

## An Assessment of the Impact of Economic Empowerment Interventions on Young People in Traditional Authority Chikulamayembe Rumphi District

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The study area has several youth economic empowerment interventions implemented by partners to address the issue of unemployment but only a few young people are benefiting. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people in T/A Chikulamayembe.

**Main Objective:** The main objective of this study was to assess challenges as well as factors that hinder and promote implementation and sustainability of economic empowerment interventions in the study area.

**Methodology:** The research used a descriptive or mixed methods approach, thus employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The researcher collected data through several tools for the purposes of verification and triangulation, namely: FGDs, questionnaires, interviews and observation.

**Results:** The study findings reveal that the economic empowerment interventions had a few positive impacts on the young people that are into youth clubs in T/A Chikulamayembe on the grounds that they were not being highly engaged in those interventions as compared to those youths that did not join the youth clubs. The study further reveals that only 3% of the young people in youth clubs involved in EEI have attained average income level and have also managed to employ a few youths ranging from 1-5 in their established businesses. Challenges and factors such as corruption, inadequate implementing partners, collateral demands by financial lending institutions and less involvement of youth clubs hinders the EEI amongst the youth in the area. Study also reveals that youth need Bottom-Top approach of project identification that will contribute to their high-level participation in the skill choices that will satisfy their needs.

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### 1.1 Introduction

The study on the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people in T/A Chikulamayembe Rumphi District, Malawi, seeks to address the pressing challenges faced by the youth population in a rural setting characterized by high levels of, youth unemployment poverty, corruption, limited economic opportunities and many other factors that will be mentioned further. The study area has a lot of young people that are both being involved and not involved in different projects as such a greater focus will also be put on assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of various interventions that are aimed at empowering young individuals in the district to transform their well-being as well as socio-economic status, this research aims to shed light on how economic empowerment programs can enhance the economic prospects, livelihoods, and overall well-being of young people

in the study area. By examining the design, implementation, and impact of these interventions, this study will contribute valuable insights to the fields of youth development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable economic growth in T/A Chikulamayembe. Through a thorough investigation of the context, interventions, research objectives, methodology, and significance of the study, this research endeavors to provide evidence-based recommendations that can inform future interventions, policies, and programs aimed at supporting the economic empowerment of young people in Rumphi District. The importance of economic empowerment interventions for young people in Malawi Rumphi district is crucial for the following reasons. They play a significant role in addressing the challenges faced by youth, such as unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Here are some key points highlighting the importance of these interventions, in relation

to addressing youth unemployment: Africa has the highest youth unemployment rate globally, with approximately 60% of unemployed individuals being young people. Economic empowerment interventions provide opportunities for skill development, entrepreneurship, and job creation, helping young people secure employment and contribute to economic growth. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), youth employment programs can boost economic growth by up to 4% in Africa. In relation to addressing poverty reduction, economic empowerment interventions enable young people to generate income and lift themselves out of poverty. By providing access to financial resources, training, and mentorship, these interventions equip young people with the necessary tools to start their own businesses or gain employment. This not only improves their living standards but also contributes to poverty reduction at the national level. In relation to fostering social inclusion, economic empowerment interventions promote social inclusion by targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups, including young women, those with disabilities, and rural youth. By providing equal opportunities and access to resources, these interventions empower young people to participate fully in economic activities, reducing social inequalities and promoting a more inclusive society. They stimulate economic growth and development, young people represent a significant demographic in Africa, with over 60% of the population being under the age of 25. By investing in their economic empowerment, countries can harness the demographic dividend, leveraging the potential of young people to drive economic growth and development. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), youth entrepreneurship has the potential to create jobs, increase productivity, and stimulate innovation.

Young individuals in developing countries like Malawi face several challenges in accessing economic opportunities. These challenges include: High unemployment rates, developing countries often struggle with high unemployment rates, and young people are disproportionately affected. Limited job opportunities make it difficult for them to find employment and earn a sustainable income. This can lead to frustration, disillusionment, and societal instability. They face limited access to education, whereby many young individuals in developing countries lack access to quality education. This limits their opportunities to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for employment insufficient educational infrastructure, lack of resources, and low enrollment rates hinder their access to education. Inadequate skills development; even if young individuals have access to education, the skills imparted may not align with the demands of the job market. There is often a mismatch between the skills youth possess and the skills required by potential employers. This poses a significant barrier to accessing economic opportunities. Gender disparities, young girls and women face additional challenges due to gender disparities. They often encounter cultural and societal barriers that limit their access to education and economic opportunities. This perpetuates inequalities and restricts their ability to contribute to economic development. Limited access to capital and resources: Many young individuals struggle to secure the necessary capital or resources to start their own businesses or entrepreneurial ventures. Limited access to credit and financial services, as well as inadequate infrastructure, hinders their ability to establish livelihoods. Corruption and lack of transparency: corruption and lack of transparent governance systems in developing countries can exacerbate

the challenges faced by young individuals. They may face difficulties in accessing economic opportunities due to corruption in hiring processes, favoritism, or lack of transparency in government programs. Inadequate support systems: developing countries often lack adequate support systems and networks to assist young individuals in accessing economic opportunities. There may be a lack of mentorship programs, career guidance, entrepreneurship development initiatives, or vocational training, further hindering their professional growth.

Hence addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves investing in education and skills development, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, reducing unemployment rates, addressing gender inequalities, improving transparency and governance and providing support systems and mentorship opportunities for young individuals in developing countries like Malawi. Expected Contribution: Highlight the potential contributions of the study to the existing body of knowledge and its implications for policy and practice. Emphasize how the findings can inform the design and implementation of effective economic empowerment interventions tailored to the needs of young people in Malawi and other similar contexts in Africa. By incorporating these key elements, the introduction will provide a comprehensive overview of the study's purpose, significance, and expected outcomes, setting the stage for the subsequent sections of the research.

Economic empowerment is the ability to make and act on decisions that involve the control over and allocation of financial resources (Golla *et al.*, 2011). Women's influence over financial decisions is associated with increased use of preventive health services by children and women (Lagarde *et al.*, 2009; Ahmed *et al.*, 2010), including use of modern contraceptive methods (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010; Do and Kurimoto, 2012). Youth empowerment refers to the prioritization and inclusion of youth in all levels of decision-making processes. It involves researching youth challenges, engaging the youth on possible solutions and designing targeted strategies to mitigate the risks and encourage development impact. The Economic Empowerment methodology represents a paradigm shift from financial inclusion to economic inclusion since it aims to provide economic opportunities to the poor through providing financial and non-financial solutions that aim to help them in their journey towards a better life.

Thus, interventions that aim to increase the economic power of women and girls may improve reproductive health behaviors, including sustained use of modern contraception (see Figure 1), particularly when linked with investments that directly address reproductive health and family planning and/or gender norms. The barriers included in the illustrative theory of change shown in Figure 1 focus on those that are thought to be directly addressed through economic empowerment interventions. Although the theory of change is organized in a linear format, the mechanisms of action are likely bi-directional and more complex.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The study area has various economic empowerment intervention problems that retard the effective implementation to meet the needs of young people and at the same time to address their challenges. The major one is high rate of unemployment among the young people that affect both skilled and non-skilled as many of them just stay in their homes without doing anything. The other problems are

demand of collaterals by lending institutions from the already poor youth who are also striving hard to make it in life are obstructed from accessing finances that they can use for establishing small and medium enterprises that in-turn become part of their economic development if accessed and thoroughly utilized. Lack of international implementing partners in the district particularly in TA chikulamayembe is exacerbating the down fall of economic empowerment interventions on the young people whereby fewer tangible projects are being executed in the district, this is so because the headquarters which is the ministry of youth and sports does not equally distribute these implementing partners to some of the districts like Rumphi. Corruption is affecting the effective and efficient implementation of interventions for young people both in the government and non-governmental projects on the grounds that a lot of money is syphoned in the name of procurement of equipment and conducting capacity building trainings for young people which in reality does not exhibit, so this is a drawback to the progress of smooth execution of economic interventions that can transform young people. According to a recent study by Mwale *et al.* (2020), the youth unemployment rate in Malawi has been steadily increasing over the past decade, reaching a peak of 22.4% in 2019. The study highlights the factors contributing to this high rate, including limited job opportunities, a mismatch between skills and market demand, and inadequate support for entrepreneurship among young people in the country. Research by Chirwa *et al.* (2018) examines how the stringent collateral requirements set by financial lending institutions in Malawi hinder economic empowerment interventions for young people. The study finds that the inability of young entrepreneurs to provide collateral often leads to limited access to credit and financial resources, constraining their ability to grow their businesses or pursue education and skills training programs. The detrimental impact of corruption on economic empowerment interventions targeting young people in Malawi is discussed in a report by the Anti-corruption Bureau (2017). The study reveals how corruption within government agencies and institutions responsible for youth development programs leads to mismanagement of funds, delays in project implementation, and compromised outcomes for young beneficiaries.

### 1.3 Specific Objective

- To assess the current socio-economic status, challenges as well as needs of young people in terms of economic empowerment in the study area.
- To identify the importance of engaging young people in economic empowerment interventions regardless of their gender
- To evaluate the impact of a selected economic empowerment interventions on the outcomes of young people such as employment generation, income levels, entrepreneurship outcomes, skills, confidence, savings, participation and overall well-being of young people.

### 1.4 Research Question and Hypothesis

- What are the socio-economic characteristics, challenges and needs of young people in TA Chikulamayembe Rumphi District in the northern region of Malawi?
- How important is the engaging of young people regardless of their gender in various economic empowerment interventions.
- What are the impacts and outcomes of the selected economic empowerment interventions on young people

in relation to employment generation, income levels, entrepreneurship outcomes, skills, confidence, savings, participation and overall well-being of young people in the study area?

### 1.5 Hypothesis

**Hypothesis 1:** Economic empowerment interventions have a positive effect on the income levels of young people in the study area, Rumphi, Malawi.

**Hypothesis 2:** Economic empowerment interventions contribute to higher rates of employment and self-employment among young people in the study area, Rumphi, Malawi.

**Hypothesis 3:** Economic empowerment interventions improve the financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills of young people in the study area, Rumphi, Malawi.

### 1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is important to define as it enables a researcher to focus their research to within achievable parameters. In this study the scope was limited to 150 participants between the ages of 18 and 29 who were interviewed and allocated questionnaires and reached out through their respective youth clubs. This task of completing to respond to the interviews and questionnaires occurred within a period of 1 month and thereafter the recorded data was systematically analyzed and interpreted by using its data analysis and interpretation tools. This study targeted young people who have joined youth clubs and this helped to generate accurate data and effective results that are needed in this research. This implies that any youth that do not participate in youth clubs were not part and parcel of this study.

### 1.7 Literature Review

#### The Journal of Economic Empowerment

According to Brown *et al* (2020) explains that the focus and aim of economic interventions is to empower young people financially. It explores the effectiveness of programs such as microfinance, financial literacy training, and entrepreneurship development in improving the economic outcomes of young individuals. Economic empowerment of young people in developing countries, such as Malawi, has been a key focus for policymakers and researchers in recent years. Studies have examined the impact of various interventions aimed at improving the economic opportunities and outcomes for young people, particularly in the areas of education, employment, and entrepreneurship. This literature review provides an overview of existing research on the assessment of the impact of economic empowerment on young people in developing countries like Malawi. One study by Stanton and Kachali (2016) assessed the impact of a microfinance intervention on young entrepreneurs in Malawi.

The study found that access to microfinance significantly increased the income and economic opportunities for young entrepreneurs, leading to improved livelihoods and economic empowerment. Similarly, another study by Chiluzi *et al.* (2018) evaluated the impact of vocational training programs on young people in Malawi and found that these programs contributed to increased employment and income generation opportunities for participants. Furthermore, research by Hambati *et al.* (2019) highlighted the importance of financial literacy and entrepreneurship education in promoting economic empowerment among young people in developing countries. The study found that young people who received

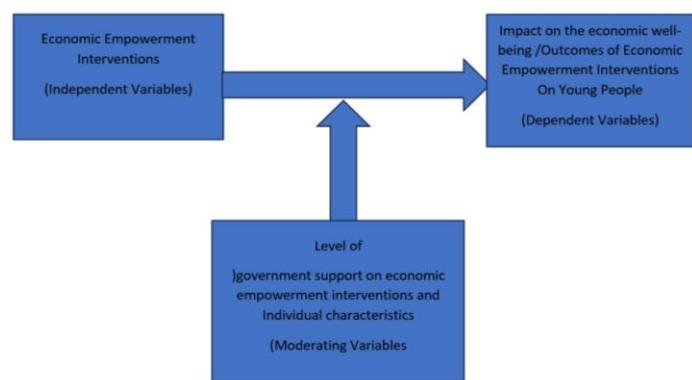
financial literacy training and entrepreneurship education were more likely to start their businesses and have better financial management skills, leading to improved economic outcomes. Additionally, studies by Maleta *et al.* (2020) and Manda *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of different job creation programs on young people in Malawi and found positive effects on employment and income generation. These studies underscore the importance of targeted interventions and support for young people to enhance their economic empowerment and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. In conclusion, the literature on the assessment of the impact of economic empowerment on young people in developing countries like Malawi highlights the significant benefits of interventions such as microfinance, vocational training, financial literacy education, and job creation programs. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by young people in accessing economic opportunities and support in order to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction in the region.

Youth economic empowerment is crucial for sustainable development and poverty reduction in Malawi. However, young people face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to fully participate in the economy and contribute to their own well-being. This literature review will highlight some of the key challenges faced by young people in Malawi and how youth economic empowerment interventions can address these challenges. One of the main challenges faced by young people in Malawi is high levels of unemployment and underemployment. According to the World Bank, the youth unemployment rate in Malawi is around 21%, significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate of 7.6%. This lack of decent job opportunities leads to economic insecurity and limits young people's ability to invest in their future. Another challenge is the lack of access to education and training opportunities. Many young people in Malawi do not have the skills and qualifications needed to secure decent employment or start their own businesses. This lack of access to education and training perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limits young people's prospects for economic advancement. Additionally, young people in Malawi face barriers to accessing financial services and credit. Without access to financial products such as savings accounts, loans, and insurance, young people are unable to invest in their education, start businesses, or save for the future. This lack of access to financial services hinders young people's ability to achieve economic independence and security.

Youth economic empowerment is a critical issue in developing countries, as young people often face significant challenges in accessing economic opportunities and achieving financial independence. Several studies have highlighted the various obstacles that youth encounter in their efforts to secure sustainable livelihoods. One key challenge is the lack of access to education and skills training, which limits young people's ability to compete in the job market. Additionally, limited access to financial resources and credit constrains their entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, social and cultural norms may restrict youth, particularly young women, from participating fully in economic activities. Several studies have explored these challenges and proposed interventions to address them. For example, a study by Blattman and Dercon (2018) emphasized the importance of providing vocational training and mentorship programs to enhance youth employability. Another study by Kabeer *et al.* (2019) highlighted the need for targeted financial inclusion initiatives to support youth entrepreneurship. In conclusion, youth

economic empowerment in developing countries is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach. By addressing barriers to education, skills development, access to finance, and social norms, policymakers and practitioners can help young people overcome these challenges and achieve economic independence. Literature on youth economic empowerment in Malawi highlights the challenges faced by young people in accessing economic opportunities and the interventions needed to support their empowerment. Several studies have focused on specific districts in Malawi to understand the unique challenges and opportunities for youth economic empowerment. One key challenge identified in the literature is the limited access to education and skills training in rural districts such as Mzimba. Young people in these areas often lack the necessary skills to compete in the job market, leading to high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Additionally, the lack of access to financial resources and credit constrains youth entrepreneurship in districts like Mangochi. Interventions such as vocational training programs and financial inclusion initiatives have been proposed to address these challenges. For example, a study by Chirwa *et al.* (2017) evaluated the impact of a vocational training program in Lilongwe district on youth employability and income generation. Another study by Manda *et al.* (2019) assessed the effectiveness of a microfinance initiative in Balaka district in supporting youth-led businesses. In conclusion, the literature on youth economic empowerment in Malawi underscores the importance of tailored interventions that address the specific needs of young people in different districts. By providing access to education, skills training, and financial resources, policymakers and practitioners can help empower youth and promote economic development in Malawi.

Literature on global efforts to address youth economic empowerment challenges highlights various initiatives and strategies implemented by different nations to support young people in accessing economic opportunities. Several studies have examined the approaches taken by countries around the world to empower youth economically and promote sustainable development. One common approach is the implementation of youth entrepreneurship programs, such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) program in Nigeria. This initiative provides training, mentorship, and financial support to young entrepreneurs, enabling them to start and grow their businesses. Similarly, the Youth Employment Service (YES) program in South Africa connects young people with job opportunities and internships to enhance their employability (ILO).



Source: (Researcher, 2024)

**Fig 1:** Conceptual framework shows a relationship between variables of a study

Conceptual review or framework is a clear illustration of the relationship between the variables of the study. In this case there is a greater relationship between the above-mentioned variables because for all the three of them to function properly and produce its desirable results depend on what role the other variable is performing. According to my perception and views towards the variables of this study, in the study of the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people in Rumphi district TA chikulamayembe, the independent variable is economic empowerment interventions. This refers to the efforts and programs implemented to enhance the economic well-being and capabilities of young people in the community. Some of the examples of the economic empowerment interventions which the researcher can engage the youths are tailoring, cosmetology, Barbering, Agribusiness as well as other small businesses in general just to mention a few.

The dependent variable as already indicated on the above figure is the outcomes of these economic empowerment interventions on young people. This includes the changes in the economic status, employment opportunities, skill development and overall well-being of the young individuals who participate in these interventions. The moderating variable in this study is the level of government support as well as individual characteristics. This variable influences the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the sense that young people being the dependent variables will greatly rely on the economic empowerment opportunities offered by government or public-private partnership and this will determine as to how many youths will be transformed in their economic status and standard of living. The level of government can affect the effectiveness and reach of the economic empowerment interventions, while individual characteristics such as education level, gender, and socio-economic status can also play a role in determining the success of these interventions on young people. Overall, the relationship between these variables suggests that the effectiveness of economic empowerment interventions on young people in Rumphi district TA chikulamayembe is influenced by the level of government support and individual characteristics. By considering these moderating factors, researchers can better understand the impact of economic empowerment interventions and tailor programs to improve outcomes for young individuals in the community.

## 2.0 Research Methodologies

### 2.1 Research Design and Approach

The study took mixed methods by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative method involved the researcher interacting and recording views of the selected respondents and it emphasized on the depth of understanding associated with perceptions. This research design helped the researcher to get a deeper insight on the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people and a deeper meaning of the experiences that people have with regard to economic empowerment interventions in the study area. This is also what Cooper indicates when he says that "qualitative method attempts to tap the deeper meanings of a particular human experience and is anticipated to generate theoretical richer observations that are not easily reduced to numbers" (Cooper, 2011). Meanwhile, quantitative method aimed at collecting and analyzing some data in numeric form for easy measurements, generalization and replication of a situation which helped the researcher to have a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, in the course of the interactions,

the views of the respondents were recorded in numerical and narrative format. The research design has provided the necessary steps and procedures that will be used to interact with all relevant participants in the study as Moko asserts that "research design and methodology give a clear picture and road map to be followed in conducting a research study" (Moko 2009:58).

### 2.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study on the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people would specifically refer to the group of young people that were targeted residing in that specific area of the study. It included individuals within the designated age range of 10-35 which are young people as defined by the study. The study focused on 150 young people in TA Chikulamayembe who are participating in various economic empowerment interventions. The total population of young people in the study area is 37621, While for Rumphi district as a whole has got the total population of 229, 161 (Malawi NSO, 2018).

### 2.3 Sampling Procedure

#### 2.4 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling helped to screen out specific groups of people for their knowledge in economic empowerment interventions and used where participants were chosen for a specific purpose. That is to say, because of the important role that they play in addressing the economic empowerment issues and those that are well conversant with economic empowerment interventions. This implies that a specific group of people were selected for efficiency and their reputation in economic empowerment interventions. The study therefore employed this to generate rich data from 150 young people from youth clubs and other key informants such as 3 youth club chair persons, 5 officials from government side and 4 from non-governmental organizations that are implementing youth economic empowerment related programs in the area and Area development committee.

#### 2.5 Convenient Sampling

The researcher also employed convenient technique which provided guidance in selecting those qualified respondents who are near to serve as participants in the study for easy access considering the fact that some areas were a hard to reach by the researcher during the time that data was collected which made some of the roads impassable to reach the required youth clubs. This technique therefore helped to sample the 3 youth clubs namely umodzi youth club, jaghala youth club and mayembe youth club.

#### 2.6 Random Sampling

To avoid being biased, the youth club respondents were identified randomly. This was done by having small papers marked number 1 up to 300 and these numbers were distributed in the youth clubs and those people who got the even numbers (totaling to 150) were selected to participate in the study.

#### 2.7 Sample Size

This research demands a carefully targeted sample of participants through non-probability sampling techniques namely the purposive and convenient sampling methods. This was so to ensure feasibility of the study as the chosen area of study which is T/A Chikulamayembe is big in size with a population of about 70421 (Rumphi NRB Office, 2018).

The selection of youth clubs was based on geographical and socio-economic characteristics as well as on the basis of high, medium and low involvement in the economic empowerment activities. There was also an attempt through the youth clubs to select the distribution of the population within the youth clubs of which youth clubs had approximately 300 youth representing the targeted clubs, and a sample of 50 young people per club were taken with a minimum of 10 youth club executive members per each club. Apart from the focus group discussions with the young people in the youth clubs, other structures were also considered like Area Development Committees in the village within the study area.

## 2.8 Quantitative Research

Clark, Riley, Wilkie and Wood (2000:40) describe quantitative research in terms of collection of data, which relies on the instrument that is determined by the researcher's skills. Quantitative method places reliance upon research instruments used to gather data and analyze or measure it. In this case, the instruments are questionnaires. Bryman & Burgess (1999: 36-37), consider quantitative research as essentially statistical where the aim is to quantify the data. The major purpose of quantitative research is to make valid and generate objective descriptions on phenomena. In this study therefore, this research design is mainly concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form. This will be essential to this research because the findings are easily measured, generalized and replicated. In this study, the researcher will design and distribute 150 coded questionnaires to the respondents described in the next subtopic on data collection tools. The completed questionnaires will then be collected and statistically analyzed by the researcher.

## 2.9 Tools for Data Collection

Several tools were used to collect data from different sources for the purposes of triangulation. Denzin & Lincoln (2000:3) indicate that triangulation of data ensures that the findings are valid and robust enough to be the basis for making academic and policy recommendations. This research envisages that the different data collection tools that will be used will help in collecting different views of respondents on the same matter and arriving at plausible conclusions and recommendations because of the effort that were done in cross-checking and validating the responses from one respondent with those of other respondents. So, in this study, the researcher interacted with respondents through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observation and as well as literature review for the qualitative method, while he used questionnaires under quantitative method as discussed below. All the interviews were semi-structured except for the questionnaires, which were structured in such a way that each question was specifically constructed and asked using the same wording for all the respondents. As for the key informants and focus group discussions, the researcher constructed a list of questions for guidance that were put directly to the respondents. This is so as Francis states that semi-structured interviews enhance flexibility on the part of the respondents and researcher (Francis, 1992). Overall, this approach enabled the researcher to rephrase or amplify any of the questions in case the respondent did not understand.

Qualitative research is committed to naturalistic enquiry and so it is hoped that the flexible nature of the interviews made the participants natural throughout the interview process which enhanced the credibility and richness of the data to be collected. In order to get a full record of the interviews

without missing any point and to be free from lengthy notetaking during the interviews, the responses were recorded using recorders and assurance about confidentiality were given to them. In the case that some respondents didn't want to be recorded, effort were made to write detailed notes and participants were asked to choose between using English or Chichewa or a mixture of the two and notes were collected in English.

## 2.10 Key Informant Interviews for Qualitative Data

This tool was selected in order to enable the researcher collect information from individuals that are deliberately been chosen because of their knowledge and expertise on economic empowerment intervention on young people in the district. The stakeholders included the Desk officer for technical, entrepreneurial, vocation and education trainings (TEVETA) in the district who was selected because of his involvement in all economic empowerment endeavors and was expected to provide information with regards to the TEVETA Management System for young people that are being involved in various skills development in the district and all issues concerning youth in the district, District Youth office that provided the overall situation of young people, the District Trade Office provided information particularly concerning youth that have registered their business which will act as an evidence that youth are really into enterprise implementation and the District Social Welfare officer who deals with the wellbeing of vulnerable groups and who also happens to be the secretary of the bursary committee at the district and was expected to provide information pertaining to bursary for those that want to proceed at technical colleges.

The researcher also will hold interviews with individuals representing 5 key non-governmental organizations that are providing support towards youth economic empowerment to hear their experiences and the impact that their initiatives have had so far on young people's economic outcomes. The researcher deliberately chose 2 individuals because others were interviewed using the questionnaires. Besides, he considered their availability because of their busy schedules. At community level, the researcher interviewed one mentor which included the ADC or former youth leader. He also interviewed two randomly selected youths (out of youth club and a going devoted member of a youth club) to represent 2 different empowerment experiences. These individual interviews helped to highlight factors that did not come through the 7 FGDs.

## 2.11 Focus Group Discussions for Qualitative Data

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is another tool that the researcher used. This method was selected in order to elicit opinions from grassroots stakeholders on youth economic empowerment interventions. These FGDs are planned to be carried out using the FGD guide that was developed on the basis of the research questions. The major strength of the FGD technique arises from the fact that it capitalizes on group dynamics. It thus becomes possible to get realistic accounts of what people think because they are prompted to critically think about, and possibly revise their views (Morgan, 1997; Kitzinger, 1994). Also, it helps in generating more data quickly, has low costs, and the data is based on attitudes, values and opinions of people which enables the researcher to collect rich information.

The study had 7 FGDs, 3 of which involved interacting with 10 youth club executive members. The next 3 were youths that are engaged into economic empowerment interventions

that comprised of 8 females and males aged 15-19 and 20- 24 while one comprised of youth not in economic empowerment interventions. The researcher also met executive members because them being the duty bearers were able to provide reliable data about whether the different economic empowerment interventions that are being implemented by government and partners are benefiting young people in terms of economic outcomes or not, or promoting employment or not. These chairpersons are on a better position because they have experience as they have handled those positions for many years and they are aware of the various developments taking place in the communities they come from year in year out. These categories of the FGDs are representative enough to collect views from different groups of people with a stake in economic empowerment interventions on young people.

In order to be explicit and applicable to the respondents during the discussion, the interview guide varied in terms of the question in such a way that the first guide was made for the youth chairpersons, the second for government officials and the organizations, and the third for the entire youth in general trying to find out what the youth think are the factors that promote and hinder economic empowerment on young people and what can be done to make them impactful.

## 2.12 Observation for Qualitative Data

The researcher also has used observation as a tool to collect data. An observation guide was prepared to this effect which helped to capture information that could have otherwise not been captured from the respondents due to the sensitivity of the information or a miss in the question guide (Creswell, 2014). The researcher was able to observe the change that is taking place in the targeted youth groups in relation to the economic empowerment activities that they have been involved and are still being involved if they are producing the outcomes that are expected. The outcomes here include the level of income that the youth are getting from the economic activities that they have been engaged either by government or partners such as vocations, business or farming and the participation of youth in different empowerment trainings will indicate the impact it is going to cause or have in the process of continuous implementation of interventions. The availability of the infrastructure such as youth resource centers in the traditional authority chikulamayembe will determine also the extent to which young people are involved in the activities and will contribute to the results needed by the researcher, furthermore it will practically help to observe pertaining to what is it that they do in order to compare with what was said during the interviews and the discussion. The study will conduct 6 observations, youth groups.

## 2.13 Questionnaires for Quantitative Data

To collect data from youths concerning the assessment of the impact of economic empowerment interventions, a total sample of 150 respondents was drawn from the youth clubs. Questionnaires were utilized in the study, because they are inexpensive to administer, information is easy to tabulate, and confidentiality is maintained. In order to seek the respondents' participation in the study, prior telephonic requests were made. The distribution of the questionnaires was to be followed and the same set of questions were administered to a particular group. As already mentioned, the questions were to be structured and employed both open-ended and closed-ended type of questions. The researcher planned to have a total of 150 out of school youth respondents whereby each group produced 50 youths' respondents for

each of the selected 3 Youth Clubs. The respondents took into consideration both youths that are married or not married because according to the definition of youth policy in Malawi the age range is 10-35 years and 5 governmental officials including 5 civil society network representatives were regarded as respondents in the study. This number for civil society organization was chosen because in Rumphi there are about more than 10 NGOs known by the district council that are implementing economic empowerment interventions programs and for a good generalization, 5 is a good number.

## 2.14 Tools for Data Analysis

According to Mouton (2003:108-09), the section of data analysis explains the stage at which gathered data is transformed into information via the process of analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample characteristics. On the quantitative data, questions were coded and recorded in an excel sheet. The excel sheet were used because it is easy to use Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 2 method in Microsoft excel. Under excel, the data were put under various headings and subheadings which helped to filter the data for proper organization and to ensure easy variations, combination and other calculations which helped in ordering the results. Then the final results were put into a SPSS software package version 10 for computation. Tables, pie charts and graphs were used to present descriptive results.

SPSS is a package of programs for manipulating, analyzing, and presenting data. It is widely used in the social and behavioral sciences by both students and lecturers as well as those in program management in organizations. It is considered as one of the most powerful, user-friendly software packages for the manipulation and statistical analysis of many forms and ranges of data, (Mouton 2005). SPSS was then considered because of the user-friendliness element looking at the time the researcher has to conclude the analysis and do the interpretation and discussion of findings.

The data was then analyzed using a transcribed verbatim and read over and over from the views, opinions and feelings expressed by the respondents during the interview to allow themes to emerge where a voice recorder was used. Then the researcher manually identified the themes which were categorized according to the research objectives and reported in narrative form along with quantitative form. On each research question, attention was paid to emerging themes, patterns, and trends that was further interpreted to answer the research questions. Through extrapolation of the views, opinions and feelings that were expressed by the respondents were taken in counts (according to occurrences) during the interviews and focus group discussions, recurring phrases or concepts, instances were structured, organized and streamlined according to recorded counts or percentages.

Meanwhile, in order to find groupings and relationships, the data was scanned for patterns and themes through tables. This helped to express possible relationships or construction of a narrative picture of the findings. Then analysis was used in order to elaborate thematic issues in the questions. On each research question, attention was paid to emerging themes, patterns, and trends that would further interpret to answer the research questions. Thereafter, conclusions were drawn through putting it all together and verifying that the findings are valid through checking of bias by incorporating triangulations. The qualitative data will be analyzed through Microsoft word by explaining, analyzing and comparing the collected data of the study area.

### 3.0 Results

The tables and figures below present the results of the data that has been collected from the 150 respondents of the study.

The data derives from the different responses put in questionnaires by the participants, key informant interviews, realized through observations and FGDs of the study.

**Table 1:** Demographic information and background of the respondents.  
75/150\*50=50% respondents to the questionnaire

Name of Youth Club	T/a	Village	Sex of Respondent		Educational Level of the Youths				Total Number of Responders
			Male	Female	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Other	
Mayembe	Chikulamayembe	Mayembe	40	10	10	35	5	0	50 (100%)
Umodzi	Chikulamayembe	Thambo	31	19	18	24	2	6	50 (100%)
Jaghala	Chikulamayembe	Jaghala	20	5	15	6	2	2	25 (50%)

Source: Researcher, 2024

**Table 2:** Marital status of the respondents and general occupation.  
These are merely temporary occupation for the youth individually and not promising.

Name of Youth Club	Marital Status			Occupation				Total
	Married	Single	Other	General Business	Farming	Piecework	None	
Mayembe	12	32	6	5	10	17	18	50
Umodzi	6	40	4	8	4	10	28	50
Jaghala	8	17	0	11	1	3	10	25

**Table 3:** Number of organizations that are implementing EEI in TA Chikulamayembe.

Name of the Organization	Catchment Area/TA	Type of Interventions or Skills Being Offered	No of Youth Clubs Benefiting	No of out of Youth Clubs Benefiting
Life concern	Chikulamayembe-Rumphi Urban	Entrepreneurship Digital skills	2	80
Mzuzu E-hub	Chikulamayembe-Rumphi urban	Entrepreneurship Digital skills	2	80
Comsip	Chikulamayembe	Youth skills challenge e.g. Tailoring Fabrication and welding Carpentry and joinery Barbering Cosmetology Electrical installation Bricklaying Entrepreneurship	31	65
Community Department	Chikulamayembe	SLGs	21	34
Ministry of youth and sports	Chikulamayembe	Entrepreneurship Business mgt Vocational skills	40	0
Computer clinic	Chikulamayembe	Digital skills Entrepreneurship	20	162
Matunkha	Chikulamayembe	Tailoring and catering services	0	100

Source: Researcher, 2024

**Table 4:** Number of businesses established by youth clubs, income generated and youth employed

Youth Club Name	Number of Businesses	Total Monthly Income Generated	Additional Youth Employed
Jaghala	11	370\$	5
Umodzi	8	500\$	2
Mayembe	5	100\$	0

Source: Researcher, 2024

**Table 5:** Trends of youth club involvement in EEI from 2019-2023  
This indicates Statistics for gender involvement for a period of five years 2019-2023

Type of Trade	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Carpentry	44	14	84	19	66	14	108	23	137	35	544
Tailoring	13	47	17	68	8	48	20	71	18	48	358
Welding	42	12	54	11	46	8	73	06	59	14	325
Brick Laying	38	6	44	27	51	21	54	28	70	18	357
Tinsmith	11	0	6	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	28
ICT	29	16	34	22	38	20	23	14	45	54	295
Motor vehicle Mechanics	12	2	36	7	30	12	41	12	44	11	207

Electrical Installation	25	9	31	6	37	9	40	7	38	12	214
Conducted-business management trainings	86	70	74	62	74	60	96	92	112	105	831

Source: Researcher, 2024.

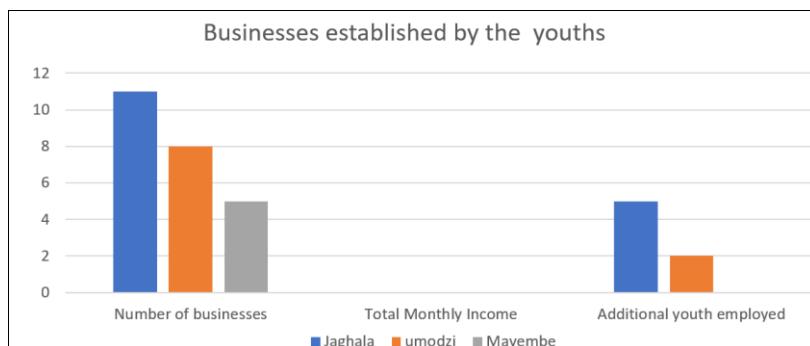
**Table 6:** Presents number of youths attached to Master craft persons in 2024

Trades Offered by Master craft Persons	Number of Youths Attached
Carpentry and joinery	10
Cosmetology	2
Tailoring	5
Fabrication and welding	1
Entrepreneurship	10
Electrical installation	3

Source: Researcher, 2024

This graph is formed from table 4 and indicates that in the three different clubs Jaghala is the one that has got more businesses established by the youth through the different economic empowerment interventions provided by partners

and government and this implies that it experiences higher revenue generation and higher employment creation rate for the youth than other youth clubs.

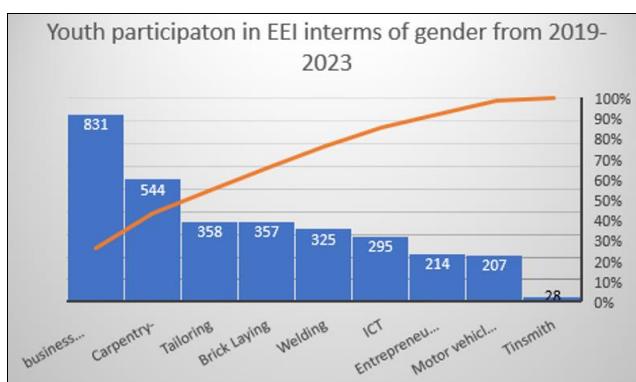


Source: Researcher, 2024.

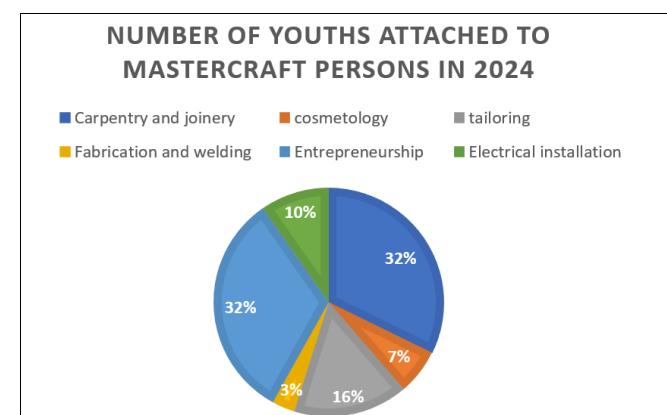
**Fig 2:** Businesses established by the youth and monthly income

This graph is formed from table 5 and indicates several youths engaged in various Economic Empowerment Interventions (EEI). In the period of 5 years more youth that are not in youth clubs have benefited more by being involved in business management trainings with 831 males and females as well as in carpentry and joinery with 544 males and females. Pertaining to gender involvement in the different trades, in carpentry there are 439 males with 105 females, tailoring has 76 males with 282 females, welding 274 males with 51 females, Bricklaying 257 males with 100 females, tinsmith 24 males with 4 females, ICT 169 males with 126 females, motor vehicle mechanics 163 males with 44 females, electrical installation 171 males with 43 females, Business management 442 males with 389 females. This data implies that male youth were highly involved in EEIs than female youth and those not in youth clubs benefited more than those that were not in youth clubs.

This chart is formed from table 6 above and indicates that entrepreneurship and carpentry and joinery has got more youths attached than other vocational skills such as cosmetology, tailoring, fabrication and welding and electrical installation has got a few youths attached. The reasons might be that those trades highly enrolled by the youth are on higher demand in the market



**Fig 3:** Bar graph shows youth engaged in different EEI



Source: Researcher, 2024.

**Fig 4:** Pie chart representing number of youths attached to Mastercraft persons in 2024.

#### 4.0 Discussion

##### 4.1 Educational Attainment-Secondary Dominance, Limited Tertiary

The findings pertaining to the education status of those youth taking part in the EEI reveal and mean that most participants had completed secondary education, indicating a relatively

high literacy rate. However, very few had tertiary education. This has the importance in the sense that it leads to program accessibility in the study whereby secondary education as a baseline suggests programs are accessible to literate youth. The findings also reveal that some youth face some barriers to access tertiary education this is evidenced by the low tertiary representation indicated in the responses: Financial constraints preventing youth from pursuing higher education. Limited relevance of higher education to the local job market or chosen economic activities. Focus on vocational skills, which might be seen as more practical.

#### **4.2 Marital Status and Occupation of Youth in Economic Empowerment Interventions**

The interpretation of Table 2 provides valuable insights into the demographic and occupational landscape of youth involved in economic empowerment programs in TA Chikulamayembe. Here's a discussion connecting the observations from the study to existing literature. To start with the marital status, most of the youth according to the results from this study are predominantly single. The high proportion of single youth in these programs aligns with global trends where youth clubs and programs primarily attract unmarried individuals (UNESCO, 2012). This is likely due to fewer family responsibilities and greater flexibility to engage in group activities. Pertaining to the inclusion of married youth, the lower participation of married youth raises critical questions about program accessibility and suitability. Existing literature highlights that married youth, particularly young women, face unique barriers to economic participation, including household responsibilities, limited mobility, and social norms (Jones *et al.*, 2019). Interventions need to consider childcare provisions, flexible schedules, and address potential stigma associated with married youth participating in youth-centric programs. Pertaining to occupational diversity but lack of security represented suggest that youth are actively seeking income-generating opportunities across various sectors. However, the temporary and unstable nature of these occupations is concerning and reflects a common challenge faced by young people in developing economies (ILO, 2020).

#### **4.3 Organizations Implementing Economic Empowerment Interventions (EEIs) in T/A Chikulamayembe**

The observations from Table 3 regarding the organizations implementing EEIs in T/A Chikulamayembe reveal a dynamic landscape with diverse actors and approaches. Here's a discussion linking the interpretations to existing literature- Diversity of organizations and Interventions such as multi-stakeholder engagement involves NGOs, government departments, and potentially private entities that reflects a positive trend towards multi-stakeholder partnerships in youth empowerment (UN, 2018). This collaborative approach can leverage different strengths and resources, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable interventions. Variety of Programs that involve the range of skills and programs offered indicates an attempt to cater to diverse needs and aspirations of young people. The focus on entrepreneurship and digital skills aligns with global trends recognizing their importance in the future of work (WEF, 2020). Comsip's focus on vocational skills is crucial in contexts like T/A Chikulamayembe where local economies might depend on specific trades (African Union, 2017). Pertaining to community-based approaches, the Community department's

emphasis on sustainable livelihood groups (SLGs) is promising. SLGs have proven effective in enhancing collective action, resource sharing, and access to markets for vulnerable communities (IFAD, 2015).

There is uneven distribution of services pertaining to reach and coverage. The uneven coverage across organizations raises concerns about equity and access to opportunities for all young people in T/A Chikulamayembe. This disparity might stem from differences in organizational capacity, funding availability, target population focus, or geographical reach. Pertaining to Comsip's Potential Impact, it has wider reach particularly among young people that are not into government registered youth clubs which suggests a significant contribution to EEIs in the area. This highlights the importance of NGOs in reaching marginalized youth who might not be enrolled in formal education systems (Harper, 2009).

#### **4.4 Business Establishment and Income Generation**

The observations from Table 4, showcase businesses established by youth in different clubs presents a positive picture of the impact of economic empowerment interventions. However, as it has been rightly pointed out, a lack of information regarding the sustainability of these businesses hinders a comprehensive impact assessment. Pertaining to positive impact and variation in business creation has got evidence of successful intervention, in this case the establishment of businesses across all three youth clubs signals the effectiveness of EEIs in stimulating entrepreneurial activity. This aligns with numerous studies showcasing the positive role of well-structured entrepreneurship programs in equipping youth with the skills and resources needed to start businesses (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2014). Pertaining to the factors influencing business numbers, the disparity in the number of businesses across Jaghala, Umodzi, and Mayembe could be attributed to several factors such as local economic context that includes variations in market demand, resource availability, infrastructure, and competition within each club's geographical location can influence the number of viable business opportunities (Porter, 2008).

#### **4.5 Gender Imbalance in Program Participation (Overall and Variations)**

From the findings of this study mostly particularly on the assessment of the impact of economic empowerment interventions on young people in terms of gender the findings reveals that more males than females participated in the economic empowerment programs across the three youth clubs, particularly in Mayembe and Umodzi. Jaghala showed a more even distribution but had a much lower overall response rate. This suggests a potential systemic issue where girls and young women might face barriers to accessing or participating in economic opportunities. This could be due to societal norms whereby cultural expectations might limit girls' involvement in certain activities or fields, for example some skills development appearing in the program are welding and fabrication which by their very name and nature are affected by the cultural beliefs of the community members who in-turn influences the career choices of their female children. Pertaining to the program design, most of the programs might not be designed to address the specific needs and constraints of young women as they may incorporate interventions which are contrary to their future dreams. The findings also portray some unintentional bias which also do play a major role in the

selection processes of who should be attached to some certain skills or trainings and in so doing males are being more favored than females.

#### 4.6 Gender Dynamics and Involvement in Youth Economic Empowerment Interventions in T/A Chikulamayembe

The interpretation of the five-year data on youth participation in various trades reveals persistent gender disparities within economic empowerment interventions in T/A Chikulamayembe. While the overall growth in participation is positive, the lack of significant progress in bridging the gender gap raises concerns and highlights the need for targeted interventions. Pertaining to persistent gender gap and societal norms on gendered occupational segregation, the male dominance across most trades, except tailoring, aligns with global trends of occupational segregation, where women are often concentrated in lower-paying, less secure sectors (ILO, 2018). This is often rooted in deeply ingrained societal norms, cultural beliefs, and gender stereotypes that shape educational choices and career aspirations from a young age (UNESCO, 2016). In an attempt to addressing root causes, efforts to promote gender equality in EEIs must address these underlying social norms. This requires community engagement, awareness campaigns targeting parents and community leaders, and promoting positive role models to challenge traditional perceptions of "male" and "female" occupations (Bandura, 1977).

#### 4.7 Youth Attachment to Master Crafts Persons in T/A Chikulamayembe (2024)

The analysis of the 2024 youth apprenticeship data highlights potential trends in skills development and economic opportunities within T/A Chikulamayembe. Here's a breakdown of the observations, connecting them to relevant research and proposing avenues for further investigation. In terms of popularity of carpentry/joinery and entrepreneurship, it has market demand and income potential. The high youth uptake in carpentry or joinery and entrepreneurship likely reflects a perception of these areas offering promising income-generating prospects (ILO, 2016). Construction and small business ventures are often significant drivers of economic activity in developing contexts, creating a demand for these skillsets (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2014). In terms of accessibility and appeal of entrepreneurship, the popularity of entrepreneurship could also be attributed to factors like lower barriers to entry compared to some trades e.g., lower capital investment requirements for small-scale ventures, flexible work arrangements, and the aspiration to be self-employed (GEM, 2023). When it comes to lower uptake in other trades and potential skills gaps in relation to local market dynamics: The lower numbers in cosmetology, tailoring, fabrication and welding, and electrical installation warrant investigation into local market demand for these skills. Factors like existing competition, saturation of service providers, or limited access to target markets could influence youth interest (Porter, 2008). In terms of availability and capacity of master crafts persons, the number of available masters' crafts persons, training capacity, and the quality of training provided are crucial factors. Limited opportunities for apprenticeship in certain trades could be a bottleneck (World Bank, 2013).

In terms of addressing skills gaps proactively, if these figures reflect future labor market trends, a potential surplus in carpentry/joinery and entrepreneurial skills, coupled with shortages in other areas, could emerge. Proactive skills gap

analyses and targeted interventions promoting less popular trades are essential to ensure a balanced labor force (CEDEFOP, 2020).

#### Conclusion

The study concludes that economic empowerment interventions have a positive impact on the lives of young people. Skills training and access to finance should be prioritized in efforts aimed at empowering youth.

My observations highlight the need for nuanced and context-specific economic empowerment interventions that consider the marital status and occupational realities of young people in TA Chikulamayembe. By analyzing the relationship between these factors, evaluating program impact on income generation, and addressing the specific challenges faced by different subgroups, interventions can be tailored to empower young people to achieve sustainable livelihoods and contribute to their communities.

This study underscores the different positive outcomes and impact of Economic empowerment Interventions on young. Connecting these findings to existing literature highlights both the universality of certain challenges and the importance of context-specific interventions. By drawing upon successful models like RUISTIPA and incorporating insights from relevant research, policymakers and development practitioners can design and implement more impactful and sustainable EEIs that truly empower young people to achieve their economic aspirations

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