

**EXAMINATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE MITIGATION INITIATIVES
AMONG THE YOUTH IN MALAWI: CASE OF MZUZU CITY**

MASTERS OF ARTS (POLITICAL SCIENCE) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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Submitted to School of Law, Economics and Governance, University of Malawi, in
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(Political Science)

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University of Malawi

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a product of my efforts undertaken under the supervision of Professor Happy Kayuni and Dr. Michael Chasukwa. It is an original thesis for it has never been submitted in whole or in part thereof anywhere on a similar purpose. All other people's works have duly been acknowledged.

WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We certify that this thesis is the student's own work and acknowledgements have been made where the works of other people have been used. We further certify that it has not been submitted to any other university for any degree and is therefore submitted with our approval.

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Joint Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother Mrs EsnartBamusi Phiri for her extreme moral and financial support towards the entire academic life. Her encouragement was so instrumental [may her soul rest in peace]. I also dedicate this study to my dear wife Masozi and my beloved daughters Deborah, Hannah and Miracle for their endurance during my long absence.

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ABSTRACT

When Malawi had re-adopted democracy in 1994, there was great optimism regarding the fair and free conduct of elections that would reflect the wishes of the citizenry. However, what transpired afterwards was something very different. In almost all elections conducted, the country's political system has been confronted with incidents of political violence being perpetrated by the youth hence the study which was to examine political violence mitigation initiatives among the youths in Malawi with a case of Mzuzu where more youth violence were recorded the post 2019 election. In Mzuzu, government infrastructure and individual property were extensively damaged by the youth. Through a sample size of thirty-five respondents with a qualitative approach that involved in-depth interviews, data was analysed using content analysis. The results revealed serious implications of political violence including but not limited to economic slowdown, death, injuries, vandalism and slowdown of democracy consolidation. On mitigation initiatives, the study revealed economic empowerment, civic education, avoidance of political interference in law enforcement and use of social media for political mobilisation and campaigning. For effectiveness, the initiatives would require commitments from the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and local leaders. The research was guided by rational choice institutionalism theory which dictates that political actors use institutions to maximize their preferences. The study recommends that politicians to embrace tolerance and desist from inciting political violence against their opponents; not to interfere with the justice system on perpetrators of political violence; ensure effective implementation of the laws against issuing of handouts by political players especially the government to economically empowering the youth financially and become self-reliant; there should be enhanced security for streets and shops including installation of security cameras and introduction of insurance cover for loss of property due to protests.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCJP :	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
COMSIP:	Community Savings and Investment Promotion
CSO :	Civil Society Organizations
DPP :	Democratic Progressive Party
DRC :	Democratic Republic of Congo
FINCA:	Foundation for International Community Assistance
HRDC:	Human Rights Defenders Coalition
MCP :	Malawi Congress Party
MDC :	Movement for Democratic Change
MMD :	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
MOSOP:	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MP :	Member of Parliament
NEEF :	Economic Empowerment Fund
NGO :	Non-Governmental Organization
NICE :	National Initiative for Civic Education
NPC :	Northern People's Congress
NSO :	National Statistics Office
NYP :	National Youth Policy
PPE :	Parliamentary and Presidential Elections
PRO :	Public Relations Office
SADC :	Southern Africa Development Community
SSA :	Sub-Saharan Africa

UNSDs: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

USA : United States of America

UTM : United Transformation Movement

ZANU PF: Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Political violence has been a major security threat to ideals and practice of democracy in Africa, especially in multi-party settings. In many cases, it has affected the conduct of fair elections, which includes the right to campaign and participate in politics. Political violence involving the youths has been a critical challenge in democracy consolidation as it has empirically posed a security threat to people for a free and fair democratic practice (Mkandawire, 2013; Mukunto, 2019; Umar, 2016). Against this background, putting in place various ways of mitigating political violence among the youths is very critical for effective democracy consolidation.

While more studies on political violence mitigation initiatives have largely been discussed in other countries outside Malawi, available literature show how this area has received little attention in this country. Among these few studies, Mjos (2007) suggests that establishment of youth trainings in business, vocational skills, leadership, social responsibility and conflict management are deemed essential prescriptions in dealing with this problem of political violence among the youth in Malawi. Jeremiah (2018) through his study in Zambia corroborates with Mjos (2007) when he asserts that it is the role of the government to create employment opportunities and support the youth with finances in order for the youth to venture into entrepreneurship activities. Mude (2014) in Zimbabwe further suggested the introduction of entrepreneurship module in colleges and universities so that the youth become self-reliant soon after their graduation if they fail to secure jobs, as well as introduction of a youth empowerment fund to support the unemployed youth with finances to open up small businesses.

In the context of political campaign approaches aimed at mitigating political violence perpetrated by the youth, another possible approach would be enhanced use of social media in political campaign to reduce physical face-to-face political meetings, since a study by Kadadzera (2020), which focused much on Malawi's political parties and their usage of social media to gain political support, established that usage of Face book was on the higher side. This implies that Malawi has the potential to embrace social media as a reliable platform for political activities including campaign and replace physical political meetings which put the youth at the risk of being exploitatively used by politicians for their personal interests.

In line with the need for adoption of various initiatives to mitigate political violence perpetrated by the youth in Malawi, this study sought to examine the implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth, as well as the initiatives that can help mitigate youth involvement in political violence, using Mzuzu City as an area of study. The city was chosen because it registered a significant number of cases of political violence in the aftermath of the disputed 2019 tripartite elections.

1.2 Background to the Study

Elections in many African countries, have been characterised by an emerging trend of violence in form of disruption of political rallies, assault, intimidation, killings and destruction of government properties especially during election campaigns and in the post-election periods (Mkandawire, 2013; Mude, 2014; Mukunto, 2019). A wide range of literature shows that the youths tend to be used more in political violence. For instance, the recent study by Armed Conflict Location & Events Data, ACLED (2022) reveals the devastating events of violence in the Kenyan presidential electoral competition between current president William Ruto (who was vice president at that time) and Raila Odinga, who was backed by outgoing president Uhuru Kenyatta with an estimated 1,060 incidents of political violence accompanied by 25 fatalities in Baringo and 23 in Elgeyo respectively.

As claimed by Akoth (2022), the youths bulge in Africa is considered as a major political instability threat affecting the essence of democracy to thrive.

Akoth (2022) posits that the youth growing population in East African countries such as Uganda and Kenya contributed greatly to political instability since the majority of the youth in these countries is affected by the high levels of unemployment and poverty which put them at the risk of engaging in political violence for their survival. In Kenya, for example, Akoth (2022) refers to demonstrations and protests by the youths in the 2007 General Election whereby more than 1000 people lost their lives and many others suffered various degrees of injuries. Scholars such as Ojok and Acol (2017) argue that youths in Africa are being used by political elites as climbing ladders when they want to achieve their personal interest. Ojok and Acol (2017) further concluded that while maintaining their positions, many political elites use the army of the youth to suppress the influence advanced by their opponents by ensuring that the youths are actively involved in political violence. According to Ojok and Acol (2017), political violence has been in the form of assaulting party candidates, journalists, vandalizing government offices, killings and many violent actions. The formation of youth movements such as the Egbesu boys in Nigeria's Oil Delta, the Apartheid Township Youth in South Africa and the Area Boys in Lagos are few examples of political violence which Ojok and Acol (2017) identified to have been influenced by political elites from way back in time when African states had attained independence.

It has been argued that political violence does not correspond well with principles of democracy and they affect countries' economic development. Complementing on this, Mude (2014) and Jeremiah (2018) from Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively confirm that political violence has been the most critical issues in Zimbabwe and Zambia and other African countries especially towards election period. Furthermore, Letsie (2022) having the same view, discusses the implications of electoral performance in the context of Lesotho's 2022 General election. Letsie (2022) postulates that a free and fair election commonly practiced in democratic governments helps people to elect leaders to represent the views of their respective communities in different structures of the political systems. Letsie (2022)'s argument makes sense and applies to Malawi's General Elections ever since it adopted democracy in 1993.

Democracy as a form of government entails that governance is based on trust to mean that those entrusted with power exercise such powers on behalf of the people (Magolowondo,

2007). According to Magolowondo (2007), a democratic government is established through elections that are held on regular basis and the system accords people the right to vote, participate, or join any political party of their choice.

Since 1994, Malawi has been conducting its elections in every five years (in line with Malawi Constitution, 1993). Rapanyane and Tirivangasi (2020) note that the trends of political violence towards election can be traced back to 1994 when Malawi became a democratic state with the first democratically elected president Bakili Muluzi's attempt to contest the third presidential term in 2004. Rapanyane and Tirivangasi (2020) further add that the trend of political violence continued in Malawi with Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika's attempts to take over leadership after President Bingu wa Mutharika's death in 2012 and during the 2019 contested election. In brief search of evidence of political violence involving the youth, Rapanyane and Tirivangasi (2020) assert that on 8th of July, 2019, police arrested 68 demonstrators countrywide for burning and destroying public offices. This is in line with Hussein and Sambo (2020) who found that almost all elections conducted in Malawi were characterized by events of political violence. According to these authors, electoral violence offers threats to government business, socioeconomic and political stability in the country due to weak electoral management.

The recent 2019 Malawi Tripartite Elections were confronted by widespread demonstrations which were staged to demand results nullification and removal of Chairlady of Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) Jane Ansah from her position on allegation that she had failed to manage the elections well. These demonstrations were accompanied by violence all over the country which disrupted peace and order in the country. Emphasizing on this, Samuel (2017) is of the view as he argues that the trend of political violence has given rise to militarisation of political space with young men forming informal military camps armed with dangerous weapons in readiness for acts of criminality.

Complementing to Samuel's view, such scenario were observed in Malawi when the youth from Msundwe in Lilongwe formed a paramilitary which they named "Msundwe Barracks" and another one in Karonga which they named "Benghazi" (Nazombe, 2016).

Against this background, there is need to study how various stakeholders can contribute towards democracy consolidation by taking steps towards mitigating political violence perpetrated by the youth in Malawi, hence this study. The study did not only seek to examine the implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth, but also the initiatives that can help mitigate youth involvement in political violence, with reference to Mzuzu City. As stated already, the city was chosen because it registered a significant number of cases of political violence in the post-election period of the disputed 2019 tripartite elections.

1.3 Problem statement

Malawi being a democratic state is in the limelight to promote the youth on issues of politics (National Youth Policy, 2013). The change to multiparty system of governance was significantly meant to elevate some principles of democracy in the quest of promoting good governance in the country. International community, through their initiatives have been advocating for the role of the youth in building peace as a way of institutionalizing democratic values. In this light, Quintilla (2016) identifies some international frameworks such as Resolution 2250 by United States Security Council to which Malawi is a signatory to have been on the forefront in facilitating the inclusion of youths in peace efforts in developing countries.

Despite these efforts, peace in new democracies like Malawi has been confronted by political violence with multiple reports of youth involvement. Mbulaje et al (2021) paint a picture that the majority of the youth, driven by social factors such as unemployment, have embarked on political violence especially towards elections when political elites use their vulnerability to engage in criminal acts such as assaults, killing, intimidations and destruction of property for individuals with dissenting political views.

Mwale (2016) brings to light evidence to show that Malawi shares similar experience of political violence in election periods when DPP leaders hired the youth armed with panga knives from Mzuzu Bus Depot to disrupt an MCP rally at Chibavi Football ground and Gonapamuhanya cultural event in Rumphi respectively. Hussein and Sambo (2020) and Ross et al (2022) also identify the youth as being behind the destruction of government offices and individual properties in Mzuzu in the aftermath of 2019 elections. This implies that political elites use the youth as a weapon to instigate violence.

If the problems affecting the youth cannot be checked well and they are offered other possible alternatives as Njoku (2015) claims, political violence among the youth will dominate and continue to impede Malawi's democratic politics. Rich body of literature on political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth shows that more studies have been done outside Malawi. In this perspective, studies such as Mukunto (2019) in Zambia, Mude (2014) in Zimbabwe and Samuel (2017) in Nigeria have concentrated on assessing political violence among the youth and their mitigation measures. On the contrary, few studies conducted in Malawi on political violence among the youth have only concentrated on finding factors which contribute to political violence among the youth. Among such studies include Mbulaje et al (2021), Dailo (2018), Hussein and Sambo (2020) and Ross et al (2022).

To some extent, Mjos (2007) touched on solving the problem of political violence perpetrated by the youth when he suggested establishment of youth trainings in business, vocational skills, leadership, social responsibility and conflict management as essential prescriptions in dealing with this problem of political violence among the youth in Malawi.

However, there was still need to identify some more initiatives that can be employed to mitigate violence perpetrated by the youth through a study involving interaction with the youth themselves, victims of political violence, policy makers and other stakeholders. Therefore, this study sought to fill this context gap by examining the political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi with reference to Mzuzu City.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Main objective of the study

The main objective of this research was to examine political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi.

1.4.2 Specific objectives of the study

1. To examine the implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth
2. To establish initiatives that can help mitigate the youth involvement in political violence

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the implications of political violence caused by the youth to society?
2. What should be done to stop the youth from being involved in political violence?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is important because it will supplement insights on the prevention of youth engagement in political violence especially towards election periods in Malawi. Apparently, existing literature on youth involvement in electoral violence are more focused on exploring factors that contribute to youth involvement in electoral violence. Based on respondents' opinions, the findings of this study will lay a foundation to scholars, academicians and researchers to add in literature the knowledge gap that exist in political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi.

The extent to which existing literature ignored tackling initiatives in mitigating political violence among the youth cannot be over emphasised. Few studies such as Mbulaje et al (2021) that focused on assessing factors that affect youth participation in political governance in Blantyre, Malawi, for example, found that 70% of the youth were not actively involved in politics implying that the majority of these youths had little knowledge

of their role in political terrain. This study, however, further established that lack of political knowledge was attributed to the culture of perceiving politics as an activity for old people. Another similar study by Hussein and Sambo (2020) on factors behind electoral violence in Malawi found that radicalization of youth wings was a contributing factor for political violence during the 2019 Malawi post-election. This study further found out that 60% of Malawi's population is dominated by the unemployed and frustrated largest number of youths who are subjected to political manipulation by political elites (NSO, 2018). Therefore, this study also widens the understanding horizon of some studies which left factors that lead youths into political violence hanging in balance, making it fertile for use by policy makers in setting standards when it comes to ways of dealing with political violence cases among the youth.

Lastly, through the qualitative research design which was used in this study, the research has brought out real issues from the interaction with respondents during primary data collection exercise. Their responses have highlighted their emotions and experiences in the quest of understanding the reasons why the youth engage themselves in political violence and how they can be handled for them to desist from engaging in political violence. Through this approach, respondents have pointed out initiatives that can best be used to prevent political violence among the youth in Malawi more clearly than using quantitative research design. This implies that the current study adds value to the academic body of knowledge.

1.7 Conclusion

The introductory chapter has clearly shown the research introduction, background, problem statement, main and specific objectives and the significance of the research. In this chapter, a problem statement has clearly shown the research gap that political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi have not been comprehensively covered other than outside the country.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The youth and their involvement in politics were deemed key factors in a democratic society and were essentially examined and put into context. This section presented the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework that governed the current research study on political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi. Probably, this chapter used the most recent published literature in line with the topic under study drawn from both local and international authors. On this, available literature on political violence has significantly revealed the negative implications that have impeded strides towards achieving democracy in Africa.. The wide range of African literature has established that the youth involvement in political violence has posed potential threats to socio-economic development in many African countries including Malawi. On what should be done to stop the youth from being involved in political violence, the first part of this chapter presented the conceptual framework which formed the basis to highlight some study related concepts such as political violence and the youth. In this respect, the chapter further examined the political violence globally with their implications. This chapter also narrows down the concept of political violence perpetrated by the youth into a Malawian context in order to posit its meaning in a historic perspective. In addition, this chapter further explored initiatives that can be used to prevent youth engagement in political violence.

On theoretical framework, the study was guided by Rational Choice Institutionalism theory to provide explanations on how socioeconomic aspect contributes to youth engagement in political violence.

2.2 Political violence

Fischer (2002) understands political violence as any act or threat of physical or psychological harm to a person or damage to property directed at anyone involved in electoral process which may disrupt or attempt to disrupt any aspect of the electoral process.

Mbaya (2013) quoting from Wolf (1969) defines violence as the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of others. Mbaya (2013) further implies political violence as all collective attacks that are employed against political regimes, their actors and policies. Mbaya (2013) argues in respect of the people of Maiduguri, Borno State in Nigeria who was victims of political vices perpetrated by the youth being hired and trained by politicians to carry out various activities including torture, intimidation and killing of civilians and rigging of elections.

This development indicates that political violence in many Africa countries has become a socio-economic and political development challenge as literature show that politicians use the youth to instigate violence in order to force people to act against their will or desires especially during election periods. In Zimbabwe for example, the youth have been recruited as agents of political violence by politicians from Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) respectively to intimidate, torture or kill all civilians who do not share their political affiliations.

Supporting this claim, few existing studies of political violence in new democracies reveal that politicians have long been behind this trend of organized violence to achieve their political motives. Mukunto (2019) for example, provides evidence of electoral violence in Zambian 2016 General Election. Mukunto (2019) asserts that activities of young cadres in Zambia have the potential to undermine principles of democracy particularly when making reference to cases of molestation, intimidation, disruption of rallies and torture which

became evident in Muchinga Province where UPND political party meetings were disrupted, in Namwala District, a female parliamentarian candidate was attacked by youth cadres and at Kanyama compound of Lusaka windscreens of five minibus were damaged leading to the police arresting two UPND youth cadres. This implies that politicians in Zambia take advantage of youth vulnerability to engage them in violence for personal gains.

Therefore, generating violence in this sense connects the current study to what Collier and Vicente (2012) refer to the strategies as distressing. Distressing strategies, according to the study findings of Edward and Wahman (2012), include but are not limited to the use of threats and other tactics that are largely organized by political leaders in disturbing political rallies of others with opposing views.

On the contrary, Bob-Miller (2014) contends that the concept of political violence has previously been viewed in the lens of a large-scale organized electoral violence which was largely based on competitive politics. He argues that many Africa leaders have strategically used, 'the winner-takes-it all' as an approach of electoral politics over some decades. On this basis, the political party in government has always been on the practice of using and monopolizing the state authority to disperse patronage. This implies that the youth that are affiliated to political parties contribute greatly to electoral violence in the pre-voting and post-voting periods as experienced in many new democracies in Africa.

As opposed to high intensity of electoral violence to which many scholars of political violence have focused, Bob-Miller (2014) identifies a new concept 'low intensity electoral violence' to refer to all electoral disturbances which occur during the pre-vote and the post-vote periods with not more than ten election-related deaths and no large-scale of displacement of human beings. This, therefore, denotes that political violence is a multifaceted concept that lacks a universal definition because of its disparity in terms of level of intensity since their degree and scale of atrocities vary widely from one state to another.

2.3 Youth

The term youth has been defined by different people in different contexts. The National Youth Policy (2013) defines the term ‘youth’ as all persons from the age of 10 to 35 years. According to the youth policy (2013), the definition of youth encompasses both political party youth and non-partisan youth. African Youth Charter (2006) on the other hand defines the youth with ages between 14 and 35 years. Regarding the age of youth discussed herein, this study intended to define the youth in terms of the ages between 15 and 35 years of old (Hussein & Sambo, 2020).

The rising cases of youth perpetrated violence in new Africa’s democracy have been very fascinating. When most African states transitioned to multiparty democracy, it became an endemic feature of both inter-party and intra-party political violence. The trend of violence exhibited in many African countries was against the principles of democracy that accord free, fair and regular elections with a true reflection of peoples’ wish. On this, Samuel (2017) asserts that Africa as a continent is still facing the problem of political violence perpetrated by the growing number of young men and women population despite the adoption of democracy in the early 21st Century. This notion agrees with Olonisakin and Ismail (2021) study which stated that youth population growth, resource distribution constraints and environmental stress are pointers that motivate the youth to get involved in political violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Olonisakin and Ismail (2021) and Alfy (2016) further say that in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) the youth have limited access to opportunities such as participation in governance, education and in economic development because making them vulnerable to political abuse. To some extent, the youth end up forming youth movement revolutions against regimes. For instance, Alfy (2016) makes reference to the growing number of university graduates in Egypt who formed a youth movement revolution in 2011 against President Hosni Mubarak’s regime for failing to create job opportunities for the young graduates.

This trend is more common now in many African major cities because most young people tend to migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of employment. As a result of this pressure for resources, more young people have ended up being influenced by political

elites to unleash terror against their political opponents for survival. Most recent Africa's studies have found that more recorded political violence in new democracies have been associated with the growing number of the youth (Resnick and Casale, 2011). According to this study, Resnick and Casale (2011) claim that the youth bulge, which comprises 70% of African population, increases the likelihood of the youth being instigators of violence as they found that 72% of youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa live on less than two dollars a day.

While contemporary scholars of political violence such as Bob-Miller (2014), Paolo (2017), Mukunto (2019) and Mude (2014) have all put together their arguments into one proper context and agree that there is lack of political instability in African democracies due to competitive politics, the youth have been identified as among the agents that contribute to political violence in this continent. In view of the above contestation, this research considered to adopt Bob-Miller (2014)'s conceptualization of political violence which has been attributed by the monopoly use of state power by political institutions that use the disadvantaged status of the youth in the political system. Adebayo (2018) further notes that since the 1960s when most African colonies attained their respective independence, politics in Africa developed a culture that concentrated on allowing old politicians into power without including the active participation of the youth.

Adebayo adds by making reference to most African states such as Cameroon's president Paul Biya, Nigeria's President Muhammad Buhari, Ghanaian president Akufo-Addo, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, South Africa's President Jacob Zuma and Malawi's President Peter Mutharika whose political leadership has been led by old politicians. According to Adebayo, the tendency of old politicians dominating political leadership provokes the youth to instigate violence as one way of initiating political leadership change.

Much has been written about political violence in Africa and how its effects on people living therein have greatly compromised the major principles of democracy. Contemporary events of electoral violence reported in Sub-Saharan Africa such as in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) offer illustrative examples of countries confronted with incidents of political violence.

Mukunto (2019) in his article ‘Electoral Violence and Young Party Cadres in Zambia’ questions the value of political participation and culture in the country’s democratic institutions. Mukunto (2019) argues that the violence in the Zambia’s 2016 general elections undermine democracy consolidation as activities of young party cadres undermine the free political participation of other stakeholders. Specifically, Mukunto (2019) mentions how the party youth cadres under MMD Administration involved themselves in the beating and harassing of journalists from both the private and public media organizations.

Malawi being one of the countries in the African continent remains a victim of political violence. A lot of literature shows that incidents of political violence occur towards election periods. According to Rapanyane and Tirivangasi(2020), when Malawi attained democracy in 1994, the basis of this country to experience more political violence by the youth during elections was formed. Rapanyane and Tirivangasi (2020) further mention Bakili Muluzi’s attempt to contest for a third term and Peter Mutharika’s attempt to take over leadership from the late Bingu wa Mutharika as some occurrences that also generated political violence in Malawi. The 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2019 general elections as claimed by Hussein and Sambo (2020) offer illustrative examples of political violence perpetrated by the youth leading to the destruction of government offices and individual properties in major cities of this country including Mzuzu.

While the truth remains that the trend of political violence is associated with negative implications in Malawi and other countries in Africa, there is need to explore measures that can be put in place to reverse the tendency of politicians involving the youth to usher violence particularly towards election periods.

2.3.1 Implications of political violence caused by the youth

Evidence from literature demonstrates that many democratic states in Africa have been characterized by various degrees of political violence more especially during election periods (Mbaveren, 2013 and Bob-Miller, 2014)). Political violence, in many respects, has been glorified by many African political actors as a new fashion within the political status

as a way of demonstrating power by employing the youth to cause violence against opponents especially during election periods. The view that youths have become more violent in the modern democratic dispensation has been argued by various scholars to be a critical issue especially in countries where democracy has not fully been consolidated. The argument has been that the youth engagement in political violence has been linked to the disadvantaged status they occupy in the governance system. A lot of literatures on political violence show that many youths in Africa are being used by political elites as climbing ladders when they want to achieve their personal interest (Ojok and Acol, 2017). Ojok and Acol (2017) further add that while maintaining their positions, many political elites use the army of the youth to suppress the influence advanced by their opponents and this strategy is usually applied by ensuring that the youth are actively involved in this act. Ojok and Acol (2017) add that the youth engagement in political violence has in some African countries extremely resulted in the formation of youth movements such as the Egbesu boys in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, the Apartheid Township Youth in South Africa and the Area Boys in Lagos after being influenced by political elites.

While this study's focus was not necessarily interested in comparing between the Western and the Southern Africa's political violence, the Nigerian movements simply showed that in African continent, the issue of political violence is not a new phenomenon. In North Africa, for example, Egypt uprising, East Africa-violence in Kenya and Southern Africa-South African Apartheid, Zimbabwe and Zambia shows that political violence in Africa dates back to the old days when African states had just received independence (Alfy, 2016; ACLED, 2022; Mude, 2014; Mukunto, 2019). Complementing this notion Adebayo (2018) asserts the hope many states had on the future of the nascent democracies after attaining independence from the colonial rule. It was hoped that the new democracies would be accompanied by the free and fair elections that would truly reflect the wishes of the rural masses. Instead, cases of political violence became evident in many nations in which the youth were actively involved. Therefore, incorporating the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Africa was to create a background of understanding of the current state that even in Southern Africa, cases of political violence are on record. Generally, the reviewed literature has formed the basis of the current study to focus on mitigation measures in the

context of Malawi to avoid catastrophic consequences experienced in some of African countries.

Adeleke (2017) defends this view by explaining that leadership positions in African politics are dominated by elders for the simple reason that the youth lack experience and influence in political terrain. He says that:

The elder can say whatever he wants to the youth, he can be rude to the youth, he can disrespect him and talk down on him, even when he (the elder) is at fault, and the youth must take it because he is the youth. This is often reflected at grassroots levels where, in villages and wards, elders hold all the key positions. There is even a saying in a Nigerian tribe that “when elders are talking, the youth must be quiet.” When you take this idea and magnify it, you start to see how the culture is already rigged to make elders think that youth have nothing beyond physical strength and youthful exuberance to offer when they (the elders) are around. The few times young people are allowed to lead are times when they are leading their peers, as seen in student unions and community age groups.

Source: Adeleke(2017, p.6)

However, Mukunto (2019) argues on the contrary and he contends that political violence undermines the consolidation of democracy in Africa as political elites who use the youths’ illegal activities deny the free political participation of other stakeholders. He adds that leadership manipulation as exhibited in Sub-Saharan Africa which excludes the youth from actively participating in politics, contributes largely to civil unrest and anarchy in Zambia and other countries. More research studies have revealed that in most of this electoral violence, the youth have always been behind the scene. On this Sulley (2013), with reference to elections conducted in Kenya, Tanzania and other countries, postulates that there is no single country in Africa that has not registered cases of violence. Sulley (2013) further asserts that incidents of political violence perpetrated by the youth have led to massive deaths, injuries and destruction of property. Straus and Taylor (2009) and Commission of Inquiry into Post Electoral Violence (2008) further observed that there was

an extreme nature of violence during the 2007 Kenyan electoral violence which registered 1,133 deaths and 3,561 injuries with more government and private property destruction.

Paalo (2017) found out that there were aggressive political activities during the 2016 general election in Ghana. The findings of his study, among others, show that acts of violence by the party youth wings were visible and they include: vandalism of public property, rioting protest, seizing and controlling over facilities of public good.

In Nigeria, Mbaya (2013) asserts that the consequences of political violence in Maiduguri City included the loss of lives from various families, destruction of houses and properties worth millions of Naira; shops, business centres and cars were also destroyed and many people became refugees in their own country by the elevated political violence perpetrated by the youth. Adebayo (2018) also paints the picture of a devastating youth-led violence of the Nigeria's 1964 General Election where politicians used university students from Southern Nigeria as agents of protest against the Northern People's Congress (NPC) for manipulating the electoral process which claimed more than 200 lives. Adebayo further posits that the involvement of the youth to cause violence in Nigeria and other African countries deprives society of the democratic principles which call for free and fair electoral competition in new democracies.

In corroboration with Mbaya (2013) about the negative implications of political violence on the economy of the country, Mbaveren (2013) observes that business people suffer losses as they become the target and in most cases such business people relocate their business to other safer countries thereby causing congestion and disturbance of the initial country's economy. He further adds that issues of politicizing social services in areas where political violence is common implies that only people in support of the ruling party benefit more than those in opposition parties. According to Mbaveren (2013) this development triggers political violence from the class of people who feel that they are marginalized on resource allocation

Mude (2014), however, says that the increased level of urban youth unemployment is an important reason of youth involvement in political violence. Mude (2013) further adds that in Zimbabwe, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are recruited by party leaders

to operate as youth militia responsible for torturing, intimidating and killing of civilians who do not share their political affiliations. This development breeds negative political instability in Zimbabwe and many other democratic societies across the world. Mukunto (2019), Mkandawire (2013) and Mude (2014) among others, indicate that elections in many African countries have been characterized by an emerging trend of violence in form of disruption of political rallies, assault, intimidation, killings and destruction of government properties especially during election periods.

In the context of Malawi and with regards to youth involvement in political violence, Samuel (2017) discusses that Malawi's 2011 protests was due to chronic fuel shortage, high levels of unemployment rate and the rising prices of commodities and that the protest left about twenty-one young people dead with the largest number recorded in Mzuzu City.

2.3.2 How to mitigate political violence among the youth

The political violence among the youth has posed a security threat in modern democracies. This entails that there is a need to finding ways to offer the best alternatives. Mjos (2007) while focusing on youth organizations and their role in the democratization process in Malawi suggests that establishment of youth trainings in business, vocational skills, leadership, social responsibility and conflict management are deemed essential prescriptions in dealing with this problem of political violence among the youth in Malawi.

Jeremiah (2018) equally corroborates with Mjos (2007) when he examined the youth involvement in political violence during the 2015 and 2016 elections in Munali Constituency in Zambia. Jeremiah (2018) found that it is the role of the government to support the youth with finances in order for the youth to venture into entrepreneurship activities.

Jeremiah (2018) further suggests that in order to prevent the youth from being involved in political violence, the government is responsible to create employment opportunities. Provision of some training in youth leadership skills would be another important initiative to mitigate the youths' involvement in political violence.

Civic education as claimed by Sternberg (2017) offers an essential element for the development and consolidation of democratic societies for it acts as a tool for the success of political parties. In this light, Neji (2011) identifies Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to foster the provision of basic social services such as training in business skills to improve the welfare of people at community level.

Another study conducted by Mude (2014) in Zimbabwe found that preventing the youth from engaging in political violence requires a political will to support the Youth Employment Policy with resources. Mude (2014) adds that the government must introduce the Youth Empowerment Fund to support the unemployed youth with finances to open up small businesses. He further suggested the introduction of entrepreneurship module in colleges and universities so that the youth become self-reliant soon after their graduation if they fail to secure jobs.

Various African Studies have argued that during electoral campaigns, there have been growing tendency of some politicians intending to assume positions of leadership on the basis of using hate political speeches. The tendency has motivated the youth in many respects to consider other politicians with opposing views as enemies, a situation that has generated political violence in many countries in Africa. In Nigeria for example, political campaigns are based on ethnic and religious backgrounds and therefore create a culture among the youth that those with the contrary opinions are enemies of development (Adebayo, 2018). Adebayo (2018) in *Gerontocracy of African Politics* focused much on examining the youth and the quest for political participation. His finding revealed that youth in Africa are excluded to participate in political spaces as most leadership positions have already been occupied by old politicians who are often referred to as founding fathers. Adebayo (2018) adds that despite the youths' attempt to occupy these leadership positions, their efforts have not succeeded. For example, during the 2014 South African General Election, Julius Malema, the former youth leader of African National Congress (ANC) was expelled.

This notion aligns to a study by Samuel (2017) who asserts that in order to stop the youth involvement in political violence, party leaders should consider developing a healthy political culture that allows the youth participation in leadership positions and to avoid

making politics based on ethnic and religious affiliation. Samuel corroborated with Olaiya (2014) who pointed out that the adult recycled politicians who have dominated the West Africa's political landscape have increased frustrations among the youth to concentrate into joining uncivil responsibilities in Nigeria and other Western countries. According to Olaiya (2014), the youth in Nigeria resort to political violence, criminal activities such as insurgence movements because of exclusionary politics practiced by elderly party leaders who do not want to involve the youth in political activities.

Ojok and Acol (2017) explain how the youth contributed to Uganda's 2016 General Election. Ojok and Acol (2017) assert that despite the youth engagement in political violence in many Uganda's previous elections following promises of job offers and other opportunities by political elites, the 2016 Uganda's elections had a different reflection. Their role in the 2016 election attracted a considerable attention from the political parties and other stakeholders especially when the young people fought for the inclusion of their youth manifesto and the formation of youth pressure groups in their agenda to act as electoral violence mitigation initiatives. This implies that the majority of the people in Uganda including the youth participated in the voting.

Furthermore, other literatures such as Working papers on conflict management No.2 (2001) in Kenya posits that political violence in many African countries including Kenya have manifested themselves in arson, looting, hate speeches, physical disruption of public meetings, party rallies and destruction of property mainly perpetrated by the youth. In view of this, the working paper on conflict management further suggests of employing a culture of dialogue among key players in the electoral process as one of the initiatives to mitigate political violence mostly experienced in Africa's pre and post-election periods.

Akoth (2022) further adds that in order to mitigate political violence, there is need of countries to adhere to some international instruments such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 through making public policies that are in line with this instrument which emphasizes the need and participation of the youth in peace efforts. This implies that in order to prevent political violence by the youth, political institutions ought to include the role of the youth in the party constitutions during electoral campaigns.

In addition, Mbaveren (2013) points out that in order to manage political violence in a country, there is need for government to enact, implement, fund, control, supervise and apply sanctions of rules and regulations to all law breakers. One wonders if such kinds of approaches have been adopted or are being considered to be adopted in Malawi as part of a drive towards mitigating political violence perpetrated by the youth in the country.

Other scholars such as Montero (2019) and Sternberg (2017) highlight the use of social media for political mobilization as an important and effective tool for social communication in this modern era. According to these scholars, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube have the potential to reach out the big audience with political messages including electoral campaigns without having physical rallies. Montero (2019) argues in reference to American politics when their political leaders used Facebook, Twitter and YouTube respectively for political mobilization which led to their victories. Montero (2019) claims that in USA, the former president Barack Obama's victory was exacerbated by millions of active American political followers on his Facebook and Twitter accounts implying that without using actual political gathering as is the case in many African countries, social media is deemed as an emerging initiative that can be used to counter political violence perpetrated by the youth.

In the context of Malawi, Kadadzera (2020) whose study focused much on Malawi's political parties and their usage of social media to gain political support found that Facebook was on the higher side. This implies that Malawi has the potential to embrace social media as a reliable platform for political activities including campaign and replace physical political campaigns which put the youth at the risk of being exploitatively used by politicians for their personal interests.

2.4 Theoretical framework

This research was guided by Rational Choice Institutionalism Theory. Drawing from comparative politics perspective, this theory is useful in the study of institutions and it argues that political actors use institutions to maximize their preferences. Both Weingast (2002) and Bell et al (2008) argue that institutions affect individuals to make their choices. According to this view and in relation to political behaviour, the theory paints a picture that

in the quest of seeking to achieve personal goals, politicians use any strategy including using individuals to engage in violence to maximize their preferences.

The theory further argues that this institutional approach has resulted in political players influencing individuals' participation in political activities. As Henry (2004) put it that the role of institutions to influence individual behaviour is balanced on the choice people make. According to Henry's (2004) view, this is based on a cost-benefit analysis economic principle which entails that the decision people make is calculated from the opportunity costs and the benefit of social values. On this, the youth take the risk of involving themselves in uttering violence because of the benefits they get out of it.

This argument is basically in line with what Bob-Miller (2014) calls low intensity electoral violence in Africa. Miller (2014)'s *"Barefoot Soldiers in Ghana"* shows how the youth political activists support politicians to win election with elites' promises to offer the youth with jobs and contracts as personal rewards for their contributions.

Therefore, political violence among the youth which has regularly occurred in most parts of Malawi including Mzuzu City in the post-2019 elections makes rational choice institutionalism theory fit to explain this phenomenon since politicians apply this strategy based on a critical analysis that the benefits of political violence outweigh the costs of their implications.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

Chapter two has comprehensively reviewed literature related to the concept of political violence among the youth in Africa during this democratic era. The sub-chapters which included definitions of key concepts divided the literature review into two sections that showed a wider range of African and Malawian contexts. The literature this research used indicated that more studies in this area were conducted outside Malawi. On theoretical framework, this research used rational choice institutionalism theory to demonstrate how political institutions such as political parties use their political status to influence the behaviour of youth in engaging in political violence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology that was used during data collection process and how the research design was implemented. The study used a qualitative method in its effort to answer the research questions. Sampling technique, data collection tools, data analysis and ethical consideration are among the contextual issues this chapter has properly outlined.

3.2 Research Design and Methods

The study employed a qualitative approach to seek in-depth views from the respondents on key areas about political violence issues. Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting. Lewis and Ritchie (in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3) in addition, define qualitative research as situated activity that consists of a set of interpretive material practices that makes the world visible. These material practices include field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. Essentially, this interpretive approach implies to the meanings of the peoples' actions, decisions, beliefs and values towards their social world. As a non-numerical data collection strategy, the qualitative approach persuaded this study to use in-depth interviews in order to come up with rich information from key informants in bringing new insights relevant to prevent the youth from their involvement in political violence in Malawi (Reiter, 2017).

3.3 Population of the Study

This study's population was from the police investigators, civil society organizations, council secretariat, officials from the Ministry of Youth, Parliamentarians from Mzimba District, NGOs, youth activists and the ordinary youths as illustrated in the table shown in a sampling and sample size section.

Generally, the choice of respondents to participate in this study was determined by the study's specific objectives. Since the study had chosen to use purposive non probability sampling technique, selection of respondents was based on their knowledge of the topic under study and this is very important because each category of respondents was going to provide specific data relevant for this study. In particular, the youth being a critical constituent of this study, was selected to provide the first hand information on their involvement in political violence. The choice of Civil Society Organizations, Mzuzu City Secretariat, the youth activists and Non-Governmental Organizations, however, were solely for their expert opinions while the police officers were simply to solicit their professional knowledge regarding youth engagement in violence while members of parliament were chosen to chip in their political side regarding youth engagement in violence and business operators their concerns as victims of violence.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

Sampling is a selection of group of people from whom data is collected (Creswell, 2003). Since this study took a qualitative approach, the study sample adopted data saturation limit during interviews. More importantly, this study used a purposive non probability sampling technique by selecting relevant research participants in order to get rich data from informed respondents with knowledgeable contribution to the study. It was from this basis that this study arrived at the figure of 35 respondents after observing that other respondents above this figure were not bringing any new ideas apart from repeating what other respondents had already raised. Therefore, this study's saturation limit was 35 participants. Findings of this study was generated through interviews from the following participants: ministry of youth officials (1), Mzuzu City Council officials (5), parliamentarians (1), youth activists

(2), NGO (1), Business operators (5), Youth (10), CSO (3) and police officers (8) to provide tangible information in relation to the topic under discussion.

Table 1: Research objectives and approaches

Objective	Method	Data collection tool	Source
To examine implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth	Qualitative	Key informants' interviews	Police investigators, Ministry of Youth officials, CSOs, parliamentarians and business operators from Mzimba, Mzuzu City Council officials, NGOs, Youth activists
To establish initiatives that can help to mitigate the youth from being involved in political violence	Qualitative	Key informants' interviews	CSO, NGO, Ministry of Youth officials, Youth activists, Mzuzu City Council Officials, MP and the police investigators from Mzuzu police station.

3.5 Data collection

This study used primary data collected using key informant interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. As a tool, it allowed this study to consider using semi-structured questions to ordinary youth found in Mzuzu bus depot from where most politicians used to hire them to instigate violence within the city. Employing semi-structured questions was well explained by Kothari (2004) who asserts that key informant interviews help researchers to collect first-hand information on the subject under study right from the participants. For this study, it was ideal to use key informant interviews and semi-structured questions to probe more information and help generate new insights that were deemed useful to contain the issues of political violence among the youth in Malawi.

To a certain extent, documentary review was another important strategy that this study employed as a secondary data collection tool. As explained by Matthews and Ross (2010) on the importance of secondary data, journal articles, newspapers, and internet sources can be used to mitigate the challenges encountered during primary data collection. Matthews and Ross (2010) further add that data collected from these sources has oftentimes been used by researchers to fill up the gaps of information that might have been missed during primary data collection. In the context of this study, it is mainly pictures taken by law enforcers that were used to add value to the primary data for further understanding and analysis of the impact of the violence under study.

3.6 Data collection method

During data collection process, this study used interview guide as one method of sourcing real information from the key respondents. An interview guide consists of questions the researcher prepares to ask the respondents' knowledge on the topic under discussion. In light of this and in line with the view of Kathleen and Lapani (2003), this study prepared interviewing questions to act as a conversation guide during data collection.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of examining what has been collected in research and making deductions and inferences (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The recorded data was transcribed, checked for and cleaned from inconsistencies. The collected data was well analysed using content analysis. Content analysis as a qualitative analysis method largely focuses on recorded communication taken from the books, newspapers, journal articles, recorded audios or videos, interviews and speech transcripts.

Analysis of data using this method was applicable because this study used interviews as a source of primary data collection. The researcher utilized and categorizes the frequency of words and phrases into themes which were relevant to the study objectives. The frequency of words and phrases that did not fit for the research objectives was excluded. The non-text data, on the other hand, the researcher used photos as a source of secondary data collection to supplement the analysis

3.8 Ethical consideration

The research proposal for this academic work was cleared by the University of Malawi under the Department of Political and Administrative Studies (now called the Department of Politics and Governance) who confirmed that the methodology and approach used in this research were ethically well. In addition, Mzuzu City Council also provided the researcher an approval to conduct a study in the city. Consent was sought from all respondents before data was extracted from them. Explanation was done to every participant of this study in order for them to understand of their rights in their choice of participation into the study. Names of participants were concealed to ensure that the content of the study is not for any other purpose other than academic.

3.9 Study Limitation

The study was subjected to several limitations with the first being geographical representation. In this regard, it would have been ideal for the researcher to have covered all the major cities of Malawi such as Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu

since reports show that cases of political violence occurred in all these cities but due to time and financial constraints, this approach was not attainable. Secondly, due to sensitivity of the subject, the researcher faced the tendency of hiding of information from other respondents since political violence does not correspond well with principles of democracy to which Malawi claims itself as a democratic state.

3.10 Chapter conclusion

The validated research objectives reflected the type of methodology to be used in data collection, analysis and discussion. The study objectives guided the research to use a qualitative method during primary data collection process. Finally, findings of the study were based on the collected data which was analysed using content analysis method.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research. This study was set out to examine political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi using a case of Mzuzu City. Firstly, the chapter presents the findings and discusses the findings on the implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth. Thereafter, this chapter presents and discusses the findings in relation to the initiatives that can help to prevent the youth engagement in political violence. The presentation and discussion of the findings in this chapter was in line with the set research questions that guided this study.

In-depth interviews were conducted from Key-Informants deemed to have vast experience from police investigators, officials from the ministry of youth, Mzuzu City Council secretariat, Civil Society Organizations, Parliamentarians, and the youth. Semi-structured interviews were also used to collect data from all the youth who fell within the National Youth policy definition. Finally, secondary data from journal articles, newspaper reports and books were also employed.

4.2 Implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth

Political violence is a multi-sectoral issue since it affects private sector operations, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people and institutions. It usually disrupts services and instils fear of terror among residents or people exposed to such violence.

The implications of political violence can be crippling either economically or socially as many respondents from Mzuzu where data was collected informed this study that political violence is orchestrated by politicians who often use a specific group of youth to engage in unconventional behaviours. One of the implications of political violence which came out during the interviews was disruption of business and transport operation services.

4.2.1 Economic slow down

When respondents were asked about who were affected by the violence in Mzuzu City, the majority of the respondents stated that business operation around the city were greatly affected as a result of the tension which was created by demonstrators. In an interview with one of the business operators at Mzuzu Central Business Market, he explained in the following manner:

“Our shops were looted, destroyed and some properties stolen. Some of our business friends were beaten and injured when they were trying to protect their properties from the protesters.”

Results of the study indicated that many shops such as Bata, Agricultural Trading Centre (ATC) and other shops belonging to Malawians, Chinese and Indians were looted and properties worth millions of Kwachas were stolen in the process.



Photo 1 depicts looted shops in Mzuzu. Sourced from Northern Region Police Headquarters Public Relations Office on 11/04/2023

Views of other respondents further hinted on the disruption of transport system due to tension escalated by the youth engagement in political violence as another business operator laments that:

“Demonstrations which occurred in 2019 turned violent with the involvement of the youth. Roads were impassable and for no apparent reasons, many vehicles which were found moving around had their glasses smashed, the development which instilled fear among the drivers who carry food stuffs and other goods into the city”¹

This study therefore established that disruption of business operations in Mzuzu City as one of the effects of political violence which posed threat to economic sustainability and development in the city as illustrated in the picture below:

¹ During an interview with one business man in Mzuzu central business market on Friday, 7th April, 2023



Photo2 depicts blocked roads in Mzuzu: Sourced from Northern Region Police Headquarters PRO on 11/04/2023

This finding corresponds well with Mbaveren (2013) whose study finding revealed that business people suffer losses as they become the target during demonstrations and in most cases such business people relocate their business to other safer countries thereby causing congestion and disturbance of the initial country's economy. Furthermore, the findings of this study also agree with the study by Ajulu (2008) which focused on the effects of 2007-2008 Kenya's politically organised conflict. On this, the violence was orchestrated by political

elites' failure to concede defeat as demonstrated by Mwai Kibaki's semi-secret arrangement on a private swearing ceremony at State House despite his downfall (Ajulu, 2008). According to Ajulu's (2008) study, conflicts had relatively slowdown the country's economic activities as demonstrators targeted the Asian business shops which were looted and properties destroyed leaving 1,000 people dead and 300,000 others displaced.

In the case of Mzuzu, the foreigners' business operators such as the Asians, Chinese and Burundians were heavily targeted such that some of the business owners closed up their shops and lay off their employees. Taking advantage of the 2019 demonstrations organized by a grouping of human rights and other opposition political parties, the majority who caused an extensive damage to government and individual property in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu were the youth. During interviews with the youth at Luwinga, Zolozolo, Chibavi and in Mzuzu bus depot, the study established that the majority who actively involved in the demonstrations were provided with T-Shirts, money and transports by the organizers.

Furthermore, to give life to the study, the researcher sought to probe more details to find out the extent to which the experience of political violence affected the welfare of residents of Mzuzu. To this, the majority of interviewed respondents bemoaned food insecurity in the aftermath of the violence. There was relatively shortage of food supply in the city since transporters were instilled with fear to transport food stuffs in the city for fear of being attacked. In an interview with another business operator in Mzuzu central business market, he explained that:

*"I am now depending on Sacramento bicycle taxi for my daily living since my shop was vandalised during the 2019 demonstration"*²

Results of this study demonstrate that a good number of business operators whose shops were looted and properties stolen therein during the 2019 demonstrations

² During an interview with a business operator in Mzuzu City on 7th April, 2023

in Mzuzu City continue facing financial constraints and bicycle taxi stands out to be their ends meet.



Photo3 depicts business man with MDF soldiers at his vandalized shop in Mzuzu. Sourced from Northern Region Police Headquarters PRO on 11/04/2023

This finding aligns with the finding of Wambura's (2008) study who found that employees of Ukwala Supermarket, Grand Kimwa and petrol stations at Kasimu City in Kenya were laid-off in the aftermath of the 2007 Kenyan election violence. This view further hinted that the youth tend to exchange their services for cash when hired to instigate violence. Complementing to this view, one key-informant, a political activist, from Young Politician Union also emphasised on the relationship that exists between politicians and the youth and how the youth are engaged in political violence. The activist contemplated that it has always been a tradition that during election campaigns, political parties use the youth masses to campaign for their party torch bearers. This mutual relationship has always been conditional with party leaders making promises to offer some opportunities to youths. Basing on this relationship, the youth are left with no option but to do whatever, including unleashing terror against other political players with

dissenting views. This was revealed when the researcher interviewed many respondents and one officer from the ministry of youth stated that:

*“Political parties in this country take advantage of lack of economic space provided to the youth when they want to advance their interests. Even the youth themselves do not know their role to play in the political terrain. So, driven by these social factors, politicians make use of their vulnerability by giving party clothes, beer and money to instigate violence in society.”*³

Complementing to this view, youth were also interviewed to understand what motivate them to get involved in violence especially during election periods. During the interview with one youth at Mzuzu Bus Depot, he was heard saying:

*“During electoral campaigns we do make money because more political party leaders hire us to mobilize people to join their political parties but also to disrupt other political parties who intend to conduct their political party rallies within the same area. During this time, we do keep clothes of different political parties in our houses so that when we are hired by any political party, we immediately put on the party colour for that particular political party”*⁴

The evidence from the data collected in the study area suggests that the level of poverty experienced by some Mzuzu residents is linked to political violence perpetrated by the youth during the national demonstrations of 2019 which were championed by Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC). The results of the research further suggest that the majority of the youth join political violence with hope that their problems would be solved since more youth are desperate for jobs.

³ During in-depth interview with an officer from the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture on 17th April, 2023

⁴ During an interview with a youth in Mzuzu City on 7th April, 2023



Photo4 depicts a police vehicle chasing the youth from vandalizing shops in Mzuzu. Sourced from Northern Region Police Headquarters PRO

4.2.2 Death and injuries

The study finds that death and injuries reflect the negative implication of political violence as has been exhibited more commonly in urban areas especially towards election periods. Many respondents who participated in this study made reference to the death of a police officer at Msundwe area when he was trying to confront violent demonstrators in the 2019 General Election. On the injury of people, views of many respondents also indicated that many people including the police officers sustained various degrees of injuries during the 2019 demonstrations.

Through interaction with various categories of respondents in order to ascertain the impact of violence in Mzuzu City, the business aspect was said to have heavily affected. In an interview with some victimized shop owners, they bemoaned about the great of their business friends who died by committing suicide due to stress. The researcher further found that the majority of business operators in Mzuzu City obtain loans from financial lending institutions such as FINCA and Vision Fund and among the vandalized shops located at Chibavi and Mchengatuwa locations belonged to those who committed suicide. Although death of vandalized shop owners was pointed to loss of hope of servicing their loans, the

researcher found that this allegation was skeptical as it lacked credible evidence from reputable institutions. However, the impact of violence has serious implications on social, healthy, political, economic, and cultural aspects. For example, one shop owner at Chiwavi location through in-depth interview said that:

*“There are three people I can remember who died after committing suicide in Mzuzu thus soon after their shops were vandalised by the youth who were engaged in violent demonstration. One deceased had a shop at Mchengautuwa and the other two had their shops at Chibavi locations respectively. They were pressured to pay back their loans by their respective financial lenders, [which included FINCA and Vision Fund], despite of experiencing that vandalism incident.”*⁵

The study’s finding aligns with that of Birch et al (2020) in Cote d’Ivoire and Straus and Taylor (2009) on the 2007 Kenyan electoral violence that led to 1,133 deaths as well as with Mbaya (2013) on Nigerian political violence at Maiduguri City that led to loss of many lives.

These scholars argue that the trends of political violence specifically during election periods are significantly common in new democracies that are not fully consolidated. The work of Birch further demonstrates the vice that is associated with political violence when he pointed out to the 2010 Cote d’ Ivoirian election in which more than 1,000 civilians were confirmed dead and 1 million people displaced. Although the Cote d’Ivoire case cannot be generalized due to the fact that incidents of violence differ from one country to another, findings of this study show that Malawi shared the same experience.

The 2019 Malawi Tripartite Election was accompanied by the wide spread of political violence which aimed at ousting the DPP leadership and the electoral management body leadership for failing to manage the election so well. The situation also generated violence in some parts of Malawi including Mzuzu that led to extensive damage of government and individual property with injuries and loss of lives during the process.

⁵ During an interview on 8th April, 2023 with one businessman whose shop was vandalized in Mzuzu City

This explains how applicable rational choice institutionalism theory is in the current study. The theory explains that institutions have the potential to influence individuals' behaviour. Malawi Police Service is a democratic institution and therefore, the killing of some of its members in their line of duty would be suggested as one of the occurrences that somehow led to the undermining of democracy consolidation by politicians in the opposition side, much as the demonstrations were aimed at fighting the undemocratic tendencies of poor management of elections and alleged rigging by the ruling party.

The finding of the current study agrees with Mukunto (2019), whose findings bring to light how political violence undermines democracy consolidation in Zambia and other new democracies in Africa. Mukunto while arguing in Zambian context says that the practice of using the youth to unleash violence and other illegal activities by political elites has potentially denied the free political participation of other stakeholders. Stressing much on democracy, Magolowondo (2007) rightly put that democratic governments are established through elections that are held on regular basis and that the system accords people the right to vote for, participate, or join any political party of their choice.

In an effort to seek for more clarity on who instructs the youth to engage in vandalism during demonstration around election periods, most of these respondents indicated that there was no clear guidance from political elites or political parties for vandalism of private or public property during demonstrations but the incentives the youth received from politicians encouraged them to engage in political violence as a way of showing solidarity. The overall impression created by the data collected in Mzuzu indicates that the culture of handouts by politicians provides a fertile ground for promoting criminal activities in the country.

4.2.3 Vandalism

Vandalism of government property was another implication of political violence this study has established. Many respondents who were reached during interview explained that during the 2019 demonstrations, Mzuzu City was confronted with massive destruction of government offices. Views of these respondents indicate that police units around Mzuzu

were burnt to ashes, Agriculture offices were looted and about 213 new bicycles were stolen, Treasury office, Mzuzu Prison office, NBS Bank, Mzuzu Post office, Mzuzu ESCOM offices were heavily vandalised.

Their views further indicated that the culture of handouts as a political mobilisation strategy promoted this rascal behaviour. This illuminates from the study findings of some notable political violence incidents which occurred around the City of Mzuzu were heavily generated by politicians. In an interview with a youth at Matabwa market in Mzuzu, he explained in the following manner:

“During election periods is when we see many politicians approaching us seeking to boost morale of their political parties and persuade people to vote for their party candidates. They give us money, food and some party clothes, so we do everything they want us to do such as setting fire to car tyres, mounting informal roadblocks on public roads to ensure we are complementing to their orders. This is because securing a job nowadays is not easy if one does not have relatives holding senior positions in public and private sectors.”⁶

The findings suggest that the youth operate as mercenaries with no ideology or value rather than making money. This implies that politicians generally entice the youth to engage in violence for their personal benefits which corroborates with the report of Mwale (2016) which indicated that the former youth leaders of DPP had hired the youth from Mzuzu bus depot to disrupt the MCP rally at Chibavi in Mzuzu.

On this development, an officer from NICE expressed his concern that:

“The culture of sponsoring the youth to act as agents of political violence makes the youth fail to understand politics in the context of decision-making. What this means to the youth is that they think that in democracy, use of violence is a right to demand for anything. This implies that the youth

⁶ During an interview with a youth in Mzuzu City on 8th April, 2023

do not know their role within the political terrain other than being engaged in unconventional behaviour.”⁷

According to this officer, practicing politics in that way raises some fears and consequently erodes interests from other stakeholders’ participation in various political activities for fear of being attacked. This study finding aligns with Mbaveren (2013) whose findings pointed out that political violence in many African countries is glorified by political leaders who hire the youth during election periods to cause violence against their opponents.

Samuel (2017) supports this sense with his finding that the youth are often times used as sacrificial lambs to unleash terror in order to undermine the essence of democracy for the interest of the few people, hence putting rational choice institutionalism theory in the right context.

A police officer from Mzuzu Police Station was interviewed to shade more lights on his professional aspect regarding the involvement of the youth in political violence especially during election periods. He explained in the following manner:

“Handouts are a major problem here because politicians entice the youth with gifts and other incentives to go for demonstrations. Unfortunately, most of such demonstrations have turned violent and uncontrollable leading to destruction of government and individual property. Like here in Mzuzu, among the victims include, the former minister of Homeland Security Honourable Grace Obama Chiumia of DPP had her house at Mchengautuwa looted and vandalized. Her two vehicles which were parked in the same premises were burned into ashes. Another DPP youth leader who was staying at Chiputula was beaten up by demonstrators and police officers were pelted with stones when confronted by demonstrators.”⁸

⁷ An in-depth interview with a key informant from NICE on 8th April, 2023 in Mzuzu City

⁸ An in-depth interview with a key informant on 11th April, 2023 at Mzuzu Police Station in CID office

A similar devastation was experienced by other individuals whose motor vehicles were smashed for being found driving while demonstrations were in progress as lamented by one respondent, a business operator, who bemoaned that:

“My own car was smashed when it was found parked right at my house at Chibavi by youth demonstrators on a mere allegation that my failure to join their planned demonstrations indicated that I was happy with the 2019 election results. Many people who failed to show solidarity in joining the young demonstrators led them to suffer various injuries for they were beaten for no apparent reasons.”

From the evidence shown above, the study established that incidents of political violence contributed to the general suffering of many people who were injured for not taking part during demonstrations in Mzuzu. The finding of this study reflects a universal problem because other studies such as Ojok and Acol (2017) reveal that acts of violence such as assault, burning of government offices, blocking of public roads and killings are suggested to suppress the influence of other political opponents. Ojok and Acol (2017) conclude in their finding that politicians often times use the youth in order to achieve their political objectives. This implies that youth engagement in political violence has the potential to create a culture of unruly youth who grow without any respect to the rule of the law.

In agreement to this finding, Ojok and Acol (2017) further add that the tendency of politicians of using the youth to unleash terror may lead to taming unruly youth as has been the case in Nigeria where the youth formed Egbesu Boys informal military grouping, the informal military grouping of Apartheid Township Youth in South Africa and the Area Boys in Lagos all were influenced by politicians. Ojok and Acol (2017) further claim that the burning of Gabonese Parliament by the youth was a result of taming unruly youths who were always used by politicians to cause violence.

This study finding is also in agreement with the study conducted in Nigeria by Mbaya (2013) whose results indicated that the consequences of political violence in Maiduguri City included the loss of lives from various families, destruction of houses and properties worth millions of Naira, and shops, business centres and cars were also destroyed and many

people became refugees in their own country by the elevated political violence perpetrated by the youth.

4.2.4 Slowdown of democracy consolidation

Elsewhere in the world, violence does not correspond to principles of democracy. Various scholars globally have argued that principles of democracy call for free and fair electoral competitions. For instance, Mbaya (2013) asserts that political violence which largely involves the youth deprives the right of many people to participate in political activities in new democracies in Africa.

In the Malawian context and Mzuzu in particular, political violence retards development as the country's infrastructure developments rely much on donor support. This is evident by referring to government offices such treasury, education division for the north building and agriculture which were plagued by demonstrators are still visible within the city. It became evident during interviewing various categories respondents who participated in this research and the majority of these respondents stated that there is a growing fear of foreign investors to establish their businesses in Malawi due to political instability thereby affecting revenue collection process by the government.

In an interview with the youth in Mzuzu City, he explained that:

“I think police units in Mzuzu have been torched signifying that the services provided by this institution are considered not to be in the best interest of the general public but more focused on the interest of political parties, particularly the then ruling Democratic Progressive Party and its leadership.”⁹

As highlighted by Samuel (2017) in his study which focused on the counter weight to democratic development in Africa, it was revealed that politicians engage the youth in violence by giving them an impression that they are fighting for their rights. The truth of the matter, however, as the study finds, remains that politicians use this strategy to protect

⁹ In an interview with a youth on 11th April 2023 in Mzuzu

their positions of leadership. As for Malawi, Hussein and Sambo (2020) are of the view that the tendency of involving the youth to take an active role in the destruction of government offices and individual property as it was in the 2019 Malawi post election, slows down the process of democracy consolidation in this country.

4.3 Initiatives that can help mitigate the youth involvement in political violence

4.3.1 Economic empowerment

This research was set to explore initiatives that can be used to mitigate the involvement of the youth in political violence. In response to what must be done to reverse the trend of youth engagement in political violence, views of CSOs, NGOs, police, MP, youth activists and business operators indicated the need for a collective responsibility that should involve the government, local leaders and other stakeholders from the private sectors to actively demonstrate their efforts of empowering the youth with social services. On this aspect, one officer from the ministry of youth was interviewed to provide his professional view on youth engagement in violence and what must be done to stop this bad practice, once and for all. He stated that:

“There is need for the government to enhance economic empowerment to youth through loans in order to allow them have an opportunity of opening up small businesses and become self-reliant.”¹⁰

Responding to a question of whether there are available institutions which provide the youth with opportunities to access loans, the majority of the youth pointed out that institutions such as the NEEF, COMSIP and others are urban based institutions and difficult to access their services. One youth was quote up saying that:

“Only few Governments financial lending institutions such NEEF offices are found in towns and not in rural areas making it difficult to serve the large number of the youth who intends to access the loans. In addition, the

¹⁰ During an in-depth interview with an officer from the Ministry of Youth on 12th April, 2023 in Lilongwe

government should consider job creation to employ more youth and to increase entrepreneurship skills so that the youth become self-reliant”¹¹

According to the respondents’ views on the social service provision, the study finds that the social services have the capacity to cushion the youth on the hardships of deprivation and lack of jobs. Another key informant from the Malawi Police Service explained that:

“Social services have a greater impact in changing youth behaviours from being rascal to law abiding citizens, hence contribute generously to the country’s economy.”¹²

In response to the question on whether or not the youth have income generating activities, views of some respondents indicate that a large number of the youth living in Mzuzu depend on piece works for their survival as they don’t have income generating activities. Advancing on this notion, the researcher interviewed a youth bus loader from Mzuzu Bus Depot and he lamented that:

“During political campaigns we get money from politicians who take us to various party rallies to mobilize people to vote for their candidates. The problem is that jobs are difficult to secure nowadays because we did not go further with education. I and some of my friends dropped out of school in Form Four due to fees issues. Even to access a loan from lending institutions is very difficult too because of tough conditions attached to them. So, most of the time we do piece work of loading passengers’ goods in buses and election periods act as our added advantage”¹³

From the above evidence, it was revealed that empowering the youth with loans and increasing entrepreneurship skills can prevent the youth from being abused by politicians in society as some young boys in Mzuzu join violence to get money for survival.

The study further established that the majority the youth who tend to be abused by politicians are school dropouts and they struggle to find their ends meet or secure jobs and

¹¹ During an interview with a youth in Mzuzu City on 14th April, 2023

¹² During an in-depth interview with a police investigator at Mzuzu Police Station on 11th April, 2023

¹³ During an interview with a youth at Mzuzu Bus Depot on 14th April, 2023

their survivals largely depend on piece works. However, other respondents' views suggest that entrepreneurship skills in Malawi are only taught in higher learning institutions such as in colleges and universities but not much in primary and secondary schools. Based on the views of some key informants who participated in this study, most of them hinted that the limited access for secondary education due to poverty has been an open opportunity for political party leaders to abuse the youth. This view complements with Ojok and Acols' (2017) study which explains that the high level of illiteracy existing among the youth in developing countries, put the youth at the high risk of being used as climbing ladders by politicians if they want to achieve their objectives.

As observed by Mjos (2007) establishment of youth trainings in business, vocational skills, leadership, social responsibility and conflict management are deemed essential prescriptions in dealing with the problem of political violence among the youth in Malawi. The findings of this study also agree with the study which was conducted in Zimbabwe by Mude (2014) which indicated that youth entrepreneurship skills are viable initiatives that have the capacity to change the youth mind-set from dependency syndrome into self-reliance.

Therefore, enhancing economic empowerment for the youth to concentrate in business agrees with Alfy's (2016) findings which highlighted that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the youth have limited access to opportunities in governance, education and in economic development because they are in majority who are easily coaxed by politicians with incentives to indulge in violence. Alfy (2016)'s argument was evident based on the 2011 Mubarak's regime which was toppled by the youth for failing to create job opportunities for young graduates.

In line with the dictates of rational choice institutionalism theory which states that institutions hold power to influence the behaviour of people in society. This implies that political actors use institutions to maximize their preferences. Therefore, the activities of some political leaders in Mzuzu to mobilize the youth in order to disrupt MCP political rally at Chiwavi football ground fits this theory well in this context.

4.3.2 Civic education

The research findings further show that civic education is another initiative that can be used to prevent the youth from getting involved in political violence. Through interactions with the study participants from various sectors, the research established that incorporating awareness raising campaigns in the school syllabus can help youth to understand the evils of being exploited by some politicians to get involved in violence during election period. The researcher engaged with some staff from CCJP and NICE for their expert opinions on the measures that can be put in place to mitigate the youth engagement in political violence in Malawi and one staff from NICE stated that:

“Awareness raising in form of having regular trainings or conveying messages on the evils of political violence is a reliable proactive strategy to prevent the youth engagement in political violence. Other stakeholders such as the media can also be involved to offer political education to ensure that politics is not about violence but making rightful decisions that help to contribute to economic development of the country. The non-governmental organizations can intensify civic education by opening more youth clubs while the local leaders need to take their role in advising their young ones to stay away from being involved in political violence at the expense of their lives. Local leaders such as traditional, religious leaders and parents should advise their youth to focus on their future ambitions than supporting the interests of the few political figures.”¹⁴

The views given above suggest that political violence can be mitigated through the efforts of the government, NGOs, local leaders and other players including the media. In light of this view, the government through community policing, Ministry of National Unity, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Sports and Culture should take responsibilities in carrying out awareness campaigns in the quest of preventing the youth from getting involved in political violence.

¹⁴During an in-depth interview with an officer from NICE on 8th April, 2023

Supporting the above sentiments, other respondents further claimed that the youth tend to join in political violence because of frustrations. In an interview with a youth in Mzuzu on whether or not awareness could be the right approach to essentially serve the purpose of preventing the youth from political violence engagement, a youth from Mzuzu Bus Depot bemoaned as follows:

“We feel offended as some authorities don’t want to take on board the issues that affect our daily life. Oftentimes, views of the youth have been considered to be of little contribution in political sphere because of our economic status”¹⁵

Other respondents who shared similar views that civic education has the potential to serve as a vibrant mitigation initiative to preventing the youth engagement in political violence were opinion leaders. The respondents who participated into this study included the Ward Councillors and Parliamentarians from Mzuzu City and surrounding areas (Mzimba). From the cultural perspective, their views hinted much on the regular awareness campaigns to sensitize the youth from getting involved in political violence despite the existence of African culture which portrays elders as good decision-makers in the political terrain. This view is in line with Adeleke (2017) who posits that in African setting, the youth cannot contribute positively in political leadership for they lack experience. In an interview with a ward councillor from Zolozolo location the councillor was quoted saying:

“Even though Malawi is a democratic state, opinion leaders are so resistant to change to conform to democratic principles. The culture of assuming elders as the only ones with solutions to some problems in society is killing the essence of democracy in Africa. This resistance to change forms the basis of the youth to instigate violence because their contributions in society are of less value. Here in Mzuzu for example, including the youth in some meetings has not been a priority. But according to me, introducing the subject of political violence in primary and secondary schools and involving

¹⁵ During an interview with a youth at Mzuzu Bus Depot on 14th April, 2023

non-state actors to raise awareness campaigns will be the best initiative to contain this problem in Malawi”¹⁶

Another key informant from the private law firm based in Mzuzu shared a similar view during an in-depth interview as he explained that:

“In order to prevent youth engagement in political violence, there is need to cast the net so wide by exposing the youth to regular awareness trainings so that they become aware of their roles in politics. This will help the youth to grow with an understanding of democratic principles”¹⁷

From the information given by the respondents in the study area, it showed that most of the young people living in this area were involved in political violence because they did not know their roles in the political arena. This is in agreement with Jeremiah (2018) who identified civic education as an important initiative to managing political violence among the youth. According to Jeremiah, the involvement of Civil Society Organization to train the youth on business skills remains an ideal strategy to contain political violence in Africa. Using rational choice institutionalism theory, to explain how institutions influence the behaviour of individuals, it can be argued that just as politicians use political institutions to influence the behaviour of the youth in order to achieve their goals, sensitization efforts by non-governmental organizations, government departments and local leaders can help the youth to understand the evils of engaging themselves in political violence. Therefore, the study suggests that engaging awareness raising campaigns about the evils of youth engagement in political violence in schools, bus depots, churches and other institutions would be ideal for this country in reducing political related problems.

4.3.3 Avoidance of political interference

Political interference was reflected from the views of the respondents who were interviewed in Mzuzu City. According to the views of some respondents, the laws that govern the administration of election must be enforced by the entrusted institutions with

¹⁶ During in-depth interview with a ward councillor from Zolozolo in Mzuzu City on 13th April, 2023

¹⁷ During in-depth interview with one seasoned Mzuzu-based lawyer on 13th April, 2023

one common goal. In this respect, the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 as a principal electoral law was established to punish whoever contravenes any provision therein. This implies that any person including political leaders being involved in political related violence cases must be hold accountable. Under this Act, section 115 (b)(ii) criminalizes any act of disruption or prevention directed to any political party from hold a public meeting anywhere in Malawi to a fine of K500,000 and serve two years imprisonment with hard labour upon being found guilty by the competent court. During in-depth interviews with a senior police officer in the Criminal Investigation Department at Mzuzu Police Station, the officer explained in the following manner:

“Both the Penal Code and the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections Act contain stiffer punishments on violence related offences. What is critical oftentimes is the fact that there is always a greater influence from accused persons affiliated to a ruling political party. So, any political related case involving a member of a party in government is always accompanied by interference from the government, hence makes it difficult to enforce the law. On the part of the judiciary, it has been a tendency of the courts to give long adjournments and delayed conclusion on political violence cases”¹⁸

This view was complemented by one senior staff from CCJP responsible for the youth and he was quoted saying:

“Although there are laws governing the management of elections in this country, some political party leaders have deliberately ignored these laws. The DPP, for example, hired the youth armed with pangasto take up unconventional behaviours against the opposition party, MCP, when it was holding a political party rally at Chibavi football ground.”¹⁹

Another similar view from a Mzuzu based lawyer added that:

¹⁸ An in-depth interview with a senior police officer from Northern Region Police Headquarters CID on 11th April, 2023

¹⁹ During an in-depth interview with an officer from CCJP on 13th April, 2023

“In order to bring sanity, politicians who incite violence in this country must be held accountable for acting outside the legal scope. Doing that will help political actors to operate their politics within the legal framework and will contribute to high political participation.”²⁰

Basing on the above sentiments, the findings of this study confirm that there is a greater political interference particularly when a person involved in political violence is an affiliate of a ruling party. This study finding suggests that presence of political interference that affects the administration of justice in Malawi may contribute to political violence perpetrated by the youth. On this point, more respondents added the importance of pursuing policies that provide new ways of dealing with this political violence problem that affect people in the modern democratic society.

The finding agree with Akoth’s (2022) study which revealed that there is need for countries to adhere to some international instruments such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 2250 by making public policies which call for youth participation in peace efforts. Similarly, Mbavereni’s (2013) study added that a country can prevent the trend of political violence being more prevalent among the youth if its government can enact and apply the laws which have stiffer punishments to all law breakers. In his political view, a parliamentarian from Mzimba shared his political stand point when he explained as follows:

“With the current trend of political violence in our country, there is need for government to make clear policies. These policies will help school going youth that soon after graduating, they should be able to know their destiny.”²¹

Although the reviewed literature did not come up with avoidance of political interference as an initiative that can help to prevent youth engagement in political violence, this study finds that this is a critical area that requires electoral management bodies to take into consideration in an effort to prevent the youth engagement in political violence in Mzuzu

²⁰ During an in-depth interview with a lawyer from Mzuzu city on 13th April, 2023

²¹ During in-depth interview with a parliamentarian in Mzimba District on 22nd April, 2023

and other parts of Malawi. By coming up with avoidance of political interference as an initiative that can help to prevent the youth engagement in political violence, it implies that this study has found a new idea which can contribute to the academic body of knowledge and can later be applied by other studies.

4.3.4 Use of social media

The research study also finds that use of social media as a platform for political mobilization is another important initiative that can help to prevent politicians from using the youth in political violence. The strength of social media as a tool for political mobilization was built from the work of Montero (2009) who stated that about 70 percent of Americans were actively using social media platforms when they wanted to follow activities of their political candidates. Building on this argument, when the respondents in Mzuzu were asked what they think would be done to prevent the youth from engaging in political violence, some respondents pointed out the use of social media as a new alternative to the physical gatherings. According to Montero (2009), social media is more convenient, faster, and cheaper as it reaches out to a large audience compared to the physical political rallies.

During in-depth interviews with some Civil Society Organization leaders in Mzuzu, they expressed optimism on the use of media as one of the initiatives that can protect the youth from being exploited by politicians. In an in-depth interview with a youth activist from Young Politicians Union, he explained that:

“It is high time that Malawi as a democratic state made use of technology as a medium of political mobilization. We migrated from analogue to digital world few years ago and we expected that everything including political deliberations would be done technologically. I remember Dr. Saulos Chilima, the founder and president of United Transformation Movement (UTM) used this initiative to beam its political rallies live on face book and television during the 2019 election campaign. Even in America, political party leaders were using Face book, Twitter [now X] and You Tube to

discuss political issues. In this way politicians who are fond of using boys and girls for their political gains find it very difficult, hence reducing incidents of youth engagement in political violence”²²

The evidence given above shows that the use of social media initially proposed by Dr. Saulos Kloss Chilima in his political campaigning during the 2019 election, can serve well in preventing the youth from political violence engagement. The finding supports Sternberg’s (2017) study which found that the social media is a potential medium to stimulate the youth to take part in electoral activities while avoiding the physical contact between the youth and politicians, hence reduce incidents of political violence.

In addition, Kadadzera (2020) was in the same view when his study focused much on Malawi’s political parties and their usage of social media to gain political mobilization, he found that Face book was on the higher side implying that Malawi’s political mobilization can still be possible using social media as a communication platform for all political activities. The finding complements with Chirwa et al (2023) who found that internet usage in Southern Africa is on the high side due to easy access to internet and availability of smart phones in this region. The finding suggests that there is a high possibility of everyone to take part in political discussion on the internet more easily than the tradition of physical rallies.

Placing rational choice institutionalism theory in this context, the finding suggests that the institutions being referred to are generally political parties whose leaders play a role of influencing the youth in the quest of achieving their objectives. The influence portrayed in this research is the tendency of some politicians who are fond of giving the youth money or incentives in order to achieve their personal gains.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented and discussed the finding on the examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi. The main argument is that in

²² During an in-depth interview with a senior member of Young Politician Union in Lilongwe on 17th April, 2023

the democracy dispensation, there is a trend of using the youth more in political violence specifically towards election periods, a thing that has affected the ideals and practices of democracy in the conduct of fair elections.

The results of the study have revealed that youth engagement in political violence has posed security threats to all spheres of life including the political arena. Results of this study on the implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth have revealed economic slowdown, death and injuries, vandalism of properties and slowdown of democracy consolidation. The discussion has even gone further to explore and establish the initiatives that can be used to mitigate the youth involvement in political violence in Malawi with reference to Mzuzu City. Basing on the views of respondents who were reached during data collection exercise, the results of the study indicated the following initiatives: Economic empowerment, civic education, avoidance of political interference and use of social media.

The study has used rational choice institutionalism theory to explain the relationship between the institutions and how they influence the behaviour of individuals (youth) with a particular focus on political related issues. The theory has explained the aspect of socioeconomic status of the youth in politics that they are a disadvantaged and vulnerable age group in the political space such that their contributions are considered less important. On this basis, the theory has further explained that political elites have taken advantage of this socio-economic vulnerability of the youth in Mzuzu by influencing them either through money or other incentives in order to join political violence during the 2019 post-election periods. The subsequent chapter will provide the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study examined political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi with reference to Mzuzu City. The study was motivated by incidents of political violence that plagued Mzuzu City, leaving government offices and business shops destroyed and some properties stolen especially towards and after the election period of 2019. In line with the main objective of the study, an attempt was made to review literature from different authors whose works are similar to the subject under study. On top of the secondary data which this study had used for literature review, in-depth interviews were also used during primary data collection.

5.2 Conclusions of the Study

Results on the objective of implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth came out based on the findings deriving from data which were collected from the field through interaction with the respondents in the study area. The study found that political violence in the study area has contributed to economic slowdown due to massive looting and theft of shop items leading to some business operators closing shops for good and possibly relocating to other countries. In addition to that, looting of shops also posed security threat to investors who contribute largely to the country's revenue collections. Furthermore, the study found death and injuries, vandalism of government and individual property and slowdown of democracy consolidation as other implications of political violence.

The study revealed that the situation was exacerbated by the high level of unemployment rate, poverty and frustrations among the youth. The study found that this is an important area that needs to be explored in addressing these issues of unemployment, poverty and frustration that come about due to exclusionary politics.

Results on the initiatives that can help mitigate the youth involvement in political violence were also generated through interaction with respondents in Mzuzu City. This study has found that there is need to find ways of empowering the youth with finances to help them open small businesses that will help them become self-reliant and keep them away from being abused by politicians. Civic education has also been identified as an important initiative in the fight against the youth engagement in political violence. The government and other stakeholders need to intensify awareness raising campaigns in primary and secondary schools, churches, universities, colleges and other institutions by ensuring that youth are sensitized on the evils of youth engagement in political violence. Political interference that has been identified as a major challenge in the administration of justice has to be avoided in the quest of preventing the youth engagement in political violence. On this, the study established the trend of delaying justice delivery through interference of politicians especially when the law breaker is a member of a political party on the ruling side. The study also found that social media is another important initiative that can be used to prevent political violence as the platform provide less or no physical contacts between political leaders and the youth. Instead, social media such as face book and other platform used on electronic media would act as a political mobilization forum for deliberation.

Essentially, the study, through the use of the rational choice institutionalism theory has shown how political party leaders tend to influence the behaviour of individuals. In particular, one of the elements of the theory dictates that political players use institutions to maximize their political goals through the use of any available strategies including engaging the youth in political violence and that various institutions such as the political parties themselves, Government agencies, CSOs, the faith community (churches and mosques) educational institutions and the media can be used to put in place mechanisms of mitigating political violence perpetrated by the youths in Malawi.

5.3 General Recommendations

From the findings in general, there are a number of recommendations that the researcher would like to suggest in order to mitigate political violence perpetrated by the youth in Malawi and enhance peaceful co-existence among people of different political affiliations and achieve meaningful democracy consolidation. These recommendations are based on the impact of political violence perpetrated by the youth as established by this study as well as the mitigating factors suggested by the participants of the study.

Firstly, there is need for political players to embrace the spirit of tolerance and avoid inciting the youth towards violence against their political opponents. There is also need to intensify monitoring and implementation of the provisions of the law against handouts during political campaign since it has been established in the study that sometimes the youth are enticed by handouts from politicians for them to engage in political violence. Furthermore, politicians should avoid politics of ethnicity or religious affiliation because such tendency also has the potential to cause political violence. The Government is also encouraged to extend loan facilities under such provisions as NEEF to as many youths as possible to ensure that they become self-reliant and are not easily exploited by politicians as instruments of political violence.

In addition to that, security agencies and shop owners should consider installing security cameras on streets with shops in areas prone to looting so that perpetrators can easily be identified and brought to book for engaging in unlawful conducts during demonstrations. The shop owners are also being encouraged to enhance the security features of their shops to avoid easy looting. Last but not one, insurance companies in collaboration with financial lending institutions should consider introducing insurance cover against loss of property in protests and encourage shop owners to get the service to minimise the negative consequences that come with loss of property and lives in violent protests, which the findings have shown to include suicide committed by business people who lose property and are unable to pay back loans.

Last, but not least, there is a need to ensure that there is equal and fair application of the law regardless of whether the suspects of political violence belong to the ruling party or opposition. There should be no political interference and the police should arrest the alleged perpetrators, take them to court and the courts should ensure that there is quick disposal and successful conclusions of such cases with stiff penalties imposed on convicts so that would-be-offenders are deterred from committing similar offences.

5.4 Recommended areas of further studies

Although this research project has provided some answers to its objectives, the study recommends future research to focus on the following areas:

Firstly, research must be conducted to assess how the rate of employment among the youth contributes to political violence in Malawi. Since Malawi attained independence in 1964, the country's population has more than quadrupled to 17.6 million people as of late 2018. Most of the population continues to reside in rural areas and pursue agricultural livelihoods, as shown by the 2018 Census (NSO, 2018).. Malawi also has one of the youngest age structures in the world with 44 percent of its population under the age of 15, and 34 percent being between 15 and 35 years old (NSO, 2018). More information on economic status of the country shows that in 2015, the agricultural sector contributed 28 percent to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Malawi's economy (World Bank, 2018). While the significance of agriculture has dropped from 50 years ago when the sector provided one-half of total economic output, Malawi's economy remains among the 15 economies most dependent on agriculture in the world. Since not all youths can engage in agricultural activities, could their present involvement in political violence owe to lack of employment? This area requires digging deeper.

Secondly, another research must be conducted to investigate on the factors that prevent the civil litigation against political parties that influence the youth to cause violence. On 20 May 2014, Malawi carried out a fifth general election since its transition to multiparty democracy in the early 1990s. While all the five general elections received a certification by local and international observers as having been free and fair; they have not been completely without incidents of violence.

However, there is no political party that was held accountable in this country for using the youth to cause violence in their political competitions. Why this is happening can as well be thoroughly discovered through conducting a new study.

Thirdly, there is need to conduct research on the critical juncture for the independence of the Malawi Police Service in the management of political violence. The Malawi Police Service is established under section 152 and 153 of the Constitution as an independent organ of the executive for the protection of public safety and rights of persons in Malawi according to prescriptions of the Constitution. The Malawi Police Service has the constitutional mandate to maintain law and order by enforcing the law through detection of crime, apprehension of suspects and prosecuting in courts of law, thereby protecting life and property. However, when it comes to cases involving politicians, there is hardly a visible end to them. Whether or not the Malawi Police Service is controlled by the present ruling party to the detriment of democratic values is another interesting area for research.

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APPINDEX 1

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi:Case of Mzuzu City** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Date:

Location:

Time taken during the interview:

1. How do you understand by the term political violence?
2. There have been incidents of political violence involving the youth in various parts of Malawi including here in Mzuzu, how do you explain this trend?
3. How many political violence incidents were reported in your office after the 2019 elections in Mzuzu?
4. How do you handle cases of political violence when they are reported at your office?
5. How do incidents of political violence affect people living in Mzuzu City?
6. What mechanisms can be put in place to prevent youth engagement in political violence?
7. What is the importance of having political violence prevention initiatives? How do they lead to discipline the youth engagement in political violence?

Thank you very much for your participation and contribution to this study.

APPINDEX 2

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE YOUTH ACTIVISTS

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi: Case of Mzuzu City** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Date:

Location:

Time taken during the interview: -----

SECTION A: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How do you understand by the term political violence?
2. What are the rights of the youth relating to politics in Malawi?
3. How would the involvement of the youth in political violence affect their political career ambitions?

SECTION B: Examining implications of political violence perpetrated by the youth to society

4. What implications do the youth involvements in political violence have to society?
5. How does political violence perpetrated by the youth affect wellbeing of people living in Mzuzu?
6. Are there cases of political violence in Malawi you regret which were perpetrated by the youth?

SECTION C: Identifying political mitigation initiatives to stop the youth from participating in political violence

1. From a political perspective, what can be done in terms of reversing the trend of youth engagement in political violence in Malawi?
2. What is the importance of having political violence prevention initiatives? How do they lead to discipline the youth engagement in political violence?

Thank you very much for your participation and contributions to this study.

APPINDEX 3

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND WARD COUNCILLORS IN MZUZU CITY

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi: Case of Mzuzu City** as a in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Date:

Location:

Time taken during the interview: -----

SECTION A: General questions

1. What do you understand by the term political violence?
2. Why political violences are more common in urban areas with the youth as the most perpetrators?

SECTION B: Examining implications of political violence being perpetrated by the youth to society

1. Under what circumstances political violence become more frequently in Malawi?
2. Are there problems that are associated with political violence? Please explain.
3. Who gets affected during political violence and how?
4. What are the consequences political violence to society?

SECTION C: Identifying mitigation initiatives to stop the youth from participating in political violence

1. From a political perspective, what can be done in terms of reversing the trend of youth engagement in political violence in Malawi?
2. Who do you think are responsible for finding ways and means of stopping the youth from being involved in political violence? Please explain this in detail.
3. What is the importance of having political violence prevention initiatives? How do they lead to discipline the youth engagement in political violence?
4. Do you have any comments?

Thank you for your participation and contribution

APPINDEX 4

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH OFFICE OF THE MAYOR AND OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN MZUZU CITY COUNCIL

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi: Case of Mzuzu City** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Date:

Location:

Time taken during the interview: -----

SECTION A: General questions

3. What do you understand by the term political violence?
4. Why political violence is more common in urban areas with the youth as the most perpetrators?

SECTION B: Examining implications of political violence being perpetrated by the youth to society

5. Under what circumstances political violence become more frequently?
6. What are the specific class of people affected with trend of political violence in Malawi?
7. To what extent do incidents of political violence affect the general welfare of people living in Mzuzu?
8. What role do youth in Malawi play in political terrain?

SECTION C: Identifying mitigation initiatives to stop the youth from participating in political violence

9. From a political perspective, what can be done in terms of reversing the trend of youth engagement in political violence in Malawi?
10. What is the importance of having political violence prevention initiatives? How do they lead to discipline the youth engagement in political violence?
11. Who do you think are responsible to find ways and means of stopping the youth from being involved in political violence? Please explain this in detail.
12. What institutions, if any, are responsible for providing financial help to youth and how do they serve their intended purposes?
13. Do you have any comments?

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this study.

APPINDEX 5

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH OFFICIALS FROM MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND CULTURE

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi: Case of Mzuzu City** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Date:

Location:

Time taken during the interview: -----

SECTION A: General questions

5. What do you understand by the term political violence?
6. Why political violence is more common in urban areas with the youth as the most perpetrators?

SECTION B: Examining implications of political violence being perpetrated by the youth to society

14. In what situation do political violence by the youth become more frequent in this country?
15. Are there problems in this country that demand for political violence as a remedy?
Please explain.
16. Who gets affected during political violence and how?
17. What are the consequences political violence to society?

SECTION C: Identifying mitigation initiatives to stop the youth from participating in political violence

7. What do you think should be done to help the youth from their participation in political violence in Malawi?
8. Who do you think are responsible to find ways and means of stopping the youth from being involved in political violence? Please explain this in detail.
9. Do you have any comments?

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this study.

APPENDIX 6

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ORDINARY YOUTH IN MZUZU CITY

My name is WYSON THOM JULIUS PHIRI, a Post-Graduate student from the University of Malawi. I am conducting a research project on the topic of **an examination of political violence mitigation initiatives among the youth in Malawi: Case of Mzuzu City** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in Political Science. The data collected will be used solely for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. I would like to ask you some few questions based on this research topic in order to hear your views. You are free to express your opinions.

Semi - Structured Interview guide number	
Interview date	___/___/___ DD/ MM/YY
Location of Interview	
Age	_____(years)
Start time of interview	___/___HH/ MM
End time of interview	___/___HH/ MM

Section A: General questions

1. How do you understand by term political violence?
2. What makes the youth get attracted to political violence?

Section B: Implications of political violence to society

1. Under what circumstances political violence become more frequently in Malawi?
2. What problems trigger political violence in Mzuzu? Please explain.
3. Who gets affected during political violence and how?
4. What are the consequences of youth engagement in political violence brought to people living in Mzuzu?
5. What do you think are the general roles of the youth in politics? In a multi-party setting like Malawi, how would you explain the trend of political violence carried out in Mzuzu?
6. Are there income generating activities in Mzuzu. If NO, how would these income generating activities helpful if they were present in Mzuzu?

Section C: Identifying mitigation initiatives to stop the youth from participating in political violence

10. What do you think should be done to prevent the youth engagement in political violence in Malawi?
11. Who do you think are responsible to find ways and means of stopping the youth from being involved in political violence? Please explain this in detail.
12. What is the importance of having political violence prevention initiatives? How do they lead to discipline the youth engagement in political violence?
13. Do you have any comments?

Thank you very much for your time and contribution to this study.