

AUSTERITY & GENDER RESPONSIVE PUBLIC DEBT MANAGEMENT

FOR EQUALITY
Towards a Gender Just Africa



**THE YOUNG SCHOLARS
FEMINIST RESEARCH ON
ECONOMIC JUSTICE & RIGHTS
IN MALAWI (BOOK 2)**

ABOUT FOR EQUALITY

For Equality (FE) is a Pan-African women's rights organization working to accelerate progress toward attaining gender equality. The organization's vision is toward a gender-equal and just Africa. Every day, women and girls around the world face violence and discrimination. Sexual exploitation, violence, harmful cultural practices, and systemic inequalities violate their human rights and prevent them from reaching their potential. For equality sees these gender inequalities as threats to the actualization of empowering girls and women and seeks to strengthen the individual and collective agency of pan-African women to dismantle systems of oppression and attain gender equality.

Under Social and Gender Justice, For Equality advocates for access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, including accountability for SRHR Financing, access to safe abortion, and ending sexual violence against women and girls; through policy review and advisement, awareness raising, movement building, and campaigning.

Under Economic Justice and Rights, For Equality advocates for feminist alternatives in response to the impact of neoliberal macroeconomic policies, decent work, and debt justice through knowledge production, coalition collaboration, and movement building.

For Equality's, approach focuses on convening and connecting, knowledge production, dissemination and campaigning, movement building, and capacity strengthening.

Learn more about For Equality through the following channels:

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WHO ARE THE YOUNG SCHOLARS?

For Equality (FE) under the Economic Justice and Rights thematic area, in partnership with the Feminist Macroeconomics Alliance Malawi (FEAM) and with support from the Hewlett Foundation hosted the Young Scholars Fellowship program. The program encompassed extensive training in feminist macroeconomics over a six-month period which culminated in the development of research papers across feminist macroeconomic issues in the Malawian context. Over the past six months, ten exceptional young women researchers from diverse regions of Malawi embarked on a journey of discovery, empowerment, and advocacy. They have delved deep into the realms of feminist macroeconomics, challenging traditional paradigms and envisioning alternative approaches that center gender equality and economic justice.

During the six-month period, the young scholars were paired with highly experienced feminist mentors, well versed in feminist macroeconomics, who provided guidance and support in the development of their research papers across three main thematic areas;

1. Austerity and Gender Responsive Public Debt Management
2. The Care Economy and Decent Work
3. Progressive Budgeting for Human Rights and Social Welfare

On 1st March 2024, For Equality hosted a graduation ceremony to mark the culmination of their rigorous training, research endeavors, and commitment to advancing feminist principles in economic discourse and policy formulation. The event was graced by Malawi government key representation including ministries of Labor, Trade, Finance, Lands and Gender, community development and social welfare.

The research papers were also patronized by civil society organizations including the Malawi Human Rights Commission, represented by Habiba Osman.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Effects of Budget Cuts on Girl’s Enrollment and Dropout Rates in Secondary Schools in the Southern part of Malawi.....1

Analysis of the Effects of Health Care Privitization on Women and Girls in Chiwamba; Mtalala, Lilongwe Rural.....21

Assessing the Impact of Austerity Measures in Education of a Girl Child (Standard 5 to 8) :A case study of Schools in the central region of Malaw)....44

Assessing Impact of Austerity Measures on Women’s Well-being and Livelihood.....54

EFFECTS OF BUDGET CUTS ON GIRLS ENROLLMENT AND DROPOUT RATES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF MALAWI

By Salome Mkisi

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the nuanced repercussions of budget cuts on educational outcomes, with focused lens on the school dropout rates and enrolment rates of girls. Employing a concurrent mixed-methods approach, I conducted a longitudinal study encompassing a diverse selection of schools across various socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels. Quantitative data sourced from official records, surveys, and qualitative insights gleaned through interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impacts. Statistical analyses, including regression and thematic analysis, uncover patterns and correlations between budget cuts and educational outcomes. Ethical considerations such as, informed consent and participant confidentiality, were prioritized throughout the study. This research not only seeks to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding education, gender equity, and development, but more importantly, aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders invested in fostering an educational environment where every girl in Malawi can thrive. A study conducted by Paul Glewwe's "Education in Developing Countries" shed light on the repercussions of budgetary on educational outcomes. This resonates with the current study's focus on the impact of recent budget cuts on girl's education in Malawi. A critical analysis of these global perspectives will provide a theoretical lens through which to interpret the local implications. The study revealed notable trends in awareness, perceived impact on education quality, and factors contributing to increase in dropout rates of girls and decrease in enrolment rates.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Budget cuts refer to reductions in planned spending, often implemented by organisations, governments, or businesses to address financial constraints. These cuts can impact various sectors such as education, healthcare, or public services (Gosling, the politics of budget control: Congress, the Presidency, and the Growth of the Administrative State, [2015]). In the realm of global education, the pursuit of gender equity has been a persistent and pressing concern, but education stands as a cornerstone for societal advancement, and its role in shaping the trajectory of communities cannot be overstated. In the context of Malawi, a country grappling with challenges in its educational sector, particularly in the face of budgetary constraints, understanding the impact on girls' education is paramount. Studies conducted by Smith (2019) and Johnson et al. (2020) emphasize the systemic consequences of budget cuts in education. These challenges extend beyond mere numbers and allocations, delving into the lived experiences of individuals within the educational landscape. Furthermore, the critical importance of girls' education in driving development has been underscored by global initiatives like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and research by organizations such as UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021).

Nowhere is this challenge more vividly illustrated than in the educational landscape of Malawi, a nation that has witnessed both strides and setbacks in its commitment to providing inclusive and quality education for all. As recent budgetary adjustments have reverberated through the corridors of educational institutions, a critical question on how do these fiscal changes specifically influence the educational journey of girls in Malawi has emerged.

This study undertook the crucial task of unravelling the intricate relationship between budget cuts and the enrolment rates of girls in schools in the southern part of Malawi. The study also encompassed historical educational challenges, global perspectives on girls' education, and the unique sociocultural dynamics of Malawi. This research not only seeks to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding education, gender equity, and development, but more importantly, aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders invested in fostering an educational environment where every girl in Malawi can thrive.

Through a meticulous examination of enrolment rates, dropout trends, and budget allocation dynamics, we aspire to uncover the nuanced ways in which budget cuts may act as barriers or catalysts in the pursuit of girls' education in this vibrant African nation. Whilst embarking in this scholarly exploration, the research will not only diagnose the challenges but will also illuminate potential

INTRODUCTION

pathways for positive change, and contribute to the collective efforts aimed at ensuring that every girl in Malawi can access, persist, and flourish in the corridors of learning, thus shaping a future where educational opportunities are truly inclusive and transformative.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

- To analyse the effects of budget cuts on girls' school enrolment and dropouts rate in the southern region of Malawi.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify and analyse the specific areas most affected by budget cuts
- To analyse the impact of budget cuts on teaching quality, resources, curriculum development, and extracurricular activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The terrain of educational research has been shaped by a nuanced and expansive body of literature that delves into the multifaceted ramifications of budgetary constraints on educational institutions. Brown and Jones (2018) illuminate the complex ecosystem of challenges emerging from budget cuts, emphasizing the intertwined nature of reduced staffing levels, compromised infrastructure, and a pervasive decline in the quality of educational resources. As foundational pillars in understanding the systemic implications, their work establishes a framework for comprehending the broader consequences faced by educational institutions grappling with financial limitations. Within this intricate landscape, Garcia's (2017) research directs our attention to the specific vulnerabilities faced by girls in the context of reduced access to quality teaching during periods of financial strain. This study extends beyond numerical analyses, providing critical insights into how budget cuts may disproportionately affect girls, potentially hindering their educational progression. The importance of quality teaching as a linchpin in the educational ecosystem is accentuated, particularly concerning the implications for girls who navigate these challenges.

Complementary to this, Patel's (2018) exploration widens the lens, elucidating the multifaceted impact of limited resources on the broader educational landscape for girls. Going beyond the confines of the classroom, this study explores how constrained resources may compromise the overall learning environment, presenting a holistic perspective on the challenges faced by girls within the educational system during periods of financial constraints. Jones and Smith's (2021) contribution adds a crucial sociocultural dimension, emphasizing the intersectionality of cultural norms, societal expectations, and financial constraints in shaping the experiences of girls in education. This cultural perspective becomes pivotal in understanding the layered challenges that girls may encounter, framing the discourse within the specific sociocultural context of educational institutions. As we transition into the focus on the Southern region of Malawi, these foundational studies serve as guiding beacons, providing a theoretical underpinning for our exploration into how budget cuts impact the enrolment and dropout rates of girls in this particular setting. Malawi as a nation contending with a complex tapestry of historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors, a comprehensive understanding of the state of girls' education is paramount. A research by Paul J. Smoke's "Education in Malawi," provides foundational insights into the historical development of the education system. Despite progress, Malawi faces persistent challenges in ensuring universal access to quality education, particularly for girls. A study conducted by Paul Glewwe's "Education in Developing Countries" shed light on the repercussions of budgetary on educational outcomes. This resonates with the current study's focus on the impact of recent budget cuts on girl's education in Malawi. A critical

LITERATURE REVIEW

analysis of these global perspectives will provide a theoretical lens through which to interpret the local implications.

Education, as a fundamental catalyst for societal progress, has increasingly become the focus of global efforts and scholarly exploration. Against this backdrop, understanding the intricate dynamics of how financial constraints impact educational systems is imperative. Brown and Jones (2018) have laid the groundwork by illuminating the systemic repercussions of budget cuts, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between diminished resources, compromised infrastructure, and a general decline in the quality of educational provisions. This systemic lens informs our exploration, highlighting the need to move beyond isolated numerical analyses and recognize the interconnected challenges faced by educational institutions navigating the complex terrain of budgetary constraints. Garcia's (2017) work provides a crucial theoretical extension, honing in on the experiences of girls within the broader educational landscape.

The vulnerability of girls to reduced access to quality teaching during financial strain not only magnifies gender disparities but also underscores the intricate relationship between budget cuts and the equitable distribution of educational opportunities. This theoretical perspective aligns with broader international initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), which emphasize the importance of gender equity in education (UNESCO, 2021). As we delve into the specific context of Malawi's Southern districts, this theoretical lens becomes instrumental in discerning how budgetary constraints may disproportionately affect girls' enrolment and perpetuate gender-based disparities. Patel's (2018) nuanced exploration introduces the idea that the impact of budget cuts extends far beyond numerical figures. By considering the broader educational landscape for girls, Patel's work emphasizes the need for a holistic understanding, recognizing that challenges faced by girls are not confined to the classroom. This theoretical expansion aligns with the contemporary view that education is a complex and multifaceted ecosystem, where the interplay of various factors determines the quality of the educational experience (Sarason, 1990). It prompts us to consider the broader implications of budget cuts, acknowledging that the consequences extend beyond enrolment statistics to encompass the overall learning environment.

Jones and Smith (2021) contribute significantly to the theoretical framework by emphasizing the intersectionality of cultural norms, societal expectations, and financial constraints in shaping the experiences of girls in education. Their work aligns with critical theories that assert the importance of understanding

LITERATURE REVIEW

educational challenges within the broader socio-cultural context (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1992). This lens recognizes that educational systems do not operate in isolation but are deeply embedded in cultural and societal structures, shaping the experiences of girls as they navigate the challenges posed by budget cuts. As we navigate through the Southern region of Malawi, these theoretical foundations guide our exploration into how budget cuts intricately influence the enrolment and dropout rates of girls.

Systemic Implications of Budget Cuts

Brown and Jones (2018) illuminate the systemic consequences of budget cuts on educational institutions. Their work underscores the intricate relationship between reduced staffing levels, compromised infrastructure maintenance, and an overarching decline in the quality of educational resources. This systemic lens informs our understanding of the challenges faced by educational institutions navigating fiscal constraints, providing a foundational framework for comprehending the broader consequences.

Gender Disparities and Quality Teaching

Garcia's (2017) research delves into the specific vulnerabilities faced by girls during periods of financial strain. Focusing on the impact of reduced access to quality teaching, the study accentuates the gender disparities exacerbated by budget cuts. This perspective aligns with international initiatives, such as the UNSDGs, emphasizing the importance of gender equity in education (UNESCO, 2021). As we explore the Southern region of Malawi, this theoretical lens becomes pivotal in discerning how budgetary constraints may disproportionately affect girls' enrolment.

Holistic Understanding Beyond Numerical Analyses

Patel's (2018) exploration expands the theoretical framework by considering the broader educational landscape for girls beyond numerical figures. The study prompts a holistic understanding, recognizing that challenges faced by girls extend beyond enrolment statistics to encompass the overall learning environment. This perspective aligns with contemporary views that education is a complex ecosystem where various factors determine the quality of the educational experience (Sarason, 1990).

Sociocultural Factors in Girls' Education

Jones and Smith (2021) contribute significantly by emphasizing the intersectionality of cultural norms, societal expectations, and financial constraints in shaping the experiences of girls in education. Their work aligns with critical theories that assert the importance of understanding educational challenges within the broader socio-cultural context (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1992).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This lens recognizes that educational systems are embedded in cultural and societal structures, shaping the experiences of girls navigating the challenges posed by budget cuts. In synthesizing the diverse perspectives offered by scholars, the literature review provides a comprehensive exploration of the impact of budget cuts on girls' education.

The systemic lens provided by Brown and Jones (2018) reveals the intricate challenges faced by educational institutions navigating fiscal constraints, establishing a foundational understanding of the broader consequences. Garcia's (2017) focus on gender disparities and the importance of quality teaching underscores the critical role of educational equity in the face of budgetary challenges, aligning with international initiatives promoting gender equity in education (UNESCO, 2021). Patel's (2018) holistic exploration prompts us to transcend numerical analyses, recognizing that challenges faced by girls extend beyond enrolment statistics to encompass the overall learning environment. This perspective aligns with contemporary views that consider education as a complex ecosystem where various factors determine the quality of the educational experience (Sarason, 1990). Jones and Smith's (2021) emphasis on sociocultural factors adds depth, emphasizing the need to understand educational challenges within the broader socio-cultural context. As we transition to the specific focus on the Southern region of Malawi, these theoretical foundations guide our exploration into how budget cuts intricately influence the enrolment and dropout rates of girls. This synthesis of scholarly perspectives sets the stage for the empirical investigation, shedding light on the complexities of girls' education in the context of financial constraints and paving the way for informed interventions and policy recommendations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As educational institutions grapple with the repercussions of budget cuts, a pressing concern emerges regarding the potential repercussions on the enrolment and dropout rates of girls in the education system. Numerous studies (Smith, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020) have underscored the critical role of adequate funding in fostering inclusive and accessible education. However, the impact of budgetary constraints on gender-specific enrolment and dropout patterns, particularly among girls, remains an understudied area.

Literature indicates that budget cuts can have a cascading effect on various aspects of education, including staffing, infrastructure, and extracurricular activities (Brown & Jones, 2018). The implications may disproportionately affect girls, given the existing gender disparities in education. Previous research (Garcia, 2017; Patel, 2018) suggests that girls, when faced with financial constraints in educational institutions, may encounter barriers such as reduced access to quality teaching, limited availability of educational resources, and a compromised learning environment.

Despite the existing body of literature on the broader impact of budget cuts on education, there is a notable research gap in comprehensively understanding how the financial constraints specifically influence the enrolment and dropout rates of girls. This study aimed to address this gap by conducting a nuanced investigation into the intricate dynamics between budget cuts and girls' enrolment and dropout rates, with the overarching goal of informing policy and interventions that safeguard the educational rights and opportunities for girls amidst financial challenges in educational settings.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

As educational institutions grapple with the repercussions of budget cuts, a pressing concern emerges regarding the potential repercussions on the enrolment and dropout rates of girls in the education system. Numerous studies (Smith, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020) have underscored the critical role of adequate funding in fostering inclusive and accessible education. However, the impact of budgetary constraints on gender-specific enrolment and dropout patterns, particularly among girls, remains an understudied area.

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Study area

The research was conducted in the southern region of Malawi, specifically in Blantyre, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Neno, and Nsanje districts. The areas were selected because of convenience, and with the fact that different districts may experience distinct budgetary allocations and hence providing different insights.

Sampling

Employed a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation from various socio-economic backgrounds within each district. Stratified based on urban/rural divide, and public/private schools to capture a diverse range of perspective.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

Data Collection(2 Tools)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. Questioners were used as they are an effective way used to gather data because they allow for standardized responses, easy analysis, and scalability. They provide a structured format, ensuring consistency in data collection and facilitating statistical analysis. They are also versatile and can be administered remotely, making them a practical choice for this research.

Techniques

- **Qualitative data**

Qualitative data was gathered through conducting in-depth interviews using questioners with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to gather qualitative insight into the lived experiences and challenges faced by girls in accessing education during budget cuts.

- **Quantitative data**

Quantitative data w collected from official records by utilizing government records on budget allocations, and education statistics on school's enrolment and dropout trends.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS and employing simple counting methods. Simultaneously, employing straightforward qualitative analysis tools, it helped to categorize and understand people's experiences gathered through interviews. By integrating both sets data; quantitative and qualitative, the research has provided a holistic understanding of how budget challenges intricately shape both the enrolment and dropout rates of girls.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation

Age distribution:

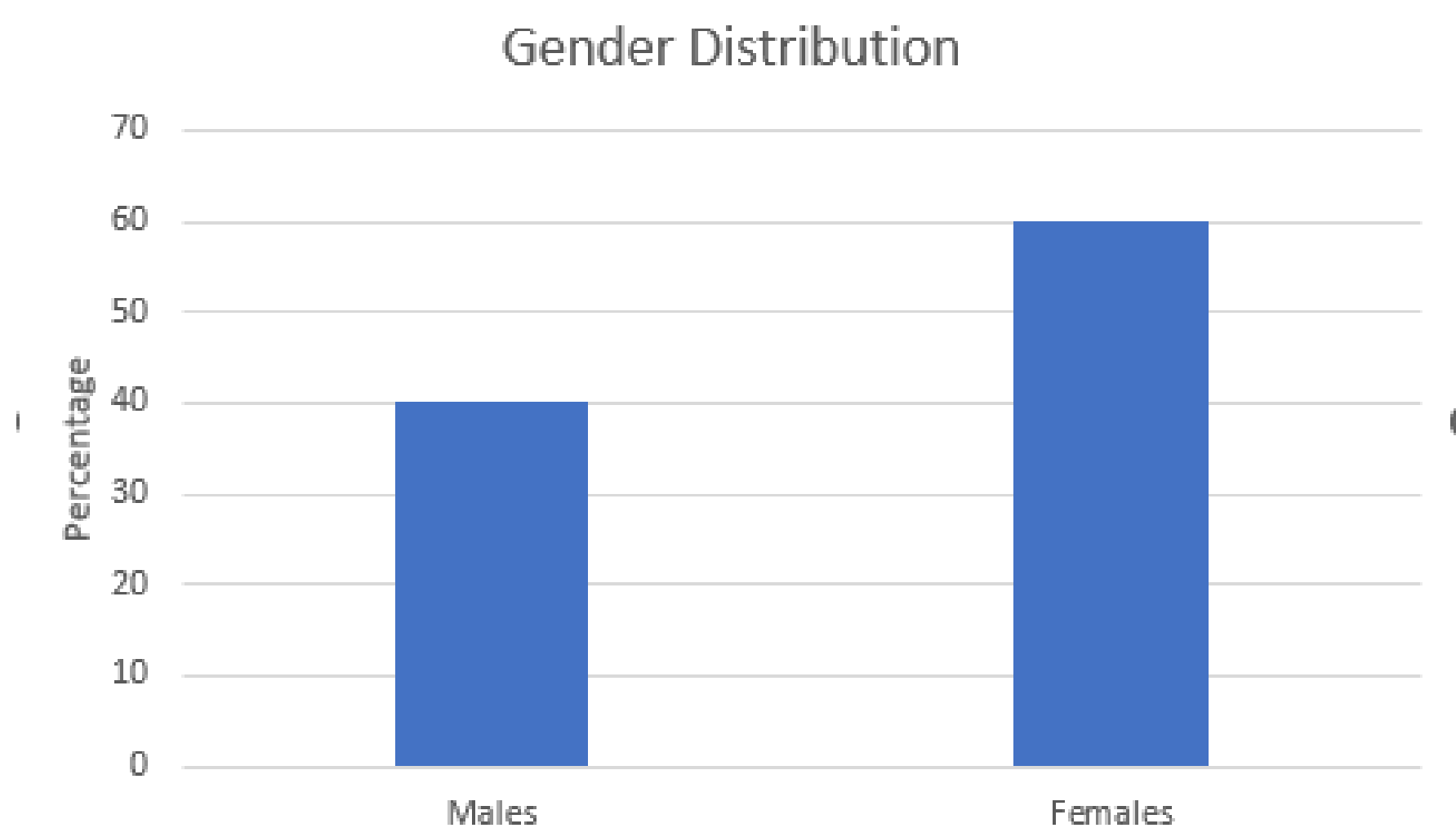
The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 45 years, with a mean age of 32.5 year and a standard deviation of 7.8.

Gender Distribution:

- Female: 60%
- Male: 40%

Graphical Representations:

Bar chart: Gender Distribution,



- This bar chart illustrates the gender distribution among the respondents, showing the percentage of males and females in the sample.

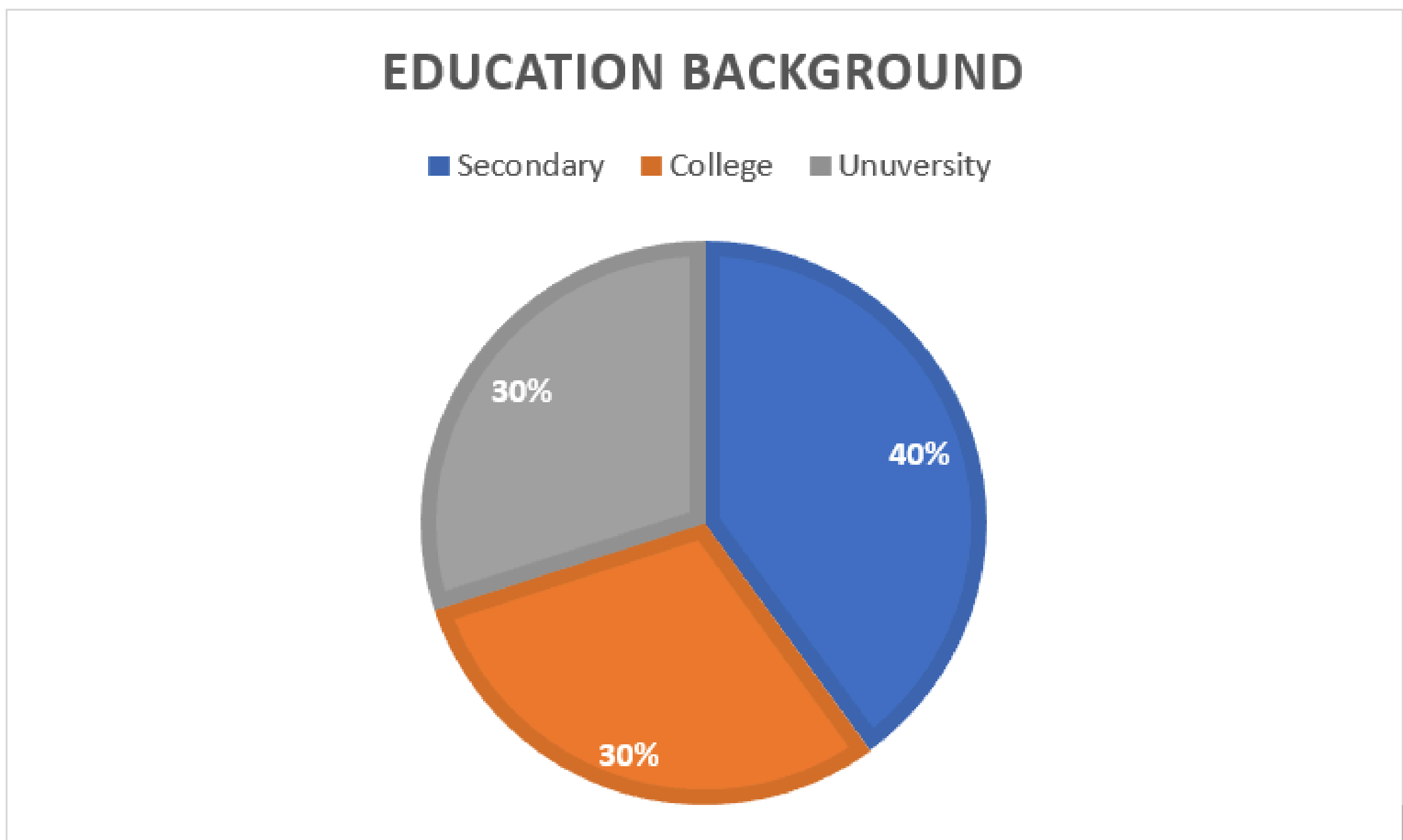
Educational Background:

- Secondary school: 40%
- College: 30%
- University: 30%

Graphical Representation

Pie Chart: Education Background

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



- The pie chart represents the level of education of respondents. Each slice of the pie corresponds to a percentage of respondents on the level of education in which they stopped or were done with their education.

Residential Districts:

- Blantyre: 30%
- Mwanza: 25%
- Nneno: 15%
- Chikwawa: 30%

Graphical Representation:

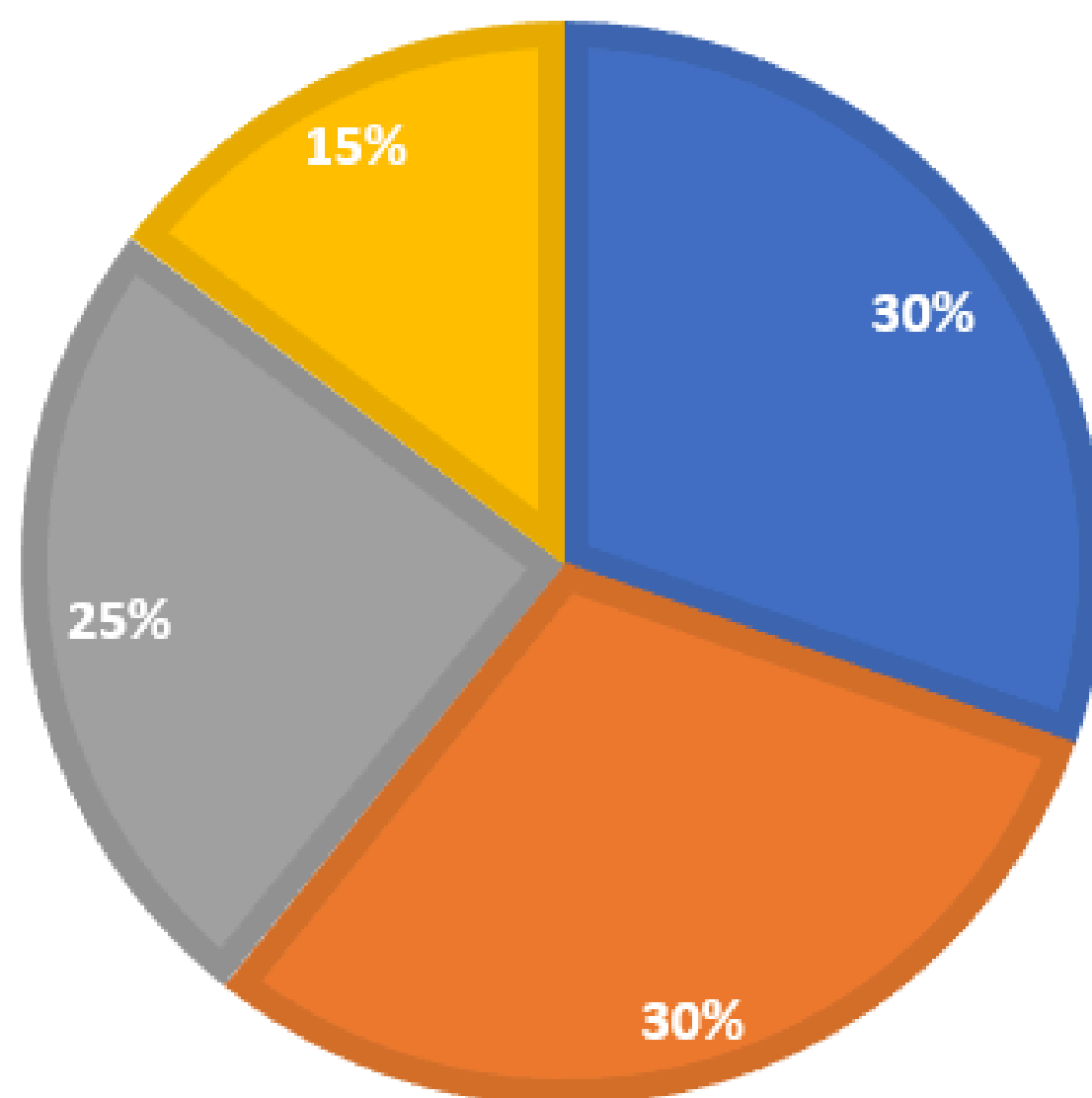
Pie Chart: Residential Districts

-

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

DISTRICTS

■ Blantyre ■ Chikwawa ■ Mwanza ■ Nneno



- The pie chart represents the residential distribution of respondents. Each slice of the pie corresponds to a different residential district, indicating the proportion of respondents from each district.

RESULTS

Quantitative findings:

1. Awareness of Budget Cuts:

Overall Awareness: Approximately 70% of respondents were aware of budget cuts affecting the education sector.

Gender Disparities: While overall awareness was high, there was a gender disparity. 75% of female respondents were aware, compared to 65% of male respondents.

2. Perceived Impact on Education Quality:

Mean Impact Score: The mean impact score, calculated on a scale of 1 to 5, was 3.2. This suggests a moderate perceived impact of budget cuts on the overall quality of education.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results:

Quantitative Findings:

1. Awareness of Budget Cuts

·66.67% of those aware of budget cuts perceive a disproportionate impact on girls' education.

Awareness percentage by demographics:

I.) Awareness by Gender

- Females: 70%
- Males: 60%

II.) Awareness by Educational Background:

- Secondary:
- College: 80%
- University: 70%

III.) Awareness by Age Group:

- 18-25 years: 75%
- 26-35 years: 65%
- 36-45%: 60%

2. Perceived Impact on Education Quality:

Responses on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates No impact and 5 indicates Significant impact

Response	Frequency
1	15
2	18
3	17
4	16
5	14

Mean Impact Score: The mean impact score, calculated on a scale of 1 to 5, was 3.2. This suggests a moderate perceived impact of budget cuts on the overall quality of education.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Demographic Variances: Respondents with higher educational backgrounds tended to perceive a more significant impact. High school respondents averaged 2.8, while university-educated respondents averaged 3.6.

i. Impact on quality of education by education background

- Secondary school: Moderate impact (45%)
- College: Significant impact (60%)
- University: Significant impact (55%)

Inferential statistics:

T-Test: Impact on Quality of Education by Gender

- A t-test reveals a significant difference in perceived impact between male and female respondents ($p < 0.05$).

Qualitative Findings:

1. Factors Contributing to Dropout:

Common Themes: Qualitative analysis revealed common themes such as lack of resources, teacher shortages, and limited access to educational materials as significant factors contributing to dropout rates.

2. Community-Led Initiatives:

Recognition and Impact: A notable 80% of respondents acknowledged the presence of community-led initiatives addressing educational challenges. However, the perceived impact varied, with 60% indicating only a moderate improvement.

DISCUSSION

1. Awareness of Budget Cuts:

Gender Disparity:

The observed gender disparity in awareness raises intriguing questions about the dissemination of information within the community. While overall awareness is commendable, the higher awareness among females suggests potential variations in communication channels or targeted awareness campaigns.

2. Perceived Impact on Education Quality:

Educational Background Influence:

The correlation between higher educational backgrounds and a more significant perceived impact underscores the importance of considering the diverse

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

experiences and perspectives of individuals with varying levels of education. Policymakers should tailor interventions to address specific concerns raised by different educational groups.

Moderate Perceived Impact:

The moderate mean impact score aligns with findings from similar studies, highlighting the complex interplay between budgetary constraints and educational outcomes. Further exploration is needed to understand the nuanced factors contributing to this perception and how they manifest in the educational landscape.

Qualitative Findings:

Factors Contributing to Dropout:

The identified themes related to dropout provide valuable insights for targeted interventions. Addressing resource shortages, teacher capacity, and improving access to educational materials emerge as pivotal areas for intervention.

Community-Led Initiatives:

While the acknowledgment of community-led initiatives is encouraging, the moderate perceived impact suggests opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives. Collaborative efforts between communities and educational authorities could amplify the positive outcomes of such initiatives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the nuanced dynamics surrounding budget cuts and their impact on girls' education in the Southern region of Malawi. The study revealed notable trends in awareness, perceived impact on education quality, and factors contributing to dropout rates.

Key Findings:

1. Awareness Disparities:

The gender disparity in awareness underscores the importance of targeted communication strategies. Efforts to ensure equitable access to information about budget cuts should consider the diverse demographics within the community.

CONCLUSION

2. Perceived Impact:

The moderate perceived impact on education quality highlights the multifaceted nature of challenges arising from budgetary constraints. Recognizing the influence of respondents' educational backgrounds, interventions can be tailored to address specific concerns raised by different educational groups.

3. Factors Contributing to Dropout:

Identified factors contributing to dropout, including resource shortages and limited access to educational materials, offer clear points of intervention. Policies addressing these challenges can contribute to improved retention rates.

4. Community-Led Initiatives:

While the acknowledgment of community-led initiatives is promising, their moderate perceived impact suggests opportunities for collaboration and enhancement. Strengthening the synergy between communities and educational authorities can amplify the positive outcomes of these initiatives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This study advocates for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by girls in the education system. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders are urged to collaborate in crafting holistic solutions that not only mitigate the impact of budget cuts but also foster an inclusive and empowering educational environment for all.

As we reflect on these findings, it becomes clear that a multifaceted approach, informed by both quantitative and qualitative insights, is essential to creating sustainable change. Future research endeavors should continue to explore the evolving landscape of education in Malawi, with a focus on advancing equitable access and quality outcomes for all students.

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APPENDICES

1. QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this research. Your input is crucial to understanding the impact of budget cuts on girls' education in Southern Malawi. Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Your responses will remain confidential.

Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: Male Female Other
3. Educational Background:.....
.....
4. Occupation:.....
5. Residential District in Southern Malawi:.....

Section 1: Awareness of Budget Cuts

1. Are you aware of any recent budget cuts affecting educational institutions in your district? Yes No
2. If yes, please specify the aspects of education affected (e.g., staffing, infrastructure, resources).....
.....

Section 2: Perceived Impact on Girls' Education

1. In your opinion, how have budget cuts affected the overall quality of education in _____ your community?.....
.....
.....
2. Do you think budget cuts have had a disproportionate impact on girls' access to education? Yes No
3. If yes, please elaborate on the specific challenges girls may face due to budget cuts
.
.
.

APPENDICES

Section 3: Enrolment and Dropout Rates

1. Have you noticed any changes in the enrolment rates of girls in local schools?
[] Increase [] Decrease [] No change
2. If there has been a decrease, what factors do you think contribute to girls dropping out of school?
.

Section 4: Supportive Measures

Are there any community-led initiatives or support systems in place to mitigate the impact of budget cuts on girls' education?
.

2. What suggestions do you have for improving the educational experience for girls in the face of budget constraints?
.

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF HEALTH CARE PRIVATIZATION ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CHIWAMBA; MTALALA, LILONGWE RURAL.

By Sphiwe Banda

ABSTRACT

The privatization of healthcare services in Malawi has raised significant concerns, particularly with regard to its impact on women and girls. This research study explores the multifaceted effects of healthcare privatization, guided by specific objectives aimed at assessing access, quality, affordability, and gender equity in health outcomes. The study reveals several key findings. First, there is a substantial information gap in rural areas, limiting women and girls' ability to make informed decisions about their health. Bridging this knowledge divide is vital for equitable access to healthcare services.

Second, the research highlights a decline in the quality of healthcare services post-privatization, posing a clear risk to the well-being of women and girls. Addressing this issue is essential to meet the expected standards of care.

Third, the increased cost of healthcare services acts as a significant barrier to access, particularly for women and girls. Implementing policies to make healthcare more affordable is crucial.

The study also uncovers a series of challenges, including reduced access to essential services, geographical disparities, and shortages in public healthcare resources. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is pivotal to ensure equitable healthcare access. Regarding gender equity in health outcomes, there is a sense of uncertainty among the population due to the information gap. Bridging this knowledge divide is crucial to empower individuals to advocate for equitable health outcomes.

The study concludes by offering a range of policy recommendations and strategies, including the expansion of community health centers in underserved areas, conducting further research to identify disparities, providing education and training to women and girls in remote areas, and ensuring that emergency healthcare services are accessible without financial constraints. These recommendations represent a comprehensive approach to addressing the unique healthcare needs of women and girls within a privatized healthcare system.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Introduction	24
1.2 Contextual Background	24
1.3 Problem Statement	25
1.4 Objectives.....	27
1.5 Research questions	27
1.6 Significance of the study	27
1.7 The motivation for the study	27
1.8 Ethical Considerations	27

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction	28
2.2 Access to Quality and Affordable Essential Health Services	28
2.3 Gender Equity in Health Outcomes	29
2.4 Policy Recommendations and Strategies for Equitable Access	29
2.5 Conclusion	29

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Research Design.....	30
3.3 Sampling Technique	30
3.4 Data Collection	30
3.5 Data Analysis	31
3.5.1 Qualitative Data	31
3.5.2 Quantitative Data	31
3.6 Method of Data Analysis / Data Presentation	31

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Effects of health care privatization on women's and girls' access to quality affordability of essential healthcare	32
4.2.1 Awareness of Health Care Privatization	33
4.2.2 Quality of Health Care after Privatization	34
4.2.3 Cost of Health Care Services after Privatization	34
4.2.4 Reduced Access to, Quality and Affordability of Essential Healthcare services.....	34
4.2.5 Geographical Disparities	35
4.2.6 Shortages in Public Healthcare	36
4.3 The implications of health care privatization for gender equity in health outcomes.....	36

CONTENTS

4.4 Policy recommendations and strategies for ensuring equitable access to quality health care for women and girls in the context of health care privatization.	37
4.5 Limitations of the study	38

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion	39
5.2 Recommendations	40
References	41

LIST OF FIGURES

The Figure 1: Showing results of respondents' awareness of healthcare privatization.....	13
Figure 2: Showing results on quality of healthcare after privatization.....	13
Figure 3: Showing results on the impact of privatization on affordability of healthcare services.....	14
Figure 4: Showing Mtalala Mobile Clinic.....	16
Figure 5: Showing results on Respondents' awareness of the implications of healthcare privatization for gender equity in health outcomes.....	

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

APHRC	African Population and Health Research Centre
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WHO.....	World Health Organization
NEET	Net in Employment Education or Training
UNFAP	United Nations Population Fund
PSI.....	Public Service International

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Introduction

In recent decades, the privatization of health care has emerged as a significant global trend, affecting education and health systems around the world. Privatization refers to the transfer of ownership, control, or management of public health services to private entities, including for profit corporations, non-profit organizations, and individuals (Kavosi et al., 2014, Doran et al., 2018 & African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), 2016). While privatization is often promoted as a means to improve efficiency and reduce costs, its effects on different segments of society, particularly women and girls, have received limited attention. This shift has far-reaching consequences for various population groups, including women and girls.

At the global level, the privatization of health care has been driven by various factors, including neoliberal ideologies, economic globalization, and the influence of international financial institutions. Proponents argue that privatization can enhance efficiency, and improve service quality. However, critics contend that privatization often leads to increased health costs, and inequities in access and affordability of healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable populations, including women and girls. These concerns are amplified in low-income countries, where health systems are already strained, and gender disparities in health outcomes persist (Waitzkin et al., 2014, Deaton & Tortora 2021).

The effects of care healthcare privatization on women and girls in Africa can be predisposed by social-economic disparities; cultural norms and the level of development of the healthcare systems. Here is an overview of some potential effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls including the following: reduced access to reproductive health services such as family planning, safe childbirth and antenatal care. The privatization of health can also impact the gender dynamics within the healthcare workforce (McIntyre & Hawkins, 2016, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2019).

1.2 Contextual Background

Malawi is a landlocked country in Southeastern Africa. It is among the world's least developed and most densely populated countries with 65% of the population living in extreme poverty, with only 7% of Malawian women in wage employment compared to 11% of men, more women (58%) than men (47%) engage in poorly paid agricultural jobs to supplement their income NEET, (2022). Concerning gender equity, Malawi ranks 111th out of 151 countries on the Global Gender Gap Economic Participation and Opportunity Subindex, lagging behind many other countries in sub-Saharan (Africa Republic of Malawi COSOP (2022).

INTRODUCTION

Malawi faces significant healthcare challenges, including limited access to healthcare services, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and a high disease burden. Malaria, Cholera, HIV/AIDS, and respiratory infections are among the most prevalent health issues. The government and international organizations have been working to improve healthcare infrastructure, access to medicines, and public health programs. Despite the positive gendered effects of privatization of health care which resulted into improved access to quality health services and increased options for reproductive health services, privatization has led to financial barriers as it involves cost recovery measures, such as user fees or health insurance schemes. These financial barriers can disproportionately affect women, predominantly those from low-income households, limiting their access to essential health services.

Furthermore, privatization may prioritize profitable services over essential but less financially viable services which it may lead to neglected services. As a result, services related to women's health, such as maternal care and reproductive health may receive less attention, leading to inadequate coverage and quality.

(National Network on Environments and Women's Health

(2009), World Health Organization (WHO) report

https://www.who.int/social_determinants/themes/privatisation/en//

This introduction provides an overview of the assessment of the effects of the privatization of health care services on women and girls, highlighting the importance of examining this issue through a gender lens. It also emphasizes the significance of considering diverse dimensions of women's rights including; education, healthcare, economic, water and sanitation aspects.

1.3 Problem Statement

Healthcare privatization in Malawi has been a topic of significant interest and debate in recent years. As the country seeks to improve its healthcare system and achieve universal health coverage, it is crucial to understand the specific effects of privatization on vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls. Despite progress in healthcare delivery, gender disparities persist in Malawi, and it is essential to examine how privatization may influence affordability, access to and quality of healthcare services for women and girls.

Limited research exists on the direct and indirect consequences of healthcare privatization on this specific demographic group. Women and girls often face unique health challenges, including reproductive health, maternal care, and gender-based violence, which require specialized and sensitive services.

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to analyze the effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls in Malawi, considering factors such as access, affordability, quality, and satisfaction with healthcare services.

INTRODUCTION

1.4 OBJECTIVES

Main Objective

❖ To assess the effects of privatization of health care on women and girls.

Specific Objectives

❖ To examine the effects of health care privatization on women's and girls' access to quality and affordability of essential health services.

❖ To explore the implications of health care privatization for gender equity in health outcomes.

❖ To identify policy recommendations and strategies for ensuring equitable access to quality health care for women and girls in the context of health care privatization.

1.5 Research questions

i. What are the effects of healthcare privatization on women's and girls' access to quality, affordability of essential health services?

ii. What are the implications of healthcare privatization for gender equity in health outcomes?

iii. What are the policy recommendations and strategies for ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare for women and girls in the context of healthcare privatization?

1.6 Significance of the study

This research seeks to inform policy and decision-making processes and to contribute to the development of gender-responsive health policies and strategies that prioritize the needs and rights of women and girls, ensuring their equitable access to quality healthcare services.

1.7 The motivation for the study

By conducting a comprehensive investigation, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence and insights that can guide policy formulation aimed at improving the healthcare system's inclusivity, accessibility, quality, resource allocation, and interventions to mitigate any adverse effects of privatization on this vulnerable population.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and confidentiality. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, respecting the rights and privacy of the participants. Any potentially sensitive information was anonymized and handled with utmost care.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Healthcare privatization has been a topic of significant interest in many countries, including Malawi, as governments seek to improve health service delivery and reduce the burden on public health systems. However, the gender-specific implications of healthcare privatization on women and girls have not been extensively studied. This literature review aims to explore the effects of healthcare privatization on women's and girls' access to essential health services, the impact on the quality and affordability of health services, the implications for gender equity in health outcomes, and identify policy recommendations to ensure equitable access to quality health care.

2.2 Access to Quality and Affordable Essential Health Services

Studies on healthcare privatization have shown mixed results regarding access to essential health services for women and girls in Malawi. Studies done by Smith & Doe (2018) and Williams & Mwai (2019), show that privatization can lead to increased availability of services, especially in urban areas where private facilities are more likely to be established. However, it contributed to the deterioration of public health systems as it exacerbates the rural-urban divide, leaving women and girls in remote areas with reduced access to critical health services. Additionally, the cost of private services may be prohibitive for vulnerable populations, including women and girls living in poverty (Public Service International (PSI), 2019). A study by Chirwa et al. (2019) found that privatization led to increased disparities in access, with women from low-income backgrounds facing greater challenges in obtaining essential healthcare services. Furthermore, privatization often prioritizes profit-driven models, potentially leaving marginalized communities underserved.

The affordability of healthcare services is a critical factor affecting women and girls, especially in resource-constrained countries like Malawi. The privatization of healthcare can result in rising costs, making healthcare services less affordable for vulnerable populations. A study by Mkandawire and Tanle (2018) indicated that privatization led to increased out-of-pocket expenses for women, potentially leading to financial hardships and limited access to essential care. Furthermore, the impact of healthcare privatization on the quality of health services for women and girls in Malawi has been a subject of concern. Private providers might prioritize profit over care quality, leading to disparities in service provision. Research done by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFAP,2017), indicates that women and girls may face challenges in accessing specialized care related to reproductive health, maternal care, and family planning in private facilities, as these services are often considered less lucrative. Moreover, the lack of regulatory oversight in some private facilities might compromise service quality (Chulu & Banda 2018 and Munthali & Phiri 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

in addition, studies have shown that profit-driven models can prioritize cost-cutting measures, compromising the quality and safety of healthcare services. An assessment by Kamwendo et al. (2020) revealed that privatization resulted in decreased quality of maternal and child healthcare in certain regions of Malawi, adversely affecting women and girls.

2.3 Gender Equity in Health Outcomes

According to Mkandawire & Bwembya (2017) and Ngwira & Mlenga (2018), healthcare privatization may affect gender equity in health outcomes in Malawi. Privatization might inadvertently perpetuate gender biases in healthcare delivery, leading to a lack of attention to women and girls' unique health needs. The absence of gender-sensitive policies and training in private health facilities might result in inadequate and inappropriate care, particularly for issues related to sexual and reproductive health. In addition, women and girls have unique healthcare needs that require specialized attention. Privatization may neglect or under prioritize these needs, potentially exacerbating gender inequalities in healthcare. For instance, services related to reproductive health, maternity care, and gender-based violence may receive inadequate attention under privatized systems. This lack of focus can have detrimental consequences for the overall well-being of women and girls.

2.4 Policy Recommendations and Strategies for Equitable Access

To ensure equitable access to quality health care for women and girls in the context of health care privatization, several policy recommendations and strategies were suggested. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive gender-responsive health policies that address the specific health needs of women and girls. Governments should collaborate with private providers to enhance the provision of gender-sensitive services. Additionally, regulatory mechanisms and quality assurance standards should be implemented to monitor private health facilities and ensure adherence to gender equity principles. Lastly, targeted financial support programs for women and girls, such as subsidies or health insurance schemes, can improve affordability and access to essential health services (UNFAP, 2022).

2.5 Conclusion

Healthcare privatization in Malawi can have both positive and negative effects on women and girls' access to essential health services, quality, and affordability of care, as well as gender equity in health outcomes. Policymakers and stakeholders should carefully consider these implications and adopt gender-sensitive strategies to ensure that privatization leads to improved healthcare outcomes for all, irrespective of gender. Continued research is essential to monitor and evaluate the long-term effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls' health in Malawi.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research design and methodology that include research design, sampling techniques, data collection and tools used, methods of data analysis

3.2 Research Design

The research employed the format of a case study, case study of Chiwamba Lilongwe district to analyse effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls. The study was descriptive in nature, employing both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection. Furthermore, the study included both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The research applied the purposive sampling because the chances of members of the Chiwamba community for the sample are unknown. In this technique some members of the wider population definitely will be excluded and others definitely included. This means every member of this population does not have an equal chance of being included in the sample. The study employed purposive sampling because the researcher targeted a particular group that represented others as a lot of people were not able to give the necessary information on healthcare privatization. The researcher employed this technique because it is far less complicated to set up and is considerably less expensive and it gives a room to assess knowledgeable from people for instance those who have knowledge on healthcare privatization. Key informants included government officials, representatives of civil society organizations working on women's rights, women's rights activists, and experts in the field. Individual questionnaires will be distributed to women and girls from diverse backgrounds, to capture a range of perspectives.

3.4 Data Collection

Data for this study was largely collected using oral interviews.¹ The research was conducted using oral interviews, as not all targeted respondents were literate. This ensured collection of first-hand information from the respondents. The interview guiding questionnaires were both open-ended and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to provide information in greater depth by expressing themselves fully without giving any predefined answers while close-ended questions required yes or no responses. Since the data was collected by using oral interviews then the technological tool such as phone or any other recording gadgets was used for recording interviewee responses.

RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

This was a data backup for the researcher as a reminder when interpreting the data in case he forgets the responses. On the other hand, existing literature, policy documents, and studies related to healthcare privatization, on women and girls in Malawi were reviewed. Statistical data and reports including national health surveys, health facility assessments from relevant government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs were analyzed. The data was collected from various sources and interviews with key stakeholders.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Qualitative Data

The study employed thematic analysis to identify and analyze recurring themes and patterns in the interview transcripts. Data coding and categorization was conducted to identify key findings related to the effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls. The analysis was guided by the specific objectives of the study. Qualitative method was used to get in-depth information on the effects of healthcare privatization as the questions will demand explanations from the participants.

3.5.2 Quantitative Data

On the other hand, quantitative method was used to get statistical data on the study, for instance, the tables and graphs was used in order to represent the data which was collected in relation to the number of participants who were aware of healthcare privatization on women and girls.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis / Data Presentation

The findings were analysed by sorting out and tallying responses from the interview results. It was tabulated to display the overview implication of the results. In addition, narration was involved to explain the meaning of the data tabulated. Finally results from the tables and charts were analysed for inference drawing purposes on effects of healthcare privatization on women and girls in Malawi. The findings will also help communities and other concerned stakeholders to find effective ways of promoting in addressing potential gender-specific challenges and promoting gender equity in healthcare under the privatization framework among others.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The privatization of healthcare systems has become a widespread phenomenon, often driven by the pursuit of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. While such initiatives aim to enhance the overall quality and accessibility of healthcare, it is imperative to understand their nuanced impact, particularly on vulnerable groups including women and girls. In this context of Malawi, this research delves into a comprehensive analysis of healthcare privatization to uncover its consequences on women and girls. The presentation of results is guided by specific objectives, shedding light on the intricate relationships between healthcare privatization and the well-being of women and girls in Malawi.

4.2 Effects of health care privatization on women's and girls' access to quality affordability of essential healthcare

In the wake of healthcare privatization, it was seen as wise to assess public awareness, quality of care and the cost of healthcare services. This multi-faceted evaluation has provided valuable insights in understanding the broader impact of healthcare privatization on women and girls.

The results of the interviews on awareness of health care privatization, quality of health care after privatization, and the cost of health care services provide valuable insights into the impact of privatization on access, quality, and affordability of healthcare services.

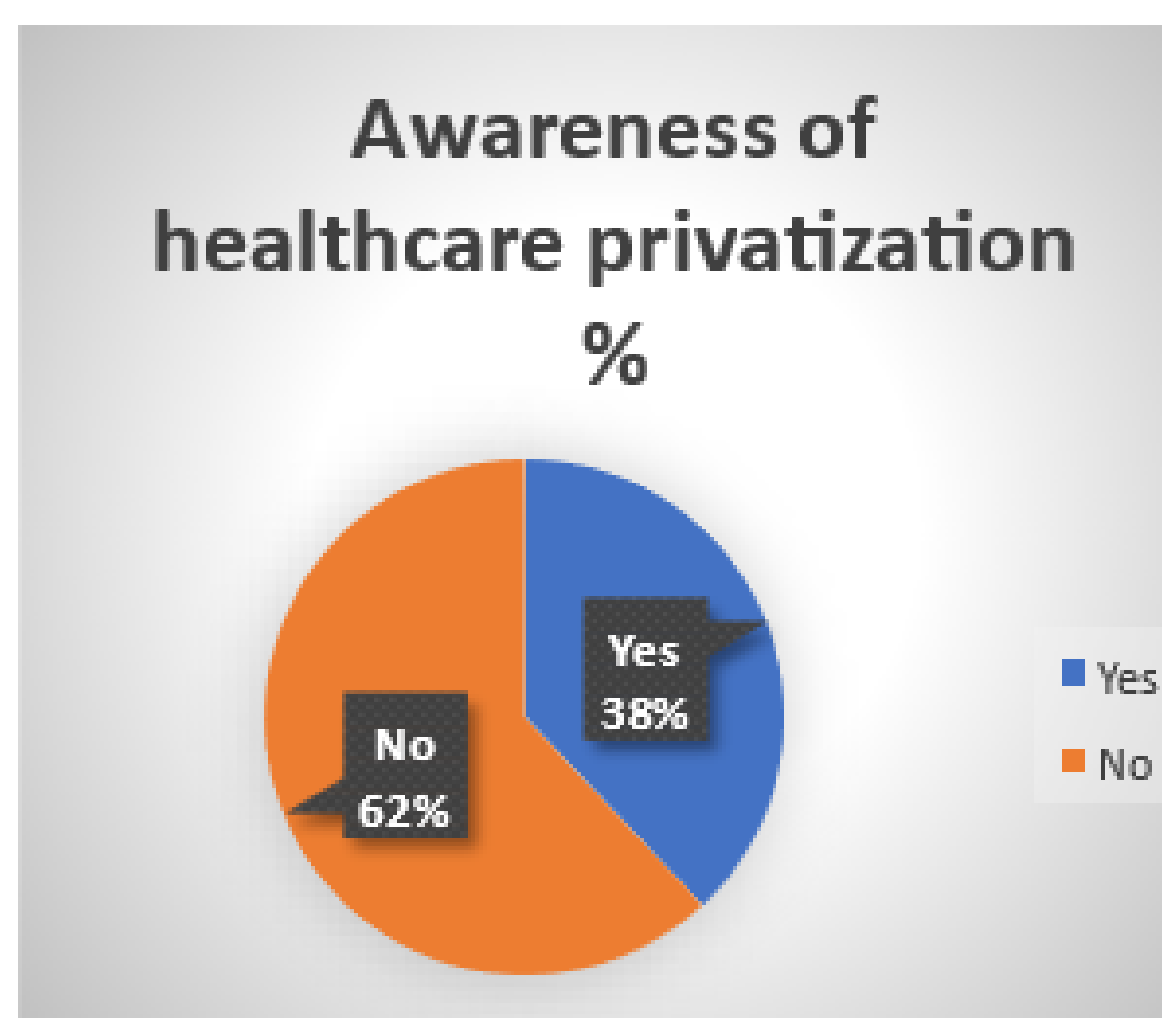


Figure 1: Showing results on Respondent's awareness of healthcare privatization.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

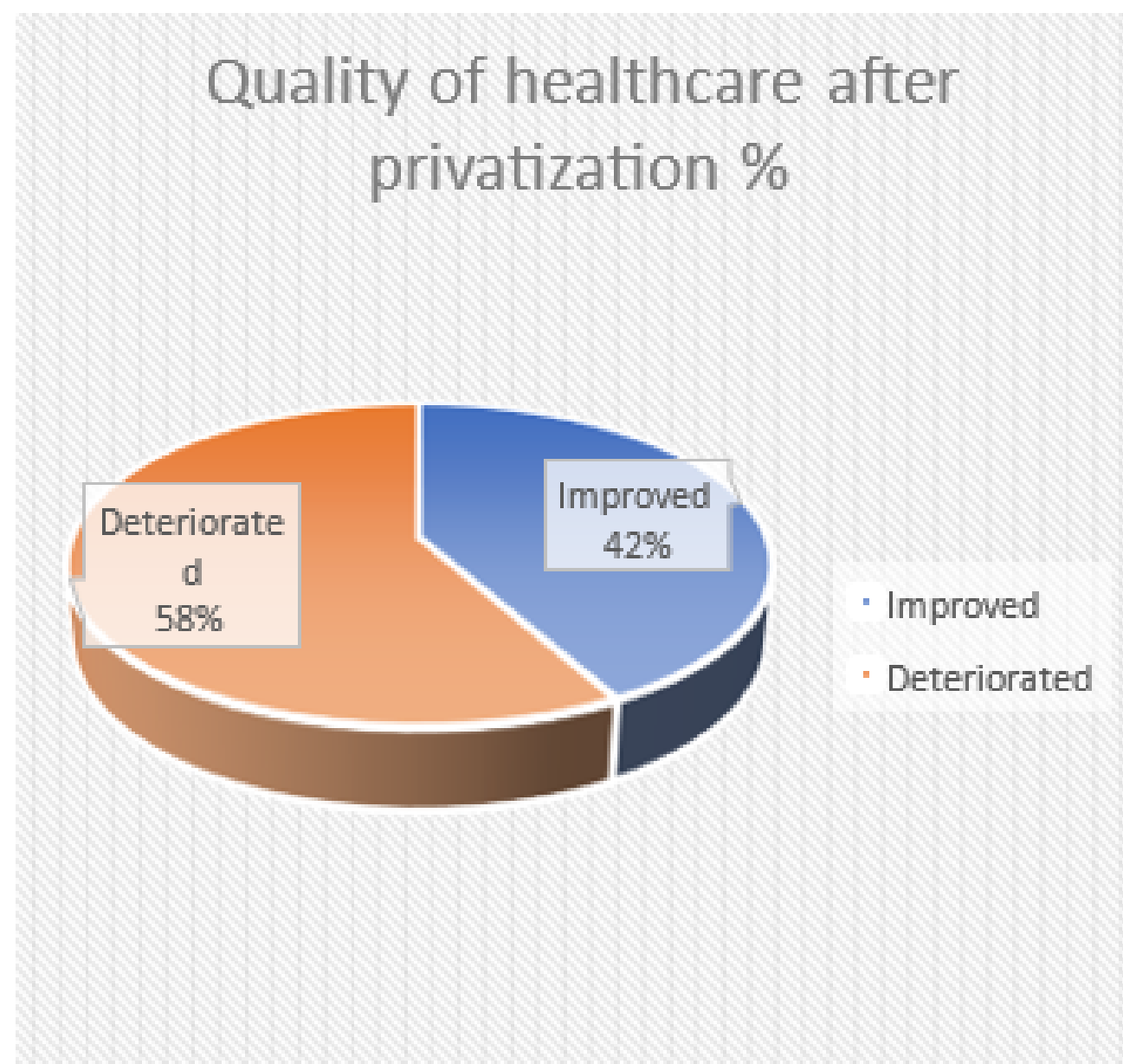


Figure 2: Showing results on quality of healthcare after privatization

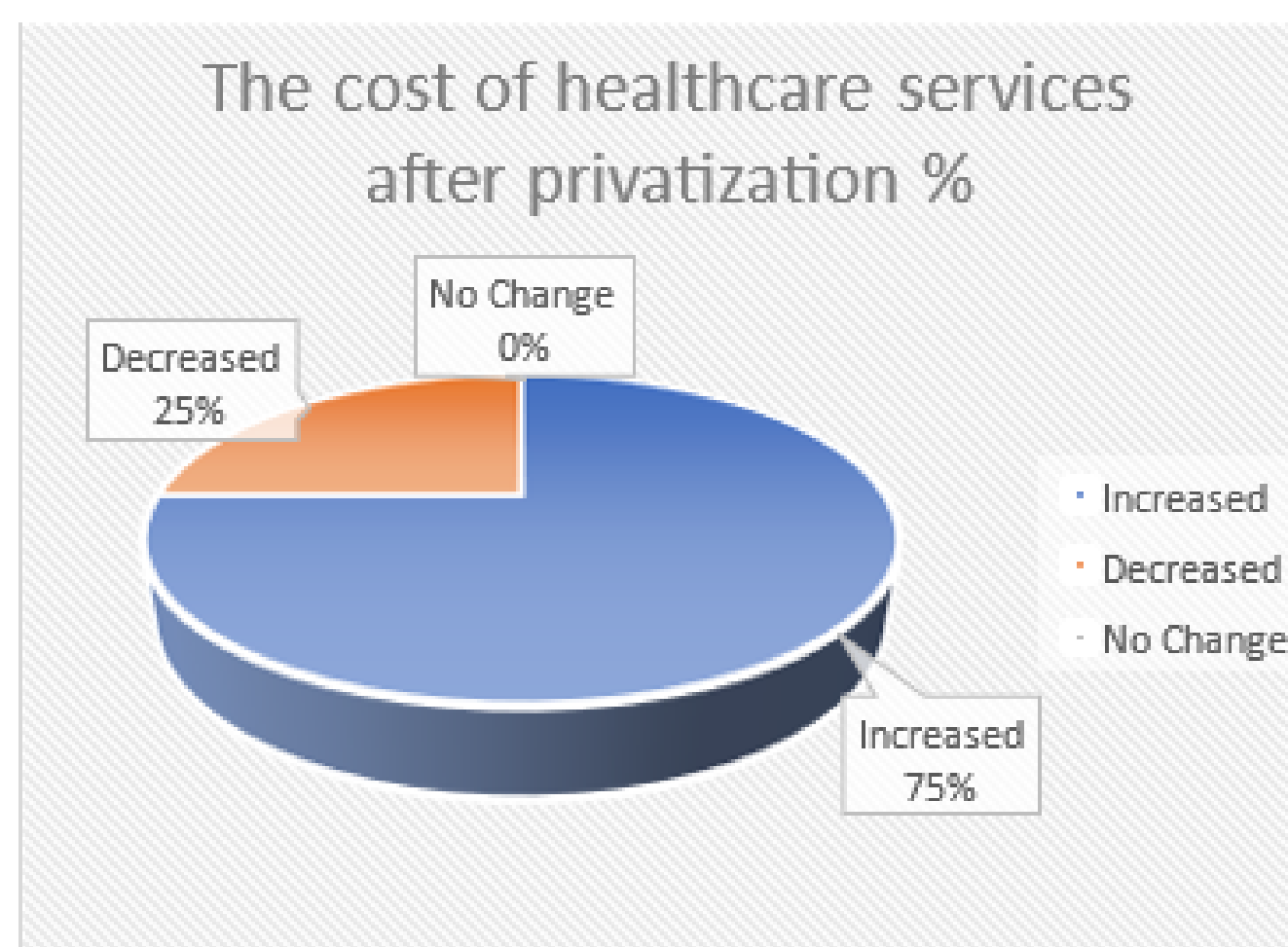


Figure 3: Showing results on the impact of privatization on affordability of healthcare services.

4.2.1 Awareness of Health Care Privatization

The study has found that 62% of respondents disclosed they are not aware of health care privatization. This is attributed to limited awareness of healthcare privatization to people living in rural areas. However, this is a huge concern as it hinders individuals from understanding the changes in their healthcare system and their potential consequences. When people are not informed about healthcare privatization, it becomes challenging for them to advocate for equitable access and quality care. As a result, there is reduced public engagement and advocacy regarding healthcare policies and regulations.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.2.2 Quality of Health Care after Privatization

The result indicates that 58% of respondents admitted that the quality of healthcare has deteriorated as compared to previous decades. However, the declining of healthcare quality has led to adverse health outcomes, patient dissatisfaction, and even harm.

4.2.3 Cost of Health Care Services after Privatization

The results indicate that the cost of health care services has increased as this has been evidenced by the higher percentage of respondents who admitted that they were facing challenges to access the proper medication assistance as compared to previous years. This implies that the increase in healthcare costs is a significant barrier to access for many individuals, especially those with limited financial means.

These findings collectively highlight that healthcare privatization has significant challenges on women and girls as discussed below:

4.2.4 Reduced Access to, Quality and Affordability of Essential Healthcare services

In a privatized system, individuals who cannot afford the high costs lead to delay or forgo necessary medical treatment, ultimately reducing their access to essential healthcare services which may include: abortion services, family planning and sex education and counselling for adolescents (Fuchs & Hahn, 2003, Robertson, H.T., & Maggard, S.R. 2018).

The results revealed that healthcare privatization has made healthcare services less accessible to those with limited financial means, thereby compromising quality and affordability of healthcare services. Respondents disclosed that whenever they seek medical assistance, they receive partial treatment and are told to buy the remaining part for themselves. In addition, private healthcare providers prefer to serve patients who can pay higher fees potentially limiting access for those lower incomes to afford necessary healthcare services. Dejectedly, healthcare privatization has led to reduction of reproductive health services as private healthcare providers, prioritise profitable services over reproductive healthcare, which negatively affects women's access to family planning and maternal health services. For example, the study has found that in the study area they used to have a mobile clinic which at first women and girls were able to access post-natal care, contraceptives but now they cannot access them as they used before. Instead, they are told to go to a health community centre which is about 14kms.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The study further found that the mobile clinic is now in bad condition as it was destroyed by the Member of Parliament of Chiwamba Constituency in the name of maintenance. Unfortunately, it's now four years since this happened. The study has also found that in the study area there is information gap related to sexual and reproductive healthcare. In the month of August 2023, the researcher has witnessed the death of a young girl who died due to unsafe abortion when she was 7 months pregnant. However, there is a need for women's organizations and civil society groups to take a role in advocating for women's and girls' health rights.



Figure 4: Showing Mtalala Mobile Clinic (Photo credit: Sphiwe Banda)

4.2.5 Geographical Disparities

Healthcare privatization has profound effects on geographical disparities in healthcare access. When the private sector takes precedence, the distribution of healthcare resources becomes uneven, leaving certain regions with limited access to essential services. However, this may lead to delayed medical care, poor health outcomes for residents of marginalized regions (Smith, J. 2018). The results have disclosed that women and girls in the study area are facing more challenges in accessing medical services. Generally, these people are already disadvantaged in accessing medical assistance as they have to travel a long distance of approximately 14kms to meet the doctor, one respondent further explains that sometimes pregnant women tend to give birth on their way to hospital since they cannot afford to hire a motorcycle due to financial crisis. As a result, they are forced to go to Azamba for further treatment.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

However, the coming in of privatization, has increased disparities in access to medical assistance for underserved populations including women and girls since privatized healthcare providers often concentrate in urban areas leaving remote areas with limited access to medical services.

4.2.6 Shortages in Public Healthcare

Healthcare privatization has led to staffing shortages in public hospitals which result in inadequate attention and care to patients. The increased workload and stress on healthcare providers led to frustration and conflicts with patients (Llorens, B.et al., 2008). Chiwamba Health Centre provides essential medical care to approximately 70% of the total population in T/A Chimutu (NSO 2018). However, the limited number of healthcare providers poses a significant challenge in ensuring that all patients receive the necessary treatment they require.

The study further found that due to workload stress, health care providers do not give enough[1] care and attention to patients reaching the point of pregnant women giving birth outside maternity ward. Dejectedly, healthcare privatization has resulted to shift in resources and talent from public to private hospitals (Harvad T.H. 2006). The study has found that Chiwamba Community Health Centre has less than 10 healthcare providers in this case hospital attendants and Security guards are found in wards treating patients. However, this has serious complications as these people do not have the necessary medical training to provide proper healthcare which may result in misdiagnoses, incorrect treatments or even fatalities among others.

4.3 The implications of health care privatization for gender equity in health outcomes.

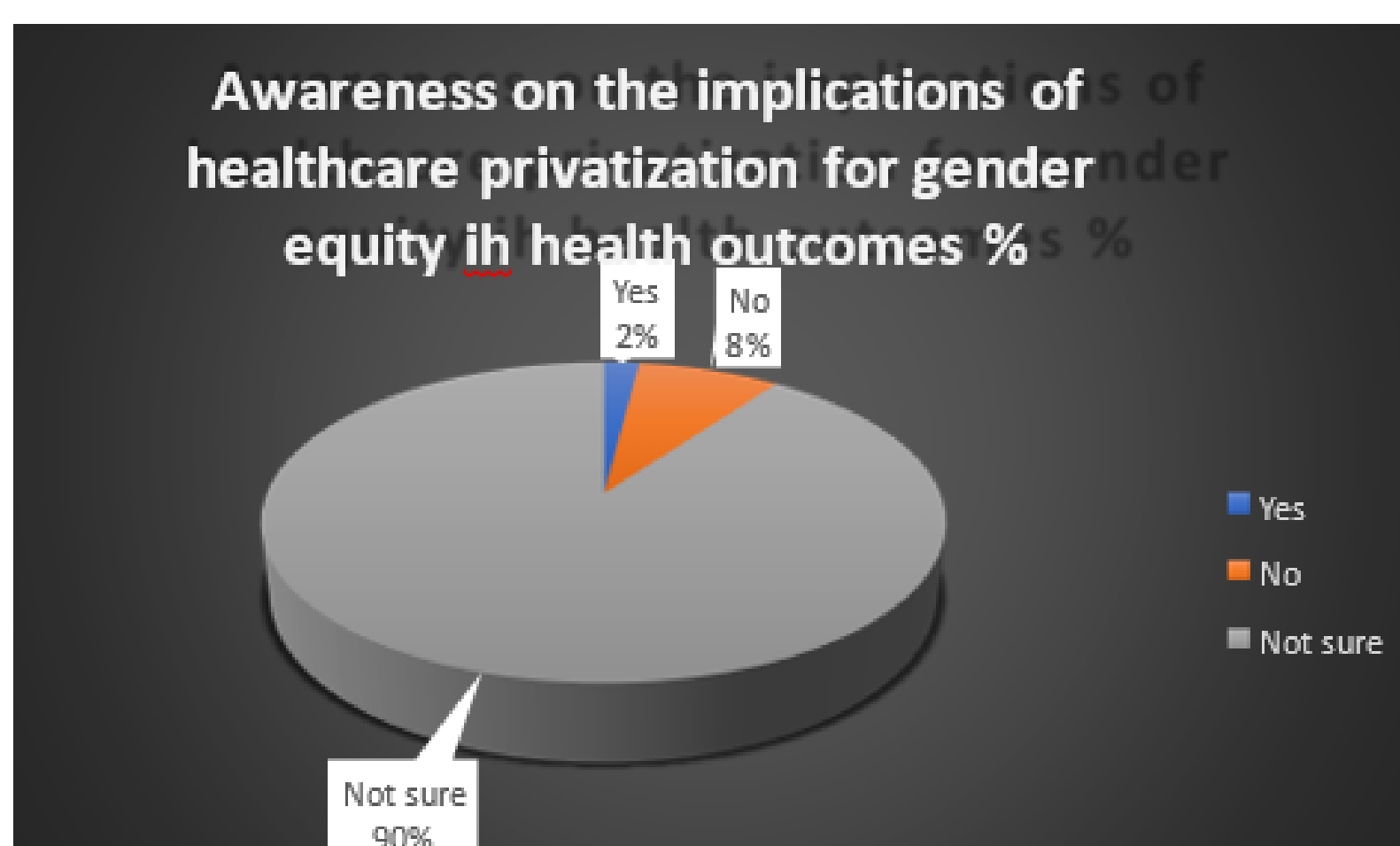


Figure 5: Showing results on Respondents' awareness of the implications of healthcare privatization for gender equity in health outcomes.

[1] Azamba: Traditional birth attendant

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of our survey revealed a noteworthy finding this has been demonstrated by a higher percentage (90%) of respondents who admitted to being uncertain about the implications of healthcare privatization for gender equity in health outcomes. These results could be attributed to lack of awareness which implies that a portion of the population is not informed about the potential gender-related disparities that can emerge in privatized healthcare systems. However, gender equity in health outcomes encompasses a range of factors, from access to healthcare services to the quality of care provided. It ensures that individuals of all genders have equal opportunities to attain the highest level of health, regardless of their gender identity. Gender disparities in healthcare can result in adverse health outcomes for specific groups, which is why understanding these implications in the context of healthcare privatization is critical (WHO 2008, Women's Health East 2014).

In conclusion, addressing the lack of awareness regarding gender equity implications in healthcare privatization is crucial for building a healthcare system that is fair and equitable for all. Raising awareness and promoting gender-sensitive policies can lead to improved healthcare access and outcomes, ultimately benefiting individuals of all genders.

4.4 Policy recommendations and strategies for ensuring equitable access to quality health care for women and girls in the context of health care privatization

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare systems, one fundamental aspiration remains unchanged: the equitable and quality provision of healthcare services to all. This pursuit becomes particularly vital when viewed through the lens of women and girls, who, historically, have faced disparities and unique healthcare challenges. In a world where privatization of healthcare is gaining prominence, the need for comprehensive policy recommendations and strategies to safeguard the equitable access to high-quality healthcare for this demographic becomes paramount.

Healthcare privatization, though introduced with promises of efficiency and innovation, often engenders a landscape of mixed consequences. To ensure that women and girls do not bear the brunt of such consequences, a thoughtful and comprehensive approach is imperative. This presentation delves into a spectrum of policy recommendations and strategies aimed at mitigating disparities, preserving quality, and upholding the right to equitable healthcare access for women and girls in a privatized healthcare system.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- Inclusion of women in decision-making process in healthcare policy
- Establishing regulatory mechanisms that mandate healthcare providers to adhere to gender-sensitive practices.
- Promotion of health literacy programs to help individuals understand their healthcare options and make informed decisions.
- Conduct awareness campaigns to educate both healthcare providers and public about gender-specific health needs.
- Engagement of Women's Organizations with policy makers to influence legislation and regulations that promote women's health and equitable access to healthcare services especially in rural areas.

4.5 Limitations of the study

The study's findings may be limited by the sample size and the specific context of Malawi, and may not be generalizable to other settings. Time and resource constraints may limit the depth and breadth of the study. In addition, the meeting with Government Officials was unsuccessful due to reasons beyond the researcher's control instead, the researcher had to rely on more qualitative data such as information based on research or gathered via interviews. It should also be noted that in some cases the data obtained was inaccurate. We have noted these inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the report.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This study has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted impact of health care privatization on women and girls in Malawi, guided by specific objectives. The findings offer valuable insights into the complexities of healthcare privatization within this context and underline the importance of addressing its challenges.

One prominent discovery is the information gap in rural areas. This disparity in access to information regarding healthcare privatization is a significant concern, as it limits the ability of women and girls in these areas to make informed decisions about their health. Bridging this gap is imperative for ensuring equitable access to healthcare services.

Another critical revelation is the deterioration in the quality of healthcare services post privatization. The declining quality of care poses a clear risk to the health and well-being of women and girls. Addressing this issue is essential to provide healthcare services that meet the expected standards of quality.

The study highlights that the increase in the cost of healthcare services has created a significant barrier to access, particularly for women and girls. Implementing policies and strategies to make healthcare services more affordable is paramount. The study uncovers a series of challenges faced by women and girls under the privatized healthcare system. These encompass reduced access to essential services, disparities in geographic access, and shortages in public healthcare resources. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is pivotal to ensure equitable healthcare access for this demographic.

Regarding the implications for gender equity in health outcomes, the research highlights a sense of uncertainty among the population due to the information gap. It is essential to bridge this knowledge divide to empower individuals to advocate for equitable health outcomes.

Lastly, the study identifies a range of policy recommendations and strategies to counteract the negative impacts of healthcare privatization. These include the inclusion of women in decisionmaking processes, the promotion of health literacy programs, conducting awareness campaigns, and the active engagement of women's organizations with policymakers. These strategies represent a comprehensive approach to ensuring that women and girls have a voice in the healthcare decision-making process and that their unique healthcare needs are met.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, discussion and the conclusion above, the following recommendations were drawn:

- Expanding the network of community health centers in underserved areas to provide primary care preventive services to disadvantaged populations.
- Conduct further research on health access and outcomes to identify disparities and develop targeted interventions.
- Providing education and training to women and girls in remote areas to understand their health rights and how to address their concerns.
- Ensuring accessible emergency healthcare services regardless of the patient's ability to pay.

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY MEASURES IN EDUCATION OF A GIRL CHILD (STANDARD 5 TO 8): A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF MALAWI

By Tabitha Kasongo

ABSTRACT

This study was initiated to analyse the effects of Austerity Measures on a girl's child education particularly in the central region. The focus of the study was, to analyse how performance if the students are affected by Austerity measure and determine how the development has affected their performance. The secondary data was generated from the ministry of education, different published and unpublished papers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 BACKGROUND	46
1.1 Problem Statement	46
2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	47
2.1 Main Aim	47
2.2 Specific Objectives	47
3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	47
4.0 METHODOLOGY	48
4.1 Study Area	48
4.2 Data Research Techniques	48
5.0 DATA ANALYSIS	48
5.1 Data presentation	48
5.2 Results	50
5.3 Discussion	50
6.0 RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	50
6.1 Recommendations.....	51
6.2 Conclusion	52
References.....	53

ACRONYMS

1. PSLE: Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
2. CSEC: Civil Society Education Coliation
3. FEAM: Feminist Macroeconomic Alliance Malawi
4. IMF: International Monetary Fund
5. SAPS: Structure Adjustment Programs

BACKGROUND

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Austerity is a term that refers to the policies that governments adopt to reduce their budget deficits, which are the gaps between their revenues and expenditures. Austerity measures can include spending cuts, tax increases, or both, depending on the situation and the preferences of the policymakers. Austerity measures are usually implemented when a country faces a high level of public debt, which is the accumulated amount of money that the government owes to its creditors. A high public debt can pose a threat to the financial stability and economic growth of a country, as it can increase the risk of default, or the failure to repay the debt obligations, or reduce the ability to borrow more money at reasonable interest rates. Austerity measures are intended to restore fiscal balance and market confidence, by showing that the government is committed to reducing its debt and improving its financial discipline.

Austerity affects all the sectors and Education inclusive. Austerity on Education is the term that refers to the policies that governments adopt to reduce their spending, either as part of a broader fiscal consolidation strategy or as a specific response to Education. Austerity on Education can include measures such as blocks to the recruitment of new teachers, wage bill cuts, low pay of existing teachers and poor learning equipment's and infrastructure. Due to these measures, the education sector has been affected and more especially the girl child due to vulnerability problems. Austerity on Education can have various impacts on the access, quality, and outcomes of Education on a girl child.

According to the 1:125 Ratio: Austerity and the public Education system in Malawi-Medium a study by done by FEAM at Katondo Primary school in Mchinji concludes that Austerity measures has a major role in Education system as it blocks the recruitment of teachers and poor learning equipment's such as books, desks and learning infrastructure. The student's ratio poses danger and quality of education as girl students require special attention girls there by leading to drop out of school. The study also indicated that every 5 in 10 girls dropout of school indicating 50% dropout rate. Girls portray a lower pass rate in comparison to boys at Katondo Primary school as girls bears extra responsibility in their different households.

For many years, Malawi has been affected by Austerity measures and education being one of the most affected sectors due to the measures that are put in place to reduce the government spending which hinders the performance of education in Malawi especially the rural areas. The measures put in place include blocks to the recruitment of new teachers, wage bill cuts, low pay of existing teachers and poor learning equipment's and infrastructure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to these measures, the education sector has been affected and more especially the girl child due to vulnerability problems. The research project is focused to investigate on how the austerity measures listed above affects the girl child education in Lilongwe central.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research study intends to:

2.1 Main Aim

Evaluate the effects of austerity measures on a girl child education in Lilongwe rural West.

2.2 Specific Objectives

- To assess the school dropout rate of a girl child
- To assess the completion rate of Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education of a girl child
- To Assess the girl student enrollment rate

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to a book published by Action aid “Public versus Austerity”, over the past 40 years austerity policies have led to cuts in the public sector workforce that have undermined the government ability to deliver quality public services. Whether impose from outside by International monetary fund (IMF) or from inside by ministry of finance. This development has affected many sectors and education sector inclusive. It has caused blocks to recruitment of teachers, limits to low pay as well as low improvement of working and learning facilities there by leading to negative impact on education sector. This is supported by research done by CSEC titled “Assessment of progress made in increasing girls education access” which stated why girls do not fulfil the completion of education due to poor quality of education caused by the austerity measures put anyplace in education sector.

Another evaluation from Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (2023) on the topic “Gendered implication of Austerity on the education of girls” explored the gendered implications of gender-blind structural adjustment programs (SAPS) on the education of girls and vulnerable groups in Lebanon as access to education is becoming more inequitable for girls to meet their basic needs resulting to dropout rates, child labor and child marriage. Due to blocking of teacher recruitment the student teacher ratio poses danger to quality of education learners may receive, an article by FEAM (Oct.11.23) titled “The 1:125 ratio Austerity and the public Education System”. The article also evaluated poor civic education structure resulting to bullying which leads to school dropout. In addition, the article also evaluated high rate of child marriage upon dropping out of school and some even die young from maternal health complications as situation in hospitals is equally dire.

METHODOLOGY

According to Ee-Seul Yoon (18.10.23) “Austerity hurts public education”, indicated that due to block of recruitment of teachers and decrease in spending in education sector leading to shortage of staffing leading to increase in workload leading to poor quality of education.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Secondary data was used in this research project and obtained from the Ministry of education and the schools within our study area.

4.1 Study Area

The study will be conducted in central region of Malawi. The primary school selected were : Mchedwa, Nasala, Malili, Zapita, Mlezi, Chimpumbulu, Yeba , Sankhani, Muzu and Phereni under Dzenza, Likuni and Njewa Zone.

4.2 Data Research Techniques

Qualitative Data Technique

For this research a qualitative data technique was collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and observation to the teachers, headteachers and the Ministry of Education.

Quantitative Data Technique

In this research, quantitative data was collected and obtained from the Ministry of Education and the primary school within the study area.

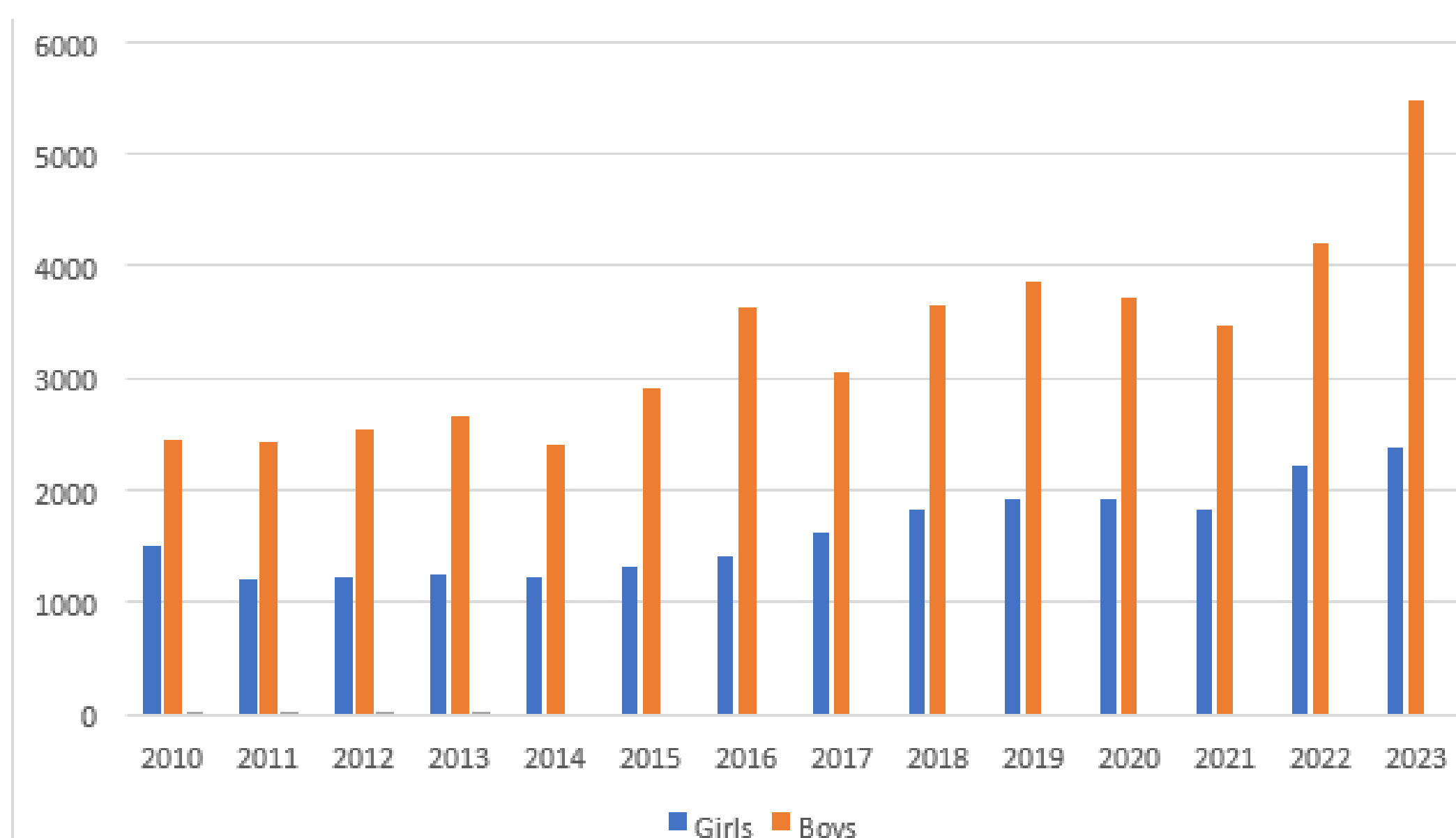
5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Data presentation

School Enrolment

The school enrolment data for girls and boys from Standard 5 to 8 from 2010 to 2023 was collected.

Graphical Presentation

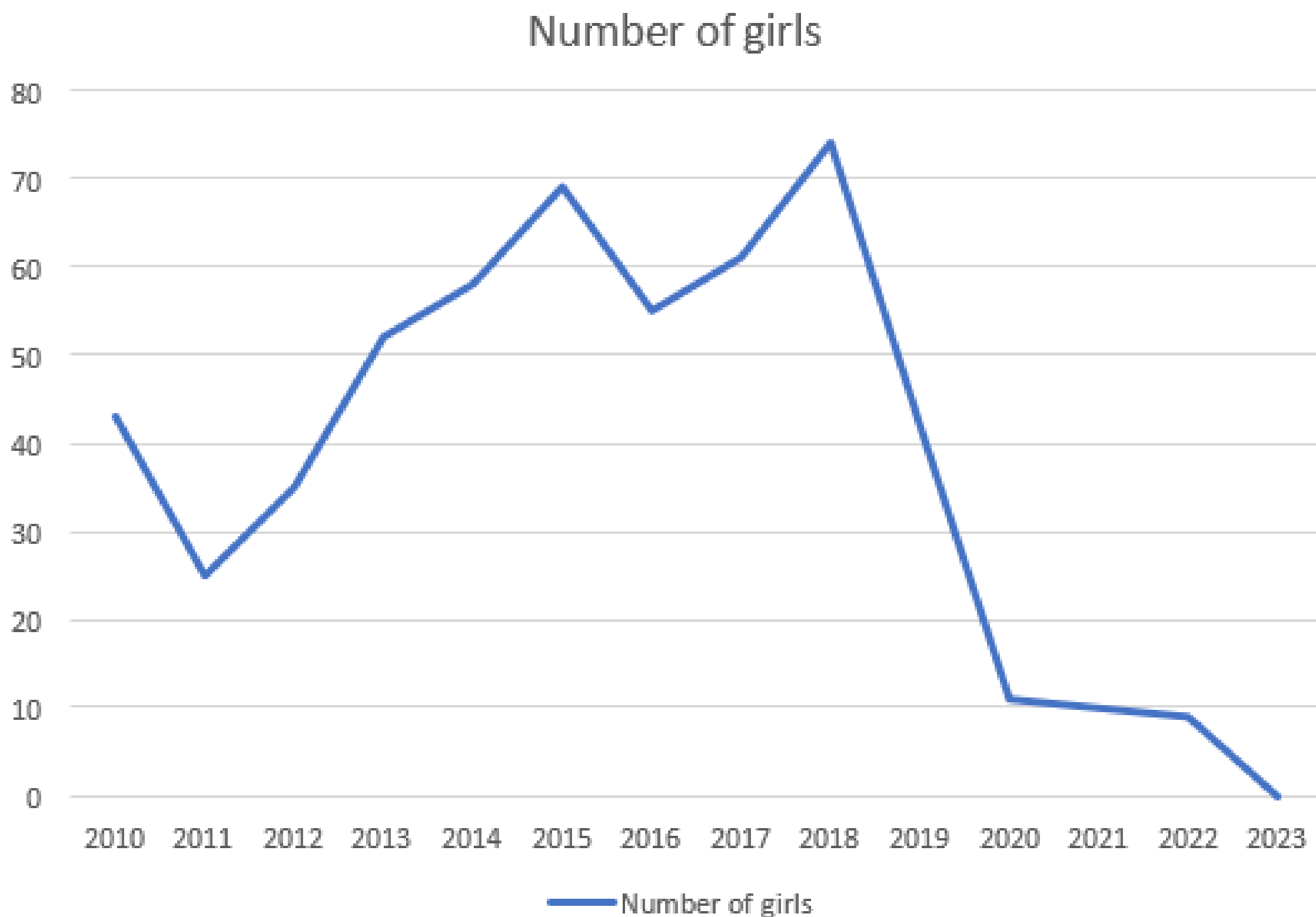


DATA ANALYSIS

School dropout

The school dropout rate data for girls from Standard 5 to 8 from 2010 to 2023 was collected

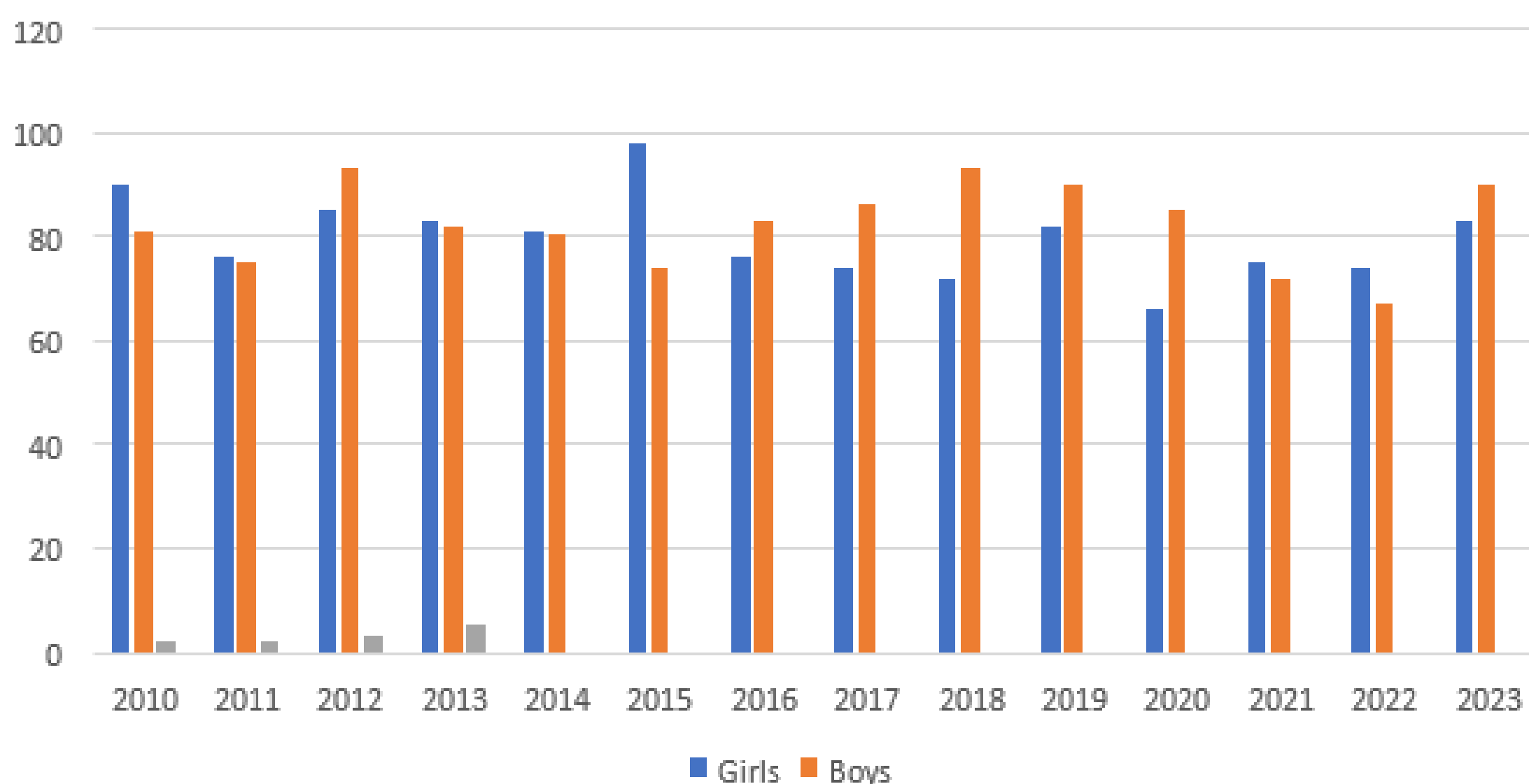
Graphical Presentation



Completion rate of Primary school leaving certificate of Education of a girl child from 2020 till 2023

The school Completion data for girls and boys from Standard 5 to 8 from 2010 to 2023 was collected.

Graphical Presentation



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

5.2 Results

I. School enrolment rate

- From 2010 to 2023 , School enrolment rate of Boy student was higher than girls enrolment

II. School dropout rate of girls was higher than boys dropout rate from 2010 to 2023

III. Completion rate

- From 2010 to 2023, completion rate of Boy student was higher while of girl was lower

5.3 Discussion

I. School dropout

- The research observed a higher dropout rate of girl students of standard 5 to 8 from 2010 to 2023 unlike the dropout rate of boys. With the data collected, it is so due to long distance to school, poor learning infrastructures and lack of proper famine facilities.

II. School Enrolment

- Although number of females is bigger in population than males, the number of females in the school enrolment is far smaller than males. Through the research observation, it was observed that number of enrolment rate of boys is greater than girls due to factors such as low student teacher ratio, low distance to acquire education, low famine facilities to accommodate a girl child.

III. Completion of PSLE

- Through the research observation, the research observed a low completion rate of PSLE of a girl child due to poor learning conditions such as high teacher student ratio, long distance to acquire education, poor learning facilities, poor famine facilities leading to dropout and absenteeism when in monthly menstrual leading to low performance of PSLE.

6.0 RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Recommendations

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Recommendation Area	Goal of the recommendation	Actions to be undertaken	Time frame
Access to girls Education	To ensure girl child has access to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure bursaries support to girls from resource poor households with school materials • Good learning infrastructure • Presence of Feminine facilities • Recommendable student teacher ration 	Short, medium and long term
High girls' school enrolment	To ensure girls are enrolled in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little distance to school (government should build more schools to prevent girls travelling long distances) • Presence of Feminine facilities 	Short, medium and long term
High girls' performance	To ensure girls high performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good learning infrastructure • Good learning resources • Recommended student to teacher ratio • Presence of feminine facilities 	Short, medium and long term

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

6.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a significant impact of austerity measures on education of a girl child in the short run . In the long run the impact of the austerity measure tend to increase the illiterate levels and low economic empowerment of a woman.

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ASSESSING EFFECTS OF AUSTERITY MEASURES ON WOMEN'S WELL-BEING AND LIVELIHOOD IN MALAWI)

By Tina Kantiki

ABSTRACT

Austerity measures are often implemented as a response to economic challenges and fiscal constraints, which have a significant impact on various aspects of society. These measures typically involve reductions in government spending, cuts to social services and changes in economic policies. Austerity measures are intended to address economic crises and stabilize government finances, but they can also have far-reaching consequences, including gender-specific impacts. This paper aims to assess the effects of austerity measures on the well-being and livelihood of women. Women's experiences and outcomes during periods of austerity can be distinct due to existing gender disparities, traditional societal roles and structural inequalities. As such, it is crucial to examine how these measures affect women and whether they worsen or improve gender-based inequalities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION..

1.1 Background.....	56
1.2 Problem Statement.....	56
1.3 Justification.....	57
1.4 Objectives.....	58
1.5 Research questions.....	58

2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....59

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study location and targeted group.....	62
3.2 Data Collection.....	62
3.3 Sampling technique.....	63
3.4 Data Source.....	63
3.5 Analytical Techniques.....	63
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION.....	63
3.7 LIMITATIONS.....	64

4.0 WORK PLAN.....64

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents.....	65
5.2 The impact of austerity measures on women's livelihood.....	68
5.3 The effects of austerity on gender equality and equity.....	72

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Recommendations.....	74
References.....	75
Appendices.....	77

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Malawi since its independence in 1964, has experienced economic rise and fall and other external shocks that led to periods of fiscal stress. This has resulted in the government implementing austerity measures to address rising debt and stabilize the economy. The measures involve reductions in public spending to social welfare programs and other economic reforms that aim at achieving fiscal consolidation. Malawi like many sub-Saharan African countries, struggles with gender inequalities, a lot of women in Malawi face barriers in accessing education, healthcare and economic opportunities which limit their ability to improve their livelihoods and well-being. Austerity measures have the potential to worsen these existing disparities because women often depend on public services and social safety nets (Josh, 2020).

Austerity measures can affect women's well-being, for example the reduction in public spending may lead to decreased access to healthcare facilities, maternal services and critical medicines which is excessively affecting women's health. The cuts in education spending might result in diminished educational opportunities for girls and women, perpetuating gender inequalities in the long term. The labour market is another critical area where austerity measures can affect women well-being in Malawi. This is because women are often engaged in informal and vulnerable forms of employment, making them more susceptible to economic shocks due to job losses, reduced wages and limited social protections this can increase poverty rates among women and their dependents.

1.2 Problem Statement

The aim of the research is to expose how austerity measures affect women. Although austerity measures are originally aimed at achieving fiscal consolidation and economic stability, austerity measures have been linked to negative outcomes for marginalized groups, particularly women. Malawi's existing struggle with entrenched gender inequalities and economic difficulties, the adoption of austerity measures raises notable apprehensions regarding their potential repercussions on the well-being and livelihoods of women. The problem at hand is the lack of comprehensive understanding of how austerity measures specifically affect women in Malawi.

Existing research on austerity measures often fail to take into account the gendered implications which result into gender-blind approach to economic policy-making. This knowledge gap hinders the formulation of effective and inclusive policy interventions that address the unique challenges faced by women during economic crises (Moos, 2021). It was important to do this research because austerity measures can extremely affect women's livelihoods and well-being particularly when it comes to accessing resources, education and economic opportunities. In times of economic crises, women frequently

INTRODUCTION

bear a greater burden and face heightened risks of negative outcomes. In places like Malawi, similar to many developing nations, women are more prone to living in poverty and encountering restricted opportunities for formal employment. Austerity measures can exacerbate these challenges, amplifying vulnerability and diminishing the well-being of women and their families. Austerity measures lead to reduced funding for social services and healthcare which can have significant implications for women's health and overall well-being particularly in maternal and child health outcomes. Economic hardship and increased stress resulting from austerity measures can contribute to an increase in gender-based violence affecting women's safety and security. To understand the specific impacts of austerity on women can help policymakers design more targeted and effective social protection programs to mitigate negative consequences and promote gender equality (M. Stupak, 2019).

1.3 Justification

Malawi, like many other countries, faces significant gender disparities in various aspects of life, including education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Women in Malawi often bear the burden of poverty and limited access to essential services which make them vulnerable to economic shocks and policy changes. Austerity measures usually prioritize fiscal consolidation, often neglecting their gender-specific consequences. This research aims to counter the gender blind approach prevalent in economic policymaking by emphasizing the unique difficulties women encounter during periods of economic austerity it is important to recognize these effects because it is essential for crafting policies that are sensitive to gender concerns, protecting women's rights and fostering inclusive development (Meades, 2019).

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving sustainable development. By examining the effects of austerity measures on women's well-being and livelihood in Malawi. This research directly aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 1 (No Poverty) among others. It provides empirical evidence to inform policy decisions that advance gender equality and reduce poverty. Findings from this research can inform policymakers and stakeholders about the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women during economic crises. The insights gained can help shape evidencebased policy interventions that protect and support women's well-being and livelihoods. Policymakers can use this research to create targeted social protection programs and economic policies that mitigate the adverse effects of austerity measures on women. (United, 2020)

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses more into the wellbeing of women. For example, the study was focusing on how austerity measures impact the overall well-being of women in Malawi, considering their physical and mental health, access to healthcare and overall quality of life. The study was looking at the economic vulnerabilities faced by women during periods of austerity, particularly in terms of employment opportunities, income levels and job security especially in the informal sector. It was also focusing on how austerity measures affect women's access to education, the implications for enrolment rates, educational attainment and educational opportunities for girls and women. Additionally, it was looking into the specific impacts of austerity on maternal and reproductive health services and how do these changes affect pregnant women and new mothers in Malawi.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 Main objective

To assess the impact of austerity measures on women's well-being

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To investigate how austerity measures, affect women economically
2. To examine the impact of austerity on women's access to education
3. To evaluate the effects of austerity on gender equality and equity

1.5 Research questions

1. How have austerity measures affected women's access to public services?
2. What are the implications for the overall well-being of women that come because of austerity measures?
3. How do austerity measures affect women's employment opportunities and income levels?
4. How do austerity measures affect women's participation in decision-making at the household and community levels?
5. To what extent do austerity measures worsen the existing gender disparities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A series of macroeconomic shocks have taken place at a global level as a result of the economic crisis which have an impact on the lives of women and girls. The term austerity measures refer to a set of economic policies that a government implements in order to control public sector debt. Governments put austerity measures in place when their public debt is so large and the inability to service the required payments on its obligations becomes a real possibility. The goal of austerity is to improve a government's financial health. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a global organization that provides financial assistance to countries facing economic crises, however this assistance often comes with conditions that require countries to implement austerity measures such as reducing public spending and increasing taxes (Maulidi, 2022).

These measures can have a significant impact on economic growth and development in a country as well as on the lives of women and girls. However, these measures can have a significant impact on social welfare, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women and girls. Research have shown that austerity measures tend to have disproportionate effects on vulnerable and marginalized populations including women's economic, social and political positions are often impacted differently from men's due to their roles and responsibilities in society. (Gayle, 2015)

The 2018 United Nations report in New York explains the impact of austerity measures on the daily lives of women. Austerity measures involve the cuts in public sector jobs and services that can lead to job losses for women particularly since women tend to make up a significant portion of the public sector workforce. Austerity measures can worsen the gender wage gap as job opportunities shrink and women may face reduced bargaining power for fair wages. Reductions in public spending can lead to cuts in social services such as healthcare and childcare, which can affect women as they are typically more dependent on these services. Austerity can increase poverty rates and women are more likely to fall into poverty due to existing gender inequalities and social norms. For example, the UN expert on foreign debt and human rights, Juan Pablo said that "some advances may look well in terms of overall social indicators but might not be as fair for women.

In Latin America, while overall income inequality seems to have decreased less than 50 per cent of women over age 15 have income of their own as opposed to just 20 per cent of men, but in this same region women's labour income is equivalent to 70 per cent of men's", he concluded. Violence against austerity-related stress and economic hardships can contribute to an increase in domestic violence and gender-based violence against women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cuts to healthcare services may impact women's access to reproductive health services, including family planning and maternal healthcare. Austerity measures may lead to reduced funding for education, affecting girl's access to schooling and overall educational opportunities (United Nation, 2018).

In many African countries women and girls are disproportionately affected by austerity measures. This is because they often rely on social welfare programs that are subject to cuts under austerity measures, a good example is the study by the World Health Organization in 2021 found that austerity measures in sub-Saharan Africa led to reduced funding for maternal and child health programs which extremely affect women and girls. Austerity measures often result in job losses and reduced access to education and training programs. This can have a significant impact on women's economic opportunities as they often have fewer employment opportunities and less access to education and training than men. As a result, women may experience a decline in their economic status and struggle to support themselves and their families.

According to the research done by Action Aid Malawi on how IMF policies are driving more women and girls into poverty in 2022, found out that IMF relief packages can have negative impacts on women and girls in African countries. These packages often come with conditions that prioritize debt repayment over social welfare programs, which can have a significant impact on women's access to healthcare, education and other essential services. For example, a study by the International Centre for Research on Women in 2023 found that IMF policies in Tanzania resulted in reduced funding for healthcare services which disproportionately affected women and girls in additional, IMF policies can have a negative impact on women's access to land and other resources. IMF-supported land reform policies in Africa have been criticized for disproportionately benefiting men and undermining women's access to land. This can have a significant impact on women's economic opportunities as they often rely on land for subsistence agriculture and other livelihood activities. (Kuphanga, 2023)

According to the research done by Hazel R. Barrett and Angela Brown find out that women in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are not receiving their share of the benefits of development despite their significant contribution to that process. Economic decline and the attempts to improve the economic adjustment measures, have increased women's workloads, with cuts in government funding, education and health facilities are less available to the rural poor with the burden of care being transferred to households. In many countries export crop promotion is drawing more fully into the market economy where their labour is under-valued and their time pushed to give an even longer working day.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-sensitive development policies that fully recognize the multiple roles and needs of women are essential for the future development of sub-Saharan Africa (Brown, 2021).

Malawi, like many other African countries, has experienced economic challenges that have led to the implementation of austerity measures. These measures often undertaken in response to economic crises or to meet conditions imposed by international financial institutions can have significant implications for vulnerable populations including women. African countries have diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts which can influence the extent and nature of the impact of austerity on women. Factors such as women's access to education, participation in the labour market and social norms play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of austerity policies on their well-being and livelihood (Kuphanga, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study location and targeted group

The research population was women only because the study was looking at different kinds of women, so to have a concrete conclusion of the situation only women were considered. Potential groups that was part of the research were; working women, this group includes women who are employed in various sectors both in the public and private industries because these women may be affected by job cuts, wage reductions or changes in labor laws due to austerity measures. The second group involved was unemployed women, because austerity measures can lead to higher unemployment rates and this group of women may face challenges in finding suitable employment opportunities. Low-income and vulnerable women was another group because austerity measures may disproportionately affect women from low-income backgrounds or vulnerable groups such as single mothers, elderly women or women with disabilities.

The study was look at health services as well because these women may experience changes in healthcare access and quality due to austerity measures. Women in education can be affected too because austerity measures can influence education funding which leads to potential implications for female students, teachers and educational staff. Women entrepreneurs and business owners was another targeted group, the research was to assess how austerity measures affect women's ability to run businesses and access financial support for their entrepreneurial ventures. The study was conducted in Lilongwe rural (Mitundu) and Lilongwe urban (Area 18 and Area 25(kwa kaivi)).

3.2 Data Collection

Data for the study was collected using mixed methods which is qualitative method and quantitative method. Qualitative methods focused on interviews, Focus Group Discussions(FDGs) and record keeping. The interviewing process allows the researcher to interact with participants and gain opinions and perceptions through observation. An interview involves women of different backgrounds and class, there was a verbal discussion between two people to collect appropriate information for research (Danis, 2021). Interviews was chosen for data collection with the aim of exploring and reviewing numerous factors in the condition that might be vital to the general problem. Focus group discussions (FDGs) with different women was also vital because they provide a broad essence of the problem in terms of what affects the majority and those isolated effects that was be covered through interviews. In addition to that FDGs allow the researcher to gather more information in a shorter period of time. For example, in two hours FDGs can help you to know if the area of concern related to a lot of people or not. Record keeping helps to have a picture on what other people have done so far and what was there findings and can start form there.

METHODOLOGY

3.3 Sampling technique

The study uses stratified and systematic sampling methods from different types of women (class, professional, religion and other differences). To determine sample size, the study used probability proportionate stratified sampling method. This is a sophisticated and systematic sampling technique used in research to ensure a representative and unbiased sample from a larger population. It is particularly useful when the population exhibits significant variability in its characteristics. PPSS involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups based on certain relevant attributes then each stratum, samples are drawn in proportion to the size of the stratum of the stratum of the overall population.

3.4 Data Source

The study was concerned with rich data such as figures, opinions, personal accounts and description of participants. Data was mainly collected from primary source. Secondary source of data was also reviewed. The chosen approach is the inductive approach, the reason for this is because an inductive approach allows the researcher to generate emerging theory from the data (Master class staff, 2021).

3.5 Analytical Techniques

The quantitative data collected in the field from the questionnaires was entered manually into an excel sheet for cleaning, verification and accuracy check and then exported into SPSS. The SPSS was used to perform descriptive statistical analysis which include frequency and frequency distribution, graphs and testing the difference between means (t-test) and chi-square to test the association between categorical variables. This makes the interpretation of the data and discussions to be ease drawn from the highest score.

On the other hand, the qualitative data analysis from interviews and FGDs involves preparing and organizing the data such that the notes, documents or other materials gathered together for analysis. Next was the review and exploring of data whereby the team conducting the study was required to read through the collected information with an intention of getting sense out of the data. Creation of codes and combining themes such as opinions, language and beliefs was of great importance and lastly the themes was presented in a cohesive manner.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The ethical clearance structure was accessed to certify that the work meets all ethical requirements stipulated by respondents, the collected data was confidentially reserved. The data attained from this study was considered as highly confidential for the purpose of protecting the dignity and rights of the participants.

METHODOLOGY

All women who participate in this study and the government ethical issues was of high prominence when the study was conducted. Information was not dispersed to nonparticipating parties without the consensus of the contributors of this study. The confidentiality of all individual's information was treated as highly important such that consent forms was given to participants whenever necessary as a guarantee to get the needed information.

3.7 LIMITATIONS

Despite employing stratified random sampling, the sample size and distribution was not fully representing the diverse population of women in Malawi. The findings were not generalizable to all women in the country. Participant's responses in interviews and focus groups were influenced by social desirability bias or memory recall issues, leading to inaccuracies in data collection.

4.0 WORKPLAN

Table 1

Timeline	Activities	Strategy
June –July	-Proposal writing	
August-September	-Designing data collection tools -Data collection -Data processing and analysis	-Survey -Interviews -Literature review
October –November	-Report writing -Final submission of report	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	40	100
Marital Status	Married	26	65
	Single	7	17.5
	Divorced	6	15
	Widowed	1	2.5
Education level	No education	19	47.5
	Primary	16	40
	Secondary	4	10
	Tertiary	1	2.5
Occupation	Piece work	26	65
	Business	9	22.5
	Employed	5	12.5

65% were married, 17.5% were single, 15% were divorced while 2.5% were widowed.

The respondent's level of education was also considered in the study. 47.5% of the respondents in the study had no education, 40% had attended primary school, while 10% had secondary education. Only 2.5% of the respondents had tertiary education. Of all the participants interviewed in the study, 65% relied on piece work as their main source of income, 22.5% had businesses for their survival while 12.5% were employed.

Age of the respondents

Table 2: Age distribution of the respondents

Minimum value	Mean age	Maximum value
19	31.1	44

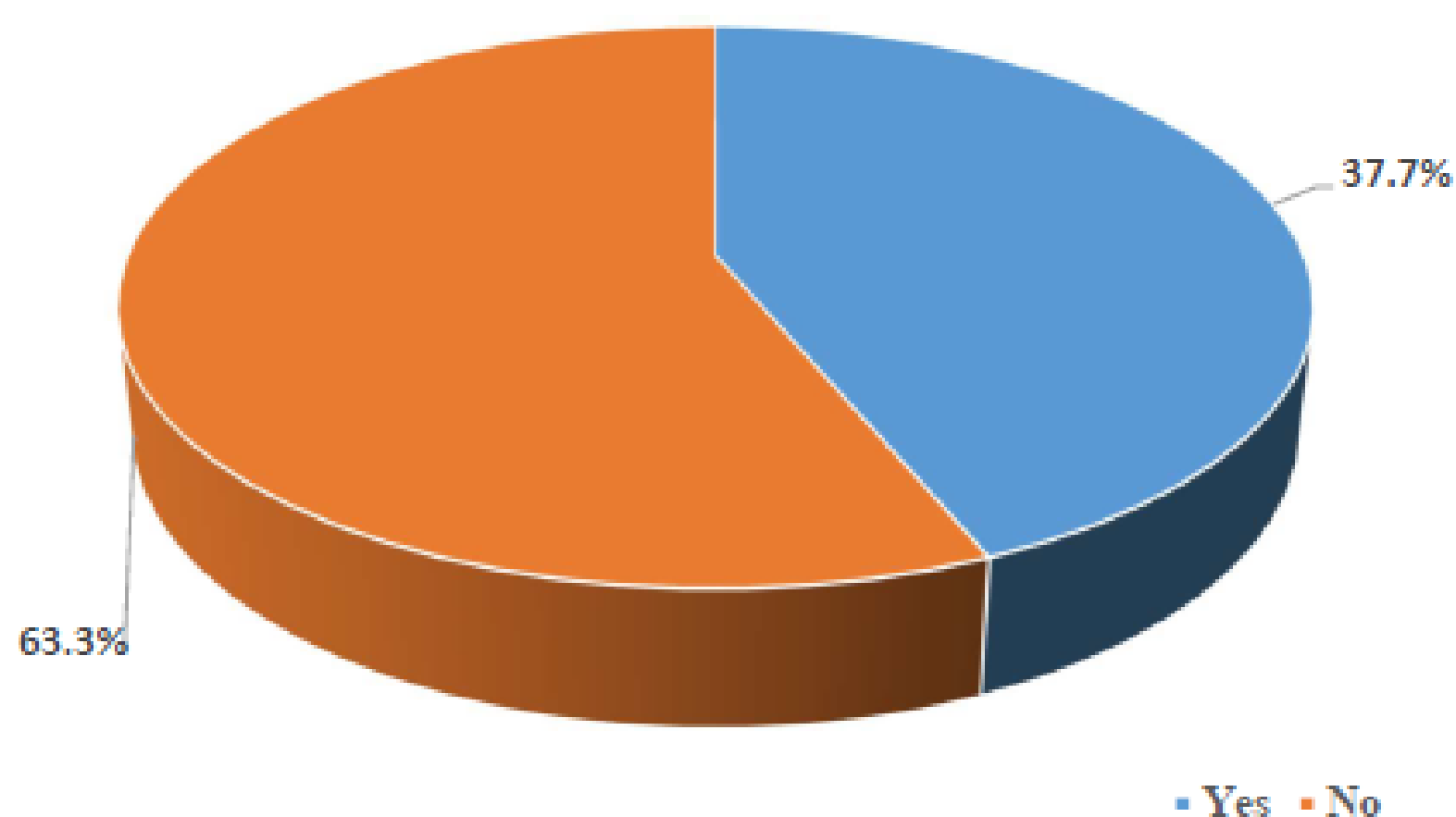
SD = 6.875

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The minimum age of the respondents was 19 while the maximum age was 44 with the mean age of 31.1 and 6.875 standard deviation.

The impact of austerity measures on women's access to education
Education serves as one of empowerment approaches to women in the community. Women who are educated can make sound decision and can also contribute actively to the national developments.

Figure 1: Accessibility of education in Malawi

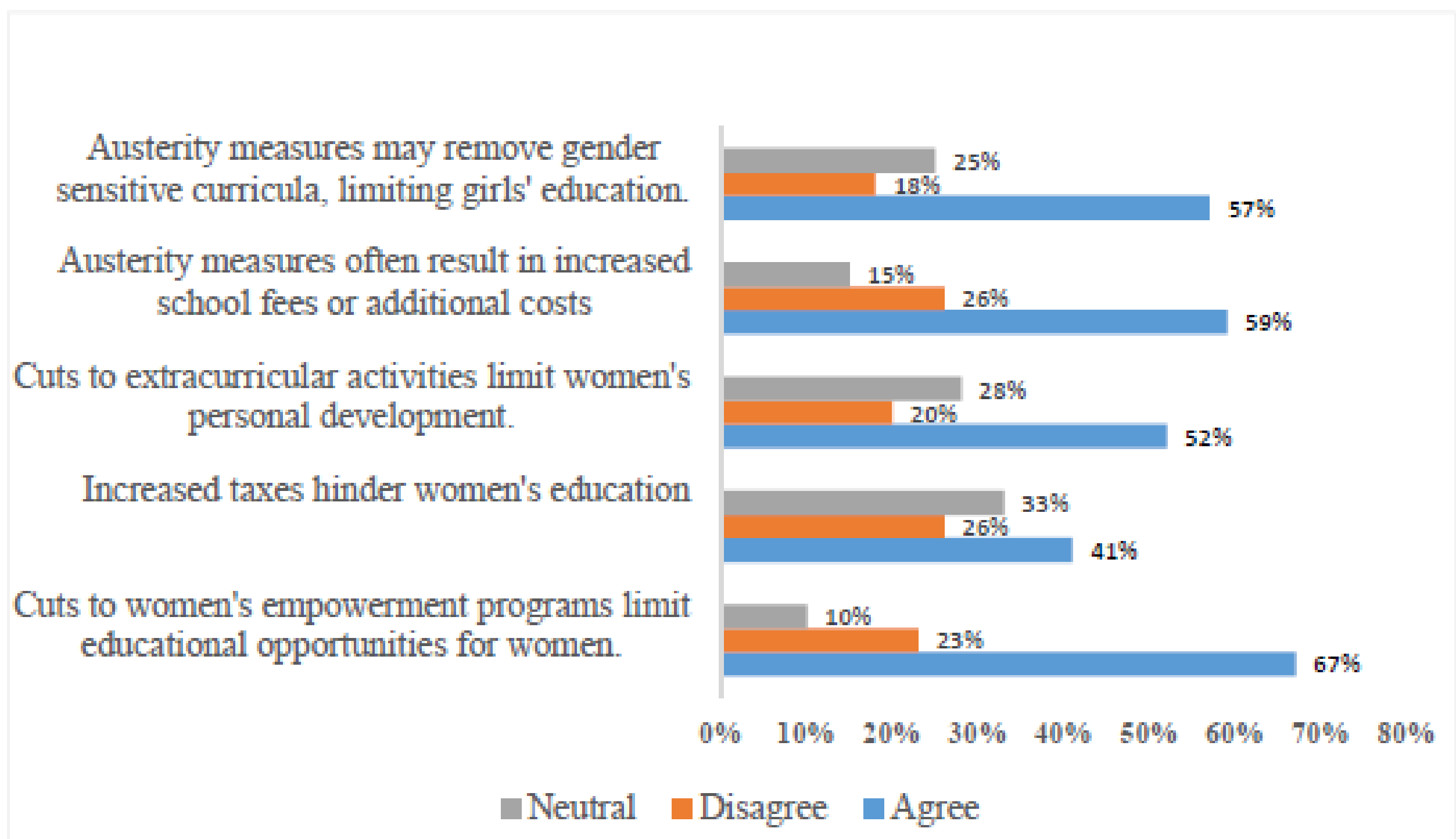


Respondents were asked to find out the accessibility of education in Malawi between males and females on equal basis. It was noted that education in Malawi is not equally accessible to both males and females. As shown in the figure above, only 41.7% of respondents said Yes, that there is equal access in education while 58.3% of all respondents said No, education in Malawi is not accessible to females on equal basis with males. This is in agreement with the study by Mwenda (2017) who found out that education in Malawi is less accessible to girls than boys due to limitations and lack of policy and law enforcement. Though education policy in Malawi emphasises on equality in access and provision, less is done on the ground to ensure that the policy objectives are met.

The study by the World Health Organization (2016), found that austerity measures in sub-Saharan Africa led to reduced funding for maternal and child health programs, which disproportionately affected women and girls. Additionally, austerity measures resulted in job losses and reduced access to education and training programs. This had a significant impact on women's economic opportunities, as they often have fewer employment opportunities and less access to education and training than men. As a result, women may experience a decline in their economic status and struggle to support their education

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: the impact of austerity measures on women's education



The study also sought the views of respondents to examine the impact of austerity measures on education. As presented in the figure, 57% of respondents agreed to the statement that austerity measures may remove gender-sensitive curriculum, limiting girls' education, 18% did not agree with this statement while 25% were neutral, which means neither agree nor disagree. To the statement that 'austerity measures result in increased school fees or additional costs', 59% agree, 26% disagreed while 15% were neutral. Respondents were also asked whether to agree or not with the statement saying 'cuts to extracurricular activities limit women's personal developments'.

It was found that 52% agreed with this statements, 20% of respondents disagreed while 28% of respondents were neutral. 'Increased taxes hinder girl's education' was another statement to which 41% of respondents agreed, 26% disagreed and 33% of the respondents were neutral. Finally, respondents were also asked to show their agreement or disagreement to the statement that 'cuts to girl's empowerment programs limit educational opportunities for girls. From the results, 67% of respondents agreed with the statement, 23% disagree with statement and 10% were neutral, did not agree or disagree.

Kuphanga (2023), noted that though IMF provides financial assistance to countries facing economic crises, this assistance often comes with conditions that require countries to implement austerity measures, such as reducing public spending and increasing taxes.

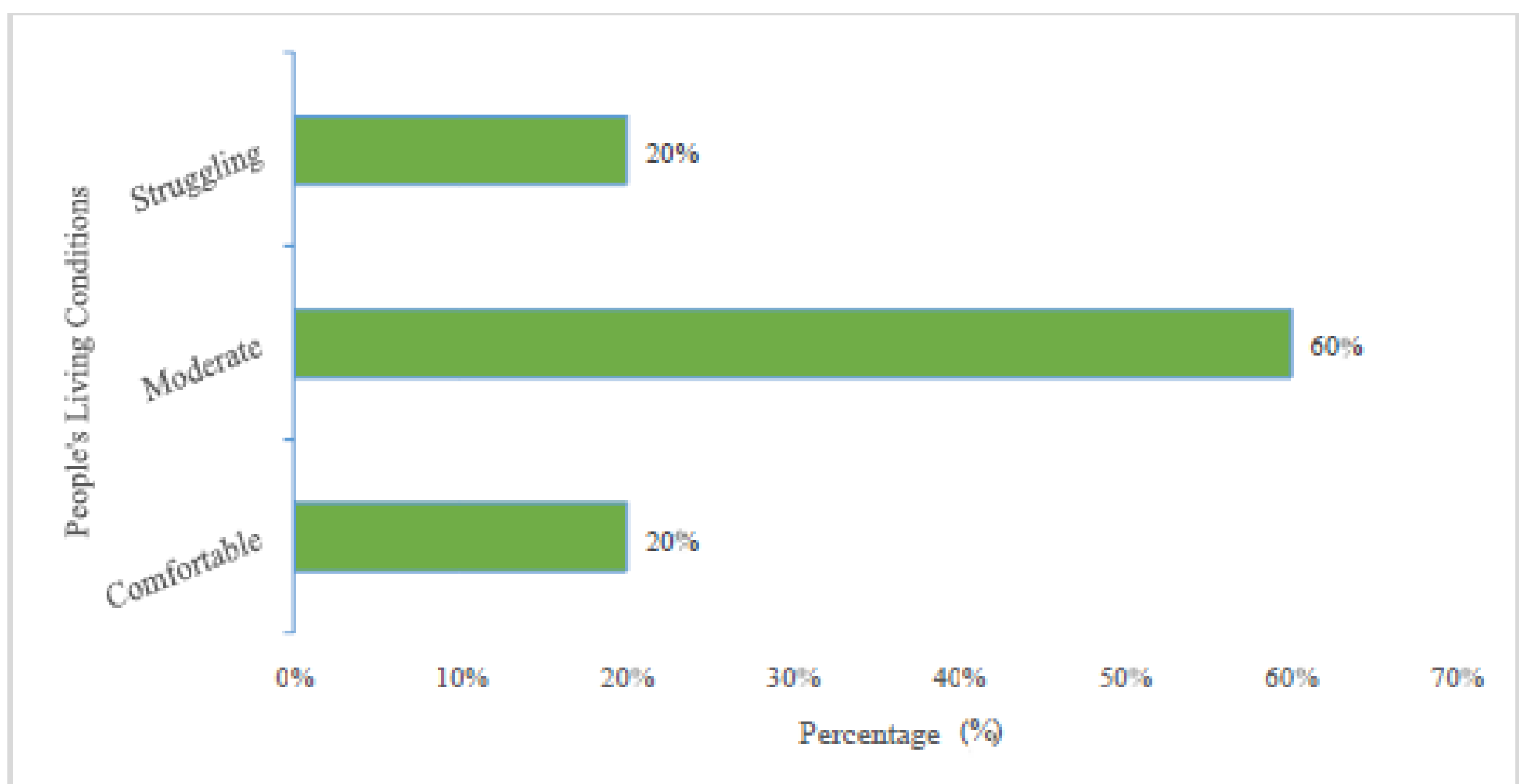
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These measures have a significant impact on economic growth and development in African countries, as well as on the lives of women and girls. The IMF often requires countries to implement these measures as a condition for receiving financial assistance. However, these measures can have a significant impact on social welfare, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women and girls.

In many African countries, women and girls are disproportionately affected by austerity measures. This is because they often rely on social welfare programs that are subject to cuts under austerity measures.

5.2 The impact of austerity measures on women's livelihood

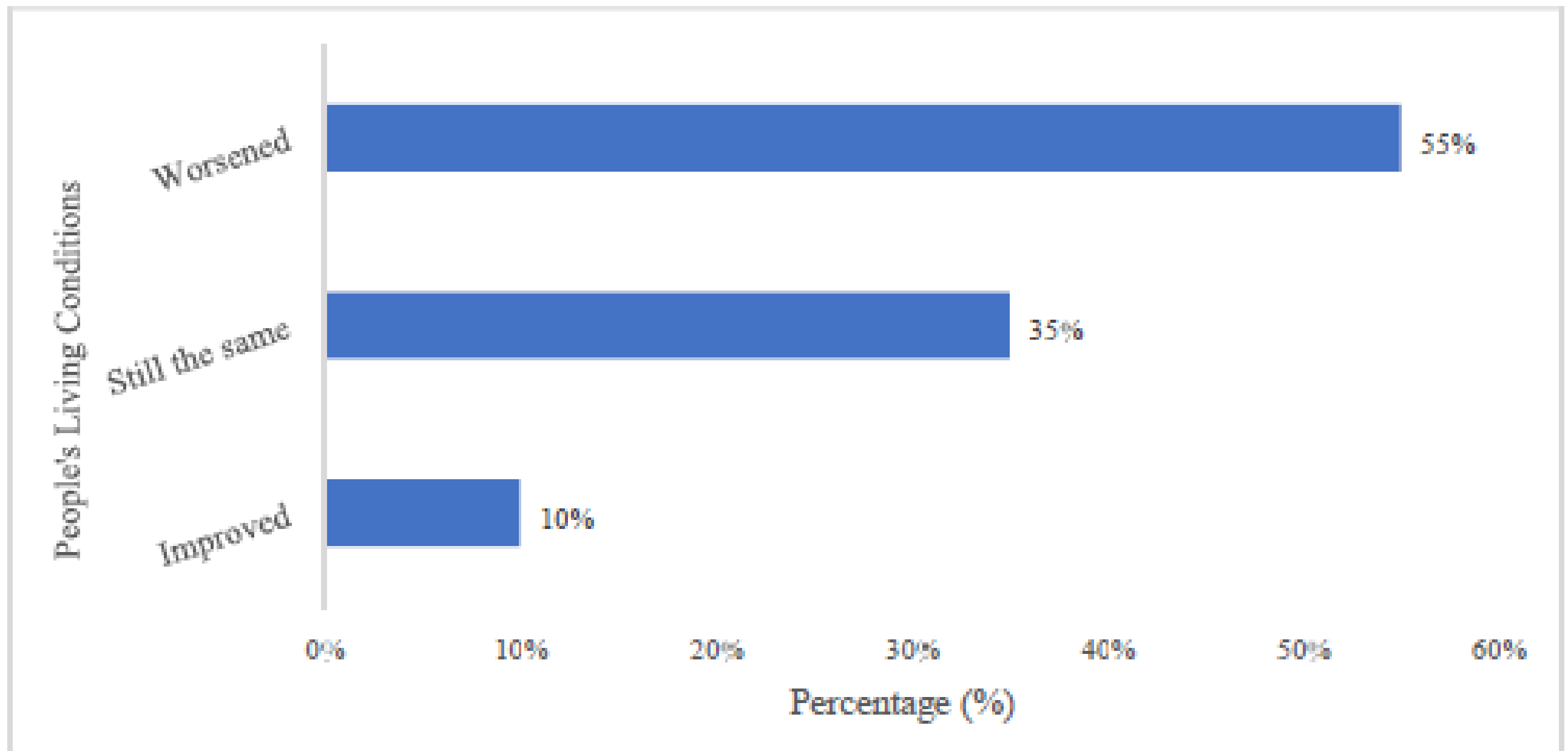
Figure 2: showing people's living conditions before austerity measures



The study also sought to understand how people's living conditions had been transformed by the implementation of austerity measures in the country. The study therefore found out that before the implementation of austerity measures, many people's living condition was moderate (60%), while others' was comfortable (20%) and struggling (20%).

Figure 3: Showing people's living conditions after implementation of austerity measures

RESULTS AND DISUCSSION



Respondents were asked: how have your living conditions changed with the implementation [cutting of social welfare benefits for example privatising hospitals and schools] of austerity measures? Have the conditions improved, worsened or still the same?

Of all respondents interviewed during the study, 55% said their living conditions had worsened by the implementation of austerity measures, 35% said their living conditions remained the same as before the implementation of austerity measures while 10% said their conditions had improved by the austerity measures. This showed that austerity measures had changed people's standard of living.

"These policies bring in some of the negatives impacts and change the way people live in order to adjust to the changes. They bring economic and social vulnerability more especially to us the poor". Respondent 22

Table 3: Areas affected by austerity measures

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Areas affected by austerity	Financial	25	62.5
	Social service	13	32.5
	Environment	2	5.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were interviewed to specify which areas had been affected by the implementation of austerity measures and how they had impacted on their life. It was found out that financial area was heavily affected (62.5%) followed by social service provision (32.5%) and the environment being the least affected (5%).

“Austerity measures often have the effect of causing retrogression in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Cuts to public spending on programs that benefit the poor can impact negatively the rights to education, health, food, water and social security” respondent 9.

“Decreases in public expenditure have led to cutbacks in employment in the State sector and State sponsored projects, resulting in increased levels of unemployment. High levels of unemployment in turn create a rise in the levels of extreme poverty which negatively impacts the realization of a wide range of human rights. Such cuts disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable in a society, especially those who rely more heavily on welfare benefits because they spend a higher proportion of their income on food and basic services”, KII 2.

UNHCR (2015), reported that during times of economic crisis, the poor are often forced to cut back on the basic necessities of life such as food, water and health care thus severely undermining the realization of their basic human rights due to the implementation of austerity measures.

Table 4: Impact of austerity measures on household level.

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Impact on household	little	13	32.5
	More	23	57.5
	Most	4	10.0

The study also wanted to find out the effect of austerity measures on the household level. Respondents were asked how much austerity measures had impacted on their household. It was noted during the study that austerity measures had impacted on many households. More than half of all respondents said their households had been impacted ‘more’ (57.5%) by austerity measures, 32.5 % of respondents said their households had been affected ‘little’ by

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

austerity measures while 10.0% of respondents had their households 'most' affected by the austerity measures. "My family has severely been affected to the extent that my father lost his job. He was the only breadwinner in the family. Losing his job means that the whole family is at risk of hunger and poverty". Respondent 16.

Table 5: Are men and women affected equally by the impact of austerity measure?

Variable	Response	Frequency	percentage
Are women affected the same way as men	Yes	5	12.5
	No	35	87.5

Respondents were asked how austerity measures affected men and women. It was found that women are affected differently from men. When respondents were asked whether men and women were affected the same way by austerity measures, 12.5% of the respondents said 'Yes' both men and women are affected the same way while 87.5% of respondents said 'No' that men and women are affected differently.

Kachingwe & Mukhia (2016), also found out that macroeconomic policies are often thought of as being gender neutral. However, economic policies affect women and men distinctly due to their different positions and roles in the economy, both market (paid) and non-market (unpaid). Hence, when policymakers do not consider this, the macroeconomic policies they promote, are not gender neutral but male-biased, as they exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities. Austerity measures, for instance, disproportionately affect women through many mechanisms and there are rarely additional actions undertaken in order to remedy this.

The austerity-driven measures, such as labour market deregulation, reductions in social protection benefits and services, cuts to public-sector jobs and the privatization of services have particularly damaging consequences for women as they are pushed into unemployment, underemployment or temporary jobs, increasing their financial insecurity, the gender employment gap and the wage gap effects of austerity measures are those in particular situations of vulnerability, such as single mothers, young women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and ethnic, religious and linguistic minority women'. KII 3.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mainstream economic thinking does not take into account the value of unpaid domestic and care work and its contribution to the economy. In contrast, feminist economist analyses have highlighted the fact that women carry out the bulk of that work, which underpins economic growth. In contexts of economic crises, unpaid work unjustly absorbs economic shocks and often underwrites austerity measures, as cuts to social services often intensify the demand for unpaid care work. This work is disproportionately carried out by women and girls who are forced to fill the gaps in services. This in turn affects their overall wellbeing.

Ways of overcoming the impact austerity measures.

Table 6: Ways of reducing the impact of austerity measures

Variable	Response	Frequency	percentage
Ways of reducing the impact	Credit	24	60
	Safety net	13	32.5
	Sacco	3	7.5

Respondents were asked to provide the solutions for reducing the impact of austerity measures. The ‘credit’ was found to be the most preferred solution to the impacts of austerity measures. 60% of respondents suggested the provision of ‘credit’ loans would help improve women’s wellbeing, 32.5% of respondents suggested ‘safety net’ as a solution while 7.5% preferred ‘Sacco’ as a way out of women’s issues brought about by the austerity measures.

5.3 The effects of austerity on gender equality and equity

Themes were generated during the focused group discussion that highlighted several issues limiting achievement of gender equality and equity.

Theme 1: Erosion of Gender Equality

Reduction in Social Services: Austerity measures, often characterized by government budget cuts, have led to significant reductions in social services. These services include healthcare, childcare, elderly care and other forms of social support. Women who often rely on these services more than men have been disproportionately affected. As one interviewee mentioned, “Cuts to social services have disproportionately affected women who often rely on them for support”. This reflects a common sentiment among many interviewees who shared that the erosion of these services due to austerity measures had a negatively impact on gender equality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These service reductions limit women's access to vital support systems that can help them balance their family and work responsibilities, maintain good health and lead independent lives. As a result, gender disparities have been worsened, making it more challenging for women to participate equally in various aspects of society.

Theme 2: Challenges on accessing legal aid

Restricted Access to Legal Aid: Austerity measures have also had a profound impact on the legal system. These measures have resulted in severe limitations on access to legal aid services which in turn affect personal justice. Many interviewees voiced concerns regarding the availability of legal aid for marginalized individuals. One participant shared, "Austerity measures have severely limited access to legal aid, making it difficult for marginalized individuals to seek justice." This subtheme underscores the importance of legal aid services as a means for individuals to protect their rights and seek justice in legal matters. With austerity-related cutbacks in legal aid, particularly for disadvantaged groups, accessing justice becomes a challenging endeavor.

Austerity and fiscal consolidation policies hit the most vulnerable groups within a given population, among whom women are overrepresented and the most exposed. In addition, these measures exacerbate discrimination and inequality. Among the women who are most exposed are single mothers, young women, women in rural areas and women who live in poverty or extreme poverty. Austerity measures, which involve reducing government spending and cutting public services to address economic challenges, have significant implications for gender equality

6. CONCLUSION

The breakdown of social protection systems due to austerity measures has had an impact on women's right to social security in many ways, including through reductions in various unemployment, social, family and maternity benefits and in aid to the elderly and to dependent persons. The situation is worse for women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, owing to their socio-economic status, age, race, sexual orientation or migrant status, among other dimensions of identity. For example, single mothers and women and girls belonging to minority or marginalized groups are more likely to be affected by cuts to benefits and tax credits because they are more likely to be living in poverty, with dependent children and in large families, adding to the burdens that they face

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations

This study made the following recommendations

- Governments should use fiscal policy to maximize their available resources for the progressive realization of gender equality and women's rights
- Governments should increase investment in social infrastructure, especially care services. Not only will this provide decent work for women and reduce their unpaid care burdens, it will also ensure better provision of care for the whole of society while improving the productivity of the workforce in the long run. Moreover, such investment is self-sustaining, creating employment and particularly employment for women that will generate future government revenue streams. Thus governments can, through deficit financing if necessary, improve care provision, create decent jobs and reduce women's unpaid care burden that compromise their wellbeing.
- Governments should ensure that employment regulations and social and legal protection are extended to cover workers in the informal economy, and throughout the supply chain
- Government spending, taxation and monetary policy should be evaluated for their effects on gender equality and women's rights and remedied if found to be detrimental.
- Governments should adopt progressive tax regimes that do not reinforce economic or gender inequality.
- Governments should use counter-cyclical macroeconomic policies to reduce the risk and impact of economic shocks, which disproportionately hit women.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire No.....

Name of interviewer.....

Date of interview

PROMOTING FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS: RECOGNIZING AND INVESTING IN THE CARE ECONOMY AND DECENT WORK

My name is Vanessa Wallace from For Equality. I am conducting a research study on the topic Promoting feminist macroeconomics: recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work. The purpose of this interview is to gather information on Care work and Decent work. Your responses are confidential. Therefore, you are kindly requested to provide genuine responses. Thank you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. What is your gender?

a) Male

b) Female

c) Other

d) Prefer not to say

2. What is your age group?

a) 18-24

b) 25-44

c) 45-64

d) 65 and above

3. What is your highest level of education?

a) No formal education

b) Primary education

c) Secondary education

d) Tertiary education

4. What is your main occupation?

a) Employed (formal sector)

b) Employed (informal sector)

c) Self-employed

d) Unemployed

e) Student

f) Retired

APPENDICES

SECTION B: CARE ECONOMY IN MALAWI

5. How do you perceive the value and importance of the care economy in Malawi?

- a) Very valuable and important
- b) Somewhat valuable and important
- c) Not very valuable and important
- d) Not at all valuable and important
- e) Don't know / No opinion

6. How much time do you spend on care work (paid or unpaid) per week?

- a) Less than 10 hours
- b) 10-29 hours
- c) 30-39 hours
- d) 40 hours or more

7. How do you balance your care work with other responsibilities?

- a) Very easily
- b) Somewhat easily
- c) Not very easily
- d) Not at all easily

8. Do you have access to any support services or facilities that help you with your care work? a) Yes (please specify)

b) No

9. Are you aware of any existing policies or programs in Malawi that promote decent work and gender equality in the care economy?

a) Yes (please specify)

b) No

SECTION C: FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS, CARE WORK AND DECENT WORK

10. What challenges do you believe hinder the recognition and investment in the care economy and decent work in Malawi?

11. In your opinion, what policy recommendations can be made in promoting feminist macroeconomics focusing on investing in the care economy and decent work in line with the sustainable development goals?

APPENDICES

10. What actions can be taken to increase investment and recognition in the care economy in Malawi?

Name of facilitator:

Date of focus group discussion:

Location:

Number of people attending focus group discussion:

PROMOTING FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS: RECOGNIZING AND INVESTING IN THE CARE ECONOMY AND DECENT WORK

My name is Vanessa Wallace from For Equality. I am conducting a research study on the topic Promoting feminist macroeconomics: recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work. The purpose of this focus group discussion is to gather information. Your responses are confidential. Therefore, you are kindly requested to provide genuine responses. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Be in groups of 10
- Each person should participate

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. What challenges do you face as a women involved in care work in your community?

2. Do you have any further thoughts or suggestions on the care economy in Malawi and decent work policies?

3. Discuss key challenges and barriers that hinders the recognition and investment in the care economy and decent work in Malawi.

4. What existing decent work policies do you think promote gender equality and equitable economic opportunities in Malawi?

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- FE Safeguarding line: +265 (0) 88 101 2165
- FE secure Mail: concerns@forequalityafrica.org
- Forms: <https://forequalityafrica.org/safeguarding/>
- FE Safeguarding Box: Available at FE offices

