



**EXPLORING CAUSES OF CONSISTENTLY OPPOSITE TRENDS IN VOTER
TURNOUT IN CHIRADZULU AND BLANTYRE IN MALAWI**

MASTERS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE (THESIS)

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university or college for similar purposes. All the sources of information I have used have been fully indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty who gave me strength to raise up against all odds to continue with this work despite the many challenges I was facing during the time I was writing this work.

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ABSTRACT

Voter turnout in Malawi has been on the decline with a slight improvement in 2014. However trends in Chiradzulu and Blantyre continue to raise interest as these two districts have maintained consistency with high turnout and low turnout respectively despite the general national trend. Specifically, the study wanted to establish factors that are responsible for the opposite trends. The study focused on reasons that prompt people to vote/ not to vote, party group linkages, political landscape and socio economic settings of rural versus urban and semi urban areas. The study sampled four constituencies, two in Chiradzulu and two in Blantyre through purposive sampling using the 2014 Presidential and Parliamentary results. Apart from secondary information, data was mainly collected through focus group discussions and one to one interviews. Focus group discussions engaged voters and non-voters while one to one interviews aimed at district governors, constituency governors and area governors and local chiefs. The data was analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis. The study established that where a party favours unpopular candidate, people tend to vote more in trying to make their favourite candidate who stand on independent ticket to win. It also established that handouts have both a negative and a positive effect on turnout. The other finding was that MPs absences from their constituency have an effect on people's interest to turnout to vote. The study also found that most non-voters belong to political parties while some voters have no party. Finally, the study also established that the use of voter Identity Card (ID) for other purposes other than voting gives false expectation of anticipated turnout.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

ADC	Area Development Committee
AFORD	Alliance For Democracy
CONU	Congress for National Unity
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEC	Malawi Electoral commission
MP	Member of Parliament
PP	Peoples Party
RP	Republican Party
TA	Traditional Authority
UDF	United Democratic Front
VAP	Voting Age Population
VDC	Village Development Committee

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

An important question which every citizen ask themselves when time for elections is approaching is why they should go and vote. Some of them do have ready answers as to why and they do not hesitate to do so when it is time to cast the ballot. But for others this question is and has been a very hard one so much so that their indecisiveness has affected voter turnout for the past decades. Since 1980s, turnout of people that vote in elections has been dwindling. This decrease in voter turnout has been a cause for great concern for politicians, professionals and academicians in the field of political science and other related faculties. This is because voter turnout is one of the key elements which political scientists use to determine political participation of the citizens in a democracy. The current downward trend worldwide is worrisome to the future of democracy because voter turnout has implications on sustainability of democracy (Huntington, 1991).

Most countries in Africa obtained multiparty democracy during the third wave of the 1990s (Huntington, 1991) hence most democracies in Africa are quite nascent and Malawi in no exception. This implies that most democracies in Africa are yet to consolidate. Despite being new democracies, these countries have not been spared from the spell of low voter turnout. In Malawi voter turnout dropped to a record level of 54.3 % in 2004 from 80% in 1994 and 92.2% in 1999 elections (Ott and Kanyongolo, 2009). In 2009 and 2014, the

turnout rose again but not as in 1994 and 1999. In 2009, it increased up to 78% while in 2014 it was at 70%.

Although the general trend has shown that there was high turnout in some years and low turnout in others, it is interesting to note that some districts are always trailing behind by registering low turnout while others are always leading in turning out to vote. The scenario suggests that despite the general downward trend that has been observed, there should be some other factors that are responsible for a consistently high turnout in some districts like Chiradzulu and consistently low turnout others like Blantyre despite the fact that these are neighbouring districts in the southern region of Malawi and are both dominated by Democratic Progressive Party.

The purpose of this study therefore, was to find out what these factors are. The study proposed that political party linkages, political landscape and some social economic factors that include location status, occupation and permanency of residence could be responsible for the inherent opposite trends in these two districts. These variables were examined against an institutional theory perspective. The study hypothesized that that consistently high voter turnout is influenced by good party linkages, stable migration landscapes and rural social economic environment prevalent through institutions of a given area.

The study is a qualitative study and it has used thematic and content analysis to analyze data that was collected. The chapters that follow will discuss the study objectives, literature review and theoretical framework, research methodology, findings and discussion and finally conclusion and recommendations.

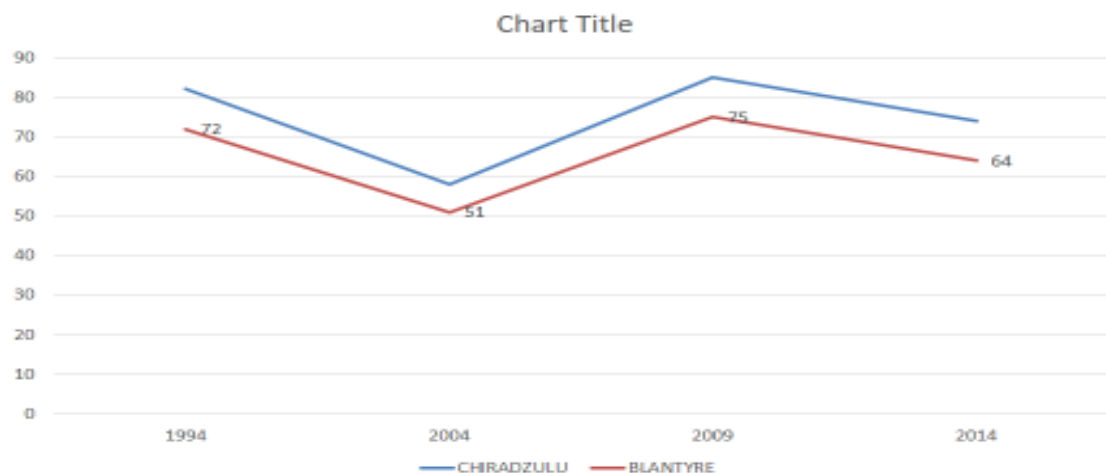
1.2 Problem Statement

The problem that the study wanted to answer was why is it that some areas have consistently high turnout while others have consistently low turnout. Chitipa and Likoma are a good example of high consistency in the northern region of Malawi while Nkhatabay on the other hand, usually registers low turnout (MEC Results). In the Centre, Ntchisi is consistently high while Mchinji is repeatedly registering lower turnout. As for the southern region it is Chiradzulu and Mulanje that are sustaining a higher turnout than the rest of the districts while Blantyre is generally registering a lower turnout. Blantyre had the lowest turnout in four elections in the south namely, 1994-72%, 2004-51%, 2009-75% and 2014-64% (MEC Results). Blantyre has the lower turnout in the South from four out of five elections the nation has had (Refer to Figure 1 below). Chiradzulu in the South has the higher voter turnout in the south as follows: 1994-82%, 2004-58%, 2009-85%, 2014-74%(MEC Results).Note that 1999 registered exceptionally higher turnout in all the districts and has thus been treated as an out layer which needs a separate study.

The presumption of this study is that there must be factors that are responsible for this trend. Hence what triggered the interest to study these two districts was the fact that they have a lot in common and a few differences. In terms of locality, they are both in southern region. The dominant party in both districts is DPP meaning that other political inclinations maybe similar. This also means that the prevalent party structures that are strong in both districts are DPP party structures. Besides, the general party group linkage systems of the same party would not be very different in one district. In addition these two are neighboring districts where migration between the two, especially from Chiradzulu to Blantyre, is likely

to be high. What could be the cause then for the opposite trends? Much as both districts are DPP dominated and are in the southern region, Chiradzulu is largely rural while Blantyre is a combination of urban, semi urban and rural. I wanted to bring forward a case of most similar designs but as can be seen the cases picked do not perfectly fit in the design but I borrowed such a concept to come up with this choice because the two districts lie next to each other in the southern region of Malawi with DPP as a dominant party.

Chiradzulu always ahead of Blantyre



3

Figure 1: Showing that Chiradzulu has consistently been ahead of Blantyre

Source: MEC Results

In a democracy, it is important that turnout in elections should be significantly high. However, this has not been the case as voter turnout has generally declined. The situation

especially grew worse since the 1980s (see figure 2). Since then, less and less people through the years are turning out to vote. Low voter turnout has not only affected established democracies but also all the other countries in the world (IDEA, 2016). This development is considered detrimental to democratic societies. Researchers and scholars alike have tried to find out the reasons that are affecting turnout at the polls (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; 2000; Powell 1986; Shaffer 1981). Among the factors that have been found are institutional arrangements, easiness of voting, frequency of elections, whether Election Day is a holiday or not, legal structures for voting and basic structures of electoral competition (Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1985; Piven and Cloward 1988). Kuenzi and Lambright (2007), nonetheless, found that in sub-Saharan Africa electoral formula and concurrency of presidential and parliamentary elections have considerable effect on voter turnout.

However, a study by Chinsinga (2006) which primarily focused on 2004 low voter turnout in Malawi, revealed that low voter turnout was largely influenced by voter apathy caused by dissatisfaction with the role played by Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in the administration and management of elections, failure of successful candidates to deliver, intra and inter party politics and legal framework (Chinsinga, 2006). In spite of these findings, we observe that there are some districts that are always lagging behind of the rest while others are always leading in terms of turnout in all the elections. This scenario suggests that there are certain inherent factors that need to be uncovered other than just voter apathy in these districts.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study is to find out factors that affect consistently high voter turnout in Chiradzulu and consistently low voter turnout in Blantyre.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To find out if people consider voting as an important exercise
- To find out if party linkages affect voter turnout
- To find out if migration and permanency of residence in political landscape affect voter turnout
- To find out whether the rural social economic environment is more conducive to turnout than the urban setting and semi urban setting

1.4 Proposition

The proposition of this study is that consistently high voter turnout is influenced by party linkages, stable migration landscapes and rural status environment prevalent through institutions of a given area.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Turnout in elections by voters has a significant meaning and impact on a democratic society. High or low turnout at the polls has implications on how the citizens perceive the government. Liphart (1997) has equated low voter turnout to unequal participation. Kuenzi and Lambright (2007:665) have said that 'low voter turnout might indicate that the people

do not see elections as central to political life.’ He further advances that the impact of low voter turnout may be dangerous for democracies that are not entrenched as this can lead to democratic reversals. More importantly, low voter turnout impacts on the legitimacy of a government. It is therefore important that the citizens should view their government as legitimate and this can only be achieved if the citizens themselves actively participate in the process of choosing their leaders at the polls.

However, there are some districts in Malawi that are consistently registering low voter turnout while others on the other hand, do consistently register high turnout. We have Chitipa, Ntchisi and Chiradzulu in the North, Centre and South respectively consistently registering high turnout. On the other hand we have Nkhatabay, Mchinji and Blantyre consistently registering low turnout in the North, Centre and South respectively. For the purposes of this study, we shall look at districts in the southern region that are registering two opposing trends, that is, Chiradzulu and Blantyre. This scenario necessitates a need for a study like this one to be conducted so that causes of low turnout are fully explored and exposed. This study therefore is expected to contribute to the quest of finding solutions to address low voter turnout while at the same time looking at possible ways of motivating people to vote as decrease in voter turnout may indicate a crisis in democracy (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007). Further to this, studying areas that have high turnout will contribute to the academic literature as to what factors matter in influencing turnout.

Outline of the Study

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter sets out the background to the study. The Chapter also looks at the problem statement which prompted this study, the

Significance of the study, objectives and the proposition of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review, Conceptual framework and Theoretical Framework.

The chapter discusses voter turnout trends in Malawi and beyond. It also introduces and discusses related concepts and causes of voter turnout throughout history. The chapter discusses reviewed literature and findings of previous studies on voter turnout thereby providing a foundation to this study. The reviewed literature also discusses issues of voter apathy as affecting voter turnout in Malawi. Finally the theoretical framework that is guiding the study will be discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology. This chapter discusses the Research Methodology. In this chapter sampling methods, data collection and data analysis have been discussed.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion. This chapter includes presentation of major findings of the study according to the four objectives of the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion. This chapter summarizes of major findings and draw conclusion of the study with recommendations.

1.7Summaryof Chapter/Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the background to the study, the problem that has necessitated this study, the objectives of the study alongside the proposition on which the study is premised. Significance of this study has also been discussed. Finally the chapter has outlined a synopsis of chapters that follow ahead.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW, CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at literature on voter turnout. It looks at trends that have emerged over the years and their implication on democracy. The chapter will also discuss operational terms used in this study and voter apathy as one of the traditional causes to low voter turnout. Besides the chapter also looks at political landscape, party linkages, socio economic setting of a rural setting and urban setting and theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 Operational Terms

Voter turnout: Voter turnout is a number of eligible voters who turnout to vote in an election (IDEA, 2016). It is measured as the percentage of votes cast at an election, including invalid votes. Voter turnout is calculated in two ways. The first approach is where the calculation is based on voting age population. Here every adult under the given constitution is incorporated in the calculation of voter turnout. The other approach, on the other hand uses registered voters as a denominator (IDEA, 1997). In this case voter turnout is calculated based on the actual number that registered to vote. Sometimes voter turnout can be difficult to measure because it can be driven by minor things like mood, personal health and such other small factors that may not be persistent over time (Matsusaka and Palda, 1999). In Malawi, the voter turnout is calculated using registered voters which

consequently leaves out a good part of adult population which fails to register either by design or default.

Voter apathy: voter apathy is ‘a lack of feel of personal responsibility, a passivity and indifference for political affairs’ (Kolovos and Harris, 2005). There are many theories regarding the causes of voter apathy. Some schools of thought think that voter apathy is a blessing in disguise because it shows that people are satisfied and have no pressing issues that may force them to vote (Kyle, 2010). The contrary thought however argues that voter apathy is not a good thing and it should be a cause for alarm as it may signify that there is a problem somewhere in the democratic system.

Voting age population (VAP): it is number of people in a country who are eligible to vote (IDEA, 1997). It is used as a denominator in coming up with voter turnout in some countries. This includes all adults above the prescribed voting age in a polity. This may even include non-citizens, those in prison and even those in poor mental health. Using voting age population has proved to be ineffective in most developing countries because actual population figures are usually inaccurate or the statistics is missing (IDEA, 1997). On the other hand using VAP can also be meaningful in situations where a huge part of the population failed to turn out to register for various reasons. Besides, VAP system can portray a good picture of the participation of people in the voting exercise.

Registered voters: these are people who are eligible to vote and have registered to vote (IDEA, 1997). Registration is done either manually or electronically. Registered voters as a denominator to calculating voter turnout is considered to be better because it eliminates those who would still not be able to vote despite being adult due to various factors. Using

registered voters makes calculation of voter turnout in developing countries more meaningful than using voting age population which is just an estimated figure which is usually inaccurate. Hence for developing countries, IDEA recommends that registered voters should be used instead and Malawi uses this approach.

Political landscape: Political landscape is the general situation in which a particular political activity takes place (Longman Dictionary). Political landscape may be affected by policy changes, ideological changes, migration, economic shifts and generational transitions among others (Crepaz, 1990).

Institutions: refers to both rules and regulations as well as organizations (Bell, 2002). They are established laws, customs and practices that govern a particular entity. The study of institutions gave rise to institutional theory also called institutionalism. There is old institutional theory and new institutional theory. The old institutional theory focused more on description while the new institutionalism explains the phenomenon (Peters, 1999).

Political party: is an organization that seeks political powers by getting candidates elected into public office (Svasand and Khembo, 2007). It can also be simply defined as a group of voters organized to support certain public choices. Parties represent ideologies or views that offer different approaches to running the government. Parties play a critical role in a democracy by introducing competitive alternatives not only in candidates but also public policy choices (Calvo and Murillo, 2013). Political parties have different functions one of which is linking citizens to government.

Party group linkages: refers to the ways political parties provide linkage to connect citizens to all levels of government. This is one of the critical roles that parties play (Dalton,

Farrel and McAllister,2011). The participation of citizens in political parties enable them to influence policy choices and engage political leaders. Citizens determine the direction they would like to go by choosing a party which subscribe to particular ideology. The purpose of party organisations according to Svasand and Khembo (2007) is to serve as a link between individuals and party organizations through a web of organizational units. This paper intends to examine the linkage role the parties play in relation to voter turnout. Does strong or poor linkage affect people's interest to turn out and vote?

First past the post: This is an electoral system in which the one with the highest votes regardless of the percentage takes the seat. Voters are allowed to only choose one candidate from the presented list (Schram and Sonnemans, 1996). First past the post is the simplest form of plurality system using single member districts and voting is centered on a candidate unlike in proportional system. The system is common in all British colonies because it was adopted from Westminster. The system does not encourage large voter turnout because the voters usually feels that their vote is far from making their preferred candidate win (Schram and Sonnemans,1996). In Malawi we use this system which already puts us at compromised position as far as voter turnout is concerned.

Clientistic approach: is an approach based on clientelism system where the relationship of the client to the patron matters (Calvo and Murilo, 2013). The patron gives special priviledges or benefits while the client gives votes. Those in control provide selective access to goods and opportunities to favor their supporters (Roniger, 2004). Some scholars who are not comfortable with this system feel that this is 'patrimonial corruption of public agencies (ibid).'

2.3Voter Turnout

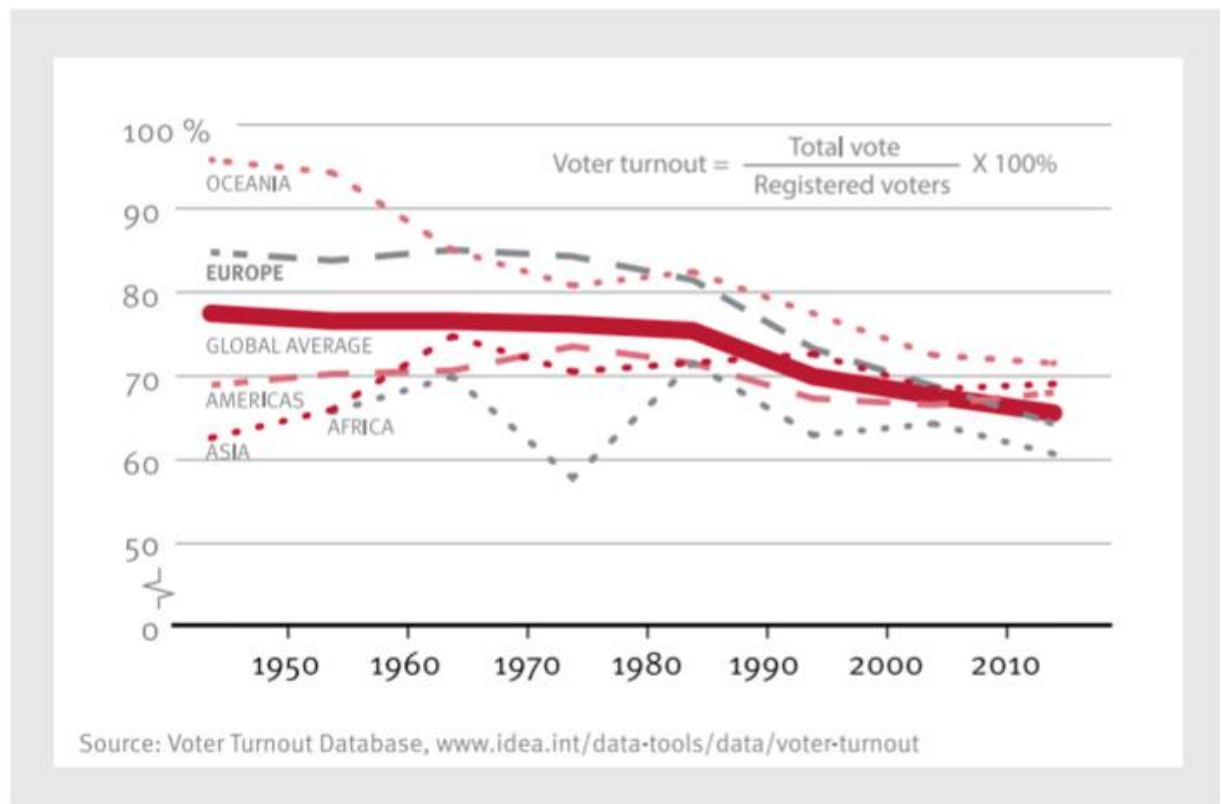
Voter turnout is a number of people who turnout to vote in an election. Voter turnout is usually expressed as a percentage of voters who cast a vote at an election. This is expressed in two ways; first as a percentage of votes to registered voters and second as a percentage of votes to the voting age population (IDEA, 1997). Voting age population is a number of eligible voters within a country. It is however important to note that using different bases to calculate voter turnout has far reaching implications in determining whether or not turnout is changing (McDonald and Popkin, 2000).

Lyons and Sinnot (2003) further argue that it is important to categorize voters further into five categories which will give more insight into the changes that we observe in turnout. The categories include core voters, marginal voters, non-voters, non-registered voters and non-citizens. Voter turnout should be considered as a very important element in explaining electoral outcomes hence policy making.

2.4Voter Turnout Trends

Literature shows that voter turnout has been declining across the globe since the start of 1980's (See figure 2).

(Source:IDEA2016)



Notes: Data is for Legislative (Lower House) Elections that took place across the globe since 1945 and covers 1,833 elections in total.

Figure 2: World Turnout By Region 1945-2015

Source: IDEA 2016

The downward trend of voter turnout is deemed to be very unhealthy for the survival and consolidation of democracy. Coming back to the case of Malawi, we see that in the first two elections there was high voter turnout. The turnout for 1994 and 1999 respectively was at 80% and 92.2% (Ott et al, 2000). Whereas in 2004 there was a slump as turnout dropped to a record level of 54.3% and in 2009 it went up a bit to 78%. The just ended elections of 2014, the turnout was at 70% (see figure 2). The higher turnout in the first two consecutive

elections, could be as a result of excitement with the onset of democracy among other things (Fornos et al, 2004).

(Source: MEC Results)

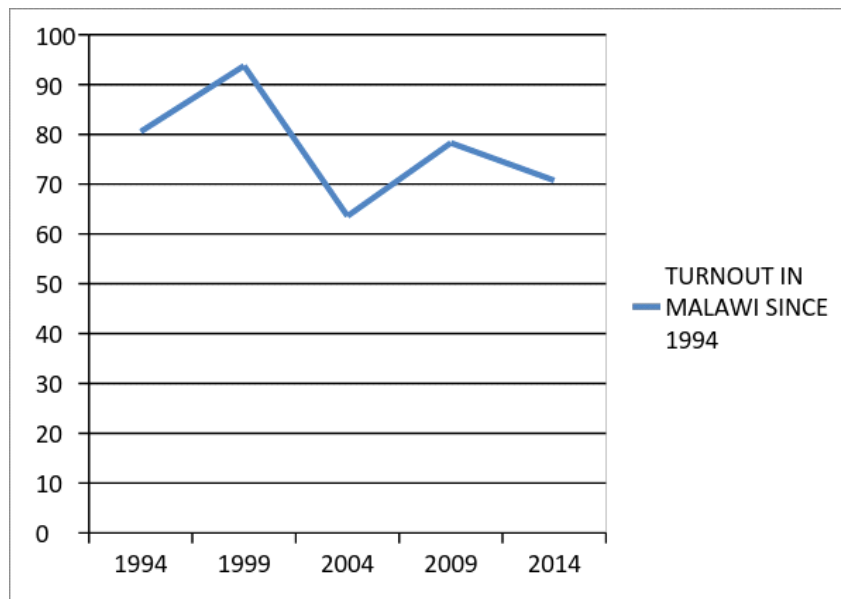


Figure 3: Voter Turnout in Malawi

Source: MEC Results

Although there is this general trend, there are some districts which are always registering high results while others are always lagging behind. Blantyre had the lowest turnout in four elections in the south namely, 1994-72%, 1999-94%, 2004-51%, 2009-75% and 2014-64(See Figure 3). Again it is Blantyre which has the lower turnout in the south for four out of five elections the nation has had. Chiradzulu in the south has the higher voter turnout in the south as follows: 1994-82%, 1999-94%, 2004-58%, 2009-85%, 2014-74% (See figure 3). 1999 was an outlier because it was exceptionally high for almost all the districts(See figure 3).

(Source: MEC Results)

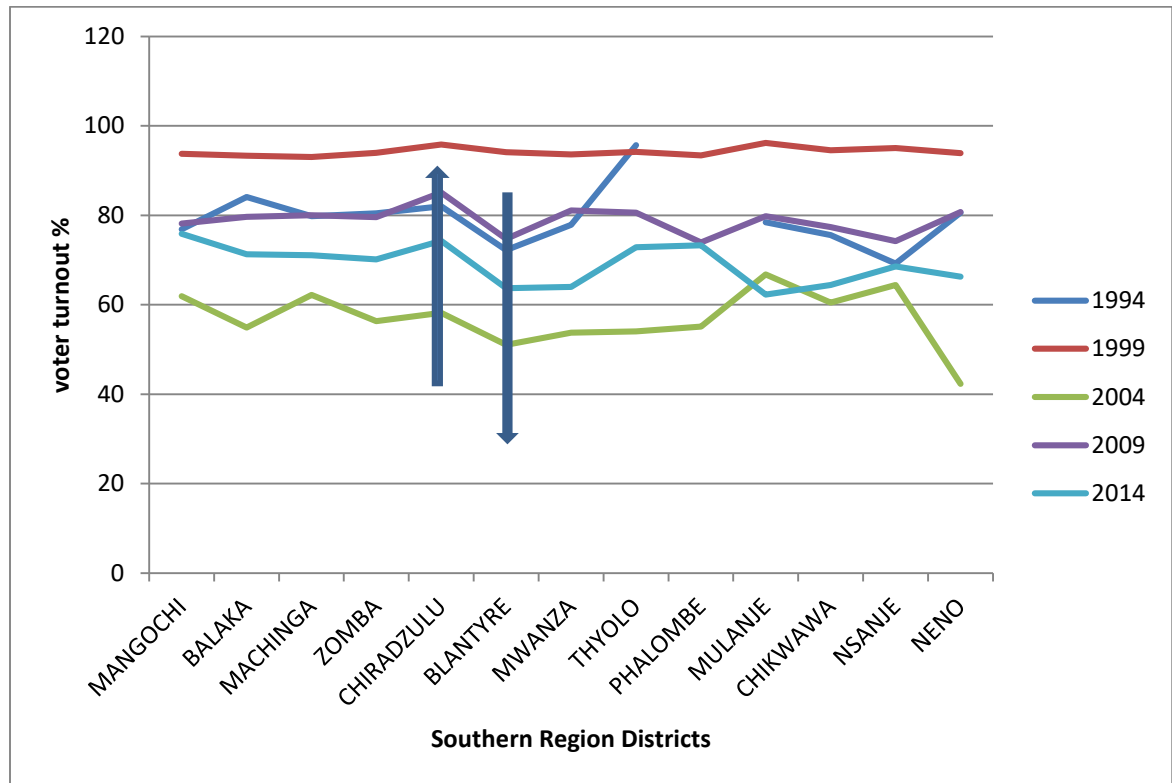


Figure 4: voter turnout trends for the southern region showing opposite trends for Chiradzulu and Blantyre

Source: MEC Results

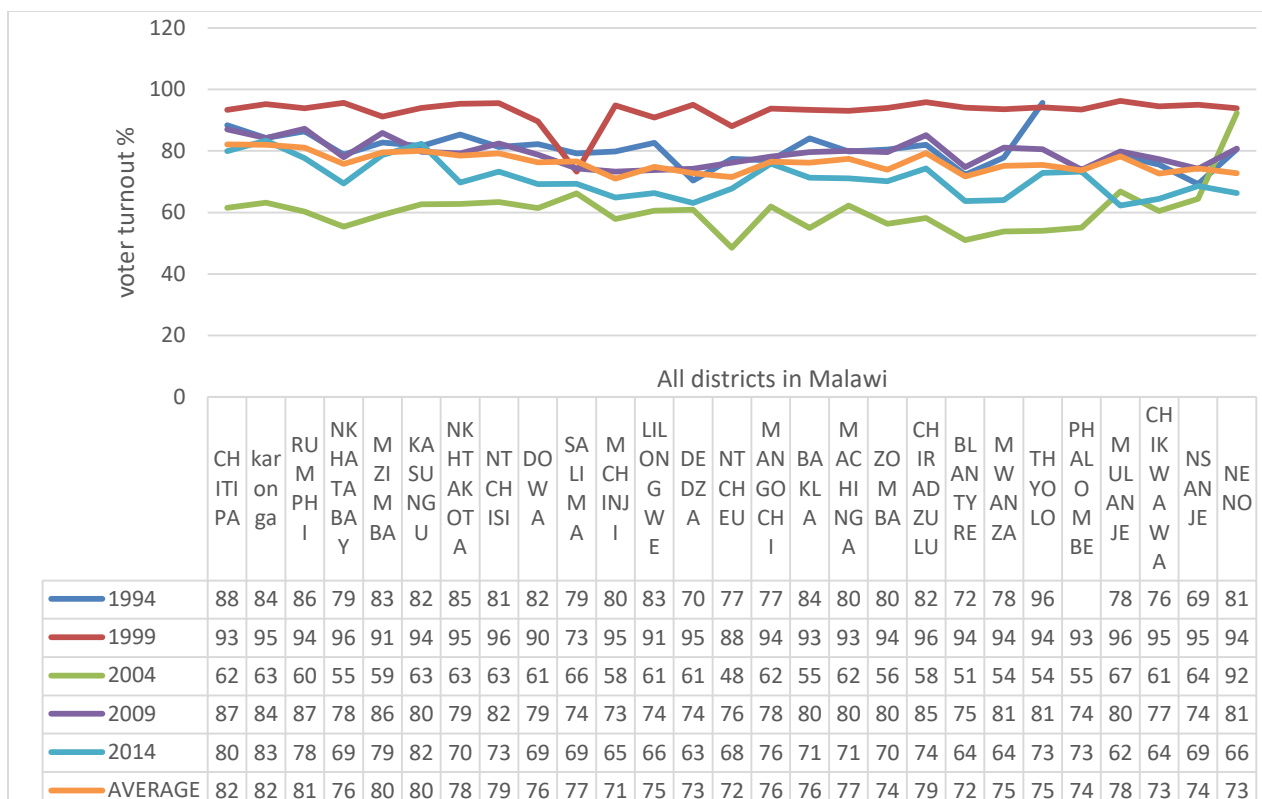


Figure 5: Voter Turnout Trend For All The Districts

Source: MEC Results

(Source: worked out averages from MEC results)

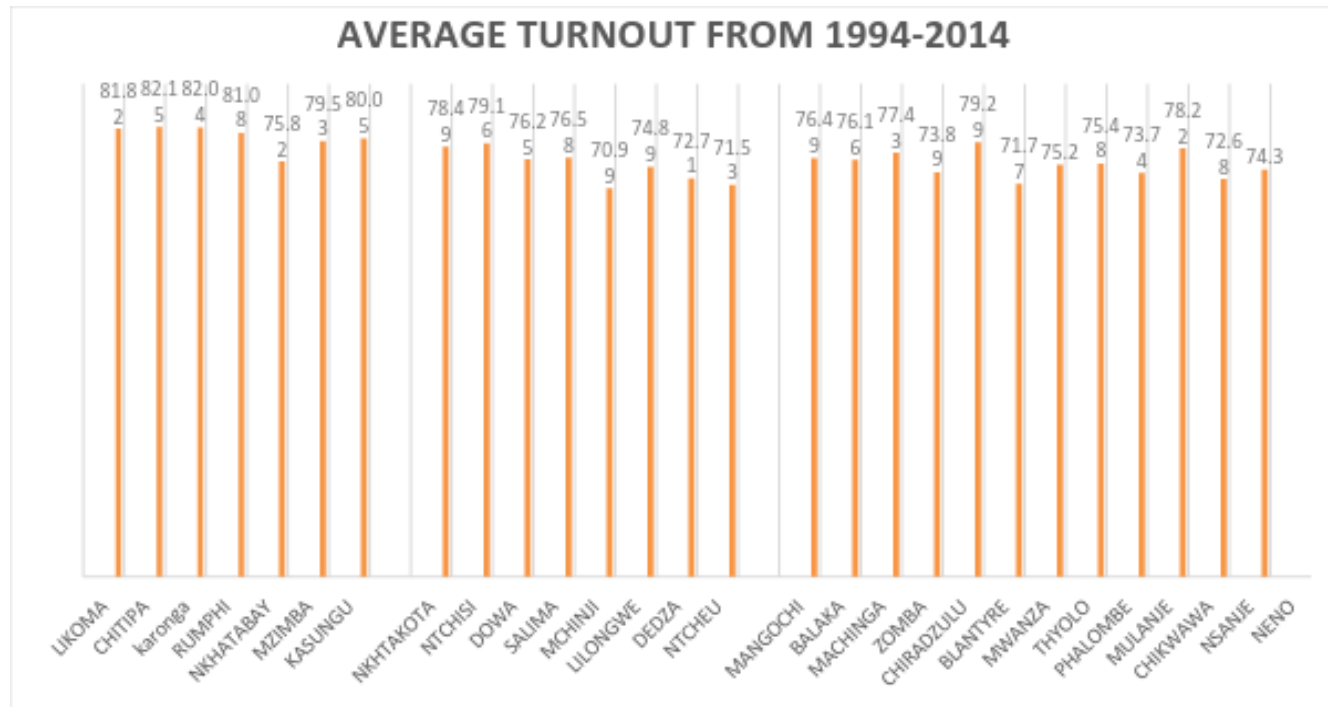


Figure 6: Average Turnout From 1994-2014

Source: worked out averages from MEC Results

2.5 What affects Voter Turnout?

There are many factors that affect voter turnout. Different scholars have categorized the reasons in various ways. Teixeira (1992) has cited three reasons that have attributed to historical variations in turnout levels namely legal structures for voting, basic structures of electoral competition and party mobilization. He considers the major reasons to be registration system and compulsory voting which fall under legal structures for voting. In the Paradox of Voter Turnout (Fenster 1994; Heckelman 1995; Jackman 1987; Jackman and Millwe 1995; Piven and Cloward 1988)) assumes that most citizens are motivated to

vote and would vote if it were not for the institutional constraints that they face in form of laws regarding registration and absentee voting.

Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) further examined factors that influence voter turnout in sub-Saharan Africa in multiparty regimes that have had two consecutive elections since 1990s. They found that the type of electoral formula and concurrency of presidential and legislative elections have significant effects on electoral turnout apart from media exposure and number of elections a polity has had. Jackman (1987) and Kastadinova (2003) found that multipartyism has a negative relationship with voter turnout. However, Brockington (2004) found that multipartyism appears to stimulate electoral voter turnout once non-minimal winning coalitions are controlled.

On electoral formula, (IDEA Report, 1997) found that Alternative vote system which is used in Australia, Fiji and Nairu attracts the highest voter turnout. Apart from alternative vote system, Blais (2006) also found that compulsory voting fosters turnout. Yet another study by Schram and Sonnemans (1996) which compared turnout in the First Past the Post Election winner-takes-it-all and turnout in proportional representation, found that First Past the Post dissuades people from voting. This was found to be the case because in First Past the Post, ones preferred candidate has very slim chances of winning unlike in the proportional representation. Here in Malawi we follow this later system of First Past the Post which makes us anticipate a generally lower turnout if we go by findings by Schram and Sonnemans (1996).

Powell (1982) distinguishes three blocks of variables that include the socio and economic environment, the constitutional setting and party systems and elections outcomes as factors

that influence voter turnout. In his study where he examined 17 countries in the 1970s, he concluded that institutional context affects voter turnout more than national competitive districts. Examples of institutional factors that affect voter turnout are voting age, voting facilities, day of voting, and rules designed to facilitate voting. Besides, accessibility to voting sites makes a significant difference to turnout, hence Gimpel and Schuknecht (2003) recommend that voting centres should be close to people.

Franklin (2004) feels that these institutional characteristics may vary across types of voters and that what increases or decreases turnout may be quite different in rich and poor countries. Apart from institutional context, Powell (1982) also emphasized more on party group linkages. He found that voter choice is simplified when groups are clearly associated with specific parties.

Jackman (1987) looked at the same period of 1970s but in 19 countries. He came up with five institutional variables that affect voter turnout. These included nationally competitive districts which Powell also referred to, electoral disproportionality, multipartyism, unicameralism and compulsory voting. Jackman (1987) has found that institutional arrangements that make voters feel that their vote counts participate more in voting than those that do not give such a guarantee. Jackman (1987), however left out party linkages proposed by Powell as well as socio economic environment.

Much as Fornos et al (2004) also agrees with Jackman when he found that no socio economic variable was significant in influencing turnout in his Latin America study, Blais and Dobrzynska (1998), proved otherwise. In their study they took a look at the effect of socio economic environment on turnout. The results showed that the socio economic

environment has a strong effect on voter turnout. Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) agree with Blais and Dobrzynska (1998) by asserting that institutions alone do not explain the voter turnout variations that are seen across Africa because there are many socio economic and contextual variables that influence turnout. In another study where Blais (2006) analyzed Jackman's assertions, he concluded that because Jackman excluded socio economic variables, his model fails to qualify as a 'fuller model'. Owing to the foregoing, this study has employed both the institutional context as well as the social economic context in order to find out causes behind the trends in Chiradzulu and Blantyre.

2.6 Dangers of Low Voter Turnout in a Democracy

One of the ways that show that democracy is maturing is the willingness of the masses to participate at the polls without being coerced or enticed. Liphart (1997 cited in Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007) has equated low voter turnout to unequal participation. Kuenzi and Lambright (2007:665) have said that 'low voter turnout might indicate that the people do not see elections as central to political life.' He further postulates that the impact of low voter turnout may be dangerous for democracies that are not entrenched as this can lead to democratic reversals.

Caulfield (2009) further argues that low voter turnout is less representative hence government is less legitimate which may lead to future unrests and crisis. Solijonov (IDEA, 2016) further argues that lower voter turnout may suggest that fewer citizens consider elections as an instrument that legitimize parties to control political decision making. Interestingly, 'lower citizen participation does not necessarily mean that citizens are becoming less active in politics (ibid)' but may express dissatisfaction with some systems.

2.7 Voter Apathy

Voter apathy is one of the factors that have been used to explain low voter turnout. Voter apathy is a behavior that shows no interest and shows that someone is unwilling to take action especially over something important (Cambridge Dictionary). Kolovos and Harris (2005) referred to voter apathy as ‘a lack of feel of personal responsibility, a passivity and indifference for political affairs’ which eventually removes the personal obligation for one to participate in political affairs. Voter apathy is caused by different reasons from country to country but often lack of trust in the candidates and electoral system, political efficacy and voter fatigue are usually cited.

Voter apathy is a problem to democracy because without involvement of the citizens in the political process, democracy can never be viable or meaningful (Dalton, 1988 cited in Kolovos, 2005). Voter apathy is an indication that things have gone ‘terribly bad’ (Dalton 1988). However there are some theorists who think that voter apathy should not be a cause for concern but should be considered as natural as it shows that people are satisfied (Kyle, 2010; Gockenbach, 2012; Ezrow and Georgios, 2016). On the other hand, other scholars feel that voter apathy should be a cause for concern because it is a sign of ‘unhealthy politics, degeneration and decay (Liphart, 1997)’.

In his article, *High Interest in Europe despite Low Voter Turnout*, Dalia (2016) argues that people’s interest to turnout to vote is not matching their high interest in politics. Low voter turnout was attributed to lack of trust in political institutions. The other finding was that there was a shift in that people’s interest in politics in that it had become more observational than participatory.

In Malawi however, Chinsinga (2006) found that voter apathy is caused by the way Malawi Electoral commission manages and administers elections, failure of successful candidates to deliver, intra and inter party politics and the electoral legal framework.

2.8 Political Landscape

Political landscape is the general situation in which a particular activity takes place (Longman Dictionary). It is a set of hierarchies that link political players together. In other words, political landscape is what defines relationships between colleagues at a given time. Crepaz (1990) argues that diverse political landscape which offers a great menu of political choice to electors is more likely to have high turnout than a political system in which the difference between parties are small. Hence he asserts that number of parties in a polity, their type and party polarization do influence voter turnout.

The recent elections in Britain, produced a changing political landscape (Financial Times, June 2017). The new landscape is showing that people no longer look to established parties to solve their problems. The political landscape has become more polarized by age. This has not been the case all along. In the recent elections the younger generation turned out to vote in their large numbers (Financial Times). In America, the 2016 elections outcome triggered a new policy trajectory in important global markets because of the policy changes that the new president is bringing in (Dallas and Warring, 2016).

Another factor that is changing the political landscape in America is immigration. The population of immigrants is growing rapidly. Besides, more Latinos are deciding to turnout

to vote as was the case in California and other big states because they were not happy with the immigration reforms which Trump was proposing (Wolgin and Gracia, 2013).

2.9 Political Landscape For Chiradzulu And Blantyre Districts

Chiradzulu is largely a rural district to the north east of Blantyre district covering 767 square kilometers with a total population of 236,050. Dominant tribes of the district are Yao and Lomwe. Their main occupation is trade and farming. It has five constituencies and ten wards. The dominant party is Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Out of five parliamentary seats, three belong to DPP representing 60%. The remaining two are independent seats representing 40%. Chiradzulu was chosen because it consistently registers high turnout in the southern region.

Blantyre on the other hand, is a combination of urban, semi urban and rural. It is the commercial capital city of Malawi. It has a population of 661,444 (2008 census). Total number of constituencies is twelve. The predominant party is DPP with nine out of twelve constituencies belonging to it representing 75%. The remaining three constituencies were won by independent candidates in 2014 elections. The urban townships of Blantyre have a combination of all tribes which are present in Malawi hence no one culture can be said to be dominant. In Blantyre rural and semi urban, it is the Yao tribe that dominates because out of the nine Traditional Authorities which Blantyre has, seven are Yao.

2.10 Political Parties and Political Party Group Linkages

Political parties are organizations that sponsor candidates in elections for political office under their name (Svasand and Khembo, 2007). They represent alternative approaches to how government should be run through different ideologies. The origin of political parties

date back to 1600s following the dissolution of parliament in United Kingdom. The move divided the people into two factions; one side was called petitioners while the other side that backed the king was called abhorrers.

Political parties are very important institutions in democracy because they perform many duties which include nomination of candidates in elections. Political parties receive those that would like to vie for different political positions in government under the ticket of their party to carry out their policies. It is the duty of the party to come up with one candidate from among the list of candidates by conducting primaries or by using any other system stipulated by the party constitution. Hence another subtle duty political parties perform is to help voters by structuring and simplifying the voter choice. They help voters to easily identify candidate's position. Powell (1982) found that voter choice is 'simpler when and where groups are clearly associated with specific parties.' However Randall and Svasand (2010) found that political parties in Africa are regularly perceived as weak link so much so that they have helped undermine democracy instead of promoting it. He argues that this is usually caused by irresponsible and selfish leaders.

Another function which political parties perform is to propose alternative government programs. This is done through developing of manifestos. This enables the citizens to compare parties and chose the one that best represents their interests and aspirations. As Calvo and Murillo (2013) assert that 'we expect variation in political linkages across political parties within the same polity because parties differ in their perceived organizational capacity to access and deliver resources.' In their article *when parties meet voters* they distinguish clientistic and programmatic approaches which parties use in

regarding access to publicly provided benefits. In clientistic approach partisan networks mediate access to goods and voters expect handouts, public sector jobs and public works as benefits. While in programmatic approach beneficiaries are defined by policy and access is independent from distributive networks. Here voters anticipate that goods will be delivered by public policy through the parties ideology when they have access to resources (Calvo and Murillo, 2013).

The last function they perform is to coordinate the actions of government officials. In this way parties do directly perform the linkage function. In a study conducted Kyriaki Nanou (2012), she found that parties are declining. However, although in the state of decline, they are still able to carry out their function of linkages effectively. A study conducted by Dalton, Farrel and McAllister (2011) confirm that parties are still essential in translating preferences of citizens into government outcomes. Besides, the study mentions that the linkage functions which the parties perform include campaign, participation, ideology, representation and policy.

2.11 Political Parties in Malawi as Linkage Institutions

Historically, there was multiparty system before and after independence until the cabinet crisis of 1966. The parties included United Federal Party, Christian Democratic Party, Congress Liberation Party and Malawi Congress Party (Svasand and Khembo 2007). Thereafter it was one party system with Malawi Congress Party as the only party up to 1993 when a referendum to decide whether we needed to go back to multiparty system was held. Since then up to date, Malawi has had a multiparty system of government. Many parties have since registered but the most common ones include Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Alliance for Democracy (AFORD),

United Transformation Movement (UTM), Peoples Party(PP) and many others that have not left significant marks. In a democracy, more so a nascent one like ours, political parties are key to the institutionalism and consolidation of democracy (Patel, 2006). As already discussed in the preceding section, parties are important in a democracy because of the critical functions which they play. Of particular interest to this study is the linkage function. Chunga (2014) in his Afrobarometer briefing paper asserted that ‘linkage function of parties can be understood better by considering peoples’ attitudes and assessment of political parties.’ The Afrobarometer survey therefore revealed that 14% of Malawians had made at least one contact with officials of a party in the past year. The previous surveys also showed the same low contact trend. In spite of low contact, the survey however indicated that the majority of people in Malawi are attached to political parties. The puzzle that this essay therefore would like to answer is whether this contact or lack of it has any effect on voter turnout.

The low contact with political leaders show level of intra party politics and is a clear manifestation of how people consider relevance of political parties (Chunga, 2014). Since one of the linkage functions of parties include campaigning and mobilizing voters (Dalton, Farrel and McAllister, 2011), it is the proposition of this study that poor linkage will also lead to low voter turnout.

2.12 Effect of Social Economic Status and Environment on Voter Turnout

Socio economic status is defined as a measure of ones combined economic and social status. Socio economic factors significantly affect whether or not individuals develop a habit of voting. There are various studies that reveal that social economic status of an individual has influence on their likelihood to turnout to vote. The social economic status

includes things like education, income and class. Religion and place of residence whether one is living in the urban setting or rural also affect voter turnout. Today social economic models typically define individual's status through a number of factors that include occupation, education, income, location of residence, membership in civic or social organizations and amenities in the home(Brown, 2008). The models claim that those with high levels of social economic status vote more often because of their increased ability to bear the costs of voting and registration. The model further says that occupations like farming, clerical workers, sales workers and vote more (Brown, 2008). On the contrary, study conducted by Blair (2014) showed that low income Americans are more likely to vote than any other group and the middle and upper income African Americans are least likely to vote.

Age is yet another critical social factor that influences voter turnout. Franklin (2004) refers to it as a key factor in turnout dynamics. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) and Blais (2000) have argued that propensity to vote increases with age. The youth that are less than 21 years of age were found to be less interested to vote than those that were beyond that age. It has a direct impact on voter turnout. Wolfinger and Rosenstone(1980) argue that age and education are significant factors in promoting engaged citizenry.

This study however has examined three factors that include age, place of residence and occupation.

2.13 Theoretical Framework

2.13.1 Background of Institutional theory

The study has employed institutional theory. The institutional theory has come around in two phases. There is old institutionalism and new institutionalism. The old institutionalism mainly focused on the actual structures and actual institutions as regulators of behavior. Institutions were seen to provide ‘actors with a set of behavioral incentives and disincentives (Bell, 2002). This approach however, disregarded informal institutions. As such it was heavily criticized for its rigidity and failure to take into account some other factors embedded within the society, culture and people themselves. As a result the new institutional theory was eventually born.

2.13.2 New Institutional Theory

It began with attempts of March and Olsen (1989) to recreate the old theory. They defined ‘political institutions as collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate action (Ibid, 2002).’ In fact Peters (1999) refers to new institutionalism as normative institutionalism simply because behavior within an organization can be explained in terms of the norms and values that people hold. While the old institutionalism emphasized structures, the new institutional approach revolves around formal and informal rules as regulators of behavior. The new approach acknowledges that much as people do make individual choices, those choices will be limited to the parameters of their prevalent dominant institutional values.

However, the coming in of the new institutional theory as Bell (2002) has put it, does not mean that the old institutionalism is dead. In light of this, the framework of this study

therefore, is institutional theory in its broader understanding as structures and rules both formal and informal. From the institutionalisms' lens, behavior of systems can be looked at through rules that govern that society and that includes elements like political culture, electoral laws and political parties among others. Hall and Taylor (1996) argue that institutionalists see institutional organization of the polity or political economy as the principal factor structuring collective behavior and generating distinctive outcomes.

2.13.3 Pillars of Institutional Theory

Scott (2001) observed that institutions have two pillars. One of the pillars is that institutions are regulative. That is to say, institutions have power to constrain and regulate behavior of people living within that context. The second pillar is that institutions are normative. They prescribe rights and privileges as well as responsibilities and duties among its members. Apart from the above pillars, the key theoretical assumptions of institutional theory are that institutions have material and cultural characteristics. The other key theoretical understanding is that interests, values, identities and assumptions of individuals and organizations are imbedded in the prevailing institutional goals (Scott 2001).

2.13.4.1 Variants of Institutional Theory

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, it is important to understand that the new institutionalism approach has many variants with historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism as the major variants. This study however will borrow heavily on historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism.

2.13.4.2 *Historical Institutionalism*

Historical institutionalism is defined as ‘the formal or the informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of polity or political economy (Peters, 1999).’ The historical institutionalists emphasize that institutions shape behavior. Peters (Ibid) argue that under historical institutionalism ‘subsequent decisions which people make come from the initial policy choices and institutionalized commitments that grow out of them’. Meaning that, history of what happened before and the previous trends or practices from the past do influence how people will make their choices in the present. As Holm (2016) has rightly put it, historical institutionalism only looks backward. He further argues that it is the choices that are made at the initial construction phase that will continue to influence policy in future.

2.13.4.3 *Sociological Institutionalism*

In Sociological institutionalism the assumption is that normative orientations, the moral standards and the general social context, will shape interactions with institutions and other actors (Bell, 2002). Lawrence and Shadnam (2008) have explicitly explained about the context of institutions. They argue that institutions are situated within specific social context within which they condition action.

Hence, this study shall focus on institutional context by examining prevalent institutions in these districts, their relationships and their effect on the people to voting and voter turnout. An important point to note here is that people are always concerned about making an appropriate response to any given situation visa-a-visa their position and responsibility (Bell ,2002).Therefore when one is making a decision to vote or not to vote, they consider

how his or her society is going to see it. Thus historical and sociological perspectives of institutional theory will dominate the study.

2.14 Summary and Conclusion of the Reviewed Literature

This section has looked at what we mean by voter turnout, trends of voter turnout, and implications of low voter turnout on democracy, the causes of low voter turn, political parties as group linkages voter apathy and the effect of socio economic status and environment on voter turnout. The reviewed literature shows that voter turnout has been on the decline worldwide since the start of 1980s due numerous reasons ranging from institutional arrangements, legal framework, party mobilization, socio economic environment, electoral formula, the constitutional setting and party systems and elections outcomes among others. Voter apathy has also been one of the major causes of low turnout even in Malawi. Literatures shows that among the causes of voter apathy is the issue of inter and intra party politics, dissatisfaction with MP performance and role played by Malawi Electoral Commission. The study therefore looks at both formal and informal institutions that may be at work within parties, legal framework and society that are responsible for voter turnout trends in Chiradzulu and Blantyre.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses research design and methodology which has been used in this research. Research design is the methodology and procedure which a researcher follows to answer the research question which they have (Boundless, 2016). We discuss methods, tools and strategies that have been used to collect data. The section will further discuss how the collected data has been analyzed. Finally, ethical considerations that have been looked into as well as the limitations of this study.

3.2 Research Design Overview

Research design is the game plan on how you intend to produce an answer for the research question that one has (Masami et al, 2014). As for this study, it is a qualitative study because it is studying factors that affect high voter turnout and low voter turnout. Franklin (2004) indicates that the logical way to ascertain the impact of a variable on turnout is to examine whether turnout increases or decreases when that variable changes. However, in this study, we will look at specific factors and observe what happens to turnout when such factors are applied in different settings.

3.3 Study Setting

The study was conducted in Chiradzulu and Blantyre districts. Chiradzulu and Blantyre are neighboring districts in the southern region. Chiradzulu is largely a rural district to the north east of Blantyre district covering 767 square kilometers with a total population of 236,050. It has five constituencies and ten wards. The dominant party is Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Out of five parliamentary seats, three belong to DPP representing 60%. The remaining two are independent seats representing 40%. Chiradzulu was chosen because it consistently registers high turnout. However, the study deliberately also targeted two constituencies that registered higher turnout than the rest in 2014. Chiradzulu central was the highest with a voter turnout of 76.37 % (2014 MEC results). The successful candidate was an independent candidate in the name of Mohammed Hanif Osman. The second highest was Chiradzulu East with 75.12 % (2014 MEC results). The successful candidate was Henry Mussa of DPP. Tribes that dominate the district are Yao and Lomwe.

Blantyre on the other hand, is a combination of urban, semi urban and rural. It is the commercial capital city of Malawi. Blantyre District consistently registers low voter turnout as compared to other districts in the southern region. However, Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada were least in the 2014 elections with 57.94% and 49.88% respectively (2014 MEC results). It has a population of 661,444(2008 census). Total number of constituencies is twelve. The predominant party is DPP with nine out of twelve constituencies belonging to it representing 75%. The remaining three constituencies were won by independent candidates in 2014 elections. The urban townships of Blantyre has a combination of all tribes which are present in Malawi hence no one culture can be said to

be dominant. In Blantyre rural and semi urban, it is the Yao tribe that dominates because out of the nine Traditional Authorities which Blantyre has, seven are Yao.

Chiradzulu and Blantyre were chosen because they have a lot in common and a few differences. The two districts are both found in the southern region of Malawi lying next to each other. Dominant party in both districts is Democratic Progressive Party if we go by the last election outcome. Since it is the same party that dominates these two districts, the party group linkage system of the same party would not be different in one district. There is also a lot of migration between the two districts. What then could be the cause for lower trend in Blantyre and the higher trend in Chiradzulu? Much as the two cases are similar they are also different in Chiradzulu is largely rural while Blantyre is a mixture.

3.4 Study Population

This study targeted all adults of 18 years and above who are residents of Chiradzulu and Blantyre districts. This is called inclusion criteria (Masami et al 2014) meaning that broadly speaking as long as one was an adult resident in these districts they stood a chance to participate in the study. However, the study sourced views from people that voted in at least three elections and those that did not vote at all. Apart from the general voting population, the study also interviewed district based political leaders and local chiefs in areas under study.

3.5 Sampling Methods and Procedures

3.5.1 Sampling Methods

This study used both purposive sampling as well as random sampling methods. Sampling is the process of identifying a subset of people or entities for a research project (Masami et

al, 2014). Sampling to obtain information that can be used to make inferences about the population of interest while saving time and resources (Weller and Romney, 1988). Random sampling basically targets everyone in the study population while in purposive sampling data, participants are chosen to fit the parameters of the research (Tracy, 2012). In this study, the two districts have been purposively chosen because of the trends they show. Chiradzulu for example, has consistently registered high turnout in the three elections in the southern region while Blantyre has consistently been low in the southern region. The two Constituencies understudy in both districts were chosen by identifying those with highest turnout in Chiradzulu while in Blantyre two constituencies with lowest turnout were chosen. Having identified these constituencies, villages that were interviewed were chosen using random sampling. One village was identified in each constituency. People that were interviewed were identified randomly at village headman level. This was done to make sure that everyone in the village stands chance of being selected to take part in the research.

Although the methodology above was adequate in identifying the sample to be interviewed, it sometimes happened that the sample which was randomly identified has did not have enough people who did not vote. When faced with such a scenario, maximum variation sampling was put to use. Maximum variation sampling is a strategy where researchers may specifically recruit underrepresented groups so that their views add to the breadth of the interviews (Tracy, 2012). Hence key informants like chiefs were requested to deliberately lead me to those that do not vote to be included in my interviews

3.5.2 Procedure

In order to find out if people consider voting as important, participants in focus group discussions were asked whether they considered voting as important and why. They were also asked to share the reasons that prompt them to go and vote. The non voters were also asked to share with the group the reasons that dissuade them from voting.

To find out if good party linkages positively affect voter turnout, those that voted were engaged to find out if people belonged to any political parties and if they vote more for the party other than the candidate. The proposition was that where there are good party linkages people will subscribe to parties and will vote for their party candidate. Again party linkages mean contact with party leaders, meaning that if the party has good local functional structures which connect the people and their needs to the party leaders, the people will be motivated to vote for candidates of the party hence higher voter turnout. In order to achieve this, objective voters were engaged in focus group discussions where they were asked about their affiliation to parties and whether at any point they voted against their party and why. Finally, in order to establish if there is a link with political leaders at various levels and strength of local party structures, the voters were asked on frequency of contact with party leaders and meetings.

On the other hand, those that did not vote were equally engaged in the same focus group discussions to examine their linkages especially where voter turnout is consistently low. The nonvoters were asked the same questions which those that claimed to be voting were asked. Party officials of the dominant party at district and area level were purposely sampled and were asked about the activities and strategies which the party use in order to connect with their supporters in the same bid to establish the strength of party linkages.

On objective three which is dealing with political landscape, the proposition was that where migration is stable or residence is permanent, voter turnout tends to be higher. Therefore in order to prove this objective the voters and nonvoters were asked how long they have stayed in a particular area to see if there will be any correlation with voter turnout.

On the last objective the study wanted to see if the rural setting of Chiradzulu is the one which is responsible for the higher turnout unlike the semirural and urban district of Blantyre. Here the study looked at occupations of people in the two districts, the social cohesiveness of people in the rural versus the urban and semi urban and the role chiefs play in the two settings. Is their influence the same or different in these two settings? In order to achieve this, local chiefs were key informants who were asked about the influence they have on their subjects to turnout to vote and the choice of candidate to vote for. The chiefs were also asked how frequent they meet their subjects. The aim was to find out if some factors are more associated with the rural setting than the urban and semi urban setting.

3.5.3 Sample

Concerning the size of the sample, Punch (2000) argues that in qualitative studies sample sizes tend to be small with no statistical grounds for guidance. He further asserts that coming up with sample size in qualitative studies depends on the purpose of the study against the sampling frame and practical constraints that may be present. Tracy (2012) augments this position by arguing that in qualitative studies quality of the sample is more important than quantity. Looking at variables that were studied, important parameters were considered so as to come up with voters and non-voters, party officials at district level, constituency level and areal level and village headmen as participants of the study.

3.6 Data Collection

Data was collected through reviewing of secondary data, conducting focus group discussions and interviews. The study looked at years from 1994 to date because this is when democratic elections started taking place here in Malawi. All the five elections we have had were considered with 1999 treated as an exceptional year. Focus group discussions were used because of their history of leading to valuable output because they offer several perspectives about the same topic. Participants in focus group discussions easily share their perceptions whether they are agreeing or disagreeing hence appropriate for a group that had both voters and nonvoters. Focus group discussions also helped the researcher to gather as much information from different participants at once.

Data was collected over a period of two weeks in Chiradzulu and Blantyre. Three research assistants were deployed apart from the main researcher to help in conducting focus group discussions. Two focus group discussion were conducted in each of the four constituencies. The participants ranged from eight to twelve. Focus group discussions were conducted with voters and non-voters and the responses were recorded and later transcribed.

Face to face or one on one interviews were also conducted to obtain information from village headmen and party officials who were district governors and area governors. These were chosen because they are better placed to provide information that relates to party structures and linkages at local level as well as the strategies they use to engage the people. One on one interviews were done with party officials and chiefs effective in bringing out issues that respondents would have hesitated to say in a focus group discussion. Structured questions were appropriate especially in this case where we are comparing two districts.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis focuses on identifying themes that adequately represents data. You start with some ideas about the hypothesis or themes that might emerge and look for them in the data that has been collected. Themes are key patterns identified in the data that may be important features of the phenomenon in question according to the purpose of the research (Masami et al, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2006) says that a theme would capture something important about the data in relation to the research question. There are basic steps that were followed under this analysis.

The first step was to familiarize with data from which codes were generated. Thereafter, themes that were coming out from the data were identified and tabulated. Thereafter the themes were reviewed. In the end, the review led to the process of defining and naming the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Through this process common trends and patterns that matched and mismatched were traced and data was finally interpreted accordingly.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The consent of the respondents to participate in the study was sought. Those that participated were assured that the information provided will be used for the purposes of the research alone. Issues of privacy and confidentiality were also observed.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

The study had some limitations. The first limitation was that the study took place in slightly two different context which may render comparison of some factors difficult. The other limitation is in the fact that there are a lot of factors that affect turnout as such it is quite a challenge to isolate determinants of high or low voter turnout. In addition, Matsusaka and

Palda (1999) argue that voter turnout is difficult to measure because it can also be driven by minor factors that may not persist for a long time like weather, mood and personal health. However, the tools that were employed in the collection of data were designed in such a way as to narrow the research to measuring unique factors that were applicable to the chosen areas and to variables being studied in this research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research findings as to why Chiradzulu consistently registers high voter turnout while Blantyre consistently registers low voter turnout. In order to answer this question, a hypothesis which was to be tested was formulated. The proposition of the study is that consistently high voter turnout is influenced by perceptions of people on the importance of voting, good party linkages, nature of political landscapes and social economic environment in the rural and urban setting prevalent through institutions of a given area. To this end, there were four main research questions that sought to address the objectives of the study. The first question wanted to find out if people consider voting as an important exercise. The second question was meant to find out how the party linkages affect voter turnout. The third wanted to establish if different political landscapes have a bearing on voter turnout. The final question wanted to find out if the socio-economic environment of the rural district setting is more conducive to higher voter turnout than the urban and semi urban setting.

4.2 Is voting important?

4.2.1 Do people consider voting as important?

The study wanted to establish whether the people considered voting as important. In the focus group discussion with voters, people were asked the question “What do you think is the importance of voting?” The responses that were given included the following: voting

brings change, it puts leaders into positions, it entices donors, helps in equal distribution of development, there is no benefit, it brings better government, empowers citizens, helps to get identity cards, to continue getting subsidized inputs and that it brings development. Among all these reasons, the ones that were common were that voting brings change, it puts leaders in their positions, it empowers citizens and that it provides an opportunity to obtain an identity card.

On the other hand, those that said they do not vote also cited their reasons. These included the following: they said that they were not included on the subsidized inputs, there was no development in the area, non-fulfillment of manifesto and promises, religion, work, pregnancy, MP absence, dissatisfaction with MP performance, not happy with distribution of handouts, it is a waste of time, they were let down by one party and that some felt that parties had empty manifestos.

However the most prominent reasons were three, the major one was MP absence from the area soon after winning, the second one was that they do not see any development in the area and thirdly was the issue of non-inclusion on subsidized inputs and other handouts. One gentleman revealed why he no longer votes by saying

I only voted in 1994 since then I have never voted again because I did not benefit and also my area. The MP did not even come to interact with us when he was voted into power. I will never vote again however I will be registering to get an identity card.

Even more interesting is the fact that most non-voters acknowledged that they go to register but they do this just to get an identity card. The responses we got in all constituencies show that most non-voters did register just to get the identity card which benefits them in other

ways other than to use it as an identity card to vote. Now since voter turnout in Malawi is based on number of registered voters and not on the voting age population, the turnout percentage will automatically be compromised once others will decide to stay away. The likelihood that registration to vote will dwindle steadily with coming in of national IDs is very high since one of the motivating factors was to get an identity card. This conclusion has just been proven to be true because recent statistics obtained from MEC this February 2019 shows that registrants have dropped from 7,531,381 in 2014 to 6,859,570 in 2018 representing 91% of those who registered in 2014. Actually the projected figure for 2019 elections registration was at 8,525,638 but only 80.46% has been achieved (Refer to Appendix 10)

4.2.2 Reasons that Prompt People to go and Vote

It was therefore interesting to go further to find out the factors that were behind the decline of interest for those that were not voting at all. On the other hand those that continue to vote had their reasons too as to why they keep on voting. Hence question 1.2(see appendix 3) wanted to find out what prompted voters to vote and non-voters not to vote.

Those that voted had a whole range of reasons to give. The responses included the fact that they were impressed with leadership of the country or the performance of their Member of Parliament (MP). Some people said that what prompted them to vote was that they wanted to choose their leader while others said that they wanted to get an identity card while some said that they wanted to secure their freedoms. Yet others said that they wanted to get development or because of fertilizer subsidy or because they really wanted their candidate and party to win. Some said they were happy with free primary education or that the party fulfilled its promises and manifesto while others said that it was their civic duty to do so.

In spite of the many responses that were given, there were four reasons that kept on being emphasized. These include to get development and subsidized inputs, to choose their desired leader, to get an identity card and that it is their civic duty to go and vote. One of the woman in the group actually said:

I was encouraged by starter pack fertilizer and all the years the winning party has been fulfilling its promises' while another man said that 'I have been voting because free primary delivered me from the burden of paying school fees at primary level and I want this to continue.

Both responses point to the fact that people expect government to handout things to them, that is, clientistic tendencies and also that people would like to see direct benefits. The reasons agree with findings of Calvo and Murillo (2013) where they found that parties with clientistic approach mediate access to goods and voters expect handouts, public sector jobs and public works from the party and its government.

But since the other major reason included provision of developments and good policies that are pro poor like free primary education, we can as well conclude that Malawian politics is also programmatic in nature. We have a combination of both clientistic politics where people would be encouraged to vote if government hand things out to them as well as programmatic where people look into the manifestos to see what programs will be implemented by the party once voted into power.

4.2.3 Summary

In summary, objective one looked at the importance of voting. The results show that people generally consider voting as an important exercise although on the other hand interest to vote is declining. On what prompted them to vote, it is interesting to note that while voters

do so in appreciation of the development they see, non-voters on the other hand argue that they fail to go and vote because there is no development in their area which they appreciate. The results also reveal that performance of Member of Parliament has a very big bearing on people's continued interest to vote. Most non-voters echoed the fact that they get discouraged to vote because of the absence of the Member of Parliament from their area and lack of development by the Member of Parliament. The finding confirms the study by Adams, Dow and Meril (2006) who identified alienation to candidates and indifference towards candidates as two main causes of voter apathy. The findings further agree with a study by Chinsinga (2006) where he found that dissatisfaction by MP performance leads to voter apathy which affects voter turnout. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this concern did not only come out from the voters but also local leaders and local politicians.

Another interesting result is that of handouts and subsidized inputs. While those that voted said that they continue to do so because of subsidized inputs, non-voters on the other hand, said the diametrical opposite that they do not vote because they are sidelined on subsidized inputs. Hence this factor is both a deterrent as well as an incentive to vote. Again this point reinforces the clientistic element of our party politics.

4.3 Effect of Party Group Linkages on Voter Turnout

4.3.1 Membership to Political Parties

First of all, the study wanted to know if participants in the focus group discussions belong to any political party. Voters and non-voters were asked if they at all belong to any political party. All voters that were interviewed in Chiradzulu East, Blantyre West and Ndirande Malabada answered yes to this question. This agrees with findings by Chunga 2014 in the

Afrobarometer survey where he confirmed that the majority of Malawians are partisan. It is only in Chiradzulu Central where most participants indicated that they did not belong to any party. Ironically, this also happens to be the constituency that registered highest votes among the four constituencies under study in 2014 and an independent candidate won just like in the preceding election of 2009. This outcome does not agree with Powell (1982) who emphasized on party group linkages and concluded that when groups are clearly associated with specific parties, voter choice is made simple.

However, further inquiry to this revealed that top party officials at regional and national level impose their own candidates who are not popularly accepted by the masses at grass root level. As a result, people choose to vote for a candidate they want regardless of party colors. It was also learnt that in both instances the independent candidates that won could not make it at primaries of the dominant party of the area due to intra party politics. Hence a popular independent candidate who stems from a strong party which is dominant in an area has higher chances of winning elections than a popular independent candidate who has no such attachments. Again here we see that parties are failing in one of their duties to help citizens identify a candidate of their choice therefore denying them a meaningful opportunity to engage political leaders to influence policy choices. The findings agree with Randall and Svasand (2010) who found that political parties in Africa have helped undermine democracy because of greed and irresponsibility.

When the same question was put to non-voters, it was interesting to note that some of them have political parties to which they belong while others do not have. However, it was Chiradzulu Central and Blantyre West where most voters indicated that they do not belong to any party as was confirmed by one gentleman who said that “*I belonged to a party before*

but I no longer belong to one anymore” and another who said “I do not follow political campaigns anymore.”

Those that indicated that they belong to a political party were further asked to explain why they chose their respective parties. The reasons given ranged from leadership style of the party, assistance from the Member of Parliament during bereavement, the candidate of the party was development conscious, the party fulfills its manifestos and promises, they introduced starter pack and that they have a good manifesto and provide free primary education.

However, leadership style of the party, developmental consciousness of the member of parliament of the party and fulfilling of promises and manifesto and provision of subsidized fertilizer were mostly mentioned as major reasons. One important point to note is that many non-voters in Chiradzulu Central and Blantyre West indicated that they belong to political parties and yet fail to turnout to vote. But when we examine the reasons that made them choose their respective parties, we find that they are the same reasons which prompt people to vote. Hence we can conclude that some of the non-voters are so by default and not by design. They are people who are interested in politics as evidenced by the fact that they belong to a political party of their choice. This finding agrees with Dalia (2016) who argued that interest of people to turnout to vote is not matching their high interest in politics. People talk a lot about politics and are genuinely interested but it is only observational not participatory.

4.3.2 Mobilization of Supporters

The study hypothesized that where party group linkages are strong, you are also likely to have more people turning out to vote. Hence the study wanted to find out how parties mobilize their supporters. Blantyre Limbe Governor for DPP had this to say;

first for us to know our supporters it is the party's secret through areas. You know that we have areas and in the areas we have committees. Like here, I have three constituencies, in the areas we know exactly how many people we have and those who are our members.

In all the four constituencies, the party governors from the district level to area level all mentioned that they mobilize their supporters through zones. They explained that each and every constituency is divided into zones. At each zone, which basically is at village level, they try to get ninety strong supporters out of which fifteen are core leaders and supporters. The rest of the supporters that may be found in that zone, just add up from the number of the initial 90 which they are sure of no matter what may happen. To this end, all the political leaders alluded to the fact that they have registers of all their members at area level and district level.

Another way in which parties mobilize supporters is through holding meetings. Political leaders' were asked about how often they organize party meetings. Chiradzulu Central and Blantyre Malabada said that they meet twice a month at area level but Chiradzulu Central does not have district level meetings while Blantyre West responded that they hold these meetings once a month at district level. For area meetings in Chiradzulu East and Blantyre West, they are ad hoc. However it was a general outcry from both the political party leaders, voters and chiefs that meetings are seldom held after elections are done such that it becomes

difficult to meet their leaders to discuss matters. The finding agrees with Chunga (2014) Afro barometer survey that established that there is low contact as low as 14% between the political leaders and the people. Again this confirms the clientistic tendencies of our politics. Once members of parliament having gotten what they wanted from the citizens, they no longer prioritize meetings with people who voted for them. They will only increase frequency of the meetings again when the next election is approaching.

4.3.3 How Parties Ensure Loyalty

To further establish party group linkages, the study wanted to find out how parties ensure loyalty of its members. The responses to this question were varied especially for Chiradzulu Central and Malabada. Chiradzulu Central confessed that it is very difficult to ensure loyalty but Blantyre Malabada district governor said that they offer incentives in form of promotions to ensure loyalty. Chiradzulu East and Blantyre West said that they use their zones or area chairpersons to ensure loyalty and trace disloyal members.

The other question that tested loyalty among voters was whether they have at any point voted for a candidate that is not of their party. Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada both responded no to this question. However when it came to Chiradzulu Central, the people responded that they mostly voted for a candidate who was not from their party at many times. As already alluded to before, this happens when party disregards the candidate whom the majority of the people in the area want and imposes another candidate which the party wants. The party's top officials systematically frustrate the popular preferred candidate at primaries. The party system makes sure that their favored candidate wins contrary to the will of the people. As a result, the man of the people is encouraged to contest

as an independent candidate but has roots in the original party. This is the reason that makes people end up voting for a candidate who is not on their party ticket.

Notwithstanding the study learnt that it is generally difficult to ensure full loyalty from members. What they rely on mostly is members' natural passion and devotion to the party. This is particularly so because parties in this country are not ideologically distinct. Hence whether to belong to party A or B depends on other factors like social identity, tribal identity and direct benefits one expects. But much as social or tribal cohesion seems to be one of the major factors driving our political choices, in cases where another party sprouts up from the same social circle, does it mean that people will easily move back and forth between the two parties? The probable answer may be yes depending on which one is offering more because of the absence of ideological differences but this is an area that requires further research.

4.3.4 Mechanisms that are used to Channel Concerns that affect the People

The study also sought to know the mechanisms which the people in the areas under study use to voice out their concerns to their political leaders and government. All governors at all levels answered that the people go through the area chairperson who in turn informs constituency governor, then the district governor and finally get to the regional governor. However, Chiradzulu East governor added that they also use Village Development Committees (VDCs).

However, when this same question was posed to the chiefs they responded that the concerns of the people are channeled through the Member of Parliament, Councilor, party meetings which are seldom held and Village Development Committees (VDCs). None of them

mentioned the party cadres. Hence local chiefs do not have much trust in political party cadres in solving the concerns of their areas.

The findings reveal a failure in the function of parties as linkages. On one hand, the linkage is provided by the mere fact that the candidate of their choice was elected as Member of Parliament. It is henceforth assumed that the candidate is representing the interests of his constituents through the party manifesto. Of course this is only true where a candidate of the party was elected and not an independent candidate. However, lack of trust in channeling concerns through party cadres and minimal interaction that follows as soon as the Member of Parliament assumes office shows a compromise in the linkage function.

4.3.5 Strength of Political Structures and Relationships within the Party

The study wanted to find out from political leaders how they perceive the strength of their political structures. Chiradzulu East and Blantyre West see their political structure as being strong while Chiradzulu Central and Blantyre Malabada see their party structures as being not so strong.

In the same vein, the study wanted to find out how members of the party relate among themselves and with their political leaders. Although the response to this question was mostly that there is a good relationship except for Chiradzulu East, there were some issues that were said to bring problems. The respondents felt that the grass root level is usually overlooked, they are only needed when it is time to vote.

The other concern had to do with selective distribution of handouts and incentives. *“We interact well with fellow party members and leaders. However when it comes to incentives I always doubt their relationship with us,”* lamented one frustrated area governor for

Chiradzulu East while another governor from the same area added that ; *“We are always together during campaigns but when it comes to incentives we sideline each other.”* They alleged that those that benefit a lot from these are either related to top party officials at district level or are close to them. Furthermore, what weakens the relationship within the party is that the Member of Parliament does not interact with the people as expected because of continued absence from the constituency.

4.4 Effect of Political Landscape on Voter Turnout

4.4.1 Composition of People

The aim of the third objective of the study was to find out if different social political landscapes do affect voters’ turnout. Hence, the first question under this objective was to know the composition of people who live in the area. According to political leaders in Chiradzulu Central, it is mostly women who are in majority. The people there are not so literate but naturally intelligent said one district governor in Chiradzulu Central. Blantyre Malabada on the other hand has people from all walks of life while the rest of the three other constituencies, most people are indigenous to the area.

The response from local chiefs was not so much different from the response we got from the political leaders. In Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada the youth are said to dominate the population while women dominate in the two constituencies in Chiradzulu. According to Franklin (2004) voting age is a key factor in turnout dynamics. Again Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980), Blais (2000), confirmed that the propensity to vote increases with age. Hence we do not expect a youth dominated population to vote more. As for women it depends on the tradition and culture that is prevalent in the given polity.

In Chiradzulu just like all district in Malawi, women are free to vote and in women are empowered more traditionally as in many southern areas of the country. Therefore this particular landscape in population could be responsible for the trend we see.

4.4.2 Migration and Mobility of the People

The other area which the study wanted to explore had to do with the migration and mobility of people. The question that was asked was for the participants to mention the time they came to the area. In Chiradzulu Central all respondents said that they were born there just like in Chiradzulu East. Except that in Chiradzulu east some said they came very long time ago. In Blantyre West, all respondents except one were born in the area. However when it came to Blantyre Malabada only one respondent said he was born there while the rest said that they came to the area but at different times ranging from 1977 to 2008. But when a follow up question was posed to know whether they stay there all the time, the response from all the four constituencies was the same. They all said that they have always been available in their places of abode.

The findings fail to confirm that migration of people actually affect turnout since Malabada which receives a lot of people coming from different parts of the country in search of greener pastures equally registers low voter turnout just as Blantyre West where people said that they were all born in that same area. But much as both constituencies in Blantyre have lower voter turnout than their counterparts in Chiradzulu, Malabada still has a lower voter turnout as compared to Blantyre West. This difference may be attributed to fact that most people are not indigenous inhabitants. They are coming from different parts of the country in search of greener pastures.

4.4.3 Influence of local chiefs on the choice of candidate on their subjects

The study wanted to find out if chiefs in the rural district setting have more influence on who their subjects vote for as compared to the urban setting. The results from all the three groups that were interviewed in all the three constituencies show that people are left to make their own choice for a candidate they want. Chiefs only encourage their people to register during registration as well as to vote during voting. They also encourage them to vote for a candidate of their choice but who will bring development. Otherwise chiefs emphasized that they have no influence at all about whom their subjects vote for whether in Blantyre or in Chiradzulu as one of them told us; *“No we don’t but they have the right to vote for a candidate of their choice including traditional leaders it’s confidential. We encourage our subjects to come up with their own choices.”*

This dispels the general feeling across the country that chiefs are powerful figures who can even influence the vote.

4.5 Influence of Rural, Urban and Semi Urban Setting on Voting

4.5.1 Voting Challenges

The last objective wanted to find out if the rural district setting is more conducive to higher voter turnout than the urban and semi urban setting. Here the aim was to see if the voting challenges for people who are in the rural and urban or semi urban are different. The results from Focus Group Discussions show that the major challenges that people from both Chiradzulu Central and Chiradzulu East face are enticement to vote for a different

candidate by monitors. One of the participants in the FDG bemoaned that “*Some monitors sway us to vote for a candidate who is not from our party and this brings confusion on our original choice but I did not change.*” Another gentleman said that they are sometimes discouraged by friends who do not vote. Another challenge in some cases are long distances to polling centres.

In Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada on the other hand, the major challenges cited were technical in-competencies on the administration of the elections which included insufficient materials and fewer booths which resulted in long ques. Apart from the two above, lack of courtesy by MEC officials was also cited.

The question which wanted to find out the specific challenges was also posed to chiefs and party leaders. Their response was similar to that of the voters themselves. The major obstacles which they all echoed were about monitors enticing voters to change their choice and long queues driven by inadequate polling booths. Apart from the reasons above, long distance to polling centres, late arrival of polling staff, rudeness of polling staff and illiteracy of voters were also cited.

The finding agrees with Chinsinga (2006) who found that one of the reasons that has led to voter apathy in Malawi is the way Malawi Electoral commission plays its role in managing and administering elections. The result further agrees with literature that assumes that most citizens are motivated to vote and would vote if it were not for the institutional constraints that they face (Heckelman , 1995).

4.5.2 Frequency of Community Meetings

Yet another aspect that the study wanted to find out was societal cohesiveness in the rural setting versus the urban and semi urban. Chiefs were asked to mention how many times they meet their subjects. Unfortunately, this question was responded to in line with voting. Most of them said that they meet their subjects more when time for voting is approaching, after voting they seldom meet. However some chiefs said that they meet once a month as was the case in Blantyre West and Chiradzulu Central. Local chiefs for Blantyre Malabada said that they meet every Sunday but also takes advantage of various events to interact and communicate with his subjects.

The study therefore could not establish the effect of this variable on turnout.

4.5.3 Occupation of People

When it came to occupation, people in all the four constituencies do farming and business. However, in Blantyre, most people do business while some are employed but another group still relies on farming. In Chiradzulu on the other hand, the majority do farming just very few people engage in business. According to socio economic model alluded to by (Brown, 2008) people involved in occupations like farming vote more.

4.6 Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study can be summarized as follows;

Peoples' interest to vote has declined mainly due to poor performance and absence of Member of Parliament, unfulfilled promises, lack of development and non-inclusion on handout distribution. The results show that clientistic politics is very high as people can

decide not to vote simply because the government or the MP did not include them on some handouts program or list.

Those that do not go to vote nevertheless register in order to get an identity card to be used as an identification in other activities including handouts. The drive to get an identity card therefore unduly raises expectation on how many people we expect to turnout to vote. Since identification is more important in urban setting, it is therefore not surprising that most eligible voters in Blantyre just got satisfied that they got the card to use for other socio economic purposes. Notwithstanding, the voter identity card is equally an important card for rural areas because it the only identification that will enable them to access subsidies and formal handouts from government.

The other important finding is that high turnout can be induced from unhealthy intra party politics. The constituency that votes the highest in Chiradzulu has voted for an independent candidate twice consecutively. The other constituencies did not vote for an independent candidate not even once. Hence where there is a strong or likable independent candidate who stems from the main party in the area, people are more likely to turn out to vote just to prove a point.

In terms of the group that turns out to vote more, the study found out that in Chiradzulu the majority of the population are women, while on the other hand in Blantyre, the majority of the population are youth. Hence in a women dominated population, voter turnout is higher than in the youth dominated population although studies have qualified that youth above 21years turnout more that youth who are between 18 and 21 years of age.

As regards migration and mobility, it was found that in Ndirande Malabada which had the lowest turnout in 2014, only one person was born there. The rest came at different times to this area. This is unlike Blantyre West, Chiradzulu Central and Chiradzulu East where the majority were born there. This may mean that most town dwellers in our urban and semi urban centres do not have much concern on who the next Member of Parliament will be since they still have attachment and allegiance to their home villages.

In Chiradzulu central and Chiradzulu East, the major problem they face during voting is enticement to vote for a different candidate other than the one they want by the monitors. Hence the issue of illiteracy could be one of the contributing factors in Chiradzulu. In Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada this was never mentioned but rather the maladministration of elections by MEC which results in long queues and insufficient materials. This may cause some to give up and not vote at all.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1Introduction

The aim of this study was to find out factors that influence consistently high voter turnout in Chiradzulu and consistently low voter turnout in Blantyre. Specifically, the study was set to find out if people consider voting as important, to find out if party group linkages affect voter turnout, to find out if different social political landscapes affect voter turnout and to find out whether the rural district setting is more conducive to turnout than the urban and semi-rural district.

The study was a qualitative research and it used thematic analysis to analyze data. The study proposed that consistently high or low voter turnout is influenced by party group linkages, political landscapes and social economic environment prevalent through institutions of a given area. The results partly confirms hypothesis on political group linkages, political landscape and socio economic environment. However there are some aspects that are similar in both district despite having different trends hence these do not confirm the hypothesis.

Factors that are responsible for the consistently high turnout in Chiradzulu central are intraparty politics; women dominated population, developments by the incumbent Member of Parliament and access to handouts. In Chiradzulu East it is the developments by the incumbent Member of Parliament and access to handouts. On the other hand consistently low turnout in Blantyre is caused by the fact that most eligible voters just register to get an identity card, some still have allegiance to their home villages, absence of member of

parliament and maladministration by MEC because people in town are busy either with work or business to make a living.

The study has exposed and explored causes of low turnout. Hence, the study can help policy makers and the electoral body to find solutions to address low voter turnout and motivate people to vote as per the causes found. At the same time, causes of high turnout in Chiradzulu shall stand as the starting point on what to do to influence higher voter turnout.

5.2 Importance of voting and what prompts people to vote

The study has found that absence of the Member of Parliament from the area soon after winning elections, lack of developments in the area, maladministration of elections by MEC and non-inclusion on subsidized fertilizer are among the top reasons that discourage people from voting. Other reasons however include; non-fulfillment of manifesto and promises, religion, work, pregnancy, dissatisfaction with MP performance and that some felt parties had empty manifestos. On the other hand the quest to have an identity card prompts many people to register even when they know that they will not vote.

5.3 Effect of Party Group Linkages on Voter Turnout

The study found that a good number of the nonvoters belong to political parties which shows that interest in politics in general is there only that other factors as outlined above discourage them.

The other finding is that linkage between voters and the party is mostly weak. Parties need the people when they want them to vote for their desired candidate. After that, there is minimal contact through meetings or otherwise. Notwithstanding the study learnt that it is generally difficult to ensure full loyalty from members.

The study also revealed that people do not have much trust in political party cadres in solving the concerns of their areas. Most prefer to air their problems through the ward councillors, VDCs and MPs.

The other finding was that relationship within the party is superficially good. Selective distribution of benefits and handouts strain the relations. This problem is compounded further by the Member of Parliament who does not interact with the people as expected because of continued absence from the constituency.

5.4 Effect of Different Political Landscape on Voter Turnout

In Chiradzulu Central and Chiradzulu East women are in majority while in Blantyre west and Blantyre Malabada the youth dominate. Most of population in these constituencies is indigenous to the area except for Blantyre Malabada. Hence, the results may confirm that the youth are not as interested in voting than women and that high voter turnout in Chiradzulu has been influenced by the dominance of women in society.

Farming is the major occupation for people in Chiradzulu and Blantyre West while Blantyre Malabada is mainly business.

5.5 District Rural Setting versus Urban and Semi Urban Setting and Voter Turnout

The study found that apart from distance to the polling centres, enticement to vote for a different candidate by monitors is the major problem that people face in Chiradzulu Central and Chiradzulu East. In Blantyre West and Blantyre Malabada, it is mainly being let down by MEC because people stand on the queues for a long time.

In terms of community cohesiveness, the study found that none of the communities meet more often than the other but that there is homogeneity in communities that are rural hence very easy to understand each other than in urban and semi urban where people are mixed.

5.6 Summary of Conclusion

One of the assumptions in institutional theory is that normative orientations, the moral standards and the general social context, will shape interactions with institutions and other actors (Bell, 2002). Lawrence and Shadnam (2008) have argued that institutions are situated within specific social context within which they condition action. We therefore see from the study that the culture of handouts creates expectations which when not met discourages people from voting. The socio economic context in urban and semi urban creates a much greater demand for the identity card which in the end exaggerates expected number of voters to turnout to vote. It is therefore an expected possibility that the coming in of national identity cards will falsify a higher turn out since those that simply registered to get an identity card will not turn out to register.

The institution of a political party on the other hand also affects voter turnout. Unhealthy intra party politics which ends up putting up unpopular candidate, creates a dissatisfaction in voters who, as has been proven in Chiradzulu central, enter into a silent fight with their own party to vote for an independent candidate which in turn increases voter turnout.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Showing Targeted Participants and the rationale

NO OF PARTICIPANTS	TARGET	RATIONALE
2 District governors	one in Chiradzulu and one in Blantyre	key informants on party linkages
4 constituency governors	two in Chiradzulu and two in Blantyre	key informants on party linkages
4 Area chairmen	two in Chiradzulu and two in Blantyre	key informants on party linkages
4 village headmen	Two in Chiradzulu and two in Blantyre	key informants on social – cultural context
22 residents	in Chiradzulu in two constituencies(focus group discussions)	voters and non-voters to understand why or why not they vote
20 residents	in Blantyre in two constituencies(focus group discussions)	voters and non-voters to understand why or why not they vote

Appendix 2: Showing objectives, key issues and data collection methods

OBJECTIVES	KEY ISSUES	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	SPECIFIC LOCATION/ INDIVIDUAL
To find out if people consider voting as important	- Find out reasons that prompt them to vote - Find out their attitude towards voting	Focus group discussions	Chiradzulu and Blantyre
To find out if party linkages affect voter turnout	- Find out if people belong to any political parties - Find out functionality of local party structures - Find out how much contact people have with their party leaders - Find out if they vote more for party than candidates	- Secondary data - Interviews - Focus group discussion	Chiradzulu in a constituency where turnout is the highest
To find out if different social political landscapes affect voter turnout	Find out composition of permanency of residence	- Secondary data - Interviews - Focus group discussions	
To find out whether the rural district setting is more conducive to turnout than the urban and semi-rural district	Examine if some factors are more associated with the rural setting than the urban and semi urban setting	- Secondary data - Interviews - Focus group discussions	Chiradzulu and Blantyre

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR VOTERS AND NON VOTERS

TOPIC: WHY IS CHIRADZULU CONSISTENLY REGISTERING HIGH TURNOUT WHEREAS BLANTYRE IS CONSISTENTLY REGISTERING LOWER TURNOUT

PLACE:

DATE:

TIME:

A. Welcome

Thanks for accepting to join us to talk about voter turnout in this district.

My name is ReinghardChimaliroChavula and assisting me is Anne Diness. We're from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College .

B. Participants introduce themselves (their name and where they live)

C. Introductory remarks

Our topic is why there is high voter turnout in Chiradzulu as opposed to Blantyre which usually registers low turnout. This is part of a thesis study as a requirement for the masters program that I am doing. You were invited because you have are eligible voters coming from this part of the district.

D. The objectives of this study are four, namely;

- To find out factors that have affected voter turnout in Malawi since 1994
- To find out if party group linkages affect voter turnout
- To find out if different political landscapes affect voter turnout
- To find out whether the rural district setting is more conducive to turnout than the urban and semi rural district

E. Ground rules

There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments You've probably noticed

the microphone. We are tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.

Your names will not appear anywhere in our report so you may be assured of complete confidentiality. The results of this study will be used for research purposes to establish the reasons behind these differences

My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion

Now we can begin!

Objective 1- do people consider voting as important?

1. Have you ever voted in your life?
2. What prompted you to go/not to go and vote?
3. What do you think is the importance of voting?

Objective 2-How do party group linkages affect voter turnout?

1. Do you belong to any political party?
2. What made you choose that party?
3. Have you ever voted for a candidate who is not from your party?
4. How do you interact with fellow party members and leaders of your party?

Objective 3- Do different political landscapes affect voter turnout?

1. When did you come to this area?
2. Do you stay here all the time?
3. What influence does your local leader have on you regarding voting?

Objective 4-Is the rural district setting more conducive to higher turnout than the urban and the semi rural district?

1. What are the challenges you face during voting?
2. How often do you meet together as people of this community?
3. What do you do to earn a living?

End of FGD guide

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LOCAL CHIEFS

TOPIC: WHY IS CHIRADZULU CONSISTENLY REGISTERING HIGH TURNOUT
WHEREAS BLANTYRE IS CONSISTENTLY REGISTERING LOWER TURNOUT

NAME:

POSITION:

NAME OF PLACE:

DATE:

TIME:

F. Welcome/

Thanks for accepting to join us to talk about voter turnout in this district.

My name is ReinghardChavulaand assisting me is Anne Diness. We're from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College .

G. Participants introduce themselves (their name and where they live)

H. Introductory remarks

Our topic is why there is high voter turnout in Chiradzulu as opposed to Blantyre which usually registers low turnout. This is part of a thesis study as a requirement for the masters program that I am doing. You were chosen because you understand the dynamics of this society better being chiefs or block leaders.

I. The objectives of this study are four, namely;

- To find out if people consider voting as important
- To find out if party group linkages affect voter turnout
- To find out if different social political landscapes affect voter turnout

- To find out whether the rural district setting is more conducive to turnout than the urban and semi rural district

J. Ground rules

Be free to share your views with us freely. You've probably noticed the microphone. We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.

Your names will not appear anywhere in our report so you may be assured of complete confidentiality. The results of this study will be used for research purposes to establish the reasons behind these differences

K. QUESTIONS

Objective 1- do people consider voting as important?

- 1.have you ever voted?
2. what prompted you to vote?
- 3.what do you think is the importance of voting

Objective 2-how do party group linkages affect voter turnout?

5. How do you relate with different political parties?
6. Do you play any role in organizing party meetings?
7. Do you think you have any influence in influencing who your subjects vote for?
8. How do people of this area voice out concerns that affect them ?

Objective 3- do different political landscapes affect voter turnout?

1. What is migration and immigration like for people in this area?
2. How would you describe the composition of people who live in this area?
3. How often do you meet your subjects?

Objective 4-is the rural district setting more conducive to higher turnout than the urban and the semi urban district?

- 1.Are there any special challenges that people of this area encounter when voting?
- 2.What is the major occupation of people in this area

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTY LEADERS

Topic: WHY IS CHIRADZULU CONSISTENLY REGISTERING HIGH TURNOUT WHEREAS BLANTYRE IS CONSISTENTLY REGISTERING LOWER TURNOUT

Name:

Name of respondent:

Designation:

Name of place:

Date:

Time:

1. Welcome

Thanks for taking the time to talk about voter turnout in this district.

My name is Reinghard Chimaliro and assisting me is Anne Diness. We're from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College .

2 Participant introduces himself/herself (their name and where they live)

3 Introductory remarks

Our topic is why there is high voter turnout in Chiradzulu as opposed to Blantyre which usually registers low turnout. This is part of a thesis study as a requirement for the masters program that I am doing. We chose to interview you because of the role you play in local politics here.

4 The objectives of this study are four, namely;

- To find out if people consider voting as important
- To find out if party group linkages affect voter turnout
- To find out if different social political landscapes affect voter turnout

- To find out whether the rural district setting is more conducive to turnout than the urban and semi rural district

5 Ground rules

Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful. You've probably noticed the microphone. We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.

Your names will not appear anywhere in our report so you may be assured of complete confidentiality. The results of this study will be used for research purposes to establish the reasons behind these differences

6 QUESTIONS

Objective 1- do people consider voting as important?

1. have you ever voted?
2. what prompted you to vote?
3. what do you think is the importance of voting

Objective 2-how do party group linkages affect voter turnout?

1. How do you mobilize your party supporters?
2. What do you do to ensure loyalty to the party?
3. What are the mechanisms through which people of this area voice out their concerns to party leaders?
4. How often do you organize party meetings?

Objective 3- do different political landscapes affect voter turnout?

- 1 Who are the members of your party?
- 2 How would you describe the composition of people who live in this area?

Objective 4-is the rural district setting more conducive to higher turnout than the urban and the semi urban district?

1. Are there any special challenges that people of this area encounter when voting?
2. What is the major occupation of people in this area?

APPENDIX 6: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS FROM VOTERS IN FDGs

Objective 1- do people consider voting as important?

What prompted you to go and vote?

	Want ed my candi date to win	To choos e a leader	To get ID	To secure our freedo m	It is my civic duty	To get develop ment	Govern ment fulfilled promise s	Because of free primary educatio n	To get Fertiliz er subsidy
CZ CENTRAL		✓			✓	✓			
CZ EAST	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
BT WEST		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BT MALABAD A			✓		✓	✓			

Why is it important to vote?

	Brin gs chan ge	Put leader s in positi on	To entic e donor s	For even distrib ution of develo pment	No benef it	Brings develo pment	Empo wers citizen s	To get ID	To get subsidi sed inputs	To secure our freedom
CZ CENTRA L	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
CZ EAST		✓						✓		✓
BT WEST			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
BT MALABA DA	✓	✓						✓		

Objective 2 : Objective 2-how do party group linkages affect voter turnout?

Party group linkages

2.1 do you belong to any political party?

	Yes	No	I don't know
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓	
CZ EAST	✓		
BT WEST	✓		
BT MALABADA	✓		

Q2.2 what made you choose that party

	Its leadership style	MP of the party helped me during bereavement	MP for the party is development conscious	Because of the president of the party-developmental	Free primary	Party fulfils manifesto	Has Good manifesto
CZ CENTRAL		✓	✓				
CZ EAST	✓			✓		✓	
BT WEST	✓		✓		✓	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓					✓	✓

Have you ever voted for a candidate who is not from your party?

	Yes	No
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓
CZ EAST	✓	✓
BT WEST		✓
BT MALABADA		✓

How do you interact with fellow members and leaders of your party?

	Good relationship	Not so good relationship	Grassroots are overlooked	No interaction with MP	Selective distribution of handouts and incentives	No quarrels
CZ CENTRAL	✓					✓
CZ EAST		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BT WEST	✓			✓	✓	✓
BT MALABADA	✓			✓	✓	✓

Objective 3: do different social political landscapes affect voter turnout ?

1. when did you come to this area

	Born here	2007-2017	1997-2017	1977-2017	Long time ago
CZ CENTRAL	✓				
CZ EAST	✓				✓
BT WEST	✓				
BT MALABADA	✓	✓	✓	✓	

2. Do you stay here all the time?

	Stay here all the time	Occasionally move out
CZ CENTRAL	✓	
CZ EAST	✓	
BT WEST	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓	✓

What do you do to earn a living?

	Ganyu	Farming	business	work
CZ CENTRAL		✓	✓	
CZ EAST		✓		
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓	✓
BT MALABADA	✓	✓	✓	✓

Objective 4: is the district rural setting more conducive to higher voter turnout than the urban and semi urban?

What are the challenges you face during voting?

	Being enticed	Discouragement by non voters	Long queues	Harsh officers	Insufficient booths	Insufficient voting materials	No problem
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓					✓
CZ EAST	✓	✓					
BT WEST					✓	✓	✓
BT MALABADA			✓	✓	✓	✓	

What influence does your local leader have on you regarding voting

	Encourage us to go and vote	Mobilise for meetings	Helps in peace and order	Does not influence choice of candidate	Encourage us to register to get IDs
CZ CENTRAL	✓			✓	✓
CZ EAST	✓				
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓			✓	

How often do you meet as people of this area?

	Meet often	Hardly meet	Sometimes
CZ CENTRAL	During campaign period	After elections	
CZ EAST		After elections	
BT WEST		After elections	
BT MALABADA		After elections	Once a week

APPENDIX 7: RESULTS FROM NON VOTERS

Objective 1: do people consider voting as important?

Why did you not vote?

	Not included in subsidised inputs/not happy with handouts distribution	Pregnant	No development in the area	Non fulfilment of manifesto and promises	religion	work	Not interested	MP absence/dissatisfied with MP performance	Waste of time	Let down by one party system	Empty promises
CZ CENTRAL	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓
CZ EAST		✓	✓					✓		✓	
BT WEST	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
BT MALABARDA						✓					

Did you register to vote?

	Registered	Did not register
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓

CZ EAST	✓	
BT WEST	✓	✓
BT MALABADA	✓	

Objective 2 party group linkages

Do you belong to any political party?

	YES	NO
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓
CZ EAST	✓	
BT WEST	✓	✓
BT MALABADA	✓	

What made you choose that party for those that have parties?

	Developments	Impressed with changes	Free primary	No party	leadership
CZ CENTRAL				✓	
CZ EAST	✓	✓	✓		
BT WEST	✓				
BT MALABADA					✓

Objective 3: Do different social political landscapes affect voter turnout?

When did you come to this area?

	Born here	2007-2017 <10 years	1997-2007 >20 years	1977-1997 >40 years
CZ CENTRAL	✓			

CZ EAST	✓		✓	
BT WEST	✓			✓
BT MALABADA	✓	✓	✓	✓

What do you do to earn a living?

	Farming	Business	ganyu	Work
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓		
CZ EAST	✓	✓	✓	
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓	✓
BT MALABADA		✓		✓

APPENDIX 8: RESULTS FROM LOCAL LEADERS

OBJECTIVE 1

How do you relate with different political parties?

	Relate well	Party imposes candidates	Accommodate all
CZ CENTRAL	✓		✓
CZ EAST	✓		✓
BT WEST	✓		
BT MALABADA	✓	✓	

Do you play any role in organizing party meetings?

	<u>Mobilize people</u>	<u>Promote peace</u>
--	------------------------	----------------------

CZ CENTRAL	✓	
CZ EAST	✓	
BT WEST	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓	✓

How do people of this area voice out their concerns to government?

	ADC	MP	GVH	No means	During party meetings	councillor
CZ CENTRAL					✓	✓
CZ EAST		✓				✓
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓			
BT MALABADA				✓		

Objective 3

What is migration like for people living in this area?

	Mostly stay here
CZ CENTRAL	✓
CZ EAST	✓
BT WEST	✓
BT MALABADA	✓

How would you describe the composition of people who live in this area?

	Youth domina te	Women domina te	All tribes	Christi ans	Musli ms	senas	yaos	lomwes
CZ CENTRAL		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CZ EAST		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
BT WEST	✓			✓				
BT MALABA DA	✓		✓					

What is the major occupation of people who live in this area?

	Farming	Business	work	Piecework
CZ CENTRAL	✓			
CZ EAST	✓			✓
BT WEST	✓		✓	
BT MALABADA	✓	✓	✓	

How often do you meet your subjects?

	Once a month	More towards voting	Seldom meet after voting	Every week
CZ CENTRAL	✓		✓	
CZ EAST		✓	✓	
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓	
BT MALABADA		✓	✓	✓

Objective 4: is the rural district setting more conducive to high voter turnout than rural and semi urban setting?

Are there any challenges that people face during voting?

	Inadequate polling booths	Long distance	Late arrival of polling staff	Abusive campaign	Monitors entice people
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓			✓
CZ EAST	✓				✓
BT WEST			✓		
BT MALABADA				✓	✓

APPENDIX 9: PARTY LEADERS INTERVIEW RESULTS

Objective 2:How do party group linkages affect turnout

How do you mobilise your supporters?

	Through zones	Holding meetings
CZ CENTRAL	✓	
CZ EAST	✓	
BT WEST	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓	✓

How do you know your party members/supporters?

	Through registers
CZ CENTRAL	✓
CZ EAST	✓
BT WEST	✓
BT MALABADA	✓

What do you do to ensure loyalty to the party?

	Its difficult	Through zones	Offering promotions	Dispelling disloyal members
CZ CENTRAL	✓			
CZ EAST		✓		✓
BT WEST		✓		
BT MALABADA			✓	

What are the mechanisms through which people of this area voice out their concerns?

	Through party leadership	Through VDC
CZ CENTRAL	✓	
CZ EAST	✓	✓
BT WEST	✓	
BT MALABADA	✓	

How strong is the structure of your party?

	Not strong	Strong
CZ CENTRAL	✓	
CZ EAST		✓
BT WEST		✓
BT MALABADA	✓	

How often do you organize party meetings?

	Twice a month at area level	Ad hoc at area level	Once a month at district level	No meetings at district level	Twice a month at district level
CZ CENTRAL	✓			✓	

CZ EAST		✓			
BT WEST		✓	✓		
BT MALABADA	✓				✓

Objective 3:

How would you describe the composition of people who live in this area?

	Mostly women	Illiterate	All walks of life	Mostly indigenous to the area
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓		
CZ EAST	✓			
BT WEST				
BT MALABADA			✓	✓

What is the major occupation of people who live in this area?

	business	agriculture	Working in SA
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓	
CZ EAST		✓	
BT WEST	✓	✓	✓
BT MALABADA	✓		

OBJECTIVE 3: Is the rural district setting more conducive to higher turnout than the urban and semi urban district?

Are there any challenges that people of this area encounter when voting?

	Rudeness of officials	Distance to polling stations	Inadequate polling materials	Poor identification sys during registration	Staying long on the que	Illiteracy of voters
CZ CENTRAL	✓	✓				✓
CZ EAST						✓
BT WEST		✓		✓		
BT MALABADA				✓	✓	

**APPENDIX 10: LIST OF MEMBERS OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
SHOWING THEIR PARTIES SINCE 1994**

CHIRADZULU CENTRAL		
Year	Name Of Candidate	Party
1994	PB MBEWE	UDF
1999	PB MBEWE	UDF
2004	FRIDAY JUMBE	UDF
2009	PM KASAMBWE	INDEPENDENT
2014	MH OSMAN	INDEPENDENT
CHIRADZULU EAST		
1994	NK MAKAWA	UDF
1999	HAR MUSSA	UDF
2004	HAR MUSSA	UDF
2009	HAR MUSSA	DPP
2014	HAR MUSSA	DPP
BLANTYRE WEST		
1994	NJ KACHINGWE	UDF
1999	NJ KACHINGWE	UDF
2004	RM MWAILA	CONU
2009	W GAMA	DPP
2014	P KUMPALUME	DPP
BLANTYRE MALABADA		
1994	-	
1999	LS MLANGA	UDF
2004	AM SANGALA	RP
2009	AM SANGALA	DPP
2014	AM SANGALA	DPP

APPENDIX 11: REGISTRATION FIGURES FOR 2014 AND 2018 (
SOURCE:MEC)

	2014 Registrat ion figures	2018 projection	Female registrants	Male registrants	No. of registrant s	% of voter registrant s to 2014	% of voter registrants to 2018
National	7,31,385	8,525,538	3,813,578	3,045,992	6,859,570	91.08%	80.46%
Chiradzu lu	168,963	178,342	88,133	57,544	145,677	86.21%	81.68%
Blantyre	598,962	686,206	256,397	241,010	497,407	74.23%	72.49%