

**THE ROLE OF FUNCTIONAL ADULT LITERACY IN EMPOWERING
WOMEN IN MALAWI: THE CASE OF WOMEN IN MACHINGA DISTRICT**

MASTER OF ARTS (DEVELOPMENT STUDIES) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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AUGUST, 2022

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my own original work and it has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Acknowledgements have been duly made where other people's work have been used. I bear the responsibility for the contents of this paper.

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Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my wife and children, family, relatives and friends for their love, support and aspiration.

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I would like to thank God Almighty for the strength given me throughout my life and for enabling me to reach this point in life. I wish to express my deep hearted appreciations to my supervisors Dr. H.K Mazizwa (Senior Lecturer) and Dr. N.K Semphere (Senior Lecturer) for the guidance and total support in the whole research process. I am grateful to my father Dr. B.N. Kaneka who also assisted me in the entire research and academic journey. I profoundly acknowledge the moral support from my wife Fanny, I also thank her for taking care of our children, Bernedine and Benjamin in the time when I am busy for research activity. Lastly, but not least, I would like to thank my mother Mrs. E. Kaneka who gave me all the support and courage a child would ever need and for the encouragement she gave me during my academic journey.

ABSTRACT

Illiteracy is a big hindrance to socio- economic development worldwide. Malawi is among sub-Saharan African countries that have high illiteracy levels among both men and women. As such, the government introduced the Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in 1986 to combat this problem. Furthermore, the programme has an empowerment component to it. This study therefore investigated the role of FALP in empowering women in Machinga district. An exploratory qualitative design was employed to get insights, views and opinions from individuals who participated in the programme. Qualitative data was collected from adult literacy instructors, Community Development Assistant (CDA) and functional adult literacy village committee chairperson using key informant interview guide. As program beneficiaries, forty-two women participated in the study as individual in-depth interviewees and focus group discussants. Findings of the study revealed that apart from learning how to read and write, women acquire knowledge and skills in such areas as communication, business management, modern agriculture, health and hygiene and tailoring which they use in their daily lives. The findings further showed that FALP empowers women socially. This enables women to participate in community activities. However, the findings have also revealed that although some women engage in businesses, which economically empowers them, they do not have total control over their income. In addition, others fail to fully participate in local politics due to societal attitude impediments. It is important therefore that functional literacy as a development intervention that empowers women should include a strategy that engages men and the community at large to develop transformative gender roles.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDPA	Center for Development and Population Activities
CDO	District Community Development Officer
CDA	Community Development Assistant
EFA	Education for All
FALP	Functional Adult Literacy Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDI	Individual In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDHS	Malawi Demographic and Health Survey
MIHS	Malawi Integrated Household Survey
MPHC	Malawi Population and Household Census
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MGDS III	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III
MDG _s	Millennium Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN women	United Nations Women
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
NCLAE	National Centre for Literacy and Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NALP	National Adult Literacy Program
NSO	National Statistical Office
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WEF	Women Empowerment Framework

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the early 1970s, Ester Boserup, a Dutch economist, recognised the importance of women in development. In her book, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*; she highlighted women's important roles in industry and agriculture and saw the need to recognise their activities in development (Boserup, 1970). The United Nations also recognises women as key development agents because they play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development (UN Women, 2013). Women play a key role in food production and form a large proportion of agricultural work force globally. World population statistics indicate that there were about 7.6 billion people in the world as of mid-2018 of which nearly half (49.6%) were women. However, women have limited access to credit, health care and education among many challenges (UN women, 2013).

In terms of education and literacy levels, women tend to lag behind men worldwide. Although literacy has been high on the development agenda over the past decades, the 2017 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data shows that out of 750 million illiterate adults, two-thirds were women (UNESCO, 2017). In Malawi, the National Statistical Office (2019) indicates that despite the steady increase in literacy rates in Malawi: (10% at independence in 1964, 22% in 1977, 58% in 1998, 62.8% in 2007, 64% in 2010 and 68.6% in 2018) illiteracy has been steadily worsening among women. Illiteracy is a big hindrance to social- economic development worldwide. According to UIS data, many countries missed the Education for All (EFA) goal of reducing adult illiteracy rates by 50% between 2000 and 2015. This means that lack of adult literacy is still a challenge in development up to date.

Table 1: Global Illiterate Population by Age Group, 2017

Global illiterate population (millions)	Adults (aged 15 years and older)	Youth (aged 15-24 years)	Population aged 25-64 years	Elderly (aged 65 years and older)
Both sexes	750	102	507	141
Men	277	44	186	47
Women	473	58	321	94
Share of Women (%)	63	57	63	67

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, July 2017

In Malawi, education is recognised as one of the key elements to national development that emancipates both men and women from poverty. According to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III, an educated and skilled population will help Malawi achieve economic growth and sustainable development (Government of Malawi, 2012). Education is a building block for human, political and socio-economic development. It is particularly important for poverty reduction because it empowers the poor, the weak and the voiceless by providing them with better opportunities to participate in national development (NSO, 2012). The Universal Charter of Human Rights proclaimed the right to education in 1948. Since then, a number of countries have ratified the right to education. In Malawi, the right to education was enshrined in the 1962 Education Act, which stipulates that all persons are entitled to education and promotion of literacy education is regarded as a concern of all key development agencies, government as well as Non-Governmental Organizations. In order to have inclusive education or Education for All (EFA) and reduce illiteracy in the country, Malawi introduced Functional Adult Literacy Programmes in 1986. The aim was to provide adults who were not able to acquire literacy and numerical skills in the formal school systems the opportunity to do so. The idea was that through reading, writing and numerical skills, the learners would acquire useable information to improve their standard of living (Kishindo, 1994).

While the term literacy means the ability to read and write in a given language, Karabona (2015) described functional adult literacy as all education that takes place outside the constraints of formal schooling. According to Karabona, this form of education is particularly for those people who are biologically at least fifteen years old and can socially take responsibilities in the family or community as adults. However, the definition of literacy has evolved over time, influenced by academic research, international policy agendas and national priorities. Nonetheless, the International Symposium on Literacy held in Persepolis in 1975 and the UNESCO General Conference in 1978 adopted a definition of functional literacy, which is still in use today. A person is functionally literate if she/he is able to engage in all activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2008). Malawi defines functional adult literacy as a learning process designed to equip illiterate beneficiaries aged 15 and above with specialized knowledge, skills, attitudes and techniques to independently engage in listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, technical and critical thinking intended to promote the development of active citizenship (Malawi Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2008).

According to Luttrell et al (2009), the term empowerment was first used in association with the women's movement within a discourse of feminism that drew on the influence of popular education and focused on the role of individuals in politics. A World Bank report of 2007 defines women empowerment as a process of increasing the capacity of women to make choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. Empowering women has a number of dimensions including social, economic and political ones. Blomkvist (1992) understands social empowerment as gaining autonomy and self-confidence over decision making in the society. Political empowerment is the process of promoting women's access to power and decision-making. It involves giving women opportunities to participate in political matters.

Economic empowerment entails women's access and control over the means of making a living on sustainable and long-term basis. According to UN Women (2013), the empowerment process includes all measures aimed at removing obstacles of

women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through an equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

Education is critical to the empowerment process. Elias (2016) maintains that education is the best means of promoting women's empowerment. This is because education helps women to break various barriers to empowerment and leads to women's self-awareness and satisfaction. Consequently, for those women who did not go through formal education, functional adult literacy empowers them socially, politically and economically. Specifically, the programme increases participants' self-confidence and self-respect through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

1.2 The importance of women empowerment in development

Women empowerment is of great significance to the development discourse. Female education and empowerment are both prerequisites for, and outcomes of, sustainable economic development. Women empowerment is very crucial in development in a number of ways. According to UN women watch (2012), women's economic empowerment is important because it sets a direction towards gender equality and eradication of poverty. Women make enormous contributions as farm workers, producers of food crops, caregivers and unpaid workers at home. Thomas (1990) maintained that the proposition that women's empowerment is crucial for achieving development goals relies on the notion that women's empowerment is likely to be associated with increased bargaining power that may enable them to influence household decision-making in favour of increased welfare spending. Women who are socially empowered are able to allocate household resources, for instance household income in a way that would benefit the welfare of the household especially children.

Evidence from literature has shown that women put an average of 90 percent of their earnings back into the family, as compared to the 30 or 40 percent that men contribute (Derbyshire, 2012 in Malunga, 2018). Porter (2013) in Malunga (2018) maintains that women empowerment is important because an empowered woman is in a better position to assure her children's health and nutrition. Liberal Feminists argue that women empowerment is very vital to the development of a nation as it leads to

liberation from false value systems and ideologies of oppression, which leads to full participation of women in developmental activities. According to UNDP (2007) in Malunga (2018), women empowerment is important because empowered women accelerate the development of a nation. When women are empowered it is not only the individual woman or groups of women that benefit, but also families and communities through collective action for development. James Emman (1920) popularized an old African proverb, which asserts, “if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation).” This proverb bears the fundamental belief that education that leads to empowerment is beneficial to all but also incorporates the notion that when women are educated and empowered, the benefits are enjoyed by a wider context, the family and the nation (Jacobs, 1996).

1.3 Functional Adult Literacy in Malawi: An Overview

Adult literacy in Malawi dates back to the 1940s under the British rule. It began as a mass education pilot project. However, due to political and technical reasons the project was not a success. Nevertheless, in 1962 the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) government launched a National Literacy Committee, which emphasised adult literacy as a development component on self-help basis. Communities were expected to take the initiative to seek or source materials and expertise on adult literacy intervention. According to Kishindo (1994), by the year 1970 adult literacy activities had spread to all the districts in the country. Kishindo also observed that on average, there has been an increase of 95,000 illiterate adults every year since 1966. It is with this background that the government of Malawi intensified adult literacy by introducing a new approach called Functional Adult literacy, which linked numeracy and literacy with development education in the year 1986. The National Adult Literacy Program (NALP) was then designed to meet the needs of about 3.8 million illiterates aged 15 and above by giving them a second chance of learning. A National Report released by Ministry of Women and Child Development about the development and state of adult learning and education in 2008 showed that the idea behind the programme was to enable illiterate youth and adults to access information

on health, nutrition and agriculture and thus improve their standard of living and contribute to national development in general.

Studies by Herbert (2004) and Elias (2016) have shown that there is a linkage between literacy and development, which in turn has put functional adult literacy on top of the poverty reduction agenda in Malawi. Herbert (2004) argued that high literacy levels correlate positively with low poverty levels. In addition, according to NSO (2005) nearly two thirds of all households headed by illiterate parents in Malawi were poor. Hence functional adult literacy intervention in Malawi aims at making 5 million adult illiterates, especially women functionally literate. According to the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census (MPHC) report, women constitute more than half (51%) of the total population and yet there are higher levels of illiteracy among them compared to men. For example, according to the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) key findings of 2015-2016, 20% of women aged 15 to 49 were illiterate while only 5% of men aged 15 to 49 were illiterate.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Adult illiteracy is a hindrance to socio-economic development. For instance, MGDS 3 stipulates that an educated and skilled population will help Malawi achieve economic growth and sustainable development. However, globally studies in the area of functional adult literacy are limited than those focusing on formal education, and even more limited are those that specifically explore functional adult literacy and empowerment. In the Malawian context, although functional adult literacy programmes have been offered for decades, limited research has been done on functional adult literacy (Chimombo and Chiuye, 2002; Kachiwanda, 2009). Furthermore, most of the literature on the subject is in the form of evaluation papers or reports (Benediktsson & Kamtengeni, 2004). Kishindo (1994), for example, assessed the effectiveness of functional adult literacy in Malawi. He noted that there was under-representation of young persons and men in the programme. Men constituted only 11% of enrolment. According to Kishindo, unmarried, divorced, separated or widowed women of mid to late 30s, were the ones who largely patronized the programme.

This study sought to investigate the role of adult literacy programme on women empowerment. It built on insights from studies such as the one by Kagiticbasi et al (2005) Kotsapas (2011); Akrong, (2014) and Teshome, (2016) that have explored the link between functional adult literacy and women empowerment. For instance, functional adult literacy programmes empowered women economically in Tanzania and Ghana because they gained business skills that assisted them to generate income and hence improve their standard of living (Karabona, 2015; Akrong 2014). Functional adult literacy programmes were found to have socially empowered women by increasing their self-confidence and participation in decision making in Timor Leste, Turkey and Ethiopia (Kotsapas, 2011; Kagiticbasi et al, 2005; Teshome, 2016). In Malawi there is dearth of information on the role of functional adult literacy programme and women empowerment. This study therefore seeks to investigate this role using a case study of Machinga district where literacy levels are very low. The literacy rate of the adult population in the district as reported in the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) (2018) was 59.7%, which is lower than the national average adult literacy rate of 73.6%. In addition, the functional adult literacy programme in the district has been one of the most vibrant in the country.

1.5 Objectives and Research Questions

1.5.1 Objectives

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the role of adult literacy programme in women's empowerment in Machinga district.

Specifically, the study aimed at

- i. Identifying the knowledge and skills that women who undergo functional adult literacy programme acquire.
- ii. Examining the ways in which women utilize the knowledge and skills they acquire in functional adult literacy programme.
- iii. Assessing whether the knowledge and skills acquired in functional adult literacy programme have led to the empowerment of women.

1.5.2 Research Questions

The overall research question of this study was what is the role of functional adult literacy in empowering women in Machinga district. To achieve the objectives, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the knowledge and skills that women who undergo adult literacy programs acquire?
- ii. How are women utilizing the knowledge and skills acquired through adult literacy programme?
- iii. Have the knowledge and skills acquired through adult literacy programme led to empowerment of the women?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study contributes to academic discourse about the effects of functional adult literacy on women social, political and economic status. In particular, the study investigated whether functional adult literacy interventions are meeting the objectives of empowering women. Women were chosen because they have higher illiteracy rates. Moreover, most adult literacy classes are patronized by women. This study is of importance because it would seem that a study of this nature has not been conducted in the Malawian context. The study is also vital in understanding and formulating interventions that will ensure that adult literacy education contributes to women's empowerment. Additionally, the findings may inform policy formulation and implementation of adult literacy activities that will specifically aim at empowering women politically, socially and economically. The current study is very critical because it not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge on functional adult literacy but may also influence policy on literacy, adult education and women empowerment in the country.

1.7 Study Limitations

Due to time and financial constraints, the study was carried out in Machinga district only. It would have been ideal to compare the experiences of women in functional

literacy in Machinga district to those women in another district with different social and economic characteristics. This might somehow limit the specific applicability of the results to other areas in Malawi. This study was also limited to the experiences, opinions and perceptions of women who are currently participating in the functional adult literacy programme, and did not include women who were no longer participating in the programme. In addition, for reasons explained above, the study has mainly focused on women. However, some researchers might have been interested in a comparative study with men. Furthermore, data collection exercise was constrained to morning hours specifically interviews conducted with women participating in the programme as during the afternoon hours they (women) attend functional adult literacy classes. The challenge with it was that some women were busy with household chores during the morning hours as such interviews were being rescheduled in order to accommodate them in the study. These limitations notwithstanding, the study still provides insights on the influence of functional adult literacy on economic, political and social empowerment of women.

1.8 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter explored the background of the study and looked at the importance of women empowerment in development. The chapter also gave an overview of functional adult literacy in Malawi and revealed that functional adult literacy was introduced in 1986. The chapter further articulated the significance of conducting a study of this nature. The next chapter will review the available literature on functional adult literacy programme and women empowerment and provide a detailed account of the conceptual framework guiding the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature on functional adult literacy in Malawi and beyond, the contribution of FAL to development, FAL and women empowerment and the importance of women empowerment to development. This literature review highlights what has been investigated on and what are the gaps that this study addressed.

2.2 Functional Adult Literacy and its importance in development

Adult literacy is a vital form of education because it helps previously illiterate adults to contribute towards their own development for and the survival of future generations (Galadima, 2012). Galadima argues that functional adult literacy is an instrument for change and development since it modifies the behaviours of individuals in the community in many ways. For instance, functional adult literacy modifies behavior of people towards production through acquisition of knowledge and skills in relevant occupations. Furthermore, functional adult literacy helps in reducing the menace or criminal behavior of individuals in communities resulting from ignorance and illiteracy hence contributing towards community development.

Bakirdjian (2013) reported that functional adult literacy has substantial impacts on the health of participants and their surroundings, as well as the education of their children. It helps participants to improve their health conditions as they apply the new health knowledge to their contexts. He posited that through the content and discussions raised in the functional adult literacy, participants gain new knowledge about the causes, prevention and treatment of diseases. In addition, Teshome (2014)

revealed that women who take part in functional adult literacy program know more about health issues related to themselves and their children. Teshome concluded that such women are eager to take their children to health centers for vaccination or other treatments and are more observant and participate in various work initiatives and health awareness issues.

Likewise, Farah (2002) states that functional adult literacy has a positive effect on advancement, particularly for women, prompting changes in development indices in a range of areas: health, prosperity rates, children's education, economic advancement, independence, and empowerment. Barton (2007), concurs with Farah and contends that functional adult literacy upgrades the individual's state of mind and promotes economic advancement and prosperity in society.

Functional adult literacy programme also improves agricultural productivity, as it equips the participants with the necessary knowledge and skills on how to effectively perform agricultural activities and use agricultural inputs properly. A study conducted by Pata and Shitu (2013) in South Western Nigeria, revealed that farmers who take part in functional adult literacy acquired more knowledge and skills in agricultural activities that led to higher productivity than those who did not participate in functional adult literacy. Furthermore, in Kenya, studies have shown that increases in the prevalence of functional adult literacy and numeracy in rural areas lead to improvements in agricultural productivity (Teshome, 2016).

2.3 Functional Adult Literacy and women empowerment

A number of studies (Okpoko, 2010; Anselm et al, 2010; Kotsapas, 2011; Yusuf, 2013; Akrong, 2014; Teshome, 2016) in developing countries point to the empowering effects of literacy for women. For instance, Anselm et al (2010), revealed that adult literacy prepares the marginalized groups, especially women with the essential skills, attitudes, and knowledge that enables them to participate fully in the society. Here, the key supposition is that if illiterate and unskilled people comprehend their condition, know their rights and learn skills denied to them, empowerment would follow. Kagitcibasi et al (2005) demonstrated that participation in functional adult literacy activities helps to enhance women's mobility in the public

sphere and provide the opportunity for interaction, as functional adult literacy enhances women's confidence and increases respect for women's opinions from family and community members. Okpoko (2010) did a research on positioning functional adult literacy to empower rural women for sustainable livelihood. Okpoko, found that women education is key to development and that empowering women through functional adult literacy programme is an asset to her family, her immediate communities, her nation and the world at large. The findings revealed that the acquisition of functional adult literacy empowered women to think positively, take proper decisions about her living conditions.

2.3.1 Functional Adult Literacy and economic empowerment of women

Studies have shown that there is a link between adult literacy and women's economic empowerment. Karabona (2015) conducted research in Tanzania that showed that functional adult literacy contributes greatly to women's economic empowerment because women acquire a number of skills. These skills included entrepreneurship, bargaining with customers in selling their products and other transactions, as well as skills required in running restaurants and participating in other work environments. Additionally, the study findings revealed that adult literacy interventions economically empowered women through the use of agriculture skills which assisted women to generate more income that enabled some women acquire assets such as corrugated iron sheets for their houses.

A study conducted by Akrong (2014) in Ghana, established a link between functional adult literacy and women's economic empowerment. Through his empirical qualitative research conducted in four rural locations in Accra, Akrong revealed that functional adult literacy intervention equips the participants with income generating skills at both household and community levels that leads to the economic advancement and empowerment of women in Accra. For instance, one of the respondents indicated that her goat and rabbit project improved after she joined adult literacy classes. This was a consequence of knowing how to read and write and putting of animal husbandry readings into practice and attain higher production.

2.3.2 Functional Adult Literacy and social empowerment of women

There is evidence that participation in functional adult literacy leads to social empowerment of women. Studies by Anselm et al, 2010; Kotsapas, 2011; Leahy, 2016 have shown that functional adult literacy increases women's self-confidence and personal development at household and societal levels. Anselm et al (2010) revealed that functional adult literacy contributes to women empowerment by improving the participation of women in farm decision making. Anselm indicated that women who have undergone functional adult literacy activities are likely to make a higher contribution to farm decision making than those that have never gone through the intervention. Anselm et al (2010) also found out that, women farmers who go through functional adult literacy adopt farm technologies at a higher rate than those that are illiterate.

A research conducted in Timor Leste by Kotsapas (2011) revealed that participation in functional adult literacy programme helped to build women's personal confidence, supported their relationships with family members, and it encouraged collective support mechanisms that in future could lead to a greater voice for rural women in decision making.

Leahy (2016) revealed that one impact of women's participation in functional adult literacy is improvement in confidence and personal development. Oxenham (2004) showed that adult literacy socially empowered women as in Burkina Faso. Such women tended to have self-confidence and figured out how to influence their spouse to hear them out more. Evidence has also shown that functional adult literacy socially empowered women through increase and improvement in decision making at household and community levels. For example, these women tend to make decisions and have a voice regarding the number of children they want to have in life. A study conducted by Egbo (2000) in Nigeria showed that 67% of women who underwent functional adult literacy activities reported that they had utilized family planning strategies in contrast to just 11% of women who never attended functional adult literacy programme.

2.3.3 Functional Adult Literacy and political empowerment of women

A study conducted by Yusuf (2013) in Kwara State in Nigeria revealed a connection between functional adult literacy and women's political empowerment. Evidence from literacy classes showed that learners acquired information such as voting in an election, seeking information about candidates or issues, participating in discussions on political party or social movement. Other information that learners acquired included quality of government service, level of corruption, accountability, political freedom, rule-based governance and extent of judicial unpredictability (Stromquist, 2005). In effect, Yusuf (2013) shows that the functional adult literacy programme have equally influenced positively the political status of women in Kwara State.

2.4 Functional Adult Literacy in Malawi

It would seem that no study in Malawi has linked women's participation in functional adult literacy to their social, economic or political empowerment. Most of the available literature on functional literacy give a general overview of functional adult literacy in Malawi. In this regard, a number of scholars have done research that provides an understanding of functional adult literacy and related issues in Malawi. For instance, Mjaya's (2010) study investigated the choices and the use of minor languages in adult literacy. In his findings, he established that many *Chiyawo* speaking adult literacy learners preferred to acquire literacy in Chichewa. He indicated that many participants in the study argued that being literate in Chichewa would help them function in most official and other domains where the language was privileged as a medium of communication.

Kishindo (1994) conducted a study, which revealed that high levels of illiteracy hinder information exchange and the transfer of skills. For instance, illiterate farmers had limited access to information that could help them to increase their agricultural output. He established that functional adult literacy programme Malawi improved the living standards of the rural people as the programme incorporated agricultural activities in its curriculum in recognition of the fact that more than 80 % of the country's population are directly dependent on agriculture. Kishindo also indicated that the functional adult literacy programme in Malawi disseminates information on nutrition, health and family planning. He recommended that since men make major

decisions in the family, such as income expenditure and adoption of family planning practices, it is important that they should participate in the functional literacy programme. Without their involvement, the knowledge gained by women is not likely to be put to use.

Furthermore, Kinteh (2003) in Government of Malawi (2008) assessed illiteracy levels and the impact of adult literacy programme in Malawi. The study findings revealed that illiteracy in Malawi is very high. It also documented that efforts to combat it began in 1947 by various players with variations in their provision of adult literacy services. Additionally, in 2006, the National Centre for Literacy and Education (NCLAE) and UNESCO did a situation analysis on non-formal education and adult literacy. This study was part of an initiative by UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) and Harare Cluster office within the context of a project on 'Reinforcing National Capacities to Evaluate Non-Formal Education (NFE) and literacy programme for youths and adults. The study revealed that there were several challenges in the programme. These included limited capacity, high staff turnover, and inadequate resources such as computers, vehicles and funds.

From the above literature, the present study used insights from studies by Kagiticbasi et al (2005) Kotsapas (2011); Akrong, (2014) and Teshome, (2016), which showed that functional adult literacy programme empowered women economically in Tanzania and Ghana as they gained business skills that assisted them to generate income and hence improve their standard of living. The study also applied findings from Kotsapas, 2011; Kagiticbasi et al, 2005; Teshome, 2016. These demonstrated that functional adult literacy programme socially empowered women by increasing their self-confidence and participation in decision making in Timor Leste, Turkey and Ethiopia. In addition, the study also benefitted from the results of Yusuf's (2013) study in Kwara State in Nigeria that linked adult functional literacy to women's political empowerment. The present study therefore investigated whether the connection between functional literacy and women's empowerment can be established in the Malawian context, using Machinga district as a case study.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

For this study transformative learning theory has been used as theoretical framework. Theoretical framework also was established for substantiating the statement of the research problem, and objectives.

Transformative Learning Theory

Inspired by Paulo Friere and Jurgen Habermas among others Jack Mezirow launched the concept of 'transformative learning' in 1977. Transformative learning theory is one of the learning theory which particularly focuses on adult education and young adult learning. According to Jack Mazirow who is the father of transformative learning theory, transformative learning for emancipation education is the business of all adult education (Mazirow, 2000). This theory of adult learning inspired many in the women's movement and focuses on deep changes in how adults see themselves and their world (Mazirow, 2000). Mazirow defined transformative learning as the process by which problematic frames of reference such as mindsets, habits of mind are transformed. The frames of reference are the structures of culture and language through which meaning is construed by attributing coherence and significance to one's experience.

Mezirow's transformative learning is defined as "an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning." Mezirow described that transformative learning has two basic focuses which are instrumental learning and communicative learning. Instrumental learning focuses on task-oriented problem solving, and evaluation of cause and effect relationships. Communicative learning focuses on how people communicate their feelings, needs, and desires. However, both of these elements are important in transformative learning.

Mezirows suggested a ten-step process for transformative learning. The first step is experience a disorienting dilemma which is a situation where a learner finds that what they thought or believed in the past may not be accurate. This is the first part of transformational learning. The second step is undergoing self-examination whereby students will do a self-examination of their beliefs and understanding. They will think

about their past experiences and how they connect to this disorienting dilemma. Thirdly, conduct a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles. During this step, students in this phase of transformational learning are able to take a more comprehensive look at their past assumptions and review them critically. Fourthly, share and analyze personal discontent and similar experiences with others. The fifth step explore options for new ways of acting whilst the sixth step is to build competence and self-confidence in new roles. Step number seven is to plan a course of action and the eighth step is to acquire knowledge and skills for action. The ninth step is to try new roles and lastly, assess feedback and reintegrated into society with a new perspective.

2.6 Application of the theoretical framework

This study was intended to go beyond knowing the skills and knowledge women acquire through FALP. However, it addressed issues on utilization of the skills and knowledge women gain through FALP in order to explore the role of functional adult literacy in empowering women in Malawi. To achieve this objective, the researcher adopted Jack Mazirow transformative theory. This theory was found to be fitting to the present researcher's investigation, as it provides a detailed process on how transformative learning is a process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves and acquire problem solving skills that leads to their empowerment. I strongly support Mazirow's view that literacy (functional adult literacy) has the capacity to empower and enable adults, especially women as transformative learning is a process which problematic frames of reference such as mindsets, habits of mind are transformed.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the women's empowerment framework by Sara Longwe (1996). This framework provides some useful distinctions between different degrees of empowerment. The Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF) is based on the notion that gender awareness means emphasizing women's participation and women's issues at every stage of the development cycle with the overall goal of overcoming

women's inequality (Centre for Development and Population Activities, 1996). The WEF focuses on a 5-level scale of increasing equality and empowerment. According to Longwe, women's empowerment involves enabling women to relate on equal basis with men, participate equally in development processes and to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men. In the Longwe's framework, development means enabling people to take charge of their own lives, and escape from poverty.

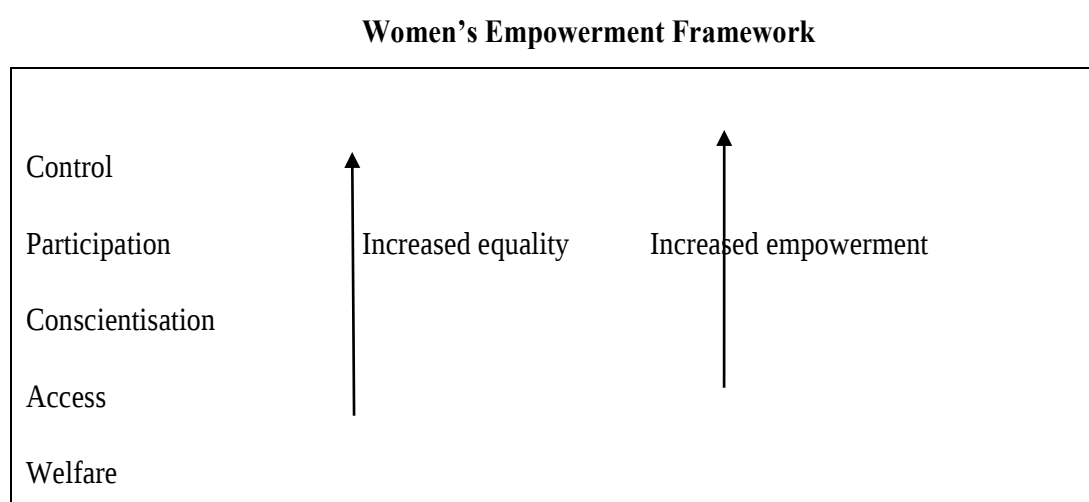


Figure 1: Levels of Equality and Empowerment of Women Empowerment Framework by Sara Longwe

Source: CEDPA Gender and Development Manual (1996)

These five levels of equality and empowerment are hierarchical. That is, if a development intervention focuses on higher levels (participation & control), there is a great possibility that women's empowerment will be increased by the intervention than if the intervention focuses on the lower levels. According to Longwe the *welfare* level is the bottom or first level which aims at women's material welfare. This level focuses on whether women have equal access to resources such as food supply, income and medical care. The second level is *access* which according to Longwe is defined as women's access to the factors of production on an equal basis with men; equal access to land, labour, credit, training, marketing facilities, and all public services and benefits. The third level which is *conscientisation* refers to belief in sexual equality. Longwe views this stage as a conscious understanding of the difference between sex and gender: that

gender roles can be changed and that the division of labour should be equal, fair and agreeable, without domination. The fourth level is *participation* which Longwe describes it as women's equal participation in decision and policy making at individual, community or national level. Control as the final level refers to women's control over decision making processes or control over factors of production and distribution of benefits without dominance or subordination. This conceptual framework was used to come up with the study's objectives and to interpret the results, in order to assess the extent to which functional adult literacy as a developmental intervention facilitates women's empowerment.

2.8 Application of the Conceptual Framework

The Women's Empowerment Framework is relevant to explain and highlight the role of functional adult literacy in empowering women by concentrating on the two final levels of empowerment, *participation* and *control*. The Longwe's framework enables gender and development workers to analysis development organisation's degree of commitment to women's equality and empowerment. According to Longwe, an intervention which is empowering women will have many components which fit into the higher levels (participation and control) of the framework. These two levels of empowerment were adopted in order to assess if women are able to participate or engage income generating activities and are able to participate in community activities and thereby being economically and socially empowered. Additionally, the framework was used to assess if the women are able to exercise their rights and participate in political matters and thereby being empowered politically and have control over their income and business hence economically empowered.

2.9 Chapter Summary

In summary, the chapter gave a review of the available literature on functional adult literacy programme and women empowerment. The review highlighted that functional adult literacy programme is important in development as it acts as an instrument for change and development by modifying the behaviour of individuals in the community in so many ways. Furthermore, functional adult literacy programme has a positive

effect on advancement, particularly for women, prompting change in development indices in a range of areas such as health, nutrition and agriculture. The chapter also reviewed the available literature on functional adult literacy and women empowerment. Literature has shown that women who participate in functional adult literacy programme tend to be equipped with different sorts of skills that empower them economically, socially and politically.

The chapter also explained the women's empowerment framework which guided the study and revealed that if a development intervention focuses on the higher levels of the framework namely participation and control, there is a great possibility that women's empowerment will be increased or achieved by the intervention. It is with this notion that the two levels of the framework were borrowed in order to access if functional adult literacy programme empowers women. The methodology that guided this thesis will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used in this study. The sections under this chapter are; research design, study area, study population and sample, data collection methods, research ethics and data management and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

According to Enon (1998), a research design is a plan of how a researcher will carry out an investigation. This study used exploratory type of research design. Exploratory design was used in order to get rich data in exploring the views, perceptions and opinions of women participating in functional adult literacy programme as it relates the connection between functional adult literacy and women empowerment. Furthermore, exploratory research design is essential as it is used to investigate the full nature of the phenomenon and other factors related to it (Crotty, 1998). According to Brown (2006), exploratory research tackles new problems on which little or no previous research has been done. The exploratory design has been used in exploring the role of functional adult literacy in empowering women because there is limited research on the subject in Malawi. In addition, this exploratory research has used qualitative methods of data collection. Qualitative methods (IDIs, KIIs and FGDs) were used because they help to develop an in-depth exploration of central phenomenon as Creswell (2009) indicated.

The paradigm used in this study was constructivism which according to Miller and Crabtree (1999) recognizes the importance of person's subjective creation in meaning. Constructivists argue that reality is relative and that it is dependent on one's viewpoint. It is with this reason that this study used this paradigm in order to get

participant's viewpoints in regards to functional adult literacy and women's empowerment. Individual In-depth Interviews were conducted with these women relating to their experiences on the benefits of adult literacy programs as it relates to their social, political and economic empowerment. Secondary data in form of records of participation was obtained from Machinga District Social Welfare Offices. This data provided the background to the functional adult literacy interventions in Machinga and provided some facts and figures pertaining to Machinga District's adult literacy programs and women empowerment interventions all of which were necessary for the study.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in the Southern Region of Malawi in Machinga district, specifically in Group Village Heads Muliwo and Magadi under Traditional Authority Sitola and Group Village Heads Mikunga and Manja under Traditional Authority Mposa. Machinga district was chosen as it is among the top 5 districts that registered high levels of illiteracy and high rate of poverty among women as recoded in MDHS 2017, DHS,2017; HIS;2012 and PHC, 2018. The two T/As were chosen because they have had robust functional adult literacy projects ran by government and non-governmental organizations and have had high functional adult literacy attendance according to the District Community Development Officer of Machinga district.

Before collecting data from the FAL participants in the study sites, the researcher conducted a key informant interview with the Assistant Community Development Assistant Officer (ACDO) who is in charge of FALP at the district level in order to get an overview of the FALP in the district. The ACDO who has been in the position for seven years outlined that the FALP started in 1998 and is implemented in all the 16 Traditional Authorities (T/As) in Machinga district. However, through the monthly, quarterly and annual reports that the (Office of the DCDO conduct, T/A Mposa and T/A Sitola have higher adult literacy attendance compared to the other T/As. T/A Mposa has a total of four hundred and thirty-four (434) participants while T/A Sitola has a total of three hundred and ninety nine (399) participants. It is for this reason that the two T/As were purposively sampled in order to get more views from

the participants. In total, Machinga district has 318 Adult literacy centers and the total number of participants as of 2019 was 3834. Table 2 below illustrates the attendance record of women and men participating in the programme per T/A in Machinga district.

Table 2: Functional adult literacy attendance per T/A

	Traditional Authority	Number of participants in FALP	Number of men participating in the FALP	Number of Women participating in the FALP
1	Nyambi	169	3	166
2	Ngokwe	173	4	169
3	Mkula	206	0	206
4	Chamba	242	8	234
5	Sitola	399	2	397
6	Nsanama	243	4	239
7	Mulomba	231	0	231
8	Mposa	434	34	400
9	Chikweo	234	2	232
10	Kawinga	124	0	124
11	Sale	307	8	299
12	Kapoloma	162	0	162

Source: ACDO, Machinga Functional adult literacy annual report 2019

3.3.1 Social-economic profile of Machinga District

Machinga district is one of the thirteen districts in the southern region. The district shares boundaries with Zomba district in the south, Mangochi district in the north, Balaka district in the west and the Republic of Mozambique in the east. The district covers a total land area of 3,771 square kilometers. According to the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census, the district registered a population of 735,438 of which 384,696 (52.3%) were females and 350,742 (47.7%) were males. Several ethnic groups live in Machinga district but Yao is the predominant group. Lomwe is another tribe that is found in parts of Machinga. Sixty percent of the population in the district practice Islam as their religion (NSO, 2019).

Agriculture is a major economic activity for Machinga District. About 70% of the population depend on agriculture for livelihoods, employment, and income. The main food crops grown include; maize, rice and cassava. Rice and other cash crops such as tobacco and cotton provide an economic outlet besides other activities like fishing, handicrafts and transport businesses. The Yao follow a matrilineal marriage system whereby the husband relocates and resides in his wife's village. Under the matrilineal system, marriage is usually validated by the meeting of the representatives from the bride and groom's side known as *ankhoswe*, and marriage transactional fees are not very substantial, often characterized by the payment of a chicken. According to Zulu 1996, Reniers 2003 in Chintsanya, 2015, the low value of marriage contributes to unstable marital relationships in matrilineal societies.

In regards to education, the literacy rate of the adult population in the district as reported in the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) (2018) was 59.7%, which is lower than the national average adult literacy rate of 73.6%. The literacy rate for Machinga's women is 46.4%. High illiteracy levels can be attributed to the large number of pupils who drop out of the school system before they reach Standard 5. Seventy-five percent of Machinga's population lives in poverty; 39.2% of its population is ultra-poor. Factors of such poverty incidences in the district are high population growth, high fertility rate, big household sizes, and a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate resulting in an increase in orphan hood, amongst others (Welfare Monitoring Survey, 2018).

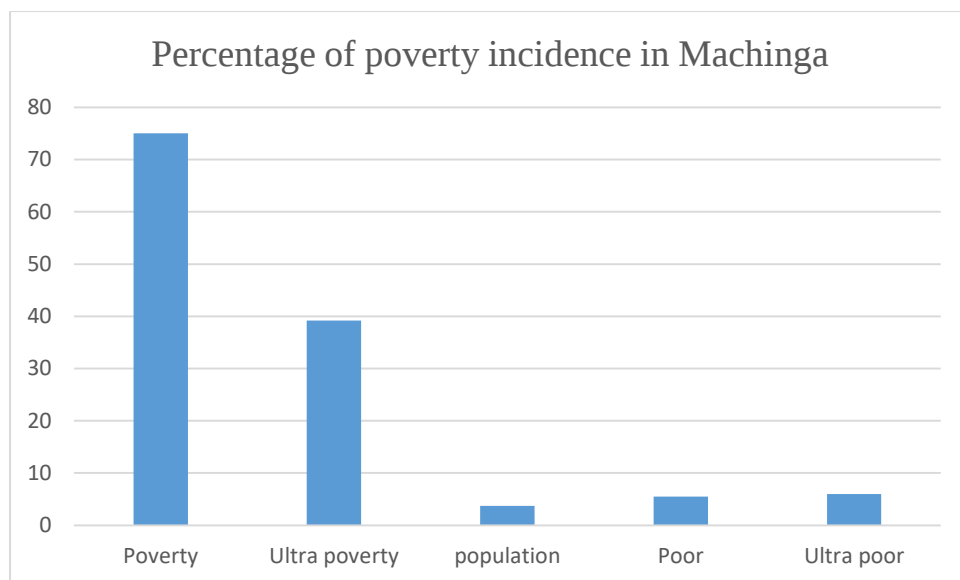


Figure 2: Percentage of poverty incidence in Machinga

Source: Machinga district council social economic profile 2017-2022 (2017)

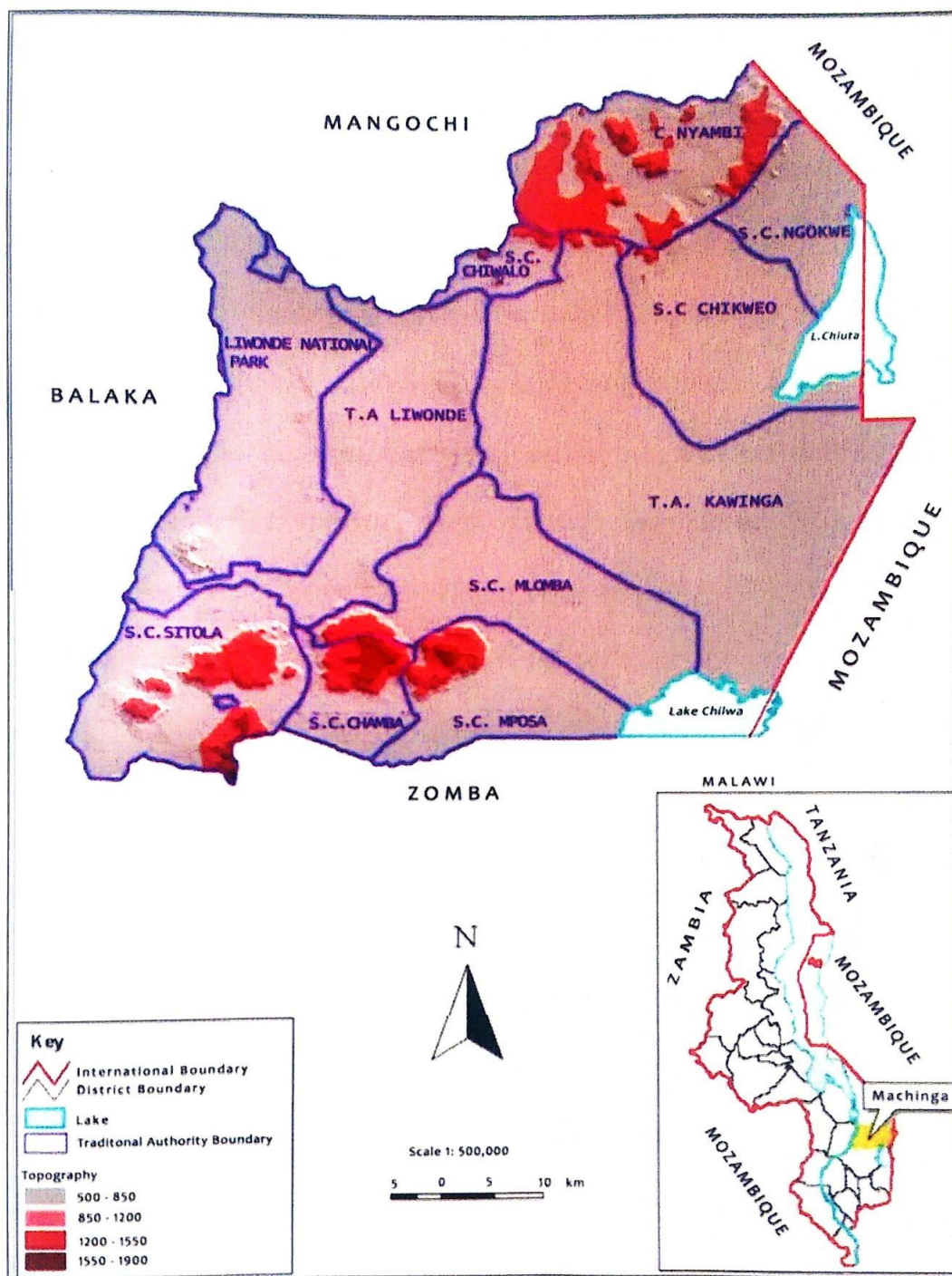


Figure 3: Map highlighting T/As in Machinga District

Source: National Statistical Office

3.4 Target Population and Sample

3.4.1 Population

According to the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census, the population of Traditional Authority Sitola is 25,138 whereby 11,824 (47%) are male while 13,314 (53%) are female. This study was also conducted in Traditional Authority Mposa which in 2018 registered a total population of 16,615 of which 7,855 (47.1%) are male and 8,760 (52.9%) are female. The targeted population of this study were Female Functional adult literacy beneficiaries, Adult literacy instructors (teachers), The District Community Development Officer (CDO) or Community Development Assistant (CDA) and Village adult literacy committees.

3.4.2 Sampling and Data Collection Methods

A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis (Omari, 2011). This study employed non-probability sampling techniques in selecting the study participants. It specifically employed purposive sampling techniques to select study participants. According to Denscombe (2010), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling technique which operates on the principle that one can get the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes. With purposive sampling, the sample is hand-picked for the research on the basis of relevance and knowledge. The study used three data collection methods in order to gather relevant data. The methods were Focus group discussions, Key Informant Interviews and Individual In-depth Interviews. These methods were essential as they gave rich data regarding the topic under discussion by unveiling personal experience and getting collective views from the participants.

3.4.2.1 Sampling of Individual In-depth Interviewees

IDIs were conducted with 10 women (5 from each T.A) who were purposively sampled from a population of women participating in FALP. These women were sampled based on a number of criteria. The first criteria were that the women had no exposure to formal education or any sort of training before joining the programme.

The second criteria were that the women were active participants in the programme. In order to get active participants, the instructors' daily attendance book was used to select those women who are active in the programme. The aim of the researcher was to get a deeper understanding of the opinions and feelings of the topic under discussion. Sampling of the IDIs were essential in achieving the three objectives of the study. A guide comprising of 15 open ended questions was developed and used to collect data from the study participants (Appendix 3). In-depth interviews were necessary for the study as it is an effective qualitative method for getting people (women who participate in FALP) to talk about their personal feelings, opinions and experience (Mack et al, 2005). Additionally, in-depth interviews were also used due to the ability it gives the researcher to probe and ask follow up questions hence giving deeper understanding of the interviewees feelings, opinions, experiences and perspectives regarding the role of FAL in empowering women.

3.4.2.2 Sampling of Focus Group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted with women who were participating in Functional adult literacy programme. These women were purposively sampled from a population of women participating in the programme. Just like the selection of IDIs, the women were sampled based on the same criteria. The FGDs comprised women with different age groups that are active participants in the programme and that had never attended formal education or any form of training before joining the programme. Focus groups were conducted in order to seek answers to research questions number one and three and hence achieve objective number one and three of the study. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in order to get different views or perspectives on how functional adult literacy contributes to women empowerment in the study area, as FGDs are powerful means of eliciting collective in-depth views of the participants on topics of interest (Silverman, 2010). The FGDs were conducted with women who were participating in the programme in order to generate collective and consensus information from the adult literacy beneficiaries on how adult literacy as a developmental intervention empowers women in Machinga district. Furthermore, this method added value in regards to data collection apart from using in-depth interviews, as according to Yin (2009) FGDs are one of the essential sources of data when doing a case study. This method was used in order to enable the

researcher to examine the way in which people in conjunction with one another interpret the topic in which the researcher is interacting as Brayman (2004) indicated. 2 FGDs (with 8 participants each) were conducted in each T.A giving a total of 4 FGDs. The discussions were conducted using a guide with 10 open ended questions (see appendix 4).

3.4.2.3 Sampling of Key informants

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants because they were the key people and experts in the programme who had in depth knowledge and experiences on the subject matter of functional adult literacy and women empowerment. A key informant guide was used in order to gather the data (see appendix 5). Seven key informants were interviewed. These included Assistant District Community Development Officer, Four Adult literacy instructors and 2 adult literacy village committee members. The sampling of the key informants was done based on the following criteria; firstly, the informants selected were the ones that are currently involved in the programme.

Secondly, those that are well trained in functional adult literacy. Thirdly, those that have at least three- or four-years' experience in the programme. The purpose of key informant interviews used in this study was to collect information from a wide range of people who have first-hand knowledge about the topic or the community. These experts, with their particular knowledge and understanding provided insight on the nature of the problem of adult literacy programs and gave recommendations for solutions.

The District Community Development Officer was chosen as he takes charge of all adult literacy programs at district level and facilitates the participation of other development agencies at district level (e.g. education, health, agriculture etc.) in literacy education and other developmental efforts. Adult Literacy Instructors were selected as they are responsible for day to day running of the adult literacy classes and directly interacted with the women participating in the program. The adult literacy village committee members were selected as they are responsible for day to day running of the NALP at the village level including identification and selection of adult literacy instructors.

Table 3: Composition of the Sample

Categories of study participants	Male	Female	Total
Women participating in the programme		32	32
Functional adult literacy instructors	1	3	4
District Assistant Community Development Officer	1	0	1
Functional adult literacy village committee members	1	1	2
TOTAL	3	36	39

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection was done for a period twenty-four (24) days from June, 2019 to August, 2019. Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was done in Traditional Authority Chamba where FALP is also implemented. According to Arain et al, (2010), a pilot study is described as a small-scale study which gives a researcher an opportunity to assess the feasibility of the main survey and also supports designing the main study. The aim of the pilot study was to test the study instrument in order to ensure validity. Validation refers to the quality of gathering instruments or procedures which measures what they are supposed to measure (Creswell, 2006). The pilot study was necessary to ensure whether the tools were designed well in order to capture the required data. After the pretest necessary amendments were made to the tools in order to improve quality of the research and reduce or minimize risk. The functional adult literacy center and participants who were subjected to the pilot study did not participate in the main study as they were already exposed to the questions in the

research and therefore they might have responded differently from those who had not previously experienced it, thereby affecting the results of the study.

3.6 Research Ethics

It is important to ensure that research ethics are observed in every research, as such I firstly obtained permission to conduct the research in the district from the District Community Development Officer of Machinga District. I briefed the Officer about my study and presented my letter of introduction from the Faculty of Social Science. Upon reading the letter, the District Community Development Officer gave me permission to conduct the research in the district. I also sought consent from the adult literacy instructors and village adult literacy committee who are in charge of the adult literacy classes at the village level. However, to ensure that the participant's rights were not violated, I also sought permission from the research participants by making them to sign a consent form (see Appendix 2). Before signing the consent form, I provided enough information to the participants about the study and provided a chance for them to decide whether to participate or not. Furthermore, after collecting all the data I kept the data that was collected confidentially.

3.7 Data Management and Analysis

Data analysis was done using thematic analysis whereby scripts were studied and themes were generated from the transcripts. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns. Thematic analysis was used in this study as it is a appropriate and powerful method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts or behaviours across a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The data management process started by translating the data collected from Chichewa language to English language. The translation process was vital as it aimed at making sense of the data. The information from the study participants were then categorized according to the emerging themes. The themes were identified and generated from the three objectives of the study.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In summary, chapter three outlined the qualitative methodology used to guide the research process. The chapter indicated that an exploratory type of research design was adopted in order to get rich data in exploring the views, perceptions, and opinions of women participating in the functional adult literacy programme. The chapter then highlighted the data collection tools that were used to collect the data which included focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. A discussion concerning selection of the study site was presented which revealed that Machinga district was chosen as it is among the top 5 districts that registered high levels of illiteracy and high rate of poverty among women as recoded in MDHS 2017, DHS,2017; HIS;2012 and PHC, 2018.

The chapter further showed that purposive sampling method was ideal for the study as it is a form of non-probability sampling technique which operates on the principle that one can get the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes. The chapter then concluded by providing insights on how data collected was managed and analyzed. Chapter four presents the research finding of the thesis followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the study objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents, interprets and analyses the findings of the study which investigated the role of functional adult literacy programme in empowering women in Machinga district. The chapter has been divided into three sections based on the study objectives and in relation to the conceptual framework that was used under this study. The first objective of this study was to identify the skills and knowledge that women who undergo functional adult literacy programme acquire. The second objective was to examine the ways in which women utilize the skills and knowledge they acquire in functional adult literacy programme. The last objective was to assess whether the skills and knowledge acquired in functional adult literacy programme have led to the empowerment of women.

4.2 FALP in Machinga: An Overview

Primarily the researcher had interest in getting to know how the community study participants got to know about the FALP. This was also meant to create rapport with the participants. It was clear from the narratives that participants knew about the FALP through a number of sources. The most prominent ones were traditional leaders (chiefs) and friends. Other participants said that they got exposed to the FALP through their friends who were participating in the FALP in other areas. Upon seeing that their friends are able to read and write, they (women) got interested and sought to participate in the programme in their communities. However, the most common theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was that the women knew about FALP through government field workers that came into their communities to do sensitization on the establishment of FALP in their community.

The researcher also wanted to find out from the study participants that have been in the programme for some time on the length of their participation. The study revealed

that many of the women have been in the programme for more than a year. Others indicated that they had been in the program for three years. It was also interesting to note that most study participants who were certified as literate continued to participate in the programme in order to sharpen their skills and also assist others that have just joined the programme who do not know how to read and write.

However, despite that women acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in FALP, they face a number of challenges which include failure to fully participate in politics and lack of total control over their economic resources due to societal attitudes that puts men as decision makers at the household and in the society. Apart from this major challenge, women in FGDs mentioned that during the rainy season they find it hard to go and attend the programme as they learn under a tree making hard to learn during rainy seasons. Furthermore, interview with the Assistant Community Development Officer (ACDO) also revealed that the FALP is facing many challenges which among include lack of financial and material resources.

4.3 Knowledge and Skills Women Acquired through FALP

Interview with one of the Adult literacy instructors from Mposa village revealed that by participating in FALP, women acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills through the Chuma ndi Moyo Book (Please see Appendix 8). The Chuma ndi Moyo book has a total of 60 topics which provides knowledge and skills in numerous areas.

“Women learn a lot from functional adult literacy programme, for example, they learn issues to do with agriculture, how to take care of their families, businesses and disease prevention. There is also a linkage between Village Savings and Loan with functional adult literacy programme. The linkage is that at Village Savings and Loans we engage in small scale businesses while at FALP we learn about how to do business. This is because if someone does not know how to read, write and calculate then he or she cannot manage to engage in VSL” (Key Informant Interview with Adult Literacy Instructor at Mposa Village)

This section focuses on the following themes: Literacy and Numeracy; Agriculture; Business Management; Cooking, Tailoring, Knitting and Sewing and Health and Hygiene.

4.3.1 Literacy and Numeracy

One of the major themes that reoccurred in regards to the knowledge and skills that women gain in the programme was literacy and numeracy. As Kishindo (1994) indicated, this is the major aim of the programme as before acquiring the other skills women have to know how to read, write and do calculations. According to Kishindo, the functional adult literacy programme was initiated in 1986 in order to provide adults who were not able to acquire literacy and numeracy skills in the formal school system the opportunity to do so in a system of non-formal education. A woman from Liwanga village revealed that she did not know how to read and write but upon joining the programme, she is able to read and write and assists her children with literacy and numeracy issues. She explained that:

“Since I know how to read and write I tend to follow up my children with their homework. I have a daughter who is in Standard 3 and a son who is in standard 1. I help them with their homework and encourage them to be very seriously with school in order for them to prosper in the future.”
(Individual in-depth interview at Liwanga Village, T/A Sitola)

4.3.2 Agriculture

It was clear from the narratives of the study participants that FALP equips women who participate in the programme with knowledge and skills on modern agricultural practices and methods that aim at increasing agricultural production and enhanced food security. It was also noted that most of the participants in the programme were engaging in farming and that skills and knowledge on agriculture have assisted them in increasing their crop yields and livestock production. Women in the focus group discussions conducted in Mposa village asserted that:

“We learn a lot of things through the FALP, among the knowledge and skills that we gain are to do with modern good agricultural practices. Through the Chuma ndi Moyo book that we use as a learning material, we gain skills especially on topic 40 (please see appendix 9) to do with how we can plant the crops and how we can increase our harvest.” (Women’s FGD at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa).

A woman from Sumani village explained that she gained knowledge on irrigation agriculture through FALP. Through an individual in-depth interview, she asserted that:

“There are a lot of ways of making money through agriculture. At school we learn about agriculture practices that will lead us to get more yields. We are taught that there is a lot of benefits in farming. We are taught that if we cultivate somewhere near a borehole, we can plant vegetables such as tanaposi (mustard) and tomato. People come and buy the vegetables there or we sell them at the market. In this way we earn income that will assist us in our households.”

(Individual in-depth interview at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

This was corroborated by an adult literacy instructor at Amoni village as captured below:

“In regards to agriculture or farming, we teach the women about crop diversification. We encourage the women to grow different types of crops because they provide income that may assist them on their households. Additionally, in regards to vitamins, the crops act as a source of vitamins and if there is lack of income at the household, the crops also act as a source of income upon selling them.” (Key Informant Interview with

Adult Literacy Instructor at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

This was also reiterated by women in an FGD at Amoni Village who indicated that they gained knowledge on crop diversification and intercropping as modern agricultural practices. The women revealed that they are taught by instructors that they should adopt new agricultural farming methods such as intercropping. For example, they learn how to grow maize together with a legume as this assist in providing nutrients to the soil that are used by the maize.

Unlike Appleton and Balihuta (1996) who conducted a study in Kenya and pointed out that education was not found to be significant in agriculture production, the current study tend to disagree with the notion and concur with Nagesso (2017) whose findings showed otherwise. According to Nagesso (2017) FALP contributes significantly to farmer’s production in Ethiopia as FALP tend to equip the participants with important and necessary skills and knowledge on how to effectively use farm inputs and effectively practice agricultural activities.

It was interesting to find out from the study participants that apart from gaining this knowledge, the women are also taught on how to make manure (appendix 6 and 7).

Since most of the participants are poor and can hardly afford to buy chemical fertilizers, the instructor encourages them to make locally made manure that are cost effective. This is among one of the hands-on skills that the participants gain in participating in the FALP. The participants are also encouraged to rear livestock such as chickens, ducks and goats for business and manure. Women in a focus group discussion at Mposa village explained that:

“The instructors taught us how to make manure in order for us to harvest more yields. In order to make the manure, we mix livestock wastes such as goat’s wastes (dung) with maize bran and, ashes and then add water to the mixture. After 14 days the manure is ready to be applied in the field. It is so simple and cheap as compared to buying chemical fertilizer.” (Women’s FGD at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

4.3.3 Business Management

Another theme that reoccurred in regards to the knowledge and skills that the women gain by participating in the programme was business management and entrepreneurship skills. The *Chuma ndi Moyo* book that the participants use for learning has a number of topics on business. For instance, topic one focuses on business in general, topic two provides knowledge and skill on searching for business (*kufufuza za bizinezi*) and topic three and four deal with ways of choosing a business and criteria for choosing a business respectively (*kusankha business, zofunika posankha bizinezi*). Women in a focus group discussion at Mposa village in their own words stated that:

“The knowledge that we gain is about business and how to end poverty at household level. We aim at ending poverty so we do business. For example, I sell rice, however, you see it is hard for someone who does not know how to calculate to sell rice, it is impossible. One may come and say I want you to sell me ten cups of rice and if you don’t know how to calculate then you might make losses. So, we benefit in the way that we know how to calculate and also how to manage a business.” (Women’s FGD at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

The narratives demonstrate that women acquire knowledge and skills in business management that are very useful to them when they are participating in Village and Savings Loan groups. According to participants from in-depth interviews and FGDs,

knowing how to write and manage business have profited them in VSL groups. This was captured during an FGD with women:

“We are members of VSL groups. Initially we did not know how to write and how to manage our businesses. However, with the coming in of FALP, we are able to know how much money we have saved and different ways of business management that will lead to us profiting from VSL.” (Women’s FGD at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

The women from the FGD at Amoni Village corroborated that they make cane chairs as a group and sell them. They further asserted that they make contributions through their Village Saving and Loan group in order to buy the materials to make the cane chairs. Additionally, they revealed that they do not have problems in calculating the prices when selling the cane chairs since they know how to calculate as they learn arithmetic through functional adult literacy programme. Through an individual in-depth interview, a woman from Liwanga village asserted that nobody can now cheat her in her business since she is able to count and do calculations. Key informant interviews with functional adult literacy instructors also showed that women acquire knowledge and skills in business management that ultimately benefit them in establishing businesses that provide income for their households.

4.3.4 Health and Hygiene

Knowledge on health and hygiene is among themes that emerged from focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and key informant interviews with the study participants. The participants indicated that the FALP provides knowledge on individual and communal hygiene and ways in which one can maintain good health. One of the women from Mposa village in an individual in-depth interview revealed that through participating in the programme, she has acquired information on health issues such as family planning methods. This was captured thus:

“We learn about family planning when we attend FALP. We learn a lot of skills to do with the life a woman in her day to day life. We are taught that a woman who gives birth frequently tends to mismanage her business because she is always busy taking care of small children. Family planning is very important as it develops the household. When a family is engaged in family planning, the wife or woman may be busy managing her business while the husband also does other

works. Together they can assist each other and develop the household.”
(Individual in-depth interview at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

The issue of family planning was also corroborated by adult literacy instructor from Sumani village who indicated that women are encouraged to use family planning methods in order to maintain good reproductive health as captured in her own words below:

“We teach the women on issues to do with hygiene and health. For example, topic 15 in the Chuma ndi Moyo book deals with family planning. We teach women that it is the responsibility of both the wife and the husband to use family planning methods in their marriage.”
(Key Informant Interview with Adult Literacy Instructor at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

Apart from gaining knowledge on family planning, the participants also acquire knowledge on other health issues such as disease prevention and good hygiene practices. It was clear from the interview with a key informant that women are mostly taught issues to do with health as they are the ones that mostly handle issues household as compared to men. The women are the ones that spend most of the time around the household while their husbands may be at work or travel somewhere to earn a living. This was summed up by the chairperson of the functional adult literacy village committee in Amoni village:

“The learners learn about health issues such as the cause of different diseases and how to prevent them. We teach them about diseases such as malaria, HIV and AIDs and other sexual transmitted diseases. Furthermore, we encourage the women to be practicing good hygiene in their homes like washing their hands after coming from toilet and also to have a toilet at their home.” (Key Informant Interview with the Chairperson of adult literacy village committee at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

A woman from Liwanga village also appreciated the programme as she learnt more on health matters apart from knowing how to read and write. She indicated that she also learnt about different diseases and how she can make sure that the diseases do not

affect her household. She gave an example whereby she cuts tall grasses surrounding her house in order to minimize breeding ground for mosquitoes that cause malaria.

Further, women in an FGD indicated that they gain knowledge on good hygiene practices that prevents them from contracting diseases.

“Our teacher encourages us to practice good hygiene every time in order for us not to contract diseases such as cholera and other diseases that results due to poor hygiene practices.” (Women’s FGD at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

The findings link well with the study conducted by Bakirdjian (2013) who reported that functional adult literacy has substantial impacts on the health of participants and their surroundings. The study findings have shown that the participants find the programme beneficial as they boost their knowledge in regards to health and hygiene practices.

4.3.5 Cooking, Tailoring, Knitting and Sewing

FGD participants mentioned that apart from learning how to read and write, they also gained skills in cooking, tailoring and knitting. The women mentioned that they teach each other how to cook different kinds of food.

“We learn how to cook various dishes. We have been taught how to cook cassava and nyamakhobwe. When I was just staying at home, I did not know how to cook nyamankhobwe (traditional meatballs) but when I joined the programme I learned how to cook nyamakhobwe and I sell them and eventually benefit from it.” (Women’s FGD at Liwanga Village, T/A Sitola)

An in-depth interview with woman from Sumani village, she maintained that apart from knowing how to read and write, she also gained skills in tailoring. This is captured thus:

“When we go to school, we don’t just learn how to write A or do some calculations, we also acquire skills in tailoring. For instance, how to make a dress or a shirt and sell them.” (Individual in-depth interview at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

4.4 Utilization of the Knowledge and Skills acquired through FALP

The individual in-depth interviews came up with individual experiences on how the women utilize the skills and knowledge gained while the key informants provided information on their expert observation on how women utilize knowledge and skills acquired. Information from the key informant interview with the chairperson of adult literacy village committee at Mposa village showed that women utilize the knowledge and skills in a variety of ways including starting own business ventures as captured below:

“Women who for example learn tailoring tend to utilize the skills learned by maybe buying a tailoring machine and start a tailoring business. We have seen women in this area who did not know tailoring but have started tailoring business. Others through cooking sessions may learn how to cook different sorts of foods and start business of selling food.” (Key Informant Interview with the chairlady of adult literacy village committee at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

These sentiments were also shared by a woman from Amoni village during an in-depth interview:

“By gaining business skills, I have been able to buy goats, layers chicken and I sell the chicken eggs” (Individual in-depth interview at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

A key informant interview with the chairperson of adult literacy committee in Amoni village revealed that women utilize the knowledge and skills gained from FALP, by engaging in businesses. He mentioned that he encourages the women to engage in business so that they should be having money and on their own and depend on themselves. He further stated that once the women know how to cook different sorts of food, others open up restaurants and make money.

The results from in-depth interviews further showed that upon gaining the skills and knowledge on business management, the participants start their own business as they are able to read, write, calculate and apply the knowledge gained on business management in their business. A woman from Mposa village in an in-depth interview revealed that:

“Initially when I was not participating in the FALP I was just depending on my husband to bring money to the house as I did not know how to do business that will profit me, since I did not know how to make correct calculations. However, I have now started a business of selling donuts and cone cakes and I am able to make a difference that I am making a profit or loss, and I do not just depend on my husband for money.” (Individual in-depth interview at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

A key informant interview with adult literacy instructors also revealed that once the women acquire literacy skills, they use the knowledge and skills to assist their children with school homework. In her own words an adult literacy instructor from Amoni village mentioned that:

“Functional adult literacy programme also assists or contributes to the education of children of the women participating in the functional adult literacy programme. For example, parents who are attending functional adult literacy programme may encourage their children not to drop out of school as the women know the benefit of education and they tend to set an example as they are also going to school as well.” (Key Informant Interview with Adult Literacy Instructor at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

The findings from individual in-depth interviews also supported the above notion that the participants use their skills in reading, writing and calculations in assisting their young children with their (children) education. Women who have or stay with children who are in primary school find the programme beneficial as they use the knowledge and skills gained in following up their children’s education and also learn from that. This is captured in these subsequent quotes:

“Since I know how to read and write I tend to follow up my children with their homework. I have a daughter who is in Standard 3 and a son who is in standard 1. I help them with their homework and encourage them to be very seriously with school in order for them to prosper in the future.” (Individual in-depth interview at Liwanga Village, T/A Sitola)

“Initially, I did not see the importance of education as I did not know to read and write. At first, I saw it as useless and when children were going to school, I had no interest at all. I just took it as normal and that children go to school and come back. Mostly I just made sure that they go to school after eating porridge in the morning. However, since

I know how to read and write, I see a lot of benefits in education and I focus a lot of attention on the education of my children. I make sure that my children go to school every day and that they are not absconding classes. I even whip them if I hear that they were not in class or if they do not want to go to school without a valid reason on that particular day.” (Individual in-depth interview at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

Apart from utilizing the knowledge and skills in reading, writing and calculations, the findings have also shown that women utilize the knowledge and skills on health and hygiene in a number of ways including following up on messages that health organizations disseminate in the communities. Individual in-depth interview with a woman from Mposa village asserted that she learns about diseases such as HIV and AIDS, malaria and Cholera and she put the knowledge to use. She revealed that she makes sure that her family members put on a mosquito net every night to protect them from malaria. She also indicated that since she knows how to read and write she is able to follow some advice regarding health issues that organisations such as PSI (Population Services International) disseminate in her village.

It was also found out that knowledge on family planning has enlightened women on birth control measures that they now use to have the desired number of children. A woman from Mposa village mentioned that she now uses contraceptives as a result of attending FALP. During an individual in-depth interview, she explained:

“I have 4 children because in the past I did not use family planning methods as I was afraid that my husband would not agree on it. I was just giving birth now and then as I was not using the contraceptives. However, my husband and I decided to join the functional adult literacy programme and when our teacher enlightened us about the usefulness of family planning methods, we decided to start using.” (Individual in-depth interview at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

In addition, these findings also concur with the study done by Egbo (2000) which discovered that sixty-seven (67) percent of women who underwent functional adult literacy activities reported they had utilized family planning strategies in contrast to just 11% of women who never attended functional adult literacy programme.

It was also revealed from the interviews that women are able to use skills acquired in communication to engage or participate in groups or community activities. A woman from Sumani village stated thus:

“To tell you the truth functional adult literacy programme enables one to participate in groups or community activities since you know how to read and write. When you are not able to read and write you tend to be shy to participate in community activities as they might tell you to write your name and you tend to feel ashamed when you fail. I am able to participate in group meetings in my community and I am able to write down anything in the meetings.” (Individual in-depth interview at Sumani Village, T/A Mposa)

From the narratives it has shown that transformative learning theory is a process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves and use the acquired knowledge and skills in their day to day lives leading to transformation in their lives. Furthermore, FALP helps women to transform their frames of reference through critical reflections on assumptions and dialogic reasoning by questioning as well and understand the meaning of what is communicated to them by taking into account the assumptions and authenticity of what is being communicated.

4.5 Functional Adult Literacy and Women’s Empowerment in Machinga

As indicated in the chapter review, the two final levels of women empowerment framework by Sara Longwe will be used as a point of reference in regards to whether FALP has led to women empowerment in Machinga district. However, in order to assess women empowerment, the researcher sought answers to the following questions. Firstly, the researcher wanted to know if participating in FALP improves women’s confidence, self-worth and potential and if so how? This question sought to find out if women are being socially empowered by participating in FALP.

4.5.1 Social Empowerment

The results from the focus group discussions show that there has been a great improvement in regards to women confidence in doing some activities. This was

particularly prominent in participating in community activities of which that was not the case before. For instance, women in a focus group at Mposa village stated thus:

“Functional adult literacy improves our confidence as when we are learning we are sometimes put in groups where we share ideas and improve our communication and public speaking skills. We are sometimes told by the instructor to go in front and elaborate on something to our friends as an exercise in the classroom.” (Women’s FGD at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

This was also corroborated by individual in-depth interviews with women that indicated that women have improved their confidence as evidenced through participating in community matters or activities. These are indications of social empowerment. A woman from Sumani village argued that when she did not know how to read and write, she failed to participate in some community activities as she was afraid that people might see her as being dull. She mentioned that she could not participate in activities such as Village Savings and Loan as she was shy that if she was selected to be the treasure, she would not be able to perform her duties since she was illiterate. However, when she joined FALP she also joined VSL group and she is able to contribute positively to the group as she is now literate.

A woman from Amoni village also maintained that FALP has increased her confidence and self-worth as she is able to stand in front of many people at Church and share the word of God. In an individual in-depth interview, she put it thus:

“I am able to speak in front of many people at church as I am not shy at all that someone may ask me to read a verse and I will fail, no! I am able to read and I am able to share the word of God with people at church without a problem.” (Individual in-depth interview at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

In line with Anselm et al (2010), who revealed that adult literacy empowers marginalized groups, especially women with the essential skills, attitudes, and knowledge that permits them to participate fully in the society. This study has also shown that women’s participation in society activities increases through participating in the programme.

4.5.2 Economic Empowerment

On the issue of women's economic empowerment there were mixed results. Individual in-depth interviews have revealed that while some women who are participating in the FAL are able to take charge and control of their livelihoods and income, others have indicated that in spite of being knowledgeable they are still not in control. On one hand, a woman from Mposa village explained that she is able to manage her income upon learning business management skills. She further explained that she has control over her income which she keeps at Village Savings and Loan (VSL) group. This was captured thus:

“Yes, I am able to manage my income as I was taught business managing and savings skills. Additionally, I am in a village Savings and Loan (VSL) group where I keep some of my money made from business.” (Individual in-depth interview at Mposa Village, T/A Mposa)

In addition, a woman from Amoni village indicated that she is able to manage her business and income from her business as she is able to apply her business management skills to her business. She explained that she knows how much she has made from her business and have total control on what to do with the money. She is captured thus:

“Yes, I am able to manage my business as I know if I am making loses or profits. If I see that my business is making loses, I get a loan and boost up my business. When I am making profits, I keep the capital aside and decide what to do with the profit. For example, I buy my children clothes and buy other household necessities.” (Individual in-depth interview at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

Women in an FGD at Amoni village also indicated that they were able to depend on themselves as compared to the past. They stated that they used to depend on their husbands in everything as they did not know about ways of making money and had no business management skills.

We were just staying doing nothing as we did not have the knowledge on how to make money, but when we started attending the FALP, we were enlightened and no longer depend on our husbands. Initially, we were just depending on the husband, whether you don't have enough clothes you go to the husband.” (Women's FGD at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

On the other hand, a woman from Amoni village in an individual in-depth interview complained that her husband is the one that still controls her income. She asserted that:

“No, my husband always controls the money as he says he is the head of the household and therefore every decision is made by him.”
(Individual in-depth interview at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

Another woman from Liwanga village explained that culture dictates that women have to listen to what their husbands are telling them, as such she does not have control over her income.

“No, with our culture we are usually taught that we should be listening to our husbands as the husband is the head of the family. Mostly, when the husbands ask about the money we made from our business we tend to give it to them and they make the decisions on what to do with the money as they are the heads.” (Individual in-depth interview at Liwanga Village, T/A Sitola)

However, concurring with Karabona (2015) and Akrong (2014), there is a link between functional adult literacy and women economic empowerment. The findings from this study showed that most of the women interviewed are engaged in businesses as a result of participating in the programme. This is in agreement with the two studies mentioned as the findings from the studies showed that functional adult literacy programme equips women with income generating skills which this study has also discovered.

4.5.3 Political Empowerment

The study findings have shown that there is a challenge when it comes to women being political empowered in the study area. Unlike Yusuf (2013) whose findings showed that functional adult literacy programme equally influenced positively the political status of women, the findings of this study show otherwise. It was captured through individual in-depth interviews that women are also taught issues to do with human rights, democracy and politics. However, the women have indicated that

despite that they are able to know some of their rights, they are not able to exercise some of these rights as people in the community still regarded them as inferior to participate in issues such as politics. These sentiments are captured below:

“Our teacher teaches us about democracy and development and that it is our right to participate in development and even politics. However, I find it difficult to take part in politics as politics is regarded as a dangerous game. Secondly, we women are regarded as inferior in our society and I personally feel I am not ready or in a position to take part in politics despite the fact that I now know how to read and write.”
(Individual in-depth interview at Amoni Village, T/A Sitola)

“Yes, we learn that it is our right to participate in politics and also to engage in development and issues to do with democracy. However, to me politics is something that one needs to be careful of as so many things happen in politics. However, though I know how to read and write I cannot engage in politics.” (Individual in-depth interview at Liwanga Village, T/A Sitola)

From the women empowerment theoretical point of view, the knowledge and skills acquired in the functional adult literacy programme has led to empowerment of women in Machinga. As indicated in chapter three, the two final levels of the women’s empowerment framework which are *participation* and *control* determine if an intervention is facilitating empowerment or not. That is, if a development intervention focuses on higher levels (participation and control), there is a great possibility that women’s empowerment will be increased by the intervention than if the intervention focuses on the lower level. Applying Longwe’s empowerment framework, it has become clear that the emphasis of the FALP is at the participation and control levels: increasing women’s self-confidence, women’s capability to participate in decision making process and control of resources through education. From the findings, it has been shown that women are able to participate and engage in income generating activities such businesses which eventually has led to women being economically empowered. Women were confident to say they are different from those that do not participate in the programme. For example, discussions with women of Liwanga and Sumani villages pointed to the fact that they were able to do business and depend on themselves as compared to women who have never attended the programme who just stay at home and rely on their husbands.

The findings have also indicated that the programme has increased women's self-confidence as women are able to participate in community activities and are able to make decisions at home or community level, hence according to the women empowerment conceptual framework, the women are socially empowered. Furthermore, findings indicated that some women are able to have total control over their resource or income which has led to women being economically empowered despite that some women do not have total control of their income despite acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. However, in regards to political empowerment, there is a challenge as societal attitudes have prevented the beneficiaries of the programme to fully participate in politics as earlier indicated, as women are regarded to be inferior and some consider politics a dangerous game for women.

4.6 Chapter Summary

From their narratives most of the women maintained that there has been a great change in regards to their social and economic life. For instance, they are able to open up and participate in community matters or activities. Others have shown that they are able to make decisions at home and also at community level and have improved their understanding of various issues pertaining to their health and that of their families. Yet others have also shown that they are able to engage in business from which they are able to make profits. This was in comparison to the situation that ensued before participation in the program. Furthermore, from a developmental point of view, the programme is facilitating empowerment as assessment by the women empowerment framework shows that the development intervention focuses on higher levels (participation and control), which according to Sara Longwe shows that there is a great possibility that women's empowerment will be increased. However, as indicated earlier cultural challenges are an impediment to the empowerment of women in some cases.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the summary of the study and conclusion and study implications of the study. It comprises of the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

In summary, this study investigated the role of functional adult literacy in empowering women in T/A Sitola and T/A Mposa areas in Machinga district. The study was qualitative in nature and used exploratory type of research design. Exploratory design was used in order to get rich data in exploring the views, perceptions and opinions of women participating in functional adult literacy programme as it relates the connection between functional adult literacy and women empowerment. The study found out that apart from gaining knowledge on how to write, read and enumerate calculate, the women also acquire knowledge on business management, public speaking skills, knowledge on health and hygiene, knowledge and skills on modern agriculture and hands on skills such as tailoring and cooking.

The findings also showed that women use the business management skills to best operate and manage their businesses and to know if they are making profits or not. When it comes to communication skills, women tend to participate in community activities and are able to speak in public as they know how to read and write. Additionally, women tend to put the knowledge and skills on health and hygiene to use as they are able to put on mosquito nets in order to prevent malaria and adopt family planning methods among others. Furthermore, women are able to assist their children who are in primary school with their homework as they are able to use their reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

The two final levels (participation and control) of the women's empowerment framework were used as point of reference in assessing if the programme is indeed empowering women. The findings have shown that women are able to engage and participate in income generating activities such as business upon attending the programme as compared to the time they did not participate in the programme. From the women empowerment perspective this has shown that women are being empowered economically. The findings have also shown that women are able to engaged in business and to some extent control their income and differentiate their economic life before participating in the programme. Most women saw that their economic life have changed or improved as they are able to start business and manage their income. According to the WEF this clearly indicates that women are being empowered as for empowerment to follow, women should be able to have control over resources.

5.3 Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the study results was that functional adult literacy programme socially and economically empowers women in Machinga district. The findings have shown that key areas of improvement that happened as a result of functional adult literacy program were women's self-confidence and self-worth. The data obtained from the study participants have clearly shown that the women's ability to read, write and calculate contributed a lot towards the development of their self-confidence. The findings have also shown that through participating FALP there has been an improvement in women's participation in social matters and social network hence FALP has led to an increase in women's participation in social events such as community gathering and local meetings. The programme has made women to be confident and express their opinions on issues related to the community they are living in.

Data from the study participants has revealed that FALP highly increase women's ability to engage in income-earning activities hence women being economically empowered. By gaining business management and entrepreneurship skills, women are motivated in finding ways to make money. For instance, women from Amoni village

corroborated that they make cane chairs as a group and sell them since they gain entrepreneurship skills through participating in FALP. It was also noted that these women make contributions through their Village Saving and Loan group in order to buy the materials to make the cane chairs. However, more is to be done in regards to economic empowerment as a number of women acquire income generating skills and open up businesses but have no total control of their income. In regards to political empowerment, there is a gap as women are taught on issues to do with their rights but find it hard to participate in political matters or activities due to cultural demands.

The study also concludes that the functional adult literacy programme is facing a lot of challenges that has made it difficult to achieve some of its goals. Among these challenges include lack of teaching and learning material, delay in payment of adult literacy instructors' honoraria that has led to instructors absconding their duties and dropout of learners in the event.

The study findings of this study have important implications on the role of FALP on women's empowerment. Most of the findings are in line with what is in the available literature. For example, the findings concur with the study done by Kotsapas (2011) who wrote that by participating in FALP, women increase their confidence in public speaking, assist their family members, especially their children, with activities that required literacy. This is also similar to the study done by Leahy (2016) that revealed that one impact of women's participation in functional adult literacy is improvement in confidence and personal development. Oxenham (2004) also showed that adult literacy socially empowered women as in Burkina Faso such women tended to have self-confidence and figured out how to influence their spouse to hear them out more. However, the Machinga case study reveals that there are certain social values and attitudes that prevent women from fully utilizing the skills and knowledge that they gain through the programme.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations in regards to the government and NGOs

From the study findings it has shown that women are being empowered through the Functional Adult Literacy Programme in Machinga district. However, it is recommended that if the government desires to see the programme contributing more to women's status, whether economic or social status, there is a need to expose or incorporate more men in the programme. There should be a strong community awareness campaign and a sensitization program to engage more men in the programme. Men tend to make the major decisions in the families, for instance income expenditure and adoption of family planning practices (Kishindo, 1994). With more men being exposed to the programme, the government should also link the functional adult literacy programme with gender action learning system, a programme that is designed to promote gender mainstreaming in the communities.

Furthermore, the functional adult literacy programme could support income generating activities by providing loans or further training in business management in order to enhance women's economic status. A lot of the participants showed interest and expressed the desire to boost their skills in business management. If the government or NGOs support these activities (trainings and providing loans), it would strengthen women's economic empowerment. In order to address some of the challenges faced by the programme such as lack of financial and material resources, the government should make sure that the adult literacy instructors are given their honoraria on time so as to avoid participant's drop outs due to instructors absconding classes. Additionally, the government should also provide enough learning and teaching materials such as blackboard, books or chalk in order to enhance learning and teaching hence facilitate women empowerment.

5.4.2 Recommendations in regards to the communities

The communities with the help from government and NGOs should also gather resources and construct permanent shelters where adult literacy classes should take place as most of the participants learn under a tree which makes learning and teaching

hard during the rainy season. This also contributes to low turn outs or attendance during this period (rainy season) as such affects intended goals of the programme.

5.4.3 Recommendations in regards to women/learners in the programme

For the FALP to effectively empower women, the program needs strong coordination among many parties; Therefore, there should be a strong coordination among NGOs, government agents, adult literacy supervisors, adult literacy instructors and adult literacy learners on issues related to project design, implementation and evaluation as well as learners handling.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Participants demographic sheet (FGD at Amoni Village)

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Marital status
1	Female	None	34	Business	Islam	Married
2	Female	None	62	Business/farmer	Catholic	Widow
3	Female	None	52	Business	Islam	Widow
4	Female	None	40	Business/farmer	SDA	Married
5	Female	None	46	Business	Islam	Separated
6	Female	None	35	Business	Baptist	Married
7	Female	None	45	Business	Islam	Married
8	Female	None	38	Business	Baptist	Separated

Annex 2: Participants demographic sheet (FGD at Liwanga Village)

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Marital status
1	Female	None	42	Farming	Islam	Married
2	Female	None	34	Farming	Islam	Married
3	Female	None	36	Business	Islam	Married
4	Female	None	53	Farming	Baptist	Married
5	Female	None	40	Business	SDA	Married
6	Female	None	38	Business/ Farming	Islam	Married
7	Female	None	44	Farming	Baptist	Widow
8	Female	None	48	Farming	SDA	Separation

Annex 3: Participants demographic sheet (FGD at Sumani Village)

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Marital status
1	Female	None	64	Business	Catholic	Widow
2	Female	None	49	Business/ Farmer	Catholic	Separation
3	Female	None	54	Farming	Islam	Widow
4	Female	None	42	Business/farmer	Islam	Married
5	Female	None	36	Business	Islam	Married
6	Female	None	45	Business	Baptist	Separation
7	Female	None	33	Business	SDA	Married
8	Female	None	40	Business	Baptist	Married

Annex 4: Participants demographic sheet (FGD at Mposa Village)

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Marital status
1	Female	None	46	Farming	Baptist	Married
2	Female	None	35	Farming/ Business	Baptist	Married
3	Female	None	45	Farming	Islam	Married
4	Female	None	40	Farming	Islam	Separation
5	Female	None	34	Farming/ Business	Islam	Married
6	Female	None	38	Farming	SDA	Married
7	Female	None	52	Farming	Islam	Married
8	Female	None	62	Farming/Business	Baptist	Widow

Annex 5: Participants demographic sheet (Individual in-depth interviewee)

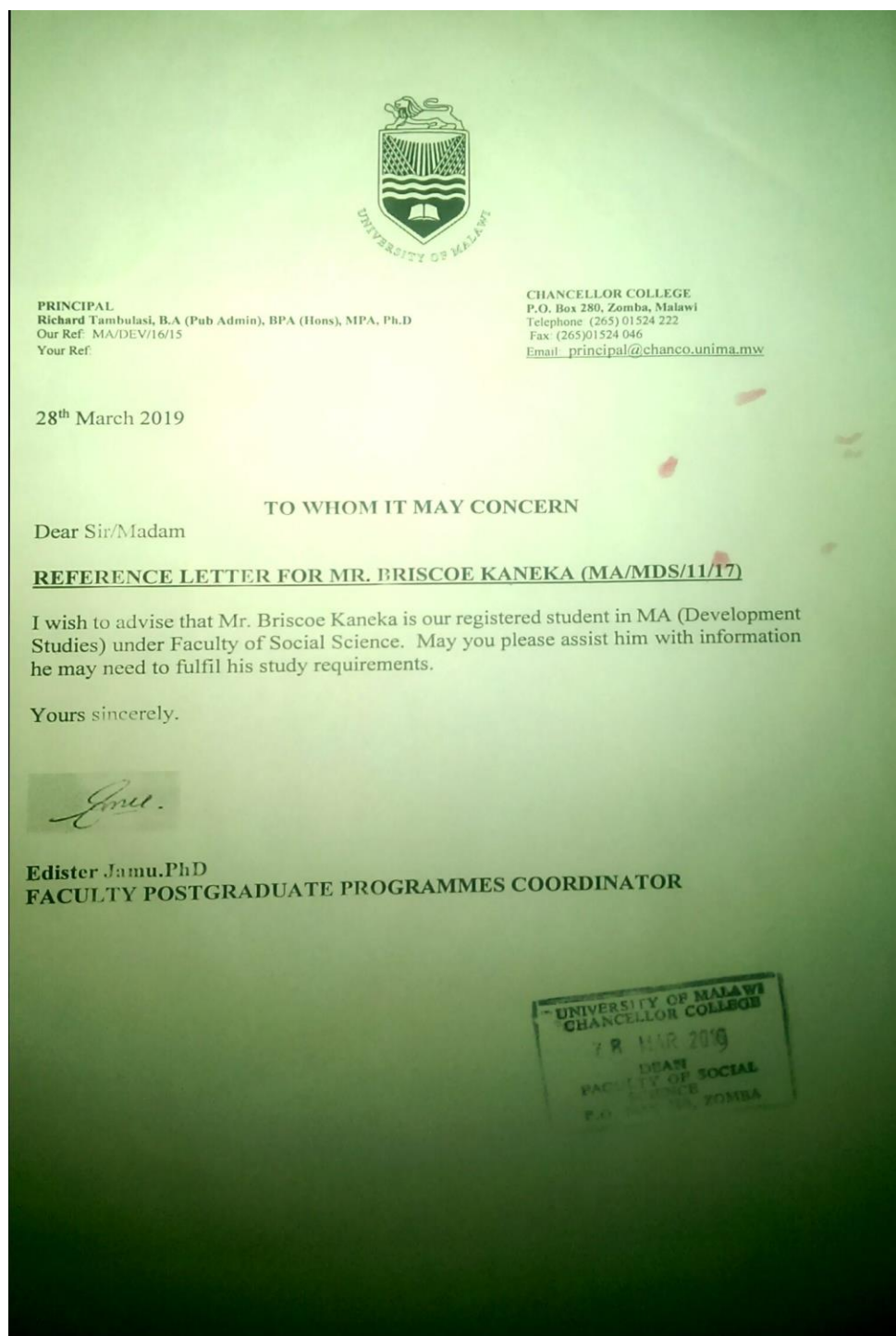
Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Marital status
1	Female	None	38	Farming/Business	Catholic	Married
2	Female	None	47	Farming	Islam	Married
3	Female	None	35	Farming	CCAP	Separated
4	Female	None	49	Farming/Business	Islam	Married
5	Female	None	33	Farming	Islam	Married
6	Female	None	46	Farming/Business	SDA	Married
7	Female	None	33	Business	Catholic	Married
8	Female	None	45	Farming/Business	Islam	Married
9	Female	None	37	Business	Baptist	Married
10	Female	None	40	Business	Islam	Married

Annex 6: Participants demographic sheet (Key Informant Interviewee)

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Role	Experience in Functional Adult Literacy Programme	FALP Training
1	Male	Diploma		ACDO	7 years	Received
2	Female	JCE	42	Instructor	7 years	Received
3	Male	JCE	42	Instructor	5 years	Received
4	Female	Form 4	40	Instructor	13 years	Received
5	Female	JCE	45	Instructor		Received
6	Male	MSCE	52	FALP Village Committee Chairman	6 years	Received
7	Female	JCE	48	FALP Village Committee Chairlady	5 years	Received

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Reference Letter UNIMA MDS Students



Appendix 2: Study Consent Form

STUDY CONSENT FORM

Assessing the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in empowering women in Machinga District

Researcher/ Investigator

Briscoe Kaneka

Introduction

Greetings! Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. My name is Briscoe Kaneka and I am a Master of Arts in Development Studies student at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. You are invited to take part in the research that I am conducting to explore the role of Functional Adult Literacy in empowering women.

This document provides you with information about the study. Before agreeing to participate in the discussion, it is important that you understand the information contained in this document. In short, the document describes the purpose and the procedures to the study. It also describes your right to choose whether to participate in the study and withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are comfortable with reading, I am requesting you to read this document on your own. However, if you wish, I can also read to you what is contained in this document. After reading, one copy of this document will be given to you (if you wish to have it) and one will be kept with me in a safe and secure place.

Do you prefer to read the document on your own? Yes_____ No_____

What is the purpose of this study?

Research findings have shown that though adult literacy has been offered for decades in Malawi, limited research has been conducted in this area, particularly on its relationship to women's empowerment. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the role of adult literacy in empowering women here in Machinga district.

Procedures

The interview will be tape recorded in order to fully capture the information needed in this study. However, all the information shared in this interview will remain confidential and will only be used for study purposes. Your participation and contribution to the study will remain confidential. I will make every effort to protect your privacy and maintain the confidentiality of all the information that is provided. Your name or other identifiers will not be included in the reports from this study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. You may find an indirect benefit in knowing your responses have informed an important study that could help in informing policy and program implementation of adult literacy intervention/activities aimed at empowering women politically, socially and economically.

INFORMED CONSENT-PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

I, (name of study participant)

Agree to take part in the study entitled

Assessing the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in empowering women in Machinga District

I have been told in detail about all the procedures in the study and know what is required of me. I understand and accept the conditions. I understand that I am taking part in the study freely and that I can stop being part of this study at any time and for any reason. All my questions and concerns about the study have also been satisfactorily answered.

Participant

Signature.....

Date Time

Person Obtaining Consent:

I have explained the nature, demands and all the procedures of the above study to the participant

Name.....

Signature.....

Date..... Time.....

Appendix 3: Individual In-depth Interview guide

Assessing the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in empowering women in Machinga District

Researcher/ Investigator

Briscoe Kaneka

Date_____

Interviewers Name_____

Location_____

Introductory Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are going to spend approximately an hour today talking about how you came to be involved in the FALP, your experiences and opinions about it. The aim of this study is to assess/explore the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme in empowering women. Therefore, your participation in this study is very crucial as it will give insights on how adult literacy is contributing to women's empowerment in this area. Please remember that what will be said here is confidential as such I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions about the subject matter.

So, shall we begin?

Participants Demographic

Background Characteristics	Participant response
Age	
Education	
Marital status/relationship status	
Occupation	
Religion	

Exposure to Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP)

1. As you may know, there are a number of activities and interventions happening in this community that are aimed at gender equality and women empowerment. What are some of them? Do you know FALP? What do you know about it? How did you get to know about FALP?
2. Can you describe what FALP entails? (**Probe: the activities that happen, the components, etc.**)
3. When did you start attending the Functional Adult Literacy programme?

The knowledge and skills acquired through FALP

4. What knowledge do you acquire by participating in FALP?
 - a) **Probe about the knowledge that may lead to women's improvement in their standard of living (e.g. knowledge on health, agriculture, family planning etc.)**
 - b) **Probe about the knowledge acquired that may lead to income generating, knowledge on business which leads to women's economic empowerment**
 - c) **Probe about the knowledge acquire that may lead to social empowerment of the women (e.g. increases self-esteem and personal development etc.)**
5. What skills do you acquire through participating in FALP?
 - a) **Probe on entrepreneurship and management skills that may help to generate income and manage business hence improving women's economic status (economic empowerment).**
 - b) **Probe on skills to do with social empowerment of women (e.g. communication skills that may lead to increase or control over decision making etc.)**
 - c) **Probe on skills that may lead to political empowerment of women (e.g. awareness about human rights issues, etc.)**

The utilization of the knowledge and skills acquired through FALP

6. How do you use the knowledge and skills gained through participating in FAL in your day to day life?
7. Could you describe how adult literacy impacted in the following components of your social life?
 - ✓ Your children's education
 - ✓ You and your family health
 - ✓ Your social networking outside home

- ✓ Involvement/ participation in community matters and social events
- ✓ Awareness about human right issues, politics etc.

Knowledge and skills acquisition and women's empowerment

8. Does participation in adult literacy program improve your confidence, self-worth and potential? How?
9. Does the knowledge you gained from the adult literacy program help you to manage and have total control over your income? **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to economic empowerment.** How?
10. What are other benefits of having this knowledge and skill to your day to day lives?
 - a) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to political empowerment (women are able to know their rights, participating in political positions)**
11. How do you compare your social and economic life before and after your participation in the adult literacy program?
12. How different are you as a woman who have undergone literacy programs from those women who have not attended FALP? **(probe in terms of establishing businesses, decision making in the households etc.)**
13. What major challenges do you face in participating in FALP?
14. What do you suggest to be the solutions?
15. What can you say about the usefulness of the FALP program?

Thank you for your time

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix 4: Focus group discussion guide

Assessing the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in empowering women in Machinga District

Researcher/ Investigator

Briscoe Kaneka

Date_____

Facilitators

Name_____

Note takers

Name_____

Location_____

Introductory Script:

“We would like to thank you for taking time to participate in this focus group discussion. The aim of this study is to assess/explore the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme in empowering women. The focus is to understand your experiences and opinions about Functional Adult Literacy Programme in empowering women in this area. The discussion will take about one and half hours.

We are handing out numbers. These will be used instead of names

A few ground rules about the focus group discussion before we begin. Firstly, we want you to do most of the talking and that there are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from every one of you. You should be free to express your honest opinions even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. Every person’s experiences and opinions are important. I may call on you if I have not heard from you in a while. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speaks at a time. Please remember that what will be said in this room is confidential as such we want all participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions

Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Let's begin by getting to know some details about ourselves

Participants Demographic Sheet

Participant No.	Sex	Education	Age	Occupation	Religion	Consent
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

Exposure to Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP)

1. As you may know, there are a number of activities and interventions happening in this community that are aimed at gender equality and women empowerment. What are some of them? Do you know FALP? What do you know about it? How did you get to know about FALP?
2. Can you describe what FALP entails or what it is all about? **(Probe: the activities that happen, the components etc.)**
3. When did you start attending the Functional Adult Literacy programme in this area?

The knowledge and skills acquired through FALP

4. What knowledge do you acquire by participating in FALP?
 - d) **Probe about the knowledge that may lead to women's improvement in their standard of living (e.g. knowledge on health, agriculture, family planning etc.)**
 - e) **Probe about the knowledge acquired that may lead to income generating, knowledge on business which leads to women's economic empowerment**

- f) **Probe about the knowledge acquired that may lead to social empowerment of the women (e.g. increases self-esteem and personal development etc.)**
5. What skills do you acquire through participating in FALP?
- d) **Probe on entrepreneurship and management skills that may help to generate income and manage business hence improving women's economic status (economic empowerment).**
 - e) **Probe on skills to do with social empowerment of women (e.g. communication skills that may lead to increase or control over decision making etc.)**
 - f) **Probe on skills that may lead to political empowerment of women (e.g. awareness about human rights issues, etc.)**

Knowledge and skills acquisition and women's empowerment

6. What are the benefits of having this knowledge and skills to your day to day lives?
- b) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to social empowerment (e.g. increased self-esteem, decision making,) How?**
 - c) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to economic empowerment (e.g. increased in their business, improved their economic status) How?**
 - d) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to political empowerment (women are able to know their rights, participating in political positions) How?**
7. What were you doing before participating in FALP?>
8. How can you describe your economic life then? When you compare with the past, what has changed? In what way?
9. How different are women who have undergone literacy programs from those who have never attended FALP? **(probe in terms of establishing businesses, decision making in the households etc.)**
10. What major challenges do you face in participating in FALP programme?
11. What do you suggest to be the solutions?
12. What can you say about the usefulness of the FALP program?

Thank you for your time

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix 5: Key Informant guide

Assessing/Exploring the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in empowering women in Machinga District

Researcher/ Investigator

Briscoe Kaneka

Date_____

Interviewers

Name_____

Location_____

Introductory Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are going to spend approximately an hour today talking about how you came to be involved in the FALP, your experiences and opinions about it. The aim of this study is to explore the role of Functional Adult Literacy Programme in empowering women. Therefore, your participation in this study is very crucial as it will give insights on how adult literacy is contributing to women's empowerment in this area. Please remember that what will be said here is confidential as such I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions about the subject matter.

So, shall we begin?

Participants Demographic

Background Characteristics	Participant response
Sex	
Age	
Education	

Marital status/relationship status	
Occupation/ position	
Religion	

Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) in Machinga

1. Can you describe what FALP entail or is all about? (**Probe: the activities that happen, the components, aim etc.**)
2. What is your role/ position in the FAL implementation programme?
3. How long have you been on your position?
4. When did you start implementing the Functional Adult Literacy programme in this area?
5. How many centers are you responsible for?
6. How many adult literacy classes do you teach?
7. How many learners do have per class?
8. How could you describe the main purposes of women's empowerment through Functional Adult literacy programme?

The knowledge and skills women acquired through FALP

9. What knowledge do women acquire by participating in FALP?
 - g) **Probe about the knowledge on social empowerment**
 - h) **Probe about the knowledge on political empowerment**
 - i) **Probe about the knowledge on social empowerment**
10. What skills do women acquire through participating in FALP?
 - g) Probe about skills to do with business or entrepreneurship (economic empowerment)
 - h) Probe on skills to do with decision making or that may lead to social empowerment
 - i) Probe on skills to do with power ever decision making and political empowerment

Knowledge and skills acquisition and women's empowerment

11. Does participation in adult literacy program improve women's confidence, self-worth and potential? How?
12. What are other benefits of having this knowledge and skills to women's day to day lives?
 - e) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to social empowerment (e.g. increased self-esteem, decision making)**
 - f) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to economic empowerment (e.g. increased their business, improved their financial)**
 - g) **Probe on whether the knowledge and skills gained have led to political empowerment (women are able to know their rights, participating in political positions)**
13. What are the major challenges you face in participating in FAL?

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix 6: Women utilizing the skills acquired in FALP in making manure in T/A Mposa



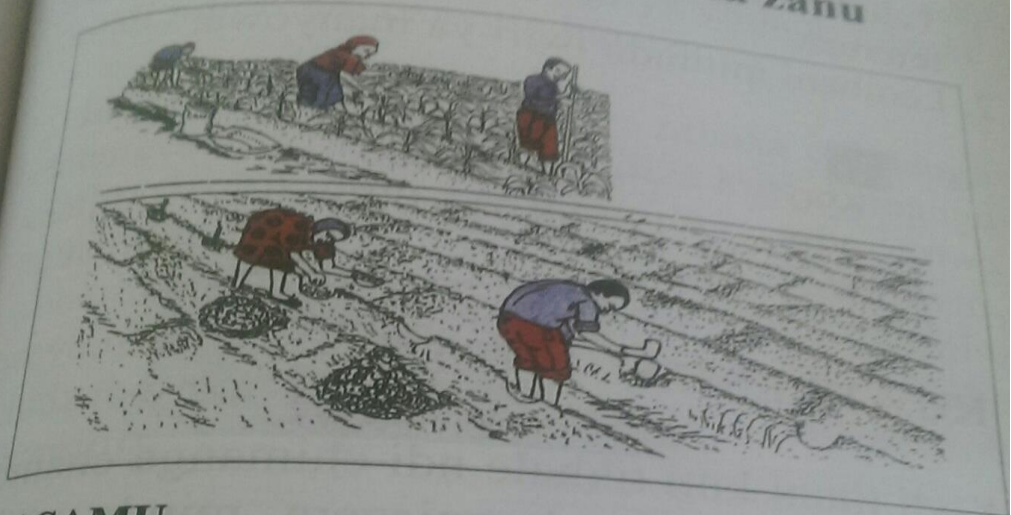
Appendix 7: Manure made from women participating in the FALP applied in a maize field



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Chulukitsani zokolola zanu

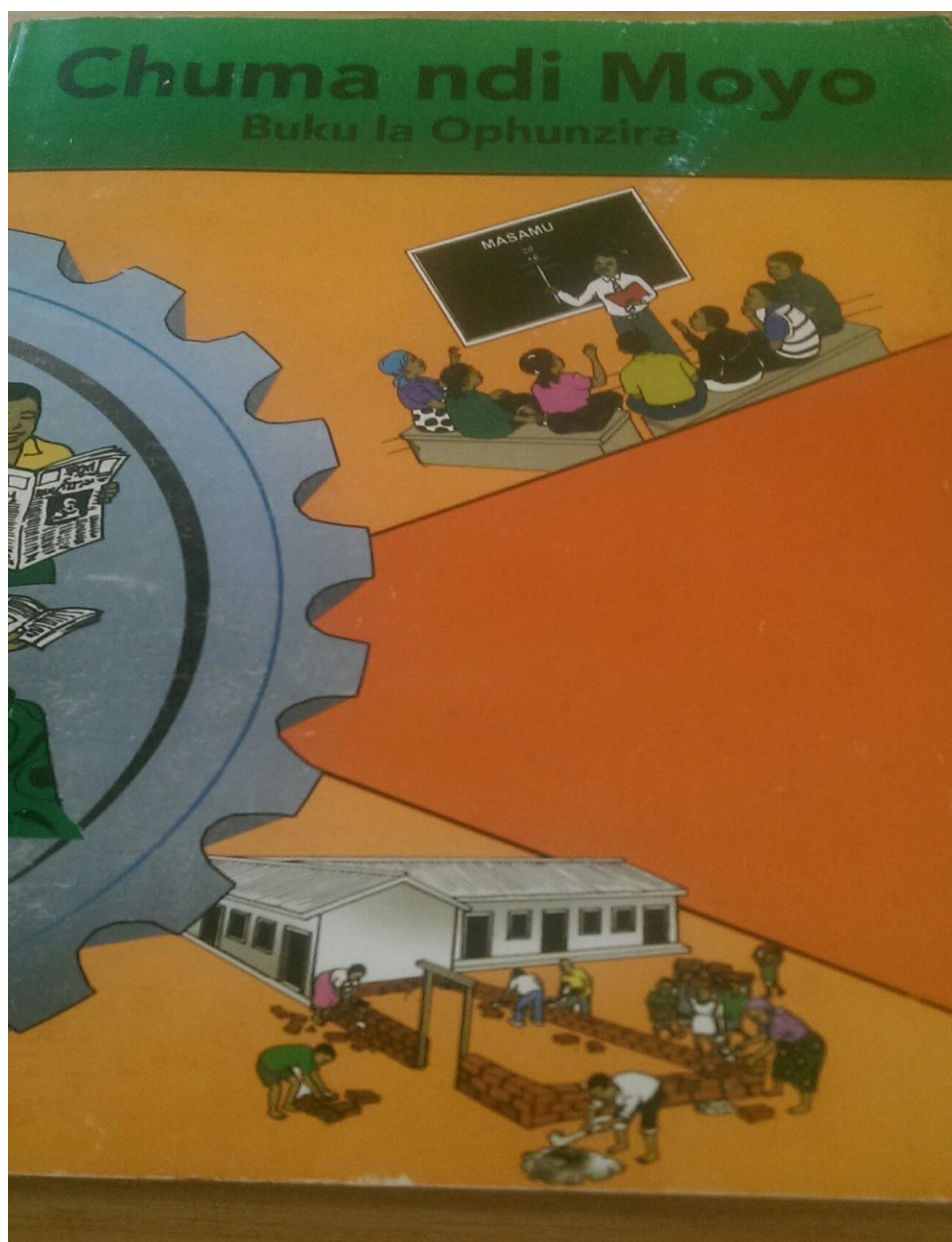


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Appendix 8: The Chuma ndi Moyo Book used by the learners



Appendix 9: A lesson on agriculture in the Chuma ndi Moyo learner's book

