

**AUDIENCE FEEDBACK ON PARALYMPICS BROADCAST HIGHLIGHTS
THROUGH MOBILE CINEMA IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF MALAWI**

**MASTER OF ARTS (THEATRE AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS IN
DEVELOPMENT) THESIS**

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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DEVELOPMENT**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation and the research involved in it are entirely the work of the author. This work, or part of it, has not been submitted for qualification to any other institute or university. Other scholars work, where used, have been duly acknowledged.

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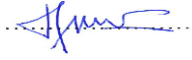
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my daughter Charlotte Dambo, for being my inspiration to conduct this research. It was never an easy thing for me to balance things with you around but the thought of having you around pushed me to make this journey significant and successful. I urge you to work hard in all your life attempts, the sky is the limit, my dear. Love Mom.

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ABSTRACT

Sports has been identified as an effective means for fostering positive health and well-being, social inclusion, and community building for persons with disabilities. Its introduction in 1944 led to the birth of the World Paralympic Games (which takes place after every four years just after the World Olympic Games); a high pinnacle event that showcases elite performance for athletes with disabilities. The emphasis in the Paralympics is on the participants' athletic achievements and not their disabilities. Several studies have been carried out on commodification of the event; the visibility of the Paralympic spectacle; portrayal and coverage of the event; and the stereotypical representation of disability in the media (Pullen and Silk, 2020; dos' Santos et. al, 2019 and Silk, 2019). However, Howe (2012) also observes that there is a lack of literature, especially from an African context discussing the event making the current study relevant. Results were derived from the rapid interviews and observations that were conducted by the researcher in Chiradzulu, Lilongwe, and Mzimba where there were mobile cinema screenings of translated 2020 Tokyo Paralympics and discussions on the same. Analysis has been done using theory of film screenings as a tool for community engagement coined by a Russian Pioneer Dziga Vertov who used films of the revolutionary patriots fighting on various fronts as well as to civilians in towns and villages to initiate political change (Cain, 2009). The theory proposes audience engagement during film screening to facilitate social change (Verellen, 2010). Findings indicate that screenings had a very big influence on audience's perceptions on people with disabilities. The two concepts of bringing global content into context and localization of the Paralympic screening which was very powerful in fostering community engagement. In conclusion, I argue that film screening is a powerful tool for community awareness which may eventually lead to action if proper structures are identified for sustainability.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Communication for Development and Para sports

Manyozo (2009) identifies the use of media and communications to actively engage communities in policy formulation and implementation. Overall it can be applied to every development issue, including sports for people with disabilities known as para sports, which is the main issue of concern in this study. In the present case, rural film screenings of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics Highlights formed the nucleus of the investigation. It sought to understand the effects of the 2020 Paralympic Highlight on the perception of rural communities of Malawi.

As modern Africa faces many challenges in terms of social, economic, political, and cultural development, communication for development has been identified as a key to engaging communities in addressing their problems (Noske-Turner, 2020; Gaventa, 2004). According to Servaes (2020), development communication is the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs, and capacities of all concerned. Communication for Development involves understanding people, their beliefs and values, and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives. This is achieved through community engagement in identifying problems, proposing solutions, and acting upon them. Communication for development is seen as a two-way process for sharing ideas and knowledge using a range of communication tools and approaches that empower individuals and communities to take action to improve their lives.

Use of strategic communication which utilizes all communication and media channels such as Print Media, Electronic Media including Television, Film, Video, and Radio; interpersonal communication such as Theatre for Development, Community Meetings, Workshops, Roadshows, etc.; IT-based communication such as social media, and Technological innovation hubs. Arcos (2016) defines strategic communication as: “the use of words, actions, images, or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to shape their behavior to advance interests or policies or to achieve objectives”. Film screenings were explored in this study as a platform to communicate and discuss issues of disability and para sports with the rural communities in Malawi.

The Paralympic games are one of the high-point events which showcase elite performance for athletes with disabilities (Darcy, 2005). The Paralympics are held every four years generally after the Olympic Games, mostly in the same host city as the Olympic Games. The emphasis is firmly placed on the participants’ athletic achievements and not their disabilities (Brenan, 2016). The 2020 Paralympic games took place in Tokyo, Japan between 24 August and 4 September 2021 (<<https://www.unicef.org/cbsc/>)

All Paralympic Games are governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) (SandipSankarGhosh and SampaBhowmick, 2018). The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) was established in 1989, following the Paralympic games held since 1960 in Rome, Italy. The committee was established for the development of Para sport and the organization of the Paralympic Games (Haslett, 2021). In addition to the development of Para sport, the IPC claims advocacy for social inclusion as one of its primary responsibilities. The IPC’s vision is to make for an inclusive world through Para sport. To enhance participation, especially in developing countries, the IPC facilitated the formation of National Paralympics Committees (NPCs) in the different countries

In Malawi, the National Paralympics Committee of Malawi (NPCM) is a sports association that is responsible for administering sports for people with disabilities. The association has predominantly focused on providing training for blind or partially sighted athletes and sitting volleyball (paralympic.org). IPC, in partnership with the National Paralympic Committee, is currently implementing a project called the I’MPOSSIBLE

education package in Malawi. The project is being run in selected schools in the Southern, Central and Northern regions by the National Paralympic Committee.

1.2 Literature Review

To understand the background and rationale for this study, the literature review has been divided into three parts. Firstly, it explains disability in detail and the context of disability in Malawi. The review has also explained stigma as a challenge that people with disability face and how this affects development. Paralympics literature has also been reviewed intensively to allow its readers to understand this concept deeply.

1.2.1 Disability

a)Defining Disability

WHO defines disability as any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. Earle 2003 thinks WHO uses a medical model. In the medical model, Johnston (2009) assumes that it is up to the individual, with the help of rehabilitation, to adapt themselves to society; learn to fit in, and be as "normal" as possible. This model of disability has been rejected by organizations of disabled people and is now generally recognised by academics and professionals as well to be an inadequate basis for understanding disability.

As the Medical model believes that people with disability need help, the social model assumes that there are economic and social barriers that prevent people with impairments from participating fully in society and that these barriers are so widespread that we are prevented from ensuring a reasonable quality of life for ourselves. The Social Model asserts that disability is not caused by impairment but by the social barriers (structural and attitudinal) that people with impairments (e.g. physical, sensory, and intellectual) come up against in every arena (Smith and Bundon, 2018). The model denies that bodily impairments are disabilities. Therefore, improving the lives of people with disabilities must focus on the elimination of social barriers that oppress people, and the development of social policies that facilitate full social inclusion and citizenship (p.no.). This is where

the idea of engaging people with disabilities in sports becomes more critical for their development as it allows society to look at them positively.

Disability is a universal condition crossing all socioeconomic boundaries, races, religions, and creeds. The World Bank reports that 600 million people, or 10% of the world's population, have a disability. Up to 80% of these people live in developing nations where 98% of disabled children live in poverty and do not receive an education (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). These rates are even higher for girls. In much of the world, stigma, discrimination, and exclusion from employment and society are the consequences of negative assumptions about persons with disabilities.

b) Context of people with disability in Malawi

In Malawi, according to a study conducted by Eide and Munthali, A. (2018) from 2016 to 2017, the prevalence of disability in Malawi was 9.0 % among adults aged 20 years or more; 3.2 % among children 2 – 4 years old; and 3.3 % among children aged 2 – 17 years. The overall prevalence from 2 years of age was found to be 5.6 %. The study found physical impairments (movement, mobility) to be the most common type of disability, followed by difficulties with seeing (25.0 % + 1.9 % blind) and hearing (14.4 % + 4.2 % deaf) (ibid). Intellectual (developmental) impairments and mental problems (6.5 % and 4.5 %) figures did not change when compared to previous studies, while epilepsy figures were high (12.5 %). The prevalence rate was higher in rural Northern Malawi for both males and females.

Eide and Munthali (2018:98) also indicate that the involvement of people with disabilities in social life and social activities is very minimal; fewer individuals with disabilities are consulted about household decisions and fewer go with the family to social events, with the difference being around 15 percentage point. Similarly, in community meeting participation only 54% of people with disabilities take part as compared to 83% of non-disabled people (Ibid). The study demonstrated that households that have members of people with disabilities have the worst living conditions when compared to those that

have no members with disabilities which results in an underestimation of households with people with disabilities.

In terms of legislation and policy, Malawi has a robust legislative and policy framework that appears to adequately address the rights of persons with disabilities (Munthali et al., 2013). The Disability Act of 2012 and the National Policy on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of 2006 both affirm the rights of persons with disabilities to play an equal, full, and participatory role in society. The National Youth Policy of 2013 and National Sports Policy of 2007 both specifically address the rights of youth with disabilities to equal participation in sports, and require facilities to be accessible to everyone, regardless of ability.

Disability is a major challenge in Malawi because, as a poor country, Malawi lacks the necessary resources such as medical and material support to effectively help people with disabilities. Additionally, there are many other conditions that people with disability face on top of their impairment such as stigma. Although Tembo (2014) uses a medical model for understanding disability, nonetheless, these concerns are relevant when using the social model, whose focus is mainly on identifying and removing barriers, and the rights model about demanding and achieving rights. The study provided room to understand whether sports can address the challenges which people with disabilities face. Through film screenings, the study will assess whether social inclusion can be achieved if communities are exposed to the Paralympics.

1.2.2 Stigma

a) Understanding Stigma

Stigma is commonly defined as the mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance or quality (Bond, 2017). People who are stigmatised are treated differently from other members of the community where they are often marginalised and discriminated against, often neglected, and may result in barriers to participation in different areas of society, as well as, being the target of violence and abuse. In many countries, people with disabilities are stigmatised and more especially those in developing countries. According to Haslett (2021), stigma is at the root of much of the discrimination which often leads to the (direct or indirect) political, social, or psycho-

emotional exclusion of disabled people which is too often their everyday experience and this hurts development.

Mostert (2016) suggests that the considerable lack of understanding and awareness regarding the causes of disabilities and their resulting characteristics is a key factor in the stigma experienced by people with disabilities in Africa. A particular study in Uganda and Kenya also found that respondents felt that attitudes to disability in their community were overwhelmingly negative due to harmful traditional beliefs and misconceptions about the causes and nature of the disability and about what roles and rights persons with disabilities can have in society (Rohwerder, 2018).

According to Barbik and Gardner, (2021), perceptions that may lead to stigma vary depending on the cause and type of disability. Congenital disability faces positive perception just as the development of social attitudes and intergroup biases takes place within a cultural context; this is especially true in the case of disability since the latter is a socially constructed concept (Barbik and Gardner, 2021). In the current study, I explore some reasons why people perceive those with disabilities the way they do. It is therefore relevant, to actually have an understanding of the initial community perceptions of people with disabilities and why that is so, before evaluating how the film screenings have influenced community perceptions of people with disabilities in Malawian Rural Communities.

b) The understanding stigma of People with Disabilities in Malawi

Back in the pre-colonial time, Malawi had fewer numbers people with disabilities if any disabled. People with disabilities were there but they were hidden away from the public; in some instances, traditional birth attendants noticed that the child has been born with a disability, and they did not allow it to survive. In the study, Aide, and Munthali (2018), established the setting of people with disabilities and they also affirmed to say that there is an increased rate of stigma against people with disabilities. In developing countries such as Malawi, people with disabilities are faced with circumstances that limit their participation in everyday life activities including sports (Massa, 2011)

In Malawi, people with albinism, for instance, most of whom live with some kind or degree of visual impairment, are reported to be ‘regularly singled out and subjected to

torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or killings because of cultural beliefs and witchcraft' (Mostert, 2016 p13).

According to Rohwerder (2018), there is a mix of grey and academic literature in Sub-Saharan Africa and there is a need for more empirical research around disability stigma in every African country, although pockets of fairly deep research do exist. From my analysis, what Rohwerder observed is of importance to this study: a concept that requires to be challenged and worth exploring. Most of the literature focuses on the challenges and context of disability in Malawi (Tembo, 2014; Aide and Munthali, 2017). This study is therefore relevant to address that gap by actually examining how stigma can be addressed through Film screenings of the Paralympics.

1.2.3 Para sports and Conceptualization of disability

In this part of the review, I have summarised and critically analysed global studies on the Paralympics and the Media. I have looked at a few studies from America, Europe and Asia, and I have also analysed the few studies that are there in Africa as well as Malawi.

a) America

Lyusyena Kirakosyan & Manoel Osmar Seabra Junior (2018) in their article presented a summary of the qualitative analysis of the media coverage related to the topic of Paralympic legacy and disability rights. The two found several themes related to the findings. Firstly there was an increased sense of national pride for the Paralympic athletes in the elite sport as Paralympians were considered role models and sources of inspiration for the public. Additionally, there was also an increased level of awareness and change in perception towards people with disability.

However, some negative themes were established by the authors including the expectation that every disabled person should overcome his or her impairment (Kirakosyan and Seabra Junior, 2018:140-142). What these authors were interested in is the narrative of the legacy of the Paralympics and they had very crucial and analytical findings that are worth exploring. However, notice that this discussion may not be very relevant for Malawi: a country that is just getting on the map as much as the Paralympics are concerned.

In Brazil, Paralympic sports have conquered space in high-impact sports news. For example, one of the most accessed sports information sites in Brazil, Globoesporte.com, now has a section exclusively dedicated to news on Paralympic sports (Globoesporte.com, 2020). Marko Bettine (2020) was interested in getting the perception from the athlete's viewpoint of what the Paralympics are about. His work aimed to investigate Brazilian athletes' views on content, means and scope of media coverage of Paralympic sports to offer reflections on their expectations and perceptions. Additionally, he also mentions that although the Brazilian media has given a lot of prominence to Paralympic sports than the international press, most athletes were dissatisfied with the way the media covered it (Bettine, 2020:997). Athletes showed dissatisfaction with the frequency of coverage, and the superficial coverage and focus on major events or just on positive results, without any broad coverage of the activities. To the author, this has resulted in the public's lack of knowledge of the Paralympics. Critically looking at Bettine's presentation, he managed to give insights on the perceptions of the subjects of the media broadcasts but failed to balance the athletes' perceptions with those who consume the content to understand if they also felt the same.

b) Europe

Paralympic sport is undergoing an intense process of mediatization on a worldwide scale. In Great Britain, Channel 4 bought the broadcast rights but also produced and published extensive information and publicity material on the Paralympics (Pullen et al., 2019; Silva and Howe, 2012). Research done by (Howe, 2008a) indicated that it has long been understood that the media has the power to shape the representation of social issues and to influence the understanding that the public has of the world. In 2019 (IPC) reported that the 2004 Athens Paralympic games were broadcast in 80 different countries and had a cumulative TV audience of 1.8 million people and 12 years later, in the 2016 Rio edition, they were broadcast to 154 countries and had a cumulative TV audience of 4.1 billion people (Pullen, 2019).

Carolyn Jackson-Brown (2020) addresses the immense role television played in the representation of disability. Covering the London 2012 Paralympic Games by the UK's publicly owned but commercially funded Channel 4 network, she explored why and how

a marginalised group was brought into the mainstream by the media, and the key influencing factors and decision-making processes that went with it (Jackson-Brown, 2020). The objective of the research was to discover the influencing factors on media producers to illuminate how and why new meanings about disability emerged. In her findings, she presented some fascinating accounts of how public perceptions of para-athletes can be shifted from a discourse of strangeness and embarrassment to admiration and inclusion (Jackson-Brown, 2020). The author notices a change in perception as well as programming of the 2012 Paralympic games which seems to have had an impact as the coverage by Channel 4 delivered a transformational shift in attitudes towards people with disabilities. Her analysis mainly focused on executives and producers who construct the meanings within that media, from cultural, political, economic, and sociological perspectives. Although this was so, she managed to explore what other authors had also written about the perceptions of the audience itself but without putting much emphasis on the pro-poor and illiterate societies.

In another study, Goggin and Newell (2000) looked at the representation of the Paralympians in the local Australian media. They argued that there had been changes and improvements in the representation of people with disability within mainstream media and those elite athletes overcame their disabilities. However, such media representations, they argue, fitted well within the established power relations which oppress people with disability in society. According to the authors, disabling media representations persist. In their study, the two authors critiqued the invisibility of people with disability in the Olympics Opening Ceremony at the 2000 Sydney Olympics as a significant cultural phenomenon. They saw that although television is the premier media form for sporting events, including the Olympics, its coverage of the Paralympics is minuscule in its scale and scope (Goggin and Newell, 2000:76). Citing challenges in funding television coverage as mentioned by the organizing team, they found out that the Paralympics do not attract people as there are not many high-profile people with disabilities. Essentially, these authors focused on understanding the content and portrayal of people with disabilities on the media platform. They also looked at the type of attention given to the Paralympics when compared to the Olympics. However, Goggin and Newell did not look

at the perceptions that the audience has after watching the Paralympics. This study, therefore, aims at exploring the perceptions that an audience has after watching the Paralympics.

c) Asia

Seiji & Yoshiko (2017) conducted a study to understand the “Role of Paralympic Broadcasts in Promoting Inclusive Society.” What the authors were more concerned with was comparing the portrayal of the Paralympics and the Olympics, looking at how the content is made to change audience perceptions towards people with disabilities. He did this by comparing Channel 4 from the UK and NHK from Japan’s broadcasting of the 2012 Paralympics. In his findings, he discovered that although the coverage of the Paralympics was not very different from the Olympics at NHK, there were differences in terms of the number of female presenters and people with disabilities (Seiji & Yoshiko, 2017). On Channel 4 there were more females and people with disabilities who were presenters in the 2019 Rio Brazil broadcasting. Additionally, while Channel 4’s coverage focused on athletes’ humanity, NHK mainly focused on the athletic aspects of the individuals participating. He then recommended that studies done later should focus on broadcasting to a smaller community, as Channel 4 had taken up the role to broadcast the mega-event to the whole world. He proposed studies that would focus on a more localised context.

d) Africa

In Africa, there have been fewer studies on the Paralympic games as well as media broadcasts of the games. The implications of this have been acknowledged by Howe (2012) who asserted that the lack of research on Paralympic sports in non-Western contexts has led to ethnocentrism, where ideas around disability and disability sports are never explored from other cultural vantage points. In addition to Howe’s sentiments, Yetsa A. Tuakli-Wosornu (2013), in a presentation at International Paralympic Committee VISTA Conference in Germany, pointed out that in his country fostering Paralympic and Paralympians as role models is a challenge as there are some inaccessible areas where transportation is a challenge and that fact alone means there is need for more

sensitization. In his presentation, he tried to show how important such communities are and the challenges they face including access to facilities.

Conducting a study that reaches the most inaccessible areas with the world Paralympic broadcast is therefore key in Africa and everywhere in the world. Studies have been conducted but only for those who have access. Looking at this literature you can notice that, contextualizing them to a third-world country such as Malawi can be very hard as most of the focus is on those who make Paralympic media content, while others were more interested in feedback from an elite Western point of view without fully exploring the global South.

1.2.4 Film screenings

According to Cain (2009), Film screenings can be traced back to 1917 from films made by Dziga Vertov during the Civil War following the Revolution. “Agit-trains” and “agit-steamers” carried films to the revolutionary patriots fighting on the various fronts as well as to civilians in towns and villages. He began his preoccupation with cinema as a young 22-year-old youth in Moscow in 1917. During the Civil War following the 1917 Revolution, “agit-trains” and “agit-steamers” carried films of the revolutionary patriots fighting on various fronts as well as to civilians in towns and villages (Barsam, 1992).

Later, he set up mobile projectors and tried to organize clubs of cinema correspondents (Feldman, 1984). This was in line with the overall goals of the Soviet agitprop movement, which were to edit newsreels for agitation and propaganda to provide the masses with both a general and political education (Barsam, 1992). What was important about his activities was to highlight that film potential as a tool for understanding and influencing social change” (Feldman, 1984, p. 5 cited in Cain 2009).

In Mozambique for example, mobile cinema units were used by Samora Michel to take the news to rural areas (Cain, 2009). In Southern Africa, using video as a tool for change in HIV/AIDS anti-discrimination campaigns, distribution included roadshows to remote villages as well as urban centres. These screenings were always hosted by trained facilitators who then lead group discussions following each film(s). Even more unusual, the characters from some of these films also participated in the roadshows meeting

people and discussing the issues with the audience. This was groundbreaking indeed, particularly because of the taboos and discrimination against making public one's HIV-positive status (Cain, 2009).

In Malawi, cinema can be traced back to the colonial period. According to Kerr (1998;2), with the introduction of a bioscope in South Africa, the colonialists decided to bring cinema to Malawi to ensure that their settler communities have a connection to what was happening at home in the United Kingdom. Later, due to increased nationalism, colonialists created films to make colonial rule acceptable to the natives. Further than that, there was an intention to bring more interest in the films so the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) was established (Kerr, 1998). It was run by the commission of sisal farmer Major Ernest Notcutt in Tanganyika to create films that included Africans (Magalasi, 2015:19).

Other films taught new methods of farming and healthy living to the Africans. These films were meant for the modernization of African countries. The films were shown to natives around central Africa, including Malawi using mobile film vans and the cinema activities were coordinated at Central Film Unit (CFU) and later the Central African Film Unit (CAFU) (Kerr, 1998; 87-88). Later, after independence, governments of the independent states operated fleets of modern, well-equipped Mobile Cinema Landrovers called "Yellow Vans" and won a high reputation for spreading agricultural information throughout the country (Kamlongera, 1984). Started during the colonial period with main aim of making colonial rule acceptable to the natives, and spreading of information on new methods of farming and healthy living, the independent state in africa continue to use it as a way of engaging the communities.

This culture has grown and film screenings have diversified into the field of health and religion. Notice that, Vertov's theory of film as a tool for social change was adopted across the world, including Africa (Magalasi, 2015). In Malawi in the 1990s to the turn of the millenium, Population International Service (PSI) used the mobile cinema in their social marketing campaigns for the fight against HIV and AIDS. However, the difference

between the 1930s colonial screenings and the 1990s HIV and AIDS mobile film campaigns was the level of community participation. In the 1930s, it was mostly one-way while in the 2000s, there were loops for feedback on the subject matter under discussion, which saw terms like “Participatory Film” thrown around (Magalasi 2015).

There has been an advancement in technology in Malawi, including an increase in television set ownership (6%) at a household level and internet access (3.5%) in rural communities of Malawi (NSO, 2015). Although film technology has advanced (Actar, 2018) to the extent that it is in people’s homes, there are still struggles to access television or the internet because the figures are low (Population and Housing Census Malawi Report, 2018). It was therefore very crucial to assess whether bringing the Paralympic highlights to the rural communities through television broadcasts could have enough impact on the perceptions of the people on disabilities, or that a deliberate approach of using mobile screening would reach those that would not have otherwise be left out. So part of the study assesses how mobile film screening could fill the gap lack of television leaves on information dissemination.

1.3 Problem Statement

The relationship between the media and disability sports is established in the academic debate (Andrew and Jackson, 2001; Silk et. al, 2005 and Pullen, 2019). More emphasis has been on the perceptions of the athletes on the media portrayal of the Paralympics as well as the inside eye of those who create the media content (Goggin and Newell, 2000). There are studies which have established the effects that Paralympic broadcasts have on the perceptions of audience derived from both the 2019 Rio Paralympics and the London 2012 Paralympics (Pullen, 2019 and Howe, 2012). Most of these studies looked at the effects that occur while the games are being played. These studies managed to establish the perceptions that people have on Paralympic broadcasts in Western societies but were also able to highlight on missing information from the Global South. Analyzing these studies, scholars mainly focused on communities with access to both the internet and television while ignoring rural communities that do not have access to either of these. Seiji and Yoshiko (2017), observes that previous literature is limited in bringing out an

analysis on the effects of Paralympic broadcasts on illiterate and inaccessible rural communities and recommends that as a problem area for future studies. It is therefore, the aim of this study to explore the extent to which Paralympic Broadcasts can be taken beyond the Malawian urban TV audience to rural communities and, apart from that gauge the interaction and effects of Paralympic highlights broadcasts of the 2020 Tokyo on perceptions of the rural communities.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

This study investigates how mobile film screenings of the Paralympics were used as a tool for rural community engagement in attempting to address stigma against people with disabilities.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study had the following objectives:

1. to gauge the extent to which mobile film screenings are utilised on issues of disability and para-sport;
2. to assess the perceptions that rural communities have on issues of disabilities; and
3. to explore the effects of screening Paralympic broadcasts highlights on perceptions of rural communities on para-sport and disabilities.

1.5 Research questions

- i. How have film screenings been used in issues of disability and para sports?
- ii. What are the perceptions of rural communities on issues of disabilities and para-sports?
- iii. How have the film screenings of the highlights of the Paralympic broadcast affected the perceptions and action on issues of disabilities and para sports in the rural communities of Malawi?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study has adopted film screenings as a tool for community engagement. Film screening of cinema is a product of cinema itself. Actar (2018) explains that cinema has gone through various stages, new technologies, and changes in users' social practices which have allowed the audience to participate in production processes that it is no longer the product of the director. This has brought up the opportunity for self-expression across various communities in different parts of the world.

Looking at cinema from this theory, the participation of the audience is the key principle and it can be traced to the work of Dziga Vertov in Russia in 1917. Vertov recognised the importance of participation, representation, and distribution as things that are very important in filmmaking as far as social change in communities is involved (Cain, 2009). He was particularly active in pioneering activities that took films beyond the traditional Russian urban Centres (Feldman, 1984). The ideas of Vertov placed community engagement at the centre. According to Basam (1992), Vertov films emphasized screenings within the marginalised communities of its subject participants. His concern with distribution is reflected in the types of distribution activities he oversaw in the heyday of Soviet agitprop (Cain, 2009). This study is more concerned with the third principle of distribution whose main emphasis is film screening which is aimed at social change.

Recent scholars such as Julia Cain (2009) and Verellen (2010) have adopted Vertov's theory of Film Screening. As Cain is more more concerned with the whole participatory video theory which is concerned with all the there principle of participation, reflection and reception the current study is more concerned with reception. Cain understood that the screenings were a catalyst for discussion, analysis and consensus-building. Ideally in her study, the facilitated screening(s) for the community would work to stimulate debate and consensus-building in terms of addressing community voice on housing to the local Municipality in Kayamandi. He adopted principles of facilitated audience discussion after each screening and informal discussion to occur after that on a more individual level between interested viewers and facilitators but also including video characters during

screenings. These principles were more concerned with audience engagement with the content for their social change.

Verellen (2010) recognized distribution, outreach/strategic communications, and audience engagement as the key principles to film screening for community engagement (Verellen, 2010). Distribution here goes beyond traditional, it is defined as the process of placing a film in (online or offline) venues to make sure that it is accessible to audiences (securing a theatrical release, national and international television broadcasts, a festival run, or DVD sales). In the current study, since we are dealing with rural communities of Malawi whose access to television is minimal, the traditional approach of film screenings has been adopted as the distribution model.

Furthermore, Outreach and strategic communications involve the way that filmmakers tell the world about their film (Verellen, 2010: 5). This is largely determined by how the film fits into the social movement, how the movement itself has connected with the film, embraced it and worked with the filmmaker to understand the message it conveys, how it fits into the needs of the social movement and how the members of this movement can see it. The principle of audience engagement is mainly concerned with ensuring that the audience has been allowed to move from passive to active. This principle is identified as the first and primary point at which we can begin to detect and measure real social engagement and change.

In the current study, we have adopted the advanced application of film as a tool for community engagement as with the direction from Cain (2009) and Verellen (2010) to interpret the findings. These principles have been very key in the data analysis because they allowed the researcher to measure the extent to which the community was engaged; whether the process had an impact or was called to action. This study, therefore, aims to apply the concept of Participatory Film by simply looking at whether the Paralympic broadcast screening engaged the rural communities and the effect that the engagement had on its audience in the rural communities of Malawi.

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 Qualitative and action research

This research adopts a qualitative methodology and uses an action research design. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a qualitative research design involves studying human actions in a natural setting and through the eyes of the actors themselves, together with an emphasis on detailed description and understanding of the phenomena within the appropriate context. Adopting a qualitative research methodology in the study gave more room to get feedback from the communities as it allowed them to share their experiences at an in-depth level (Ferguson, 2011). Qualitative research enabled the researcher to adapt to the situation and set patterns depending on the social, cultural, and political background in a particular community for example, all three communities visited were handled with a difference depending on their cultural background. In the North of Malawi, the team was flexible to receive greetings through our representative who was the principal investigator in the study which was not the case for the South and Central regions.

This study has adopted an action research design. Burns (2017) defined action research as the superordinate term for a set of approaches to research that, at the same time, systematically investigate a given social situation and promote democratic change and collaborative participation. Action research demonstrates the importance of the involving impetus for action together with the reflective process of progressive educational inquiry (Hayman, 2003). Action research enhances collegiality, collaboration, and involvement of participants who are actors in the situation and most likely to be affected by changes; and establishes an attitudinal stance of continual change, self-development, and growth. As in the proceeding chapters, you will realize that these screenings were able to engage the community in taking up their development as they planned for action just after the exposure.

Unlike the Knowledge, Attitude, and Perception survey which targets a larger population and limited community stakeholders in developing, implementing, and evaluating change processes, Parcy-Smith et al in Noske-Turner (ed) (2020), proposes a more engaged,

learning-based participatory alternative form of community-based action research. The scholar identifies mindset change as a change agent itself where critical questioning of attitudes and practices is very key to finding out alternatives. The same approach has been adopted in the current research where the transformational learning process has been used through the screening of Paralympic Broadcasts.

1.7.2 Sample

a) Sample Area

Data for the study was collected in three districts, namely Chiradzulu at Montfort School of the Deaf; Lilongwe at Dzenza Secondary School, and Mzimba at Edingeni. The districts were respective districts where the I'mPossible project is being implemented, apart from Mzimba which by the time we were conducting the study, the project was in its initial phases. Since the I'mPossible project targets secondary schools, the sampled areas were surrounding villages of a particular school where the project was, except in the case of Mzimba. The pilot of the research was done with students at the University of Malawi where the film screenings were piloted. This allowed for the adjustment of the tools and testing of other logistics.

b) Random Sampling

Random sampling is a part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen (Sign). Out of the 60 participants were invited by the local leaders to be in the audience. Categories of the respondents comprised 25 % of people with disability, and 75 percent of the general public without looking at age and with a 50% representation of males and females. At every site, the village chief was interviewed including a representative teacher. Different age groups were interviewed except children. The majority of these respondents came from the illiterate community and mostly farmers. There was no specific pattern of choosing who to interview what was key is that they should be part of the audience and using the percentiles that were already preset. At every sample district, one site was visited for film screenings as well as data collection.

1.7.3 Participant observation

The activities were pre-booked at every site, either through the village head or the headteacher of a nearby school. This was very beneficial because it allowed the program's flexibility and it also enabled the research team to let go of the participants in good time. The team for the study arrived at every site early in the morning to find a suitable venue for the screening during the noon hours. 60 community members were already identified by local leaders in the community to be at the screenings.

During the screenings, the research team conducted participant observation. In essence, the ethnographic participant observation tool was adopted in the study. Ethnography is a methodology developed for the study of cultures and cultural sense-making, derived from anthropology. According to Brancati (2018), participant observation is a form of qualitative data collection that involves the immersion of researchers into the environment of their subjects for an extended period. The researchers were participants because they were part of the audience to allow themselves to study very well people's reactions to the highlights. Documenting was done through note-taking as well as photography. Some discussions solicited views from the audience while watching the highlights to determine the effectiveness of interactive discussions as a tool for community engagement.

Before the screenings, the researchers wanted to ascertain community knowledge on issues of disability as well as para sports. A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was used to collect field notes (Hoffman, 2007). This method allowed participants to expand on any questions or move to other topics that would help the researcher to increase the amount of data collected data and enhance the validity of the study (Hoffman, 2007). STEPS screenings and surveys were adopted in the study where before screenings to get a baseline on audience awareness and knowledge about Paralympics and identify gaps for the discussion period (Cain 2009:185).

Since there was a need that the question should be asked before and after the screenings to avoid contaminating the data, it was critical to use a semi-structured checklist of

questions to allow those helping with data collection to be able to isolate what comes before and after. This approach was adopted by Kyoung Lee and Priester (2015) who claims that pre- and posttest evaluations and analysis of qualitative feedback, participants' reactions to the films enhance cross-cultural understanding and the ability to find value in differences.

1.7.4 Contents of the Screenings

During the screenings, there was a specific package which was showcased to the audience. It comprised of Chichewa dubbed highlights of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Broadcast prepared by Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation (MBC); Rising Phoenix a film on elite athletes in the Paralympic games and Taonere Banda (a local Malawian Paralympian who participated in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN2NA3H7uPM> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOR-7ydUEpg>). The arrangement of these videos did not follow a specific pattern, rather when it came to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic highlights they varied at every site.

1.7.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis used transcription of the interviews (Weiss et al., 2010). Individual interviews were documented separately (Parlalis, 2011). It enabled the researcher to have every single piece of data coded which provided the means to discover the findings (Kilkenny, 2012). Similar issues rising from the individual interview were combined to develop the themes for discussions.

1.8 Research Ethics

The study had ethical clearance from UNIMAREC. In terms of ethics, the village chief around the area or the headmaster was asked for permission to work with the members of that particular community. There was Informed consent to conduct the interviews and record the participants of the study. To ensure that there was anonymity since we were dealing with some sensitive issues, names have not been recorded in the write-up (Van Maanen, 1988). Anonymity allowed participants to be free to tell their minds. As the

study was dealing with people from different backgrounds including those with disabilities, the researchers had to build trust with them to ensure that they are well-protected.

The other ethical consideration is what CARE (2009) proposes which is developing a legitimate and serious dissemination plan for the findings of the proposed research that will meet the needs of both communities and researchers. Since this study used the community engagement model, it will, therefore, be necessary to distribute the results of the study. The researcher will go back to the communities where film screenings and data collection were conducted.

1.9 The organisation of the thesis/dissertation

The study is structured into five chapters:

Chapter 1 sets the background of the study stating the aim, objective, literature review, and methods. It also provides a background on the Paralympics as well as the background of film screenings in Malawi. The timeline for conducting the study has been provided including the research ethics.

Chapter 2 provides results based on the first objective which explores the use of film screenings on disability and para-sports in Malawian rural communities. Results and findings of this chapter have been presented based on the objective and the final part of the Chapter has given the themes of discussions about the findings.

Chapter 3 gives the results on the perceptions that rural communities have on para-sports and disabilities in general. These are the deeply rooted perception that exists in various rural communities of Malawi. A discussion of the results is provided in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the findings related to objective no 3: to establish whether or not the film screenings have implications on perceptions of communities on para-sports and disabilities. This chapter has explored mainly the findings which are related to the immediate change observed or told through the interviews in terms of perception. It has also given the way forward as far as para sports and Paralympics are concerned.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, provides the conclusions drawn from this study. It also provides the direction for future research on film screenings and rural communities in Malawi.

CHAPTER TWO

USE OF FILM SCREENINGS ON ISSUES OF DISABILITY AND PARA-SPORTS IN MALAWIAN RURAL COMMUNITIES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will concentrate on the first objective which is analyzing the use of film screening issues of disability and para-sports in Malawian rural communities. The Chapter explains the practice of film screenings in rural communities in Malawi. I have presented the specific issues which film screenings brought to rural communities. Secondly, the chapter has given a detailed situation analysis of people with disabilities in Malawian rural societies. The final part of the chapter has presented the critical discussions of the findings and the conclusion which has been drawn from this chapter.

In terms of the methods, part of the data used in this chapter was collected through a literature review which was done to understand the historical overview of film screenings in Malawian rural communities. The majority of the data was derived from the rapid interviews which were conducted in the field using the interview guide used in the field. Observations also helped the researchers to record data, especially on the situation of people with disabilities in the rural communities of Malawi. The main aim of this chapter is to give a general background and overview of the situation of film screening and issues of people with disabilities in the rural communities of Malawi.

2.2 Results And Findings

2.2.1 Existence of Film screenings

a) Extinction of Film screenings

As discussed in chapter 1 film screenings practice has had a long history, however, results show that the practice has recently dropped to little or no screenings in rural communities. The majority of the respondents from all three sites where the screenings

and the rapid interviews were conducted indicated that cinemas are a dead history. In Lilongwe for example, a particular respondent said:

“Kunali makanema nthawi ndi nthawi, okhudza zaulimi, umoyo komanso wachipembedzo, zonsezo lero kulibe. Zinatha,”

“Previously, there used to be frequent screenings on agriculture, health, and religion but today it is all gone. They no longer exist”. (Male community mobile viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

Similar views were given by a certain respondent in Mzimba who explained how the screenings were educational as well as entertaining to the community in this way:

“Kanema anali othandiza, timaphunzira komanso kudyetsa maso. Ndili mwana ndikukumbukira kuti ndimatha kuchoka pano kupita ku Edingeni komwe ndikutali ndikwathu kuti ndikangoonera zomwe kanemuyu watibeletsera.”

“Film screenings were very helpful; we could learn and get entertained. I remember when I was young, I would go as far as Edingeni Trading Centre, although it is far, just to see what cinema has brought us. (Woman community film screening viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21)

The above thoughts were spread across all three sites. According to the respondents, this has had an impact on the community's understanding of certain developmental issues. One respondent said that the extinction of screening has reduced their ability to learn from what others have been doing out there. For instance, in one of her comments, she narrated:

“kudzera mukanama uja, timaphunzira zambiri. Timatha kuphunzira mmene anzathu ena akuchitira ndondomeko zamakono makamaka ku ulimi. Kanema amatha kutionetsa ngakhale mmene maulimi osiyanasiyana amachitikira. Koma lero zonsezi zinatha.”

“The screenings, were very educational, we could learn some new technologies being advanced out there, we could even see how it is done

especially when it was agriculture. All this is gone today.” (Woman community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

However, results indicated that, although the majority of respondents said that the screening has been dormant in recent years, there was indication that the screening still occurs in churches, such as Seventh Day Adventist, at least once every year. In Lilongwe, for example, Group Village Headman Chipupa (not the real name) explained that

“Mchaka Chilichonse pa 24 December kumakhala kanema wa Ambuye Yesu yemwe cholinga chake chimakhala kukumbukira chikondwelero cha Khirisimasi komanso kutikumbatsa zakufunikira kwakubadwa Kwaambuye”

“Every year on the 24th of December, there is a screening of a Jesus Christ Film whose main aim is to celebrate Christmas Eve and remind communities why the day is very important to Christians.”

A similar response was also given by a respondent in Chiradzulu who said that the screenings still occur once every year showing the story of Jesus Christ.

There was a unique scenario in Chiradzulu at Montfort School of Deaf where the majority of the respondents who had disabilities said that screening still occurs in the area on issues of disability and how they can cope with their disability. According to the respondents:

“Pasukulu pano kanema amachitikabe nthawi ndinthawi ndipo ife anthu osamva ndikuyankhula timaonera..., amapangidwanso mwadongosolo chifukwa amakhala otanthauzilidwa kuti ifeyonso tikhale ndimwayi okumvauthengawu.”

“Screenings of films to do with issues of disabilities still occur at this school. People with hearing and speech problems watch these films. They are well produced because they are interpreted in sign language so that we can also understand.” (Woman community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21).

She said that, although the practice is still there, the screening does not necessarily include people who are not disabled or those outside the school for the deaf but those in the School Community. However, another respondent said that

“Kale langa, pano pa Montfort pamakhala kanema osiyanasiyana, koma sikuti ndi wa aliyense koma wa anthu aulumali aku Montfort komanso kuMaryview. Sindikudziwa pano ngati kanemayu akumachitikabe.”

In the past, we used to have been having screenings in this area. They were not for everyone but only for people with disabilities from both Maryview School and Montfort School even though I am not quite sure if they still occur. (Chief Mwalipa , 18/10/21)

From this data, it is clear that screening has been occurring in rural communities, and recently, the frequency has reduced drastically. Commonly, screenings are associated with religion as well as non-governmental organisations. In our case, from the comments, the audience referred to the team of researchers as an NGO. In Mzimba for instance, a certain respondent from the audience said:

“Ndimakumbukira panali bungwe linalake linabwelanso m’buyomu, ndye izizi musalekere panjira koma pitilizani kumatiphunzitsa kudzera mukanema. Olo bungwe lanu litafuna magulu tingathe kuwakhazikitsa”

“I remember, in the past, there were NGOs who had these screenings that is why I urge you to continue. Even if your organization decides to form groups, we are ready to do so. (Male community film screening viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21)

That said, in the current study, the audience’s understanding of the screenings was very interesting, for some respondents saw the sustainability of the screenings for the future. The audience and the respondents were thrilled with what they saw and they believed that it could change their attitudes, behaviors, and call to action.

b) Television ownership and Video Shows

In Chiradzulu, Village chief Mwalipa mentioned that he watched the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics with his family on their TV set. Similarly, a teacher from Lilongwe said that he knew about the Paralympic games through his television. Although in Mzimba, it was not quite open that respondents owned television sets, it was very clear that people can access various audio-visual materials through video showrooms.

In the study, it was very common for the respondents to relate the screenings to those which occur at video shows. In Chiradzulu, one of the respondents when asked if screenings occur in the area confirmed that yes, and started explaining how the video shows have been showing action films as well as football in his area.

Another respondent in Lilongwe said:

“Kulekana ndikale lija pano anthu amatha kuonera zinthu zosiyanasina mnyumba zawo ngakhaleenso mmashow angoti mbwe lerowa.”

“As compared to the past, people are now able to watch various programs in their homes as well as video shows which are very common nowadays.”

(Male community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

Respondents explained that the fee for paying at video shows varies from one area to another depending on the demand for a particular audio-visual material and the availability of an affordable electricity supply. When it started it was pitched at K10, but now it has risen to K250. The video showrooms are found at trading centres all around the country, both in the rural and urban areas. In these places, films and other audio-visual material such as the European soccer leagues are screened in an enclosed space and for one to watch, he/she is required to pay a fee. Such a finding brought questions on whether the culture of film screening is still relevant in the context of contemporary Malawian rural communities and can be modified to use video showrooms in different areas of the country. This will be discussed in the later chapters.

2.2.2 People with Disability in Development

It was clear from all three sites where the interviews were conducted that, people with disabilities are included in some specific development projects such as social cash transfer, tree planting as well as road cleaning run by the government or NGOs in the

rural communities. when they are included they are most often paid because it is portrayed as an act of charity.

One of the respondents in Edingeni, Mzimba, who had a disability, said that they mostly get included in activities where they will be given hand-outs not necessarily activities that will challenge their ability. A certain female respondent with a disability in Lilongwe said that a few weeks before the research teams' arrival, people with disabilities in her community were given pigs for them to raise and develop their lives. On the second note, this woman emphasised that:

“Mapulogalamu ngati amenewa akamabwera amakhala aife anthu olumala okha, onse alunga amakhalanso ndizawo.”

“These development projects come to us as people with disabilities, for those who are non-disabled

What she meant was that people with disabilities are isolated as a group, depending on the development project. In ones for hand outs such as the pig raising program, they are included.

In terms of inclusion, the respondents indicated that people with disabilities are included in a lot of activities. The majority of respondents from all the sites said that it is very common to see people with disabilities engaging in small and medium enterprises which includes tomato and vegetable selling or the selling of dried fish and other food commodities. The respondents also indicated that people with disabilities commonly engage in skills businesses such as pot making, basket weaving, and many more.

One of the respondents in Chiradzulu expanded to say that,

“Anthu aulumali ndi odalitsika... ali ndiluso losiyanasiyana tikayelekezera ndi ife alunga.”

“People with disabilities have God-given gifts of skills, unlike people with no disabilities. (Male Mobile film Viewer Montfort/18/10/21)”

To him, he believes that makes up for their disability; it is like a cover and a bonus for them.

2.2.3 Parasports and Paralympics

In terms of sports, over half of the respondents had never heard of or seen people with disability engaging in sports. In Chiradzulu there were a few respondents who confirmed having seen people with a disability doing sports. In Mzimba, there was one unique case of a man who was mentioned by most respondents to have engaged in football sports as a goalkeeper. This man has a problem with his leg and the community has always been proud of him.

“Munthuyu ndiodabwitsa mdera lathu ndipo mbiri yake idapita kutali”

He is a legend of our community and his story went very far across the area. (Female Mobile Film Viewer Edingeni, 28/10/21)

This view aligns with a social model understanding of disability as it is mainly focusing on the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in sports. In contrast, in Lilongwe, one of the respondents mentioned a particular rehabilitative example that falls under the medical model of understanding disability. She said that she has seen children with disabilities engaging in sports at Save Our Soul (SOS) Village (a local NGO, based in Lilongwe) which focuses on providing humanitarian and developmental assistance to children in need and protecting their interests and rights around the world). According to her:

“Ngati mbali imodzi yamaswera olimbitsa thupi, anawa amathandizika kumbali yamatupi awo, amakhala olimba akamapita kuSOS.”

“Doing this is part of physical exercise so it provides the children with physical health benefits that allow children to stay fit.” (Female Mobile Viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

As there were quite a better number of respondents who were aware or had seen people with disabilities engaging in sports, the number dropped when individuals were asked if they have ever heard about the Paralympics. It was only a few selected individuals who were mostly teachers in surrounding primary schools who agreed to have heard about it. One of them said it was through the I’mPossible project and the second one said that it was only through their TV set that they watched such games. Since the question

addressing the respondents' knowledge of the Paralympics was given before watching the highlights, the majority would ask the researchers to narrate what these games are all about. In simple terms, World Paralympics was a new phenomenon, term, and idea brought to these rural communities.

2.3. Discussion Of The Results

The discussion has centred around two areas of Paralympic film screenings and screening of issues of disability. It is comparing the current practice to what has previously been done by other experts, accordingly, it connects, theoretically film screenings as a tool for community engagement.

2.3.1 Paralympic Film screening

The screening in rural communities aimed at engaging the communities with the broadcasts in a participatory forum. Firstly, community engagement was manifested as communities were brought up together to watch the broadcasts. One of the key principles which Martha Walker (2014) identified to be key in community engagement is the focus on public involvement with a defined purpose, clear expectations, a planning process, and anticipated impacts. In the current study, unlike indoor broadcast which targets households that own a television set, the public was brought together to watch the Paralympic games which aimed at awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities with the expectation that the audience may change their perceptions towards people with disabilities.

Another principle of community engagement is to become knowledgeable about the community's culture, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with efforts by outside groups to engage it in various programs (CDC, 2011), learning about the community's perceptions of those initiating the engagement activities. You will notice that the research team was tasked to gather information before the screening to understand several things in the community including perceptions. This enabled active

community engagement as we could choose the order of broadcasts as well as giving direction to the discussions.

Manyozo (2012) identifies dialogue and deliberations as crucial for social change. As explained earlier on, in the process some discussions were made and facilitated by the research team. This allowed the audience to reflect on their perceptions and attitude toward people with disabilities. The community screenings were indeed a tool for community engagement as they adopted some of the core principles of community engagement such as dialogue, and public involvement. Parcy-Smith (2020) explains that it is key to use engage communities for change to happen as it stimulates reflection and dialogue in response to prevailing attitudes and practices.

The screenings that were conducted in Chiradzulu, Lilongwe, and Mzimba had a similar flow of the films which were made to those done by either by DzigaVertov, the Russian pioneer of rural mass mobile film screenings; or BEKE since they were all made to initiate change. However, since the films back then by such people as Vertov mainly aimed at propaganda, audience involvement was limited if we compare them to the screenings of the Paralympic highlights. Additionally, the setup of the films made by Vertov was not strategic as they targeted everyone for popularity and propaganda.

In contrast, the current screenings conducted in rural communities of Malawi targeted people for a specific purpose. As Piotrow (1997: 14) points out, for every communication to be successful it has to be strategic, it has to have the target audience (segmented).

There was a slight difference in terms of community engagement if we compare the current screenings and those from before. The facilitator of the Paralympic highlights film screenings was very selective in choosing which people to include at the screening; various community leaders (village chiefs, teachers) and other representatives (cultural communities, disability community) were invited for the highlights. When Julia Cain talks about reception in his theory of film screening as a tool for community engagement, she mentions that screening a 'local' video product for its subject-audience community is a distinctive experience from the mass distribution screening of films or videos made for

a general audience. This has been manifested in the current study as a careful selection of the audience gave the best results (see further discussion in chapter 4).

As Bennet and Cole-King (1982) point out, Malawi has a long tradition of community involvement in development through "self-help" projects. Communities are organised according to a combination of traditional and political structures. Traditional chiefs, village headmen, and elders act as the decision-making authority in villages. In the theory that Verellen (2010) talks about audience engagement, the scholar clarified that a well-defined target audience accomplishes its audience/community engagement and communication goals. The application of this tenet of the theory allowed those who were available at the screenings to suggest the best ways of progressing as far as knowledge exchange on the Paralympics and stigma was concerned as key stakeholders were available.

Having community leaders around allowed the gatherings to bring in successful debates. The debate brought openness and accountability since some issues targeted specific leaders whose input was key to finding solutions. In Chiradzulu for example, in the discussion, and Mzimba's example, a teacher responsible for special needs students commented, stating that they will move forward to train special needs students in para-sport. When using film as a tool for community engagement the principle is that there should be a target for a specific audience (Priester, 2015). The current screenings ensured that this principle should be applied. From the results presented, there was a lot of learning that occurred from the audience and some were able to relate to previous screenings which they had watched. And these results indicate the power of film in community engagement. Just as the theory also suggests that mutual benefit is established, managed, and communicated effectively, filmmakers can create partnerships with leaders of corresponding social movements to create synergistic relationships (Vellen, 2010).

This study has brought about the discovery that film screening is sporadic in rural communities. Although this is so communities were very excited about their involvement

in many programs. The use of film screening has been very successful throughout history. It allowed the facilitation team to use examples from different communities to teach, share and promote the behaviors which are acceptable, as noted by Cain, 2009. This program has proven to be very effective because it disseminated knowledge and gave room to discuss the way forward. So it is very key that the culture of film screenings should be reawakened so that various communities can relate their situations to what they see, or learn from what others are doing. People like Taonere Banda, the Malawian only Paralympian, can be a motivation in such instances.

In observation, it was quite clear that the screenings event helped to reveal the unique needs of the communities. In almost all three sites, through the comments given by participants, it was clear that there was a need for institutions to work on promoting para-sports at a community level as well as in schools. As most people were not aware of para-sports and Paralympics, communities were eager to know and learn how they could move forward with the continuation of the program. In Mzimba for example, one of the viewers commented that such an arrangement could be helpful to the community.

However, although the success of the screenings had flourished from the above finding, there was an indication that there were also other forms of distribution channels such as video showrooms that could be used as a distribution model in rural communities. This channel, has been explored before by Tufte (2009) who claimed that ‘video parlours’ were widely available and accessed, in particular amongst younger men. In defining them, he said they were informal cinemas organised as video/DVD screenings, often in private homes, where the owner charged a minimal fee for each screening. Action films and pornographic films were amongst the most popular screenings, representing a very particular dimension of possible symbolic worlds these young men accessed.

In the theory of screenings Verellene (2010: 4), proposed the use of multiple channels of film distribution to ensure that the process is strategic and successful. Notice also that the current study has proven that television ownership has spread to rural communities and access to videos through the internet, unlike back in the 1930s when viewership was

communal. This has enabled people in rural communities to access videos in their local settings with few challenges unlike before which means exploring such channels can be very key for a greater impact. This is, therefore, an area where future research can explore on.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the results and findings concerning the objective, exploring the use of film screenings on issues of disability and para-sports. Results show that their film screening on various issues is very limited. This made the current screenings more interesting. Adding to that, results also show that there is increased discrimination which is persisting in Malawian rural communities. In terms of para-sport, there is limited knowledge of the subject. The chapter has drawn two themes. It has compared the current screenings with those which were done in the past. It has also brought the concept of discrimination by looking at how culture has contributed to that. In doing so the theory of film screenings as a tool for community engagement has also been applied in this chapter by looking at the results.

CHAPTER THREE

PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES ON ISSUES OF DISABILITY AND PARA-SPORTS

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the report looked at how film screening has been used in the past and what the practice was like in the current research. In this chapter, we will look at the various perceptions that people have on issues of disability and para-sports. The chapter looks at the general perceptions of people towards those with disabilities. Later, we will extend by giving the results on the perception of people on sports for the disabled, after which a critical discussion on results concerned with the perception is presented.

Data for this chapter was collected through individual interviews which were done with the participants from all three sites. To seek relevant and accurate data, data for the perception objective was carefully collected before the actual setup of the screenings. This helped to minimize contamination of data with data which would be collected after the screening of the highlights from Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Broadcast. As the final objective of this study mainly focuses on getting feedback from the audience and part of it tackled perception, so asking questions on their initial perception before the screening allowed the team to understand how the community perceives people with disabilities. In simple terms, perception is defined as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment.

3.2. Results And Findings

The results and findings of this chapter have been divided into three emerging topics; disability as normality, Disability as inability, and perception of para-sport.

3.2.1 The situation of People with Disabilities

a) Acceptance by Community

One of the questions which the respondents were asked aimed at knowing the experience they have especially with people with disabilities. This question looked at the experience by putting in mind the different individual differences which were there in terms of age, sex, and differences in terms of being disabled or non-disabled. Most respondents from all three sites showed people with disabilities are treated as equals and with a lot of respect when compared to those with no disabilities.

A respondent in Lilongwe said that she views and treats them with love as any other human being because they were also created by God. She emphasised that people with disabilities need love

“Nthawi zonse ndikakumana ndianthu aulumali ndimawathandiza, kaya ndikumjigo ndimawasiya uti atunge kaye, ngakhale akanyamula katundu olemetsa ndimawanyamuza.”

“Every time I meet a person with a disability whether at a water drawing point I let them go first, even when they have carried heavy loads I help them out.” (Woman community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

In understanding this, you can notice that disability has been related to some kind of situation that requires charity. People in rural areas have defined disability just as the medical model has defined disability; ‘caused’ by parts of the body that are lacking or do not work ‘properly’. In this understanding, people look at those with a disability as a responsibility to them and people who always need non-disabled people’s help because those with disabilities are lacking.

b) Terms and meanings

The majority of the respondents referred to people with disabilities as ‘olumala’ in Chichewa or ‘aulumali’ in Tumbuka which means disabled. A lot of people have learned to use the language ‘olumala’ which describes as “people with disabilities”. It was in rare cases that the respondents used the word ‘opunduka’ to describe a person with a disability. “Opunduka” is a negative and discriminatory which was used by a few respondents in Lilongwe and Chiradzulu. However, use of positive language was noticed,

especially among opinion leaders as well as the teachers from across all three areas that we visited.

In the current study, it was discovered that there is a notable change if we compare the language used to describe people with albinism from “*napweri*” to “*anthu achialubino*”. It is very common for people in the southern part of Malawi to call a person with albinism a ‘*napweri*’ because that is how they have been described for decades. Using such terms is offensive as defined by many local NGOs but in a discussion I had with one of the female respondents in the south, she said that using such a term is what they know from how they have been raised:

‘Kodi zotchula anapweri kuti alubinozi zatchuka zaka zomwezi momwe tinazindikira kuti anthuwa sizoti amasowa koma amaphedwa ndikukagulitsa ziwalo zawo. Ndizamabungwe izi, ife zomwe timadziwa kalelo ndizoti anapweri samafa amangosowa.’

‘Calling people with albinism as albinos is a new term that was brought to us by NGOs, especially after as a country we noticed that albinos are killed by people who sell their body parts. So it is not wrong to call them “*napweri*”.’ (Woman community film screening viewer, Mwalipa, 28/10/21)).

c) Inclusion and discrimination

Results revealed that there were conflicting views on whether people with disabilities were included in activities or discriminated against. People with disabilities in the study had a different perspective from people with no disabilities. People with disabilities indicated that often they were excluded from developmental programs. At times there were individuals who teased them about their disability although done indirectly. Sometimes it was done through jokes. For example, a respondent in Lilongwe Dzenza cited that it is very common for her mates to say bad words about her movement as a person with a disability:

“Anandipatsa maina onyozetsa, nthawi zambiri ndimakhala pandekha kuopa kukhumudwa.”

“They gave me different names; I always stay alone to avoid getting hurt.”
(Male community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

He extended to give an example of several children with disability who were in most cases hidden from the public in their community because of their impairment. That, according to her, was done by parents because they were afraid that these children might be hurt by their friends. According to her, children with no disabilities took part in highly physically demanding games that did not consider those that were disabled, and when the children with disabilities took part, they got hurt.

To understand this, the researcher extended the question to the Village Chief of the community Chipupa (not a real name) to comment on the same. In his explanation, he defended that, although that was the case, it should be understood that, most people with disabilities had tempers that could not be explained which resulted in them being victims. He gave an example of a certain man in his community who had hearing and speech impairments and frequently got into fights, especially at beer joints. According to the man in one of the public hearings of his case at the village headman’s court space, his actions were a result of a hot temper.

What the chief said has shown that there were widely held stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes even from the top/ leadership level. As he continued to explain he said that such actions, prompted parents to keep their children in safe places, thereby hiding them from the public. According to him, because of their temper, children with disabilities had no safe place to chat and they were hidden for their protection. (This debate is further explored in Chapter Three).

Another female respondent in Chiradzulu commented that there was discrimination against people with disabilities. According to her,

“ndili ndi mwana wa ulumali oti nthawi zambiri amakhala akutuluka dovu moti anthu ambiri safuna kumuyandikira... akamuyandikira ndiye kuti amangomunyoza. Izizi zinandipangitsa kuti ndizimukaniza mwana wanga

kupezeka pagulu ndipo sapita kusukulu ndimaopa kuti anzake azikamuchita chipongwe.”

“I have a child who has a disability and always salivates at the mouth. A lot of people in my community refuse to stay close to her, and other people send her away from groupings while bad-mouthing her. This has prompted me to keep my child far away from the public including school because I am afraid that the child may be teased.”(Chiradzulu female Film screening Viewer 18/10/21)

In sum, although the majority of the respondents said that there is no discrimination against people with disabilities, data collected through observations and interviews proved otherwise. It was quite clear that people with disabilities were still treated as having an inability to do things on their own and often and again they were ignored in development as well as in sports.

3.2.2 Disability as a normality

A female community member in Chiradzulu said that almost all the respondents in the study said that they viewed people's disabilities as a normal occurrence for humanity. Some people were born with a disability, or a disability was acquired due to other factors as people live in society. Others were born without a disability and lived through life as non-disabled people. The respondents gave examples of what people with disability had that made them fully human. They said these people could marry and have children, and that, when allowed to go to school, they do succeed. The female community member from Chiradzulu illustrated it in this way:

Kunena zoon, anthu auulumali ndingati ife tomwe alunga. Ngati pali kusiyana kumabwera chifukwa chaulumali wawowo, kaya sakumva, kaya sakuyankhula kapena kuyenda. Koma kutengera nzeru komanso kachitidwe kazinthu sikasiyana, kungoti pena ife anthu alunga timatha kuchita zinthu zina mosavuta kuyerekezera ndi anthu aulumali.

Frankly speaking, people with disabilities are just like people without disabilities. If there is a difference, it is only in terms of their disability;

whether they are deaf, dumb, or crippled but in terms of intelligence and running of things there is no difference. The only advantage that able-bodied have is that they can do things much more easily than those with disabilities. (Woman community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

Listening to this respondent showed the confidence she had in people with disabilities. This was interesting because it is often a kind of taboo, and sometimes it depends on the different disability/impairment as to how stigmatised dating, getting married, having kids etc. could be viewed (ibid.).

Village Chief from Chiradzulu said that, since people in the area had lived together with people with disabilities in the schools around the area, they lived with them as any other human being. According to him, people in the area had faith and belief that people with disabilities could do things just like anyone. In his example, he mentioned that when he was in primary school he shared a desk with a friend who was blind. So to him, living around people with disabilities had not been a challenge. He continued to say that this perception was spread across the area, that:

“Mdera lino anthu amakhala bwino ndi anthu aulumali chifukwa anachikhazikitsa kuti iwowo ndichimodzimodzi ndimunthu aliyense. Kubwera kwasukulu iyi (Maryview School for the Deaf, and Montfort school for the blind) ili pafupiyi, kunapangitsa kuti ena ngakhale anthu oti saali pasukulupa azitha kulumikizana ndi anthu osamva ndikuyankhula pogwiritsira ntchito ma sign. Ndipo anthu omwe ndi osamva ndikusayankhula amanena kuti amasangalala akabwera ku chiradzulu kudzaphunzira sukulu.”

“People in the area live well with people with disabilities and they consider them as every human being. The existence of schools like Maryview School for the Deaf, and Montfort school for the blind for children with disabilities has helped ordinary community members to interact with them freely. Most community members can communicate

with those who cannot speak using sign language. The deaf community, they are happy when they come to the schools here in Chiradzulu because the community is very welcoming.” (Male community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

In Mzimba, respondents had a similar perception of people with disabilities. The majority said that they were just as human as them. Others said that they were all an image of God and those with disabilities were not inferior in God’s eyes, and neither do they view them differently.

Adding to this point a respondent in Lilongwe who also has a disability said “I view people with disabilities as able-bodied. I, for example, can do farming and other activities despite my physical disability. However, as people with disabilities, the only challenge we face is that we are not allowed to engage in activities.” This point of view brought in another interesting discovery which dwelt much on the idea that disability is regarded as inability. This will be discussed thoroughly in the next section.

3.2.3 Disability as inability

Through the comments which were given by the participants in the discussion of the Paralympic games, respondents from Mzimba brought about issues which showed that people with disabilities are unable to do things. One of the respondents said “what people with disabilities need was care from able-bodied people. In addition, a female respondent from Lilongwe said:

“Anthu aulumali amafunika thandizo lathu, iwo aja ndioperewerera, simungawafananize ndiife alunga.”

“People with disabilities need our help, you cannot compare them with us.” (Woman community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

What this woman tried to communicate is that people with disabilities cannot do things on their own without the help of people who have no disabilities. She gave an example of

how they needed help in carrying heavy things, escorting them to school and doing all the heavy chores for them.

A male respondent in Chiradzulu had the same perception, stating that helping them relieves and protects them from danger.

“Sizoona kumusiya munthu osaona kuti ayende yekha kupita kugolosale kukagula chinthu, ndichimodzimodzi kuwalekelera kuti achite ngozi. Iwo aja amafunika chithandiza ndichitetezo cha anthu alunga zomwe zili ngati chikondi chifukwa mumakhala kuti mukuwafunira zabwino.”

“You cannot leave a person who is blind to be moving around to the grocery alone, which can be equated to leaving them in danger. They need our help and guidance for their protection. Doing so means we love them because we are wishing them well and a good life.” (Male community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21))

A similar finding was pointed out by (Smith and Bundon, 2018), who argued that: How societies divide ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ bodies is central to the production and sustenance of what it means to be human in society. It defines access to nations and communities. It determines choice and participation in civic life. It determines what constitutes ‘rational’ men and women and who should have the right to be part of society and who should not (p.65).

Both these respondents are of the view that a person with a disability needs help always. They cannot do things on their own. Some respondents were also very clear that people with disabilities have to be in their parent’s homes longer unless they are married to someone who will be willing to take care of them. Another respondent still from Lilongwe talked about a certain lady who had been trying her best to act normal though she had a disability and was involved in several accidents. According to the respondent, such a person would be regarded as odd because she went against what she could do as a person with a disability. Another respondent still said that “if a person who is disabled goes beyond what he cannot do, it causes chaos and it becomes a responsibility for able-bodied people to solve such issues”.

There was also a respondent in Lilongwe who mentioned that even in development projects people with disabilities were limited to simple jobs only. They would be denied work on road projects such as carrying rocks and sand. They would usually be told that they could not do such things. However, according to her, that should not have been the case. What they needed, according to her, was to be given a chance to work at a pace she could manage. In her case, she was sure that she could do whatever other people thought she could. To her, all that able-bodied people needed was to cultivate patience.

Village Chief revealed in his interview that most of his community members who were disabled travelled to Lilongwe City to beg for money. For children, parents sent them as a means of earning their livelihood and for other families begging was like a business. According to the Chief, the way society was shaped, people with disabilities were pitied and as such were given money and alms to survive on as they were unable to work. This perception had entrenched itself even deeper among those that had disabilities. In a particular case in Lilongwe, a woman at the community film screening responded in this way when she was asked:

“Anthu ambiri alibe chisoni, safuna kundithandiza, ndilipa ndimagona ndinjala kusowa chakudya. Nyengo yadzinja palibe amabwera kudzandithandiza kulima, olo onditungira madzi ndilibe.”

“Many people do not have people, they cannot help me. As I am, I sometimes go to bed without food. During the rainy season I don’t get any help. When it comes to drawing water, nobody helps” (Woman community film screening viewer, Dzena, 24/10/21)

Although this woman made these remarks, note that in one of her responses on whether she was included in development projects, she said yes, and that she was enlisted on a project which paid rent for her farming land and bought her farm inputs. She recalled that there was a certain organization which had just enlisted her to be a beneficiary of a certain project that distributed pigs to people with disabilities.

Although there was this view that people with disabilities were unable to do things by themselves, others with disabilities had different views. They look at themselves as abled

and that they could do things even much better than people without disabilities. A respondent in Chiradzulu who had speaking difficulties denied this thinking and said that:

“Ine ndimazona ngat walungalunga, chifukwa ndimatha kuchita chilichonse chomwe munthu aliyense atha kuchita. Ndili ndikuthekera kopanga chilichonse.”

“I view myself as any able-bodied person, I know I can do anything that they can do. I can do everything.” (Male community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

A similar comment was given by a respondent from Lilongwe who said that as a man, and a household head, he has been able to feed his family and nothing, not even his disability, had stopped him from doing his role as the head. This type of thinking contrasted with others that saw themselves as helpless and needed able-bodied people to take care of them.

3.2.4 Disability and Beliefs

One clear theme was that people held various beliefs on the cause of disabilities. One particular respondent from Mwalipa Chiradzulu who was involved in an accident when he was a teenager said that he believed that he was bewitched by a relative which resulted in his disability. According to him:

“Kubadwa walunga ndithu koma anthu ena ansanje anandipanga chipongwe. Tinayesera kuponda apa and apa koma ayi ndithu. Olo kuchipatala amanena kuti mzokaikitsa kuti ndizabwelenso mwakale.”

“I was born without any disability but jealousy people bewitched me. We tried to consult traditional healers but there was no hope. Even the hospital said this condition is permanent.” (Male community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21).)

A similar view was given by a respondent in Lilongwe who said that other people bewitch their children to get riches. In his narration, he told a story that it was believed that if a woman gave birth to disabled children two to three times then she was cursed or

bewitched or she could have been a witch herself. According to this respondent, such a woman would be avoided from marriage in her village and most women with such traits got divorced (Male community film screening viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)). So you will notice that according to the idea mentioned in the earlier section that everyone who had a disability could get married seems to have exceptions, not due to the specific disability, but due to the understanding about causes the disability and consequences thereof.

Since part of my research required that I know my respondents beforehand, in Chiradzulu before the program started I met a group of women who were chatting and I joined them, purposely posing a question about how others viewed people with disabilities. An interesting discussion broke out. A woman in the group talked about her child who had a cognitive disorder and in her remarks she said:

“Koma mwana ameneuja yekha amandipatsa minyama”

“The child is a curse to me.” (Woman Mobile Film Viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

She claimed that the child always brought her bad luck, citing one incident in which the child at one time almost had their house burnt. “Taking care of him is difficult because he is over-reliant on me, even his friends cannot be around him because he is a burden and destroys everything.” Critically weighing her argument, it can be seen that she believed being disabled is connected to some dark spiritual world.

Similarly, Helander (1984:35) argues that; ‘disability seen as a divine curse "justifies" low esteem for disabled people and their families...Moral trespasses or "sins" and "evil thoughts" may remain hidden, but the appearance of disability in a family will make the "sin" visible to all. In a close-knit society, this may lead [one] to rid oneself or [one's] family of such obvious proof of evil doing (in B. Ingstad, 1995:247).

3.2.5 Perception on para-sports

The majority of the respondents could not imagine people with disabilities engaging in sports. In a particular case in Lilongwe, a certain male respondent said that it was not possible for someone with a critical disability to engage in sports because that would be

beyond their capabilities. A woman respondent in Chiradzulu exclaimed when commenting on the interview:

“Iiih!! mpaka olumala kusewera mpira, ndiyetu mukutanthauza kuti amenewo akhoza kukhala kuti chilema chawo ndichaching’ono eti?”

“Ooh No!! So people with disabilities can participate in sports, or it is only for those with minor disabilities right?” (Woman community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21).

It is clear from this response that it never dawned on this woman to perceive that people with disabilities could take part in sports unless their impairment was very minor. She perceived a disability as something which could hinder someone from doing sports.

Although such perceptions were shared across all the sites, there were a few individuals whose perceptions were positive towards the engagement of people with disabilities in sports. For example, almost all the teachers interviewed on all the sites were aware that such games existed. In Mzimba most respondents started with doubt about whether people with disabilities could take part in sports, only to change after watching the Paralympic games. One woman said

“Iii sitinaziganizire n’komwe izi zoti anthu aulumali n’kumapanga nawo masewera”

“It never dawned on us that people with disabilities could participate in such sporting activities as seen in the film.” (Woman community film screening viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21)).

From the findings, it can be generally concluded that there was a lack of knowledge about the Paralympics and para sports games in the rural communities, especially amongst ordinary villagers, outside those that had some education like teachers.

3.3 Critical Discussion

This section will dwell much more on understanding the factors which have led to the perceptions which were observed amongst ordinary community members in the rural areas in Malawi. Critically analyzing this, it can be observed that there were several key factors which led to the perceptions that people had towards people with disabilities. as

that it moved from self-exploration of communities to a critical juxtaposition of different modes of understanding. Cain (2009: 184) identifies that the theory of facilitated community screening programme helps create conditions for “true discourse” of community knowledge systems which may lead to critical evaluation.

It was observed in the current study, through the critical evaluation which was there on the community’s knowledge that there were several factors which led to such. These factors include culture, belief systems, socialization, and level of education. In this section, these factors are discussed to give insight on how they led to stigma and discrimination towards people with disabilities.

3.3.1 Culture and Belief Systems

The theory of film screening as a tool for community engagement looks at the use of community engagement to create a collaborative learning environment and provide a context in which communities can understand not only the historic experience of other cultures but also current issues and the evolution of their own culture. The current study’s results have found that it is very common for parents to hide children with disabilities for protection which has become a culture in almost all the communities. Similar results have been reported in previous studies such as Lund, Massah, & Lynch (2015) and Odongo (2018). However, there are still questions about whether hiding children from the public is good or bad for them. According to some respondents, this is acceptable because in doing so they are protected from danger. Other scholars such as Ingstad (1995) have argued strongly that it is usually more about protection and poverty. Other respondents, felt differently, claiming that such children are deprived of their rights to grow as normal children. Results from the data collected seem to support that parents are trying to protect their children from external abuse and don’t have many options due to poverty and lack of support, but of course, it can still have negative effects even if the intention is to protect.

The results showed that people claimed to view people with disabilities as normal as any human being. This dominant claim has its roots in the Christian belief system and teachings. The majority of respondents from all the three areas visited belonged to the

Christian faith, although, a few numbers belonged to other denominations such as Islam and African traditional ancestral worship, which is connected to spiritualism like The Masquerade “Gulewamkulu” dance. Several respondents quoted Genesis 1:27 from the Bible saying that people were all created in the image of God.

Commenting on this, Kaur and Karora (2019) discovered that religion plays a critical role in determining how disability is understood and how persons with disability are treated. The teaching of Islam also takes disability as normality. In the Quran, disability is regarded affirmatively, and that is apparent from one of its texts as, ‘no blame attaches to the blind, nor does blame attach to the lame, nor does blame attach to the sick’ (cited in Kaur and Karora, 2019). These teachings of acceptance because of religion were advanced in the study, judging from the respondents’ comments.

Apart from the perception that living normally with people with disability is the way to go since it attracts salvation in both Islam and Christian religions, the results showed that in rural communities, people are sympathetic toward people with disability. This treatment of people with disabilities has led to the idea of considering a disability as an inability, therefore people with disability need able-bodied people to help them survive. Able-bodied people consider those disabled as unable, and that requires help from those that are fit. Most of the time people with disabilities are isolated.

Although today’s religious teachings do not come out openly, in the organizations of the church and other religions it is manifested. It is quite common for the church to offer support to those that are disabled, and the elderly, time and again, helping them with chores such as farming. According to the church, being good Samaritans is good in the eyes of God but in essence, they still live with the idea that people with disabilities are unable. In one of the interviews, a respondent said that it is said in the Bible that when we want to celebrate, all those in need include the disabled (Quoted from Luke 14:12-14). Such teachings have resulted in the view that the disabled are always in need and their disability should be regarded as an inability.

From these points’, it can be concluded that religion is one of the key factors which has imposed certain negative perceptions towards people with disabilities in the rural communities in Malawi. Its influence is very dominant, especially among those that hold these beliefs.

3.3.2 Socialization

Another factor which was clear from the results to have been influential on the perceptions of able-bodied people on people with disabilities is socialization. Kendall (2012;76) defines socialization as a lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society. In analyzing the data, I found out that most respondents from Chiradzulu were very positive in interacting with people with disabilities.

This has resulted in tolerance between both the abled and the disabled - probably due to the presence of the Montfort Schools for people with disabilities. In Mzimba, I observed that it was because of the existence of strong leadership in viewing people with disabilities positively, because of achievements that have come from some of those that had disabilities. This seemed to have created a grounding for change in those communities, fostering positive perceptions toward people with disabilities.

Results in Chiradzulu also showed that due to increased positivity, most parents have been able to send their children to school, including the special schools meant for people with disabilities. The socialization of people in Chiradzulu has enhanced them to be tolerant and friendly towards people with disabilities. Chief Mwalipa agreed with this fact as he mentioned the existence of the school for children with disabilities to be an enabling factor for their understanding and tolerance (Interview, Montfort, 18/10/2021). A similar finding was given by Diamond, (1993) who indicated that children with positive attitudes toward peers having disabilities may be more willing to interact with them compared to children with negative attitudes. This idea applies to both young people and old people if the attitude is positive and that they are likely to interact with people with disability. In Chiradzulu, socialization has fostered a positive perception of people with disabilities.

The negative socialization of most people with disabilities has affected their perception of themselves and their abilities. In Lilongwe people with disabilities who were interviewed said that they have social circles in which they interact to avoid being hurt. They added to

say that there are others like them who in most cases are ignored and kept in hiding because of the community's perceptions of them (Woman community film screening viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21). The negative socialization has increased the number of beggars in the streets of Malawi. People with disabilities look at themselves as incapable and mostly engage in activities which they think and believe fit their status and situation. This is what Barbik and Gardrner (2021) observed, that negative attitudes toward disability disempower individuals with disabilities and lead to their social exclusion and isolation. Socially excluded children may have unsatisfying peer relationships, low self-esteem, and lack of achievement motivation, which affects their social and academic aspects of life, mental health, and general well-being.

3.3.1. Educational Background

Another key factor which was evident to influence positive perception of issues of disability was the educational background. Results from the interview with most teachers indicated that bias was minimal in them. They could speak of inclusive education and how they ensured that they can accommodate every student. In Lilongwe, a specialist teacher indicated how he has made sure that students with disabilities are included in almost every club at school. They are given a chance to engage in every sporting activity of their choice. He gave an example of one key example of a student saying that:

“We have a disabled boy who plays volleyball. I make sure that they are included in all the school activities.” (Interview specialist teacher, Dzenza, 24/10/2021)

The level of education has been evident in other studies to influence the perception of people with disabilities. The argument is that the higher the level of education the higher the positive perception of people with disabilities (Barbik and Gardrner, 2021). In addition to this, village chief Mwalipa who has secondary school level education said: “Having attained secondary school education myself makes me have a better understanding of what being disabled entails, due to interaction with people with disabilities while at school”.

Adding to this, both inclusive and non-inclusive education mattered in terms of perceptions. People in Chiradzulu were very positive and had a very developmental

perception towards those with disabilities unlike those in Mzimba or Lilongwe. This was so because the education system was inclusive. Similar results were given by Barbik and Gardrner (2021) who found that comparing inclusive and non-inclusive classrooms, indeed, found that inclusion and exposure have positive effects on typically developing children's attitudes toward and acceptance of peers with disabilities.

3.3.2. Perception and discrimination

Another emerging theme which I have isolated from the findings is the notion of perceptions leading to discrimination. Findings have indicated that most people perceive the disabled as unable. This has led to their situation of being victims of isolation, abuse, and mockery. In Chiradzulu for example, a respondent mentioned that she has witnessed parents isolating their children from others to avoid them being hurt since they cannot do things on their own (Woman community film screening viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21).

Some children with disabilities do not go to school because their parents feel they cannot manage to travel to and from school by themselves. Several parents who have children with disabilities are afraid of exposing their children to danger (Owusu et al.:2018). This implies that while isolating children for protection, parents have denied these children enjoyment of their rights to education and freedom of association as given by the Constitution of Malawi (1998).

The perception that people with disability are unable to do things has also resulted in exclusion from other community development activities. Adults from the study who had a disability explained that indeed they are discriminated against by their communities because their disability is perceived as an inability. This has made them vulnerable and it has limited their personal development at an individual level as well as a community level.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the findings on the perception of people on issues of disability and para-sports. The first part of the chapter talked about the findings which dwelt much on the views of disability. Findings have also detailed community

perceptions on para-sport. The second part of the chapter discussed the findings by looking at the various factors which have led to the perception that people have toward people with disability. The discussions tackled the issue of discrimination which seems to be caused by the various perceptions which people have towards people with disability.

The specific question that this chapter attempted to answer is: what are the perceptions of able-bodied people on people with disabilities in rural Malawi? In response to the exploration of the findings, it can be argued that the perceptions of ordinary rural Malawians are mixed, though they lean more towards the thinking that disability means inability. This can be argued with a proviso that those who have some education have a more tolerant perception that even people with disabilities can do things, including taking part in para-sport.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERCEPTIONS AND FEEDBACK OF RURAL COMMUNITIES ON PARALYMPIC BROADCAST SCREENINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the argument is that there was a noticeable change in perception and plan for action in the rural communities especially after participants were exposed to the Paralympic broadcasts. Perception changed both in terms of people with disability in general and what they are capable of. Through the discussions that occurred with all the participants, observations and individual interviews it was quite clear that there was a positive change in the perceptions of the audience. Such findings have been presented in this chapter and the discussion has been done using literature as well as the theory of film screening as a tool of community engagement.

4.2 Results And Findings

Through the coding process, the researcher identified three major themes relating to the third research objective of the current study.

4.2.3 Reaction and Interpretation of the Paralympic Screenings

Malawi was the only country of all the Sub-Saharan African countries that broadcast the Paralympics to have commentary in the local language. The use of Chichewa in the commentary allowed for effective community engagement, as the audience was able to understand the messages. One of the male respondents at Montfort in the discussion said that:

*“Kugwiritsa ntchito Chichewa kwandithandiza kuti ndimvetsere
mwatcheru ndikhunzirapo zambiri”*

“The use of Chichewa translation allowed me to listen attentively and learn a lot.”

Another respondent from Lilongwe, happily said that:

“Koma onenera aja ndye amaitha, zimachita kumveka ngati ndikumvera mpira wa ku Malawi.”

“The commentators were fun. It was just like I was watching Malawian football” (Male Film screenings Viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

The results of the study reveal that there were various interpretations of the screenings across the three districts. In Mzimba, there was excitement and amazement among the audience after watching the Paralympics. Right from the start, the audience cheered and made gestures that showed that they have never had such an experience of watching the Paralympics. People were murmuring while watching and they had a lot of discussions as the films were showing.

The village chief of the area said in his remarks that he was very happy that it was very kind of the team to visit their area and bring them good news and knowledge. According to the chief, the Paralympics are a new thing in the community and they expect that they will do something to ensure that the news is spread across the entire area. Additionally, in an interview, a female respondent said that showing the Paralympic broadcasts to their area was good for her and her community.

“Izizi sizimabwerabwera kumudzi kuno zomwe zimachititsa kuti tikhale otsalira. Ndichinthu chosangalatsa kwambiri ndipo ndiine okondwa kwambiri. Ndikapita kumudzi ndikauzakonso ena.”

“This is something you rarely see in the rural communities around here which has made us backwards. It’s very interesting to watch the screenings and I am very excited that when I go back to my home place I will spread the news on the knowledge gained here.” (Female Film screenings Viewer, Dzenza, 24/10/21)

One respondent however queried whether what she was watching was real. According to her, we live in a world which is full of acting. It took the researcher to convince her that it was real, illustrating further using Taonele Banda, who is a local athlete. Additionally the example of local children who participated in the I'mpossible video clip was also used to substantiate this. Nearly all the participants were very happy to be part of the screenings, from their gestures and applauses that were given towards both the commentary and the screenings. In a particular instance, people with disability who are identified as the deaf community started making sign language with happy faces, pointing at the amazing things which the para-athletes were doing. In one of the interviews, a participant from the deaf community (interview done with an interpreter) said that:

“Zinthu izi ndizosangalatsa, anthu olumala kuchita zinthu zoposera walunga sindikukhulupilira zomwe maso anga aona ndipo ndine osangalala kwambiri”

“This is amazing, seeing people with disabilities doing things that even those who are able-bodied cannot do. I can't believe what my eyes have seen and I am very excited.” (A woman with hearing difficulties, Chiradzulu).

The experience was not very different in Lilongwe. Results showed that participants were very happy to be part of something new in their community. A certain participant in the audience said that he was thrilled to be a pioneer, and very advanced in knowledge when he compared himself with those who did not attend the screenings. All this implied that the screenings were very important to the community and they had effects on perception change and action as discussed in the proceeding sections.

4.2.1 Perceptions of people with disability

The concept of disability has been explored in this study and the findings presented how the audience's perceptions of people with disabilities were affected after watching the Paralympic broadcasts. Through the interviews, which were done with selected participants, data for this section was collected. Several issues came out of this section and they have been discussed below.

a) Archery para-athlete

The first key issue which came out from the audience after watching the highlights was the surprise that people with disabilities can achieve. A certain respondent in Lilongwe said that

“Sindikukhulupilira! Sindimaganizirako kuti anthu aulumali ali ndikuthekera kochita zinthu zodabwitsa chonchi.”

“I cannot believe this!! I never imagined people with disabilities to be this capable that they can do such unbelievable things”

As observed in chapter 3, for quite some time now, disability has been equated to an inability in rural communities. People with disabilities were treated as normal of course but with less capability to do things on their own. The screening showed them what people with disability are also capable of, by bringing in excerpts from the film “Phoenix Rising”, which explored the back stories of the Paralympians. A respondent in Mzimba after being asked about the lesson he has learnt from the screenings said that:

“Mmene amakhalira munthu opanda manja uja yemwe amapanga nawo masewero oponya mibvi ndi uta ndizosangalatsa. Mulungu anatilengadi tonse mchifanizo chake. Chomwe chimangofunikira ndichikondi chowauza ndikuwaonetsa anthu aulumali kuti nawonso ali ndikuthekera, mwina sizingakhale chimodzimodzi ndi alunga koma sitiyanera kuwaonera pansi.”

“The life experience of the disabled man who did archery is very interesting. Indeed, God created all of us in his image and all that is required is love. This love needs to be told and shown by letting them know they are as capable as able-bodied people. Although it may not necessarily be the same with able-bodied people, but people with disabilities should not be seen as any less.”

Another participant was challenged to said that those athletes with disabilities were ten times more able than the entire room which was available at the screenings. The participant said that as a community they needed to start being inclusive and they should stop looking at people with disabilities with pity.

The facilitator of the discussion revealed some of the benefits which the para-athletes may have which were beyond the audience's expectations. In Lilongwe, the audience was in awe after hearing what Taonele Banda benefited from participating in the World Paralympics in Tokyo. This gave them confidence and from the fact that Taonele Banda originates from rural communities, the participant said that they knew they just had to invest with a little bit of trust in people with disabilities so that they could also be like Banda.

International Paralympic Committee believes the World Paralympic games can be a driver of social change that goes far beyond a stadium, helping to shift attitudes towards those with an impairment (Nielsen Sports Report, 2016). In the current study, findings have also indicated similar results. Participants changed their attitude towards people with disabilities after watching the highlights of the World Paralympics.

b)Amputee Swimmer

Across all three areas participants were shocked by the performance of one of the swimming Paralympians featured in the film "Phoenix Rising". The participants said that they were astounded by the performance of the athlete because she performed beyond expectations. This may be because the film was well designed to give details but also the idea that the one who was performing well was a woman.

In Malawi, observing the participants and through the interviews, it was discovered that, the Paralympic swimmer was very interesting to the community members because culturally people with disabilities are seen as unable. The highlights of a woman with an amputation challenged the audience's cultural beliefs from all three sites of our study, impressed with her stellar performance. In Chiradzulu, the whole room cheered when they saw the performance of this particular athlete. Similarly, in Lilongwe in one of the comments from the discussions with the audience, a male participant said:

"Ndinali odabwa kuona mayi opanda mikono akusambila mochititsa kaso, anakhala oyambilira mumpikisano wake. Chonena ndilibe."

"I was very astonished by the woman's performance as she swam yet had no arms and yet still became first in the race. This is something I did not

expect. It has left me speechless.” (Woman Film Screenings Viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

This man’s expectations were challenged, just like another woman in Mzimba who said:

“Zomwe ndaona lero ndizachilendo kwaine, sizomwe ndimadziwa kuti ndizotheka ngakhale kwa anthu amudera lino ndichilendo, Tangoganizani, mayi opanda mikono yonse kusambila kuposanso oti ali nayo yonse. Zochititsa chidwi kwambiri”

“This is a completely new experience for me. It has challenged my experience and even that of this community. Imagine a woman without arms swimming like she has both hands. So amazing.” (Woman Film Screenings Viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21)

According to the participants, what made this performance more special was the fact that the woman performed beyond what her body was expected to do. Tembo (2014) observed that the social structure and cultural processes in one’s community can make people believe that there was nothing people with disabilities could do, and this instils a dependency attitude in people with disabilities in Malawi. As a result, most people with disabilities are raised in a system where they are not allowed to even learn basic chores such as cooking, let alone swimming and sporting activities because of the hierarchy of disabilities they are at.

Both these respondents had prejudices toward people with disabilities and through the screenings, their belief was challenged. They thought and said they did not think that people with disabilities can do such things and the highlights challenged their belief that after being exposed to them their perceptions towards people with disabilities changed positively. Similar findings were also highlighted by Coates and Vickerman (2014:16) who said that when the subjects in their study were exposed to the highlights they had a firm belief that the Games had a positive effect on people’s perceptions, leading them to view individuals with disabilities in a more positive light.

4.2.2 *Significance of Paralympics to the communities*

a) Role Model

Participants who had disabilities took the Paralympians as role models. Similarly, other able-bodied parents were inspired by the athlete's performance. One particular woman in Chiradzulu who is deaf was astonished by the performance of a female para-athlete with an amputated arm. According to this woman, she never imagined people with disabilities could have such capabilities, especially in a world where there is discrimination. The woman said:

Mdziko lomwe tikukhalamoli, moyo ndiovuta kwa anthu ngati ine kuti tipite patsogolo ndikumapanga nawo masewera olimbitsa thupi. Pamakhala kunyoza kochuluka kuti sitingakwanitse. Koma kuona mzimayi uyu opanda manja akupambana pamasewera osambila ndazindikira zomwe ifenso tingathe ndipo ndikhulupilira kuti ana amene ndimawathandiza akhala ozindikira kuti nawonso ali ndikuthekera kochita chilichonse.”

“In the world, we live in, things are very hard for people like us to rise to the top and engage in sports. There is a lot of teasing in terms of what we are capable of. However, seeing this woman with amputated arms performing as the best has made me realize that we are all capable and I am sure in my community here at Montfort I will let the children know that they can do everything they want because it is possible.” (Woman Film Screenings Viewer, Montfort, 18/10/21)

This woman has been at the institution for some years, taking care of children with disabilities and having watched this made her realize that with the passion that she already had, she could do more by helping the children realize their capabilities. She made the achievement of the athlete very personal and related it to hers.

In another example, in Lilongwe, there was a man who had been struggling with taking care of his son due to financial challenges. He explained that there are a lot of expenses that the child needs including time. He had doubts about whether the son can be productive in his adulthood. However, after watching the screenings, the man was very

confident that his son had a future. This came after he had observed that the son is very passionate about sports and seeing people playing table tennis made him think that could be something he would try. Similarly, Purdue and Howe's (2012) study found that showing what is possible meant that Paralympians have the potential to be lifestyle role models for individuals with a disability.

b) Feeling Motivated to Take Action

In all three districts, participants showed tendencies that their attitudes and feelings toward people with disabilities were changed. Through their gestures and comments, participants showed confidence in people with disabilities. It was revealed through observations, interviews and discussions that the communities had an instant plan for action as discussed in this section. We will look at the three areas to understand their action plans separately.

In Chiradzulu, the village chief made it quite clear that after the screenings, he would set up a meeting within the village. According to him, since he was a group village headman, he was very confident that he would share the information and new knowledge with a wider group. Apart from that the teacher who was interviewed in Chiradzulu, said that, although there were para sporting games in the school, there were not enough so after watching a wider range of games he would make sure that they plans to extend to include other games.

Just like Chiradzulu, the village chief of Lilongwe revealed a similar plan to conduct a meeting with his subjects back at home. The specialist teacher responsible for people with disabilities at Dzenza Secondary school also added to say that, he would lobby for an inclusive policy in the school that included engagement of people in sports. The teacher said that although the school had a policy that ensured that people with disabilities are not discriminated against, it did not put much emphasis on sports. It would therefore be his duty to lobby so that students with disabilities were empowered to challenge their disability.

Finally, there was a lot of promise for a plan of action in Mzimba by the specialist teacher who added to say that apart from advocating for sports for people with disabilities he would also call for collaboration with parents. He planned to call the community members who were guardians of children with disabilities to send their children to school. These guardians and parents would be convinced to send their children to school. The village chief planned for action on the spot by asking his advisors to schedule a meeting which was to be on the next Sunday of that week. He made the schedule just after watching the screenings. When we interviewed him he said:

“Zomwe ndaona lero ndizosangalatsa moti zikufunikira kuchitapo kanthu mwamachawi ndichifukwa ndauza nduna kuti ziitanitse msonkhano. Cholinga chake ndikuwadziwitsa anthu zandondomeko yaleroyi komanso kukakonzekera mmene tingapitire chitsogolo.”

“What we have seen today is very significant that it required immediate action that is why I have called my advisors to set up a village meeting. The main aim of the meeting is to share what we have learnt here and plan what we are to do next.” (Male Film screenings Viewer, Edingeni, 28/10/21)

The plans that all three communities shared to have had shown that the screening was very successful and they had the power to initiate change. However, there was a discovery that, although the screening brought good and interesting knowledge there were doubts and challenges that community members had in practising para-sport. This has been discussed intensively in the next section.

c) Limits in Assistive Technology

Even though the highlights had a positive influence on the change of perceptions by the participants, there were some issues which were raised by some participants on how hard it was for the rural communities to adopt the Paralympics. The first issue was to do with assistive technology which was not easily accessed in Malawi, where, according to Munthali (2017), only 4.5 % of people have the access to assistive technology. The

challenge in the country is that many people who have walking difficulties walk or crawl due to their lack of access to wheelchairs, canes, hearing aids, crutches, and more.

In Mzimba, a certain respondent said explicitly that although the knowledge which has been imparted to them is very beneficial, he was worried that it will be challenging for the rural communities to fully commit to the games. In his narration, the man said that noting from the screening, para-athletes were using assistive technologies such as wheelchairs and such AT is rarely found in the communities. The technologies are very expensive for people with disabilities to access.

4.3 Discussions

In this section, I will present a discussion of the findings using the theory of film screenings as a tool for community engagement, in addition to assertions made by some scholars who have studied the same. The discussion will look at the two concepts that are very key to community engagement which is Awareness and Action. Additionally, in this section, we will look at three emerging issues namely: taking global content to a local context, localization of the screenings and film as a tool for community engagement.

4.3.1 Taking Global Content for Local Context

The aesthetics of film screening have always centred on entertaining and educating communities (Cain, 2009:178 and Nichol 2012:69). This was evident in the current screening where we observed participants during the screening, but also evidenced through the interviews. The highlights proved to be very effective in increasing awareness of the Paralympics. Braden (1999) recognizes that film screening of global content which can be done in Malawi can represent a global, homogenised narrative, but as a technology it can be adapted to small scale uses, with the possibility of access and representation at a local level. What braden was concerned about here was the idea that when world wide communication networks represent global power structures, local power is also expressed through representations.

As alluded to by most participants in the study about their ignorance of the existence of Paralympic games, the audience indicated that the screening made them aware and were very excited about both the activity and how it changed their thinking. Related to this is

what Purdue & Howe (2012) explains in their article that ‘the sporting performances of Paralympians at the Paralympic Games were deemed to have the potential to heighten awareness and knowledge of Paralympic sport as well as increasing sporting participation among people with a disability (p.9).’ What these authors are arguing about is that letting people watch Paralympic games is very key in helping people with or without disabilities to be aware of Paralympic sports and also to be aware that people with disabilities can engage in sporting activities, and this point has been strongly established in the current study. However, one community was worried that the screenings did not say much about what is in the community but rather showed them what was happening elsewhere in the world. The respondent said that the games which were being shown did not give a picture of what is in Malawi. He viewed the screenings as what is happening internationally, citing the swimming he had witnessed in the film.

Looking at the findings, the highlights of the Paralympics could be categorised as global content. Some doubted if such things as shown in the highlights could be attainable in Malawi. The relatively less educated, as those who had no education could be unfamiliar with the various technical styles of film presentation. And this is something that needed careful consideration. Garthwaite (2000:63) says that for communities which lack cohesion, self-esteem and even visibility, the experience of seeing their area and/or issues portrayed constructively and with dignity on-screen can bring about a profound change in consciousness and confidence. It can therefore be recommended that future screenings should also contain highlights of Malawian Paralympic content for easy referencing and representation. Additionally, the 2020 Paralympic highlights screenings could have included many games that were also known and done in the communities. This could have been done by conducting a mini-survey beforehand to know more about the communities in which the screenings were taking place. When these communities watch videos illustrating people with whom they identify, they could have suggested or taken concrete action to improve their lives (Garthwaite, 2000:63). In this process, the audience moves the message from passive complaint to active engagement that they get involved in the succeeding change. It was therefore key to include content that local communities could identify with.

4.3.3 Localization

As the idea of bringing global content to a local context can be viewed with scepticism (Garthwaite, 2000), the evidence from this study shows that some part of the audience had doubts about the applicability of the global content that they were watching, to their lives. They thought its application could be challenging as some of the games did not apply in their context. Others were worried about accessing some of the assistive technology calling the highlights more international for Malawian standards. However, the highlights were balanced by a careful curation of what was to be screened which included local para-sport videos done by the National Paralympics Committee, and news clips about local athletes. Additionally, the highlight's commentary was translated into Chichewa, a Malawian national language, adding to the use of local models such as Taonele Banda, and a community engagement post-discussion which was facilitated by part of the research team.

Respondents in the current study were very happy and satisfied with the use of Chichewa as it allowed them enjoy the highlights, claimimng that they were able to learn from them without any translation struggles. This approach has been used in Malawi before when Central African Film Unit provided commentary of films in local languages using a local interpreter/cinema (Kamlongera, 1984). Although this was not very effective but it gave a chance for locals to learn from these films. Understanding film as a tool for community engagement, Cain (2009) realizes that use of local language internally brings about persuasive discourses while enabling people to engage with both content (discourse) and the medium (video) as well as opening access to different interpretations and meanings, thereby facilitating the development of personal viewpoints that is formed through engagement.

The use of commentary made it easier for the audience to understand. It was partly made in a humorous way as local radio football commentary is done. Bill Nichols argues that documentary films have often called attention to social issues and problems. Film enhances “aesthetic awareness,” but also the “social consciousness” of its subjects (2012:69). Nichols argues that although other people may argue that the imaginary world

from fiction films is what is more entertaining, the reality of the image in a video also has the power to appeal to our senses. It may entertain or please, and does so using a rhetorical or persuasive effort aimed at the existing social world. In this case the commentary made it more lively for the communities to understand (ibid).

Language is a very important aspect of culture. In his argument McCloskey, et.al. (2015) explain that culture shapes identities and fosters notions of community, and it shapes how individuals and groups relate to each other, how meaning is created, and how power is defined, shapes ideas about partnership, trust, and negotiation (p.10). Culture has the power to enhance the process of community engagement. Through the Chichewa commentary, communities understood the messages. This was very powerful and this is similar to the argument that Chovanec (2008) makes that “minute-by-minute online reports combine informative and entertaining functions (p.267). In other words, the commentary was used for edutainment purposes which is a very key aspect of communication for development (Tufte, 2001; Kamlongera 1989 & Servaes, 2002; 2008).

According to Melkote (2018), edutainment comes at different levels and when it is applied at the individual level, it influences awareness, attention and behaviour toward a socially desirable objective, and at the larger community level, it serves as an agenda-setter or influences public and policy initiatives in a socially desirable direction (p.79). It was observed in the study that, the interest to continue watching the Paralympic highlights was elevated mostly by the humorous commentary.

The theory of film as a tool for community engagement proposes the use of local icons for successful strategic screenings which allows the audience to connect the issues in the film to local struggles with direct action potential. In the current study, the use of local models such as Taonele Banda increased awareness among the audience. It gave them confidence that they could also do it. When the I’mpossible video was shown, viewers were extremely attentive because it related to their situation. Purdue & Howe (2014:9) and Coates & Vickerman (2014:347) have also argued that participants in watching

Paralympic games feel relatedness to the Paralympic athletes, in terms of sharing in the challenges of disability, and viewing their success as an achievement not only for the athletes but for people with disabilities more generally.

Distinctly, in the current study people with disabilities, even parents and guardians saw their situations through the Para-athlete's narratives and performance. They were confident to do something and change their lives for the better. In India when they adopted film screenings as a tool for community engagement, they found out that the process helped people to reflect on whatever was shown on the screen so much so that they began speaking to each other about it and recalling what they had seen. In the current study, it was observed that the discussions which were made during the screenings allowed active participation of the audience and gave them a chance to share their ideas on the issues that were being addressed in the screenings (Rao et al, 2022). In Chiradzulu, the participants were actively giving comments (even people with hearing problems used sign language) more so with the opportunity to discuss the films within and with the viewing group. The research team was thereby able to collect more data on how the audience denoted the messages from the screen.

The dialogue allowed the participants to actively participate in the screenings, and it afforded the researchers a chance to understand their views of the films within their context. In addition, the participants were also able to ask for clarification. If the highlights were not localised by using a facilitator who clarified and contextualised the screenings, chances are more of the global content would not have been understood. NFB (1968:10) explains that effective screenings require specialised discussions and screenings for specific interest groups.

Looking at these three aspects, the Chichewa language translation of the highlights, the use of local para-athletes and the discussions made the film screenings very effective for creating awareness. People could relate to and contextualize the content they were seeing through strategies of localization. Clarifications and issues were also addressed through the discussions which made the process quite significant for awareness and initiating

change. The subject participants were quite aware of what the screening was about, and they changed perceptions immediately after the screenings, showing readiness to change. Using theory of film as a tool for community engagement, Verellen (2010) identified one of the key foundation for audience engagement that the use of a strong character driven story is a critical component in inspiring social change with film. This method truly speaks to an audience by sparking real emotions; hope, sympathy, rage, sadness, inspiration, connection, frustration, empathy, joy, pride, etc. In the current screening, as explained in the methodology there was careful selection of the package, first of all using the powerful film of *Rising Phoenix* which had powerful characters. It was that emotional connection with a film that we believe created the building block for substantive audience engagement and social change. In the current study, results indicate that ‘Phoenix Rising’ had a greater influence on perception of people especially through the story of the Amputee swimmer.

4.3.2 Film screenings as a Tool for Social Change

Film has for a long time had a history of initiating change just as has been indicated in the findings of this chapter. Scholars such as Falcon (2012), and Cain (2009: 178) argue that public screenings are the best example of the use of video technology as an alternative medium and an empowering tool. Screenings provide spaces for dialogue and encounters, binding people from diverse backgrounds together, and opening up the possibility of media, social, humanitarian and/or political action (Cain, 2009:178). Immediately after watching the Paralympic highlights, the audience showed signs of a change in perception of the abilities of people with disabilities. Through film, people were aware of exactly what para sports is and what they would be expected to do.

Haslett and Smith (2021:66) argue that the increased visibility of para-sports and representation of para-athletes as strong, capable, thriving disabled people serves to challenge prevailing negative stereotypes about disability (i.e. disabled people as less than, incapable or limited). Likewise, when the audience was exposed to the highlights through screening of the local athlete who performed at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo, their belief system was challenged and they changed their negative stereotypical views. A

participant said that they now look at disability, not as an inability and they have faith that people with disability can engage even in sports when allowed to do so.

Reactions which were given to the para-amputee swimmer are related to what Westbrook et.al (1993) calls the 'hierarchies of disability'. They argue that there has been a growing body of work that has understood the mediation of disability sporting narratives relational to hierarchies of disability which have often been cast as a response to a cultural context structured by ableism privileged citizenship based on norms of ability from which the disabled body has been "othered". Disability becomes positioned as a personal tragedy to be "overcome" by hard work and dedication to achieve success" (Silva & Howe, 2012). In the current study, such reactions also proved that the more the disability, the more interesting it becomes for the audience to actually call these athletes super-heroes.

The film screenings had the capacity in changing the perceptions. Community organization as one of the principles of community engagement recognizes that, to change, we all must feel a need for change, and that we are more likely to do so when we are involved in group learning and decision-making (McCloskey, et.al., 2015:10). The change was not only evident through the change of perceptions but also in terms of planned action. As presented in the findings, the participants were confident that they would implement the practice of para-sports in their communities.

In community engagement the foundation for community organizing is the principle of social action, bringing people together to pursue a shared interest. This was evident in the current screenings when the audience watched, they were convinced that they would take action collectively as well as individually. Just like the screenings conducted, Braden (1999) concludes that the direct participation of villagers in Malawi in the process of participatory video led to their concrete influence on the formation of a national rural energy policy. The current screening also had that influence. Using video in a participatory process opened local consciousness to the alternative uses of the medium.

Additionally, the dialogue made it very successful in terms of critical community engagement. Through the dialogue, people were given issues to reflect on, as Freire (1970) proposes in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”. For critical awareness the messages were not sent to the community just for them to see but, were also clearly explained and clarified. This process gave room for conscientization which is a key step to change. Participants planned to take action individually as well as collaboratively. In Mzimba, for example, while the screenings were only done once, the village chief set up a meeting right away to ensure that other community members were aware.

Public screenings are the best example of the use of video technology as an alternative medium and an empowering tool as suggested by the theory (Cain, 2009:178). Unlike when videos are watched at home, public film screenings provide a platform for dialogue and encounters, binding people from diverse backgrounds together, and opening up the possibility of media, social, humanitarian and/or political action. In the current study, we have indicated that some people had the chance to watch the Paralympic games on their screens but in the same areas, people they were close to were not made aware. Through the film screening, we mobilised the communities to do something about disability and the Paralympics and in all three communities they had plans for future action. Public screenings are limited in the number of people they can reach but they are successful in engaging with audiences at a direct and more personal level.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the effects of film screenings on rural community’s perceptions and change. It has given a detailed account of how the screening positively changed their perception as well as action. The chapter has discussed the two concepts of bringing global content into context and localization of the Paralympic screening which was very powerful in fostering community engagement. The chapter has related what similar studies (Juarez, 2018; McCloskey et al, 2015 & Haslett and Smith, 2021) have discovered regarding the power of film screenings as a tool for community engagement as well as broadcasting in general.

In conclusion, this chapter argues that film screening is a powerful tool for community awareness that leads to action. The theory of film screening as a tool for community engagement ensures that beyond the impact on a personal level, self-reflexivity works on a broader scale, particularly when used consciously as part of a participatory video process (Cain, 2009: 181). It can be used to develop a collective sense of community between individuals and/or between people living in isolated geographical areas that share common problems but who previously did not have that recognition. However, it would be important to know that there were still some challenges in did that partly affected the level of success in bringing immediate social change.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study by looking at the implications of the study on methodological issues and empirical evidence as it also discusses the successes and limitations of the study.

5.2 Summary Of The Chapters

5.2.1 Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, the research presented the general introduction of the research. The background of the study was presented in this chapter; the study was located within communication for the development branch of knowledge. This is so because the film (Paralympic highlights) as a mode of communication has been used as a tool for community awareness and involvement in addressing their social problem (stigma). By establishing this link, the section provided the purpose of the current study.

Through a presentation of a literature review which explored issues of disability, stigma, Paralympic sports and film screenings the objectives were drawn. In the chapter, studies which have been conducted in Malawi (Massa, 2011; Munthali, 2018, Mostert, 2016, & Magalasi, 2015) were explored and it was discovered that the studies have only focused on disability in general, film trends in general not particularly aligning it to issues of disability or para-sports. There was no particular study in the literature which specifically tackled disability and sports. The literature review provided the gap in knowledge and the significance of the current study thereby providing the direction of its three objectives. The objective was later turned into the subsequent three chapters of this study. In this

chapter, we explored how the objectives would be analyzed using the theory of mobile film screening as a tool for community engagement coined by Dziga Vertov and later advanced by Cain (2009) and Velleren (2010).

Chapter 1 has also presented the qualitative methodological process of the study. It explained the details of how this action research study was conducted. The section provided the details of the study area, sample size as well as sampling technique. The tools used for data collection were explained in detail including the process of analysis. Ethics were also discussed in this chapter and how they were applied. In general, the chapter provided a general introduction to what the study was about and what it intended to do. This chapter essentially provided the background and introduction to the current study.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

This chapter presented findings for objective 1 and a discussion on emerging issues of disability within the communities, the historical practice of mobile film screenings and knowledge of Paralympic sports. The results of the chapter indicated that there were several things which came out. On film screenings, results showed that they were becoming extinct as they were challenged by an increase in television ownership and video showrooms (enclosed spaces where people watch films and sports at a fee). Similar findings were also discovered by Tufte (2009) who realized that there is growth in terms of Video Parlour which are the same as video showrooms.

In terms of disability, there were several things discussed regarding the situation of people with disability. A common understanding for their acceptance was that all people were created in the image of God. There was also quite some change in terms of the use of non-discriminatory language in addressing them which is in contrast with what Mostert (2016) found out in her study. In terms of inclusion, the chapter presented that people with disability were included in developmental projects and other business activities, though this was limited to only those projects that were meant for charity.

As the study discovered another key channel to use in rural areas which was video showroomss, it implied that there were distribution outlets that could be used to help drive social change amongst rural Malawians. As noted by Tufte (2009) there is limited knowledge which exists as to the sense-making processes resulting from these particular media consumption patterns, so a study aimed at addressing such can be very key. Using the theory, this chapter explored how its principle has been applied in the current screenings by looking at audience participation, audience engagement and discussions. In conclusion the anlysis found out that the principles of the theory were used to a greater extent though some aspects of exploring other channel for distribution were missed.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 mainly looked at the perceptions of people with disability. Although results indicated increasing positivity in viewing people with disabilities as ‘normal’ and just like able-bodied people, there was also another view which showed that often disability is related to inability. It was established that there was deeply-rooted discrimination caused by stereotyping disability as inability. Analyzing this, the results also showed that such perceptions fueled stereotypes that stigmatised people with disabilities. The chapter also indicated why there was high overprotection by parents and communities in general towards people with disability. More often than not, they were treated as delicate individuals that always required help from able-bodied people.

In the discussion, a critical evaluation system adopted from Habarmus as proposed by Juli Cain (2009) was adopted. Through this analysis, it was established that there are several factors which fuel the perceptions including culture; educational background; socialization (within gender and age) and belief systems (Kendall, 2011 & Lynch & Lund 2011). These factors were seen to influence perceptions either positively or negatively. For example, in terms of belief, it has influenced the perception that disability is normal as Christian and Islamic teachings center on the equal creation of humankind. The same belief system was seen to also induce the idea that people with disability are unable because they are founded on the principles of charity work and pity. Such treatments as

discussed have hindered the inclusion of people with disabilities in para-sports activities and other challenging encounters.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

This is the chapter that bears the central argument of this research as it explored the effects of the screenings on rural communities' perceptions as well as actions after watching the Paralympic broadcast highlights. Findings show that respondents had positive reactions to the Paralympic highlights. It was quite clear that the audience subsequently changed their perception after consuming the highlights and other supporting videos. There was a unique highlight of a woman with an amputated arm which was very popular among the participants as it proved to them beyond their imagination that people with disabilities can achieve anything when given an opportunity and supported to do so.

Results in the chapter showed that the highlights were very significant to the communities plan for action. Some participants with disabilities saw para-athletes as role model, relating what they did to what they themselves were able to achieve in their local situations, empowering them in the process. Similarly, parents and guardians were also astonished when, in the screenings, they saw the support that families of the para-athletes gave them to participate in such big events and promised to also do the same for their children. There was a plan of action at both the individual level in terms of awareness as well as the community level in terms of conducting meetings and inclusion policy. Braden (1999) observes that, when he applied film and tool for community engagement in Malawi, he understood that processes demonstrated the value of localising power through the creation of shared, social discourse and the benefit of using video to carry local discourses to bring about change in political climate and policy.

The discussion within this chapter managed to explore the extent to which film screening was able to achieve community engagement. It was evident that the screenings were very key to awareness and their effectiveness was fueled by the use of global content in a local context, allowing the audience to interact with new ideologies of which most of the

participants were not aware of. To them, it was a privilege. The localization of the screenings through commentary, use of local athletes and discussions provided a platform for active discussions and reflection as well as facilitation of a plan of action amongst most participants of the screenings. In conclusion, the study has proven film screenings to be an effective tool for community engagement in terms of awareness.

Although it failed to go beyond the immediate breaking of systems and structures in the rural communities visited, the screening of the highlights and other videos on the Paralympics and para sport demonstrated good practice on Paralympics broadcast in Malawi, with evidence of contribution to the reduction of stigma on people with disabilities. This study has established that awareness often can't change systemic/structural issues on its own. This is exactly why some scholars such as Noske-Turner (2020) use the term 'communication for social change' which highlights that communication needs to go beyond the behaviour and awareness of individuals who don't have much power as individuals even if they have attained some awareness.

More attention needed to be put on systems and structures, which often need collective action, citizen demand, social movements, advocacy, policy changes, and systemic changes. Similarly, as much as screenings of the Paralympics allowed the participants to be aware of their social problems, there was more which needed to be done. There was a need for an advocacy model of communication, which could turn attention to those who can change structures and systems which do hinder or could promote the processes of change for people with disabilities to engage in sports.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has managed to explore various issues of disability and para-sports that are in the rural communities of Malawi using film screenings. The practice was very successful at creating awareness of what the Paralympic games are and how significant they are to the community. Participants in the study showed a change in perceptions after watching the 2020 world Paralympic Games when compared to their initial perceptions. Perceptions shifted towards positivity towards the capabilities of

people with disabilities. Although not very effective at bringing out issues from within the community, the screenings managed to give the communities a clear picture of what para sports are all about. It elevated the confidence of people with disabilities in the things that they are capable of and removed negative stereotypical perceptions towards people with disabilities. The finding of the study agrees with Juarez's (2018:1) arguments that a film is a powerful tool since its creation continuously change the way humans experience and think about life.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

TABLE OF OBJECTIVES, TOOLS, AND QUESTIONS

OBJECTIVE	METHOD	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	QUESTIONS
To examine the use of film screenings on issues of disability and para-sports.	Rapid interviews	Randomly sampled respondents	- Does this community have film screenings? On what issues? - Briefly explain your experience with people with disabilities in this area? How are they treated? - Do they engage in community development and sports? - What are the common activities in which people with disabilities engage, in this community? - Are you aware of para-sports? - What is your previous experience of the games in para sports before the film screenings?

To assess the perceptions that rural communities have on disabilities and para-sports.	• Participant Observation • Interviews	• Attendees for the film screenings. • Randomly sampled respondents	• How do you view people with disabilities? • Why do you view them so? • Are there any specific behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and norms which may have influenced your thinking? • Did you ever imagine people with disabilities engaging in sports? Why was that so?
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To establish whether the film screenings have implications on perceptions of communities on para-sports and disabilities.	• Interviews • Participant observation • Interviews	• Randomly sampled respondents	• From what you are watching, what do you think is going on in the screenings? • What are some of the interesting issues have you identified from the screenings? • Why are they interesting to you? • How are you characterizing and understanding what is going on? • What are the assumptions that you are making after watching the Paralympic highlights? • How are the participants perceiving what is being shown? • Are you comfortable with the idea of engaging people with disabilities in sports? • Were you surprised with any of the participants, or footage
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			in the screenings? • Is there any content from the screenings which has inspired you? Explain. • What is your perception of people with disabilities after watching the screenings? • What do you think about people in your community with disabilities, what could happen next in the community? • Are there any opportunities and challenges in this community which you think can help in advocating for para-sports and Paralympics activities?
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