

**The extent to which African indigenous language tools are an instrument to
promote or/and hinder gender equality: Critical analysis of Chichewa
proverbs of Malawi**

by

Juliet Jacinta Chiwaya-Kamwendo

College of Humanities, School of Social Sciences

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of Philosophy in the graduate program in Gender studies,**

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Main Supervisor: Dr Janet Muthuki

Co-supervisor: Prof Hassan O. Kaya

South Africa

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work and that it has not been submitted before in fulfilment of any degree or examination at any other institution. All the sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete references in the text and the reference list.

STUDENT NAME: Juliet Jacinta Chiwaya-Kamwendo

DEGREE: PhD

STUDENT NO:

SUPERVISORS: Dr J. Muthoni Muthuki and Prof H.O Kaya

SIGNED:

_____ **Date** _____

DEDICATION

This PhD is dedicated firstly to my lovely late husband, Gregory Hankoni Kamwendo. Greg, it is with deep sadness and can not imagine that this journey is completed and awarded while you are gone forever. You were always on my side, helping me with all the necessary support and resources. My car fuel tank was always full to allow smooth travel to and from all the places I carried out my research work. You inspired me through and through and it was not possible for me to complete this PHD without you providing such conducive environment. I wish you were around to witness what you wanted me to be. I will always cherish such unselfish gesture. With all the hope, I know you are watching over me and the children. May the good Lord reward you on my behalf and keep you in a place of eternal peace until I meet you. I owe you great time Greg.

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ABSTRACT

This study is traced from the United Nation Sustainable Development goal number five of gender equality and women empowerment which supersede Millennium Development Goals number three. One way in which language is used is through the use of proverbs. The study aimed at finding out how Chichewa proverbs of Malawi can be an instrument to promote or hinder gender equality and women empowerment. The study followed hermeneutic phenomenological method and qualitative research approach to understand and interpret the connotations inscribed in Chichewa gendered proverbs. In order to unpack and analyze the proverbs, the study is underpinned within the Knowledge translation theory, along with critical discourse analysis and the reformist African feminism. Two methods of data collection were adopted in this study: desktop search and interviews which were conducted with the aid of semi-structured open ended questions. The interviews were conducted in two separate ways ie. Individual face to face as well as focus groups. In total, forty four participants were from four different population groups namely; the block leaders, the ward councillors, the education managers and other respondents who were just residents of the area. Using content analysis, the data were analyzed qualitatively and findings presented and discussed thematically.

On a positive note, the results of this study reveals that Chichewa proverbs may work positively towards enhancing gender equality and women empowerment. This is demonstrated when some proverbs portray women as symbols of warmth to the society while others encourage women empowerment and agency. Secondly, men's bad and evil behaviors towards women are rebuked in some Chichewa proverbs. The results of this study further shows that within Malawi society, men are not completely free from proverbial negativity but are equally victims of proverbial messages. With special reference to matrilineal society, proverbs have shown elements of discrimination on the part of suitors (*mkamwini*). This is in conflict with some Eurocentric gender studies which completely ignore the dynamics and uniqueness of different context, cultures and traditions. With the aid of poly-epistemic research approach and methodologies, such tradition dynamics were unravelled to fill the gaps and contribute to already existing body of knowledge. However, to the larger extent Chichewa proverbs have elements that work against women in various aspects. The proverbs are tools used to create and sustain the construction of hegemonic masculinity and femininity hence the superiority of men and inferiority of women in Malawi is sustained. By creating a body of knowledge which

portray women as gossipers, evil beings, weak and people lacking decision-making skills, women continue to suffer oppression, marginalization, subordination and discrimination in various ways both in public and private spheres.

Even though the results of this study reveal that probably both men and women were involved in the construction of proverbs, but the knowledge contribution of women in this domain was just meant to serve the male chauvinistic. This study therefore concludes that although some Chichewa proverbs can be used by gender activists to promote gender equality in Malawi, the wisdom embedded in some proverbs seem to be a hindrance towards the advance.

Key words: Africa Indigenous Language, Chichewa proverbs, Gender equality, Malawi, Africa.

ABBREVIATIONS/ACCRONYMS

ACALAN: African Academy of Languages

AD: Anno Domini

AF: African Feminisms

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AIL: African Indigenous Languages

CCAP: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CEDAW: Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

DC: District Commissioner

DEM: District Education Manager

EDM: Education Division Manager

HIV: Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

IKS: Indigenous Knowledge Systems Systems

JC: Junior Certificate

M.ED: Master of Education

MSCE: Malawi School Certificate of Education

NABW: National Association of Business Women

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGO: Non-Government Organization

PHD: Doctor of Philosophy

PSLC: Primary School Leaving Certificate

PTC: People's Training Centre

REFLECT: Remember Experience Focus Learn Evaluate Consider Trial

SADC: Southern African Development Community

UKZN: University of Kwa Zulu - Natal

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNISA: University of South Africa

USA: United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction to the chapter

This introductory chapter lays the foundation for this interdisciplinary study in which Chichewa proverbs of Malawi are critically analyzed and discussed within the context of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and gender equality/inequality. I therefore begin this section by giving a brief introduction of the study context just to give a picture of the country under discussion. The study context is discussed in detail in chapter 4. Malawi previously known as Nyasaland Protectorate is a sovereign state situated in the Southern part of African. Malawi gained her independence from Britain on 6 July in 1964. The country shares borders with Mozambique to the east and south, Zambia to the west and Tanzania to the north. According to the recent 2018 population census, Malawi has registered a population of 19.718,743 million. Within this population, women comprised more than 51 per cent and men 49 per cent. Economically, the land locked Malawi rank among the worlds' poorest countries with almost 80% of the people living in rural areas and two thirds of the population living below poverty datum line. This is because the economy of Malawi depends largely on donors and subsistence agriculture which is unpredictable due to issues of climate change that challenges the global world (National Statistical Office report 2019, United Nations population Report 2019, Mussa and Pauw 2011, Binauli 2010).

From the linguistic point of view, Malawi is a multilingual society with many ethnic groups and approximately different ethnic languages ranges between 8-15 (Moyo 2001). Just like other African countries, Malawi is one such a country where proverbs as kernels of indigenous knowledge are used extensively. Proverbs contain societal wisdom and knowledge used in many ways to socialize the young ones into desirable citizens. It is without doubt therefore that issues of gender relations in Malawi society forms part and parcel of this socialization. Therefore, proverbs can be seen as sites where issues of gender inequality/equality can be explored. This study was then conceived within the IKS domain with the aim to establishing the extent to which Chichewa proverbs could serve as instruments for promoting or hindering gender equality. Chichewa as a language have been chosen because of its status of as the national language. Chichewa is also Malawi's second official language. As such, the language is spoken and

understood by almost 80 percent of the population of the country. As stipulated by researchers such as Kishindo(2002), Kayambazinthu (1998) and many other researchers, Chichewa language is a cross-border language spoken in other parts of southern Africa in countries like Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe hence the scope is only about Malawi.

This is a qualitative phenomenological case study and the interest is to hear the individual lived experiences concerning proverbs, and not developing theories and/or models of the phenomenon that is under study. This is in line with the typical case study which is a systematic process of analyzing a particular person, group or detailed description of setting and situation (Gerring 2004). This study did not rely on documentary evidence only, but went further to document views and perceptions of selected knowledge holders in Zomba (Malawi) with regard to how they perceive, understand and interpret the gendered proverbs in their day to day activities in relation to gender equality. A typical case study was identified since the study concentrates on analyzing Chichewa proverbs of Malawi only. Whilst normally findings from case studies are not generalizable to the larger population, the situation here is different in some respects. With regard to Chichewa as a language, the interpretation of gender equality can be applicable to other contexts that speak the same language or other languages that have similar proverbs.

The current chapter has been structured as follows. In section 1.1, I provide the background to the study. In the next section 1.2, I present proverbs as sources of indigenous knowledge. Following on to this is section 1.3 which spells out the motivation for the study. The research problem comes in section 1.4 whilst the rationale for the study is presented in section 1.5. The aim of the study, the specific objectives and the research questions are covered by sections 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 respectively. I outline the significance of the study in section 1.9. In the next section (1.10), I discuss the delimitations of the study whilst section 1.11 covers the limitations of the study. Section 1.12 focusses on definitions and clarifications of the key terms employed in the study. I present an outline of the forthcoming chapters of the thesis in section 1.13, whilst section 1.14 is a summary and conclusion to the introductory chapter.

1.1 Background to the study

After more than half a century of freedom from colonialism, some African countries still remain lukewarm in their approach towards the study of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Indigenous knowledges have been identified as offering one possible way out of the development stagnation that Africa experiences. IKS has been identified as an effective tool towards redressing the acute poverty, primary health care and child mortality, food security, environmental management and many other socio-economic and political challenges (Ngulube 2016a, b; Makgoba 2014, Odora-Hoppers 2001). The relevance and contribution of indigenous knowledge systems towards socio-economic and political development has gained much appreciation because the masses of Africa depend on IKS for their livelihoods (Makgoba 2014).

However, despite the acknowledgement that indigenous knowledge systems can make critical contributions to the development and survival of African people, IKS continues to be looked down upon. It is as if IKS were something primitive and non-progressive. Colonialism and other forms of oppression (such as apartheid and slavery) did portray African IKS as backward and not worthy of any serious recognition. Africans, Malawians include, need to emancipate themselves from the mental colonialization and ideologies that continue to alienate them from their indigenous knowledges and cultures. The combined dominance of Western culture and Western education has created a situation under which African indigenous knowledges are relegated to the periphery of the world's knowledge systems. The situation can be described as epistemicide i.e. the erosion and downgrading of African IKS, and this creates a favourable context for epistemic dependence. That is, Africans seem to glorify and celebrate alien knowledges at the expense of African IKS. Naturally, there is a burning need to rescue and restore African IKS. Africa, strongly needs to uphold epistemic sovereignty. This call comes under the banner of decolonization of knowledge production (Msiska 2017, Msila 2017, Prah 2017, Mbembe 2015). This decolonization of knowledge does not imply throwing away all non-African knowledges, but rather it is about recognizing and appreciating African IKS as being as equally valid as Western and other non-African knowledges. It is about trying to benefit from the use of both African and non-African knowledges. There is also the need to enhance inclusive innovations that aim at improving the livelihoods of the less privileged and marginalized populations. IKS is not synonymous with backwardness. Discourses that promoted the downgrading of IKS were meant to serve the interests of the colonial regimes as part of the colonial campaign to advance the

misrepresentation, marginalization and downgrading of African cultures and their knowledge systems (Makgoba 2014).

It is an established fact that knowledge production occurs in every society in contexts where human beings interact with nature and fellow human beings. Djite (2008) argues strongly that there will be no continuity of IKS without language. It has to be appreciated that language is a key component of culture in its own right, containing values, customs, traditions, beliefs, norms and history of a particular society. It is within this culture-containing role that African languages become very important as tools and carriers of society's indigenous knowledges. It is through indigenous languages that members of any society are able to develop activities and engage with issues such as those of agriculture, environmental management, medicinal and healing, food processing and preservation. With the use of indigenous languages, people compose songs, and create folktales, riddles, metaphors, idioms and many others. It is through language that people socialize children in a given context. In addition, language is an instrument that develops people's personality and identity. With the realization that language is symbol of power, human rights declarations in Africa are working towards revitalizing Pan-African organizations that would enhance the role of African languages in all sectors of national development. Language is, therefore, very fundamental to the ways in which people order, understand, intervene and justify their interventions into natural and social worlds. To this end, any meaningful pursuit of development projects has to consider indigenous languages as tools of engagement (Dijte 2008; Ndimande-Hlongwa, Balfour, Mkhize and Engelbrecht 2010; Evance and Murray 2008).

Similarly, Settee (2008) argues that within the frameworks of promotion of any IKS lies the critical role of African indigenous languages too. Indigenous knowledges are created, stored and conveyed through African indigenous languages. As such, African languages are the conveyor belts of African IKS. We cannot genuinely talk about African IKS without talking about African languages (Khupe 2016, Khupe and Keane 2017, Keane et al 2017). Much as the former colonial languages remain official languages in most African languages, these foreign languages are known and competently used by only a tiny fraction of the populations of any sub Sahara African country. The majority of the citizens in a sub-Saharan country do not speak or write the official languages. That majority of the people actually speak one or more of the African indigenous

languages and not the language(s) of the former colonial power(s). The common denominator in most Sub-Saharan countries is the perpetuation of the supremacy of the colonizers' language(s). These foreign languages are often used and promoted at the expense of indigenous African languages. It has to be acknowledged that IKS does become accessible to other peoples by being passed on through other languages as result of either translation or interpretation. The power of translation and/or interpretation has enabled IKS to move across cultural and linguistic boundaries. To this end, African indigenous knowledges can be accessed by speakers of both African and non-African languages.

Although there is recognition of African indigenous languages as possible tools of engaging with gender issues, not enough considerations within African language scholarship has been devoted to this area. Issues of power, authority and privilege are usually associated with gender inequalities. Power, authority and privilege may be enjoyed by one group of people at the expense of another group, and these trends are also reflected in language. For example, when asked about the relationship between language and gender, one can cite two of such relationships. The first relationship is that language reflects society. In other words, language serves as a mirror of society. That is, what one sees in language is what one can also see in society. In line with this view, the social divisions (inequalities) we have in the world are reflected in language. The second link between language and gender can be said to be that language goes beyond merely reflecting gender divisions in society. Language actually creates and sustains some societal gender inequalities (see, for example, Lakoff 2004, Talbot 2003). It is against this background that the study took Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2014; Fairclough and Wodak 1997) as one of its theoretical frameworks. Issues of the link between language and power, language and social hierarchy, language and domination, language and marginalization and language and inequality, most of which tend to work more against women/girls than men/boys, are of interest to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The current thesis explores how power, domination and inequality between men and women is reflected in Chichewa proverbs.

1.2 Indigenous knowledge in proverbs

It has been observed that the African continent is well known for its richness in oral traditions and literature. Since oral literature is made out of society and carries societal views, oral literature

especially proverbs can become another site where issues of gender relations, equality and equity can be detected, contested and engaged with. Schipper (2006: 19) defines a proverb as “a short, memorable sentence of wisdom covering ideas that are relevant to a certain culture”. As mentioned earlier, proverbs are said to be reservoirs and repositories of society’s collective wisdom. So proverbs are wisdom-imparting tools associated with the elders, the wise people, the grey haired people and people who have experienced a lot in life (Zegeye and Vambe 2006). As such, proverbs are a powerful component of oral literature which is regarded as store houses or kernels of societal wisdom that is rich in society’s knowledge. Daramola (2006) notes that in African traditions it is a common practice that the elders inject proverbs into their daily speeches as a sign of being wise. The eloquent use of these proverbs in one’s speech is usually a mark of a person’s depth of wisdom. Chinua Achebe, arguably one of the most celebrated Nigerian and African writers, mentions that within the Ibo society of Nigeria “proverbs are the palm oil through which words are eaten” (Achebe 1982:5). Even outside Africa, proverbs have the wisdom-imparting function. For example, with reference to the Japanese culture, “proverbs are the fruit of a people’s wisdom”. Using proverbs in one’s speech signifies a sense of being knowledgeable and wise” (Storm 1992: 168). Proverbs are regarded as society’s assets that serve as windows through which a particular society can be viewed and appreciated. Thus proverbs are mirrors through which societal beliefs and values about men and women are reflected. Every proverb contains some wisdom of the elders that is passed on from generation to generation. For instance, Mieder (1997:3) refers to proverbs as “traditional bits of wisdom”. Rolls (2008: v) argues that throughout the world, commonsense explanations and larger truths of life are expressed through proverbs. Most of African societies regard proverbs as linguistic tools to instil and maintain social and moral values (Magwaza 2004).

1.3 Motivation for the study

This doctoral study was motivated from my own experiences whilst growing up, working as a teacher and later as student at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Accumulation of experiences from these encounters have led to my undertaking the doctoral study which is currently under discussion. I now take the reader through the journey that finally culminated into the current study. The journey starts off in my early days as a young person. As I grew up as a child in a remote village of Phalombe district in the Southern Region of Malawi (see Figure 1 for

a map of Malawi), there was abundant use of proverbs in social interactions at all levels of society. At home and in the villages, I heard proverbs being uttered in various interactions. The school is another environment where one meets proverbs. At secondary school, proverbs were taught, and teachers encouraged us as learners to use proverbs in Chichewa essay writing assignments. The skill of weaving proverbs into a Chichewa essay was rewarded through the award of high marks. In those early days before Malawi had no television. Actually, public television only came to Malawi in the mid 1990s. As such, the radio was the key mass media tool in Malawi, and it still is today. Therefore, the radio was another avenue through which I came to hear about proverbs. Two programmes on the then sole radio station (which also happened to be a public radio) were devoted to the promotion of Chichewa. These programmes were *Tiphunzitsane Chichewa* and *Chichewa cha kumudzi*. These programmes were well known for exposing the listenership to Chichewa proverbs, their usage and meanings.

Growing up in the rural village in Malawi, I directly engaged with proverbs through fireside interactions. As observed by Owour (2007), traditionally it is a common practice in many African societies that a fireplace is used as a symbol and place of unity. This is where family members sit to warm themselves during the cold season, while discussing issues concerning their family, clan and community. During that time, parents would talk to children about their culture and traditions in a relaxed environment. Sitting with grandparents around that big fire, we would listen to different stories and folktales associated with family values, traditions and cultural heritage of our society (see also Kamwendo and Kaya 2016). I remember very well that each folktale would be concluded with a proverb as a way of driving the message home and concretizing it for self-reflection. I cannot remember a day passing without hearing a single proverb from village members, parents, older siblings, relatives and more seriously by teachers at school. The proverbs were and are still meant to safeguard society's wisdom across and through generations, and to educate, guide and inspire children as future wives/mothers, and father/husbands. Examples of some of the proverbs that were commonly used were: "*chosamva anachiphikira mmasamba*" meaning a stubborn caterpillar ended up being cooked together with vegetables. This proverb originates from a story of stubborn children who never listened to advice and that they were caught up in trouble. Another proverb of those times which I can easily recall is: "*Pawiripawiri sipauzilika* or *ichi chakoma ichi chakoma pusi anagwa chagada*" - meaning one cannot serve two

masters at a time. This proverb cautions about people who never get satisfied with one thing and go for several targets at the same time, and they end up losing everything. This message which was put across to both boys and girls was to concentrate on schooling and avoid fooling around, and avoid sexual related problems such as venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

In the process of educating the children through proverbs, gendered proverbs formed part and parcel of this exercise. Two common proverbs which were commonly used during this time was “*mphongo ya chiwala sichepa*”- meaning no matter how small a male grasshopper can be, it can perform its male duties. The other proverb which was commonly used was “*mamuna ndi kabudula amathela moyenda*” –which means a man is like a pair of short trousers, it gets worn out in the strange land. The underlying meaning of the two proverbs is about superiority of men and boys in society. Traditionally, the proverbs are used in Malawi society to teach young men and boys the spirit of being courageous, adventurous, people who take up challenges and taking up a leading position no matter how small they might be. In this process of teaching using proverbs, so many stories were narrated by the elders in trying to illustrate the profound meanings of the proverbs. With such teachings, boys grow up with such tough and leadership ideologies in mind. As can be noted here, proverbs are one tool for the socialization of boys and girls with respect to societal gender expectations (Kamwendo and Kaya 2016).

Writing on the issue of proverbs and their relevance, Malawian philosophers, Kaphagawani and Chidammodzi (1983) argue that it is through proverbs that community members are able to learn morals, traditional and society values. The two authors further argue that proverbs play an integral part in the normal everyday conversations across Malawian communities. Proverbs are commonly used as socialization tools in homes and initiation schools. The teachings in proverbial wisdom range from desirable citizenships, parenthood, motivation, inspiration and many more. Because of the recognition of the power of proverbs, the use of proverbs goes beyond homesteads and cuts across all levels of the education system, that is from primary schools all the way to higher education institutions. In religious settings, proverbs are also used extensively as a preacher’s tools to drive home spiritual messages (Mphande 2001). As such, proverbs have the potential to influence public thinking and behaviour. Malunga (2012) states that in traditional African societies, the wisdom that is contained in proverbs forms a powerful tool that can make great

contribution towards addressing some of the cultural, ethnic, moral and other dilemmas facing modern society.

Globally, hierarchical social relationships between men and women have been widely acknowledged in gender studies especially in African proverbs by many researchers such as (Amadiume 2015, Cassandra 2017, African Union 2010, United Nations Development Programme 2005, 2008). One is able to notice in Chichewa proverbs that one sex (the male sex) is considered to be superior whilst the other sex (the female sex) is treated as inferior. This unfair and demeaning hierarchization of men and women cuts across economic, political, social and other spheres. Language is used for delegitimizing and excluding others. In the same vein, language is used to delegitimize women and the girl child on one hand, and glorify men and the boy child on the other hand. As a result, we find gender-based inequalities and the lack of equity between men/boys and women/girls being reflected by and in the lexicon of a language as well as the way linguistic communication is carried out by men and women. In this way, conceptual spaces should be made for an exploration of the links between the discursive and non-discursive between the words, the practice and between the relation of power and domination that order the words and images that represent the words.

As countries embrace globalization with its economic underpinning in terms of knowledge production, the continued validation of Western paradigms at the expense of diverse traditions and systems of knowledge should be taken into account (Agrawal 1995). The argument being put forward is about the decolonization of people's minds in view of the failure to develop and use our own tools such as indigenous languages and indigenous epistemologies such as proverbs. Malunga (2012) argues that if used positively, African proverbs can help in addressing the negative face of African culture amidst the challenge of corruption, nepotism, favoritisms, tribalism and inequalities. However, based on their accumulated wisdom the issue of gender in proverbs has been overlooked and neglected. It is possible to romanticize proverbs as cultural assets and sources of pride and wisdom about ethnic identity. Just like in language in general, some studies have aimed at promoting and preservation of such folk proverbs without critically analysing their implications for gender equality debates. The current thesis, therefore, fills that gap by critiquing proverbs as sources of indigenous knowledge on gender equality/inequalities.

We problematize the notion of wisdom. What kind of wisdom is conveyed through Chichewa proverbs? Is it wisdom that has the potential to widen or minimize gender inequalities? From a CDA perspective ((Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2014; Fairclough and Wodak1997), proverbs are social texts. Use of proverbs is, therefore, a social practice. This social practice reflects and sometimes reinforces power, dominance and inequalities between men and women.

Within my area of specialization of the study of African languages, I became interested in the role of folklore in educating society as claimed by Banda and Morgan (2013). Fully aware of the claim that proverbs are storehouses of societal wisdom, I then started to ask questions like: What has this societal wisdom that is stored in indigenous language proverbs got to do with gender equality/inequality? Is this wisdom consistent with the drive to promote gender equality? Is gender equality something that Malawi and other African countries should be schooled about by the West, or can the indigenous knowledge systems be used as sources of inspiration to promote gender equality in Malawi and other African countries? In other words, I began to engage with the debates on the relevance and contribution of indigenous knowledge systems to the promotion of women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality especially in Malawi. I found this debate worth joining given the way indigenous knowledge had been ignored or sidelined as primitive.

1.4 Research problem

Although African proverbs form a foundation of cultural wisdom and values, they have also facilitated the transmission of ideas and values that are fragmented and contradictory to issues of gender inequality. Largely, African proverbs have been deemed as favorable sites that facilitate the transmission of ideas and values that perpetuate gender inequality in many African societies (Dogbevi 2007, Lakoff 2004). On the other hand, scholars such as Fassan (2006), have established that, some African proverbs promote gender equality and gender role complimentarily. Wisdom in proverbs is considered the absolute truths. As such, some major decisions in life are often taken based on truths that are inherent in proverbs. To what extent, then, are Chichewa proverbs instruments that either promote or hinder gender equality?

As indicated earlier, proverbs and gender are a vital component in African society's family organization and child development. Because of their wisdom-imparting nature that Chichewa proverbs reveal, many people, for example traditional leaders, religious leaders and society members continue to use the gendered proverbs consciously and unconsciously. Chichewa proverbs are used for the general socialization within homesteads, during initiation ceremonies, in preaching and counseling processes and in conflict management. More seriously, in Malawi, proverbs are part of school syllabus topics at primary, secondary and teacher training levels. The idea is to establish appropriate institutional spaces for communities and educators to provide guidance to socio-economic development through multiple forms of knowledge including indigenous knowledge forms and pedagogies.

1.5 Rationale for the study

In this study, I examined the connotations inscribed in Chichewa proverbs and establish how they may be instrumental in promoting or hindering gender equality in Malawi. One clear assumption of this study is that there is a possibility that some Chichewa proverbs are to subordinate women to men. However, as articulated by Malunga (2012) some of the wisdom in African proverbs forms a powerful tool that can make great contribution towards addressing most of cultural, ethnical, moral and other dilemmas facing modern societies. Malunga (2012) argues in contrast to scholarship that sees powerlessness in African proverbs and conceptualizes them as instruments that only promote gender inequality in society. In agreement with Sunderland (2006), Mills and Mullany (2011) argue that gender and language studies have a wide-ranging sphere of relevance with regard to gender equality issues that needs to be considered at its own right. Despite the early gains that were made by feminist movements and emancipation, gender equality still has not been achieved and many nations are grappling with gender inequality. Sunderland expresses that an understanding of gender and the way it influences the intrinsic value of local knowledge systems is critical to the understanding and interpretation of knowledge systems and how other groups may be discriminated in this process. This study assumed that there might be some Chichewa proverbs that have the potential to empower women and promote gender equality and equity contrary to some feminists' point of view, and indeed such proverbs do exist as discussed in Chapter 7. The marginalisation of the use of African languages in progressive

discussions on gender equity and inequality made scholars not see the value of using Chichewa proverbs in addressing gender roles in Malawi and other African countries.

1.6 Aim of the study

This research study aimed to document and conduct critical analysis on ways in which Chichewa proverbs are used and serve as instruments to promote gender equality/ inequality in the Malawian society.

1.7 Specific objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are

1. To establish historical and cultural background of Chichewa proverbs
2. To identify connotations inscribed in Chichewa proverbs
3. To explore implications of Chichewa proverbs in relation to gender equality
4. To document views of Malawian men and women regarding the use of Chichewa proverbs in relation to gender equality
5. To investigate how proverbs which promote egalitarian gender roles can be re-appropriated so that they can advance gender equality issues.

1.8 Research questions

1. What is historical and cultural background of the Chichewa proverbs?
2. If proverbs are considered the wisdom of all the people, what gender connotations are inscribed in Chichewa proverbs?
3. What are the implications of the inscribed gender meanings in proverbs in relation to gender equality?
4. How do Malawian men and women engage with proverbs in view of gender equality?
5. How can Chichewa proverbs that have the prospect of promoting gender inequality be re-appropriated?

1.9 Significance of the study

I noted that there had been some studies on Chichewa proverbs, and the application of proverbs to address societal challenges (see, for example, Malunga and Banda 2013, Mphande 2001, Matiki 1996). For example, in the study on Tonga proverbs, Mphande (2001) explored the use of

Tonga proverbs in preaching religious messages. Having come across some gendered Chichewa proverbs, I became fascinated with the idea of problematizing proverbs as fountains of knowledge. The motivation to undertake the current study grew from trying to find out this study discusses how gender relations are articulated and expressed through the use of proverbs amongst Chichewa-speaking people in Malawi. While other Malawian researchers such as Kayange (2014); Kaphagwani and Chidammodzi (1983) studied proverbs as a powerful indigenous socialization tool commonly used to educate, inspire, guide, warn people and solve conflicts in some Malawi communities. More recently, Malunga and Banda (2013) studied proverbs as instruments for enhancing organizational capacity building. The thesis represents the first study to explore the strategic link between Chichewa proverbs and promotion and/or hindrance to gender equality in Malawi. Proverbs (especially proverbs of the Tonga people of Malawi) have been studied from a theological point of view by Mphande (2001). Two Zambian authors (Banda and Banda 2016) have argued for the deployment of Chichewa (Chinyanja) in the teaching of academic writing. Prior to my study, no one had studied proverbs from a gender perspective.

Reading through literature available in Malawi, not much has been empirically done to document the gendered proverbs, bring to the awareness of people, and probably inform the policy. The area has suffered a conceptual poverty greatly. No research that I am aware of has been undertaken to interrogate what role Chichewa proverbs can possibly contribute towards improving efforts to redress gender issues such as gender parity, gender discrimination between men and women in society, issue of power relations and subordination of women and many more inequalities that exist in Malawi. The paucity of literature can be explained to the fact that proverbs and gender have not been considered as a problem in Malawi by either researchers or practitioners of change. This has led to the silence and a gap in knowledge on how Chichewa proverbs can be used as instruments for promoting or hindering gender equality. To this end, the current study breaks new ground in knowledge production regarding the link between Chichewa proverbs and gender equality. As the first Malawi doctoral study to consider proverbial dimensions of gender equality, the study is a response to the concern that in general, there is scarcity of studies on language and gender in Africa. In addition, this is the first Malawian study to consider gender from an indigenous knowledge perspective. The study therefore contributes to the knowledge translation

theories and/ models under which the utilization and application of research knowledge in particular contexts of practice has been discussed (see, for example, Sudsawad 2007).

As already mentioned, some scholars, especially feminist scholars of western orientation, have largely ignored to investigate the role of African proverbs in addressing gender inequality in specific geographical region and the people that inhabit it. That makes this study significant and relevant in the context of Malawi. This is a unique ground breaking study structured to address the need to document and appreciate the extent to which Chichewa proverbs of Malawi may promote or hinder gender equality. The study is grounded in a perspective that could shape the dynamics incorporating proverbs in IKS processes as a tool for redressing gender inequality in Africa and Malawi in particular. Beyond the claims and counter-claims by many scholars on the role of African proverbs in hindering gender equality, this study is an empirical analysis of the extent to which Chichewa proverbs can be used as instruments for understanding gender equality/ inequality in Malawi.

This study finds its relevancy in interrogating the what, why and how questions in the use of Chichewa proverbs as tools of hindering or promoting gender in/equality in Malawi. The what part shall be achieved through desktop analysis where documentation of gendered proverbs were sourced out to establish their historical and cultural background. I engaged with the knowledge holders to understand how they engage with the stereotypical proverbs. In addition, the researcher went further to establish if there are any efforts made by knowledge holders of Malawi to reconstructed the deemed negative proverbs to enhance gender equality aspirations. By doing so, the study addresses the existing gap on ‘how’ the knowledge holders (residents) of Zomba city engage with proverbs that promote egalitarian gender roles and what can be done with those proverbs carrying stereotypes connotations between men and women. By examining the extent to which Chichewa proverbs promote or hinder gender in/equality, this study is an empirical approach adding to the existing scholarship and debates on IKS, proverbs and gender in Africa.

This study is significant and contributes to the body of knowledge within the following grounds: Firstly, the fact that there is not much work has been done in Malawi specifically in area of gender and proverbs; this study is then significant as it fills such a gap in knowledge about gender and

proverbs in the context of indigenous knowledge systems. The knowledge produced in this study will contribute to current debates in a wide range of academic disciplines (such as Language Studies, Gender Studies, Development Studies and others). In Chapter 2 (section 2.6), I discuss the academic context of IKS and African indigenous language at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where the study was conceived and supervised.

In view of the fact that many policies fail to materialize since they are formulated from top to bottom, this study takes a bottom up strategy where the results from grass root level can inform policy makers. Guided by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2014), Reformist African Feminism (Arndt 2002) and the knowledge translation theory (Sudsawad 2007), this study addresses some of the shortcomings of gender as a social and cultural construct that is shaped and defined through proverbs and gender socialization. This study argues that proverbs within the context of IKS offer a new dimension of addressing issues of gender roles, equity and inequality in Africa. Therefore, this study offers new insights of using proverbs within IKS framework in addressing social ills associated with gender. In other words, knowledge gained from the current study could be used in policy formulation, or supporting already existing policies, or being used in gender activism.

1.10 Delimitations (scope) of the study

The first delimitation that comes out clearly in this study is that of border scope. Firstly, although Chichewa is a cross-border language spoken in countries like Mozambique and Zambia, and some parts of Zimbabwe (Kayambazinthu 1998). This is a case which study was strictly confined to selected speakers of Chichewa in Malawi only. Being a citizen of Malawi, I enjoyed the benefit of having a research context that was very familiar. So the study was confined to Malawi. Secondly, the study was conducted in Zomba Central only. The diverse ethnic composition of Zomba necessitated the choice of it. The metropolitan character enriched the data since it captures people from different ethnic groups, different social economic status, different religion and different level of education. Thirdly, although Malawi is a multilingual society, the study focused on Chichewa proverbs only. This posed to be delimitation on the choice of Chichewa language as compared to other local languages spoken in the context of the study. It is important to stress here that the study was conducted among the Chichewa speakers of Malawi and not among the

Chewa people of Malawi. The study did not solicit views from only people of the Chewa ethnic group but rather the study solicited views from Chichewa-speaking people, irrespective of whether they were of the Chewa ethnic group or not. As will be discussed Chapter 2, Chichewa is deeply entrenched as the national lingua franca and is also a compulsory language in all public schools. Chichewa happens to be the most highly developed of all Malawian indigenous languages.

Finally, another delimitation that was identified was that of the proverb texts to be used in the study. I made use of three texts. The main text used in this study is that authored by Chakanza (2001) with the title: *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja proverbs*. Chakanza's book was chosen on merit since is an anthology of 2000 Chinyanja (Chichewa) proverbs. No one in Malawi has ever compiled such a large compendium of Chichewa proverbs. To avoid any confusion regarding the title of the book and the aims of the study, I have to clarify on the issue of Chinyanja and Chichewa. The names refer to one language. Before the attainment of independence, the language use to go by the name Chinyanja. It was in 1968 that independent Malawi changed the name of the language to Chichewa, which happened to be one of the Chinyanja dialects. Beyond the borders of Malawi, the language has continued to be called Chinyanja (Kayambazinthu 1998).

The second book is that of Kumakanga (1975), *Nzeru za Kale*; and *Miyambi ya m'Chichewa* by Mlachila. The two extra books have been chosen because of two reasons: First, they include some few proverbs that Chakanza's text missed more specifically those that deal with sexual issues. Secondly, the two books contain the cultural and historical background of each specific proverb in there. I found it relevant since Chakanza (2001) did not include this important background information.

1.11 Limitations of the study

I embarked on the study with an already determined limitation in mind. Since this study is grounded within indigenous knowledge systems, I knew at the back of my mind that it needs to incorporate the participatory approach in data collection as one of the guidelines in IKS discipline. To this regard, data collection was conducted in Chichewa language and findings presented in English in line with the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) language of research policy. There is an anticipated limitation of losing the flavor and direct meaning of a proverb. In the process of

translating the proverbs from an indigenous language (Chichewa) to English, there might be some losses of both meanings and flavor. In every translation that is made to any language, there are risks of losing the meaning slightly because meaning in translation can never be maintained absolutely. The metaphorical expressions contained in the proverbs added to the challenge of translation since metaphors are meaningful within a particular language and environment or context.

The loss of meaning in proverbs was mitigated through a triangulation of translation. The researcher tried as much as possible to use different people to give the translations of different proverbs. This helped the researcher to compare the translations and settle for a meaning that is closer. The approach in this study is first give the literal English translation and secondly to explain the message and the contextual translation in which a particular proverb is used. Presumably, what can be lost in the process of translating a proverb is only the flavor and not the message.

1.12 Definition and clarification of key terms

In this introductory chapter, I find it imperative to clarify the key terms that have been used in the thesis. I also seize the opportunity to problematize the terms where necessary. Some of the terms, such as critical discourse analysis, gender and sex, are controversial and do not yield to simple and single definitions. It is against this background that in the current section, I define and clarify the following terms: critical discourse analysis, gender, sex, culture, indigenous knowledge systems, patriarchy, sustainable development, socialization and triangulation. I will address them in the order they are presented.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis has been used as both a theory (see chapter 4) and a method (see Chapter 3). For the purpose of the current thesis, I take CDA to be the study of language and textual practices, and the purpose being to illustrate relationships between language and power (dominance) and inequalities. CDA draws its tenets from a wide range of theorists including Karl Marx. CDA has a political agenda of exposing and resisting all forms of hegemony as reflected

in language and reinforced by language (Fairclough 2014, 2003, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

Gender

In some instances, the terms gender and sex have bred confusion among some people and this has led to a situation whereby some people tend to treat the two terms as being synonymous. Such a treatment of gender and sex as being synonymous is erroneous. In view of this confusing situation, I utilize the current section to unpack the difference between the two terms. I will start with the term gender. Different scholars have defined the concept of gender in different ways. For instance, Holmes and Meyer (2003) have defined gender as a socially constructed relationship and roles prescribed to men and women in society. In this thesis, however, I have adopted and worked with the definitions of gender as provided by the African Union. In the gender policy document of the African Union, gender has been defined as “the socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women, boys and girls, which give them unequal value, opportunities and life chances. Gender, also refers to typically masculine and feminine characteristics, abilities and expectations about how women should behave in society. These characteristics are time bound and changeable” (African Union 2009: 25). Gender differences are not by birth but one acquires them through socialization. On the other hand, sex is the biological state of being male or female. In other words, sex is not the same thing as gender. Holmes and Meyer (2003) clearly point out that gender is very different from sex, which is biologically determined.

Culture

This study borrows a definition provided by McElhinny (1995) who defines culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge systems, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other habits acquired by an individual in a particular society. Society’s culture, therefore, speaks to what people believe to be norms in terms of gender with its attributes such as masculinity and femininity.

Indigenous knowledge systems

To some researchers, the term indigenous knowledge systems is also known as local knowledge, folk knowledge, people’s knowledge, traditional wisdom and traditional science (Semali and

Kincheloe 2011, Mawere 2015, Ngulube 2016a, b). This study, therefore, uses the above mentioned concepts interchangeably.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the ideology that institutionalizes and legitimizes male dominance and superiority while promoting female subordination (Bell and Klen 2002). It is within the patriarchy ideology that cultural practices, attitudes, values and beliefs manifest themselves in power relations between men and women.

Sustainable development

The term development sounds an elusive concept that has received numerous definitions. Due to this situation, this study does not attempt either to propound a more precise definition. The study, however, adopts the definition by United Nations (2009). The United Nations (2009) defines sustainable development as the building communities so that all people can live comfortably without compromising the future. One of the mechanisms to achieve sustainable development is for the world to debate the role of gender equality and women empowerment. Gender equality featured in the now closed Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3 being to promote gender equality and empower women) and one of the current 17 Sustainable Development Goals focuses on gender. The aim of Goal number 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Socialization

Within society gender construct theories, lies gender role theory where boys and girls learn appropriate behavior and attitudes from their families and overall cultures within which they grow up. Bultler (1990) argues that a girl will be taught roles that are traditionally meant for girls. Such roles include cooking, cleaning the home premises, gathering firewood and caring for siblings. The boy child, on the other hand, will be socialized into roles that are meant for boys such as hunting, construction work and looking after domestic animals. Since gender refers to societal expectations for females, or males it should be expected that there will be behavioral differences between the two genders due to their social environment (Bultler 1990). These traditional ways are passed on from generation to generation and language and its tools such as metaphors, proverbs, songs, folktales, riddles and similes play a crucial role.

Triangulation

I have used the notion of triangulation in the current study. I have treated triangulation as “the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct” (Yeasmin and Rahman 2012: 156). The aim of triangulation is to increase the validity and credibility of findings. In Chapter 3, I discuss theory triangulation i.e. the use of critical discourse analysis, reformist African feminism and knowledge translation theory as the three theoretical lenses through the findings of the study are interpreted. The notions of data triangulation (ie getting data from different sources) and methodology triangulation are discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

1.13 Summary and conclusion

The chapter notes that IKS is a catalyst to sustainable development and that all aspects of IKS needs to be promoted as well. As such, many countries including Malawi are embarking on trying to tap from their indigenous knowledge systems in a way to accelerate their socio-economic and political processes. Within the frameworks of IKS, African languages have been identified as key factors in IKS processes and activities. It is a common sense that the promotion of African languages means the promotion of its tools such as proverbs. The chapter further observes that participation of all the stakeholders is a crucial factor since women comprise more than half the population of many nations. The chapter concludes that any aspiration to sustainable development strategies must take into account the issue of gender. From the preliminary literature in the chapter, it was observed that the wisdom in some African proverbs is a hindrance to gender equality advances. While to some extent identifications are there that some African proverbs may work towards promotion of gender equality and gender role complementarity hence the purpose of this study. This gives the significance of this study interrogate on Chichewa proverbs in trying to identify how they could serve as instruments for the promotion or non-promotion of gender equality.

1.14 Roadmap to the forth coming chapters

In this section, I present a summary of the contents of each chapter. Chapter 2 presents the relevant theoretical frameworks and the review of related literature. The theoretical frameworks

underscore nuanced understanding of IKS as an alternative perspective of knowledge production and epistemological framework. The chapter adopts the knowledge translation theory as one of the theories in trying to understand proverbs as a site for knowledge production in African context. Because of the shortcomings of the knowledge translation theory and that it could not explain all the gender dynamics in the use of proverbs, the chapter also presents the two other theories which are adopted to add to our understanding of gender inequality within the African context and the extent to which the proverbs abet or condemn gender inequality. Therefore, the chapter presents Critical Discourse Analysis along with the Reformist African Feminism. The second component of the chapter comprises the review of the related literature. The chapter notes that most of works produced by scholars contain narratives that corroborate, modify or rebut the claims made by some feminist scholars on how African proverbs serve as hindrances to gender equality.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of the study. The chapter gives a detailed account of the methodology and data collection techniques and how they were presented during the period of this study. Then Chapter 5 focusses on desk top analysis. This is where the proverbs sourced from three selected books are presented and discussed. The proverbs are placed within appropriate themes. The majority of the themes speak negatively about women. For example, women are depicted as evil and gossipers, and as people who lack decision-making skills. In addition, we have proverbs in this chapter that degrade women and categorize them as a subordinated group. Of course there are some proverbs that positively acknowledge women as providers of warmth, and another set of proverbs denounces men's bad actions or behaviour. The chapter is a mixed bag, but as mentioned earlier, the majority of the proverbs speak in favour of women.

Chapter 4 presents the research context. It is in this section where I discuss a detailed account of political, socio-economic and sociolinguistic landscapes of Malawi. While chapter 5 presents the findings from the desk which was carried out prior to field work. Chapter 6,7 and 8 is analysis and discussion of the findings . And finally chapter 9 is the summary of the findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction to the chapter

The chapter addresses two major issues, namely outlining the theoretical frameworks for the study, and secondly, reviewing the relevant literature. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical frameworks within which this study is grounded: critical discourse analysis, Reformist African Feminism and knowledge translation theory in section 3.1. Then follows section 3.2 in which I cover the review of related literature.

2.1 Theoretical frameworks and theory triangulation

In this study, I combine the use of three theoretical frameworks, namely the Knowledge Translation, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Reformist African Feminism respectively. This amounts to what is known as theory triangulation. This means the use of more than one theoretical framework in the study. By making use of more than one theory, I have been able to address the weaknesses that are associated with single-theory studies. The theories then come to the rescue each other in order to give the findings a benefit of increased validity and credibility. The ways in which the weaknesses of one theory is strengthened by the strength of the other and vice-versa, is the same way in which the triangulation of data collection methods built on each other to make the data rich and thick. More importantly, the use of more than one theory helped in the analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. The theories are therefore presented in the order according to how each theory illuminate the other.

2.1.1 Knowledge translation theory

Since the late 1960s, there has been increased attempts to critique and challenge western frameworks that ignore other ways of knowing. As a result, some scholars have come up with alternative approaches to the understanding of different ways of knowing and knowledge productions. Increasingly within African communities, refreshing critical voices are emerging to question the process of knowing and validating knowledge and disseminating it across nations and global spaces. Because of their complexity, lived realities require multiple readings, social

representations and understandings, the knowledge translation theory is presented as a tenet that recognizes multiple ways of knowing, knowledge production and value systems. Knowledge translation theory challenges the western frameworks that ignore the multiple ways of knowing, knowledge production, value systems including the experiences of men and women in their diverse cultures. In IKS, generation of knowledge starts with simple stories as the base units of knowledge (Smylie 2003). As already articulated, Chichewa proverbs as part of oral literature constitute such this body of knowledge.

The notion of knowledge translation and knowledge translation theories and/or models has been popularized in the health research and professional practice domains. In these domains, there has also been calls for the application of research findings to domains of practice. The thinking is that research should influence or guide actions in the domain of practice (Sudsawad 2007). To this end, various theories and/or models of knowledge translation have evolved. The field of knowledge translation has generated a lot of literature and research, I do not attempt to cover all theories and/or models of knowledge translation, but rather to pick up some key components of knowledge translation and apply them to current thesis. Whilst knowledge translation has been heavily popularized in the health research and health practice sectors, I argue that the common denominator of the whole exercise, which is the application of research to theory, is something that cannot and should not be confined to the health research and health practice sectors. All areas of research and practice should be able to benefit from knowledge translation.

Sudsawad (2007), in her very extensive review of the literature on knowledge translation, has noted that a number of theories and models of knowledge translation do exist. She observes that despite the plethora of such theories and models of knowledge translation, not everything can be reduced to the desire to have research informing practice. It is about knowledge dissemination that leads to knowledge utilization. Central to any doctoral thesis is the idea of producing and disseminating knowledge. Whilst it is clear that knowledge is produced in the course of a doctoral study, what may not be explicit in the use of the knowledge. Who uses the knowledge, and where, and how? Is it possible to get evidence of use of research-generated knowledge?

I now turn to a discussion on types of knowledge use (which is basically knowledge translation). Some scholars (such as Beyer 1997 and Estabrooks 1999) have come up with three types of knowledge use, namely: conceptual use of research knowledge, instrumental use of research knowledge, and symbolic use of research knowledge. Let us elaborate and unpack these three types of knowledge use. Conceptual use of research knowledge is said to occur we use research findings for our own general enlightenment. This may result in the way we think about something but may not necessarily result in the change in our personal actions. For example, a person reading the findings of the current doctoral study may learn something new about gender issues as reflected in proverbs, but he/she may not proceed to use such knowledge in his/her work domain. What is crucial here is that the mind registers or recognises existence of new knowledge (Beyer 1997, Estabrooks 1999).

In the case of the instrumental use of knowledge, a person takes in the new knowledge and proceeds to utilize the new knowledge in his/her area of profession practice. This is what Beyer (1997) calls the application of research findings to a particular professional practice. It is what Estabrooks (1999) refers to as the concrete application of research. It translates into usable forms of knowledge. In the case of the current doctoral thesis, one can think of the question: Are there professionals or workers whose practice is going to be affected or changed in some way by the findings of the current study? It is a difficult question since one cannot tell easily but one always hope that the findings would be usable in some area of practice (see Chapter 10 of the thesis).

The symbolic use of knowledge happens when the use of knowledge serves as a tool to legitimize or oppose to certain practices or policies (Beyer 1997, Estabrooks 1999). Larsen (1980) does caution us regarding knowledge use. These are four possible ways that people can react to any available research knowledge. First, the acquired knowledge may be modified to relate well to the local context. The second option is that the acquired knowledge may be partially used. Third, the knowledge may be used in an alternative way. Fourth, it has to be accepted that in some cases, research knowledge may not be picked up for use at all. The knowledge just goes unnoticed or unused. Even if the knowledge is noticed, no one uses it in a field of practice.

Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) argue that knowledge is produced through collaborative processes and that no single group, community or nation can justifiably claim ownership of all knowledge. The authors contend that all people have the capacity to produce knowledge that is relevant to their own communities. This is why in African, academic circles and political projects are seeking to rupture and deconstruct the Euro-American hegemonic science paradigms that denigrate the Africa's knowledge production and ways of knowing. The knowledge translation theory challenges the Western frameworks that ignore the multiple ways of knowing, knowledge production, value systems which includes the experiences of men and women in their diverse cultures. It is very important to realize and appreciate the differences in knowledge production between indigenous and Western knowledge systems. This is in terms of the ways in which people come to know and the ways in which knowledge is understood and transferred from one generation to another. Jacobson, Butterill and Goering (2003) argue that much as cultural principles and processes guide Western knowledge, the indigenous knowledge operates under its own principles and processes that are internally and collectively agreed upon. The processes of knowledge production in indigenous knowledge systems are totally different to those of the western culture. For example, in western culture, knowledge production goes through processes of systematic and scientifically tested, objectivity and based on merit. While in African culture knowledge is not only viewed in term of such objectivity processes but allows some subjectivity. However, this does not devalue indigenous knowledge systems but rather strengthens it as it allows collaboration and participation of knowledge holders.

Like the scholars above, Jacobson et.al (2003) contend that to have a meaningful understanding of the intent of knowledge translation, it is important to clearly identify the reference points between knowledge and how it is translated in the contexts where it is situated. The implicit goal of knowledge translation therefore is to contextualize the knowledge and how it can improve the wellness of the knowledge users. The knowledge translation theory is seen as a dialogical and interactive process where users and creators of knowledge come together during all stages of the research processes (Smylie et.al 2003). This multiple entry point of view provides a more active engaging model of knowledge production and translation.

Unlike in the Western perspective where knowledge production is only viewed in terms of being scientifically proven, within the frameworks of IKS, generation of knowledge starts with simple

stories as the base units of knowledge. With an integration of the values and processes described in the stories contained in Chichewa proverbs, it culminates into wisdom. This process can be viewed as cyclical as wisdom keepers in turn generate new stories as a way of disseminating what they know. Smylie et al. (2003) observed that traditionally, local forms of knowledge construction are interwoven with social, ethnic, political and kinship structures. This is to reinforce individual and collective well-being and to ensure the protection and sustainability of the traditions, beliefs and values. This gives a better instrumentation in understanding the collectiveness in the construction of Chichewa proverbs and how the Malawi traditional, beliefs and values within the proverbs are sustained by knowledge holders.

Furthermore, the interface between knowledge translation and policy is worth considering in this current study. Hanney et al (2003) regard knowledge translation and policy as operating under four possible scenarios. The first scenario is that of consistency between research findings and policy. That is, there is a one-to-one fit between research findings and policy. The second scenario is the degree of influence of research on a policy agenda setting. The third scenario is the degree of influence of research on actual implementation of policy. The principles in Knowledge translation theory are therefore used in this study to establish the extent to which the Malawi gender policy has been built on the basis of available research and knowledge. However, because this theory under discussion is silent in terms of knowledge production and gender, the study also deploys the critical discourse analysis to aid as an analytical tool within social contexts. This is because at the bottom of what critical discourse analysis does are issues of power, hegemony, domination and inequality.

2.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

As I initially mentioned in Chapter 1 (see section 1.12), the study employed critical discourse analysis as one of the theoretical frameworks. Critical discourse analysis stems from a critical theory of language that regards the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced, contested and how different interests are served and sustained. The Lancaster School of CDA is one of the leading brands of CDA, and the champion of this school of thought is Fairclough (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2014). Every theoretical framework is known for its basic tenets, and it is to these that I now turn.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-280) provide some eight fundamental principles upon which CDA is founded, and these can be outlined as follows:

- i. CDA addresses social problems, and the current study focuses on gender-based problems.
- ii. CDA recognises power relations as being discursive.
- iii. Discourse constitutes society and culture, and is constituted by them.
- iv. Discourse does ideological work. As such, discourse reproduces society's unequal relations.
- v. Discourse is historical and is connected to the present.
- vi. Relations between text and society are mediated.
- vii. Discourse is a form of social action.
- viii. CDA is interpretive and explanatory.

Critical discourse analysis, therefore, provides the social-historical conditions that govern the processes that the texts/discourses reveal by pointing out how discourses are implicated in relation to those in power in society. Critical discourse analysis can be employed as a theory to examine how social power abuse, dominance, identities and knowledge systems that perpetuate inequalities are constructed through written, visual, and spoken texts. CDA is further interested in the production and consumption of such texts. In the case of the current study, CDA is an analytical tool whose purpose is to assist me in understanding the underlying meanings in Chichewa proverbs. As Gross-berg (1991:134) observes, "texts reveal their significance, not on the surface of images and representations, but rather in the complex ways that they produce, transform and shape meaning structure". Talbot (2003) explains that since proverbs are made out of language, they are openly used to pre-determine gender relations in relation to power, spatial parameters and gender roles. Through the manipulation of language, men have managed to create an ideology that defines their supremacy as the natural owners of the intellect, and as people with rationality and power to rule.

Although Critical Discourse Analysis has been used by many researchers as an analytical tool for texts, some inconsistencies and shortcomings have been pointed out. Some critics have brought

to light the problems or shortcomings within the epistemology and theoretical framework, most particularly the instrumentation of the theory and the failure to establish an objective standpoint for power relations in African societies. The power relations in CDA is only attached to how powerful people control communication with no consideration that power is not always exercised in obvious abusive acts of dominant group members but may be enacted in a myriad taken for granted actions of everyday life by ordinary people. For example, Chapter 8 of this thesis reveals that even in a patriarchal society, there are situations when men come under some constraints. Chapter 8 demonstrates through its findings that not all members of a powerful group (men in our case) remain powerful in all contexts at all times.

Above all, CDA has been criticized for its overgeneralization of dominant group members. However, not all powerful people produce domineering, abusive and sexist acts. Critical discourse analysis, in conclusion, deals with inequalities. Racism, gender and colonialism offer spaces within which inequalities can be detected. CDA is interested in social problems, and gender inequalities therefore naturally fit into the concerns of CDA. It is also worth mentioning that CDA by its very nature is multidisciplinary. The multidisciplinary is reflected in the current doctoral study since it draws on Gender Studies, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Language Studies (through proverbs). This is by no means the final scope of the relevance of the current study. The relevance of the current doctoral thesis can extend other disciplines (beyond the three disciplines mentioned above). The current study therefore tries to consolidate this through analyzing the proverbs with the aim of showing how both the elite and low status people interact with them in relation to gender equality in ways which Fairclough's (2003) theory failed to explore. Because of such shortcomings, the study therefore deploys the Reformist African Feminists' approach which the researcher finds relevant to explain some of society gender inequalities in a holistic and wider perspective. African feminisms try to fill the gaps that knowledge translation theory together with critical discourse analysis could not offer.

Whilst CDA did lay the initial ground for the issue of power, it is advisable to interrogate African gender issues in the light of social realities, context and its different complexities. The fundamental issue is that challenges that women and men experience cannot and should not be

universalized. This is because gender dynamics differ in different geographical contexts and chronological periods. Any serious scholarship of gender in African realities needs to raise questions about prevailing concepts and theoretical approaches. The architecture and furnishing of gender in CDA have been distilled largely from Eurocentric's and other Western gender ideologies. It is because of such shortcomings identified in CDA that the researcher deploys other frameworks as discussed in sections 2.1.3 below. The African feminism used takes care to delineate those concerns that are peculiar to African situations and to African women. African feminism review and reject dominant narratives that generalize and essentialise the condition of African women, men and children and seek awareness of specific context, cultures and peoples.

2.1.3 Reformist African Feminism

Reformist African Feminism is a reaction and response to the West-oriented or Eurocentric brand of feminisms. Whilst feminism is a response to the domination, hegemony and abuse of power by men under patriarchy, it does not follow that women's concerns are the same across all contexts in the world. As already indicated, the experiences of African women under patriarchy do not always match the experiences of non-African women. African women have unique challenges. Chilisa and Ntseane (2003) argue that African feminism challenges the universalized western gender theories and employ post-colonial, indigenous and African feminist approaches to reveal local stand points that express girls'/women's agency and resistance to often contradictory forms of patriarchal oppression. Focusing on western perspectives only may lead to distortions and misrepresentation of women as homogenous monolithic group without diversity of experiences. Compelled by the fluidity and complexity of gender, no single theory can fully explain the dynamics in it. This has led to the birth of African feminisms as alternative ways which aim at getting to the bottom of African gender relations together with other factors that sustain the problems that other disadvantaged groups face. For instance, Ogunyemi (1996) discusses gender inequality from the angle of African womanism.

As opposed to CDA, which is more concerned about patriarchy and power, the reformist African feminism expands the inequality in terms of being a woman or a man in African context. This is reflected in chapter 6 where Chichewa proverbs sustains the construction of hegemonic masculinity/femininity between men and women of Malawi. The background to the issue of

womanism is about the family in African contexts and distinctive human relations that go with that. Traditionally, in the African context, women are mothers and wives to men. This means a woman has to be married and be known by the husband's name. Having babies is one of the most prestigious and respectable outcomes in the African context of marriage. From the African ways of knowing, a woman who is not married and let alone without a child is regarded as a child. Being a woman in African societies is different from what it entails to be a woman in Western societies. Ogunyemi (1996) argues that it is these marital coupling and pride of being a wife, procreation and lactation that usually form part of sexual divisions and probably to some extent a genesis to gender inequalities. In Malawi it is also imperative that the core business of a desirable wife/mother is to take care of the husband and children while the husband attends to technical issues such as construction and providing for the family. Women are also proud to carry their responsibilities as wives.

Oyewumi (1997) argues that the concept of a woman or rather *womanism* is a fundamental factor for social categorization in African cultures. A significant issue of concern to some African feminists like Ogunyemi (1996), Oyewumi (1997) just to mention a few, is the place and role of a woman in African societies. While writing about Oyo-Yoruba society of Nigeria, Oyewumi (1997) shares her views on social stratification. Oyewumi (1997) argues in terms of seniority and chronological age difference as another aspect and source of inequality. Oyewumi (1997) argues that although chronological age is universal and not as an African aspect only, in African societies, this forms a capstone and presumably armed with alleged distinctions between individuals. What matters in Oyo-Yoruba is the chronological age. The older an individual is, the more the power he or she holds. Oyewumi (1997) points out that the issue of inheritance and entitlements in Oyo – Yoruba society does not necessarily conform to gender aspects but rather to age.

While Ogunyemi (1996) and Oyewumi (1997) attempt to conjoin gender issues and African indigenous knowledge systems with the African womanism approach, their writings are however being criticized of being so naive on how patriarchy and its structures are interwoven and pivotal to gender ideologies that place men and women in different positions. Although this is the case, there are other gender dynamics experienced within this society. This is where we see women

marginalizing and discriminating against fellow women. For example, this happens when older women discriminate against young women and when mother in-laws discriminate against daughter in-laws.

It is argued by some researchers in recent theories of post-modern thought (e.g. Arndt 2002) that no power is monolithic and exists in isolation from other social structures and traditions. It is because of such complexities that this study finds shortcomings in the African womanism theory as it fails to pin point and explain in a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective way to unpack the root cause of inequalities that exist African societies. Given the enormous diversity of the African continent, it can be difficult to characterize and generalize African gender experiences and dynamics in terms of womanism. With an understanding that gender is socially constructed, the social category and challenges of women and men cannot be fundamentally universal. Given such fluidity manner of gender, African feminism does not pin down gender relations to one aspect only, but rather discusses them in a more holistic manner while considering issues of appropriateness, positionality, inter-sectionality and applicability of the proverbs. There is need to tease out gender inequalities in the light of social realities and its complexities. By adopting the African feminism, the question of subjectivity has been posited as an alternative as it acknowledges multiplicity, contradictions and fluidity. Individuals, through talk and various actions, situate themselves particular discourses and take up various subject positions.

The concerns of the reformist African feminism are based on two premises. The first concern is on how patriarchal structures along with individual patriarchy-molded attitudes, norms and conventions both modern and old discriminate against women. Within the reformist arguments, men are not only accomplices but also products of patriarchal patterns of thought (Arndt 2002). Beyond an epistemology of patriarchy, culture and power, African feminism is characterized by ongoing process of self-definition and redefinition. It is a counter-canon to certain tendencies of mainstream western feminisms. It encompasses various and sometimes oppositional strands which inform each other and create a reflexive internal dialogue. African feminists are in constant negotiation with elements of custom and tradition and their goal is to emancipate women, girls and some vulnerable men. Within the complexities of patriarchy and analogous to men's attitudes, the behavior of some women is also criticized. Arndt (2002) argues that the Reformist African

Feminism also acknowledges women who share the responsibility for the criticized behaviour of oppressing fellow women. The Reformist African Feminism also focuses on sexist language within societies. Lakoff (2004) argues that in male dominated societies, language patterns are interpreted as manifestations of patriarchal social order that institutionalize and sustain male domination.

The reformist theory argues for the reform of the language and its tools so that in the end linguistic sexism is eradicated. There is an attempt to free language from harmful sexist words and expressions. To achieve this goal, for instance, the reformist feminists geared their efforts to providing a set of neutral and non-offensive alternatives to sexist usages, such as ‘chairperson’ instead of ‘chairman’ (Sadiq 2003). The reformist theory also stresses accuracy, neutrality, truth and fairness in language with respect to both masculine and feminine words and expression (Sadiq 2003). The principles underlying the RAF has been criticized though by some researchers. One criticism leveled against the reformist theory on language use is that reforming the language does not translate into a reformed society. Cameroon (1992) notes that reformist language actions are ineffectual given that people can say that which they do not mean. Cameroon argued that people can use gender fair language but in their own actual practices, they can be abusive and sexist. In other words, it does not logically follow that if someone uses non-sexist language, then they are non-sexist in their own deeds.

This study find the theory still relevant in the analysis of the African proverbs. Unlike in CDA where power is discussed in a general mode without considering that power does not exist in isolation but from social structures and traditions. The Reformist African feminism in this study will be used as analytical tool to understand power and agency of Malawian women themselves, together with their lived experiences to produce knowledge that is context relevant. The issues of *appropriateness, positionality, intersectionality* and *applicability* are always a major concern in any theory application. Given the fluidity manner of gender, values, beliefs and traditions in many African traditions, AF does not pin down gender relations to one aspect only, but rather discusses it in a more holistic manner. African Feminism is used as an alternative way which aims at getting to the bottom of African-gender relations together with other factors that sustain the problems for example in and other disadvantaged groups face illuminating their cause and consequences. With reference to Chichewa proverbs as Malawis societal valuable wisdom used

update to socialize, educate, inspire, warn, counsel and used to solve conflicts, the reformist African feminism is an ideal.

The approach of the Reformist African Feminism is that of negotiating with patriarchy traditions and the possibility to reformation of the criticized society considering Malawian men as partners who may also bring change. Nnaemeka (2004) coined the term nego-feminisms to speak to the tensions and aspirations of African feminisms of compromise, contending with multiple aspects of patriarchy and dealing with it in an African way. Nnaemeka (2004) argued in her Nego-feminism that although there is a general consensus among all feminist theories that women are a disadvantaged group, any serious scholarship on the place of gender must raise questions about other prevailing theoretical approaches within a specified context. This is because social structures would not exist without human willingness, and conscious or unconscious participation. This will help in avoiding sparking fireworks that may work imposingly to gender equality advances.

It is imperative therefore for researchers to apply constant attempts to update language by reconstructing the gender ideologies contained in instruments such as proverbs in a specific way without disturbing the community itself. It is essential to reflect the cultural dynamics in our research efforts while taking into consideration the fact to provide purpose and meaning to people's needs. Because indigenous knowledge systems such as proverbs and the wisdom embedded in it is generated in the immediate context of the livelihoods of people, a dynamic entity should undergo constant modifications as the needs of the communities' change.

2.2 Review of related literature

The review of literature comprises the following sections: indigenous knowledge systems (section 3.2.1), historical and cultural backgrounds of African proverbs (section 3.2.2), proverbs and gender construction (section 3.2.3), patriarchy in proverbs (section 3.2.4), proverbs and the control of spatial parameters and gender roles (section 3.2.5), African

proverbs and women objectification (section 3.2.6), profligacy and multiple sexual relationships (section 3.2.7), proverbs that silence women (section 3.2.8), proverbs and gender role complementarity (section 3.2.9). proverbs and women agency and empowerment (section 3.2.10) and summary and conclusion to the chapter (section 3.2.11). Reading through literature available, there is limited literature on African indigenous languages especially on how African languages are used to promote or hinder gender equality. This also affects the availability of scholarly studies with focus on ways in which African proverbs can promote or hinder gender inequality. Existing sparse literature focuses on a few issues related to the topic as presented in the paragraph above and which are presented as headings in this literature review section.

2.2.1 What entails indigenous knowledge systems

Different scholars have defined the concept of indigenous knowledge systems differently. This is based on different contexts and views according to the specific disciplines to which scholars belong. This doctoral study, however, adopts the definition offered by Briggs and Sharp (2004) because of its inclusiveness. The two authors conceptualize IKS to be whatever the African masses in their specific cultural environments consider to be important to their cultural livelihood and authentic expression of themselves. Briggs and Sharp (2004) argue further that indigenous knowledge systems encompass all grassroot community based experiences, beliefs and values that are condensed into knowledge. IKS has been identified as one of the catalysts for sustainable development. Individuals and organizations are beginning to turn their attention to exploring how indigenous knowledge and institutions could contribute to more culturally appropriate and sustainable development. A growing number of scholars (e.g. Munyaradzi 2016, Jegede 2011, Mosha 2011, Teffo 2011, Owuor 2007) argue that the people of Africa lost the right to claim that they could function as competent human beings when, through colonial experience, they underwent the indoctrination required by western modernity. Very often, peoples' capabilities and indigenous ways of doing things are ignored. In this regard, the cultural products of the West, including Western science, are able to claim compelling primacy and universal validity only because of their congenital relationship with the political throne and global power.

Kgoroadira and Kaya (2012) argue that with the coming of Western cultures and ideologies during colonialism, African indigenous knowledge systems became marginalized and were

considered primitive and unscientific. As a result, there has been a disturbing distortion of African cultural values and the marginalization of Africa's contribution to the global knowledge pool. This has resulted in Africa being considered as a region in the world where foreign development paradigms dominate development processes. Africa has been turned into a consumer of knowledge(s) of other parts of the world and little is done to turn Africa into a respectable producer and exporter of knowledge (Prakash 2009). Munyaradzi (2015) argues that with the exception of a few countries such as South Africa (Teffo 2011) and Ghana, the majority of African countries have no policies to protect their indigenous knowledge systems. South Africa's Department of Science and Technology has established the National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office as well as the Ministerial Advisory Committee on IKS. The Committee, among other things, is tasked with affirming, promoting and protecting South African IKS (Teffo 2011). Due to the lack of policy frameworks, negative exploitation and stealing of African IKS goes on. Within the spirit of the African Renaissance, African countries have to come up with strategic plans to protect Africa's indigenous knowledge systems (Munyaradzi 2015, Saurombe 2016, Msuya 2007). With specific reference to the SADC region, Saurombe (2016) has pointed out that the lack of protection of IKS is a challenge that requires a regional approach; and it is in that spirit that a regional policy (SADC policy) for IKS and legal instruments for the protection of IKS have been called for.

Prakash (2009) argues that there has been a paradigm shift in concepts, processes and products associated with the production of the so-called scientific and modern knowledge. The realization of the importance of IKS as a stepping-stone and foundation to new knowledge has been embraced by many nations globally. IKS as grass-root community experience is a critical factor and valuable resource in improving peoples' understanding of developmental issues which result into sustainable development. Contrary to some perceptions of western ideologies regarding the baseless and unfounded nature of IKS, it can be argued that IKS goes beyond solving problems within communities but also helps in promoting acceleration of economic and social development in various aspects.

Thabo Mbeki, former president of South Africa, revived and popularized the notion of the African Renaissance in 1998 at a conference held in Johannesburg where he called for the rebirth of Africa

(Cossa 2015). Mbeki argued that the African Renaissance was the way forward of reclaiming and redefining Africa in its own context by using locally available resources and knowledge systems (Cossa 2015). Mbeki further pointed out that the Eurocentric view of producing and validating knowledge continues to colonize, westernize and politically construct Africa despite it being independent. For example, African traditional medicines were seen as non-scientific within the Eurocentric lenses. This is one entity that has been subjected to Eurocentric bias; a justification for domination and the silencing of the African voice, as well as a reflection of the complex interactions between Europe and Africa.

Melkote and Steeves (2001) deplore the thinking behind many Western ideologies within which the African human mind is treated as *tabula rasa*. *Tabula rasa* is Latin phrase often translated as a blank slate or the absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals (Springer 2014). Contrary to the idea of *tabula lasa*, the African, just like any other person in other parts of the world, possess immense knowledge of their environment. With the knowledge being produced within communities the people use to relate to other knowledge frameworks such as those of Western knowledge. Living in and from the riches and variety of complex ecosystems, they have an understanding of the properties of plants and animals.

As mentioned previously in this doctoral thesis, proverbs are said to be containers or reservoirs of cultural heritage. In other words, proverbs are regarded as reservoirs of societal knowledge, expertise and wisdom. One can therefore take proverbs to be some kind of manuals of life since proverbs tell people what is worth doing as well as what is not worth doing. As such, a person who uses proverbs in his/her speech is held in high esteem, and is taken to be a man or woman of wisdom. Such a person commands a lot of respect. It is against this background that proverbs are highly treasured in Africa and elsewhere since they educate, warn, counsel and/or guide society (Grant and Asimeng-Boahene 2006, Banda and Morgan 2013, Malunga 2009, Malunga 2012, Mphande 2001). It is within this context that proverbs play a critical role in the socialization and development of the African child. In this respect, proverbs address not only the child but also parents as well and other care givers.

Whilst recognizing proverbs as sources of societal wisdom and knowledge, I should also recognize and appreciate that some proverbs can contradict or cancel each other out. In other words, proverbs offer contested wisdom. Basically, this means that the wisdom should be open to scrutiny and critique. What this requires from any user of proverbs is the need to be critical and open-minded towards the meaning and relevance of any proverbs. This should not be surprising since even with laws, charters or conventions, they too have to be subjected to scrutiny and critique. Wisdom that is not open to scrutiny can be dangerous and unhelpful since no piece of wisdom is applicable to all situations that life offers.

There is no doubt that proverbs are carriers of wisdom, but in the case of African proverbs, there are some challenges with regard to the recognition and acceptance of such wisdom. Since Africa has undergone a number of disempowering and humiliating experiences such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, indigenous African knowledge(s) and wisdom tend to be down played and relegated. It is as if Africans have no wisdom worth presenting to the world at large. This situation is well captured by Malunga (2012: 3) who observes that “since in the modern world knowledge has traditionally flowed from the global North to the global South, this wealth of knowledge in African proverbs and folktales has not been given a chance”. The tendency has been for the global North to provide answers to the world’s problems. But is the global North the only provider of answers and/or solutions to the challenges that the world faces? For example, the world today faces a number of challenges linked to children; for example, abuse of children by other children and adults, loss of respect for elders by children, involvement of children in drug and substance abuse and other forms of crime. Today we have charters, conventions, constitutions, policies and other mechanisms that aim at guiding and protecting children as well as those who look after children. Many of these instruments have come from the global North. As such, the global South seems to be a recipient of this wisdom from the North. But is the South deficient in wisdom and knowledge about child socialization, guidance and protection? In this thesis, I argue that Africa is not deficient in wisdom. Since times immemorial, African societies have always guided and protected their children. Most of Africa’s indigenous wisdom and knowledge remain undocumented, and thus not accessible to the outer world.

Furthermore, the education systems in Africa are largely replicas of Western education systems, and as a consequence, indigenous African knowledges sit on the peripheral. Such African education systems contribute to the invisibility of African indigenous wisdom and knowledge. It is as if Africa has no wisdom and knowledge worth presenting to the world. The current doctoral thesis recognizes proverbs as important tools in terms of how African societies educate and socialize their children. The proverbs provide the cultural perspectives on children and their development. The blurb of Chakanza's (2000) collection of Chinyanja (Chichewa) proverbs makes a bold declaration that "since wisdom does not get 'rusty', the old proverbial heritage is still relevant even in this modern age". This treasure of wisdom is passed on from generation to generation. It is wisdom that has been tried and tested over generations. Of course, new proverbs do come up all the time since culture and society are not static. The fact that a proverb is old or relatively new does not dilute its wisdom-imparting capacity. In the current era, sometimes there is a tendency to dismiss the cultural wisdom. Such dismissal is, for example, embedded in the proverb "*tsabola wakale sawawa*" (old pepper does not carry bitter taste). The proverb dismisses the utility of wisdom that is carried in proverbs.

Malunga (2012) cautions us that Africans have generally tended to celebrate western wisdom at the expense of local wisdom and knowledge. That is not to say that there is no wisdom in non-African wisdom, but rather one has to seriously question the abandoning of one's own culture in favour of a foreign one. One only reclaims that which has been lost. In the case of Africans, they lost part of their heritage or have had part of their heritage devalued by slavery, colonialization, apartheid and other forms of subjugation. As a consequence, some Africans have lost pride in their traditional names, whilst others have abandoned traditional dances and ceremonies and rituals, and others have developed very negative attitudes to their own mother tongues. Some Africans regard anything African to be backward, primitive and detrimental to progress. Such Africans have abandoned their cultures and languages. Unfortunately for such Africans, they have not been able to be fully absorbed and accepted into the so-called progressive world in that they are neither in this camp (African camp) nor in the other camp (imitators of the West). It would appear that cultural decolonization remains incomplete. It is against this background that Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) has talked about coloniality in the post-colonial era. The continued coloniality of culture needs positive action and it is within this context that the notion of *reclaiming our*

heritage becomes relevant. Through the African Renaissance, Africans hope to reclaim what they had lost. They hope to revive, renew, restore, rejuvenate or rekindle the lost and despised African cultural heritage.

The African Renaissance (Makgoba et al 1999) therefore aims at rescuing Africans from decay and/or self-destruction. Africa has to face the new world, and should proceed to embrace the so-called modernity without losing its cultural heritage. One should never enter the modern age of globalization from a position of weakness i.e. without a strong cultural base. The African Renaissance is therefore a rebellion against the tendency to devalue or downplay or trivialize African heritage. The decolonization of the mind (Wa Thiongo 1986) calls for practical steps to restore the rightful place of African heritage in which Chichewa proverbs which is the focus of this thesis forms part of the African heritage.

2.2.2 Historical and cultural background of African proverbs

Indigenous people have traditional methods and practices which they use in their daily activities such as songs, stories, legends and folktales. More prominently, African traditions are well known in using proverbs in their speeches as a sign of being wise. Goldberg (2016) has stated that tracing the origin of proverbs has proven to be futile and tiring without proper answers. Airing out his sentiments about the origins of proverbs, Goldberg (2016) lamented that it takes a lot of energy and sometimes many phone calls to track down the origins of a single proverb. In the end, the answer one gets might be ‘we just don’t know’ (Goldberg 2016). Probably one may hypothesize that there was a limitation in the phone call methodology used by Goldberg. The methodology limited him in getting a clear answer since most of the people are sceptical when it comes to answering questions through phone calls. As Goldberg (2016) used phone calls to reach out to his participants, probably the knowledge holders had some reservations and did not want to speak to a stranger, let alone someone that they could not see. Conducting phenomenology study requires participatory approaches in knowledge production.

The proverbs are regarded as a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of being one of the custodians of people’s wisdom and philosophy of life. The question about historical cultural backgrounds of African proverbs and what would constitute a proverb, has

occupied the minds of many contemporary philosophers and researchers including myself. Proverbs are the analytical tools of thought. When thought is lost, it is proverbs that are used to search for it (Hussein 2005). From the earliest times, African proverbs have been used to convey important messages. It is believed that such sayings come from the wise and only the wise understand them. Because of such communal reliance, as there seem to be a lot of emphasis on particular issues such as hard working, the importance of treating others kindly, and the importance of respecting and obeying the elders, proverbs are rated highly in African traditions. As simple statements with deep meaning, proverbs are guidelines for individual, family, village and society behavior. This is built upon real life experiences and observations over a longer period.

A challenge has arisen for contemporary African researchers for two main reasons. Primarily, is the lack of an indigenous written philosophical tradition in Africa. With an exception of few historical environments such as Egypt and Ethiopia, there was no existing tradition of writing of African ideas that could be explored and developed in the early civilization days (Gyekye 1996). Africa is one such a continent whose peoples and cultures have been denigrated and received less appreciation by scholars. There is no good reason to suppose that the lack of written sources implies the absence of indigenous African philosophies. The lack of indigenous written philosophies and heritage mostly led to some contemporary researchers to believe that African philosophy is of less value and that there is yet to come a good one. This has led to a situation whereby proverbs are being abandoned and less used by the so-called modern people (Gyekye 1996: xxiii).

Secondly, as many people started receiving westernized education, the nature of African thinking became so westernized that some philosophers and researchers found it of no importance to focus on African heritage and culture. Over the years, in various African contexts, proverbs have become a language tool mostly associated with the elderly and the grey haired who pride themselves in the knowledge production and eloquence of these proverbs. While Africa has many languages, proverbs offer them a common ground. Some African proverbs state facts from people's history, traditional, customs and practices while other proverbs express philosophical

thoughts, beliefs and values about life in general. Malunga and Banda (2004:2) point out that the same proverb may recur in similar forms in other African languages and societies.

Proverbs come up in a wide range of situations that express happiness, sadness, warning someone off, giving someone blessings, in rituals and many more too numerous to mention here. Goldberg (2016) argues that, although much has changed since 1969 that some researchers have embarked on writing about African proverbs, this oral African literature and heritage remains a paradox. Finnegan (2012) explains that while it is beyond doubt that technology has transformed access to scholarly information about proverbs as Africa's heritage, the landscape of academic publishing, questions remains about long-term digital preservation. It is clear that in characterization of the study of the philosophical thoughts of particular people, language and more specifically proverbs were among the Africans heritage. The proverbs reveal that in African proverbial expressions are modes of speech at their own right. That is why among the Zulu of South Africa there is a saying; "Without them (proverbs) the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul" (Hussein 2005:61). In the African context, every situation has got its own proverb. Just like many other countries globally, Africa contains a vast number of cultural backgrounds and a vast number of ethnic groups. What is prominent about Africa is the idea of living as a community with shared ideas. In fact, there are even proverbs that emphasize the idea of living as a community.

Researchers such as Egenti and Okoye (2016) have revealed how proverbs are used in a wide range of instances. The two authors argue that proverbs can function as icebreakers in relieving tension, and as therapeutic tools in facilitating trauma healing. Now and then traditional leaders use proverbs to warn, judge, counsel, encourage people and calm down situations that may seem complex. Even though they are context based, up to date, proverbs are rhetorical strategies employed by various communities in expressing their experiences in a condensed manner. Egenti and Okoye (2016) maintain that as forms of figurative communication with didactic functions in conversations, proverbs are found to possess evidence of peace and reconciliation and serve as linguistic tools for conflict management (Egenti and Okoye 2016 :55). The following are some of examples of Igbo proverbs:

i. *Onye chi? Ba onye n'eme ka ya s? ya ebiri*, meaning tolerance is a necessity for communal living.

ii. *E gbue n'iwe e'nie ma isi-* meaning if you destroy by anger, you bury because of the smell.

The two Igbo proverbs are used for calming down a tense situation in trying to manage the conflicts (Egenti and Okoye 2016:65). However, the challenge now is that while one thinks highly of the colourful imagery of proverbs and their value-carrying roles, one usually ignores their sexist and discriminatory tone towards men and women. Benson (2005) explains that with a belief that words are not empty talk, they are a form of action. Through words in proverbs, men and women are empowered or disempowered differently. Consciously and unconsciously, who we are determines what we do. The hidden nature of culture, and that culture is unconscious phenomenon, makes it difficult for people to understand and to know whether the proverbs have negative impacts towards other groups. With an understanding that culture is socially constructed and dynamic, Webster (1982: 173) cautions that while many societies value the wisdom in proverbs, this has to be treated with a lot of caution. On their part, whilst writing on the proverbs of the Chewa (of Malawi), Kaphagawani and Chidammodzi (1983:30) also caution that “not every proverb is a storehouse of wisdom but some proverbs are storehouses”.

2.2.3 Proverbs and gender construction

Ordinarily, the proverbs of a people are meant to provide valuable clues about their character and culture and open paths of communication. Proverbs are meant to safeguard society's wisdom, across and through generations, educate, guide and inspire children as future citizens in general. The preliminary literature review in this study shows that in the context of African ways of knowing and value systems, African proverbs are used directly or indirectly as instruments of gender construct. It is therefore crucial to analyze how the proverbs might construct what it means to be a woman and a girl, or a man and a boy in an African context. (Nyembezi 1990: xii). Proverbs and gender can combine to form a vital component in African society's family organization and child development used to keep men and women away from behavior that disrupts the normative patriarchal structure of the society. As such, proverbs are used for socializing the children in order to prepare them to assume duties as desired by the society at

large. Without understanding the complexity of proverbs, it is difficult to address the real needs of both men and women in society.

Many scholars have provided rich information on the influential power in a language. For example, Ogbulogo (2002) argues that African proverbs have been powerful instruments that has been used to reinforce the prevailing gendered power hierarchies and rigid images of what it means to be a man or a woman in society. Ogbulogo (2002) sees language as possessing creative, constructive as well as destructive potentials depending on the purpose to which it is applied. Through proverbs, in African ways of knowing, men learn to be assertive, strong, fearful and aggressive since they are head of families and providers. Being a head of family in African ways of knowing is to rule and take up control over women and children.

Asimeng-Boahene (2013) found out that African proverbs facilitate the construction of masculinity and femininity and the shaping of different lives for men and women by placing them in different positions and patterns of expectations. Hill (2002) explains that gender socialization assumes that individuals observe, imitate and eventually internalize the specific attitudes and behaviors that the culture defines as gender appropriate by using male and female as role models. Hill (2002) continues to argue that the traditional pattern of gender socialization shows a masculinity pattern where parents socialize their sons to become independent, self-reliant, ambitious, intelligent, strong, courageous, hardworking and ready to take risks and challenges. On the other hand, daughters are socialized to be kind, unselfish, attractive, loving, well-mannered and submissive. These traditional African gender norms have been criticized by feminists in that gender dynamics in African context place women and girls in a more subordinated and marginalized spaces as compared to those in western countries. Men and boys are more privileged and empowered while disadvantaging and disempowering women and girls.

A study conducted by Letsholo (2007) in Botswana shows that language has been very slow to reflect the changing gender role in society that most typical African societies whether they have been modernized or not, have conserved the historical, traditional and religious ways of living with regard to gender power relations, roles and spaces. Webster (1982: 173) made an important observation about the proverbs to the effect that some have become of no use, except for their literary and historical significance, whilst others are there for all times. Nwabugwu (2015) argues

that proverbs have subtle means of expression. As such, sensitivity must always be observed when using African proverbs to avoid misuse and wrong interpretations. Nwabugwu (2015) believes that wise and elderly men and women use a variety of proverbs in their daily social interactions. The argument being put forward by Nwabugwu (2015) is the fact that knowledge should not be viewed as static. With the passing of time, knowledge also changes. It is from this understanding that the elders also created proverbs that counteract and argue against other proverbs. This is meant to avoid being fixated but try to think outside the box and see what can be the best for oneself and to the society.

Belfatmi (2013) argues that by their very nature of being gendered, proverbs have the function of legitimizing certain stereotypes, especially those related to women and men. Normally, the stereotypes work at the expense of women and girls as the findings of my doctoral study will demonstrate in Chapter 6 and beyond.

African proverbs facilitate the shaping of different lives for men and women by placing them in different positions and patterns of expectations for social cohesion. Proverbs have reinforced the prevailing gendered power hierarchies and established rigid images of what it means to be a man or a woman in an African society (Asimeng-Boahene 2013). As power defines knowledge, men and society use African proverbs in general to articulate and emphasize women's unfitnes to assume important leadership and decision making positions in society. Schipper (2004) argues that through the manipulation of language by men and those in power in patriarchal societies, African proverbs are used to facilitate the transmission of social and cultural beliefs that portray men as superior while women portrayed as inferior, dependent, less intelligent, subordinated group and people who cannot lead. Because of gender differentials, skills held by women and girls often differ from those held by men and and boys. This was revealed in studies conducted in Botswana by Nhlekisana (2007) and by Hussen (2005) in Nigeria, Soetan (2001), in which they cited the following Sepedi/Setswana and Igbo proverbs respectively:

- i. *'Mosadi ke tshwene o lewa mabogo'* meaning the only contribution a woman can make in society is through her physical hard work.
- ii. *'Tsa etwa keya tshadi pele di wela leopeng'* meaning if a leader is a woman, disaster is bound to happen (Kanjere, Thaba and Teffo 2011:246).

iii. While the Setswana proverb from Botswana says ‘*magadi ke di etelelwa pele ke tle di wele ka selomo*’, meaning an ox cannot be pulled by cows, it will fall into a ditch (Nhlekisana 2007:124).

iv. Among the Igbo of Nigeria is a proverb “*Woke obu la na-agba egwu nwayi na-aku oye o bula na-anwu mgbe chi ya akpoghi*” meaning, the man who dances the flute played by a woman generally goes to the spirit world prematurely (Soetan 2001:26).

The meanings and connotations embedded in the proverbs cited above illustrate the power of men in oppressing and excluding women from taking active roles in different societal aspects. In the first Sepedi proverb, women are portrayed as useless human beings in society. Women’s existence as human being is doubted and that the only contribution a woman can make is through her own efforts. Unless women prove something to the world, the world does not recognize them. This is a true manifestation of patriarchal social ideology that is meant to exclude the mental strengths and the significant contributions that women can make towards society. This is evident in that African proverbs directly or indirectly serve as instruments of social control, pushing women to the margins and inhibiting their performance as full members of society (Rolls 2008, Salami 2005, Webster 1982). Belfatmi (2013:20) continues to argue that African proverbs maintain patriarchal ideologies that place women in a secondary position while they valorize and put men in higher positions. Schipper (2006:19) is of the view that proverbs are a domain and variety of metaphors that have arisen to capture the idea that “gender is an agreed upon activity, but that gender is a performance that is to be accomplishment as prescribed by a particular society”.

Rolls (2008) states that throughout the world, commonsense explanations and large truths of life are expressed in proverbs. Therefore, proverbs are a useful means of studying people as they reveal what they like, what they hate and what they respect. The gender beliefs contained in the cited proverbs portray and sustain hegemonic male supremacy that leads to women’s capacity to lead to being always doubted and marginalized. Because of the general views expressed in proverbs that women are not born leaders, the women tend to doubt themselves even if given a chance. Probably this is the reason why there are few women who ascend to decision-making and higher positions be it at local and institution levels. Although some of these traditions and beliefs

may have undergone significant change over the years given that culture is dynamic, such changes may not be reflected in the proverbs.

In contrast to the doubting of the intellectual capability of women, Dzimbiri (2007) notes that in the contemporary world, new developments have proven such negative gender belief systems wrong. Dzimbiri (2007) argues that women all over the world, including African women, have demonstrated that they too have the intellectual and physical capabilities to perform functions which society tends to attribute to men only. Today, women in Malawi (and in Africa) and beyond have infiltrated into domains that were originally seen as purely male domains. Webster (1982) expressed the view that the cultural portrait painted by proverbs may be fragmented, contradictory or otherwise at a variance with reality. Although some proverbs are consistent in their judgments, they may also be inconsistent with some other elements of culture. Olasupo, Kikelomo and Adeniran (2012) argue that while the power exercised by men in society is forceful and temporal, women exercise spiritual terrestrial and sophisticated power that can be used to disarm the strongest men. Oyewumi (2005) elaborates that an assertive, strong willed and courageous hardworking woman who is ready to take her destiny in her own hands now replaces the passive, docile and insignificant woman. Women are now moving forward with transformation and they refuse to become men's appendages.

2.2.4 Patriarchy in proverbs

Because of patriarchal entrenchment that many African societies experience, and that language and its tools reflect the society's beliefs, traditions and values, proverbs that contain gendered connotations and pathways of patriarchal ideologies can have an impact on the way women and men, boys and girls are empowered. The superiority of male and gender role categorization is reinforced through proverbs and other linguistic expressions. Writing about Malawi, Moto (2000) argues that Malawi is one such a society where the connotations embedded in some Chichewa proverbs illustrate the power of men in society while oppressing and excluding women from taking active roles because of the fact of being women. The use of gendered proverbs places women in subordinated positions and domestic spheres where their role is reduced to that of nurturing children and performing domestic chores. Men, on the other hand, are placed in the public sphere and are allowed to go beyond their homes and work. For example, a Chichewa proverb "*mamuna saudzidwa*" (never tell a man what to do because he knows) "*mamuna*

safunsidwa komwe achokera” (you do not ask where a husband is coming from) and “*mamuna ndi mpeni timabwerekana*”– (a man is like a knife and can be borrowed by a neighbour). A man knows best. He cannot and must not be questioned regarding his actions and/or whereabouts. The woman is further reminded that in the traditional setting, one can borrow a knife from a neighbour. In the same way, another woman can borrow the services of man, meaning that a man cannot be tied to one woman. Other women can ‘borrow’ him in terms of sexual relations.

The implication is that the society continue to nurture children in situations where proverbs are used to encourage and perpetuate gender differences where women and girls are regarded as subordinated, passive, inferior, people who lack confidence and rational thinking while, on the other hand, encouraging men and boys to look assertive, superior, brave, and intelligent. Girls are not expected to display the same positive attributes. These acquired and forced behaviours are then internalized and normalized. Any groups or individuals who display the behaviours contrary to the institutionalized are regarded as disgruntled elements and ill- cultured. According to Lakoff (2004), proverbs are used in African society by men to denigrate women physically, mentally and socially.

In contrast to proverbs that reveal prejudices and negative stereotypes about women, Fasan (2006:71) reveals an interesting proverb in Yoruba which goes ‘*Okunrin rejo obinrin pa, sebi kejo sati ku ni*’ meaning-there is no problem when a man sees a snake and a woman kills it. The cited Yoruba proverb recognizes the natural dichotomy that exists between males and females as well as recognizing their co-existence. In another case, with reference to Kenya, Dickson and Mbosowo (2014) cite a Kikuyu proverb which says “*As long as grandmother is in the house, the rain will not spoil the millet*” (Dickson and Mbosowo 2014: 20). This Kikuyu proverb challenges the claim and allegation that women are useless. As men go out to look for other household necessities, women remain in homes doing other domestic roles to complement that of men. The proverb, therefore, acknowledges, the important role that women play within their domestic parameters to compliment that of the men and husbands. This gives an indication that if we dig through, within our African traditional knowledge system, there are other proverbs that recognize and encourage the complementary gender roles and enhance gender equality. This is a new body of knowledge that challenges the Western feminist critiques of traditional African societies that exaggerate the negativity of proverbs and differences in roles between the sexes portrayed by

African proverbs. These instances need to be documented and bring to the awareness that despite the strong presence of negative proverbs about women, we do have some proverbs that cast women in positive light. Actually, this is one of my doctoral study's findings, and Chapter 7 is devoted to that theme.

A study conducted by Noor (2015) in Pashtuns society of Pakistan was aimed at analyzing sexism and gender relations. The analysis was based on 500 proverbs relating to gender. The findings point out that proverbs though seem fixed to view of reality as performance in context, different speakers may use proverbs for different purposes such as establishing and negotiating gender ideologies. While establishing that patriarchal structures and values are transmitted through proverbs, messages and meaning are context based and women may use proverbs in order to discuss, contest and sometimes undermine gender ideologies. Noor (2015) also found out that proverbs as wisdom texts represent viewpoints of those with authority in a given context and are used as a tool for exercising exclusion. Arnfred (2004) argues that the strongest academic criticisms against Western feminism is that its application to African contexts does not take into account some of the gender relations that are unique to African societies, particularly those that show matrilineal tendencies.

2.2.5 Proverbs and control of spatial parameters and gender roles

One mechanism through which men control positions of social and economic influence in African society is by controlling spatial parameters. In a gendered society, men and women are stratified along differential patterns of space of private (domestic) for women and public for men. Mafela (2007) argues that women's personal lives and social legal status were curtailed by strictly prescribed patriarchal social codes of behavior based on religion, traditions norms, rules and practices. She continued to argue that with these prescriptions, women are placed in already existing positions, which are private to the society. Mafela's (2007) arguments are in line with what Nelson (1974) articulated that women's place in the public structure of roles is clearly defined in relation to one or two points, that of their husbands and their fathers. As for the rest of women's social life, it takes place at relatively unstructured interpersonal level with other women. This pattern that prevails amongst women is less significant than the men's relations with one another in public role systems. Nelson (1974: 551) mentions that women's world has two

manifestations “the home and private communication between women of several homes while men’s world is in the sphere of earning a living and public sphere of communication including public affair’’. Proverbs of such a view include a proverb from Morocco, which says

‘El-mRa hiya qfel elbi:t’ meaning ‘a woman is a key of her house’.

Likewise, from Uganda, we have following proverb ‘*The man dies in his field, the woman in the house*’ (Belfatmi 2013:17).

While a study by Hussein (2005) shows how Oromo proverbs of Ethiopia facilitate the transmission of knowledge, conveying messages of different spatial parameters between men and men. The following Oromo proverbs can be cited:

- i. *Regardless of her position, a woman is not allowed to enter a mosque.*
- ii. *Males are the iron pole of a house, while females are the outside gate that belongs to others.*

The same is true in Yoruba where a proverb considers a male child as the pillar of the family.

- iii. *A male child is the pillar of the family, a female one is a seasonal stream-* Yoruba proverb of Nigeria (Hussein 2005:70).

In general appearance the second and third proverbs above serve to illustrate superiority and inferiority of male and female children respectively. Above the spatial parameters that the proverbs ii and iii shows, there is patriarchal views that reveal differential socialization of their female and male children. In many African traditions, a male child is regarded as iron pole of the house to symbolize his potential of bearing a family name and the position that he holds in the family. This is what Kabwila (2013) refers to as double patriarchy where the rule of men and religion are at work. The message in the cited proverbs emphasizes the patriarchy tendencies where the spatial parameter is used to sustain male supremacy by categorizing men and women according to certain spaces.

Pheko (2002) argues that through socialization in African traditional societies, the woman’s place is in the kitchen. When male and female children are born, their socialization is channeled towards to the spaces and roles that they will occupy as adults. A male child is socialized to assume a leadership role at family level. That is why a male child is referred to as a pillar of the house as in proverb ii and iii above. While on the other hand, a girl is nurtured to become a good woman, mother and wife of somebody. As such, his socialization is focused on kitchen duties and caring

for the siblings. As argued by Pheko (2002), in African traditions, women are confined to their homes where they are engaged in less skilled unpaid labor of domestic work and nurturing children unlike the men who go out and do more skilled, technical and construction work. Pheko (2002) argues that the labour categorization of men and women received support from colonial masters and that during colonial time women used to work as home craft workers with jobs like knitting, sewing and cookery.

While Nelson (1974) explains that in social divisions of labor, women are less involved than their counterparts (males) and that women are subjected to control in their social responsibilities and their experiences are less valued. Nelson (1974) compared women's roles to that of serfs and slaves where most of women's role or work is devalued. This situation is carried over to formal institutions such as work places where women choose to perform duties closer to what they do at home such as teaching, secretarial, nursing and many more. This is because at school, boys and girls choose subjects that are closer to duties performed at home.

Studies conducted in the United States of America (Smyth 2010, Donald 2013) reveal that since schools operate in societies that are gendered, they too serve as sites for the construction of masculinity and femininity in subject choices. Thus particular subject's areas such as Mathematics, Science and Technology may be constructed as masculine. Teachers are also the agents of masculinity and femininity gender construction as they discourage girls from enrolling into the so-called masculine subjects (Donald 2013). Regarding the same topic, serious concerns have been registered in one Malawian newspaper 'the Nation' and elsewhere that science subjects were becoming less popular than other subjects were in general. In addition, the same subjects were becoming less popular for girls. In the end, few students decide to major in sciences at the university level (Somanje 2002). The Nation newspaper article highlight that among the few students who excelled in science subjects, the majority were male -see articles by (Ndala 2002, Somanje 2002). It is also important to observe that women are generally, on a global level, underrepresented in the field of science and technology, both at educational and workforce levels. To this end, Donald (2013) argues that schools should construct environment whereby teachers do not give out sexist messages subliminal or otherwise that there are subjects that are not for girls and vice versa. Limiting learners in subject choices means limiting them in job opportunities

too. Probably this is the reason why on the labour market, some fields are over flooded more specifically with women for example in secretarial, language teaching just to mention a few.

While acknowledging the fact that in African ways of knowing women are significantly confined to domestic work and the nurturing of children, it is somehow naive essentialism that women are just subordinated and oppressed. A study conducted in Kenya by Dickson and Mbosowo (2014), cites a Kikuyu proverb that says, “*As long as grandmother is in the house, the rain will not spoil the millet*”. This Kikuyu proverb challenges the notion that women are considered passive or rather useless but acknowledges the important role that they hold within their domestic parameters. In African tradition, women have their own spaces where they exercise their power and control. Being a domestic worker does not necessarily render one powerless or subordinated. Probably such gaps in knowledge are there for a reason, i.e “that existing paradigms systematically ignore or erase the significance, the agency and the resistance of women and fail to look for their voices in different contexts” (McElhinny 2003:1).

2.2.6 African proverbs and women objectification

Talbot (2003) contends that African proverbs are well known in communicating directly or indirectly the objectification of African women. Talbot (2003) argues that African traditional societies, women have for a long time been used as conduits through which men formed and solidified their friendship, power, and relations with other men. For example, the Xitsonga/Xichangana proverb says: *’Nhwanyana I huku yo khomela vayeni*’ meaning ‘a girl is a chicken reserved for visitors’ (Nhlekisana 2007). With an understanding that the girl child will one day get married and leave her parents’ home, the mentioned proverbs reduce the whole human being of “a girl child” to a fowl as she awaits a suitor. Nhlekisana (2007) explains that in African traditions, more specifically those which practice *lobola* marriage rites, families enhance their wealth and alliance through giving away their daughters at higher price as virgins. This is why in Igbo society some proverbs are used as a patriarchal tool to denigrate women’s worthiness.

For example, a proverb which says *’When a woman is getting old, it would seem as if money (bride price) was not paid for when marrying her*” (Ogbulogo 2002). While Hussein gives us a proverb in Somali which is used to increase or devalue the chastity of their unmarried and married females respectively. Such example of Somali proverb is the one which says: *“The smaller the*

entrance to the bride's vagina, the greater the value in marriage market” (Hussein 2005:65). In this regard, the cited proverbs clearly depict women as just mere objects used for bargaining for one's wealthy and power. By placing demands on their body and reproduction, women and girls are subordinated. By focusing on a woman's/girl's vagina entrance and virginity, such proverbs depict women as just sexual objects who are there to satisfy male sexual pleasures.

2.2.7 Profligacy and multiple sexual relationships

Another aspect in the African gender ideology that comes out clearly in African proverbs is the issue multiple relationships. This is an area which is institutionalized to advantage men while subordinate women and girls. Mashige (2011) argues that African proverbs are instruments that perpetuate the gender ideologies of male profligacy and multiple partners or the culture of polygamy. Within the spatial parameters that African societies are categorized, some African proverbs give opportunity and encourage profligacy towards men. This is where men are given freedom to interact with the world while women on the other hand have their movements and freedoms restricted. This is demonstrated through the following Sesotho proverb; '*Botle ba monna ke ho shoela nyatsin*' meaning that man's beauty is to die at the concubine's place. Mashige (2011) argues that in African societies a man happily displays infidelity behavior since it is part of manhood. This is done regardless of all health risks such as HIV and AIDS to which men expose themselves and the partners.

There are some African proverbs that speak in favour of the acquisition of multiple sexual partners. Chilisa et al (2009) provide us with some examples of proverbs from the Setswana language of Botswana:

- i. *Monna poo ga a gelwe lesaka*- meaning- a man is like a bull and he should not be confined to one kraal.
- ii. *Monna phafana o a hapaanelwa*'-meaning- a man is like a calabash; he must be shared.
- iii. *Monna selepe o a adimanwa*'. a man is an axe so he can be shared
- iv. *Monna nawa o a nama*-meaning'- a man, like a bean seed, it spread(s) out with no limitations.

Chilisa et al (2009) explain that the dominant message expressed in these Setswana proverbs is the presentation of male sexual drive, which must find an outlet and whose scope of operation must know no limits. A man's infidelity is implicitly, socially and culturally sanctioned because,

like a bull, he should go outside his kraal to look for mates. Just as a bull can be rotated in several kraals to mate with cows, a man can also meet the sexual needs of several women. In addition, in the same way that neighbours can share an axe used for chopping firewood or share a calabash of water for drinking, a man can be passed from one woman to the other. The proverbial metaphors, seeing man as an axe or calabash, also encourage women to *accept* sharing a man. The bean seed metaphor encourages males to spread their seeds (genes) as widely as possible.

Through the help of African proverbs, men have managed to control positions of social, economic and political influence. African proverbs help patriarchy to grow stronger from generation to generation by presenting the content of proverbs including male dominance as stable immutable and uncontested part of social order. Such metaphors influence how people behave sexually and shape the societal attitude toward promiscuous behaviour. To employ proverbs in the indigenous knowledge research process is to engage in a dialogue about people's lives using their own indigenous literature as a frame of reference for discussion, analysis and interpretation. The study propagates that these cultural practices need to be empirically researched and documented to inform policy and create awareness in order to eradicate such practices.

Contrary to such gender ideologies in Setswana culture, in Akan traditions of Ghana are proverbs that oppose the idea of polygamous marriage systems. Agyekum (2012) conducted a study in Akan society of Ghana. The aim of the study was to analyse how Akan people conceptualize the issue of marriage along with its values and intricacies. The study used radio recordings as a way of collecting information, used document analysis and interviewed what he calls renowned people. Agyekum (2012) analysed thirty (30) proverbs and categorized them according to types of marriages in Akan. What was more interesting and beneficial to this study is the idea of proverbs talking against polygamy. This is from the fact that many African proverbs that I have reviewed in this literature review are those, which encourage polygamy. Agyekum (2012) reveals some Akan proverbs that say: "*The polygamous husband is killed by hunger; If you have four wives you have four mouths*".

Although polygamy is accepted and practiced in Ghanaian society, people also consider the behaviour of the co-wives to their husband. They feel it is better to have a single wife. This is the case since depending on the choice of the wives, it is not a guarantee that the man enjoys the

benefit of having two wives. The Ghanaian society does not believe in polygamy as an advantage to the husband. The first proverb, therefore, illustrates such a dilemma. While in the second proverb, men are accused of being liars in the event of trying to impress all the wives. According to Agyekum, for the husband to maintain and manage the four wives, he must be someone who is able to change his position of love at every sector so that he can tell each wife that he loves her. Agyekum (2012) stressed that it is impossible for someone to love four people at the same time and with the same degree of love.

Agyekum (2012) says that the language of the people more especially proverbs, is inextricably interwoven with culture and thought. He argues that in Ghanaian culture proverbs are a powerful social tool that is used to evoke realities beyond the literal linguistic content of what is being talked about (Agyekum 2012). Culture practices are also linked to language ideology that is a true manifestation of patriarchal social order that oppress, subordinate and women. In his arguments, the author put a strong argument that proverbs are of many types and many functions. A single proverb can be used in different contexts such as arbitration, dialogue and rites. What matters is the way in which proverbs are applied by a group of people and the choices that people make. The cited proverbs can therefore offer a unique way in which the Akan people decided to guard against the culture of polygamy which many African societies embrace with the support from proverbs.

2.2.8 Proverbs that silence women

The construction and perpetuation of gender inequality through proverbs is also a statement of women's biological and psychological inferiority. This emerges from hegemonic masculinity in social representation of the psychological, social and physical potency of men in a sexist society. Webster (1982:174) argues that within the African context, hegemonic masculinity on sexual behaviors is maintained by silencing women. Proverbs play an important role in reinforcing the femininity cultural expectation of endurance and submissiveness. The conspiracy and stereotypical inferiority of some African proverbs render women vulnerable by silencing them. Webster demonstrated his argument through a Moroccan proverb, which says, "*A wise woman has much to say but remains silent*".

Yitah (2009) explains that a common feature in African tradition is that of passiveness of women. An ideal woman in African context is the one who does not respond or rather backchat when the

elders more specifically men talk. Women are socialized to be calm and less talkative. Women are restricted from taking up arguments and challenging the husbands. A woman or a girl who talks is considered not a good wife material. As gender is a cultural constructed phenomenon, patriarchal norms in egalitarian African culture has contributed to the construction of a silent woman. As a result of this grooming of a 'silent and muted woman', the impact can be life long lasting. This silence goes beyond the home and is carried over throughout the life of a woman in public spheres. Probably this is the reason why some women do not want to take up decision-making positions for fear of being seen to be talking too much.

In contrast to such gender ideologies explained above, a study on African proverbs shows a body of scholarship on African proverbs that locates the issue of women resistance towards patriarchal ideologies. Within the Kasena society of Ghana is a proverb that says "*one mouth does not stay silent while another speaks*" (Yitah 2009:85). The Kasena proverb affirms resistance and that a woman is not just passive human beings. Atanga (2012) challenges and resists the dominant patriarchal discourses and traditional gender ideologies within African society that require women and men to behave in particular and different ways. When men talk or shout, a cultured woman should remain silent or rather quite. Even if the woman is not in the wrong, as a way of preserving culture, a woman is expected to calm down. Women have gone past such socialization through which the patriarchal society upholds the gender ideologies silence them. A woman who stands up for her rights has replaced a woman who cannot defend herself, the oppressed, submissive and docile African woman. The wisdom in the cited proverb above of Kasena society needs to be documented and brought to the awareness of the society. Such are the proverbs that can empower women to stand up for their rights in situations where they are abused and taken advantage of.

Hay (1994) argues that although social structures operate over the heads of human actors, human beings have choices to make towards their own destiny rather than depending on others to liberate them. A globally great woman and successful politician, Indira Gandhi, once said that "rather the goal is to enable the societies indigenous knowledge to adapt to its times rather than stagnate". Indira Gandhi made a comment on social transformation, practical and theoretical considerations of activists and researchers on indigenous knowledge as an empowerment tool for sustainable development (Kapoor 2003). This is from the premises that the degree of involvement and participation of all stakeholders has been taken as an index of how progressive and sustainable

development can be (United Nations 2015). Letsholo (2007) argues that because all societies across the world are male dominated, patriarchy is viewed as divine rights and legitimate by men. This keeps women in subordinate position as second-class citizens. Gender equality has become increasingly important for those seeking to secure international community support. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 5, that of achieving gender equality and empowering all women, still show pockets of gender disparities between sexes (United Nations 2015:1).

2.2.9 Proverbs and gender role complementarity

Contrary to the common understanding by some researchers that proverbial messages only perpetuate gender inequality, there is a number of scholars who argue that within African contexts, there are proverbs that promote shared norms between men and women. As indicated already in the background a clear example is given by Fasan (2006:71) who reveals proverbs in Yoruba such as *'Okunrin rejo obinrin pa, sebi kejo sati ku ni'* meaning there is no problem when a man sees a snake and a woman kills it. In addition, a Moroccan proverb says *"one hand cannot clap"* (Belfatmi 2013). This is an indication that within African traditional knowledge systems, there are proverbs that recognize and encourages the complementary gender roles. Digging through the literature, a study conducted in Kenya by Dickson and Mbosowo (2014) reveals a Kikuyu proverb that says, *"As long as grandmother is in the house, the rain will not spoil the millet"*. The cited Kikuyu proverb challenges the view that women are passive or rather useless but acknowledges the important role that they hold within their domestic parameters while men engage with other issues.

Similarly, an ethno-cultural study conducted by Hussein (2005) reveals some long-standing African tradition of oral arts have facilitated the transmission of gender complimentary knowledge. Although to a larger extent Hussein's (2005) study revealed negative proverbs, the study reveals how some proverbs can be used as instruments to promote gender complementarity between men and women. The following proverbs were revealed:

- i. *A woman is a flower in a garden; her husband is the fence around it.*
- ii. *It is better to be married to an old woman than remain unmarried.*
- iii. *He who eats alone dies alone.*
- iv. *The woman plans the income and the man plans the expenditure.*
- v. *Males do not milk goats but still are not ignorant of how much milk the goats afford.* (Hussein 2005:71).

The cited proverbs above reveal the gender nature of wife-husband relationship in a family. Hussein pointed out that in African tradition marriage is one of the social accomplishments that one is expect to fulfill. Remaining unmarried is not normal even and it renders one incomplete. The cited proverbs stress the necessary of male-female complimentary role in ensuring the totality of human existence within a balanced ecosystem. This is to state that men and women make different contribution to make life possible. Although the proverbs are spatially categorized to carry out culturally different roles, men and women are in a condition to complement each other.

Malunga and Banda (2013:3) argue that “proverbs are like seeds, they only become alive when they are sown or applied to actual situations, bringing them to life and expanding their meanings in different situations”. Probably with thorough research, critique with proper instrumentation, African proverbs may be vital in the promotion of gender equality. Given the nature of patriarchy, and how it is intertwined in daily undertakings of African tradition, the cited proverbs revealed shows a very subtle and romanticized way of how patriarchy is maintained.

Although there is complementarity, one would ask as to why a woman cannot plan the expenditure? In trying to expanding this interrogation, proverb (v) also shows some manifestation of patriarchy where in Oromo society of Ethiopia it is the role of women to milk goats. Patriarchal tendencies are clearly manifested in the Oromo proverb as it is mentioned that while it is the responsibility of women in that society to milk the goats, the men know how much milk a goat can give. Men engage in other things while they carefully watch exactly what women are doing. This gives the impression that women do not have the full decision making power on how to use the milk without the knowledge of the husband. These are cases in African tradition where married women own wealthy or property but all the control lies with the husband. Complementary role in African tradition is not absolute granted. Kelly (1998:132) argues that an imbalance of status of power between men and women in patriarchal society reveals different but overlapping relations. It is not surprising then that even at the heart of the proverbs that on the surface may show complementarity of roles, one may also find men’s stake and conspiracy to limit women to certain secondary and subordinated position.

The researcher found some shortcomings in the studies where proverbs were reviewed. The mentioned studies do not precisely reveal the methods that they used in data collection and how they based their analysis. I argue that the ideas in Hussein's (2005) study were constructed from the researcher's own perceptions on proverbs and not that of knowledge holders of societies mentioned. This study emphasizes that the gender ideologies in proverbs do not come out easily through conventional western data collection methods, such as the questionnaire and even interview method. Many studies reviewed in this study do not take into consideration the fact that proverbs communicate ideologies and worldviews that many researchers may find too difficult and sensitive to discuss using explicit language and traditional methodologies. This study goes beyond mere conceptualization of proverbs but engages with knowledge holders in a participatory and relaxed manner to generate the knowledge.

2.2.10 Proverbs and women agency and empowerment

In trying to understand the concept of women empowerment as a researcher, I identified the element of agency to be crucial. Agency simply means that women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change that is being described. Kabeer (2010) gives us a more inclusive definition as he explains that empowerment is a process where an individual is able to make choices concerning oneself and how much influence an individual has over own actions. Create conditions for them to become agents of their own development and be able to find sustainable solutions for change at personal, family, and civil society levels" (African Union 2009: 27). The United Nations Development Programme identified five components of women's empowerment as follows: women's sense of self-worth; women's right to have and to determine choices; women's right to access to opportunities and resources; women's power to control their own lives; and women's ability to influence the direction of social change (United Nations Development Programme 2008). In the African context, women empowerment is very different from the same concept in the western countries. Although 2015 was declared the year for women's empowerment, many researchers and gender activists still believe the battle is far from won (Otas 2015). In African context, women's and girls' empowerment encompasses a number of things such as freedom from unjustifiable cultural norms and traditions imposed on women and girls, unrestricted access to agriculture inputs opportunities, sex and reproductive health rights, social freedom and access to credit for African small entrepreneurs.

The early studies on gender and women empowerment consider empowerment and autonomy as equal terms. Individuals gain control of their lives be it in a family, community, society and out on labor market (Jejeebhoy 2000). In African patriarchy, society proverbs play an important role in reinforcing the cultural ideal of masculinity such as competitiveness, dominance, forcefulness, endurance, confrontation, self-reliance and willingness to take risks while on the other hand, women have been victims of gender ideology, which restricts and control their ambitions (Hussein 2005:67). The cited proverb, however, challenges women to take up challenges and risks just as their male counterparts do. Women empowerment is not a given phenomenon but an aspect that has to be pursued by women themselves. Thus, hypothetically there could be no women empowerment and gender equality unless women define their interests, organize themselves, increase their own self-reliance, and define their rights.

With reference to the literature reviewed in this chapter, African proverbs about womanhood express the society's denial of female psychological and social existences without men, usually husbands. However, the connotations embedded in some African proverbs are good manifestations of urging women to stop considering themselves as appendages to men. Women are encouraged to work and to take up actions that aim at empowering women. The empowerment of woman cannot be left to men alone. It is a task that both men and women should participate in. Meyer (2008) argues that transforming a society into a gender sensitive one and one in which gender equality exists does not necessarily mean favoring women, but it is a matter of giving unrestricted opportunities to the marginalized group (women and girls) to participate freely in society. Examples of some African proverbs that encourage women to make efforts towards the positive growth of their status in society are:

- i. *You are beautiful but learn to work for you cannot eat your beauty.*
- ii. *There is no beauty but the beauty of action'*
- iii. *Wine, women and food give gladness to the heart- Ancient Egyptian proverb*
- iv. *A woman who pursues a man for sex loses her spiritual being.*
- v. *Mosadi ke tshwene o lewa mabogo'* – a Sepedi proverb meaning the only contribution a woman can make in society is through her physical hard work.

Nevertheless, Tlou (2002) argues that gender ideology is a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which a society constructs and wields its gender relations and practice. Although a woman may want to take up challenges and risks, she may be restricted to do so. Tlou (2002) strongly criticizes the rigid gender ideology in African cultures, which subordinate and depicts women as helpless individuals and their dependent on men. The sub-conscious gender stereotypes influences thoughts and behaviors of women. As taking challenges may sometimes result into a woman being assertive, going beyond her domestic place, as far as gender power relations are concerned, male supremacy has a language that will continue to control women, and rendering them subordinated and vulnerable. This brings in situation where transforming and empowering women would be a tough task in African tradition.

2.2.11 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

This chapter has attempted to interrogate and contextualize the literature on indigenous knowledge systems and the role of African proverbs in promoting or abetting gender in/equality. The chapter has noted that most of works done by scholars contains narratives that corroborate, modify or rebut the aims of this study. This has led to a robust scholarly debate about the nexus between African proverbs and promotion of gender equality. This chapter examined this debate and highlighted the neglected realities of proverbs as indigenous systems of the people and the role it plays as an instrument of social cohesion. Scholars have carried out studies that suggest that proverbs may hinder gender equality while some had revealed some proverbs that promote gender role complementarity. From the survey on literature in this study, the role of African proverbs in promoting or abetting gender in/equality within the context of Malawi remains under-researched. I therefore argue that this study that critically analyses Chichewa proverbs to find out the extent to which they can serve as tools of African indigenous languages and instruments promoting and hindering gender equality is vital and valuable. The under-researched role of Chichewa proverbs (in Malawi) as a source of wisdom and indigenous knowledge systems of the people in relation to gender equality and inequality becomes a motivation and edifice of this contemporary study.

As explained earlier, this study builds upon previous studies to fill the gap by examining Chichewa proverbs in relation to the promotion or hindering of gender equality. This stems from the fact that some studies show that African proverbs are a hindrance to gender equality. Feminist

researchers give a general view that most African proverbs work negatively towards women. With the utilization of the tenets of poly-epistemic: Critical Discourse Analysis, Reformist African Feminism and knowledge translation theory within the context of indigenous knowledge systems, the quest for a refined analysis of the problem on gender and Chichewa proverbs has been captured in this review of literature in understanding of proverbs within African indigenous knowledge systems. As such, the study fills the gap left by preceding scholars' non-empirical assumption on the role African proverbs play within the context of African indigenous knowledge systems. By gaining such vital insights and perspectives from Chichewa proverbs from Malawi, this study cast a more critical gaze on what has motivated the Western feminism not to see that there are some proverbs in Africa that recognize and encourage complementary gender roles that enhance gender equality.

Although the proverbial messages cited in many studies disadvantage women, this study still finds new hopes in those African proverbs which can be used to enhance gender equality. Probably such gaps in knowledge are there for a reason, i.e "that existing paradigms systematically ignore or erase the significance, the agency and the resistance of women and fail to look for their voices in different contexts" (McElhinny 2003:1). This challenges the feminist critique of traditional African societies that exaggerates the differences between the sexes. Reading the literature on gender studies, this study identified some opportunities through which this African indigenous knowledge exhibit.

As mentioned previously in this thesis, and as a way of concluding the review of related literature, it should be recalled that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women lies within the Sustainable Development Goals. Hierarchical social relationships between men and women are widely documented in the literature on gender studies. To this end, one is able to notice that one sex (male sex) is considered to be superior whilst the other sex (female) is treated as inferior. This unfair and demeaning categorization of men and women cuts across economic, political, social and other spheres. As a result, we find gender-based inequality and the lack of equity between men and women. These trends are also reflected in language. For example, when asked about the relationship between language and gender, one can say that language reflects society. In line with this view, the social divisions (inequalities) we have in the world are reflected in language. Another link between language and gender can be said be that language goes beyond

reflecting gender divisions in society. Language actually creates and sustains some societal inequalities (see, for example, Lakoff 2004, Talbot 2003). Since literature is made out of language, one also finds oral literature to be another site where issues of gender equity and equality can be detected and engaged. One form of oral literature that is worth examining is proverbs. For example, Schipper's 2006 book is a collection of proverbs on women, drawn from a wide range of countries in the world. Schipper (2006: 19) argues that "people have been programmed as men and women mostly without being aware of it. The proverbial messages are an excellent yardstick for measuring the extent to which, individually and socially, we continue to swallow these stubborn ideas, or have come to look more differently at the world than our ancestors did. Consciously or subconsciously, we have all been influenced by such messages".

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. The sub-sections of the chapter have been lined up as follows: the research design, population, sampling and sample population, demographic profile of research participants, the phases of the study, methods and data collection instruments, data analysis, validity, reliability, pilot study, reflections on the research journey, and a summary and conclusion.

3.1 Research design

Social realities can basically be studied through three major approaches. These are: the quantitative approach, the qualitative approach and the mixed method approach to research. The current study adopted the qualitative approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) say that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It attempts to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people attach to them. In addition, Tsang (2013) mentions that the aim of the qualitative approach is that it intends to explore and to discover issues about a particular phenomenon and lived experiences of a particular group of individuals. All the five research questions of the current study (see section 1.8 in Chapter 1) could best be addressed through a qualitative study. It is these five research questions that warranted the use of a qualitative approach to this research study.

I now turn to the research design. First, I have to acknowledge that research designs are varied. For example, the following research designs are possible: action research design, descriptive design, experimental design, exploratory design, historical design, longitudinal design, observational design, case study design and others (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). For the current research study, the case study design was applied. As a phenomenological qualitative study, following the case study design was deemed to be scientifically evident and able to respond to the research questions that were used for investigation in this research study. A phenomenological study is interested in describing the individual lived experiences, and not developing theories and/or models of phenomena that are being studied. A case study is therefore a systematic process

of analyzing a particular person, group or detailed description of setting and situation (Gerring 2004). A typical case study aspect can be noted in my situation since the study focuses on Chichewa proverbs of Malawi. The study came out of a large and broad topic of gender issues in African proverbs. I narrowed down the topic to gender issues in one language (Chichewa), and though this is a cross-border language, I narrowed down the language to one country (Malawi). Even within Malawi, the study was confined to the selected research participants of Zomba city. As can be noted, I narrowed down a very broad topic to a smaller and researchable unit.

After conducting the desktop study under which I assembled some gendered proverbs, I proceeded to conduct fieldwork in the environment (Malawi) where the proverbs are in use daily. The fieldwork provided an in-depth examination of the topic and this process took care of all the five research objectives of the research study. One of the merits of a case study is that it allows a researcher to go deep into one subject (gender issues in Chichewa proverbs as was the case in my situation). I was able to use several sources of data (focus groups, key informant interviews and semi-structured interviews) in order to make a very detailed and thick contextual analysis of the research topic. Another advantage of the case study design is that though its findings cannot be generalized to other cases or settings, the study did offer grounds for further research (see Section 10.6) and shed a light on the gendered implications of Chichewa proverbs use. Based on the findings of the case study, it is proposed that the study could be extended to other languages of Malawi. One has to remember that, Malawi is multilingual, and the current study focused on one language only. A frequently cited criticism levelled against case studies is that they cannot be generalized. My counter argument is that generalization is not always the goal of research. For example, in my study, the main interest was to understand gender issues in one Malawian language, and not all languages.

3.2 Research paradigms

Research paradigms are critical in driving any study. A research paradigm can be said to be a framework of ideas and beliefs through which a person is able to interpret the world (Chilisa 2012, Wahyuni 2012, Sipe and Constable 1996). The research paradigm is closely linked to ontology (that is the nature of reality), epistemology (that is how we end up knowing what we know), axiology (the values linked to a study), and methodology. The research topic and its

research objectives drive a researcher towards the selection of an appropriate paradigm. No paradigm is the best. Everything depends on the topic under study and the research objectives, and the following were the research objectives To:

1. To establish historical and cultural background of Chichewa proverbs
2. To identify connotations inscribed in Chichewa proverbs
3. To explore implications of Chichewa proverbs in relation to gender equality
4. To document views of Malawian men and women regarding the use of Chichewa proverbs in relation to gender equality.
5. To investigate how proverbs which promote egalitarian gender roles can be re-appropriated so that they can advance gender equality issues.

Research paradigms do exist, but there is no consistency with regards to how they are named. For example, Sipe and Constable (1996) list four paradigms: positivist paradigm, interpretivist paradigm, critical theory paradigm and the deconstructivist paradigm. On the other hand, Wahyuni (2012) offers four paradigms as follows: positivism (naïve realism), postpositivism (critical realism), interpretivism (constructivism) and pragmatism. On her part, Chilisa (2012) names four research paradigms as positivist/post-positivist paradigm, constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, transformative/emancipatory paradigm, and postcolonial/indigenous paradigm.

The positivist paradigm is about getting quantitative data, and is value free, and there is one knowable reality. The current doctoral study, being a qualitative case study, does not belong to the positivist research paradigm. One thing that is a fact is that in one study, there could be one or more paradigms at work. As Sipe and Constable (1996: 153) argue, the lines between research paradigms “are not intended to represent rigid or unchanging differences/boundaries”. My study fits into this situation. The current study has elements of Chilisa’s (2012) transformative/emancipatory paradigm and postcolonial/indigenous paradigm. I now proceed to demonstrate how my study has elements of the two paradigms.

The reason for doing research under the transformative/emancipatory paradigm is to empower people so that they can change society radically. My study has exposed the inequalities that are championed by proverbs and the aim is to see society eliminating gender inequalities. On the

other hand, the postcolonial/indigenous paradigm aims at challenging the deficit thinking in formerly colonized people who are made to think that their ways of knowing are inferior. My research study focussed on IKS as a respectable type of knowledge which should not be sidelined and undermined by Western knowledges.

Critical discourse analysis and feminist theories are some of the philosophical underpinnings of both transformative/emancipatory paradigm, and postcolonial/indigenous paradigm (Chilisa 2012). My study employs the same philosophical underpinnings. Thirdly, both paradigms stand for multiple socially constructed realities, and my case study is based on the same principle of multiple realities that have found their way into the findings. To this end, I can say that my study exhibits elements of both transformative/emancipatory paradigm and postcolonial/indigenous paradigm.

3.2.1 Africanization of the research process

While there are universal principles of research, one should be very sensitive to context-specific realities. This does not mean flouting the cardinal principles of research, but it means being sensitive to the socio-economic, political and sociolinguistic contexts in which the research processes occur. In order to maintain that African touch, as already stipulated in the background, principles underlying the current qualitative study are those of the Afrocentric paradigm as championed by Asante (1995) and other African scholars who will be cited in the next paragraphs. In effect, Afrocentricity emerges as a methodology that consciously operates within African ways of knowing and existence and results in the implementation of principles, methods, concepts and ideas that are derived from African cultural experiences (Pellerin 2012). The Afrocentric paradigm constitutes a systematic approach to African phenomenon where culture is emphasized as essential for collective liberation of African people. Asante (2007) argues that Afrocentricity says that the key should be epistemological centeredness that involves placing Africans as self-willed agents instead of objects of investigation.

Afrocentricity approach requires an immersed involvement of both the researcher and participants in participatory knowledge production, hence they are regarded as co-researchers. For example, a researcher who wishes to involve women in participatory research, will not only listen to women's voices, but women were invited to become equal partners, participants' observers and co-researchers with the voice and agency to engage in the ongoing construction of knowledge. Pellerin (2012) arguments support such methodologies and measurements that are non-

threatening, non-intrusive and non-disruptive to the agency of African people. This is to mitigate the gap that exists between the researcher and participants and allows equal participation and openness. In my study, I did not show any arrogance of being a PhD student, but humbled myself to listen to all views. All views from the research participants were treated as equal and important. Though most of the research participants had lower educational qualifications than mine, I set out to learn and to be schooled by those who were of lower qualifications. In the end, I had good rapport with all my research participants.

Some scholars (e.g. Msiska 2017, Prah 2017, Mbembe 2015, Chilisa 2012 and others) have expressed concern that Western or Euro-centric approaches and methodologies tend to dominate the study of African issues. Even African scholars, as a result of their training, continue to study African phenomena using Western or Euro-centric research lenses, approaches and methodologies. The Eurocentric epistemic canon has been critiqued as a canon that fails to acknowledge the existence of indigenous African knowledge. As Mbembe (2015:16) charges, “a Eurocentric canon is a canon that attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production and that disregards other epistemic traditions”. It is a canon that disregards other epistemic traditions”. Research projects that seek to understand African phenomenon, holism is therefore a must. The research processes must be guided by African experiences and realities. The previous interpretive framework used to study Africa have focused on Eurocentric paradigms which are not fruitful and liberating for African people. Methodologies are also still Eurocentric and exogenous views of Africa are still colonized, westernized. This amounts to what has been called epistemic coloniality. This calls for research that takes into serious consideration African realities such as language and cultural protocols (Chilisa 2012). The Africanization agenda is evident in the institution (the University of KwaZulu-Natal) where I registered for my PhD studies. The University (as discussed in depth in Chapter 2) champions African scholarship within which the Africanization of research resides. Other researchers conducting research in African communities (eg Chilisa 2012, Khupe 2016, Khupe et al 2017, Keane et al 2017) have stressed the critical importance of conducting research in the language of the community. This minimizes the distance between the researcher(s) and the community. When a researcher and the research participants do not share a common language, and when an interpreter has to be brought in, the researcher is seen by the research participants as an outsider (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). And

meanings of the reported information can easily be lost through the interpretation and translation processes.

Given that this doctoral research study involved proverbs of an African language, I became aware of the importance of not ignoring the African context. The first thing that occupied my mind was the research site and that the participants are Malawians. The linguistic Africanization aspect was to conduct the fieldwork in Chichewa language. In this case both English and Chichewa were used in the research processes as follows: Firstly, the research proposal was developed and constructed in English. Although the University of KwaZulu-Natal does allow the use of isiZulu as an alternative to English, but I could not take the isiZulu option since I have no knowledge (written or spoken) of the language. The research instruments however have both English and Chichewa versions. This also means that all interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed into Chichewa, and later translated into English. Furthermore, even though the thesis itself is written in English, but within the thesis itself, both the Chichewa and English versions of statements/quotes made by participants appear. The use of a commonly used indigenous language (Chichewa) as the language of data collection did not bring in the gap that English and the use of interpreters could have done. The fact that I shared one language (Chichewa) with all the research participants enabled me to understand well my participants, and get their views without any difficulty and/or distortion.

3.2.2 Researchers' positionality

While I continue to maintaining the qualitative Africanized approach to this study, I recognize the challenges in research when conducting a study in a context where the researcher and participants have a lot in common. As a woman socialized within the same society, objectivity and biased mind was what I battled with all through the data collection period. Infact, there was what I will call 'Shifting nature of positionality'. What I mean is that feeling of wanting to be just a researcher and remain objective but found myself on the side of being a participant too. No matter how I went out to collect data with the mind to distance myself, I found myself being shifted towards joining participants to win their arguments that all gendered proverbs regardless of what messages they convey should be maintained in our society because they teach the morals of what it means to be a good woman. In some instances I felt like losing focus of being a

researcher but acted as a gender advocate who is there to protect my culture of what it means to be a woman of Malawian culture.

However, Ponelis (2015) argues that in interpretive research paradigms such as this current study, researchers see themselves as ‘within the circle’ interpreting the world and knowledge around them. They have an epistemological position of that of someone co-creating and sharing knowledge as well as creating and sharing relationships furthering their understanding of different point of view. This was exactly my case whereby I perceived myself to be close to participants because of three reasons. Firstly being a Malawian with shared cultural values to those of participants. This is the culture and wisdom that shaped me to be who I am today. Secondly, being a parent who has a role to pass on the wisdom and culture to new generation (ie my children). 3. As an educator who is supposed to teach and have even taught in schools such wisdom about Malawian culture. The researcher carries out subjective where the results can be influenced by their opinion. To position myself as the main instrument of data collection and data analysis. As the main actor in the research process, I naturally brought to the process some values. As a woman, naturally I stood on the side of women in their struggles against patriarchy. As one of my theories, CDA, claims that research of this type has a political agenda, that is to fight the hegemony of patriarchy that is housed in Chichewa proverbs. I was not alone in the qualitative study. I collaborated with the research participants in making meaning out of the various views and situations regarding each proverb. The journey to knowledge production was therefore a shared activity. The researcher and the research participants joined hands and became co-producers of knowledge. This is a situation which is more likely to have influence the research findings in one way or another.

Given my gender skills acquired both at Masters and doctoral phases made me different from most of the participants that I interviewed. Infact, as it is discussed in the motivation section, proverbs, as part of folklore, featured prominently in my entire life both at home as well as in our school curriculum. When I joined the teaching profession, I came into contact with the presence of Chichewa proverbs in the school curriculum. I taught Chichewa proverbs during my teaching career in Malawi. I then enrolled into the Bachelor of Education degree programme at the University of Botswana, specializing in language education. After the completion of the first degree, I enrolled into a Masters degree in Education at the University of Botswana, specializing in gender studies. This academic programme exposed me to literature on gender. As an MEd

student, I started thinking of how language (my undergraduate degree major) could link up with my masters degree major. I became more and more interested in trying to establish the link, if any, between language and gender. An international conference that was held in Bangkok in Thailand did lay the foundation stone of the current thesis. At the conference, I presented a paper that focused on Chichewa proverbs and gender inequalities (Kamwendo 2010/11). When I left Botswana for South Africa, I became interested in pursuing a PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I wanted my PhD study to build on both my masters and bachelors degrees. My bachelor's degree specialized in language education whilst my Masters degree in Education was situated in the field of Gender Studies. I started to ask questions: What have African (or Malawian) languages got to do with gender equity and gender inequality? It became very clear to me that there is a dearth of studies on gender issues from the perspective of Chichewa proverbs as a tool of an African languages. It is because of such gender skills and curiosity to interrogate the proverbs which made me remain focused and understand the wisdom in proverbs with a gender lens with the help of the study objectives. Furthermore, the idea of using multiple data collection instruments that is desktop, one to one interviews and focus groups also added to the credibility of the findings. With credibility, I refer to how well the researchers' portrayal of participants matches the participants perceptions. Credibility rests on the data collection and how the research systematically studied what it claimed to study.

3.2.3 Reflections on the research journey

I now turn to reflect on the challenges that were experienced during the field work. Though the field work was conducted in my home area, the possibility of challenges was not ruled out. The major challenges that I encountered was that of frequent changing of interview schedule agreed between the researcher and the participants. As I tried to make sense of what could be the reason, I found out that there was a poor timing of the field work process. This challenge could have been avoided if the data collection was conducted off the growing season. However, it was inevitable to avoid this because the whole process was delayed while waiting for research approval from University of KwaZulu-Natal research office.

As the data collection commenced from November 2015 to January 2016, this is the time when Malawi receives the first rains. Due to this poor timing, it was a bit challenging for the respondents to honor the agreement time for interview. Several times, I had to postpone the interview schedule in order to give time to the responds to attend to garden issues. As such, the interview period was

more prolonged than expected. The issue of timing also led to the situation where the researcher had to adjust conduct the focus group discussion which was initially planned for. As the situation was becoming so hard and that the researcher had exhausted the extension of time for field work to accommodate individuals for interview, it was at the researcher discretion that two focus groups were conducted to add on numbers on one to one interviews.

Although as a researcher I encountered some technical challenges in terms of poor timing of field work which coincide with first rains in the growing season, the researcher wishes to reflect on the warmth and kindly welcome which was experienced throughout the field work. I begin by saying that, most of the literature on research and field work is tilted towards the knowledge about how unwelcome some communities are in terms of their participation. However, through my own experience, even though at times I experienced schedule changes, the general attitude of the participants of Zomba city was cordially warm, relaxed and very participatory. Honestly, I embarked on my field work with a preconceived mind which made me prepared for some gifts in terms of small amount of money to give to participants as a sign of appreciation to them for sparing their time. To my surprise, it was I who ended up collecting gifts from the research participants. The gifts ranged from food stuffs such as potatoes, cassava, green maize, sugar canes and vegetables. Others even went to the point of preparing food (*nsima* with local chicken) in readiness for me. At one point, a participant (a ward councilor) who I understand is late may his soul rest in peace, completely refused to accept a small amount of money as a token of appreciation. The old man in his late seventies was ill by then accepted to take part in the study and explained that his knowledge of proverbs and traditions is not for sell but to educate others. This was the climax during the field trip when I truly witnessed a true African philosophy of *umunthu or ubuntu/botho*. What I witnessed during the fieldwork contrasted sharply with other contexts (for example, South Africa) where research participation is highly commercialized in that research participants expect monetary rewards and/or other forms of rewards.

Because of such warm, friendly and welcoming gestures that I received, my data collection exercise was made a bit easier and the environment was so amazing and allowed for a complete participatory approach encroached with laughter and jokes. This challenges the claims of some researchers who universalize their negative research experiences which are context based. One possible reason for the success of the fieldwork had to do with the fact I am a Malawian and was

conducting fieldwork in Malawi, and that linguistically, I was at home as well. I was therefore an insider and I was able to use my insider knowledge to negotiate my way across various contexts.

3.3 Population

Every speaker of Chichewa from the age of eighteen (18 and above) were eligible to take part in this study since Chichewa as a language is spoken widely in all regions. In Malawi, 18 is the age at which one is considered as an adult and does not require parents or guardian consent to engage in any activity. Every adult resident of Zomba city was eligible to take part in this study.

3.3.1 Sample selection

The sample population can be broken into two categories, namely key informants and some interviewees. The former comprised block leaders, ward councillors and two senior education officials (two managers). Purposive sampling was applied as a strategy in order to get the knowlegably targeted participants to take part in the study. All the four stratas of participants were pre-selected and approached to participate in the research study based on the fact that they were deemed to have knowledge and understanding of the Chichewa proverbs that the study examined.

3.3.2. Key informants

In research, key informants are knowledgeable people or people who hold special or unique knowledge about the subject matter that is being investigated. They can also be described as authorities on a particular subject matter. In the case of my study, I was interested in people who are knowledgeable about proverbs as sources of indigenous knowledge. To this end, I was able to identify the following as key informants that were relevant to my topic of study: block leaders, ward councilors and two managers from the Ministry of Education.

It is important that diversity in key informant selection is achieved. This means that all key informants must not come from one sector or else there will be no diversity of views. In the case of my study, diversity of key informants was achieved given that the key informants came from three different backgrounds, namely: traditional leadership was represented by the block leaders. Secondly, civic leadership was represented by the ward councillors, and thirdly the Ministry of Education was represented by two education managers. I was satisfied that this selection of key information enabled me to access a diversity of voices.

I was fully aware that the use of key informants in research does have its merits and demerits. I carefully considered these issues. First, I asked myself as to why I needed key informants as per my selection. I argued that block leaders and ward councillors are community leaders, and as such, they are custodians of community culture, beliefs and knowledge systems. Such leaders are usually not young, and are associated with the wisdom of the people. They were, therefore, well placed to address the objectives of my study. With regard to the education managers, I justified their choice as follows. The education sector is one avenue through which proverbs have been popularized, promoted and preserved. It therefore made a lot of sense to have two education managers as part of my key informants list. I also noted some advantages of using key informants in a study. The first advantage is that a researcher is able to receive valuable information from well qualified people i.e. people who can speak authoritatively on a subject matter without bias. Secondly, I was aware that well selected and good key informants can act as a check on the information that a researcher had previously obtained from other informants. However, these advantages can fall off should a researcher fail to make the right choice of key informants; or if the researcher influences the thinking of the key informants.

Whilst the use of key informants does bring benefits to a researcher and his/her project, I was also aware of the challenges that could have come along. Selecting a key informant is not easy. In addition, key informants could be very busy people, and this happened in my case. The block leaders, the ward councillors and the education managers were all extremely busy with their core duties. Finding space and time to engage in an interview with me was a big challenge. A number of them had to postpone their interviews to another date in view of their busy schedule. I had to exercise the highest level of patience, and it paid off handsomely. The key informant, like any other research participant, can make or break a research project, and were therefore treated with care and respect. During every interview, I thanked the key informant and apologized for eating into their time.

Block leaders

From the information that I obtained from Zomba District Commissioners' office, the city is divided into small manageable sections that are called blocks. These are similar to those that exist in villages and are headed by traditional leaders. Therefore, the people who take up positions of leading the blocks are known as block leaders. To some extent these block leaders are also the

custodians of Malawi customs and traditions, and as such, they were in a good position to provide views on historical backgrounds and meanings of proverbs. The block leaders also gave practical accounts of they engage with proverbs with respect to gender equality. I also found it important to engage with the block leaders in order to understand how they interact with proverbs in their daily undertakings as they deal with people in various issues such as conflict management.

Through enquiries to the Zomba District Commissioner's office, I established that there are twenty (20) blocks within the city which are also represented by twenty block leaders. I realized that out of twenty block leaders, only five (5) were women. Because of the gender disparity that was identified in these leadership positions, I was compelled to use different sampling techniques for male and females. In this case purposive sampling was used for female traditional leaders since these were the only female traditional leaders holding the position. Purposive sampling allowed me to interview all the female leaders in this regard. On the other hand, non-probability simple random sampling was used for male traditional leaders. Since I could not interview all the fifteen traditional leaders, I used simple random sampling to choose the sample from the target group where fifteen names were written down and every second person was picked. Seven (7) male block leaders were selected from the group of fifteen. This gave me a total number of twelve (12) block leaders.

Ward councillors

Apart from the blocks into which Zomba city is divided, there are also other political geographical units known as wards. Ward councilors are politicians and policy makers at local level who work hand in hand with law makers i.e members of parliament. The ward councilors were selected to shed light and give views on how they engage with proverbs with respect to gender. I used the purposive sampling technique to select the ward councilors. Ten (10) ward councillors were identified in the end.

Education Managers

The Education Division Manager and the District Education Manager were selected since they sit on committees that are responsible for reviewing education curriculum. As proverbs are part of the Malawi school curriculum, the education managers are also another critical category of people who can shed light and give their views and probably influence changes or modification.

Purposive sampling was used in this category too since these are the specific people holding the positions. I experienced some challenges in maintaining gender balance in this category since there is only one Division Manager and one District Education Manager in Zomba central and both are male. I had no option but to proceed to interview the two senior education officials.

3.4. Other research participants (Just residents)

Apart from the key informants, the study also engaged with some residents of different ages ie from eighteen (18) and above and are able to converse clearly, ethnic groups, social-economic status and religion within Zomba city. To select a sample from these knowledge holders (men and women), I made use of the Zomba voters' register. In order to maintain a balance of gender and age, the names of participants were put in categories according to gender and age. Thereafter, I used simple random sampling to select every 10th person from the respective categories. This gave every participant an equal chance of being selected. A total of nineteen (19) participants participated in this category. In total, there were forty four participants. Table 1 below shows the tabulation of twenty two women and twenty two men making a total of 44 participants in this research study.

Table 1: FIELDWORK RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Category	women	Men
Block leaders	5	7
Ward councilors	5	5
Education division manager and Zomba Urban District Education Manager	0	2
Group Age 35-above	6	4
Group Age 18-35	5	4
	22	22

Since the aim of qualitative studies is to get in depth data rather than focusing on quantity of data, the sample in this study was quite reasonable. The number yielded very convincing thematic saturation across all the gendered proverb that the researcher had sourced out from the text. Mason (2010) argues that samples for qualitative studies are generally small and frequencies are rarely important. He continues to explain that there is always a point of diminishing return to qualitative samples because as the study goes on more data does not necessarily lead to new information. In addition, qualitative research is very labour intensive, and analyzing a large sample can be time consuming and often simply impractical to analyze.

3.5 Demographic profile of research participants

In total, 44 people participated in the study. The participants are categorized according to gender (see Chart 1), age (see Chart 2), ethnicity (see Chart 3), marital status (see Chart 4), educational level (see Chart 5) and religion (see Chart 6) on preliminary pages.

CHARTS 1-6: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

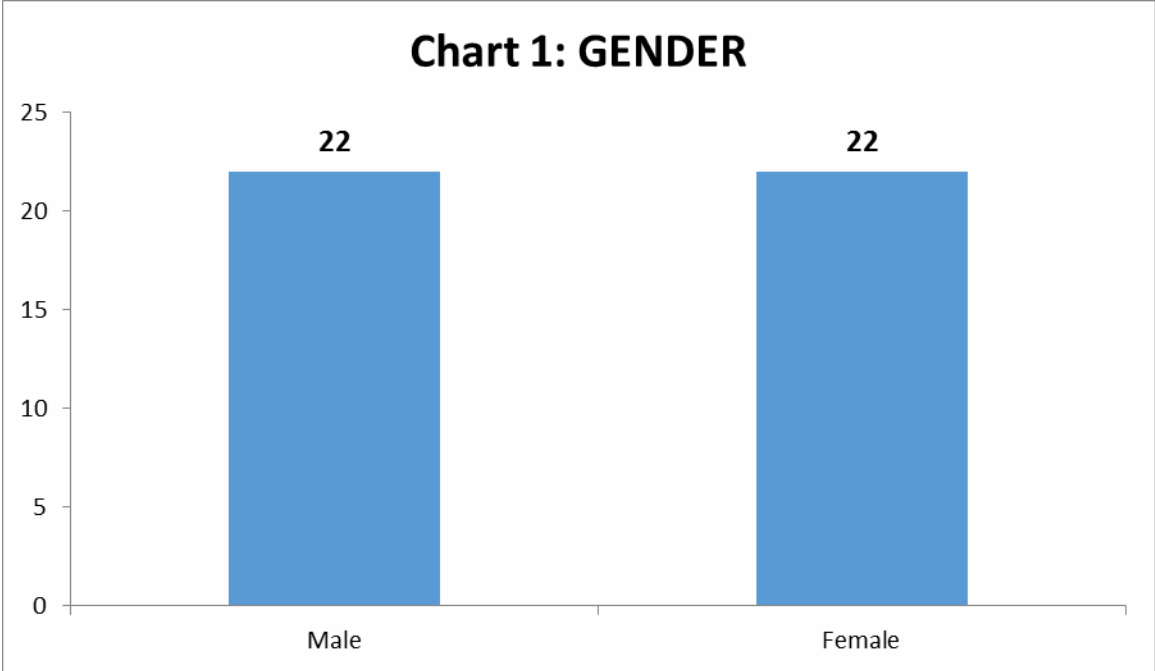
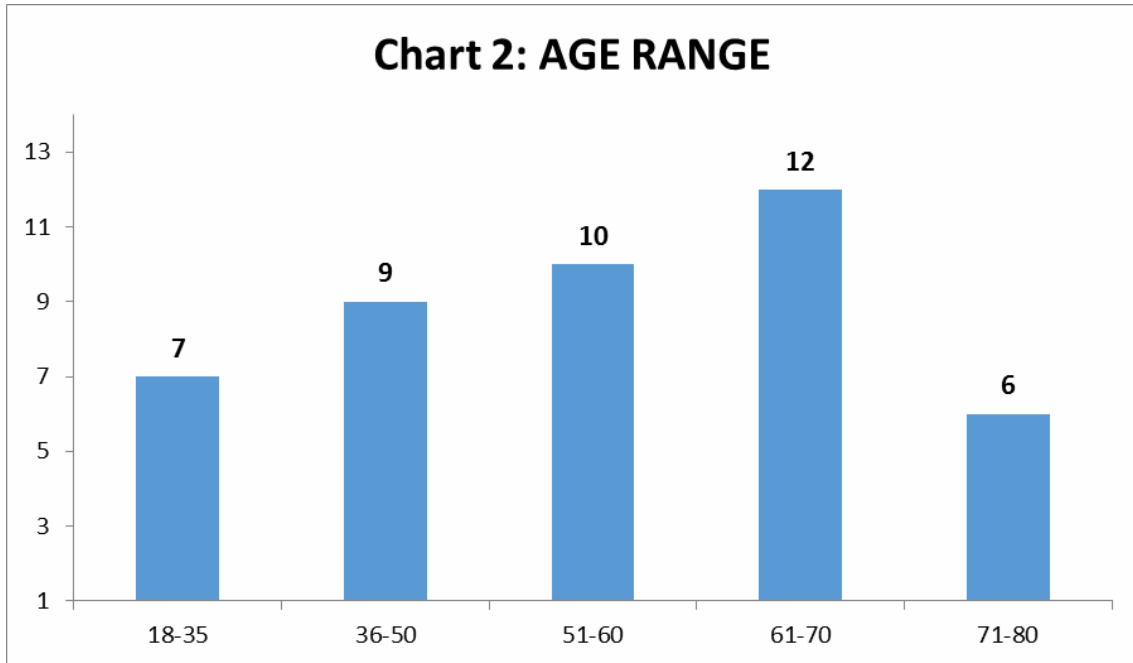


Chart 1 shows that both men and woman were represented in the study. The charts show a gender representation of twenty-two (22) men and 22 women representing 50% took part in this study.



The age of the knowledge holders ranged from eighteen (18) years to eighty (80). No one below the age of eighteen was interviewed (see Chart 2 above). This was done in consistence with the constitutional restriction in Malawi and research ethics that individuals under 18 years of age are regarded as minors and that their participation in any research requires approval and consent from parents or guardians. However, I did not factor in such protocols in the data collection tools. As such, I did not interview any individual under 18 years of age.

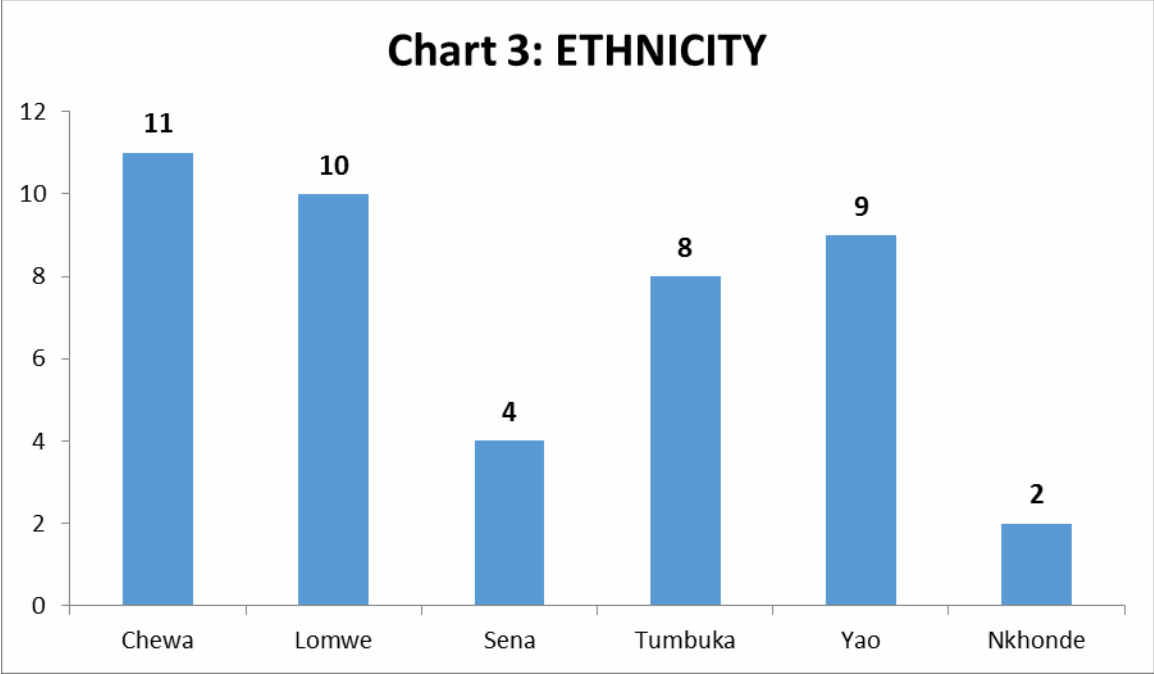
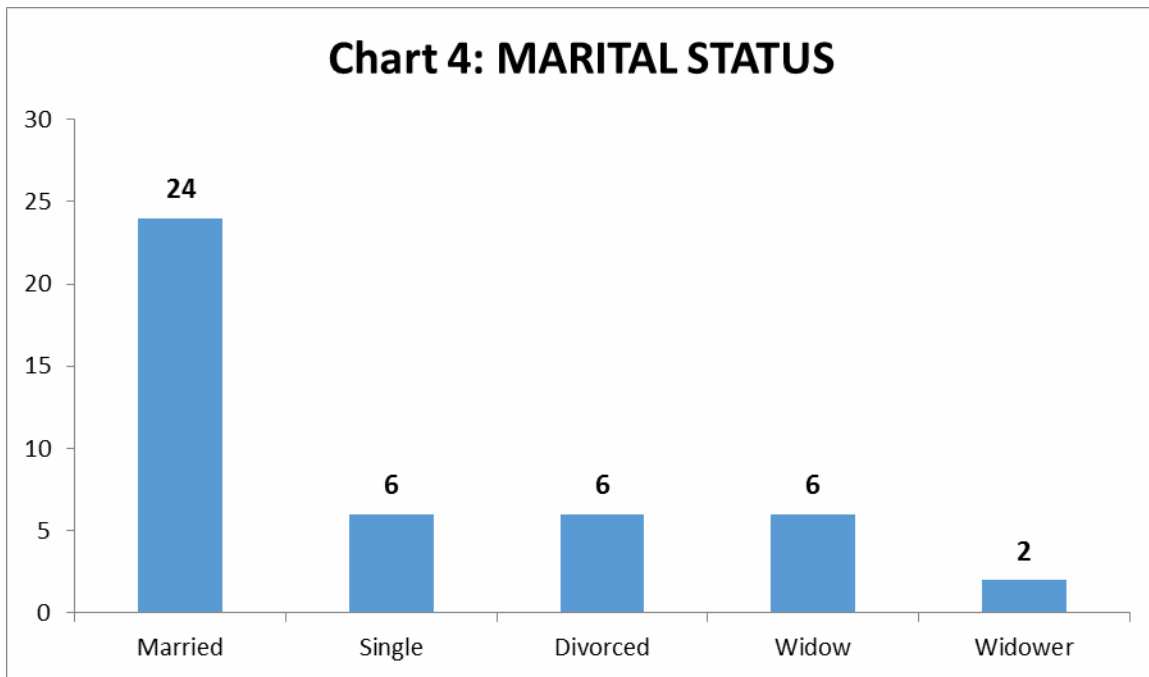


Chart 3 shows ethnicity of the participants who were involved in this research study. The chart shows ethnicity distribution of (11) Chewas, ten (10) Lomwes, eight (8) Tumbukas, nine (9) Yaos and four (4) Senas and two (2) Nkhondes were interviewed. Since the researcher used the voters register with a non-probability simple random sampling to sample the population, it was not possible to equalize the numbers of knowledge holders in terms of ethnicity. The number of the ethnic groups is a true reflection in the sense that Zomba city houses people from all walks of Malawi with majority coming from southern region where the research city is located. While the Chewas from central region come second followed by the Tumbuka from the Northern region.



Another variable that the researcher felt necessary to include is that of marital status as shown in chart 4. With reference to the desk top analysis, I established that most of the gendered proverbs were talking about issues of heterosexual marriage. The traditional customs and beliefs have an influence on affordability, flexibility and freedom to challenge the gender ideology in the proverbs how married/unmarried people relate to norms and traditions inscribed the proverbs. Chart 4 shows that out of the thirty knowledge holders who were interviewed, 24 participants representing 80% of the total population were married, 6 were single, 6 divorced, 6 widows and 2 widowers. One would also argue that the percentage exceeds 80% since the divorced, widows, widowers were once married.

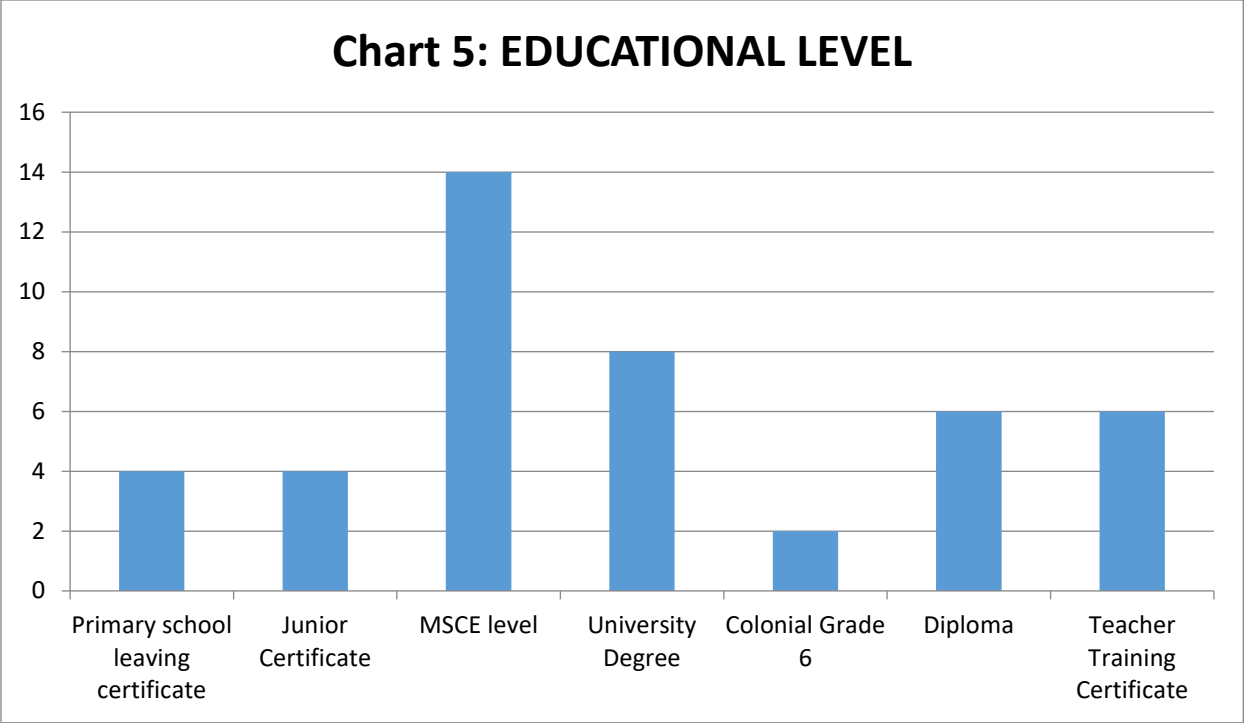
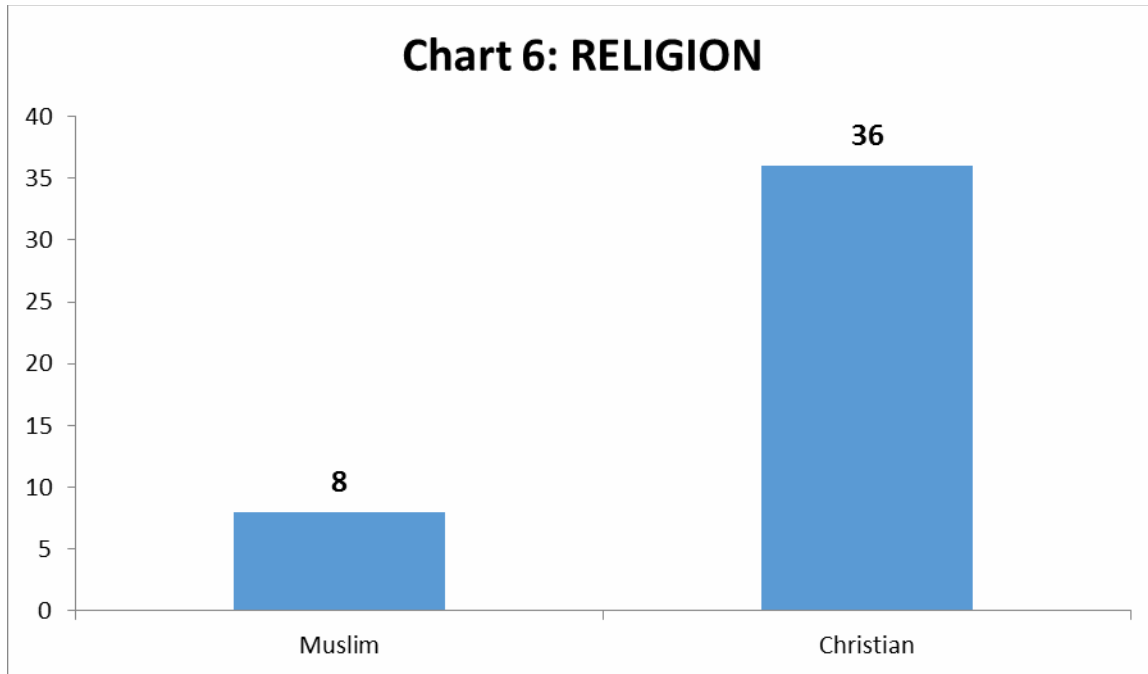


Chart 5 above is about Education level of participants. This was also considered a very crucial variable in this study. The chart shows that out of the forty-four participants who were involved in the study have at least gone through a certain level of education systems. None of the participants were completely illiterate. The table shows that 8 participants have university degrees, 6 have diploma, 14 they have the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), 6 have teacher training certificate, 4 have Junior Certificate (JC), 4 have Primary school leaving certificate (PSLC) and 2 have the colonial grade 6. Although Malawi is rated one of the poorest countries in Africa and that people struggle financially to seek education, there is a positive indication that people strive to attain at least basic education and beyond. As indicated in the background, Chichewa is one of the subjects. Finally, chart 6 covers the religious affiliations of the participants.



According to the latest population census, conducted in 2008, the information shows that Malawi is 80% a Christian country. The majority of Malawi are affiliated to different Christian denominations with major denominations as Roman Catholic, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Anglican, Seventh Day, Church of Christ and others from Pentecostal churches. The majority of the participants were therefore Christians with the total number of thirty-five (36) representing 81% while nine (9) were of Islamic religion representing 19 % of the research participants.

3.6 Phases of the study

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved desktop work. This phase took place in South Africa where I was based as a doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. During the desktop study, I extracted gendered proverbs from three books: Chakanza's *The wisdom of the people: 2000 Chinyanja proverbs*, Kumakanga's *Nzeru za kale* and Mphonda's *Miyambi yatsopano* (see Chapter 5 for the presentation and discussion of the findings from the desktop phase of the study). The desktop phase of the study did not require ethical clearance because I was using texts I was using already published anthologies of Chichewa proverbs. There was no involvement with human subjects. My task during this phase was to identify gendered

proverbs from the three anthologies of proverbs, and document the relevant background information as well as the provided meaning of each proverb.

The second phase of the study involved fieldwork. I had to leave South Africa and travel to Malawi to conduct the field work in Zomba. The field work took place from November 2015 to December 2016. During the fieldwork, I collected data through key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The findings from the fieldwork are captured in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Naturally, since the fieldwork involved getting in touch and talking to people, ethical issues became handy, and I discuss them later in this chapter in section 4.11.

3.7 Methods and data collection instruments

3.7.1 Desktop study

A desktop study is secondary research and it also known as desk research. It involves the collation or synthesis of already existing data are in print or published on internet. I deployed desktop method to source out proverbs from three selected books. Only those proverbs that talk about human beings and those of animals as representation of human beings shall be picked. I adopted and adapted this model from Webster (1982: 174) whose study on women, sex and marriage in Moroccan proverbs was based on the following selection criteria:

1. Only those which refer to people (females or male) human beings shall be examined.
2. Only those which explicitly deal with females or males animals shall be examined. In my case, the proverbs on male and female animals are a representation to human beings. I also welcomed additional proverbs from the knowledge holders themselves in case they were omitted in the texts being used. It is from this point of departure which necessitates the researcher to carry out field study. Rather than relying on my analysis only, the field study was undertaken to establish independent views from knowledge holders themselves regarding the meanings of the proverbs.

3.7.2 Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with the participants especially those holding specific positions and roles. By the concept key informants, I do not wish to undermine other participants but only recognizing that some participants hold special roles such as traditional leaders, ward concillors, authors of the proverb book and education managers. The interviews took place at venues that the key informants suggested. This meant that some key informant interviews took

place at offices of the key informants whilst other interviews took place in the homes of the key informants. Key informant interviews can be face to face or conducted telephonically. I did not opt for telephonic interviews for the following reasons. It would not have been easy to access phone numbers of all key informants. Secondly, the phone bill would have been exorbitant and not affordable. Thirdly, with telephonic interviews, the researcher may not verify the authenticity of the interviewee. It is possible for someone else to pose as the interviewee. Another challenge would have been that in some places in Malawi, the telephone reception is so weak that the quality of the interviews could have been compromised.

I opted for face-to-face interviews. They afforded me to meet the key informant in person, and thus enabled me to verify the authenticity of the key informant. With the key informant's consent, I audio recorded each interview. Occasionally, I would make notes in my field notebook. I did this sparingly in order to avoid losing human and eye contact with the key informants.

3.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

Although by their very nature, interviews are time consuming and can drag the researcher into being biased, this study still used in-depth interviews with the use of a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A & B) for the interview guides – English and Chichewa versions). Adler and Clark (2008) describe a semi-structured interview as a designed ahead of time instrument which is modified as appropriate for each individual participant. The two authors argue that at the root of such interviews is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people on particular phenomenon and experiences and the meanings they make out of those experiences.

The semi-structured interview guide was used to allow both the researcher and participants to discuss the proverbs in-depth and probe for clarity. Semi-structured interview guide provided me with room to adjust questions depending on participant's response(s). This gave room for the researcher to welcome additional proverbs in case they had not been captured in the desktop study phase. Individual face to face interviews were used as a primary data collection technique for the study. The interview was conducted in a one to one manner. Since the nature of this study is that of indigenous knowledge systems, the interview guide was conducted in Chichewa. With some participants, there was code switching between English and Chichewa during the interviews, but for the vast majority, the interviews were conducted exclusively in Chichewa. Since Malawi is

my home country and Chichewa is my mother tongue, I did not experience any linguistic barrier during interviews. When researchers conduct fieldwork in communities whose language(s) they do not speak, research assistants are normally hired. Given that the study was about proverbs in Chichewa, it made sense to conduct the study through Chichewa. After all, African indigenous knowledge is stored in indigenous African languages.

3.7.4 Focus group discussions

In addition to interviews, focus group discussions were used to seek views from community knowledge holders. Krueger (2002) explains that focus group technique is one qualitative research method used to explore the opinions, knowledge, perceptions and concerns of individuals regarding a particular topic. Krueger (2002) stresses that the focus group technique requires carefully recruited participants of similar type, in an environment that is comfortable and well moderated. The focus group typically involves preferably six to eight individuals who have some knowledge or experience of the topic. The group is asked a series of questions or are given statements to which they freely share their opinion, ideas and reactions while the researcher listens and records the main points from the discussion.

The focus group has an advantage in that the participants are relaxed as compared to one to one interviews. With such relaxed environment, chances of getting detailed information are higher unlike in one to one interviews (Krueger 2002). Although the focus group may result in yielding undesirable findings through participants who dominate the group, the approach gives the researcher a better understanding of findings to quality control the whole process. What matters most is the researcher's ability to control the whole process. Another potential challenge associated with focus group discussion is that confidentiality could not be guaranteed since all participants actually listen to each other's presentations. In other words, participants know what their colleagues said, and this contrasts sharply with one on one interviews. One also has to acknowledge the possibility of group thinking and social desirability bias. That is, some research participants may end up answering questions in ways that would be socially or politically correct simply because there are some people around who are listening to him or her. If the same speaker were to be involved in a one on one interview, they could answer questions more honestly.

In this study two focus groups (males only and females only) were conducted. The first group of males comprised six men who by the time of research were working as labourers in clearing

bushes on the Zomba mountain. The group was organised and facilitated by one traditional leader who happened to be amongst the group as team leader. Upon agreement with the participants, a date and time was set for the group discussion.

Likewise, another focus group comprising female members was conducted. This was a group of eight women who met every fortnight to discuss issues of small business loans commonly known as the village bank. The group was organised by a friend of mine who by that time was the chairperson of the group. The chairperson invited me to meet the group and attend a meeting on one of the days. It was after that meeting that the chairperson introduced me to the group and presented my intentions of wanting to engage the group members in a discussion about gendered Chichewa proverbs. The idea was welcomed by everybody in the group and it was agreed to conduct the focus group one a set day.

In all the two focus groups, the researcher adopted and adapted the REFLECT model as explain by Mkabela (2005) to carry out the process. REFLECT model is a technique where the participants are given a chance to identify the problem in a given phenomenon under research. In this study therefore, the researcher introduced the gendered proverbs and invited participants to identify the problems in them. According to Mkabela (2005), the REFLECT model is one such an approach that allows researchers to learn with, by and from the indigenous community members. In order to avoid any chaotic situation in the discussions which could resulted in missing the important information, the process was thoroughly monitored by the researcher's good command of control. Free and open discussions among the participants resulted in generation of new ideas which have been useful in the discussion. The free and open discussion in data collection allowed both objectivity and subjectivity while listening to research participants. According to postmodernist gender theories, subjectivity means taking the perspective of the individual self rather than being rigid (Lewis 2016).

Just like with the semi-structured interviews, Chichewa was the language of the focus group discussions for guide for focus group discussions – (English and Chichewa versions). Each focus group discussion lasted for at least one and a half hours. The same interview guide which were used on one to one interview as in section 4.8.3 was used on focus group. This was done to maintain the focus and constistence of the questioning. I, the researcher, served as the moderator

for each session. The proceedings of each discussion session were audio-recorded, with the consent of all participants.

3.8 Data analysis

The analysis of data needs to be clearly articulated. The case of qualitative data poses peculiar challenges to researchers, and I am not exempted. There is a belief in some academic quarters that qualitative research, by its very nature, is inferior, and that quantitative research, on the other hand, is perfect and impeccable research. It is as if qualitative research is second class research that lacks legitimacy. This unfortunate view can grow deep root if qualitative researchers conduct their business without the rigour that that academic research requires. One of the areas that can easily come under attack is qualitative data analysis. Some critics have claimed that qualitative data analysis does not carry the vigour and rigour that accompany quantitative data analysis. One way of dismissing this claim is to ensure that qualitative data analysis is thorough and open to scrutiny. To this end, I decided to devote a section to how each qualitative data category (i.e. data obtained from desktop analysis, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews) was analysed.

3.8.1 Data analysis: Key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions

Since key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were all audio-recorded, I took the following steps to analyze the data. Each interview session was listened to and transcribed in Chichewa. Content analysis was used to analyze transcripts. Hsiek (2005) explains that content analysis is a technique used in research to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. This is done through systematic evaluating the texts, for example, a document or oral communication and graphics, context of the text; language, words, phrases, themes and symbols. Hsiek (2005) argues that content analysis is a very challenging technique in trying to find adequate measures and developing proxy of a transcript. Although that is the case, he also argues that content analysis allows the researcher to analyze social cognitive, recover and examine the nuances of stakeholders' perception and social trends.

Firstly, through reading the notes of the field interview and results from desk top analysis repeatedly, the researcher transcribed the notes on interesting and relevant information that was found. Secondly, the data were cleaned by removing all unnecessary information and only

remained with the information which was relevant in line with the research aims and objectives. The researcher coded the information by identifying the categories on information identified. For example, all the information (answers) from different participants answering objective number 1 of historical background of the gendered Chichewa proverbs was placed together. The same was repeated through all the transcripts of different participants on individual interviews as well as those from focus group. Each transcript was read repeatedly, and clues were coded accordingly. This was done to all information from different participants relating to different categories answering different objectives of about Chichewa proverbs were placed together. This was applied to all those categories that offers description of what information is about. After identifying the major categories of the information, the researcher identified those which could be combined into a theme. The themes were examined to consider their relevance and where they fit. As already indicated, to avoid going astray with the analysis, the categorization of the information was done with guidance of the research objectives. Finally, each theme was then developed, discussed in relation to theories and the literature. Conclusions are drawn for every theme developed.

All the discussions of data in the analysis were done in relation to the theoretical frameworks of underpinning this study. Regarding the theory of critical discourse analysis, the researcher adopted the hermeneutic interpretative orientation as argued by Gross-berg (1991: 134). Gross-berg states that “texts reveal their significance, not on the surface of images and representations, but rather in the complex ways that they produce, transform and shape meaning structure”

3.9 Ethical issues

Ethical issues were observed throughout the study. Research ethics do not start during data collection. Rather, research ethics are not one event affair. This means that the whole research process, from the conception of the study up to the dissemination of research finding, has to be founded on sound ethical grounds. Permission to conduct research is a key component of research ethics. Prior to data collection process, a permission was granted by the UKZN research office to allow me conduct research in Malawi (see appendix C). The University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa also demanded to see that I get permission to conduct fieldwork in Malawi. To this end, prior to the data collection process, permission to conduct the research in Zomba city was

sought from the District Commissioner's office. A written request to conduct research was sent three months before the actual process. A written permission was granted by the District commissioners) (see Appendix D). With regard to the use of voter's register, the permission was also sought to use the voter's registers of specified areas. A written permission was granted from Malawi Electoral Commission (see Appendix E). Through the Zomba District Commissioner's office, I was provided with a list of traditional leaders and ward councillors.

The traditional leaders and the ward councilors were the gatekeepers. As community leaders, the ward councilors and block leaders held the keys to the community. As I approached each ward councillor or block leader, I introduced myself and my research intentions. I also made available the letters of permission that had been granted by the District Commissioner's office. It is not enough to expect things to go smoothly simply by displaying letters of permission. The gatekeepers by their very nature can make or break a study (Singh and Wassenaar 2016). It is therefore important that the researcher should approach the gatekeepers with great tact. I approached the traditional leaders as gatekeepers with the respect that is expected of traditional leaders. In addition, I made it very clear that I was not a money-making consultant but rather that I was an ordinary and non-money making PhD student. They were happy to note that a woman was studying outside the country and also studying at PhD level. They were most ready to assist the daughter of the land to succeed in her studies. I found the gatekeepers to be very warm and friendly. For example, after interviewing one of the traditional leaders as a key informant, he was kind enough to assist me in organizing the men's focus group discussion.

One of the ethical requirements is make the research aim very clear and understandable to the research participants. In every semi-structured interview, key informant interview and focus group discussions, I meticulously and unambiguously explained the aims of the study. Key to the explanation was that it was an academic study and not a consultancy. After the participants had been informed about the study, they were then requested to consider taking part in the study. It was made clear to them that they had the freedom to choose not to take part, and that if they decided not to take part, no negative consequences would follow. Even in the case of those who agreed to take part in the study, it was also made clear to them that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time without attracting any negative repercussions. In one case, a key informant declined to take part in the interview because of ill health, and I obliged

Accordingly. This boiled down to respect for the research participant (Wassenaar and Mamotte 2012). The informed consent form (in both English and Chichewa versions) was made available to each participant. Whenever participants accepted to take part in the study, they proceeded to sign or thumb stamp the consent form (see Appendix F) as evidence of being in agreement to take part in the study.

Research ethics also include making a risk/benefit analysis of the study. In other words, to what extent was the study a risk to the research participants? Or to what extent was the study beneficial to the research participants? One can also talk of social value of the study to the research participants and Malawian society in general (Singh and Wassenaar 2016, Wassenaar and Mamotte 2012). The University of KwaZulu-Natal had issued a research clearance certificate that declared that the study did not pose a risk to human beings (see appendix C). However, I still had to exercise great caution to avoid any situation through which the study could cause stress or embarrassment to any research participant. That is why, for example, the two focus groups were sex-based. This was to ensure that participants were free to talk about issues without being constrained by members of the opposite sex.

The study was also based on the beneficence of the treatment of participants (Creswell 2012). Beneficence insists on maximising good outcomes while minimising risks for the participants. The question of social value of the study was a complicated one in that whilst the study tackled an important aspect of human life i.e. gender inequality. I pointed out to research participants that whilst the research will make its findings and recommendations to various quarters, the use of the research findings in actual life situations is strongly recommended. People want research contributing to their well being.

The ethical considerations guiding this study were also meant to protect the autonomy of the participants. The use of audio and video gadgets to record the interview proceedings were used with the permission of the participants. Anonymity of participants involved in the data collection was observed and where names are to be mentioned during analysis and discussion of the findings.

3.10 Validity

The term validity has been defined differently by different researchers. Gill and Johnson (2010: 143) regard validity as “the accuracy of the measurement process. That is the extent to which a measuring device will produce the same results when applied more than once to the same person

under similar conditions”. On their part, De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2012) define validity as the extent to which an empirical study measures adequately or reflects the real meaning of the concept under study. De Vos et.al (2012) extend their meaning of validity as the degree hat least to approximate the truthfulness of the results. These considerations include truthfulness, accuracy, genuineness and soundness.

Booyse, Roux, Seroto and Wolhuter (2010:83) explain that in research, there are two main types of validity identified in many studies are those of internal and external validity. According to Booyse et.al, internal validity refers to the measurement and the test itself while external validity refers to the ability to generalise the findings to the target population. Booyse et.al (2010) argue that when the researcher disregard validity of the study, the trust worthiness of the study come in question. They argued that the concept of validity is not universal but rather a contingent construct, inextricably rooted in the process and intentions of a particular research methodologies and projects.

The validity of the study goes beyond instrumentation but also includes the literature reviewed. This implies that the literature reviewed should be valid and in line with what the study’s objectives. The validity of a study guards against mis-matches from the topic, foundation/background, literature review, methodology used, data presentation and analysis. Validity is therefore seen as the layout of building blocks. This is the fact of being logically or factually sound, acceptable and how it corresponds accurately to the real world.

3.11 Reliability

Reliability on the other hand, is viewed as the extent or the degree to which results remain constant with the passage of time and an accurate representation of the population. Reliability is more of the whole study’s consistence and how the study can be reproduced using similar instruments and under a similar methodology (Yin 2016). In a way of maintaining validity and reliability, I conducted a pilot study prior to the main data collection process. The pilot study was conducted to test the research instruments and to detect possible flaws. Where it was identified that the instruments failed to give what they are supposed to measure, I modified and adjusted/restructured the instruments accordingly.

3.12 The pilot study

With the aim to test the validity and reliability of the instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the main process of data collection. The pilot study was conducted in Blantyre city more specifically Makhetha area. Makhetha is a township located to the North East of Blantyre city. In normal cases, the pilot study could have been done within the same Zomba area. However, I departed from using the study area to avoid research fatigue on the side of the participants. Conducting the pilot study in Zomba could have meant using the same participants more especially the key informants. It has to be noted here that Zomba being a small town where the main campus of University of Malawi (Chancellor College) is located, a number of surveys are conducted in it either from students, academics and other research fellows. Being a small town, the study would have involved almost the same group of people. This has put a situation where many people excuse themselves from taking part in studies more especially when there is no financial benefit.

I therefore decided to conduct the pilot study in a different location but with similar characteristics. In this case, I decided to conduct the pilot study in Makhetha township in Blantyre city. Similar to the main location of this study, the cosmopolitan similarities of the two locations Zomba city and Makhetha township are almost the same. Due to urbanization and migration, Makhetha that was previously a bushy and primitive location known for harboring thugs has witnessed growth in population and buildings. Today Makhetha is upgraded to a decent township where many people rush to rent houses which are cheaper and closer to their companies. Makhetha is now a home of people from all walks of Malawi those from different ethnic groups such as the Chewa, Tumbuka, Lomwe, Sena, Yao from all regions of Malawi. The residents of Makhetha possess similar characteristics to those of Zomba.

The pilot study involved ten (10) participants selected randomly on purpose. The pilot study involved 2 Tumbukas, 2 Lomwe, 2 Yao, 1 Sena and 3 Chewa were selected as respondents in this pilot exercise. These were the participants who were purposively and conveniently selected to respond to the questions because of their ethnicity, social economic background and age. The participants were aged between 22 and 70. Although I used a purposive sampling, the issue of

gender balance and age group was maintained. The pilot survey yielded the results that the following were noted regarding the instruments: Firstly, there was poor wording in some of the interview schedule guide. I then proceeded to amend all the guide questions which seemed confusing questions and were not clear to the research participants. It was realized that some words used in the questions were misleading. For example, interview guide No 7 and 8 which says (How do the referred proverbs promote the women's'/men's personal development and empowerment. The question seemed a bit challenging to some participants. As such it was amended by omitting the word 'development' and only left the word empowerment. Secondly, I also identified that the interview guide was more time consuming given that the interview was done in a participatory with open ended questions. The amendment was done where some questions were merged. It was noted that guide question 9 and 10 could actually be combined just to establish the implications of using gendered proverbs. In a nutshell, the pilot phase of the study afforded me the opportunity to improve the data collection instruments in readiness for the main study.

3.13 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

In summary, this phenomenological study has used multiple theories of knowledge translation theory, critical discourse analysis and African Reformist Feminism approach. The study has also used triangulation in data collection instruments i.e. desk top analysis which has been supplemented by interviews and focus group. This was all done to strengthen the reliability of the study. In addition to triangulation of data collection instruments, pilot study was also conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXTS OF THE STUDY

4.0 Introduction to the chapter

In this chapter, I lay out the context within which the study was conducted. I am using the notion of context to refer to the site from which the study was conducted specifically in Malawi as well as the political, socio-economic and sociolinguistic contexts. Research processes are never carried

out in a vacuum. They occur in particular contexts and the contexts in turn affect the research processes as well as the knowledge coming out of the processes. The various contexts of the doctoral study are presented in the following order. In section 4.1, I provide the map of Malawi showing Zomba district which is the exact research site, 4.2 is a brief overview of the political context in which the study is situated. Then I discuss lineage systems in section 4.3. After this, I outline the economic situation in Malawi in section 4.4. In the next section (4.5), I discuss the institution of marriage as it operates in Malawi. This is followed by the sociolinguistic profile (section 4.6) within which I conducted the doctoral study. I am aware that the university where the study was conceived and supervised needs some introduction and discussion. To this end, the place of IKS and African indigenous studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is discussed in section 4.7. In section 4.8 I also briefly discuss the gender relations in Malawi just to shed light on some aspects. I then conclude and summarize the chapter in section 4.9.

4.1 Research site

This research study was conducted in Zomba area located in Malawi. As already explained in the introductory section, the country is home to 19,718,743 population, of them only 3304531 which is 16.6% live in urban areas. Malawi has two main cities including Lilongwe- the capital city and Blantyre both inhabited by 905000 and 808000 respectively. The country is located in the southern Africa region as depicted on the (map1) below and it is ranked among the poorest countries in the third world (Malawi National Statistics Office 2019 Report; United Nations Estimate Report 2019; Binauli 2010; Mussa and Pauw 2011). Malawi shares borders with Mozambique to the east and south, Zambia to the west and Tanzania to the north. The study was undertaken in the city of Zomba in the Southern Region of Malawi (see Figure 1). Zomba is the fourth largest city in Malawi coming after Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu. Zomba used to be the capital of Malawi since the colonial days until 1975 when Lilongwe was declared the capital city. Of the 10-15 local languages of Malawi, the most spoken language is Chichewa being spoken by over 35% of the population, and of the seven most dominant religions, the protestants are highly ranked at 27.2 % as most dominant religion in the country according to the 2018 Malawi demographic profile. Fig 1 is therefore map of Malawi showing Zomba district down south.



Fig 1: Map of Malawi adopted and adapted from world map on line. www.world map online. Retrieved 2017/04/08

4.1.1 Political context

Since the doctoral study involved desktop study of Chichewa proverbs of Malawi as well as fieldwork in Malawi itself, it is important to present the political landscape within which the study was conducted. At the time of the attainment of independence on 6 July 1964, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda of the Malawi Congress Party became Prime Minister whilst the Queen of Britain remained the head of state and was represented in Malawi by a British government-appointed Governor-General. In 1966, Malawi attained republic status and the Queen of Britain ceased to be the head of state. Malawi attained its own head of state in the form of an executive president. The first president, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda was in office from 6 July 1966 to 21 May 1994. From time of the attainment of independence up to the present day, Malawi has experienced some significant changes in the political governance. Immediately after independence, Malawi outlawed the multiparty political system of government, and this meant that only the Malawi Congress Party, which was led by the country's founding president, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, was allowed to operate within Malawi. This single party political era was associated with some gross abuse of human rights and the neglect of social justice. Dictatorship was the order of the day. As time went by, the opposition to the dictatorship grew bigger and louder within and outside Malawi. The opposition took giant strides in the late 1990s when political activists started to openly campaign for democracy within Malawi itself.

The winds of political change under the banner of democracy and good governance finally led to a national political referendum in 1993 in which two thirds of Malawians voted for a multi-party political system. The 1993 referendum paved the way for multiparty elections of 1994. The founding president of the country, Kamuzu Banda and his Malawi Congress Party were defeated at the ballot box. On May 17, 1994, Bakili Muluzi was elected the first state president in the multi-party era. This marked the end of Kamuzu Banda's tight grip on the political machinery in Malawi. It was marked the birth of a new chapter of democracy in which human rights were going to rank high on the agenda, and the rights included the rights of women as provided for in the constitution of the new and democratic Malawi (Posner 1995, Kaspin 1995).

Within the parameters of the constitution of Malawi, Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) ruled for two consecutive presidential terms, that is, from 21 May 1994 to 24 May

2004. Each presidential term of office run for 5 years. At the end of Muluzi's second term of office, Bingu wa Mutharika run on a UDF ticket as presedential candidate and won the election. Bingu wa Mutharaika was in office from 24 May 2004 to 5 April 2012. During his second term of office, Bingu wa Mutharika died suddenly of cardiac arrest in 2012. In line with the provisions of the constitution, he was replaced by the then Vice President, Joyce Banda on 7 April 2012. Joyce Banda completed the term of office on 31 May 2014. In the 2014 presidential elections, Joyce Banda was defeated at the polls by Peter Mutharika, the younger brother of the late Bingu wa Mutharika. The latter is the current president of Malawi.

The post-Kamuzu Banda era (starting from 1994 to the present day) has witnessed some positive developments with regard to gender issues. For example, the new constitution of Malawi (Government of Malawi 2010) makes provisions for women's rights. Secondly it is during the same era that Malawi established a line ministry to handle women and gender issues. Thirdly, Malawi became a signatory to the SADC protocol on gender and development (see Southern African Development Community 2008). Another achievement during this era was the formulation and release of the gender policy for Malawi (Government of Malawi 2000). Furthermore, it is during the same period that Malawi had the first woman chief of police, and also the first woman as Vice President (Joyce Banda) who later became president after the death of President Bingu wa Mutharika. Joyce Banda made history as she became the first woman president in the whole SADC region.

The post-Kamuzu Banda era also witnessed the coming in of a new constitution that was guided by human rights. The new constitution, as per the 2010 ammended version provides for gender equality as one of the principles of national policy. In order to achieve gender equality, the following are some of the measures that have to be implemented. First, there has to be full participation of women in all spheres of Malawian life on the basis of equal opportunities between men and women. Secondly, non-discrimination against men or women has to be implemented. No person should be discriminated against on the basis of being a woman. Thirdly, the constitution provides for the implementation of policies that curb domestic violence against women, economic exploitation of women and the safeguarding of women's right property. The constitution goes further to protect women from sexual abuse, harassmnet and violence. The

constitution further protects women from discrimination at work, business and public affairs. Thirdly, the constitution protects women from the deprivation of property, including property acquired through inheritance (Government of Malawi 2010).

Another development that occurred in the gender arena was the release of the Malawi Vision 2020 document. This national vision identifies gender inequality as one of the stumbling blocks to national sustainable development and prosperity. The Vision deplores the encouragement of early marriages amongst girls. In addition, the Vision also deplores the tendency to give first preference to boys when it comes to education. Boys and girls should be afforded equal opportunities for and in education. The Vision, having noted that gender inequality runs across of spheres of Malawi, calls for gender sensitivity in all spheres of action (Malawi National Economic Commission 2000).

At continental and regional levels, it has increasingly become incumbent upon independent states to display a commitment to improving the status and participation of women. Gender equality becomes a widely accepted tool for entrenching justice and equity, and empowering men and women to participate to their full potential in society (African Union 2009, 2010; SADC 2008). This realization has led to formulation of different frameworks such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development. NEPAD framework acknowledges that for any development initiative to be considered seriously, it has to incorporate, at least, an element of participation of both men and women at grassroot level.

Similarly, at national level, Malawi, just like most countries worldwide, is a signatory to numerous gender protocols. Malawi as a democratic and sovereign state has a National Gender Policy. The Government of Malawi realizes that gender is a crosscutting issue that has a critical bearing on all aspects of sustainable and human development. The wider and more important goal is to improve the statuses of both men (and boys) and women (and girls) (Malawi Government 2000). The policy, therefore, seeks to situate itself within the international, continental and regional protocols, declarations, charters and conventions on the status of men and women which Malawi has ratified (Malawi Government 2000).

The current political environment in Malawi, therefore, is one in which gender equality is officially endorsed. Of course actual practice on the ground may speak to the contrary. But from a political and legislative points of view, it can be argued that gender equality in Malawi is recognized and protected through the following measures:

- i. The constitution of Malawi (Government of Malawi 2010).
- ii. The national policy on gender (Government of Malawi 2000).
- iii. A government Ministry dedicated to women/gender issues (Government of Malawi 2000).
- iv. Malawi as a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC 2008).
- v. Malawi being a member of the African Union, an organization that supports gender equality and the discrimination against women and girls
- vi. Malawi being a signatory to relevant United Nations charters that aim at eradicating gender inequalities, and advancing the empowerment of women and the girl child.
- vii. Gender activists are at work on the ground in Malawi.

These measures have been supported by a number of scholars who provided the positive implications of gender equality in Africa and the world. For example, Mama (1995) asserts that during this postcolonial period, one of the ways through which sustainable development can be achieved is through the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The commitment to the achievement of gender equality can be traced to the 1948 United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that all human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights and that freedom of all will not be limited on grounds of gender. This marked the milestone which was followed by the formulation of United Nations instruments such as the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Platform, the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Development Programme 2005, 2008; World Bank 2003) and the current United Nations Sustainable Development. Currently the United Nations' Sustainable Goal number 5 which supersedes

Millennium Development Goal number 3, is also aimed at achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls. Malawi is party to all these instruments.

4.1.2 Economic context

Economically, landlocked Malawi ranks among the world's poorest countries with almost 80% of the people living in rural areas and two thirds of the population living below poverty datum line (Mussa and Pauw 2011). The economy of Malawi depends largely on donors and subsistence agriculture. Several strategies have been put in place to help to boost the social-economic status of the people. Exmples of such initiatives include the Poverty Alleviation Programme which run from (1994-2005) and the recent Malawi Growth and Development Strategy that run from 2006 to 2016. The majority of Malawians suffer from chronic food shortages that are caused by unreliable climate changes and lack of farm inputs. What is worrying is that corruption seems to be growing, and it is working against achieved economic gains.

Further to this, the economy situation of Malawi has recently declined due to sour relationship with the donor community. This situation paralyzed the government and the most affected groups includes the landless, the majority of whom are women. According to United Nations Development Programme Human Development index 2013, Malawi is rated number 36 out of 51 Africa countries and number 170 out of 187 countries worldwide (United Nations Development Programme 2013). A study conducted by Binauli (2010) argues that apart from the unfavorable climate and donor freeze conditions that Malawi faces, patriarchal cultural practices and traditions are also factors contributing to this low social economic status and that women are the most negatively affected group. Women make up just above half of the entire population of Malawi which is currently estimated at 16 million. In the next section 4.1.4 I then turn to discuss a brief gender relations experienced in Malawi. Gender relations are a universal phenomenon that refers to an ideology which is socially constructed according to context. Gender relations entail acceptable roles and relationships between women and men. This implies that gender relations are mainly determined by culture and tradition as well as religion.

4.1.3 Gender relations in Malawi

Referring back to the background and motivation of this study, it is quite telling that the gender relations denotes those processes and a system of shaping different lives for men and women by placing them in different social positions and patterns of expectations. Consciously and unconsciously, planned or unplanned, individuals in a given context such as Malawi, are taught, persuaded, or compelled to conform to the usages and life values of the traditional. Gender relations therefore is a socially constructed phenomenon. Kabwila (2013) argues that gender relations in Malawi can be articulated from what she calls 'triple patriarchy namely; political, religion and traditional. She defines gender relations mainly with respect to power, decision-making, control over resources and freedom of action which is derived from political background, culture and religion. Kabwila shed light that from colonial regime, Malawi has witnessed a greater experience of gender role segregation. This is a situation agreed upon by other researchers such as Pheko (2002). In her writings about Botswana, a southern African country which was previously under British rule just the same as Malawi, Pheko alludes that Botswanas gender relations were shaped by its historical/political landscape. Kabwila and Pheka have one common view that gender relations of such nations follows a rigid pattern that can be traced up to date. One common characteristics of colonial regime is that the allocation of roles were gendered such that white colored jobs, construction, military jobs and even education were preferably assigned to men. On the other hand, women were taught more of domestic work such as housecraft, needlework and knitting as well as remain at home looking and nurturing children. From the religious point of view, gender ideologies applied the same pattern where men only comprised members of the clergy. While on traditional gender side, Malawi still value men more than women in terms of leadership and kinship.

The continual re-invention of a gendered society of Malawi ensures the maintenance of the *status quo* and therefore the privileging of male/masculine interests over female/feminine interests. Men's access to and control over resources and rewards within the private and public spheres derive legitimacy from the ideology of male dominance. Both in homes, at school and at work places is characterized with unequal opportunities between men/women as well as boys/girls. More seriously is damning image on how women especially girls continue to view themselves as inferiors, because these gender roles favour boys and views them as being more important, more intelligent and more rational than girls. In a more damaging way, women and girls are

continually abused. In addition, women and girls face gender based violence, sexually abused, being raped, girls being denied their right to education, right to access of information just to mention a few.

Evidently, a study conducted by Kerr (2015) revealed that women in Malawi have fewer entitlements within the household and beyond and they do not have much decision-making power over major production issues. This was a study conducted in the northern part of Malawi, Ekwendeni in particular. The study revealed that women have a higher workload in terms of household, reproduction, agricultural and market activities as well as caring for sick relatives within and beyond the household. Wives are less likely to receive support for kin in the form of seeds, cash, land or food, in comparison to husbands, who in turn do not always give these resources to the household and it affects household food security. Wives' unequal position is thus due to a lack of entitlements, such as land, access to employment, support from kin and the state. Because of such gender differential, there is evidence of high levels of spousal abuse and lack of autonomous to issues concerning women reproductive choices which in the long run put their own healthy at risks. Kerr (2015) however, noted a slight differences between the northern Malawi and the results from other studies conducted from central and southern Malawi. Kerr explains a difference due to the different entitlements, particularly control over land and income, which speaks to the enduring implications of different lineage systems in the region. However, because of the nature of patriarchy which is deeply entrenched in all regions of Malawi even in those matrilineal societies which could be different, gender inequality in many aspects are constructed on a daily basis through the gendered norms, attitudes and practices of a group of men and individuals within them.

Nevertheless, at different levels, efforts are put in place to redress the situation. Gender mainstreaming is one such approach designed to alter the *status quo* and facilitate women's empowerment. While not exhausting the list, many NGOs such as Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), Concern Worldwide, Men for Gender equality Now (MEGEN), EKARI Foundations have adopted gender mainstreaming as a strategy to address gender inequality and women/girl empowerment both within their organizations and within the communities where they work. The initiatives involves a variety of activities including gender awareness, empowering the youth especially girls, hiring more women staff members, designing policies within the

organization to promote gender equality and educating staff members about gender issues through training workshops. While these strategies represent important steps forward for gender equality, it is not clear to what extent these policies and initiatives are translating into meaningful change within the organization.

Despite government efforts to provide equal opportunities between sexes, men and boys strongly oppose the efforts being made to bridge the gender gaps hence gaps in education, employment, politics, gender roles and spaces. Just like in many countries globally, gender relations in Malawi has remained a very challenging phenomenon that the country is grappling to balance (Kerr 2015, Kabwila 2013). The understanding of patriarchy is crucial because it provides a framework within which to express the totality of exploitative relations which affect African women including those of Malawi. Patriarchal structures privilege men over women; whether demonstrated through direct or indirect violence against women, political and economic dominance over women, or by severely restricting women's movement, education, and development, traditional patriarchal structures show great resistance to change. This current study therefore is one such example in critiquing patriarchal structures. Through the critical analysis of Chichewa proverbs and how they are continually used as tool to justify and foster the hegemonic masculinity and practices in terms of legitimization of the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal, cultural, religious, and military institutions. As already articulated in the background, in Malawi, rituals, legends, name-giving ceremonies, oral narratives, proverbs, aphorisms and usages have been in the vanguard of mobilizing gender ideology. With the emphasis on normative male-dominated African society, women's roles are limited as stereotyped in the traditional narrative/literature. This epitomizes the successful construction of patriarchy and male chauvinism that continues to define the African world, thus using proverbs as agents of social construction/control, groups to which they belong. The ultimate aim of such an agenda is woman's "passive acceptance and respect for male domination.

4.1.4 Lineage systems

Another aspect that needs to be clearly understood in this study is about the different lineage systems that are followed in Malawi. It is within such systems that Chichewa proverbs are constructed and used. Just like many African countries, Malawi follows two different lineage system and these are patrilineal and matrilineal. The patrilineal system is practiced in the northern

region and some few districts in the southern region, specifically in Nsanje and Chikhwawa. Because bride price or commonly known as *lobola* is paid, the practice is sometimes referred to as *nthengwa*. This is to distinguish it from the one practiced in the southern region in Nsanje and Chikhwawa districts. The concept *nthengwa* simply means bringing the bride to groom's home. The chieftainship is inherited from the father's side. Land resources and property ownership are passed on from the father through the children more specifically the male children. In contrast, in matrilineal system, people practice *chikamwini* type of marriage. The wife's village is matrimonial home and no *lobola* is paid for the wife. Traditionally, *mkamwini* as the groom is referred to in matrilineal system, is regarded as a borrowed cock whose job is just to come and fertilize the egg. All the children born in this system belong to the bride's family since no *lobola* was paid. The chieftainship is then followed from the mother's side and land resources are passed on through female children. In few cases, however upon agreement between the two families, a woman can stay at the husband's home even though *lobola* is not paid. This can be due to reasons such as scarcity of land for cultivation from the bride's side or in case a man owns property or business that he needs to monitor constantly. This system is known as *chitengwa* (Mtika and Doctor 2002, Munthali 2008).

Although the picture presented in both matrilineal and patrilineal systems seems impressive according to cultural perspectives, they however show some dilemmas as far as gender equality is concerned. Binauli (2010) notes that in matrilineal setting, although women can ascend into leadership positions, a woman has minimal decision-making power. Uncles, brothers and husbands in this system are the ones who make decision for them. In addition, although land is passed on through the female child, it is actually the brother or the uncle who makes decisions on the disposition of land. Similarly, in a patrilineal system, Munthali (2008) explains that inheritance is channelled through the male children and not daughters. Binauli (2010) argues that although social patriarchy is justified in kinship relationships for purposes of security and protection for women and children, patriarchy manifests itself independently to facilitate the superiority of men at the expense of women. In many cases, patriarchal hegemony and its power relations tend to put women in situations in which they cannot bargain since they do not own property and other livelihood resource. Kabwila (2013) agrees with Binauli (2010) and Munthali (2008) that regardless of which system one fall, the most notable element in Malawian culture is

that women are still regarded as minors. Both in patrilineal and matrilineal set ups there are some culturally justified power relations between men and women as true manifestation of patriarchy. This is because before marriage, a woman is under the control of the father and uncle and once married, she is under control of the husband. It is in view of this situation, the government of Malawi has taken initiatives to redress the gender inequalities and reduce the gender gaps that exist between men and women of Malawi. It is only when issues of gender equalities are taken into consideration when a country can have dreams about sustainable development.

In Chapter 8, which is titled *Mkamwini, the constrained man*, I demonstrate through the findings that in the matrilineal system, the son-inlaw (*mkamwini*) is a rather constrained man. He does not exhibit the dominance and power that is usually associated with men in a patriarchal society. This goes to demonstrate that even in patriarchal society, there are some contexts that reduce men's dominance and superiority. Men are not dominant and powerful in all contexts at all times.

4.1.5 Marriage as a social institution

The constitution of Malawi does provide freedom of man and woman to enter into marriage and found a family. The constitution goes further to provided that no one should be forced to enter marriage (Government of Malawi 2010). As a social institution, marriage is well placed in Malawi. To be unmarried is a condition that is normally frowned upon. It is heterosexual marriage which is widely acknowledged and endorsed by society. At constitutional level, Malawi upholds the beliefs and values of heterosexual marriage as opposed to homosexuality and other forms of sexual orientation. In fact, homosexual orientation is a criminal act which can lead a person to 14 years in jail if found publicly showing off their sexuality (Kamwendo 2015). From the cultural point of view, heterosexual marriage is said to hold great potential for the protection and promotion of culture morality as compared to other sexual orientations. Heterosexual marriage also receives support from religious faith communities. Malawi is predominantly Christian country but with a significant Moslem, Hindu, Budaism and other faith communities as a minority. These are the dominant religions whose teachings are deeply in favour of heterosexual marriages. This does not necessarily reflect the absence of non-heterosexual orientation in Malawi.

Although constitutionally Malawi does not recognize homosexuality, there are some homosexuals. Kabwila (2013) explains that in Malawi, patriarchy touches a wide range of life of

the people. She argues that patriarchy surfaces at the levels of culture, religion and political. This is so evident up to date that within tradition, the vast majority of Malawian people do not believe in a woman marrying another woman, or a man marrying another man, or a person being bisexual. In Malawi, there is acute resistance and opposition to non-heterosexual orientations. This non-accomodation of non-heterosexual orientations clashes with the discourses and practices of human rights. When Malawi detained a homosexual couple in 2014, it took the then United Nations Secretary General (Ban Ki Moon) to travel to Malawi and meet the then president, Bingu wa Mutharika, and had the homosexual couple freed (Kamwendo 2015).

4.1.6 Sociolinguistic context

Since the study utilized proverbs found in Chichewa, it is worthwhile to present the Malawian sociolinguistic context within which the study was conducted. Malawi is a multilingual society with many ethnic groups. Due to the fluidity of what distinguishes a language from a dialect, scholars have found it difficult to come up with the exact number of languages spoken in Malawi. Although some of the languages are considered as dialects, Kayambazinthu (1998) sheds light that the approximate number of languages spoken by different ethnic groups in Malawi ranges between 8 and 15. Chichewa, also known as Chinyanja in other countries, is a cross-border language spoken in some parts of Southern African countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. With specific reference to Zimbabwe, Mutasa (2016) gives an explanation that because of migration and mine working, there is a minority group of people in Zimbabwe who speak Chichewa. This is the language spoken by people from Chewa ethnic group. The Chewa are an African ethnic group that has existed since the beginnings of the first Millenium-AD and their language is known as Chichewa (Sutherland 1982).

During the colonial regime, Chichewa then known as Chinyanja was widely used as a medium of instruction in the Southern and Central Regions of Malawi. While on the other hand, Chitumbuka was a medium of instruction in the Northern Region of Malawi. This was the time when education was still in the hands of the missionaries whose main goal was to teach indigenous people of Malawi to read the Bible in their own languages (Chilora 2000).

The implementation of the language policy in Malawi, like many other African countries can be traced way back from independence time. At independence, Malawi retained English as the main

official language and Chinyanja and Chitumbuka as semi-official languages. This meant that Chichewa and Chitumbuka, together with English, served on the then sole public radio as well as the school curriculum. In 1968, Chichewa was made a national language. This idea of national language can be traced back from early 1960s. In the process, Chitumbuka was stripped of its official status, and therefore ceased to be used on the public radio and schools. The idea behind Dr Banda's linguistic nationalism movement was about unity, national building and identity. Up to date Chichewa remains a national lingua franca that links together people of different linguistic backgrounds both in Malawi and beyond.

With the idea of national building and unity, Malawi is among some of the few countries in Southern Africa which is conspicuous by its language policy as an instrument of national identity in the disposition of one nation of Malawi, one language (Kayambazinthu 1998). Language is a powerful instrument for promoting internal cohesion and providing an ethnic or national identity. Apart from its contribution to national identity, language also contributes to the values of oneness and peoplehood. It is not correct therefore to view Chichewa as solely a language for the Chewa even though, Chichewa emerged as a language of the Chewa ethnic group. The language has ceased to be a language of a people of one ethnic group. It is therefore important to de-link Chichewa from its ethnic group and view it as a national lingua franca of Malawi as already explained.

The use and promotion of African indigenous languages in official domains remains a tall order in many independent African countries and Malawi is no exception. Currently, Malawi is still answering to the colonial masters by reverting to the language policy that privileges English in the first class of the primary school. Malawi has a new language policy that came in 2014 which places English as the medium of instruction right away from the first class of primary school while Chichewa remains a subject (Kishindo 2015, Kamwendo 2016). It has been argued that the education systems in many African countries and some parts of the world were inherited from western epistemologies that spread in the wake of colonialism. One challenge that is associated with the western adopted type of education is the unrealistic teaching and learning methods as well as the use of very unrealistic linguistic media of teaching and learning. The preference is one of the former colonizer's language and such as a language also happens to be far removed from

the learners' experiences. In the vast majority of the case, learners meet the language for the first time at school. With reference to Sub-Saharan countries, many nations adopted English as a medium of instruction in schools. With all the convictions that African indigenous languages are anti-development as branded by the colonial rulers, African countries still depend on borrowed or foreign languages in their education systems.

The use of African languages in schools as media of instruction can be traced to UNESCO stand on the earliest medium of instruction. Following UNESCO (1953), the use of African languages with an aim to bridge the gap between home and school, and to promote understanding and acquiring of skills has been encouraged, especially at primary education level. This is the level at which learners are still new and still grappling with the new school environment; the use of their local language is the only way they can relate to issues. Because of such recognition of the importance of indigenous African languages, some governments have attempted to strengthen and revitalize their education systems in order to make education systems relevant to the people. For example, in Malawi, following the demise of the Kamuzu Banda dictatorship in 1994, Muluzi's government made a directive on mother tongue instruction in the first four classes of primary school. This policy directive, though in line with UNESCO (1953), was unfortunately never implemented. The reasons for non-implementation include the following: the misguided fear that mother tongue instruction would lead to a decline in academic standards.

It is only fair to say that Chichewa is the most widely used and promoted indigenous language in Malawi. The first president (Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda) adopted a linguistic assimilationist policy under which Chichewa became the only indigenous language that received state recognition and support. In this context, the state supported, developed and promoted Chichewa at the expense of other indigenous languages. After the demise of the Kamuzu Banda dictatorship, attempts were made to liberalize the language policy. This resulted in indigenous languages such as Chitumbuka, Chitonga, Chiyao, Chisena, Chilomwe and Chiyao being used on the national radio. As mentioned earlier, there was an attempt to use indigenous languages as media of instruction in the first four classes of the primary school sector but this has been pushed off by the new policy which stipulates that English should serve as medium of instruction straightaway

from the first class at primary school. The new language policy is a big blow to mother tongue education (Kishindo 2015, Kamwendo 2016).

This study acknowledges that, although Chichewa is the common language spoken within the study context, there are traces of multilingualism. This is because Zomba, which served as the capital of Malawi during colonial regime, is one of the major business areas and that some government offices remain there, and characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity. This brings a positive situation where Zomba is represented by all the major ethnic groups of Chewa, Tumbukas, Sena, Tonga, Lomwe and the Yao. All the people are connected through one language Chichewa. With the implementation of Chichewa as a medium of instruction, it therefore follows that the teaching of metaphors, folktales, similes, and riddles is part of Malawi school syllabus. This implies that Chichewa proverbs are accessed and learnt in Malawi from both the home and the school.

4.2 The University where the study was conceived and supervised

It is important to discuss not only the research site (Malawi) but also the university where the study was conceived and supervised. To this end, I turn to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa where studies of IKS and indigenous African languages are placed high on the institutional academic agenda. The end of apartheid, which was finally signaled through the 1994 democratic and multi-racial elections, ignited the transformation of the South African higher education landscape. It is within this dispensation of transformation that the University of KwaZulu-Natal is integrating African indigenous knowledge systems and an African language (isiZulu) into the academic trinity (teaching, research and community engagement). The overall objective is to promote African scholarship. It can be noted that the University of KwaZulu-Natal has taken some visible steps to integrate AIKS and an indigenous language (isiZulu) into academic activities of the institution. Both AIKS and indigenous African languages are some of the most marginalized entities in African higher education. There is an unfortunate perception that AIKS and indigenous African languages are inferior to Western knowledge and western languages respectively. As a university that seeks to promote African scholarship and African-led globalization, the University of KwaZulu-Natal is creating spaces within academia where AIKS and indigenous African languages can work together with their non-African counterparts.

In response to the demise of apartheid, South African universities and other higher education institutions are currently engaged in a process of transformation. This process involves redressing the inequalities of the past, and erasing various forms of discrimination. The academic transformation, among other things, has meant Africanizing the curriculum as well as Africanizing the research agenda. On their part, university students across South African universities staged protests between 2015 and 2016, and central to these protests was the demand for free higher education as well as the decolonization of the entire South African higher education sector (Msila 2017, Prah 2017, Mbembe 2015). Even before the students' protests, the University of KwaZulu-Natal had already started walking on the part of Africanizing the institution. Particularly relevant to the current doctoral thesis is the Transformation Charter of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) which "recognizes the importance and value of African languages as academic languages" (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012a: 5).

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is an outcome of the mergers that took place in South Africa after the end of apartheid. In 2004, the University of KwaZulu-Natal was born out of the merger between two universities, the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville. The new university has taken the challenge to grow into a premier university of African scholarship as well as a research-led institution (see, for example, University of KwaZulu-Natal 2006, 2012a, 2012b). This higher education institution sits within the category of the African university. In order to fulfil the mandate of becoming an African (or South African university) and a premier university of African scholarship, African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKS) have been placed high on the academic agenda. For example, the university has gone a step further by putting in place an AIKS policy (Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014). One of the signature research projects at this university is on indigenous knowledge systems. The university has engaged the services of a professor to drive the integration of AIKS into the academic trinity. The specific responsibility of this research leader is "to provide leadership and coordination in the development of AIKS through research, postgraduate training, and curriculum transformation" (Kaya 2013: 148). It is within the university's plans to turn the institution into an AIKS hub in South African higher education. This is evidence of the prominent place AIKS occupies at the university (Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014).

The University has established an IAKS centre, and as mentioned earlier, the centre is headed by a professor who specializes in AIKS. He also happens to be the second supervisor of the current doctoral thesis. As mentioned earlier, AIKS is one of the signature projects at UKZN. Since 2012, the AIKS project has made a number of achievements, one of which has been the formulation and approval by all UKZN structures of an AIKS policy. Another achievement has been the establishment of a multi- and trans-disciplinary Working Group of AIKS Champions from the various Schools and Colleges within UKZN. Thirdly, a multi-disciplinary Advisory Team comprising internal and external members (including indigenous knowledge holders and practitioners) has been put in place. Fourth, there is a growing interest in AIKS by postgraduate research students. These students are based in the various Schools (faculties) within the four Colleges of UKZN. Research covers a wide range of topics such as African indigenous language, gender, traditional governance and leadership, food security, climate change, religion, education and others. The current doctoral thesis is an example of studies located in the IKS domain. In addition, there is a growing number of publications in the field of AIKS. An example is a special issue of an accredited journal, *Alternation* (Jones and Mtshali 2013). My own publication (Kamwendo and Kaya 2016) adds to the list of publications emanating from IKS research.

It is an undisputed fact that globally English is the dominant language of scholarship. In the post-apartheid South Africa, despite the transformation of the country's language policy resulting into eleven official languages (English, Afrikaans plus nine indigenous African languages), English still remains the dominant language of scholarship. As such, English is the language in which the majority of masters' degree and PhD theses are written. One has to acknowledge that for the vast majority of South Africans, English is not the first language or home language. Though South Africa is categorized as belonging to the outer circle of English (as an English-speaking African language), not every South African is English-speaking.

The Anglophone or English-speaking label does not serve as a good mirror of the sociolinguistic picture as it obtains on the ground. Backed by its institutional language policy, the University of KwaZulu-Natal allows students to present their theses in either English or isiZulu. Since the recent years, students are now allowed to defend their research proposals in isiZulu at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, if they want to do so. For example, at Masters and PhD levels, students are allowed to write their theses in isiZulu. However, it has been observed that it is only

students registered in isiZulu discipline who do their research in isiZulu who have done this, as none of the students from other disciplines have done so. This implies that there is little growth regarding the issue of constructing and defending research proposals in the medium of isiZulu among university students. Since I neither speak nor write isiZulu, I opted for English as the medium through which the doctoral thesis has been written.

4.3 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

In this chapter, I painted the context in which the doctoral study was conducted. The context has included the political context, economic context, lineage systems, marriage and sociolinguistic contexts as well as the University of KwaZulu-Natal where the study was conceived and supervised. This context will become useful when I present and discuss findings (Chapters 5 to 9) and when I conclude the doctoral thesis (Chapter 10). In the next chapter (Chapter 3), I will present the theoretical frameworks for the study as well the review of related literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENDERED PROVERBS

5.0 Introduction to the chapter

As already indicated in the methodology chapter, the study adopted the phenomenological qualitative research design in which three key texts comprising an extensive collection of Chichewa proverbs were analyzed. The current chapter firstly presents the research findings from the desktop study which was conducted prior to field work . Initially, gendered proverbs were to be extracted from three texts: that of Chakanza's (2001) an anthology of Chichewa proverbs, Kumakanga (1975), *Nzeru za Kale*; and the third text was *Miyambi ya m'Chichewa* by Mlachila.

I have to mention here that after realizing that Chakanza compiled all the proverbs found in other proverbial books, I decided to use only Chakanza's anthology for easy numbering of the pages instead of putting two or three pages taken from different books. This does not mean I abandoned other books, the books were used to refer to other phenomena like historical backgrounds of the proverbs. The proverbs are therefore presented in two major groups i.e. those about men and this is seen in section 5.1 from A-D and those about women seen from section 5.2 from F-K. Because of this thematic categorical presentation, the proverbs do not follow the order of page numbers from the books they were taken but it is random. The proverbs are presented along with the authors (Chakanza's 2001) interpretation with the following symbols T1 standing for direct literal meaning, T2 is cultural interpretation and M is underlying contextual meaning. Followed by the presentation of the proverbs are the responses from the participants regarding the social cultural and historical background of the Chichewa gendered proverbs which I found necessary as this is an interdisciplinary study. This is presented in section 5.2.

5.1 Proverbs about men

5.1.1 Proverbs and masculinity construction

Page 29 Proverb 70 -*Atambala awiri salira mkhola limodzi*

T1- Two cocks do not crow in the same chicken pen.

T2-*Nkovuta kuti anthu awiri azilamura chinthu chimodzi.*

M- No two hoes rule over the same area.

Page 46 Proverb 63 *Wakwata kwa mphenzi saopa kung'anima (Nzeru za kale-Kumakanga).*

T1- When one marries a thunder he should not fear the lightning.

M- A husband is expected to take control of situation courage, bravely.

Mamuna mzako ndi pachulu umalinga wakwerapo,

T1- A fellow man is like an ant hill you can only celebrate when you are on top of it.

T2- *Osamadelela munthu mzako*

M- It is not advisable to undermine others

Page 18 Proverb 20: *Agona chimwini nsomba.*

T1- He sleeps with the alertness of a fish.

T2- *Chifukwa choopa zina ndizina pamudzi mkamwini ankagona makutu ali kunja.*

M-Because of fear, the son-in-law slept with extreme watchfulness.

Page 42 Proverb 131: *Chaphulika chapsa, mkamwini konza nguwo.*

T:- What has burst is ripened, son-in-law, prepare the wrap over.

T2-*Chinthu chikakanika pafunika kulimba mtima.*

M-There is no way to reverse other misfortunes but what is required is determination and courage and preparing oneself for uncertainty and the readiness to face the inevitable.

P90 Proverb 367: *Iliko nja usiku, mkamwini anajiwa dzanja.*

T1- What is left for the night, the son-in-law has his arm bitten off.

T2:- *Sibwino kuyembekezera zinthu chifukwa zikapanda kubwela timadzagwila njakata.*

M:- Avoid depending on unconfirmed promises.

Page 225 Proverb 1053: *Mwamuna ndine ndekha adampachika ndi nkuzi.*

T1-The one who said “ I am the only man around” was hanged with a woman belt.

T2- *Osamadzikuzi chifukwa ena adzatitsitsa nkuchitapo manyazi.*

M-Self-exaltation ends up in humiliation.

Page 250 Proverb 1178 -Nkhalamba masana, usiku ndi mnyamata.

T- He seems to be an old man during the day at night he is a young man.

T2- *Mamuna sakalamba. Chakalamba kumutu kumusi kuli ntchito.*

M- Men are evergreen creatures.

Page 225 Proverb 1054: *Mwamuna ndi kabudula, amathera moyenda*

T1: A husband (man) is like a pair of short trousers, it gets worn out due to travelling.

T2: *Mwamuna amayenera kukhala wotakataka kufuna za pabanja lake.*

M-A man is expected to be hunting for domestic needs.

Page 185 Proverb 847: *Mbeta silola tsiku limodzi.*

T1. The unmarried girl does not consent to marry in one day.

T2- If at first you do not succeed, keep on trying. It is about perseverance.

M-If, at first you do not succeed, keep on trying- have patience and perseverance

Page 41 Proverb 22: *Amalume, khalani pansi ana akudziweni.*

T- Uncle stay put so that the children may get to know you.

T2-*Mwinimbumba azikhazikika pakhomu kuti anthu amdziwe ndi kumzoolowela.*

M- An uncle, being head of the flock, should stay around for the unexpected.

Page 298 Proverb 1411:*Tonde akadula sabwerera*

T1-When the male (he goat) cuts the tether, it does not come back.

T2-Chimene mtima wako watsimikiza chita chomwecho usaleke.

M- When the billy goat gets loose, it goes for nothing but nanny goats and there is no point of return. Do what your heart is set on.

5.1.2 Marginalization of men as *akamwini* (suitors)

Page 901 Proverb 196: *Mkamwini sawiringula.*

T1- A son-in-law does not complain.

T2-*Mkamwini aone zovuta pakhomu nthawi zambiri sawiringula tsono mkofunika kuti tizimuchitira zabwino.*

M- Though not much of a moner, a son-in-law should be handled with care.

Page 196 Proverb 897: *Mkamwini asakule mwendo.*

T-A son-in-law should not grow a big leg.

T2- *Mkamwini asamakhale wolamulira pamudzi koma wofatsa ndi wolemekeza eni mudzi.*

M- A stranger, like a son-inlaw, should never get the sway of the village.

5.1.3 Proverbs that discourage mens bad behaviour

Page 40 Proverb 121: *Chambo chimaona konse konse.*

T-The chambo fish looks in all directions.

T2- It is important to assist relatives from both the husbands and wives side. Be bi-lateral.

M- It is important to assist relatives from both the husband's and wife's sides.

Page 197 Proverb 902: *Mkamwini wa umbombo adakabisa mtolowa mapira kumadzi.*

T1- A greedy son inlaw hid a bunch of sorghum in the river.

T2- *Tikakhala ndi zinthu tizigawirako wena chifukwa tikabisa tidzapeza zaonongeka kenaka osazigwiritsa ntchito*

M- A selfless share with someone makes a big difference. Do not be a miser! Learn to share with others.

P197 Proverb 903: *Mkamwini wankhuli adathira thendo la inswa pa nsanamira.*

T- The gluttonous son-inlaw poured away the fat of the winged white ants against the pole

T2- *Tiziyamba taonetsetsa tisananyanyale kanthu kalikonse chifukwa nthawi zina ponyanyala timataya zinthu zabwino.*

M-An action taken under the influence of anger can have a regrettable outcome. Examine the situation before reacting.

Page 105 Proverb 443: *Kansalu ka wani mitala, malamulo tho!*

T- An endless list of rules for use just for one piece of cloth.

T2- *Mwamuna kumangolongoloza mkazi chifukwa choti wamugulira kansalu ngakhale kali kosakwanira konse.*

M-A husband yaps at his wife for the way he uses a small piece of cloth or anything he has bought her

5.1.4 Proverbs that encourage multiple relationships in men

Page 198 Proverb 906: *Mkazi mmodzi ndi diso lopsinya.*

T1- one wife is like a closed eye.

T2- *Sibwino kudalira ntchito imodzi chifukwa zinthu zikavuta umasowa pogwira.*

M-Get more resourceful. Have several ways of survival.

Page 198 Proverb 907: *Mkazi mmodzi, diso limodzi, akazi awiri, maso awiri.*

T- one wife is one eye, two wives are two eyes.

T2- *Munthu ukakhala wamitala sukhala pamavuto aakulu ngati mmodzi wamwalira, chimodzimodzi ukakhala ndi podalira pena monag ntchito ndi ulimi peka pakavuta umadalila pena.*

M- Depending on double resource.

5.2 Proverbs about women

5.2.1 Predetermined domestic space for women

Page 196 Proverb 899 *Mkamwini ndi mlamba sachedwa kuterereka.*

T- A son-in-law is like a catfish, he easily slips away.

T2-*Akamwini* ndi ofunika kuwasamalila bwino chifukwa tikawachitila nkhanza adzatichekela mkuvutika ndi ana.

M-A son-in-law should be handled with utmost care.

Page 202 Proverb 928 *Mleleni bwino ayiwale kwawo.*

T- Keep him well so that he may forget his home.

T2-*Pokhala ndi alendo kapena akamwini ndi atengwa pafunika kuwasamalila bwino kuti asamadandaule ndi kukumbukila kwawo.*

M-Let him feel at home (and forget his own). Give him the best care possible.

Page 1052 Proverb 225: *Mwamuna mpamimba, nkhope siisinha. Mwamuna koma kumuyang'ano kumimba.*

T- For the man, it's the belly, the face does not change/ For a man you look at his belly

M- A man works better on a full stomach.

No page-*Akazi ndi maluwa sachedwa kulakatika:* Women are flowers that blossom nicely in the morning but wither and die quickly in the afternoon.

No page-*Ovala nyanda salumpho moto:* Those putting on sanitary pads should not engage in fire skipping games.

Page 198 proverb 911: *Mkazi wophika nsima yosazizira.*

T- A woman who does not cook cold stiff pap.

T2- *Mawu otamilila mkazi wolandira bwino alendo powakonzela chakudya.*

M- A hospitable wife.

5.2.2 Women as evil beings and gossipers

Page 191 Proverb 875: *Mfiti yaikazi kulimba moyo.*

T- A female witch is hard hearted.

T2- *M'chikhulupiliro cha anthu, mfiti yaikazi ndi yankhanza ndipo siimva za anzake.*

M- In popular belief, a female witch is cruel and stubborn, a hard nut to crack.

Page 278 Proverb 1321: *Paunjikana ntchembere pali mabodza.*

T- Where women gather, there are plenty of lies.

T2- *Amayi nthawi zambiri akakhala pagulu amakonda kukamba nkhani zojeda ena.*

M- Women love to tell slanderous stories.

Page 198 Proverb 909: *Mkazi wa mfumu akati mlomo tololo, wataya mudzi.*

T- When the wife of the chief talks too much, she loses the village.

T2- *Ngati mkazi wamfumu ndi wokonda zoyankhula, mudzi sukhalira bwino.*

M- When the chiefs' wife talks a lot, people leave the village.

Page 910 Proverb 198: *Mkazi wa mfumu asamati khutu pekupeku.*

T- The wife of the chief should not listen to half truths.

T2- *Mkazi wamfumu asamakhale wamabodza chifukwa akhoza kunamiza wake mkupasulitsa mudzi wonse.*

M- The wife of the chief should be serene and amiable and not a tale teller.

5.2.3 Women as people who lack decision making skills

Page 1402 Proverb 296: *Tinthu m'khuni adalekera mwana mkazi mnzake ku njoka.*

T- The one who said, "There are things in firewood bundle", left her fellow women to a snake. Not being prudent.

Page 13 Proverb 17: *Adagula mbereko mwana asanabadwe.*

T- She bought the carrying cloth even before the child was born.

T2- *Kuchita zinthu mopupuluma nthawi yake isanakwane.*

M- do not rush things unnecessarily, take your time, calm down.

Page 258 Proverb 1121: *Nsima ya apongozi amuna sasungira mlendo ngakhale yachokera kwa apongozi akazi.*

T1-Do not keep your mother in-law stiff porridge for a visitor even if it has been sent by mother in-law.

T2-*Apongozi monganso makolo ena onse ngofunika kuwapatsa ulemu waukulu.*

M-A father/mother in-law deserves special type of respect.

Page 198 Proverb 908: *Mkazi ndi chitenje, chimathera pakhomo.*

T1- a woman is like a wrapping cloth, it gets worn out around the home.

T2-*Mkazi amayenela kukhala pakhomo mkumasamalilapo bwino.*

M-A woman is primarily responsible for the welfare of the home.

Page 220 Proverb 1025: *Munthu wosabala anasowa chomutukwanira mamuna*

T1- A barren woman lacked someone through whom she might use abusive language against her husband.

T2-*Mayi wa mwana amatha kutukwana mwanayo pamene wayambana ndi mwamuna wake chifukwa akuopa kumtukwana mwamunayo pamaso.*

M-The woman who has a child can scold it when she is angry with her husband to whom she does not speak directly without causing offence. To lack indirect way of confronting the husband.

Page 241 Proverb 1136: *Ndikanadziwa ndikanaphika therere.*

T1-Had I known, I would have cooked okra.

T2-*Mkazi amayembekezera kuti mwamuna wake abweretsa nyama ku uzimba.*

M-Regreting that one's expectations have not turned the way one wished they would be.

5.2.4 Proverbs and childrens behaviour as mothers' reprica

Page 24 Proverb 50: *Anayamwila kubele.*

T-She sucked from her mother's breast.

T2- *Nthawi zambiri khalidwe la munthu limakhala lochokera kwa makolo ake.*

M-Form the child right from the infancy. Spare the rod and spoil the child. Upbringing.

Page 111 Proverb 472: *Kapusa mkwamake, kopanda make kachenjera.*

T1-The child with a mother is a fool, the one without a mother is clever.

T2-*Anthu ambiri akakhala ndi makolo awo amapusa. Amachenjera mako awo akamwalira. Amasiye amaphunzira kuzidalira okha.*

M-Having no mother, an orphan has to rely on her/his own efforts and/or initiatives and become resourceful.

Page 190 Proverb 869: *Mdima wa dzinja udakwatitsa mkazi woyansa.*

T- The darkness of the wet season got the ugly woman a husband.

T2-*Zinthu zina zikamachitika zimaoneka ngati malodza, koma zimapatsa mwayi anthu a tsoka.*

M- Undeprivileged or unfortunate people get their luck from some unfortunate circumstances.

Page 238 Proverb 1117: *Ndakwatiwa n'kumbuyo komwe.*

T- I am married even at the back.

T2-*Wakwatiwa ndi mmamuna wabwino pazonse; chuma, makalidwe ndinso kubereka.*

M-He is prolific. He is a Croesus. Swimming in money.

Page 237 Proverb 1115: *Ndakwatiwa kumbuyo, kumaso kulira ena.*

T- I am married in the back, the front cries for others.

T2- *Wakwatiwa ndi mwamuna wabwino pazonse, chuma, makhalidwe ndinso kubeleka.*

M-He is prolific. Swimming in affluence.

Page 237 Proverb 1116: *Ndakwatiwa n'kulinga utagonera.*

T- You can say, "I married well", only after some years.

T2-*Ngakhale mkazi wakwatiwa ndi mwamuna opeza bwino koma ngati ali gojo sangathe kumpatsa ana.*

M-Although a woman is married to a well to do man, but he is unable to give her children because he is impotent.

Page 200 Proverb 917 *Mlamu wako ndi likongwe, akalowa mphanga, koma kumutsekera ndi masamba.*

T- Your inlaw is a weasel, if he enters a cave, shut him in with leaves.

T2- *Ukathandiza mnzako yemwe ali pamavuto ndiye kuti wamtsekela ndi masamba.*

M- Be willing to help others. To agree to help a friend is to shut him in with leaves whereas to refuse is to shut him in with stones. Forgive and support your neighbour in life.

5.2.5 Mothers as a symbol of warmth

Page 335, Proverb 21: *Ali ndi amayi (atate) adadala, ayenda modzitama.*

T- Those who have a mother (father) are lucky, they can walk proudly.

T2-*Makolo ndi ofunika pamoyo wa ana popeza amawapezela zofunikila pamoyo wao.*

M- Parents are a blessing to children.

Page 90, Proverb 336 *Ili ndi make sikugwa m' mbuna.*

T- The little one which has a mother does not fall into the game pit.

T2-*Mayi amalangiza ana awo ndipo ana awo amamvela malangizo awo.*

M- Abiding by the counsel of elders is life on the safe side.

Page 71, P272: *Dala la mwana wa nkuku lolila make ali pomwepo.*

T- The chick deliberately cries while the mother is right there (present).

T2-*Anthu ena amangodandaula ngakhale kuti ali nao anthu owathandiza.*

M- Said about people who always want other people to do things for them. They are always complaining to attract attention. Mourning about the need when help is at hand.

Page 227 Proverb 1062 *Mwana sasowa (sangasowe) mmake.*

T- A child cannot fail to recognise its own mother.

T2-*Ana kaya ziweto zimadziwa makolo ndinso mbuye wao.*

M- What is yours is markedly (yours).

5.2.6 Proverbs that protect women from societal evils

Page 161, Proverb 721: *Mmimba ndi mchipala (mng'anjo)*

T- The womb is like the blacksmith's forge.

T2-*Ana obadwa kwa mayi mmodzi amakhala osiyana mmakhalidwe, mmaonekedwe ndi njila zina.*

M- There is no telling what character one is going to give birth to.

Page 168 Proverb 755 *Mako ndi mako, angachepe mwendoor mako ndi mako usamuone kuchepa mwendo.*

T- Your mother is your mother, even if she has a small leg.

T2-*Chikondi cha nakubala, zivute zitani chilibe pochepera.*

M- Your mother will always be important no matter what disability she has.

Page 227 Proverb 1061 *Mwana sakulira nakubala.*

T- A child never grows too big for those that bore him or her.

T2-*Mwana angakhale aphunzile chotani kaya alemele kapena kuopsa bwanji, ayenela ndithu kupeleka ulemu kwa makolo ake osawanyoza.*

M- A parent commands the respect of his or her child.

5.2.7 Proverbs encouraging agency and women empowerment

Page 259 Proverb 1226- *Ntchembere yamapasa izigona chagadama.*

T- The mother of twins should sleep on her back.

T2-*Ukakhala pakati umaona mbali zones ziwiri nupereka thandizo kofunikira.*

M- Middle position is an undertaking that is full of advantages. Being alert. Multitasking.

Page 276 Proverb 1310 *Papita mkazi mnzako, nawenso pitapo.*

T- You pass where your fellow woman has passed.

T2-*Nthawi zina ndi chithu chotamandika kuchita zomwe ena akuchita osati zathu zokha.*

M- It is often good to do things in togetherness as others do.

Page 1360, Proverb 287: *Sayenda adabala (adaona) mwana oyenda.*

T- One who was not able to walk gave birth to a child who walked.

T2-*Tisamanyoze anthu amene timawaona ngati sangathe kuchita kanthu kuooneka chifukwa tsiku lina angazatidabwitse.*

M-Do not undermine others for their different way of life, because they could give a surprise one day.

5.3 Social cultural backgrounds to Chichewa proverbs

One of the objectives of this doctoral study was to do with the identification and appreciation of the historical and cultural backgrounds of gendered Chichewa proverbs. The Chichewa gendered proverbs of Malawi cannot and should not be discussed from a narrow perspective but require an understanding of the broader context of the time in history and cultural values of people in different situations. Many participants of this study revealed most proverbs originate from folktales or figurative speech. Just like parables, make social teachings easier, understandable, meaningful and memorable. The participants explained the richness of proverbs in harbouring

knowledge of different age groups of people. This then entails that within Malawian culture, age is not just a number but it symbolises a group of people and responsibilities that come with it.

The characterization and symbolisms of certain living creatures in proverbs are meant to teach people to align themselves to the behaviours of such creatures. Proverbial wisdom constitutes a complex array of knowledge systems of tradition, customs and practices that guide human societies. Chichewa proverbs culminate into collective wisdom that is associated with a certain group of people, mostly the elders (“*anthu a mvula zakale kapena mmbado wakale*”). For any proverb to gain legitimacy, it has to seek authority from the elders. This is the reason why sometimes the use of a proverb in interactions is preceded by the expression “*akulu akale anati*” (the elders said....).

One participant, who is also a Chichewa expert working with University Centre for Language studies explained that Chichewa proverbs are not used in a haphazard fashion, but are systematically crafted to represent different situations and people of different age groups and social groups, whether it is men and/or women, married people, young women and men and small children. A particular proverb has to resonate with what is to be addressed, and to who, at what stage or age, male or female. Choosing a proverb for use is not like going shopping where one buys according to the fashion of the period. Chichewa proverbs are designed for particular purposes and they cannot be used just at random. For example, proverbs which are meant for married people cannot be applied to a group of young and unmarried for people. This amounts to flouting the beliefs and values contained in the proverbs. Chichewa gendered proverbs are also used according to responsibilities that each age group has to satisfy in accordance with the norms, beliefs and traditions of Malawian society. For example, the teachings in some proverbs may be specially about morals, manners and etiquettes that are specifically meant for children. On the other hand, some proverbs are meant to teach young men and women with regard to the masculinity and femininity constructions that are required for adulthood. Some proverbs are targeted at mature men to teach them about married life and how to live a harmonious life as a family and/or member of society, inspiring them towards hard working, living as desirable citizens, and how to take care of their families. To the elderly and those in leadership, the proverbs teach them how to respect their subordinates and to become good and influential leaders. In a

nutshell, Chichewa proverbs are essential to positive human relationships as well as community peace building.

In the whole process of trying to understand the historical background of gendered proverbs, marriage was noted to be at the centre of people's lives in the construction of the proverbs. This is evident from the responses all the participants I interviewed on one-to-one basis and those from focus groups. The participants unanimously expressed a huge support for heterosexual marriage. Some research participants argued that whatever status one holds in Malawi, it can never surpass the status of being married. This entails that unmarried and/or people without children do not attract respect from other members of the society. A female participant, who happens to be in her late twenties, explained that and I quote: "*ukapanda kukwatiwa umaona ngati ukufuna uzipanga uhule kumalanda amuna a eni. Ndiye olo ukuona kuti mwina mnyamata ndi osalongosoka umangovomela ukwati kuthawa kunenedwa*". (Translated into: if you are not married, people suspect that you want to be practising prostitution. In the end, for fear of being regarded as a prostitute, you grab any man who comes around irrespective of whether he is suitable or not). While some male research participant explained that and I quote "*umaopa kutumizilidwa azimalume*"-meaning- one fears a delegation of uncles would come to demand why you are not marrying and one is forced to marry even if you feel not ready and not interested.

Being married and known by a husband's surname is something that many girls and women aspire for. One research participant, a man in his late 50s, gave an account of how the incumbent president of Malawi (Peter Mutharika) was forced to marry upon being elected president. Peter Mutharika joined politics as a member of parliament during the presidential term of office of his elder brother, the late Bingu wa Mutharika. During Peter Mutharika's tenure as a member of parliament, nobody bothered about his marital status. It was only after his victory in the presidential elections of 2014 that people, including the clergy of different denominations, raised their voices that he must marry and indeed he had a white wedding very soon after the presidential elections. The knowledge holders of Malawi largely believe that it is through heterosexual marriage that one's behaviors are moderated and one becomes respected as a responsible man or woman. One research participant made a comment and I quote: "*Ana ndi mphatso ya kwa mulungu. Komabe timayetsesa kuti an azibadwila mbanja kuti aleledwe ndi mayi ndi bambo onse limodzi*" (meaning- Every child is a gift from God and the parents would love their children to

have babies within marriage so that they have the privilege of living with their fathers and mothers under one roof). The absence of one parent in the life of a child can have negative impact as far as traditions, norms and values are considered. Bearing in mind that within Africa's indigenous knowledge systems and traditions, there are other things that a mother cannot say openly to an adult boy and vice versa, the presence of both fathers and mothers is crucial in the raising of children.

5.4 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

Through the desktop study, I was able to identify and document some gendered proverbs which I have presented in two major categories. By identifying the meanings in the proverbs, the proverbs are grouped on those which talk about men and those that talk about women in various aspects. While the other chapters categories the proverbs in gender thematic categories. The sections also discussed the historical backgrounds of the proverbs. This was to lay a background and better understanding of the gendered proverbs in Malawi. The knowledge holders shed light that the gendered proverbs were meant to help people live a more organized and complimentary life between men, women and children. The next sections discusses the gendered proverbs and their implications to men and women.

CHAPTER SIX

PROVERBS AND MALE DOMINANCE

6.0 Introduction to the chapter

In this chapter, I analyse and discuss the gendered proverbs that promote male dominance and work against women in various aspects. Firstly, in section 6.1, I analyze and discuss those proverbs in chapter 5 which enhance the general gender construction of what it means to be a man or a woman in Malawian society. This is what is traditionally referred to as masculinity and femininity. In section (6.2), I consider proverbs that predetermine spatial parameters and gender roles whilst in section 6.3, I discuss proverbs that designate women as subordinates. There are some proverbs that encourage men to have multiple sexual partners, and such proverbs are covered in section 6.4. One also finds proverbs that consider women to be lacking decision-making skills, and in section 6.5, I discuss them. There are some proverbs that attribute children's negative behavior to mothers (see section 6.6). Proverbs that depict and castigate women as mere gossipers come in section 6.7; and section 6.8 discusses proverbs that portray women as evil human beings. I provide the summary and conclusion for the chapter in section 6.9.

6.1 Chichewa proverbs and masculinity construction

One way through which Chichewa proverbs hinder gender equality is by promoting male dominance. This is achieved through the creation of different gender identities between men and women. Proverbs in Malawi have been used in the social construction of what it means to be a man or a woman. The masculinity and femininity constructions are one major factor that has determined the differential skills and/or capabilities possessed by men and women of Malawi. As such, men tend to dominate both the private and public spheres.

All the proverbs below are those which enhance a traditional gender ideology of being a real, resourceful and tough man.

1. *Mwamuna ndi kabudula, amathera moyenda* (a husband or a man is like a pair of short trousers, it gets worn out due to travelling).
2. *Tonde akadula sabwerera* (When the he-goat cuts the tether, it does not come back).
3. *Chophulika chapsa, mkamwini konza nguwo* (What has burst is ripe, son-in-law, prepare the wrap over. Men have to be courageous).

4. *Mzako akapsa ndevu mzimile*-meaning- extinguishing fellow man's beards.
5. *Amalume, khalani pansi ana akudziweni* (Uncle stay put so that the children may get to know you).
6. *Mbeta silola tsiku limodzi* (The unmarried girl does not easily consent to a marriage proposal in one day).
7. *Mphongo ya chiwala sichepa* (The male grasshopper is never too small for its female).
8. *Atambala awiri salira mkhola limodzi* (Two cocks do not crow in the same chicken pen. No two bosses rule over the same area at the same time. Used to protect male territory).
9. *Mwamuna mzako ndi pachulu umalinga wakwerapo* (Your fellow man is ant hill and you can only celebrate when you are on top).
10. *Wakwata kwa mphenzi saopa kung'anima* (When one marries a thunder, he should not fear the lightning). A man is expected to take control of situation no matter how cunning a woman is. This is about being courageous and strong.
11. *Nkhalamba masana, usiku ndi mnyamata* (He seems to be an old man during the day but at night he is a young man).

The cultural and historical connotations inscribed in proverbs 1-11 relate to desirable behaviours that are expected to be exhibited by a real man in different ways. For example, proverbs 1 to 9 are instructional materials used for socializing and teach boys as they grow up. The proverbs are used to teach them the idea of being industrious, resourceful, adventurous, courageous, and hard-working since they are the future providers and heads of families. Boys are also socialized to be firm, assertive, aggressive, resilient, brave, strong and to guide others, where necessary. With special reference to proverb 10, men are taught to take control of their wives, no matter how cunning the latter could be. Although the ideas in proverb 10 are now used as a unisex message where women also expected to take control of the situation in case they marry a difficult husband. Ordinarily, the proverb was meant specifically for men. The proverbs also teach men and boys not to undermine fellow men and boys (see proverbs 7, 8, 9) but rather respect and support one another in times of trouble as in proverb 4. Proverbs are a manual used in equipping men and boys with survival skills to protect the male territory. The proverbs instill skills that would enable men to navigate through different challenges and difficult situations without fear and stress. These findings agree with what obtains in another African country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, where a real man is one who is "intelligent, rational, courageous, strong and gifted". In addition,

a real man should be able “to make decisions, be firm and determined, and not to track back even in the case of opposition” (Onditi and Bah 2017: 94, 95). While on the other hand, the same Chichewa proverbs are used to create different skills in women and girls as seen in section 6.1.2 below.

6.2 Proverbs and femininity construction

In contrast to cultural masculinity construction above, the Chichewa proverbs sustain male dominance through femininity. In femininity framework, the proverbs teach women and girls how to remain good and desirable women in society. Among some of the things, Chichewa proverbs teaches women/girls issues concerning sexuality, not to be outspoken, being a good and submissive woman (wife). Proverbs in section 6.2.1.1 below are those that encourage male dominance in ways such as:

6.2.1 Predetermining spatial parameters and gender roles

Chichewa proverbs exhibit a characteristic of creating distinct spaces and roles for men and women. For instance proverbs 16-22 which says;

12. *Mkazi ndi chitenje chimathera pakhomo* (a woman is like a wrapping cloth which is specifically worn at home only).
13. *Mkazi wophika nsima yosazizira* (A real woman is the one who does not cook cold pap).
14. *Mlereni bwino aiwale kwawo* (keep the husband well so that he may forget his home)
15. *Mkamwini ndi mlamba sachedwa kuteleleka* (a husband is like a fish he slips easily so the wife should take care).
16. *Mwamuna kumamuyang'ana pamimba* (the wife is supposed to check the husbands' tummy to make sure he is alright and well fed).
17. *Mkazi opusa apasula banja ndi manja ake* (an unwise woman destroys her marriage with her own hands while the wise build it).
18. *Nsima ya apongozi amuna sasungira mlendo ngakhale yachokera kwa apongozi akazi* (Do not keep your mother in law's stiff porridge for a visitor, even if it had been sent by the mother in law).

In Malawian tradition, the ideologies in proverbs 12-18 stem from frameworks of heterosexual marriage cultures where men/husbands are considered head of families, bread winners and providers. Chichewa proverbs are not built from a vacuum, but rather on individual, family,

village and society expectations. The construction of Chichewa proverbs reflects the customs, tradition, beliefs and values about heterosexual orientation as opposed to other forms of sexual orientations. Heterosexual marriage is considered the most noble institution and important achievement in ones' life accomplishments. Whatever ambitions and dreams a woman may have, her life is not complete if she is not married and also does not have children. More especially for women and/or girls, being married, being known by the husband's name as (*mai uje* –Mrs so so), bear a child/children for the man, is something that any woman aspires for. Similarly, parents look up to marrying their female and male children. The proverbs above clearly indicate the cultural values of Malawi that women have a key role and a backbone in making sure that their marriages work. No matter what circumstances she may find herself, and irrespective of the husbands' weaknesses, behaviours and shortcomings which the wife may not have a control over, the general belief of the people including some religious is that a woman has the natural power to neutralize the man's powers. Culturally, if a marriage fails, people condemn the woman as a failure. Chichewa proverbs emphasize the norms, beliefs and traditions of being a good and submissive wife.

Throughout the growing period of a girl, her socialization is driven towards gender roles and to become a wife of someone. Among other gender roles, girls are assigned many tasks such as helping their mothers in household chores such as cooking, cleaning the yard, fetching water and firewood and being closer to their mothers to learn skills of being a mother by taking care of young siblings. Mutunda (2016) and Moloko-Phiri (2015) are in agreement that African proverbs are used as a language tool during premarital counselling to instruct the couple, more specifically the woman, on the values of marriage and encouraging them to stay together. This is the reason why traditionally during marriage rites processes, it is the girl (bride) who undergoes a special counselling commonly known as bridal shower. Bridal showers are women's spaces where elderly and married women counsel the bride regarding her duties as a woman of the house. Newly wedded girls are counselled and warned of the repercussions of not knowing how to cook. The girls get warned that should they fail to look after their husbands, they could be returned to their fathers' house. Issues of general household chores, cleanliness, financial management and bedroom obligations are taught during this time. In the case of white (western) wedding where counselling is done at church with the focus on both the groom and the bride, women still find it not enough such that they go round and conduct a special function specifically for the bride. This

second counselling is done according to customs and traditions of Malawi in line with proverbs 4-8. The bride is counselled on issues of general duties (household chores) and those of the bedroom and making sure that she satisfies her husband sexually.

Responses from the research participants established that the initial aim of prescribing gender roles was not to discriminate against a particular sex, but to see to it that there was no chaos. The roles were prescribed by looking at the strengths and vulnerability of men and women. Traditionally, Chichewa proverbs emphasize the responsibility of men and how they should use their masculinity power positively towards human relationships and coexistence. The researcher quoted one research participant as having said:

“Miyambi inali kugwilitsidwa ntchito Monga ndanena poyamba kuti miyambi ina inali yongoteteza kuti azimayi ndi ana asagwiritsidwe ntchito yomwe sigwilizana ndi mphamvu zawo. Ndipeleke chitsanzo kuti pakati pa mnyamata ndi mtsikana yemwe ali ndi mphamvu za chibadwidwe zoti akhonza kuguza ngolo ndani? Miyambiyi sinali yoti ena azunzike koma kufuna kuti ntchito igwilike bwino opanda kukhulanakhulana. Mutati muone masiku ano mikangano yachulukana mmidzi ndi mmabanja chifukwa dongosolo palibe”.

In the quote above, the participant tries to explain that the structure in Malawi is not necessarily different from that of Western contexts where there is distribution of duties according to hierarchy. The participant, who happened to be an administrator in one of the education institutions in Malawi, explained that the bureaucracy in western institutions demand clear distribution of roles in any given institution. The participant gave an example at his work place that at the top is the manager, then desk officer, then school inspectors, messengers and cleaners. He noted that the same pattern was applied in family contexts. In African tradition, the father is always considered as the manager and head of the family. The father is the one who is responsible for the general welfare of the family.

The participants in the focus groups, both for men and women, also added that proverbs were not created to discriminate against one group but rather to guard against chaotic situation if duties are not distributed accordingly. The research participants explained that when a male child is born in Malawi traditional, he is nurtured and provided with the skills to help him take up the responsibility of being the provider and the head of the family. On the other hand, a girl child is

prepared for domestic chores because this is the role that she will assume as a wife of somebody. This is evident from proverbs 49-53 in which the traditional approach is used to embrace the values of the family. The participants in this study explained that the proverbs were used in its total fairness to protect the family only and not as a form of destruction and oppression to others. This is exactly what Sibanda (2015) argues for in his paper in which he writes about the philosophical contextual relevance of indigenous wisdom in some African proverbs. Sibanda (2015) argues that the observation of justice and rights of others as core members of the family is fundamental role of some African proverbs. While writing about Zimbabwe, Sibanda (2015) argues that proverbs as part of African philosophies help in bringing about peace and justice within societies.

Some of the participants of this study especially the elders those above 40s of age. They lamented on how Africa has lost its uniqueness of African philosophies and the essence of tolerance while embracing Western ideologies. The research participants further explained that the alarming gender disputes that are faced today are a result of the collapse of such African framework. This was echoed by four (4) traditional leaders and two (2) ward councillors who expressed their concerns that at many times they are approached to resolve marital conflicts. The traditional leaders and ward councillors explained that the problems facing many marriages today emanate from the distorted and decay of Malawian culture and traditions. One traditional leader said and I quote:

“Anthu tikutengela chikhalidwe cha azungu pamene ife sizungu ndife anthu akuda’ ifetu pachikhalidwe chathu mzimayi ayenela kupeleka ulemu kwa mamuna wake muzonse”. In the text the participant explains that people have abandoned their tradition and values and adopted the western philosophy that men and women are equal. The participant further explains that in Malawian traditional a woman has to submit to the husband.

While on the issue of submitting to husbands, one participant who happen to be in religious marriage counselling groups revealed that most of the issues that are brought to their attention that most disputes between couples surrounds the fact that women abdicate their roles and responsibilities in homes. This was echoed by another participant gave his account on how he

mediated in disputes between a husband and wife while studying abroad in one of the Western countries. The research participant explained how the Malawian couple who also had gone to study abroad quarrelled over the cleaning of the toilet after use. The participant explained how the wife demanded that the husband should clean the toilet after use. However, this did not please the husband as he claimed that it is the duty of the wife. I probed to understand how the matter was mediated. The mediator explained that as the husband maintained his ground and claimed that since they had gone abroad, the wife has changed her attitude concerning family roles. Traditionally, cleaning is a task that is considered fully to be part of the women's/girls' duty while the husband goes to work to look for money to support the family.

Considering the fact that most of the women in Malawi are not employed and depend on their husbands, women take up the domestic roles happily because it firstly defines them as real women. Secondly, this is part of women's contribution to the family. Most of the women who took part in this study did not raise much concerns about this issue of domestic work. Therefore, waking up early, warming bath water for the husband, sweeping the yard, preparing breakfast, preparing clothes for the husband to wear going to work and bathing the children ready for school. Later in the day, a Malawian woman prepares lunch and supper for the husband and the entire family. Because this has been part of the customs and traditions, the tasks have been internalized and normalized by the society. Women themselves perform the duties happily as part of their obligation while the husband goes to work to look for money to support the family. In fact, the kitchen is the space where women feel free to discuss matters of their concern to other women or chat with children freely away from men. Women strategize their life and welfare within these domestic spaces.

Evidently, some participants, women especially stressed that indeed in Malawi the kitchen is a space of a women and they protect it away from their husbands and other men. The participants revealed that it is in the kitchen where women strategies on issues concerning their families. They further explained that in the event that a man is found in the kitchen, he gets instructions from the wife to get out. One woman explained that the kitchen seems to be the office for most Malawian women. The kitchen is their space and they do not want to be disturbed. The women who were in focus group explained that because men are not used to kitchen work, when they intrude into this space, they mess up things and waste the supplies. In fact, in Malawian culture, women take up

the domestic roles happily, as it defines them as a real woman. The Malawian woman is the first to wake up in the morning making sure everything is in order and she is the last one to go to bed in the evening making sure everybody is satisfied.

Even though there is such an acceptance and normalization of the demarcation of places and gender roles between men and women, some participants of both sexes opposed this idea of creating distinct and separate spaces for men and women. The participant's worries were expressed in terms of other men who take advantage of this domestic socialization of women and use it as a tool to enhance their superiority and/or exploitation of women. The participants explained that in modern times where some women are also employed and engaged in other public engagements women are overburdened. The participants have a view that both men and women should learn to complement each other. One participant, a female in her late twenties said and I quote: "*kodi bajetiyo amasokoneza akakwatila, pokhala akakhala asanakwatile amaphika okha ndipo bajetiyo amapanga bwino bwino*". The participant explained that with proper agreements, the issue of messing up with budgets can be avoided.

The responses of some of the male research participants, however, indicate that not all men and women enjoy this one sided socialization. Some male participants revealed their frustrations and that they were not happy with this one sided socialization where women are more overburdened than their counterparts (men and boys). This is an indication of high level of gender awareness where men are ready to turn around tables on gender equality. One man explained and I quote: "*ife azibambo tivomele kuti mzimai tikunenayu akhonza kukhala mwana wathu, mchemwali kapenanso amai athu. Palibe amafuna kuona mbale wake akuzunzika kapena kunyozeka*". In the text is an appeal to men to realize that sticking to inequality and oppressive gender ideologies may also affect their daughters, sisters and their mothers. The research participant expressed that nobody is glad to see a female relative being discriminated against. Some research participants pointed out how people have already started changing their attitudes towards gender complementary role. With confirmation provided by several research participants, the tradition of marriage counselling now involves both the groom and the bride. It was revealed by some participants that the society realised that counselling was previously biased focusing on the bride only while marriage is about the bride and the groom. As such in some parts of the country, the

knowledge holders are now engaging with both the bride and groom during marriage counselling. The research participants, however, revealed that not many people are welcoming the innovation and initiatives. Still many people focus more on the bride than the groom. With the conviction that a woman is the heart of the family, some of the participants who took place in this study do not see it as a problem. This should be understood from the background that most of the women are not formally employed but depend on their husbands as providers. It is therefore in order for women to reciprocate and be engaged with domestic chores while the husband goes out to look for food and money. However, the implication is that proverbs creates a ‘dependence syndrome’ which does not work to the advantage of women/girls in terms of their own empowerment and emancipation. Such femininity construction of making women to rely solely on men to put bread on the table creates a spirit of hard working in men. Mutunda (2016) argues that because of such gender role prescriptions, the status of men is raised to that of superiority while depriving women from other benefits. This is considered natural and normal, it remains unquestionable by society members.

In view of the role distribution, in Malawi, no matter whether a woman is formally employed or not, the tradition continues to overburden her with patriarchal gender ideologies. It is the responsibility of a woman to perform all household chores while men have the freedom to rest, read newspapers, and watch televisions after work. One participant explained and I quote: “*pali azibambo ena oti amakana chakudya chophika wantchito*” meaning some men refuse to eat food prepared by a helper of the house. No matter how tired a woman might be, an ideal woman is forced to make sure that the husband is taken care of.

Knowing that proverbs were constructed more than many centuries ago when at the dawn of civilization as one participant explained, the idea of ‘ideal wife and homemaker’ in some proverbs is a less empowering tool. This participant, a university professor, explained how some women are brainwashed and they take it as normal hence defending and act as gatekeepers towards other enlightened other women who may try to interrogate these practices. Without necessarily underestimating and twisting the beliefs of Malawi about the essence and domestic role of a mother, this study challenges the minds of knowledge holders to be flexible on issues of marriages which in some instances has been used as a root cause to some abuses, exploitation and

oppression. If not well handled, this may fuel in domestic violence and accelerated divorce rates amongst couples because of power struggle that may exist. With all the challenges that come because of such society pressures about marriage issues, forced and not being prepared to marry are some of the factors that have contributed to gender inequality and the marginalization of women (Mama 2005).

Women in Malawi are brainwashed to view themselves as not complete if they are not married. Even if a woman is self-dependent economically, society pushes her to stay in an abusive marriage in a way to protect traditions and customs. More seriously, within this context of marriage, women fail to make the decision to say no to some cultural practices of multiple partners, genital partners are genital mutilation, “*kusasa fumbi/ kulowa chokolo*” (where a widow is forced to sleep with the late husband as a ritual), *fisi-meaning-* a hyena who is assigned during the night to sleep with the girls at initiation confinements with the aim of verifying if a girl has learnt all the tricks of making husband enjoy sex. This tradition is practiced in some Malawian ethnic groups and is meant to sustain male supremacy. Although on paper there is a decline in such practices, still in some cultures, they are practised silently.

Bearing in mind that women make up to more than 50% of the Malawian population, some advocates of gender empowerment question how economic growth outlook may be sustained if subjugation of women’s issues is still deeply widely embedded in the societies. According to the African Union protocol on women’s rights alongside with other gender equality initiatives, Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, still registers the lowest proportion of countries with gender parity (Shefer, Kruger and Schepers 2015). From the African Union (2015), more than 34 million of African girls are not enrolled in schools. Some of the reasons for for all these alarming figures are the unjustifiable culture, customs and traditions imposed on women and girls. More seriously, strong cultural norms that favour the education of the boy over the girl as well as premature marriages continue to act as hindrances (Otas 2015). In many African societies, proverbs are used by men in particular to justify the acts of marriage as a livelihood for women. Infact, by making women dependence of men is a patriachal tool of abuse which was put in place by men inorder to control their power and territory. However, this does not necessarily mean all men are enemies of progress. There are other men those which Mama (2005) calls them straight men who are

flexible and adapt to new global realities. This study also finds out that there are other men within Malawian society who do not agree with women control.

6.2.2 Proverbs and sexual issues in marriage

The patriarchal structures in Malawi society also use language tools (proverbs) to emphasize male superiority and women's subordination mostly in heterosexual marriages. Proverbs 19-22 are some examples.

19. *Munthu wosabala anasowa chomutukwanira mamuna* (A barren woman lacked someone through whom she could use abusive language against her husband).

20. *Mbolo sinyanyalidwa* (One does not refuse her husband's penis).

21. *Akazi ndi maluwa sachedwa kulakatika* (women are flowers that blossom nicely in the morning but wither and die quickly in the afternoon).

22. *Ovala nyanda salumpho moto* –meaning- Those putting on sanitary pads should not engage in fire skipping games.

In proverbs 19-22 are feminine behaviours that are expected in every woman and/or girl. Just like in many African societies, traditionally, the society of Malawi prefers a good and cultured woman or girl who is so obedient and submissive not only in marriage 'BUT' in terms of sexual issues. Women are socialized to fulfil men's sexual desires without any compromise. As in proverb 20 above, a woman is cautioned against refusing the husband's penis. Proverb 20 instructs women and/or girls not to say no to their husbands with regard to sexual obligations. This is no different from what I have already discussed earlier that Malawians hold marriage as a noble engagement. Hence issues concerning marriage have to be handled with caution to avoid separations and divorces. Since sex is an important factor that binds the couple together in any intimate relationship, issues such as the like sharing of time together, and companionship come second. In any intimate relationship, the deterioration of sexual satisfaction can lead to more serious implications that may lead to husband going to satisfy his sexual desires outside the marital home. The proverbs, therefore safeguard such ideology. Proverbs teach married women and girls that no matter what circumstances, the wife has to surrender herself completely to the husband. This was a view which was supported by the vast majority of the research participants, both men and women.

The research participants argued that no matter what marital disagreements that may exist between spouses, a woman is restricted from starving her husband's sexual desires and that other burning issues and conflicts have to be sorted without necessarily using sex as a weapon. The majority of male research participants sharply castigated women who equate themselves to men in marriage. One male research participant argued and I quoted: "*mkazi ndi mkazi basi kaya ali pantchito ayenela kusamala za pa banja choyamba*". The meaning in quote is that no matter how educated a woman could be, and whatever position she has, her first duty is to take care of her husband and family. A similar belief was documented in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where there is a saying that goes: "*mwasi akotikala kaka mwasi ata aza monkonzi*" (the woman remains a woman even if she is a chief)" (Onditi and Bah 2017: 91). During the fieldwork in Malawi, an elderly woman agreed with the men. I quoted the elderly woman as having said:

"atsikana ambiri masiku ano ali ndi chizolowezi chowakana amuna awo ku bedi. Akati mamuna kumamuyang'ana kumimba amatanthauzanso kubedi. Mamuna adzipita kuntchito atakhutitsidwa kuti asakayang'anenso ena"

The meaning of the quoted words is that modern girls have the tendency of denying their husbands in bed. The participant quoted the proverb that *mwamuna kumamuyang'ana pamimba*-meaning 'a women should look at the man's tummy'. The participant explained that the proverb is used ironically where the meaning includes not only providing for food but sexual satisfaction too. Not fulfilling sexual obligations may motivate men into cheating which may also result into conflicts and possibly domestic violence and divorces. To restrain the man from looking for other women, the wife has to make sure that the husband is always sexually satisfied. This view was articulated by the majority of men who participated in the study. For example, one man explicitly said: "*nanga mkutani ungapita kwina basi*" meaning- if the woman denies you, what else do you do? You just go and find someone (another woman). A man can even beat his wife if she refuses to have sex with him. This behaviour has also been recorded in the DRC (see Onditi and Bah 2017).

In addition to proverbs instructing women to remain submissive to husbands, proverbs are also used to restrict women and girls movements. For example in proverb 22 where menstruation period is used a weapon to oppress women and girls not to move around unnecessarily but remain in homes. Proverbs further teach girls to be less controversial and not to be outspoken for example

in proverb 19 which in a subtle way teaches the society that women should be scared of their husbands and not just to open their mouths. This proverb illustrate how women use children as an excuse to insult their husbands. Traditionally, when a woman is facing challenges in marriage, it is sometimes the children who get insulted instead of their fathers. This is a clear indication of fear and that women harbour a lot of stress within them. Women and girls are expected to display some level of withdrawal, lenience, love, and tolerance. After getting married, a woman continues to be confronted with societal femininity ideologies of being submissive, less argumentative and showing respect to the husband. Above the general behaviours, women and girls are socialized to take care of themselves and maintain the attractiveness and beauty of their bodies. The proverbs therefore encourages the superiority and inferiority status of men and women.

6.2.3 Women as subordinates to men in heterosexual marriages

Further from predetermining women's spaces and roles, Chichewa proverbs are used as language tools that portray women as just a subordinated group within heterosexual marriage frameworks. This emanates from the traditional belief that in heterosexual marriages, it is only men who have the monopoly and/or autonomous power to propose marriage. The traditions, customs, values and beliefs of Malawian society openly restrict women from making any romantic move towards a man. A woman is viewed as *hule* (prostitute) if she tries to show any interest in a man. As such, the power of who to marry, when to marry, when the marriage can end lies in the hands of a man. On the other hand, women are on the receiving end waiting to be proposed, when to get married and even to divorce. The proverbs that follow in this section carry such beliefs.

23. *Ndakwatiwa n'kumbuyo komwe*-meaning- I am married even at the back; meaning one has landed into a good marriage.

24. *Ndakwatiwa n'kulinga utagonera*-meaning-You can say, "I married well", only after some years.

25. *Ndakwatiwa kumbuyo, kumaso kulira ena*-meaning-I am married in the back, the front cries for others.

26. *Mdima wa dzinja udakwatitsa mkazi woyansa*- meaning-The darkness of the wet season got the ugly woman a husband.

Above marriage and sexual issues as discussed in preceding sections, the underlying specific connotation in cited proverbs in this section is about the anxieties that women have when they get

married. Women in this study especially those that I engaged with in a focus group explained that in Malawi, upon getting into marriage, women are engulfed with fear as to whether the marriage will last or not. They explained the fears in terms of firstly their performance which is measured both outside and inside the bedroom. This refers to whether the woman is well groomed with respect to household chores as well as bedroom chores. The bedroom includes among other things, how attractive the body and how to satisfies the husband sexually. One research participant in the group mentioned that in the event that a woman lacks skills or does not have enticing qualities concerning sexual activities those that help to seduce a man, this is a reason that can cost someone her marriage. Customarily, in Malawi, when a woman is not being well equipped in terms of sexual skills, a man has the right to divorce the wife because of such shortcomings. Secondly, another fear comes as to whether the in-laws will accept her and see her as beautiful and treat her well. More seriously, the woman/girl fears whether she will conceive and bear children for the husband as in proverb 25.

As indicated earlier on, just like in many other African countries, in Malawi, a person is respected and regarded highly for having a wife or a husband as well as having children. Children are considered as the wealth and strength of any individual. No matter how old or rich one may become, having no children is a sign of great loss to the clan and the entire society. The person with no children faces ridicule. For example, such a person, if it is a man, is called *gojo/osapita mnyumba/ogwa mpapaya* meaning (barren, one who does not enter the bedroom and one who fell from pawpaw tree). A barren woman is called *chumba*. Failure on the part of a woman to conceive can cost her dignity and happiness.

No matter how wealthy one can be, having no children renders one useless. Infact within African ways of knowing, being rich but having no child is a situation which sometimes is associated with cultism (*okhwima*). Marriage is, therefore, complete only when there are children. One may even be radical and say every marriage is equated with baby making. When one gets married, there is a cultural expectation to see a woman pregnant after some time. One old woman mentioned that in her days, couples were on count down after getting married. She explained that in some ethnic traditions especially the Lomwe, a big log of wood would be placed on fire in the kitchen. This specific wood kept on burning day and night. This is the log that people will get fire charcoal to make new fire. The purpose of this wood was not to keep fire for the next day but it was used as

a gauge to determine when a pregnancy is expected. The elders observed the wood very well. If it came to be half way burnt, the elders would start interrogating the couple, more specifically a woman, to find out if she had problems in getting pregnant. Traditionally, there is a belief that when a couple fails to have children, it is the woman who has to bear the blame. The Lomwe participants explained that in the situation that the wood is finished, interventions were put in place to help the couple. The intervention included using traditional fertility medicine to boost up sperm count. In the case that severe problem was detected on the man's side, a third party known as *fisi* (hyena) was deployed to sleep with woman and make her pregnant. The *fisi* was mostly the brother or any member of the man's family. This was an traditional knowledge system which was meant to preventing any shame and ridicule that the couple may suffer if they do not have children.

Several research participants, including traditional leaders and ward councillors, explained that in typical villages, people still maintain that having no children in marriage is the fault of a woman. In African tradition, the issue of sperm count does not matter. What matters is the man getting erect and ejaculating into a woman. The research participants, most of them traditional leaders, revealed that cases are still coming to their traditional courts where women are accused of not giving their husbands children. One research participant, a ward councillor, said and I quote: "*azibambonsotu amakhalapo oti mphamvu zikuchepa, apena anatengapo mabomu omwe amachititsa kuti asabeleke. Koma chomwe timadabwa ndi choti milandu yosabeleka imakhuza kwambili azimai*". The quote above is an acknowledgement from the ward councillor that men too can be impotent due to low sperm count and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases that he may suffer. The ward councillor lamented that in many cases women are falsely accused of bareness while men are let free. It became more worrying when the wood finishes completely without any sign of pregnancy.

The interpretation is that just like in many African traditional, bearing children is a core business for people who chose to get married heterosexually. The society expectation is to see fruits of the womb. In Malawian traditional, after getting married, the members of the family (both parents and in-laws) expect the couple to start having children immediately. When this fails, it is the woman to whom the blame is levelled against and not the man. Marriage has ceased to be a reflection of peaceful coexistence of a man and a woman and a dynamic process which advances

gradually with the progressive integration of children as gifts. The proverbs in 23-25 stress such a view. This corresponds to the writings of many researchers that regardless of how many years a couple has stayed together, the woman is rendered useless if she fails to give her husband a child. In the event of childless marriage, the woman is divorced and left empty handed. This is because property is directly attached to children. A woman who is barren is equal to empty vessel (Masenya 2010, Gupta 2012).

The proverbs above define women in Malawi as if their full and wholesome existence depends on getting married, producing children and caring for the family. Women's duties are relegated to those of baby making and production of children. Women go into marriage engulfed with fear. Heterosexual marriage in this regard is a pathway towards subordination and marginalization of women. This is an area that the society needs to separate issues of marriage and having children. Without medical proof, women are mostly persecuted and psychologically tortured, harassed, humiliated by in laws if they fail to bear children. A man's sperm count is not seen as a contributing factor that may lead to couples' failure to have children. These are some of the shortfalls of African indigenous knowledge which relies on assumptions and not on empirical evidence.

The proverbs are used within marital relationship in ill health, discrimination and oppression manner. With all the attribution of fertility to a woman only, it brings shame, frustration, stress, hurt, anger, low esteem and psychological emotions that can affect the well being of the women. Sometimes it goes worse to maltreatment both by the husband and in-laws among infertile women as a cultural expectation is not achieved. This maltreatment of women has a great influence as it encourages some men to engage in extra and multiple relationship as discussed earlier because the woman is rendered useless. The proverbs script involves a stereotypical masculinity that mandates strength and aggressive behaviours in men and boys. Such is the indigenous knowledge that needs to be restructured because it does affect issues of human rights. African proverbs encourage society's behaviours of discrimination and abuse of widow inheritance (Moloko-Phiri 2015).

6.2.4 Proverbs encouraging multiple partners

The discussions in the previous section focussed on the subordination of women to men with regard to marriage, coexistence of husband and wife and sexual issues in general. Above that,

Chichewa proverbs are used openly to encourage men the idea of having multiple partners. Proverbs 27 and 28 below are such examples.

27. *Mkazi mmodzi diso limodzi and Mkazi mmodzi diso lophinya* (having one wife is like having one eye).

28. *Akazi awiri maso awiri* (having two wives is like having two eyes).

The message inscribed in proverbs 27 and 28 is about the habit of men having multiple sexual partnerships. The dominant message expressed in the proverbs 24 and 25 is the presentation of male sexual drive which must find an outlet and whose scope of operation has no limits and cannot be restricted. The language tools infact are used to encourage and sanction that having one woman is like having one eye or looking with one eye. The interpretation is that in Malawi, the issue of multiple partnership is not considered as a wrong doing. A man's infidelity is socially and culturally sanctioned because, like a bull, he can go outside his kraal to look for mates. Available literature has shown the escalation of plural relationship from old to current times. Polygamy and plural relationships constitute a tradition that is normalised in many traditions both in Africa and beyond. The reasons for multiple relationship differs from context to context, and from individual to individual (Siddiqui 2016, Rafia 2014). Whatever cultural and/or religious reasons there might be, the effect of multiple sexual relationships are mostly negative.

Polygamy is mostly done without considering the humiliation, pain and psychological torture that women (wives) go through in the process of adapting to polygamy. Not in many cases is the wife consulted. She is forced to accept polygamy on grounds that it is part of tradition. In trying to make her marriage work, women are subjected to humiliation, psychological emotions as they go through such processes. The purpose of the proverbs 27 and 28 is to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and institutionalized patriarchal patterns of household socialization that reflect men as superior and entitled to any immoral behaviours while women are rendered as inferior. This is a clear manifestation of differential power relations between men and women in patriarchal societies which then lead to oppression, victimization, demeaning and psychologically torture to women.

Proverbs provide ideological rationale for the continuation of differential treatment of women and men and that the unjust behaviour of men is accepted as normal. Within Malawi context,

hegemonic masculinity on sexual behaviors are maintained by silencing women. Proverbs play an important role in reinforcing the femininity cultural expectation of endurance, submissiveness, not being confrontational towards the husband or partner. The stereotypical inferiority of women in some Chichewa proverbs renders women vulnerable to being silenced.

The implications of polygamy vary according to context. Having more than one wife now seems to be normalised in some countries such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and many more. Polygamy simply means having more than one spouse. This is a socially constructed ideology which is governed by customary law of marriage and family. Reasons for plural marriage are many and includes among others barrenness, sickness of wife, fame, while others are religious prerogatives (Gaffney-Rhys 2014:3). Gaffney-Rhys also gives us insights observed in some Islamic societies where polygamy is viewed as a religious right. A woman who refuses her husband to take another wife is socially condemned as a violator of divine law (Gaffney-Rhys 2014:3).

Although in some isolated studies girls have shown favouring polygamy, the implications to polygamy are mostly negative and work against the violation of women's rights and freedom as argued by Balogun (2010). Women are placed in vulnerable situation of HIV/AIDS risks as men practice this multiple partner ideology and the proverb presupposes that a man has a right to it. Evidently, HIV/AIDS prevalence among males and females in Malawi shows that males aged 15-49 was 8% while those of women from 15-49 was 12% (World Economic Forum 2013). Probably the rise in HIV/AIDS prevalence in women is due to the fact that women fail to make the bold decision to say NO to traditional practices of multiple partners. For example, referring to proverbs in Chapter 6 proverb 13 where woman is socialized not to say no to husband in terms of sexual issues and proverbs 27- 28 which encourage the acquisition of multiple sexual partners by men. Similar trends have also been observed in earlier studies when Chilisa (2009) gives examples of Setswana proverbs which says "*Monna selepe o a adimanwa*" meaning- man is an axe so he can be shared and "*Monna nawa o a nama-meaning*"- a man, like a bean seed, spread out. Chilisa (2009) argues that women are not only held inferior to men, but they become victimized and oppressed. In patriarchal structures, language is used to brainwash and victimize women and getting to view themselves as subordinated and helplessness. It is this state of helplessness that allows men to take advantage of women in these intimate relationships. Not only does this happen

when a woman economically depends on the husband, even if a woman is self-dependent economically, the society pushes women to stay in such abusive marriages in a way to protect traditions and customs.

6.2.5 Women as a group lacking decision making skills

29. *Mbeta silola tsiku limodzi* (The unmarried girl does not consent to marriage in one day)

30. *Tinthu m'kuni adalekera mwana mkazi mnzake ku njoka* (The one who said, “there are things in firewood bundle”, left her fellow women child to a snake. Not being prudent.

31. *Adagula mbereko mwana asatabadwe* (She bought the baby carrying cloth even before the child was born).

The connotation inscribed in the first cited proverb is about women being weak and not firm to the decision that they make. This is seen in proverb 29. Traditionally this proverb is one of those proverbs that is used to construct masculinity and characteristics of being peristent in fulfilling one's ambitions. The proverb is metaphorically used to teach the young men that spirit of not giving up in doing something. This is where the ideas are compared to a girl who does not accept the boy's marriage proposal on the first day. Women are a group people whose actions should not be taken for granted. In fact, other participants explained that it is just a common idea that women and girls do not want to accept proposal from a man not because they do not want but they believe that if they accept on the first attempt they will look as if they are weak. But after several attempts the girl finally gives up.

The knowledge holders consider that women are weak in holding up their decisions. One participant, a male explained that and I quote:

“azimayidi sachedwa kugiva chinthu. Mukakhala mma office akangopanikizidwa basi amasiya ngati anali paudio. Ndiye azibambo amapanga dala ngati sakufuna kuti mzimai azialamulila amampanikiza mpaka amasiya”.

The meaning in the italicized statement is about the truth that indeed women are a weak group. When women are in leadership positions, they sometimes easily surrender when they meet pressure and resistance from people. Taking advantage of this apparent soft spot in women, sometimes men deliberately apply pressure and resistance when they do not want to be ruled by a woman. Eventually the woman gives up. Another research participant, also a male and an educator, explained and I quote: “*timadziwa kuti azimai ndi ofooka ndipo ukampanikiza kaya ndi*

kuntchito amatha kusintha maganizo ake ndikumvela za iwe”-meaning women are weak and even at work places, men capitalize on women’s weakness and that they are swayed easily. Men push their selfish and well calculated agendas under such circumstances.

In addition, proverb 30 is about women not being prudent and not desisive in making properly decisions moves in times of trouble. The proverb tells society that women are people who are weak and slow in thinking and people who lack proper decision making skills. The proverb illustrates how women fail to take action in times of danger such as when a child is about to be bitten by a snake. In fact, in this proverb goes beyond showing the woman as a slow thinking person but also an unreasonable and evil human being as well. Proverb 31 portrays women as irrational and people who just rush to do things before thinking. In Malawi, this is an idea of *kujjirika*. Doing things without thinking is captured when a woman goes ahead to buy a baby carrier before the baby is born. Traditionally, preparations for the unborn baby are done with high level of secrecy. Buying baby supplies before the baby is born is considered a taboo and unreasonable. One has to wait and see the outcome of the baby delivery before purchasing baby supplies. The knowledge holders believe that it is only when a child is born that one can start buying things.

Although in modern days there is a paradigm shift in that preganant women are encouraged to reserve welcoming materials, there other things that should wait and only bought after the baby has arrived. This is all about the fear of a stillbirth. However, it is now a common practice that due to uncertainties of when the child is to be born whether during the night, or mid month when the parents are financially broke and other issues, pregnant women are encouraged to start preparing for the baby early enough. Because nurses have been confronted with situations whereby a baby is born but there are no baby receiving materials readily available, hospitals (both private and public hospitals) have made it a condition that on the very first day of ante-natal clinic attendance, an expectant woman has to show evidence of preparations on baby receiving materials. Buying baby stuff is no longer a hidden agenda. In the event that the baby does not survive, the stuff is sold or kept for future use.

The proverbs yielded conflicting responses from the research participants. Both males and females were in agreement that it is true women lack decision making skills. Several examples were given ranging from homes how women fail to operate in the absence of men. The example

given by many research participants to illustrate their point was that of former president Joyce Banda. According to some of the research participants, Joyce Banda failed to win the presidential elections because she did not have the skills to run the government machinery which had led to great losses of billions of Malawi Kwacha (cash gate). On the other hand, some participants expressed confidence in women's capabilities. Several research participants gave examples of their own experiences having grown up in female headed households where there was no male figure. One research participant narrated how his mother operated and managed the home, engaging in business to source money for him and his siblings. The research participant explained that out of the four children, three of them are graduates in different disciplines while their sister is a nurse. One of the members of this group of research participants explained and I quote: "*azimayi ena amaganiza kuposanso azibambo koma anthu anachikhazikitsa kuti azimai onse saganiza bwino*"-meaning that some women have high thinking capacity and skills to lead and manage things more than some men only that the society internalised such demeaning ideas. Another research participant explained that and I quote: "*mabanja ambili kwathu kuno amayendesedwa ndi azimai*"-meaning many families in Malawi are led by women and are capable of surviving.

However, doubting of women's thinking and weakness in decision making skills corresponds to the perceptions in some of African cultures as shown in the literature review section. An example is seen from the Tswana proverb that says that an ox cannot be pulled by cows. The idea also corresponds to other studies conducted by Soetan which revealed an Igbo-Nigeria proverb "*Woke obu la na-agba egwu nwayi na-aku oye o bula na-anwu mgbe chi ya akpoghi*" meaning, the man who dances the flute played by a woman generally goes to the spirit world prematurely (Soetan 2001:26). As discussed in literature review, women leadership is not a new phenomenon in Malawian tradition. For example, before the British rule, some of the women in the Chewa ethnic group served as queens and king makers. Women had the power to choose and unseat a chief, or traditional or clan leader. This is the societal system that was destroyed by the colonial structures in its control over the existing populations in Africa. Usman (2012) argues that the colonial era created a ruling system dominated by men and compounded by the beliefs that women did not have a place in colonial. Giving examples of Tanzania and Kenya, Usman (2012) explained that traditionally women were in control of households i.e cleaning, food preparation, reproduction and care giving as well as milking and caring for sick animals.

The prejudices loaded in the Chichewa proverbs go a long way to discredit women. The implication is that the trustworthiness of a woman's leadership is also compromised. One research participant explained during field trip that men should acknowledge that not all women lack decision-making but they oppose their ideas in order to mark and protect their territory. In its post-independence history, Malawi has had one female vice president (and later president) by the name Joyce Hilda Banda. She has proved to be very intelligent and with strong character better than some men. Joyce Banda has served in very reputable organisations within Malawi. Before elected into Member of Parliament in 2004 under the United Democratic Party, Joyce Banda had received a number of awards and recognition of her excellence (Kamwendo and Kamwendo 2015).

As Hussien (2005) strongly asserts, some Chichewa proverbs have become outdated and have no use, except for their literary and historical significance. Current events in our world today show numerous examples of successful women in both public and private sectors. Women globally have shown their resilience in reaction to pressure as they have been elected as presidents, vice presidents, prime ministers, ministers, vice chancellors of universities, chief executive officers of big companies, ambassadors, pilots and many other jobs, which were considered male dominated. One can cite some notable cases from Africa: Zimbabwe at one time had a woman (Joyce Mujuru) as vice president, Malawi had Joyce Banda as vice president and later president, Liberia had Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president, South Africa has had two female deputy presidents (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Baleka Mbete), and the current president of Mauritius Ameenah Gurib is a woman. One also has to acknowledge that Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa became the first woman to head the African Union Commission. This view therefore of women being regarded as people with weaknesses and not taking challenges is no longer true. This is a clear indication that women fail to succeed in decision making not because they are not intelligent, or are weak or not capable but the patriarchal society system deliberately set them up for failure by deliberately not supporting women.

6.2.6 Proverbs attributing children's negative behaviour to mothers

This section addresses Chichewa proverbs that attribute children's negative behaviour to their mothers. Women are to blame for any wayward behaviour of children, and men are left off the hook. It is as if women are alone should and/or responsible for ensuring the upbringing of a well

mannered child. Before we begin to consider this huge responsibility that is unfairly placed on the shoulders of women, we need to pose and answer the question: Who is a child? I will attempt to answer this question by making use of legal provisions as well as the relevant Chichewa proverbs. Let me start by defining the child (*mwana*) from a legal perspective. At the international level, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (in Article 1), defines a child as any person under the age of 18. The constitution (Chapter IV – Human Rights, Section 23) defines a child as any person under the age of 16. It means anyone who is above 16 is an adult, and should behave as such (Malawi Government 2010).

Within the proverbs, parental love, care and protection crop up. This is evident in proverbs 1 – 4.

(1) *Chiyipira achaje, amake nkumati ndi mwana* (it is nasty to outsiders, yet its mother still calls it her child) [meaning: unconditional parental love]. The point is that whilst some people may find a child or person not to be likeable, or find the person to be unpleasant or even ugly, parents never see things that way. In other words, the parent is the source of refuge for his/her children (Chakanza 2001:68)

(2) *Ali ndi mwana agwiritse* (Let the one with a child hold it tight). This proverb calls on parents or those in the care of children to ensure that children are protected. It is all about care and protection for the child. Parents and/or care givers are culturally expected to protect children (or children under their care) from all forms of harm. This proverb is echoed in Article 19 on the Rights of the Child which stipulates that children have the right to be protected from physical and/or mental harm. Protection of the child is also provided for in the Constitution of Malawi (Republic of Malawi 2010), Section IV, 23 (4) whereby the child is afforded protection from economic exploitation, or any treatment, work or punishment that can be or is likely to be hazardous, or can interfere with the child's education or can be harmful to the child's physical, mental or spiritual health (Chakanza 2001:21).

(3) *Mwana wa nkhuku, chenjera, kabawi wadza* (little chick, beware, the hawk is here). According to Chakanza (2000), this proverb advises workers to take care since the boss is around. In this context, the workers are regarded as *ana a nkhuku* (little chicks) and the boss is *kabawi* (the hawk). One can also extend the meaning of this proverb to human children in that they are being warned to take care of themselves since there is danger around (Chakanza 2001:230).

Taking after parents is something that is natural as, for example, demonstrated in proverbs 4 and 5 below:

(4) *Mwana wa ng'ombe upeza akudya udzu, anaonera amake kudya udzu* (you find a cow calf eating grass, it is because it has its mother eating grass). [meaning: child takes after parents, especially the mother](Chakanza 2001:229)

(5) *Mwana wa ng'ona salepherea kuyangalala* (the off-spring of a crocodile does not fail to roam about) [Like father, like son](Chakanza 2001:230)

(6) *Mwana wa ng'ona ndi uyo ali pamchira, wapambuyo ndi wa ng'azi* (the real offspring of the crocodile is the one on its tail, the one which is behind is that of iguana) [meaning; a genuine child walks in the footsteps of parents (Chakanza 2001:230).

The nurturing of children is a task which is mostly done by women in Malawi. Children stay closer to their mothers or other female members of the family or female household workers. Because of such a role that women play in the life of a child from birth to up to the age of 11-12 which are crucial for behaviour formation. The Malawi society believes that children exhibit behaviours which are relative similar to what they observe and immitate from their mothers during formation stages. Proverbs have been used in Malawi to emphasize such ideology. Below are some of the examples of Chichewa proverbs:

(7). *Kupusa mkwamake, kopanda make kachenjera* (The child with a mother is a fool, the one without a mother is clever).

(8). *Anayamwira kubere* (She/he sucked from her mothers' breast).

Proverb 7 emphasizes the belief that a child who grows up without a mother is more self-reliant, less dependent and intelligent than those who grows in the comfort of their mothers. Unanimously, all the participants' revealed that indeed a child without parents shows independent skills quickly than those with mothers. It was agreed by most of the research participants that because of issues of lactation, issues of nurturing are mostly done by women. From birth to young age up to adolescent stage, children are closer and stay with their mothers more than their fathers. These are the crucial age as far as human behaviour formation is concerned. It was also agreed that mothers and women socialize the children more than anyone else in the society.

The research participants revealed that children learn from both mothers and fathers but mostly they learn from their mothers. This means if the child is nurtured by a mother who is lazy, evil, talkative, lack of respect, gossiping or a mother who is caring, compassionate, respect, loving mother/care taker, hardworking, the same behaviours will be reproduced. Probably these are ideas that informed the social learning theorists such as Albert Bandura's and others. In Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, children learn by listening, observing, imitating and modelling. The principles working under Bandura's (1977) theories encompass attention, memory, reproduction and motivation (Schlag 2017). In the event that the child exhibits undesirable behaviours, mothers are the people to be accused of failing their duties as nurturers. Some participants in this study revealed an interesting unjust situation when a man is caught up in gossiping circles. Instead of accusing the man himself, with all the conviction that men never gossip, the society would turn the story to the mother of nurturing such a gossip. Another participant revealed how Malawian women suffer humiliation, torture other even divorce from their husbands when a girl is found pregnant while she is schooling or when she is under age.

Women suffer from emotional and psychological humiliation and torture as they carry their children's faults alone even in the presence of the father. Little is acknowledged and attributed to women when the child shows intelligent and positive sociable behaviours. When a child is intelligent, all the credits goes to the father. These are unfair and demeaning situations where proverbs are just used to denigrate women focussing on their failures in nurturing the children. The society needs to rethink over such wisdom and probably do away with them because raising and nurturing children is not only the responsibility of the mother but both parents.

The society does not even take into account some of the factors that may influence the child's behaviour. This is where the social learning theories have been criticised and challenged. Not all the behaviours are a result of nurturing and mentoring. Two individuals mentored or nurtured by one person in similar conditions can exhibit distinctive behaviours. Without casting a blind eye, this study acknowledges the balanced and a wider perspective in construction of Chichewa proverbs. While arguing on the same idea of nurturing, the elders gave other proverbs to counter argue and show that proverbs are not only confined to one perspective. For example the proverb which says "*mmimba ndi mchipala*". The underlying meaning of the proverb is about the complexities about children behaviours which cannot be attributed to the mothers as nurturers but other factors both cognitive and environmental. Gender equality in Malawi cannot be achieved when child rearing and nurturing is used as a tool to marginalize, subordinate and oppress women. Raising children in Malawi context has become a trap used to hook and attack mother for immoral behaviours exhibited by children. In Malawi mothers are false accused and carry the burden of childrens behaviours which are beyond their control. For example, it is always the mothers fault when a girl falls pregnant before wedlock, when a boy is a womaniser, being lazy, being a gossip and other bad habits, all the blames goes to the mother. Contrary to such observation, when the children show the spirit of hard working, performing well at school, exhibiting good manners and etiquettes, the society praises the father for the achievements. This is an African gender ideology which is aimed at marginalizing women.

6.2.7 Portraying women as gossipers

Further to portraying women as evil, proverbs are also used in Malawi to discriminate against women by controlling their interaction and social life. This is achieved through portraying women as gossipers. Proverbs 35-37 are language tools that emphasize such beliefs.

35. *Paunjikana ntchembere pali bodza* (where women gather, just know there are plenty of lies).

36. *Mkazi wa mfumu asamati mlomo tolotolo ataya mudzi* (A wife of a chief should not be too talkative otherwise she destroys the village).

37. *Mkazi wa mfumu asamati khutu petupetu* (a wife of a chief should not listen to rumours).

One thing that I need to make clear is that traditionally, according to Malawi context, the wife of a chief/traditional leader is also regarded as a chief. In the case that the chief is not around, the wife is may preside over some small issue and take control of situation. The concept of a chief is

extended to the family level to mean a clan leader i.e uncles and male children. In traditional Malawi, male children are considered clan leaders. In this regard, all men in general are leaders in their own small families. These are the people who lead in times of marriage rites, funerals and conflict resolution within the clan. It is therefore to the best interest of the family for the wives to such male children to be disciplined and not someone who can scatter the clan because of gossiping within members but help in building and reinforcing peace and harmony. Chichewa proverbs are used to instruct wives and women in general to take precautions and exercise discipline in terms of what they say and not say.

While engaging with the participants the researcher observed that 32 participants 17 males 15 females out of 44 participants representing 72% agreed with the notion that women are a group of people who are fond of gossiping. This gossiping stereotype may be interpreted that indeed women entangle themselves with discussions which lead to gossiper. Without proper information women rush into fabricating news which result in backfiring to them. This is from the fact that many conflicts concerning gossiping that the society experience, women are the culprits. Another interpretation is that because of one or few incidents that happen to some women, the society decided to put the stereotype on all women. Although both men and women engage in chitchat, women are the only group of people who are always associated with gossiping. If a man is caught up in situations of men will find an excuse not to expose him as a man but in directly associate his behaviour to a woman.

In the group of males 4 were ward councillors and 6 were ward councillors. These key knowledge holders expressed their frustrations on how women are caught up in events of gossiping and blowing up the matter before it reaches a point to be revealed. In fact, many people, more especially men, resist involving women in serious matters to avoid matters been blown out. Because of such behaviours in women, the society believes that wherever women are gathering there must be gossiping taking place.

The traditional leaders also commented on how frequent they advocate for cases of gossips where the root cause are women. Some educators also commented how girls caught up in gossiping issues in schools as compared to boys. There were 12 participants (representing 27%) who disagreed strongly with the claim that women are gossipers. One research participant further explained and I quote: *“azibambo amapanga miseche kwambilinso koma kuti amasunga*

chinsinsi. Mische ndi ya wina aliyense. Azibambo amatha kumaziwa zomwe mnzawo akupanga koma samaululu. Pamene azimai sagwila mtima ndiye nkhani zimasalila chifukwa zina zomwe amathamanga nazo amakhala alibe umboni weniweni”, meaning that men too are gossipers only that men keep secrete after gossiping while women gossip and blow up even before they have enough evidence about the matter. As a result, people label them negatively. The interpretation can be that indeed women are most likey involved in gossip or few.

Second interpretation can be few women have a tendency of gossip and it has now become a stereotype pegged to the group. The implication to such stereotype is that all women are just heaped in one group of gossipers. Because of few incidents in which women are caught up in gossiping, all women are seen as people with no vision or people who do not think of anything productive but gossiping. Women are thus categorized as being empty and good for nothing. This is not a true reflection of all women and certainly not a true reflection of women forums. This is a stereotype which negates women based on one single incident of an individual as an English saying which says ‘when one tomato/fish is rotten the whole basket is considered rotten’. Just like men, women gather to discuss matters concerning themselves, their children and families. Worldwide women engage in forums where they discuss development matters. The contextual connotation is that proverbs are used as a shield which gives the men an immunity not to be interrogated by their wives. In this situation, women live in pretence and even if there are challenges the wife will suffer in silence. Because of the stereotypes labelled against women, women are subjected to marginalization, psychological oppression, discrimination and their contribution to knowledge denied as people consider them as gossips. The implication is that the stereotypes and prejudices are internalized by women themselves have come to accept it that they are gossipers. Although women in Malawi are a group which is labelled as gossipers, men can gossip too and this does not mean all women talks are false.

A story was told by one male research participant about a woman who continuously was denied justice on an issue concerning her husband. In Malawi and I believe in many African culture, marital issues are given a special privacy. No matter how serious the matter is, a good and cultured woman is supposed to remain quite. After realizing that her husband is going out with another woman, the wife took the matter to the elders (marriage counsellors). Upon interrogating the man, the case was thrown out of the window because there was no concrete evidence to back the

woman's allegations. It was claimed that the woman's allegations were just based on hearsays. One day the wife discovered that there was a woman's underwear in the glove compartment of the husbands' car. The wife took the underwear to the elders again as an exhibit for the case of cheating. On the day of the case, the husband denied the matter again and accused the wife of not being cultured that she brought the underwear to the public without asking him first. The husband demanded a divorce on the same day. In this case, the woman was punished because she managed to bring live evidence. This is an instance of injustice and oppression that women experience in society. Women keep silent not because they do not have anything to say but they are caught up in between whether to say something and mess up their marriage, or remain quiet. Furthermore, because of such a negative stereotype that has been attached to women about gossiping, society does not trust what women say. Even at family level, women and girls are denied participation of crucial discussions all in fear of them revealing institutions' or families' secret matters. Men are warned not to take women's contributions seriously to avoid associating themselves with gossips. It is important to note that any transformation and radical change towards a gender sensitive society requires a change of mindset not only in one sex but for both men and women, girls and boys.

6.2.8 Women as evil human beings

38. *Mfiti yaikazi kulimba moyo* (A female witch is hard hearted).

Portraying women as evil is one product of a systematic institutionalized patriarchy ideology that has been embraced in Malawi over the years. Traditionally, the proverb has been used as an overgeneralization for women that they are evil and hard-hearted people. Men, on the other hand, are depicted as being the direct opposite to women. Two research participants (females) explained the originality of such beliefs in Malawi. According to the participants, in very old days when hospitals were not there, birth deliveries were done in isolated places or bushes. When a pregnant woman had signs of being in labour, some elderly women would take her away from homestead to the bush. This was done to prevent firstly children and men hearing the weeping of the woman in labour. Secondly women wanted to be in hiddden place in order to deal with any abdominalities that may arise. The participant revealed that in the event that a baby is born with strange, peculiars abnormalities, the child was killed immediately and buried there in the bush. The women will therefore report the matter as a still birth. The participants continue to explain that this is why in

old days people with albinism, down syndrome and other abnormalities were not common. Such children were considered as (*zidangwaleza, zipukwapukwa*) meaning evil children like ghosts who will bring evil and atrocities to the community.

The above story was agreed upon by an old woman between 70-80 years of age. The woman claimed to be a survivor of such evil cultural ideologies. The woman narrated a similar story about the society belief that in the old days that any child who start growing teeth in the upper jaw instead of lower jaw was considered a curse who will bring evil to the family and the entire society. In that situation, the society called for immediate death of the child. The women were to take the child to the evil forest and choke him/her with grounded millet flour and be left there to die. The woman explained how her mother had to run away from her village to a far away village for fear of being killed as she started growing teeth in the upper jaw. However, with the coming of Christianity and introduction of hospitals and education, such practices were condemned, stopped and they no longer exist.

Although the cited weird and evil cultural practices of killing babies were done under the umbrella of customs and traditions of those days, which were mostly engineered by men, the image which was put forward was that of women are evil human beings. Many participants gave an example of how female traffic police are hard hearted and that they refuse to soften up in the event that they find someone breaking the laws on the road. Participants both men and women themselves agreed that it is hard when a woman is in a position of power. While following up the matter about female traffic police officers, one male participants explained that because of fear of being imprisoned, women do not easily fall to corruption. While male traffic police officers will let an offender go after receiving a bribe, a woman traffic police officer would want the offender to pay a fine as per the road traffic regulations. The participant explained and I quote: “*azimai ndi a mantha ndipo ambiri amatsatila malamulo*”- meaning women are scared to do corruption and they abide by rules and regulations. With the evidence from participants, women are accused of following rules and are portrayed as evil.

The society beliefs are used until today to show how hard hearted, cruel and evil a woman can be. Instead of condemning the practice and those in power who formulated such practices, what I see here is the idea of ‘killing the messenger not the one who sent the messenger’. Secondly the researcher observes contradiction and confusion in the participants’ responses as issues of bribery

and corruption are mixed up to one being labelled as evil. Traditionally people in Malawi believe that when a woman is in leadership, decision making or in control, it is hard to convince or soften her. Most of the participants who participated in this study both men and women agreed with such beliefs. Participants explain that it is always difficult to bribe and convince a woman to change her heart on some decisions made. This is unjust stereotype that has not changed and members of society find it fit to continue to subordinate, oppress and marginalize women.

The stereotype of women being evil is just a mythical and unjustifiable patriarchal tool which is used in Malawi to protect the male territory. Because of such beliefs, women face discrimination, oppression and are marginalized from entering into what are believed to be male dominated spaces of decision making. No matter how qualified women are, most of them find it difficult to excel into decision making positions because the society (this includes men and some fellow women) are not ready to be led by a woman. This is in fear of the beliefs that women are hard hearted, evil and difficult to manipulate in times when people especially men want to involve them in corruption. On their side, women are scared to take up challenges of decision making positions as they are scared of being opposed. Women, therefore, accept to be led and dominated by men.

6.3 Implications of male dominance proverbs

The implication to the use of proverbs as discussed above is that they enhance the construction of gender ideology in which men are regarded as superior and symbols of power while women assume a status of inferiority. From the interpretation drawn especially the sex proverbs as discussed in preceding sections of 6.1. those of masculinity construction ; and those of section 6.2,1.1. up to 6.2.1.8 where women are portrayed in different aspects as servants to men, women as people lacking decision making, women as gossipers, women as evil and women as people who teach children bad manners. All these proverbs are created to place women on the margins by suppressing their feelings and emotions, inflict fear, humiliate, undermine and oppress them. Men on the other hand are portrayed as superior.

The levels of superiority of men is firstly identified in proverbs especially those used in intimate relationships. Proverbs prescribe the fact that a married woman is owned property to the man (husband). For example in proverb 10, shows that in Malawi, '*kukwata*' is a masculinity concept that signifies the act of a man marrying and owning or possessing someone. On the other hand, '*kukwatiwa*' takes a femininity connotation to mean getting married to a man and be probably

being under him. From my own point of view, by allowing to get married within heterosexual orientation, a woman surrenders all her powers, ambitions, dreams as she falls under the man who will take full control of her life. No matter how cunning and nagging a woman could be, a real man should be able to control such a woman. In this case, the woman's life choices lie in the hands of the man (husband). In the event that a woman falls to an excessively strong and unreasonable man, all the positive ambitions that a woman may have could fall away. This may include the woman's career and other interests. This may degenerate into a situation whereby the husband prescribes the type of job the wife has to undertake, the level of positions that a woman can hold, level of participation in social interactions, freedom of worship, and who to relate to. Proverb 10 teaches men and boys not to be intimidated by the nagging actions of a woman/wife. Probably this instruction may go as far as administering some form of physical control where a man is given the licence to use corporal punishment on his wife. Several research participants that I interviewed held the view that traditionally men are supposed to lead and provide for the family in order to instil their dignity. One research participant explained and I quote

“kwathu kuno sitimalola kuti mzibambo akhale pansi pa ulamulilo wa mzimayi chifukwa zimachotsa ulemu kwa mwamuna. Mukazapeza mzibambo otelo ndi wadyela kapena waulesi akungofuna kumudyela mzimai basi”

The statement above simply means that a real man should not allow himself to come under the rule of a woman or the woman should not be given a chance to overpower him in whatever circumstances. The research participant mentioned that if a man is found in such circumstances, that means he is a greedy or lazy person. The intimate relationship in this regard can be equated to that of a master and his servant. Similar sentiments have been voiced in the Democratic Republic of Congo where one of the ways of defining a man is to say that “he is a creature created in God's image, a fundamental difference with a woman who was not created in God's image” (Onditi and Bah 2017: 95).

The superiority of men is further encouraged for instance in proverb 11 which gives a public view that no matter how old a man is, he can still perform his sexual obligations. The sexual strength of a man is highly valued not only in Malawi about also in other African contexts. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, “if a man is sterile, impotent or incapable of satisfying his wife in the bedroom, then he would not be a man with that capital” (Onditi and Bah 2017: 95).

This is opposed from the general perception that women's sexual performance deteriorate with age. Traditionally, men are given special age favours of sexual performances as compared to women. In Malawian tradition and other African societies, when a boy marries a woman who is older than him, it raises eyebrows to the members of his family and society. But when the opposite happens, nobody cares and it is treated as normal, with the belief that biologically women grow faster because of issues such as child bearing, and hormonal changes that make women lose interest in sex. Therefore, the older the man is, the better his state of sexual health.

The sexual performance of men and women is an issue that can be contested. There are a number of reasons, both social and healthwise, that may affect women's appetite for sex. As sex is a mind game, what goes on in the life and mind of a woman may also affect her ability to respond to sex. Issues such as being burdened with chores, stress of child caring, stress from work, emotional and psychological abuse just to mention a few, may be contributing factors to conditions of decreased appetite for sex. Because of the same factors as mentioned above and many others, men too can become victims of impotence and sexual desire loss. All over the world, men's clinics have been established and they are widely marketed to help men who have sexual challenges. The society belief that men are naturally evergreen and can continue to perform well sexually is therefore not a true reflection of all men. This is an African traditional belief that was crafted to protect and cover up male sexual failures while women and/or girls are sexually abused and exploited by older men. However, because of such beliefs, some men take advantage of and sexually abuse and exploit young girls. Convinced by the patriarchal beliefs advanced by the proverbs, some parents even force their young girls into premature marriages with older men who are old enough to be their fathers. Some research participants expressed their serious concerns that some of the proverbs may encourage husbands to go for a second wife (polygamy) because his wife is getting old. For example, proverbs which speak of the unending sexual strength that a man possesses even in his old stages of life, give men the motivation to go on picking more and more wives.

The society expectations that women's main role is to serve men, put womens emotional, psychological and other forms of welfare not taken into consideration. Women and girls in this regard go into marriage and take up the role of a wife not as an equal partner to the husband but as a subordinated and inferior partner. One research participant, a female of Tumbuka ethnic group origin, explained to me that in their culture, even if the woman is not feeling well (health

wise), that is not taken as an excuse to deny and deprive her husband of sexual desires. As the wisdom in one Chichewa proverb says “*walila mvula walira matope*” -meaning- crying for rain means crying for mud as well. In any business that one aspires to venture into, one has to know the challenges that come with it and know how to manage them. This can be summarized within the two English sayings that go as follows: ‘marriage is not a bed of roses’ and ‘one can not eat his/her cake and still have it’. However, by denying and just dismissing women’s concerns and reasons for their actions in denying the husbands sexual desires, women’s/girls’ human rights to life choices are compromised. Women and girls are taken advantaged of, exploited and oppressed with such gender ideologies. Forcing married women and/or girls to accept everything is an infringement of their rights considering the pains that some women go through in the name of protecting society’s image about marriage. In this era of HIV/AIDS pandemics such wisdom is a life threatening ideology that puts women’s/girls’ lives at risk.

The Chichewa proverbs also exhibit characteristics of control of movement for women and girls as opposed to men and boys. Above the general traditional beliefs that women and girls are weak and prone to physical attacks and sexual abuses, in Chichewa proverbs, the menstruation period is used as a tool for the control of women. Society took advantage of the menstruation period as captured in proverb 15. With all the beliefs and convictions about *mwiikho* and *kutsempha* (taboos) associated with menstruation. For example, there is a belief that when a girl’s menstruation blood is seen by people, especially men, the girl will end up being barren. The only time a man should see menstruation blood is from his own wife. Secondly, it is believed that when a woman passes behind the back of any man while she is in the menstruation period, the man will end up having bad omen in whatever he does. For example, business and/or anything that he lays hands on will be cursed. With all these traditions and beliefs, the society (especially men) did not want such situation to happen to them. In this regard, society has created some proverbs as tools for controlling women’s/girls’ movements during the menstruation period.

It was established through the participants that in some religious cultures, menstruation is used as a serious tool for effecting exclusion and control. Some research participants explained that up to date in Islam, there are some beliefs that are still associated with the menstruation period and the idea of being unclean spiritually. The research participants touched on the issue of menstruation

as a reason why women should not be allowed in mosques. This is what one of the research participants had to say: *“anzathuwa pena sazindikila kuti aona mwezi liti? Ndiye ndibwino nthawi zambili azingokhala kunyumba kumapemphela mnyumba basi. Koditu mulungu amamva pena pali ponse munthu wapemphela”*. This is to say because of complexity of not knowing when one can begin menstruation, and to avoid any embarrassment, it is therefore better for women to remain at home when they are close to their menstruation.

The separate sitting arrangements for men and women in mosques was explained and justified by a male research respondent as follows:

“Malinga ndi momwe timapemphedzela mumzikiti, sikoyenela kuti tidzikhala limodzi ndi azimayi. Ife timagwada ndikupolama kuyang’ana ku Mecca, nanga ndizoona kuti patsogolo pako pakhale mzimayi?”

The participant explains that according to Islamic practices in praying that it involves kneeling and bowing down towards Mecca, it is not proper for women to come closer to us. Another male research participant also said; *“kukhala limodzi ndi azimai ndiye kuti munthu sungapemphela uzikhala ukuyang’ana azimayi maonekedwe awo ndi kumasilila.”* meaning-being closer to women in mosques will make men lose concentration during prayer.

In a separate interview, another research participant narrated an incident that occurred in one of the Islamic strongholds in the Central Region of Malawi where people had gathered for a funeral service. As is the tradition under the Islamic faith, women are not supposed to come close to the house where the remains of the deceased are lying. Women are also expected to stand or sit far away from men. Women sat far from the men while braving the sun. When it was time for preaching and speeches, one man stood up and asked the women to move closer to the shed. Immediately another man shouted with a big NO! The man vehemently opposed the idea that women should come closer to them but insisted that they remain standing in the hot sun. This is all about beliefs, which I regard as being very hypocritical, unjust and oppressive and are meant to subordinate women in the name of Allah. The menstruation period has been taken advantage of in a move to restrict women and girls from freedom of movement. Kunje (2014) made a similar observation that menstruation is used to restrict and exclude women from freedom of worship and free association. However, not all who are affiliated to Islamic faith are happy with such

discriminatory and non-inclusive practices. One research participant, a man, who is also a muslim explained and I quote “*kodi azimaiwo amakhala odetsedwa akamayenda kunja? Nanga poti tikukhala nawo mmakomo ngati mai athu, azichemwali ena ndi azikazi athu*”. The italicised statement questions the double and hypocritical ideology of portraying women as unclean. This criticism is stemming from the fact that the same men who champion such criticisms live with other women such as their mothers, sisters, and aunts.

In addition, a research participant strongly condemned the non-inclusive tendencies by saying and I quote:

“Anthu akupezelapo mwayi chifukwa kale mavalidwe anali ovuta ndiye amaopetsa azimayi kuti angathe kuziipisila pagulu. Komanso zogona paokha amangochita kuopela ukhondo kuti asagone pamodzi ndi amuna awo osati kuti munthu angafe ndizimenezo. Komabe mmizimu zidakalipo chifukwa cha umphawi poti ena akusowabe chovala chabwino ndiye atsikana amajombabe kusukulu”.

Because there was no proper dressing previously, the restriction of girls was only meant to prevent embarrassment in case a woman or a girl messes up herself. Since in modern days people use sanitary pads and other materials, women should not be stopped from participating in public affairs when they are in the menstruation period. Some research participants explained that until now, in a typical Malawian village, such patriarchal restrictions are still maintained. This is the case because people are caught up in poverty and that a girls may find it difficult to find proper dressing and sanitary pads. For example, the Islamic faith unjustly continues to exclude women from prayers on the basis of their menstruation period. This is a refusal to acknowledge women’s rights over disposition of worship to their Allah (God).

Because of the key role that uncles and brothers play as *mwini mbumba*, mediators and negotiators, and later as heads and providers of their respective families, men are elevated naturally to superiority positions. This is seen in proverb 5. Within the cultural framework of *mwini mbumba/mwini mtundu* boys are moulded, created and ordained as people who should be assertive and strong enough to defend, protect and make key decisions concerning their clan. The proverbs prepare the boys for such endeavours by inspiring them to be courageous, take control of situations, and not allow anyone to overpower him. When a boy shows characteristics that are similar to those of a girl, he is considered to be weak, stupid and is thus less accepted in the group

of other men or boys. In fact, when a boy cries, people will always laugh at him and compare him to a girl. It is also considered shameful for a boy to report issues of being bullied by girls or when a man is abused by the wife. Such situations provide signs of a weak and stupid man. This is why in Malawi, crying is a woman's behaviour. In Malawian tradition, a man will never cry openly even if he loses his loved ones. A real man does not cry.

Women, girls and children are therefore socialized to respect their uncles and brothers. No matter how small a boy can be, he is potentially a leader and he deserves all the respect as a future clan leader. For example, uncles and brothers negotiate during marriages. Uncles and brothers play a key role in all funeral processes. In case of conflicts such as land disputes between families, the uncles and/or brothers are there to make key decisions and defend the family or clan. At a tender age, young boys are exposed to proverbs that offer them instructions and inspire them that as uncles, brothers and future husbands and fathers, they must be in control of situations. The uncles have a final say over all decisions to be made in all aspects of life. However, this is one sided socialization that maintains male superiority and considers men and/or boys as the only people who deserve all the respect. It is expected that boys and/or men are the people who should lead, and they are also the people who deserve every opportunity in life. In addition, proverbs construct masculinity and femininity characteristics which at the end of the day only enables men and boys to acquire life skills of being tough and courageous.

Consequently, because of the societal expectation that men should be tough as leaders, one research participant explained that men in Malawi have created a sense of fear and negative resistance of not wanting to be under the rule of a woman. The research participant continued to explain that the fears are extended to the extent that some men (husbands) will oppose and suppress any move a woman can make towards her achievement and/or empowerment. For fear of being under the rule of a woman, some men in Malawi will not allow a woman who is more educated, or has accumulated wealth more than them. Another research participant revealed a situation when a man denied his wife the opportunity to take up a senior position at her work place. Upon being given a promotion, the husband threatened and tortured his wife. The man did not stop there. He made allegations that his wife got the job promotion on grounds of sexual favours she had rendered to some men in senior management. For fear of destroying her marriage

for which the relatives and society would have condemned her, the woman gave up the new position at her workplace. This clearly shows that men in Malawi tend to use the wisdom in the proverbs to their own advantage in showing off the ego of manhood to sustain male chauvinism. Masculinity powers are used for gaining control over spaces, positions both in the household and work places. Proverbs, especially those talking about sexuality, have enhanced differential gender power relations between spouses in heterosexual marriage. For example, proverb 12 shows such a dilemma and fear that wives experience towards their husbands in heterosexual marriage. Women's feelings and emotions are suppressed. In Malawi, many wives do not talk directly to their husbands but instead yell at their children in trying to vent their anger. If marriage is meant to be built under the umbrella of love, the creation of barriers in communication is equal to creating a master and slave relationship. Denying someone the freedom of expression kills the essence of love, the spirit of oneness and may even kill the spirit of creativity in women.

Without any hesitation, the proverbs are used to emphasize the ideology unjust stereotypes which portray women as mere objects. This is why women are compared to flowers as in proverb 14. Metaphorically, the underlying meaning of such a proverb is about how beautiful flowers blossom but wither quickly. Without unpacking and defining the concept of flower and its usefulness, the proverb can be translated as women are like just objects which are there to beautify the world. This study, however, acknowledges and argues that flowers are important because they grow into seeds and big trees. In fact, there is no continuation of a plant without flowers. With regard to beauty, I also argue that being beautiful is a very important aspect to all humans. As human and social beings, it is very important to move with time and fashion and not remain in the past. This gives an individual the sense of confidence and high esteem which one needs to achieve things in life. The problem in the use of such proverbs is that some girls may interpret them wrongly, thinking that their core business is just to make themselves look beautiful. Proverbs could inspire ideas which would make women waste their time by focusing on making themselves look beautiful. One research participant, a male and an educator, commented and I quoted: "*atsikanadi amataya nthawi ndikuzikonza. Zimenezi mchifukwa chake masukulu ena makamaka a chikatolika salola kuti mtsikana azikonza tsitsi. Nanga kuphunzila ndi tsitsi zikugwilizana*"-meaning- girls waste time with issues like hair do to make themselves look beautiful like flowers. Some schools, such as those run by the Catholic Church, do not allow girls to do their hair because it is a waste of time. A woman's worth should not be measured or determined by the degree to which she

beautifies herself. A woman should remain worthy of respect and dignity as a human being irrespective of whether she beautifies herself or not.

Serious concerns were raised by some research participants that in some ethnic societies girls go beyond simple beautification acts of dressing and hairdo but they sacrifice their dignity and go through the painful process of pulling their clitoris (*nyini*) to make them longer. As quoted from one elderly participant, a woman who also serves as a marriage counselor in the Catholic Church said and I quote: “*eyetu nyini zimasunga kutentha komanso musanagone ndi abambo, akakoka nyini mzimainso amamva bwino*”-meaning, pulling of clitoris helps to preserve warmth in the vagina. Before sexual intercourse the husband has to pull the clitoris in order to induce heat which helps the woman to reach orgasm. Apart from some activities such as knitting, embroidery, crocheting, sewing and baking that women engage with on their leisure time, women were engaged with other activities such as I quoted her one woman saying “*Azimayi tikakhala mmizimu tikamapuma timapanga mikanda, kuluka zidoilo ndi zina zozikongoletsa thupi. Mzimayi amayenera kuzikonza kuopa ena angawalande wamuna. Sipaja pali mwambi oti azibambo ali ngati mwana, amapita komwe kukuoneka zosangalatsa. Komanso fumbi ndiwe mwini*”-meaning- during their leisure time, women in Malawi engage in activities like beading and other activities to make their bodies look sexy and beautiful. This is all because of the patriarchal ideology in Malawi that men are like children and they easily get attracted with beautiful looking things. Woman’s home and body have to be attractive to the man. Another research participant said “*azibambotu amafuna zoseweretsa usiku ndiye mzimayi umayenera kukhala chikwanekwane*” meaning- men need something to play with at night. This is done to save marriages since most of the ordinary women in Malawi depend on them for survival. One research participant, a woman in her late forties complained that her husband harshly pulled her clitoris to the point that she felt immense pain. It was revealed in this study that in some Malawian traditions, older women continue to defend these cultural practice where up to date girls in villages continue to deform their bodies. The participant called such traditional practices as fantasies which are just meant to satisfy men’s sexual desires.

As explained by one participant, no empirical medical study has been conducted that has proven a positive correlation between the pulling of the clitoris (*nyini*) and sexual satisfaction. This cultural practice of extending the clitoris is no different from genital mutilation which is practised

in some African countries. Encouraging girls to continue deforming their bodies by pulling their clitorises should be viewed as an act of violence against girls and infringing on girls' human rights. Their freedom and privacy are also violated and compromised. As discussed earlier, marriage in Malawi is taken seriously to the point of abusing women (see also Onditi and Bah 2017 for a similar trend in the Democratic Republic of Congo). It is, therefore, the duty of a woman to make sure that her marriage works in all aspects, including the bedroom. In fact, one participant a female, who serves as a marriage counselor in the Catholic Church, the church has endorsed that women should go for some lessons which mostly cater for the bedroom. This decision was taken due to the escalation of marital conflicts that are brought to the attention of priests.

6.4 Summary and conclusions to the chapter

In the chapter, I have unearthed eight themes, namely: the construction of masculinity and femininity; proverbs that predetermine spatial parameters and gender roles; women as subordinates; proverbs that encourage men to have multiple sexual partners; women as people who lack decision-making skills; attributing the negative behaviour of children to their mothers; women as gossipers; and women as evil beings. As can be noted from the eight themes, it is clear that the proverbs cast women in very negative light. What is particularly important is that this negative portrayal of women was challenged by some research participants during the fieldwork. It is a sign that though proverbs are considered to be the wisdom of society, it does not mean that they are not open to scrutiny and critique. Negative discourses constructed around women and girls (such as the proverbs discussed in this chapter) are commonplace in a patriarchal society. They are part of the culture and also embedded in the language of society (Chichewa). But that does not mean that such negative and hegemonic discourses should be taken as gospel truths. That is why the current study deployed CDA (Fairclough 1995, 2003, 2014) and Reformist African Feminism (Arndt 2002, Nnaemeka 2004) as relevant theoretical frameworks that could expose such linguistic injustices against women. The fact that some research participants (who included men) were able to expose the linguistic oppression of women creates a fertile ground for activism. These very negative and oppressive Chichewa proverbs could be deployed and used by Malawian gender equality activists in their campaigns. That would amount to knowledge translation theorists (Beyer 1997, Estabrooks 1999, Sudsawad 2007) would call instrumental use of research knowledge.

Whilst the Chichewa proverbs largely paint negative pictures of women as per patriarchal ‘norms’, the study has noted some exceptions to the negativity about women. By this, I mean that there exist some Chichewa proverbs that do not speak the patriarchal language of demonizing and degrading women. Some Chichewa proverbs do portray women in positive light. It is to such proverbs that the next chapter (Chapter 7) is devoted.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PROVERBS WORKING IN FAVOUR OF WOMEN

7.0 Introduction to the chapter

It is understandable that proverbs emanating from a patriarchal society are bound to portray women in negative light. This reality has been well documented in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 6 of this study. What is particularly interesting in the current chapter, however, is that within the same patriarchal society, one finds some proverbs (of course constituting a minority) that work positively towards women. The proverbs challenge the widely held anti-women discourses and unfair treatment and unjustifiable portrayal of women. Such proverbs depict women as symbols of warmth, and those proverbs that inspire women and girls towards their empowerment. While some proverbs discourage men’s extreme masculinity oppressive behaviours which are counterproductive towards women’s and girls’ empowerment. This chapter proceeds to discuss these themes in the following order. In section 7.1, I discuss Chichewa proverbs that depict women and/or mothers as a symbol of warmth. While section 7.2 discusses women empowerment and agency. In section 7.3, I summarize and conclude the chapter.

7.1 Women and/or mothers as symbols of warmth

This chapter contrasts very sharply with the previous chapter (Chapter 6) in that the current chapter offers some Chichewa proverbs that depict women in positive light. A positive theme runs across the whole chapter, running in direct contrast to the theme(s) of the previous chapter.

Proverbs 39 to 45 will be analysed as examples of proverbs that convey the message that women are symbols of societal warmth.

39. *Mako ndi mako, angachepe mwendo.* Your mother is your mother, even if she has small legs.

40. *Mwana sakulira nakubala.* A child never grows too big for those that bore him.

41. *Mwana sasowela mmake*-meaning. A child cannot fail to recognise its own mother.

42. *Ali ndi amayi adadala, ayenda modzitama.* Those who have a mother are lucky, they can walk proudly.

43. *Illi ndi make sikugwa m' mbuna.* The little one, which has a mother, does not fall into the game pit

44. *Dala la mwana wa nkhuku lolila make ali pomwepo.* The chick deliberately cries while the mother is right there.

45. *Mmimba ndi mchipala (mng'anjo).* There is no telling what character one is going to give birth to.

In Malawi, mothers are given special recognition and are regarded highly in terms of their role in mothering, nurturing, protecting children and family members. Proverbs 39,40 and 41 teach every child that no matter how powerful or how big one grows into later in life, an individual remains a child to the mother. A person can be summoned at any time and get rebuked or reprimanded by his or her mother. Children are warned and socialized to respect their mothers. This is done in order to avoid any misfortunes that could befall them for being disrespectful. Proverbs 42, 43 and 44 talk about affection, love, guidance, protection and warmth that a child gets from the mother, all of which are second to none. The mother will never disown her own child but always defends the child no matter what. In fact, there is a metaphor in Malawi which goes “*chikondi cha mai chili ngati bulangete mpaka kumanda*”, meaning that a mother’s love is like a blanket which one takes with him or her to the grave.

Proverb 45 categorically protects mothers from any false accusations, abuse, torture and harassment imposed on them for giving birth to a child with defects or disabilities. This is achieved by comparing the womb to the smiths forge, where there is no control over the outcomes of the metal. For example, in Malawi there is a belief that when a woman gives birth to a child with down syndrome, albinism or any biological or physical disabilities, it means the woman was cheating during the pregnancy period. At times women are also emotionally tortured by in-laws

for giving birth to children that exhibit characteristics and behaviours which do not correspond to those of the parents. The wisdom in proverb 45 can have great impact in defending and protecting mothers from accusations that are based on unscientific beliefs.

Most profoundly, the teaching in the proverbs is about respect for women in general, irrespective of whether she is your mother or not. Despite the shortcomings of some mothers' behaviour, Malawian society upholds the values and traditions that respect and recognize the key role that mothers play in the life of a child. It is a common belief within Malawian tradition that in the absence of the mother, a child is more orphaned than when a father dies. Almost every research participant in this study explained that children are socialized to respect their mothers. The fundamental understanding is the role that women play in their respective homes which contribute to the general well being of society. Because of all this recognition, apart from the international mothers' day, which is celebrated every year, Malawi has a special mothers' day which is celebrated on first Mondays of October every year. One research participant gave an example of such an honour that is given to mothers and women as witnessed on public buses where the travellers will not allow a woman to stand up because of shortage of seats while a man is seated. One person has to stand and give up a seat to the woman.

A male research participant, who happened to be a traditional leader, complained bitterly on this issue that western life has robbed off the society's etiquettes and customs. He complained and I quote: *"ana amasiku ano uwapeza akhala pampano mbasi ali pa internet, mzimayi waimilila akuyamwitsa mwana"* which is translated as: in modern days, it is a common practice to find a boy seated on a bus and is busy with his internet phone while on the other side a woman is standing breastfeeding her baby. Ordinarily Malawian code of respect calls for the youth are supposed to give up their seat to the elderly or mothers. But modern Malawian children are losing this code of respect. Another research participant complained that departing from this beautiful wisdom, Malawi has witnessed a big setback as children no longer respect their mothers. Several research participants gave examples of how children are committing various atrocities such as killing, raping women, beating up people and talking disrespectfully to mothers. One research participant accused the emergency of human and child rights as having significantly contributed to the erosion of treasured traditions and values.

The participants revealed that, even though the counselling proverbs are still in use, many children are more focusing on childrens' rights to engage in whatever they want to do. Since the advent of the multiparty democracy and human rights in the early 1990s, Malawi has witnessed an increase in reckless behaviour by children and young people in general. Democracy and human rights have obviously been misunderstood and misinterpreted. This shows that some Malawians have failed to appreciate that democracy comes with rights and responsibilities, and also that rights and responsibilities have to be balanced well.

This study, however, acknowledges that despite all the good that has been said about mothers, there are still some instances when some women fail to fulfil their roles and obligations. Evidence obtained from interviews with some research participants revealed that some mothers may abandon newly born babies and/or treat their children in a very cruel fashion. There is substantial evidence showing how mothers have fallen victim to the abuse of their own children. Coohy (2004) further explains that the mother's abuse of children has increased where there is emotional and physical abuse and/or assault on the side of the mothers themselves.

Apart from some mothers who registered mental illness as a factor leading to child abuse, the lack of quality and supportive relationships is another contributing factor to the mother abuse of the child (Coohy 2004). One research participant, a female (who happened to be a police officer), cited several cases that she had witnessed. For example, she witnessed a child being burnt by the mother herself on the basis of the accusation that the child was a thief. The mother wanted to punish the child whom she claimed was a thief. She also indicated that on several occasions she had witnessed mothers abandoning newly born babies by throwing them into the bush or pit latrines. Children who are born and raised in such situations have strong chances of ending up as abusers themselves.

Some research participants' claimed that Malawi has suffered a great loss of wisdom that is expected to guide society. It was claimed that people have embraced western knowledge and culture under which children are given more power to back chat to the parents and children have the audacity to think that they can do whatever they want. The knowledge holders of Zomba claim that if used frequently, at an early stage of primary education, positive proverbs about mothers can be helpful in preventing the instances where children kill their parents, children committing suicide because parents have reprimanded them, issues of children raping their own mothers or

other women and the many other horrible acts done by ill-disciplined children. In addition, using proverbs in this section may also help to bring to awareness that mothers do not have an absolute control over the behaviours of children where behaviours of children are attributed to the failures of their mothers.

7.2 Proverbs encourage women empowerment and agency

46. *Ntchembere yamapasa izigona chagada.* The mother of twins should sleep on her back.

47. *Tinthu m'khuni adalekera mwana mkazi mnzake ku njoka.* The one who said, “there are things in firewood bundle”, left her fellow woman child to a snake. Not being prudent

48. *Papita mkazi mnzako, nawenso pitapo-* meaning- You pass where your fellow woman has passed.

Likewise, in a key informant interview, I also noted from one male research participant who happened to be a traditional leader in his late fifties, a proverb which goes “*ali ndi mbina mkulinga utamusogoza*” meaning- you will only notice how big the buttocks of a woman are if you make her walk in front of you. As I tried to probe for clarification for the underlying meaning of the proverb, this is what this traditional leader said to me:

Mwambiwutu akuulu akulu anauika ndicholinga choti anthu aziganizilanso kuti mzimai akhonza kuchita zinthu ngati titampatsa mwayi umenewo. Mukudziwa pa chikhalidwe chathu cha chikuda anthu timakhala ndi chikaiko ndi azimai kuti sangathe kupanga zinthu za phindu. Izi zimachitika chifukwa chinthuchi anthu anachikhazikitsa osati kuti ndizoona. Ine pano mukundiona, mwana wanga wamkazi amathandizana ndi anyamata kufetsa mitengo panjapo. Iyi ndi ntchito imene anthu amaitenga ngati ndi ya azibambo ndi anyamata koma mwana wanga wamkaziyo amafetsa bwino bwino. Ngakhale kuti azimai ndi azibambo tinapatsidwa mphamvu zosiyanyirako, ichi chisakhale chida chomapondeleza azimai kapena kuwakaikila pamene sitinapatse mpata oyesera.

The meaning in the italicized paragraph above is that the cited proverb was created by elders to teach society, more specifically men, to explore good things and potentials in women through involving and giving them a chance to do things. Basically, this boils down to giving women opportunities under which their capabilities can be put in action. The research participant argued

that in many African traditions, women do not exhibit their potentials because they cannot perform, but because of the complexities in gender power relations and cultural prejudices that work against women. The traditional leader gave an example of himself and the way he manages his home and the area under his jurisdiction. The traditional leader explained to me how his daughter is involved, together with his sons, in sowing and maintaining seedlings. According to him, the tree nursery project was initially meant for men only but he is now training his daughter to venture into the industry as it is a lucrative business. The traditional leader continued to argue that although men and women were born with different levels of energy biologically, he believes giving women opportunities will benefit the society rather than just doubting women's capabilities out of prejudice. The traditional leader also outlined that this way of doing things applies to his work as traditional leader where he treats his subjects in the same manner, irrespective of whether they are male or female.

Other traditional leaders explained how they have used their powers as traditional leaders to advance women's empowerment in their areas and this is what one traditional leader, a man in his sixties, had to say:

“Ineyo pa ntchito yanga ndimayetsesa kuti onse amai ndi abambo ngati pali mwai wa ngongole onse alandile. Osati kunena kuti azimai sangathe musanapatse mpata. Nthawi zambiri azimai amamanidwa ngongole pa njira zitatu. Njira yoyamba- azimai amatengedwa ngati ana omwe ali panso pa ulamuliro wa abambo. Chifukwa cha chimenechi mzimai sangathe kupeza ngongole payekha. Kachiwiri, mabungwe ambiri amakhala ndi chikaiko pa mzimai kuti sangathe kupanga bizinesi. Kachitatu, kanali koti ngakhale mzimai asakhale okwatiwa koma chifukwa cha mavuto ena azimayi sakhala ndizowayenereza kutenga ngongole. Ine ndimayetsesa kuwasainira azimaiwo kuti apeze mwai wangongole”.

The explanation in the quoted words above is that a traditional leader has taken a number of initiatives to help women acquire bank loans to help them establish small businesses. The research participant explained that traditionally, it was difficult for a woman to get a loan from the bank or any other money lending institutions in Malawi. In another encounter, another traditional leader (a woman in her late fifties) narrated her own experiences in early nineties

when her business ambitions were shuttered because she could not get a loan from the National Association of Business Women (NABW). This was a money lending organization that had been initiated by former Malawi president, Joyce Banda. The aim of this organization was to give opportunities to small business enterprises, more specifically women, with the aim of improving women's status. This loan facility is meant to empower women economically. This was the most noble and welcomed initiative that Malawi has ever had. The initiative was welcomed by many people and most women grabbed this chance to emancipate themselves from economic dependence. However, one of the requirements of NABW was that an applicant must have a well motivated business plan which has to be submitted along with the loan application. This did not work well with this traditional leader who desperately needed a loan. This is what she had this to say and I quote:

“Nditamva za ngongoleyi nane ndinafuna nditatengako kuti ndikulitse business yanga ya mandasi yomwe ndimapanga. Koma nditafika kunyumba kuwauza abambo anangondiiza mau amodzi kuti sakufuna katundu wao wa mnyumba azalandidwe chifukwa ndalephela kulipila ngongole. Ananeneratu kuti asamveso zimenezo. Zimenezi zinandiwawa kuona kuti anzanga atengatenga koma mayi chifukwa cha ukwati ndinalephela. Pano basi ndakalamba abambowonso anamwalira koma sindingapange chili chonse.”

In the quote above the traditional leader is lamenting how she failed to get a loan from NABW in early 90s just because her husband had restricted her and shut her down not to hear that plan in his house. The husband's justification was that he did not want his property to be seized by the money lender in case his wife failed to pay back the money. The traditional leader laments that now the husband died long ago leaving her with nothing but she is too old to conduct business any longer. This was a chance missed that can never come back. This case demonstrates how men can stifle women's economic upliftment initiatives.

The picture on the ground shows that traditional leaders and ward councilors are working hard within their mandate to carry out their work without discriminating anyone on the basis of gender differences. This is a high level of gender awareness where men and women are working as equal

partners to uplift the lives of their subjects in their respective ward and jurisdictions. One ward counsellor explained that:

“During monthly strategic plan meetings which they normally have at municipal offices with the mayor, councilors share ideas on how the municipality can help government to uplift status of the people through small loans and that women should be the priority. The mayor’s office is used as surety in negotiating with the money lending institutions. This is done to help women access loans without depending on their husbands’ approval. This is all done to make sure women are also empowered economically and that they may use that to mitigate the cultural subordination, marginalization and oppression that they suffer. Regardless of gender, the loans are accessed to manage small businesses”.

I had the privileged to interview one executive senior member of the city council of Zomba who also serves as a ward councilor. In agreement with the ward councillors who fall under her management, the key informant revealed how she has used her position to advance the lives of many people, especially the women in her ward. The ward councillor explained that during the period that she has been in position as a councillor, she has managed to conduct several meetings with groups of men and women in her ward in trying to understand why the high prevalence of gender based violence being experienced by many women in her ward. The ward councillor explained that there is a direct connection between lack of women financial empowerment and gender based violence. The key informant revealed that because of the global economic crisis, many household and individuals find it difficult to find coping ways. Men as bread winners are in a position where they are pressurized and find it difficult to put food on the table. These situations lead into conflicts between couples. The key informant continued to explain and I quote:

“Mudela mwanga muno anthu ambiri akhala akudandaula zokhunza chuma mmabanja kuti zikuyambitsa mikangano. Ndachititsapo misonkhano mmadela kuti tithandizane pankhani ndipo kuti azimai angathandize bwanji. Ine mukundiona pano ndakhala ndikupanga timabusinezi ngakhale yogulitsa mowa, kupita ku Joni kuti ndizithandizako amuna anga pakhomo. Kachiwiri ndayetsetsa kukambirana ndimabungwe obwereketsa ndalama kuti azimai ndi azibambo omwe sagwira ntchito athe kubwereka ine monga mboni yawo. Ndipo azimai ambiri athandizika”-

The italicized paragraph simply means that there had been concerns raised by the people in the ward concerning the role of women in supporting their husbands financially. This motivated the ward counsellor to organize successful business meetings in the ward. The meetings were aimed at giving motivational talks to both men and women on how they can engage in small business ventures to support each other economically. Offering her office as surety, and witness, the mayor had conducted meetings with money lending organizations to give money to women. The mayor also monitors and does follow up on this matter to make sure the money is used to advance women's life and many women are prospering in this initiative.

The interpretation of the above narrated case is that women are deliberately sidelined in accessing financial resource not because they are not capable of handling things, but through patriarchal gender dynamics which are shaped, organized and put in place through the entire society. Money lending institutions are not sensitive to the plight of women. There is no deliberate attempt on the part of such financial institutions to give special dispensation to women loan seekers. The loan providers treat women as minors who operate under their husbands. Another setback is that women do not own property which could be used as surety and this places women in situations whereby they cannot apply for loans on their own without the consent of their husbands. In addition, with such hurdles, women do not succeed in business because they are engaged daily in looking after children and managing home affairs. Banks and other money lending facilities are not ready to risk their money on women as they know will not give back the money.

In the current situation where women constitute half of Malawi's human capital, neglecting women's/girls' involvement can have severe negative results. Increasing the participation of women is the key to faster economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. As it has been discussed, education plays a vital role in trying to bridge the gap that exists between culture and development. In almost all the United Nations reports which have been published, education has remained as one of the main catalyst to human development and national capacity building. A key challenge lies in the transformation of education policies and cultural practices in ways that are consistent with heterogeneous and pluralist cultural values and sustainable development. In both the public and private sectors, gender stereotypes persist and this has led to a pipeline of problems with a significant number of women/girls being underutilized.

Some participants of this study who happen to be educators explained that Malawi should invest in education as a tool/catalyst to redress male dominance in many ways. Not educationally empowered, patriarchy find favourable conditions to manifest itself by exploiting, oppressing and subordinating the vulnerable and powerless women since they depend holily to their husbands for financial and survival. It is a common sense which is disputable that education, is a key and catalyst to many challenges that nations face. Nelson Mandela, one of the most celebrated global icon once said education is most powerful tool that can be used to change the world challenges and view. Although this study has revealed a shift in socialization that some families engage boys in domestic/kitchen chores, as is discussed in the earlier sections, boys do it reluctantly. In addition, still many families are still stuck with the old customs and traditions where girls are the ones to do most of the chores. This is a complex process that requires sustainable efforts that would promote a paradigm shift and change of mindset from the current rigid and patriarchal attitudes. Education may help to reduce gender discrimination, sexist societies while empowering women and girls economically and educationally may also reduce acute poverty and food security, dependence of women on men, improved voices within households and society at large, gender based violence, teenn age pregnancies, lower new HIV/AIDS infections, child mortality and maternal health. Keeping and supporting girl child education may not only facilitate her job and financial opportunities but improved healthy nation, reduce martenal/child mortality. Girls who give birth between the ages 14-19 are at death risk in child birth twice as compared to the girls in their twenties. Human trafficking, prostitution, child labour, gender based violence and abuse which many nations in Africa, are finding it a challenge to combat are also a direct consequence of some societal traditions which view women/girls as sex objects. Silence on the issue is less reflective of the absence of the problem than insufficient freedom for gender activist and independent civil society to raise the issue.

It is emphasized in African Union (2015) and United Nations statues (2015) that sustainable development cannot be achieved by technological solutions, political regulations and financial instruments only. An effective education system is seen to benefit all members of the society. The world requires change of attitude, thinking and actions at all levels including social contexts, traditional practices and other knowledge systems to empower women/girls through education. While the literature is all this concern, the study suggests a collective correction which will involve

men and women themselves. The study propagates the idea that women/girls too has a key role to play in the issues concerning gender equality. In this 21st century, society requires indigenous knowledges which are more transformational and empowering to both men and women. Gender equality can only be achieved when there is radical transformation of the knowledge systems under which men and women are partners in turning over the wheels of gender inequality. This then requires the world needs to identify what is happening on the ground (that is, the local level).

Furthermore, what is more crucial is that women should learn to live a true self and not being apologetic to gender ideologies that subordinate them. New approaches to masculinity construction will prove to be useful for government programmes and non-governmental organizations working on gender based programmes. Teffo (2011) argues that women in Africa struggle to access things in African society just because gender ideologies which were put in place work as a baffle to them. The society ignores and under value the work of nurturing that women do in a family. As one participant argued and I quote: “*azibambo ndife mitu ya banja koma amai ndi khosi, ngati khosi ladwala mutu sungagwile ntchito*”-meaning- while men are heads of families, women are the neck which hold the head. While another said women are a heart of any nation. If the neck collapses, and the heart stops pumping blood, the head cannot function. Any country that aspires for equality and empowerment of women and girls, the core values and commitment should be on greater influence on members of the society to develop transformational cultural ideologies which match with time.

7.3 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

Contrary to common realities, women are being depicted in positive light as per the Chichewa proverbs that I have presented and discussed in this chapter. It is interesting to note that women’s empowerment and agency have been highlighted in section 7.2, and this goes against the view that African women are helpless. In the next chapter (Chapter 8), I present a rather ‘abnormal’ situation, that is, when a man from patriarchal context comes to sit at the receiving end of domination and constraints.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PROVERBS WORKING NEGATIVELY TO MEN

8.0 Introduction to the chapter

In Chapter 6, I presented and discussed how Chichewa proverbs are used in Malawian society in favour of men as they enhance male dominance, discriminate, marginalize, subordinate and oppress women in a wide range of ways. This chapter however, discusses the findings which go against the claim by some researchers that African proverbs marginalize women only to the benefit of men. In a patriarchal context, it is assumed that it is women who appear in various types of social, economic and political constraints. This chapter however, challenges this view by revealing that some men in some traditions for example Malawi are not absolute free from some society-inflicted constraints as portrayed by some proverbial messages. I demonstrate in this chapter that Chichewa proverbs can become instruments of paralyzing the patriarchal powers and discrimination against men. In this study I argue that Chichewa proverbs have been very instrumental in reducing patriarchal powers through rebuking men with their evil dominating behaviours. Furthermore, I argue that in the matrilineal society, the son-inlaw (*or mkamwini*) is not the usual free and dominant man. The son-inlaw leaves his home (the place of comfort) and sets up a new home at the bride's place. At his new home, the *mkamwini* is treated as a stranger and his powers and/or authority are severely curtailed and restricted. He is subjected to the control, monitoring and discrimination that is often and usually applied to women. So what the findings of this chapter want to demonstrate is that men do not always enjoy domination and power. There are some unique cases, for example in the case of *mkamwini*, when a man cannot easily flex his masculinity muscles.

As discussed in Chapter Four of the context of the study, traditionally, the term *mkamwini* simply symbolises (someone's property, not of your clan). This is attached more to a man who goes out to marry in the context of matrilineal systems. However, as it was revealed by one participant, recently there is a shift in meaning of *mkamwini*. *Mkamwini* is sometimes viewed in a wider perspective to refer to either a man or a woman. This application of the term *mkamwini* is done with an understanding that a bride can also leave her home and stay with with inlaws and she too qualifies to be called *mkamwini*. The proverbs listed below in section 8.1 talks about the cultural

expectations and rebukes men as son-in laws and those in 8.2 completely gives restrictions to *mamwini* in matrilineal contexts:

8.1 Constrates to the patriachal power: Proverbs rebuking men

49. *Mkamwini wa umbombo adakabisa mtolo wa mapira kumadzi-* meaning, a greedy son-in-law hid a bunch of sorghum in the river.

50. *Mkamwini wankhuli adathira thendo la inswa pa nsanamira* –meaning, the gluttonous son-in-law poured away the fat of the winged white ants against the pole.

51. *Kansalu ka wani mitala, malamulo thoooo!* –meaning, an endless list of rules for use just for one piece of cloth.

52. *Chaamuna sayanika* –meaning, one does not show off one's masculinity more especially to the physically weak people.

53. *Mkamwini azikhala ndi diso la nsomba loyang; ana uku ndi uku-* meaning, a son inlaw must have a fish eye that looks on both sides.

The common understanding of proverbs 49-53 in Malawian context, is that no human being is complete without the help of other community members. The concept of *umunthu* or *botho/ubunthu* as it is known in other societies is an African philosophy teaches the community members to display the spirit of being selfless but being of service to others in times of need and learn to share and respect other people. *Umunthu* is the pillar of strength and harmony that holds all Malawian community and the whole of Africa together. Proverbs about marriage should be understood within such cultural parameters and traditions of Malawi. The concept of *umunthu* grows from the family into community and national levels. The proverbs discourage *mkamwini* from being a miser, showing off masculinity power, or being pig-headed (arrogant), violent, greedy, excessive in pride, egoistic but being of positive service to others. The childish behaviors are monitored closely within and by the structures of society. *Mkamwini* has the obligation of taking care not only his immediate family but also the parents of the wife, sisters, brothers, grandparents and other relatives who are close to the wife. It is the responsibility of *mkamwini* to make sure that there is food in his own house as well as the house of his mother and father in-laws.

The findings presented and analysed in this section are a very interesting scenario within which the findings show that in the Malawi context, and specifically in matrilineal systems, men are not free. They are somehow constrained in their actions. Proverbs has been used to exclude men from

being free members of the society. This has been noted when Chichewa proverbs shows tendencies of exclusion to suitor (*mkamwini*) specifically in matrilineal societies from where Chichewa proverbs originated. This has led to the adoption of such proverbs to all the ethnic groups which follows matrilineal systems. This challenges some feminist writings which portray men as a monolithic group and that they all enjoy the same benefits as men. This is a gender dynamic and complexity that many feminist scholars have neglected and not focussed on. This ideology has a repercussion that it leads to neglect of fathers towards their children and this kills innovations on the side of the groom as he knows that anytime he may be told to leave the village which is the bride's home.

I probed to understand the connection between gender equality and the concept of *mkamwini*. Although each and every participant explained in their own ways and according to their duties, the twenty five people drew from the knowledge holders which included the traditional leaders both male and female, ward counsellors, and residents of Zomba explained to me and I quote :

“Kuti anthu akhale bwino mudziko mwantendere, mogwira ntchito molimbika komanso molemekezana wina ndi mzake pamafunika kuwalangiza pa zinthu zokhunza moyo wao kuyambila aadakali ang’oono. Umunthu ndi ofunika pena pali ponse. Umunthu ndi chinthu chomwe chili chofunika angakhale pa nkhani yomwe mukupanga kafukufukuyi. Chifukwa ngati umunthu palibe mwamuna sangalemekeze mzimayi, kapena mnyamata kulemekeza mtsikana. Tsopano miyambi yathu ya Chichewa ili ndi zonse zofunikila pa malangizo onse omwe anagthe kuthandiza munthu munthu akule monga mzika yoyenera polimbika ntchito komanso kulemekeza anthu ena yomwensho izathandiza kutukula dziko la Malawi” .

The quoted statements simply emphasises on Umunthu or Ubuntu. The participants especially the traditional leaders explained that no country can guarantee its people to live in peace, harmony and under the notion of *umunthu (ubunthu/Botho)* if the youth and the general public are not properly guided. It emerged from the two focus group discussions that Chichewa proverbs are an African indigenous knowledge framework which encompasses the wisdom to guide people on issues concerning good citizenship, respect, hardworking, morality and many others. Chichewa proverbs are used not just as mere metaphoric statements, but as a teaching and socializing tool

for the married man to respect his family and that of the wife. Another research participant, who happens to be a university lecturer, explained that Chichewa proverbs challenges the mind of the listeners to think deeply and the mind recalls the story and experiences behind that proverb so that one can draw a conclusion. So *mwambi* is not just an ordinary sentence but has a profound hard hitting meaning. What is commonly known about proverbs is that the beliefs and interpretations they carry are evident across cultures and they are only presented in different ethnic languages. Chichewa proverbs can also stand as expressions that juxtapose an actual (literal) thing and a figurative thing in order to give more meaning to the figurative concept. Such metaphors are meant to create impact in the minds of hearers and convey a thought more forcefully than a plain statement would do. Proverbs in this section therefore challenges *mkamwini* on selflessness manners despite being at a strange home.

Because of the role that *mkamwini* plays in taking care of the wives' relatives, the proverbs for example in section 6-1 also teaches the wife and *a pambumba* (wife's clan) the responsibility to handle the son-in-law with utmost care otherwise if he leaves both the daughter, the children if any, and entire family will be in trouble. If well handled, *mkamwini* can be a blessing, and the whole family can benefit from him. The proverb teaches the spirit of fairness, tender love, and care and making the husband feel at home. Since marriage is a lifelong relationship, a woman has to choose the spirit of perseverance and finding mechanisms to manage the challenges encountered while the husband provides for the entire family.

8.2 Mkamwini the restricted individual

Contrary to section 8.1 where proverbs are used as instructional materials to bring peace and harmony to married couples, proverbs 54-62 below are used to restrict, discriminate and place *mkamwini* in chains.

54. *Mkamwini sawiringula* (A son-in-law does not complain).

55. *Agona chimwini nsomba* (He sleeps with the alertness of a fish).

56. *Mkamwini asakule mwendo* (A son-in-law should not grow a big leg).

57. *Iiko nja usiku, mkamwini anajiwa dzanja* (What is left for the night, the son-in-law has his arm bitten off) *Mkamwini asakule machende /mwendo kwa eni* (A son inlaw should not grow a big/testicle or leg).

58. *Mkamwini sawiringula pakhomu pa eni* (a son-in-law does not complain).

59. *Tambala akula kwao kwa eni ndi chipsolopsolo* (a cock is only big in its home place, elsewhere it is a young cock).

60. *Tambala kwa eni salira, alira kwao* (a cock does not crow at other peoples place but only when at home).
61. *Pamudzi pakakhala zitsiru, mkamwini asamakulirepo machende/mwendo* (When there are fools in the village, the son-inlaw should not make his testacles or leg big .
62. *Mkamwini azigona chimwini nsomba* (son inlaw sleeps with the alertness of a fish because anytime he may be asked to leave).

The underlying meanings in proverbs emphasize the fact that the *mkamwini* being is a stranger as discussed in chapters one and four. Proverbs 54-62 above are a true reflection of some societies within Malawi, more specifically those practising matrilineal systems. Through the instructions in the proverbs 54-62, *mkamwini* has no liberty to do as he wishes at the wifes home. The proverbs originated from a traditional background of another proverb that goes “*ndikhale nawo analanda malo*” (the stranger who asked for a piece of land to settle ended up grabbing the entire territory). In his writing about proverbs in *Nzeru za kale*, he gave an analogy of grey hair which normally start with one in the head and finally ending up having all the hair white. For fear of being captured and relinquishing power to a stranger, the clan members refrain from involving the *mkamwini* in family plans and other business. Out of the forty four (44) research participants that I interviewed, 18 of the 30 participants making 68% of the total sample population were in agreement that *mkamwini* or son in-law is indeed a stranger. The participants pointed out the traditional strangeness of *mkamwini* which is proven when he/she dies, or at the point of death, the relatives will come to fetch him so that he may die and be buried at his ancestral village. Even if he dies accidentally, the relatives will come and take his remains so that he could be buried at his home. However, the exception refers to societies that practise *lobola* where the wife is buried where she is married. One participant vehemently stressed and insisted that *mkamwini* is indeed a stranger and I quote him saying:

“Ifeyo pa chikhalidwe chathu angakhale munthu akhale zaka zambiri pakhomo ngati mkamwini, zimene sizipangitsa kuti munthu uja asanduke mmodzi wa ife. Mkamwini ndi munthu oti simungamukhulupilire mu maulamuliro okhuza mtundu wanu. Akatero mumaoneka opusa ndipo iye akhonza kumazona ngati inu olephela. Pa zokambirana zokhunza maliro kapena maukwati mkamwini sayenera kumatengapo gawo popeleka chigamulo. Angakhale kuti pakhomopo anthu anatha kuli kwabwino mwana wang’ono atsogolere kusiyana ndi mkamwini iye ndi obwera basi. Vuto ndi loti mukhonza kumamuuza zinsinsi zanu pakhomo koma iye akhonza kumakauza anthu ena ngati akwao ndipo inu muzayaluka.’

While another research participant said: “*mkamwini amatha kuyalusa pakhomu ndiye pali zina zoti sayenela kutenga nawo mbali*”. In all the Chichewa quotes the meaning is that by virtue of being *mkamwini*, the son in-law should always bear in mind that he does not belong to the wife’s clan. As such, the *mkamwini* should not intrude in matters concerning the wife’s clan. Above all, *mkamwini* is always monitored and restricted in terms of behaviours that the clan find it undesirable.

Within the complexities of matrilineal order, no matter how long a son in-law has stayed at the wives’ place, that does not change his status as a stranger and will never be assigned tasks that are meant for the male children of the family. *Mkamwini* is not entrusted with any decision concerning the clan he marries. This is done to avoid sell out of the clan and avoid being captured by *mkamwini*. This is done to maintain the dignity of the clan. During serious discussions at funeral times and marriage rites, *mkamwini* is not allowed to be part of such forums because he may expose the weaknesses to other people. Some research participants explained that the silencing of the *mkamwini* was put in place as instrument to instil respect and a distant relation between inlaws. While another participant explained and I quote: “*munthu obwelayi mukampatsa kwambili ufulu wa china chili chonse, wina amatha kuyamba kumakunyozi ndi kuyankhula zamwano*” meaning- if you sign roles to a stranger at the end he may use your family secrets as a weapon to destroy your family. In this regard even though there might be things that the son inlaw does not agreeing with, out of respect, he/she can not say anything. Due to the fact that an individual (*mkamwini*) is not at his home, he just keep quite and allow some concerning issues to die naturally.

Women and girls in matrilineal society, receive all the protection from the family members. This is because women and girls are considered to be home makers through which chieftainship is passed on. Infact within matrilineal traditional there is a song which goes “*wabala mwana mkazi walemela, wabala mwanamamuna wasauka*”, meaning those who have given birth to a girl child are rich and those given birth to boys are poor. This was the song which was popular in early 1970-80s on public radio programmes. This was origin of the proverb that says “*mwana hamuna ndi kabudula athela moyenda*” –meaning- a boy child is like a short trouser it gets worn out in the bush. Women in matrilineal systems are also chief makers and mothers to traditional leaders.

Women and sisters play a role in advising whoever the leader is. It within this situation that women's status is so crucial because they rule behind the scenes. The society therefore does not allow a stranger (*mkamwini*) to overrule the clan and abuse their mother and sisters.

One research participant, a woman, explained to me how a husband was assaulted by the wife's relatives. The man was injured and later died at his home. A story was told that upon discovering that his wife was going out with another man, he confronted his wife. As the arguments get heated in their house, the brothers of the wife came to inquire about what was going on and it ended up with insults and calling him a useless man and even threatened to beat him if he continues harrasing their sister. This is all because the alleged boyfriend was bribing the inlaws. The whole issue of cheating was halted and put/swept under the carpet by the inlaws. Another participant also lamented and I quote: "*mmakomomutu tikuzunzikamo kumanidwa zakudya nthawi zina. Koma timangokhala chete poti uli pakhomo pa eni*" meaning we are abused and sometimes denied food with no apparent reason. This is unfair treatment that son inlaws suffer in matrilineal system of Malawi. As it has already been explained in the background section, gender issues are not women issues only but matters concerning men and women. This requires interogation and challenging the dominant gender ideology in which men also falls victims.

The gender dynamic as established in this study mre especially in matrilineal settings is what I call *power reversal and disarmement from men to women*. With exceptional to those who marry and reside elsewhere away from the brides place, no matter how powerful a man can be, he is constantly reminded that he is a stranger as seen in cited proverbs for instance –"*Mkamwini sawiringula pakhomo pa eni*"- A son-in-law does not complain; *Tambala kwa eni salira, alira kwao-meaning-* a cock does not cowl in a strange kraal; "*mkamwini azigona chimwini nsomba*"- meaning- son inlaw sleeps with the alertness of a fish because anytime he may be asked to leave. Three possible factors that make women powerful are:

- (i) Women are cushioned with their relations around. Men, in most cases, are scared to abuse the women for fear of being chased away.
- (ii) Women own land for subsistence farming. Land ownership is inherited through female children. In this regard, women posses some wealth such as goats and chickens that they acquire after selling their farm produces. In case of divorce, women remain with property such as a house.
- (iii) The children born in matrilineal society belong to the women and uncles because no *lobola* was paid. In African ways of knowing having children is the most important

thing that one can ever have. Children make one powerful as they defend and give an individual moral and financial support.

This is the context where the son-in-law is only there for his sex obligation to make babies which in turn he does not have a rightful customary entitlement. As indicated already in background section, children born in this society belong to the wife. The abuse and exploitation that men go through in this society can not be underestimated. Men go through different psychologically and physically. Documenting both men's and women's abuse may help to address issues of gender inequality in a holistic manner rather than focusing only on one group. Falola and Yacob-Haliso (2017) give us an account of women autonomy in matrilineal societies in which women have more control over property and domestic authority than in patrilineal systems.

Evidently, several participants who participated in this study reported some forms of abuse that;

- Men are constantly insulted and humiliated
- Being blamed for things that are not true for example accused of cheating resulting on social contacts being controlled from seeing or talking to friends
- Being dictated to do things beyond your economic capabilities and intimidated of being chased (divorced) away if they fail to fulfill it.
- Being denied basic needs such as sleep, food and sexual
- Being denied any financial control especially if not working and the woman is a bread winner.
- Your relations not being welcomed in your house
- Denied access to children after divorce

The participants continued to explain and I quote “ azibambotu amangofa chamuntima mapeto ake amasanduka ankhaza pofuna kuziteteza. In this quote we complain that because they are ashamed to reveal that they too experience abuse and they die silently. As a result to such psychological and emotional situation, men create a defensive mechanism by becoming monsters.

In many of the literature reviewed in this study, such instances as documented above are missing by many gender scholars. As was discussed under literature review section, the reasons could be issues concerning men do not come out easily as men do not feel comfortable to reveal in fear of losing power and respect. Above all, many scholars especially those which are western oriented in their methodologies are a bit selective and they choose on what to report because their aim is to bring to the attention of the readers that African proverbs always discriminate women and favour men. However, although in matrilineal society there is such a power reversal and that female

children are regarded as mothers of the clan, king makers, this does not relegate the male children to a less important status neither giving the girls absolute power.

The gender dynamics as revealed in this study are complicated and rather confusing. Even though this study has pointed out issues of land, property ownership, and power that women have in matrilineal societies of Malawi, the study has also demonstrated the consequences lead to women power decline. Just as a reminder, this has been argued in terms of, gender role segregation which put women in domestic spheres, negative portrayal of women as evil, gossipers, sexual power relations where a man has to lead and the fact that in African tradition women do not have powers to propose for intimate love (see chapter 6 in all sections). In addition, one can argue in terms of civil, religious, modes of production and military as argued by many scholars globally that has placed many women at a disadvantage. The same applies to Malawi that women's power loss can be attributed to disadvantaged position of social economic, financial status and acute poverty that women find themselves which renders women to depend on men. Even though female children can take up chieftainship succession, in many cases, this task is assigned to male children. Secondly, a male child is important in issues regarding marriage negotiations for his sisters. No matter how small, he is to lead the grave diggers to the grave. This is the role that can never be played by a woman. In Malawi, it is rare to see a woman who is allowed to stand and speak in front of men during funerals. In the event a chief or traditional leader is a woman, she delegates her *nduna* (her advisers) to speak on her behalf during funerals. Similarly, a male child is equally celebrated because of his crucial role he will play as *mwini mbumba/mtundu* i.e clan leader. Male children are leaders by birth. Within the framework of *mwini mbumba*, all traditions concerning marriage and funeral rites, land disputes, conflicts resolutions among the family members lies in the hands of the male child/children. *Mwini mbumba* plays a critical role during funerals. It is the male child who will authorise the burial of the dead. This gives checks and balances towards male powers be it in matrilineal or patrilineal societies.

8.3 Summary and conclusion to the chapter

Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2014, 2003, 1995) posits that power, control and domination are held by those who are socially, politically and economically powerful. Men are all over the world very powerful. However, this chapter has cautioned against overgeneralizing

men's power and denomination. The chapter has demonstrated that men too can sometimes sit on the receiving end of constraining practices. The *mkamwini* of the matrilineal context is a man who lives in chains and faces discrimination, oppression and many other negative ideologies.

CHAPTER NINE
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

9.0 Introduction to the chapter

The current chapter brings the doctoral thesis to its conclusion and closure. To this end, in section I provide a recap according to the objectives and research questions that guided the study as stated in the background Chapter 1.

9.1 Summary of the key findings and contributions to knowledge

This study has revealed that Chichewa proverbs constitute an important language tool and vehicle for disseminating negative and stereotypical messages and images about some groups of people. Most of the gendered proverbs are discriminatory and oppressive towards women. Such proverbs pose severe implications on efforts to deliver the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal number 5 (achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls). Although the study has revealed that men are not absolutely free from the negative and disadvantaging proverbs, to the larger extent the connotations embedded in Chichewa proverbs have the potential to marginalize, demean and disadvantage, and control women and girls.

The findings of the current doctoral study agree with previous study findings to the effect that proverbs are windows through which societal wisdom and beliefs on gender are portrayed. Similarly to previous studies, the current findings reveal that proverbs convey messages of gender inequality. In this gender inequality, it is women who suffer more than men. Chapters 5 and 6 convey this reality. Proverbs as an element of knowledge systems affect gender-based rights and social position which are key factors in determining spartial demarcations and domestication of women, gender role segregation, objectification of women/girls as major features which work against women. Proverbs are used for justifying the restriction of women's access to resources and other facilities as well as restriction to building capacity for human capital.

Findings in this research study remain consistent with CDA theory of (Fairclough 2014, 2003, 1995, Fairclough and Wodak 1997) that suggest that language and proverbs in particular are one tool through which inequalities are exhibited and reinforced. The inequalities are reinforced given that proverbs are societal fountains of wisdom and knowledge, and culturally people feel obliged to take the wisdom without subjecting it to serious critique. What I mean is that much as proverbs are claimed to be reservoirs of societal wisdom and knowledge, proverbs should not be treated

as unquestionable sources of wisdom. For example, one needs to ask: Is the wisdom in the proverbs in line with current thinking and policy about gender issues? Culture is never static, and as such, clinging on to repression-inciting proverbs (in the name of being faithful to culture) is counterproductive.

The second major finding (see also Chapter 7) is that although the literature on gender issues in proverbs tends largely to paint bleak and negative images of women, there are instances (though very limited in frequency) when Chichewa proverbs go against the patriarchal norm. The patriarchal norm is to portray a negative, powerless and helpless picture of women. The current doctoral study, in contrast, has pointed out that women can and do exhibit power more especially in matrilineal society of Malawi. Chichewa proverbs have also demonstrated that women serve as providers of warmth, and men benefit from the same. Furthermore, the study has unearthed Chichewa proverbs that depict and encourage women's empowerment and agency.

One other major finding as discussed in Chapter 8 is that even in a patriarchal system, Chichewa proverbs do not always favour men. There are times when men are on the receiving end of oppression and domination. The case of *mkamwini* (the son in law) in a matrilineal society is one example. This man, by virtue of leaving his home and living at the bride's place, loses some power and authority. The *mkamwini* becomes a stranger at his wife's home, and thus loses some of men's biting teeth. It is therefore erroneous to think of men being powerful and domineering all the time. The findings of the current study have seriously challenged the claim that men are powerful and domineering across all contexts at all times. By the same token, not all women, and in all contexts, suffer from men's oppression and domination. This finding challenges us to be stay out of blanket statements or overgeneralizations. We have to consider context-specific realities before we make claims about oppression, domination and gender inequality.

This draws similarity with the CDA framework and posits that like any other knowledge systems, Chichewa proverbs serve as sites of power struggles between men and women. As CDA (Fairclough 2014, 2003, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak 1997) posits, it is through language that some cases of power abuse and domination are effected. As such, language reflects inequalities and dominance. In the case of the current doctoral study, this CDA position is confirmed. Chichewa proverbs, like folk stories, transmit powerful gender ideologies that perpetuate the

dominance of some groups by privileging knowledge and practices that discriminate against women.

By its very nature, a doctoral study should be able to make unique or special contributions to the knowledge domain. To the body of knowledge on gender issues in African proverbs, the current doctoral study has added the findings that have been outlined above. I should also mention that this doctoral study is the first one of its kind to be conducted in Malawi. The study, for the first time in Malawian knowledge production space, brings together the following disciplines: Gender Studies, Language Studies and IKS studies. It is for the first time that proverbs emanating from a Malawian indigenous language had been studied from a gender perspective. Previous studies of Malawian proverbs had focussed on religion (eg Mphande 2001), leadership and management (Malunga). To this end, the current doctoral study delves into new academic spaces.

Marshall and Young (2006:65) argue that we must view gender studies as a revolution and that methodologies used to investigate gender issues must involve Afrocentric methodologies which shift, redefining of issues and paying sharp attention to the power of dominant values of patriarchy. Western methodologies do not expose the dynamics and other multiple knowledge production in African. In this study, both documentary and participatory approaches have yielded alternatives in which Chichewa proverbs can benefit women. Marshall and Young (2006) call for the decolonization and indigenization of research, literature and theories. The complexities and dynamics of knowledge contribution cannot be unraveled with western theories only. The research work can be more benefiting and become more relevant and empowering within transformative research. Nkondo (2016) argues that although many aspect of knowledge production will be more westernized, new epistemologies and research are bound to appear together with new forms of assessment. This will mark a significant contribution that is relevant to Africa instead of epistemologies that are rooted in Eurocentric and imperialistic interest that ignore Africa's contribution to the knowledge domain. This study has opened new ethos and new ideas on how Chichewa proverbs have been used and can be used for applauding and acknowledging women's contributions and how women could take an active role move towards their own empowerment.

9.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, an important position taken in this study is that the indigenous knowledge systems

(proverbs) contains some elements of positivity which may be deployed and exploited to promote gender equality. Proverbs are just like seeds unless we water and care for them, they may give positive results. Most of the proverbs that circulate within the society are those which are biased against women. With all the elements of negative connotations inscribed in most of Chichewa proverbs, the study concludes that gender equality still remains in pipeline. Most of the gendered proverbs work against the achievement of women empowerment which at the end will have negative impact on the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal number 5 which talks about gender equality and women empowerment.

This research study has revealed that the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Chichewa proverbs are rooted in a previously patriarchal system that was reinforced with colonialism and worked against women in the society at large. Three major themes emerged with findings that supported this conclusion namely: the negative portrayal of women as demonstrated in Chapter 6; the recognition and celebration of women's positive attributes as demonstrated in Chapter 7; and the revelation that despite living in a patriarchal context, some men live in chains and constraints as a result of being a son-in-law (*mkamwini*) in a matrilineal environment (see Chapter 8).

In the literature on proverbs that was reviewed in this thesis, proverbs are seen as containers of wisdom. Proverbs are highly respected manuals of life. To some, proverbs convey the absolute truth and the unquestionable wisdom that has been passed on from generation to generation. But the current thesis has critically analysed this wisdom, and come to the conclusion that some of this so called wisdom can be dangerous and counterproductive to the culture of human rights and sustainable development. To this end, the thesis has identified such counterproductive wisdom. Such counter productive wisdom (proverbs) can actually be used in gender activism to teach against gender inequalities. In contrary to the actual ascription to proverbs as wisdom of the people; the Chichewa proverbs in Malawi are shown to rather promote gender inequality.

Reformist African Feminists and CDA scholars have it that men belong to a powerful group that marginalizes women. Whilst generally it is women who suffer at the hands of men, this doctoral thesis has, on the other hand exposed situations under which even men can come under constraints.

That is to say that men are not powerful at all times in all contexts. That is what Chapter 8 has demonstrated in the case of *mkamwini*, the son-in-law in the matrilineal environment.

Although there are some Chichewa proverbs that constrain men's power, most of Chichewa proverbs demonstrated that they work against women empowerment and consequently fail to achieve the sustainable development goals that are dependent on gender equality in societies. This calls both men and women from Malawi to engage with proverbs cautiously that they promote gender equality and not the opposite. Ultimately, the Chichewa proverbs that have prospects to promote gender inequality can be re-appropriated through a decolonisation of mind led by the scholars and all the population representatives who were consulted during this research. Other options to remediate to this cause are presented in the recommendations section.

9.3 Recommendations for action

At this stage, it is important to address the issue of knowledge translation i.e. to consider application of research findings as per the knowledge translation theory. As established in this doctoral study, there are some stereotypical proverbs which promote gender inequality and women/men disempowerment. Since society's beliefs and interests are mirrored through proverbs, it is important that activism on gender issues should take on board all proverbs, irrespective of whether the proverbs convey gender equality messages or not. Gender activism should use positive proverbs such as those listed and analysed in Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 to encourage gender equality. Activists of various persuasions could find the proverbs applicable and relevant to their respective domains of work. This would sit well with the knowledge translation theories which advance the view that research findings should be converted into usable forms.

Since it is a common knowledge that education plays a very critical role in promoting behavioural change. To this end, a special place of proverbs in highlighting gender issues should be mainstreamed in the education system through curricula. There is need, therefore, to revisit the education curricula and make them more gender sensitive through incorporation of more positive and empowering proverbs in school syllabus. Focusing more on negative language tools as a mirror to our society will only perpetuate and work against transforming societies. Proverbs themselves do not have to be abandoned. Since children have to go through schools, more gender awareness should focus on schools and tertiary institutions in order to breed a new crop of gender sensitive people as opposed to people whose minds have already been fixated and hardened. By this token,

teachers should be prepared and equipped with gender skills so that they teach in a gender sensitive manner.

More seriously, the findings of the study have revealed that some Chichewa proverbs Malawi put women's lives at risk in terms of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is special reference to the proverbs that encourage multiple sex partners and those which marginalize women's freedom and autonomy to sexual issues in heterosexual marriage. With the fundamental understanding that traditionally in Malawi and I believe in many African ways of knowing marriage issues are treated as private, proverbs are therefore used as a tool to abuse, marginalize, exploit oppress women/girls while some proverbs may fuel gender based violence.

9.4 Dissemination of research findings

The PhD journey does not end with the submission of a thesis for examination. A critical undertaking remains, and that is the dissemination of the research findings. Dissemination of research findings can take written and oral modes. The first mode of disseminating the research findings will be when the thesis will be uploaded on the institution research webpage. This will enable easy access to the thesis. Secondly, one paper (Kamwendo and Kaya 2016) emanating from the current thesis has already been published in a refereed and accredited journal as attached in the preliminary pages. Two papers have already been presented at international conferences as outcomes of this research study. The first conference paper (Kamwendo 2016) was presented at a conference of the African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA) in Namibia in 2016, whilst the second conference paper (Kamwendo and Muthuki 2017) was read at an international conference that took place in 2017 at Kariba in Zimbabwe. So far the research dissemination has focused on the academic community whilst the non-academic community, especially the ordinary Malawian man and woman, have not been catered for. Forthcoming publications will include newspaper articles, written in Chichewa and English and published in Malawian print media. This addresses the complaint that often research findings and recommendations do not filter down to the ordinary members of communities within which studies are conducted. Instead, research findings are located in academic journals which the ordinary man and woman cannot access.

9.5 Further possible research areas

One strong recommendation for further research is to conduct similar studies in other indigenous languages of Malawi such as Chiyao, Chitumbuka, Chisena and Chilomwe. It would be interesting to establish how proverbs in the other indigenous languages of Malawi reflect gender inequality. This is ground for further research.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE -ENGLISH VERSION
SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

GENDER:.....

AGE RANGE: 18-30; 31-4041; 50-60; 61 and above

MARITAL STATUS:.....

ETHNICITY/ TRIBE:

HOME DISTRICT:.....

REGION:.....

OCCUPATION:

RELIGION:.....

EDUCATION LEVEL:.....

SECTION B: QUESTIONS ON HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO THE PROVERBS

1. What is the historical background of the proverbs?
2. Who are the main actors in the construction of the proverbs?
3. What exactly are the messages inscribed in proverbs?
4. What is the role of the proverbs in our culture?

SECTION C: GENDER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

5. What lessons do we get from the following proverbs concerning women? Give examples of proverbs
6. What do lessons do we get from the following proverbs concerning men? Give examples of proverbs.
7. How do the referred proverbs on women promote the women's' personal development/empowerment?
8. How do the referred proverbs on men help to their personal development?

9. Are there any differences on proverbs referring to women as compared to those referring to men? b- i) Explain if any the differences.

10. Do you believe that the discussed proverbs may help to promote gender equality policy advances in Malawi?

-If the answer is yes explain in detail

-If the answer is No explain in detail

11. What can be done to redress the discrepancies in proverbs between men and women?

12. Is it possible to reconstruct or re-appropriate the negative proverbs?

13. How best can we use such negative proverbs between men and women?

14. You are free to give any other comments and additions regarding the issue of proverbs as discussed.

I thank you very much for sparing your time to discuss the gendered proverbs with me.

**APPENDIX B: MAFUNSO A KAFUKUFUKU M'CHICHEWA
GAWO LOYAMBA: KUDZIWA MAINA, ZAKA, KUMUDZI NDI ZINA ZOKHUNZA
OYANKHA MAFUNSO**

MAMUNA/MKAZI:.....

ZAKA:..... 18-30 31-40 41-49 50-60 and above

ZOKHUNZA BANJA:.....

MTUNDU:.....

KUMUDZI:.....

GAWO LA DZIKO:.....

NTCHITO:.....

CHIPEMBEDZO:.....

MAPHUNZILO:.....

GAWO LACHIWILI: Mafunso okhunza mbili ndi chiyambi cha miyambi

1 Kodi chiyambi cha miyambi ndi chotani?

2 Kodi miyambiyi ndani anali oloedwa kuipanga?

3 Kodi mauthenga a mmiyambi amakamba za chani kwenkweni?

4 Kodi miyambi ndi yofunika bwanji mu chikhalidwe chatu monga a Malawi?

**GAWO LACHITATU. MAFUNSO OKHUNZA MIYAMBI POLINGALILA ZA
ABAMBO NDI AMAI**

5 Kodi mauthenga omwe ali mmiyambi yokhuza azimayi iyi ikutiphunzitsa chani? -(Kupereka zitsanzo za miyambi)

6. Kodi zotsatila zake ndi zotani ngati miyambiyi igwiritsidwa ntchito motere kwa azimayi? 6. a Nanga miyambi yokhudza azibambo ikutiphunzitsa chani? - (kupereka zitsanzo za miyambi)

7. Kodi ndi maphunzitso otani tingapeze pa miyambi yokhunza azibambo?

8. Kodi miyambi yokhunza amayi takambiranayi ingathandize bwanji pa moyo wa azimayi?
9. Kodi miyambi takambirana yokhunza azibambo ingathandize bwanji pa miyoyo yawo?
10. Kodi pali kusiyana kwanji pa miyambi yomwe takambirana yokhunza amayi/atsikana kuyerekeza ndi yomwe ikukamba za abambo/anyamata?
11. Ngati pali kusiyana ndikotani?
- 12 a.Kodi miyambi yathuyi ndiyothandiza bwanji khumbo la boma la Malawi kuti pasakhale kusiyana pakatipa amayi ndi abambo muzochitika zones?
13. Muli ndi ufulu kupeleka ndemanga zanu.

Zikomo kwambili potenga nawo mbali pakafukufukuyi.

APPENDIX C: UKZN RESEARCH CLEARANCE



28 October 2015

Mrs Juliet Kamwendo (213570645)
School of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Kamwendo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1438/015D

Project title: To what extent are the tools of African Indigenous Languages an instrument to promote or hinder gender equality? Critical analysis of Chichewa proverbs of Malawi

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 06 October 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

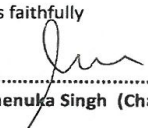
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Supervisor: Dr Janet Muthuki and Professor HO Kaya
Academic Leader Research: Professor Sabine Marschall
School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymam@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX D: GATE KEEPER'S LETTER (ELECTORAL COMMISSION)

Subject: Permission to use names on voters' register

-Forwarded message----

From: WKalonga@mec.org.mw

To: juliet.kamwendo@yahoo.com

Cc: ceo@mec.org.mw, MChisi@mec.org.mw

Sent: Mon, Dec 29, 2014 6:14 PM PST

Subject: Re: Permission to use names on voters' register

Dear Mrs. Kamwendo,

Complements of the season !

Your request is granted. We will however require that you meet us to discuss confidentiality protocols before the roll is released.

Kindly continue the discussion with our ICT Director, Mr. Chisi.

Regards,

Willie Kalonga

CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER

Sent from my iPad

On 29 Dec 2014, at 4:00 pm, "Juliet Kamwendo"

<juliet.kamwendo@yahoo.com<<mailto:juliet.kamwendo@yahoo.com>>> wrote:

Dear Sir/madam,

My name is Mrs Juliet Kamwendo. I am a Malawian national studying as a PHD student at University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. As part of the academic requirements, I am supposed to conduct a research as partial fulfilment of the Degree of Philosophy. In this case I have chosen to conduct the study in my home country-Malawi. My topic deals with Malawian proverbs as indigenous wisdom of the people and the extent to which they can promote gender equality in Malawi society. As such, I would require to interview the knowledge holders themselves of Malawi (ie men and women) more specifically those from Zomba Central constituency where the study is located.

Therefore I write this email to ask for permission from your office to use the voters register for Zomba Central to sample the population to avoid being biased in the choice of the participants. I would like to stress that this study is purely academic and all ethical issues shall be observed where no names of the participants shall be published in the thesis. Anonymity shall be observed throughout the research process. The selected participants shall also be given a chance to accept or decline to be interviewed. My study is to commence from first week of March to end March.

I look forward to your favourable response. Yours Faithfully, Mrs Juliet Kamwendo Student no: 213570645 (UKZN-Durban-RSA)

The information contained in this message and all attachments are those of the individual sender, except where the sender specifically states them to be the views of the Malawi Electoral Commission. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you must not use, copy, distribute or disclose this email or any part of its contents or take any action in reliance on it. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately and destroy the original message.

All reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure no viruses are present in this message. MEC cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage arising from the use of this message or attachments and recommend that you subject them to your virus checking procedures prior to use.

APPENDIX E: GATE KEEPER'S LETTER (DISTRICT COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE)

ZOMBA CITY COUNCIL



P.O. BOX 43
ZOMBA
MALAWI

Your Ref
Our Ref: ZCC/ADMIN/RTN/27c

Tel.: (265) 01 525 039
Fax: (265) 01 525 362

Email: info@zombacitycouncil.org

2nd February, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Permission is hereby granted to the bearer of this letter, Mrs. Juliet Kamwendo, student at KwaZulu Natal University in South Africa to conduct academic research study on **Malawian proverbs as indigenous wisdom of the people to promote gender equality in Malawi Society**. The research will start from the first week of March to the end of March 2015

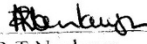
Details of the conditions attached include:

- Voluntary participation
- The permit is only in Zomba City area of jurisdiction.
- Solely for academic purposes.

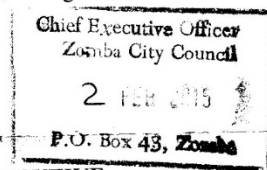
Please assist her accordingly.

The under copied is being informed about this permission.

Yours Faithfully,


R.T Nankuyu

For: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



Cc : Officer in Charge, Zomba Police Station.

ALL CORRESPONDANCES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT 1: CHICHEWA VERSION

Kuvomereza kutenga nawo mbali pa kafukufu

Okondeka abale ndi alongo,

Dzina langa ndine mai Juliet Kamwendo. Panthawi ndikulemba kalatayi ndine mmodzi mwa ophunzila a sukulu ya ukachenjede ya KwaZulu Natal ku dziko la South Africa komwe ndikuyembekeza kuzalandila digili ya pamwamba ya PHD. Kafukufuku wanga ndiokhunza momwe miyambi yathu yachiMalawi ingathandize kupititsa patsogolo khumbo la boma kuti pasakhale kusiyana pa zochitika pakati pa amayi ndi abambo. Cholinga chenicheni cha kafukufukuyi ndikubweretsa poyera miyambi ya Chichewa imene ikukamba a amayi kapena abambo, nyama zazimuna komanso zazikazi ndikumvetsetsa zomwe miyambiyi ikutanthauza ngati zingathe kuchepetsa kusiyana komwe kulipo pakati pa amai ndi abambo muzochitika.

- Zomwe tizakambirana inu ndi ine ndizongokhunza maphunzilo basi.
- Simuli oumilizidwa kupanga na kafukufukuyi. Ngati mwasankha kupanga nawo kafukufukuyi, muthanso kuloledwa kusiyira panjila opanda chifukwa china chili chonse.
- Dzina lanu silizatchulidwa pena paliponse pokhunza zomwe tikambirane.
- Zokambiranazi zitenga ola limodzi koma ndikololedwa kudukiza ngati pangafunike.
- Zotsatila za kafukufukuyi zizasungidwa mobisika ndipo pambuyo pa zaka zisanu zones zokhunza zomwe tikambirane zizaotchedwa.
- Ngati muvomere kupanga nawo kafukufukuyi mukupemphedwa kuti musaine kapena kudinda pa malo omwe aikidwa.

Ngati pangakhale zina zofuna kudziwa za ine mukhonza kundipeza ku adilesi iyi. KwaZulu Natal University, Howard College. Mukhonzanso kulemba kalata pa lanya pogwiritsa ntchito adilesi iyi: Juliet.kamwendo@yahoo.com, Nambala ya ophunzila ndi: 21357064, Cell phone +27(0)835196360.

Komanso mukhonza kundipeza kuzela mwa omwe amandithandiza pa maphunzilo anga. Maina ndi keyala yawo ndi:

Dr Janet Muthuki, UKZN, Pietermaritzburg/Howard Campus. Email Muthuki @ukzn.ac.za, phone number +27(0) 332606462. Komanso Prof H.O. Kaya, UKZN, Westville Campus. Email address:kaya@ukzn.ac.za. Nambala yawo ya foni ndi +27(0)312607237.

KUVOMEREZA

Ine..... (*maina onse*)

Ndikutsimikiza kuti ndamvetsetsa zolinga zakafukufukuyu ndipo ndikuvomera mosakakamizidwa kutengapo mbali ndikukhala mmodzi mwa anthu omwe azifunsidwe mafunso.

Ndamvetsanso kuti ndili ndi ufulu kupitiliza kapena kusiya kutenga nawo mbali pa zokamirana ngati pangakhale zovuta zina kapena kusagwirizana pa okambiranazo mwaufulu wanga. Ndipo ngati pangakhale kutola zithnzi izi zizachitika movomerezedwa ndi ine mwini

Kusaina.....

Tsiku ndi chaka.....

Kudinda.....

APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT 2. ENGLISH VERSION

Dear Participant,

My name is **Juliet Kamwendo (Mrs). Student No 213570645**. I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **The extent to which African language tool are an instrument that can promote gender equality: A critical analysis of Chichewa proverbs of Malawi**. The aim of the study is to empirically document and analyze the connotations inscribed in Chichewa proverbs to establish the extent to which they can promote gender equality/inequality. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take an one hour (1 hr).
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet was provided for signatures).

Declaration

I.....(write all names in print)

Declare that I have understood the aims of this research and have accepted to take part without being forced to do so. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw from participation if I feel so without being forced or intimidated.

Signature.....

Date:.....

Thumb stamp.....

