

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN MALAWI

**BOOK 1 : THE YOUNG SCHOLARS FEMINIST  
RESEARCH ON PROGRESSIVE BUDGETING FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS & SOCIAL WELFARE**

# 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.

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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.

# **ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN MALAWI**

**THE YOUNG SCHOLARS FEMINIST RESEARCH ON  
PROGRESSIVE BUDGETING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND SOCIAL WELFARE (BOOK 1)**

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# A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALAWIAN WOMEN'S ACCESS TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

By Tabitha Tiffany Phiri.

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study delves into Malawian women's access to renewable energy. The research explores the interplay of budgetary processes, awareness, financial inclusion, infrastructure development, and participation in the context of women's access to clean and sustainable energy, focusing on the case of Malawi. This included semi-structured interviews with women in rural areas, urban areas, working in ministry of gender, ministry of energy and the energy commission. Findings underscore the need for comprehensive education and awareness initiatives within energy policies, financial inclusion for women, gender-responsive infrastructure development, and women's participation in decision-making processes. Moreover, the study highlights the potential of energy democracy and decentralized energy access to empower women. It provides policy recommendations that emphasize gender mainstreaming, the allocation of resources for women-centric renewable energy programs, and the importance of collaborative governance in driving a transformative agenda. The research contributes to bridging the gender gap in the renewable energy sector, aligning with global sustainability goals and recognizing the vital role women play in sustainable development.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Energy is essential to preserving the quality of life and promoting economic development (Ding et al., 2014; Crentsil et al., 2019). Thus, achieving universal access to sustainable forms of energy in order to enhance the livelihoods of people around the world remains an important objective (REN21, 2019). Moreover, without energy services, disadvantaged people will be excluded from those basic amenities and risk being relegated to poverty (Fathallah and Pyakurel, 2020; Patnaik and Jha, 2020). Reversing this trend and improving access to sustainable energy is crucial, but requires political commitment and the will to set goals for energy poverty alleviation (Patnaik and Jha, 2020). Energy improves the well-being of women and men by making the production of goods possible, as well as through the provision of services, such as water, health, education and communications (Emmons Allison et al., 2019; OECD, 2019).

According to Ganle et al. (2015), women continue to shoulder the major responsibilities of household roles even though they are also actively engaged in the paid workforce in Malawi. Gender-responsive energy sector frameworks include considerations of the differentiated sociocultural experiences, as well as the needs and priorities, of women and men in order to overcome gender biases and integrate actions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (Emmons Allison et al., 2019; Patnaik and Jha, 2020). In as much as advocacies and reforms have boosted gender mainstreaming in most developing countries, growth in many of the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, however, has resulted in little development and has brought only slight benefits to women for example gender disparities in education persist, with a lower percentage of girls completing secondary education compared to boys in SSA countries. In Zambia, only 30% of girls complete secondary education, compared to 50% of boys (Klege et al., 2021).

Over the past decade, significant attention has been directed towards investigating the potential of progressive budgeting as a means to enhance women's access to renewable energy in various developing countries. With the recognition of renewable energy as a critical pathway to sustainable development and climate change mitigation, understanding how budgeting strategies can effectively address gender disparities in access becomes crucial. While existing research has shed light on the potential benefits of progressive budgeting, the overall effectiveness of these approaches in the context of Malawi remains unclear.



# INTRODUCTION

This research paper aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining the effectiveness of progressive budgeting in enhancing women's access to renewable energy in Malawi. By evaluating the impact of budget allocation and policy implementation on women's participation and empowerment in the renewable energy sector, this study seeks to identify key areas of improvement and provide valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working towards gender-inclusive sustainable energy transitions.

## 1.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the growing recognition of renewable energy as a vital pathway to sustainable development and climate change mitigation, women in Malawi continue to face significant barriers in accessing and benefiting from clean energy solutions. The existing literature highlights various challenges, including limited infrastructure and connectivity, gendered socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, lack of technical skills and knowledge, and safety and security concerns. Therefore, the problem statement of this study was to examine women's access to renewable energy in Malawi and identify key areas of improvement in policy and budgetary interventions.

## 1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the existing policies and initiatives related to progressive women's access to renewable energy.
- To assess the impact of improving women's participation and representation in renewable energy projects and decision-making processes.
- To analyze the effectiveness of increasing women's access to renewable energy technologies and services.
- To identify the key challenges and barriers faced by women in accessing and utilizing renewable energy resources.

## 1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study holds significant implications for policy, practice, and sustainable development. By addressing the research gap in understanding the impact of progressive budgeting on women's access to clean energy, the study aims to inform policymakers and development organizations about the strengths and weaknesses of current policies, ultimately leading to improved access to renewable energy for women in Malawi.

# INTRODUCTION

It contributes to gender equality and empowerment by highlighting specific challenges faced by women and providing recommendations for addressing these barriers. Moreover, the study aligns with sustainable development and climate change mitigation efforts by promoting inclusive and equitable energy transitions. Overall, the study's significance lies in its potential to shape policies, enhance women's access to renewable energy, promote gender equality, and foster sustainable and inclusive development in Malawi.

## 1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study encountered several limitations. These include the potential challenge of generalizing the findings beyond the specific context of Malawi, as the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors unique to the country may influence the effectiveness of progressive budgeting differently elsewhere. Limited availability and quality of data related to women's access to renewable energy in Malawi also impacted the depth of analysis. The study's time frame restricted the ability to assess long-term impacts, and external factors such as changes in policies or economic conditions could influence the results. Research biases and subjectivity in data collection and interpretation are additional limitations to consider. The scope and depth of analysis was constrained by the complexity of the research topic and available resources.

### 1.3.1 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

- Progressive budgeting is an appropriate and effective strategy for addressing gender inequalities and enhancing women's access to renewable energy.
- There are existing gender disparities in renewable energy access and further assumes the presence of specific barriers that disproportionately affect women in this context.
- Policy and budgetary interventions have the capacity to influence and improve women's access to renewable energy.
- Information provided by research participants is reliable and accurate, serving as a genuine reflection of the realities and experiences related to women's access to renewable energy in Malawi.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives the theoretical base of the study and explains what has already been done and found by other researchers in the similar field.

## 2.1 DEFENITION OF TERMS

### 2.1.1 Progressive Budgeting

According to Nallathiga, R., & Sridharan, S. (2014), progressive budgeting refers to an approach to budgeting that emphasizes the allocation of resources based on the principles of equity, social justice, and the promotion of inclusive development. It involves prioritizing and allocating budgetary resources in a manner that targets and addresses the needs of marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as women, low-income individuals, and other disadvantaged groups.

### 2.1.2 Women's Access to Renewable Energy:

Women's access to renewable energy encompasses the availability, affordability, and utilization of renewable energy technologies and services by women. It refers to the ability of women to obtain and benefit from clean and sustainable energy sources, such as solar, wind, or biomass, for various purposes, including household energy, productive activities, and community development. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2013).

### 2.1.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the degree to which progressive budgeting interventions and policies successfully achieve their intended goals and objectives in enhancing women's access to renewable energy. It involves assessing the extent to which these interventions lead to positive outcomes, such as increased women's participation, improved energy access, and enhanced gender equality in the renewable energy sector. OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2010).

### 2.1.4 Gender Equality

Gender Equality is the fair and equal treatment of individuals, regardless of their gender, in all aspects of life, including access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. In the context of the study, gender equality pertains to addressing gender disparities in women's access to renewable energy and ensuring equal opportunities for women's empowerment and participation in the sector. United Nations Women. (n.d.). Gender Equality Glossary.

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## 2.1.5 Renewable Energy

Renewable Energy refers to energy derived from naturally replenishing sources, such as sunlight, wind, water, and biomass. It encompasses technologies and systems that harness and convert these renewable resources into usable forms of energy, providing a sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional fossil fuels. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (2020).

## 2.1.6 Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming refers to the integration of a gender perspective into all stages and levels of policy development, implementation, and evaluation, with the aim of promoting gender equality and addressing gender disparities. United Nations. (1997).

## 2.1.7 Environmental

Environmental refers to the natural and physical surroundings, including the air, water, land, ecosystems, and resources. It encompasses the interactions between human activities and the natural environment. United Nations. (1987).

## 2.1.8 Marginalized

Marginalized refers to individuals or groups who experience social, economic, or political disadvantages and are excluded or pushed to the margins of society due to various factors such as poverty, discrimination, or lack of access to resources and opportunities United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2016). Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone.

## 2.2.9 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)

SDGs are a set of 17 interconnected goals established by the United Nations to guide global development efforts towards sustainable development. They address key challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and sustainable consumption and production. United Nations.(2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## 2.2.10 Sociocultural

Sociocultural refers to the combined influence of social and cultural factors on individuals and societies. It encompasses norms, values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and social relationships that shape human behavior and interactions. Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952).

## 2.2.11 Gender Inequality

Gender inequality refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and power between genders. It encompasses the social, economic, and political disparities that disproportionately affect individuals based on their gender.

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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (1995). Human Development Report 1995: Gender and Human Development.

## 2.2.12 Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperature patterns and weather conditions resulting from human activities, primarily the emission of greenhouse gases. It encompasses changes in temperature, precipitation, sea levels, and weather events that have significant impacts on ecosystems and human societies. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2014). Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report.

## 2.2.13 Energy Policy

Energy policy refers to a set of principles, strategies, and actions implemented by governments and institutions to regulate and guide the production, distribution, and consumption of energy resources. It aims to ensure a sustainable, affordable, reliable, and environmentally friendly energy system. Sovacool, B. K. (2016).

## 2.2.14 Gender-inclusive

Gender-inclusive refers to approaches, policies, and practices that consider the diverse needs, experiences, and perspectives of individuals of all genders. It involves creating environments and systems that promote equal opportunities, rights, and representation for people of all genders. United Nations. (2021).

## 2.2.15 Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of various social identities (such as gender, race, class, and sexuality) and the ways in which they intersect and interact to shape an individual's experiences, opportunities, and access to resources. It recognizes that individuals may experience multiple forms of oppression or privilege simultaneously. Crenshaw, K. (1989).

## 2.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING

### 2.3.1 The gender gap concept

According to DiPrete and Jennings (2012), gender gaps are caused by social rather than biological differences between women and men. Gender gaps are manifested in education, income, job opportunities, literacy, ownership of land, access to resources, access to credit, health, nutrition and participation in political activities and processes (Lambrecht, 2016; Crensil et al., 2019).

Despite the larger share of females in informal employment, gender inequalities in this sector are predominant (Ogando et al., 2017). Gender gaps represent a severe constraining of women's

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economic advancement, especially in rural poor communities (Rosenthal et al., 2018; Shaaban et al., 2018; Crentsilet et al., 2019; Koomson and Danquah, 2021). Indeed, the gender gap between women and men in certain positions continues to widen (Koomson and Danquah, 2021), with women restricted from the leadership selection process (Scholten and Witmer, 2017).

According to Khoza et al. (2019), women are not fully taking advantage of opportunities presented to them. Men, on the other hand, remain primary decision-makers, while women continue as the primary implementers of men's decisions. When it comes to less-developed sectors, women are not only deprived of recognition of their work but also suffer from different forms of harassment and violence (Lambrecht, 2016). At another level, they do not find opportunities to occupy higher positions within their working groups, or when they do, they are not respected by their male counterparts (Ogando et al., 2017).

There are significant geographical and gender inequalities apparent in asset ownership and access to social services. Women face obvious and inherent discrimination in access to productive assets like land, credit, technology and livestock. They receive lower wages than their male counterparts in the labor market and work without remuneration as unpaid workers on family farms (Lambrecht, 2016; Tayal, 2019). In the industrialized countries, 75% of women are employed in historically low-paying, service-sector jobs; 15 to 20% work in manufacturing; and some 5% in agriculture. Nonetheless, women are gradually entering leadership positions in public service companies, though they continue to lack representation in the private sector. Gender equality has become lip service, occasionally useful to the organization but associated with uneasiness in management. Improving women's sustainable development 25 structures and among men. Regardless of being successful at policy levels where legislations and programs ostensibly to reduce inequality have been introduced, women still remain broadly under-represented (Scholten and Witmer, 2017; Rosenthal et al., 2018).

### **2.4 THE LINK BETWEEN GENDER MAINSTREAMING, ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Mubaya et al. (2017) theorize that the considerations for sustainable development and climate adaptation responses do not necessarily have to consider women as a special social group in isolation but, rather consider the implications for both men and women.

Women play a major role in Africa's food production sector, comprising two-thirds of the agricultural labor force (Lambrecht, 2016). In their role as food

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producers, women face discrimination affecting not only their well-being but also imposing high costs on the economy through poverty and deprivation (Adubra et al., 2019; Brandão et al., 2020; McKay et al., 2020). Available statistics from many authors (Gartaula et al., 2017; Diiro et al., 2018; Mahajan, 2019) indicate that should women have access to same productive resources as men, their farms could increase yields from between 20 and 30%. This represents a potential agricultural output increase in developing countries of between 2.5 and 4%, in turn, reducing world hunger by 12–17%. Moreover, gender equality stimulates economic efficiency and is vital to achieving other development outcomes. Gender fairness is crucial to promoting shared growth and accelerating the achievements of the third SDGs (Tavenner et al., 2019). As such, gender mainstreaming is indispensable to advancing gender impartiality in organizational activities (Tavenner et al., 2019).

### 2.5 PROGRESSIVE BUDGET

Progressive budgeting aims to address income inequalities by establishing tax structures that consider individuals' ability to pay based on their earnings. Implementations such as graduated income taxes underpin these initiatives by progressively taxing higher-income groups at higher rates compared to lower-income brackets. In effect, this approach ensures that those who can afford more contribute proportionally toward public services like education or healthcare infrastructure development. Smithers et al., (2018)

Thompson's seminal research from (2020) highlights Another crucial aspect of progressive budget management lies in targeted resource allocations aimed at bridging socioeconomic gaps. Rather than adopting blanket approaches which may disproportionately benefit certain segments of society over others, targeted spending facilitates the delivery of much-needed support programs and services where they are most required.

A study conducted by Johnson et al., (2019) highlights how an integral component shaping successful implementation is measuring social impact transparently using performance indicators tailored towards enhancing fairness among beneficiaries. The adoption of outcome-based measurements allows policymakers to steer financial decisions towards programs that effectively narrow disparities, rather than perpetuating inequalities. By evaluating the social impact generated from different budget allocations, governments and organizations can ensure their resources are used efficiently in reducing socio-economic gaps.

### 2.6 ACCESS TO ENERGY IN MALAWI

In Malawi, electricity generation was critically constrained in January 2022,

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following the damage by Tropical Cyclone Anna on one of the Hydro Power Stations called Kapichila Hydro Power Station which resulted in loss of 130 MW into the national grid. Following this destruction, Malawi has been experiencing critical power shortages which is affecting both household and industrial productivity.

Rapid growth in population and subsequent increase in energy demand in the developing countries has also led to an emerging energy crisis which in effect increases people's dependence on non-renewable energy sources. Malawi, given its relatively small landmass, large population and heavy dependence on fuel wood, is an increasingly energy-stressed country. The Malawi National Energy Policy 2018 estimates that 93% of total energy demand in Malawi is met by biomass energy. Households in Malawi consume 84% of the total primary energy. A staggering 99% of household energy needs is supplied by biomass. This, coupled with increasing population growth, is exerting pressure on the country's forest resources, leading to forest degradation and deforestation at a rate of 2.6% per year. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of the Malawi population uses firewood and 8% uses charcoal to satisfy their thermal energy needs. However, with the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, the use of charcoal, firewood and fossil fuels are no longer a viable option.

Malawi is currently facing serious energy poverty for both domestic and industrial use. Installed electricity generation capacity in Malawi on the main grid is highly constrained, currently standing at 312MW against installed generation capacity of 441MW<sup>1</sup>. Worse still and as stated in the above section, following the damage of Kapichila Hydro Power Station in January 2022 by Tropical Cyclone Ana, electricity generation capacity has further gone down to around 200 MW<sup>2</sup>. Energy sector state Institutions such as Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM), Electricity Generation Company (EGENCO), Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) and National Oil Company of Malawi (NOCMA) are all characterized with compromised corporate governance in form of corruption, misprocurement and poor service delivery.

High income inequalities and poverty especially among women, youth and marginalized groups has affected their access to clean energy too. For those connected, low-income levels have prevented them from using the clean energy on critical energy needs which is cooking and heating. Of the 18 million Malawi population, only 11% have access to electricity. While the rural population makes up 80% of the total population, only 2% of them have access to electricity. Consistent with this, studies have established that out of 18 million population, 96% still use wood biomass (charcoal and firewood) for household cooking and heating, and that 62% of urban households use charcoal.



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As a result, the improvements and investments in the energy sector including the energy sector reforms, have not yet meaningfully contributed to management of climate change and developing a green economy in Malawi.

### 2.7 GENDER BUDGETING

Many governments worldwide are implementing gender budgeting (see, e.g. the recent empirical accounts in edited volumes and special issues: Ng, 2016; O'Hagan, 2015, 2018). Feminists in Australia started calling for gender equality in the budgeting process in the early 1980s (Galizzi, 2010; Sharp and Broomhill, 1990, 2002). Moreover, scholars guided and monitored these developments by publishing their insights in books (Budlender and Hewitt, 2002; Budlender et al., 2002; Elson and Sharp, 2010; Ng, 2016, O'Hagan, 2018), conference proceedings (Judd, 2002) and –increasingly –academic journals (Himmelweit, 2002; Rubin and Bartle, 2005; Sharp and Broomhill, 1990, 2002; Steccolini, 2019).

A widely used definition of gender budgeting is a 'gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process' (Council of Europe, 2005:10). Stakeholders, such as citizens, can therefore use gender budgeting for holding governments accountable for their policies and actions in the field of gender equality, with the goal of promoting material equality among people of all genders (Sharp and Broomhill, 2002).

The academic discourse on gender budgeting is interdisciplinary, encompassing research from accounting and finance, education, feminist economics and non-profit studies, among others (Budlender, 2002; Elson and Sharp, 2010; Morrissey, 2018; Nolte et al., 2021; Steinhórsdóttir et al., 2020). Thus, a growing body of the gender literature points out that interdisciplinarity 'mediates the status of feminist knowledge' (Pearse et al., 2019: 116). In addition to this interdisciplinarity, studies also differ in their aims. Some studies are normative, proposing how governments can implement gender budgeting instruments (e.g. Budlender et al., 2002; Elson, 2000). Other studies are purely descriptive, offering insights into different countries' gender budgeting plans and programmes (e.g. Downes et al., 2016). Yet other research takes an interpretive stance. For example, Marx (2019) criticizes the traditional budgeting process as reflecting 'the masculine politico-economic power relations in society' (1183). She also points out that governments might neglect underlying structural problems by simply distributing budgetary resources based on gender quotas. Gender budgeting –as an important aspect of budgeting in the public sector has been neglected by public administration scholars, giving rise to calls for further attention (Steccolini, 2019). The decades-long discourse in public administration on gender and other human and social characteristics encompasses diverse topics such as representative bureaucracy,

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coproduction through participatory budgeting and accounting for displaced persons and refugees (Bearfield, 2009; Escobar, 2021; Riccucci et al.,2014).For example Riccucci et al. (2014) study representative bureaucracy in a hypothetical police service unit dealing with domestic violence. They find that gender representation affects the unit's perceived trustworthiness, fairness and performance. Their study 'illustrates the importance of symbolic representation, whereby the attitudes and potentially in turn the behaviors of clients can change regardless of bureaucratic actions or outcomes'(p. 538). Other scholars, focusing on participatory budgeting, stress involving citizens in the budgeting process, to enhance its effectiveness and to move gender budgeting from a 'government cosmetic approach 'to a 'transformative 'one (Klatzer, 2016: 100). Escobar (2021) underlines the need to lower participation barriers for minority groups and include the opinions of people who are frequently excluded from the definition of 'citizen', such as migrants, refugees, children and prisoners.

### 2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this research, the two major streams of theories have been adopted. The first is "Women In Development" (WID) and "Gender and Development" (GAD). Tourigny et al. (2017) holds the position that developmental issues do not include women, but should, in order to benefit them. The GAD theory stipulates that women have always participated in the development, but from an unequal position and without being acknowledged. This theory was suitable for this research and is adopted because, according to March et al. (1999), cited by (Mubaya et al.,2017), development gender mainstreaming as distinct from women and development. A study by Smith (2013) emphasizes same that gender occurs through five sets of relations: power relations, production relations, cathexis or emotional relations, and symbolic relations. Interestingly, these theories elucidate vital inquiries that help in understanding the study problem and what potential solutions could be. Nevertheless, it was useful for this study in assessing how gender is practiced in the Malawi context and how different sets of relationships can be mobilized in situations such as women's energy access. Tourigny et al. (2017) posit gender mainstreaming as a model to advance a more gender-equal recruitment process, focusing on the structural dimensions of gender in society. According to Tourigny et al. (2017), GAD supporters argue that the fundamental constraints for women's advancement are the social structure and processes which create and maintain male superiority and female subordination.

### 2.9 CONCLUSION

The literature review provides substantial support for the proposed research on the effectiveness of progressive budgeting in women's access to renewable energy.

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Gender disparities in various sectors, including education, income, and access to resources, call for targeted interventions such as progressive budgeting. The common thread throughout the literature is the recognition of the need to address gender inequalities comprehensively, not solely through isolated measures.

The link between gender mainstreaming, energy, and sustainable development emphasizes that holistic approaches that consider both genders are crucial for equitable development. Gender-responsive policies, which could be advanced through progressive budgeting, are essential for achieving SDGs and promoting shared growth.

Progressive budgeting aligns with the principles of equitable resource allocation and targeted interventions. Given the challenges women face in accessing energy in Malawi, progressive budgeting could play a pivotal role in bridging gender-based disparities in energy access.

Overall, the literature review justifies the proposed research by highlighting the interconnectedness of gender disparities, energy access, and budgeting strategies. It underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that target gender inequalities in energy access, aligning with the objectives of the proposed research.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is dedicated to elucidating the intricacies of the research methodology employed in this study, providing a comprehensive overview of the methods and techniques used for data collection and analysis. The significance of research methodology lies in guiding the overall approach taken by the researcher in conducting the study. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) define research methodology as the foundational framework that underpins the entire research project, while Kothari (2004) describes it as a systematic and objective understanding of the scientific process of conducting research. In essence, research methodology shapes the path through which the researcher explores the research problem. This chapter is organized into ten subsections, encompassing introduction, research design, study area justification, population, sample and sampling design, source of data, data collection techniques, validity and reliability considerations, ethical considerations, data analysis, and conclusion.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design involves the deliberate arrangement of conditions to effectively gather and analyze data, with a dual focus on relevance to the research objectives and efficiency in execution (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the chosen research design was the descriptive research method, which facilitated an in-depth qualitative exploration. This approach is adopted due to its capacity to provide a holistic understanding the perspectives and experiences of women in accessing renewable energy. By delving into the complexities of this social phenomenon, descriptive research revealed insights from the individuals experiencing the impact of gender-related budget allocations.

### 3.4 TARGET POPULATION

The target population, as Polit and Hungler (1999) define it, constitutes the aggregate of all entities that adhere to a predetermined set of characteristics. In this study, the target population comprises Malawian women, encompassing diverse attributes such as race, age, educational status, socio-economic background, and residential location. These women fall within the spectrum of having or lacking access to energy resources. This broad inclusion ensures a comprehensive representation of the demographic, enabling a nuanced exploration of the intersection between gender, energy access, and socio-economic factors.

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## 3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Sampling procedures are meticulously crafted mechanisms for selecting a subset of the population that is sufficiently manageable for data collection while maintaining its representative nature (Barbie, 2010). To this end, a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques is employed. The purposive sample is designed with a specific objective in mind (Kothari, 2004), selecting individuals from departments known to possess a robust understanding of government budgeting and gender dynamics. This strategic approach ensures that the sample encapsulates expertise relevant to the research problem. Additionally, simple random sampling is applied, offering each member of the population an equal chance of selection (Kothari, 1997). This approach negates bias and fosters a balanced representation. The combined application of these techniques contributes to a well-rounded and insightful study.

## 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The data collection process is meticulously designed to ensure the acquisition of rich and relevant insights. One-on-one semi-structured interviews are conducted with respondents, providing them the freedom to express their experiences and opinions in-depth. This format will also enable the researcher to ask probing follow-up questions, unraveling intricate layers of the research topic. During the interviews, detailed field notes will be taken, capturing nuances and non-verbal cues. Supplementary data is drawn from secondary sources, including a comprehensive literature review incorporating project reports, published works, and academic papers. This multi-faceted approach enhances the comprehensiveness of the data collection process, validating the research findings.

## 3.7 SAMPLE SIZE

The selected sample size for this study comprised a total of 35 respondents, meticulously chosen based on their roles and expertise. This distribution includes 5 participants from the Ministry of Energy, 5 from the Gender and Social Protection Ministry, 5 from the Energy Commission, and 10 women from both rural and urban areas each. This balanced representation ensures diverse viewpoints, enabling the study to capture a holistic understanding of the intricate dynamics between gender, access to energy, and government budgeting. The chosen sample size, bolstered by a strategic distribution, aligns with the research objectives and enhances the depth of the study's insights.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The interviews and interview notes were transcribed in Microsoft Word, and the interviews were coded by a single coder. All of the interviews provided usable data. The coding process consisted of identifying specific codes, or phrases to describe categories of data, that were then organized into broader families and themes. The codes were specifically assigned to quotes to categorize the data. The coding process was done using a word processor and Microsoft Excel, and the coding was performed continuously as each interview was transcribed. Thematic Content Analysis was performed to analyze the data by identifying common themes that emerged from the coding process. The themes chosen for this paper had a substantial amount of data associated with the specific codes.

#### **Theme 1: Awareness and Education**

Women participating in this study highlighted a critical gap in existing policies and initiatives related to renewable energy. Specifically, they emphasized the lack of educational components aimed at empowering women with knowledge about renewable energy technologies and their associated benefits.

Participant from the urban area expressed this concern, stating, "Our research highlights a significant issue within the current policies and initiatives. Women, especially those in rural areas, lack access to vital information about renewable energy technologies. This knowledge gap hinders their ability to harness the benefits of these technologies for improved livelihoods."

However, in regards to the Rural Electrification Fund this initiative, as outlined in the National Energy Policy (NEP), has been instrumental in extending the grid to rural areas. While there have been some limitations, it has made progress in improving energy access for rural communities. Outreach and educational programs often accompany electrification projects.

Participant from the ministry of gender further emphasized the detrimental impact of these financial constraints, stating, "These financial limitations make it challenging for institutions to incorporate gender mainstreaming effectively. The lack of funds restricts our ability to organize crucial workshops, seminars, and stakeholder meetings, which are vital for raising awareness and providing education."

Importantly, participants in the study also noted the geographical disparities in access to educational resources. Participant from the energy commission pointed out, "These educational programs, while struggling to operate effectively due to

## RESULTS

financial constraints, face an additional challenge. They often do not reach all women, primarily because of limited access to information and educational resources, especially in rural areas." Participants from the rural area added, "Many women residing in villages may remain unaware of these initiatives due to the lack of accessible information channels. This knowledge gap further exacerbates existing disparities in access to renewable energy and reinforces gender inequalities."

A participant from the ministry of energy highlighted that "One of the successes of the National Energy Policy (NEP) was the establishment of the Department of Energy Studies at Mzuzu University". This is so because the department likely plays a crucial role in educating students and, indirectly, the broader community about renewable energy technologies.

### **Theme 2: Financial Inclusion**

A woman from a rural area noted, "If energy is obtained for free in a traditional setting, it would help women save money. Some of the women I know are now concerned as they are using money to buy firewood obtained far from their villages and homes"

Women in rural areas are constrained in the preparation of food and natural products that need energy. The cutting of live trees is becoming more common due to the depletion of deadwood. This may cause land degradation, leading to poor yields and pasture, and ultimately poverty in the affected areas.

Another woman in a rural setting expressed the challenges: "The cutting of live mopane trees leads to low yields of mopane caterpillars, which are a source of livelihood for local people. They are a local relish and are often sold to commercial farmers and retailers"

In practice, rural women often face significant challenges in accessing these financial mechanisms. They may lack collateral, financial literacy, and encounter social and cultural barriers to financial independence, which can limit their ability to benefit from microfinance or credit programs related to renewable energy.

A woman in an urban area working in the Ministry of Energy noted, "In urban areas, we have seen some success in facilitating financial inclusion through progressive budgeting. The government has initiated microfinance programs targeting women entrepreneurs in the clean energy sector. These programs have helped urban women access financing for renewable energy projects, such as solar-powered businesses and clean cookstove enterprises."

## RESULTS

However, she also acknowledged that challenges persist: "While urban women have seen some benefits from these programs, rural women often face greater barriers. Limited access to financial services, coupled with cultural norms, can prevent them from participating fully in these opportunities. We need more targeted efforts to ensure that progressive budgeting truly reaches and empowers rural women."

A woman from ministry of energy Malawi's budgetary reforms have included incentives for clean energy projects that are owned or led by women. This may include tax breaks, subsidies, or grants designed to promote the establishment of renewable energy businesses or the adoption of clean energy technologies.

### **Theme 3: Infrastructure Development**

Infrastructure development initiatives might include electrification projects that target rural areas, which can significantly impact women's access to renewable energy. The implementation of such projects might be slow and limited, leaving many villages without access to clean energy. Women might still have to travel long distances to charge devices, affecting their time and safety.

One of the respondents from the rural area said "I am are grateful for the electrification project in our village. It has brought light to our homes, making cooking and studying easier. This improves our daily lives."

A respondent from ministry of energy "Having access to electricity has allowed us to use clean energy sources like solar power, which helps us save money and protect the environment."

A respondent from the urban area highlighted that "While we have electricity in some areas, many villages are still waiting for it. Women have to wait, and this affects our daily routines, especially when we need to charge our devices."

Another respondent from the urban area said "I appreciate the electricity project, but it can be expensive. Sometimes, we struggle to afford the electricity bills. This makes it hard for us to fully enjoy the benefits of renewable energy."

"The long journeys to access electricity can be risky, especially for women traveling alone. We need more electrification projects closer to our homes for our safety" a participant from the rural area

The development of infrastructure, especially electrification projects, presents opportunities for women's access to renewable energy in Malawi. However, the slow progress, limited coverage, affordability concerns, and safety issues remain a challenge to for all women who participated in the study.



# RESULTS

## Theme 4: Decision-Making and Participation

Energy democracy is a concept that aims to decentralize access to and control of energy sources, moving them to communities for the benefit of all. It has the potential to realize energy sovereignty, which is the right of communities to have access to sufficient energy from sustainable sources for a dignified life. However, in the context of rural electrification in Malawi, women from rural areas have reported not being involved in any consultations regarding this issue. This lack of participation means that women's developmental concerns are unlikely to be fully be considered in public budgeting.

The National Energy Policy of 2019 in Malawi seeks to address clean and affordable energy as well as providing equal opportunities for women in the energy sector. The policy has provisions for gender equality, safety, and security, which are in line with the country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NEP aims to empower women and create gender parity in the energy sector by enhancing their capability to influence decision-making and educating them about their rights.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that brings all gender issues into the mainstream to promote the socio-economic welfare of both men and women. In the context of the energy sector, gender mainstreaming involves the involvement and participation of women in energy policies and programs. However, the research findings suggest that the various stakeholders in the energy sector in Malawi are formulating and implementing policies and programs that are not in line with gender mainstreaming.

"These policies are formulated to improve the lives of women and advance the agenda to reduce the disparity between men and women in the energy sector of Malawi and also empower them to participate fully in the energy sector; however, even though the policy is there, I do not feel like women's views are incorporated when budgeting or making policies." – Respondent from urban area.

"Currently, it looks like the men are marginalized in the whole process. This is due to the notion that women in Malawi have been marginalized for far too long, and this is the opportunity to bridge the gap." - Ministry of Gender Respondent

The research findings also show that most of the interviewees equated women's issues to gender issues. There was an emphasis on the involvement and participation of women in energy policies and programs, and the general observation was that the various stakeholders in the energy sector are formulating and implementing various policies and programs which are not in line with gender mainstreaming in the energy sector."

## RESULTS

To address the challenges and opportunities of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector, gender analysis should be carried out in the initial phases of interventions to ensure relevant issues are identified and interventions are planned in a gender-responsive manner. Gender neutrality should never be assumed in any policy or practice interventions, and gender analysis findings must be effectively incorporated into the implementation of policy and practices.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION/ INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### **Theme 1: Awareness and Education**

The findings emphasize the critical role of education and awareness in improving women's access to renewable energy. While the National Energy Policy (NEP) of 2019 in Malawi incorporates provisions for gender equality and safety, there seems to be a gap between policy intent and on-the-ground implementation. This finding aligns with global insights indicating that broad educational programs are necessary to transform mindsets and enable women's participation in the renewable energy sector. Initiatives like the Testing Centre for Renewable Energy Technologies (TCRET) mentioned in the NEP can bridge the knowledge gap and enhance access to renewable energy, offering women more opportunities for education, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability.

### **Theme 2: Financial Inclusion**

Progressive budgeting can indeed facilitate financial inclusion for women, particularly in urban areas where financial services are more accessible. Financial inclusion has been recognized as a key driver of increased renewable energy consumption, reduced emissions, and women's empowerment. However, challenges remain in reaching rural women who face unique barriers. It's essential to continue these efforts and implement additional reforms to ensure that women in both urban and rural areas can fully benefit from financial inclusion initiatives and participate in the renewable energy sector.

### **Theme 3: Infrastructure Development**

A gender lens must be applied throughout the renewable energy infrastructure development process. This involves considering women's specific needs and priorities, ensuring they can access new job opportunities, and addressing potential negative impacts like gender-based violence. By adopting such an approach, infrastructure development can become more gender-inclusive and effectively contribute to women's empowerment.

### **Theme 4: Decision-Making and Participation**

The concept of "energy democracy" emphasizes the importance of decentralizing energy control to empower communities. In practice, though rural electrification seems an ideal solution for energy access, women in rural areas often aren't consulted. This discrepancy highlights a gap between policy intent and the reality experienced by rural women in Malawi. Women's participation in decision-making and policy formulation is a critical aspect of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector. Policies and programs should be designed to ensure that women's

## DISCUSSION/ INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

voices are heard and their developmental concerns are integrated into public budgeting.

In summary, the research underscores the importance of effective policy implementation, the role of education and awareness, and the need for financial inclusion, infrastructure development, and inclusive decision-making processes to improve women's access to renewable energy in Malawi. These findings have broader implications for gender-inclusive renewable energy strategies globally.

### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

**Data Availability:** Limited access to comprehensive and up-to-date data on the budgetary allocations and outcomes of progressive budgeting initiatives posed a significant constraint. Budget details, especially those that directly impact women's access to renewable energy, can be challenging to obtain and may not be publicly disclosed.

**Research Scope:** The study primarily focused on progressive budgeting as a concept and its potential impact on women's access to renewable energy. It did not delve deeply into the specific policies and programs within different countries, which may have distinct challenges and outcomes.

**Geographical Variation:** The study did not extensively explore regional or country-specific variations in the effectiveness of progressive budgeting. Women's access to renewable energy can vary significantly between nations, influenced by diverse cultural, social, and economic factors.

**Limited Stakeholder Perspectives:** The research predominantly considered governmental and organizational perspectives, potentially missing the viewpoints of grassroots women, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively engaged in renewable energy projects.

**Time Constraints:** The effectiveness of progressive budgeting initiatives may require a considerable amount of time to manifest fully. This research, limited by time constraints, might not capture the long-term impacts and dynamics of these initiatives.

**Causality Challenges:** Establishing a direct cause-and-effect relationship between progressive budgeting and women's access to renewable energy is intricate. Other variables, such as social and cultural factors, may concurrently influence this relationship.

## DISCUSSION/ INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The research study has revealed valuable insights into the potential of progressive budgeting for enhancing women's access to renewable energy. To build upon these findings and address limitations, the following recommendations are proposed.

Firstly, future research should delve deeper into specific progressive budgeting initiatives related to women's access to renewable energy. Detailed case studies or program evaluations would help uncover the nuances, successes, and challenges of such initiatives, offering practical guidance for policymakers.

Secondly Given the regional variations in women's access to renewable energy, studies should contextualize progressive budgeting effectiveness in different countries or regions. This approach will yield insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by women in diverse socio-economic and cultural settings.

Thirdly To capture the long-term impacts of progressive budgeting women's access to renewable energy, longitudinal studies are recommended. These studies should track the progress of initiatives over several years to determine sustained benefits and assess whether these initiatives lead to transformative change in the energy sector.

In addition to that, future research should include the voices of women at the grassroots level and involve local communities and NGOs actively working in the renewable energy sector. Their perspectives and experiences can offer valuable insights into the practical implications of progressive budgeting. Furthermore, comparative studies can be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to progressive budgeting, such as participative budgeting, gender-responsive budgeting, and energy democracy initiatives. These comparisons can help identify best practices and areas for improvement.

To enhance women's access to renewable energy in Malawi, the government should prioritize gender-responsive policies and budgetary allocations. This begins with integrating gender considerations into national energy policies and strategies, conducting gender impact assessments, and ensuring women's involvement in planning and decision-making. By dedicating a portion of the national budget to renewable energy initiatives targeting women, the government can fund programs that address the unique energy needs of women in both rural and urban areas. Implementing gender-responsive budgeting practices, offering subsidies for clean energy technologies, and facilitating access to credit and microfinance services for women can further break down financial barriers.

## **DISCUSSION/ INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

Additionally, capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, and incentives for female entrepreneurs can empower women to participate actively in the renewable energy sector. Close collaboration between relevant ministries, strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and a supportive legal framework are essential components of this multifaceted approach to promote gender equality in renewable energy access. By embracing these policy recommendations, the Malawian government can foster sustainable development while ensuring women's energy needs are met.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This research delves into women's access to renewable energy, offering critical insights into an increasingly urgent matter. The findings demonstrate that progressive budgeting can be a powerful catalyst for women's empowerment in the renewable energy sector. By advocating for socially-progressive policies and challenging conventional gender roles, it opens doors for women to actively participate in this vital field. While industrialized countries contemplate innovative approaches to economic security and environmental preservation, this research reinforces the idea that such advancements are attainable through progressive budgeting strategies. Moreover, it underscores the existence of well-established gender equality initiatives in non-OECD countries, serving as instructive models for OECD nations to adapt and implement.

In addition to enhancing women's roles and participation, progressive budgeting possesses a remarkable capacity to influence good governance. The study reveals that efficient governance can serve as a moderating force, ensuring that the involvement of women in politics directly translates into improved access to electricity, increased renewable energy consumption, and heightened energy efficiency. Thus, the significance of progressive budgeting cannot be understated. It stands as a potent means of enabling women to access renewable energy resources, thereby contributing to gender equality, sustainability, and a brighter energy future.

Furthermore, this research aligns with the feminist energy research agenda, emphasizing the necessity of democratic, decentralized, and pluralistic political structures. It underscores the prioritization of human well-being and environmental preservation over unchecked profit and unbridled growth. The findings advocate for fostering a sense of relationality, focusing on collaborative socio-ecological approaches over individualistic ones, and promoting distributed and decentralized power sources and communal engagement in technological solutions.

In conclusion, this study not only highlights the positive impact of progressive budgeting on women's access to renewable energy but also calls for a rethinking of our energy and budgetary paradigms. It suggests that women's active participation in the renewable energy sector is not merely an option but a necessity for realizing a more equitable and sustainable future.

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### Additional Links:

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[2][The Atlantic - Women, Energy, and Economic Empowerment](<https://www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/deloitte-shifts/women-energy-and-economic-empowerment/261/>)

[3][UN Women - Gender Analysis Guidance for Energy Infrastructure]([https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Gender%20Analysis%20Guidance\\_Energy%20Infrastructure.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Gender%20Analysis%20Guidance_Energy%20Infrastructure.pdf))

[4][Routledge Handbooks - Gender and Renewable Energy](<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/pdf/doi/10.4324/9780429402302-20>)

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# EXAMINING FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS IN MALAWI'S ROAD TRANSPORT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF BLANTYRE CITY

By Tamara Banda.

## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the application of feminist macroeconomics in the context of Malawi's road transport and infrastructure, focusing on a case study in Blantyre. It employed a mixed-method approach and probed into the experiences of women in both public and private transport systems. It also examined the implementation of gender mainstreaming within Blantyre's transportation network. The key objectives included exploring the economic impact of transportation affordability on women, assessing the convenience and accessibility of existing systems, and unveiling the awareness and integration of feminist macroeconomics.

The findings highlight the universal influence of Intersectionality on women's mobility, revealing shared challenges across diverse backgrounds. A detailed analysis of participants highlights the significance of minibus usage, guiding recommendations for gender-sensitive initiatives within this predominant mode of transport. Navigating affordability emerges as a central theme, exposing the intricate trade-offs women face in pursuit of daily activities.

Proposed recommendations include widespread driver training programs for minibus operators, improved visibility for women's concerns in minibuses, and the promotion of non-motorized transport. These initiatives, along with safety measures such as enhanced street lighting and campaigns against harassment, aim to create a more inclusive and secure environment for women.

The study also reveals a considerable lack of awareness of feminist macroeconomics among participants. Collaborative efforts with organizations like the Feminist Macro-Economic Alliance (FEAM) and targeted education campaigns are proposed to bridge this knowledge gap. Integrating feminist perspectives into policymaking is highlighted as a key strategy for fostering positive change within the transportation sector.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the potential impact of implementing these recommendations, not only in addressing immediate challenges but also in reshaping societal norms and fostering gender equality. By prioritizing gender-sensitive policies, the research visualizes a transformative shift towards a more equitable and accessible transportation landscape in Blantyre.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**BCC-** Blantyre City Council

**FEAM-** Feminist Macro-economic Alliance Malawi

**IPPI-** Information Platform for Public Infrastructure

**MCC-** Millennial Challenge Corporation

**MNTP-** Malawi National Transport Master Plan

**NUTP-** National Urban Transport Policy

**NTP-** National Transport Policy

**SCTP-** Social Cash Transfer Programme

**SDG-** Sustainable Development Goals

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Transport and road infrastructure: key terms defined

In precise terms, transport can be defined as the “movement of goods and persons from place to place and the various means by which such movement is accomplished” (Britannica, 2023). Transport, therefore, can refer to both the means of movement and the actual movement itself. These means can range from using aircrafts, water vessels, trains and automobiles. Thus, within the context of this research, transport will be used when discussing the means used in order to move from one place to another on land such as cars, motorbikes, bicycles and even walking. The main modes of transport are air, water and land travel which all offer varying levels of comfort, convenience and accessibility. In Malawi, the main mode of transportation is land travel particularly through roads (paved and unpaved) and railways.

Road infrastructure will mainly refer to the physical components that make up the road. This includes construction, design and maintenance of roads, highways, streets and bridges (Casey, 2023). It also involves features like traffic signals, lane markings, pedestrian crossings, lightings, bus stops and signs which contribute to road safety and accessibility of road transportation systems.

### 1.1 Road transport and infrastructure in Malawi

The means of land transport have remained unchanged for decades in Malawi. Intra-city travel within cities such as Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu is done using minibuses, shared taxis, bicycles or motorcycles (kabazas), privately owned vehicles and walking from area to area. Intercity travel is then mostly carried out through minibuses, shared taxis, and privately owned bus hire companies. In 2015 the vehicle population was 250, 000 and it can be expected that it has grown since then (Kaunda).

Road travel is therefore the most common means of transport with roads handling more than 70% of internal freight traffic and 99% of passenger traffic (Malawi Roads Authority, n.d.). Inland water transport, railway networks and civil aviation are also potential means of transport within the country but unfortunately lack infrastructure investments, revamps and maintenance. For a majority of developing countries, roads are a dominant mode of transportation as these countries have not been able to develop other modes sufficiently enough to support their population (Asomani- Boateng, Fricano, & Adarkwa, 2015).

For example, the rail network is not all-inclusive as it only serves the central and the southern regions of the country. Besides, a majority of the network is used for

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freight, with only the Limbe-Balaka-Nayuchi sections offering passenger service. This section spans a length of 297km but around 200km is not operational. This leaves only a small portion which can be of use to Blantyre compared to the entire railway which spans 933km (Mhango & Chisinga, 2017).

Inland water transport, despite having potential with the presence of Lake Malawi and the Shire River, faces challenges such as a lack of private sector investors, vessel maintenance and port infrastructure. As for civil aviation, the absence of robust local and international markets, limited cargo operations, and overall unprofitability have hindered its growth. This resulted in the industry remaining in its infancy despite its early establishment in 1964 under the state-owned national airline of Malawi.

It is therefore safe to say that road transport has been prioritized as a main means of transport. With the collaborative efforts of the Malawi Government and foreign donors, including the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the United States, significant funding has been allocated to enhance Malawi's road infrastructure, fostering social and economic growth. In September 2022, a momentous US\$350 million infrastructure grant was officially endorsed by the Malawi Government and MCC. This partnership referred to as the "Malawi Transport and Land Compact" strives to decrease transportation expenses by upgrading over 300km of roads. These developments aim to establish vital connections between farmers and markets to boost the country's agricultural sector. This project also prioritizes road safety and future maintenance (Millennial Challenge Corporation, 2022).

The National Budget also ensures that numerous road projects are funded and completed. These projects include upgrading the Jenda-Manyamula Road, Thyolo-Makhanga Road and the construction of Mwanza-Ntcheu Road, Njakwa-Livingstonia Road and Nsanje-Marka Road among many other initiatives. Capacity improvements are also targeted towards the M1 road from Crossroads to Kanengo in Lilongwe city which have already began with assistance from the People's Republic of China (The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, 2022). With this many investments, it would not be wrong to hope that there would be a progressive change to road transport and infrastructure in the years to come. Currently, road transport has many problems such as a lack of road capacity in some areas, an incomprehensive rural transport strategy, and unavailability of all-weather roads especially in rural areas, insufficient non-motorized transport friendly infrastructure and limited segregated pedestrian facilities which raise many safety concerns.

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## 1.2 Problem statement

Malawi's approach to road infrastructure thus far can be described as gender neutral. It can be argued that the main goal has been to facilitate movement from one place to another at low costs without intentional efforts into how people arrive at their destinations especially marginalized groups like women, people living with disabilities and children. Referencing the Malawi National Transport Master Plan (MNTP), the main goal of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works is to reduce transport costs such that transport does not constrain the economy. It also seeks to improve the safety of transport infrastructure and services as well as enhance passenger and freight transport systems (Mhango & Chisinga, 2017). Throughout the MNTP, urban and rural transport are discussed but unfortunately through gender blind lenses. The problems that rural and urban transport face are merely stated without a gender sensitive approach to remedy them considering that due to gender disparities, men and women experience these problems differently. As for people living with disabilities, kerb ramps are mentioned as a means of integrating disabled people who use wheelchairs but besides that, no other notable innovation is brought forward to make transport and road infrastructure as inclusive as possible. In order to achieve this, a feminist macroeconomics approach can be proposed to revolutionize the design and construction of our roads, aiming to foster genuine integration within our communities and nation as a whole.

## 1.3 Main research objectives

- To investigate the experiences of women in Blantyre's public and private transport system;
- To examine the implementation of gender mainstreaming within Blantyre's public transport system and road infrastructure; and
- To identify potential areas for improvement in the design of our road infrastructure.

## 1.4 Justification for study

By conducting an in-depth analysis on the integration of feminist economic principles in Malawi's road infrastructure planning, this research aims to contribute to the broader discussion of gender inclusive development policies and practices in developing countries. The findings have the ability to begin a conversation on the experiences of women (especially those who are less economically privileged) as they physically navigate day to day life. Social mobility is closely tied to economic ability such that gender-inclusive transport policies can financially empower women.



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This research therefore can inform policymakers, international organizations and local stakeholders on ways to create more gender-responsive and equitable road infrastructure systems in Malawi and beyond.

## 1.5 Theoretical framework

In this study, feminist macroeconomics plays a central role as road transport and infrastructure is examined especially when it comes to how it affects women in particular. In the context of my research, feminist macroeconomics serves as a foundational framework for reviewing the gendered dimensions of transport. This approach challenges traditional economic models which are often mainstream by highlighting the importance of gender equality and women's economic empowerment within macroeconomic policies and practices. Through feminist macroeconomics, issues such as unpaid care work and gender pay which causes economic disparities for women are reviewed and tackled. In addition, public policy and gender equality are revised to promote equal opportunities, access to resources and social welfare. Through this framework, this study will be able to easily take a gendered review of our current transport systems.

Intersectionality is another theoretical framework capable of guiding this study. Developed by Kimberle Crenshaw an American critical legal race scholar. This theory recognizes the interconnected nature of social categories namely race, class, sexuality, ethnicity among other factors. It highlights how people who occupy these various sections tend to experience society differently and how that is often to their disadvantage (Coaston, 2019). In this particular study, it can be noted that a woman who uses her own private vehicle to travel with experience transport differently compared to women who rely on public transportation to get around.

Lastly but just as important is the Social Capital Theory. Developed by sociologists, Peter Bourdieu and James Coleman, this theory focuses on the social networks people possess and grow in order to expose themselves to more economic opportunities (Machalek & Martin, 2015). They emphasized that social networks provide the opportunity for the exchange of information. Social mobility and social capital are therefore closely intertwined.

## 1.6 Chapter conclusion

The contents of this chapter aimed to define what transport and road infrastructure refer to in the context of this research paper with transport referring to the means used to get by while road infrastructure comprises of the features on the road used to facilitate road travel (lanes, bridges, pedestrian crossings etc.).

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Transport in Malawi was then discussed in terms of which means are most popular; it being road travel, the current innovations within the MNTP as well the inefficiencies noted.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Feminist macroeconomics: Origins and critique of mainstream economics

During the 1990's, feminist economics emerged as both a school of thought and a political movement. With gender as a central category, it seeks a more integral and humane comprehension of the economy and critical analysis of the process of inclusion and exclusion taking place in it (Calderon & Munoz, 2019). It has been argued that mainstream economics perpetuates economic oppression among women and minorities while also attaining a "neutral" status in academia as its exclusion of women is subtle and not done outright or obviously. In addition, a majority of the schools of economic thought except for Marxist economics lack critical or negative judgment of the status quo in society. They tend to operate on basic assumptions of how society operates and expect positive results from these (Bateman, 2015). For example, in economics it is assumed that all individuals are capable of and should be allowed to pursue their own interests. Each person is able to do this because they are rational and will pursue their personal interests in a way that maximizes their personal gains. However, this assumption ignores anything that limits their ability to do so, be it their race, gender and class which is common amongst women especially those who live dependently on others (Bateman, 2015).

Think of the theory of the invisible hand proposed by Adam Smith who used the metaphor of an invisible hand to explain how in a free market economy, there are invisible forces that move the market towards equilibrium. This is through self-interested individuals who act in a way that serve their own personal interests. By allowing the supply and demand forces to operate freely, this allows efficient resource allocation and maximum social benefit. The concept disfavors government intervention and believes the government should only provide essential public goods and leave resource allocation decisions to the public sector. However, this theory was disputed by critics who said the invisible hand or "intervention free approach does not always produce socially beneficial outcomes and instead encourages inequalities and greed. By supporting this theory in mainstream economics, it ignores how marginalized people are not able to make choices that optimize their social benefits (Lockert & Suarez, 2022).

#### 2.1 Principles of feminist macroeconomics

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The Feminist Economics Handbook then asserts that the ultimate aim of its approach is to enhance the living conditions of all individuals, regardless of their gender. To achieve this goal, it emphasizes the need to dismantle institutional structures and policies that perpetuate and worsen gender disparities. (Kongar & Berik, 2021). It focuses on gender and aims to understand the economy in a more compassionate way by including women's experiences in its discussions. Additionally, feminist economics has grown into a political practice that aims at improving the economic system and ensures that everyone has equal access to a decent life. It acknowledges the fact that real human characteristics and emotions are just as important for understanding the economy and rejects the more "robotic and rational" way of explaining human behavior which is regularly incorporated into mainstream economic models (Strober, 1994).

One way feminist macroeconomics has done so is by shedding a light on the unseen work done by women in their homes through unpaid care work. It is expected for women to care for the homes of their spouses as well as the children and elderly residing in the home. This is expected whether she is employed or not. This care work saves expenses as money is not allocated to these needs and also supports other economic activities which are more valued in society such as working in the formal sector. Unpaid care work usually exists in the private sphere which involves informal and communal interactions individuals have with one another. The labor women perform for their families and communities in their day to day life, though significant, is not considered economically valuable even though these services help lower expenses (Kongar & Berik, 2021). By acknowledging the economic contribution of this unpaid work, feminist economics advocates for policies that can reduce the burden on women, giving them more time and resources to pursue other opportunities.

Intersectionality is another core principle which enables feminist macroeconomics to highlight how people do not make economic decisions in a vacuum but are influenced by power dynamics and hierarchies. For instance, when studying gender wage discrimination, it takes into account various factors like societal norms, workplace regulations, actions and decisions by employers and power dynamics within workplaces (Kongar & Berik, 2021).

Agency also serves as a core principle. On a surface level, women owning land, having formal jobs with regular wages and having more women in political positions can help challenge the existing power structures and make women feel more empowered. However, feminist economists believe that having a job is not sufficient for women to feel empowered. If women are not aware that their situations are unfair or if they cannot make choices due to strong societal pressures, surface level attempts at empowerment does not help.

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According to Kabeer, a professor of Gender and International Development, empowering women goes beyond just having external opportunities. It involves a personal change where women start making choices that do not reinforce existing inequalities. Through pushing for agency, women understand the value of their work and their rights. Women will no longer just ask for better wages and working conditions but also demand safety from sexual harassment, domestic violence and access to healthcare. By pushing women's agency, women can create internal power and influence, empowering themselves to challenge unfair situations and make better choices for their lives (Kongar & Berik, 2021).

Feminist economics also highlights the ways in which macroeconomic policies shape people's ability to provision and the extent to which people have access to income. It factors in the range of social protection and care policies that are necessary for the economic system to reproduce itself in a stable manner. These economic policies can promote instrumental freedoms that enable individuals to fully participate in economic life, such as to have a social safety net in times of crisis (Kongar & Berik, 2021). An example of this was the cash transfers to help families during COVID-19. The Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) locally known as Mtukula Pakhomo was an unconditional transfer of cash to ultra-poor and labor constrained households. One of the recipients of the Programme was a mother of six who relies on selling mandasi to feed her family. Thanks to the money allocated to her she was able to buy school uniforms for her children (Tembo, 2020). By integrating feminist macroeconomics into mainstream policies, there is greater potential to bring about positive and transformative changes in women's daily lives, including how they navigate themselves through transportation networks. Feminist macroeconomics, which focuses on understanding and addressing gender based inequalities within economic systems, can lead to policies that recognize and account for the unique challenges women face in accessing transportation options.

### **2.2 The importance of gender sensitive transportation**

As the economy of a developing country grows, inclusion of minorities and less privileged people becomes imperative to prevent the widening of inequalities between privileged and unprivileged communities. In Malawi, not every citizen has the luxury of using a personal vehicle for their everyday travels, especially those residing in rural areas and the outskirts of cities. Hence, it is crucial to shape the country's roads infrastructure and means of transport in a manner that caters to the needs of these communities. This research aims to emphasize the significance of adopting an inclusive approach, rooted in feminist macroeconomic, which places the needs of the marginalized majority at the forefront of the country's transport system.

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By embracing this approach, Malawi can achieve not only enhanced transportation accessibility but also foster social justice and gender equality, bringing about a more equitable and sustainable society.

Despite gender continually being a topic that is discussed and integrated within the country's education and social institutions, there is still a lot of effort to be done in regard to bringing awareness and implementation of gender policies in the country. A gender perspective is required as a lens through which we view society and consider how certain occurrences, systems and policies affect women especially. Transportation is one of these systems and plays a crucial role in both our individual lives and the overall economy. At a personal level, it influences our ability to interact with others, commute to and from work or business locations, and access important services like healthcare and education.

On the national level, transportation impacts the economy in numerous ways. In trade and commerce, transport facilitates the movement of goods and services by connecting producers and consumers across different regions. Efficient transportation networks allow for businesses such as female owned smallholder farmers to access larger markets and distribute their products more effectively. This leads to increased trade and economic growth and reduces post-harvest losses as goods are delivered on time to prevent spoilage. This efficiency also translates to lower production costs as less money is spent on storage, inventory management and production delays. Women are reported to comprise about 60% of the smallholder agricultural sector in Malawi (African Development Fund, 2006). However, women's level of effort and contribution to agricultural activities equals men's' even though women are the main providers in household chores and labour (Mphezu, 2019). It is also a common sight to witness individuals exerting tremendous effort to transport heavy loads of produce, such as charcoal, on their bicycles. This is often in the early hours of the morning so that they can reach the markets in timely manner and secure sales. This scenario exemplifies how the existing transport networks often work against the population instead of for their benefit. However, with the establishment of a robust transport system, this labor is alleviated providing individuals with faster and less tiring means to deliver their good to markets. These efforts thus create socio economic mobility in the country.

A study carried out in Iran proved this point by providing a framework aimed at examining the correlation between the access of the country's cities to different types of rail, air, road and air transportation networks and the economic and social parameters of its inhabitants. The results of the case study revealed that access of cities to transportation networks positively affected the economic development and even population size of Iran.

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It was also found that road transport is more correlated with economic development and employment rate of Iranian cities compared to all the other modes of transport. (Fard, Roshanghalb, & Beigi, 2022).

Reliable transport can also provide access to opportunities in turn promoting socio-economic mobility and inclusion. Socio-economic mobility refers to the ability of individuals or households to move across different socio-economic levels within a society over time. It can be measured in various ways such as changes in wealth, educational attainment and occupational status. High socio-economic mobility indicates a society where individuals have the potential to improve their circumstances and achieve better quality of life. A good transport system thus makes that possible.

A well-developed transport network enables individuals to conveniently reach employment opportunities, educational institutions, healthcare facilities and other essential services offered in the country. This accessibility eliminates the need for children residing in remote rural areas or in the outskirts of cities and townships to endure long journeys to the nearest schools as a reliable transport system significantly reduces travel distances. Sick patients and expectant mothers would no longer have to travel long distances and use uncomfortable and slow means of transport like bicycles and ox pulled carts to receive healthcare with a good transport system put in place. These changes might seem insignificant but have the ability to improve the socio economic mobility of multiple generations of people.

Gender sensitive transportation allows for women to have convenient, safe, and affordable options to travel to various destinations. Improved access to places reduces the time and effort required for women to travel. Transportation infrastructure when developed from a gender perspective including operations and fares that consider women's travel patterns will fashion itself in a manner that reduces time, expenses and effort. (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2023). The extra time and money can be used for education, production and social activities. At a household level, better mobility creates a potential for increased income as the spare time for women is used for other social activities such as workshops which can enrich their own and families' lives.

Women are also liberated to move around safely and without fear of harassment and violence. Ensuring this is fundamental to pushing for women's human rights. Measures such as having adequate street lighting, criminalising verbal abuse and harassment towards women in their travels and installing security cameras in bus depots push to empower women to travel securely.

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### 2.3 Gender- inclusive transport: global perspectives

In India, a conversation on 'Gender and Transport' was started in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include 17 goals one of which is gender equality. Transport was therefore correctly mentioned as a factor that facilitates socially sustainable development for women. The National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India was then drafted to guide urban transport. Two of the goals outlined in the policy include achieving more equal distribution of road space by focusing on people rather than vehicles and encouraging greater use of public transport and non- motorized transport (NMT) by providing central financial aid (Singhai & Singhai, 2021). However, this policy was drafted in 2006 and was mostly focused on the modes of transport and not the groups of individuals using the transport. A gendered perspective to transport was not a factor to consider at the time, which is unfortunate as women in India earn less, work in less productive jobs, take on a majority of unpaid care work and are more likely to be unemployed whilst taking up half of the population.

Post-COVID 19 also highlighted the socio-economic equalities and inadequacies of the public transport system. It is now recognized that men and women have different transportation needs. When assessing transport attributes, men and women have distinct priorities. Women's worries are focused on personal protection and general wellness on the road such as comfort, politeness and hygiene. Men on the other hand focus on speed at the expense of safety or personal security. (Singhai & Singhai, 2021). So even though these differences are present, there is still a gender-blind approach to urban development which primarily focuses on real estate and infrastructure with little to no regard for who uses them and whether they benefit men and women differently.

These impacts are more visible when analyzing the gendered impact of transport such as the effect on economic potential. The inadequate provision of mobility services for women can be linked to the falling female labor force considering that the consequences of poor public transport affect women more unfavorably than men. When public transport is unreliable or expensive, women may have to forego better job chances far from their homes in favor of closer but lower-paying job opportunities. This is because women's labor is more needed by their families such that they usually can't always be too far. As a result, public transport is a critical enabler of women's economic potential (Barbanchon, Rathelot, & Roulet, 2021).

The fear of sexual harassment can also never be understated. Groping, catcalling, verbal harassment and leering are all forms of sexual harassment and regularly occur in cities due to increased urbanization.

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Women's mobility and confidence are affected by sexual harassment shown in a research done in Delhi 2010 where over 90% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the previous year (Jagori and the UN Women, 2010). With these types of findings, it is expected for women and girls to avoid taking public transport and remain immobile restricting their access to opportunities such as accessing health care, education and employment.

Within the African continent, strides have also made to push for gender mainstreaming in urban public transport. In a working paper funded by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), case studies in three cities in East Africa: Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam were conducted so as to review and better understand current research trends on gender issues in transport around the world and create gender-responsive transport solutions (Muhoza, Wikman, & Chavez, 2021).

Across these three cities, similar trends were noticed such as a lack of accessibility and safety of public transport systems, sexual assault and harassment, lack of integrated and gender-sensitive urban planning and inadequate gender mainstreaming in the transport policies, legal frameworks, poor implementation and enforcement. In addition, they also noted an underrepresentation of women in transport policymaking, planning processes and public transport service provision. However, respondents argued that the participation of women in the transport policy and decision making processes does not guarantee that gender issues will be addressed and change will happen. This depends on women's awareness of both gender issues and flaws in their current transport system. Their general conclusions were that gender mainstreaming in transportation is an area that is under-researched and under-accomplished in the global south.

Further quantitative and qualitative research on the relationships between transport, mobility and gender in the three cities is needed in order to fully understand gendered differences in travel patterns and mobility needs. Policymakers therefore require more disaggregated data to provide better policies, regulation and enforcement. This requires capacity building and an improved understanding of providing spaces of equality where women feel secure, empowered and are aware of their human rights such that they can push for innovations that work in their favor.

### 2. 4 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to explain the core principles of feminist economics and contrast it to mainstream economics which is more recognized and practiced in society.



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Gender-sensitive transport was then emphasized upon highlighting the advantages of putting women at the forefront when designing the road networks and infrastructure. Global reports focused on gender mainstreaming in transport were also discussed to appreciate external discussions and efforts that have been done highlighting that this is a universal problem.

### RESEARCH METHODS: METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.0 Introduction

In order to comprehensively explore the application of feminist macroeconomics within Blantyre's transport networks, it is essential to establish a research methodology that is attuned to gender dynamics. This chapter introduces a gender sensitive approach that seeks to dive into the intricate ways in which women experience transport facilities and services. By understanding their unique perspectives, needs and challenges, we can reveal insights crucial to both feminist economic principles and the enhancement of the country's transport infrastructure.

A gender-sensitive research methodology takes into account the fact that conventional economic analyses often fail to capture the diverse impact of policies and systems on different genders. Focusing on how women engage with transport systems provides a lens through which we can evaluate the inclusivity and effectiveness of transportation innovations. Through this approach, we aim to bridge the gap between economic theory and practical implementation thus creating a path towards gender-equitable transport solutions. By embracing this methodological framework, we aspire to contribute not only to the theoretical domain of feminist economics but also to the tangible advancement of Malawi's transport networks.

#### 3.1 Study site justification

This study focused on the means of transport common in Blantyre city and how they shape the experiences of women as they interact with the road infrastructure. Blantyre is a hub of urban development, commercial activities and industrial projects giving the study access to women of different socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, Blantyre's diverse transportation network including minibuses, taxis, motorbikes and bicycles adds extra varied perspectives from the anticipated participants. The availability of these varied means of transport shape and influence the everyday experiences of the inhabitants.

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By understanding how different forms of transport intersect with class, gender roles and economic activities, the study can delve into the challenges as well as opportunities faced in this landscape. Having looked at the study site and justification, it is necessary to look at the type of research design that was used in this study.

### 3.2 Research design

The study employs a mixed-methods approach to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative aspect involves structured interview questions with ranking scales to assess specific aspects like affordability. For example, respondents are asked to rank the affordability of their weekly transport costs on a scale from very affordable to not affordable at all. These ranking questions are complemented by qualitative open-ended questions, probing respondents for detailed insights into their experiences and challenges. The pairing of these qualitative and quantitative elements allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances surrounding gender-sensitive transport experiences.

A structured interview with a key informant, the Deputy Director of the Engineers department at the Blantyre City council was also administered to obtain a professional perspective. The questions were strategically designed to elicit the informant's observations on the noted challenges and experiences of women in the transport system, awareness of feminist macroeconomics, and the impact of austerity measures on transportation.

By incorporating this professional viewpoint, the study aims to enrich its understanding of the broader issues and systemic challenges within the transport infrastructure, providing a more comprehensive analysis of gender-sensitive considerations.

### 3.3 Population and sample

Choosing the right sampling method is crucial for ensuring the study's findings accurately represent the population. Given the study's focus on understanding the experiences of individuals using various modes of public transport in Blantyre City, a purposive sampling method was chosen as the ideal method.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers deliberately select specific individuals or groups from a larger population based on certain characteristics or qualities. Unlike random sampling methods, where every member of the population has an equal chance of being included, Purposive sampling focuses on choosing participants who possess the knowledge or experience relevant to the research study.

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The participants were chosen from key areas which are: Wenela Bus depot, Limbe Bus Depot, Blantyre commercial area and market and Limbe market.

**Table 1: Number of Participants and their corresponding locations**

No.	Location	No. of participants
1	Limbe Bus Depot	18
2	Wenela Bus Depot	17
3	Blantyre Market	27
4	Limbe Market	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>

The locations were specifically chosen in order to target participants who often rely on public transport to get around.

### 3.4 Data collection

There are two fundamental types of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to information freshly gathered and originally required for a specific study making it unique and original in character. For this research, primary data is exemplified by information collected directly from individuals who use public transport, focusing specifically on their experiences with transport in their region in ties to gender. This approach ensures that the data collected is tailored to the specific needs and perspective of the passengers, enhancing the study's depth and authenticity (Kothari, 2004).

In contrast, secondary data comprises information that was previously collected by others for different studies and has undergone statistical processing. In this research context, secondary data involves existing studies and reports related to gender sensitive transport planning and public transport experiences. By incorporating both primary data from direct interactions with commuters and secondary data from existing literature and studies, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of gender-sensitive transport planning and its impact on individuals using public transport.

This combined approach, integrating first-hand accounts and existing scholarly work, is crucial for obtaining a holistic understanding of the subject matter. It allows for a nuanced exploration of gender-sensitive transport planning, drawing insights from real-life experiences of public transport users and the knowledge derived from previous research efforts.

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### 3.5 Desk research

Desk research was conducted in a manner that incorporated existing knowledge and perspectives on gender-sensitive transport planning. This approach involved considering literature that encompassed diverse viewpoints and analyses related to the design and implementation of gender sensitive transport systems sourced from various mediums such as books, journal articles and online publications. The gathered information included insights on different aspects of gender-sensitive transport planning, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. This literature review not only explored broad views of gender mainstreaming in transport in other countries but also examined the relationships between gender-inclusive transport and the general economic and social well-being of women in Malawi, Blantyre as well.

### 3.6 Data analysis

After conducting the interviews and collecting that data, the research enters the crucial phase of data analysis. In qualitative research, data analysis involves a meticulous examinations of the collected information to identify themes, patterns and meaningful insights. This is also referred to as thematic analysis. (Caulfield, 2023). This process begins with through familiarization with the data, then coding followed by generating themes, defining and naming themes and then writing up. It also helps to avoid confirmation bias which is the tendency to seek out and prefer information that supports our pre-existing beliefs (Caulfield, 2023).

Through the use of themes and coding it becomes easier for the researcher to organize their data, identify patterns, analyze and interpret data systematically and enables readers to comprehend the results of the research.

### 3.7 Ethical considerations

Before conducting the interviews with the participants, a full debrief of the aims of the study was conducted which included disclosing the title of the study, what it aims to achieve, why the participant was chosen for this particular study. The organization and fellowship which I as the researcher was working under was also stated to help give participants a sense of security and validity of the study. After receiving the participant's full confidence in the study, consent was granted to the researcher to commence the interview.

The participant's privacy was also protected as their names and identification were not required but rather their experiences.

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## 3.8 Limitations

Of course this study was not immune to certain limitations. One of them is limited generalizability. This study was conducted in specific location within Blantyre which might not represent the experiences of women in other parts of Malawi in different socioeconomic contexts. Therefore, the findings might not apply to the entire population.

The structured questions also worked as a limitation as well. They were meant to provide a guided way to gather targeted information but also may have limited participant's responses to the predefined options available.

Another is social desirability bias. Participants might respond in a way they perceive as socially acceptable rather than expressing their true experiences, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as gender related challenges in public transport. This bias could affect the accuracy of the data collected.

Language and cultural barriers when conducting interviews can also be a challenge. Two versions of the structured interview questions were made; one in English and another in the local language, Chichewa. Participants were allowed to choose which language they were more comfortable with. However it can be noted that some sentiments could have been lost in translation between the two versions. It is possible that the two versions were not perfect copies of each other and had varied impact in their tone and speech. The ability of some respondents to write down their responses was limited as well due to illiteracy. Some respondents were unable to read and write easily in both English and Chichewa.

### 3.8.1 Mitigations to these limitations

The respective mitigations were then done in order to handle these limitations.

- Limited generalizability was confronted by recognizing the scope of the study. By acknowledging the specific locations and demographics this study represents, it is easier for readers to contextualize the responses and findings of this study.
- In order to address the limitations the structured interview questions present, open ended questions were paired with the structured ones in order to give the participants an opportunity to share their experiences in their own words. For example after asking participants to rate the how secure they feel when travelling from place to place, they are then asked if they have ever encountered safety concerns giving them a chance to provide detailed qualitative responses.

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- Social desirability bias was combated by practising anonymity which encourages honesty. By assuring participants that their responses were confidential and not linked back to them personally, more open responses were given. Using indirect questioning techniques also minimize socially desirable responses.
- To overcome language barriers, the English and Chichewa versions were cross checked by peers to ensure the structured interview questions were accurately translated. In cases where the respondents were unable to fill in their responses due to illiteracy, the questions were read aloud to them and their responses were jotted down by the researcher.

### 3.9 Reliability and validity of data

To establish construct validity, particularly when measuring abstract concepts like attitudes or beliefs, the study relied on established theories in transportation psychology. For instance, existing literature highlighted aspects such as freedom from sexual harassment, theft, and courteous behaviour from fellow passengers as indicators of safety in gendered transport. These factors were considered when defining safety for women in transportation. To capture a nuanced understanding of perceived safety, affordability and convenience among other factors, the study developed questions using a scale format. This approach allowed participants to express varying degrees of their feelings and perspectives, offering a broader and more detailed perspective than a simple yes/no response.

#### 3.9.1 Chapter conclusions

In this chapter, the research methods employed have been thoroughly discussed. The study relied on structured interview questions to engage participants, chosen through purposive sampling. The selected locations – Limbe bus depot, Blantyre market, Limbe market, and Wenela bus station – were justified based on their relevance to the research focus. Detailed insights into the data collection process were provided, highlighting the planned use of thematic analysis to categorize and interpret participant feedback. The chapter also delved into the limitations faced, ethical considerations upheld, and the steps taken to ensure the reliability of the collected data.

With a robust foundation in place, the next chapter will transition seamlessly into the data analysis, where the gathered information will be explored, shedding light on the experiences and challenges faced by women in Malawi's transport system.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the heart and substance of this study which is the findings and responses. Through structured interviews with 50 female and 42 male participants, the aim was to recognize the subtle as well as the more common and prominent experiences within Malawi's transport system.

Throughout this study, Intersectionality emerges as a significant factor contributing to the complexities of women's experiences in mobility. Whether a woman relies on a car for her commute or depends on a minibus or kabaza, distinct experiences surface. The study clearly acknowledged these differences. Nevertheless, consistent patterns and themes were present across the different scenarios, highlighting the shared challenges faced by women. These commonalities elevated the importance of problems women experience despite their differences, almost acting like bridges connecting to the various social sections women belong to.

### 4.1 Categories of participants

The table below shows the number of male and female respondents who were willing to volunteer according to their gender and preferred transport.

Table 2: Preferred modes of transport of the respondent with their gender

No.	Mode of transport	Female	Male	Percentage
1	Minibus	20	17	40
2	Motorbike/Kabaza	10	9	21
3	Taxis/Sienta	8	3	12
4	Private owned car	9	11	22
5	On foot	3	2	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

Out of the 92 respondents, 40% of them preferred to use minibuses to get to place to place. 22% use their own private vehicles to get by while 21% opted for kabazas as their main mode of transport. Of the participants, 12% chose taxis while only 5% chose mainly walking on foot to move regularly from place to place.

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Within this sample size, minibuses are revealed to be the most common choice. It must be noted however that this does not mean the respondent exclusively uses the chosen mode of transport but rather the one they use most regularly.

### 4.2 Patterns across respondents

Within this study, key dimensions were chosen and incorporated into the mixed method approach questions. These are affordability and economic impact, convenience and accessibility, safety and security, awareness of feminist macroeconomics, policy awareness and suggestions. These dimensions acted as checkpoints for gender inclusive transport within the research. Under these themes, similar responses or perspectives were noted which will be discussed and illustrated in the following sections.

Within these dimensions, certain response patterns were identified, reflecting the shared experiences and concerns voiced by both female and male participants. In addition, it is important to note the demographics of the participants chosen. The respondents were chosen from Wenela Bus Station, Limbe Bus Depot, and Limbe (Town) Market and Blantyre market. All of the respondents stated that they regularly travel from their homes from Monday to Saturday and in many cases Sunday to get to their places of work and/or business. Their occupations ranged from shop owners, salaried employees in the formal sector, vegetable sellers, and second hand (kaunjika) clothes sellers to errand girls/boys.

#### 4.2.1 Affordability and economic impact

Participants widely voiced concerns about the affordability of transportation costs. Within the structured interview questions, they were given a scale upon which they could rate the affordability of the transport options made available to them.

##### 4.2.1.1 Perceived affordability ratings

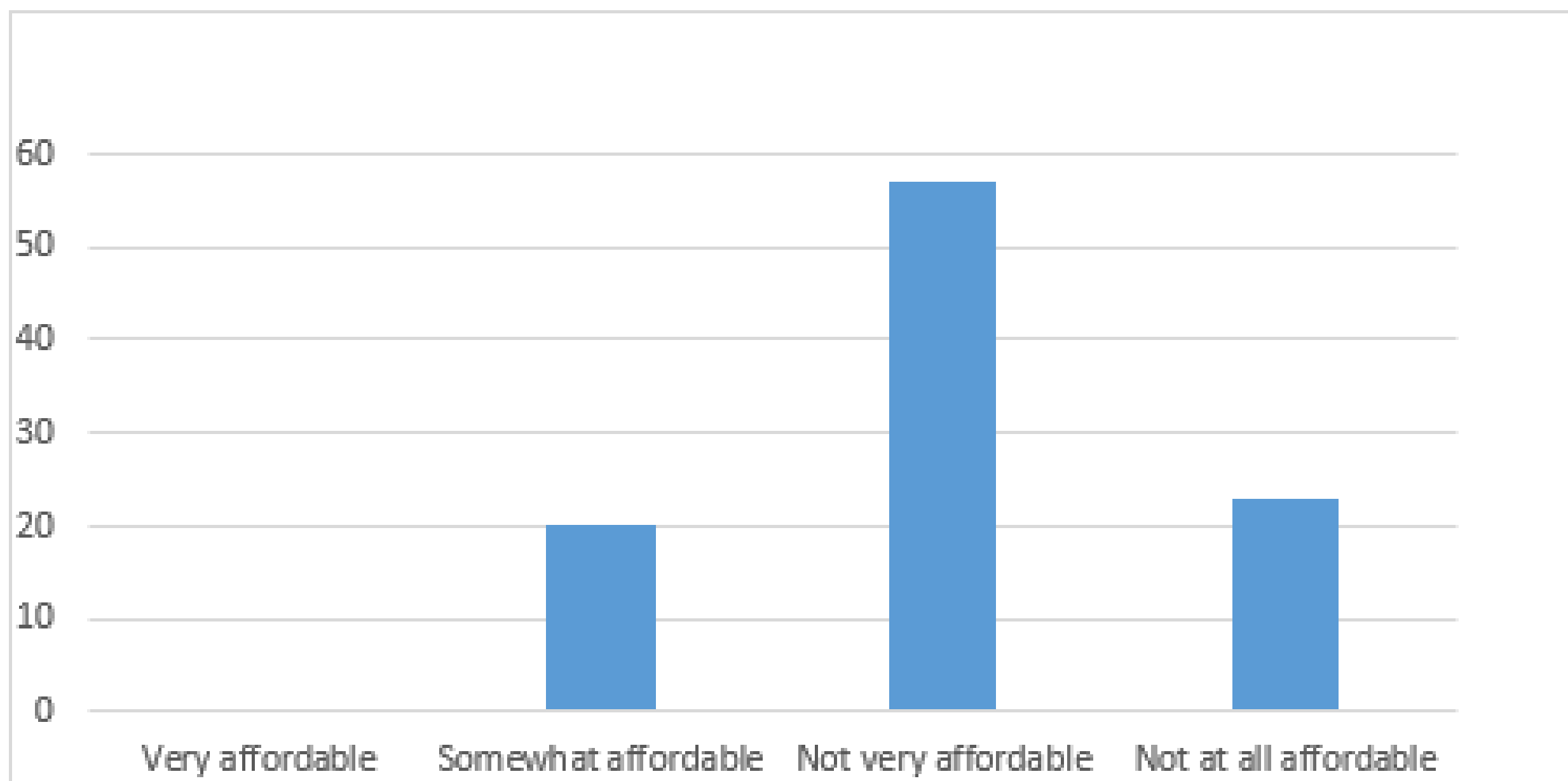
A majority (57%) of them viewed their transport costs as *not very affordable*, followed by 23% who saw the costs as *not at all affordable* and lastly 20% who rated the transportation costs as *somewhat affordable*. These findings have been illustrated in the graph below:

Figure 1: Levels of perceived affordability



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Within this sample size, minibuses are revealed to be the most common choice. It must be noted however that this does not mean the respondent exclusively uses the chosen mode of transport but rather the one they use most regularly.



### 4.2.1.2 Financial Analysis

From the figures received from the respondents, the average transportation costs per month were K80, 0000 for private car users (fuel expenses only), K48, 000 for minibus users, K40, 000 for taxis and K31, 200 for motorbike users (kabazas).

Table 3: Average transportation costs according to the mode of transport

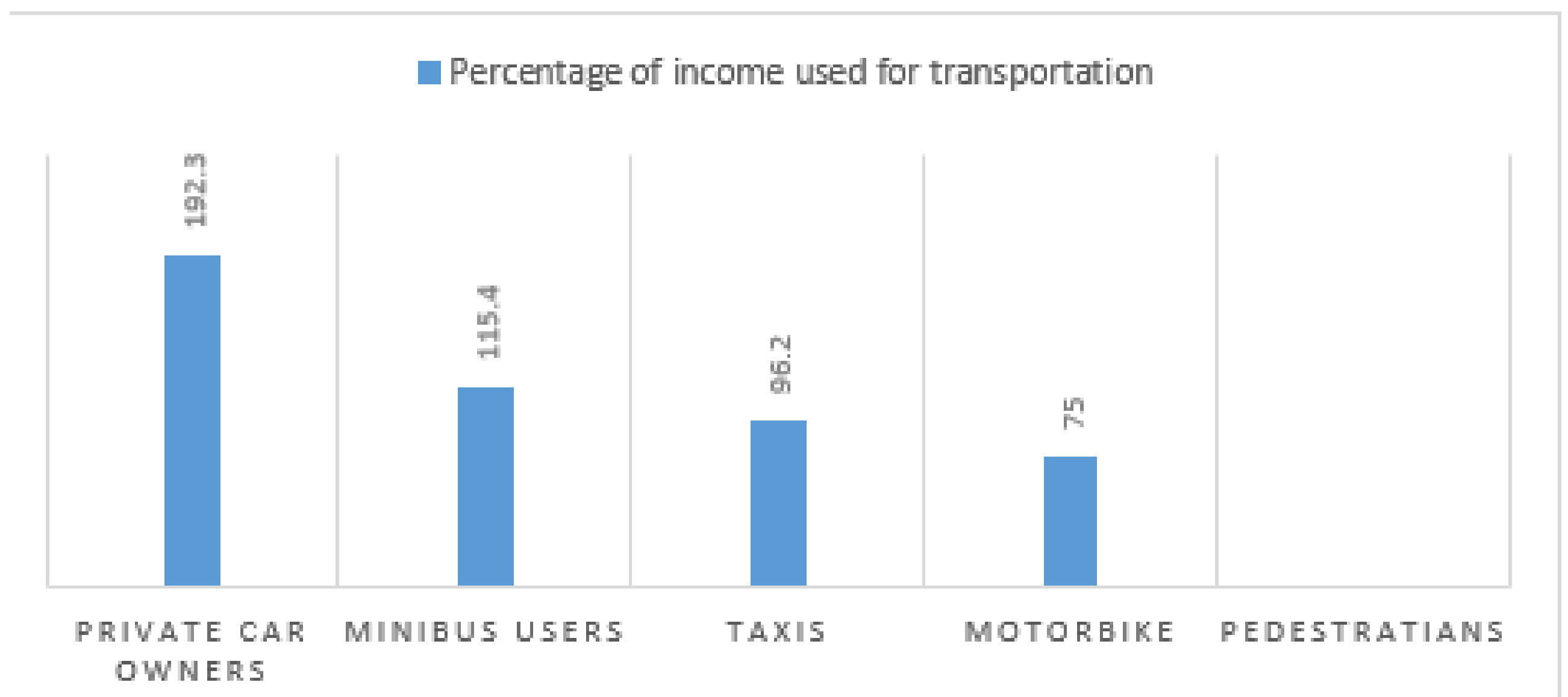
Mode of Transport	Average Transportation Costs per week from Respondents) (MWK)	Total Average Transportation costs per month
Private cars users	20, 000	80, 000
Minibuses	12, 000	48, 000
Taxis	10, 000	40, 000
<i>Kabaza</i>	7, 800	31, 200
Pedestrian	-	-

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It must be noted that though the pedestrians did not spend any actual figures on transport they can still lose out on time that could have been spent on economic activity. Even walking from place to place still has a hidden cost. However in this case, the respondents who walked (all of them residing within walking distance from Limbe market) asserted that they simply because the distance is too short for public transportation. The next goal was to understand and appreciate how much of their monthly earnings are eroded by transport expenses. However, eliciting responses from participants regarding their monthly income posed a challenge, as some expressed discomfort in disclosing specific salary or profit figures.

To address this, a general average monthly salary was utilized as a point of reference to analyse the impact of transportation costs on participants' earnings. In order to get an estimate of how much transportation costs erode their salaries and earnings, the average monthly salary is looked into. Reports show that the minimum average salary is K41, 600, the median is K144, 000 and the maximum is K734, 000 per month before tax deductions (Average Salary in Malawi, n.d.). It must be noted that these figures are merely an approximation and vary according to careers, positions and organisations/ businesses a person is working at.

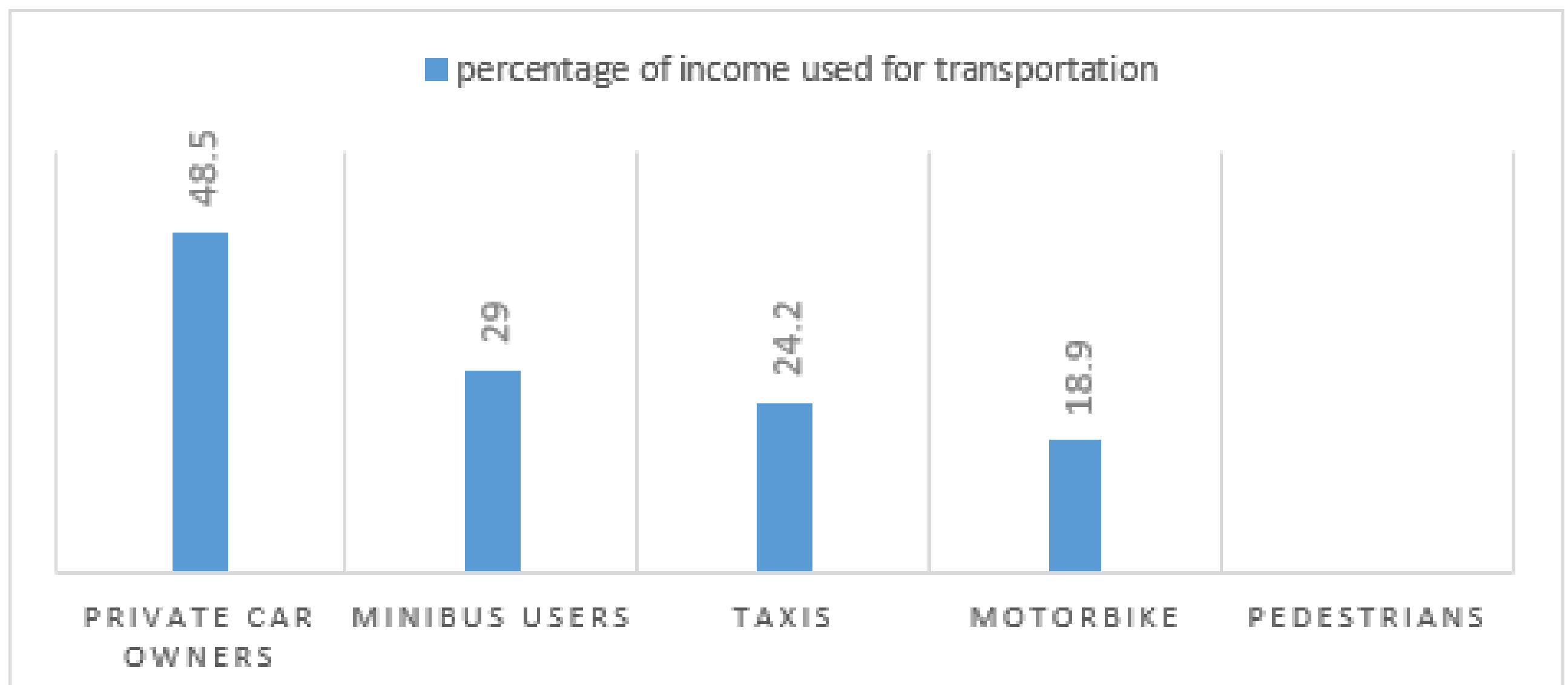
Figure 2: Percentage of income used for transportation for the low average salary earner



For even the cheapest option, (which is the motorbike) monthly expenses for regular travelling (Monday to Saturday) would require 75% of their monthly pay. The figures are more drastic with the transport expenditures exceeding what they earn. It is evident that the less income one earns, the more compromised their mobility is.

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Figure 3: Percentage of income used for transportation for the median average salary earner

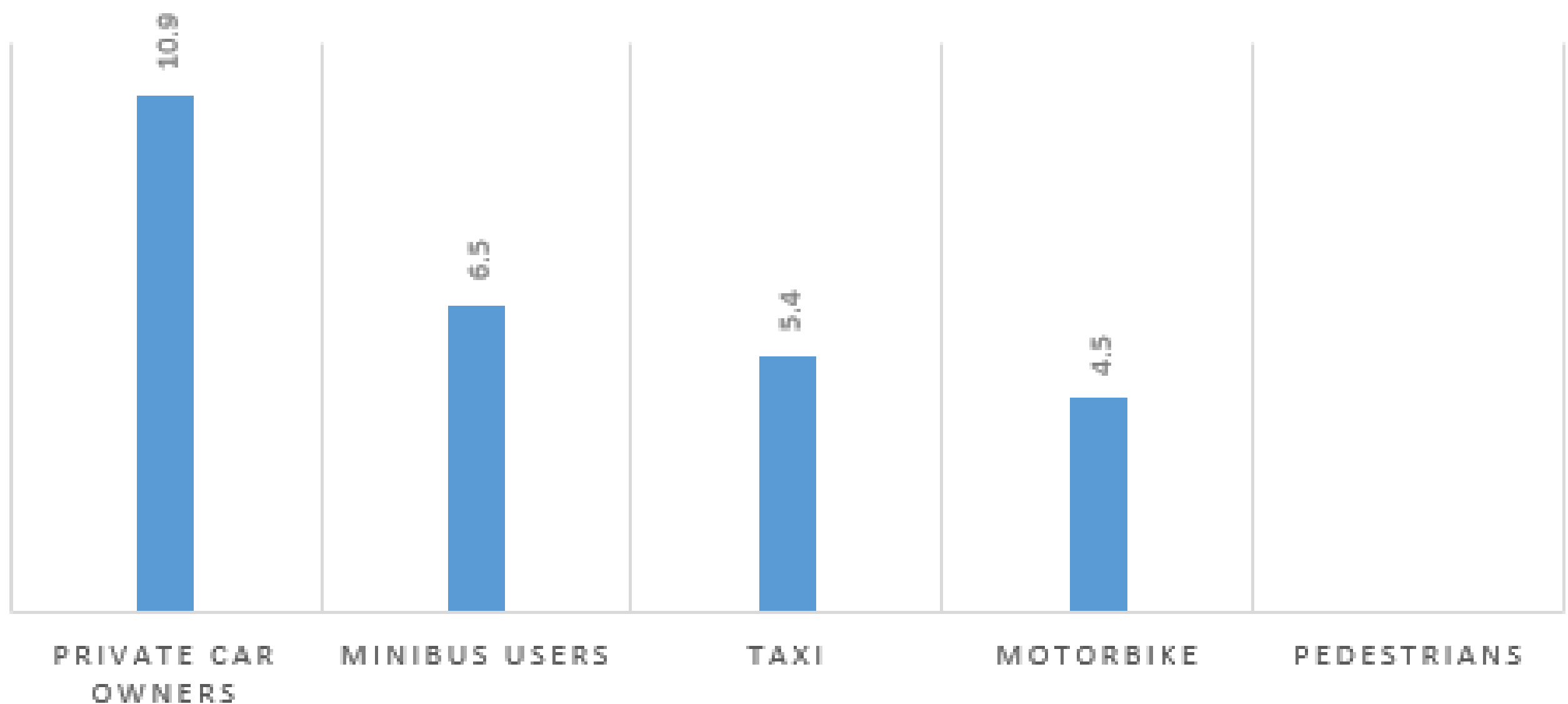


This graph depicts that for the medium salary earner, using a privately owned vehicle would take up 48.5% of their salary, a minibus takes up 29%, a taxi (matola) uses up 24% while a motorbike hire uses 18.9%. These figures show that transport expenditure takes up a decent amount of an individual's income. These high figures show that transportation is not affordable especially according to the transportation affordability index. Transportation affordability refers to the household's ability to purchase basic mobility needs within their limited budgets. This generally means that households spend less than 10% of their budgets on transport (Litman, 2021). The findings are in obvious contrast to what is ideally expected. This becomes more severe when analysing the percentage of income used up for a low earner who earns approximately K41, 600.

Figure 4: The percentage of income used for transportation for the highest average salary earner

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### PERCENTAGE OF INCOME USED FOR TRANSPORTATION



As for higher earners, transport expenditures barely dent their monthly income and are in line with the transportation affordability index with private car owners spending roughly 10.9% of their monthly income on fuel costs. This percentage decreases as you move across the other transportation options. However only 5% of people are reported to earn K312, 000 or more in the country (Average Salary in Malawi, n.d.). This situation is not the reality for a majority of Malawians especially women who reportedly earn less than their male counterparts. The average difference between the salary of male and female employees is 12% across all career fields.

#### 4.2.1.3 Affordability Challenges

It was noted that with *not affordable at all or zokwera mtengo kwambiri* in the Chichewa version, the expectation was that respondents who rated the transportation costs as such would then opt for travelling by foot as their main travel option since the chosen rating implies the costs are beyond their financial means. This was not the case however and there are possible factors which could have influenced that choice. Subjective perception is one of them.

This is a judgement made from personal experiences and opinions (Meem, 2020). Participants might perceive a mode of transportation as *"not affordable at all"* based on their subjective feelings about its cost. However, practical considerations, such as the lack of alternative options or the necessity of transportation for daily activities, might still lead them to use these modes either way.

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Another factor is the possibility of trade-offs. Some participants might prioritize spending on transportation despite considering it "not affordable at all" because they see it as a necessary expense they cannot avoid. Therefore, they might cut back on other expenditures to accommodate transportation costs.

### 4.2.2 Convenience and Accessibility

Convenience and accessibility in the context of this study looked at how easily one could access the transport options from their place of residence to their destination. Factors such as the travel time spent reaching minibus stops or ranks, reliability and ease of access from their homes are considered so that mobility is more efficient. Accessibility also considered how easily respondents can access important services such as hospitals and police stations. One of the questions asked under this section was how easily they can reach hospitals and police stations. The respondents who had the easiest ease of access were those who have private vehicles and those who reside in areas with a neighbourhood police station/ block and clinic or dispensary. Otherwise respondents who do not have this privilege noted that they struggle with getting assistance during emergencies especially during late night hours leaving them stranded.

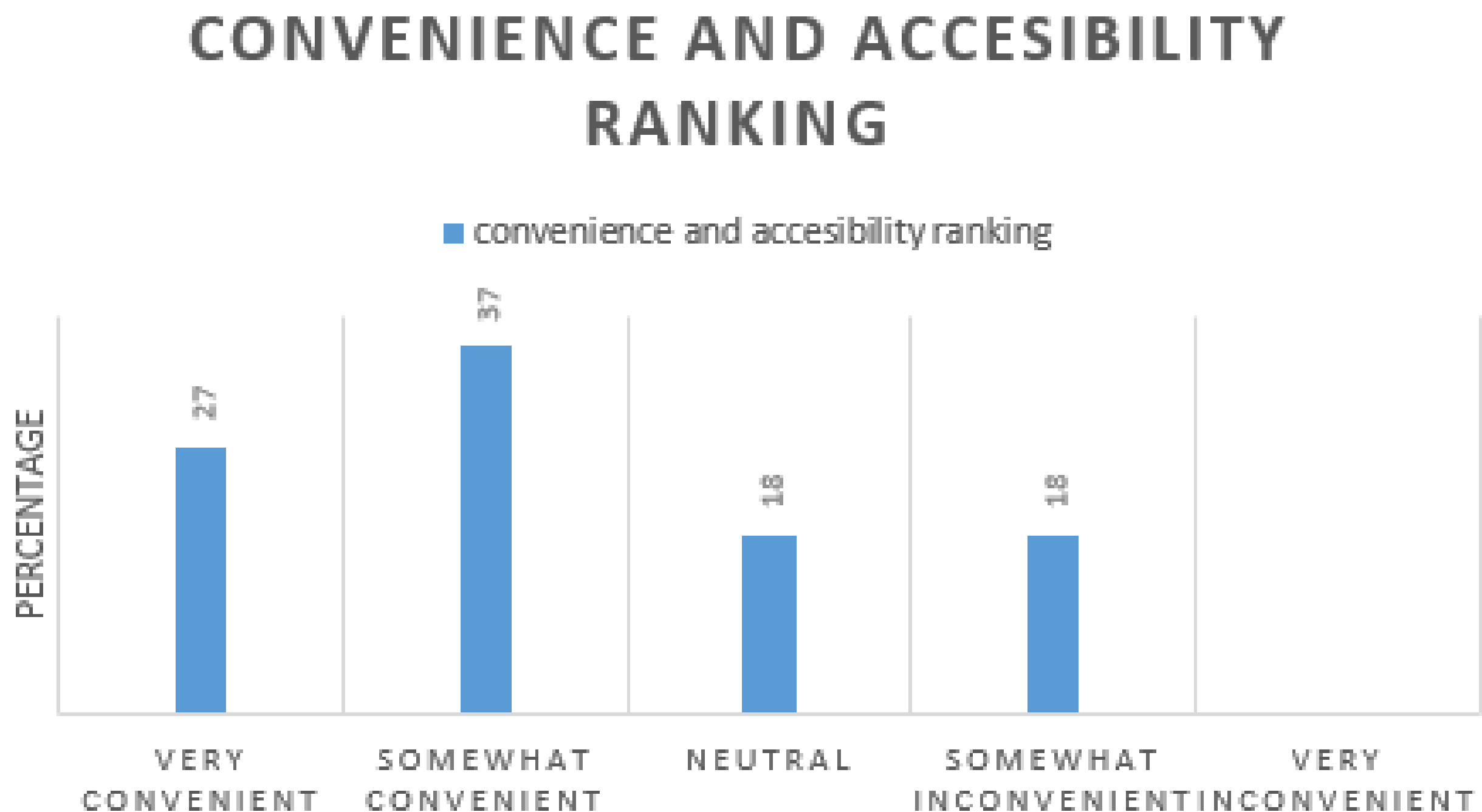
#### 4.2.2.1 Ratings of convenience

Convenience and accessibility are more positively discussed by the respondents with 27% rating their preferred mode of transportation as very convenient, 37% choosing a rating somewhat convenient, 18% going with neutral and 18% opting for somewhat inconvenient. These findings are illustrated in the graph below:

Figure 5: The level of convenience and accessibility

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Figure 5: The level of convenience and accessibility



### 4.2.2.2 Factors influencing convenience

The respondent's proximity to work had an influence how convenient they ranked their modes of transport as they do not have to travel long distances to reach their destination which is often times their place of work.

Under convenience and accessibility, availability plays a huge role. Minibus users notably rated their means favorably with 26 out of 40 (65%) respondents stating it is somewhat convenient. These findings are reasonable when considering that minibus operators make a huge portion of the public transport providers in the city and are present in large numbers with minibuses taking up 45% of the market share (Kaunda). It is therefore easy to find a minibus at different hours of the day making them easy to access therefore convenient.

A few respondents however correctly pointed out that during times of fuel crisis, [1] this convenience is greatly compromised as private car users, minibus drivers, taxis and motorbikes are either occupied with looking for fuel or are unable to operate completely.

Others also complained about having to walk a distance from their bus stop or rank to their homes. This problem is emphasized more when their routes back home are not well lit or easy to navigate at night thus transitioning into the next dimension of gender sensitive transport.

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### 4.2.3 Safety and security

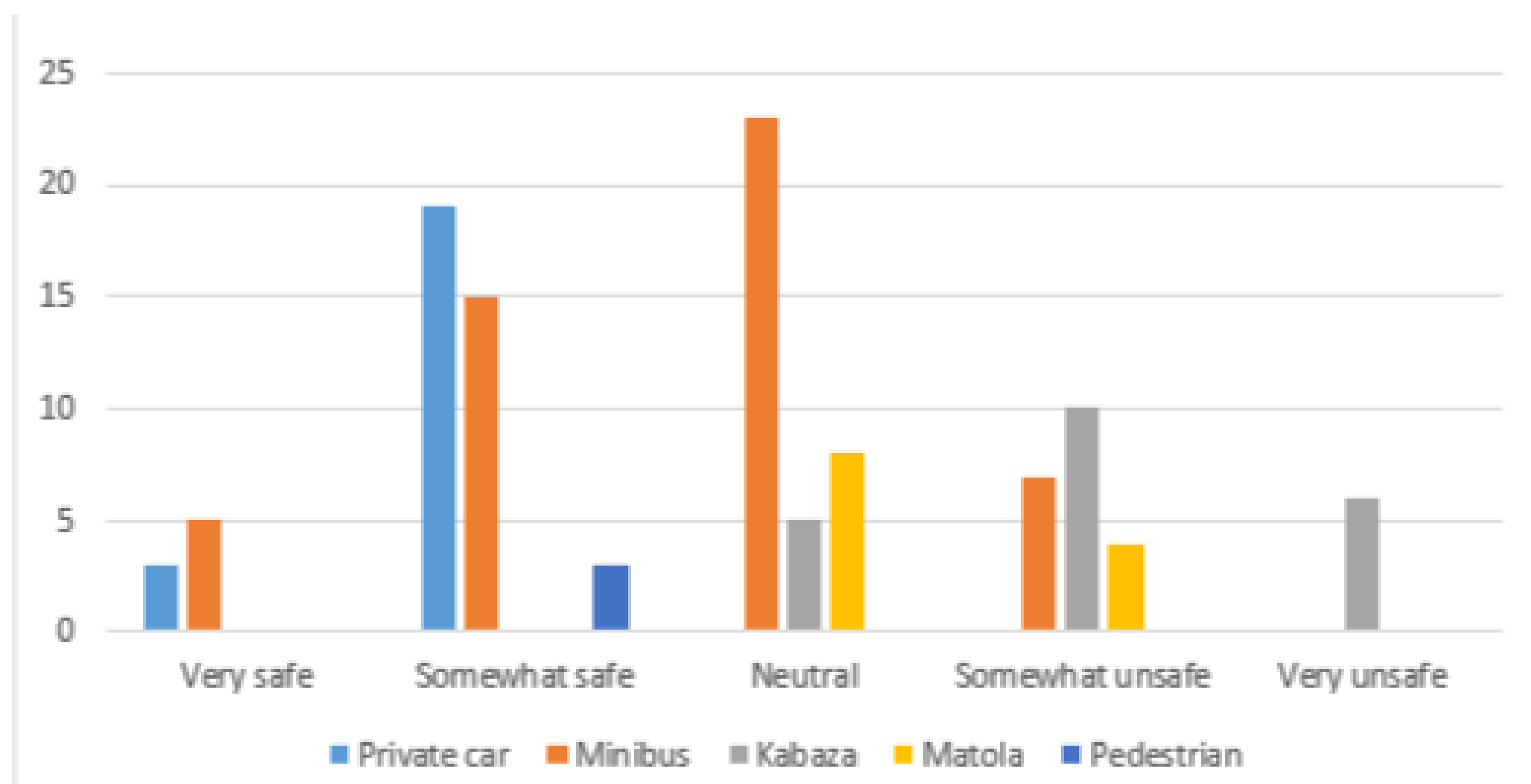
Regarding safety and security, participants were provided a range of options to rank the level of safety of their usual mode of transport. The options were 'very safe', 'somewhat safe', 'neutral', 'somewhat unsafe' and 'very unsafe'.

Through the open-ended questions, participants were also invited to share their day-to-day safety concerns during regular travel. The resulting discussions went into various aspects of safety, addressing issues such as theft, physical and verbal assault, harassment, and road accidents.

Responses regarding safety were given from the respondents as shown in the graph below.

Figure 6: The level of perceived safety according to the chosen mode of transport

[1] Note that the fuel crisis was a consistent occurrence throughout the period of this study and it is unclear whether it is an issue that will be remedied soon.



The responses from respondents exhibited a central bias when rating the safety of their chosen modes of transport. A majority of participants indicated perceptions of safety ranging from 'somewhat safe' 'to somewhat unsafe' with only 8.6% (8 out of 92) classifying their transports as 'very safe'.

[1]Note that the fuel crisis was a consistent occurrence throughout the period of this study and it is unclear whether it is an issue that will be remedied soon.

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Notably all of the 6 respondents who rated their mode of transport as 'very unsafe' were users of motorcycle hires (kabaza). This finding aligns with the known higher risk associated with motorcycles, often attributed to over speeding and a lack of protective gear, contributing to a higher incidence of accidents for both drivers and passengers (Naitha, 2020).

Safety and mobility are positively related where the imposition of effective safety measures contributes to enhanced mobility. This heightened mobility, in turn, creates opportunities for increased social connections, income opportunities, and access to vital social services such as education and healthcare. However, in the road transport system, particularly in Blantyre, respondents identified notable gaps in certain safety measures that directly impact their daily lives.

### 4.2.3.1 Concerns raised by respondents

#### Theft and assault

A prevalent concern raised by participants was the absence of adequate street lighting in their residential areas, a critical factor when commuting home after work. This deficiency not only left respondents vulnerable to theft of personal belongings, such as phones and handbags, but also heightened their fear of potential assaults during their evening journeys. The absence of neighborhood patrols further exacerbated these safety concerns

#### Impact on business owners

The financial consequences of compromised safety were particularly evident among business owners. A significant number reported that the lack of assurance in the safety of their commute compelled them to knock off from their businesses earlier than desired. This compromise, aimed at prioritizing personal safety, led to forfeited opportunities for potential extra profits in the hours they gave up. The fear associated with unsafe travel conditions prompted a trade-off between economic gains and personal security.

#### Privacy and harassment

One respondent also shared her experiences of being subjected to unwanted pressure from men (usually older) to give them her contact details while commuting in minibuses and in some cases sientas. This behaviour raises concerns around privacy invasion and potential harassment during the use of public transportation. It emphasizes the need for addressing such instances to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers, especially women during their commutes.



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However the common notion is that respondents cannot speak up against it with one respondent saying, '*bola kufika*' which loosely translates to 'as long as I arrive'. Either way, these safety concerns were commonly ranked as somewhat safe, neutral and somewhat safe indicating a lack of extremely positive reviews showing that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

### 4.2.4 Awareness of Feminist Macroeconomics and Gender-Sensitive Policies:

In our examination of feminist macroeconomics, which involves adjusting the economy to better meet the needs of women, one of the objectives was to gauge respondents' awareness of this evolving economic and political movement. This understanding is vital not only for assessing progress toward a more equitable society but also for guiding future policies and innovations in Blantyre's transport and infrastructure.

The collective findings from respondents reveal a prevailing theme: feminist macroeconomics remains a relatively new concept, yet to fill mainstream discussions. This lack of widespread awareness is both notable and unfortunate, given the potential transformative impact such awareness could have on societal structures.

The lack of awareness of feminist macroeconomics applies in the discussion of innovation. Recognition of the shortcomings in our societal systems is the initial step toward fostering innovations that promote gender equity. Drawing on the insights of E.M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory, we observe that crucial stages such as the awareness of the need for innovations and the decision to adopt them, are yet to be fully realized (Dearing & Cox, 2018). In this context, key innovations such as gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive transport have not yet been introduced and made widely known to the public. This indicates a significant opportunity for initiatives that prioritize gender inclusivity to take center stage in the discourse surrounding Blantyre's transport and infrastructure.

### 4.3 Responses from the key informant: Blantyre City Council

An important key informant for this study was the Blantyre City Council (BCC), namely the deputy director of the engineers department at the BCC. The Council operates under the guiding principle of 'taking the city back to the people,' aiming to deliver environmentally friendly, high-quality, efficient, and effective demand-driven municipal services. The city is managed in accordance with the Local Government Act, established in 1998. The Act mandates elected representatives of the various city wards and non-voting members (headed by the Mayor) to manage the city.

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It also outlines the functions of the Council clearly and regulates the operations of the Council and its secretariat which is headed by the Chief Executive Officer. These operations are divided into departments which are but not exclusive to administrative Services, legal services, financial services, and town planning and estate management services, engineering and human resource development.

The management of the city is shared with other service providers and stakeholders such as the Blantyre Water Board, Escom, Malawi Housing Corporations, Ministry of Lands and Housing, Surveyor Department, Ministry of Works, Roads Authority, Ministry of Health and Population, Malawi Police Service, Ministry of Education and other charitable organisations.

The BCC's mission statement is to provide environmentally friendly, high quality, efficient and effective demand driven public services in partnership with the individual and corporate residents to attain better quality lives for all residents in the city (Blantyre City Council , n.d.). For this reason it was chosen as an ideal key informant capable of contributing to this study.

Similar to the structured interviews given to the participants, the key interview informant had a list of questions structured under themes in order to guide the conversation. These themes were; noted experiences and challenges faced by women, experience with feminist macroeconomics, transportation and austerity measures, past, present and future efforts and recommendations with stakeholder collaboration.

It must be noted that in certain segments, the key informant did not possess specific information related to the questions asked namely the past, present and future efforts. I as the researcher saw it as crucial to acknowledge these gaps in data to maintain transparency and provide a comprehensive understanding of findings. The absence of information in those areas does not diminish the value of the insights gained in other areas of the interview and the available data still has the ability to give a proper understanding of the subject matter. With that in mind, the responses regarding these themes are discussed in detail as follows:

### 4.3.1 Noted challenges within the current transportation system

Upon being asked on the noted challenges within the transport system, the key informant touched upon the lack of inclusiveness in accommodating all modes of road transport, contributing to congestion. In Blantyre, various modes of road transport were identified throughout the study. However, a closer examination of the current road design reveals a predominant focus on accommodating two-way traffic for motor vehicles.

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Specialized lanes for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcycles are either limited or non-existent. This limitation has a direct impact on the increasing traffic in the area. Furthermore, the existing road designs appear outdated, dating back to a time when the number of motor vehicle users was considerably lower than it is today. This outdated infrastructure significantly affects road capacity, as the roads wear down more rapidly due to increased usage and the heavier loads imposed by freight trucks and Lorries. The evidence of this wear and tear is visible through the potholes.

The lack of inclusiveness is more pronounced when one considers the lack of efforts to include people living with disabilities. It is not an unusual sight to see wheelchair users having to use the same road as motor vehicles which leaves them vulnerable to road accidents. The key informant noted that the ideal situation is would be providing them with their own specialised pavements. Unfortunately, the pavements are notably bumpy and uneven making them difficult for wheelchair navigation. Visually impaired people are also unable to navigate without the help of an aide and efforts need to be done to include deaf people as well.

This is unfortunate considering that ensuring the transport needs and priorities of women, men, children, elderly and persons living with disabilities are one of the objectives of the National Transport policy (2019) and was delegated to the city councils. The key informant acknowledged this and agreed that efforts are still to be done and stated that factors such as a lack of collaboration between government bodies and relevant stakeholders, difficulty in acquiring the technology like sound indicators at traffic lights for visually impaired people and lack of funding slows down these projects such that they never kick off at all.

Another point brought up was the relaxed attitude towards enforcing traffic laws among motorbike users. The deputy director mentioned the leniency in terms of safety gear usage, like helmets, and issues like overloading by motorcyclists. This leniency is often attributed to not wanting to upset potential voters in the local area, but it ends up impacting women more. Since women are more likely to choose the more affordable motorcycle option for travel, they often end up as casualties in road accidents due to these lenient practices. In addition despite motorbikes and bicycles being the cheaper option for women, their setup does not support cultural norms for women to present themselves conservatively or modestly. Therefore even as women use these modes to be more economical, they end up vulnerable to harassment.

Discussions surrounding the accessibility of social services, such as schools and healthcare facilities, within the current transportation system with the key informant revealed a disconcerting trend.

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It became apparent that the pursuit of commercial and economic advancements often hinders the realization of goals outlined in the Urban Structure Plan. For Blantyre. Unfortunately this details of this plan are not yet available for public review. However the key informant stated that land that could be used to serve essential community needs, including schools and recreational centres, is diverted for commercial purposes, primarily the construction of shops and/or shopping complexes.

Rather than allocating land blocks for community-benefiting projects, there is a preference for erecting shopping complexes. While commercially viable, this approach neglects the reality that a significant portion of Blantyre's population is economically disadvantaged. Therefore, the majority does not truly benefit from these structures, except in cases where direct employment at these places is secured. This scenario highlights a conflict of interest in determining the optimal use of available land. Prioritizing the establishment of hospitals, schools, and other essential service centres for easy accessibility by the public enhances mobility and enriches lives. However, the prevailing trend focuses on meeting commercial demands rather than addressing the pressing needs of the residents, especially those less privileged economically.

The discussion then shifted to the topic of safety, specifically addressing whether adequate measures are in place to ensure the safety of women, including well-lit bus stops, security personnel, and emergency assistance services. It was acknowledged that, unfortunately, there is a deficiency of street lights in the city, and those that have been installed are not consistently functional. This is due to the strict adherence to using a specific type or brand of bulbs, often outdated and occasionally hard to procure, resulting in extended periods between bulb wear and replacement. Furthermore, the existing street lights are subject to vandalism, which is a significant cost for the city council in terms of frequent repairs and replacements. Despite these challenges, the key informant highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance safety. Specifically, there have been initiatives to station security personnel strategically, including police stations at busy locations such as bus depots, exemplified by the one in Limbe market, and shopping centres like in Chichiri shopping mall.

### 4.3.2 Experience with feminist Macroeconomics

The conversation then steered towards feminist macroeconomics with the key informant being asked if they are familiar with the term, the theories and reforms associated with it and if they are aware of any policies and initiatives which employed its principles specifically in the transportation sector.

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The key informant noted that feminist macroeconomics is a new term they are unaware of and could not completely confirm whether there have been a past or current projects that were carried out under its principles. Despite the informant's lack of awareness, it is challenging to completely dismiss the existence of initiatives aimed at enhancing women's economic mobility that may not explicitly align with the framework of feminist macroeconomics. Nevertheless, it is apparent that both gender mainstreaming and feminist macroeconomics have significant ground to cover before becoming central to the forefront of innovation or projects.

The conclusion drawn emphasizes that efforts to integrate gender perspectives into economic policies, especially within the transportation sector, should be intensified. This could involve targeted education, awareness campaigns, and collaborative initiatives between policymakers, city councils, stakeholders, and advocates. The objective is to bridge the existing knowledge gap and advance toward more inclusive and equitable economic practices in the ongoing projects and innovations.

### 4.3.4 Transportation and austerity measures

In this section of the questions, the goal was to engage the key informant on whether it is safe to say that austerity measures have had an effect on how transportation services are provided in Blantyre. As a note, austerity measures are defined as strict strategies implemented by governments to lessen the overall budget to avoid worsening the debt crisis (Poorna, 2023). One way the government can do this is through cutting down on government spending on public services like transportation and funding public schooling.

As previously discussed in the first chapter, transportation in Malawi became largely privatized in the 1980's and 1990's such that it is difficult to detect direct government involvement currently. The key informant confirmed that transport has indeed become more profit centred than holistic (where the goal is to maximize profit rather than facilitate movement in a more thoughtful manner regarding women, children and people living with disabilities). They also referred back to their earlier statement where land that could potentially be used to erect facilities which are easily accessible thus improving mobility is instead used to fulfil commercial demand.

They also agreed with the notion that due to the privatization of the transportation sector, low income individuals and communities are disadvantaged. With privatization comes less government regulation and monitoring as seen in the leniency towards motorcycle users who fail to follow safety regulations.

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This, as discussed before harms passengers in case of road accidents. Affordability is also affected in privatization where price regulation occurs in a free market as seen through the hiked fares that minibus operators impose on commuters. This is worsened with rises of fuel prices which affect transport fares.

During the study, the key informant briefly touched upon how the occasional scarcity of fuel due to lack of forex in the country affects the regular functioning of the country leading to unreliable transport routines as public transport providers and private car owners have to wait in long queues to fill up their vehicles.

With privatization being dominant in Blantyre's transport system, the passengers and operators are not the only victims. Upon being asked on how the role of the government in regulating and overseeing transport services has changed over the years due to privatization, their response emphasized on how the government has lost out on revenue as revenue collection from public transport operators has become difficult. With black number taxis covertly operating as red number taxis, it becomes to collect fees such as Taxi Parking Fees (TPF), the appropriate toll gates fees, licensing fees, road tax and other payments which could be used by the government to fund other projects such as infrastructure maintenance.

### 4.3.5 Collaboration (Stakeholder Engagement)

The closing question focused on how to strengthen the collaboration between the government, gender equality organizations and other stakeholders so as to address the unique needs and challenges faced by women and girls when using transportation services. The key informant made an impactful remark on how as much as projects may be proposed numerous times and interventions and innovations may being brought up now and then, they do not matter until actual action and implementation is taken. One way to ensure said implementation is through encouraging transparency and accountability namely through the IPPI (Information Platform for Public Infrastructure in Malawi) project.

It was developed with the goal of increasing citizen engagement in the public construction sector and to promote transparency and accountability of public resources. The aim is to build engagement and trust from not just the general public but also among the organisations listed on the platform. The platform allows for the publication of public infrastructure projects and contract details from the tender level to completion of the project. One simply needs to search for the named project and/or organisation and details such as the name of the project, its status and the total funding it has received is available for viewing.

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## 4.4 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the findings from both the respondents and the key informant have been thoroughly examined and, where applicable illustrated to facilitate the reader's analysis. While the respondents exhibited diversity in their responses across specific themes and questions, notable commonalities emerged, underscoring key points for necessary to point out. The key informant also enriched the study by offering a nuanced and professional perspective drawing on their affiliation with the city council. This unique insight provided information that the researcher would not have been able to discover independently.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 Introduction

In this concluding chapter is a finale of the study's exploration of the intricacies of women's mobility within the Blantyre transportation landscape. This chapter serves as a conclusion of our journey, summarizing key findings and proposing recommendations. Investigating the multifaceted aspects of Intersectionality, participant categories, economic impacts, convenience, safety, and awareness of feminist macroeconomics, the study reveals meaningful patterns and challenges. The following section not only recaps the findings but also outlines actionable suggestions, offering a roadmap for informed interventions and policy adjustments.

The goal is to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender-inclusive transport policies and infrastructure, striving for a more equitable and accessible transportation environment in Blantyre.

### 5.1 Key findings recap

#### 5.1.1 Intersectionality in women's mobility and awareness of feminist macroeconomics

The investigation has highlighted the undeniable impact of Intersectionality on women's mobility. Distinct experiences arise based on the mode of transport, yet commonalities emerge through, emphasizing the shared challenges faced by women across diverse backgrounds. Of course it is undeniable that a woman who uses her own private car to travel will have better security and convenience compared to a woman who uses public transportation. However, there are certain experiences that both these women experience which economic privilege simply cannot buffer namely the fuel crises that have occurred over the years. Securing fuel proved to be a challenge for women drivers as they were forced to wait for hours and in some respondents' recounts, even days until they were able to secure fuel. This put women in a strained situation in which they were exposed to potential threats such as theft, harassment and assault.

One respondent shared her experience where a physical quarrel broke out between vendors while she was waiting on the line showing that women are forced to endure tense and uncomfortable situations just to fuel up. This scarcity of fuel proved to affect women who use public transportation as they struggled to find minibuses that were operating and if they did, they had to pay higher fares than usual.



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Another interesting takeaway was the lack of awareness of feminist macroeconomics, gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive transport. The women in this study were of different economic backgrounds and probably had different educational backgrounds as well but all of them admitted to not being familiar with these concepts. In addition, some respondents could not think of any gender inclusive innovations in transport even though they were aware of the discrepancies in the current transportation system. This disproved the researchers' preconceived notion or bias that women of more economic privilege and education are more likely to be familiar with such terms. Discussions of gender mainstreaming and feminist macroeconomics are therefore meant to be shared to all women despite their background.

### 5.1.2 Feminist macroeconomics: raising awareness

While the majority of participants in the study expressed unfamiliarity with feminist macroeconomics, it's important to note that the concept is not entirely foreign. Organizations like the Feminist Macro-Economic Alliance (FEAM) have been actively working with collaborators such as For Equality to educate young women and their allies, fostering engagement and influence on macroeconomic policies (FEAM, 2023). FEAM serves as a coordinating platform for collective action, bringing together feminists, women's rights activists, and women-serving organizations to advocate for gender-just macroeconomic policies.

Through collaborations with FEAM and other stakeholders, there exists a potential to significantly raise awareness of feminist macroeconomics. This can be achieved through various channels, including workshops, seminars, and online webinars. Educational campaigns employing diverse content such as videos, articles, and compelling storytelling can play a crucial role. Additionally, strategic partnerships with media outlets like Zodiak TV can enhance outreach, amplifying the message.

Creating inclusive training programs for policymakers, economists, and professionals is another avenue to integrate feminist perspectives into their work effectively. This not only facilitates a deeper understanding of feminist macroeconomics but also opens opportunities for gender mainstreaming in policy and decision-making processes. Encouraging collaborations and consultations with credited gender activists.

These innovations might already be in progress but remain unknown to the researcher and the general public. Nevertheless, there is significant potential for positive developments, sparking excitement for the conversations that are yet to unfold.

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### 5.1.3 Categories of participants

A breakdown of participants reveals the prevalence of minibus usage among respondents, showcasing its significance in the transportation landscape in Blantyre. The high number of minibus users' guides future projects and innovations aimed at improving women's transport. This can be done through a specific focus on minibus transportation which is a preferred mode of transport that has the potential to influence the livelihood of numerous women if enhanced.

To make minibus transportation more gender-sensitive, in addition to introducing reserved women-only seats and enforcing stricter regulations against overcrowding, comprehensive driver training programs can be implemented. These programs should emphasize gender sensitivity, respectful behaviour, and the creation of a safe and comfortable environment for women passengers. Furthermore, improving visibility and lighting within minibuses and at bus stops is crucial. This not only enhances overall safety but also creates a more secure environment, especially during early morning or late-night travels. These proposed initiatives, integrated into the minibus system, aim to address existing challenges and contribute to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive public transport system in alignment with the objectives of the study

## 5.2 Patterns across respondents

The mixed-method approach has uncovered compelling patterns, providing a holistic view of respondents' perspectives on affordability, convenience, safety, and awareness of feminist macroeconomics.

### 5.2.1 Economic impact: navigating affordability

Navigating affordability in the realm of transportation unveils the intricate trade-offs that women in Blantyre encounter in pursuit of their daily activities. This intricate decision making process is shaped by the mismatch between what women perceive as a good choice and what they are actually able to do. For instance, a promising job opportunity might be turned down by a woman if the transportation costs to reach it prove to be prohibitively high, undermining her chance for career advancement. Similarly, female scholars at the primary or secondary level may grapple with inconsistent school attendance due to exorbitant transport expenses, leading to them to instead attend schools with lower standards of services such as understaffed teaching staff and overcrowded classrooms.

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The struggle to balance affordability and necessity becomes evident when women are forced to make choices between accessing healthcare, applying for jobs, attending classes, or lowering their transport expenses instead. These instances stress the intricate web of challenges women face as they navigate the affordability landscape, making it imperative to address these issues to ensure equitable opportunities and experiences.

### 5.2.2 Transportation costs vs. monthly earnings

When looking at the costs of getting around, it becomes clear that it's a big challenge for people with lower incomes. This is a problem because there might be opportunities that could make their lives better, but they can't take advantage of them because they can't afford to travel. One way to help with this is by promoting what is called Non-Motorized Transportation (NMT). This was briefly discussed on the Malawi National Transport Master Plan. This includes simple things like walking or riding a bike, as well as other options like scooters or cycle rickshaws. Using these kinds of transportation are not only cheaper, but are also good for their health (Mhango & Chisinga, 2017)

NMT is useful for short trips, which are the most common in cities. To encourage this type of transportation, there needs to be a plan that includes constructing and improving road features like sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes. The government can also make sure there are enough paths for walking and biking, and they can create special shortcuts for these types of transportation. It's important to make sure that these paths are well-lit for safety (Muhoza, Wikman, & Chavez, 2021). Overall, promoting non-motorized transportation can make it easier for people with less money to get around and access opportunities. However these changes alone are not enough and challenging gender bias in cyclized transport would have to be addressed so that women are comfortable when using bicycles. Public perceptions towards using bicycles and walking to get by would also have to be subverted. Instead of viewing them as means in which poor people get by because they do not have a motor vehicle, the health benefits that come with walking and cycling can be emphasized instead so they are viewed more favorably.

### 5.2.3 Convenience and accessibility: handling crisis

Participants overwhelmingly favour minibus travel for its convenience, a preference challenged during fuel scarcity, impacting both private and public transportation. To mitigate such challenges, promoting non-motorized transport emerges as a solution, encouraging modes like bicycles, motorbikes, scooters, and walking, reducing overall fuel demand and providing alternative

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means during shortages. Over-reliance on a particular means of transport disrupts routines during times of uncertainty and change such that encouraging alternative means of transport enables women to react adeptly and resume regular operations.

Another noteworthy innovation, in its early stages in Malawi, is the diversification of energy sources. In 2023, Sky Energy introduced the country's first electric vehicles, marking a shift toward clean and affordable mobility. This emerging technology aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, contributing to climate change (Pensulo, 2023). Notably, Total Energy's collaboration with Sky Energy to install chargers in strategic fuel station locations signals growing interest and accessibility to electric vehicles, albeit not yet universal. While such innovations may not be accessible to everyone, they contribute to alleviating fuel demand, a critical step given the volatility in fuel supply.

### 5.2.4 Safety and accessibility

In addressing safety and security concerns, the installation of streetlights within the city and residential areas serves as a deterrent against theft and sexual assault, particularly during women's travels. Zomba provides a noteworthy example, with the city council becoming a trailblazer by installing 261 solar-powered streetlights along the M3 road, covering a distance of 4 miles (Bungane, 2017). The emphasis on solar energy aims not only to enhance safety but also to promote environmentally friendly practices and alleviate pressure on hydroelectricity, a scarce resource in the country.

While Blantyre City Council has taken strides by procuring 200 watts LED integrated solar streetlights along prominent roads, the need persists for additional streetlights in residential areas. Women navigating their neighbourhoods face heightened risks, especially during blackouts when reliance on outdoor house lights is compromised. Installing streetlights in these areas would represent a crucial step forward in ensuring safety.

Another safety concern is the prevalence of catcalling, verbal and physical assaults, and groping, contributing to an unescapable rape culture. Women should not endure such humiliation during routine travels. Initiating a cultural shift is essential, as highlighted by the key informant. Campaigns aimed at educating the public about catcalling, defining its harmful nature, and discouraging such behavior can play a pivotal role in fostering change. Addressing the normalization of rape culture requires complete measures. Ensuring security personnel, including police and neighborhood patrols, are well-versed in issues of gender-based violence, harassment, and catcalling is

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crucial. This education equips them to handle complaints seriously and empathetically, challenging the prevailing acceptance of harmful behaviors. By collectively implementing these strategies, we can strive for a safer and more respectful environment for women in their daily travels.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by women in Blantyre's transportation landscape, revealing critical intersections of gender, affordability, safety, and awareness of feminist macroeconomics. The findings underscore the undeniable impact of Intersectionality on women's mobility, emphasizing shared challenges that transcend economic backgrounds. The prevalence of minibus usage among participants highlights the significance of this mode of transport, guiding future projects to enhance women's transportation.

The recommendations outlined align seamlessly with the research objectives. Proposals for gender-sensitive initiatives within minibus transportation, promotion of non-motorized transport, and addressing safety concerns collectively aim to create a more inclusive and secure environment for women. The integration of feminist perspectives in policymaking, especially in the realm of transport, emerges as a key strategy for fostering positive change.

The potential impact of implementing these recommendations is substantial. Beyond addressing immediate challenges, such measures can contribute to reshaping societal norms, fostering gender equality, and creating a more sustainable and resilient transportation system. The ripple effect extends beyond transportation, influencing broader conversations on feminist macroeconomics and its integration into policymaking.

As we look to the future, the implementation of these recommendations not only aligns with the objectives of this study but also holds the promise of transformative change. By prioritizing gender-sensitive policies and inclusive strategies, we pave the way for a more equitable and accessible transportation landscape in Blantyre.

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### **Introductory letter;**

Dear Participants:

I appreciate your interest, support and participation in my research study titled, 'Examining Feminist Macroeconomics in Malawi's Road Transport System: A case study of Blantyre'. The goal of this study is to delve into the intersection of feminist economics and Malawi's road transport system, focusing particularly on the vibrant city of Blantyre.

My research is driven by the belief that understanding the unique challenges and experiences faced by women when using the transportation services available helps to highlight areas which could be improved to alleviate their mobility. This is crucial for fostering gender equality and empowering women in urban spaces. This study also hopes to pinpoint opportunities for enhancing gender-sensitive policies within the transport sector, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and accessible urban environment for everyone.

As neo-liberalism and austerity measures become more prominent, services provided by the government are limited or diminished entirely. Transportation is one of these services such that the sector is primarily private owned. It is therefore crucial within this study to discuss how this has affected Malawians particularly less privileged women and marginalized communities.

Your responses will be instrumental in shaping recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders, paving the way for transportation infrastructure that is truly inclusive and supportive of all residents.

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I sincerely thank you and look forward to the meaningful insights you provide

Warm Regards,  
Tamara Banda.

## Appendix 1: Structured questions in English

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Participant Information:

1. Gender:  Male  Female  Other

Travel Frequency and Patterns:

1. How often do you need to travel for various purposes such as work, education, and social activities in a typical week?

Rarely  1-2 times  3-4 times  5 or more times

1. Please briefly explain why you need to travel as frequently as you mentioned above.

#### Transportation Costs:

1. On average, how much do you spend on transportation costs per week?

1. Do you consider transportation costs to be affordable?

Very affordable  somewhat affordable  Not very affordable  
 Not at all affordable

#### Convenience and Accessibility:

1. Please rank the main means of transportation available to you?

Minibuses  Shared Taxi (matola)  Motorcycle (kabaza)  Bicycle  
 Foot (Kuyenda wa'pansi)

1. How would you rate the convenience of the transportation options available to you?

Very convenient  somewhat convenient  Neutral  
 Somewhat inconvenient  Very inconvenient

1. Are the transportation options easily accessible from your location?

Yes  No

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## Safety and Security:

1. How safe do you feel when using public transportation?  
 Very Safe  somewhat safe  Neutral  somewhat unsafe  
 Very Unsafe

1. Have you ever encountered safety concerns while using public transportation? If yes briefly explain

## Gender-sensitive Features:

1. In your opinion, does the current transportation system consider the specific needs of women?  
 Yes, to a great extent  Yes, to some extent  No
2. Are there any aspects of the transportation system that you think should be more gender-sensitive? Please explain.

## Economic Impact:

1. Does the quality of transportation options affect your ability to pursue job opportunities?  
 Yes  No
2. Does the cost of transportation impact your financial decisions or opportunities?  
 Yes  No

## Feminist Economics Principles:

1. Are you familiar with the concept of feminist macroeconomics?  
 Yes  No
1. In your view, do you see any alignment between feminist economic principles and the transportation system in Malawi? Please explain.

## Policy Awareness and Suggestions:

1. Are you aware of any gender-sensitive policies related to transportation in Malawi?  
 Yes  No
2. If you could suggest any improvements to the transportation system to make it more gender inclusive and aligned with feminist economic principles, what would it be?

**Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is valuable for our research.**

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## Structured Interview guide for the key informant

Gender- Sensitive Urban transportation and Infrastructure in Blantyre: An exploratory Study of Experiences, Efforts, and Future Directions from Key Informant Participants

### 1. Experiences and Challenges

- From your professional perspective, what are the imperfections within the current transportation system operating in Malawi i.e. minibuses, taxis, motorcycles and bus hires which need immediate fixing?
- Would you say these imperfections disproportionately affect women more than men? Please elaborate on your answer.
- Besides women and children, do you think that the current road transportation networks cater to the needs of other marginalized groups including wheelchair users, blind people and deaf people? Please elaborate.
- Do you believe that the current transportation system ensures women's easy access to essential social services such as education, healthcare and police assistance especially when reporting crimes like theft, domestic violence, harassment and sexual assault?
- From your professional perspective, are there adequate measures and facilities in place for women passengers such as well-lit bus stops, security personnel or emergency assistance services?

### 2. Experience with Feminist Macroeconomics

- Are you familiar with feminist Macroeconomic principles? (unpaid care work, social reforms)
- Have you come across any specific theories or frameworks within feminist economics that focus on transportation system?
- Can you provide any examples of policies or initiatives where feminist economic principles have been applied in the transportation sector?

### 3. Transportation and Austerity measures

- In the pursuit of profitability, do you think there has been a shift away from a holistic approach to transportation, where the focus is primarily on profitable routes and services, potentially neglecting essential but less profitable routes that serve critical social needs?

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- Can you describe (if there are any) any noticeable changes in the quality or availability of public transportation due to austerity measures? Preferably dating as far back as the late 1970's, the 1980's when Malawi's Structural Programs were introduced and until present day.
- Have you observed any disparities in transportation access, particularly among low-income individuals and communities, as a result of the privatization or profit-orientated approach in the transport sector?
- Has the pursuit of profits within privatized transportation services had notable impact on the safety, reliability, or quality of transportation services in Malawi?
- With privatization being dominant within the transport systems, how has the role of the government in regulating and overseeing transport services evolved, and what impact has this had on service provision and public interest?
- Have you observed any changes in the maintenance and upkeep of transportation infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public transit facilities due to budget constraints?

## 4.Past Efforts (Historical Context):

- Can you provide insights into any measures or efforts that have been undertaken in the past to address the challenges (based on accessibility, safety and lack of financial resources) women and marginalized communities face?

## 5.Ongoing Initiatives (Current Status):

- Are there any ongoing initiatives or efforts by your organization or any other organizations) aimed at improving the gender- sensitivity and overall inclusivity of public transportation and infrastructure? If so please describe them)

## 6.Role of City councils (Institutional perspectives):

- From your perspective, what role does the City Council play in ensuring that public transportation and infrastructure are safe, accessible and accommodating for women and girls?

## 7.External Insights (Best Practices):

- Are there any successful examples or practices in transportation system from other countries that you believe could be adapted to enhance the situation for women and girls?

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## 8.Future Priorities (Forward looking)

- In your opinion, what are the key priorities or actions that should be pursued in the future to further improve the gender-sensitivity of transportation and road infrastructure?

## 9.Collaboration (Stakeholder Engagement)

- How do you envision strengthening collaboration between the government, gender equality organizations and other stakeholders to address unique needs and challenges faced by women and girls when using transportation services?

For Equality maintains a zero tolerance policy against any form of safeguarding violations. Reporting is encouraged through the following channels:

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

