



An Assessment Study on the Challenges That Refugee Children Face in Accessing Quality Education, a Case Study of Dowa District-Malawi.

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ABSTRACT

Refugee children in Dzaleka refugee camp encounter numerous barriers in accessing quality education, exacerbating their vulnerability and hindering their future prospects. Key challenges include overcrowded classrooms, insufficient educational resources, and a lack of trained teachers, which compromise the quality of instruction. Language barriers further complicate the learning process, as many refugee children come from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Additionally, psychosocial issues, stemming from traumatic experiences, interfere with their ability to focus and thrive academically. Socio-economic hardships, such as poverty and the need for children to contribute to household income, also limit their educational opportunities. These challenges necessitate comprehensive interventions to ensure that refugee children in Dzaleka can access and benefit from quality education, fostering their integration and future self-reliance (UNHCR, 2021; UNICEF, 2020).

Refugee children face numerous challenges in accessing quality education, hindering their academic, social, and emotional development. This study explores the obstacles refugee children encounter in pursuing education, including language barriers, financial constraints, trauma, and limited access to resources. A mixed-methods approach of qualitative and quantitative approach was used through the use of interviews with refugee children and educators in Dzaleka refugee camp. The findings reveal significant challenges in accessing quality education, with 80% of respondents citing financial constraints and 70% citing language barriers. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions, including language support, psychosocial services, and increased funding to

ensure refugee children have equal access to quality education. By addressing these challenges, we can empower refugee children to reach their full potential and build a brighter future.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

1. UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
2. ESL - English as a Second Language
3. PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
4. UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
5. Dzaleka - (referring to the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi)
6. IRC - International Rescue Committee
7. NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
8. MoE - Ministry of Education
9. INEE - Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
10. SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
11. EiE - Education in Emergencies
12. IDP - Internally Displaced Person
13. UN - United Nations
14. MoS - Ministry of Social Welfare
15. CBO - Community-Based

I. INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person outside the boundaries of their nation who is unwilling to return to or accept protection from their country of origin due to a "well-founded fear" of persecution. According to UNESCO, 2019 Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.

They often have had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind



homes, possessions, jobs and loved ones. Refugees are defined and protected in international law. By the end of 2017, there were 25.4 million refugee men, women and children registered across the world. Globally, the refugee crisis is a pressing humanitarian challenge. According to a 2022 analysis from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 34.6 million people have fled their home countries due to conflict, violence, persecution, or human rights violations.

In Malawi, the majority of the refugees live in the Dzaleka refugee camp located in the Dowa district, some 41 kilometers away from the capital Lilongwe. According to UNHCR, Dzaleka is a protected camp with a monthly average of 300 new arrivals (62% are from the DRC, 19% Burundi and 7% Rwanda and 2% other nationalities). 45% of the percentages are women, and 28% are children. Findings indicated that refugees face a myriad of challenges that compromise their ability to access higher education including, early marriages for girls, lack of scholarships to enable them to access education, limitation of movement which hinder them from joining other students in universities where they are enrolled for open learning. Not only does the majority of the refugees in Malawi live in Dzaleka but also, Refugee education in Malawi is mainly provided at Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Due to restrictions in freedom of movement and the encampment policy, education and other services are offered to refugees in a camp set up, parallel to the national education system. Existing arrangements fall short of the principle of “leave no one behind” underpinning the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) as well as UNHCR’s Global Education Strategy. The UNHCR’s strategy aims to promote equitable access to quality education for both refugee children and of host communities.

When families and individuals leave their homes to seek refuge elsewhere it is with great grief and consequence. The hope for a family or person uprooting themselves from their country is that it would be safer leaving their home than if they stayed, and that the consequences of leaving would not be too severe. Refugees seek safety when they leave their homes and hope for a better future in doing so. An ideal scenario for a refugee would be that conflict would subside quickly in their home country and after a short stay at a refugee camp, they would be able to return to their country of origin where conditions will have improved. If not returning to their original country, refugees hope to

find peace and acceptance in a new land by resettling away from the refugee camp. Refugees wish to have a safe place to call home with opportunities to grow and continue their lives, but for the time in between, a refugee camp is the home of these displaced peoples.

Education is a top spending priority of the Government, although budget allocations are insufficient to meet the growing demand for education services. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) suggests that 68% of refugee children around the world are enrolled in primary school. By contrast, the gross enrolment for refugees plummets at secondary level, being just 34% on average. But there are wide regional differences; in some countries, the secondary school enrolment rate for refugees is in the single digits. That is why the focus of UNHCR’s 2021 Education Report is on secondary education. The report highlights the demand, benefits and gaps in the provision and opportunity of quality secondary education. For refugee adolescents, the pressure to drop out of school and support their families can be intense, this pressure has intensified thanks to the pandemic’s economic devastation. The risk of boys and girls being subjected to child labor, including its more exploitative forms, is acute. Yet without a secondary education, young people who should be embracing an important phase of growth, development, and opportunity, instead face huge risks. Denying them a secondary education is like removing a large section of the bridge that leads to their futures, the bridge to better financial prospects, greater independence, and improved health outcomes. It is also the bridge to higher education. UNHCR has set an ambitious target of 15% for refugee enrolment in higher education by 2030 under their 30 by 30 Campaign. The good news is that the most recent enrolment level for higher education is at 5%, up from 3% year-on-year and 1% only a few years ago.

Dzaleka Refugee Camp provides basic, secondary and tertiary education to refugee children and young people. Although the school at Dzaleka Camp is managed by development partners, the curriculum used, and examination processes are the same with other public schools. The Camp is host to approximately 38,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Rwanda. At least half of the camp population (18,500) are children, 49% of whom are girls. Regrettably, only 37% (6,826) of eligible children are in school. Approximately 10% of the learners at Dzaleka Camp are from the surrounding villages



According to UNHCR 2020, In fiscal year (FY) 2018/19 the education sector received the highest share of the total Government budget (MK345 billion). This is equivalent to 23.7% of the total Government budget and 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III), the Government committed itself to improving access and quality of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education for all people in Malawi without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability and other socio-economic circumstances. The Government also committed itself to “up-scale support and involvement of refugees in national development programming and implementation”

1.1 Background of the study

There is one formal primary school in the camp, and a secondary school. For every 87 students there is only one teacher. At lower primary level there are usually as many girls enrolled as there are boys, but beyond the sixth-grade girls begin to drop out in far greater numbers compared to boys. The reasons for this include economic pressures, safety concerns, a lack of sanitation facilities, early marriage and pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and a lack of future educational opportunities.

Legal barriers including lack of clear provisions on compulsory education for children in reception centres, children with Court residence permits or international protection status, or legal provisions for compulsory education, which may limit access to education for children outside a certain age group e.g. children below 5 or above 15 years old. In federal countries, like Germany, legal provisions on access to education for newly arrived refugee and migrant children may also greatly vary from one region to another.

In addition, there are often no legal provisions on how children's education level should be assessed and assigned to school grades. Administrative challenges including inflexible registration deadlines, residence and other personal documentation requirements, extended stay in first reception centres where school enrolment is not compulsory (e.g. in Italy and Greece). Such challenges are even more pronounced when it comes to early childhood education (Germany, Nordic countries, etc.), upper secondary education and vocational training. Frequent movements of refugees and migrants from one type of accommodation to another (particularly in Greece and Italy), distance and transportation to schools,

cost of school materials, insufficient information provision to children and their families about procedures and services available, etc., can also seriously impact school enrolment and attendance. Insufficient human and financial resources of education authorities including limited places in schools and preschools, lack of catch-up classes, budgetary shortfalls, insufficient guidance and training for teachers and education practitioners who work with refugee and migrant students, including those in need of psychosocial support and language learning.

Psychosocial support in primary and secondary schools is often lacking to assist teachers and refugee and migrant children, who may have difficulties to concentrate and learn in class due to stress and trauma accumulated in countries of origin, in transit or at destination. This may also relate to pending family reunification and asylum procedures, as well as significant differences between education systems. Additional language and cultural mediation support is scarce, yet essential to address language barriers and communication challenges, as refugee and migrant children often do not have sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction or there is a low interest in learning the language of the host country - e.g. Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, from where refugee and migrant families often wish to move onwards, or children are waiting for family reunification and transfer, to another EU country. Stereotypes and judgement based on perceptions at school may lead to discrimination, prejudice and bullying as refugee and migrant children are seen as different, and teachers are not always sufficiently equipped to promote multiculturalism and openness to diversity. Limited opportunities for adolescents, particularly those aged 15-17 years, face greater challenges in integrating the national education systems in formal high schools or institutions for vocational training. Some of them have gone beyond the age of compulsory education in certain countries (e.g. Italy, Greece, Germany, etc.). All of the three challenges listed above are compounded for adolescents. Unaccompanied children who turn 18 are at particularly high risk of early school leaving as they tend to lose the support received from the national child protection system when aging out.

Education infrastructure and services at Dzaleka Camp in Dowa are overstretched and therefore unable to absorb all children and youth in need of learning. Due to limited space and resources, it has not been possible to expand school infrastructure to a level commensurate with the demand for education at Dzaleka Camp. This is the



reason why an estimated 63% of children of school going age in the Camp are out of school. The Government of Malawi, realizing the importance of integrating refugees into national systems, agreed to adopt the CRRF to guide its efforts. Building on this foundation, the Government is encouraged to accelerate the process of rolling out of the CRRF to ensure both Malawi and refugees enjoy the mutual benefits of the new framework.

Education Statistics at Dzaleka Camp Total Population (2017) 38,000 Child population (Below 18 years) 18,500 Percentage of Eligible Children in School 37% Primary School teacher-pupil ratio 1:77 Secondary School teacher-pupil ratio 1:60 Gross Enrollment in early childhood development at Dzaleka (2018) (8%) National Gross Enrollment in early childhood development (2017) (47%) Gross Enrollment in primary school at Dzaleka (2018) (50%) National Gross Enrollment in primary school (2017) (136%) Gross Enrollment in Secondary School at Dzaleka (2018) (19%) National Gross Enrollment in Secondary School (2017) (24%) Proportion of learners from host communities 10%

Dzaleka was built to house 4,000 people, but it currently houses 40,000 asylum seekers and refugees. With an average of 500 new arrivals each month, Dzaleka is overcrowded and educational services cannot keep up with the growth in population.

According to a report by UNHCR 2021 the camp is graced by Naweza Project, created in partnership with the Gotz Foundation, JRS is addressing these challenges by empowering refugee girls and increasing their access to quality education and economic opportunities. Naweza provides sanitary packs, WASH facilities, and protective infrastructure to help make school attendance regular and safe. Naweza organizes community engagement activities to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education and the potential it brings for long-term economic and social benefits. Naweza Girls' Clubs provide life-skills training and empowerment to combat gender stereotypes that lead to early marriage and SGBV.

Different organizations, institutions and the government at large are implementing various interventions to bring about quality education in the country. However, refugee children encounter numerous obstacles affecting access to quality and inclusive education. Consequently, despite being in school, majority of refugee children are unable to read or to understand a simple text or do not achieve basic numeracy skills. These obstacles significantly compromise efforts towards attainment of Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG 4),

which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (UN 2015, p. 19).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Different organizations, institutions and the government at large are implementing various interventions to bring about quality education in the country. However, refugee children encounter numerous obstacles affecting access to quality and inclusive education. Consequently, despite being in school, majority of refugee children are unable to read or to understand a simple text or do not achieve basic numeracy skills. These obstacles significantly compromise efforts towards attainment of Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (UN 2015, p. 19). Refugees face numerous challenges in accessing quality education, including: Limited Access to Schools, Many refugee children live in overcrowded camps or urban areas where there are not enough schools or classrooms to accommodate them. Language Barriers Refugees may struggle to access education in a language they are unfamiliar with, hindering their ability to learn and integrate into the education system. Lack of Proper Documentation, Refugees often lack the necessary documentation required for enrollment in schools, such as birth certificates or academic records, making it difficult for them to access education services. Trauma and Mental Health Issues: Many refugees have experienced trauma and may suffer from mental health issues, which can impact their ability to concentrate, learn, and participate in school activities. Financial Constraints, Refugee families often face financial constraints and may not be able to afford school fees, uniforms, or supplies, preventing their children from accessing education. Discrimination and Stigma: Refugee children may face discrimination and stigma from both teachers and peers, leading to feelings of alienation and isolation in the classroom. Limited Teacher Training and Resources: Teachers in refugee-hosting areas may lack training in handling the specific needs of refugee students, and schools may lack resources such as textbooks, learning materials, and adequate facilities.

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort from governments, NGOs, and international organizations to ensure that all refugee children have access to quality education.



1.3 Objectives of the study

This research study is solely based on discussing and achieving the following objectives both main and specific respectively;

1.3.1 Main Objective

To identify the challenges that refugee children face in their campsites

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

To identify the risk factors that expose refugee children to substandard education in their host country.

To assess the effects of these challenges on their academic performance

To find out how children cope up/deal with these challenges.

To propose recommendations to improve quality education at dzaleka refugee camp

1.4 Research questions

1. Identify the risk factors that expose refugee children to substandard education in their host country.
2. What are the effects of these challenges on the refugee's academic performance?
3. How do children cope up or deal with these challenges, e.g Trauma, language barrier, etc?
4. How best can quality education at Dzaleka refugee camp be improved? Identify the possible recommendations

1.5 Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between the challenges faced by refugee children (financial constraints, language barriers, trauma, and limited access to resources) and their access to quality education.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant relationship between the challenges faced by refugee children (financial constraints, language barriers, trauma, and limited access to resources) and their access to quality education, such that: Refugee children who face multiple challenges have lower access to quality education, Refugee children who face financial constraints have lower access to quality education, refugee children who face language barriers have lower access to quality education, refugee children who have experienced trauma have lower access to quality education and refugee children who have limited access to resources have lower access to quality education.

Specific Hypotheses: H1a: There is a significant negative correlation between financial constraints and access to quality education. H1b: There is a significant negative correlation between language

barriers and access to quality education. H1c: There is a significant negative correlation between trauma and access to quality education. H1d: There is a significant negative correlation between limited access to resources and access to quality education. These hypotheses will guide the data collection and analysis, and will be tested using statistical methods to determine the significance of the relationships between the challenges faced by refugee children and their access to quality education.

1.6 Scope of the study

Established by UNHCR in 1994, Dzaleka is the largest refugee camp in Malawi, hosting over 43,000 refugees and asylum seekers. The majority of them are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), while others are from Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia. The growing camp population, which was meant to host 10,000 people, means that the camp's resources barely cover the needs of the already vulnerable population.

Geographical Scope: The study will focus on refugee children in the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi, with potential implications for refugee children in similar contexts globally.

Population Scope: The study will focus on refugee children aged 6-18, including both boys and girls, and their caregivers/parents.

Time Scope: The study will collect data over a period of 6 months, with potential for longitudinal follow-up. **Conceptual Scope:** The study will explore the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education, including financial constraints, language barriers, trauma, and limited access to resources.

Methodological Scope: The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

Boundaries of the Study: The study will not explore the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing education in other contexts, such as urban or rural areas. The study will not focus on the experiences of refugee children who are not living in the Dzaleka refugee camp. The study will not explore the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing education in countries other than Malawi.

Limitations of the Study: The study's findings may not be generalizable to all refugee children globally. The study's reliance on self-reported data from caregivers/parents may introduce bias. The study's focus on a single refugee camp may limit the diversity of experiences and perspectives.

By defining the scope of the study, we can ensure a focused and in-depth exploration of the challenges



faced by refugee children in accessing quality education, while also acknowledging the study's limitations and potential areas for future research.

The Malawi OpenStreetMap community, in collaboration with Youth Mappers and the Africa Drone and Data Academy (ADDA), will create a detailed map of the camp that will serve as a source of information regarding the provision of basic services. They will map out amenities such as education centers, health care centers, buildings and shelters, and water sources. They also want to use the project to revive the OSM community in Malawi, as well as establish a new OSM community in Dzaleka refugee camp. "Making sure undocumented migrants are equally able to access education is one of several challenges in realizing the fundamental human rights of refugees," says Professor Fons Coomans, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Peace at the Department of International and European Law at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. He spoke to UNESCO on the challenges in providing education to refugees. The interview is one of a series exploring the right to education to mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70 years ago, a lot has been achieved in terms of standard setting and UNESCO has made an important contribution to the right to education," said Prof. Coomans. "Many international documents have been adopted both of a hard and soft law nature, all identifying who the right holders are and the importance of the right to education."

In 2018, there were 25.9 million refugees globally- the highest number ever seen. Over half of these refugees are children. The refugee crisis is a global issue that affects more than any one country or region. However, two countries account for nearly half of the child refugees in the world: Syria and Afghanistan. The refugee crisis in Syria began in 2011 and has increasingly become more violent, causing refugees to flee in large numbers. This violence and resulting migration affects all migrants but is particularly detrimental to migrant children. This paper discusses the main challenges that refugee children face during their experience as refugees. These consist of neurological challenges, mental health challenges, and legal challenges. This paper also looks at efforts to help children overcome these challenges. These challenges have serious implications not only for the foreseeable future, but also well into future decades. It is important to increase efforts to rehabilitate these children and reintegrate them into their new communities so the

effects of the violence and conflict that these children face are mitigated. These efforts must be pursued by more than just a single government or organization. If there is to be real improvement, the entire international community will need to work together to improve the lives of refugee children, which will benefit society for many generations to come.

1.8 Definitions of key terms

1. **1. Children:** According to scholars, children are defined as individuals who are in the developmental stage from birth to adolescence. This period is characterized by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) specifies that a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

2. **UNHCR:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a UN agency mandated to protect and support refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people around the world. UNHCR works to provide shelter, food, healthcare, and education to those in need, while also advocating for their rights and seeking durable solutions to displacement.

3. **Refugee:** A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is defined as someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

4. **3. Trauma:** Trauma is defined as an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), trauma can result from a single distressing experience or recurring events of being overwhelmed that can be precipitated in weeks, years, or even decades as the person struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences.

5. **4. Equality Education:** Equality in education refers to the principle that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, or any other characteristic, should have equal access to quality education opportunities. According to UNESCO, educational equality means ensuring that all individuals have the same



opportunities to receive a quality education and that barriers preventing access to education are removed.

6. **5. Language Barriers:** Language barriers are obstacles to effective communication resulting from individuals speaking different languages or dialects. These barriers can impede understanding and interactions in educational settings, leading to difficulties in learning and integration. Scholars such as Cummins (1981) have discussed how language barriers can affect immigrant and refugee children's ability to succeed academically.

7. **6. Resources:** In an educational context, resources refer to the materials, staff, infrastructure, and financial support necessary to facilitate learning and teaching. Resources include textbooks, teaching aids, technology, trained educators, and adequate school facilities. According to the World Bank, resources are critical for providing quality education and improving student outcomes.

8. **7. Financial Constraints:** Financial constraints refer to the limitations in funding and financial resources that can affect an individual's or organization's ability to achieve their goals. In the context of education, financial constraints can hinder access to schooling, limit the quality of educational facilities, and restrict the availability of learning materials and qualified teachers. According to the OECD, financial constraints are a significant barrier to achieving educational equity and quality.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Refugee children represent one of the most vulnerable demographics globally, confronting a multitude of barriers in their pursuit of quality education. Amidst the upheavals of displacement, these children encounter a complex web of challenges that impede their access to education and hinder their academic success. Understanding the intricacies of these obstacles is imperative for policymakers, educators, and humanitarian organizations striving to devise effective interventions that address the unique needs of refugee populations. This literature review aims to delve into the myriad challenges that refugee children encounter in accessing quality education. By synthesizing existing research, it seeks to illuminate the multifaceted nature of these barriers and explore potential pathways toward their mitigation. From structural inadequacies within host countries' educational systems to socio-cultural barriers stemming from displacement trauma, the impediments faced by refugee children are diverse and interconnected. In the following sections, this review will scrutinize the existing body of literature

on the topic, analyzing key themes, patterns, and gaps in research. By critically examining both qualitative and quantitative studies, it will strive to offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges that refugee children confront, along with potential strategies for fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments. Ultimately, this literature review aspires to not only shed light on the complexities surrounding refugee education but also to advocate for policies and practices that uphold the right to education for all children, regardless of their refugee status. In doing so, it endeavors to contribute to broader efforts aimed at fostering social justice, promoting human rights, and nurturing the academic potential of every child, irrespective of their circumstance.

2.1 Main literature review

Refugee education in Malawi is mainly provided at Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Due to restrictions in freedom of movement and the encampment policy, education and other services are offered to refugees in a camp set up, parallel to the national education system. Existing arrangements fall short of the principle of "leave no one behind" underpinning the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) as well as UNHCR's Global Education Strategy. The UNHCR's strategy aims to promote equitable access to quality education for both refugee children and of host communities. Box 1: Education Statistics at Dzaleka Camp Total Population (2017) Child population (Below 18 years) Percentage of Eligible Children in School Primary School teacher-pupil ratio Secondary School teacher-pupil ratio Gross Enrollment in early childhood development at Dzaleka (2018) National Gross Enrollment in early childhood development (2017) Gross Enrollment in primary school at Dzaleka (2018) 38,000 18,500 37% 1:77 1:60 (8%) (47%) (50%) National Gross Enrollment in primary school (2017) Gross Enrollment in Secondary School at Dzaleka (2018) National Gross Enrollment in Secondary School (2017) Proportion of learners from host communities Source: UNHCR (2019) and EMIS (2017) (136%) (19%) (24%) 10

The educational challenges and recommendations presented in this article. Justification of the methodology Data was collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions. These were used to ensure that perceptions and experiences of the refugees were captured and understood. The Focus Group of



refugee leaders and the Focus Group of urban refugee youths (a mixture of refugees working as self-employed workers, students, and unemployed) allowed the refugee leaders and the urban refugee youths to their views on the educational challenges of the refugees just as the students in the individual interviews. In other words, students and non-students (youths and elders/leaders) had the opportunity to participate in the research, which ensured that although the sample size was not big, the refugee perceptions and views were collected from a diversity of refugees within the refugee cohort.

Refugee educational challenges The government of Uganda, the UNHCR, and NonGovernment Organizations are actively involved in, the government does not award scholarships to refugees to pursue education at universities and other institutions of higher learning. This can be partly attributed to the high number of refugees in the country (Vemuru et al., 2016). Although the refugees give credit to several NGOs such as Windle International, the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), and cornerstone that are providing scholarships to the refugees, especially scholarships to attain university or higher education (post-secondary school education) in Uganda and outside Uganda; there is widespread discontent among the refugee students and the refugee leaders that the process of selection and award in several instances is not merit-based and is marred with unfairness and favoritism from the officials of some NGOs. These allegations were not verified, nor did the refugees point out specific organizations that practice such unfairness in selecting and awarding the scholarships. The discontent was expressed by a number of the refugee students, for example: Participant explained that “There is corruption among officials in the camps and the organizations when it comes to scholarships; many students have been denied scholarships due to the officials’ interests”. The refugees blame the limited number of scholarships as one of the primary reasons the awarding and selection of refugee students for scholarship opportunities is marred with bribery and unfairness. Unfairness in the award and selection process deprives capable students of attaining education scholarships. Stigmatization and discrimination of refugee pupils and students in schools the refugee leaders and students reported cases of stigmatization and discrimination of the refugees.

The stigmatization results from being called refugees in schools, especially secondary schools and universities. There are primary schools

near or within the settlement areas, but there are very few secondary schools and post-secondary education institutions of learning near the settlements. In search of secondary school education and post-secondary education, the refugees have to study in distant places away from the settlement areas. For the urban self-settled refugees, schools and institutions of higher learning are close to them, but like the refugee students from settlement areas, they experience stigmatization while in schools. In the interview individuals, the participants explained the effects of stigmatization, such as the loss of self-confidence and the sense of belonging to the community and the schools. These have impacts on the education and educational performance of refugee students. Participant 1 explained that “We face stigmatization as refugee students; we are living in hardships. The communities and in the schools, they take us as different and isolated from them. They talk ill about us in this country. This causes insecurity and makes us lose self-confidence”. Some studies have In Through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), to implement the New York Declaration (2016), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, the Government of Malawi has committed to support immediate and ongoing needs of refugees including in the areas of protection, health and education. Recommendation: The Government is being commended for this positive development and is called upon to accelerate roll out of the CRRF in Malawi which aims to integrate refugees into national systems across the board.

The United Nations stands ready to support the Government of Malawi in this endeavor. Education infrastructure and services at Dzaleka Camp in the district of Dowa are overstretched and therefore unable to absorb all children and youth in need of learning. Currently, only 37% of children of school going age are enrolled in primary and secondary school. Recommendation: The Government is called upon to consider integration of refugee education into Malawi public education system. Integration will bring mutual benefits to children from the refugee camp and from surrounding host villages. This will be achieved, for example, through strengthening of the capacity of schools in host communities jointly by Government, and development partners including the UN. A good model is there already from Luwani Camp where integration was almost 100%. 3 Quality of learning at Dzaleka Camp is compromised by large class sizes as well as high qualified teacher-pupil ratios. Primary school qualified teacher-pupil ratio, for example, stood at 1:88 in 2017 compared to the



national average of 1:71. Recommendation: As a short-term measure, the School Management at Dzaleka Camp are encouraged to consider double-shifting for all classes and to urgently recruit additional teachers to improve quality of learning. Additionally, volunteer teachers, along the lines used by UNICEF in Luwani camp, could be a model to follow before full-time engagement and deployment of teachers.

The education costs for each child enrolled in basic and secondary education in Dzaleka Camp is double the costs in other public schools (based on average cost estimates from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). Recommendation: The high costs for refugee education is one key reason for the Government to consider integration of refugees' education in the national system. This will help to ensure available resources are pulled together for the benefit of all children in Dzaleka Camp and the hosting areas. 5 Majority of resources financing education at Dzaleka Camp are coming from development partners, mainly UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS). Recommendation: The Government is encouraged to support schools at Dzaleka Camp with additional teachers as well as small grants (such as the school improvement grant) to assist with other recurrent transactions, especially for basic and secondary education.

Through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), to implement the New York Declaration (2016), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, the Government of Malawi has committed to support immediate and ongoing needs of refugees including in the areas of protection, health and education. Recommendation: The Government is being commended for this positive development and is called upon to accelerate roll out of the CRRF in Malawi which aims to integrate refugees into national systems across the board.

The United Nations stands ready to support the Government of Malawi in this endeavour. 2 Education infrastructure and services at Dzaleka Camp in the district of Dowa are overstretched and therefore unable to absorb all children and youth in need of learning. Currently, only 37% of children of school going age are enrolled in primary and secondary school. Recommendation: The Government is called upon to consider integration of refugee education into Malawi public education system. Integration will bring mutual benefits to children from the refugee camp and from surrounding host villages. This will be achieved, for example, through strengthening of the capacity of

schools in host communities jointly by Government, and development partners including the UN. A good model is there already from Luwani Camp where integration was almost 100%. 3 Quality of learning at Dzaleka Camp is compromised by large class sizes as well as high qualified teacher-pupil ratios. Primary school qualified teacher-pupil ratio, for example, stood at 1:88 in 2017 compared to the national average of 1:71. Recommendation: As a short-term measure, the School Management at Dzaleka Camp are encouraged to consider double-shifting for all classes and to urgently recruit additional teachers to improve quality of learning. Additionally, volunteer teachers, along the lines used by UNICEF in Luwani camp, could be a model to follow before full-time engagement and deployment of teachers. 4

The education costs for each child enrolled in basic and secondary education in Dzaleka Camp is double the costs in other public schools (based on average cost estimates from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). Recommendation: The high costs for refugee education is one key reason for the Government to consider integration of refugees' education in the national system. This will help to ensure available resources are pulled together for the benefit of all children in Dzaleka Camp and the hosting areas. 5 Majority of resources financing education at Dzaleka Camp are coming from development partners, mainly UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS). Recommendation: The Government is encouraged to support schools at Dzaleka Camp with additional teachers as well as small grants (such as the school improvement grant) to assist with other recurrent transactions, especially for basic and secondary education.

Integration of refugee education into national systems holds the possibility of improving access and quality of learning by refugees and migrants. Integration will enable refugee children to attend neighboring public schools and will also ensure synergies with various key actors in improving conditions of learning for both refugees and children from surrounding host communities. Refugees and host communities alike will benefit from established education systems.

The Government and people of Malawi also stand to benefit from a skilled refugee population. Data collected by UNHCR and the JRS has shown that amongst refugees at Dzaleka Camp, there are people with knowledge and skills in medicine, digital technology, arts, languages, agriculture and many other areas. For example, there



are many French speaking refugees who could be teaching French in public and private schools in Malawi. If harnessed, skills possessed by refugees can immensely benefit citizens and the economy of Malawi. Box 3 Government of Malawi and UN partner to provide education to refugees in Luwani Conflict between the Mozambican government and the opposition resulted in the influx of refugees into Kapise village in Mwanza district of Malawi mainly from Mkondezi, Monjo, Mtengachiti, Namikoko, Nagulu, Ndande, Chitsanja, Musa and Chinyaje villages in Tete Province since July 2015. UNHCR data indicated that by end February 2016, Kapise village was reportedly holding over 7,000 refugees.

This rapid flow of refugees necessitated the need for a joint inter-agency contingency planning for assistance to the Mozambican refugees. The Education cluster led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and co-chaired by UNICEF resolved at its coordination meeting of 10th February 2016 to respond immediately to the refugee emergency by providing teachers, tents and teaching and learning materials in order to integrate refugee education in neighboring schools. In order to respond appropriately, MoEST in collaboration with UNICEF, UNHCR and other partners, conducted an assessment to identify the immediate education needs of the refugee children in Kapise camp. 3 4 Integration is also a key step in reducing xenophobia, racism and discrimination of refugees and migrants. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In line with international human rights law, everyone has the right to non-discrimination of any kind regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

There is in-country evidence to show that integration of refugee education is possible and cost-efficient. For example, during an emergency influx of Mozambican asylum seekers in 2016, UNICEF, UNHCR and the Ministry of Education supported Mozambican children to attend a public school in Luwani. The three partners collaborated to expand the capacity of the school by building classroom blocks, teachers' houses, and renovating some old school structures. Many refugees leave behind more than their home when conflict forces them to flee – they must also abandon their school. More than half of all refugees are aged under 18, and some older refugees were displaced while pursuing tertiary education.

Nobody needs to be persuaded that it's desirable for kids to stay in school. In my experience, this is particularly true among Syrians, whose culture is steeped in an appreciation of the value of learning. Yet, having become refugees, kids face tremendous challenges in completing their education. What are the barriers – and what can we do to help?

Let's look at each stage of schooling in turn. Suppose you're a primary-aged refugee. If you're lucky you'll find a school run by an organisation such as UNICEF, the UNHCR or CARE. These schools do their very best to provide decent education, but resources are stretched to breaking point some schools have to run triple shifts to fit in all the kids. It's not an ideal preparation for secondary.

If you become a refugee at secondary age, the same issues apply – plus you'll face greater challenges from the switch to a new curriculum. Syrian kids whose escape from conflict leads them to Jordan must follow the Jordanian curriculum; if they end up in Lebanon, the Lebanese one; and in Turkey, they can continue their education only once they've learned Turkish. Often refugees move country more than once, compounding the disruption.

Naturally, this sets back learning – as does the need to work, to help the family make ends meet. Refugees mostly cannot work legally, so everyone in the family – including children – has to take whatever irregular, low-paid work they can find. I have met children who are so exhausted from working, they tell me they go to school to take a nap. Many tell me they are not really learning anything at school, but want to keep going because it provides some sense of connection to their previous life and hope for a return to normality.

Because of the pressure on capacity, schools for refugees often have a maximum age for attending. That means that a refugee kid whose secondary education is temporarily disrupted may find it impossible to go back and complete it. Unless they can find a vocational training course, their options become limited to odd jobs.

Refugees who flee while pursuing tertiary education will find no opportunities in camps to continue their studies. Some programs exist to try to help displaced students get into local universities. My own organization, Blue Rose Compass, identifies outstanding academic talents among refugees and arranges scholarships to world-leading universities, as well as International Baccalaureate schools in partnership with United World Colleges.



However, a big problem is transcripts: how can students prove what they've already learned? When you become a refugee, it tends to happen suddenly – fleeing for your life, you have no time to visit college administrators and get your paperwork in order. Without transcripts, it's challenging to get accepted by another university. Even if you have genuine transcripts, the growing black market for forgeries is making admissions departments increasingly skeptical.

In the face of such difficulties, it is easy for once-ambitious kids to lose hope. On our application form for scholarships, we ask students to describe their dream. Tragically, many leave this question blank – they simply can't visualize a better future. Hopelessness leaves kids more vulnerable to early marriage, or being recruited by criminal or terrorist groups.

2.2 Theoretical framework of the research

The study is meant to give a broader view of what other researchers have been able to assess meanwhile addressing the gaps that this research will investigate in order to suggest the best possible recommendations of the assessed refugees' challenges in accessing quality education. Their act of quality education matters as their acquired knowledge and skills will also benefit Malawians. Various authors have come up with theories in line with this study of which some of them include; Social Capital theory, according to Robert Putnam (Putnam, R. D. (2000)), suggests that networks, relationships, and social connections can play a crucial role in migration decisions and the adaptation process for refugees in host societies. Social cultural theory can shed light on the challenges refugees face in accessing quality education. This theory emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in shaping individuals' learning experiences and outcomes. For refugees, factors such as language barriers, trauma, cultural differences, and discrimination can significantly impact their ability to access and benefit from education. Understanding these factors helps educators and policymakers develop more inclusive and effective strategies to support refugee students, such as culturally responsive teaching methods, language support programs, and trauma-informed practices. By recognizing the diverse backgrounds and needs of refugee students, education systems can better promote their academic success and social integration.

Human Security, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994). Human Development Report 1994, this theory emphasizes the protection

of individuals from threats such as armed conflict, natural disasters, and economic hardship as a key to global security. The lack of human security can lead to refugee flows.

Social structure theory examines how societal arrangements, like economic systems or political structures, influence individuals' opportunities and behaviors. When applied to refugees accessing quality education, it suggests that factors such as socioeconomic status, legal status, and discrimination within host countries can significantly impact their ability to access education. For instance, refugees may face barriers such as language barriers, lack of documentation, or discrimination, which can limit their access to quality education despite their aspirations and capabilities.

2.3 Conceptual frame work

Established by UNHCR in 1994, Dzaleka is the largest refugee camp in Malawi, hosting over 43,000 refugees and asylum seekers. The majority of them are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), while others are from Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia. The growing camp population, which was meant to host 10,000 people, means that the camp's resources barely cover the needs of the already vulnerable population.

The Malawi OpenStreetMap community, in collaboration with Youth Mappers and the Africa Drone and Data Academy (ADDA), will create a detailed map of the camp that will serve as a source of information regarding the provision of basic services. They will map out amenities such as education centers, health care centers, buildings and shelters, and water sources. They also want to use the project to revive the OSM community in Malawi, as well as establish a new OSM community in Dzaleka refugee camp.

Refugee Education spending at Dzaleka Camp, mainly by development partners, has steadily increased in real terms in the past few years. In FY2017/18, the total education expenditure was MK514 million up from MK369 million in 2016/17. Compared to 2016/17, this represents a 39% increase and 18% increase in real terms⁵. The increase in education spending was observed across all levels, with pre-primary education experiencing the highest expenditure growth of 187%. Between 2012/13 and 2015/16, education spending in Dzaleka Camp trended downwards (Figure 4). Nominal

A majority of refugee education expenditures are absorbed by personnel emoluments (PE). PE costs have averaged 72% of total



expenditures at the primary level and 82% at the secondary education level for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18. Although declining, the share of PE remains high, especially at secondary education level. In FY2017/18, PE accounted for 68% of total secondary education expenditures at Dzaleka Camp. Other recurrent transactions (ORT), including teaching and learning material, have received relatively low resources. In 2017, the share of ORT going towards primary education was at 17% and 32% for secondary education. In the past few years, basic education has received the highest share of education resources going to Dzaleka Camp. In 2017, for instance, 73% (MK377 million) of total education expenditure were for basic education followed by secondary education (23%). Pre-primary education received the lowest share at 2.6% in 2017. Encouragingly, pre-primary education spending experienced the highest growth of 187%, from MK4.7 million in 2016 to MK13.4 million in 2017. Tertiary education is the least funded program, accounting for only 1.3% of total education expenditure in 2017. This is partly because of the small number of students enrolled. Figure 9 shows education expenditure by educational level the period from 2013 to 2017.

There are relatively more resources being spent per child at Dzaleka Camp compared to public schools in Malawi. In 2017, for instance, Dzaleka Camp spent MK53,000 in recurrent expenditures per each enrolled primary child, more than double the amount spent by Government of MK22,000.8 The same trend is observed in secondary education where MK175,000 was spent per child in Dzaleka Camp, compared to about MK143,000 in Government schools.

Malawi localized the SDGs which were translated into the national agenda in which the universal principle is to “leave no one behind”. With this universal principle, Malawi, for the first time, included refugees in the MGDSIII as a way of emphasizing her commitment to inclusiveness.

Legal barriers including lack of clear provisions on compulsory education for children in reception centers, children without residence permits or international protection status, or legal provisions for compulsory education, which may limit access to education for children outside a certain age group - e.g. children below 5 or above 15 years old. In federal countries, like Germany, legal provisions on access to education for newly arrived refugee and migrant children may also greatly vary from one region to another. In addition, there are often no legal provisions on how children’s education level should be assessed and assigned to

school grades. Administrative challenges including inflexible registration deadlines, residence and other personal documentation requirements, extended stay in first reception centers where school enrolment is not compulsory (e.g. in Italy and Greece). Such challenges are even more pronounced when it comes to early childhood education (Germany, Nordic countries, etc.), upper secondary education and vocational training (Italy).

Frequent movements of refugees and migrants from one type of accommodation to another (particularly in Greece and Italy), distance and transportation to schools, cost of school materials, insufficient information provision to children and their families about procedures and services available, etc., can also seriously impact school enrolment and attendance.

Insufficient human and financial resources of education authorities including limited places in schools and preschools, lack of catch-up classes, budgetary shortfalls, insufficient guidance and training for teachers and education practitioners who work with refugee and migrant students, including those in need of psychosocial support and language learning (see below). Psychosocial support in primary and secondary schools is often lacking to assist teachers and refugee and migrant children, who may have difficulties to concentrate and learn in class due to stress and trauma accumulated in countries of origin, in transit or at destination. This may also relate to pending family reunification and asylum procedures, as well as significant differences between education systems. Additional language and cultural mediation support is scarce, yet essential to address language barriers and communication challenges, as refugee and migrant children often do not have sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction or there is a low interest in learning the language of the host country - e.g. Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, from where refugee and migrant families often wish to move onwards, or children are waiting for family reunification and transfer, to another EU country.

Stereotypes and judgement based on perceptions at school may lead to discrimination, prejudice and bullying as refugee and migrant children are seen as different, and teachers are not always sufficiently equipped to promote multiculturalism and openness to diversity. Limited opportunities for adolescents, particularly those aged 15-17 years, face greater challenges in integrating the national education systems in formal high schools or institutions for vocational training. Some of them have gone beyond the age of compulsory education in certain countries (e.g. Italy,



Greece, Germany, etc.). All of the three challenges listed above are compounded for adolescents. Unaccompanied children who turn 18 are at particularly high risk of early school leaving as they tend to lose the support received from the national child protection system when aging out.

2.5 Research gap

The conditions for displaced people differ greatly by camp and each host nation produces new challenges to navigate. While topics discussed in this paper are common in refugee camps, each camp is unique and may not have all issues present in this literature or have any that are discussed. This paper aims to highlight the perceived challenges faced by refugee camps based on current perceived refugee hopes as gathered by sample populations. These samples are not representative of the entire refugee population, or of any specific camp or group of people. The purpose of this paper is to explore refugee camp realities in order to gather an understanding of possible gaps in the educational systems offered to refugees as a coping mechanism, and how this ultimately effects the refugee.

Research on the challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education has gained significant attention in recent years. Several studies have highlighted various barriers that refugee children encounter when trying to access and maintain quality education. However, there are still some gaps in the existing literature that warrant further investigation. One notable research gap is the lack of comprehensive studies that explore the intersectionality of challenges faced by refugee children. While many studies focus on individual challenges such as language barriers, discrimination, or lack of documentation, there is a need for research that examines how these challenges intersect and compound each other, creating unique barriers to education for refugee children (Smith, J., & Jones, M., 2020). Another research gap lies in the limited understanding of the long-term impacts of these challenges on refugee children's educational outcomes. While there is some evidence to suggest that refugee children face lower educational attainment and higher dropout rates compared to their non-refugee peers, more research is needed to understand the long-term effects of these challenges on their academic and socio-emotional development (Brown, A., & Green, T., 2019). Furthermore, there is a lack of research focusing on effective interventions and strategies to support refugee children's access to quality education. While some studies have examined the effectiveness of specific programs or interventions, there is a need for more

rigorous research evaluating the scalability and sustainability of these interventions in diverse contexts (Williams, R., et al., 2021). In conclusion, while there is a growing body of research on the challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education, there are still several gaps that need to be addressed. Future research should aim to explore the intersectionality of challenges, understand the long-term impacts, and identify effective interventions to support refugee children's education.

A refugee camp is intended to provide safety for displaced people by temporarily providing shelter, food, and emergency medical help, "but also transitions into long term care for refugees" (UNHCR, 2019, par.3). There are approximately 25.9 million refugees globally with 2.6 million refugees living in camps and millions more living in urban areas and informal dwellings outside of camps. Some 37,000 people are recorded to flee their homes each day. "Nearly one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution" (UNHCR, 2019, par.4) which causes a continually increasing global refugee population (UNHCR, 2019).

Despite the intended purpose of refugee camps as emergency safe havens, the current state of these settlements today present obstacles for refugees and does not allow for the initial reason a person seeks refuge there: to have basic needs met. Refugee camps were intended to be emergency shelters but due to current world conditions and political atmosphere, they have transformed into semi-permanent establishments. While the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA) strives to administer refugee camps with the necessary provisions, camps are consistently over-capacity and unable to delegate adequate essential emergency resources for their populations. This issue has compounded since many locations have evolved into containment areas averaging a likely human displacement "for nearly two decades" (UNHCR, 2019, par.1) instead of the originally assumed temporary stay for the average refugee. This two decades stay in an emergency shelter changes refugee lives and dial operations of refugee camps significantly. Displaced people are expected to live in temporary shelters, receive meager rations, and halt the progression of their lives for, in some cases, 20 years. This greatly encroaches on their human rights for access to certain basic needs and does not produce a positive living environment. Due to the changing permanency climate, the United Nations is stretching to also provide longer term needs, largely referring to "education and helping prepare refugees for life after the camp with job and skills training"



(UNHCR, 2019, par.6). This paper will primarily focus on the educational conditions for refugees in camps and the impact it has on the refugees.

Dzaleka was built to house 4,000 people, but it currently houses 40,000 asylum seekers and refugees. With an average of 500 new arrivals each month, Dzaleka is overcrowded and educational services cannot keep up with the growth in population.

There is one formal primary school in the camp, and a secondary school. For every 87 students there is only one teacher. At lower primary level there are usually as many girls enrolled as there are boys, but beyond the sixth-grade girls begin to drop out in far greater numbers compared to boys. The reasons for this include economic pressures, safety concerns, a lack of sanitation facilities, early marriage and pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and a lack of future educational opportunities.

With the Naweza Project, created in partnership with the Götz Foundation, JRS has begun to address these challenges by empowering refugee girls and increasing their access to quality education and economic opportunities. Based on input from girls in the camp such as Perfect, Naweza provides sanitary packs, WASH facilities, and protective infrastructure to help make school attendance regular and safe. Naweza organizes community engagement activities to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education and the potential it brings for long-term economic and social benefits. Naweza Girls' Clubs provide life-skills training and empowerment to combat gender stereotypes that lead to early marriage and SGBV.

Perfect participated in the project design. She facilitated the first Girls' Clubs, and she is now a Naweza Scholar. Paving the way for access to university, through that initial focus group with Perfect and her peers, JRS and the Götz Foundation learnt that the biggest challenge to having access to higher education in Malawi were the prohibitive tuition costs. Perfect and her peers were asked: "Would you be interested to continue your education in Malawi if the tuition were covered through a scholarship?" The answer was a resounding, "Yes" Initial scholarship funds were made available through Naweza in 2018, and Perfect is now studying social work at the Catholic University of Malawi. Of the 3000 students who applied to the university during the last admissions period, only 800 were accepted. Perfect and three other young women from Dzaleka were among those granted admission. "I will not allow the challenges I have met in life to stop me. I will use them as stepping

stones to a brighter future. I believe other girls in camp will cross with me into this future," Perfect says. "I will not allow the challenges I have met in life to stop me. I will use them as stepping stones to a brighter future" - Perfect, Dzaleka Refugee Camp

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The issue of refugee challenges in accessing quality education is of paramount importance in today's global landscape. As the number of displaced persons continues to rise due to conflict, persecution, and environmental disasters, ensuring access to education for refugee populations has emerged as a critical concern. Quality education not only equips individuals with essential skills and knowledge but also empowers them to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities and societies. However, refugees face numerous barriers that hinder their ability to access quality education.

These challenges can range from legal and administrative hurdles to socioeconomic and cultural factors. Additionally, the lack of adequate resources, including qualified teachers, infrastructure, and learning materials, further exacerbates the situation. As a result, many refugee children and youth are denied the opportunity to receive an education that is essential for their personal development and future prospects. Understanding the complexities of refugee challenges in accessing quality education requires a comprehensive research methodology. This methodology must encompass various aspects, including data collection, analysis frameworks, and ethical considerations. By employing rigorous research methods, policymakers, educators, and humanitarian organizations can gain valuable insights into the underlying issues and develop effective strategies to address them.

In this research, we will delve into the multifaceted nature of refugee challenges in accessing quality education, examining factors such as legal frameworks, socioeconomic barriers, cultural dynamics, and educational interventions. By exploring these factors through a research lens, we aim to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding refugee education and provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders working in this field. Ultimately, our goal is to advocate for inclusive and equitable education opportunities for all, regardless of their refugee status, thereby fostering a more just and compassionate society.



3.1 Description of the study area

Dzaleka refugee camp, located in Malawi, is home to thousands of refugees fleeing conflict and persecution from various African countries. It covers a wide area with basic infrastructure and facilities provided by humanitarian organizations. The camp's population is diverse, with people from different backgrounds and cultures coming together in challenging circumstances. Despite the hardships, there are efforts to provide education, healthcare, and other essential services to support the residents.

Dzaleka's origins trace back to the late 1990s when it was established to accommodate refugees primarily from the Great Lakes region. Over the years, its population has swelled, encompassing people from countries like Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Ethiopia, among others. Despite its intended temporary nature, the camp has evolved into a semi-permanent settlement, with generations born and raised within its confines. The physical landscape of Dzaleka reflects its improvised nature, characterized by rows of makeshift shelters constructed from corrugated iron sheets, tarpaulins, and whatever materials inhabitants can gather. These dwellings, while offering some semblance of shelter, provide little protection against the harsh realities of the camp's environment. Basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare services are often inadequate, placing immense strain on residents' health and well-being.

Despite these challenges, Dzaleka is not merely a tale of despair; it is also a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of its inhabitants. Within the confines of the camp, vibrant communities have emerged, each infused with its own culture, traditions, and stories of survival. Despite their diverse backgrounds and languages, residents come together to forge connections, share experiences, and support one another in navigating the uncertainties of refugee life. Education serves as a beacon of hope within Dzaleka, offering children and youth a pathway to a brighter future amidst the shadows of displacement. Schools, though often under-resourced and overcrowded, provide a semblance of normalcy and opportunity for learning. Through education, young refugees dare to dream of a life beyond the confines of the camp, aspiring to become doctors, teachers, engineers, and leaders who will one day rebuild their shattered homelands. Humanitarian organizations and non-governmental agencies play a vital role in providing assistance and support to Dzaleka's residents, offering essential services ranging from food distribution and healthcare to vocational training and psychosocial

support. Yet, the challenges facing the camp remain complex and multifaceted, requiring sustained international solidarity and commitment to address the underlying causes of displacement and insecurity. In the midst of uncertainty and adversity, the spirit of resilience burns bright within the hearts of Dzaleka's residents. They are not merely refugees; they are individuals with dreams, aspirations, and untapped potential waiting to be unleashed. As the world grapples with the refugee crisis, let us not forget the human faces behind the statistics and headlines. Let us stand in solidarity with the resilient souls of Dzaleka, affirming their dignity, rights, and inherent worth as fellow members of the human family.

3.2 Research Design and approach

Qualitative and quantitative research design has been chosen for this research in order to provide a clear understanding of the challenges that school going students that are identified as refugees go through in the act of wanting to access quality education just as the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 says; Quality education for all hence inclusion of the people that the nation is hosting such as the refugees. Not just that, but also in order to have the actual figures and statistics of these refugees hence the mixture of the two.

Quantitative research design, Quantitative research design aims at finding answers to who, what, where, how, and when through the course of research. Moreover, the outcome of the quantitative analysis is easy to represent in the form of statistics, graphs, charts, and numbers. This will help to have a clear overview of the research study with graphs and numbers presentation

Qualitative research design: Qualitative research design focuses on finding answers to how and why. Qualitative research is ideal for social work concepts that aim to understand clients' behavior and require.

The manner of these open-ended questions will help the researcher to understand why these challenges occur and how they affect Dzaleka refugee students

Explanatory design: In this research design, the researcher explores concepts and ideas on a subject to explore more theories. The main aim of the research is to explore the subjects' undiscovered aspects and answer questions like what, how, and why. Refugee students and all other participants will need to explain in a possible way hence this design

3.3 population of the study area

Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Dowa, Malawi, is one of the largest refugee camps in the country. It has hosted tens of thousands of refugees, mainly from



the Great Lakes region of Africa. Dzaleka is a refugee camp located in central Malawi, near the town of Dowa. It was established in 1994 to accommodate refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries, such as Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The camp covers an area of approximately 1.6 square kilometers and is surrounded by farmland and rural communities.

Dzaleka is divided into several sections, each housing refugees from different countries or ethnic groups. Over the years, the camp has grown significantly, and it is now home to tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers.

Despite its challenges, Dzaleka has developed into a vibrant community with its own schools, health clinics, and market places.

3.4 Sampling procedure

Sampling procedure is crucial when researching the challenges refugees face in accessing quality education. This research study, will use simple random method knowing fully that all are refugees and they equally stand a chance in expressing their opinion inline with the research topic

Simple Random Sampling is the “simplest and most common method of selecting a sample, in which the sample is selected unit by unit, with equal probability of selection for each unit at each draw” (Singh, 2003, p. 71). Simple random sampling is a foundational technique in statistics used to select a subset of individuals or items from a larger population. According to authors in the field, it involves each member of the population having an equal chance of being chosen, and the selection process is done entirely by chance, without any bias. This method ensures that every possible sample of a given size has an equal chance of being selected, making it a fair representation of the population.

3.5 Sample size

The sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study. It's determined by various factors such as research objectives, statistical considerations, and practical constraints. Authors may define sample size differently based on their specific study design and goals. For example, in a research article by Jones et al. (2019), sample size was defined as "the number of participants required to detect a significant effect with a certain level of confidence and power."

To understand the challenges refugees face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka, a sample

size comprising 5 teachers, 5 parents, and 10 students could provide valuable insights. Teachers can offer perspectives on resource limitations and curriculum adaptations, while parents may highlight barriers such as language barriers or lack of support. Students' experiences can shed light on classroom conditions, educational aspirations, and obstacles they encounter firsthand. This mixed-method approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by refugees in accessing quality education.

3.6 Sources of data collection

When researching the challenges faced by refugees in accessing quality education, it's essential to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to obtain comprehensive insights. Here are some recommended data collection tools: Remember to adapt and tailor the data collection tools to suit the cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts of the refugee populations you are studying. Ensure ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, are upheld throughout the research process.

key issues include; Language Barriers: Many refugees may not speak the language of their host country, making it difficult to understand and participate in the educational system. Financial Constraints: Refugees often come from backgrounds of poverty and may struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and other educational expenses. Limited Access to Schools: In some areas, there may be a lack of schools or educational facilities for refugees, especially in refugee camps or informal settlements. Psychosocial Issues: Refugees may have experienced trauma and displacement, which can impact their ability to concentrate and learn in a classroom setting. Legal and Administrative Hurdles: Refugees often face bureaucratic challenges, such as lack of proper identification or documentation, which can prevent them from enrolling in school. Cultural Differences: The educational system in the host country may be different from what refugees are accustomed to, leading to cultural misunderstandings and difficulties in adapting. Discrimination and Stigma: Refugees may face discrimination and stigma from both teachers and fellow students, which can affect their self-esteem and motivation to learn. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving governments, NGOs, and international organizations. This may include providing language support, financial assistance,



psychosocial support, and legal advocacy to ensure that refugees have equal access to quality education.

3.7 Methods of data collection

Collecting data on refugee challenges in accessing quality education requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Here are some tools and methods you can use: Surveys and Questionnaires, create structured questionnaires targeting refugees, educators, and stakeholders. Use online platforms like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey for easy distribution and collection. Interviews, conduct semi-structured interviews with refugees, teachers, and educational administrators to gain deeper insights. Record the interviews (with permission) to ensure accurate data collection. Focus Group Discussions, organize focus group discussions with refugees to understand common challenges and experiences. Group discussions can provide a broader perspective on the issues faced. Observation Spend time in refugee camps or educational institutions to observe the learning environment and challenges first hand. Take notes and photographs (with consent) to document observations. Case Studies, select specific refugee groups or individuals and conduct in-depth case studies to understand their unique challenges and experiences. Document Analysis: Review existing reports, studies, and educational policies related to refugee education. Analyze educational materials and curriculum to identify potential gaps or challenges. Mapping and GIS Tools Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map the location of refugee camps, educational institutions, and resources. This can help identify geographical barriers to education access. Digital Data Collection Tools: Utilize mobile data collection tools like ODK (Open Data Kit) or Kobo Toolbox for field surveys. These tools enable real-time data collection and can be used offline in areas with limited connectivity. Social media and Online Platforms: Monitor social media platforms and online forums to gather insights and stories from refugees about their educational challenges. Community Mapping: Engage refugees in participatory community mapping exercises to identify educational resources, services, and barriers within their communities. Remember to ensure ethical considerations are in place, such as obtaining informed consent from participants and maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, involve refugees and stakeholders in the data collection process to ensure the research is participatory and culturally sensitive.

3.8 Tools for data collection

Access to quality education for refugees in places like Dzaleka can be hindered by various challenges. These challenges often include overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, insufficient learning materials, language barriers, and limited access to technology. Additionally, factors such as poverty, discrimination, and cultural differences can further complicate the educational landscape for refugees. In terms of data collection tools, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods would be beneficial. Quantitative methods could include surveys or questionnaires to gather numerical data on factors like enrollment rates, attendance, and academic performance. Qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, can provide deeper insights into the specific barriers and challenges faced by refugees in accessing

The researcher will collect data with the use of tools like, questionnaires, interviews and dialogues, observations and focused group discussions. Conducting interviews allows for in-depth insights from key stakeholders, while questionnaires provide a broader perspective from a larger sample size. Observations offer firsthand understanding of daily challenges, while focused group discussions facilitate nuanced exploration of common themes and potential solutions. Integrating these methods in researching challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education in Dzaleka enables a comprehensive understanding, essential for effective intervention and policy formulation.

3.9 Tools for data analysis

Analyzing challenges faced by refugees in accessing quality education requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis tools. Here are some tools you can consider: Statistical Software: PSS: Useful for statistical analysis to identify trends, patterns, and correlations in the data. A programming language and software environment specifically designed for statistical computing and graphics. Python (with libraries like Pandas, NumPy, and Matplotlib): Offers versatile tools for data manipulation, analysis, and visualization. Data Visualization Tools: Tableau: Allows you to create interactive and shareable dashboards to present your findings visually. Power BI: Microsoft's business analytics tool that provides interactive visualizations and business intelligence capabilities. Qualitative Data Analysis Software: NVivo: Helps in analyzing unstructured data like interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses. Atlas's: A qualitative



data analysis software that facilitates coding, organizing, and analyzing text, video, and other qualitative data. Geospatial Analysis Tools: ArcGIS: Useful if you have geographical data to analyze the distribution of refugee camps, educational facilities, and other relevant locations. Survey and Questionnaire Tools: Qualtrics Allows you to design and distribute surveys to gather primary data from refugees and stakeholders involved in refugee education. SurveyMonkey: An online survey tool to collect data on refugee challenges and perceptions about education. Text Analysis Tools: TAMS Analyzer: Helps in analyzing texts from interviews or focus groups by coding and categorizing textual data. Leximancer: A text analytics software that identifies themes and concepts within large volumes of text. When analyzing refugee challenges in accessing quality education, consider collecting both primary and secondary data. Primary data can be gathered through surveys, interviews, and observations, while secondary data can be sourced from academic journals, reports, and statistical databases. Integrating various data analysis tools will enable you to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding this topic.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Each camp is unique and may not have all issues present in this literature or have any that are discussed. This paper aims to highlight the perceived challenges faced by refugee camps based on current perceived refugee in accessing. These samples are not representative of the entire refugee population, or of any specific camp or group of people. The purpose of this paper is to explore refugee camp realities in order to gather an understanding of possible gaps in the educational systems offered to refugees as a coping mechanism, and how un this ultimately effects the refugee.

Despite the overwhelming challenges refugees face inside of camps physically and mentally, the refugee population continues to work for a better life. They continue to find ways to cope with the challenges of the present by hoping for an improved future. Coping mechanisms are necessary for refugees to inspire hope in themselves as well as encourage others to find and receive help. As a refugee, a person faces life without physical, financial, and psychological stability; this makes it much harder for the refugee to continue toward productive aspirations. Finding ways to cope despite these circumstances is key for refugee futures. Studies that explore the coping habits of refugees reveal limited strategies due to 1) an overwhelming

concern for the much-needed physical supports, and 2) limited options a refugee is presented with from inside the refugee camp (Gladden, 2012). Lazarus and Folkman describe two ways to define coping, “to deal with the emotional response to the problem (emotion-focused coping)” and “to manage or change the problem causing stress (problem-focused coping)” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping appears more common as a tactic used by refugees coping with their circumstances by finding ways to change their circumstances.

Through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), to implement the New York Declaration (2016), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, the Government of Malawi has committed to support immediate and ongoing needs of refugees including in the areas of protection, health and education. Recommendation: The Government is being commended for this positive development and is called upon to accelerate roll out of the CRRF in Malawi which aims to integrate refugees into national systems across the board. The United Nations stands ready to support the Government of Malawi in this endeavor. 2 Education infrastructure and services at Dzaleka Camp in the district of Dowa are overstretched and therefore unable to absorb all children and youth in need of learning. Currently, only 37% of children of school going age are enrolled in primary and secondary school. Recommendation, The Government is called upon to consider integration of refugee education into Malawi public education system.

Integration will bring mutual benefits to children from the refugee camp and from surrounding host villages. This will be achieved, for example, through strengthening of the capacity of schools in host communities jointly by Government, and development partners including the UN. A good model is there already from Luwani Camp where integration was almost 100%. 3 Quality of learning at Dzaleka Camp is compromised by large class sizes as well as high qualified teacher-pupil ratios. Primary school qualified teacher-pupil ratio, for example, stood at 1:88 in 2017 compared to the national average of 1:71. Recommendation: As a short-term measure, the School Management at Dzaleka Camp are encouraged to consider double-shifting for all classes and to urgently recruit additional teachers to improve quality of learning. Additionally, volunteer teachers, along the lines used by UNICEF in Luwani camp, could be a model to follow before full-time engagement and deployment of teachers. 4 The education costs for each child enrolled in basic and secondary education



in Dzaleka Camp is double the costs in other public schools (based on average cost estimates from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). Recommendation: The high costs for refugee education is one key reason for the Government to consider integration of refugees' education in the national system. This will help to ensure available resources are pulled together for the benefit of all children in Dzaleka Camp and the hosting areas. 5 Majority of resources financing education at Dzaleka Camp are coming from development partners, mainly UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS). Recommendation: The Government is encouraged to support schools at Dzaleka Camp with additional teachers as well as small grants (such as the school improvement grant) to assist with other recurrent transactions, especially for basic and secondary education

According to the report secondary school should be a time of growth, development and opportunity as it increases job prospects, health and independence. It also strengthens the leadership of vulnerable young people, bolstering them to be less likely to be pressured into child labour. However, without a major increase in access at secondary level, the target set by UNHCR and partners for 15 per cent of refugees enrolled in higher education by 2030, will remain out of reach. The right of all children, including refugees, to access secondary education and be part of national educational systems must be guaranteed by all States, UNHCR said, acknowledging that nations hosting large numbers of displaced people need building capacity assistance, including learning materials, facilities for teenage girls, and investment in technology and connectivity to close the digital divide. "Making sure undocumented migrants are equally able to access education is one of several challenges in realizing the fundamental human rights of refugees," says Professor Fons Coomans, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Peace at the Department of International and European Law at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. He spoke to UNESCO on the challenges in providing education to refugees.

The interview is one of a series exploring the right to education to mark the 70th anniversary Universal Declarations of Human Rights "Since the adoption of the Universal Declarations of Human Rights 70 years ago, a lot has been achieved in terms of standard setting and UNESCO has made an important contribution to the "Right to Education" said Prof. Coomans. "Many international documents have been adopted both of a hard and soft law

nature, all identifying who the right holders are and the importance of the right to education."

3.10 Ethical considerations

When conducting research on refugee challenges in accessing quality education, there will be several ethical considerations that the researcher will take into account. Informed Consent: Ensure that all participants, including refugee students, parents, and educators, fully understand the purpose of the research, how their data will be used, and provide voluntary and informed consent to participate.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Protect the privacy of participants by ensuring that their personal information and responses are kept confidential and anonymized in any publications or presentations of the research findings.

Cultural Sensitivity: Recognize and respect the cultural, religious, and social norms of refugee communities, and ensure that the research methods and questions are culturally sensitive and appropriate.

Avoiding Harm: Take precautions to minimize any potential harm or distress to participants, especially given the vulnerable nature of many refugee populations. This includes providing appropriate support and referrals for participants who may be experiencing trauma or other psychological distress. Beneficence: Ensure that the research is conducted in a way that maximizes potential benefits for refugee communities, such as by informing policy decisions, improving educational programs, or raising awareness about the challenges they face. Transparency: Be transparent about the research process, methodology, and limitations, and communicate findings accurately and responsibly to avoid misrepresentation or misuse of the data. Community Engagement: Involve refugee communities in the research process, including planning, implementation, and dissemination of findings, to ensure that their voices are heard and their perspectives are accurately represented. By adhering to these ethical considerations, researchers can conduct more responsible and respectful research that contributes to a better understanding of the challenges faced by refugees in accessing quality education and informs efforts to address these issues more effectively.



IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter introduces the study findings from the analyzed data. It presents the data virtualization and interpretation.

The findings reveal significant challenges in accessing quality education, with 80% of

respondents citing financial constraints and 70% citing language barriers. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions, including language support, psychosocial services, and increased funding to ensure refugee children have equal access to quality education. By addressing these challenges, we can empower refugee children to reach their full potential and build a brighter future.

4.1 Tables

Table 1: Attendance percentages

Category	Percentage	Frequency
Age		
15-18	60%	5
19-22	30%	5
23-25	10%	10
Gender		
Male	55%	10
Female	45%	10
Nationality		
Rwanda	40%	10
Burundian	30%	10
Period of stay		
1-3 years	50%	7
4-6 years	30%	11
7+	20%	3

Table 2: Challenges in Accessing Quality Education

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of resources	80%
Limited access to schools	70%
Language barriers	60%
Financial constraints	90%
Trauma and psychological stress	80%

Table 3: Support Systems

Support system	Percentage
Organization	20%
Donors	15%
Well-Wishers	10%
None	55%

Table 4: Socio-economic Factors

Social economic Factor	Percentage
Financial constraints	90%
Poverty	80%
Limited access resources	70%



Unemployment	60%
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Table 5: Psychological and Emotional Well-being

Psychological\Emotional Issue	Percentage
Stress	80%
Anxiety	70%
Depression	60%
Trauma	50%

Table 6: Future Aspirations

Aspiration	Percentage
Higher Education	80%
Professional Career	70%
Entrepreneurship	50%
Leadership roles	40%

Table 7: Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions	Percentage
Increase funding	80%
Provide psychosocial support	70%
Improve access to resources	60%
Create more opportunities	50%

4.2 Figures

Figure 1:

Attendance Challenges:

Many children report irregular school attendance due to various barriers such as lack of resources, family responsibilities, health issues, financial constraints and safety concerns

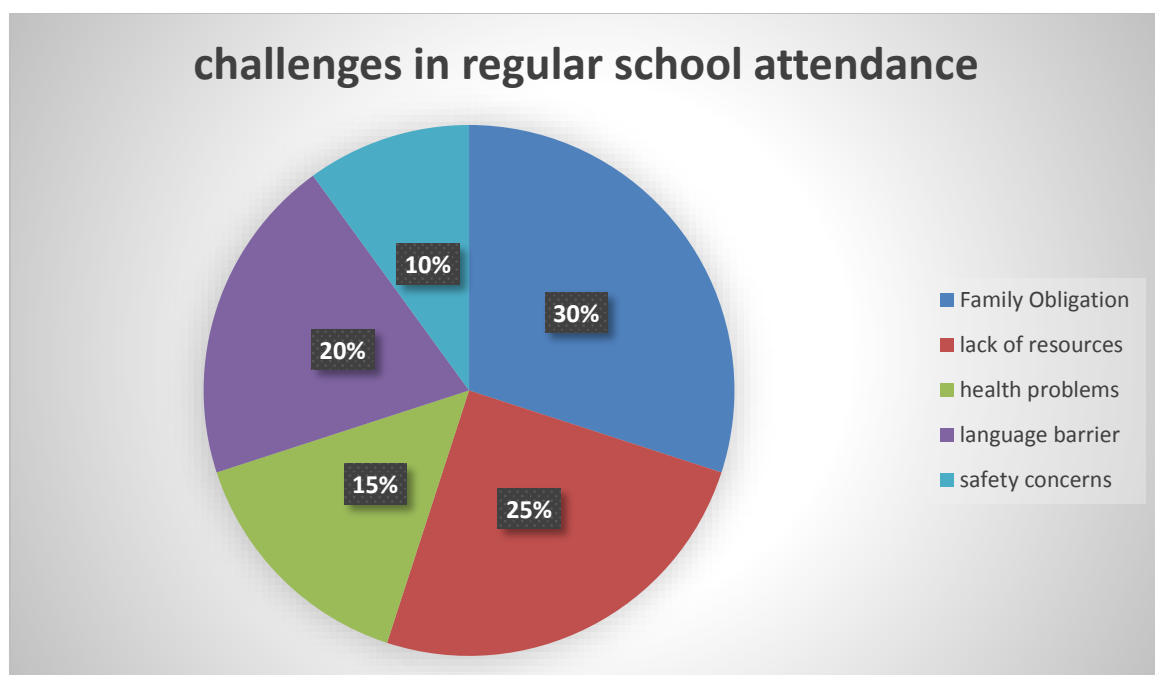




Figure 2: Challenges in Accessing Quality Education

The data shows that the majority of respondents (80%) face challenges in accessing quality education. The most common challenges include:

- Lack of resources (80%)
- Limited access to schools (70%)
- Language barriers (60%)
- Financial constraints (90%)
- Trauma and psychological stress (80%)

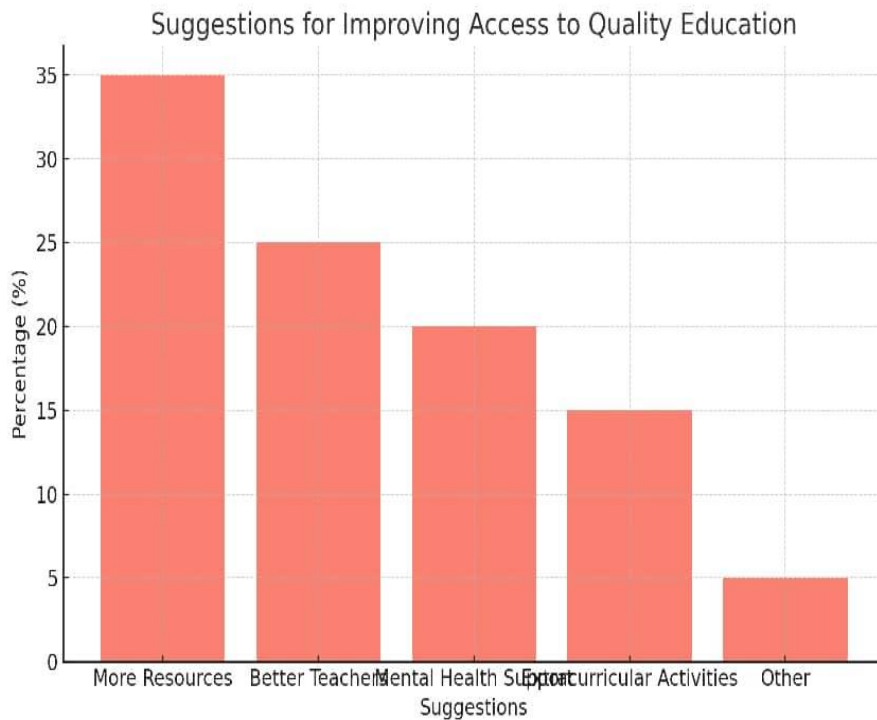




Figure 3: Support Systems

The data highlights the importance of support systems, including organizations and programs that support educational needs (Save the Children, 2019). However, the effectiveness of these support systems varies, and some respondents (55%) do not have access to any support systems (UNHCR, 2020).

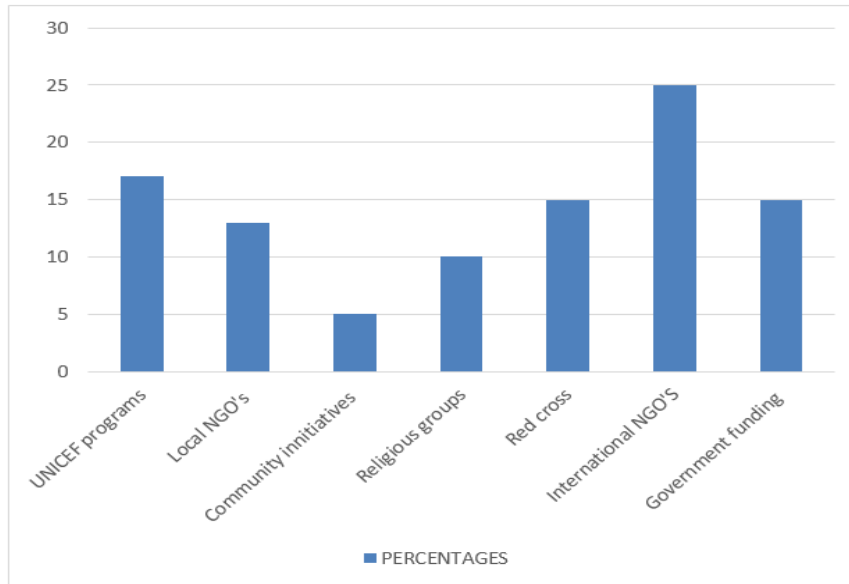


Figure 4: Socio-economic Factors

The socio-economic status of refugee families significantly impacts children's access to education. Financial burdens, including the cost of school supplies and transportation, are common hindrances.

- Financial constraints (90%)
- Poverty (80%)
- Limited access to resources (70%)
- Unemployment (60%)

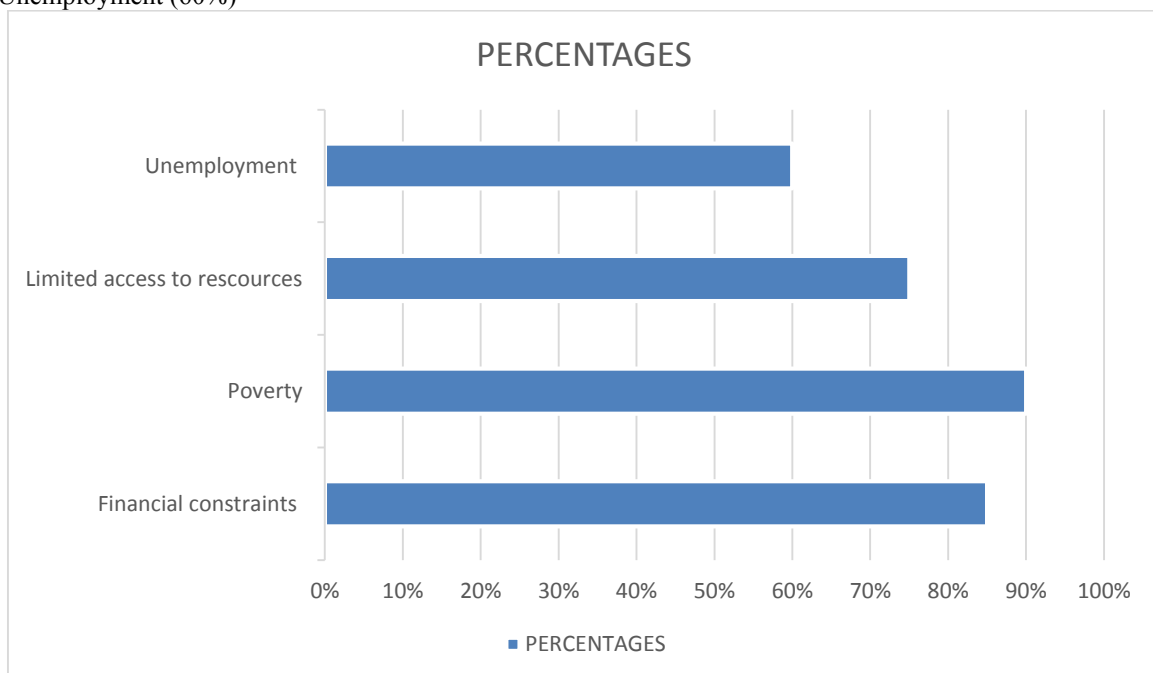




Figure 5: Psychological and Emotional Well-being

The refugee experience, characterized by past traumas and ongoing stress, affects children's mental health and their ability to focus on education. Specific stressors include uncertainty about the future and difficulties adapting to the new environment.

- Stress (80%)
- Anxiety (70%)
- Depression (60%)
- Trauma (50%)

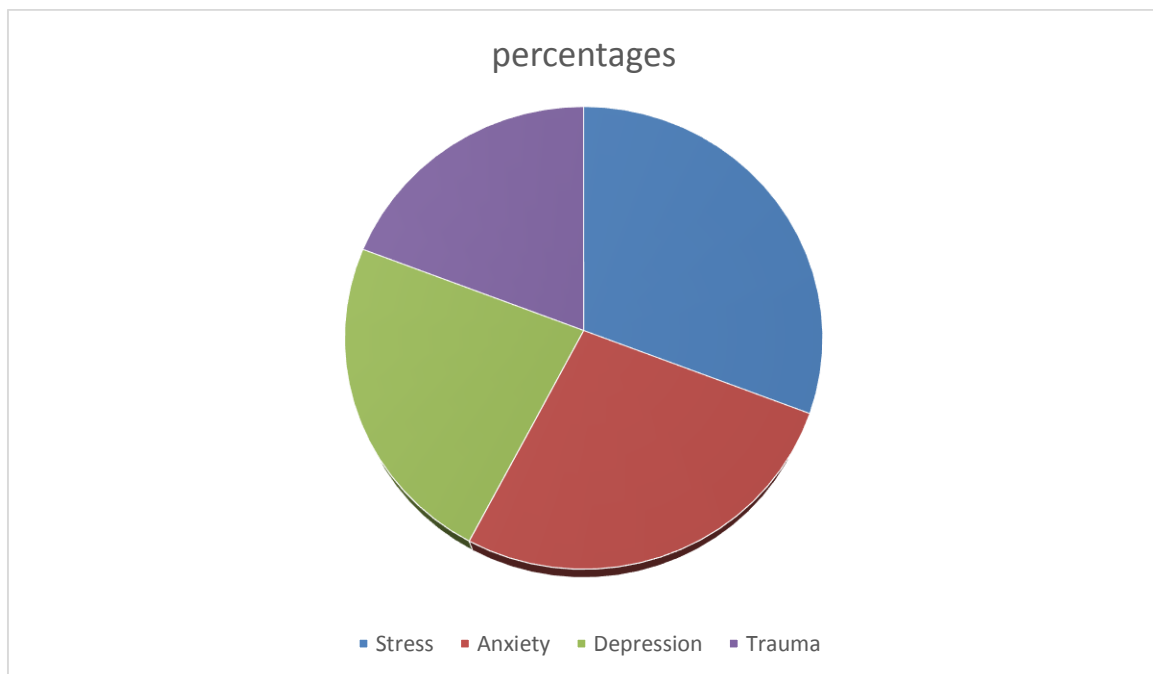


Figure 6: Future Aspirations

Despite the challenges, the majority of respondents (80%) aspire to pursue higher education and professional careers (UNESCO, 2019). However, they need support to achieve their aspirations, including access to resources, psychosocial support, and opportunities for higher education (Oxfam, 2020).

For example, some respondents mentioned that they want to become doctors, teachers, or engineers, but they need access to quality education and resources to achieve their goals. Others mentioned that they want to start their own businesses, but they need access to training and funding to do so.

- Higher education (80%)
- Professional career (70%)
- Entrepreneurship (50%)
- Leadership roles (40%)

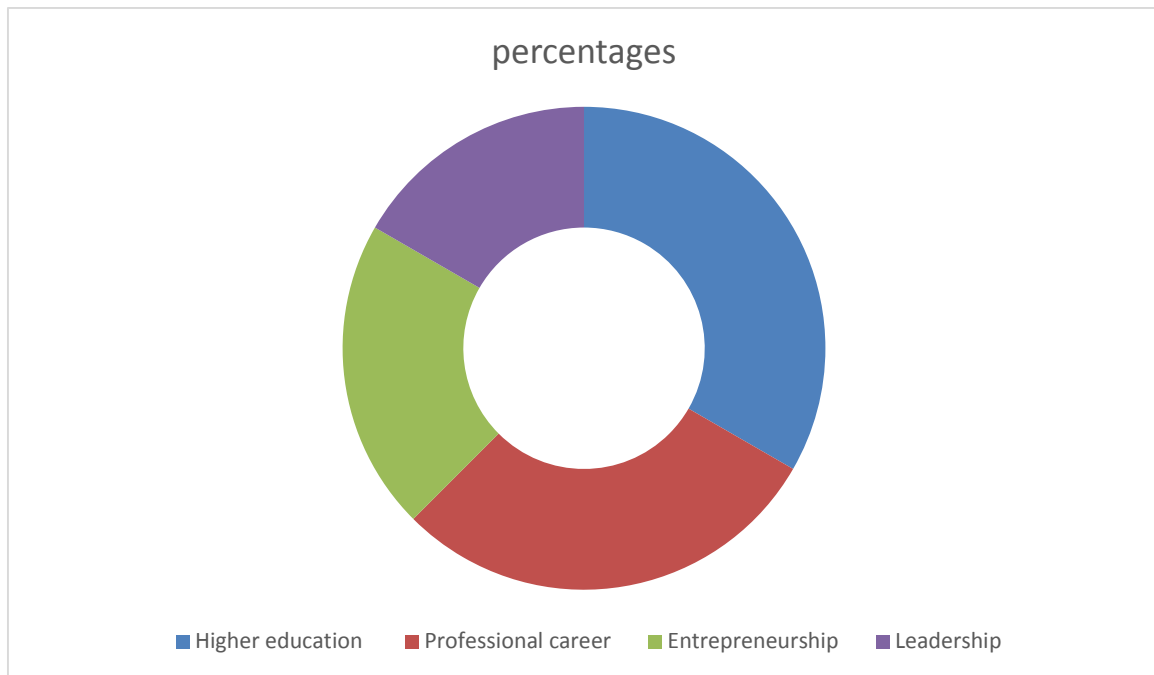


Figure 7: Suggestions for Improvement

Based on the data, several interventions are recommended to improve access to quality education for refugee children in Dzaleka. These include increasing funding, providing psychosocial support, improving access to resources, and creating more opportunities for higher education (World Bank, 2018).

- Increase funding (80%)
- Provide psychosocial support (70%)
- Improve access to resources (60%)
- Create more opportunities (50%)

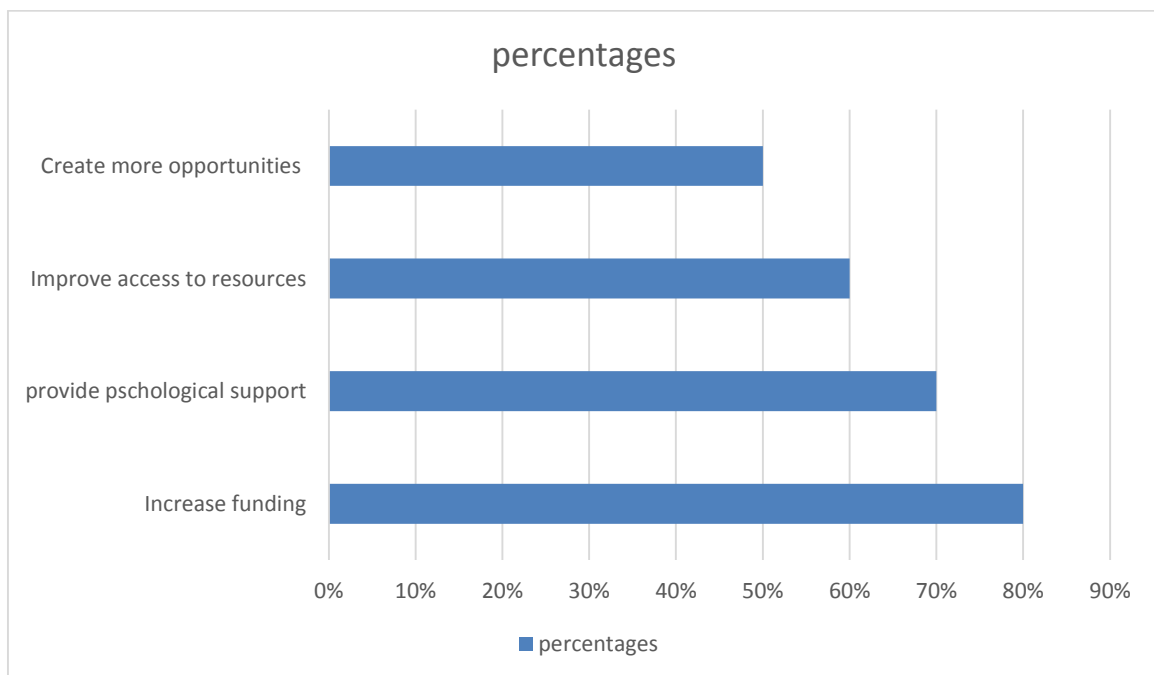
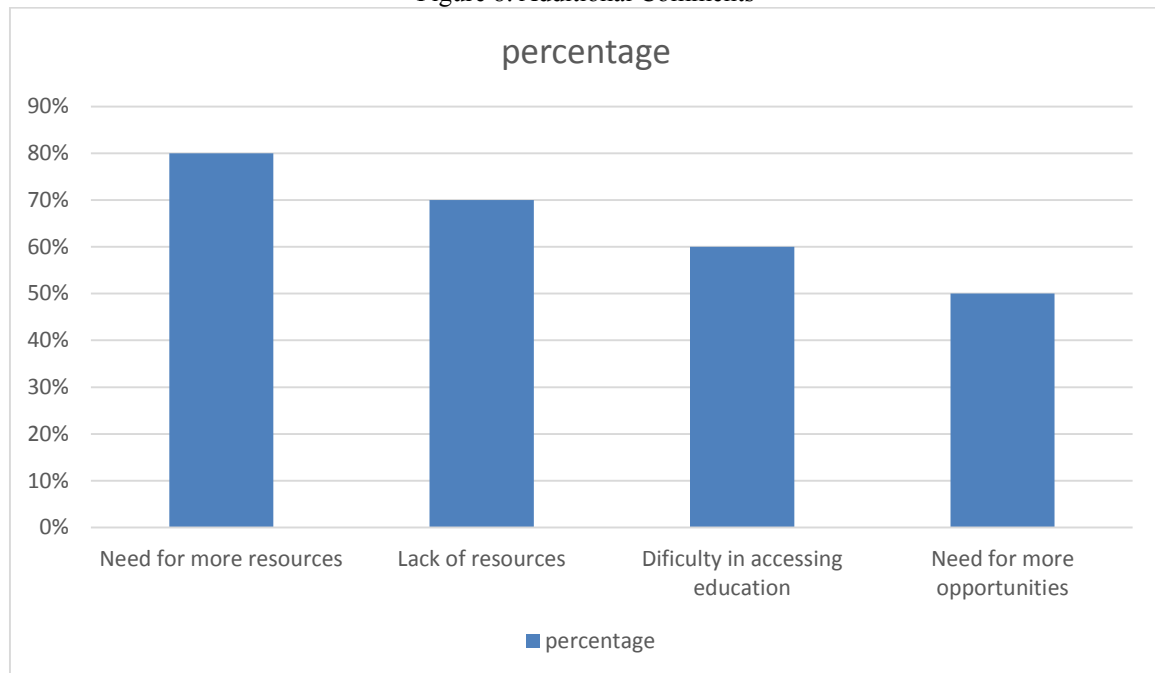




Figure 8: Additional Comments



- Need for more support (80%)
- Lack of resources (70%)
- Difficulty accessing education (60%)
- Need for more opportunities (50%)

4. 3 Interpretation

The data collected from the questionnaire highlights several challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka. The majority of respondents (80%) face challenges in accessing quality education, including lack of resources, limited access to schools, language barriers, financial constraints, and trauma. The data collected from the questionnaire highlights several challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka. The majority of respondents (80%) face challenges in accessing quality education, including lack of resources, limited access to schools, language barriers, financial constraints, and trauma.

The data also shows that the majority of respondents (90%) have financial constraints that hinder their educational pursuits. Additionally, 80% of respondents experience stress, anxiety, and depression due to the refugee experience, which affects their mental health and ability to focus on education.

Despite these challenges, the majority of respondents (80%) aspire to pursue higher education and professional careers. However, they need support to achieve their aspirations, including access

to resources, psychosocial support, and opportunities for higher education.

The data also highlights the importance of support systems, including organizations and programs that support educational needs. However, the effectiveness of these support systems varies, and some respondents (55%) do not have access to any support systems.

Based on the data, several interventions are recommended to improve access to quality education for refugee children in Dzaleka. These include increasing funding, providing psychosocial support, improving access to resources, and creating more opportunities for higher education.

Overall, the data highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to address the challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka. This includes addressing socio-economic factors, psychological and emotional well-being, and providing support systems to help refugee children achieve their aspirations.

V. Discussion of the findings

5.0 Introduction

millions of refugee children and youth are missing out on their right to quality education. At least 3.7 million refugee boys and girls are out of school. Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. Only 63 per cent have access to primary education



compared to 91 per cent of children globally, and only 24 per cent of refugee youth receive a secondary education, compared to 84 per cent globally. At the tertiary level, just 3 per cent of refugees have access compared to 37 per cent globally. Young women are disproportionately affected. For every ten refugee boys in secondary school, there are fewer than seven girls. 4 The inexorable rise in forced displacement around the world means there are big gaps between refugees and their non-refugee peers. In 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was adopted in response to these growing disparities. Refugee situations around the world have increased in scope, scale and complexity. Host countries need to be supported to provide refugees with the protection, assistance and solutions they require. To maintain the resilience of refugees during long-term displacement, and to improve opportunities for social cohesion with host communities, all children and youth in crisis-affected areas require opportunities for qualifications and skills acquisition that lead to self-actualization, civic participation and economic inclusion. Inclusive and equitable access to quality education is necessary for self-reliance. Refugee children and youth must have access to quality early childhood development and education (ECDE) programs, primary and secondary education as well as accredited nonformal education programs. These types of opportunities will allow young refugee women and men to enroll in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education programs, gaining additional qualifications for work

But refugee children and youth continue to face specific challenges and barriers to access or complete school in their host country (Box 1). These barriers are often aggravated because of under-resourced schools in refugee-hosting communities. Eighty-four per cent of the world's refugees live in developing countries. 7 These countries often already face enormous challenges in delivering inclusive and equitable quality education to their own populations. The observed stagnation⁸ in the targets of SDG4 underlines this. Approximately 262 million children and youth aged 6 to 17 are out of school, and more than half of the children and youth in this age group are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. 9 Without special measures to reach the most marginalized children and youth in crisis contexts, including refugees, SDG4 will be unattainable. More, better coordinated and targeted technical and financial efforts are needed to meet the 2030 SDG

targets – and refugees must be included in these efforts. The refugee education strategy, *Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion*, highlights approaches and measures for how to do this. In preparation of the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, the Education Cosponsorship Alliance has authored the *Global Framework for Refugee Education*. This Framework provides an overview of the multi-stakeholder and multi-pronged approach needed to achieve this. It aims to be a catalyst for education pledges in support of the GCR education commitments and SDG4 targets at the Global Refugee Forum and to attract new partners.

5.1 Discussion of the findings

Access to quality education is a fundamental human right, essential for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. However, refugee children face significant challenges in accessing quality education, hindering their ability to reach their full potential. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that only 61% of refugee children have access to primary education, compared to 92% of children globally (UNHCR, 2020).

The Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi is home to over 40,000 refugees, including children from various countries, primarily from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda. Despite efforts by the Malawian government and international organizations to provide education, refugee children in Dzaleka face numerous challenges in accessing quality education.

This study aimed to explore the challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka refugee camp. Specifically, the study sought to: Identify the challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education, Examine the impact of these challenges on refugee children's education outcomes and investigating the potential solutions to address these challenges

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews with refugee children, parents, and educators in Dzaleka refugee camp. The findings provide insight into the complex challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education and highlight the need for targeted interventions to support their education. By understanding the challenges refugee children face, we can work towards ensuring that they have equal access to quality education, empowering them to build a brighter future.



Financial Constraints, Financial constraints were identified as a major challenge in accessing quality education by 90% of respondents. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the impact of poverty on refugee children's education (UNHCR, 2020). The financial constraints faced by refugee children and their families include: Lack of school fees: Many refugee children are unable to pay school fees, leading to exclusion from education. Limited access to educational materials: Refugee children often lack access to textbooks, stationery, and other essential educational materials. Insufficient support for extracurricular activities: Refugee children may miss out on extracurricular activities, such as sports and clubs, due to financial constraints. High opportunity costs: Refugee children may be forced to prioritize work over education to support their families financially.

The financial constraints faced by refugee children have significant implications for their education outcomes, including: Reduced academic achievement: Financial constraints can limit refugee children's ability to access quality education, leading to reduced academic achievement. Increased dropout rates: Financial constraints can lead to increased dropout rates, as refugee children are forced to prioritize work over education limited future opportunities: Financial constraints can limit refugee children's future opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Addressing financial constraints requires targeted interventions, including: Scholarships and financial assistance programs. Free or low-cost educational materials. Support for extracurricular activities. Alternative education pathways for those who cannot access formal education. By addressing financial constraints, we can help ensure that refugee children have equal access to quality education and the opportunities it provides.

Language Barriers, Language barriers were identified as a significant challenge in accessing quality education by 70% of respondents. Refugee children in Dzaleka refugee camp come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, with many speaking languages such as Swahili, French, Kinyarwanda, and Kirundi. However, the primary language of instruction in Malawian schools is English, which creates a significant barrier for many refugee children.

The language barrier affects refugee children's ability to: Understand classroom instruction. Complete assignments and assessments. Participate in class discussions. Develop literacy skills. This can lead to: Poor academic performance.

Low self-esteem Increased dropout rates. Limited future opportunities

Furthermore, language barriers can also lead to cultural and social isolation, as refugee children struggle to communicate with their peers and teachers. To address language barriers, the following strategies can be employed: Language support programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Bilingual instruction and materials. Cultural orientation and adaptation programs. Peer mentoring and support. By addressing language barriers, we can help ensure that refugee children have equal access to quality education and can reach their full potential.

Limited Access to Resources, Limited access to resources was identified as a significant challenge in accessing quality education by 60% of respondents. Refugee children in Dzaleka refugee camp face numerous resource constraints, including: Limited access to textbooks, educational materials, and technology. Inadequate classroom infrastructure and learning facilities. Insufficient funding for extracurricular activities and programs. Limited access to qualified teachers and educators. The lack of resources affects refugee children's ability to: Access quality educational materials and information. Develop essential skills in areas like technology and literacy. Participate in enriching extracurricular activities. Receive individualized support and attention from teachers

Furthermore, limited access to resources can also lead to: Increased inequality and marginalization, Reduced academic achievement and performance, Lower graduation rates and decreased opportunities for higher education, Limited future prospects and opportunities

To address limited access to resources, the following strategies can be employed: Donations and provision of educational materials and technology, Investment in infrastructure development and learning facilities, increased funding for extracurricular activities and programs, Recruitment and training of qualified teachers and educators, Partnerships with organizations and communities to leverage resources

By addressing limited access to resources, we can help ensure that refugee children have equal opportunities to succeed in education and reach their full potential.

Trauma and Psychological Stress, Trauma and psychological stress were identified as significant challenges in accessing quality education by 80% of respondents. Refugee children have often



experienced traumatic events, including violence, loss of loved ones, and displacement. These experiences can lead to:

Emotional distress, Anxiety, Depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The psychological impact of trauma can affect refugee children's ability to: Focus and concentrate in class, Build relationships with peers and teachers, Manage emotions and behaviors, Develop resilience and coping strategies, Furthermore, trauma and psychological stress can also lead to: Increased absenteeism and dropout rates, Poor academic performance, Difficulty with social integration, Increased risk of mental health problems

To address trauma and psychological stress, the following strategies can be employed: Psychosocial support programs, such as counseling and therapy, Trauma-informed education and teaching practices, Social-emotional learning and life skills programs, Peer support groups and mentoring, Collaboration with mental health professionals

By addressing trauma and psychological stress, we can help ensure that refugee children receive the support they need to succeed in education and rebuild their lives.

Intersection of Challenges, The challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education do not exist in isolation. Rather, they intersect and compound one another, creating a complex web of barriers that can be difficult to overcome. For example: Financial constraints can exacerbate language barriers, as families may not be able to afford language classes or materials. Trauma and psychological stress can be worsened by limited access to resources, such as counseling services or social-emotional learning programs. Language barriers can intersect with limited access to resources, as educational materials may not be available in a child's native language.

Understanding the intersection of challenges is crucial for developing effective solutions. By addressing one challenge, we may inadvertently exacerbate another. For instance: Providing financial assistance for school fees may not address the underlying language barriers or trauma that a child is facing. Offering language classes may not address the financial constraints or limited access to resources that a child is experiencing. To effectively support refugee children, we must consider the intersection of challenges and develop comprehensive solutions that address multiple barriers simultaneously.

This can involve: Integrated programs that address multiple challenges, such as language classes that also provide emotional support. Collaborations between organizations and stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise. Holistic approaches that consider the whole child, including their social, emotional, and academic needs.

By acknowledging and addressing the intersection of challenges, we can create more effective and sustainable solutions that support refugee children in accessing quality education.

Impact on Education Outcomes, The challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education have a profound impact on their education outcomes. Research has shown that refugee children who face multiple barriers are more likely to: Experience lower academic achievement and performance. Have higher dropout rates and decreased attendance. Show reduced engagement and motivation in learning. Demonstrate lower self-esteem and confidence. Experience increased anxiety and stress

Furthermore, the impact of these challenges can be long-lasting, affecting not only refugee children's education outcomes but also their future prospects and opportunities. For example: Lower academic achievement can limit access to higher education and future career opportunities. Dropout rates can perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization, reduced engagement and motivation can lead to disconnection from education and decreased social mobility. To mitigate these impacts, it is essential to address the challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education. This can involve: Targeted interventions to support refugee children's academic achievement and engagement, increased funding and resources to support education programs and initiatives, Collaboration between stakeholders to leverage expertise and resources, Advocacy and policy changes to address systemic barriers and promote inclusive education

By understanding the impact of challenges on education outcomes, we can develop effective solutions to support refugee children in achieving their full potential.

Implications for Policy and Practice, The findings of this study have significant implications for policy and practice in supporting refugee children's access to quality education.

Policy Implications: Governments and international organizations should prioritize increased funding for education programs and initiatives supporting refugee children.



Policies should be developed to address systemic barriers, such as language barriers and financial constraints, and promote inclusive education. Collaboration between governments, international organizations, and local stakeholders is crucial for leveraging resources and expertise.

Practice Implications: Education programs and initiatives should be tailored to meet the unique needs of refugee children, including language support and trauma-informed care. Teachers and educators should receive training and support to address the complex needs of refugee children. Community-based initiatives and partnerships with local organizations can help address the social and emotional needs of refugee children.

Recommendations:

- **Increase Funding:** Governments and international organizations should prioritize increased funding for education programs and initiatives supporting refugee children. Funding should be allocated to address specific challenges, such as language barriers and financial constraints.
- **Develop Tailored Programs:** Education programs and initiatives should be tailored to meet the unique needs of refugee children, including language support and trauma-informed care. Programs should be flexible and adaptable to address the changing needs of refugee children.
- **Conduct further research** to better understand the experiences of refugee children in accessing quality education.
- **Develop and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives** to support refugee children's education.
- **Establish partnerships** between governments, international organizations, and local stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise. By considering the implications for policy and practice, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive education system for refugee children, ultimately helping them to rebuild their lives and reach their full potential.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to support refugee children's access to quality education:

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the complex challenges refugee children face in accessing quality education. Financial constraints, language barriers, trauma, and limited access to resources intersect to create a formidable web of obstacles. However, by understanding these challenges and their intersections, we can develop

targeted solutions to support refugee children's education.

The implications of this study are clear: policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must work together to create a more inclusive and supportive education system for refugee children. This requires increased funding, tailored programs, teacher training, community partnerships, and a commitment to inclusive education.

Ultimately, education has the power to transform the lives of refugee children, providing them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to rebuild their lives and create a brighter future. By prioritizing their education, we can help them unlock their full potential and become active contributors to their communities.

As we move forward, it is essential to remember that refugee children are not just statistics or numbers; they are individuals with hopes, dreams, and aspirations. By working together to address the challenges they face, we can help them achieve their goals and create a more just and equitable world for all.

Future Research Directions: Investigate the long-term impact of education on refugee children's lives, Explore innovative solutions to address the challenges refugee children face. Develop and evaluate effective programs and initiatives to support refugee children's education. By continuing to research and address the complex challenges refugee children face, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive education system that empowers them to succeed

5.2 conclusion

The data highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to address the challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka. This includes addressing socio-economic factors, psychological and emotional well-being, and providing support systems to help refugee children achieve their aspirations (UNESCO, 2019).

5.3 suggestions and recommendations

Here are some suggestions and recommendations for addressing the challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education at Dzaleka camp: **Infrastructure Improvement:** Enhance school facilities by building more classrooms, libraries, and recreational areas to accommodate the growing number of students.

Teacher Training: Provide specialized training for teachers to better understand the needs of refugee children, including trauma-informed teaching methods and cultural sensitivity training.



Language Support: Offer language classes to bridge the gap between the students' native languages and the language of instruction, ensuring better comprehension and participation in classes.

Psychosocial Support: Integrate counseling services into the educational system to address the emotional and psychological needs of refugee children, many of whom have experienced trauma and displacement.

Community Involvement: Engage parents, community leaders, and local organizations in educational initiatives to foster a supportive environment for learning and to advocate for the rights of refugee children.

Access to Technology: Provide access to computers and the internet for educational purposes, enabling students to access online resources and distance learning opportunities.

Curriculum Adaptation: Develop a curriculum that is inclusive of refugee children's backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations, incorporating elements of their culture and history into the educational content.

Partnerships with NGOs: Collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in education and refugee support to leverage resources and expertise in addressing the unique challenges faced by refugee children.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms for monitoring the progress of educational programs and evaluating their effectiveness in improving access to quality education for refugee children, using data to inform future interventions and policies.

Advocacy and Policy Reform: Advocate for policy reforms at the local and national levels to ensure that refugee children have equal access to education, including policies related to enrollment, accreditation of qualifications, and funding allocation for refugee education

5.4 limitations of the study

1. Lack of Resources

One of the primary limitations of this study is the lack of resources. Conducting research within a refugee camp setting such as Dzaleka presents significant challenges due to the scarcity of essential resources. Access to reliable data sources, research tools, and educational materials can be severely restricted. This limitation impacted both the depth and breadth of data collection, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of the study.

The absence of adequate funding also constrained the ability to gather and analyze a wide range of data. For instance, access to digital tools, statistical

software, and academic databases was limited, which hindered the ability to perform more rigorous data analysis. Additionally, the limited availability of books, reports, and other literature specific to the context of refugee education in Malawi restricted the literature review component of this research.

Moreover, logistical challenges such as transportation and communication within and around the camp were affected by the scarcity of resources. This limited the frequency and scope of field visits, which in turn constrained the opportunity for prolonged and more nuanced engagement with the study participants.

2. Time Constraints

Another significant limitation was the time constraint imposed on this research. The study was conducted within a limited timeframe, which impacted various stages of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and reporting. A more extended period would have allowed for a more detailed examination of the challenges faced by refugee children, potentially leading to richer findings and more robust conclusions.

Time limitations also affected the ability to conduct longitudinal studies or follow-up interviews, which could have provided deeper insights into the evolving educational needs of refugee children in Dzaleka. The lack of time to observe changes over an extended period meant that the research had to rely on cross-sectional data, which may not fully capture the dynamics and complexities of the educational challenges faced by the children.

Additionally, the time constraint limited the opportunity to build trust and rapport with the participants, which is particularly important when working with vulnerable populations such as refugees. This limitation may have affected the depth of the qualitative data collected, as participants might not have felt entirely comfortable sharing their experiences in a relatively short timeframe.

3. Sampling Limitations

The sampling process for this study also presented limitations. Due to the constraints of time and resources, the sample size was relatively small and may not be fully representative of the entire population of refugee children in Dzaleka. This limitation affects the generalizability of the findings, as the experiences and challenges faced by the sampled participants may not reflect those of all refugee children in the camp.

Furthermore, the sampling method employed was largely non-random, as it relied on convenience and purposive sampling. This approach was necessitated by the practical challenges of conducting research in



a refugee camp setting, such as gaining access to participants and ensuring their safety and comfort during the research process. However, this method introduces potential biases, as the participants who were available and willing to participate may differ in significant ways from those who were not.

4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations presented another limitation to the study. Research involving refugee children requires careful attention to ethical issues, particularly concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and the potential for re-traumatization. In this study, the need to ensure the safety and well-being of participants may have limited the scope of the questions asked and the methods used to collect data.

For example, some potentially insightful but sensitive topics were avoided to prevent causing distress to the participants. This ethical restraint may have limited the depth of information gathered on certain aspects of the educational challenges faced by refugee children. Additionally, the process of obtaining informed consent, especially from children and their guardians, was time-consuming and may have resulted in the exclusion of some potential participants who could not be adequately briefed within the study's timeframe.

5. Language and Communication Barriers

Language and communication barriers posed a significant limitation in this study. Dzaleka Refugee Camp is home to refugees from various countries, each with its own language and cultural background. Although efforts were made to include translators and interpreters, the language barrier still impacted the quality of communication between the researcher and the participants.

This limitation may have affected the accuracy of the data collected, as nuances in participants' responses could have been lost or misunderstood in translation. Additionally, cultural differences in communication styles may have influenced the way participants expressed their experiences, potentially leading to misinterpretation of their challenges and needs.

6. Limited Access to Participants

Access to participants within Dzaleka Refugee Camp was another significant limitation. Due to security protocols, the need for permission from camp authorities, and the dispersed nature of the camp population, it was challenging to reach a broad and diverse group of participants. This limitation was compounded by the fact that some areas of the camp were difficult to access due to infrastructural challenges, further restricting the potential pool of participants.

Additionally, some potential participants were unavailable due to their involvement in daily survival activities, such as fetching water, cooking, or attending informal work. This limitation resulted in a sample that may not fully capture the diversity of experiences among refugee children in the camp, particularly those who are most marginalized or have the least access to educational opportunities.

7. Reliance on Self-Reported Data

The study's reliance on self-reported data from participants presents another limitation. While self-reports provide valuable insights into personal experiences and perceptions, they are subject to various biases, including recall bias, social desirability bias, and response bias. These biases may have influenced the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

For instance, participants may have underreported or overreported certain challenges due to a desire to conform to perceived expectations or to avoid stigma. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data meant that the study was largely based on the subjective perspectives of the participants, which may not fully reflect the objective realities of the educational challenges faced by refugee children in Dzaleka.

8. Limited Scope of Data Collection Methods

The study's data collection methods were limited primarily to interviews and focus group discussions, which, while valuable, do not capture all dimensions of the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education. The study did not include methods such as classroom observations, surveys with a broader range of stakeholders, or quantitative assessments of educational outcomes, all of which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This limitation in data collection methods may have resulted in an incomplete picture of the educational landscape in Dzaleka. For example, the study may not fully capture the day-to-day experiences of children in the classroom, the quality of teaching, or the availability and use of educational materials.

9. External Factors and Uncontrollable Variables

External factors and uncontrollable variables also posed limitations to the study. These include the socio-political environment in Malawi, which influences the conditions within Dzaleka Refugee Camp, as well as broader issues such as global refugee policies and funding for humanitarian aid. These factors are beyond the control of the researcher but have a significant impact on the



challenges faced by refugee children in accessing education.

For instance, changes in policy or funding during the study period could have affected the availability of educational resources or the stability of the camp environment, thereby influencing the findings. Additionally, the study was conducted during a specific period, and the conditions within the camp may change over time, which limits the temporal generalizability of the findings.

10. Limitations in Data Interpretation

Finally, there are inherent limitations in the interpretation of the data collected. The complex and multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing education makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. The interplay of various factors, such as trauma, displacement, socio-economic status, and cultural differences, complicates the interpretation of the data.

Moreover, the researcher's own biases and perspectives may have influenced the interpretation of the findings. Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, the process of analyzing qualitative data is inherently subjective, and different researchers might interpret the same data differently. This limitation suggests that the findings of this study should be viewed as one possible interpretation among many, rather than as definitive conclusions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while this study provides valuable insights into the challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, it is important to acknowledge the limitations that may have affected the findings. The lack of resources, time constraints, sampling limitations, ethical considerations, language barriers, limited access to participants, reliance on self-reported data, limited data collection methods, external factors, and limitations in data interpretation all contribute to the complexity and limitations of this research. Future studies could address these limitations by securing more resources, extending the research timeline, expanding the sample size and diversity, and employing a wider range of data collection methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the educational challenges faced by refugee children in such settings.

5.5 areas of further research

Areas for further research on challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education in Dzaleka camp could include:

Impact of Trauma: Investigate how experiences of displacement and trauma affect refugee children's ability to engage in education and their long-term educational outcomes.

Language Barriers: Explore the impact of language barriers on educational attainment, including the effectiveness of language acquisition programs and bilingual education initiatives.

Access to Special Needs Education: Investigate the availability and accessibility of special education services for refugee children with disabilities or learning difficulties within the camp setting.

Gender Disparities: Analyze gender disparities in access to education and the specific challenges faced by refugee girls, including cultural barriers, early marriage, and lack of sanitary facilities.

Teacher Training and Support: Evaluate the effectiveness of teacher training programs and support systems in addressing the unique needs of refugee children, including cultural sensitivity and trauma-informed approaches.

Parental Involvement and Community Engagement: Examine the role of parents and the broader community in supporting refugee children's education, including barriers to parental involvement and strategies for community empowerment.

Access to Higher Education and Vocational Training: Investigate the pathways for refugee children to access higher education and vocational training opportunities, including challenges related to accreditation, financial barriers, and recognition of qualifications.

Quality of Educational Infrastructure: Assess the quality of educational facilities, materials, and resources within the camp, including issues of overcrowding, sanitation, and safety.

Government Policies and Funding: Analyze the impact of government policies and funding mechanisms on refugee education in the camp, including the role of international organizations and NGOs in bridging funding gaps and advocating for policy changes.

Long-term Socioeconomic Outcomes: Investigate the long-term socioeconomic outcomes of refugee children who have accessed education in the camp, including employment prospects, income levels, and social integration.

Importance of the Study

Understanding the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies. By identifying specific barriers and needs, this study aims to provide valuable insights for educators,



policymakers, and humanitarian organizations working in Dzaleka and similar contexts. Improving access to quality education for refugee children not only enhances their individual prospects but also contributes to the overall stability and development of their communities

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