

Care Economy & Decent Work

**THE YOUNG SCHOLARS FEMINIST
RESEARCH ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE
& RIGHTS IN MALAWI (BOOK 3)**

ABOUT FOR EQUALITY

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

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

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

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

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WHO ARE THE YOUNG SCHOLARS?

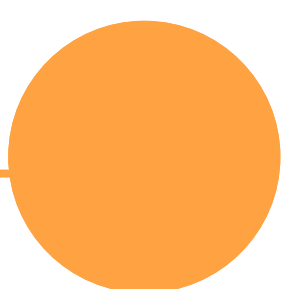
For Equality (FE) under the Economic Justice and Rights thematic area, in partnership with the Feminist Macroeconomics Alliance Malawi (FEAM) and with support from the Hewlett Foundation hosted the Young Scholars Fellowship program. The program encompassed extensive training in feminist macroeconomics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

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

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

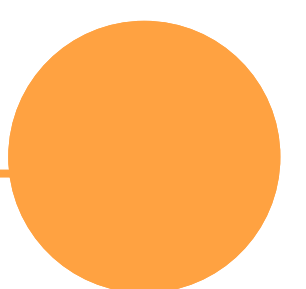
On 1st March 2024, For Equality hosted a graduation ceremony to mark the culmination of their rigorous training, research endeavors, and commitment to advancing feminist principles in economic discourse and policy formulation. The event was graced by Malawi government key representation including ministries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

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



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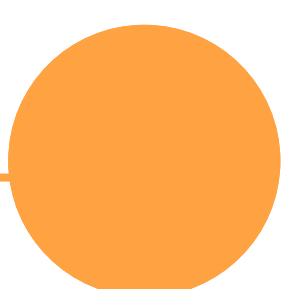


CONTENTS

The Impacts of Domiciliary Work Among Secondary School Girls in Mzimba District.....1

The Gendered Relationship Between Care Responsibilities and Employment: Evidence from Malawi.....23

Promoting Feminist Macroeconomics: Recognizing and Investing in the Care Economy and Decent Work.....44



THE IMPACTS OF DOMICILIARY WORK AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS IN MZIMBA DISTRICT

By Towera Ngwira

ABSTRACT

This objective of this paper is to highlight the impacts of domiciliary work among school going girls in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) in Mzimba, Malawi. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. The sample comprised of 30 girls from 2 schools, 5 teachers and 5 guardians. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data for the study. The findings of this study indicate that domiciliary work has significant negative impacts on the educational attainment, emotional well-being, and personal development of female students in Mzimba North, Malawi. The data highlights that a significant majority of the participants, 92%, are responsible for domestic work in their households and spend 1-2 hours daily on domestic work which eventually affects their school work, with late class attendance and the occupation of study hours. Also the findings reveal a concerning acceptance of traditional gender roles assigning household and care giving responsibilities to women and girls and a significant number (46%) of participants felt pressured or obliged to take on domestic work due to their gender.

The participants employ various coping mechanisms to balance academic responsibilities, domestic work, and patriarchal expectations. These include time management using timetables and seeking help from siblings, as many come from families with multiple siblings. This reflects their determination to overcome the challenges they face. The study recommended a versatile approach by conducting community awareness on gender roles and redistribution of household work, support systems and after school program for students especially girls, mental health services to cope up with emotional stress they experience, and collaborative efforts to empower girls remain in school. By addressing these challenges, we can empower female students to achieve their educational potential and improve their overall well-being

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Research Problem.....	4
1.3 The Significance of the study.....	4
1.3.1 Research Objectives	4
1.4 Research questions.....	5
CHAPTER 2	6
2.1 Unpaid Carework and Domiciliary work.....	6
2.2 Domiciliary Work and Education	6
2.3 Gender and the Patriarchal System	7
CHAPTER THREE	9
3.0 Methodology	9
3.1 Data Collection.....	9
3.2 Data Analysis	9
CHAPTER FOUR	12
4.0 Research findings and analysis.....	12
4.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants	12
4.2 Domestic work	12
4.3 Patriarchy system and unpaid care work	14
4.4 Academic Experience	14
4.5 Coping Mechanism	15
4.6. Further Interviews	15
CHAPTER FIVE	16
5.0 Discussion of the findings	16
5.1 Recommendations	17
5.2 Conclusion.....	18
REFERENCES	19
APPENDIX	20

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Women and girls in countries around the world, regardless of socioeconomic status, perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work in their homes and communities. Unpaid care work includes household duties such as cooking, cleaning, water and fuel collection, child care, or elder care. These domestic duties are essential to a well-functioning society and economy but they are often overlooked. The patriarchal system assigns and reinforces rigid gender roles, perpetuating the idea that women and girls are the main caretakers at home and bear more of the burden for these duties than men and boys. This system influences various aspects of women and girls' lives, extending far beyond the immediate responsibilities of household chores. It affects their school attendance, academic performance, secure decent work and their overall well-being. It restricts their opportunities and aspirations, thereby contributing to the continuation of gender inequalities.

This study embarks on a comprehensive examination into the detrimental consequences of unpaid care work particularly domiciliary work among Community Day Secondary School girls in Mzimba North, situated in the northern region of Malawi. Mzimba district is one of the male dominated districts where patriarchy system is deeply rooted which enhances gender inequalities. Despite concerted global efforts to promote gender equality, the deeply rooted patriarchal norms in the region often dictate that girls bear the primary responsibility for unpaid care work in their households and this gendered division of labor within households not only places an additional burden on girls but also disrupts their pursuit of education.

Hence this research shall provide a comprehensive assessment of the detrimental impacts of domiciliary work, with a particular emphasis on its intersection with the patriarchal system. It aims to unravel how household responsibilities impede girls' access to education, hinder their academic achievements, and reinforce cycles of gender inequality within Mzimba North.

To conduct this study, we employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. This methodological diversity allows us to obtain a holistic understanding of the issue by engaging with the voices and experiences of Community Day Secondary School girls, their families, educators, and community leaders. Through rigorous data analysis and compelling narratives, we aim to shed light on the intricate web of factors sustaining gender disparities in education within the region.

Furthermore, this study aligns with international efforts to valuing women work which is essential for the functioning of economies and societies but

CHAPTER ONE

not taken into account in convection national accounts or Gross domestic account. Our findings and recommendations will contribute to the ongoing discourse on reducing the burden of unpaid care work among girls offering practical insights into mitigating the negative impacts of domiciliary work and challenging the gender norms perpetuated by the patriarchal system. As we delve into this critical issue, we aspire to promote awareness, facilitate understanding, and drive actions that will pave the way for a more equitable educational landscape for Community Day Secondary School girls in Mzimba North and similar contexts.

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem under investigation is the significant negative impacts of domiciliary work on the educational attainment, emotional well-being, and personal development of female students attending Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North, Malawi. This problem is exacerbated by the intersection of traditional gender roles, where girls are disproportionately burdened with domestic responsibilities, hindering their academic progress and overall growth. The study seeks to understand the multifaceted challenges faced by these girls, particularly within the context of the patriarchal system, and to identify strategies for mitigating these adverse effects to promote gender equality in education.

1.3 The Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to shed light on the adverse effects of unpaid care work particularly domiciliary work on female students in Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North, thereby informing education policies, empowering girls to advocate for their rights, promoting gender equality, and improving their overall well-being. By addressing the patriarchal system's role and offering coping mechanisms, this research can contribute to creating more equitable educational environments, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering community engagement in reevaluating traditional gender norms and expectations, ultimately benefiting both the individual girls and the broader community.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

- To determine the extent to which domiciliary work affects the academic performance of female students in Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba north.
- To investigate the emotional and psychological well-being of girls in relation to their experiences with domiciliary work, including stress, anxiety, and overall emotional health.

CHAPTER ONE

- To explore the role of the patriarchal system in shaping gender norms and expectations related to domiciliary work among female students in Mzimba North.
- To identify the coping mechanisms employed by girls to balance their educational pursuits and domiciliary responsibilities, particularly in the face of societal expectations.

1.4 Research questions

1. To what extent does domiciliary work influence the academic performance of female students in Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North, particularly in terms of grades, attendance, and completion rates?
2. How do the experiences of domiciliary work impact the emotional and psychological well-being of female students in Mzimba North, including factors such as stress, anxiety, and overall emotional health?
3. What is the role of the patriarchal system in shaping and perpetuating gender norms and expectations related to domiciliary work among female students in Mzimba North, and how does this system affect their educational experiences?
4. What coping mechanisms do female students employ to effectively balance their educational pursuits and domiciliary responsibilities, especially in light of societal expectations and pressures?

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Unpaid Care Work and Domiciliary work

Unpaid care and domestic work refers to non-market, unpaid work carried out in households and this work includes both direct care (of persons) and indirect care (such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and fuel, etc. These activities are recognized as work, but typically not included in the System of National Accounts which is the set of measures used by countries all over the world to measure economic activity, including GDP. According to Actionaid UK study, “Women perform 75% of unpaid work globally, dedicating, on average, 4 hours and 25 minutes daily, more than three times men’s average of 1 hour and 23 minutes.

Globally, girls aged between 5 and 14 years old spend 40% more time, or 160 million more hours per day on unpaid household chores, collecting water and firewood compared to boys. Such heavy domestic workloads keep women from pursuing more productive roles outside the household and women are thus less likely to be free to take up training opportunities, continue their education, and to pursue paid work opportunities. These, in turn, limit their opportunities for better incomes and lives, and keep them financially dependent on men (Hernando et al., 2022).

2.2 Domiciliary Work and Education

Domiciliary work, often referred to as domestic labor or household chores, encompasses a range of responsibilities within the home, including cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and taking care of younger siblings etc. While these tasks are important for the upkeep of the household, the burden of such responsibilities can significantly impact the education of Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) girls in Mzimba North. This section delves deeper into the negative impacts of domiciliary work on education and the subsequent repercussions.

2.2.1 Absenteeism and Academic Performance

Domiciliary work often requires CDSS girls to allocate a substantial amount of time to household chores, which can lead to high rates of absenteeism from school. A study conducted by Bourdillon, et al. (2013) in Malawi found that girls' absenteeism from school was often linked to domestic responsibilities, with girls being more likely to miss school compared to their male counterparts. Frequent absences, in turn, result in missed lessons and reduced opportunities for interaction with teachers, negatively impacting academic performance (Chirwa, 2007).

Furthermore, research by Anderson (2010) highlights the correlation between absenteeism due to domiciliary work and poor academic performance among girls in Malawi. The demands of housework, such as collecting firewood and water, may require girls to travel long distances, further exacerbating their absenteeism from school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.2 Exhaustion and Limited Study Time

Engaging in domiciliary work after school can lead to physical and mental exhaustion among CDSS girls. This exhaustion can make it challenging for them to concentrate on their studies in the evening. As highlighted by Ansong (2014), the long hours spent on household chores can leave girls fatigued and with limited time for homework, leading to lower academic achievement.

Also a study conducted by A. Dida (2014) in Kenya revealed that learners failed to finish assignments given due to reasons such as lack of concentration at home which indicates a relationship between the domestic gender roles performed by the learners and academic performance. Moreover, the lack of time for extracurricular activities, which are integral to holistic education, can hinder the development of skills beyond the classroom. This limitation can negatively affect girls' personal growth and future career prospects.

2.3 Gender and the Patriarchal System

The patriarchal system in Malawi, deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms, plays a pivotal role in perpetuating gender inequalities. This system assigns traditional gender roles and expectations to girls and women, which often limit their access to education and personal development opportunities.

2.3.1 Traditional Gender Norms and Roles

Traditional gender norms in Malawi dictate that girls and women should primarily fulfill the roles of caregivers and homemakers. According to Mutharika (2009), girls are expected to take on household chores, child-rearing responsibilities, and caregiving duties from an early age. These gender norms prioritize domestic work over educational pursuits, creating a significant barrier for girls aspiring to complete their secondary education.

2.3.2 Limited Access to Education

The patriarchal system restricts girls' access to education in various ways. Girls may be discouraged from attending school regularly, as their perceived primary role is to support their families through domiciliary work. This perspective is reinforced by parents and community members who prioritize their daughters' contributions to the household over their education (Biswas, 2011).

Furthermore, gender discrimination can manifest within schools themselves. Teachers may exhibit bias against girls, expecting them to prioritize their domestic responsibilities over their studies. This can lead to unequal treatment and further discourage girls from pursuing their education (Bourdillon, et al., 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

To sum up, the negative impacts of domiciliary work on CDSS girls in Mzimba North are exacerbated by the patriarchal system in Malawi. Traditional gender norms and roles assign girls the role of caregivers, limiting their access to education and personal development opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires not only interventions within the education system but also a broader societal shift towards gender equality, recognizing the importance of education for all, regardless of gender.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 Methodology

To comprehensively investigate the negative impacts of domiciliary work among Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) girls in Mzimba North and its connection with the patriarchal system, a mixed-methods research approach was employed. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017) defined methodology as the systematic and structured set of principles, procedures, and rules used in the design, implementation, and analysis of research or investigations in various fields of study. It serves as a blueprint for how a study is conducted, providing a clear and organized approach to address research questions, test hypotheses, or achieve specific objectives. This methodology integrated quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the issue.

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 Surveys

Babbie, E. R. (2016) defined survey as a research method used to collect data from a sample of individuals or entities in order to gather information, opinions, or attitudes on specific topics or issues. Surveys typically involve asking structured questions, which may be open-ended or closed-ended, and are administered through various means, such as questionnaires

Surveys were administered to a sample of CDSS girls to assess the prevalence and specific tasks associated with domiciliary work. The survey questionnaire included questions about the frequency and duration of household chores, the impact on school attendance, and girls' perceptions of their roles. The survey aimed to quantify the extent to which domiciliary work affected the educational prospects of these girls.

3.1.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews were carried out as part of this study, involving both CDSS girls and their school teachers. The aim of these interviews was to gather qualitative insights into the real-life experiences of girls who are actively involved in domiciliary work. Through these interviews, we delved into the emotional and practical dimensions of how these young girls manage the intricate task of balancing their household responsibilities with their pursuit of education. By speaking directly with the students themselves and their teachers, we were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to maintain this delicate equilibrium.

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

According to Neuman, W. L. (2014), quantitative data analysis is the process of examining numerical data to draw meaningful conclusions, make inferences, and uncover patterns or relationships within the data

CHAPTER THREE

The data obtained from surveys were analyzed using statistical tools, such as descriptive statistics. This quantitative analysis provided numerical insights into the relationship between domiciliary work and school attendance, as well as the specific chores that had the most significant impact.

3.2.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the systematic process of examining non-numerical data, such as textual or visual information, to identify patterns, themes, and insights within the data. This analysis involves organizing, interpreting, and making sense of the qualitative data to draw conclusions and generate understanding (Neuman, W. L. 2014)

The qualitative data collected from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring themes and patterns in participants' narratives. Qualitative analysis helped uncover the nuances of girls' experiences and the societal factors contributing to domiciliary work.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

In research, ethical considerations means the principles, guidelines, and practices that ensure the rights, well-being, and dignity of research participants are protected, and that research is conducted in an ethically responsible manner. Acknowledging Sieber, J. E. (1992), these considerations includes issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, data security, minimizing harm, and maintaining transparency in research.

In this research, ethical principles were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured. The research team ensured that participants' identities and responses were protected, and the research was conducted in an ethical and respectful manner.

3.4 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this study. The sample size may not be fully representative of all CDSS girls in Mzimba North, and findings may not be generalizable to other regions or countries. Additionally, self-reporting in surveys and interviews may introduce response bias. Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into the negative impacts of domiciliary work and the patriarchal system on girls' education in Mzimba North.

To conclude, the mixed-methods approach employed in this research allowed for a comprehensive examination of the negative impacts of domiciliary work among CDSS girls in Mzimba North. It also shed light on the role of the patriarchal system in perpetuating these challenges.

CHAPTER THREE

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data helped uncover the complex dynamics at play and provided a solid foundation for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Research findings and analysis.

This chapter presents the research findings and analysis of significant negative impacts of domiciliary work on the educational attainment, emotional well-being, and personal development of female students attending Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North, Malawi. The chapter provides an in-depth examination of the data collected through surveys, interviews, and observations to shed light on the extent and implications of this issue.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants

Before delving into the research findings, it is essential to understand the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. This information will help provide context for the analysis

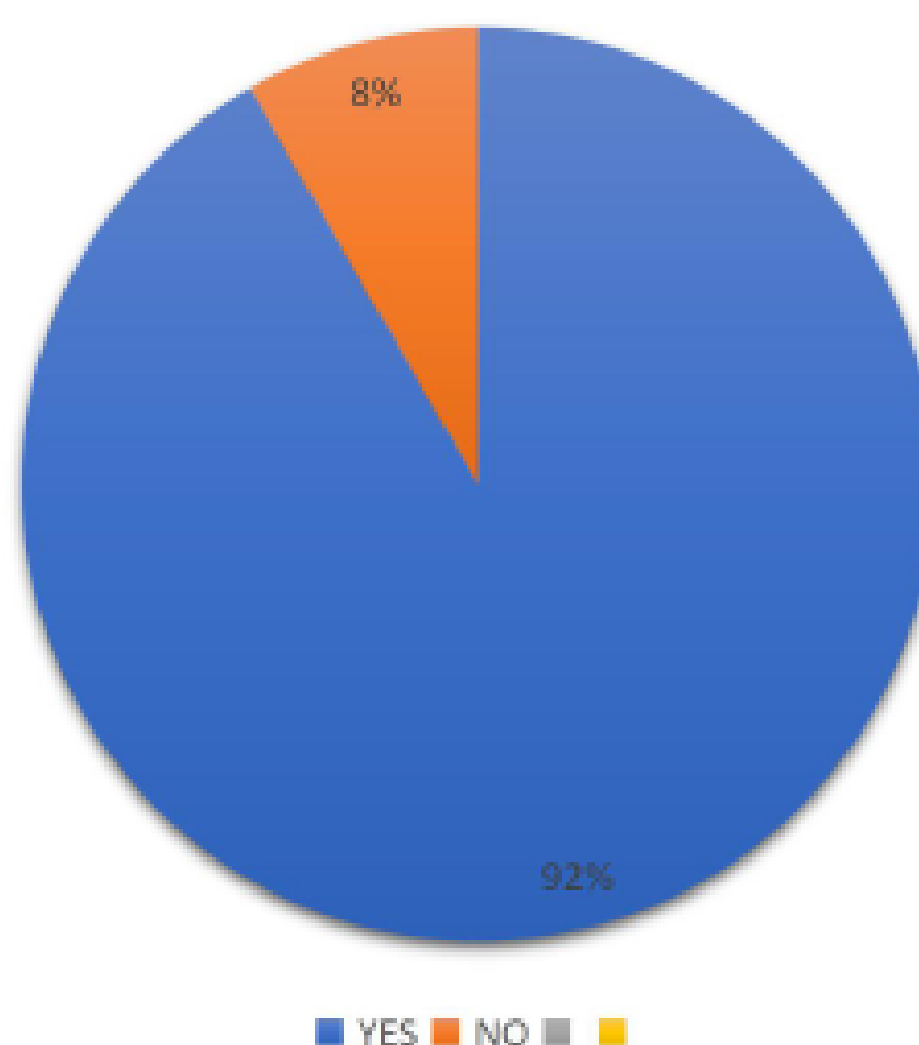
4.1.1 Age and Grade

The study participants were female students attending Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North. Their ages ranged from 13 to 19 years, with the majority falling between 16 and 17 years. Most participants were in form 3 and 4. All the participants came from families with more than 1 sibling.

4.2 Domestic work

4.2.1 Responsible for domestic work in the household

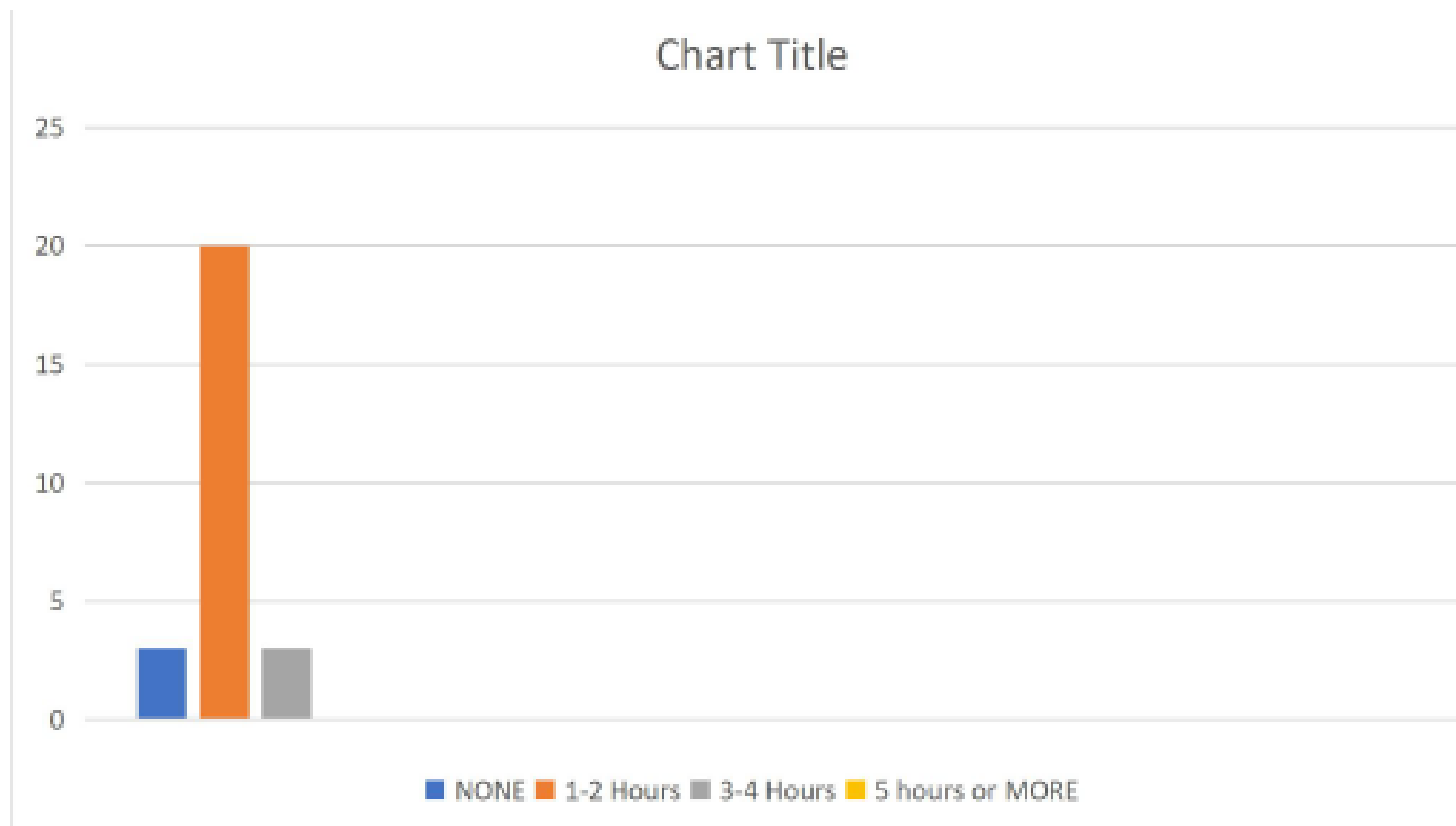
Responsible for Domestic work



Among the 26 participants, 23 participants answered YES to the question representing 92% and only 3 participants answered NO representing the 8%.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.2.2 Hours per day spent on domestic work.



Out of the 26 participants, 3 participants spend 0 hours on domestic work representing 11.5%, 20 spend 1-2 hours representing 77%, while the remaining 3 spend 3-4 hours on domestic work representing 11.5%.

4.2.3 Does domestic work affect participant's school work

On this question, 16 participants admitted that domestic work affects their school work, with factors like late class attendance, domestic work occupying their study hours representing 62% of the participants while 10 participants said the domestic work does not affect their school work representing 38% of the study population.

4.3 Patriarchy system and unpaid care work

4.3.1. On the existence of traditional gender roles that assign certain household and caregiving responsibilities to women and girls

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	6	3	4	12

Only one participant strongly disagrees on the existence of traditional gender roles that assign certain household and caregiving responsibilities to women and girls representing 3.8% while 12 out of 26 participants strongly agree representing 46% and 3 out of 26 participants were neutral representing 11.5%.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.3.2 On ever felt pressured or obliged to take on domestic work because of the participant's gender

YES	NO
12	15

Out of 26 participants 12 answered YES representing 46% while 15 answered NO representing 54%

4.3.3. How does the patriarchal system in your community influence your unpaid care work responsibilities?

On this question, out of 26 participants, 22 participants believe that traditional gender roles, cultural beliefs are primarily responsible for unpaid care work, such as childcare, eldercare, and household chores. Men are typically expected to be the primary breadwinners. This division of labor can lead to an unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

4.4 Academic Experience

4.4.1 Perceived academic performance

GOOD	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	POOR
4	21	0	1

On how do participants perceive their academic performance, the majority 21 out of 26 indicated average representing 81% while 4 out of 26 indicated good representing 15% and only one indicated poor representing 4%.

4.4.2. are you able to complete homework and study for exams regularly

Never	Rarely	Often	Always
0	5	4	17

On the question above, 17 participants are always able to complete homework and study for exams regularly representing 65% while 5 out of 26 rarely complete homework and study for exams representing 19%

4.4.3 How often do you miss school due to domestic work responsibilities?

CHAPTER FOUR

Never	Rarely	Often	Always
14	10	1	2

On the above question, 14 participants out of 26 NEVER misses school due to domestic work responsibilities representing 54% while 10 RARELY misses school representing 38% and only 2 always misses school due to domestic work responsibilities representing 8%.

4.5 Coping Mechanism

4.5.1 on the question are there any strategies participants use to balance academic responsibilities, domestic work and the expectation of the patriarchal system, many participants suggested they just manage their time using time tables as well as getting help from other siblings since many of them come from families with more than one siblings.

4.5.2 on the question whether do participants receive any support from family or community in managing academic and domestic responsibilities, particularly in challenging patriarchal norms many of these participants says yes as they share these domestic responsibilities with their mothers and some with their sisters.

4.6. Further Interviews

The data was not only collected through survey questionnaire, but also short interviews with other stakeholders e.g. various school teachers as well as through observation.

Many Community day Secondary School teacher who were interviewed suggested that a significant number of their students especially girls, do not attend classes. This absenteeism was often due to the time required for household chores. According to these teachers, some girls expressed concerns about the need to drop out of school entirely due to their inability to balance these responsibilities with their education.

The interviews with teachers and other stakeholders further revealed that many girls experienced high levels of stress and anxiety, primarily stemming from the pressure to fulfill both their domestic and academic responsibilities. These emotional burdens often led to a decline in mental health and overall well-being hence impacting their academic performances. They also pointed out the influence of societal and cultural factors in perpetuating the issue.

CHAPTER FIVE

Gender norms and expectations play a significant role in assigning domestic responsibilities to female students, further exacerbating the negative impacts on their educational attainment, emotional well-being, and personal development.

5.0 Discussion of the findings

The research findings presented in Chapter Four shed light on the negative impacts of domiciliary work on female students attending Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North, Malawi. The study covered several aspects of their lives, including demographic characteristics, domestic work responsibilities, the influence of the patriarchal system, academic experiences, and coping mechanisms. Here, we will discuss the key findings and their implications.

- Demographic Characteristics

The study included female students aged 13 to 19, with the majority falling within the 16-17 age range. Most participants were in form 3 and 4 and came from families with multiple siblings. This demographic information sets the stage for understanding the challenges these girls face in balancing their domestic responsibilities with their education.

- Domestic Work

The data highlights that a significant majority of the participants, 92%, are responsible for domestic work in their households. Furthermore, most of these girls spend 1-2 hours daily on domestic work, which can be a considerable time commitment. Importantly, 62% of the participants admitted that domestic work affects their school work, with late class attendance and the occupation of study hours being the primary issues.

- Patriarchy System and Unpaid Care Work

The findings reveal a concerning acceptance of traditional gender roles assigning household and caregiving responsibilities to women and girls. While only one participant strongly disagreed, 46% strongly agreed, indicating a prevailing belief in these roles. A significant number (46%) of participants felt pressured or obliged to take on domestic work due to their gender. These findings underscore the importance of addressing deeply ingrained gender norms and expectations within the community.

- Academic Experience

The majority of participants perceived their academic performance as average (81%), with only 15% rating it as good. This might be linked to the fact that while 65% of participants are always able to complete homework and study for exams regularly, 19% rarely do. Additionally, 8% of participants regularly miss school due to domestic work responsibilities, further impacting their academic progress.

CHAPTER FIVE

- Coping Mechanisms

Participants employ various coping mechanisms to balance academic responsibilities, domestic work, and patriarchal expectations. These include time management using timetables and seeking help from siblings, as many come from families with multiple siblings. This reflects their determination to overcome the challenges they face.

- Further Interviews

The insights from interviews with teachers and guardians provide a more comprehensive view of the issue. Many girls are unable to attend school regularly due to household chores, which can potentially lead to dropouts. Moreover, the high levels of stress and anxiety they experience due to the pressure of fulfilling both domestic and academic responsibilities have a significant negative impact on their mental health and overall well-being.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to address the negative impacts of domiciliary work among female students in Mzimba North

- Community Awareness and Education

Launch community awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Engage both students and parents in discussions on the importance of education for girls and the need to share domestic responsibilities.

- Support Systems

Implement support systems within schools, such as after-school programs or flexible schedules, to accommodate students' domestic responsibilities while ensuring they do not miss out on their education.

- Mental Health Services

Provide mental health support and counseling to help students cope with the emotional stress they experience. This can help in mitigating the long-term impact on their well-being.

Collaboration

Collaborate with local women's organizations, NGOs, and governmental bodies to implement policies and initiatives that empower girls to balance their academic and domestic responsibilities.

- Peer and Sibling Support

Encourage peer and sibling support networks where older students or siblings can assist younger ones with domestic tasks and homework.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.2 Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that domiciliary work has significant negative impacts on the educational attainment, emotional well-being, and personal development of female students in Mzimba North, Malawi. These impacts are largely rooted in traditional gender roles and expectations, which assign domestic responsibilities such as cooking, fetching water and firewood, cleaning, washing and looking after young ones to girls and women. It was also concluded that there was a relationship between school girls involvement in the domestic roles and academic performance. The more the school girls were involved in the domestic roles, the more they were late for schools, the more they were not able to complete assignments and therefore the more their education was affected. Also a significant number of girls felt pressured or obliged to take on domestic work due to their gender which shows the power of patriarchy system.

The participants mentioned several coping mechanisms they employ to balance academic responsibilities, domestic work, and patriarchal expectations which include time management using timetables and seeking help from siblings, as many come from families with multiple siblings which reflects their determination to overcome the challenges they face.

Also teachers provided their view that the high levels of stress and anxiety they experience due to the pressure of fulfilling both domestic and academic responsibilities have a significant negative impact on their mental health and overall well-being.

The study recommended that parents should be sensitized through community awareness to consider redistribution of domestic work to both girls and boys and prioritize their education, introduce support systems, mental health services, and collaborative efforts to empower female students to achieve their educational potential and improve their overall well-being.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

An assessment into the negative impacts of domiciliary work amongst community day secondary school girls in Mzimba

RESEARCHER NAME: Towera Ngwira

SCHOOL NAME: _____

Dear Student,

We invite you to participate in our research project titled “An assessment into the negative impacts of domiciliary work amongst community day secondary school girls in Mzimba north”. This study aims to understand how homework and domiciliary work impact students' well-being and academic performance. If you choose to participate, you will complete a short questionnaire during a designated class period, which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without academic consequences, however, your involvement will contribute to improving educational practices. Your privacy is a priority, and all information provided will be kept confidential. For any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher, Miss Towera Ngwira, at towengwira@gmail.com or 0992006144.

By signing below, you indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this research project.

Class/Grade: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

[Please return this signed consent form to the researcher after finishing. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute valuable insights to our research.]

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a study investigating the negative impacts of Domiciliary work among community day secondary school girls in Mzimba North. Additionally, it seeks to understand how the patriarchal system influences unpaid care work among women. Your honest responses are crucial in shedding light on these issues.

Please be assured that the information you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for this research. Your participation will be of great value to this research. I request you to participate in this study at a voluntary basis.

Section 1. Demographics

1.1 Age: _____

1.2 Grade/Class: _____

1.3 How many siblings do you have? _____

Section 2. Domiciliary Work

2.1 Are you responsible for Domiciliary work in your household?

Yes No

2.2. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on Domiciliary work (e.g. cooking, cleaning, caregiving, etc.)?

None 1-2 hours 3-4 hours 5 or more hours

2.3 How does this affect your school work?

.....
.....
.....

Section 3: Patriarchy System and Unpaid Care Work

3.1. In your community, do you think there are traditional gender roles that assign certain household and caregiving responsibilities to women and girls?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3.2 Have you ever felt pressured or obligated to take on Domiciliary work because of your gender?

Yes No

3.3. How does the patriarchal system in your community influence your unpaid care work responsibilities? _____

APPENDIX

Section 4: Academic Experience

4.1 How do you perceive your academic performance?

Good Average Below average Poor

4.2. Are you able to complete your homework and study for exams regularly?

Never Rarely Often Always

4.3 How often do you miss school due to Domiciliary work responsibilities?

Never Rarely Often Always

Section 5: Coping Mechanisms

5.1. Are there any strategies you use to balance your academic responsibilities, Domiciliary work, and the expectations of the patriarchal system?

5.2. Do you receive any support from your family or community in managing your academic and Domiciliary responsibilities, particularly in challenging patriarchal norms?

Section 6: Recommendations

6.1. What suggestions or recommendations do you have for challenging patriarchal norms and improving the situation of girls who face similar challenges with Domiciliary work and academics?

Section 7: Additional Comments

Please share any additional comments or insights you think are important for this study

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is invaluable in addressing the negative impacts of Domiciliary work and the influence of the patriarchal system on unpaid care work among women and girls.

THE GENDERED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CARE RESPONSIBILITIES AND EMPLOYMENT: EVIDENCE FROM MALAWI

By Gloria Orama Dzanjalimodzi

ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between care responsibilities in the home and the type of employment by gender. This study delves into the complex interplay between gender dynamics, education, and economic engagement in Malawi, utilizing data from the Fourth Integrated Household Survey 2016-2017 provided by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and hosted by the World Bank. Focused on individuals aged 15 and above who self-reported their survey responses, the research employs statistical analyses, including the Chi-squared test and Mann-Whitney U test, to examine the relationships among gender, education levels, time allocation for daily tasks, and preferred economic activities. The findings highlight significant gender-based variations in education attainment, time spent on water and fuel-related activities, and the type of economic activities individuals engage in. Moreover, the study underscores the intricate connections between household care responsibilities and economic participation.

The nuanced insights derived from this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the gendered dimensions of employment and education in Malawi, providing a foundation for targeted interventions and policies to foster greater equity and inclusivity in the labour market.

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

Background To The Study	25
Literature Review.....	28
Data And Methodology.....	35
Findings And Discussion	37
Conclusion	41
Bibliography	42

KEY WORDS

JEL Codes: J16, J22

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Various scholars and organisations have affirmed, and continue to express that gender equality, aside from being a fundamental human right, is essential in promoting equitable and sustainable development (Connelly & Kongar, 2017). Women's economic empowerment has been a key approach in attempting to realise the wealth gap between women and men, particularly through supporting entrepreneurship and implementing social policies that enhance women's access to decent working conditions. Malawi's ambitious long-term development policy, Vision 2063, aspires to turn Malawi into an inclusive, wealth and self-reliant nation. Unfortunately, in the context of gender equality, large gaps remain in multiple areas including economic participation, access to education, opportunities, capital and employment (MacIntyre, et al., 2013).

Over the past three decades, substantial efforts have been dedicated to advancing gender equality on both global and national fronts. A pivotal moment occurred in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, culminating in a consensus that propelled gender equality to be enshrined as the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by 2030 within the United Nations framework (Bittman, 1999). Numerous countries have since implemented policies aimed at fostering gender parity, and in 2022, the International Monetary Fund took a significant step by integrating gender considerations into its core activities.

While commendable progress has been achieved, especially in narrowing the gender gap in health and education, as evidenced by the closure of 95% and 96% of these gaps, respectively, according to the 2022 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, significant disparities persist. Notably, these disparities are most pronounced in the realms of economic participation, opportunities, and political empowerment (Danish Trade Union Development Agency & Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, 2023).

Within labour markets, regional variations underscore the complexity of women's participation, revealing persistent global trends where women are less likely to work than men and often bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities. Economic discrepancies persist, with women earning, on average, only 77% of what men earn, and facing limited opportunities for managerial positions or entrepreneurial ventures (Simtowe, 2010).

This paper delves into the nuanced landscape of gender disparities, aiming to critically examine the persisting challenges and explore potential avenues for comprehensive and equitable solutions.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Despite notable strides, the journey towards full gender equality remains a work in progress, warranting sustained attention and innovative strategies to address the multifaceted dimensions of this global concern.

In Malawi, the intricate interplay between gender roles, care responsibilities, and employment poses significant challenges that warrant closer examination. The burden of care, particularly in activities such as collecting water and firewood, is often disproportionately shouldered by women, impacting their time use patterns and labour constraints. As Malawi strives for economic development and gender equality, understanding the nuanced relationship between care responsibilities and employment becomes imperative.

While existing research has acknowledged the existence of gender disparities in care and employment, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies exploring the multifaceted dimensions of this issue in the specific context of Malawi. The current knowledge gap inhibits the formulation of targeted policies and interventions aimed at alleviating the burdens faced by individuals, especially women, in balancing care obligations with economic participation.

Main Objective of the Study

This study seeks to examine the gendered relationship between care responsibilities and employment in Malawi, focusing on the burden of care, time use, and participation in particular economic activities among individuals.

Specific Objectives

This study aimed to:

1. To understand the distribution of care responsibilities, particularly water and firewood collection, among different genders and assess how these responsibilities influence time allocation.
2. To analyse the demographic characteristics associated with variations in care responsibilities and employment participation, providing insights into potential socioeconomic factors.
3. To investigate the gendered patterns in contributions to agricultural economic activities.
4. To investigate the gendered patterns in participation in non-agricultural economic activities and how care responsibilities influence this engagement.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

5. To identify the primary economic activities among individuals, with a focus on women, and analyze how care responsibilities impact their participation in various forms of employment.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do care responsibilities, specifically hours spent collecting water and firewood, vary across gender and its impact on time use patterns?

2. What key demographic features influence the burden of care and employment patterns in Malawi?

3. How does participation in household agricultural activities differ by gender?

4. How does participation in non-farm economic activities differ by gender, and what is the relationship between care responsibilities and engagement in these activities?

5. What economic activities do individuals predominantly engage in, and how do care responsibilities influence their involvement in wage labour, casual labour, or non-farm business?

Assumptions

This study had the following assumptions:

1. Women have greater care responsibilities in the home, and this means they have less engagement in traditionally compensable economic activity.

2. Gender and education status significantly influence the burden of care and employment patterns in Malawi.

3. There is no significant gendered difference in participation in household agricultural activities.

4. There is an inverse relationship between non-farm economic activities and care responsibilities in favour of men.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the growing body of literature in Malawi on the gendered disparities in labour market participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The examination of employment in Malawi, propelled by the insights from the 2013 Malawi Labour Force Survey (MLFS), unveils a nuanced landscape of challenges and opportunities. With a robust labour force participation rate of 89.4 percent, the survey illuminates gender disparities favouring men, dominant occupational sectors like agriculture, and the prevalence of underemployment and informal work. Noteworthy is the disproportionate impact on women, as echoed in the recent Malawi Report on Employment Statistics by the Ministry of Labour in 2022, highlighting the need for gender-inclusive policies to address job creation and loss.

Extending beyond national borders, Stevano's 2021 study on Mozambican women provides a cross-cutting lens to understand the complexities of women's work in localised labour markets, emphasising the role of social reproduction dynamics. Given the sparse literature on the case of the Malawian labour market, their work was essential in drawing key insights to enrich this review. Additionally, insights from Onaran, Oyvat, and Fotopoulou's macroeconomic model hint at the interconnectedness of gender equality, income distribution, and social infrastructure spending. This literature review encapsulates a variety of findings, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of Malawi's employment landscape and the imperative for inclusive policies to foster sustainable and equitable economic growth.

The Labour Market and Employment Dynamics in Malawi

The findings of the 2013 Malawi Labour Force Survey (MLFS) provide a comprehensive insight into the employment landscape and labour force dynamics among individuals aged 15-64 years. The survey reveals a substantial labour force participation rate of 89.4 percent, with a notable gender disparity favouring males at 90.9 percent compared to females at 88.1 percent. The majority of the labour force, around 87 percent, resides in rural areas, with a significant portion (64 percent) having no formal education (NSO, 2013).

When examining employment rates, the survey indicates an overall rate of 79.6 percent, showcasing a gender gap as well (85.7 percent for males and 74.3 percent for females). Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers constitute the largest occupational group at 44.9 percent, followed by elementary occupations (22 percent) and service and sales workers (19.1 percent). Agriculture, forestry, and fishing emerge as the dominant industry, accounting for 64.1 percent of the workforce. In terms of unemployment rates, the broad definition places it at 20.4 percent, with females experiencing a higher rate than males (25.7 percent vs. 14.3 percent).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban areas report higher unemployment rates compared to rural areas (28.2 percent vs. 19.2 percent), and individuals with tertiary education face higher unemployment rates (30.6 percent) than those with lower levels of education (21.3 percent or less) (NSO, 2013).

Underemployment rates, measured in a time-related context, stand at 26.8 percent, with females surpassing males (27.6 percent vs. 26.1 percent). Rural areas exhibit higher underemployment rates than urban areas (27.4 percent vs. 23.4 percent). The youth unemployment rates, under the broad definition for the age group 15-24 years, reach 27.5 percent, with females experiencing a higher rate than males (30.6 percent vs. 23.8 percent). For the age group 15-34 years, the youth unemployment rate is 23 percent, again with females having a higher rate than males (28.3 percent vs. 16.9 percent). Informal employment rates are notably high at 88.7 percent, with females surpassing males (93.6 percent vs. 83.8 percent). Rural areas display a higher prevalence of informal employment (91.4 percent) compared to urban areas (69.2 percent). Examining income, the average monthly gross income for employed individuals is 41,643 Malawi Kwacha, with males earning more than females (50,300 vs. 30,500). Urban areas also report a higher average monthly gross income compared to rural areas (82,800 vs. 29,900) (NSO, 2013).

Finally, the survey highlights a low pay rate (earning less than two-thirds of the median earnings) of 61 percent, with females experiencing a higher rate than males (65.9 percent vs. 56.1 percent). Low pay rates are more prevalent in rural areas (64.4 percent) compared to urban areas (43.4 percent). These findings offer a nuanced understanding of the employment landscape in Malawi and emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address disparities and promote inclusive economic growth (NSO, 2013).

The proportion of precarious workers is higher among females than males, is higher in rural areas than urban areas and persons with more education are less likely to work as precarious workers. Overall, 89 percent of working persons are in informal employment setups. Women are more likely to be employed in informal employment than males (NSO, 2013).

Gender disparities exist in wage employment in non-agriculture sector. Women constitute 30 percent of total wage employment in non-agriculture in Malawi. The percentage share of women in wage employment in non-agriculture in rural areas is higher than in the urban areas. The 2013 MLFS also indicate that the female and male shares of employment in senior and middle management are very low at 0.32 percent for males and 0.07 percent for female.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proportions of females and males in senior and middle management positions are higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Representation of males and females in high status occupation is positively related to one's level of education (NSO, 2013).

According to the Malawi Report on Employment Statistics, the Ministry of Labour conducted an employment data collection exercise for the first six months of the 2022/23 fiscal year in Malawi. The main objective of the exercise was to determine the number of jobs created and lost during this period. The study found that 12,763 jobs were created in the past six months, mainly in the formal sector of the economy, which accounts for 11% of the share of employment. However, if the informal sector is accounted for, an estimated 112,000 jobs were created during this period. On the other hand, 761 jobs were lost during the same period, with more permanent jobs lost than temporary ones. The loss of jobs affected females more than males, and dismissal and retrenchment were the major factors that contributed to job loss. The report also notes that the sample size of the study was relatively small, with only 451 institutions submitting data, which is not a big sample size compared to the 2687 TEVET Levy Employers. The report recommends that more follow-ups and call-backs are required to ensure that more workplaces submit employment data regularly, and that a system of ensuring regular provision of employment data is instituted and supported with the review of employment laws to include a clause that enforces regular submission of employment data (Ministry of Labour, 2022).

The report provides several notable findings on gender in the labour market in Malawi. Firstly, the study found that 55% of the jobs created in the first six months of the 2022/23 fiscal year were occupied by males, while 45% were occupied by females. Secondly, the study found that the loss of jobs during this period affected females more than males, with 427 females losing their jobs compared to 334 males. Finally, the report highlights the need to improve the participation of women in the labour market, as women are often underrepresented in certain sectors such as manufacturing. Overall, the report suggests that gender disparities in the labour market remain a significant challenge in Malawi, and that more efforts are needed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace (Ministry of Labour, 2022).

Based on the 2013 Malawi Labour Force Survey, the predominant occupations for women in Malawi encompass skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery work, constituting the primary engagement for 50.9% of the female workforce. Additionally, a significant portion, accounting for 21.2%, is involved in elementary occupations, while the service and sales sector employs 19.2% of women in the workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

These findings illuminate the diverse array of occupations that women in Malawi predominantly find themselves engaged in, shaping the employment landscape within the country (NSO, 2013).

It's also important to note that a significant portion of women's work is informal, with an informal employment rate of 93.6%. This means that many women may be engaged in work that is not officially recognized or regulated, and they may not have access to the same protections and benefits as formal workers. The main industry for women is agriculture, forestry, and fishing, which employs 64.1% of the workforce.

According to a study by the World Bank (2021), women's employment in Malawi is influenced by several key factors. One crucial aspect is education, where women's access is significant; however, challenges, particularly in pursuing higher education, pose barriers to their school-to-work transition and overall workforce participation. Early marriage and childbirth are prevalent in Malawi, resulting in high dropout rates among girls in upper primary school. This pattern contributes to low levels of economic independence for women in the country. Access to resources plays a pivotal role, with women facing unequal utilization of land inputs, limited access to farm labor, inferior availability of improved agricultural inputs and technology, and reduced participation in cash crop/export crop value chains. This gender gap in agricultural productivity affects women's roles as farmers, entrepreneurs, and wage workers. Cultural perceptions also play a role in hindering women's employment, with certain fields such as engineering often perceived as challenging for women. Consequently, many girls opt for courses in the arts. The prevalence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence in Malawi further restricts women's economic opportunities. Addressing these multifaceted challenges through policy reforms and effective implementation of existing policies is crucial to narrowing the gender gap and enhancing economic opportunities for women in Malawi (World Bank, 2021).

In the realm of gender equality within the labour market, despite existing legal frameworks and policies aimed at protection and promotion, the pervasive influence of patriarchal elements casts a shadow, evident in a pronounced wage gender gap and a scarcity of businesses with significant female participation in ownership. The expansion of social protection and labour programs, while on the rise, has not translated into substantial poverty reduction. A mere 2.3% of older individuals receive pension benefits, health insurance coverage extends to only 11%, and the unemployed often find themselves without access to unemployment benefits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the current landscape, there is a notable absence of a functioning Tripartite National Informal Economic Forum or other national platforms specifically addressing the status of informal economy workers. Nevertheless, various policies are making strides in addressing the plight of these workers, exemplified by initiatives such as the National Labour and Employment Policy (NLEP), the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2017-2022, and the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme (MDWCP). The Tripartite Labour Advisory Committee's agendas reflect a commitment to addressing issues related to decent work for informal economy workers and operators. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2019, Malawi is ranked 121 out of 141 countries concerning active labour market policies. The ratio of salaried female workers to male workers is 75%, and the country is positioned at 102 in terms of cooperation in labour-employer relations.

Onaran, Oyvat, and Fotopoulou (2022) present a groundbreaking gendered macroeconomic model that incorporates the interplay of gender inequality, functional income distribution, and public social infrastructure spending on various economic indicators. Although their empirical investigation was focused on the UK from 1970 to 2016, it yields significant insights into the relationship between these factors. The study establishes that the UK's economic output is influenced by both gender equality and wages, suggesting an overall equality-led dynamic. Closing the gender pay gap and increasing the wage share emerge as catalysts for enhancing aggregate demand and short-term output (Onaran, Oyvat, & Fotopoulou, 2022).

Crucially, the research underscores the pivotal role of public social infrastructure spending. Findings reveal a substantial positive impact on both output and employment, with a further positive effect on productivity in the medium term. This positive productivity trend contributes to increased employment for both men and women, highlighting the broader societal benefits of robust social infrastructure investment (Onaran et al., 2022).

Delving into Mozambican women's multifaceted engagement in activities such as casual wage work, trade, food preparation, domestic work, and farming, Stevano (2021) underscores the nuanced nature of women's work. The author contends that social reproduction dynamics, encompassing gender norms, intra-household relations, care obligations, and ceremonial responsibilities, significantly shape women's work experiences. Stevano highlights the devaluation, invisibility, and appropriation of women's work by men, resulting in precarious and heterogeneous livelihoods. The author advocates for adopting a social reproduction lens to comprehend the intricate interplay between production and reproduction, emphasising spatial and temporal dimensions in understanding women's work (Stevano, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing on empirical evidence from localised labour markets in northern Mozambique, Stevano proposes an integrated conceptual framework. This framework, influenced by various bodies of literature, underscores the significance of the International Political Economy (IPE) of everyday life in capturing the complexities of production, reproduction, and social differentiation among working women. Additionally, the study explores how feminist analyses of localised labour markets contribute to broader discussions on global supply chains, export-oriented industries, and global capitalism. Rooted in the understanding of labour markets as bearers of gender, class, age, and race inequality, the framework utilises a social reproduction lens to identify patterns of differentiation and fragmentation both locally and globally (Stevano, 2021).

Stevano's findings present two key arguments. Firstly, the study scrutinises women's work in localised labour markets, detached from global production networks, revealing its profound influence shaped by transformations in the global economy. The commodification of life, initiated during the colonial era, is identified as the basis for a long-term process culminating in the fragmentation of labour and the erosion of means of social reproduction during the neoliberal era.

The study underscores the gendered dimensions of livelihood diversification, shedding light on the appropriation of women's productive and reproductive labour within the context of global racial capitalism. Secondly, Stevano explores the differentiation of working women, asserting that their working lives are shaped by gender relations and social practices foundational to economic and social reproduction. The imperatives of social reproduction, mutually constitutive and in tension with productive activities, determine gendered constraints, such as mobility, migration, work interruptions, and care obligations. Working lives are characterised by a precarious and exploitative dynamism, necessitating engagement in multiple and precarious occupations framed by specific spatial and temporal dimensions. Spatial dispersion of households and families and temporal tensions further complicate family-centred social reproduction, differentiating working lives (Stevano, 2021).

Temporal dynamics are identified as crucial in shaping social reproduction through both historical processes and everyday life. Stevano concludes by proposing that the insights gleaned from the study of northern Mozambique can be extended to understand the working lives of women and men in peripheral areas of global capitalism. In these regions, gendered and racialised individuals' piece together livelihoods at the margins of global production, constituting the majority of the working poor. A deeper understanding of their everyday lives is essential for investigating the present and future of neoliberal capitalism (Stevano, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conclusion

This comprehensive literature review serves as a crucial foundation for crafting a theoretical framework that scrutinizes Malawian women's participation in the labour market through the lens of social reproduction dynamics, inspired by the insights from Mozambique. The 2013 Malawi Labour Force Survey paints a vivid picture of the multifaceted employment landscape, underlining the prevalence of gender disparities, dominant occupational sectors, and the challenges faced by women in formal and informal work. By juxtaposing this with Stevano's study on Mozambican women, the review highlights the imperative of incorporating social reproduction dynamics in understanding how cultural norms, intra-household relations, and care obligations shape women's work experiences.

The intersectionality of findings from diverse sources, including employment statistics, World Bank insights, and macroeconomic models, underscores the complex web influencing women's economic roles in Malawi. Leveraging these insights, the theoretical framework will delve into the intricate relationships between gender norms, social practices, and economic activities, aiming to unravel how these factors coalesce to shape the working lives of Malawian women. By adopting a social reproduction lens, the study aspires to shed light on the nuanced interplay between production and reproduction, spatial and temporal dimensions, providing a holistic understanding that transcends conventional economic analyses. Ultimately, this synthesized knowledge will guide empirical investigations, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the dynamics that underpin Malawian women's engagement in the labour market in the context of gender norms.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Sent and van Staveren (2019), approached their examination of behavioural gender differences from a feminist economics perspective. Their analysis encompassed four key behavioural dimensions: risk appetite, overconfidence, altruism, and trust. Within these realms, the authors noted mixed results regarding gender differences, with only a limited subset of the eighty-one studies demonstrating substantive and statistically significant distinctions.

Sent and van Staveren (2019) observed a pervasive lack of gender awareness in the interpretation of findings across many studies. These studies often failed to explore crucial gendered causal mechanisms, such as gender roles, identities, stereotypes, beliefs, social interactions, and social-biological influences. The authors cautioned against biased interpretations, even in the presence of statistically significant results, as they may inadvertently perpetuate unjustified essentialist explanations for gender disparities in economic behaviour. In response, the authors advocated for a more gender-aware approach in experimental economics research. They emphasised the necessity of incorporating gendered contexts, including socialisation, gender norms, beliefs, priming effects, and interactions shaped by stereotypes.

Given this information, this study's research design was a primarily quantitative approach but used qualitative data to enrich insights of numerical data (della Porta, 2017). The University of Southern California (2020) states that a research design refers to the general approach that a researcher uses to organise their study logically in order to address research problems. This study is a cross-sectional study that adopted a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) mixed methods approaches are appropriate where qualitative findings can expand upon quantitative results and vice versa.

The study used a primarily quantitative design to describe and analyse numerical data to show whether there is a gendered relationship between care responsibilities (such as collecting firewood, water and childcare).

Data

The primary data source for this study was the Fourth Integrated Household Survey 2016-2017, obtained from the National Statistical Office (NSO) and hosted by the World Bank Development Data Group. This dataset, accessible through the World Bank's microdata bank, played a pivotal role in examining various dimensions related to education, time use, labour, and demographic characteristics of the respondents. Specifically, the focus was on individuals aged 15 and above who responded to the survey themselves, aligning with the

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

International Labour Organization's (ILO) definition that considers 15 years as the minimum age for those involved in economic activities. The emphasis on self-responses aimed to ensure agency in the data and maintain consistency with international labour standards. The dataset's comprehensive coverage and relevance to key variables made it a valuable resource for exploring the intricate relationships between gender, education, and economic engagement in the context of Malawi. The study could have used the most recent HIS but because of the time this survey was taken, it was thought that the implications and impact of Covid-19 would have been too.

Methodology

In examining the association between gender and education levels, the Chi-squared test, tailored for categorical variables, was employed. This method enables a thorough investigation into potential differences in education attainment between males and females, ensuring a robust analysis of gender-specific factors influencing educational patterns (Gaur, A. S., & Gaur, S. S. 2009).

For scrutinizing differences in time allocation for water and fuel activities between genders, the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric method suitable for non-normally distributed data, was chosen. This test strengthens the analysis by providing a methodologically sound approach to explore genuine differences in time allocation, contributing valuable insights into gender specific patterns in daily tasks and resource distribution (Gaur, A. S., & Gaur, S. S. 2009).

To investigate gender-related patterns in economic activities, the chi-squared test of independence was selected. This methodological choice assesses the association between gender and the type of economic activity, offering a comprehensive examination of statistically significant differences in economic activities engaged in by men and women. The chi-squared test adds methodological rigor, providing a solid foundation for discussions on gender-specific factors influencing economic disparities.

In exploring the correlation between household care activities and reported economic activity, the chi-squared test, a powerful tool for examining relationships between categorical variables, was instrumental. This methodological choice enhances the paper's exploration of intricate dynamics between gender roles, care responsibilities, and economic pursuits. The statistical strength of the chi-squared test, with its highly significant results, justifies its use in validating the existence of a statistically significant relationship, laying a robust foundation for further nuanced analysis and policy considerations (Gaur, A. S., & Gaur, S. S. 2009).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

		Gender				TOTALS	
		Male		Female			
		Count	Table N %	Count	Table N %	Total Count	Total %
Age Ranges	15-24	1,421	8.43%	2,412	14.31%	3,833	23%
	25-55	3,955	23.46%	6,227	36.94%	10,182	60%
	Above 55	1,189	7.05%	1,651	9.8%	2,840	17%
TOTALS		6,565	38.95%	10,290	61.05%	16,855	100%

Table 1: Indicates the Age Range and Gender of Respondents Analyses (Source: Author's calculations based on IHS4 (2016-17))

Share of key variables across gender (%)

Variable	Men	Women
Care Responsibilities		
Collecting Water	15	66.04
Collecting Firewood	5.65	26.21
Age (Years)		
15-24	21.65	23.44
25-55	60.24	60.52
>55	18.11	16.05
Education Level		
None	60.73	70.25
PSLC	13.91	12.28
JCE	12.34	9.85
MSCE	8.86	5.38
Non-University Diploma	2.55	1.55
University Diploma, Degree	1.13	0.58
Post-graduate degree	0.47	0.11

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Marital Status

Monogamous marriage	70.54	61.65
Polygamous marriage	4.89	2.48
Separated	2.5	7.19
Divorced	2.02	6.49
Widow(er)	2.42	13.79
Single	17.62	8.43

Participation rates in... Household

farming	80.73	79.74
Household livestock	35.66	29.37
Household fishing	3.87	1.98

Participation rates in non-farm activities

Wage labour	15.14	5.45
Casual labour	50.72	40.97
Non-farm business	15.28	13.41

Type of Economic Activity Most Engaged in

Wage Employment Excluding Casual Labour	12.87	5.43
Non-agricultural household business	10.57	11.11
Unpaid household labour	60.08	69.98
Unpaid apprenticeship	0.29	0.15
Ganyu (Casual labour)	16.19	13.32

Average time use across gender

Type of Activity	Men	Women
Hours spent in various farm activities		
Hours spent farming in the last week	6.11	4.95
Hours spent in animal husbandry	1.31	0.84
Hours spent in fishing	0.38	0.98
Hours spent in non-farm activities		
Hours spent in a business for personal gain	2.58	1.79
Hours spent in a household business	0.51	0.46
Hours spent in casual labour (ganyu)	3.83	1.95
Hours spent in wage labour	4.55	1.51

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Education

The present study aimed to investigate the association between gender and education attainment within the dataset. The primary hypotheses under examination were whether there exists a significant relationship between gender and the distribution of education levels. The null hypothesis posited no association, while the alternative hypothesis suggested a significant difference in education attainment between males and females. The application of the Chi-squared test revealed compelling evidence against the null hypothesis. The Chi-squared test statistic of 182.65, coupled with an exceptionally low p-value (< 0.001), indicates a robust and statistically significant association between gender and education levels. The findings underscore a noteworthy and statistically confirmed difference in education attainment between males and females in the studied population. The observed disparities in education levels highlight the importance of recognising gender-specific factors when assessing educational patterns.

Collecting Water and Fuel

We employed the Mann-Whitney U test to scrutinize differences in time allocation for water and fuel activities between men and women. The Mann-Whitney U test yielded a substantial difference between men and women regarding time spent on water-collecting activities. The difference was highly significant (p-value < 0.001), providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. On average, women spend 0.5 more hours collecting water compared to men. The test statistic was 15965447.0.

The test identified a significant difference in time allocation for firewood and fuel collecting activities between men and women. The difference is highly significant (p-value < 0.001), indicating it's not due to chance. Although statistically significant, the practical impact (median difference) is minimal, approximately 0.0 hours. The test statistic was 26803067.5. The specific test statistics bolster the credibility of our findings, confirming real differences in time allocation for water and fuel activities between genders. This insight holds significance for understanding gender-specific patterns in daily tasks and informs efforts to ensure fairness and equity in resource distribution or workload.

The Mann-Whitney U test was chosen due to its suitability for comparing two independent groups when data distribution is not normal. Given the likely non-normal distribution of hours spent on these activities, the Mann-Whitney U test provided a robust method to assess genuine differences between men and women. The highly significant p-values, coupled with the specific test statistics, underscore the reliability and credibility of our results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Economic Activity

The chi-squared test is used in this context because we are examining the association or independence between two categorical variables: gender (categorical) and the type of economic activity individuals spend most of their time on (also categorical). The specific test used is the chi-squared test of independence. The chi-squared test results indicate a highly significant association between gender and the type of economic activity individuals spend most of their time on. The chi-squared test Statistic was 330.89 and the p-value: $2.34e-70$ ($p < 0.001$)

The extremely low p-value suggests strong evidence against the null hypothesis of independence between gender and preferred economic activity. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. The conclusion was that there is a statistically significant difference between the type of economic activity that men and women spend most of their time in. These findings highlights gender-related patterns in economic activities and underscores the importance of considering gender-specific factors in understanding and addressing these disparities. These results contribute valuable insights into the gendered aspects of economic engagement and can inform policies or interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in economic activities.

Correlation between care work and economic activity

The chi-squared test was conducted to examine the relationship between the time allocated to household care activities, specifically hours collecting water and hours collecting fuel, and the reported type of economic activity. The analysis yielded a chi-squared test statistic of 1052.61 and an associated p-value of $2.16e-65$. The substantial chi-squared test statistic signifies a marked difference between the observed and expected frequencies in the contingency table. The exceedingly small p-value, essentially zero, provides compelling evidence against the null hypothesis. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there exists a statistically significant relationship between the time spent on household care activities and the type of reported economic activity.

In practical terms, these findings imply that the distribution of economic activities is not independent of the time devoted to household care tasks, such as water and fuel-related activities. The association observed suggests that individuals' engagement in specific economic activities is notably influenced by the time invested in domestic responsibilities. These results contribute valuable insights into the interplay between household care responsibilities and economic participation, highlighting the intricate dynamics that merit further exploration in the context of gender roles and economic pursuits.

CONCLUSION

This study meticulously examined various facets of gendered relationships within the context of care responsibilities and employment in Malawi. The findings unveiled robust associations between gender and education attainment, time allocation for water and fuel activities, preferred economic activities, and the correlation between care work and economic engagement.

The pronounced gender disparities in education attainment underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these imbalances, emphasizing the pivotal role of recognizing genderspecific factors in educational patterns. Moreover, the substantial differences in time spent on water and fuel activities illuminate the gendered division of labour, calling attention to the disproportionate burden borne by women. This insight is vital for promoting fairness and equity in resource distribution and workload allocation, crucial for fostering gender-sensitive policies.

The study's exploration of economic activity preferences revealed statistically significant differences between men and women, emphasizing the importance of considering genderspecific factors in understanding and addressing economic disparities. These insights can inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in economic activities in Malawi, recognising and rectifying gender-related patterns in employment.

Perhaps most crucially, the study unearthed a compelling relationship between household care activities and the type of reported economic activity. The intertwining of care responsibilities and economic engagement signals a nuanced interplay between domestic duties and employment choices. These findings carry profound implications for policies and initiatives seeking to enhance gender equality in the workplace, emphasizing the intricate dynamics that shape gender roles and economic pursuits in the Malawian context.

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted intersections of gender, care responsibilities, and employment in Malawi. The implications of these findings extend beyond academic realms, advocating for targeted interventions that acknowledge and address the intricate dynamics of gendered relationships in the pursuit of fostering a more equitable and inclusive society in Malawi.

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

By Vanessa Wallace

ABSTRACT

This research topic is about how to advance a feminist perspective on macroeconomics, which is the study of the economy as a whole. Feminist macroeconomics challenges the assumptions and methods of mainstream economics, which often ignore or undervalue the contributions of women and other marginalized groups to the economy. One of the main areas of focus for feminist macroeconomics is the care economy, which includes the activities and services that people perform to care for themselves and others, such as childcare, eldercare, health care, education, and domestic work. The care economy is growing as the demand for care services increases, but it is often characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of social protection. Feminist macroeconomists argue that investing in the care economy can create more jobs, reduce gender inequalities, improve well-being, and support sustainable development. Another area of focus for feminist macroeconomics is decent work, which is the concept of work that respects the rights, dignity, and security of workers, and provides them with fair income, social protection, and opportunities for participation and voice. Decent work is essential for achieving gender equality, social justice, and human development. Feminist macroeconomists advocate for policies and measures that promote decent work for all, especially for women and other disadvantaged groups who face discrimination, exploitation, and violence in the labor market. Promoting feminist macroeconomics means recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work as key drivers of economic and social progress. It also means challenging the dominant paradigms and practices of economics that exclude or marginalize the voices and experiences of women and other oppressed groups. By doing so, feminist macroeconomics aims to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economy for all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND	47
1.2 MAIN OBJECTIVES	48
1.2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	49

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 STATUS OF FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS IN MALAWI	50
2.2 THE SITUATION OF CARE ECONOMY AND DECENT WORK IN MALAWI	51
2.3 GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN MALAWI.....	52
2.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	52

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY DESIGN	54
3.1.1 STUDY AREA.....	54
3.1.2 SAMPLING	54
3.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND ANALYSIS TOOLS	54
3.2.1 DATA COLLECTION	54
3.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS	54

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION	56
4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS.....	56
4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES	56
4.4 IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING AND INVESTING IN THE CARE ECONOMY	57
4.5 BENEFITS OF PROMOTING DECENT WORK AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN	57
4.6 LINKING FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS TO CARE ECONOMY AND DECENT WORK	58.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	60
5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	60
5.3 CONCLUSION	60
5.4 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	61

REFERENCES	62
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APPENDICES	63
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QUESTIONNAIRE	
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MDGS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TLAC	Tripartite Labor Advisory Council
USD	United States Dollar

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Coming from a historical background of a one party era where social dialogue was virtually nonexistent, Malawi has made tremendous progresses towards creating an enabling policy environment and the necessary institutional mechanisms and structures for social dialogue to thrive, such as the Tripartite Labor Advisory Council (TLAC) whose main role is to advise the Minister responsible for Labor on all issues relating to labor and employment, including the promotion of collective bargaining, the labor market and human resources development as well as with respect to matters concerning the activities of the International Labor Organization.

A situation analysis of decent work in Malawi must be placed in the context of the prevailing economic setting. Malawi has a fragile economy, overly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and a narrow range of products. The agricultural sector is the pillar of the economy, providing livelihood to 80 per cent of the population, generating over 90 per cent of export earnings and 35 to 45 per cent of GDP. Maize is the staple crop and the most important crop in terms of food security and land area cultivated. However, tobacco is by far Malawi's largest export, accounting for 60 per cent of merchandise export earnings.

Since 1981, Malawi has been implementing a series of structural and sectorial adjustment programs and the focus of economic policy has evolved over time: Earlier emphasis placed on development which was based on estate agriculture has given way to policy changes aimed at market-determined macroeconomic indicators for economic management, and more recently, with a focus to alleviate poverty. Strategies have included the liberalization of domestic markets, the privatization of some parastatals that previously dominated the economy, privatization or commercialization of state-owned enterprises, and improvements for smallholder farmers, including the liberalization of agricultural production and marketing arrangements.

Fadekemi Abiru (2018) offers a comprehensive summary reflection on some of these: A move towards the commoditization and commercialization of agriculture pushed women further down the rural hierarchy, whilst the export drive led to increased work burdens on women without any compensation for their unpaid care. What welfare support that did exist either through traditional systems or unexperienced state provision was also reduced. Cuts to state education and its gradual commercialization worsened the gender bias within state provisions as patriarchal norms revived to further marginalize girl's access to education.

INTRODUCTION

With feminist activists increasingly learning and undertaking positions on economic issues, the call to place economic justice at the heart of our economies has never needed greater focus (Kinoti, 2019).

On the domestic front, the rising costs of goods and shrinking safety nets saw varying impacts on women from different backgrounds. More urban women with moderate incomes became increasingly dependent on rural women domestic workers to pick-up their unpaid care burdens. Progressive currency devaluations also impacted health and education sectors the most. Given that these sectors were the largest employers of women, resultant cuts in financing led to a huge reduction in women's formal opportunities for wage earning, ultimately increasing the marginalization of their work.

An atomization of women's economic struggles has followed, with an insidious onus on women to "entrepreneur themselves out of poverty" promoted alongside an undermining of more radical women's collective action goals within economic development (Kuo, 2015; Kelleher 2017).

Women need decent, dignified work, and economically just recognition and returns for their work. This includes fair pay, protection from workplace violence, income security and other wider social safety nets, such as paid maternity leave. Women's right to decent work is also about the right to rest (Horn, 2017). But the relatively small yet well-resourced formal sector is viewed in isolation from a large, growing, poverty-stricken informal economy (Madzwamuse & Kouakou, 2018).

Without significant strategic investment in the informal sector, women will remain perpetually on the sideline. Transitioning to the formal economy as per the ILO's recommendation provides a policy framework for African governments (Chakanya, 2018).

1.2 MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To critically analyse the care economy within the context of Malawi and its contribution to overall economic growth in the country.
- To evaluate the existing decent work policies in Malawi and assess their effectiveness in promoting gender equality and equitable economic opportunities.
- To identify key challenges and barriers that hinders the recognition and investment in the care economy and decent work in Malawi.
- To provide policy recommendations that promote feminist macroeconomics, focusing on recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

INTRODUCTION

1.2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To critically analyse the share of care work in total employment, the value added of care sectors to GDP, the productivity and efficiency of care services, and the linkages and spillovers of care sectors to other sectors of the economy.
- To evaluate the coverage and adequacy of minimum wage, social security, labour rights, and occupational safety and health, the incidence and distribution of informal, dangerous, and vulnerable employment, the gender gaps and disparities in wages, benefits, and working conditions, and the impact of decent work policies on poverty, inequality, and human development.
- To identify the social norms and attitudes towards care work and gender roles, the availability and accessibility of data and information on care work and decent work, the institutional and organizational capacity and coordination of relevant stakeholders, and the political and economic constraints and opportunities for policy change.
- To provide the alignment and coherence of policy objectives and instruments, the feasibility and affordability of policy options, the potential and expected outcomes and impacts of policy interventions, and the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and indicators for policy implementation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 STATUS OF FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS IN MALAWI

Feminist economists have been questioning the androcentric dualism inherent in mainstream neoclassical theory. They argue that neoclassical theory, premised on the idea of homo oeconomicus (based on the idea of a rational white male citizen worker) and the principle of the free market, is fundamentally patriarchal and fails to recognize the complexity of real economics. At a conceptual level, feminist economists have called for a rethink of economic theory and a full integration of care and care work into the economic analysis (see for example, World Development, 1995, 23(11) Special Issue on integrating gender in economics).

They argue that an integration of care in economic analysis is important because: 1) real world economy relies on trust and reciprocity to ensure the smooth running of the market; and 2) there cannot be productive labor without reproductive labor, indeed, the reproductive (care) labor underpins productive labor (Folbre 2001; Elson 2017; Schmitt et al 2018). At a more empirical level, feminist economists also have been unravelling the intra household dynamics and division of labor that determine the distribution of unpaid care work. They challenge the mainstream, unitary household models developed by economists such as Gary Becker, Reuben Gronau and Jacob Mincer, arguing that the notion of “comparative advantage” and specialization as applied to the analysis of the gender division of labor within the family (Becker 1991) not only rationalizes women’s (unpaid) housework but also serves to justify and reinforce gender wage gap. And the idea that relative productivities were said to make it rational for women to specialize in housework while men specialize in wage work, since women’s earnings were less than men’s on the job market, not only assumes rational decision making within a harmonious household and but also that women’s unpaid housework would somehow promote collective household wellbeing in the form of a larger household output.

Collaborations between feminist economists and sociologists show adverse labor market outcomes for women with care responsibilities. First, there is a considerable amount of research showing that the unequal distribution of care responsibilities between men and women is a key contributing factor to gender wage gap and to various labor market disadvantages faced by women, including poorer working conditions and reduced employment and occupational advancement opportunities (Budig and England 2001; Budig, Misra and Boeckmann 2016; Kuhhirt and Ludwig 2012; Abendroth, Huffman and Treas 2014; Gangl and Ziefle. 2009).

Younger women often incur significant care penalty due to child birth, child rearing and care, while older women often face an additional care penalty related to elder care.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The cumulative effects of the care penalties for women include less hours worked, lower wages, less promotional opportunities, precarious employment status, and long-term economic and social insecurity (Budig and England 2001; Budig, Misra and Boeckmann 2016). Second, in addition to unequal labor market outcomes, women's care responsibilities also come with time and emotional costs that can affect not only women's economic well-being but also emotional and health well-being.

Analyses of Time Use Surveys show that universally women are substantially more time-pressed than men because the increase in the total amount of time women spend in paid work is not balanced out by the reduction in the amount of time, they spend in the unpaid care work at home. Indeed, globally, despite the noticeable increase in women's paid work time, domestic time distribution for unpaid care work between men and women remains largely unchanged, as women continue to take on the lion's share of unpaid care work—a phenomenon which Hochschild (1989) aptly refers to as “the second shift”. This has adverse effect on women's mental and physical health (Craig, Mullan and Blaxland 2010; Roeter and Gracia 2016).

2.2 THE SITUATION OF CARE ECONOMY AND DECENT WORK IN MALAWI

Care work sustains people on a day-to-day basis, from one generation to the next, and contributes to production and reproduction of a labor force that is productive, creative and capable of learning. Despite this invaluable contribution, unpaid care continues to be largely treated by mainstream economics as an externality, being unaccounted for in policies and national accounts. The associated costs in the form of forgone wages and opportunities for women and girls amplify gender inequality; two key concepts of the Care Economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and brought further to the fore these costs. With schools and day-care centers shut down, families witnessed a massive shift of childcare responsibilities into their homes. While both women and men increased their unpaid workloads, women continued to shoulder the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work, with negative ripple effects on their working hours and earnings, mental health and wellbeing. Many mothers have left the workforce altogether to care for children amid prolonged school and day-care center closures (Béland and Marier, 2020).

Though the pandemic raised social recognition of paid care workers – particularly those in the health sector –the high numbers of nursing home deaths, in advanced economies for example, have confirmed what many had called a looming care crisis. The large proportion of deaths in public elderly care facilities were attributed to longstanding infrastructure deficits, poor working

LITERATURE REVIEW

conditions and high turnover rates among staff, as well as dependence on private-for-profit providers (Béland and Marier, 2020). Overall, public care services remain underdeveloped and chronically underfunded in Malawi, with negative implications for unpaid caregivers, paid care workers, children and care-dependent adults. Women's growing participation in the paid labor force has reduced the supply of unpaid family care, while poor working conditions and wages have exacerbated labor shortages in the paid care sector (UN Women, 2019).

2.3 GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN MALAWI

With regard to Rights at Work, it is recognized that Malawi has made tremendous progress in creating an enabling policy and legal framework for the enjoyment of rights at work. However, full enjoyment of these rights in practice is constrained by historical gender discrimination based on deep-rooted cultural attitudes and beliefs, the lack of sufficient capacity by the duty bearers, particularly Ministry of Labor, to ensure compliance with the law, inadequate capacity of the dispute settlement and adjudication system, the rapid change in the employment relationship practices in Malawi and globally, and the inability of the law to keep pace with these changes, as well as the challenges associated with the problem of women empowerment, a problem which is further aggravated by gender inequality and discrimination.

While the Government of Malawi has put in place a solid foundation in terms of a comprehensive policy framework for wealth creation and employment generation in the form of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), gainful and decent employment remains elusive to the majority of the Malawian labor force. Within a background of a small and shrinking formal economy and the absence of a national social security system, the majority eke out a living through the most precarious jobs in the informal economy, characterized by low incomes and very high levels of underemployment. The lack of a comprehensive national employment and labor market policy and deficiencies in the education and training system to prepare labor market entrants, are some of the identified strategic deficits. The vulnerable groups, including women and the youth, tend to be more affected by the consequences of the deficits. This research aims at promoting feminist macroeconomics: the care economy and decent work.

2.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malawi gained its independence after 75 years of colonization by the British in 1964. Despite being rich in agricultural lands, natural resources and a vibrant youth population, 70% of Malawi or 13 million people live on less than USD \$2.15 a day (World Bank, 2023). Patriarchal norms are entrenched, meaning women experience this poverty more acutely. Between 2010/11 and 2016/17,

LITERATURE REVIEW

income poverty amongst female-headed households increased from 57.2% to 58.7%. For men, it remained around 49.1% (UNDP, 2021). About 94% of employed women (compared with 85% of men) work in the informal economy (WIEGO, 2019). Women are paid less, occupy just 22.9% of parliamentary seats, and perform more than six times longer on unpaid care work than men (UN Women, 2023). This research therefore aimed to promote feminist macroeconomics: recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY DESIGN

3.1.1 Study area

The study was conducted in Area 36, Lilongwe. The area was purposively selected because of convenience and it has people of different class hence it was easy to get different Ideas and perspectives from different people.

3.1.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used, respondents were chosen based on judgement and only those who best met the purpose of the study were selected i.e., those who were aware of gender, gender roles and feminism. Then simple random sampling technique was used to sample out on those who were purposively selected. Due to limited resources only 50 people participated in focus group discussions and one on one interviews.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND ANALYSIS TOOLS

3.2.1 DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1.1 Techniques

i. Quantitative data

Quantitative data was collected from national surveys, reports, and statistical databases to assess the economic contribution of the care economy in Malawi.

ii. Qualitative data

Qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews with individuals engaged in unpaid care work. These qualitative insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work. It helped to shed light on cultural norms, infrastructure limitations, and social protection measures that hinder progress towards gender equality.

3.2.1.2 Tools

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a data collection tool for the study. As a method of data collection, the questionnaire is a very flexible tool, that has the advantages of having a structured format, is easy and convenient for respondents, and is cheap and quick to administer to a large number of people. There is also no personal influence of the researcher, and embarrassing questions can be asked with a fair chance of getting a true reply.

3.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data analysis included the estimation of the value of unpaid care work, its impact on national income, employment generation, and social development indicators. It was also used to identify gender disparities by

METHODOLOGY

working out the proportion of female decent workers to the whole population, total number of females absorbed in the labour force as well as the number and proportion of females in the care work industry and SPSS and Excel were used to analyse the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings generated from the data collection in Area 36, Lilongwe. This chapter covers the socio-economic challenges faced by women in the area, importance of recognizing and investing in the care economy, benefits of promoting decent work opportunities for women and the impacts on poverty reduction and socio-economic development.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The first demographic characteristic of the study participants was age. Age describes the person's ability to make independent decisions, suitability of getting married as well as experience in doing various duties. The study results show that the majority (56%) of the respondents were between age group of 25 - 44 years followed by the 45-64 years group (24%) then the 18 - 24 group (15%) and the least being the over 64 years groups (5%). The study results suggest the majority of the participants were youthful adults and this was because of the youthful population of Malawi with a high number of youths in the country.

Majority of the participants (83%) were women and 55% of participant's education level was secondary school and 20% tertiary. People who are educated are expected to understand information easily and since the study used purposive sampling and people who have better knowledge and understanding of gender issues, feminism and the economy hence the high percentage of mid and high educated participants.

60% of women in the area were not employed, 10% have informal jobs like housemaids, the rest responded that they are retired and had formal jobs, i.e., primary school teachers, nurses, and others.

4.3 Socio-economic challenges

90% responded that they do not have access to any support services or facilities that help with your care work hence they face different social economic challenges. The latest gender assessment for the country shows that early marriage and childbirth, low levels of economic independence, and low levels of education among women causes gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. The Malawi Gender-Based Violence Assessment Report has identified that the drivers of high rates of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence are early marriage and childbirth, low levels of economic independence for women, and low levels of education among women. 65% of women in the area revealed that they encounter GBV and IPV almost every day. Area 36 is one of the hotspots for gender-based violence and discrimination, especially against women and girls. The World Bank Gender Assessment for Malawi report also states that women in Malawi face legal and cultural barriers to owning and inheriting

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

land and property, accessing credit and financial services, and participating in decision-making processes. These factors limit women's agency and empowerment, and expose them to various forms of abuse and exploitation. And the study found that most of them (93%) in the area were not aware of any existing policies or programs in Malawi that promote decent work and gender equality in the care economy.

4.4 Importance of recognizing and investing in the care economy

In the study, respondents were asked if they were aware of the importance of recognizing and investing in the care economy. Malawi a country that faces many challenges such as poverty, inequality, HIV/AIDS, and climate change. The care economy in Malawi consists of both formal and informal sectors, where mostly women and girls provide unpaid or low-paid care work for their families and communities. According to a report by ActionAid Malawi, women and girls in Malawi spend an average of 5.9 hours per day on unpaid care work, compared to 1.7 hours for men and boys. This limits their opportunities for education, employment, and political participation. Investing in the care economy in Malawi can help to reduce the burden of care work on women and girls, and improve their well-being and empowerment. It can also create decent jobs, especially for young people, and contribute to the social and economic development of the country. Some of the ways to invest in the care economy in Malawi include:

Providing easily accessible public services such as water, sanitation, and health which can reduce the time and energy spent on care work and improve the quality of care and also supporting community-based care initiatives, such as child care centers, home-based care for the elderly and people living with HIV/AIDS, and mutual support groups, which can enhance social cohesion and solidarity as well as recognizing and valuing the contribution of care workers, both formal and informal, by ensuring fair wages, social protection, labor rights and providing training and skills development.

4.5 Benefits of promoting decent work opportunities for women

Economic growth and poverty reduction: Increasing rural women's access to decent employment opportunities is key to improving their productivity and earning power, which in turn raises family incomes and food security. According to the World Bank, female wage workers earn 64 cents (512 Malawi Kwacha) for every dollar (800 Malawi kwacha) earned by men (According to 2019 study). Closing this gender wage gap could boost Malawi's GDP by 5.6%. Moreover, women tend to invest more of their income in their children's education, health, and nutrition, creating a positive cycle of human capital development and intergenerational wellbeing.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender equality and empowerment: Promoting decent work for women means ensuring that they have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment in the labor market, as well as effective voice and representation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This includes ratifying and applying international labor standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, non-discrimination, and elimination of child labor and forced labor. Empowering women through decent work can also enhance their agency and autonomy, enabling them to challenge harmful social norms and practices, such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and unequal division of household responsibilities.

Social protection and resilience: Promoting decent work for women also means enhancing and extending the coverage and quality of social protection for workers and their families, especially in the informal and rural sectors where most women are employed. Social protection can provide income security, access to health care, and protection against shocks and risks, such as illness, disability, old age, unemployment, and natural disasters. Social protection can also support women's labor force participation and productivity, by reducing their care burden, facilitating their access to childcare and other services, and promoting their skills development and lifelong learning.

4.6 Linking Feminist Macroeconomics to Care Economy and Decent work

Feminist macroeconomics links care work to the broader macroeconomic context and policy, and examines how different macroeconomic policies and outcomes affect the distribution and quality of care work, as well as the well-being and empowerment of care workers, who are predominantly women. For example, feminist macroeconomists analyze how fiscal and monetary policies, trade and investment policies, labor market policies, social protection policies, and environmental policies impact the demand and supply of care work, the allocation of time and resources between paid and unpaid work, the gender wage gap and occupational segregation, the access and affordability of care services, and the quality and sustainability of care provision.

Feminist macroeconomics also advocates for a care economy that promotes decent work for all care workers, both paid and unpaid. Decent work is defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. Decent work for care workers implies that they have adequate wages and benefits, safe and healthy working conditions, social security and protection, voice

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

and representation, and opportunities for training and career advancement. Decent work for care workers also benefits the care recipients, who receive better quality and more accessible care services.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a conclusion on findings based on the objectives outlined in the first chapter. The chapter also highlights on recommendations on promoting feminist macroeconomics: recognizing and investing in care economy and decent work.

5.2 Summary of Findings

These research findings will contribute to the existing literature on feminist macroeconomics, gender equality, and sustainable development. Policymakers, key stakeholders, and civil society organizations will benefit from the policy recommendations, enabling them to prioritize the care economy, recognize unpaid care work, and promote gender equality through meaningful policy interventions. Promoting feminist macroeconomics by recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work is crucial for achieving gender equality and sustainable development in Malawi. This research aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting a detailed analysis of the care economy, evaluating existing policies, identifying challenges, and providing actionable recommendations. By prioritizing the care economy, Malawi can pave the way for inclusive economic development that values unpaid care work, promotes gender equality, and fosters a more equitable society.

5.3 Conclusion

The study sought to promote feminist macroeconomics by recognizing and investing in care work and decent work. The first objective of the study was to critically analyze the care economy within the context of Malawi and its contribution to overall economic growth in the country. To achieve the objective, variables such as age, education level, occupation, hours spent on paid or unpaid work were included in the study with the aim of analyzing the share of care work in total employment, the value added of care sectors to GDP, the productivity and efficiency of care services, and the linkages and spillovers of care sectors to other sectors of the economy. The objective has been partially achieved as the study has not included the value added to the care sectors to GDP.

The second objective of the study was to evaluate the existing decent work policies in Malawi and assess their effectiveness in promoting gender equality and equitable economic opportunities. This objective was achieved because it used the existing qualitative data and participants of the study were asked to discuss the coverage and adequacy of minimum wage, social security, labour rights, and occupational safety and health, the incidence and distribution of informal, dangerous, and vulnerable employment, the gender gaps and disparities in wages, benefits, and working conditions, and the impact of decent work policies on poverty, inequality, and human development during focus

CONCLUSION

group discussions.

The third objective of the study was to identify key challenges and barriers that hinders the recognition and investment in the care economy and decent work in Malawi. This was achieved by asking the participants during one-on-one interviews and focus group to identify the social norms and attitudes towards care work and gender roles, the availability and accessibility of data and information on care work and decent work, the institutional and organizational capacity and coordination of relevant stakeholders, and the political and economic constraints and opportunities for policy change.

Lastly, the objective was to provide policy recommendations that promote feminist macroeconomics, focusing on recognizing and investing in the care economy and decent work, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This have been achieved successfully.

5.4 Policy recommendations

Policy recommendations for this study are;

- Expand monetary space and increase public spending to support the care economy, social protection, health, education, and other public services that are essential for gender equality and human wellbeing.
- Reform the global economic governance system to ensure a more equitable and democratic distribution of resources and decision-making power, and to address the challenges of debt, trade, and financialization that constrain the policy space of developing countries.
- Promote decent work and labor rights for women.
- Recognize and value the unpaid and paid care work that women perform, and invest in the infrastructure and policies that can reduce and redistribute the care burden, such as public childcare, paid leave, and flexible work arrangements.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire No.....

Name of interviewer.....

Date of interview

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

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

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. What is your gender?

a) Male

b) Female

c) Other

d) Prefer not to say

2. What is your age group?

a) 18-24

b) 25-44

c) 45-64

d) 65 and above

3. What is your highest level of education?

a) No formal education

b) Primary education

c) Secondary education

d) Tertiary education

4. What is your main occupation?

a) Employed (formal sector)

b) Employed (informal sector)

c) Self-employed

d) Unemployed

e) Student

f) Retired

APPENDICES

SECTION B: CARE ECONOMY IN MALAWI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b) No

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

a) Yes (please specify)

b) No

SECTION C: FEMINIST MACROECONOMICS, CARE WORK AND DECENT WORK

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

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

APPENDICES

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

Name of facilitator:

Date of focus group discussion:

Location:

Number of people attending focus group discussion:

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

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

INSTRUCTIONS

- Be in groups of 10
- Each person should participate

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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
- Forms: <https://forequalityafrica.org/safeguarding/>
- FE Safeguarding Box: Available at FE offices

