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Assessing the Roles of Non-Governmental Organization in Tackling Poverty in Malawi: A Case Study of Chikwawa District T/A Chapananga

Joshua J Kumwembe

DMI-ST. Eugene University, Zambia

ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a pervasive challenge in Malawi, with approximately 52% of the population living below the poverty line. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been instrumental in tackling poverty in Malawi, providing essential services and support to vulnerable communities. This study assesses the roles of NGOs in tackling poverty in Malawi, highlighting their contributions, challenges, and areas for improvement. The findings reveal that NGOs play a crucial role in providing food security, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment programs. However, NGOs face several challenges, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited capacity. The study recommends increased funding, improved infrastructure, capacity building, and collaboration between NGOs, governments, and donors to enhance the effectiveness of NGOs in tackling poverty in Malawi

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

"Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is the deprivation of one's ability to live as a free and dignified human being with the full potential to achieve one's desired goals in life. It also includes the concept of vulnerability, which is the likelihood that people will fall into poverty owing to shocks to the economic system or personal mishaps, and the concept of social exclusion, which focuses on the lack of participation of individuals or groups in society…" (Ferguson, 2019)

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world with 50.7 percent of the population living below the poverty line and 25 percent living in extreme poverty. Poverty is detrimental to development, and therefore an issue that needs to be dealt with. Over 3 billion people, constituting almost half of the world live on less than $2.50 a day (Shah, 2020). In spite of commendable world efforts to fight poverty, it still prevails as a major problem. In 2020, world leaders agreed to take serious actions against extreme poverty, hunger and disease, by adopting the next set of anti-poverty goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2017). Poverty is the first goal among others, which signifies global urgency to tackle it. Notwithstanding, nation States have individual obligations to develop strategies, and ensure connection of relevant agents, stakeholders and resources to achieve this goal.

The Government of Malawi carried out an Integrated Household Survey (IHS) in 1997 and 1998 to better understand the conditions under which Malawians were living. This followed the government adoption of its Poverty Alleviation Program in 1994 and the institution of a Poverty Monitoring System. An important economic drive for all individuals is to improve one's living conditions or welfare. Likewise, an appropriate function for many governmental and nongovernmental institutions is to assist individuals who are striving to improve their welfare, particularly those unable to meet their basic living requirements. An important starting point in such governmental efforts is to understand conditions under which people live. The IHS was used to undertake a poverty analysis and, subsequently, to prepare a poverty profile of Malawians. This paper presents the results of the poverty analysis.

Poverty reduction has become the primary objective of development interventions across much of the developing world, particularly in Malawi. The work of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) often surfaces in poverty reduction discussions, aside that which is done by States. The role of NGOs in alleviating poverty is increasing, and they are rapidly emerging as important actors and players in international politics and economic order (Sohel, et al., 2020), and contributors to the realization of development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of this study is to assess the roles of non-governmental organization in tackling poverty and examining their operations towards poverty alleviation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

☐   To find out the definition of poverty in line with the research area

☐   To identify the specific areas of poverty

☐   To identify some of the NGOs as well as the target group of the beneficiaries

☐   To find out how the NGOs are dealing with the targeted areas of poverty

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research will be guided by the following research questions

☐   Are NGOs still significant development actors in fighting poverty in Malawi?

☐   How do NGOs work on reducing poverty?

☐   To what extent has the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation changed?

☐   To what extent do NGOs cooperate with the State in reducing poverty?

REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

The chapter will also look at the concepts, opinions, and ideas from authors/experts in relation to contribution of NGOs in in poverty alleviation and theoretical review. The study is based on Progressive Social Theory According to T.K. Bradshaw (2019) this theory focuses on several factors, and they are the political system, economic policy adopted in the country that do not support the principle of transparency in dealings between citizens, as well as the social structure. The social structure has an impact in the reality of poverty where income is reduced and there are no savings and the society is denied access to their well-being, by the reduction of opportunities to gain access to resources, for example, access to education, employment or support for small enterprises. In the communities that suffer from the political, economic and social imbalances, there is a wide category of society that is living close to the poverty line and the reason for this is racial, sexual, and sectarian or there is a social stigma where tribal traditions prevail. All this leads to their chances becoming limited regardless of their competence and their personal capabilities. I would argue this theory. It also cannot be applied in Iraq. Because it does not address the problems that must be resolved. But only in the description of the case of poverty and the causes of poverty.

Big Push Theory

 The Big Push theory is that there is an urgent need in poor communities for a strong push or an intensive program with a specific minimum level of investment in order to overcome the obstacles of development and put the economy on track for growth. P .din opined that large investments in the manufacturing sector will lead to a rapid increase in the accumulation of capital. Rodin considered that his theory (Big Push) is more feasible than the classic theories because this theory is more realistic and more (Jmona, 2020; Sumaya, 2020). In fact, when this theory was applied in poor countries, it was proven that this theory cannot he applied successfully there because the Big Push theory requires a huge capital for the establishment of industrial projects, but poor countries do not have the money and also do not have a large enough market. In addition to that, this theory only focuses on the industrial sector and neglects all the other sectors. Although this theory is ideal for countries that suffer from poverty, but it does not fit with this study because Iraq is a rich country and does not need financial support from outside.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the choice of my research design. A research design is a plan for conducting a study (Berg 2018) or a logical framework for data collection and analysis to enable the researcher answer the research question (David and Sutton 2018: 133; Burnham et al. 2018: 30). A research plan has both theoretical as well as practical implications. At theoretical level, the research design is influenced by the philosophical approach adopted for the research while at practical level, the research design influences what relevant research methods and techniques can be used and how the data can be analyzed. As the purpose of research is to find answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures (Berge 2018), there are a number of implications for social research arising from the philosophical perspective of critical realism. In critical realism, the objectives of the research and the way questions are framed determine the research design in terms of its depth and breadth. Thus, studying the impact of NGOs on poverty and vulnerability required a critical reflection at all the stages of the research starting from the way questions were framed, the methods used for data collection and in the analysis and interpretation of data. Based on the critical realist approach, this study adopted the case study design. The basic tenet of a case study is that it aims at collecting and analyzing a single case(Bryman 2018; Gillman 2018). Case studies are also best suited where a researcher collects intensive data from the case (Yin 2021 ; Gillman 2020) in order to address the research question. Yin (2021) also points out that another condition is when the subject under study may not easily be separated from the context, requiring data from both the context and the case. The choice of the case study design was also influenced by the very fact that in Malawi, there are various types of projects targeted at various categories of the poor. All these different projects interventions cannot be covered under one study. For example, targeted social transfers use a variety of targeting methods, varying

degrees of innovations and other project specific characteristics. Some transfers are conditional while others are unconditional in nature.In this case, I chose the social cash transfer scheme which targets poorest 10%. It is also an interesting case study because this scheme is a departure from the traditional social protection menu because it targets 10% of the poorest who are also labour constrained. Traditionally, cash transfers have been targeted to the poor who are deemed to be productive compared to this category which lacks productive labour. Concentrating on this particular case also means that maintaining reliability, replicability and validity of the research can be maintained. In other words, replicability can be achieved by sticking to the same parameters of the case. Specifically, the study used single-case study design; that is one case in one location as compared to multiple case designs (one case in different locations). The study is about meanings, experimental designs could not have effectively addressed the research question. Experiments require a manipulation of an independent variable in order to determine what variations occur in a dependent variable, which was not the case in this study. Cross-sectional designs were not appropriate either as they entail collecting data at a single point in time across the sample. Longitudinal designs, both panel and cohort study designs were not suited for this study either due to time and financial constraints as they require collecting data more than once.

Population of the study

The population study of the area consists 40 NGOs, 20 stakeholders and 40 beneficiaries from NGOs Data base.

Sampling procedure for participants

The research will employ a purposive sampling to identify the responses or data's who experience that participated in the study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which include specialist knowledge of the research issues or capacity and willingness to participate in research (Mason, 2020). Purposeful sampling will used for the recruitment of participants for this study. It involves selecting research participants according to the needs of the study (Glaser & Strauss; Morse, 2021) in that researchers choose participants who give a richness of information that is suitable for detailed research (Patton, 2021). The selection criteria for inclusion will be participants that will providing rich information related to the study. Hence, this type of sampling will be used in this research to get the specialized knowledge from those participants that will give the required information.

Sample size

Saunders, (Lewis, & Thornhill 2021, P 23), define sample size as the number of participants included in a study. Essentially, a sample size is a subset of the general population that is chosen to represent that population for the purpose of the study. The researcher will use probability and non-probability sampling where a copy of questionnaire will be given to 100 participants out of existing around 4 million participants. The sample size was determined using the following standard formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$

Where

n = corrected sample size

N = population size

e = Marginal of Error (MoE)

Therefore, the population size was **4** million. This means **N= 4** million, and the chosen marginal of error is 10% which is **e = 0.1**

Step 1: the square of **0.1 = 0.01**

Step 2: then **0.01** is multiplied by **N** which is **4**million, and the answer is **40,000**

Step 3: then add **1** to **40,000**, and the answer is **40,001**

Step 4: then divide **N** which is **4** million, by **40,001** Therefore, **n** = **99.96**

To the nearest whole number, **n** = **100**

This means 100 people from the population of 4 million were respondents to the study.

Sampling procedure for non-participant

The research employed a non-probability sampling of convenient sampling to identify non-participant. The non-participants will be selected through convenience sampling. In this type of sampling, study participants will be selected based on their availability to the researcher (Schutt, 2021). Convenience sampling will used in this study to enable the researcher to achieve the sample size required in the study relatively fast and inexpensive way. Hence reduced cost and time consuming.

Sources of Data Collection

There are Primary and Secondary data, whereby primary data refers to new data specifically collected for the project through field research and determines the existence of the member and generates information which is specifically for the project at hand (Strokes, 2021, P,22). Data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews were used. The primary data focused on assessing the effectiveness of communication and awareness strategies on KYC registration. Secondary data is the data which already exists for other purposes and not the current study (Strokes, 2020, P 21). The survey reports, journals, books and web-sites as the major source of collecting data.

3.10 Primary Data Collection Methods

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaire to come out with required information or data related to the study. Using primary data, the investigator collected data specific to the problem under study. In addition to that, they will be no doubt about the quality of the data collected (for the investigator). Lastly it will be possible to obtain additional data during the study period.

Semi-structured Interview

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews which are a type of interviews related to qualitative research. In this type of data collection, the researcher has a list of questions or specific tools to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. All the questions are asked to every study participant and a similar wording is used from interviewee to interviewee (Bryman, 2021). This approach of data collection enabled the researcher to ably uncover in depth knowledge on the research topic. This is because the researcher had the chance to probe on some of the interesting discussions and query where it was not understood.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a quantitative instrument which contains questions, usually closed in nature, that are given to respondents to answer or fill with or without the researcher being present (Mitchell & Jolly, 2021) the tool was used in this study because it can carry a large number of respondents.

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data refers to the data collected from documents or papers containing similar data as observed in the field during primary data collection which is also known as desk research (Bryman, 2021). The secondary data was collected by reviewing already existing literature from, books, journals, newsletters, media (both print and electronic) and the internet. This was important as the existing data helped the researcher to shape the nature and course of the study. Furthermore, the various documents regarding the topic under study assisted the researcher in gaining vast knowledge relating to the primary data obtained from the participants. Further, the secondary data helped the researcher in relating theories with facts on the ground as perceived by the research participants.

Methods of Data Collection

It's essential to outline tools that I will use to collect data to ensure a robust and reliable of my research methodology. Here are some of the tools that I will use;

Both primary and secondary data analysis methods will be employed in this research. Primary data collection methods will be used to collect data from the corner participants who experienced and will be part of this study. The secondary data collection methods will be obtained by reviewing already existing literature from books, journals, newspaper, media (both print and electronic) and the internet as well.

Content Analysis

This study employed content analysis due to its nature of being qualitative research. Content analysis refers to the analysis of the documents and text that seek to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in systematic and replicable manner (Mason, 1996). The researcher identified dominant themes in the study and related them to the objectives of the study. After identifying the themes, the researcher grouped the collected data based on the themes. The collected data will be then coded and entered into Micro Soft Excel computer package for production of tables and charts that allowed comparison and interpretation of data.

Interview

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews which are a type of interviews related to qualitative research. In this type of data collection, the researcher will have a list of questions or specific tools to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, interviewee will have a great deal of leeway in how to reply. All the questions will be asked to every study participant and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee (Bryman, 2021). This approach of data collection will enable the researcher to ably uncover in depth knowledge on the research topic. This is because the researcher will have the chance to probe on some of the interesting discussions and query where it was not surely understood.

Data analysis

Data analysis techniques which are used in this study are content analysis and SPSS. These two-data analyses were used because both qualitative and quantitative research strategies were used in this study.

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Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS)

The researcher used SPSS to analyze the quantitative data mathematically. SPSS is a widely used computer program that allows quantitative data to be managed and analyzed. However, due to the nature of the research study, the data was mostly analyzed through the content analysis**.** The data was analyzed using SPSS to generate, table, and hypothesis was tested using compare means and using a logistic regression analysis to find out if there was an impact on sustainable development. The results will be presented in tables through frequency, mean and standard deviation

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of data that was collected from respondents in the district of Chikwawa, T/A Chapananga. The analysis and interpretation of data was according to research questions as a set out on the questionnaire and data collected as corresponding responses. The data analysis was done through descriptive statistics. The responses have been summarized and presented in the form of tables and figures.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

FREQUENCY OF SEX RESPONDNTS

Table 1: Sex Distribution among the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
male	24	40.0	40.0	40.0
female	36	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Showing the number of respondents in the table of male and female involving the males in order to differentiate the results.

Table 2; Age of Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30	7	11.7	11.7	11.7
	31-40	18	30.0	30.0	41.7
	41-50	25	41.7	41.7	83.3
	51-60	9	15.0	15.0	98.3
	61-70	39	40.3	40.3	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 3; Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Single	5	8.3	8.3	8.3
Valid	Divorced	48	80.0	80.0	88.3
	Separated	1	1.7	1.7	90.0
	married	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Absolute poverty and Relative poverty	-28663.50000	31641.31236	4084.87586	-36837.31772	-20489.68228	-7.017	59	.000

DEFINITION OF POVERTY IN CHIKWAWA

The results presented in table 4.2.1 above addressed the first specific objective of the study which was "to find out the definition of poverty. A comparison of average monthly incomes was made, and the comparison was on absolute poverty 'treatment' group versus relative poverty 'control' group. Results from table 4 of the two-sample t-tests (Group Mean Comparisons) reveal the following about absolute poverty and relative poverty; Here, the null hypothesis tested was using two paired sample correlations where the significant indicated 000 as shown in the above table. The null hypothesis was not accepted at ($p<.005$). This means that the estimated average absolute poverty is significantly different from (greater than) that of the relative poverty. The result confirms the hypothesis that "there is a difference between the mean absolute poverty and relative poverty".

Table .2.2; Monthly Income for those in living in Absolute poverty and relative poverty

Absolute poverty and relative poverty	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Absolute poverty	52160.0000	30	29761.83161
Relative poverty	5170.0000	30	2992.19099
Total	28665.0000	60	31640.93479

This result confirms that those under absolute poverty they fail to meet basic needs necessary for survival than those under relative poverty. To further to find out the definition of poverty in chikwawa, mean and standard deviation was run to measure the definition of poverty on the income generated by a household. Results are displayed in table 4 above.

4.4 AREAS OF POVERTY

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Rural poverty	100	-.547	.000
Pair 2	Food insecurity	100	.869	.000
Pair 3	Limited access to education	100	.673	.000

The results presented in table 4.2.1 above addressed the second specific objective of the study which was "to identify the areas of poverty". Results from table of the two-sample t-tests (Group Mean Comparisons) reveal the following about Areas of poverty; Here, the null hypothesis tested was using two paired sample correlation where the significant indicated 000 in all patterns as shown in the above table. The null hypothesis was not accepted at (p<.005). This means that the estimated Rural poverty is significantly different (greater than) that of the Limited access to education. The result confirms the hypothesis that "there are different areas of poverty in chikwawa. But the most common is Rural poverty where rural areas are disproportionately affected by poverty, with limited access to basic services.

4.5 NGOs AS TARGET GROUP BENEFICIARIES

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Action Aid Malawi	-2.083	1.183	.153	-2.389	-1.778	-13.640	59	.000
Pair 2	Oxfam Malawi	.067	.406	.052	-.038	.172	1.271	59	.209
Pair 3	Save the children Malawi	.033	.258	.033	-.033	.100	1.000	59	.321

This result confirms Action Aid Malawi focuses on poverty reduction, human rights and education, Oxfam Malawi works on poverty reduction, food security, and humanitarian response and save the children Malawi focuses on education, health, and emergency response. The results from these NGOs working in chikwawa were measured using mean and standard deviation on how these NGOs are reducing poverty levels in chikwawa district.

The results from the table indicated that through Action Aid Malawi, Oxfam and save the children there is greater improvement in poverty reduction in chikwawa.

"our children are able to go to school and we receive farm inputs like fertilizer and seeds for cultivation"

HOW THE NGOS ARE DEALING WITH THE TARGETED AREAS POVERTY

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Community Based initiatives	60	-.358	.005

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Capacity Building and training	.067	.880	.114	-.161	.294	.587	59	.560

The results obtained under this section were used to address the fourth specific objective of the study which was "To find out how the NGOs are dealing with the targeted areas of poverty". A comparison of community-based initiatives and capacity building and training. The comparison of these areas was determined by the programs that have contributed to poverty reduction. Results from table of the two-sample t-tests (Group Mean Comparisons) reveal the following about community-based initiatives and capacity building and training; Here, the null hypothesis tested was using two paired sample correlations where the significant indicated .005 as shown in the above table. The null hypothesis was accepted at (p<.005). This means that community-based initiatives is significantly equal to that of capacity building training. The result confirms the hypothesis that "there is equal contribution of these programs to poverty reduction".

KEY FINDINGS

Objective 1: Definition of Poverty

Key Findings

Poverty is a multifaceted concept encompassing economic, social, and cultural dimensions.

Different stakeholders (NGOs, governments, local communities) may have varying definitions and understandings of poverty.

Hypotheses

Poverty definitions will vary significantly across different stakeholders.

Economic indicators (e.g., income, access to basic needs) will be the primary focus of poverty definitions.

Objective 2: Areas of Poverty

Key Findings

Poverty is prevalent in rural areas, urban slums, and among marginalized communities.

Specific areas of poverty may include education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and access to basic services.

Hypotheses

Rural areas will exhibit higher poverty rates compared to urban areas.

Marginalized communities (e.g., women, children, ethnic minorities) will be disproportionately affected by poverty.

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Hypotheses

Rural areas will exhibit higher poverty rates compared to urban areas.

Marginalized communities (e.g., women, children, ethnic minorities) will be disproportionately affected by poverty.

Objective 3: NGOs as Target Group Beneficiaries

Key Findings

NGOs play a crucial role in addressing poverty, particularly in areas where government services are limited.

NGOs often target vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and marginalized communities.

Hypotheses

NGOs will primarily focus on providing basic services (e.g., food, shelter, healthcare) to their beneficiaries.

NGOs will prioritize community-based initiatives, engaging local stakeholders in poverty reduction efforts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on poverty, NGOs, and poverty reduction. The results align with previous studies highlighting the multifaceted nature of poverty (e.g., [1], [2]) and the importance of NGOs in addressing poverty (e.g., [3], [4]).

Consistencies with Existing Literature

1. Poverty definitions: The study's findings on the varying definitions of poverty among stakeholders are consistent with previous research (e.g., [5], [6]).

2. NGO roles: The results highlighting NGOs' crucial role in addressing poverty, particularly in areas where government services are limited, align with existing literature (e.g., [7], [8]).

3. Targeted areas of poverty: The study's findings on the specific areas of poverty addressed by NGOs, such as education and healthcare, are consistent with previous research (e.g., [9], [10]).

Contrasts and Contributions

1. Contextual focus: This study's focus on [specific context or region] contributes to the literature by providing insights into the unique challenges and opportunities in this context.

2. NGO strategies: The results highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts between NGOs, local governments, and communities contribute to the literature on effective NGO strategies.

3. Sustainability and empowerment: The study's findings on the need for sustainable and empowering strategies in poverty reduction contribute to the literature on long-term poverty reduction and community development.

Implications for Future Research

1. In-depth case studies: Conduct in-depth case studies of successful NGO-led poverty reduction initiatives to identify best practices and lessons learned.

2. Comparative studies: Conduct comparative studies of NGO-led poverty reduction initiatives in different contexts to identify transferable strategies and approaches.

3. Longitudinal studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of NGO-led poverty reduction initiatives.

Limitations of the study

1. Limited Sample Size: The study had a limited sample size, which may not be representative of all government schools with community-arranged boarding facilities.

2. Limited Geographic Scope: The study was conducted in only a few districts, which may not be representative of all districts in the country

Areas for further research

1. Long-term Impact: A longitudinal study to investigate the long-term impact of community arranged boarding facilities on students' academic and personal development.

2. Comparative Study: A comparative study to examine the differences in outcomes between students in schools with community-arranged boarding facilities and those in schools without such facilities.

3. Impact on Vulnerable Groups: A study to investigate the impact of community-arranged boarding facilities on vulnerable groups, such as orphans and students with disabilities

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