



## Effects of Community Arranged Boarding Schools in Government Primary Selected School Zomba, Malawi.

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### ABSTRACT

Government and non-governmental organization have been implementing initiatives towards girl child empowerment and much focus is in rural areas where girl child education is an issue. One of the most profound initiative that has been introduced by community members in rural area is the community arranged boarding school, whereby a girl child can have access to quality education and adequate time to prepare for their Primary School leaving Certificate of Education (PSCE) examination, hence minimizing the challenges that girls do face in their communities due to culture, geographic stress and harassment on their way to and from school. Therefore, this study has focused on the effects of community arranged boarding schools in government primary school in selected school in Zomba District. The study adopted a mixed research design, which is a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The results from this study indicates students in schools with community-arranged boarding facilities performed better academically, had better social skills, and demonstrated improved personal development compared to students in schools without such facilities, the study also identified the challenges associated with community-arranged boarding facilities, which include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, safety and security concerns, furthermore, this study recommends that government and NGO's should support in providing resource for instance construction of hostels, bath rooms as well as meals.

**KEY WORDS:** Primary School leaving Certificate of Education (PSCE), Community-arranged boarding facilities, social development, girl child, financial assistance, technical assistance

### INTRODUCTION

Community Arranged Boarding Facilities are lodging establishments organized by members or groups from local communities aimed at providing accommodation for remote residing school-going individuals usually attending a specific level or grade (e.g., Standard 8 Pupils). These facilities are arranged through communal efforts rather than being provided directly by government educational institutions as it against government education policy to all its schools. Many initiatives have been launched in different parts of the world with a common goal of providing educational opportunities for all, despite of socio-economic background, gender, location or other factors.

These efforts cover measures such as building new schools, improving existing infrastructure, implementing policies that promote inclusivity and equity in educational systems, providing scholarships or financial incentives for disadvantaged groups, and investing in teacher training programs. Smith and Williams (2017) tested the role of community boarding facilities in empowering young girls from low-income household to pursue education. Their study revealed that these facilities not only offered safe accommodation but also provided mentorship programs, life skills training, and career guidance, enabling girls to overcome socio-economic barriers and achieve academic success.

Brown et al.'s (2018) literature review focused on the impact of community boarding facilities on educational equity for marginalized students across different regions. They observed a positive correlation between access to such facilities and improved educational outcomes, emphasizing their role in bridging the gap between disadvantaged communities' access to quality education. Case study by Davis et al. (2020) examined a community-based boarding facility's implementation strategy as part of an initiative targeting underprivileged students in urban areas with limited schooling options nearby. Findings indicated that these facilities created an inclusive learning environment while reducing dropout rates significantly through personalized support systems tailored to individual student needs.

Study by Thompson and Anderson (2021) investigated the effectiveness of community boarding facilities specifically for indigenous youth facing socio-economic challenges within Australia's remote regions. Results demonstrated notable improvements in attendance rates, academic performance, cultural preservation efforts through Indigenous language programs facilitated within these residential settings.

It is very important to notice that while progress has been made towards this goal, demanding situations remain in various regions related to achieving universal access. Factors such as poverty, gender disparities, lack of infrastructure particularly in rural areas or conflict-affected zones can hinder efforts

aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This research offers valuable insights into whether or not community-arranged boarding facilities effectively address barriers faced by girl students attending government primary schools at this critical educational stage.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of access to quality education for girls in developing countries has been a persistent issue. In many cases, girls face barriers such as long distances to schools, safety concerns, and lack of proper boarding facilities. While some government primary schools have introduced community-arranged boarding facilities for standard 8 pupils as a potential solution, the impact of these arrangements on girl child education remains under-researched.

According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, "the distance to school is a major impediment to girls' education" (UNESCO, 2016). Additionally, research by Chowa and Masa (2017) emphasizes that "boarding facilities can have positive effects on educational outcomes by providing an environment conducive to learning." On the other hand, a study conducted by Asadullah and Chaudhury (2019) suggests that "the absence of suitable boarding arrangements may affect girls' ability to attend school regularly."

Furthermore, the World Bank's report on gender equality in education highlights that "safe and accessible boarding options can significantly contribute to improving girls' retention and performance in schools" (World Bank, 2020). However, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific effects of community arranged boarding facilities within government primary schools for standard 8 pupils.

In light of these gaps in research and evidence-based records regarding the impact of community arranged boarding facilities on girl child education at the primary level from standard 8 onward, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth study. This research aims to explore the effects of such arrangements on attendance rates, academic performance, safety perceptions among parents and students as well as overall educational outcomes for girl students within government primary schools.

The study contributed to address gender disparities in education by examining how community-arranged boarding facilities impact girl child education. Understanding these effects, it will inform policies and interventions to support girls' access to education. The findings will also provide insights for policymakers and educational authorities in Malawi and similar regions, helping them make informed decisions regarding the implementation and improvement of community-arranged boarding facilities.

By focusing on community-arranged boarding facilities, the study shed more light on the role of local communities in supporting girl child education, highlighting their contributions and potential areas for improvement and finally Understanding the effects of these boarding arrangements reveals broader implications for educational outcomes, not only at Chilipa Primary School but potentially across other government primary schools in Malawi.

Brown et al.'s literature review (2018) focused on educational equity for marginalized students through access to community boarding facilities across diverse regions. They found that these arrangements positively impacted academic performance, with girls achieving better grades and higher test scores compared to their counterparts who did not have access to such accommodations.

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach for this study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The study used a descriptive research design. This design was appropriate for observing and describing the effects of community-arranged boarding facilities on girl child education without manipulating any variables. The design involved surveys, interviews, and document analysis

The target population for this study were:

Standard 8 girl pupils in government schools with community-arranged boarding facilities, Teachers and school administrators and Parents of the Standard 8 pupils.

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## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1** Age of respondents

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>19-30Above</b>	88	67.63	67.63	67.63
<b>13-15</b>	27	19.42	19.42	87.05
<b>16-18</b>	12	8.63	8.63	95.68
<b>10-12</b>	6	4.32	4.32	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The table 1 above are showing the age range of respondents. 68.61% of respondents were of the age of 19-30 and above followed by the age of 13-15 or order which was at 19.71%.

**Table 2**

**Gender**

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Female</b>	79	57.66	57.66	57.66
<b>Male</b>	58	42.34	42.34	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 2: above are showing the gender of respondents. 79% of respondents were females and 58 % were Males.

**Table 3**

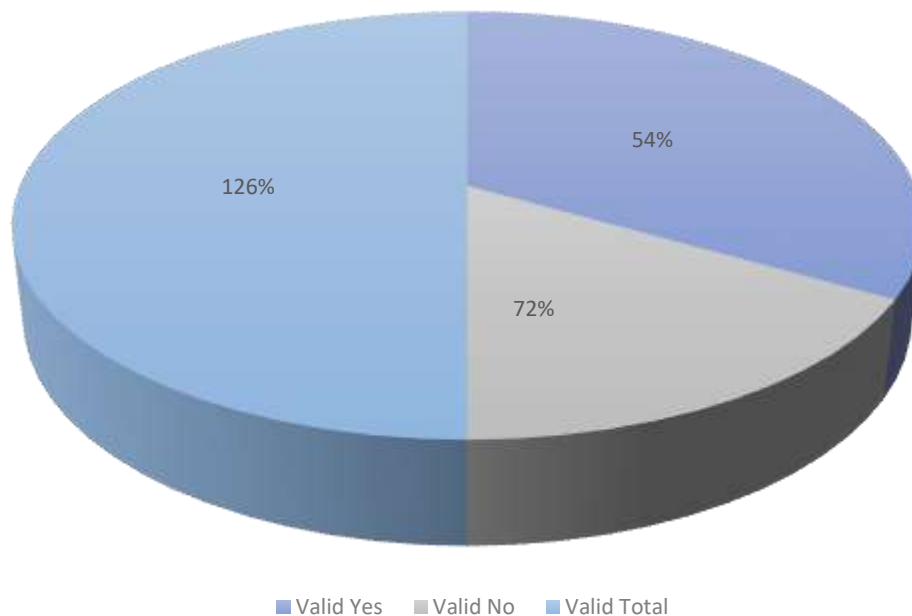
**Impact of community-arranged boarding facilities on attendance rates and academic performance among female students**

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>All</b>	28	41.18	41.18
<b>Most</b>	28	41.18	41.18
<b>Some</b>	12	17.65	17.65
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the results above it shows that community arranged boarding facilities in government schools have both positive and negative effects on female students. The results showed that 20.44% responded that there is improved attendance; boarding facilities have improved attendance, especially for students from remote disadvantaged areas. In addition, better academic performance boarding facilities provide a stable and supportive living environment leading to improved academic performance. On the hand 8.76% was against the backdrop.

**Figure 1**

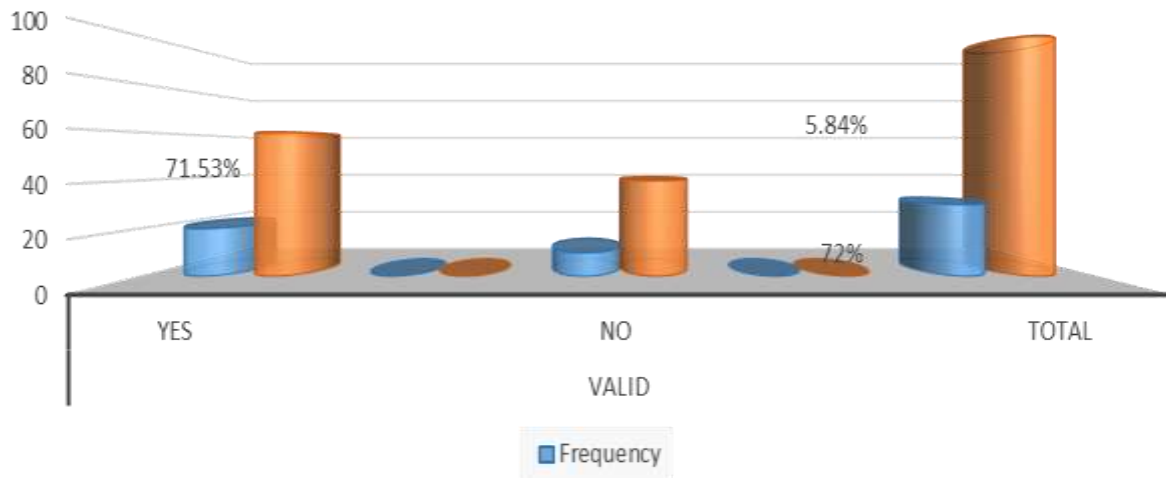
To examine the perceptions of parents and students regarding safety and security within these boarding arrangements



From the results above it shows most of the students reported feeling safe in their boarding schools, but 54% from 126% expressed concerns about safety at night or in isolated areas, some students reported feeling hesitant to report incidents of bullying or harassment, citing fear of retaliation or not being taken seriously, and some students generally understood and accepted the rules and regulations in place to ensure their safety and security. 72% from the findings parents were satisfied with the safety of school facilities, and raised concerns about outdated infrastructure and inadequate maintenance.

**Figure 2**

Analysing how community arranged boarding facilities influence retention rates among female students



From the results above community arranged boarding facilities were found to have a positive impact on retention rates among female students, with a significant decrease in dropout rates. 71.53% reported that boarding facilities provided female students from rural or disadvantaged areas with access to quality education, which contributed to increased retention rates, in addition reduced absenteeism among female students leading to improved retention rates.

**Table 4**

The overall educational outcomes for female students within Chilipa Primary School due to these community-arranged boarding arrangements.

Value	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	106	90.60
<b>No</b>	11	9.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the findings female students in community arranged boarding facilities showed significant improvement in their academic achievement, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science. 77.37 % reported that they increased in passing rates in community arranged boarding facilities were higher compared to living at home representing 8.03 percent. In addition, female students in community arranged boarding facilities had better grade point averages compared to their counterparts living at home.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

The analysis of the data collected from respondents reveals several significant findings regarding the impact of community-arranged boarding facilities on female students

Firstly, the demographic data indicates that a substantial majority of respondents (67.63%) fall within the age range of 19-30 years, with a notable representation of younger students aged 13-15 years (19.42%). This suggests that the study captures a diverse age range, which is essential for understanding the varying perspectives on boarding facilities. Gender distribution shows a predominance of female respondents (57.66%), highlighting the focus on female students in the context of community-arranged boarding facilities.

The findings regarding the impact of these facilities on attendance rates and academic performance are particularly noteworthy. A significant portion of respondents (41.18%) indicated that community-arranged boarding facilities have a positive effect on both attendance and academic performance. Specifically, 20.44% of respondents noted improved attendance, especially for students from remote and disadvantaged areas, while the supportive living environment of these facilities contributed to better academic outcomes. However, a minority expressed concerns about the negative aspects of these arrangements, indicating a need for further investigation into the challenges faced by some students.

Safety and security perceptions among students and parents also emerged as critical themes. While most students reported feeling safe in their boarding schools, a concerning 54% expressed worries about safety at night or in isolated areas. Additionally, some students hesitated to report incidents of bullying or harassment due to fears of retaliation. On the other hand, a majority of parents (72%) expressed satisfaction with the safety of school facilities, although some raised valid concerns about outdated infrastructure and inadequate maintenance, which could compromise student safety.

Retention rates among female students were positively influenced by community-arranged boarding facilities, with 71.53% of respondents indicating that these facilities provided access to quality education, thereby reducing dropout rates. This finding underscores the importance of such arrangements in promoting educational continuity for female students, particularly those from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Finally, the overall educational outcomes for female students in community-arranged boarding facilities were overwhelmingly positive, with 90.60% of respondents affirming that these arrangements contributed to improved academic achievement. The research also revealed some of the challenges that include poor infrastructure, lack of funds, congestion, management problems, and health and hygiene issues. These challenges point to the necessity of continued support and upgrading of boarding facilities arranged by the community to ensure that they remain a safe and conducive place for female students to learn.

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## SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government needs to give financial and technical assistance to boarding facilities organized by communities to help them develop better infrastructure and resources. Through financial assistance and technical support, the government can enable these facilities to develop better living conditions, increase security, and obtain basic materials needed for learning.

The societies must implement appropriate management structures that will oversee the operation of the boarding facilities and ensure they are run effectively. Good governance will also help provide transparency, accountability, and sustainability. An effective management system will help in the distribution of resources, policy implementation, and also solving problems that will arise within the boarding facilities.

In addition, capacity-building programs should be provided to caregivers and teachers in boarding schools to enhance their skills and knowledge. Child welfare training, counseling, and effective teaching methodologies training programs can significantly contribute to the quality of education and care provided to students. Empowering caregivers and teachers ensures students the academic and emotional support they require for their well-being.

Lastly, the communities and government must implement monitoring and evaluation systems to ascertain the efficiency of community-established boarding facilities and areas that require improvement. Regular assessments will aid in tracking progress, addressing emerging issues, and undertaking necessary adjustments to enhance service delivery. A proper monitoring system will ensure such facilities stay pertinent to the learners' needs and continue contributing positively to their learning and development.

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## CONCLUSION

Community-arranged boarding facilities have had a generally positive impact on the educational outcomes and social development of girls in primary government schools, particularly in rural or isolated areas. By providing safe, stable living arrangements close to schools, these facilities have contributed to improved attendance, better academic performance, and a stronger sense of independence among girls (Laplanche, 2009). However, the challenges of insufficient resources, overcrowdings and emotional difficulties must be addressed to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of such facilities.

Future studies should explore the effects of community-arranged boarding facilities across different contexts, including urban and peri-urban schools, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their impact as well as a longitudinal study to investigate the long-term impact of community arranged boarding facilities on students' academic and personal development. A comparative study to examine the differences in outcomes between students in schools with community-arranged boarding facilities and those in schools without such facilities.

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