, and property ownership for refugees in their host country contribute to their unproductive lifestyles. Thus, perpetuating their impoverished conditions and potentially leading some individuals to engage in deviant behaviours. The findings therefore suggest that legal restrictions imposed on refugees' economic rights have a contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for youth gangs to emerge.

4.4.1.4 Summary of key findings on structural factors

The study identifies structural factors contributing to youth gang involvement in Dzaleka, specifically poverty, educational challenges, and legal restrictions. Poverty drives youth toward gang activities, as economic hardship fosters frustration and hopelessness. Many rely on aid from UNHCR and WFP, but inadequate support leads to deeper poverty and increased delinquency. Educational access is limited, with many children out of school due to overcrowded facilities and financial barriers. Legal restrictions further hinder opportunities, preventing refugees from enrolling in public universities, leaving them idle and susceptible to deviant behaviours. Consequently, these structural factors significantly increase the likelihood of youth joining gangs.

4.4.2 Exosystem

The study in Dzaleka Refugee Camp resonates with the broader literature on gang involvement, particularly in terms of community factors, such as exposure to violence and weak neighbourhood support. As outlined in the literature, community factors play a significant role in shaping delinquent behaviour and gang affiliation among youth. These factors, including exposure to violence, social disorganisation, and lack of social cohesion, are present in Dzaleka, influencing the behaviours of youth and their involvement in gangs like the 24hrs and Young Money Crew.

4.4.2.1 Exposure to violence

Consistent with the findings of Goodrum et al. (2015) and Higginson et al. (2018), exposure to community violence is a critical factor contributing to gang involvement in Dzaleka.

The participants' narratives reveal that violence is pervasive within the camp, with children often witnessing or experiencing violent incidents both in public spaces and homes. This aligns with Wolff et al.'s (2020) study, which showed a positive relationship between adverse childhood experiences and gang involvement.

Below are testimonies of gang members highlight how deeply violence is entrenched in the camp's environment. A member of the 24hrs gang shared:

I have seen all sorts of violence in the camp since I was a child. People fighting, swearing at each other, all of that. I have also suffered violence as well. Look at me... I have lost 3 of my front teeth and look at these scars... I have gone through a lot. (In-depth Interview, 24hrs Member, November 2022)

Another gang member echoed similar sentiments:

Eeee there is a lot of violence in the camp, I have witnessed a lot of fights and quarrels in the camp. Almost everyone will tell you that it is common. People hurt each other, they fight each other, for the past 22 years I have been here I have witnessed a lot of violence be it at home, bars anywhere. Sometimes you get drunk you just find yourself in a fight. (In-depth Interview, 24hrs Member, November 2022)

These accounts align with Hong et al. (2014), who argue that exposure to violence contributes to psychological conditions like aggression and conduct disorder, which can, in turn, lead to delinquency and gang involvement. The normalisation of violence in

Dzaleka not only shapes the environment but also perpetuates a cycle of violent behaviour and delinquency.

The presence of violence across different zones of the camp, particularly in areas like Blantyre and Likuni, which were noted as hotspots for violent incidents, further corroborates the literature on neighbourhood effects on youth behaviour. The study participants consistently described violence as a common occurrence, with Blantyre being described as the most violent zone due to its high population density, unsanitary conditions, and the availability of cheap liquor. Below is an account of one of the key informants

“Blantyre is worse, there are a lot of drinking joints, they sell Kachasu and these other cheap liquor. So, people easily access alcohol and they come from different places in the camp as well as outside. So, fights are a common sight. In addition to this, there are a lot of women involved in survival sex residing in that area, so fights over unpaid services, fighting over clients and all those stuff are there. In such environment most children are exposed to violence.” (Key informant, November 2022)

According to the history of the camp, Blantyre and Likuni zones are one of the initial zones to be established within the camp, and a majority of gang members originated from these two zones. This suggests that the social environment in these two zones may have increased the likelihood of certain young individuals living in these areas becoming involved in gangs, thus providing evidence that exposure to violence has a favourable impact on gang affiliation.

4.4.2.2 Weak Social Cohesion and Neighbourhood Support

The lack of social cohesion and weak neighbourhood support in Dzaleka plays a significant role in enabling gang formation. Research by Sampson and Groves (1989) and Mazerolle et al. (2010) emphasizes the importance of strong social networks in exerting control over crime and gang activity. However, the study found that social ties in Dzaleka are weak, and the community exhibits low levels of collective efficacy, making it difficult to implement effective informal social control mechanisms.

Community members and leaders acknowledged this lack of engagement. One participant shared their frustration with the community's apathy toward gang issues:

“The problem here is that people only care about their personal problems. They forget that each one of us have problems and these problems become bigger when you aggregate them. Sometimes we focus much on our problems and forget to work on their solutions which may be for us to work together. People here are just concerned with getting resettled. They don’t care about our community. They don’t care about Dzaleka. Even when it comes to issues like food or other distributions those negatively affected will only be seen demonstrating or complaining. I hope you saw what happened at Yetu radio. Some people were left out of the monthly cash distribution beneficiary list, how many people tried to help these people to have their voices heard? No one, leaders tried but the community did not” (KII, Community Leader, 2022).

Another layer of complexity in Dzaleka lies in the ethnic and cultural tensions that contribute to both violence and social disorganisation within the camp. As one key informant observed, *"Due to different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, people easily fight"* (KII, Youth-Led CBO Leader, 2022). This observation is consistent with the findings of Jobes et al. (2004), who argue that social ties and relationships are weakened by factors such as ethnic heterogeneity, residential instability, and low economic status. These social tensions foster an environment of mistrust and conflict, which in turn exacerbates violence and hinders collective efforts to address issues like gang activity. Burke (2009) and Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) similarly contend that ethnic heterogeneity erodes social cohesion and weakens informal social control, further complicating the community's ability to mitigate violence and delinquency.

4.4.2.3 Summary of key findings on exosystem factors

The study highlights the role of community factors in youth gang involvement in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, focusing on exposure to violence and weak social cohesion. Violence is prevalent, with participants recounting frequent incidents both in public and domestic settings, which correlates with psychological issues like aggression and delinquency. Key locations, such as Blantyre and Likuni, are identified as hotspots for violence, exacerbated by alcohol availability and socio-economic challenges. Additionally, the study reveals a lack of social cohesion and neighbourhood support, as residents prioritize personal issues over collective community well-being. Ethnic and cultural tensions further complicate social dynamics, leading to mistrust and conflict, which undermines efforts to control gang

activities and reduce violence. These findings underscore the importance of community context in understanding gang involvement.

4.4.3 *Microsystem*

Within the microsystem three main elements were identified, and these were parenting/parental support, school support and peer support. Below are the results on how these three elements contribute to youth's formation or joining of gangs.

4.4.3.1 *Parenting/parental support*

In gang literature, family plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's socialization, either through parental control and support mechanisms or through its absence, which may lead to delinquency (Mwangangi, 2019; Walters, 2020).

In Dzaleka, the study uncovered that most youths who joined gangs such as the 24hrs or Young Money Crew either grew up without parents or had strained relationships with their guardians. This aligns with literature that identifies poor parenting, family conflict, and low parent-child bonding as risk factors for delinquency (Brezina & Agnew, 2015; Mwangangi, 2019). The following findings and cases from the study support these observations.

4.4.3.2 *Parental Absence and Poor Relationships*

Many gang members in Dzaleka lacked parental figures, for example, out of the nine 24hrs members interviewed, only two had at least one parent and an adult relative living in the camp while seven grew up without their parents or any adult relation. As for Young Money

Crew, four out of six had both parents while one had a single parent and another had an uncle living in the camp but the relationship with their parents were poor. Below are two cases of Moses and Monty illustrating the protective role of parents in gang affiliation.

Case 1 Moses

Moses came to Malawi in early 2000s to seek asylum after fleeing from his country. He came to Malawi through Zambia in company of unknown people as he got separated from his parents during an attack on his village by some unknown assailants. He stayed in Zambia for a while but then he heard that some people fled to Malawi and he believed that his parents would also be there. He then joined a group of people who were on their way to Malawi to trace their relations. Most of the members of the group found their relations in Mchesi, unfortunately for him he didn't find any of his family relations. However, four other boys who were homeless and lived as street kids in the city of Lilongwe. He joined the group and were living on alms and slept under bridges and veranda of shops. Later, they met someone who was speaking their language. The man told them that there was a camp in Dzaleka where refugees are hosted by the Malawi government. Moses and his friends then moved from town to Dzaleka. Fortunately, he met one his father's relations who took him under his roof. However, according to Moses, the uncle used to mistreat him. He never enrolled him into school, didn't provide for his material needs. Since he already had his friends in the camp who were also living by themselves in an abandoned house, Moses left his uncle's home and joined his friends. This was easy for him as he was already used to living in the street. According to Moses, his friends were closer to him and were more caring than the uncle.

Case 2 Monty

Monty came to Dzaleka with his two siblings and his mother. According to Monty, he joined 24hrs because the group offered him support when he needed it most. During the war, his father and mother were severely beaten by soldiers in front of him. Unfortunately, his father, died on their way to Malawi but his mother sustained serious wounds and she was vomiting blood. She died a few months after arriving in Dzaleka. Monty claimed the death of his mother changed his life beyond his imagination. At the time he had just enrolled at Katubzya primary school. Since there was no one to support him and his siblings, he decided to drop out of school in order to do piece work and support his siblings. The little money he was getting from his menial jobs he supported his siblings to buy school materials. However, along the way he started to drink alcohol and smoke Marijuana. Being young and vulnerable, he was constantly attacked by some big boys and part of his earnings could be taken away by these boys. In order to be protected from these boys, he joined 24hrs. Since he joined the group, he was no longer bothered by the boys who used to bully him.

As noted in both Moses' and Monty's cases. Moses, after experiencing mistreatment by his uncle, found emotional support and a sense of belonging among his peers on the streets, and later, with the gang. Monty's narrative highlights how the death of his mother left him vulnerable and seeking protection, leading him to join a gang for safety, a common motivation for youth gang involvement (Strand, 2014). This reflects findings that gangs often substitute for the absence of family, offering emotional support and protection (Akiyama, 2012), though some scholars contest this notion (Decker & Curry, 2000).

4.4.3.3 Parental Social Support and Control

The study's results also emphasize the importance of parental control and support in preventing gang affiliation. A key informant suggested that;

“...most of them (gang members) don't have parents or guardians, if their parents or guardians were around, they wouldn't have allowed them to join these groups. They would have provided the necessary care and guidance to them. However sometimes it happens that some with parents or guardians join such groups but usually they are not likely to join these groups because they are controlled. (KII, November 2022)

This echoes McDaniel's (2012) findings, which indicate that positive reinforcement and monitoring by parents can reduce the likelihood of gang involvement. Additionally, Walters (2020) highlights that parental social support, more than control, offers protection, especially when youths are exposed to negative peer influences. The quote from a key informant above further supports this view. It was further mentioned that some parents

would leave their children unattended to and leave them to fend for themselves. In doing so, children enter in the labour market at an early stage and consequently drop out of school. Some children would be forced into begging in markets and exposing them to various forms of abuse. This therefore underlines the protective role that parents can play by providing supervision and a nurturing environment, a theme echoed in the literature on how strong parent-child bonds can deter delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969).

4.4.3.4 Family Structure and Delinquency

The relationship between family structure and delinquency is another significant factor. In Dzaleka, most participants observed that youths from single-parent households, appeared more likely to engage in gang-related activities. One participant emphasized the vulnerability of children in these situations:

“From my experience most of these youths involved in delinquent behaviours or gangs come from single parents than families with both parents. They may be overwhelmed to take care of their children and have less time for their kids.” (FGD Participant male, November 2022)

A key informant shared a similar perspective, highlighting the challenges faced by male-headed households, particularly when the father is absent or inattentive:

“Children from male headed families are more likely to join these groups especially here in the camp because the fathers would spend most of their time looking for money and spend less time on checking on their children. So, men are a bit more careless than women and more especially if he is an

alcoholic. A woman may go out to fetch for something and remember that they have children at home but men, no! Very careless.” (KII, November 2022)

This is consistent with some literature that links single-parent families with higher rates of delinquency (Estrada et al., 2018), though other studies argue that the quality of parent-child attachment, rather than family structure, is more crucial in predicting delinquency (Mack et al., 2007).

4.4.3.5 Foster Parenting and Its Challenges

The study also raised concerns about the foster parenting system in Dzaleka, where children under foster care were perceived to be more prone to delinquency. Some foster parents, driven by material incentives rather than genuine care, failed to form emotional attachments with the children, which could contribute to delinquent behaviors. This aligns with findings by Hirschi (1969) that highlight the importance of emotional bonds between children and caregivers in preventing delinquency.

A participant noted: *“Some of these foster parents are not taking care of their foster children... The parents would claim that as long the kids were eating at the home... they were benefiting”* (KII LRO worker, November 2022). This disconnect between foster children and their caregivers may foster resentment and push children toward gangs for emotional and social fulfillment, reinforcing the significance of social bonds in delinquency prevention (Kochanska et al., 2004).

4.4.3.6 School support

Although no official gang activities were reported within the camp's primary and secondary schools, focus group discussions with students revealed that some delinquent behavior had emerged in the past. In one instance, a young man recruited students to steal phones from teachers. However, this incident was isolated, and there has since been no record of gang formation in the schools.

Nevertheless, the broader issue of access to education remains critical. The study found that 46% of school-aged children in Dzaleka were out of school due to limited space. This echoes Mwangangi (2019) and Ensor (2014), who argue that lack of access to education leads to idleness and desperation, pushing children toward antisocial behavior. One student highlighted the impact of this: *"The school cannot accommodate many students... Many in the community have nothing to do and then they start to engage themselves in bad habits"* (FGD Participant, students, November 2022). The lack of educational opportunities not only contributes to the risk of delinquency but also leaves many youth vulnerable to recruitment by gangs. One gang member from the 24hrs gang explained: *"I dropped early in school, must be in standard 2. I was lacking material support... so I lost interest in school and dropped out"* (In-depth interview, 24hrs gang member, 2022).

This account aligns with research showing that school dropout and poor educational support are linked to increased gang membership (Lenzi, et al., 2014). The study revealed that while members of the Young Money Crew gang had completed their secondary education, the majority of 24hrs gang members dropped out or never attended school, further reinforcing the role of education in shaping pathways to gang involvement.

A community leader noted that the inability of parents to afford private schooling further exacerbated this issue: *“Here in Dzaleka, we have one primary school and one secondary school. So, we have a lot of children who are not in school... If these children are not going to school, they get involved in delinquent groups”* (KKI Community Leader, November 2022). The impact of this situation is particularly severe for children from poor families, as evidenced by one mother’s emotional testimony:

My son has completed his primary education but just got a pass, since he was not selected to our community secondary school, it means I have to send him to a private secondary school. Now look at me, what do I have? Nothing, I have nothing. Sadly, he can’t repeat in standard 8 because there is no place for him there. There are no repeaters at the primary school due to lack of space. So, this means this is the end of the road for my son and I will not be surprised if in the next few years, he will join these bad companies. Sometimes I cry when I look at him, he is a nice boy but his future is doomed. I pray for a miracle that God should do something, I don’t want to see my child joining these gangs. (FGD, Participant, November 2022)

The study's findings support the argument that school attachment acts as a protective factor against gang involvement, as noted by Chen and Zhong (2013), and Wilkinson et al. (2019). Youths who remain in school and develop connections with peers and teachers are more likely to internalize prosocial norms and avoid antisocial behavior. Conversely, those excluded from education are deprived of the protective benefits that school offers, increasing their vulnerability to gang recruitment.

4.4.3.7 Peer influence

Participants in the study repeatedly cited the influence of peers as a primary factor in their gang involvement. The findings show that many youths were introduced to gangs by friends already involved in gang activities. As a 24hrs gang member described: *“I joined this group to be with my friends and earn money through piece works. So, since I was hanging out a lot with the young ones among the group, I just left my father’s house and joined them”* (In-depth Interview, 24hrs member 2022). This narrative aligns with previous studies, such as Wijewardhana (2017), which found that peer connections are crucial in gang recruitment, with over 60% of male youths joining gangs due to their friends' involvement. Similarly, Icli and Coban (2012) also confirmed that friends encourage and support one another in criminal activities.

Case Study: Jeremiah

The case of Jeremiah as narrated by his mother further illustrates how peer relationships contribute to gang involvement. Jeremiah, a young boy with an interest in music and dancing, was gradually influenced by his friend Leonard, who introduced him to gang life:

Case 3 Jeremia

Jeremiah was a good boy, I cannot deny that every child has a problem, but my son was well behaved. He used to go to school despite the fact that we are poor and I could not afford buying everything that he wanted. Raising four kids by myself was hard especially here in the camp. Jeremiah liked dancing and he was fond of American urban music as well as Congolese music. Then I noticed that he was good with his dancing moves and I asked him where learnt this and he told me that it was through music videos. He said he watched those videos at video shows. At that particular time, I didn't know he was going to these video shows and when he told me this, I was surprised but it never occurred to me that he was spending more time at video shows. Later Jeremiah started to abscond classes and spend most of his time hanging out with friends. When I confronted him, he said he used to go for dancing lessons with his friend called Leonard. As time went by, Jeremiah would spend nights out, he stopped going to school and then I learnt that those nights he did not come home he was staying at Leonard's house. Leonard was staying alone with his siblings and he was 17 years old. My son was thirteen by then and in primary school. After a few months he completely moved out of the house and I could only see him at the market drunk. Up to now I do not know what Leonard did to my son for him to join gangs in the camp. Most of Jeremiah's friends are married now with kids but my son is a useless drunkard now.

Jeremiah's story highlights how peer association, particularly with individuals already engaged in delinquent behaviour, can pull youths away from structured activities like school and family life, leading to gang involvement. His experience is also reflected in the literature where youth gangs often provide an alternative support system, particularly when family attachment is lacking (Akiyama, 2012).

4.4.3.8 The Role of Social Bonds

The study also found that the majority of gang members in Dzaleka valued their friendships over familial relationships. In many cases, gang members viewed their friends as their primary support system, both emotionally and materially. This aligns with O'Brien et al. (2013), who explain that adolescent peer groups form strong social bonds that can reinforce either prosocial or antisocial behaviours. One participant expressed this sentiment: "I

would definitely value my friends' advice because they know me better, they understand me, and we live the same kind of life. They may appreciate my situation better than my parents" (In-depth interview, Young Money Crew member, 2022). Gang members not only sought advice from their peers but also relied on them for practical needs, such as financial assistance and protection. One member of the 24hrs gang explained: *"My friends care about me and share what little they have. They support me when I'm in trouble, even fighting for me, and when I'm sick, they take me to the hospital."* (In-depth Interview, 24hrs member, November 2022).

This dynamic reflects the concept of gangs serving as "alternative families," particularly in environments where parental or guardian support is lacking (Akiyama, 2012). The strong bonds within the gang, described using terms like *"family"* and *"brotherhood,"* further indicate the emotional dependency that members develop on their peers, much like findings in studies on gang culture (Goodrum et al., 2015).

4.4.3.9 Absence of Family Relations

Youth with no adult family members in the camp were found to be particularly vulnerable to peer influence. Many described their friends as family, sharing similar hardships and life circumstances. This aligns with Decker, Melde, and Pyrooz's (2013) findings that peers can fill the void left by absent family members, offering protection and emotional support.

In Dzaleka, peer support becomes crucial for youths with no close family relations, as these individuals are more likely to turn to their peers for guidance and support. One gang member stated: *"Like I said, my friends are like family to me. Their advice is better than*

my father's because they know my problems and what I have gone through" (In-depth Interview, 24hrs member, November 2022).

The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature on the role of peers in youth gang involvement. In Dzaleka, peers play a significant role in recruiting and sustaining gang membership, particularly among youths lacking strong family ties or adult supervision. Peer groups in gangs like the 24hrs and Young Money Crew provide emotional and material support, reinforcing the members' sense of belonging and identity. The influence of peers in Dzaleka mirrors global trends in youth gang involvement, where social bonds between gang members often outweigh those with family, pushing youths further into gang life. Therefore, addressing peer influence and providing alternative social support structures are key to preventing gang membership in the refugee camp.

4.4.3.10 Summary of key findings on microsystem factors

The study highlights that parenting plays a critical role; many gang members reported absent or strained parental relationships, leading to increased vulnerability to gang affiliation. The cases of Moses and Monty illustrate how lack of parental care and support pushed them toward gangs for emotional fulfillment and protection. School support is limited, with 46% of school-aged children out of school due to inadequate facilities, increasing their risk of delinquency. Participants noted that school attachment could deter gang involvement. Peer influence emerged as a significant factor, with many youths joining gangs due to friends' involvement. Gang members often viewed their peers as primary support systems, further emphasizing the need for alternative social structures to mitigate gang recruitment and involvement in the refugee camp.

4.4.4 *Ontogenic*

The findings of the study highlight the role individual (ontogenic) factors play in shaping youth participation in gangs. This aligns closely with the literature, which emphasizes that personal attitudes toward delinquency and substance use strongly influence gang affiliation (McDaniel, 2012; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999). However, the research revealed a lack of association between gang membership and individual attributes such as ethnicity and nationality.

4.4.4.1 *Delinquent Behaviors and Substance Use*

One of the key observations from the study is that most gang members exhibited a personal inclination toward deviant behaviours, particularly substance abuse, which they considered a core part of their identity. This resonates with Lenzi et al. (2014), who found that individuals with a history of delinquency and a high tolerance for deviance were more likely to engage in gang activities. The pride expressed by members of the 24hrs gang in their alcohol and drug consumption corresponds to the findings of Hill et al. (1999), where drug use and violent behaviors were linked to higher risks of gang membership.

This sense of pride in deviance reinforces the literature's assertion that youths with a positive disposition toward delinquent behaviors are more likely to be attracted to gangs (McDaniel, 2012).

4.4.4.2 *Low Self-Esteem and Identity Seeking*

Although the relationship between low self-esteem and gang membership has been debated (Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999), more recent research suggests that low self-esteem can act as a push factor, driving individuals toward gang involvement as a way to seek identity and respect (Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Farmer & Hairston, 2013). The study findings reflect this trend, as many members described their gangs as providing a sense of belonging and purpose. In Dzaleka, some young men joined gangs to gain respect and assert themselves within their social environments, much like Florian-Lacy, Jefferson, and Fleming (2002) describe. A participant explained: *"Before joining the gang, I felt like I didn't belong anywhere. Now, I have people who respect me"* (Ind-depth interview, 24hrs members, November 2022). This underscores the connection between low self-esteem and the search for a sense of identity, as noted in studies by Strand (2014) and Akiyama (2012).

4.4.4.3 *Gender and Gang Membership*

The gender dynamics observed in Dzaleka further align with the literature, which consistently shows that boys are more likely to engage in gangs than girls (Goodrum, Chan, & Laztman, 2015; Mwangangi, 2019). In Dzaleka, participants acknowledged that girls showed little interest in joining gangs, which limited their recruitment. As one gang member explained: *"Girls don't want to join us. They have their own groups and interests"* (In-depth interview, 24hrs member, November 2022). This reflects broader societal patterns where boys are more likely to affiliate with gangs to assert masculinity and gain peer recognition (Howell, 2010).

4.4.4.4 *Age and Gang Involvement*

The study also revealed that most gang members in Dzaleka were in their mid-20s, though their involvement often began during adolescence. This aligns with previous research, which notes that gang affiliation typically starts in adolescence and continues into early adulthood (Strand, 2014). In the case of Dzaleka, gang involvement seemed to provide a way for young men to navigate the challenges of growing up in a refugee camp, where opportunities for formal education and employment were limited. One participant shared: *"I joined the gang when I was 16. It was the only way to feel like I had something to do and people to be with"* (In-depth Interview, 24hrs member, November 2022). This sentiment echoes findings by Hill et al. (1999), where gang membership offered youth an alternative identity and means of coping with social and economic challenges.

The study's findings therefore reinforce existing literature on the role of ontogenic factors in gang involvement. Personal predispositions toward delinquency, substance abuse, and the search for identity and respect emerged as significant motivators for youth participation in gangs. While the specific context of refugee life in Dzaleka adds nuance to the analysis, the core individual factors that drive gang membership—delinquent attitudes, substance use, low self-esteem, and gendered patterns—remain consistent with broader research findings on youth gangs.

4.4.4.5 *Summary of key findings on ontogenic factors*

The study emphasizes the influence of ontogenic factors on youth gang participation, aligning with literature linking personal attitudes toward delinquency and substance use to gang affiliation. Key findings include a prevalence of deviant behaviours among gang

members, particularly substance abuse, and the role of low self-esteem as a motivator for seeking identity and respect within gangs. Gender dynamics showed that boys are more likely to engage in gangs, while age trends indicated involvement typically starts in adolescence. Overall, the findings highlight that individual predispositions toward delinquency, substance use, and identity-seeking are significant drivers of gang membership in Dzaleka.

4.5 Gang prevention and intervention activities and challenges in the camp

According to Lenzi et al. (2014), reducing gang involvement requires targeting both risk and protective factors, while a holistic approach should incorporate individual, family, school, and community-based strategies (Van Ngo et al., 2015; Smith-Moncrieffe, 2013). However, efforts in Dzaleka face gaps and challenges, particularly due to resource limitations and a lack of targeted programming, hindering effective intervention.

4.5.1 Lack of Targeted Intervention for Youth Gangs

In Dzaleka, the camp administration has adopted some crime prevention strategies, primarily through community policing volunteers (Sungusungu). However, there is an absence of specific programs aimed at addressing youth gang problems. This lack of focus on delinquent youth is a critical gap in the prevention strategy, as noted by a key informant: *"I don't think there is a special program for targeting delinquent youths apart from those cases referred to Plan or JRS for counselling"* (KII, November 2022). This statement illustrates a significant limitation in the approach to gang prevention in Dzaleka, where general youth programs take precedence over targeted interventions for gang-affiliated individuals.

This gap contrasts with successful interventions in other contexts, where tailored programs—such as counselling, case management, and life skills training—are vital in deterring gang involvement (Smith-Moncrieffe, 2013; White, 2004).

4.5.2 Prevention Efforts Focused on Broader Youth Empowerment

While NGOs such as Plan Malawi International have developed initiatives like child-friendly spaces and youth empowerment campaigns, these programs primarily target non-delinquent youth. A focus group participant remarked: *"I don't think there is any program that targets gangs in the camp by the organisations working here. Sometimes we see Plan doing awareness campaigns through shows and other things, but not on gang related issues"* (FGD Participant, November 2022). This underscores a key challenge: prevention programs are more generalized and do not specifically aim to engage gang-involved youth. This gap in targeted intervention implies that without focused engagement, gang-involved youth may continue to feel marginalized and overlooked by existing programs, potentially deepening their involvement in gang activities. This is problematic, as Howell (2010) suggests that effective prevention should focus on early intervention with at-risk youth, providing them with alternative pathways before they are entrenched in gang culture. Therefore, addressing this oversight is crucial, as it could lead to more inclusive prevention strategies that reach those most susceptible to gang influence.

4.5.3 Challenges with Marginalization and Outreach

One of the most significant issues highlighted by the study is the marginalization felt by gang-affiliated youths in the camp. This marginalization is both a cause and a consequence of their disengagement from formal intervention programs. As expressed by a gang member: *“We can’t go there because they use nepotistic volunteers who favour family or people of the same nationality. I’ve heard they give animals for farming, but none of us from the streets are helped”* (In-depth interview, 24hrs member November 2022).

This perceived exclusion from camp resources and support is a major barrier to effective intervention. According to Howell (2010), gang members need to feel that they are included in the community and that opportunities for rehabilitation are available. Without this sense of inclusion, marginalized youths are more likely to remain entrenched in gang culture.

4.5.4 Limited Intervention Programs

The study found that one of the few direct interventions aimed at preventing youth delinquency was a positive parenting program initiated by Plan International. This initiative focuses on bridging the generational gap between parents and their children, equipping parents with skills to nurture and control their children’s behaviour. This reflects the literature, where family-based interventions—such as parenting programs—are identified as key in gang prevention, as family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping youth behaviour (Mwangangi, 2019; Smith-Moncrieffe, 2013). While promising, such programs remain limited in scale and reach within Dzaleka.

4.5.5 Resource Constraints and Lack of Coordination

The lack of coordination between International NGOs and Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) was cited as a major constraint in addressing gang problems. Moreover, RLOs often lack the financial and technical resources to implement effective interventions. As one key informant working with a women's RLO explained: *"When trying to help those involved in gangs, they often say, 'I don't have food or shoes.' As refugee led organisations, without funds or opportunities to keep them busy and earning a living, change is nearly impossible "* (KII, November 2022). This reflects White's (2004) argument that intervention programs must be comprehensive, addressing both psychosocial and economic needs. Without addressing the economic pressures that push youths into gang involvement, any intervention remains incomplete.

4.5.6 Summary of key findings on gang prevention and intervention activities and challenges in the camp

The study underscores key challenges in gang prevention and intervention efforts at Dzaleka refugee camp. While community policing exists, there is a critical lack of targeted programs specifically addressing youth gangs, hindering effective intervention. Current initiatives focus on general youth empowerment but fail to engage gang-affiliated youths, exacerbating their marginalisation and exclusion from support. Positive parenting programs offer potential but lack sufficient scale. Additionally, resource limitations and poor coordination between NGOs and refugee-led organizations further impede progress. Addressing both psychosocial and economic needs is essential to reducing youth gang involvement in the camp.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The study reveals significant insights into gang formation, characteristics, and underlying factors driving gang affiliation in Dzaleka refugee camp. Gangs identified include the 24hrs and Young Money Crew, which, alongside other groups, exhibit varied degrees of criminal involvement, identity, and violence, resonating with characteristics highlighted in Eurogang criteria. Notably, 24hrs emerged as a highly recognized and feared gang, known for both violent activities and limited community service contributions. The presence of graffiti demarcating territories underscores the gangs' territorial identities, and the study aligns these gang characteristics with existing literature on gang behaviour, emphasizing the prominence of group names, violence, and criminal activity in establishing gang identities.

In examining the nature of these gangs, the study found that while 24hrs initially served as a support group for former street children and unaccompanied minors, the Young Money Crew emerged after a group of dancers failed in their pursuits. Both groups are loosely organized, lacking formal leadership, rules, or affiliations in other zones within the camp, making membership fluid. While 24hrs demonstrated higher tendencies for violence and intimidation, especially during peak periods, both groups have seen a decline in activity due to attrition, alcoholism, and lack of leadership. As a result, these gangs have transitioned into more retreatist subcultures with weaker community presence.

Structural factors were identified as major contributors to youth gang involvement, with poverty, limited education, and legal restrictions standing out. Economic hardships create frustration among the youth, often leading them toward gang activities for a sense of

purpose and relief. Limited educational opportunities due to overcrowded schools and financial challenges also push youth toward delinquency, as does restricted access to higher education, which leaves young refugees idle and vulnerable to deviant behaviours. These factors contribute significantly to the likelihood of youth joining gangs, driven by a sense of economic and social exclusion.

Community factors also play a crucial role in youth gang participation. Exposure to violence, both public and domestic, correlates with aggression and delinquency among the youth. Specific areas within the camp, like Blantyre and Likuni, were identified as violence hotspots, aggravated by alcohol availability and socio-economic challenges. Additionally, weak social cohesion and ethnic tensions further fragment the community, undermining collective efforts to address gang issues and reduce violence. This social environment, marked by mistrust and competition for resources, intensifies the attraction to gangs as a source of belonging and support.

Lastly, family and peer influences were significant in gang affiliation. Strained or absent parental relationships were common among gang members, with some youths seeking emotional support and protection within gangs. School attendance emerged as a deterrent to gang involvement, yet limited access to educational facilities leaves many vulnerable. Peer influence also emerged as a critical driver, as gang members often rely on each other for social and emotional support. Individual predispositions, including attitudes toward delinquency, substance abuse, low self-esteem, and the quest for identity, were noted as additional factors, particularly among adolescent boys, that align with established theories on youth gang involvement.

In conclusion, the findings underscore that gang affiliation in Dzaleka stems from complex socio-economic, community, and personal factors, reflecting a broader narrative on youth gangs shaped by structural constraints, social contexts, and individual motivations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the conclusions drawn from the study and subsequent recommendations.

5.2 Conclusions

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the issue of youth gang activity in the Dzaleka refugee camp. This involved the identification and examination of youth gangs, as well as an analysis of their characteristics and an exploration of the factors contributing to their formation within the camp. The study employed qualitative research methods and applied a theoretical framework consisting of three theories: Subculture theory, Social disorganisation theory, and Ecological systems theory. Based on the analysis, the study arrived at several significant conclusions, which will be elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion.

5.2.1 The existence of youth gangs in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

The study confirms the existence of youth gangs in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, highlighting their varied identities and activities. Key findings indicate that while some groups, such as 24hrs and young money crew, conform to established gang definitions—engaging in organized criminal behaviour and maintaining a cohesive identity—others, like the unnamed group of young Congolese boys, engage collective criminal activities but is less

organised. The presence of graffiti serves as a visible reminder of these gangs' identities and territorial claims within the camp, reinforcing their influence and marking their presence in the community.

5.2.2 The nature of gangs in Dzaleka

The study reveals the complex and evolving nature of youth gangs in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, particularly focusing on the Young Money Crew and 24hrs gangs. Both groups began with non-criminal intentions, with Young Money Crew emerging from a dance group and 24hrs forming as a support network for homeless boys. However, external factors such as economic hardship, substance abuse, and social disorganisation transformed them into delinquent subcultures engaging in criminal activities.

The findings highlight the fluidity of gang structures and behaviour, with leadership, membership, and internal organization deteriorating over time, contributing to their reduced influence in the camp. The absence of formal leadership and rules in both gangs contrasts with traditional gang structures but aligns with literature on disorganized gangs. Moreover, the use of violence and intimidation was a key characteristic, especially for 24hrs, and less for Young Money Crew. Nonetheless, both groups exhibited retreatist behaviours tied to drug and alcohol use particularly after their prime years.

Overall, the study underscores the role of social and economic pressures in gang evolution, the impact of leadership on gang dynamics, and the intricate relationship between gangs and the broader community. Understanding these factors is crucial for designing effective interventions aimed at reducing gang-related activities and promoting positive youth engagement.

5.2.3 Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

Using social disorganisation theory and ecological systems theory the study reveals that youth gang involvement in Dzaleka Refugee Camp is driven by a combination of structural, community, family, and individual factors. Structural challenges, including poverty, limited access to education, and legal restrictions, create conditions of frustration, idleness, and hopelessness, making youth more susceptible to deviant behaviours. The scarcity of educational opportunities and barriers to higher education leave many youths without productive outlets, increasing their risk of gang involvement. Community factors such as frequent exposure to violence, weak social cohesion, and ethnic tensions further exacerbate the problem. Violence, particularly in areas like Blantyre and Likuni, normalizes aggression and contributes to delinquent behaviour, while the lack of community support networks undermines collective efforts to address gang activity.

Family dynamics also play a critical role. The absence of strong parental relationships and support systems leaves many youths vulnerable to seeking emotional security and belonging in gangs. Peer influence is another significant factor, with many youths joining gangs due to their friends' involvement. Lastly, individual factors, including low self-esteem, substance abuse, and the search for identity and respect, are central motivators for gang membership. These issues are more prevalent among boys, with adolescence being a key period for gang affiliation.

Addressing gang involvement in Dzaleka requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles these structural, community, and individual factors, focusing on strengthening education,

community cohesion, parental support, and providing alternative social structures for youth.

5.2.4 Gang prevention and intervention activities and challenges in the camp

The findings reveal significant gaps and challenges in addressing youth gang involvement in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, primarily due to a lack of targeted interventions, resource limitations, and marginalization. Although the camp administration has implemented community policing strategies, such as the Sungusungu volunteers, these efforts do not specifically address gang-related issues. Existing programs, such as those from Plan Malawi International, focus on general youth empowerment rather than targeting gang-affiliated individuals, overlooking the critical need for early intervention with at-risk youth to deter gang involvement.

The marginalization faced by gang-affiliated youths exacerbates their disengagement from formal intervention programs. Feelings of exclusion and perceptions of favouritism alienate these individuals from community support structures, diminishing their likelihood of seeking help or participating in rehabilitation efforts. Resource constraints among Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) further complicate the situation, as they often lack the financial and technical means necessary for effective interventions.

Additionally, the research highlights the inadequacy of community support, particularly regarding social control, which stems from weak social cohesion within the camp. This deficiency undermines collective efforts to address gang issues, emphasizing the need for stronger community ties. The study underscores the importance of more inclusive and targeted programs that address both the psychosocial and economic needs of gang-involved

youth. Family-based interventions, such as positive parenting programs, show promise but are limited in scale. The foster parenting system also presents an opportunity for unaccompanied and orphaned children to receive parental care; however, when driven by material benefits, it can lead to increased child delinquency. Without improved coordination, targeted programming, and adequate resources, efforts to prevent and reduce youth gang involvement in Dzaleka will remain insufficient.

5.3 Recommendations

- To address structural factors of gang involvement like poverty which is greatly influenced by the restrictive legal framework and access to education, it is imperative that authorities find better ways to reduce poverty in the camp by
 - i. Lifting of the reservations that restrict refugees from engaging in gainful economic activities outside the camp.
 - ii. Improve access to education so that all school going age children are able to attend school.
 - iii. Expand livelihoods projects targeting the vulnerable groups.
- There is need for implementation of projects that will enhance social cohesion among refugees in the camp in order to improve informal social control to reduce delinquency and youth gangs. This will therefore address the problem of weak community support identified in the study.
- Related to the preceding point is the need to support Refugee Led Organisations (RLOs) as they may provide the necessary support in engaging the youths involved in gangs.

- There is need to continue with the positive parenting initiative by Plan Malawi International which is essential in mediating the economic stress that leads to bad parenting like child neglect that make children susceptible to crime and joining delinquent groups.
- There is need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the child fostering system in Dzaleka refugee camp.
- The study findings show that youths who are already involved with gang activities are not targeted by service providers in the camp. It is therefore imperative to engage these youths and their leaders in particular with the aim of moving them out of the gangs and in turn weaken the groups' influence in the camp.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form



Chancellor College
Master of Arts in Sociology

Title of Project Delinquent Youth Subcultures Among Displaced Youths: The Case of
Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Dowa District, Malawi

Informed Consent Form

Introduction

My name is Themba Shalom Nyambose. I am a Master Arts in Sociology student at the University of Malawi. I am conducting research on delinquent youth subcultures among displaced youths in Dzaleka refugee camp.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the forms and activities of gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp.

Purpose of the interview you have been identified to participate in the study because you live/work in Dzaleka and therefore you are considered to have useful information to the study. It is therefore expected that through this interview, all the information required for the study will be obtained. This interview will take at least an hour or more. The questions in this interview concern existence gangs in the camp, how they operate and why they are formed.

Benefits of this Study: Your participation in the study will contribute to knowledge about gangs among displaced persons which may be used for a better understanding of issues regarding gangs to provide better interventions for the youths.

Risks or discomforts: No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study to the respondent or community. But if you feel uncomfortable with a question or place of interview, you can skip that question or choose another place for interview respectively or you may withdraw from the interview.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Each participant will be assigned a participation number, and only the participant number will appear with your responses. Only the researcher will see your individual responses.

Decision to quit at any time: Your participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

How the findings will be used: The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings and at professional conferences, and the results might be published in a professional journal.

Contact information: If you have concerns or questions about this study and your rights as participants, please contact the principle investigator Themba Nyambose by email: thembanyambose@gmail.com or phone: +265993117908 or Head- Department of Sociology, Dr Phillip Kapulula by email: pkapulula@unima.ac.mw or phone: +265 993 75 75 50; or Postgraduate Coordinator, Mr. Felix Kakowa by email: fkakowa@unima.ac.mw or phone: +265 888 72 74 25 or UNIMAREC Chairperson, Professor Alister Munthali, P.O. Box 280, Zomba. Tel No. 0888822004/265997999459 or by email; amunthali@unima.ac.mw

I..... acknowledge that I have read this information and agree to participate in this research on

Appendix B: Key Informant Interview guide; Agency Staff/RLOs Staff

Key Informant Interview guide; Agency Staff/RLOs Staff

Name of the respondent	
Position held	
Date of the Interview	
District	
Consent	

Questions

Existence of Gangs in Dzaleka

1. For how long have you been working with your organisation?
2. How did you know about the existence of gangs in the camp?
3. How many groups do you think exist in the camp?
4. Which one is the most famous group and why?

Nature of gangs

5. How do you distinguish gangs from mere youth groups?
6. What exactly do these gangs do?
 - a. What are the common behaviours that members of delinquent groups display?
 - b. What type of crimes are commonly committed by these groups?
7. What are the significant differences across different gangs?
8. Which part of the camp has more gangs and why?
9. What are the special demographic characteristics of the members of gangs? Probe for:
 - a. Age
 - b. Gender
 - c. Family composition
 - d. Ethnicity

Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

10. What do you think are the main factors contributing to the formation of gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp?
 - a. Who are most likely to join gangs? *Probe on reasons given.*
 - b. What could be influencing youths to join or form gangs?
 - c. How often do you witness violent acts in your neighbourhood?
 - i. What form of violence is this?
 - ii. Who are the perpetrators?
 - iii. Who are the victims?
 - iv. Which part of the camp do these violent acts mostly occur and why?
 - d. What measures have you put in place to curb youth delinquency in your area of responsibility?

Appendix C: FGD Interview guide with community members

FGD interview guide community members

Name of the Group	
Date of the Interview	
District	
Location in the camp (Zone)	
Consent	

Questions

Existence of Gangs in Dzaleka

1. How often do you see gangs in the camp?
2. When did these groups started?
3. How many groups are there in the camp?
4. Which one is the most famous group? And why?

Nature of gangs

5. How do these gangs operate?
6. How do you distinguish them from mere youth groups?
7. What are the significant differences across different gangs?
 - a. What exactly do these gangs do?
 - i. What are the common behaviours that members of delinquent groups display?
 - ii. What type of crimes are commonly associated with these gangs in the camp?
8. Which part of the camp has more gangs and why?
9. What are the special demographic characteristics of the members of gangs? probe for
 - ✓ Age
 - ✓ Gender
 - ✓ Family composition
 - ✓ Ethnicity

Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

10. What do you think are the main factors contributing to the formation of gangs in Dzaleka refugee camp?
 - a. Who are most likely to join gangs?
 - b. What could be influencing youths to join or form gangs?
 - c. How often do you witness violent acts in your neighbourhood?
 - i. what form of violence is this?
 - ii. Who are the perpetrators?
 - iii. Who are the victims?
 - iv. Which part of the camp do these violent acts mostly occur and why?
 - d. What are you doing as parents/members of the community to address delinquent youths problems?

Appendix D Interview guide with gang member

Interview guide with gang member.

Participant Name	
Participant Code Number	
Nationality	
Name of delinquent group	
Date of the Interview	
District	
Location in the camp (Zone)	
Consent	

Questions

Existence of Gangs in Dzaleka

1. What is the name of the group you belong to?
2. For how long have you been a member of this group?
3. How many members do you have in your group? Prompt on gender, residence (zone in the camp) and nationality
4. Why did you choose this particular group of all groups in the camp?
5. Roughly, how many groups are there in the camp?
6. Which one is the most famous group and why?

Nature of gangs

11. What is the structure of your group? Prompt on;
 - e. Leadership structure and leadership selection process
 - f. Clear code of conduct
 - g. Physical structure where they meet
 - h. Has units/representation in other zones
12. How do you distinguish yourselves as a group from mere youth groups?
 - i. What are the significant differences across different gangs
 - j. What is the unique feature or characteristics of your group that sets you apart from the rest?
 - k. Which part of the camp has more gangs and why?
13. When recruiting new members, what are the special demographic characteristics of prospective members do you look for? Why?
 - l. How do you induct new members?
 - m. Under what circumstances are members allowed to leave your group?
14. How would you describe the day-to-day activities of your group?

Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

15. Explain why you joined gangs? And how did you join this group?
16. What was the reason behind forming this groups?

17. How would you describe your relationship with your parents/guardian and why?
Prompt on his/her feelings on safety
18. In terms of your friends, how many of them are also members of your group?
19. When making decisions about your life, who do you consult most and why them?
20. Between your parents/guardians, whose advice do you value most? Why?
21. Under what circumstances do you feel your friends are more important than your immediate family?
22. How far did you go with education?
23. What was/is your relationship with your teachers?
24. How would you describe your time spent at school? *Prompt on whether he/she enjoyed or not enjoyed the time spent at school and why.*
25. *If he/she dropped out of school, ask why?*
26. What form of abuse, violence have you witnessed or experienced in the camp?
Prompt on
- a. At home
 - b. School
 - c. Community
27. Who were the perpetrators and the victims? Let him/share one or two stories s/he experienced or witnessed.
28. How often did you witness or experience these violent acts? Prompt if they have stopped or still happening?

Appendix E Interview guide with gang member's parent/guardian

Interview guide with gang member.

Name of the respondent	
Nationality	
Date of the Interview	
District	
Location in the camp (Zone)	
Consent	

Questions

Factors responsible for gang formation in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

1. For how long have you been living in Dzaleka Refugee Camp?
2. How many are you in your household?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What is your occupation? *Prompt on main income generating activity*
5. What is your relationship with...? (Name of the youth)?
6. For how long have you known that (Name of the youth) is involved in gangs?
7. What was your reaction the moment you realised this? *Prompt on how he/she knew about it.*
8. What actions did you take to ensure that he/she leave the group he/she is associated with? Did it work?
9. How would you describe your relationship with...? (Name of the youth)
10. How would describe.... (Name of the youth) Relationship with his teachers and peers at school?
11. In your opinion, why do you think (Name of the youth) joined this gangs?

Appendix F Observation Checklist

1. Body tattoos

Check if interviewee has a visible tattoo and describe the tattoo in your notes.

2. Dressing code (colour or style)

Take note of any dressing style or colours that appears to be a dress code for a particular group.

3. Hand signs

Take note of any hand gestures that are used as a mode of communication.

4. Graffiti

Check for any graffiti within the camp.

Appendix G Research Ethics and Regulatory Approval and Permit for Protocol No P.08/22/178. from University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee.



VICE-CHANCELLOR
Prof. Samson M.L. Sajidu, BSc Mhw, MPhil Cantab, PhD Mhw.

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi

Our Ref: 08/22/178
Your Ref:

Telephone: (265) 1 526 622
Fax: (265) 1 524 031
E-mail: vc@unima.ac.mw

7th October, 2022

Mr Themba Nyambosc
Department of Sociology
University of Malawi
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

Dear Mr Nyambosc

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR
PROTOCOL NO. P.08/22/178. DELINQUENT YOUTH SUBCULTURES AMONG
DISPLACED YOUTHS: THE CASE OF DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP IN DOWA
DISTRICT**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat.

Once the study is completed, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Principal with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance

inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,


Prof. Alister Munthali
CHAIRPERSON OF UNIMAREC

CC: Vice Chancellor
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Acting University Registrar
Acting Finance Officer
Dean of Research
Compliance Officer



Appendix H Letter of Research Approval from Ministry of Homeland Security.

Telephone: (265) 01 789 177
Fax: (265) 01 788 104
(265) 01 789 509

Communication should be
addressed to: The Secretary for
Homeland Security



In reply please quote No.:
MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY
PRIVATE BAG 331
CAPITAL CITY
LILONGWE 3
MALAWI

Ref. No. HA/2/50

25th October, 2022

Mr. Themba Nyambose,
Department of Sociology,
University of Malawi,
P.O. Box 280,
ZOMBA

Dear Mr. Nyambose,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP

Thank you for your letter dated 11th October, 2022 seeking Government authorization to conduct academic research in the camp.

I am pleased to inform you that Government has approved your request. You may proceed with your plan to visit the camp and I hope the results of the study will be used for educational purpose only. We will be looking forward to benefit from your findings and recommendations for Government need to make improvements as necessary.

By copy of this letter, the Camp Manager is advised of this approval and is requested to assist you in carrying out your research.

Yours faithfully,



For: **SECRETARY FOR HOMELAND SECURITY AND
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

cc : The Camp Manager, Dzaleka Refugee Camp,
P.O. Box 16, **DOWA.**