

**AN INVESTIGATION OF GENDERED LEADERSHIP AND POLICY
PRIORITIZATION: THE CASE OF BALAKA AND MACHINGA DISTRICT
COUNCILS (2014-2019)**

Master of Public Administration and Management Thesis

By

YAPIKACHI MSISKA

B. A. (Public Administration) – University of Malawi

Submitted to the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of
Social Science, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Public Administration and Management

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

DECEMBER, 2022

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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

Signature_____ **Date**_____

Tiyesere Mercy Chikapa, PhD (Senior Lecturer)

FIRST SUPERVISOR

Signature_____ **Date**_____

Happy Kayuni, PhD (Professor)

SECOND SUPERVISOR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would firstly like to thank God for the gift of life and seeing me through my studies.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Dr Tiyesere Mercy Chikapa and Prof Happy Kayuni for all the constructive feedback, patience and kindness shown to me throughout this research process.

I am grateful to all my family and friends who supported me along the journey.

This endeavour would not have been possible without the financial support from the Political and Administrative Studies Department. I am deeply indebted to the department for the scholarship which make this degree possible.

ABSTRACT

Malawi is a landlocked country located in south-east Africa which became a democracy in 1994. Malawi practices multi-party which promotes local governments and provides for democratic governance of the people at the local level. In the climate of today's society, gender and identity are issues that are highly discussed and contended for a mirage of reasons. Although women constitute half of the population, there is underrepresentation in the policy making spheres. To date, research and advocacy in Malawi have paid more attention to women's descriptive representation. The main objective of this study was to investigate the gendered leadership in policy prioritization in local government councils. Specifically; to assess the policies that have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils; secondly to examine policy interest of male and female councillors and lastly to evaluate the factors driving the agenda for council meetings. The study employed a qualitative approach with a focus on Balaka and Machinga District Councils. The study found mixed conclusions. On the one hand, at an institutional level it appears that the presence of women or lack thereof has no bearing on a council prioritizing women focused policies as seen with Balaka District Council. On the other hand, at an individual level, it is evident that men and women have different interests however this does not always translate that interest into policy. This was found to be due to gender; where women are not as likely to speak up to what they really believe in, party politics and the institutional framework where councillors do not have a sense of institution and political party empowerment. The implication resulted in most women councillors not going ahead to contend for the office of councillor for the next election cycle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES AND GRAPHS.....	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background and History.....	2
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.4.1 Specific objectives	6
1.4.2 Research Questions	6
1.4.3 Specific research questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	6
1.6 Organization of the Paper.....	8
1.7 Conclusion.....	9
CHAPTER TWO	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Definition of Key Terms and Concepts.....	10
2.2.1 The Concept of Leadership	10
2.2.2 Ubuntu Leadership	11

2.2.3 Gender and Leadership	12
2.2.4 Public Policy.....	13
2.2.5 Empowerment.....	13
2.2.6 Women’s Empowerment	14
2.2.7 Decentralisation	15
2.2.8 Political and Pragmatic Imperatives of Decentralisation.....	17
2.2.9 Decentralisation and the Principle of Subsidiarity.....	19
2.3 The Malawian Local Government Context.....	20
2.3.1 National Decentralization Policy	21
2.3.2 Malawian Public Sector Strategies to Include Women in Policy Making	22
2.4 Global Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization	27
2.5 African Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization	28
2.6 Malawian Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization	30
2.7 Theoretical Framework	32
2.7.1 RAPID Analytical Framework	32
2.7.2 Feminists Theories	33
2.7.3 Theories of Representation	34
2.8 Conclusion.....	35
CHAPTER THREE.....	36
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Research Design.....	36
3.3 Research Population.....	38
3.3.1 Background of Machinga District Council	38
3.3.2 Background of Balaka District Council.....	39
3.4 Sampling Method	40

3.5	Sample Size	40
3.6	Data Collection Methods.....	41
3.6.1	In-depth Interviews	41
3.6.2	Document analysis	42
3.7	Data Analysis	43
3.8	Ethical Consideration	43
3.9	Limitations of the Study	44
3.10	Conclusion.....	44
CHAPTER FOUR.....		45
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....		45
4.1	Introduction	45
4.2	Assessment of Policies That Have Been Prioritized by Male Dominated vs Female Dominated Councils	45
4.2.1	Priority Areas in Machinga District Council	46
4.2.2	Priority areas in Balaka District Council	47
4.2.3	Girl-focused initiatives.....	49
	Priorities from the Constituency Development Fund.....	50
4.3	Evaluation of Male and Female Policy Interests.....	52
4.3.1	Understanding of their role as a councillor.....	52
4.3.2	Perception of Councillors' Competency	53
4.3.3	Hard vs Soft Issues.....	55
4.4	Assessment of the Factors Driving the Agenda for Council Meetings	58
4.4.1	Institutional Establishments	58
4.4.2	Political and Social Culture	60
4.4.3	Division Amongst Women	63
4.4.4	Intra-Party Politics	65
4.4.5	Male Dominance in Local Councils	68

4.5	Chapter Conclusion	69
CHAPTER FIVE		71
5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Major Conclusions	71
5.2.1	Assessment of Policies Prioritized by Male and Female Dominated Councils	71
5.2.2	Examination of Male and Female Policy Interests	72
5.2.3	Evaluation of Factors Driving the Agenda for the Council Meetings ...	72
5.3	Summary	73
5.4	Recommendations for Further Study	73
REFERENCES.....		74
APPENDICES		80

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: RAPID analytic framework.....	33
---	----

LIST OF TABLES AND GRAPHS

Table 1: Sample size gender distribution.....	41
Table 2: Data collection methods and participants	42
Table 3: Balaka Priority issues per sector.....	47
Table 4: Machinga Electoral Trends.....	66

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Consent Form	80
Appendix 2: Councillor Interview Guide	82
Appendix 3: District Commissioner Interview Guide	85

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMAA	-	Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire
ADC	-	Area Development Committee
CEO	-	Chief Executive Officer
DC	-	District Commissioner
DDF	-	District Development Fund
DDP	-	Director of District Planning
DDP	-	District Development Plan
DPP	-	Democratic Progressive Party
GAD	-	Gender and Development
GoM	-	Government of Malawi
MCP	-	Malawi Congress Party
NSO	-	National Statistics Office
MLGRD	-	Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development
SEP	-	Social Economic Profile
UDF	-	United Democratic Front
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	-	Village Development Committee
WID	-	Women in Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Malawi is a landlocked less developed country in South-East Africa covering an area of 118,480 square kilometres with a projected population of 19.4 million people in 2022 (Government of Malawi, 2017). Public sector leadership is critical for efficient policy direction and implementation, but it is also the most challenging especially in developing countries where institutions are mostly fluid (Holmes, 2009). In one of the earliest studies of women in politics in modern Malawi, there is a vivid description of how women are recruited to sing and dance at political rallies (Kayuni and Amundsen, 2016). Scholars such as Oluwu and Wunsch argue that the leadership styles of men and women differ significantly, where women's styles are more inclusive and participative than that of men. Policy making is one of the important functions of the local governance system as councillors implement policies and make decisions that affect the welfare of the local population which they represent. f; Goss, 2001). This chapter provides a background that contextualizes the research problem. It states the research problem, the objective of the study and explains the motivation and justification of the study and provides the sequence in which the thesis is organized.

1.2 Background and History

There are numerous definitions and approaches to leadership. Leadership can be viewed from multiple perspectives. It can be represented as an act (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1994), behaviour (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk, 1996; Rowden, 2000) or process (Jacques & Clement, 1991). According to Bass (1990:20), leadership is a "universal phenomena." According to the author, leadership is "an interaction between two or more group members that frequently entails a structuring or restructuring of the circumstance and the perception and expectations of the members. In essence, leaders are agents of change, that is to say that they are people whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Jargo (1982) contends that leadership is not only some quality or characteristic that one possesses or is perceived to possess, it can be something that one does. It therefore can describe, as earlier mentioned, an act as well as a person.

The discourse around leadership argues that the leadership styles of men and women differ significantly, where women's styles are more inclusive and participative than that of men. The term policy often refers to a deliberate course of action that a person or group continuously takes in order to address a problem (Anderson, 2015). A wide range of organisations and people having an interest in the reform process and its results are involved in policy reform. One of the crucial roles of the local governance system is policymaking, as council members make decisions that have an impact on the welfare of the community they serve (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004; Goss, 2001).

After the country's democratisation and the advent of the multi-party system, Malawi's government issued a new constitution in 1995 that, among other things, gave local governments more power and called for democratic populist rule at the

local level. The Local Government Act (LGA) and Decentralization Policy were subsequently adopted by the nation in 1998. The council is institutionalized as a mixed-type local government authority at the district level under the system as it is set forth in the 1998 Local Government Act (Chiweza, 2016). Each council consists of the former local government councils as well as all of the line ministry offices and departments that are represented at the district level. Each local government has a political and administrative organization by design. The highest decision-making and supervisory body of the local government is the political structure, commonly known as the council.

The membership of the council is specified in Section 3 of the Act. It comprises of five chosen representatives of special interests in the local government area, chiefs with the rank of Sub-Traditional Authority (STA) and above, MPs whose constituencies are in the local government area, and elected ward councillors. One of the duties of the council members is to provide for horizontal accountability. However, service committees, sometimes known as standing committees, are how the council is intended to do business. The following standing committees are established under Section 14 of the Local Government Act of 1998: the Finance Committee, the Development Committee, the Education Committee, the Works Committee, the Health and Environmental Committee, the Human Resource Committee, and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. The majority of the specific Council work is handled by these committees, while the whole Council is only left with matters requiring policy decisions. The full Council is then informed of the Committee's recommendations for approval (Chiweza, 2016).

Local government council members are chosen for terms of five years under the Local Government Elections Act of 1996. For a five-year term, the council members choose the mayor, chairs, and their deputies. The Local Government Elections Act of 1996 outlines the requirements for running for office. Candidates for council positions must meet a number of standards, including the ability to read and write English and a prohibition against simultaneously holding several public posts or appointments.

In essence, the Local Government Act (1998) stipulates that councillors in Malawi are mandated to make policy and decisions as well as by-laws for the good governance of the local government. In terms of local politics, there has been a low representation of women. The first local elections were held in 2000 and women representation stood at 8.1 per cent, and with the elections in 2014, the number increased to 13.4 per cent. This is a significant increase, but still way below the SADC average of 24 per cent (Kayuni and Muriaas, 2016). Due to this, gender scholars are now examining these links by asking questions on whether women act for women (Chiweza, 2016): whether the involvement of women in politics enhances the representation of women's interests and whether raising the proportion of women in parliament or local government councils draws more attention to issues related to women's policy. (Kayuni, 2016. Women's issues vary in what they are, but generally speaking they are those that disproportionately impact women and their lives (Barnes 2016). Women's issues have been labelled in a variety of policy sectors, including housing, social welfare, and the environment. According to Palley (2004), women in America are increasingly being elected to public office and are influencing the policy agendas in many local and state jurisdictions.

1.3 Problem Statement

The argument is that the presence of women leads to more gender sensitive policies which has not been thoroughly investigated at a local level (Chiweza, 2016). The study investigates gender and policy prioritization in Machinga and Balaka District Councils. There are various approaches to leadership where it can be defined as being an act, behaviour or process. Sundstrom and Stockemer (2015) claim that academic literature has not paid much attention to research that examines women's representation at the grassroots level. While in Malawi there have been robust training programmes in national elections such as the 50:50 campaign, but there is no empirical evidence which indicates whether these trainings have any effect on policy prioritization. Although authors like Muriaas et al. (2018) assert that the gender and politics literature places a great deal of emphasis on how female leaders influence political agendas and outcomes, they caution that this research only focuses almost exclusively on state actors, such as parliamentarians (MPs) and cabinet ministers, and does not examine the role of leaders' gender in their governance effectiveness. The study aims to fill in the research gap in literature by examining gender dynamics which come to play at the local level when it comes to policy prioritization by examining the policy outcomes in local councils with various gender distribution. For the purpose of this study male dominated councils are those with all men councillors and female dominated councils will refer to councils with the highest representation of women.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the significance of gendered leadership in policy prioritization in local government councils.

1.4.1 *Specific objectives*

- To assess the policies that have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils.
- To examine policy interest of male and female councillors.
- To evaluate the actors driving the agenda for council meetings.

1.4.2 *Research Questions*

Main research question is does gender play a role in policy prioritization in local government councils?

1.4.3 *Specific research questions*

- What policies have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils?
- What is the policy interest of male and female councillors?
- Who are the actors driving the agenda for council meetings?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Authors such as Kayuni (2016) conducted a study in Phalombe and Chiradzulu districts of Malawi which focused on identifying factors that determine women's participation in politics at grassroots level by identifying some of the reasons why they volunteer to join politics. This study however looked at aspirants vying for the position of member of Parliament. A study by Kayuni (2016) thus looks at the supply aspect which entails issues such as factors and barriers to entry. In addition to this, other authors like Chiweza (2016), admit that there is not much empirical data available regarding the representation of women in local government councils in Malawi and whether or not they can effectively express their views and establish their

influence. This study focuses on the political motivations of women councillors, the involvement opportunities they have, and their capacity to express the interests of women and other groups. However, this study aims to interrogate policy outcome by comparing interests prioritized by councils with high female representation and those without. That is to say if indeed councillors are able to articulate issues and advance women's interests and have an actual influence on decisions made.

Beal (2005) states that from a gender perspective, local government is the closest and the most accessible level of government to women. Women may be able to advance to this level for the first time, and as a result, by strengthening their skills and accumulating experience, it may act as a launching pad for careers in national politics. The formal forum for participation and interest articulation is the whole council and its committees. The service committees are crucial to local governance since they can suggest initiatives in any field, analyse laws, and monitor their execution. Chiweza (2016) states that committees are consequently important avenues where women interests can be articulated and discussed. According to Kayuni (2016), there are a lot of things that drive women into politics, including their personal understanding of their community and their awareness of the issues there that require local political leadership and guidance to be resolved.

Additionally, they might be firmly committed to a certain political party or ideology, or they might just be striving to uphold a particular family heritage. The function of political party gatekeepers is one of the crucial determining elements, as numerous research have demonstrated. Exposure to NGOs and local governance institutions' projects and mechanisms for local development is another influence. The prevalent literature hasn't explained this very effectively. According to the study, this exposure

gave female candidates the self-assurance and enthusiasm to get involved in politics. However, the study does not expound further on what outcome these women produce when they get the space to play a role on political affairs, an element that this study tackles.

In addition to this, as earlier mentioned, service committees act as an opportunity for women to be heard however, According to Chiweza (2016), this depends on how women are positioned in these settings, if they are aware of the need to address women's issues, whether those issues are defined, who articulates them, and whether those voices are heard. While Chiweza (2016) brings the issue to light, there has not been any evidence-based research to look into what happens on the ground. this study also attempts to fill this gap in research.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

In conclusion, chapter one elaborates the research topic. It unveils the problem statement and the lacuna in research which this actual study attempts to fill. The research objectives and the study justification are all brought into the limelight in this chapter. The second chapter examines pertinent literature to the topic of study. Hence, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this study are all subsumed in this chapter. The third chapter exposes the methodology employed in acquiring data during this study. All ethical principles which cannot be dispensed with during research are delineated. In addition, all obstacles faced during research which may minimize the degree of reliability of the study findings are also stated. In chapter four, all study findings are uncovered and mooted. Chapter five presents the conclusions that can be drawn from the study findings. This chapter also suggests

areas consonant with the overarching topic of study which could be further explored by other researchers.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the background of this study. Malawi as a young democracy. It has also uncovered the problem statement; whether the involvement of women in politics enhances the representation of women's interests and whether raising the proportion of women in parliament or local government councils draws more attention to issues related to women's policy. As such unearthing the research gap. The chapter reflected on the main objective of the study which is to investigate policy prioritization in Balaka and Machinga District Councils. The specific research objectives were also brought forth. These include assessing the policies that have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils, examining policy interest of male and female councillors and lastly evaluating the actors driving the agenda for council meetings. Lastly the chapter offered the study justification.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This aim of this chapter is to review conceptual and empirical literature on the notion of leadership, gender, policy making, local government and decentralisation. The chapter also highlights previously conducted studies on the above related topics.

2.2 Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

2.2.1 The Concept of Leadership

There is often much interrogation in answering what constructs are connected with effective leadership and how this is measured. Much of this discourse is applied not only in academic fields such as business or applied psychology, but is also relevant to contemporary organisations that seeks to take stock of and improve its leadership (Bass, 1990). According to De Ver (2009) whether its socially, culturally or politically, leadership is a notion which is habitually discussed, and as such has created an increase of literature, particularly in the field of management and organizational science (Jones, 2005). According to Yammarino (2013), leadership is one of the most extensively and commonly studied topics in the sphere of organizational behaviour. As such, numerous definitions and approaches to leadership have emerged. Various authors have viewed leadership through multiple perspectives. Leadership can be characterised as an act (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1994), behaviour (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk, 1996; Rowden, 2000) or process (Jacques & Clement, 1991).

Leadership has been referred to as a universal phenomena by Bass (1990). According to the author leadership is an interaction between two or more group members that frequently entails a structuring or restructuring of the circumstance and the perception and expectations of the members. In essence, leaders are agents of change, that is to say that they are people whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. According to Jargo (1982), leadership may also be a behaviour. It's not just a trait or characteristic that one has or is thought to have. Therefore, it can be referred to as both an act and a person. The employment of titles like manager, supervisor, or superior does not automatically imply leadership, which does not require the use of force, coercion, or dominance. Leadership is a concept that trickles down in all aspects of life including the political sphere, down to the local level.

2.2.2 Ubuntu Leadership

Though leadership has been mostly traditionally studied from a Western viewpoint, looking at other forms of leadership from an African context. The majority of traditional African civilizations are built around ubuntu. It fosters an attitude of charity and solidarity, peace and friendliness, reverence and receptivity (Mangaliso, 2001). Its further definitions include the capacity for empathy, reciprocity, and decency (Bekker, 2008). Harmony and consistency are characteristics of Ubuntu. It is about coming to terms with what it means to be interconnected. From a leadership standpoint, Ubuntu demands that leaders provide an example for subordinates. By committing to African values like sincerity, honesty, and integrity as well as compassion, empathy, dignity, and respect for others, the leader justifies his or her leadership and serves as an example for others (Malunga, 2009). The promised of the Ubuntu philosophy seem promising. For instance, this framework asserts that it

supports collectivism, which fosters cooperation and a non-competitive environment while fostering loyalty and unity within the workplace. Ubuntu enables people to advance and prosper by utilising continuous integrated development (Ncube, 2007). However, the applicability of the Ubuntu philosophy in a contemporary organization would be problematic. For instance, Kayuni and Tambulasi (2015) caution the application of this philosophy. However, the study promotes using Ubuntu in accordance with democratic and good governance ideals. The application of Ubuntu by political and public officials who disregard democratic and good governance principles can have a negative connotation, despite their best intentions, as this research has shown.

2.2.3 Gender and Leadership

In the climate of today's society, gender and identity are issues that are highly discussed and contended for a mirage of reasons. The terms sex and gender tend to often be interchangeably however sex refers to features which are biologically determined while gender is a term that is used to define socially constructed features of women and men. According to the World Health Organisation (2002), individuals are born female or male but becoming a man or woman is something that one grows into after learning to be a girl or boy. The behaviour which is learnt is what constitutes gender identity and as such determines gender roles. Women's standing in society has major implications for its economic, social and political functioning (Chopra and Muller, 2016). It is this backdrop that poses questions on the relevance and significance that gender plays in leadership as authors have contended whether men and women's leadership styles differ. Authors such as Funk (2015) have argued that earlier research claims that the leadership styles of men and women differ significantly, with women's styles more inclusive and participatory.

2.2.4 Public Policy

The term policy refers in general to a purposive course of action that an individual or group consistently follows in dealing with a problem (Anderson, 2015). A wide range of organisations and people having an interest in the reform process and its results are involved in policy reform. As the official reformer and implementer, the government plays a crucial part in this process. Through the process of policy reform, politics and institutions play a crucial role, according to a political economics approach (Abonyi et al, 2013). Public policy is further defined by Kraft and Furlong (2015) as the actions taken or abstained from doing by representatives of the people within the government in response to societal issues. Public difficulties are conditions that the general public views as intolerable and for which action is necessary. For example, public problems in Malawi may include Gender Based Violence (GBV), severe hunger, poor child health, inadequate infrastructure amongst others. However, as public policies are developed and put into practise, conflicts between the public interest and special interests always arise (Coburn, 2011). Some public policies work to advance the common good by aiming to address market flaws, reduce transaction costs, effectively control externalities, or boost productivity. Other public policies are the product of manipulation by influential groups that are actively pursuing their own interests (Anderson, 2015).

2.2.5 Empowerment

Eyben (2009) contends that at its core, empowerment is about power: the power to redefine our possibilities and options and to act on them, the power that comes from within that gives people the courage to do things they never thought they were capable of, and the power that comes from working with others to assert what is theirs. According to Czar (2005), empowerment entails more than just taking part in

decision-making; it also involves the procedures that help people believe they have the right and ability to make decisions. Empowerment has both fundamental and practical benefits, according to the World Health Organization (2002). Empowerment can be economic, social, or political and is important both on an individual and group level. Relationships inside homes or between poor people and other global players can be described by the phrase. There are various forms of empowerment such as economic empowerment, social empowerment, but this paper zooms in on women's empowerment, conceptualized by Eyben (2009) which the next section focuses on.

Women's empowerment arguments, according to Chopra and Muller (2016), have been multifaceted and complex, with various meanings, objectives, and values attached to the empowerment of women and girls. While some of these discussions centre on the definition and goal of women's empowerment. Women's empowerment has generally been conceptualised along these two lines, according to Nazneen, Darkwah, and Sultan (2014). The first is that it's a goal with objectives and targets, primarily set by the development sector. Second, it has generally been conceptualised by social movements and researchers as an ongoing process of transformation in which women confront patriarchal institutions and empower themselves.

2.2.6 Women's Empowerment

According to Eyben (2009), women become more powerful when they are able to envision a different society and carry out that vision by altering the power dynamics that have held them in poverty, silenced their voices, and denied them of their autonomy. A clear distinguish is drawn between instrumental and structural perspectives on women's empowerment, the instrumental perspective captures the need to include women to reach overarching development goals. Women's

empowerment is sometimes described as a means to an end in and of itself, according to Eyben and Napier-Moore (2009), while other times it is described as a means to a complementary end, such as economic growth, poverty reduction, democracy, human rights, peace, conflict prevention, HIV/AIDS reduction, and the MDGs. A structural perspective refers to the need for transformation in the power relations between men and women. Philips (2015) states that on a structural level, It might be claimed that the best method for addressing gender disparity in most nations is sustainable female empowerment. According to Ashford (2011), empowerment is only long-lasting if it addresses power disparities and gives women influence over the conditions and context of their life, including things like having access to resources. Despite the general understanding that women's empowerment is both an end in itself and a means to other social and economic purposes, there are discrepancies in the relative emphasis placed on the intrinsic or instrumental value of empowerment and in what is considered to be instrumental (Cornwall and Edwards, 2014; Eyben, 2008).

2.2.7 Decentralisation

Olsen (2007) defines decentralisation as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local Governments. According to Dulani (2004), decentralisation refers to a set of policies that determine the transfer of fiscal, administrative and political authority and responsibility for public functions are transferred from higher to lower level government. Hence the view of setting out from the idea that powers that were previously concentrated in the hands of the central government are handed down to structures of the local government which Chiweza (2009) defines as as legally established government at the

local level where elected representatives exercise specific powers on behalf of the people.

While these definitions provide important insights on the scope of the concept, they emphasise over the reality that the transfer of the responsibilities and powers is not a one-off activity but rather a process that can sometimes be extended and touchy as it involves taking away powers, resources and responsibilities from the centre to the periphery. It is for this reason that this study takes forth the definition of decentralisation put forward by UNDP (2005) as a process of structures, procedures and practices of governance with the aim of bringing governance to be closer to the citizenry.

The literature on decentralisation is vast. The types of educational decentralisation include:

Administrative Decentralisation

According to Sayedi (1997), the most publicly justified claims for educational decentralisation are based on the administrative dimension. Administrative refers to the transfer of managerial responsibility for specifically defined functions to lower levels of government (Chiweza 2007:140). This type of arrangement is most often referred to as deconcentration and involves very limited transfer of authority. According to UNDP (2005) administrative decentralisation involves the transfer of authority for specific decision-making, financial and management functions by administrative means to different levels under the same jurisdictional authority of the central government.

2.2.7.1 Political Decentralisation

Political decentralisation, according to Olsen (2007), is the distribution of political authority and decision-making to subnational levels like elected village councils, district councils, and state level authorities. Devolution occurs when such a transfer is performed to a local level of public authority that is independent and autonomous from the devolving authority. According to Dyer and Rose (2005), devolution is the formal holding of authority at the subnational level, when local decision-makers are not required to obtain higher-level consent before acting. The most prevalent definition of true decentralisation is the delegation of authority to such units, which is frequently referred to as "devolution" (UNDP, 2005). Devolution involves the central government giving up certain powers or establishing new governmental entities that operate independently of it. By reducing centralised control over educational decision-making, the political justification for educational decentralisation is to redistribute, share, and expand power as well as to increase participation (Lauglo & McLean, 1985).

2.2.7.2 Fiscal Decentralisation

Dulani (2004) states that fiscal involves a ceding of government non-tax revenue collection and use from central government to local government structures. Fiscal decentralisation involves transferring revenue mobilization and expenditure assignment authorities to lower government levels.

2.2.8 Political and Pragmatic Imperatives of Decentralisation

According to the UNDP (2005), decentralisation should not be viewed as a goal in itself but rather as a means of improving local government transparency, responsiveness, and effectiveness as well as representational systems of decision-

making at the community level. A careful evaluation of the literature on decentralisation therefore suggests that decentralisation is usually employed as a means of realizing both political and pragmatic imperatives as this section further explains.

2.2.8.1 Political Imperatives

When looking at decentralisation and whether it will indeed yield to effective service delivery, Bernbaum (2011) notes that decentralisation is usually not a 'linear' process; implementation takes place in a political environment. In tackling the implementation of service delivery, the political motives underlying decentralisation for decentralisation must not be ignored. The reasoning of decentralisation is that it provides political education. Chiweza (2007: 142) states that when roles and responsibilities are devolved to a lower level, this provides an avenue for prospective leaders to develop skills in areas such as policymaking, conflict resolution, and allocation of resources at the local level. Bernbaum (2011) however, cautions that over time in political will and stewardship of government/ministries for decentralisation will ebb and flow. In addition to this, decentralisation promotes accountability by being closer and more accessible to the population whom it represents (Chiweza 2007:142). Bernbaum (2011) explains how it is vital to understand that changes in political will (with changes in presidents, ministers of education) are inevitable over time. For NGOs that assist in the education or health sector for example USAID, anticipating these changes needs to be primarily built into their project designs. If they occur during implementation, sufficient flexibility is necessary to adjust implementation strategies, project activities, and indicators. In Malawi, politically, decentralisation sought to promote democratic governance by bringing decision making powers closer to the people (Chiweza 2013; Chirwa 2000).

2.2.8.2 Pragmatic Imperatives

When looking at the implementation of decentralisation, a comprehensive approach that simultaneously addresses decentralisation at all actors and players within the local governance structures. Pragmatically, decentralisation was considered as a medium for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public goods and services to people at all levels, especially in rural parts of the country where the majority of Malawians reside (Chiweza 2007). This is the case as here is likely to be better matching of supply and demand for local public goods than would be possible through Central Government. In addition to this, Chiweza (2007: 143) notes development and poverty reduction as a pragmatic imperative of decentralisation, as the process provides a way to reduce poverty through efficiency, participation, and democratisation. With greater participation and local democracy, activities of Local Governments can be geared towards local needs and aspirations can be a positive outcome of such participation. The latter section of this chapter dives deeper into empirical evidence on what this practically implies.

2.2.9 Decentralisation and the Principle of Subsidiarity

As Chiweza (2013) rightly suggests the concept of decentralisation is closely connected with the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity, according to Olsen (2007), is the idea that problems should be resolved by the lowest level of authority. Therefore, the concept is that a central authority should have a subsidiarity function by only carrying out those duties that cannot be accomplished in an efficient manner at a more immediate or local level. According to the principle of subsidiarity, a particular public service should be allocated to the lowest level of government that can efficiently provide the service. Urbanovič (2009) states that subsidiarity is a fundamental European Union management principle according to which decisions are

made as close as possible to their place of implementation, i.e., on the lowest competent management level. The functions of different management levels are redistributed based on this principle. The principle also facilitates the participation of local communities and citizens in decision making.

2.3 The Malawian Local Government Context

At the 1994 transition to democratisation, the main aims of alleviating poverty and building a viable democracy resulted in constitutional provisions for decentralising government (ss. 146-151). In 1998 the Local Government Act and the National Decentralisation Policy which was carried out in two phases (NDP I and II) were rolled out. “The aims of these were to realise decentralisation and to make public services more effective through the elimination of dual administration, that is the continuation of field administration of social sectors by central ministries alongside local government” (Government of Malawi, 1998:2-3,). Hussein (2017) asserts that the policy and institutional framework recognises the District Councils and the Councillors as being critical to enable local democracy and efficiency and effectiveness in the running of affairs at the local level.

After adopting the Decentralization Policy and passing the Local Government Act, Malawi began its National Decentralization Program (1998). (1998). By transferring political and administrative power to the local level, the decentralisation process seeks to increase community involvement in governance and development. This empowers local authorities to plan and execute their development activities which are reflected in the District Development Plans. The national development policy frameworks the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III (MGDSIII), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Decentralization Policy and Local Government Act

have provided the guiding framework in preparing this Balaka District Development Plan (DDP). (GoM, 2017)

2.3.1 *National Decentralization Policy*

During Malawi's transition to a democratic political system in the early 1990s, the Government of Malawi (GoM) embarked on institutional reforms to decentralise the public sector. This aimed at fulfilling two aims consecutively which firstly included promoting democratic governance and secondly, achieving policies that were in the best interest of the society (Chirwa 2000). The Malawian government has declared a desire to decentralise political and administrative power to district level as a means of strengthening democracy and as a means of achieving the nation's development aim of reducing poverty (Government of Malawi, 1998). Consequently, in July 1994, "Cabinet directed a comprehensive review of all decentralisation initiatives which culminated in the formulation of a Draft National Decentralisation Policy" (Government of Malawi 1998:1). This was later adopted as "the 1998 National Decentralisation Policy that provided a basis for the 1998 Local Government Act" (Chiweza 2013).

According to the Government of Malawi (1998) the stated objectives of the National Decentralisation Policy were as follows;

- (a) "To create a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development; at the local level which will facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision making;"
- (b) "To eliminate dual administrations (field administration and local government) at the district level with the aim of making public service more efficient, more economical and cost effective;"

- (c) “To promote accountability and good governance at the local level to help Government reduce poverty”; and
- (d) “To mobilise the masses for socio-economic development at the local level”.

When a deeper understanding of the above objectives mentioned above is taken into account, it is clear to see that the Policy suggests that the reasons for decentralizing Malawi’s public sector were both political and practical. When looking at the political aspect, decentralisation sought to promote democratic governance by bringing decision making powers closer to the people (Chiweza 2013; Chirwa 2000). On the other hand, when looking at the practical aspect, decentralisation was considered as a medium for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public goods and services to people at all levels, especially in rural parts of the country where the majority of Malawians reside (Chiweza, 2007). Malawi held its first ever tripartite elections for president, the national assembly and local councils on 20 May 2014. This was the fifth set of general elections since the introduction of multi partyism (Nandini and Wahman, 2014). This study zeroes in on the on the implementation of the local council elections, specifically for Machinga and Balaka District Councils.

2.3.2 Malawian Public Sector Strategies to Include Women in Policy Making

According to Tambulasi and Kayuni (2007), the public sector is an institution that is in charge of providing products and services by and on behalf of the state. The public sector serves as the state's public face. The legislative, judicial, and executive departments of government—collectively known as the public sector in Malawi—

comprise all organisations that fall within their respective jurisdictions. This includes national state departments and ministries, Local Government authorities, public enterprises, regulatory departments. This section highlights some of the gender strategies used in the Malawian public sector organisations and discusses the degree to which the instrumental or structural goals are evident in the gender strategies.

2.3.2.1 International Indicators as Guiding Frameworks

International indicators such as Millennium Development Goals can be used as an indicator to measure how well a country is doing in its quest of women's empowerment. The MDGs offer a structure for integrating gender equality into all of the MDGs. Women's empowerment and gender equality are currently widely acknowledged as being essential to achieving each of the MDGs by practitioners and policymakers alike. At a more regional level, the Africa Gender and Development Index was created to give African policymakers a suitable tool for tracking progress toward gender equality and to assist in tracking advancements in the application of the conventions that African nations have ratified, such as the Dakar Platform for Action (UNECA 2004). Social, economic, and political power are the three components that are measured.

2.3.2.2 The National Gender policy

There have been attempts to reduce inequalities in the gender arena through international commitments in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In order to increase participation of women and men, girls and boys for sustainable and equitable development for poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming in the national development process was the goal of Malawi's national gender strategy, which was

formed in 2015. Gender equality is acknowledged as being crucial for achieving sustainable, social, and economic development in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 11 (MGDS11), the nation's overarching plan (Government of Malawi, 2015). Principally, the national gender policy employs an instrumental approach to empowerment which covers areas such as health, education, agriculture, violence as priority areas.

2.3.2.3 Gender Mainstreaming

A approach known as "gender mainstreaming" tries to enhance women's rights and gender equality by incorporating gender analysis, gender sensitive research, women's perspectives, and gender equality goals into mainstream programmes, laws, and institutions (Porter & Sweetman, 2005). In the Malawian public sector, the strategies that have been put in place to implement gender inequality such as gender in health which focuses on improving women and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights (Government of Malawi, 2015) are predominantly instrumental in nature and fail to discuss the gender dynamics that take place in the public sector. Where gender policies do exist, implementation and monitoring is problematic, as is the case with the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare. This is consistent with Eyben's (2008) assertions that Gender Mainstreaming is thus at risk of shifting towards an instrumental intent, based on the premise that organisations will not be able to achieve their other policy objectives, such as economic growth or girls' education, unless preparations are made to ensure that gender issues are addressed in every aspect of their work. An agenda setting approach which is structural in nature would yield more transformative which begins with each institution to conduct a situation analysis that informs the development of context-specific policies and

interventions to address issues affecting males and females (Porter & Sweetman, 2005).

2.3.2.4 The Use of Ministry of Gender as a Gender Machinery

In order to remove obstacles to women's presence in politics and to advance women's interests, Malawi, like many other nations, has its own version of a "national gender machinery." It was created to coordinate government initiatives to advance gender equality and is made up of a network of national organisations, systems, and procedures that are managed by a central policy coordination agency. The ministry responsible for this in Malawi is the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW). However, it is important to note that overall, government institutions in Malawi are underfunded as far as budget support is concerned which does become challenging when actually implementing strategies employed.

According to Chasukwa (2016), the MoGCDSW's strategy of serving as a resource mobilisation ministry has so far been successful, but the government is stuck in a predicament where it has established institutions that focus on women in order to play the game without necessarily removing the barriers that low women representation in public life. This is to say that in theory the instrumental perspective of women's empowerment has been applied in strategies but the structural perspective of women's empowerment which looks at the actual relations between men and women, boys and girls is lacking. Various donors, including UNICEF, UNAIDS, Norad/Norway, USAID, AfDB, UNDP, and UN Women provide financial (and technical) support to the ministry. The Ministry receives development assistance from donors, most of which is given through programmes and projects that are off-budget. The focus of

these projects tend to be on once again short term solutions and not the gender relations between men and women.

However, it is critical to note that there exists a huge challenge in gender strategies in the public sector as there isn't an overarching and guiding legal framework in which these strategies can fall under. Kayuni and Chikadza (2016) note that although legally enforceable legislation, such as legislation requiring political parties to field a certain percentage of women in parliamentary elections, has proven to be helpful in the fight for women's empowerment, the legal framework governing elections and political parties in Malawi does not include such affirmative action. The participation of women in party leadership and general elections is not protected by law, let alone encouraged. This clearly indicates that the instrumental perspective is evident in the approach to women's participation in political participation. Chiweza (2016) goes on to note that while decentralisation may undoubtedly give women the opportunity to join local government, it is not a given that such admission will enable them to speak out on issues, advance their interests, and have a role in how decisions are made. Additionally, it implies that the presence of women in local government does not guarantee that they will have a significant say in how policies are implemented. The author suggests that there is need for affirmative action which enhances women's understanding of the system. This suggestion affirms Eyben (2009)'s structural perspective on women's empowerment, that is to say that empowerment involves having intrinsic value, focusing on more than just a means to an end, which is what is on the ground. From the above it is evident that most focus has been placed on the national level and not the local level in Malawian politics specifically.

2.4 Global Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, which were both adopted decades later, promote and support women's rights to equal political engagement at all levels of government, according to the United Nations (2021). (SDGs). Globally speaking, women are more represented in municipal deliberative bodies than in parliaments, but they are still underrepresented compared to men. Malawi is a glaring example of this. But among the millions of local government representatives, the tale of women's representation is mainly untold. This research study goes beyond looking at the why of low numbers but what happens in the political areas where women are. Despite some country case studies and regional initiatives, global data and research on this level of government has been scant, resulting in a major knowledge gap (United Nations Women, 2021). Gender-responsive local governance in European nations like Austria also include making sure that all local governance processes, procedures, and systems are created and put into place in a way that considers the various requirements of women and men.

In other parts of the world such as Brazil authors such as Funk (2015) have argued that earlier research claims that the leadership styles of men and women differ significantly, with women's styles more inclusive and participatory. By studying whether female elected politicians are more likely to boost public involvement, the author tests this claim. The findings imply that participation levels between men and women are comparable. Instead, choosing to start participating in a certain policy looks to be a deliberate decision. While female mayors are more likely to adopt a council for sports, both male and female mayors are more likely to embrace participation councils for women's rights, children's rights, and health care. This is

due to the fact that both sexes are more likely to start participating in areas of policy that assist those belonging to the other gender and dispel misconceptions. These findings suggest that female leadership styles are not always more inclusive than male leadership styles. The effectiveness of a leader appears to depend more on strategy than on style (Funk, 2015).

2.5 African Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization

When the focus is narrowed to Africa, there are quite some similarities and nuances in the literature on what's happening theoretically and on the ground. This section reviews literature on the current trends and debates on gender and policy issues within the region. Firstly, a study by Beall (2005) focused on a few southern African countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia have decentralized government and centralize gender. What this study found was firstly, that the effective involvement of women in local governance is predicated both on the approach adopted by political parties and on how women are organized at the local level (Beall, 2005). Secondly, the study also revealed that even when women are successfully established and represented at the local level, that doesn't seem to serve as a guarantee for gender-sensitive service delivery despite a close association between decentralization and neo-liberal policies. This research study seeks to build onto this by evaluating factors that drive the agenda at local council meetings.

There is still much work to be done, even though women have made some contributions to the advancement of gender equality and empowerment, according to a study conducted in Uganda that examined the impact assessment of the contribution of women in influencing legislation and policy formulation and implementation in Uganda from 1995 to 2005. The paper makes the case that even though the

government has been enacting a constitution that is gender sensitive and responsive, and despite the fact that more and more women are getting involved in politics and governance, their involvement has not had the desired effect on laws and policies that would make them more gender sensitive and responsive to women's rights, interests, and needs. The investigation is focused on the areas of health, education, and family because these are the areas where women are most impacted. It is believed that having non-discriminatory legislation and gender-sensitive, responsive, and enforced policies in various fields will significantly reduce patriarchy, advance gender equality, and empower women (Mushemza, 2009). On the other hand, while this study does not look at the policy implementation and formulation at the national level, the study however focuses on policy implementation in Malawian councils at the local level.

In counties such as South Africa, a study found by Beall (2005) dived into decentralizing Government and Decentering Gender: Lessons from Local Government Reform in South Africa. The study discovered that a gender quota is being evaluated as a crucial policy instrument to increase the participation of women in political decision-making. The culture of local government needs to be evaluated to guarantee that women are treated fairly and equitably, and discrimination against women is unacceptable. These attitudes need to change at the social level (Beall, 2005). One of the key focus areas of this research study is to investigate factors that drive the council agenda meeting where men and women are for Machinga; and just men for Balaka are. This study also looks at policy interests of men and women which essentially affects decisions that will be made at the various councils.

2.6 Malawian Studies on Gendered Politics and Policy Prioritization

The primary theoretical premises of the literature on women's representation, where studies have been undertaken, are that there is a relationship between descriptive and substantive representation and that a rise in the percentage of women in policy processes and results. It is expected that female politicians will speak for all women (Amundsen and Kayuni, 2016). It is important to note that political representation from women is quite genuinely quite low. Although there have been numerous studies on political representation, there hasn't been much that focuses on the grassroots level. However, the representation of women in local politics has been extremely low. The first local elections was held in 2000, women representation stood at 8.1 per cent, and with the elections in 2014, the number increased to 13.4 per cent. Although there has been a significant increase, the numbers still remain way below the SADC average of 24 per cent, which is also still low (Amundsen and Kayuni, 2016). O'Neil et al (2016) conducted a study on women's representation and influence in parliament in Malawi. Amongst other things, the authors investigated whether women MPs push for gender equality or express the interests of other women. As significant as this is, this does not say much about what happens at the local level. There is not much empirical evidence which sheds much light on whether the same can be said about councillors in Malawian local government.

There is limited empirical data on the representation of women in local government councils in Malawi and whether they are able to express women's interests and assert power, despite Chiweza's (2016) study looking into what drove women to stand and run in the 2014 elections. In Malawi, women consistently have minimal representation at this level and have little experience with local administration (only since 1994). This study focusses on the political motivations of women councillors,

the space for participation that they have, and their ability to articulate women's and other interests. The study however focuses on the motivation and not outcome of their representation. This research fills the gap by focusing on what the policy outcome of their participation is. According to Chiweza (2016), local government institutions have received little attention in studies on substantive representation in Africa, which has mostly focused on the legislature. According to Barnes and Burchard (2012: 773), women have recently had more political opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa, allowing them to advance in political representation through political transitions, activism in women's movements, and acceptance of regional and international norms that support equal political representation.

Chiweza, Wang and Maganga (2016) explored the role of the Malawian cross-party parliamentary women's caucus and its role in advancing women's substantive representation. Their study employed a qualitative approach, and the authors contend that although the parliamentary caucus has been successful in advancing pro-women legislation and policies, its effectiveness has changed from one legislative session to the next. The caucus made a name for itself as a significant collective player during its early years, but later on it was limited by party politics, intraparty leadership disputes, and a shift in the interests of the caucus members towards re-election and retention of their parliamentary seats. The authors draw the conclusion that more female lawmakers do not necessarily enact legislation that are more supportive of women.

A study by Kayuni (2016) examined factors that encourage Malawian women to contest for political positions at the local level. This basically focused on the demand aspect of politics at the local level where the author focused on women who stood for local elections and women who sought out positions within the local and district party

structures. Chiweza (2016) also looks at women representation in Malawian local councils the local level, in the local councils. Chiweza looked into what drove women to run in the 2014 local elections, and she discovered that the development requirements of their communities, such as the absence of portable water and opportunities for women to earn an income, are a key concern. Other significant motivators for women to enter politics are early marriages of daughters and other women's interests. They are inexperienced and find it difficult to handle the rigours of holding political office, thus when elected, they have little representation on service committees and hardly ever advance past the position of vice-chairpersons of the councils.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This section of the study reviews various theoretical and analytical frameworks that relate to the gender and policy prioritization. Thereafter, justifies why substantive representation theoretical has been adopted as a theoretical framework for this study.

2.7.1 RAPID Analytical Framework

This framework gives the context in which policy that is established can be analysed. The RAPID framework looks at the linkages between the political context, evidence which is presented by policymakers and the links between policy makers and other stakeholders, relationships and other mediators (Crew and Young, 2003). The framework also takes into account external factors such as international factors, economic influences and cultural influences, etc. This framework is important as it does not look at the policy cycle in a vacuum.

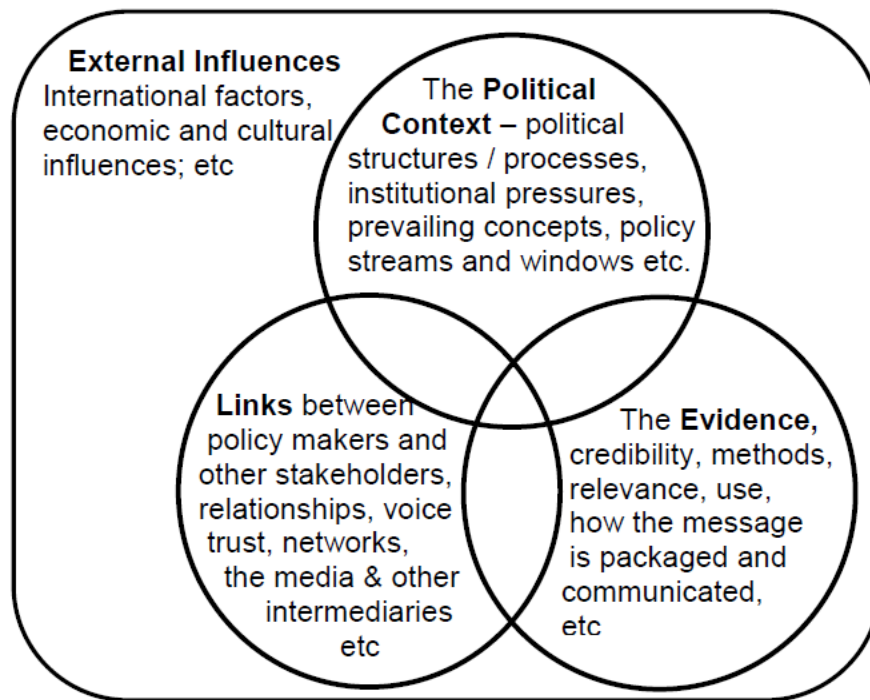


Figure 1: RAPID analytic framework. **Source:** Crew and Young (2003)

2.7.2 *Feminists Theories*

Some academics, like Vyan (2007), approach the feminist theory from the perspective of empowerment. The empowerment strategy has its own metrics for evaluation that range from individual to group at micro and macro levels. The micro level represents a person striving to evolve from being subjugated to a more evolved personality. The institutions, authorities, and regulations making important decisions impacting the advancement of individuals are represented by the macro level. In this article, the macro levels are municipalities or organisations, authorities such as political office holders and regulations such as gender equality policies and programmes, and the micro levels are women seeking empowerment and acknowledgment. A key pillar of the feminist standpoint theory is that women and men have different experiences of life that have consequences for how their interests are represented in politics

(Tumerius, 2010). This should be considered when observing governance processes, particularly policy formulation and implementation.

2.7.3 Theories of Representation

Regarding substantive representation, studies ask whether an increase in the numbers of women elected as a result of gender quotas leads to greater attention to women's issues in the policy-making process (Kook and Zetterberg, 2014). When it comes to theories of representation, Heywood (1997) identifies four models of representation which include the trusteeship model, delegate model, mandate model and the resemblance model. Hannah Pitkin (1967) describes three concepts of representation as descriptive representation, substantive representation, and symbolic representation.

Simply put, Pitkin's (1972, 209): substantive representation is "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them". Substantive representation looks ways in which women who are voted into parliament could potentially change political agendas, public policies and procedures by making them more women-friendly (Freidenvall, 2014). One of the primary theoretical presumptions of the research on women's representation, according to Amundsen and Kayuni (2016), is that there is a correlation between descriptive and substantive representation and that an increase in the proportion of women in policy processes and results. It is expected that female politicians will speak for all women. It is for this reason that substantive representation has been adopted for this research study as this will assist in assessing the policies that have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils and examining policy interest of male and female councillors.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has defined key terms and concepts as they pertain to gender, politics, and policy prioritization. The chapter has also reviewed the literature available and has explored the conceptual and empirical literature on gender, politics, and policy prioritization. The chapter has also looked at what previous scholars have studied on the same both in Malawi as well as other countries and gap in knowledge which the study filled by examine the gendered leadership in policy prioritization in local government councils. Lastly, the chapter highlights the use of substantive representation as a theoretical framework.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that was used in the course of undertaking the study. It details out the research design, the sampling framework, as well as data collection and data analysis techniques. Kothari (2004) defines research methodology as a way to systematically solve the research problem which can be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Research methods may be understood as all those methods/techniques that are used for conduction of research. By virtue of this definition, it is evident that methods are a part of the methodology.

3.2 Research Design

Research design simply put is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems (Kerlinger, 1986). Kothari (2004) identifies two basic approaches to research, namely quantitative approach and the qualitative approach.

Quantitative study design generally demands randomly selected large representative samples in order for researchers to generalise their findings from the sample (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative research uses highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observation which leads to closed ended questions. Quantitative researchers use mathematical models and statistics to analyse the data and report their findings in impersonal, third-person prose by using numbers.

In contrast, a qualitative study design covers a wide range of approaches, but by definition, none of these approaches relies on numerical measurements. Qualitative research seek to explore phenomena instruments use more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions using semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Kothari, 2004). In addition to this, another key difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is their flexibility in the study design. According to Mack et al. (2005), quantitative approaches are typically rather rigid. Researchers ask the same questions to every participant in a survey or questionnaire using a quantitative method, for instance. Participants may select from "closed-ended" or predefined response categories. The benefit of this rigidity is that it makes it possible to compare responses in a meaningful way across study sites and participants.

However, Pandey and Pandey (2015) caution that the quantitative approach requires a thorough understanding of the important questions to ask, the best way to ask them, and the angle of possible responses. However qualitative study design is more flexible as it allows for the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions to be changed along the way. As such, participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next which allows the study design to become iterative which allows for data collection and research questions to be adjusted according to what is learned along the way.

The research employs a qualitative approach. Unlike quantitative approach which emphasizes measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, qualitative approach was opted for as it enables investigation of the interplay of values in a socio-institutional phenomenon (Kumar, 2015). Thus, considering that the

study aimed at understanding councils and councillors' policy prioritizations, qualitative approach was deemed as the most appropriate research approach for the study. Due to the objectives of the study, a cross-sectional study design was adopted to collect information requirements of the study. According to Kumar (2015) a cross sectional study design, also known as one shot or status study design is a strategy of investigation in which the study population is contacted only once and the data gives an overall picture of the situation as it stands at the time of the study. This research design was opted for because it is convenient and the nature of the study required understanding the state of affairs in Malawi's local government.

3.3 Research Population

A population refers to any collection of specified group of human beings or of non-human entities such as objects, educational institutions, time units, geographical areas, prices of wheat or salaries drawn by individuals (Kothari, 2004). The research population of this study are the 35 local government councils in Malawi which include 471 councillors who served as councillors from 2014 to 2019.

3.3.1 Background of Machinga District Council

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Balaka and Machinga District Councils were sampled for this research study. Before findings and discussion are presented it is imperative to give a brief background of where these two councils are coming from for a well-rooted analysis. In Malawi's Eastern Region, lies Machinga. Its shared borders with Mangochi District in the north, Zomba District in the south, Balaka District in the west, and the Republic of Mozambique in the east are located between Lakes Chilwa, Chiuta, and Malombe. The district is located about 258 kilometres south of Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city, and about 101 kilometres north

of Blantyre, the region's principal commercial and financial hub (Government of Malawi, 2017). According to the National Statistical Office (National Statistics Office), the district's population is expected to grow from 490,579 in 2008 to 647,401 in 2017 (National Statistics Office, 2008). The total land area is estimated at 3,771 square km and its population density is 172 persons per square km, making the district one of the least densely populated in the Eastern Region (Government of Malawi, 2017).

The dominant informal structures in Machinga District Council the dominant informal structures in the district are youth, men's, and women's groups. These consist of support groups, faith-based organisations, and community-based organisations (CBOs). These organisations are particularly involved in traditional dances, sports, and the care of the elderly, orphans, and HIV/AIDS patients, most of which fall under the umbrella of Gender and Community Services (Government of Malawi, 2017).

3.3.2 Background of Balaka District Council

The Balaka District is located in the Republic of Malawi's Southern Region. It is bordered to the northwest by Ntcheu, the north by Mangochi, the east by Machinga, the southeast by Zomba, the south by Blantyre, and the southwest by Neno. The district's administrative centre is located around 127 kilometres from Blantyre, the country's major commercial hub, and 201 kilometres from Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city (Government of Malawi, 2017).

Balaka is quite unique in that the district is prone to vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods, windstorms, and migratory pest outbreaks. Since 2000, the incidences of disasters have become more frequent with far-reaching impact on the population,

economy, and environment. Balaka is one of the districts that has some mineral deposits and small-scale mining activities. Amongst the mineral deposits found in Balaka are monazite, limestone, gemstone and gold. Balaka District Council does have some informal structures which include the district's registered community-based organizations.

3.4 Sampling Method

The study used a purposive and quota sampling method. Purposive sampling is sampling in which the researcher's judgement is used to determine who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2015). However, quota sampling is more specific with respect to sizes and proportions of subsamples (Mack et al, 2005). In this study quota sampling allows the researcher to have an accurate representation of voices from various councils with differing gender distributions. Sarantakos (2005) argues that in purposive sampling a researcher chooses the participants or respondents who are relevant to the subject. In order to achieve validity of the findings, the study was guided by the principle of saturation point. Thus, the interview guides were administered to several respondents to a point where they were no longer generating new answers. As Kumar (2015) posits, this is the stage that determines the sample size of a qualitative study unlike a quantitative one that starts with a pre-determined sample size

3.5 Sample Size

The term sample size refers to the number of items that are selected from the universe to constitute a sample (Kothari, 2004). The study uses Machinga and Balaka district councils as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Sample size gender distribution

Council	Female councillors	Male councillors
Machinga	4	10
Balaka	0	8

Source: Malawi Electoral Commission, 2019

Machinga and Balaka district councils were sampled because they have a variety of having the highest as well as the lowest percentage of female councillors representation during the 2014-2019 cohort. The 2014-2019 cohort of councillors were used as opposed to the current councillors because the previous cohort provides evidence of actual outcome on policy prioritization over their past five years.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods can be defined as a way of collecting data; either primary or secondary. Primary data being data that is collected fresh and for the first time whereas secondary data is data that has already been collected by someone else (Kothari, 2004). In order to collect data from the respondents the study used in-depth interviews and secondary data in the form of document analysis.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

An in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic where the researcher's interviewing techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic (Mack et al, 2005). For this reason, the data for this research was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with selected key informants such as councillors and DCs. For Machinga the following wards were visited: Mpiri, Nsanama, Mlomba, Nkoola, Mpoosa and lastly Chikweo. Whereas Shire and

Nkhonde wards were visited in Balaka. An interview guide was developed and an audio recorder was used during these interviews. The interviews in depth interviews were employed to allow for an intrusive enquiry into the subject in order to discover the information that could have otherwise been limited through a rigid research tool like a questionnaire (Kumar, 2015).

Table 2: Data collection methods and participants

Data collection method	Participants
In-depth interview	8 Councillors: a. 3 female Machinga b. 3 male Machinga c. 2 male Balaka
In-depth interview	2 District Commissioners: a. Machinga b. Balaka

Source: Researcher

3.6.2 Document analysis

Document analysis involves collecting data from secondary data sources. These are datasets that are already in existence (Harell and Bradley, 2009). Merriam (1998) cautions that exclusive reliance on one method may lead to bias or distortion of the picture of the reality under investigation. For this reason, the use of in-depth individual interviews from different stakeholders was supplemented by document analysis to complement each other. The secondary sources that this study used include the council's official and archival documents which include the district development

plans, Social Economic Profile (SEP), annual reports, minutes derived from council and District Executive Committee (DEC) and other associated meetings.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Kumar (2015), there are generally three ways to write about qualitative research findings: first, by creating a narrative to describe a situation, episode, event, or instance; second, by identifying the key themes that emerge from your field notes or transcription of your in-depth interviews; and third, by writing about those themes in great detail using verbatim quotes. Finally, in addition to the aforementioned, quantify the primary themes to show their ubiquity and hence importance. This study used thematic analysis during the data analysis phase of the research. After data collection, transcripts are coded according to participant responses to each question and/or to the most salient themes emerging across the set of interviews (Mack et al, 2005). Thus the literal transcripts from an audio recorder were analyzed and themes were developed from there. This method was opted for because the interfering unstructured interviews resulted in information that needed organization.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

This study did not in any way as per its design harm anyone or put any person's life in danger. This study did not go beyond limits of invading the privacy of the chosen study area and its respondents. The data collected was strictly for academic purpose. In addition to this, as Mack et al (2005) write, in general, data collection activities that require more than casual interaction with a person require individual informed consent from that person, regardless of whether community-level permissions exist. As such permission will be sought from each Council before proceeding with data collection. Additionally, each respondent was informed of the research's purpose,

expectations for research participants, including the time commitment that is likely to be required, that participation is voluntary and that one can withdraw at any time with no repercussions, that their confidentiality will be protected, and the name and contact information of the researcher who could be contacted with any questions or issues related to the research.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

This research is a qualitative study which studied two councils (Balaka and Machinga District Councils) in Malawi. This meant that although there is a small number of cases, qualitative researchers generally unearth enormous amounts of information from their studies (King, Koehanne and Verbe, 1994). However, since the proportion of female councillors in Malawi is so low, the results of the study can be validated. As an advantage as this is, a major limitation of this is that it would be difficult to generalize these results at a wider/national scale.

3.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the methodology that was used in the study. The chapter has shown that a quantitative study design was used. The research population of this study are the 35 local government councils in Malawi which include 471 councillors who served as councillors from 2014 to 2019, with Machinga and Balaka district councils as a sample frame. The chapter highlighted that data collection methods which includes in depth interviews and analysis method used namely thematic analysis. Lastly, the chapter raised the ethical considerations used and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to presents findings and discussion of the research study. The research mainly sought out the role that gender plays in policy prioritization in councils. The main objective of this study is to examine the gendered leadership in policy prioritization in local government councils. The specific objectives of the study were to firstly assess the policies that have been prioritized by male dominated and female dominated councils; secondly to examine policy interest of male and female councillors and lastly to evaluate the factors driving the agenda for council meetings. The data was collected in Machinga and Balaka District Councils. The chapter is organized into five sections addressing all the specific objectives and discussing in relation to various literature.

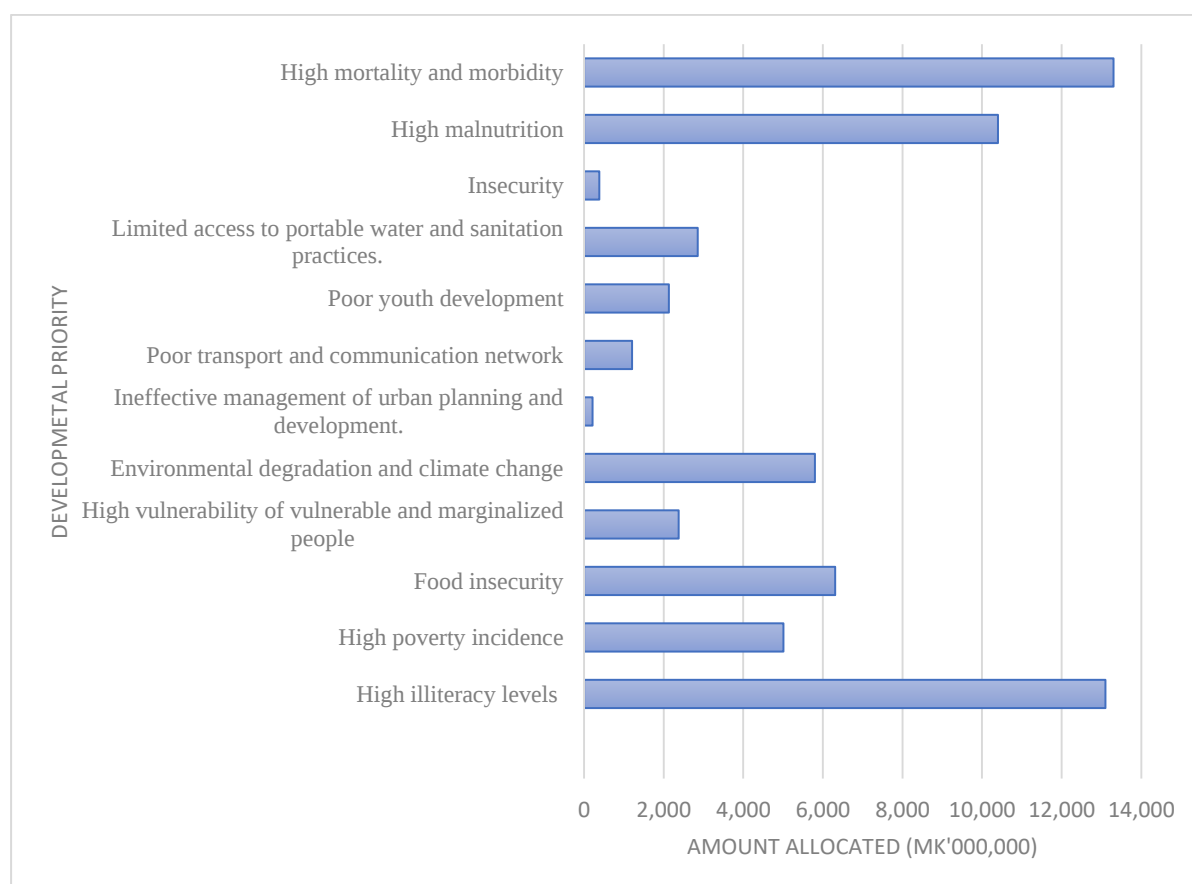
4.2 Assessment of Policies That Have Been Prioritized by Male Dominated vs Female Dominated Councils

One of the specific research aims was to assess what sorts of policies were prioritized from councils. The councils which this study focused on was Balaka and Machinga District councils as justified in the second chapter of this dissertation. Both female and male respondents were interviewed. In addition to this, desk review through reviewing minute meetings and relevant policy documents was also conducted.

This can be seen as is in the case of Machinga and Balaka District Councils. It is important to note that District Development Plans are one of the key documents used which guide councils on conducting their business during the five-year periods. District Development Plans are fed in from Village Action Plans and include both the administrative arm and political body in terms of creation and implementation of police. In addition to this, communities play an important role particularly in projects identification and implementation through various structures such as Area Development Committees which are at Traditional Authority (TA) level and Village Development Committees at group village level (Government of Malawi, 2017).

4.2.1 Priority Areas in Machinga District Council

Graph 3: Developmental priorities and amount allocated Machinga District Council



Source: Machinga District Development Plan

From the graph above it is obvious that high mortality and morbidity, high illiteracy levels, and high malnutrition feature as the most heavily prioritized developmental issues. When Machinga District Council prioritizes high mortality and morbidity what this entails is ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Government of Malawi, 217). Achieving gender equality is introduced within the context of realising international and national development goals namely the Sustainable Development Goals and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III. However, gender equality is vaguely brought up in selected priority in areas such as tackling mortality and morbidity, literacy rates, food insecurity without much reference on what policies or actions will be implemented exactly. Where women are brought up in the District Development Plan, they are lumped up as a homogenous group under vulnerable people together with children. There were no specific policies or projects that were directly targeted towards tackling women issues.

4.2.2 Priority areas in Balaka District Council

Table 3: Balaka Priority issues per sector

No	Issue	Sector
1	Limited access to potable water with the highest population to water point ratio at 1:2,331 people and improved sanitation. Access to safe water is about 53% of the population with water coverage of 73 %	Water Development, Environmental Health

No	Issue	Sector
2	Food and Nutritional Insecurity due to low crop, livestock and fish productivity, production and marketing (food lasts only for 8 months after harvesting month)	Agriculture and climate change, Fisheries, Irrigation, Trade
3	Poor access to Health Services and high incidences of HIV/AIDS and Malnutrition	Health, HIV/AIDS, and Nutrition
4	High illiteracy rate of 36%	Education and Labour
5	Under collection of local revenue	Finance
6	Degradation of environment and natural resources	Forestry, Environment, and Climate change
7	Insecure land tenure (5% of the total land is registered)	Lands
8	Inadequate roads/building/ICT infrastructure	Public works, Information, Transport
9	Low participation of women, girls and boys and the vulnerable in socio-economic activities, increased teen age pregnancies and early marriages	Gender, Socio welfare, Community Development, Youth and Trade
10	Low participation of youth in economic and sporting activities	Youth and Sports
11	Poor safety, security and governance	Security and Judiciary

Source: Balaka District Development Plan

Both Machinga and Balaka District Councils acknowledge and have similar priorities. Both councils place much emphasis on poverty eradication, malnutrition and high illiteracy rates. Similarly to Machinga District Council, gender equality and women empowerment were raised within the context of the MGDS III and the SDGs. However, interestingly the study found that though there were no females in this cohort of councillors (2014-2017), Balaka Council's District Development Plan had more specific women focused policies and projects. For instance, Balaka District Council actually planned and prioritized women and girl's rights to education sensitization campaign with expected outcome of the rights of girls' education to be promoted (Government of Malawi, 2017).

4.2.3 Girl-focused initiatives

In both Machinga and Balaka District Councils girl focused initiatives were carried out despite Balaka having no women councillors. During the period from 2014 – 2019, both councils engaged in a project called Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire (Give Girls a Chance to Learn). This is a United States Government initiative specifically funded by USAID for five years in five districts of Phalombe, Chikwawa, Mzimba North, Machinga and Balaka. The minutes from the Machinga council meeting stated that:

“AMAA is a holistic project which focuses on removing barriers that prevent girls from achieving their full potential; in the community, at home, at school, and within themselves. As well as improving access to Secondary School education through building Secondary Schools and providing bursaries.”

It is evident from the minutes that there has been a deliberate effort to enhance issues that pertain to the female child from a Machinga District Council that has a significant high number of female councillors as compared to other Balaka in Malawi. This minutes however were an ex-officio meeting which suggests that this was not initially planned for like Balaka District council but rather, that an opportunity presented itself and was optimized. As the RAPID Framework suggests, external influences such as international factors (Crew and Young, 2003) can affect policies which are made as is evident in the case above.

4.2.4 Priorities from the Constituency Development Fund

The Constituency Development Fund is where funds can be used to push development work. This is at the heart of what is prioritized at the council level. Throughout various constituencies in Machinga, what the council prioritized can be seen in how Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was shared and was used as follows:

- i. The sum of MK8,999,751.50 was used for Chikuluma Market shelter, Masaka Under Five Clinic, Nsanama Road Block, Namalasa Teacher's house, Namandanje CDSS maintainance, Masungwi Headquarters, Mwikala and Nsangu Under Five Clinics, electrification of St. Mary's CDSS, Madzianjuchi school block, Namalasa Teacher's house and Namandanje bridge.
- ii. Machinga Central East Constituency
 - a. The sum of MK8,32533.25 was used on Mlomba Primary School, Nkhande Bridge, Mlomba Health Centre, Chilora Bridge and Naminga Bridge.

iii. Machinga East Constituency

- a. The sum of MK8,984,686.00 was used for Chinyasa Bridge, Sowani Bridge, Masambuka CBCC AND Chitimba CBCC.

iv. Machinga South Constituency

- a. The sum of MK8,827,135.25 was used on Puteya Bridge, Puteya-Nkakamira Bridge, T.A. Mposa, Mposa Police Post, Chamba Maternity Wing and Mposa CDSS.

v. Machinga Likwenu Constituency

- a. The sum of MK8,989,975.00 was used for Machemba Bridge, Mpotola-Mwacheya-Mlelemba road, Cement of Napwanga bridge and transportation and labour inclusive.

vi. Machinga South-East Constituency

- a. The sum of MK9Million was used for road reshaping in the Constituency.

From the above, it is clear to see that the fund had been divided amongst different wards but mostly focused on infrastructure development. This should come as no surprise as both Machinga and Balaka District Councils have infrastructural development as one of the key areas in their district development plan. In addition to this, mobilising the masses for socio-economic development at the local level (Government of Malawi, 1998) is one of the main aims of the National Decentralization Policy. Pragmatically, decentralization was considered as a medium for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of public goods and services to the

general population, particularly in rural areas where the bulk of Malawians dwell (Chiweza 2007). This is the case as here is likely to be better matching of supply and demand for local public goods than would be possible through Central Government, as such much focus has been placed on infrastructural development projects.

4.3 Evaluation of Male and Female Policy Interests

The second research aim of this study was to analyse the policy interests of male and female councillors.

4.3.1 Understanding of their role as a councillor

Regardless of gender, there is a common understanding and knowledge on what the workings of a councillor constitute. The common thread amongst councillors who were interviewed was that they felt that they stood in the middle of the community and council, they acted as a bridge and are there to communicate the needs of the community. The reason answering this question was important is because it guides the way in which substantive representation is perceived. As Chiweza (2016) asks, do women act on behalf of women, or is one just a councillor representing all people?

When asked how respondents understand their role as a councillor and what it means to be a good councillor, a respondent said the following:

Approachable, competent and transparent and friendly with people and should have a heart for development. Should be able to follow. Kuphuzira kuphatikiza ndi kuzindikila [learning to do both and be aware] but they don't have to be persistent and educated – interview with male Machinga Councillor, 20 February 2021

However, when the study turned to the administrative branch of local government and asked how one would you describe the roles of councillor, a respondent said the following:

Generally, we talking of the issue of oversight as being the main responsibility but with time we see that there is serious shifts. Most councillors want to be in the role of doing other than being in the role of oversight – Interview held with a District Commissioner.

These responses suggest that councillors do not necessarily have their gender in mind when they perceive what their duties entail. Additionally, it appears that the traditional model of Woodrow Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy, which holds that elected officials provide political direction through policy leadership and legislative oversight while public administrators' primary duty is to enable public policies to be implemented practically in accordance with the legislative intentions and directives, is in conflict with reality. (Weber, 1980). This finding agrees with Chiweza and Msiska (2019) that a blended approach to politics and administration as opposed to separating the two seems to the interaction between politicians and bureaucrats needs to be considered in an African context.

4.3.2 Perception of Councillors' Competency

Since councillors are elected and brought into the Malawian Local Government System by public vote, defining what it means to be a competent councillor then becomes double folded. On the one hand, councillors are accountable to the citizens in their wards who put them into power but at the same time they are working within the realms of the Full Council, working hand in hand with the Council Secretariat.

The study found that competency seemed not to be an issue from the administrative side of local government, where the secretariat did not show bias according to gender but rather what they can do.

Interestingly, the study found that female respondents/councillors were more cautious about the words they said and how they communicated them as compared to the male counterparts. This can be justified where it was observed an officer was asked about the competency of male versus female councillors where an administrative staff observed that sometimes men will just side with men regardless of the fact that a woman raises valid points or concerns and is more educated. Male overrepresentation is frequently seen as the primary determinant or characteristic of male political dominance, according to the Irish Inter-parliamentary Union (2017). Despite making up a fraction of the world's population, men continue to be disproportionately represented in politics in almost all nations. Scholars globally and locally in Malawi have often argued that men and women in politics are judged using a different yardstick (Kayambazinthu, 2016). This is to say that women tend to get judged more harshly than their counterparts. The study revealed that This was seen in the study where female councillors seem to be more cautious with their choice of words as compared to their male counterparts. Thus, the research fills the gap by focusing on what the policy outcome of their participation is.

“...as a woman you have to be understanding, not angry, sitting well with people, have wisdom with how to speak to people; mayankhulidwe (talking) has to be filtered. Understand what is being told and relayed.” - Interview with female Machinga Councillor

This is in agreement with what Chiweza (2016) found in a research where the author studied councillors who contended in 2014. What was found was that after gaining a seat in the council, since they lack experience and find it difficult to handle the rigours of holding political office, women are underrepresented in service committees and rarely advance past the position of vice-chairpersons of the councils. However, the experience in Machinga district proved to be an exception where working with a chairperson who was a woman was exceptional. However, most content that they indeed did face many difficulties in their roles as in service committees even as vice chairpersons.

4.3.3 Hard vs Soft Issues

There seem to be theories that suggest that women tend to focus on ‘soft’ issues where as males focus on ‘hard’ issues. This was clearly evident in Machinga District Council. When asked if the respondent thought that women participating would bring more female related issues to be chaired or does it not matter? What are the sort of issues female councillors are passionate about and push for?

I look at the female councillor who chairs the education committee. Each time there is an issue she brings the girl child, even when we were dealing with the Covid thing, her passion was about the girl child and how we bring them in on these issues. In the human resource, when we were preparing vacancies for the council she [the female council] fought that we reduce the qualifications so that we get more ladies in there but she was defeated by the male counterparts. I believe if we had possibly 50/50 we would be looking

at the issues of gender differently in the council. The male are serious on infrastructure. – District Commissioner

Recalling on the second chapter when Eyben's theory of women in development was tackled, this phenomena on why women focus on soft issues and men focus on hard issues can be understood by acknowledging the history of how women are coming into development work. Traditionally and historically, men went out and worked playing the more economic role of the breadwinner and focusing on hard issues. On the other hand, women stayed home and predominantly played the nurturing role while taking care of the family.

Going to the issue of the vocal ones, a councillor is suppose to make resolutions. Resolutions are suppose to be made either through a vote or a consensus of some kind but what I have noticed is that all the resolutions that have been made in this council for the past two years came out of one or two councillors who are vocal. When these two speak with a lot of energy, intimidation the rest will be silenced and that's the resolution. So for the people we would say they look at that one [being vocal] as competency, (saying the councillor is able to bring things to our ward) but when you look at the system up will see that no, that's not the way because we are suppose end up with decision that are agreed upon by all the members or the majority.

However, it is worth noting as Young and Smith (2003) point out through their analytical framework that it is vital to have a wholistic overview when establishing how policies come into play. As a study by Beall (2005) also reveals, that even when

women are successfully established and represented at the local level, that doesn't seem to serve as a guarantee for gender-sensitive service delivery despite a close association between decentralization and neo-liberal policies. When asked if men and women prioritize different issues or not, a respondent said the following:

From what I have seen and what I have been looking at male councillors tend to advocate for infrastructure and females for social issues. When you sit with female councillors you might think they are fighting for weak issues because all the time they want to ask how do we assist the girl child, like free scones or sweets for the girl child? Whilst the men are saying let's build a hostel, a bridge or boreholes. We are now building boreholes in the city district. This one was balanced because the female councillors looked at how these can help females in the community and the male looked at different perspective but of the same borehole. – Interview with Balaka District Commissioner.

Most women chaired education or Human Resources service committees. Again this speaks to the positioning of women being left in charge of more 'soft' issues. *When I first started, I was vice chair then went to education then Human Recourses -* Machinga female councillor, interview held 19th February 2021. The positioning of where women were placed/voted into may suggest that women and men had predisposition for different issues. This is consistent with the findings of Clyaton et al. (2019), who found that men representatives and men citizens tend to prioritise infrastructure projects, whereas women representatives and women citizens are

significantly more likely to prioritise poverty reduction, health care, and women's rights.

4.4 Assessment of the Factors Driving the Agenda for Council Meetings

The last research aim was to evaluate the factors who drive the agenda for council meetings. Full council meetings are where issues are deliberated and essentially where policies are made at the local level.

4.4.1 Institutional Establishments

As the RAPID analytical framework suggests, there are various factors that influence policies and their implementation. Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI), according to Mackay et al. (2010), is an analytical school concerned with understanding how institutions structure human interaction. Rational Decision Institutionalism also examines the deliberate efforts made by players to sway the establishment, upkeep, and alteration of institutions (Amenta and Ramsey 2010). When considering the setup for local council policy implementation and agenda setting, various actors come into play. On the administrative side, a DC pointed out that what makes a competent councillor is understanding the system from the side of the officers' point of view.

Councillors also recognise the institutional power dynamics at play in local councils.

When asked if councillors receive support to enable them to conduct their council work a responded said:

This teaching is brief but is not effective because it's only the councillor who learns and not the community so there is an information gap. Councillors are threatened by Members of Parliament. There is a lot of greed from those chosen from

VDC's and ADC's, they overlook opinions of councillor and listen to MP's because they get money. When a councillor wins in a party ticket the party. DDP but I was threatened and was almost arrested... there were issues with money. The party wants to control the councillor - Interview with Balaka councillor

So, we have looked at understanding the system. How does one understand the system? The system is embedded in books, if someone cannot follow what is written in a book despite so many trainings, is there absorption of the materials that are required for the system? Talling with what they know as individuals. You see there is that big gap. So it's a question of who speaks louder. So whilst we may say he [the councillor] is not competent the people will say he is because he is bringing whatever we asked him to do for us. – Interview with a District Commissioner

The opinions expressed above support Krook et al (2009:92) claim that in institutional settings like these, 'soft quotas' are frequently the only remedy that is likely to be applied. Soft quotas may include internal party quotas or less formal targets in nomination procedures in order to indirectly boost the representation of women (Kayuni and Muriaas, 2014). This is to ensure that there are enough women in the system from the supply end of things.

4.4.2 Political and Social Culture

Verba (1969) defines political culture specifically as a set of symbols, beliefs, values, and myths that is embedded in a political system. A political system lives in a wider subset of a societal culture. Expectations of men vs women outside of the council are different and this can affect the way in which they conduct and present themselves in council meetings at various levels. For example, a respondent said:

“..not that they are intimidated or not allowed but themselves don't make points which makes them seem like they are not contributing, they are just like followers. They need to be empowered. They need a mindset change that they can make decisions on their own. In our culture, people (women) are taught to listen to their husbands and he is the head and this is the mentality they take to the office. They are intimidated when they want to do something they get ridiculed for example this happened when Joyce Banda when she sat as president.” -

Interview with Machinga councillor.

This finding seems to point to a larger debate on masculine and feminine roles when it comes to development. Kimmel (2000) defined masculinity as the social roles, behaviours, and meanings that are encouraged for men in a certain society. The socially created status of men in a gendered hierarchy is known as masculinity (Connell, 2005). In a study done in Bangladesh which is also a third world country, according to Karim et al. (2017:99), the "dominant male model," which holds that men are supposed to provide for their families as family guardians, is the traditional explanation for masculinity. On the other hand, women are typically viewed as being

dependent family members (Kabeer, 1990). The husband is likely to be the guardian of his wife while the wife is expected to obey her husband. This sentiment is similar to what respondents both male and female felt. Additionally, studies show that married women's involvement in development may be hampered by their husbands' interferences (Karim & Law, 2013; Schuler, Hashemi, & Badal, 1998). This also seemed to be a similar trend in this study where certain female councillors felt they could not network with their counterparts afterhours due to societal expectations for them to make it back home earlier in their day. Their male colleagues on the other hand could stay out as long as they like at a bar or lounge for instance. This is a crucial element as this time could potentially buy them the influence needed to sway and discuss policy issues further which most women cannot be included in.

Additionally, Mushemza (2009) contends that there is still insufficient gender mainstreaming in the selection of policies and laws and how these affect the quality of life for both women and men, particularly in the areas of family, health, and education. This is due to the institution of patriarchy's continued dominance. Beall (2005) advises that in order to eliminate laws that prevent women from participating equally in the decision-making processes, it is critical to assess and change current constitutional, political, legislative, and regulatory frameworks, including electoral systems.

The nature of the state itself is a second important query. When gender equality is used as a tool of political hegemony, a state's ability to guarantee and promote economic equity, equality, and social well-being of all citizens is compromised. In some instances, the emphasis on gender mainstreaming has diverted policy attention

away from women's human rights and jeopardised advancement in the direction of gender policies that are non-discriminatory from an intersectional perspective, i.e. policies that are concerned with how race, class, and gender intersections affect women's political participation (Cabrera and Rangel, 2018).

When asked to what extent do think cultural and societal issues play a role in how the women are able to express themselves or conduct themselves?

This goes back to how we are brought up as people, it starts from there, a lady is given a back seat throughout. This goes on to whenever they take big responsibilities, they always look at a man as somebody who is superior. But with the current generation it's different. (District Commissioner)

I wanted to pursue the issue of statues, what is it that we are doing? We have standing orders, have we made standing orders to accommodate the female councillors, I don't think so. So we look at do we still maintain the same statues, are they making sense to the present thinking? Now we have looked at this system, where are we failing? What is the role of the ladies, we see that the role is still minimal. We should look at those dogmatics and say now let's come up with a deliberate policy, even in the councils, things funds for development like how much should be allocated to where the councillor is a female. But also when it comes debates, a person is only suppose to speak twice but that never happens. Also, we would say let us now come up with rotational

headship in the council to say if in the first term we had a male councillor, in the second one we should have a female councillor as a mayor. - Interview with a District Commissioner.

4.4.3 Division Amongst Women

There seems to be a common theme that although women are few in number the ones that are there don't seem to support and lobby for each other. The problem can even date back to what seems to be women not even voting for each other in the first place. When asked what challenges a female councillor face when it comes to advancing polices, a respondent said:

The biggest is competition is from male councillors. Let me start from the ward [level], when we are selecting people to be councillors, very few ladies would come forward, looking at the way the competition is and how dirty it is the number of ladies would withdraw. And also there is a big issue of fellow women [not] choosing fellow women. So the issue starts at the primary level, so the few that do survive and make it into the council it is even difficult for them to compete in the council. The competition at the council level is just that aggressive. The aggression comes from the men. But also, it's a tall order to find educated women at possibly a degree level to compete for councillorship, the educated ones take it as rubbish, they are looking for bigger things other than representing people at

that level, so it's about the numbers as well - Interview with
Machinga District Commissioner.

In addition to this, another respondent said:

*Women are gossipers and don't wish each other well. Where
there is women they don't love you. It takes a lot for them to
love you. There is a lot of jealousy and making up stories from
women. It's better for the older women but for the younger
women it's worse.* - Interview with Machinga female
councillor, December 2020

*How they work is different. Women are scared and shy. They
are not sound and confident and as such they are weak, 70%
get carried away... because in Women haven't been in
leadership for a long time, it's still hard and new to embrace.
Eg had a "End Cholera Programme" in 2014, our was to visit
all DC's ... they are easily agreeable.* Interview with
Machinga male councillor.

*No difference but working wise we are the same. Only
difference is women look down on themselves. They just say
'mene anayankhilimo iwowo' [just as the previous person has
answered]. Most women when it comes to electing men not
women. But in decision making they fall back.* – Machinga
male councillor.

This seems to contradict what Ngunjiri found in their study of women and leadership. The author studied various qualitative studies have linked motherhood and leadership among African women leaders (Madimbo, 2013; Mogadime et al., 2010; Ndlovu, 2013; Ngunjiri, 2007a, 2009, 2010b). Ndlovu (2013). Perhaps the nuance can be unpacked in that Ngunjiri focused on women who perhaps are of a different educational and economic background, because of the study's focus on women in the Zimbabwean NGO sector, it was discovered that all NGO leaders emphasised how their mothering traits can be applied to the workplace and are influenced by their Christian faith. Additionally, because Ubuntu values servant leadership and motherhood has strong spiritual values. The respondents in this study did not attribute their faith as a driving factor of their work ethic but rather 'kukhala bwino ndi anthu' (living in harmony with others, which in essence captures the tenants of the Ubuntu philosophy/leadership style. This however still leaves contradiction as women within the local government political arena are seemingly cold and pull each other down as evidence would suggest.

4.4.4 Intra-Party Politics

This subsection interrogates the intra-party politics that the study found seem to play a role when councillors decide what policies to push for. To begin with, it is important to note when a councillor engages their term in office, they can either go in as an independent candidate or through a party ticket. The study found that politics within parties has an effect on what the councillor pushes for example a respondent said *“when a councillor wins in a party ticket the party has a lot of say. I was DDP but I was threatened and was almost arrested... there were issues with money. The party wants to control the councillor.”* -Interview with Balaka councillor 4 December 2020.

Table 4: Machinga Electoral Trends

UDF			DPP		PP		Independent	
	MPs	Councillors	MPs	Councillors	MPs	Councillors	MPs	Councillors
1994	7		NA		NA		0	
1999	7		NA		NA		0	
2004	4		NA		NA		3	
2009	7		0		NA		0	
2014	5	13	0	0	1	0	1	1

NB: NA in the table means the party did not exist during the electoral cycle

Source: Machinga Social Economic Profile

The underrepresentation of women in politics has been a problem that evidently needs to be solved, but in some places gender quotas appear too controversial to be enacted. Since the return of multiparty elections in 1994, parties in Malawi have reportedly been urged to adopt voluntary gender quotas, but none have really done so successfully, according to Muriaas and Kayuni (2014). Only two parties had quota clauses in their political platforms as of 2004. These are the Malawi Congress Party and the United Democratic Front (UDF) (MCP). This could be largely in part due to the fact that parties were simply encouraged without a stern mandate to actually include gender quotas. Surprisingly enough, of the two political parties who included quota provisions manifestos in their manifestos, UDF is one of the parties with such a feature. In addition to this, the study also found that party politics also have an effect on who gets elected as mayor as this is something that the councillors vote on amongst themselves. Sometimes the qualified candidate may not be elected as mayor

simply because they do not belong to the majority party. For example, when asked how the skills of councillors are determined and who determines them, a respondent had the following to say:

They are issues of politics Now. For example, the female councillor [I talked about] is an independent candidate whilst the majority are DPP. I personally think she should have been a mayor but because of the voting patterns that go along the party lines she'll have to work extra hard. – Interview with
Machinga District Commissioner

Authors such as Chikadza (2016) have looked at the politics of participation within political parties. Chikadza (2016) argues that representation of women is usually symbolic as party politics is a masculine domain. There has been a backing of scholars to suggest that perhaps gender quotas. For instance, Mesikano-Malonda (2016) makes a compelling case for the implementation of female quotas, contending that voluntary quotas (a minimum of women on the parties' candidate lists) will not be sufficient given the low and even declining level of female political representation in Malawi. It is necessary to set aside seats for women on local and national councils, as well as to establish laws requiring political parties to have a certain percentage of women on their ballots. In addition to this, this reiterates what Beall (2005) found; that in order to enhance the participation of women in political decision-making, a quota on gender is being considered as an important policy measure. Unfortunately, Kayuni and Chikadza (2016) point out that while legally binding legislation, such as one requiring political parties to run a certain percentage of women in parliamentary elections, has proven to be useful in the fight for women's empowerment, the legal

framework governing elections and political parties in Malawi does not include such affirmative action, especially at the local level.

4.4.5 Male Dominance in Local Councils

The study found mixed results on the perception on how female counsellors seem to not be able to well articulate themselves. The study found that men are more confident and vocal in voicing out their opinions as opposed to women. A respondent shared how in Machinga District Council there are about two or three vocal councillors whose voice really matters. When they speak people's opinions are swayed. These councillors are male. The respondent then added on to share that there one who is female who whoever she fights with a lot objectivity which is the difference.

In addition to this, when asked what the respondent thought are the challenges of women who participate in decision making at the council, the respondent said:

First of all, we would want to go back to our voting patterns, even at the local level, how do people choose a representation, are the communities ready to take a female to represent them. You see that Machinga has 10 councillors and only 2 female councillors. If females are voted they represent the people but not that strongly because the committees, they participate in are male dominated so their voice becomes narrow and narrower. – Interview with Machinga District Commissioner.

When asked about the nature of those who are more vocal between men and women during full council meetings, the following response was given:

There is one particular lady councillor she is not that vocal but she is logical. Now despite her being logical (she will do well at a committee level) but she is normally defeated at a full council level because she always insists on logic while the others are vocal. If we go back to the issue of competency, we see that to me this lady is competent because she knows and reads these things, she knows the procedures to be followed but she is defeated because of the vocal ones. The chairs of the full council are supposed to control this approach but they cannot even control the vocal ones. – Interview with Machinga

District Commissioner held on

Despite the said female councillor being perceived as the more logical councillor behind the scenes, she was however quiet and as such it was difficult for her to lobby support at the full council for her ideas and policies to be taken on board.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the findings and discussion of the research study. The findings were obtained through key informant interviews and desk research in an attempt to evaluate gender and policy and policy prioritization in Malawian local councils, specifically Balaka and Machinga District Councils. As regards to the policies that the councils prioritizes, the study found that both Machinga and Balaka District councils had similar priority areas although Balaka had no female councilors. In addition to this, the study found that both men and women

join politics at the local level to with the aim of helping their communities. Women councilors tended to focus on more social issues such as education and social wellbeing whereas men focused on more tangible projects such as development works and infrastructure. Lastly, the study found that gender does play a role in the way that a council is able to articulate their interests at a full council or sector meeting. The study found that men are louder, and their ideas are often taken on board regardless of if women having better ideas.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents major conclusions of the study and areas for further research. The study critically investigated gender and policies that were prioritized in Balaka and Machinga District Councils. This study employed a qualitative approach and data was collected through key informant interviews and document analysis.

5.2 Major Conclusions

5.2.1 Assessment of Policies Prioritized by Male and Female Dominated Councils

The study found that both Machinga and Balaka District councils had similar priority areas although Balaka had no female councilors. The study findings show that despite Balaka District council not having any female councilors they had more women focused policies which contradicts the notion of substantive representation as women and the girl child had more policies and specific actions that advocated for them as opposed to Machinga District Council. This affirms what the RAPID Framework suggests; those external influences such as international factors play a role in policy formulation and implementation (Crew and Young, 2003). In addition to this infrastructure was heavily focused on both councils. Chiweza (2007) suggests that this due to the fact that practically, decentralization was considered as a medium for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public goods and services to

people at all levels, especially in rural parts of the country where the majority of Malawians reside.

5.2.2 Examination of Male and Female Policy Interests

The study then looked at male and female councilors at an individual level. The study found that both men and women join politics at the local level to with the aim of helping their communities. The study found that help however looks different to men and women who seem to have different priorities and policy interests. Women councilors tended to focus on more social issues such as education and social wellbeing whereas men focused on more tangible projects such as development works and infrastructure. As a study by Beall (2005) also reveals, that even when women are successfully established and represented at the local level, that doesn't seem to serve as a guarantee for gender-sensitive service delivery despite a close association between decentralization and neo-liberal policies.

5.2.3 Evaluation of Factors Driving the Agenda for the Council Meetings

Lastly, the study evaluated factors that drive the agenda for council meetings as this is the blueprint on where policies are made. The study found that gender does play a role in the way that a council is able to articulate their interests at a full council or sector meeting. The study found that men are louder, and their ideas are often taken on board regardless of if women having better ideas. The study found that there was an agreement in that more women taking up political spaces at the local level would harness more action towards women's voices being taken on board. Studies also indicate that married women's participation in development is likely to be affected by their husbands' interferences (Karim & Law, 2013; Schuler, Hashemi, & Badal, 1998). This also seemed to be a similar trend in this study where certain female

councillors felt they could not network with their counterparts afterhours due to societal expectations for them to make it back home earlier in their day.

5.3 Summary

The study finds mixed conclusions. On the one hand, at an institutional level it appears that the presence of women or lack thereof has no bearing on a council prioritizing women focused policies as seen with Balaka District Council. On the other hand, at an individual level, it is evident that men and women have different interests however this does not always translate that interest into policy. The study found that this is due to gender; where women are not as likely to speak up to what they really believe in, party politics and the institutional framework where councilors do not have a sense of empowerment.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Study

This research study's findings are based on a couple local councils, there is need to conduct a wider scale research to capture the voices of more women in local political leadership. This can investigate women who belong to different political parties who were not featured in the sample size. The implication of this study was that most women councilors who were interviewed did not go on to contend for the office of councilor for the next election cycle. For those who did proceed to contest, most were not successful in their attempt to re-run.

REFERENCES

- Aggestam, K., & Rosamond, A. (2018). *Re-politicising the Gender-Security Nexus: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*. *European Review of International Studies*, 5(3), 30-48. Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26593814>
- Amusden, I. & Kayuni, H. (2016). *Women and Politics in Malawi: An Introduction*, in Amundsen & Kayuni (eds). *Women in Politics in Malawi*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)
- Anderson, T. (2015). Seeking internationalization: The state of Canadian higher education. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(3), 166-187
- Basnett, B. (2018). *(Rep.olu). Center for an Urban Future*. <http://doi.org/10.2307/resrep21676>
- Bass, B. (1990). *From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision*. *Organisational Dynamics*. Winter, 19-31.
- Bangura, A., & Thomas, A. (2015). The Nexus Between Good Governance and Gender Equality as A Human Right In Africa: A Correlation Statistical Analysis. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 32(1), 45-58. <HTTP://doi.org/10.2307/45195111>
- Beall, J. (2005). Decentralizing Government and Decentering Gender: Lessons from Local Government Reform in South Africa. *Politics & Society*, 33(2), 253-276.

- Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Chasukwa, M. (2016). The Gender Machinery: Opportunities and Challenges for Women in Central Government, in Amundsen & Kayuni (eds). *Women in Politics in Malawi*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)
- Chiweza, A. (2016). *Local Government Councils: A Potential Arena for Women's Substantive Representation*, in Amundsen & Kayuni (eds). *Women in Politics in Malawi*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)
- Chiweza, C. (2005). *Women's Inheritance Rights in Malawi: The Role of District Assemblies*. *Development in Practice*, 15(1), 83-89. Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030169>
- Cheryl de la Rey. (2005). Gender, Women and Leadership. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, (65), 4-11.
- Connelly, P., Murray, T., MacDonald, M., & Parpart, J. (2000). *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development*. International Development Research Centre.
- Day, D.V. (2012a). Leadership. In S.W.J. Kozlowski (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Psychology* (pp. 12-7). Oxford University Press
- Eyben, R. (2008) *Conceptualising policy practices in researching pathways of women's empowerment*. Institute of Development Studies.
- Eyben, R. & Napier-Moore, R. (2009). Choosing words with care? Shifting meanings

- of women's empowerment in international development. *Third World Quarterly*, 30 (2), 285-300.
- Eyben, R. (2011) .*Supporting pathways of women's empowerment: A brief guide for International development organisations*. Institute of Development Studies.
- Felfe, J., Tartler, K., & Liepmann, D. (2004). Advanced Research in the Field of Transformational Leadership. *German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 262-288.
- Funk, K. (2015). *Gendered Governing? Women's Leadership Styles and Participatory Institutions in Brazil*. *Political Research Quarterly*, 68(3), 564-578.
- Government of Malawi (1998) *National Decentralisation Policy*
- Government of Malawi (2010). *Local Government Act, 2010*
- Government of Malawi (2015). *National Gender Policy*
- Jago, A.G. (1982). Leadership: Perspectives in theory and research. *Journal of Management Science*, 28(3), 315-332.
- Kark, R., Preser, R., & Zion-Waldoks, T. (2016). From a Politics of Dilemmas to a Politics of Paradoxes: Feminism, Pedagogy, and Women's Leadership for Social Change. *Journal of Management Education*, 40(3), 293–320.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562916634375>
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017). *Women in National Parliaments: Situation as of 1st January 2017*. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>
- Lyndon, S., & Rawat, P. (2015). Effect of Leadership on Organizational Commitment. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 51(1), 97-108.

- Levac, L., & Worts, S. (2018). Invisible Young Women and Public Policy in Ontario. *Canadian Public Policy*, 44(1), 41-53. [http:// doi.org/10.2307/90019787](http://doi.org/10.2307/90019787)
- Malvankar, A. (2016). Interrogating Women's Leadership & Empowerment. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 23(3), 481–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521516656082>
- Mushemza, E, D. (2009). *Contribution of Women in Influencing Legislation and Policy Formulation and Implementation in Uganda (1995-2005)*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24483161>
- Muñoz-Cabrera, P., & Rangel, P. (2018). Gender Justice in Feminist Analysis of PublicPolicies in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. *Estudos Feministas*, 26(3), 1-11. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26538499>
- Monsem, J. (2004), *Gender and Development*. Routledge
- Malunga, C. (2009). *Understanding organizational leadership through Ubuntu*. Adonis & Abbey.
- Neale, G. (2005). Transformational Leadership. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 331(7516), 560-560.
- Ngunjiri, F. W. (2016). “I Am Because We Are”: Exploring Women's Leadership Under Ubuntu Worldview. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 223–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641416>
- Ng, E., & Sears, G. (2012). CEO Leadership Styles and the Implementation of Organizational Diversity Practices: Moderating Effects of Social Values and Age. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 105(1), 41-52.

- Olowu, D., and Wunsch, J. (2004). *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenge of Democratic Decentralization*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder
- Rothfelder, K., Ottenbacher, M., & Harrington, R. (2012). The impact of transformational, transactional and non-leadership styles on employee job satisfaction in the German hospitality industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 12 (4), 201-214.
- Raju, S. (2006). Contextualising gender empowerment at the grassroots: A tale of two policy initiatives. *GeoJournal*, 65(4), 287-300.
- Sundstrom, A., & Stockemer, D., (2015). What determines women's political representation at the local level? A fine-grained analysis of the European regions. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 56(3-4). <http://doi.org/10.1177/0020715215595691>
- Simola, S., Barling, J., & Turner, N. (2012). *Transformational Leadership and Leaders' Mode of Care Reasoning*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 108(2), 229-237.
- Tambulasi, R., & Kayuni, H. (2013). Public Sector Reforms. In N. Patel and S. Svasand (Eds.), *Government and Politics in Malawi (2nd ed.)*. Capital Printing Press
- Wilkins, J. (2014). Stewardship of public service renewal and reform. *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*, 10(4), 188-199
- West, D. (2008). *Informal Public Leadership: The Case of Social Movements*. In P. Hart & J. Uhr (Eds.), *Public Leadership: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 133-144). ANU Press.

- World Health Organization. (2002). *Integrating gender perspectives into the work of WHO*. Author
- Scheyer, V., & Kumskova, M. (2019). Feminist Foreign Policy: A Fine Line Between “Adding Women” And Pursuing a Feminist Agenda. *Journal of International Affairs*, 72(2), 57-76. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26760832>
- Palley, M. (2004). Gender and Public Policy Decision Making in State and Local Jurisdictions. *International Area Review*, 7(2), 3-19.
- Palanithurai, G. (2017). Role of Support Agency for Elected Women Representatives: A Narration of Two Decades Experience in Women Empowerment. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 60(3), 489-502.
- Patel, N., & Wahman, M. (2015). The Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Elections in Malawi, May 2014. *Africa Spectrum*, 50(1), 79-92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24589181>
- Phillips, R. (2015). How 'Empowerment' May Miss Its Mark: Gender Equality Policies and How They are Understood in Women's NGOs. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 26(4), 1122-1142.
- Yammarino (2013). Leadership: Past, Present, and Future. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051812471559>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Consent Form

Masters Research Thesis: Gender and Policy Prioritization in Malawian Local Councils

I _____, agree to participate in the research thesis, conducted by Ms Yapikachi Msiska who has discussed the research topic with me.

The researcher has explained the general purpose of the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate in the research project and the following has been explained to me:

- a) the research may not be of direct benefit to me
- b) my participation is completely voluntary
- c) my right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications to me
- d) the risks including any possible inconvenience, discomfort or harm as a consequence of my participation in the research project
- e) the steps that have been taken to minimise any possible risks
- f) public liability insurance arrangements
- g) what I am expected and required to do
- h) whom I should contact for any complaints with the research or the conduct of the research

- i) I am able to request a copy of the research findings and reports
- j) security and confidentiality of my personal information.

In addition, I consent to:

- a) audio-visual recording of any part of or all research activities (if applicable)
- b) publication of results from this study on the condition that my identify will not be revealed.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date:

Appendix 2: Councillor Interview Guide

A. General questions

1. How do you describe the role of councillors?
2. In your opinion what constitutes the scope of work of councillors?
3. What is your perception of a competent councillor and how important is it?
4. If a councillor is effective, in your opinion what will they be doing?
5. What are the conditions that must exist for councillors to be competent at their work?
6. How are your skills needs determined and by whom?
7. What are the challenges that may affect effectiveness of councillors?
8. Is there any difference between how male and female councillors conduct themselves?

B. Policy/interests of individual councillors

1. Was this your first time serving as a councillor?
2. What service committees have you served in?
3. Have you ever served as a chair or vice chair?
4. What priorities/interests did you have when starting off?
5. Where you able to see these to completion?
6. Have if been led by a female chair? If yes, what was the experience being led by a woman in a service committee?

C. Council priorities

1. What do you think are the factors that influence women participation in decision making at the local council?
2. How frequent are women involved in decision making processes of the council?
3. How frequent are women consulted in decision making processes at the council?
4. What are the decision-making structures of the Council?
5. What are the factors that influences women decision making and decision outcomes at district level? Explain
6. What are the challenges that female leaders face at the council?
7. In your opinion, how does women's education background influence their decision-making levels in the public sector?
8. How are female leaders perceived at your district council?

D. Evaluate actors driving agenda for council meetings

1. Who would set the agenda for service committee meetings?
2. Who articulates issues in council meetings?
3. To what extent were you involved in decision making processes at the district council?
4. Are you allowed to contribute ideas to the district council before a decision is made?
5. How frequently were you consulted for your inputs before the council makes a decision?

6. What do you think are the factors that influences women decision making and decision outcomes at district level?
7. To what extent do political, social and cultural factors influence women and decision making?
8. How do you explain the impact of political influence on female and decision-making process?
9. What are the challenges that women who are in leadership positions face?
10. What kind of decisions are you/women allowed to make at a district council?
11. Is there any relationship between education background of women and their decision-making levels?
12. What do you think women should do to ensure that they are able to contribute effectively to decision making and also influence decision outcomes?

Appendix 3: District Commissioner Interview Guide

A. General questions

1. How do you describe the role of councillors?
2. In your opinion what constitutes the scope of work of councillors?
3. What is your perception of a competent councillor and how important is it?
4. If a councillor is effective, in your opinion what will they be doing?
5. What are the conditions that must exist for councillor to be competent at their work?
6. How are your skills needs determined and by whom?
7. What are the challenges that may affect effectiveness of councillors?

B. Council priorities

1. What do you think are the factors that influence women participation in decision making at the local council?
2. How frequent are women involved in decision making processes of the council?
3. How frequent are women consulted in decision making processes at the council?
4. What are the decision-making structures of the Council?
5. What are the factors that influences women decision making and decision outcomes at district level? Explain
6. What are the challenges that female leaders face at the council?
7. In your opinion, how does women's education background influence their decision-making levels in the public sector?

8. How are female leaders perceived at your district council?

C. Evaluate actors driving agenda for council meetings

1. Who would set the agenda for service committee meetings?
2. Who articulates issues in council meetings?
3. To what extent were you involved in decision making processes at the district council?
4. Are you allowed to contribute ideas to the district council before a decision is made?
5. How frequently were you consulted for your inputs before the council makes a decision?
6. What do you think are the factors that influences women decision making and decision outcomes at district level?
7. To what extent do political, social and cultural factors influence women and decision making?
8. How do you explain the impact of political influence on female and decision-making process?
9. What are the challenges that women who are in leadership positions face?
10. What kind of decisions are you/women allowed to make at a district council?
11. Is there any relationship between education background of women and their decision-making levels?
12. What do you think women should do to ensure that they are able to contribute effectively to decision making and also influence decision outcomes?