

The public dimension of Practical Theology: The contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi

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DEDICATION

This thesis has been dedicated to my late grandmother, Elidah Chaima, who died in dire poverty.

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of poverty in Malawi is one of the challenges that raises questions amongst almost every Malawian. There have been efforts by the government and different religious organisations to fight against poverty. The results have not been so promising considering the rate at which poverty is still increasing in Malawi. Based on previous studies on the church and the poor in Malawi, it is evident that the increase in poverty is caused by ineffective methods of addressing poverty in the country.. In light of the high levels of poverty in Malawi, the researcher was prompted to investigate how the Evangelical Church, particularly the Zambezi Evangelical Church could be improve its contribution to addressing poverty in the country. The objective was to understand and recommend an improvement for the Zambezi Evangelical Church's contribution to addressing poverty from a holistic point of view.

This study used Osmer's (2008:4) framework for practical theological interpretation to answer the research questions and meet the objectives. Osmer (2008:4) develops a framework for practical theological interpretation in congregations by focusing on four key questions:

1. What is going on in a given context?
2. Why is this going on?
3. What ought to be going on?
4. How might the leader shape the context to better embody Christian witness and mission?

Based on the first question of the framework, the researcher assessed what was going on in Malawi in terms of poverty. The study found that poverty in Malawi is pervasive, deep and severe. The country is experiencing chronic poverty considering that most of the poor people lack food and can go to sleep without eating anything. The situation of poverty has been perpetuated by different factors in the country.

An empirical study on how the ZEC is addressing the challenge of poverty was conducted. It was found that while the ZEC has a biblical foundation to engage in addressing poverty in Malawi, nevertheless, their involvement is not properly guided to yield the results. The issue of leadership within the ZEC emerged as one of the reasons why the ZEC is challenged in addressing poverty in Malawi.

This study proceeded to look into the Bible on what God's word says about poverty. It has been found from the Bible that God has a concern for the poor. His concern is shown in different legislations in the Pentateuch which were given in order to give directions on how the poor should

be treated in societies. The directives that the word of God gives, is that the poor should be empowered to come out of their poverty and also to be cared for by the church.

The recommendations were given on how the ZEC can improve the leadership and enhance their engagement in addressing poverty. The ZEC should promote servant leadership within the church, establishing the department/organisation that will specifically deal with poverty issues, assume a prophetic role, fostering true unity and partnering with the government and other stakeholders on more developmental programmes.

Key words: public dimension, practical theology, Zambezi Evangelical Church, poverty, Malawi

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS - Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome

CCAP - Church of Central African Presbyterian

DPP - Democratic Progressive Party

ESV- English Standard Version

FAO- Food and Agriculture Organisation

FBO - Faith Based Organisation

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

GDP - Growth Domestic Product

GoM- Government of Malawi HIS- Integrated Household Survey

HIV - Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

ILO- International labour office

IMF - International Monetary Fund

LWF - Lutheran World Federation

MGDS - Malawi Growth Development Strategy

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NSO- National Statistics Office

PAP - Poverty Alleviation Program

PPP - Purchasing Power Parity

PRSP - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

UN - United Nations

ZEC – Zambezi Evangelical Church

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 The Church and the Poor

There has been a constant debate as to what the primary mission of the church is. Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:62-63) stated that:

The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of the Father.

Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:62-63) observed that from the early church in Acts and the life of the apostle Paul, the primary mission of the church is to win people to Christ and build them up in Christ. Making of disciples has been the primary task of the church as seen in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Mark 16:16-20). In agreement to the assertion above is Hildreth (2018:55-63) who maintained that preaching and witnessing and making disciples of all nations is what the church needs to corporately endeavour to accomplish.

However, Stearns (2009:181-189) argued that a gospel that excludes social involvement is a Great Omission rather than the Great Commission. Stearns (2009:189) added that:

If we in the church are truly dedicated to the Great Commission, then we will first have to do something about the 'Great Commission'. We will never effectively demonstrate Christ's love to the world if we cannot first demonstrate it to the Church—the whole Church that includes those struggling just to survive.

Sider (2010:27-28) asserted that there is a problem when we define the gospel as the Good News of the forgiveness of sins or of personal salvation rather than the Good News of the Kingdom of God. The problem of understanding the gospel as simply the forgiveness of sins comes in two-fold (Sider, 2010:17). First, it implies a one-way ticket to heaven and one can live like hell until they get there (Sider, 2010:17). Second, Jesus himself in his ministry demonstrated that the inauguration of the Kingdom of God did not just come with the forgiveness of sins but also other things like the healing of the sick and concern for the oppressed (Sider, 2010:17).

Chester (2013:67-80) in his book, *Good news to the poor*, gave this conclusion about the issues of the gospel and social justice. First, evangelism and social action are distinct activities. These should not be confused as one (Maggay, 1994:17). Social involvement is about effecting change in history while proclamation is effecting eternal change. And also, social involvement empowers

the community through their participation whereas the message of the gospel is that we are powerless and cannot participate in our salvation (Chester 2013:73). Second, the proclamation is central. While evangelism and social action are partners in several aspects, it is wrong to think of them as corresponding activities of equal impact (Chester 2013: 74). Third, evangelism and social action are inseparable. This is due to the fact that evangelism involves the lives of people. People cannot be treated outside of their context. Thus, meeting people's needs always accompanies evangelism. "Evangelism alone might make sense in the lecture room. It may even just make sense in a wealthy suburb. But, it makes no sense at all when working among the poor" (Chester 2013:74). The Christian ministry approach that integrates evangelism and social action is denoted by the term integral mission.

Magezi and Mutowa (2018:124) in agreement with other integral mission scholars such as Padilla (2004), in their recent article titled 'Towards doing practical integral mission' rightly observed that there is agreement among Christians on the notion of integral mission.

The terms such as "integral mission", "holistic mission" or "ministry", "Christian development", "compassionate ministry", "transformation", or "church-driven development" denote the role of churches in helping people and communities with material resources, as opposed to solely evangelism. These terms denote a Christian ministry that is concerned for the whole person (Magezi & Mutowa, 2018:124).

Regardless of the agreed position on the integral mission, Magezi and Mutowa (2018:125) noted that there has been a lack of motivation and empirical research as to how it can be done on the ground. This has been noted by Myers (2010:121) who observed that there is a lack of new volumes of case studies that have been published, few serious programme evaluations that are authentically holistic, and very little serious research on the subject indicating thorough theological reflection.

Myers (2017:174-176) observed that due to the situation described above, there are no global proposals by Christians for ending poverty in the world. There are three reasons among others that Myers gave for the lack of Christian contribution to development theory and practice (2017:175). Firstly, Christian's development work with the poor is local and micro. The churches' involvement with the poor is "highly decentralised, almost church by church, denomination by denomination, and traditional by traditional" (Myers, 2017:175). Secondly, churches and Christians tend to delegate their development efforts of Christian development to Christian agencies whose engagement with secular development theory and research is uneven (Myers, 2017:175). Lastly, most Christians in the academic world are either theologians who have little

contact with a practical discipline like development studies which have a great potential in helping the church to function effectively in development processes (Myers 2017:175).

Kaiser (2015:40) noted that traditionally the Christian church has been at the vanguard of giving freely to the poor, caring for widows, taking in needy orphans, visiting the sick and caring for the dying. Magezi and Mutowa (2018:124) acknowledged the significant role that churches and Faith-Based Organisations (FBO) have played over the years in the social development and transformation of people's lives. Myers (2017:175) stated that in the time between the ascension of Christ and his coming again, the history of the church shows that through its theological anthropology and moral vision, it has encouraged the emergence of changes that improved the living conditions of humanity. Sunshine (2015: 22) confirmed the vanguard role of the Christian church as follows:

There can be no question that the early church was involved in caring for the poor. The church in Jerusalem in Acts 4 is perhaps the most obvious (and most misunderstood) example of this, but we can look as well to the aid delivered to the church in Jerusalem from churches in Asia Minor and Greece as an additional example of caring for those in need within the Christian community. But these early Christians did not only take care of their own poor. They ministered to the sick and dying, purchased slaves to set them free, clothed the naked and fed the hungry whether they were Christians or not.

Notwithstanding this long legacy of support for the poor and the needy, the church's role in addressing the needs of the poor declined in 1926 (Kaiser, 2015:40). Myers (2010:119) stated that during the 1920's American evangelicals took a break in social action. This was due to wounds that were caused by the modernist-fundamentalist controversy (Myers 2010:119). Kaiser (2015:40) added that this decline was probably due to the "emphasis on the 'Social Gospel' in liberal theology which evangelicals began to view with deep suspicion as evidence of attempts to procure salvation by works rather than evidence of social concern in the church." As a response to this, the evangelicals "retreated behind the fundamentals of the faith and the singular importance of evangelism and stayed in a defensive stance for almost 50 years" (Myers, 2010:119). Keller (1997:38) asserted that the helping of the poor has now been generally looked at as the secondary duty as some churches still wrestle with what takes primacy, evangelism or social action. But, helping of the poor is and should be part of any Christian church as affirmed by Paul in Galatian 2:10 (Longenecker, 2010:159-170). According to Wright (2005:81), the church's social involvement reflects her gratitude for what God has done and her confident hope

in what He's (God) doing. The church is to imitate the character of God that she worships in her social as well as her personal life.

The perspective of the poor by the early church in its outreach to the Hellenistic cities of the Greco-Roman world is found in these words of apostle Paul, "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do" (Gal. 2:10). This is evidenced in the reports recorded of Paul's ministry that he really was committed faithfully to helping the poor (Rom. 15:26, Ac. 20:35).

The commitment to helping the poor was not for Paul only. In the book of Acts of Apostles, the members of the early church in Jerusalem made it a general practice to sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had a need (Acts 2:45). Padilla (1982:62) notes that, even though the Jerusalem pattern was not repeated elsewhere, "It is quite clear, however, that the concern for the poor was for the early Christians an essential aspect of the life and mission of the church."

There is evidence enough that the church in the book of Acts was striving for equal status hence they sold all their belongings and shared the proceedings with the church (Acts 4). It is also evident that this kind of practice did not apply in all churches, neither was it set to be a model because we do not find such practices being encouraged elsewhere in the churches that Paul planted. As the general rule churches and believers in the New Testament were encouraged to take care of the poor especially those who were believers (Gal. 6:10). In a way, the principle drawn from this is that those who are believers are to demonstrate the genuineness of their love to their brothers and sisters in the faith who are in need as demonstrated by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. This pattern needs not to change inwardly- meaning that the church is called to support their own poor and this should be maintained.

1.2 Zambezi Evangelical Church and practical ministries

Mkweteza's article *Zambezi Evangelical Church celebrates 125 Years of Mission in Malawi* in the Nyasa Times (2017), affirmed how Zambezi Evangelical Church has been involved in the spreading of the Gospel and contributing to the social development of Malawi. Mkweteza (2017) further records what Luckwell Mtima, the then General Secretary of Zambezi Evangelical Church said on the celebration event:

Am impressed looking at the years and the role the church has taken in helping the government in various development initiatives of the country. For example, in health, education services, women empowerment, youth and road infrastructures.

Zambezi Evangelical Church was founded in 1892 by a missionary known as Joseph Booth (Paas, 2006:201). The church has over 500 church stations across Malawi and it has also some branches in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa (Zambesi Mission s.a). The church is governed by its own Synod which convenes bi-annually.

In the 1980s, due to war in Mozambique, Zambezi Evangelical Church Relief and Development department was created in order to help the refugees who fled from civil war. The work of giving relief and development continued despite Mozambican citizens returning into their homes in the 1990s. The department then changed its focus towards assisting locals who lacked necessities like water, food and health care. This was to address the needs of many people in Malawi who live in rural poverty-stricken areas (Zambesi Mission s.a). Zambezi Evangelical Church claims that it undertakes holistic development in a Gospel Context (Zambesi Mission s.a).

According to the official church website (www.zambesimission.org), the church has projects that include emergency food distribution and various other community development projects. Zambezi Evangelical Church has been involved in assisting the victims of flood and drought with money, grain, seed corn and fertilizer. Many people in Malawi experience food shortages due to the poor harvests which cannot cater for everyone's needs. Zambezi Evangelical Church is also involved in Community Development projects. In order to help the communities to develop, the Church has initiated projects with fish, bees, poultry and goats. It is also helping with organic farming and nurseries for trees and new crops. There are other projects that give villagers supplementary sources of income on a very small scale through loans and some training in business.

Zambezi Evangelical Church also helps with adult literacy as the statistics show a very high level of illiteracy, particularly among women. The church has also some projects with water and sanitation, vocational training and AIDS Awareness (Zambesi Mission s.a).

The Zambezi Evangelical Church adopts a holistic ministry approach as stated on its official website (Zambesi Mission s.a). The holistic ministry approach entails evangelism and social action as functionally separate, relationally inseparable and essential to the total ministry of the Church (Yamamori, 1996:1). In Evangelism, the church is devoted to the proclamation of the Good News of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. The social action part is devoted to the liberation of men and women from social, political and economic shackles (Yamamori, 1996:1). Yamamori (1996:1) argues that the ministry of God should be viewed as a whole. "Holism implies the identity and distinctiveness of various parts in their relationship to the whole and, at the same time, their relationally inseparable nature" (Yamamori, 1996:1).

The approach of the Zambezi Evangelical Church seems to be anchored in the Bible. One of the things that God demanded His people Israel was to show justice in caring for the vulnerable in society (Zech 7:10-11). The vulnerable people include the widows, the fatherless, the immigrants and the poor. Keller (2010:4-5) explained that “the *mishpat*, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity, but a violation of justice, of *mishpat*.” This indicates how God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power. From this perspective, the Zambezi Evangelical Church is involved in the different practical programmes to reach out to the vulnerable and needy people in Malawi.

1.3 Operational concepts and definitions of poverty

The term poverty can mean different things depending on who is giving the definition (Ngwira, 2018:4). The World Bank defines poverty in absolute terms. As per the bank’s definition, the extreme poverty amount to living on less than US\$1.90 per day and moderate poverty to less than \$3.10 a day (World Bank, 2018:viii).

The question of who the poor are is vital in establishing the ways in which the church might reach them. People can define the poor or poverty in various ways but whatever way they may be defined, the terms have two major dimensions. Firstly, the poor are those deprived of physical necessities (experiential). Secondly, the poor are those who are socially and politically oppressed (contextual and relative) (Magezi, 2007:48).

Gustavo Guterrez (1973:289) in defining poverty stated, “the term poverty designates in the first place material poverty, which is the lack of economic goods necessary for a human life worthy of the name.” Similar to the idea of poverty being deprived of physical necessities is Pixley and Boff (1989:1) who described the poor as “those who suffer from basic economic need, those who are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with dignity.” It should be noted that in any consideration of the poor, it is the concept of physical deprivation which most naturally comes to mind at the first meaning of the term. Whatever the term “poor” may stand to mean, initially it carries the idea of lack and want. Because the lack of daily supplies is defined in the spectrum of what it means to be poor, poverty is an evil which has debasing and painful consequences.

Within the range of poverty, there are those who can be said to be poor in absolute terms. This is when one lives below the subsistence level. For example, there is a great percentage of people in Malawi or other countries who live below the poverty line. This is to say that they fail even to find the money needed to buy enough food for normal physical life and work (Samuel and Sugden, 1983:14). Then, there are those who live in relative poverty. This level of poverty has been

described by Samuel and Sugden as “a level of income sufficiently low to be generally regarded as creating hardship in terms of the community’s prevailing living standards” (1983:15). There are also those who refer to poverty as being poor in the spirit, which is not the focus of this study.

The second dimension of poverty refers to the poor as those who are socially deprived. As it can be seen in the words of Pixley and Boff (1989:3), this group involves “the product of a conflictive process, the poor are those classes whose impoverishment has not come about naturally but by the forces of a system of domination” (1989:3). If poverty is understood in this way, then it refers to more than physical deprivation to include exclusion. Pixley and Boff (1989:5) asserted that “the classical image of the ragged figure begging a crust from door to door is something we have to put behind us, to be replaced by a less romantic and more realistic image of the poor.” They are those who are oppressed in all manner of ways, and who seek their liberation.

Therefore, poverty in this study refers to those who are deprived of physical necessities and those who are oppressed socially. These frameworks of poverty will be used in this study. The poor are an oppressed class or classes of people who are marginalised and exploited by social systems and whose oppression is expressed in economic and cultural forms.

1.4 Zambezi Evangelical Church country context - Malawi

Malawi is a small landlocked country in Southern Africa. It has a land area of 94,484 square kilometres and by 2018 it had a population of around 18 million people (Kanyuka, 2018:1). This makes Malawi one of the highest population densities in sub-Saharan Africa (Conroy, 2006:14). The country of Malawi was and is predominantly agricultural. There is a lack of mineral resources that have paralysed Malawi’s economy as it only depends on agriculture (Harrigan, 2001:1, Ngwira, 2018:4). According to Record *et al.* (2018:27), the agricultural sector remains of central importance for Malawi to achieve its development objectives and fight poverty. Ngwira (2018:1) describes Malawi’s economy as one that relies mostly on grants from foreign donors as agriculture fails. According to Chasukwa and Banik (2019:107), Malawi heavily depends on bilateral and multilateral donors to meet the cost of implementing its national budget. Churches like Zambezi Evangelical (Zambesi Mission s.a) and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) (Jere, 2018:2) have been involved in initiating community-based projects that help in bettering people’s lives at grassroots. There are serious deficiencies in the public sector, telecommunications and infrastructures that are an obstacle to economic growth (Ngwira, 2018:1).

The biblical statement that the poor are always going to exist (Deut. 15:11; John 12:8) cannot only be seen but also the intensity at which poverty is increasing. Poverty is a principal challenge in human societies. Malawi is considered one of the poorest countries in the whole world. Malawi

is the sixth poorest country in the world and the pace at which poverty reduction has been undertaken has been very slow (World Bank, 2018:14).

As per a report of the International Monetary Fund, Malawi has the lowest per capita GNI (a measurement of income divided by the number of people in the country) in the world (IMF, 2017:1; Harrigan, 2001:1). This shows the severity of poverty in Malawi. Dunga (2014:139) states that “poverty in Malawi has been serious and remains the same albeit some changes have taken place.” There has been no visible improvement in combating poverty in Malawi. Bwalya (2004:7) describes poverty in Malawi as “pervasive, deep and severe.” Gumulira (2019) in the Mail & Guardian has an article *Malawi is at a crossroads. It needs change* where he records Dr Saulosi Chilima, the former Vice President of Malawi points out that “our communities are being ravaged by curable diseases; an overwhelming majority of our citizens live in dire poverty and spend less than a dollar a day.”

Recent estimates of poverty show that around 70% of the population live below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day (World Bank, 2018:1; Harrigan, 2001:1; Conroy, 2006:22). Most people in Malawi struggle to have food to eat for a day (Chasukwa & Banik, 2019:107; Conroy, 2006:3).

It is not uncommon to see both government and different religious organisations venturing into the programmes to alleviate poverty (Kakowa, 2016:64). Government and other stakeholders’ attempts to fight poverty in Malawi has been visible since the introduction of democracy in 1994. Mussa (2014:138) records the introduction of the Malawi Economic Growth and Poverty Alleviation strategy in 1994. The Malawi Poverty Alleviation Program of 2002 recorded by Bwalya (2004:10). The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy I 2006–2011 by Mutharika (Malawi Government, 2006). The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II from 2011 to 2016, and the Malawi Economic Recovery Plan 2012–2014 (Malawi Government, 2012).

1.5 The need for a Public Practical Theology inquiry

In recent years, practical theology has evolved from being seen as primarily concerned with the practice of the Church and clergy to include public issues such as poverty. Dreyer (2004:919-920) argues that practical theology should not solely be understood as focusing on the church and clergy. The vision for practical theology should be broadened to include everyday life of people at local, national and global levels. This position that practical theology should take a public dimension was noted by Dreyer (2004:919). Practical theology should “critically reflect on both the Christian tradition as well as social and political issues” (Dreyer, 2004:919). Magezi (2019:133) in his insightful article ‘Practical Theology in Africa- situation, approaches, framework

and agenda proposition' rightly observed that "practical theology in Africa is faced with a challenge of developing a holistic practical theological framework that includes practical spirituality, social, physical, political and economic issues" (Magezi, 2019:133). The shift in emphasis of practical theology to public practical theology is a major development that is acknowledged by many practical theologians (Magezi, 2018; Dreyer, 2004, 2011; Dreyer & Pieterse, 2010; Osmer & Schweitzer, 2003). Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:218) usefully explain that the task of public practical theology is discerned in three ways: firstly, it is about ensuring that the public is one of the audiences of practical theology. Secondly, it is to ensure that practical theology includes everyday concerns and issues in its reflection. Thirdly, practical theology should facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture.

Vanhoozer and Strachan (2015:16–17) in *the pastor as public theologian* advised that the pastor should be a theologian by saying 'what God is saying in Christ'. At the same time, he or she should be a public figure which means that he or she should 'publicly be involved in and for the community'. The focus on public issues in practical theology is to ensure that theology engages key social issues such as poverty (Miller-McLemore, 2005:95-106).

Considered from a public practical theological perspective, the challenge of poverty in Malawi and the interface of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in cooperating to address poverty raises a need for reflection and examination. Practical theology performed at this public intersection is 'murky' and unclear (Magezi, 2019:1). Magezi (2019:1) writing in the context of public pastoral care definition rightly noted that:

Despite the recognition of the need for pastoral care to address broader social issues, the vexing questions and issues that currently remain somewhat like a black box or lacking clarity are the following: how does public pastoral care look like? How should public pastoral care be practically conceptualised? How can public pastoral care be done? What is pastoral about engaging in social issues?

The above questions could be applied in this study to examine how Zambezi Evangelical Church is engaging in public practical theological issues. Noting the developments in public practical theology, Miller-McLemore (2012:26) observed that practical theology has disrupted the space occupied by academic theology by pushing for a fresh theology abstracted from life (i.e. public life). This entails taking theology out to the streets and using what is learned from the streets to assess the adequacy of biblical, historical and doctrinal claims. It is in this context that the Zambezi Evangelical Church and its holistic ministry activities are examined as public and also theological efforts.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the positive concerted efforts by the government and faith-based organisations, such as the Zambezi Evangelical Church, poverty is still increasing for both religious and irreligious people. The gap between the rich and the poor is so intriguing in the sense that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Mussa and Masanjala (2015:5) commented that the

Economic inequality has worsened significantly in Malawi in recent years. In 2004, the richest 10 percent of Malawians consumed 22 times more than the poorest 10 percent. By 2011, this had risen to the richest 10 percent spending 34 times more than the poorest.

Jere (2016:40) argued that one of the reasons for the gap between the rich and the poor is lack of true *Kenosis* within the church. When people do not understand the model of self-emptying and humility that Jesus Christ provided, there will be no complete and long-lasting change in the lives of people.

The question is “what is going wrong with all the efforts to eradicate poverty in Malawi?” There seems to be no convincing response to this question. There are different factors that contribute to Malawi’s poverty. According to McNeill and Asuncion (2009:3), poverty is the consequence of the complex interactions of many forces at all levels – global, national and local. Handley (2009:2-9) mentioned that some of the factors that led to Sub – Saharan African countries (Malawi being one) are political, social, economic and geographical. Handley’s statement seems to agree with Mbetwa’s conclusion in his book *‘Why Africa is poor’*. Mbetwa (2018:179) sees the combined effect of severe geography and climate, the slave trade, colonial and neo-colonial plunder as some of the factors that have contributed to Africa’s poverty as a continent. (2018:179). Mills (2011:1) argues that Africa is poor because of the African leaders’ decisions to remain in poverty. He arrived at this conclusion based on the record that shows that African countries can grow their economies and develop faster if the leaders make sound decisions in the national interest (2011:1). According to Jere (2018:2), Malawi remains in poverty because there is lack of serious poverty reduction efforts at both local and national levels. He further stated that the application of secular approaches in combating poverty has also contributed to the worsening of poverty in Malawi within members of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, which is one of the huge Christian denominations in Malawi. He proposes *Koinonia* (fellowship) as modelled in Acts 2 is the biblical solution to deal with poverty.

Corbett and Fikkert (2012:49-68) analysed how the Church in North America engages in poverty alleviation, and saw the same problem as to Jere, that the methods being used by the Church to address poverty worsen both the helper and the helped. The problem of poverty needs to be studied. Kunhiyop (2008:138) asserted that before we venture into a recommendation for

addressing poverty in the communities, it is imperative that we “critically examine some approaches to the problem of poverty in Africa.” This is to say that jumping into addressing the problem of poverty before surveying the deep issues surrounding the problem will result in failing efforts.

There is consensus among churches in Malawi that the church should be involved in helping the poor. It is not uncommon to find some sort of programmes that are run by different denominations to address poverty in the society. The problem, however, as noted by Janse van Rensburg and Breed (2011:2) is “the question is whether the church is equipped with enough knowledge and skills to develop a more structured approach to the problems surrounding poverty.” The point raised by Janse van Rensburg and Breed (2011) is that while churches may have good intentions, it seems to lack the capacity to effectively engage in poverty reduction initiatives. Linked to this problem is that churches may be unclear about how to engage with government officials. Furthermore, there is a lack of well-developed practical theology to inform and guide the church to effectively function at the interface of church and social issues such as poverty. Therefore, these limitations of the Zambezi Evangelical Church require examination to ensure that the holistic ministry of the church is well understood, which lead to meaningful theological reflection and effective holistic ministry designs. The problem arising is how the Zambezi Evangelical Church can effectively address the issue of poverty in Malawi.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Primary research question

The main question of the study is:

How can the Zambezi Evangelical Church's contribution to address poverty in Malawi be improved from a holistic ministry perspective?

3.2 Secondary research questions

To clarify the main question, the following secondary (sub-questions) are posed:

- What is the nature and the extent of poverty challenges in Malawi?
- What is the Zambezi Evangelical Church’s current contribution in addressing the problem of poverty in Malawi?
- What are the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively in Malawi?
- What recommendations could be made to the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact on poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi?

4. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Main aim

The main aim of the study is to:

Understand and recommend improvement for the Zambezi Evangelical Church's contribution to addressing poverty in Malawi from a holistic ministry perspective.

4.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of the study are to:

- Describe the nature and the extent of poverty challenges in Malawi.
- Explore the Zambezi Evangelical Church's current contribution in addressing the problem of poverty in Malawi.
- Understand the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively in Malawi.
- Recommend theological and practical approaches that could be adopted by the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry as well as enhance its impact in poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sefotho (2015:31) states that methodology deals with why, what, where, when and how data is collected and analysed. "Methodology is the way you go about achieving the purpose already stated" (Vyhmeister, 2008:38). Different research topics demand that specific methodology should be used in order to appropriately solve the research problem (Smith, 2008:157). It is the research methodology that informs which tools the researcher uses to carry out the research project and the tools that will be selected (Leedy and Omrod, 2010:12).

This research was guided by the practical theological framework of Osmer (2008:4).

Osmer proposed a model of practical theological interpretation with four tasks (2008:4):

- The descriptive-empirical task. Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.
- The interpretive task. Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.

- The normative task. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from “good practice.”
- The pragmatic task. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted.

5.1 The Descriptive Empirical Task

The question regarding the descriptive-empirical task is “what is going on?” (Osmer, 2008:37-41). The research question that was answered in this section was: “what is the nature and the extent of poverty challenges in Malawi?” This section of research involved a systematic investigation of the current situation as it relates to how poverty is increasing in Malawi. To achieve this, the researcher gathered the information to discern patterns and dynamics, in particular episodes, situation, or contexts through a qualitative empirical study and a literature study. For the literature study, this research used available literary data on poverty and the church involvement, which was accessed through libraries as well as the internet. The collected data was critically analysed using a text analysis which extracts and examines data and deriving patterns and finally interprets the data. These helped to probe what is going on with the Zambezi Evangelical Church’s involvement with addressing poverty in Malawi as the descriptive-empirical task involves priestly listening (Osmer, 2008:4-35).

5.2 The Interpretive Task

The interpretive task of practical theological interpretation helps in identifying the important issues related to why poverty is increasing in Malawi despite the involvement of denominations like the Zambezi Evangelical Church in combating poverty. The question that was answered as related to this task is: “why is this going on?” The specific study question that was answered in this section is: “what is the Zambezi Evangelical Church’s current contribution in addressing the problem of poverty in Malawi?” A literature study of various related topics of the inquiry was conducted in order to find out why poverty still is a big challenge in Malawi. Osmer (2008:82) refers to this process as applying ‘sagely wisdom’. Sagely wisdom requires the interplay of three key characteristics: thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation, and wise judgement. Thoughtfulness involves considering how one treats other people and also being committed to reflecting deeply on the challenges that life brings on an everyday basis (2008:82). Theoretical interpretation involves the “ability to draw on theories of the arts and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes, situations, and contexts” (Osmer, 2008:83). Osmer highlights that the fact that all theoretical knowledge is fallible and is grounded in a particular perspective, it must be

used with a full understanding of these limitations. Wise judgement is the capacity to interpret episodes, situations, and contexts in three interrelated manners:

- Recognition of the relevant particulars of specific events and circumstances;
- Discernment of the moral ends at stake;
- Determination of the most effective means to achieve these ends in light of the constraints and possibilities of a particular time and place (Osmer, 2008:84).

This research drew on theories to bring about an understanding of the poverty issue in Malawi (Osmer, 2008:83). These theories were used with understanding that they do not give a complete picture; therefore, the researcher was aware of the difference between theory and reality (Osmer, 2008:80).

5.3 The Normative Task

The normative task of practical theological asks this question: “what ought to be going on?” This task calls for prophetic discernment. It seeks to discern God’s will for present realities.

Prophetic discernment involves both divine disclosure and the human shaping of God’s word. The prophets draw on specific theological traditions to critique popular and official theologies and the way of life justified by these theologies. They interpret theologically very specific social conditions, events, and choices before the covenant community at a particular moment in time (Osmer, 2008:134-135).

The following question :“what are the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively in Malawi?” was answered under this section.

The normative task of interpretation has three approaches: theological interpretation, ethical reflection and good practice (Osmer, 2008:161).

- Theological interpretation: using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, and contexts, informed by the theory of divine and human factors.
- Ethical reflection: using theological principles and guidelines to provide guidance to good moral practice.
- Good practice: deriving norms from good practice by looking at how other people have dealt with similar situations in the present and past in order to bring transformation into the present practice.

This research selected some passages from both the Old and the New Testament on poverty and employed both exegesis and hermeneutical principles in order to draw biblical principles for dealing with poverty.

The main passage in the Old Testament was Leviticus 25. And the New Testament main passage was Acts 2. In the Old Testament, God set out laws on how the Israelites should treat the poor people among them. While the context in which these laws were given is totally different from Malawi, nevertheless, there are principles that can be drawn from Leviticus 25 that can be applicable to Malawi's poverty context. In the New Testament, challenges like poverty were prevalent. The way the early church dealt with those challenges provides lessons and is still applicable today. Acts 2 gives a good example of how the church can reach out to the needy. Other supporting passages were analysed to help to understand what ought to be done in Malawi poverty situation.

5.4 The Pragmatic Task

The objective of the pragmatic task is to provide congregational leaders with "strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable" (Osmer, 2008:176). The question that was answered as related to this task was: "how might we respond?" The specific study question that was answered under this section was: "what recommendations could be made to the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact in poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi?"

What are the practical and effective ways that the Zambezi Evangelical church can employ to address poverty issues in Malawi? The answer to this question was found in the results of careful application of the Exegesis and hermeneutics of chosen passages. The biblical perspectives that are posed in this study will have a significant impact on the pastoral-theological model to equip the Zambezi Evangelical church of Malawi to respond to the issue of poverty in Malawi relevantly and effectively.

5.5 Data Collection

Two types of data were gathered, that is, literature information and empirical data.

5.5.1 Literature information

The foundation of this research paper was built upon a literature review (Borg & Gall, 1989:116). The insights and knowledge gained by the review will certainly lead to better-designed projects

and significantly progress the chances of obtaining important and significant results (; Osmer, 2008:54-55; Borg and Gall, 1998:116).

Boote and Beile (2005:3-4; Borg and Gall, 1989:117-119) highlight the importance of a literature review. Firstly, a literature review is important because it delimits the research problem. In this, the review helps in both limiting and more clearly defining the research problem. Secondly, it helps in seeking new approaches. Reviewing literature allows one to learn about the work that has been done already on a particular topic and what could have been overlooked (Boote and Beile, 2005:3). Thirdly, it helps in avoiding sterile approaches. When thoroughly done, literature reviews help to avoid approaches that have failed to produce results in the past. Fourthly, the review of the literature helps not only report the claims made in the existing literature but also examine critically the research methods used to better understand the methods, measures, subjects and approaches used by other research workers and can thus lead to significant improvement of your design (Boote and Beile,2005:4). Lastly, it helps in giving recommendations for further research with specific suggestions for persons planning further research in the field.

A thorough analysis of related literature was done. The following databases at the Ferdinand Postma and Jan Lion-Cachet Library at the North-West University (Potchefstroom campus) were used. Keywords used in the above-mentioned research questions were used to search on the following databases:

- ATLAS – American Theological Library Association – Religious Database
- EBSCO HOST – Academic Search. Elite Database
- Library Catalogue
- NEXUS DATABASE SYSTEM – Dissertations and Theses
- SCOPUS – Multidisciplinary Articles Database
- ISI – Web of Science
- ISAP – South African Journal Articles

5.5.2 Empirical data

The empirical study used a qualitative approach. The researcher employed in-depth interviews to obtain factual information regarding the current situation in the ZEC for purposes of description, statement or planning.

Empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five (5) leaders and ten (7) members. An interview guide in the form of a pre-compiled questionnaire in-depth interview guide for data collection was developed based on the research questions. Both the pastors and the members were asked the same questions.

5.5.3 Sampling

This study used a non-probability sampling method, in which the samples were selected based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. The researcher has a clear target in mind. Therefore, a purposive sample of church leaders with experience and exposure to the Zambezi Evangelical Church holistic ministry and those who have been members for ten years and more were purposively sampled. Those who participated in this research were from three regions of Malawi namely the Southern, Central and Eastern. The Northern region was left out purposely as the Zambezi Evangelical Church has not been in this region for a long time.

5.5.4 Legal authorisation

The researcher got permission from the General Secretary of ZEC to conduct the interviews. All the participants signed the informed consent that the researcher sent through the email which provided the participants with sufficiently detailed information on the study, which enabled them to make an informed, rational decision to participate. The researcher sent interview questions via email to the participants after receiving informed consent from them.

5.5.5 Recruitment of research participants and inclusion criteria

The following inclusion criteria was used in selecting the key informant interviewees. The key informants were (1) theologically trained or at least involved in church leadership with a theological understanding in the church, (2) had been exposed and well informed on the holistic ministry, (3) had been a Zambezi Evangelical church member for more than ten years (4) one who can read and understand English (5) willing and available to participate in the interviews.

The interview questions were sent to two groups of people, that is the pastors and church members. In total, five (5) pastors were selected: two pastors from the Central region, three pastors from the Southern region. Out of these 5 pastors, one was a female pastor (as the ZEC have the female pastors). Three members from the Central region and four members from the Southern region participated in the interviews.

5.5.6 Data gathering

The participants sent answers to the interview questions via email to the researcher. Follow up interviews with the participants was done telephonically as well as through WhatsApp to clarify areas that were unclear.

5.5.7 Data analysis

This research study used a thematic approach to analyse the data collected through questionnaires. The analysis themes were generated from the study objectives and research questions.

5.6 Risks and precautions

There is a possibility that the participants might be emotionally and physically exhausted in responding to the interview questions. The researcher gave ample time of two weeks to do the interviews, so that the participants can work at the pace where risks are avoided.

5.7 Benefits for participation

The respondents who participated in this research contributed to a greater understanding of how the Zambezi Evangelical Church is addressing poverty and the recommendations this study will give to better address the problem. The data that was collected helped to improve the church's approaches to addressing poverty in Malawi.

5.8 Incentives for respondents

No financial remuneration was offered to any respondents for their participation in this research.

5.9 Management, storage and destruction of data

All the data from the survey was collected by the researcher through email and kept securely in a locked cabinet. The transcribed data was password protected in the researcher's computer. All data is currently stored in the researcher's computer for a period of five years and will be destroyed thereafter.

5.10 Privacy and confidentiality

All personal information from respondents was treated anonymously and confidentially and will only be accessed by the researcher and his promoter(s). Pseudonyms were allocated to the respondents to maintain anonymity.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The research proposal was reviewed and submitted for ethical clearance in the Faculty of Theology at NWU. The empirical research did not include vulnerable individuals. The risk level is set as a minimal risk as the probability, magnitude or seriousness of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is negligible and not greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life.

All participants were aged 18 and above, which means that it was a low-risk study.

7. CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Chapter One: Introduction and background
- Chapter Two: What is the nature and extent of poverty in Malawi? (Descriptive task)
- Chapter Three: Why is poverty persisting in Malawi despite efforts of many players such as churches, government, and international development agencies? (Interpretive task)
- Chapter Four: What is God's desire regarding poverty within a context of Malawi? (Normative task)
- Chapter Five: What recommendations can be made to the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact on poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi (Pragmatic task)
- Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: NATURE AND EXTENT OF POVERTY AND ITS PERSISTENCE IN MALAWI

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature and extent of poverty as well as its persistence in Malawi. To help understand the poverty levels in Malawi, a definition of poverty will be provided. The history and the economic context of Malawi will be considered to understand the situation of poverty in the country. Different factors that are perceived to be the major causes of poverty and its persistence in Malawi will be addressed in this discussion. The literature on the subject of poverty in Malawi will be reviewed and analysed. Poverty will also be considered from a biblical perspective.

2.2 Historical context and brief overview of Malawi as a country

2.2.1 History of Malawi

Malawi is a small landlocked country in Sub-Saharan Africa which is bordered by three countries namely, Mozambique to the south and east, Tanzania to the east and north, and Zambia to the west. It has a land area of 94,484 square kilometres and it had a population of around 18 million people by 2018 (Kanyuka, 2018). This makes Malawi one of the highest population densities in sub-Saharan Africa (Conroy, 2006:14).

In Malawi, there are three regions and each region has its own city. The country has and twenty-eight districts. . Mzuzu is the city for the Northern region, Lilongwe is country's capital city and also the city for the Central region, and Blantyre is the city for the Southern region. . The largest commercial city is Blantyre , which has a population of about 2 million people (World Population Review 2020).

Malawi was a British Protectorate until 1964 when it gained its independence from the British (Conroy, 2006:17). Prior to this time, just like most of the African countries, Malawi suffered brutally under colonial rule. Conroy (2006:15) stated that Malawi was a major trading route for the slave trade and thousands of people were taken from villages and transported to ports on Lake Malawi, and then on to slave markets of Zanzibar. This continued until the British Government established the Protectorate of Nyasaland in response of Dr David Livingstone's concerns about the slave trade. During the colonial rule, Malawians suffered by being forced into British Army to

fight the World War 1, and experienced increased taxation in 1912 when there was famine in the Thangata System¹.

Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda was the first national president who ruled from 1964 until 1994. According to Conroy (2006:17), by the time that Malawi gained independence, poverty was extreme, illiteracy was high and there was rapid population growth. Only few people had access to formal education. However, the young leaders who pioneered the independence movement were bright and brilliant. The mistake that they made was giving the presidency to Dr Banda who rapidly became a dictator and did not listen to advice from anyone. Commack (2004:8) commented that:

Under Banda's autocratic rule dissent was violently quashed and a culture of self-censorship emerges. This undermined the formation of a strong and active civil society and enable Banda to establish a network of comprehensive and highly personal control that had full power of the law but completely arbitrary.

There are different opinions in Malawi regarding the Banda regime. Some believe that he was a good ruler, but some argue that he contributed to worsening the level of poverty in the country. The anti-Banda's regime pointed out that his development model was largely top-down and unresponsive to the needs of the ordinary poor people. During his reign, the nation was praised by foreigners for its economic policies and growth, while in actual sense the prosperity that was generated evaded the majority of the population and created high levels of inequality (Commack, 2004:8).

In 1993, Malawi had a referendum which resulted in a change from a one-party system to democracy. Since then, Malawi has had different presidents in the term of ten years maximum. The reign of Dr Bakili Muluzi, (1994-2004) the first democratic president of Malawi, also had some problems which contributed to poverty in Malawi. According to Cammack (2004:9), Dr Muluzi's economic policy was 'poverty alleviation,' which was meant to prioritise education, health and other social sectors using fund available by donors, and to ensure that agriculture remained the driving force of the economy. The initial signs of this endeavour were positive as the country's economy sizeably grew. Unfortunately, the country did not experience economic growth for long as it was negatively impacted by the food crisis in 2001-2002 (Conroy, 2006:22). His reign was marred with the preoccupation with domestic political rivalries which undermined his administration's ability and will to address poverty as well as other pressing issues effectively and efficiently (Cammack, 2004:9). Ellis *et al* (2002:3) called Dr Muluzi's process of redressing issues

¹ In Thangata System natives were forced to work in colonial settlers' estates without being paid

in Malawi as “slow, uneven, and complicated by factional, ethnic and regional pressures and exploitations.”

According to Bastoe (2017:11), political life in Malawi is characterised by a majority of ethnic or regional politics over national issues. There has been a tendency in Malawi for the government to prioritise development for the president’s tribe and region. For that reason, the Northern region lags behind in terms of development because there has never been a president from that region. Cammack (2004:8) gives a helpful insight on this when he said:

The political elite care little about national issues but are tied by patronage relations to big men along parochial lines of region, ethnicity and religion; the elite are generally unresponsive (even hostile) to the largely uninformed and impotent public.

2.2.2 Malawi brief overview

Malawi is one of the world’s poorest countries because of a number of factors (Marriot *et al*, 2018:5; Arndt *et al*, 2014:84; Dossani, 2012:20; Ellis, *et al*, 2002:3). According to the IMF (2017:1), Malawi had a small open economy in Sub-Saharan Africa with a per capita GDP of just US\$320 in 2016, which is one of the lowest in the whole world. Out of the population of about 18 million people, around 70 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day (World Bank, 2020:252; Kubalasa, 2004:2-3; World Bank, 2018:viii).

According to the Reserve Bank of Malawi (2020:15; World Bank, 2020:252), currently Malawi is at the population of around 18.6 million. It has the GDP of US\$412 per capita. Malawi remains an outlier when compared with her neighbours like Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia who are geographically and demographically similar and were at a similar stage of development in 1995 (IMF, 2017:1).

Malawi has natural resources such as good water from Lake Malawi and Shire River, natural forests, animal life and land (Page, 2019:43; Dossani, 2012:20; Nuka, 2018). Conroy and Blackie (2006:1) argue that Malawi is not a poor country as it has significant natural resources as well as determined and innovative people .Despite all these, the 2015 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)² ranked Malawi 173 of 188 countries (World Bank, 2016:1). This shows how much poverty is a huge problem in the country. According to Tsoka (2013:1), the permanency of impoverishment in Malawi is confirmed by scientific studies that the country has had since 1998. Studies have shown that there is no significant change as to combating the problem of

² HDI is a statistical tool used to measure a country’s overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions. The social and economic dimension of a country are based on the health of people, the level of the education attainment and their standard of living.

poverty in the country. For example, in 1998, the Malawi poverty and Vulnerability Assessment conducted by the Malawi Government and the World Bank showed that 54 percent of people were poor. In 2005, poverty was 52 percent and the 2010-2011 Integrated Household Survey showed that 51 percent of people were poor. These demographics show that poverty and underdevelopment is a big problem in Malawi as there has never been any significant change (Tsoka, 2013:1; GoM and World Bank, 2007:3-4).

2.3 What is poverty?

The definition of poverty is very important in establishing how the Zambezi Evangelical Church is addressing the issue of poverty in Malawi. The term poverty is not a concept that offers itself to an easy definition. Magezi (2007:42) points out that poverty is a difficult term to define clearly. For this reason, there have been different definitions influenced by different disciplinary approaches and ideologies (Handley *et al*, 2009:1).

Traditionally, poverty has been defined in monetary terms, using income or consumption level. In order to be able to compare poverty levels across countries and over time, those that live below a given level of income – the poverty line is classified as poor (Ravallion, 2010:1-4). Ludi (2015:1) observes that over the past years, defining poverty in economic terms has been complemented by other approaches to conceptualise poverty. According to Handley (2009:1), there are three other approaches that have complemented the concept of poverty. These are the basic needs approach, the capabilities approach and the human development approach (Handley, 2009:1).

Poverty is considered to be a difficult, varied occurrence, from an economic point of view. For this reason, poverty cannot be defined solely in terms of low-income levels. It covers a number of areas such as lack of employment, poor housing, poor health, poor education, social life, amongst other things. Thus, as observed by Silungwe (2001:1-3) poverty is neither purely an economic nor social problem, but one with “economic, social, political, cultural and demographic dimensions. It is a condition as well as a process, a cause and an effect, an involuntary rather a voluntary affliction.”

In agreement with Silungwe’s observation is Robert Chambers (2006:3) who stated that it is very important to know what poverty means if the reality of reducing, alleviating or eliminating poverty is to be realised. Because of difficultness to define poverty, Chambers said that “what it is taken to mean depends on who asks the question, how it’s understood, and who responds” (2006:3). From this perspective, he, therefore, came up with four clusters of meanings.

The first perspective according to Chambers (2006:3) is income or consumption poverty. said he highlights that this definition is used mostly by economists. When they use the word poverty, they

refer to what can be and has been measured. This definition is the one that the World Bank (2019) adopts when they state that anyone who lives by \$1.90 a day or below is poor. The second perspective is poverty as material lack or want. Chambers (2006:3) states that this is used when poverty is defined in other terms other than income. It includes “lack of or little wealth and lack of low quality of other assets such as shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, radios or television, and so on.” He added that poor access to services can be put in this category of poverty. The third perspective is capability deprivation which refers to what one can or cannot do, can or cannot be (2006:3). Chambers (2006:3) highlights that this includes human capabilities, for example, skills and physical abilities and also self-respect in the society, but goes beyond material lack or want. The fourth one is the multidimensional deprivation with material lack or wants, as one of several mutually reinforcing dimensions (Chambers, 2006:3). These definitions of poverty by Chambers shows a multidimensional understanding which is less precise. The definitions help to see poverty in relation to its causes.

If poverty means a number of things, how should one understand poverty to be? It is very important to present a proper definition of poverty that fits the Malawi context before describing the condition of poverty in Malawi.

Noble *et al* (2007:119) assert that there is a difference between definitions of poverty that are solely defined by the experts and definitions which consider the views of ordinary people. In each country, there is a general framework out of which definitions are developed. These definitions do help to distinguish people who are poor and ones who are not within a specified framework. Thus, a definition can help us measure by counting how many people fall within the definition of poverty or measuring the depth of their poverty (Noble *et al*, 2007:120).

Magezi (2007:44) highlights the multi-dimensional definition of poverty. Poverty can refer to case poverty, community poverty, absolute poverty and relative poverty. Traditionally poverty has been defined as absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to impoverishment which is said to be independent of any reference group and does not change according to the needs of different groups in society (Noble *et al* 2007:120). Relative poverty has been defined based on the fact that what is to be poor is different in different places and at different points of time as noted earlier above. For example, the poor of South Africa cannot be the poor of Malawi. Relative poverty is when the poor are not defined as those who fall below a fixed substance level but those whose incomes are considered too far as compared to the rest of the society in which they live. In this, the poor are identified in relation to or relative to other people. Approaching poverty definition this way implies that the majority of people are relatively poor compared with a minority in that it is assessed in the context of the community prevailing living standards.

The most broadly and agreed definition of absolute poverty according to the World Bank (2019), which is strictly in economic terms, states that anyone who lives by \$1.90 a day or below is considered poor. In order to capture both absolute and relative poverty in their description, the World Bank (2004) presented the description that goes beyond the amount of money a person or a family earns to this:

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is a lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not able to see the doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not know how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

The description of poverty above does capture what is being experienced by the poor people in Malawi. Sachs (2005:26-36) defines this kind of poverty as extreme or absolute poverty. The World Bank (2007:1) stated that in Malawi people live in such dire poverty that they cannot afford to meet even their recommended daily food. This is the kind of poverty where those who experience such are degraded and even their lives are on a threat. This is when people have less than \$1 per day to survive, they are chronically hungry, deprived of basic shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation, sufficient clothing, health care and education.

2.3.1 Poverty and its understanding in Malawian context

As one can observe in all the above attempts to define poverty, it is clear that poverty is a term that is difficult to define. Nevertheless, there is one thing that all definitions of poverty have in common. It is the idea that poverty is the lack of something. This lack is understood differently. It could be understood materially, spiritually, mentally and socially.

According to the Malawi Government (2002:5), Malawians' characterisation of poverty is that it is a state of continuous deprivation or a lack of the basics of life. Benson *et al* (2004:419) stated that in Malawi poverty is understood to be that condition in which the basic needs of a household or individual are not met. These basic needs in the context of Malawi include economic, social, psychological and physiological requirements (Malawi Government, 2002:5). Looking at the basic needs in Malawian context, it can be seen that poverty has many dimensions. These include income poverty and human or capability poverty (Malawi Government, 2002:5).

The Malawi Government (2002:5) pointed out that poverty in the country is not abstract. It is a concrete phenomenon which is observed at the individual, household, and community levels. The poor themselves, as per what the qualitative studies have shown, define poverty in terms of lack of felt basic needs at household and community level (Malawi Government, 2000). Sawasawa

(2014:236) recognises that poverty in Malawi is seen when the majority of the population have insufficient food, poor water supply system, large number of illiteracy levels, poor health facilities, and high levels of unemployment.

In this study, in order to capture what Malawians understand poverty to be, this research paper departs on the definition that poverty refers to the experience of those who lack basic needs of life. In the context of Malawi, these basic needs are food, shelter, clothes, health services and education. This includes those who are oppressed socially. This study will use the following frameworks of poverty: the poor are an oppressed class or classes of people who lack basic needs of life and are marginalised and exploited by social systems and whose oppression is expressed in economic and cultural forms.

2.3.2 Measuring poverty in Malawi

It is very profound to discuss how poverty is measured first so that the dimensions of poverty in Malawi could be established. Benson *et al* (2004:419) asserted that in order to determine which household is living in poverty, one must first establish a level of welfare for the household. That level, whether defined subjectively or objectively, will be compared to a level of welfare above which one assumes the basic needs of a household can be met.

According to the National Statistics Office of Malawi and the World Bank (2018:3), poverty analysis is conducted in two main sets of information. Firstly, a welfare indicator that ranks individuals, and second, a threshold welfare level (that is a poverty line) below which an individual is considered as poor. The total expenditure on food and non-food items is used in order to come up with a proper ranking of the lowest to the highest welfare level from the population. Those who rank above or below the poverty line are classified as non-poor or poor respectively.

There has been some consensus on the use of monetary values as an indicator of welfare/living standard and a lot of researchers have used this approach to measure and analyse poverty. Even though the monetary indicator does not cover all aspects of human wellbeing, however, it captures a central assessment of living standards. The preferred one in the context of Malawi as a developing country is the consumption expenditure as it is likely to be a more accurate measure of living standards than income (NSO and World Bank, 2018:4). The huge reason why using monetary values indicator cannot work in Malawi is due to the fact that many people do not have regular income, making current income difficult to assess at any point in time (World Bank, 2007:3).

The cost of basic needs approach is most commonly used to establish a poverty line. In the case of Malawi, the cost of acquiring enough food for adequate nutrition is estimated, which is 2,400

calories per person per day. Then, allowance for the cost of other basic needs is added (NSO and World Bank, 2018:14). The poverty line is absolute in the sense that it fixes the same standard of living throughout Malawi – two persons with the same welfare level will be treated the same way regardless of the location of their residence. The basic needs are invariable. The amount of the basic needs is variable depending on the time and place. For example, in Malawi prices of the items are not the same in all three regions. Therefore, while there is invariableness regarding the basic needs, there is variableness as to the cost of the basic needs (Benson *et al*, 2004:423). The methods in which the poverty in Malawi is analysed is through the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) (Benson *et al*, 2004:420).

2.3.3 Poverty dimensions in Malawi

The incident of poverty in Malawi is widespread, deep and severe (Lungu, 2015:27; Malawi Government, 2003:2). As specified by the third Integrated Household Survey of 2010, 50 percent of the population is poor, and 25 percent live in ultra (extreme) poverty (Malawi Government and World Bank, 2016:2). Mussa and Pauw (2011:1) shed the light on the severity of poverty in the country that it is widespread despite the recent advances to combat the problem. As claimed by the Malawi Government and the World Bank (2016:2), the extent of poverty is exceptionally high when compared against a line of international extreme poverty, even when compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries. But what is meant by all these assertions?

The 2007 *Malawi Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment* showed that using the poverty line of MK³ 10,029 per person per year, or MK 44.3 per person per day, the headcount⁴ poverty rate for the population of about 13 million people in 2005 was 52.4 percent (GoM and World Bank, 2007:4). This shows that close to 7 million Malawians were living in poverty. According to this study, people who lived in ultra (extreme) poverty were 22.4 percent of the population. This makes it more than 70 percent who were living in poverty in the country. About one in every five people lives in such awful poverty that they cannot even afford to meet the minimum standard for daily-recommended food requirement (GoM and World Bank, 2007:4). Phiri (2017) wrote an article in *the Nation* about how the poverty level is extreme in Malawi. She describes the condition that the data from the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (Unctad) indicates that 71

³ The MK is Malawian Currency which is called Malawian Kwacha used in the country. MK44.3 was roughly equivalent to US\$0.50 in 2007.

⁴ Poverty headcount is the percentage of population living below the national poverty lines. National estimates are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys.

percent of Malawians are living in extreme poverty. The World Bank (2018:14), says that around 70 percent of the population in Malawi live below \$1.90 per day per capita. If the middle class poverty line of \$3.10 per day per capita is used, almost 90 percent of the population in the country is living in poverty.

According to Chasukwa and Banik (2019:107), the challenge that poverty poses in Malawi is dire that most of the Malawians are struggling to have food to eat for a day. The researcher has had an experience of what Chasukwa and Banik are stating. Born and raised in Malawi, the researcher experienced a number of times when the family could go to bed without eating anything for the day, even bread. There are a lot of Malawians who are experiencing hunger due to poverty (Conroy, 2006:2). As a result of malnutrition, a lot of children are affected which make them susceptible to various diseases that lead to high infant and child mortality. Tembo (2018:3) alluded to the fact that Malawi has experienced never ending food shortages. He quoted Taifour mentioning that the hunger which hit Malawi in 2002 is said to have claimed 300-500 lives (Tembo, 2018:3). Tsoka (2013:6) mentions that food shortages have always been the number one problem that the country of Malawi is fighting against. The fight against hunger that started at independence, if not earlier, has not yet been won. According to Conroy (2006:33-35), another challenge that Malawi has is serious health issues that impede its economic development. There are high mortality and morbidity rates in the country. Diseases like HIV and AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and other sexually transmitted diseases which can be preventable, are the main causes of deaths in Malawi (Mukherjee and Benson, 2003:409). Simwaka *et al* (2012:223; 2013:3984) pointed out that Malawi is one of the countries that is highly affected by HIV/AIDS. The statistics posted by UNAIDS in 2018 shows that 1,000, 000 people were living with HIV in Malawi.⁵

According to Khuluza and Haefele-Abah (2019:23), the study shows that in Malawi the state of the public hospitals is pathetic. The availability of essential medicine is higher in the private hospitals than in the public hospitals. A lot of people cannot afford the prices that the private hospitals offer and most of them die because of lack of treatment. The reason why there are inadequate medicines in the public hospitals is that the government is failing to give sufficient funding to the health sector. The health care in the public hospitals are offered free of charge (Khuluza and Haefele-Abah, 2019:2; Mussa and Masanjala, 2015:13-15). For Malawi to continue giving medicine free of charge in the private hospitals means an increased funding through taxation or through international partnership. Unfortunately, a lot of partners have pulled out their

⁵ Sourced from: <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/malawi>

support due to the revelation of massive plunder of public resources in 2013. The situation calls for Malawi Government to look for sources of income to deliver health services elsewhere. Consequently, Malawi's public health centres experience poor delivery of medical health services (Khuluza and Haefele-Abah, 2019:2; Makwelero, 2018:3). According to Makwelero (2018:3), the lack of resources, maldistribution of staff and funding between the rural and urban settings and across tiers of care, demotivated staff, task shifting and lack of good interdisciplinary models of work thwart implementation progress in the country.

Conroy and Blackie (2006:1) asserted that Malawi has got devastating and crippling levels of poverty as shown in the statistics:

The statistics are frightening. The average Malawian dies before the age of 40; 73 out of every 1000 infants die in their first year, and further 133 fail to reach their fifth birthday.

The children who survive face a continuing struggle against disease and malnutrition.

Conroy and Blackie (2006:1) point out that the situation in Malawi is startling considering the fact that the diseases that kill people in the country are preventable. Not only are that majority of people are dying in Malawi as a result of preventable diseases, but also that these diseases are the major cause of poverty in Malawi (Mukherjee and Benson, 2003:409; World Hunger, 2013:6). According to Conticini (2004:11) achieving better health status of the poor is not just a fundamental human right but also a strategic, sustainable and cost-effective investment to reducing poverty levels. This is because capitalising in health and health-related sectors backs not only to the enhancement of the health status of the population, but it also adds to engage in poverty levels through nurturing economic growth.

2.3.4 Inequality and poverty in Malawi

As attested by Marriot *et al* (2018:5), Malawi as a country "is stuck in a deadlock of slow growth which is unequally distributed, where poverty and inequality are two faces of the same coin." The gap between the rich which is 10 percent and the chronic poor which is 40 percent is keeping growing and growing (Mussa, 2017:4, Marriot, 2018:5). Mussa (2017:4) observes that there is a worsening of consumption inequality in Malawi. A comparison of the richest and poorest 10 percent of the population shows that the consumption of the richest 10 percent in 2004 was about twenty-two times higher than that of the poorest. This number rose to thirty-four times in 2011 (Mussa, 2017:4; Marriot, 2018:5). There is staggering difference between the rich and the poor

in Malawi. As noted by Nkuna *et al* (2018:13), inequality in the country is worsened as evidenced by the worsening Gini coefficient⁶ per capita for Malawi from 0.390 in 2004 to 0.452 in 2011.

According to Mussa and Masanjala (2015:5, 6), inequality in the country is also explained by the mansions that the richest in the country live in, as they can be seen in the cities of Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Blantyre. Mussa and Masanjala stated that:

Anyone who has seen the many large mansions springing up on the edges of Lilongwe and Blantyre and the plethora of new shopping malls being opened, knows that the conspicuous consumption amongst the rich is dramatically growing.”

Nkuna *et al* (2018:213) argue that while it is true that the whole country is facing the challenge of poverty, it is also evident that poverty is more prevalent in rural areas than in the urban area. About 95 percent of the poor and 97 percent of the ultra-poor live in rural areas (Nkuna *et al*, 2018:13; GoM and World Bank, 2016: 5; 2007:5). According to the Malawi Government and the World Bank (2007:3), the poverty levels in the urban areas are much lower than the rural areas. About 25 percent of the urban population lives in poverty whilst 56 percent of the rural population lives in poverty. This means that people in rural areas are twice as much likely to be poor than those in the urban areas. In terms of ultra-poverty, 24 percent of the rural population is poor, while in urban areas, only 8 percent of the population is ultra-poor (GoM and the World Bank, 2007:3). Furthermore, women and children headed households are affected more by the poverty levels (Dunga, 2014:114; NSO, 2012:217). There are also regional imbalances in poverty incident and shared prosperity across the country's regions. The Southern and Northern regions are worse as compared to the Central region (World Bank 2016:5, NSO, 2012).

2.3.4.1 Inequality in education

While education is deemed as the key to success in Malawi (NSO, 2012:21), it is disappointing to see that only the rich are the ones that can manage to send their children to good schools and universities such as the private primary and secondary schools, and universities (Conley, 2001:59; Pfeffer, 2011:109). The public primary and secondary schools are not in a good condition as they are failing to give adequate quality education to the society. This situation puts those who are poor in a disadvantage as it is hard for them to complete school and break the generational poverty cycle (Mussa and Masanjala, 2015:6; GoM and the World Bank, 2007:x). According to Wamba and Mgomezulu (2014:323), there have been serious concerns about the quality of primary and secondary schools which include overcrowding, poor teachers'

⁶The Gini coefficient is a standard measure of the amount of inequality, and is based on mathematical measure. It can take a value from 0 (perfectly quality) to 1 (perfectly inequality).

qualifications, insufficient teaching and learning materials, high pupil-teacher ratio amongst others. While primary education is considered to play a major role in poverty reduction strategies, however, the low levels of education are a cause and outcome of poverty (Kadzamira and Rose, 2001:5). The public Higher Education is underfunded which makes the fees to be higher and a lot of Malawians cannot afford to pay. In 2016, Safarao wrote in *Malawi 24*, “with our levels of poverty out there, K400, 000 is far too much for most parents to afford. I have seen students fail to afford shoes, so how could they afford to pay K400, 000?” The K400, 000 (equivalent to R10, 000) was the fees that a college student was expected to pay in 2016. This is far beyond the reach of ordinary citizens in Malawi. While paying for university fees is an issue for impoverished Malawians, at the same time the quality of education in Government universities is considered low. Kapatuka-Mana (2016) in the *Nyasa Times* quoted Mwakasungula who argued for the raising of the fees so that higher education can be attained in the university sector, saying this:

If we are concerned about the quality of students and education standards in our universities to be higher and at the same time, we want our universities to compete with top universities in Africa, we also need to pay higher for the same.

The conditions mentioned above make Malawi’s education system to be unpalatable for the ordinary citizens. Hence, illiteracy and poverty are high in Malawi as many people cannot afford education.

2.3.4.2 Inequality in health services

The access to public health facilities in Malawi is unequal (Mussa and Masanjala, 2015:13; Nandini *et al* 2003:1). The persistent shortages of medicines and staff makes the public health facilities to provide a very poor-quality service, despite the best efforts of their few heroic health workers (Khuluza and Haefele-Abah, 2019:2; Mussa and Masanjala, 2015:13). In common with most developing countries, overall utilisation of public outpatient care is regressive (unequally distributed to the disadvantage of the poor). According to Zere *et al* (2007:2; Machira, 2017:12), studies have shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa the level of inequity in health services is high as governments’ expenditures on health tend to benefit the richest of the society in absolute. In the case of Malawi, there are a considerable number of health centres in urban areas than in the rural where the poorest Malawians live. Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) hospitals provide nearly 40 percent of available healthcare in Malawi, and vary hugely in quality (Mussa and Masanjala, 2015:13). They are often based in very rural areas, but charge user fees, meaning that the poorest cannot manage to access their services as they cannot afford to pay the fees (Machira, 2017:12).

2.4 Malawi's economy and poverty

The economy of Malawi strongly depends on agriculture (Arndt *et al*, 2014:85; Ngwira 2018:4; Kubalasa, 2004:2; Mucavele, 2009:8). According to Arndt *et al* (2014:85; NSO, 2012; Bastoe, 2017:22; GoM and UNDP, 2017:1), in Malawi agriculture generates about one-third of gross domestic product (GDP), half of the total export earnings and two-thirds of employment. This shows how agriculture is important in Malawi (GoM and UNDP, 2017:1; IMF, 2017:3; Chirwa, 2008:1). Record *et al* (2018:27) and Devraj, (2017:328) state that agriculture in Malawi is of central importance as it helps the country economic wise to achieve its development objectives and fight poverty. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2015:1) gives a very good summary of Malawi's dependence on agriculture:

Agriculture is considered the engine of Malawi's economic growth since, between 2005 and 2011, more than 80 percent of the country's total exports were agricultural commodities, primarily tobacco, sugar and tea. Tobacco alone, however, represents an average 60 percent of Malawi's total exports. The manufacturing and agricultural sectors work together in their contribution to the overall growth of the economy, which in 2013/14, registered an average GDP growth rate of 5.2 percent.

This reliance on agriculture has had an adverse impact on economic growth due to the factors like drought and floods (Pauw *et al* 2010:1). Floods of 2014, a drought in 2014 and 2016 that was caused by El Nino⁷ affected agricultural production and left millions of Malawians food insecure. Malawi has the potential to diversify its income-generating avenues, to expand its economic base through multiple sectors such as energy and industry rather than depending solely on agrobusiness (GoM, 2012:7). For example, the tourism sectors have got potential to grow the economy of the country and help millions who are poor to come out of abject poverty (World Bank, 2018:47).

2.5 The causes of poverty and its persistence in Malawi

Poverty cannot be attributed to a single factor as far as its causes are concerned. This is as a result of the difficulty to give a precise definition to poverty. McNeill and Ascuncion (2009:3) state that poverty is a result of complex interactions of many forces at all levels. This statement shows that there are myriads of factors that can be contributed to the cause of poverty. These factors can be natural factors, global factors, national factors, or local factors. Poverty and its persistence

⁷The warm phase of the El Nino – Southern Oscillation and is associated with a band of warm ocean water that develops in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific, including the area of the Pacific coast of South America.

in Malawi is caused by a myriad of factors (GoM, 2002:6; Devraj, 2017:328). Some of the major factors causing poverty and its persistence in the country are discussed in detail below.

2.5.1 The arguments of geography and history as causing poverty and its persistence in Malawi

2.5.1.1 Geographical argument

Diamond (1997:54-55) proposes that the environmental factors and topography are directly related to the wealth and success of a country. There are some environments that easily allow the domestication of plants and animals hence making the societies likely to be prosperous (Landes, 1998:5-6; Rodrik, 2003:5). Mbetwa (2018:14) seemed to agree with this advancement when he said that the geography, topography and climate have played a significant part in weakening the African continent. He further argued that much of Africa has been considered hostile to human habitation compared with the places that are blessed with wonderful climates (2018:14). According to Mbetwa (2018:14), this explains why the white colonial settlers preferred to reside in Zimbabwe and South Africa than in Zambia and Malawi.

The other argument on the geography of most of Sub-Saharan Africa as a hindrance for economic development is argued by Paul Collier (2006). To summarise Collier's argument (2006:235-251), he argues that African countries could be grouped into three categories. The first group refers to those countries which are resource-poor but have a coastline. The second group are countries which are resource-poor and landlocked. The third group are the countries which are resource-rich, and it does not matter whether they are landlocked or have a coastline (Collier, 2006:236). These countries have remarkably different economic growth patterns. The coastal resource-scarce countries performed considerably better than the rest (Collier, 2006:241). Collier (2006:237) noted that a lot of African population is pooled around the landlocked resources. According to Collier's argument, it explains why a lot of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are poor including Malawi. This argument is furthered by Arvis *et al* (2007:1). According to Arvis *et al* (2007:1), the countries that are landlocked are disadvantageous as pertaining to prices of goods. They further argued that the countries that are landlocked pay more to export and import their goods (2007:1). Arvis *et al* pointed out "that landlocked economies are primarily affected not only by a high cost of freight services but also by the high degree of unpredictability in transportation time." Lack of direct sea-access has affected many countries. Arvis *et al* (2007:3) noted that Malawi is one of the 20 out of 54 low-income economies which are landlocked and the majority of them are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While it is true to some degree that geographical and environmental factors matter, however, it is not entirely true that these are the reasons why poverty is still persisting in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moyo (2009:30) posited this:

Clearly, one's environment matters, and of course the conditions in parts of Africa are harsh – notably the climate and terrain. But harsh as they may be, these aspects are not insurmountable. With average summer temperatures reaching 49°C (120°F) Saudi Arabia is rather hot, and of course, Switzerland is landlocked, but these factors have not stopped them from getting on with it.

Bradshaw (2006:13) agrees with Moyo (2009) when he said that no matter how badly buffeted by geographical forces, communities can still be developed when they identify their assets and address their condition.

2.5.1.2 Historical argument

Historical factors of slavery and colonialism have also been mentioned as explanations for Malawi's underachievement (Pryor, 1990:27-28). The idea that colonial powers delineated nations established political structures and fashioned bureaucracies that were fundamentally incompatible with the way of indigenous people (Moyo, 2009:31; Mbetwa, 2018:21). According to Mbetwa (2018:21), colonialism was a shattering blow to African countries in the sense that it found Africa in a state of social and economic dislocation and accelerated its impoverishment. Hammond (2003:66) has argued against the factor of colonialism as responsible for poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is what he says:

The notion that colonialism is the major cause of world poverty was popularised by Vladimir Lenin, and his disciples have faithfully repeated it ever since. However, contrary to the ahistorical mumblings of the coloniphobics, some of the most poverty-stricken and backward lands imaginable (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nepal, Tibet and Liberia) never fell under western colonial control.

He presented some colonies like Hong Kong who became very prosperous despite being controlled by the west. He further talked about the most advanced Western countries like the United States of America and Canada who were themselves colonies and also Australia and New Zealand (2003:66). Guest (2005:9) acknowledges the evilness of slavery but mentions the implausibility to blame slavery for all of the African modern problems. There is a sense in saying that at some point almost all nations have practically endured slavery to some degree. "Probably everyone alive today is descended from slaves (and from slave-honours, too)" (Guest, 2005:9). For Europe itself, the majority of people were serfs, bonded labourers, but look at where Europe

is today compared to Africa. This shows that while slavery and colonialism were bad, they cannot account for the persistence of poverty in Sub-Saharan African countries today.

2.5.2 Limitations on economic productivity of land

Agriculture is one of the most important things that differentiates the economies of rich countries from poor countries (Restuccia and Llopis, 2015:2). Restuccia and Llopis, (2015:2) indicated that the poor countries are much less productive in agriculture and allocate their labour to this sector than rich countries. For example, in Malawi, the agriculture sector has more than 80 percent of the population (Chirwa *et al* 2008:2), and also more than 80 percent of employment (FAO, 2015:1; Mucavele, 2009:8). This shows how the country's economy largely depends on agriculture (Devraj, 2017:328, IMF; 2017:7; Pryor, 1990:67).

It is argued that land degradation and access to land cause limitations with land productivity in Malawi. Ngwira and Watanabe (2019:1) asserted how deforestation has caused land degradation in Malawi, and how this has contributed to the limitation of land productivity in the country. Tyagi, *et al* (2014:1491-1492) agrees with Ngwira and Watanabe stating that deforestation is the major driver of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Deforestation also disturbs natural process such as biogeochemical, hydrological, and ecological circles and makes the land useless for agricultural production. In Malawi, deforestation is estimated to be responsible for the loss of 33,000 hectares per year as people in the country try to expand agricultural space and excessive use of biomass (Ngwira and Watanabe, 2019:1). As a result of deforestation, a lot of arable land in Malawi has lost its arability due to washing away of soils by the rains. According to Kirui (2016:1; Nkonya *et al*, 2016:215-218), it is a constant debate as to whether land degradation can be linked to poverty. However, the inter-linkages between land degradation and poverty is very likely in the countries where livelihoods predominantly depend on agriculture. This applies in the case of Malawi (NSO, 2010:16). Land degradation contributes to low and declining agricultural productivity, and this in turn contributes to the worsening of poverty (Kirui, 2016:1).

Chirwa (2004:3) pointed out that the extent to which agricultural development can have greater impact on poverty in Malawi also depends on the availability of land. He argues for land redistribution that will help increasing the land of those with small farms. He further maintained that it appears rational to argue that increase in land holdings provides one of the few opportunities for increasing income of the individual farmer (Chirwa, 2004:4). Bigsten and Shimles (2004:16) have alluded to the studies on determinants of poverty in developing countries that are dependent on agriculture which show that land is one of the important variables in explaining the welfare of the population. The fact that a great percentage of poor people in Malawi has limited

access to land explains why poverty in the country is still a big challenge (Chirwa, 2004:10; Kishindo and Mvula, 2017:1).

While the arguments of land degradation and access to land do hold up to the causes of poverty in Malawi to some extent, however, they are not the real issues contributing to the limitations as to productiveness of the land is concerned. Wilson (2014:4) compares Malawi's economy to that of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. These countries have similarities in that (i) they are all relatively small in geographic area, (ii) they are all landlocked, (iii) they are all predominantly agricultural, (iv) they are in the same climatic region and (v) they are all faced with rural pressures with a limited arable land base. The other three countries are doing much better than Malawi in their economies regardless sharing the same limitations with Malawi (Wilson, 2014:4). Wilson (2014:4) concludes by asserting that the real issue is that the government of Malawi does not have many operational and policy reforms to implement that would bring transformation to the country. The first real issue is the weak government policy on making fertiliser accessible to ordinary farmers (Gono and Takane, 2019: 132). Fertiliser is so expensive to the reach of ordinary farmers (Wilson, 2014:8). The fact that there is visible land degradation in the country, demands that a lot of fertiliser should be used to improve the richness of the soils. Studies have shown that the accessibility of fertiliser by ordinary farmers through Farm Input Subsidy Programmes (FISP) yields great results as to productivity of the crops in the country (Chirwa *et al* 2016:26; Chibwana *et al* 2012:124). The example is of 2005/2006 crop season when Bingu wa Mutharika initiated the FISP which resulted in Malawi yielding a great harvest ever in the history and began to export maize to other countries (Wilson, 2014:8).

The second real issue is the dependence on rain for agriculture (Nuka, 2018; FAO, 2015:8). The reliance on rain for the agricultural sector has recently affected the productiveness negatively due to frequent droughts. There are two seasons in Malawi with a subtropical climate which are: the dry season – which goes from May through October, and the wet season – from November through April. Because of lack of irrigation system in the country (IMF, 2017:7), most Malawian farmers and their pieces of farming land stay idle from May to October waiting for the next growing season. This leaves the majority of people without income for six months as they solely depend on rain-fed farming for their income (Killian, 2015: 60; World Bank, 2007:14). Agriculture in Malawi is largely practised by small-holder farmers. Despite Malawi been blessed with plenty of water in Lake Malawi and Shire River and so many rivers that would help with irrigation, it is so sad to see that until now a lot of Malawians depend on rainwater for agriculture. Due to climate change worldwide, a key to promoting agricultural productivity of small-scale farmers is to increase access to affordability and efficiency of low-cost irrigation technologies (FAO, 1997; Mloza-Banda, *et al* 2010:659).

Dependence on maize and tobacco for food and export respectively is the third real issue in Malawi (Wilson, 2014:3; FAO, 2015:3). Tobacco is the main cash crop in Malawi which accounts for more than half of exported goods (Lungu, 2015:27; Zant, 2016:2; Nuka, 2018; Ngwira and Watanabe, 2019:11). There is other agricultural produce such as tea, sugar and cotton that Malawi exports but in small quantities (Chirwa, 2004:1; Mangani, 2012:5). For tobacco and maize to do well, they need very good rain. Malawi should consider diversifying in terms of agriculture considering the ever-changing climate in the world rather than rely on maize and tobacco only. Moyo (2018) in *the Nyasa times* wrote that another reason for rethinking the growing of tobacco for commercial reasons is the fact that tobacco has a global health risk for people.

2.5.3 The dependency on failing agriculture

There have been some disagreements among economists as to whether agriculture is a good tool for poverty alleviation (Christiaensen, *et al* 2006:3). While it has been long recognised that economic development is inseparably linked to agriculture, there has been little consensus about the preciseness of its role in poverty reduction in the developing countries (Christiaensen *et al*, 2006:2). Christiaensen *et al* (2006:2; Christiaensen and Demery, 2007:1) point out the dual economy models inspired by Lewis (1954) and popular in development economics in the 1960s and the 1970s which characteristically featured agriculture as backward, subsistence sector. In this view, agriculture is not solely dependent upon as a tool that brings economic growth and improves the lives of the poor in the country. Rather, resources are drawn from the agriculture sector to boost the development of the productive industrial sector.

Machethe (2004:2) discusses the role that agriculture plays in the economy of the country. Firstly, he acknowledges that agriculture is very important for the economic growth of a country (2004:3). However, he noted the disagreement on the issue of whether agriculture is the most appropriate way to fight poverty in developing countries (Machethe, 2004:2). Secondly, he summarises the schools of thought on the issue of agriculture and poverty reduction (2004:2). There is one school of thought that argues that since the majority of people in the most developing countries are in the rural areas and the fact that most of them engage in agricultural production or agricultural-related activities, therefore, agriculture is the most effective way to reduce poverty (Hull, 2009:70; DFID, 2005:1). The other school of thought is the one that McIntosh and Vaughan (1961:91) are proponents of. This school of thought recognises the contribution of agriculture to poverty alleviation but attaches more importance to non-agriculture. McIntosh and Vaughan (1961:91) stated that:

“... the notion that a broadly based smallholder agriculture can be created, and that it can transform the character of the agricultural production system is an inappropriate premise on which to build policy frameworks designed to improve livelihood.”

According to the study that Chirwa *et al* (2008:27) conducted on the link between agriculture and poverty reduction, the analysis shows no significant links between agricultural sector performance and poverty indicators in Malawi. The rate of poverty was at 54.1 percent whilst the agricultural value-added per capita grew at 11.5 percent. The poverty rate was 52.4 percent when the growth of agriculture value added per capita was 0.4 percent. The study also shows no clear link between growth in value added per capita and the malnutrition rates (Chirwa *et al* 2008:27). This shows that while there is a correlation between agricultural growth and GDP growth, there is no such clear link between agricultural growth and poverty reduction (Dorward and Chirwa, 2015:2). Chirwa and Dorward's study has comparative results with Benson's study (2005). Benson's study was aimed at finding out why poverty is prevalent in rural Malawi. Benson's observation (2005:42-43) was this:

Very little analysis emerged from the analysis to permit one to convincingly argue that the poor in Malawi are trapped in areas of low agricultural productivity, subject to frequent drought and farming on poor soil. The poor are throughout Malawi, on the best land and the worst land, in areas of relatively high productivity and those of low productivity. Extending this idea, we know that poverty and food insecurity in rural Malawi are closely linked. The fact that agriculture is shown to be positively associated with poverty also implies that agriculture, if not a source of food insecurity, is not serving as an effective means of reducing food insecurity. Subsistence farming is not providing a reliable and sufficient livelihood for most. Moreover, this dismal relationship is not found in isolated pockets but is the dominant pattern observed.

Matita and Chirwa (2019:1), alluding to the World Bank (2008), note that agriculture has failed to get Africa out of poverty. According to the World Bank (2008:26), there are many success stories of agriculture as an engine of growth early in the development process and agriculture as a major force for poverty reduction. However, at the same time, the World Bank (2008:26) stated the numerous failures that have occurred in most parts of the world in getting agriculture moving and how most countries, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa, are experiencing low agricultural growth. The World Bank statement (2008:26) does not imply that agriculture is a failing tool for poverty reduction. But, when agriculture is not handled well in developing countries, it will lead to failure in economic growth, hence the prevalence of poverty.

The case with Malawi is that agriculture has not been handled well to match the demand needed for its effectiveness in poverty reduction (Chirwa *et al*, 2008:27; Chirwa, 2004:24). Dunga (2014:97) says that for agriculture to be a channel for poverty reduction, there are several policies that need to be accompanied to enhance its effectiveness. The concluding summary that the International Labour Organisation (2008:5) gives on how agriculture can be made a channel for poverty reduction is worth to be noted. The ILO (2008:5) stated this:

Agriculture cannot play this dynamic, wealth-creating role without an enabling policy environment, adequate institutions, and sufficient, well-targeted public and private investment. The experience of recent decades has been disappointing in this regard in a number of countries, particularly the LDCs, where investment has declined, rural poverty remains widespread and a very large share of the labour force is engaged in low-return agricultural work. Cuts in health and education budgets and in other public services, as well as the dismantling of publicly funded agricultural extension services during the structural adjustment processes of the 1980s and 1990s, undermined the foundation for bottom-up development for a generation. The effects are being felt today with a large number of poorly educated rural youth with few skills and poor job prospects and a smallholder agricultural sector that cannot thrive due to lack of support in terms of the policy, infrastructure, inputs and investment.

The statement from the ILO (2008) above shows that for agriculture to be effective in reducing poverty, some other factors like enabling policies, adequate institutions and sufficient, well-targeted public and investment need to be implemented. It is disappointing that the rate at which the Malawi Government is dealing with agriculture sector does not correspond to the results that it is anticipated to produce (Dunga, 2014:97; Chirwa, 2004:27; World Bank 2008:8-9).

The GoM and UNDP (2017:27), and Blackie and Conroy (2006:100) allude to the fact that the lack of overarching policy document that would guide agriculture in the country brings a lot of challenges to the sector. Dorward and Chirwa (2015:7) made a similar observation that the importance of the sector to different stakeholders has undermined consistent and coordinated strategic policy and program design and implementation. This has been seen in the way the government, politicians, and development partners (on whom development investments have been very dependent) promoting and pursuing particular and often different and changing interests (Dorward and Chirwa, 2015:7). According to GoM and UNDP (2017:27), the lack of National Agricultural Policy (NAP) in the country has brought the following challenges:

- Inadequate intra-sectoral coordination of activities. There is little or no collaboration in the implementation of irrigation and livestock development at the grassroots level, or fisheries and livestock development.
- Compromised inter-sectoral collaboration with Environmental and natural resources (ENR) and other sectors that affect the sector's performance and vice versa.
- Inadequate intra-sectoral institutional collaboration, such that most project activities initiated by agricultural Non-Governmental Organizations are not incorporated into government programming once the NGO activities come to an end.
- Absence of clear and legitimate criterion for intra-sectoral resource allocation, rendering the resource allocation process amongst the different subsector or departments a subjective undertaking.
- An incomplete agricultural policy reform process with some value chain stages almost fully liberalised while others having heavy government interventions (such as input subsector).
- A minimal public-private partnership with a demonstrable positive outcome.

The challenges described above by the GoM and UNDP (2017:27-28) have made agriculture to fail its capacity of alleviating poverty in Malawi. The technologies which Malawians use to boost agriculture are incomplete, often uneconomic and do not provide a reliable and effective path from poverty. (Blackie and Conroy, 2006:100). The reforms carried out at the macro-level are ineffective due to the fact that the planners have a poor understanding of how they play out in real life (Blackie and Conroy, 2006:100).

2.5.4 Low levels of education and lack of or limited off-farm employment

According to Rahman (2006:3, Dunga and Sekatane, 2013:3; Dunga, 2014:81; Mussa, 2017:2), there is a link between education and poverty reduction where children from poor households have access to education, and to a greater extent where the educated youths have access to employment. The relationship between poverty and education is particularly important because of the key role played by education in raising economic growth and reducing poverty. The better educated have higher incomes and thus are less likely to be poor (World Bank, 2005:11; Dunga, 2014:84). As stated by Johnes (1993:12) and Siphambe (2000:291), there is strong and empirical evidence across the societies that show that the wages and salaries people receive at work correspond to their education. The higher the education one has, the higher the salary and the wages they will receive. Unfortunately, according to Nuka, (2018; Tsoka, 2013:8) the high percentage of the Malawi population comprises of illiterate people. This makes a lot of people unable to find decent jobs that can take them out of poverty.

According to ILO (2008:5; Islam, 2004:1; Mecha, 2017:19), sustainable employment is one of the best routes out of poverty. Dunga (2014:70) highlighted that not every employment can help the poor out of poverty. Formal employment can change peoples' lives (Dunga, 2014:70). Mussa (2013:1-2) asserted that there are a lot of Malawian young people who are struggling to find jobs in the country. Over 70 percent of young Malawians aged between 15 and 29 are employed in informal sectors. It is very difficult to get out of poverty if you are employed informally, according to Dunga (2014:70). The government of Malawi lacks good job creation policies that would assist the unemployed population.

2.5.5 Limitations on capital

The key constraint on capital is lack of access to credit (GoM, 2002:6). According to Tsoka (2013:8; Nkuna *et al*, 2018:812, Mecha, 2017:19), lack of access to credit is one of the major factors that is making many people to be in poverty in the country. Malawi is one of the countries in whose financial sector is among the least developed (Simwaka *et al* 2012:86, Mandiwa, 2014:1). While there is constant debate as to whether access to loan and credit helps with improving poor peoples' lives, studies have positively shown that it really does (Mecha, 2017:18, 19). Access to credit has been considered as a tool for economic development and poverty reduction. In developing countries, access of financial services to low income households such as savings, insurance services, small loans and remittances enables them to benefit from economic opportunities to build up income and assets to lift them out of poverty. Unfortunately, most people in the developing countries including Malawi do not have access to formal financial services (Mandiwa, 2014:1; Diagne and Zeller, 2019:2). According to Simwaka *et al* (2012:86; Chirwa, 2002:5), the range of institutions that can help people with loans in Malawi is narrow, and few that are available do not operate national programmes; therefore, access to credit by the poor remains a major obstacle in the country. By 2012, there were only 11 licenced commercial Banks operating in Malawi with only 19% of the adult population using the services (Mandiwa, 2014:7; Simwaka *et al*, 2012:86). The Reserve Bank of Malawi (2019:35) showed that the total assets held by the commercial bank system by December 2019 was K1, 890,154.4 billion. This is so low as compared to other neighbouring countries (Simwaka, *et al*, 2012:86).

The limited access to finance remains one of the reasons why a lot of people are in poverty. Chirwa (2002:3) pointed out that generally there is agreement that most of microfinance institutions that are operating in Malawi do target the moderate poor and vulnerable. The households that are extremely poor are excluded from these innovative financial services (Chirwa, 2002:3. How to improve access to credit or loan remains a key policy challenge.

2.5.6 Limitations on technology

Poverty has multiple and complex causes, the poor are not just deprived of basic resources but also, they lack access to information that is very important to their lives and livelihoods (Mecha, 2017:19). This includes information about market prices for the goods they produce, information about health, information about structure and public institutions, information about their rights etc. It is in these aspects of information and development that technology helps in combating poverty. Throughout history, technology has been a powerful instrument for economic and social development (Prodi, 2015:1). Technology can be employed in a variety of fields, from increasing agricultural productivity to generation of cheap energy, from providing clean water to improving health (Prodi, 2015:1).

The government of Malawi admits that well developed information and communication technology system is essential for the development of a country (2012:40). But as is the case, Malawi's ICT is still underdeveloped (Nuka, 2018; GoM, 2012:40). Malawi Government, in the Malawi Growth and development strategy II, has carried out a number of reforms aimed at improving research and development and application of science and technology in the country (2012:10). However, studies have shown that Malawi faces a number of human and financial resource constraints to the development of its ICT sector (Isaacs, 2007:4; Salanje, 2008:69). Besides this, the prices for accessing information through internet which is expensive in Malawi is beyond poor citizens (Nuka, 2018). When people cannot have access of information, it will halt their development effort. That explains why a lot of people are poor in Malawi.

2.5.7 Donor/aid dependency

Chasukwa and Banik (2019:104) mention that there are numerous historical foundations of foreign aid. In addition to political ideology, foreign policy, commercial interests, and national security, there are huge elements of unselfishness and a desire to reduce global poverty. There is complexity with the world of foreign aid and there is the inclusion of official development assistance and development, humanitarian, and emergency aid provided by the non-governmental organisation, civil society organisations, bilateral donors, and multilateral agencies (Chasukwa and Banik, 2019:104).

Over the past couple of decades, there have been interesting debates on the conceptual foundations and effectiveness of providing aid. Calderisi (2006:163) has argued foreign aid as a whole has not worked particularly in Africa. This agrees with Dambisa Moyo's argument in her book *Dead aid: why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa* (2009). According to Moyo (2009:29):

In the past forty years at least a dozen developing countries have experienced phenomenal economic growth. Many of these, mostly Asian, countries have grown by almost 10 percent of GDP per year, surpassing the growth rates leading industrialised economies, and significantly reducing poverty. In some instances, poorer countries have leap-frogged the per capita income levels of leading developed economies, and this trend is set to continue: by some estimates, star emerging-market performers such as Brazil, Russia, India and China are projected to exceed the economic growth rates of nearly all industrialised economies by the year 2050. Yet, over the same period, as many as thirty other developing countries, mainly aid-dependent in Sub-Saharan Africa, have failed to generate consistent economic growth, and have even regressed.

On the other hand, Hanlon *et al* (2010) in the book *Just give money to the poor* have argued that aid has not failed Africa. What has failed is an aid and anti-poverty industry that thrives to make the process of giving aid as complex and mystery, with highly paid consultants designing ever more complicated projects for the poor and continuing to impose policy on the poor countries (Hanlon *et al* 2010:8). Hanlon *et al* (2010:9) argue that there is a better way of giving aid and this is to give money directly to those who have the least of it (the poor). A lot of organisations that give aid to Malawi have adopted this system. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) with support from US and UK governments has distributed cash to almost 350,000 vulnerable people in the country's most food-insecure districts during this time of Corona Virus pandemic (UN News, 2020)⁸

Malawi is one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world, with external donors funding over 40 percent of the nation's budget (Chasukwa and Banik, 2019:104; Banik, 2013:2; Adhikari *et al* 2019:197). According to Booth *et al* (2006:29), donors have made matters worse in a number of respects over an extended period that has resulted in the prevalence of Malawi's poverty. By the constant donations that Malawi receives, donors have contributed their own part to a vicious circle in which both the quality of policy and the policy-making capacity of the Malawi state have been progressively weakened (Page, 2019:49; Adhikari *et al*, 2019:197). Page (2019:57) points out the negative effects that aid has in a nation. Firstly, aid conditionality can lead to failed projects when the donors withhold their funds due to any disagreement on how the money is being used or the type of policies the government implements. Secondly, donor policies do not consider in-country situations and make their own conditions for the release of the funds (Page, 2019:57). Thus, for a country like Malawi to depend entirely on donors is so dangerous for the development of the nation and its people. Nyondo (2018) in *the Nation* referred to the statement that the former

⁸ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063062>. Accessed on 12 May 2020.

ambassador of German Peter Woeste stated that Malawians were becoming poorer despite the country receiving \$ 1 billion per year for poverty reduction.

Another way in which aid cripples the developing countries is that a high proportion of foreign aid is in the form of loans which cripples developing countries through the accumulation of debt. Many rich nations receive more in interest payments from recipient countries than they give in aid (Malik, 2018; Kabonga, 2017:8). Niyonkuru (2016:2) challenged the efficacy of aid when he said that in most cases, the aid in form of the bailout has been seen as a form of economic exploitation and defective as it tends to rather deteriorate existing economy as in the IMF-related fiscal target always compel the recipient to adopt measures with harmful effects at a long run.

There is no way that Malawi could make her economy work without donations. The incident that happened in 2011 when then the government led by Bingu wa Mutharika disagreed with main donors (UK, USA, IMF) on some governing policies (Page, 2019:48; Donnelley, 2011:215) backs this assertion. When the donors withheld their aid, Malawi's economy crumbled that saw basic necessities like food doubled their prices which a lot of poor Malawians found it hard to survive. This did not only affect food but all sectors including the health sector (Donnelley, 2011:216).

Nyondo (2018) in *the Nation* quotes Sandra Paesen, an Ambassador for European Union saying this:

Aid has been very useful to countries like Malawi which has pressing development needs. But the point that I'm making is that the modern world, the post-2020 world, I think easy loans cannot bring all developmental answers. What we need is the economic side to develop trade. We want trade and economic development. We want jobs, growth and economic opportunities in Malawi.

In response to Paesen's speech, the president of the Economics Association of Malawi unashamedly argued that it is not easy for Malawi to graduate from donor dependence while citing missing links on technological advancement as one of the challenges that can derail Malawi (Nyondo, 2018).

This kind of donor dependency is what makes the nation of Malawi poor as the country depends on others for her prosperity. Guest (2005:11) states that countries that prosper tend to do so by their own efforts. Outsiders can help, but only to a certain degree. Mbeki (1998:248) made the prediction of the African Renaissance. He then gave the condition for the success of the renaissance. He said the renaissance will succeed "if its aims and objectives are defined by the Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by ourselves and if we take responsibility for the success or failure of our policies" (Mbeki, 1998:248). Unless Malawi grapples with the

issue of poverty and find ways on how it can best address it, chances are high that the fight against poverty will not be successful.

2.5.8 Lack of reliable energy and poor infrastructure

Furthermore, lack of reliable energy sources negatively impacts the economy of Malawi (Rasmusen, 2018:2). Nuka (2018) points out that Malawians depend solely on hydroelectric power which the Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM), a Government-owned company provides. ESCOM is failing to generate the electricity to suffice the needs of the citizens of Malawi. According to Nuka (2018), only 10% of the population is connected to the national power grid. There is a lot of load shedding almost on a daily basis of about 5 hours (Nuka, 2018). This impacts the economy in Malawi negatively since numerous businesses and companies cannot function properly as they need electricity for their effectiveness. International companies also fear to open their trades in Malawi for the same reason of poor energy sources. This has a huge negative impact on the nation's economy.

The lack of reliable energy sources in Malawi goes akin to the condition of infrastructure. Phiri (2018) alluded to the World Bank report that states that Malawi is one of the countries that is very poor on infrastructure development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Foster and Shkaratan (2011:7-18) observe that the challenge of poor infrastructure is visible in the power sector as described above, poor roads as there is inadequate funding for roads maintenance, poor railways, poor air transport, poor water supply and sanitation and poor water resources. Infrastructure is viewed as a crucial ingredient to foster the economic growth for a country. Anyanwu and Erhijakpor (2009:1) point out that "there is general acceptance that economic infrastructure is critical for economic growth and poverty reduction." The fact that the infrastructure is poor in Malawi shows how the economy in Malawi is being affected.

What can be seen in the economic description above is that there are serious challenges as pertaining to the economic growth in the country. Despite all the efforts that the government is putting in order to enhance the economic situation, there seems to be a retrogression as far as the results are concerned. The economy of Malawi remains pitiable.

2.5.9 The HIV/AIDS pandemic

The impact of HIV/AIDS on both the people and the economy of Malawi cannot be overlooked. Phiri (2018) in *Reuters* writes about how Malawi has been congratulated by Jay Levy who co-discovered the virus in 1983. Levy said that Malawi, despite being a poor country has done a remarkable job of reducing poverty (Phiri, 2018). However, the number of people infected in the country is still too high. As recorded by the UNAIDS (2018), Malawi's HIV prevalence is one of

the highest in the world with 9.2 per cent of the adult population aged 15-49 living with HIV. In 2018, it was estimated that more than one million Malawians were living with HIV, more than 38,000 were newly infected with the virus and 13,000 died from AIDS-related illnesses⁹. According to ILO (2005), there are strong bi-directional linkages between HIV/AIDS and poverty. HIV/AIDS is both a manifestation that exists, taking hold where livelihoods are untenable and the results of the sheer impact of the epidemic on social and economic conditions. HIV/AIDS is both a cause and an outcome of poverty, and poverty is both a cause and an outcome of HIV/AIDS (Magezi, 2007:54; ILO, 2005:1; Msangaambe, 2011:91). Msangaambe (2011:91) explains that poverty and HIV/AIDS have become interrelated problems in Malawi and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. This means that the poverty situation has contributed to the rise of HIV/AIDS and, on the other hand, HIV/AIDS has promoted the intensity of poverty in Malawi. But there are some exceptions to this statement. For example, Botswana and South Africa are economically richer than most African countries but at the same time, they have the highest number of HIV/AIDS cases in the world (Magezi, 2007:57). AIDS is making Africans poorer (Guest, 2005:95). HIV/AIDS impacts both economic growth of the nation and household poverty.

2.5.9.1 Economic impact of HIV/AIDS in Malawi

Macroeconomic impacts of HIV/AIDS in Malawi include economic growth, in particular the evolution of GDP, capital stock and productivity, human and financial capital and labour supply (Nyirongo, 2012:22; ILO, 2005:1). As seen above on how HIV/AIDS is affecting a young generation in Malawi, a result of death due to HIV/AIDS brings loss of labour force and this affects the overall economic output (Bollinger *et al*, 2000:3; Arrehag *et al*, 2006:60). Not only does HIV/AIDS impact the labour force, but also it has a severe impact on both agriculture and food security of Malawi and public sector and civil service too (Nyirongo, 2012:22; Arrehag *et al*, 2006:50, 65).

Another facet of the loss of human capital is the long-term effect of the epidemic on the skills and experience of succeeding generations (Bollinger *et al* 2000:3; ILO, 2005:2). In the case of Malawi, AIDS is more prevalent among economic elites. At their death, they leave with their skills and experience and this has impacted the economy of Malawi negatively (Bollinger, 2000:3). When the working places of people who have died with AIDS spend money and time to recruit and train their replacements, it affects the economy negatively. Furthermore, the high rate of the disease leads to high absenteeism and subsequently, low production. Most people living with HIV/AIDS are not strong enough to undertake economic activities in the same manner as the healthy ones. This becomes worse when the HIV positive are living in a poor country like Malawi where the

⁹ Sourced from: <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/malawi>

distance to go to the hospitals in the rural areas is very far and they do not provide food for the patients (Jere, 2019:71).

2.5.9.2 Economic impact of HIV/AIDS on the households in Malawi

The prevalence of diseases in a community adds to the increase in poverty levels. The pervasiveness of HIV/AIDS in Malawi has overwhelming impacts in as far as the poverty levels are concerned. There are a number of ways how HIV/AIDS has worsened the lives of already poor people in Malawi (Bollinger et al 2000:4).

One of the ways in which HIV/AIDS affects a household is the loss of income of the patient, who is frequently the breadwinner. For the majority of Malawians living in poverty, the short and the medium term-effects on families suffering from the loss of an adult who is a breadwinner has a devastating impact (Bollinger *et al*, 2000:4; Arrehag *et al* 2006:113). Malnutrition, which is already pervasive in the country, is likely to increase making the family members vulnerable to all sorts of diseases including HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS can affect the lives of poor people in Malawi through increased household expenditures for medical expenses. In the case of poor families, HIV/AIDS is a burden as the household cannot withstand the expenses that a patient with AIDS demands. In most cases when the household faced with economic problems need to raise money to meet food or medical expenses, they resort to selling assets (Bollinger *et al*, 2000:4; Arrehag *et al*, 2006:40; Nyirongo, 2012:22). Since such patients would need good dietary needs and care from their family members, the family members get forced by circumstances to sacrifice their time and resources which they could otherwise have used for their economic growth (Jere, 2019:71, 72). Jere (2019:72) quotes Smith who has this observation:

The inabilities of the Malawian population to work to provide economically for themselves has been seriously compromised by their lack of nutrition and food, the HIV/AIDS epidemic which eliminates the middle generation, and the deprived governmental school systems making it almost impossible to make any strides toward breaking away from impoverished conditions.

Other members of the household, usually daughters and wives may miss school or work in order to take care of the sick person. Children in HIV-affected households face multiple challenges in their access to schooling. In most cases, the children drop out of school prematurely as the fees become heavy for the household to manage (ILO, 2005:2). Sometimes the children have to find some domestic or agriculture tasks so that they can take care of other children and the sick

person. It is in this scenario where girls venture into prostitution, and both boys and girls get into begging (ILO, 2005:2; Arrehag *et al* 2006:117; Bollinger *et al* 2000:4).

Death results in a permanent loss of income. There is also a lack of labour when death occurs in the household, especially those who depend on agriculture. This forces children to drop out of school in order to save on educational expenses and increase household labour, resulting in severe loss of future earning potential (Bollinger, *et al* 2000:4).

While Malawi is currently doing a commendable job in combating the HIV/AIDS, the devastation that the disease has caused in the country still has effects until now. Malawi has lost educated, strong and skilled young people who could help with the economic growth of the nation and their households. HIV/AIDS has caused poverty to be prevalent in the country (Whiteside and Conroy, 2006:81).

2.5.10 Overpopulation

The effect of the population growth rate is one of the most debatable topics on the issue of development. There is one view that says that population rise has a positive effect on both economic growth and development of a country (Koduru and Tatavarthi, 2016:2). The argument used for pro-population rising is that the resources required for economic growth are driven by the availability of human capital. And also, the possibility of the increasing market for the goods produced in the country and the new attitudes, ideologies, creativity they bring (*Baker et al*, 2005:291). On the contrary, others argue that population growth has been and will continue to be problematic as more people inevitably use more of the finite resources available on earth, thereby reducing long-term potential growth (Linden, 2017:1; Malthus, 1798:5).

Both of the arguments above can point to their stories of success in different parts of the world. For example, the pro-population rising could mention countries like Israel, Singapore and Kuwait that are overpopulated and at the same time are doing well. On the other hand, the anti-population rising could mention countries like Malawi, Lesotho and the bunch of them in SSA.

Whatever the case is, it is reasonable to conclude that countries who are overpopulated need to have an economy that is vibrant so that the population could match the opportunities to grow their economies and develop people's lives. Unfortunately, Malawi's economy is not growing at the pace to accommodate the population growth (World Bank, 2018:7).

The population of Malawi is growing rapidly (Makupe *et al* 2019:2; Palamuleni, 2013:91). The recent Malawi population and Housing Census (MPHC) conducted in 2018 shows that Malawi's population still remains youthful with about 51 percent being the age of 18 (NSO, 2018; World

Bank, 2018:3). The high rate of population growth and its adverse impact on the economy, environment and developmental strategies in Malawi cannot be unnoticed. The government of Malawi has been trying to reduce the population growth rate since 1964 and there has been a reasonable improvement (NSO, 2017; Palamuleni, 2013:92). However, despite all these efforts and achievements in family planning programmes, the country's population continues to grow rapidly (Makupe *et al*, 2019: 2). The total population increased with 35 percent from 13 million in 2008 to 18 million in 2018 representing a growth rate of 2.9 per annum (NSO, 2018, Kanyuka, 2018:1).

According to the World Bank (2018:3) and Makupe *et al* (2019:20), overpopulation is enhancing the prevalence of poverty in Malawi. The World Bank (2018:3) clearly states the danger the overpopulation is posing in the prevalence of poverty in the country in this statement:

In a country that was ranked the 10th most densely populated in SSA in 2014, population growth is contributing to the depletion of natural resources, is reducing productive capacity and increasing exposure to the effects of climate change. Malawi has lost 19 percent of its forest cover over the last 25 years according to FAO estimates, resulting in the lowest hectareage of forest cover per capita among neighbouring countries. Groundwater levels have dropped significantly, and erosion presents a growing challenge. Agricultural yields and farm/smallholder income have been reduced by the loss of soil fertility as a result of land degradation.

Understanding the impact of population growth on socio-economic development is essential for making strategic policy and program decisions. Resources for the Awareness of Population Impacts on Development (2017:1) mention that if the rapid population growth continues, it will significantly affect the country in its ability to meet the basic needs of its health, education, economic, and agriculture sectors. It will also create challenges related to urbanisation and other services, including clean water and electricity (RAPID, 2017:1). What follows below is the discussion of how overpopulation affects health, education, economic and agriculture sectors.

2.5.10.1 The impact of overpopulation on health in Malawi

Malawi is facing a shortage of trained health professionals (RAPID, 2017:12). In 2010, there were an estimated 2 doctors for every 100,000 people and 38 nurses and midwives for every 100,000 people¹⁰. Against the population of around 16 million people in 2015, the country had only 15,482 doctors, nurses and community health workers. (RAPID, 2017:12; GoM, 2017:21). In the same year 2015, the country had approximately 616 hospitals and health centres, with nearly a quarter

¹⁰ <http://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2017-05/Malawi-ccsbrief-en.pdf>

of the population living more than 8 kilometres from the nearest facility (GoM, 2017:28). With the government's inability to train more doctors and health professionals, the current population of Malawi is in serious problems as there is the scarcity of health service and medicine in the country (World Bank, 2018:81).

2.5.10.2 The impact of overpopulation on education in Malawi

In 2015, the ratio of a teacher to pupils and students was 1-67 in primary schools and 1-25 in secondary schools respectively (World Bank 2018:58; RAPID, 2017:21). Only 57 percent of the teachers in secondary schools are professionally trained (World bank 2018:58). Malawi does not have enough permanent school buildings that can withstand the rainy season. Learning materials like desks, books and science labs is even short at the secondary level (RAPID, 2017:21). The fact that government cannot train enough teachers and also the inadequacy of both building infrastructures and learning materials pose a great danger on the quantity and quality of education that Malawians have. This explains the high rate of illiteracy in the country.

2.5.10.3 The impact of overpopulation on the economy in Malawi

Malawi is one of those African countries that fight with unemployment since more than half of its population is unemployed (Jere, 2019:62). As pointed out in the sections above, population growth has its effect on the economy as it enhances a supply for labour demand. In order to employ a population surplus, more jobs need to be created in the country. Consequently, increasing labour supply leads to decreasing wages. Nyale (2016) in the *Mail & Guardian* quotes Ben Kalua, an economist from the University of Malawi, as saying, "our government is failing to provide the right level of public services, including such basic necessities as education, medicine and food." He added that the rapid growth of Malawi's population is also a factor, as the country's economy is failing to absorb new entrants to the labour market.

2.5.10.4 The impact of overpopulation on agriculture in Malawi

As noted, before, the economy of Malawi is largely dependent on agriculture. It means that people need to have enough land where they can cultivate crops for food and also sell. The World Bank (2018:3) has observed that the population growth has been high and has posed a major challenge for poverty reduction in the country. When the population grows, the country's needs increase such as an increase in food production. However, if the level of poverty is high in the country, population growth will result in an increase in costs and a decrease in access. This means that less food will be available, especially for the county's poorest residents (RAPID, 2017:34). The fact that land does not grow, it means the more than 18 million people who are in Malawi today still depend on the same land to give them enough food and money in their pockets after selling

the produce. How true would this be? According to the World Bank (2018:3), the increase in population growth does exert pressure on Malawi's limited arable land and natural resources. The outcome of this is that a lot of people will be landless and for those who have land, it will still not be sufficient to meet their needs (Chirwa, 2004:1; 2008:2). Hence, this adds to the severity of the poverty problem. However, beyond the World Bank says is that Malawi is incapable of handling the population growth as it has poor technology to advance agriculture and other industries that could maximise food availability and create job opportunities to the mass of people who are impoverished (World Bank, 2018:21).

2.5.11 Government failures

There are a number of areas where the government is contributing to the cause and persistence of poverty in Malawi. Guest (2005:12) quotes Chinua Achebe saying this:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

This statement of Chinua Achebe, according to Guest (2005:12; Rodrik, 2003:103), applies not only in Nigeria but the whole of Africa. After a lot of African countries got independence, their governments have failed the people (Pecoraro, 2012:1; Guest, 2005:12). The argument of a weak institution posits that the problem of underdevelopment in Africa is basically internal. Such internal factors include issues of bad leadership and governance, corruption, political instability, violent conflicts, and terrorism (Sule, 2016:55; Jeffrey, 2013:121; Udoka; 2006:74).

2.5.11.1 Poor governance

Much as there are social, economic and political causes of political corruption, it is argued that all these causes are collectively a symptom of poor governance (Daka, 2013:123; Shah, 2007:235). According to Johnston and Doig (1999:15), all facets of political corruption, such as greed, nepotism, and state capture are symptoms of weak governance. Malawi is plagued by poor governance at almost all levels of administration (Daka, 2013:32).

2.5.11.2 Poor economic policies

Despite embarking on economic maintenance programmes aimed at hastening agriculture and economic growth in the early 1980s, economic performance has been low with negative per-

capita growth in most years, both for agriculture and the economy as a whole (Wobst *et al*, 2004:2). Tsoka (2013:7) forcefully asserted that one of the causes of poverty and its prevalence in Malawi has been poor economic management. The world Bank (2018:xi) rightly observed this:

While external shocks have contributed to Malawi's repeated episodes of macroeconomic instability, poor economic policies and management have played an even larger role. Recurring issues in Malawi's economic management during episodes of instability include weak fiscal management, through budgetary indiscipline and weak expenditure control, soft budget constraints, and weak budget planning, with overly optimistic assumptions leading to frequent overruns. Government's response to shocks is reactive and short term, with ad hoc expenditure cuts and arrears, and relying on donors, rather than making hard fiscal adjustments.

The fact that Malawi has tremendous inflation is a token that Malawi is operating under poor economic policies. When Bingu wa Mutharika came into power, his government started to manage the economy well and the evidence of this was visible when there was tangible development in both government and private sectors (Tsoka, 2013:7). Unfortunately, this was short-lived, as by 2008, poor economic management again became a prominent issue. The World Bank (2018:xii) gives an insightful observation that "Malawi is frequently characterised as having the sound policy and legal frameworks, but evidence points to considerable gaps in implementation." It is clear that poor economic policies and management have played a huge part in the persistence of poverty in the country.

2.5.11.3 Corruption and greed in the government

A lot of politicians in Malawi do not do politics to develop the country, but rather they want to amass wealth for themselves (Patel *et al* 2007:29; Mbaku, 2007:64). Hence, politics in Malawi is associated with corruption. wa Mutharika (2009:1) stated that the problem that the nation of Malawi encounters that detour economic development is corruption. Strasser (2016:309) asserted that studies have shown that corruption is institutionally entrenched, systemic and getting worse where even donor driven legislature and institutional reforms proved inadequate to eradicate or control it. The cash gate, maize gate and the jet gate are some examples of high levels of corruption recorded in Malawi where according to Strasser (2016:303-336), money amounted to \$356 million and \$34.5 million of donor and taxpayers were stolen. Corruption in political sector is not attributed to low pay or necessity to meet the living expense of their families. Instead, greed and lack of ethical values are major motivating factors (Daka, 2013:35; Myint, 2000:40). This put a lot of Malawians in poverty as donors withdrew their budget support. It is disappointing to see that this kind of behaviour is still going on in the Malawian government today.

2.5.14 Lack of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)

Business environment in Malawi is not conducive to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and manufacturing growth. Malawi, just like most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the exemption of South Africa, still has very minimal foreign direct investment (Nakagawa *et al.*, 2009:9). There are a number of factors why the attraction of FDI has not been successful in the country. According to Nakagawa *et al.*, (2009:9) and the World Bank (2018:100), besides the fact that Malawi is landlocked which can result in high transport costs of more than 30 percent of the country's total import bill, the challenges of poor power and water infrastructure also pose a serious limitation for the attraction of the FDI (World Bank, 2018:100, Nakagawa *et al.*, 2009; Nsiku, 2012:3). Other factors like cumbersome trade facilitation and the inadequate infrastructure are critical obstacles to foreign direct investment in the country (World Bank, 2018:51).

Another factor is political and governance (Nkuna, 2009:34). The investors have indicated that corruption, security, bureaucracy, regulatory framework are the most negative factors that are affecting investment in the Malawi (Nkuna, 2009:34; World Bank 2018:51). Despite the existence of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Malawi, investors in the country find corruption to have the strongest negative effect on other factors relating to governance. The recent scenario of the prolonged demonstrations after the May 2019¹¹ elections is one of the examples that foreign investors have raised their concerns about the developments in Malawi.

There are a number of ways that FDI contribute to both economic growths of a country and to the development of peoples' lives (Klein, 2001:5). At a macro level, FDI is said to have the potential to contribute to economic growth through various ways, among which are through; boosting technology, increased productivity and also through crowding in additional investment. According to Magalasi (2009:6), empirical evidence shows that an increase in the number of FDI in a country brings about an increase in the GDP and an increase in per capita income. Magalasi (2009:6) quotes UNCTAD stating that of all developing countries and economies in transition, the fastest growing economies are those that receive most foreign direct investment. There are others who have argued that by endorsing both forward and backward linkages with the domestic economy, additional employment is ultimately created, and hence advance economic activity stimulated in a country. Others have argued that by increasing rivalry from foreign firms, competition is promoted thereby improving efficiency as such some resources are allocated in the most productive way, and in so doing enhancing growth (Nkuna, 2009:44; Magalasi, 2009:6).

¹¹ Sourced from: <https://times.mw/political-situation-to-smother-economy/>

Job creation is another way that FDI contributes to economic growth and the development of people's lives (Nkuna, 2009:45). There are insufficient jobs in Malawi due to inadequate levels of investment. Investors are not willing to invest in Malawi due to numerous factors highlighted above. However, if Malawi had a lot of FDI, the country would be in a better state as shown by studies that one of the contributions of FDI in a country is the creation of local jobs (Nkuna, 2009:45). With a small number of FDI in the country, Malawi is struggling in providing job opportunities to its impoverished population, hence the prevalence of poverty in the country. Additionally, there has been stagnation in the way trade (imports and exports) and industrial sectors have contributed to the GDP as observed by Mapemba (2009:11). This is evidenced in the examination of the country's Index of Production that shows that indeed there is stagnation in the industrial sector (Mapemba, 2009:11).

Below is a table showing some of the FDIs, the industries they specialise in and the number of employees they have employed as of 2009.

TABLE 1¹²: Affiliates of Foreign transnational companies in Malawi

Company	Home Economy	Industry	Sales (US\$m)	Employees
A. Industry				
Illovo Sugar Malawi	South Africa	Agriculture	98	10594
Transglobe Produce Exports	Mali	Food produce, beverages and tobacco	3	1800
Valmore Paints	UK	Chemicals and Chemical Products	1	60
Limbe Leaf Tobacco	United States	Food products, beverages and tobacco	-	5300
Mandala	UK	Chemicals and Chemical products	-	2000
Bata shoe company	Canada	Leather and leather products	-	380
B Tertiary				
CFAO Malawi Limited	France	Wholesale Trade	2417	300
Metro Cash and Carry Malawi	Germany	Distributive Trade	47	1800

The long list of the same FDI that Nakagawa has (2009:62) shows that by the time in 2014 when Dunga (2014:129) wrote his paper, a number of FDIs had left the country due to poor business environment in the country (World Bank 2018:xiii; World Bank and GoM, 2007:61; Wobst *et al*, 2004:3).

2.6 Biblical concepts of poverty and its causes

Why do we need a biblical concept of poverty? Magezi (2007:45) gave an insightful reason as to why we need a biblical concept of poverty. The fact that many societies, including Africa, have been permeated with pluralistic thinking even in theology, demands that any theological endeavour should appeal to the epistemological foundation of Christianity which is Scripture. Magezi (2007:45) continued saying that failure to use Scriptures in everyday reflections on life could risk theological pursuit becoming indistinguishable from the social sciences. Magezi

¹² Source: Dunga, S.H. 2009:129

(2007:45) gives a two-fold value of using the Scriptures in everyday reflections of life. Firstly, it helps people in not deviating from God's mission or Kingdom focus. God has a mission in the world. The mission is that people of every nation should be brought into His family and become His people (Mat. 28:18-20). This mission becomes a standard of everything that believers do. Secondly, focusing on Scriptures helps to shape our thinking and actions (Magezi, 2007:45). From this two-fold value of Scriptures, it is very important that we consult the Bible as what it says about poverty.

2.6.1 The Old Testament understanding of poverty

In the Old Testament, as observed by Kaizer (2015:30), the poor are commonly mentioned as those who are impoverished. They are the ones who are lacking basic necessities to keep the body and soul together. They are the ones who have little or nothing in terms of material goods, possessions, wealth, or even the means to maintain a subsistence level of living (Kaizer, 2015:30). Kunhiyop (2008:143) states that there is a specific group of people that many references to the poor in the Old Testament mostly include. They are orphans, strangers, aliens and widows (Exo. 22:21-24). In most of the cases, this group of people were dependant on others for their livelihood so that is why they were mostly referred to as the poor in the Old Testament (Kunhiyop, 2008:143).

There are a number of words in the Old Testament that are used to describe the poor (Scheffler, 2013:1; Magezi, 2007:46; Kunhiyop, 2008:143; Kaizer, 2015:30). Some of the terms that the Old Testament uses to designate poverty are *ani*, *ebyon*, *dal*, *rasj*, *mahsor* (Scheffler, 2013:3; Magezi, 2007:46; Kunhiyop, 2008:143-145; Kaizer, 2015:30).

- *ani* – The term *ani* occurs 75 times in the Old Testament and *anw* 25 times (Scheffler, 2013:3). Scholars generally agree that these two terms have the same basic root and therefore indistinct in meaning. It can be translated as “poor” and “humble.” The former refers to material poverty, economic poverty, oppression, exploitation, suffering and it is the most used term in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:10; Isa. 3:15). The later refers mostly to the spiritual meaning (Num. 12:3; Prov. 15:15).
- *ebyon* – The Hebrew term *ebyon* occurs 61 times in the Old Testament (Scheffler, 2013:3). Originally, it referred to beggars but it was later used to describe the socially weak, a person who is economically or legally distressed, destitute, or miserable (Job 31:19; Deut. 15:7,9) (Magezi, 2007:46; Scheffler, 2013:3).
- *dal* – The term *dal* can be translated as low, helpless, insignificant or poor and occurs 48 times in the Old Testament (Scheffler, 2013:3). And in many cases, it alludes to the

difficulty of the harassed peasant farmer (Ps. 41:1-2; Isa. 14:30; Prov. 14:31) (Magezi, 2007:46).

- *rasj* – This term occurs 21 times in the Old Testament (Scheffler, 2013:3). Magezi (2007:46) says that this term refers to someone who is politically and economically inferior. This is the word that Prophet Nathan used in his parable about the poor man to David (2 Sam. 12:3).
- *Mahsor* – This term denotes lack of or need for material goods. It occurs 13 times in the Hebrew Bible and mainly in the Proverbs. The fact that it has been used mainly in the Book of Proverbs shows that the term is a wisdom term (Magezi, 2007:46).

Magezi (2007:46) quoted Plein to say that these different Hebrew words translated as poverty should be understood in their various context. Therefore, he discourages the etymological study of the words but rather to consider the context. This is what Plein says as quoted by Magezi (2007:46):

It is important to note the distribution of the vocabulary throughout the Hebrew Bible: no one Biblical writer or text uses all the Hebrew terms for poor/poverty. In fact, the distribution reveals selectivity on the part of the biblical authors: *ras* for example, is a wisdom word and not a prophet word. This selectivity should also alert us to the fact that even when the various blocks of the biblical text make use of the same Hebrew term, the writers may not mean the same thing by that term: in Proverbs, for example, the *dal* is a lazy person, whereas for the prophets, the *dal* is an object of exploitation.

As understood by different renderings of the word poverty in the Old Testament, one can observe that each division of the Hebrew Bible focuses on a particular aspect of poverty. Kaizer (2015:31-32) observes that the Torah, which is the first division of the Hebrew Bible focuses on protecting the poor. Yahweh is the One who desires that there should be no poor people in his covenant community (Deut. 15:4). In order to see this in effect, God is setting laws that prevent the rich to take advantage of the poor (Exo. 20:22-23:19). He also grants the poor the rights to harvest in the fields whatever the land produces in its own during the Sabbatical Year in which Israel was to leave the fields uncultivated. The law concerning the poor in the section of Torah mostly was interested in providing needed protection from unscrupulous persons who wanted to take advantage of another person's misfortunes (Kaizer, 2015:32). Mostly the people that were disadvantaged were the widows, orphans and the aliens (Exo. 22:21-22; Deut. 24:17; Exo. 12:49; Lev. 23:22). The section of Prophets largely focuses on being the voice for the exploitation that the poor were experiencing (Kaizer, 2015:33). The condition of the poor degraded during the periods of the Kings as the infusion of the silver and gold to the monarchy along with a number of

luxury products from afar in the loyal court spurred the growing disparity between rich and poor as the standard of living grew apart. Those who achieved wealth and riches and became socially strong could use the position of strength to oppress the poor, hence the strong warnings against exploiting the poor in the prophets (Amos 8:4; Isa. 3:15; Mic. 2:2). Lastly, in the Wisdom writings, there is a mixture of aspects emphasised. For example, the book of Proverbs presents that poverty could be as a result of being lazy (Prov. 10:24); living an undisciplined life (Prov. 13:18); the weak being oppressed (Psalm 12:5); or it could be the result of the evil schemes of wicked people (Psalm 10:2).

To sum up what the Old Testament says about poverty, the poor are those who are in need. The poor are the powerless who are being exploited by those who have power. The poor are those who cannot support themselves for them to keep on living. This summary of poverty in the Old Testament also alludes to the concept that poverty is what is experienced by individuals in relation to what others are getting. Thus, the contextual and experiential dimension of it.

2.6.2 The New Testament understanding of poverty

According to Kunhiyop (2008:146), the New Testament does not contain many details on how the poor should be treated as compared to the Old Testament. However, the New Testament focuses much on how to reach to the needs of the poor (Kunhiyop, 2008:46). There are four Greek terms that the New Testament has translated as poor/poverty (Scheffler, 2013:3). These words are *ptochos*, *penes*, *endeos* and *penichros*.

- *ptochos* – the term *ptochos* refers to poverty in its literal sense. The people referred to as *ptochoi* are those who are extremely poor and destitute to the point of begging. Louw and Nida (1988:564) highlighted that the rendering of *ptochos* in the New Testament implies that the condition is an ongoing state. The term *ptochos* has been used 34 times in the New Testament (Scheffler, 2013:3; Kunhiyop, 2008:146, Magezi, 2007:47). In the Gospel according to Luke, the term has been used 10 times. This alone is an indication to show how integral was the issue of poverty with the New Testament authors. The Gospel according to Matthew uses this term in chapter 5:3 to refer to spiritual poverty. The usage by Matthew in this chapter is metaphoric to show spiritual lowliness or humility. However, it does not give it a basis of spiritualising this term as we see that in the same Gospel, Matthew uses the term to refer to material poverty (see 11:5; 19:21; 25:31-46).
- *penes* – The term is used once in the New Testament (2 Cor. 9.9) and it refers to a person who is poor but not to the same extent of *ptochos*. This is a person who must live sparingly, and can hardly survive (Scheffler, 2013:3).

- *endees* – The term also occurs once in the New Testament (Acts 4:34). The term is used similarly to *ptochos* but only in the sense where the emphasis is on the serious lack of resources (need) rather than a continuous state of poverty and destitution (Scheffler, 2013:3).
- *penichros* – The term is a variation of *penes*, and it only occurs once in the New Testament (Luke 21:2). It has a similar meaning to *ptochos* (Scheffler, 2013:3).

The New Testament teaching on poverty shows that as much as the term could be understood in the spiritual sense, the primary understanding is that the poor are those who are lacking the necessities of life like food, and shelter. In the Gospel according to Luke, this group is considered to be the marginalised of the society, hence Luke's Gospel centres on proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God to such people (Luke 4:18-19).

2.6.3. A summary of biblical teaching on poverty

In summary, the biblical teaching on poverty shows that, firstly, poverty is a concrete misfortune that individuals suffer due to different reasons. Secondly, both the Old and New Testament talk about spiritual poverty. However, it is clear in both Testaments that material poverty is at scope unless the context shows us otherwise, and it does the intention of Biblical message harm when we try to spiritualise poverty in order to run away from the challenges that it poses in our societies. It is in this scope of poverty that this research paper is going to talk about – that is, the poor people's experience when they lack food, shelter, drink, health, employment, freedom dignity and honour as the Bible puts it. Thirdly, both the Testaments focus on the community of faith (believers) to take initiative in helping first, those who are believers and are living in poverty and also the rest of the poor of the communities. This is because God himself is the one who has compassion on the poor as the Old Testament shows. He is calling the human being to reflect his character in dealing with the poor. God does not condone individuals who mistreat the poor. He blesses those who help the poor, and one day he is going to eliminate poverty in the world when his Kingdom will be established by the Messiah.

2.6.4 The causes of poverty in the Bible

In Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, we read that God created the universe and everything that He created was good (Gen 1:31). Things changed after chapter 3 of Genesis. The serpent (Satan) deceived the woman to eat the fruit that God said they should not eat. When she gave the fruit to the husband who was with her, things changed dramatically. The relationship that they had with God was broken. And God cursed the serpent, the ground and pronounced changes in the conditions

of man. From that time onwards, they would experience pain as they gave birth and had to work (Gen. 3).

The history of humankind changed for the worse as a result of the fall. Man began to experience all kinds of suffering including death (Gen 4:8). While there are a lot of reasons why people become poor, the Bible is clear that sin is the result of all the pains that we are experiencing today. From the time that man fell, sin brought confusion in oneself and against each other (Gen. 4:1-24). Thus, the Bible presents the fall as the primary cause of every suffering, including poverty.

There are other factors that the Old Testament presents as the causes of poverty.

The Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses) records the history of the nation of Israel. What is found in these books is that when Israel settled in the land of Canaan, after the forty years of travelling in the wilderness, they existed as a tribal communities. The early days of settlement the Israelites enjoyed almost the same standard of life. The land which had been divided among families on a tribal basis, was the primary source of wealth (1 Kgs 21:1-3; Num. 26:55-56; 33-54; 36:2). Things changed with the establishment of the monarchy. Dean (2002:35-41; Bright, 1981:198) mentions four structural changes that were brought by monarchy which caused a lot of people in Israel to become poor. These included firstly, the restructuring or reorganisation of the army. Secondly, taxation and conscription. Thirdly, forced labour. And lastly, the administration of justice. To have a professional and sophisticated army like the nations surrounding Israel, they had to have more land as the pastures for the horses. As a result of that, a lot of people lost their land and entered into poverty (Dean, 2002:35-41). In order to maintain the army, the monarchy introduced another structural change which was taxation and conscription. Everyone had to pay tax, especially the peasants that would help with sustenance of the army. The monarchy also brought forced labour that King Solomon introduced in order to enhance the project of building the Temple and his Palace (1 Kgs 5:13). Instead of people working in their fields, they had to become migrant workers and work for the king for several months in the year that resulted in them becoming poor. The restructuring of administration of justice also brought a lot of people into poverty as the monarchical administration system became corrupt. A lot of people who had no money suffered under the hands of those who had wealth as they used the court to exploit and oppress the poor people by bribery (Dean, 2002:35-41). The theme of God's justice against oppression and exploitation runs throughout the Prophets section of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament also presents rebellion against God as the cause of poverty. In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, God charged the Israelites to obey his commands and if they failed to obey, it would lead them into poverty.

Wright (2004:169-171) has classified the causes of poverty from the Old Testament as threefold. These are natural causes, laziness and oppression. The result of the fall as explained above, has caused things to go wrong for no reason (Wright, 2004:169). Wright points out that the Old Testament is supportive of the idea that natural causes are one of the prime cause of poverty (2004:169). He gives examples of the disasters of famines of Genesis 47 and the tragedy that the family of Elimelech and Naomi encountered, and also the story of Job (2004:169). These stories from the Old Testament, argues Wright, show how it is rare to give a suitable explanation why it happened the way it happened. Jacob and his family, as well as Naomi and Job, all experienced poverty due to natural causes. These would also include things like disabling injury, floods, or cases where a person or people group is unintentionally negatively affected by unpredicted misfortune (2004:169).

Regarding the poverty caused by laziness, Wright alludes to the passages in the Wisdom Literature, mostly the Proverbs, where laziness and squandering are deemed to lead one into poverty (Prov. 12:11; 14:23; 20:13) (2004:170). This is the kind of poverty where one is into just because he does not want to work. Because work requires hard work, an individual is not willing to undergo the pains, hence they end up being impoverished.

Lastly, Wright (2004:170-171) observes that the Old Testament also presents oppression as the cause why people become poor. According to Wright (2004:170), the great percentage of poverty in the Old Testament was as a result of human exploitation. People taking advantage of other people by using them for their own selfish interest.

There are some similarities to the biblical approaches to the causes of poverty and conservative liberal approaches of the same. The liberal approach has four categories of perceptions on the causes of poverty which are individualistic, fatalistic, structural and psychological causes of poverty (Dunga, 2014:38).

According to Yun and Weaver (2012:184), individualistic perception is where the poor person is seen to be answerable for his or her state; the fatalistic perception is where poverty is perceived as fate; structural is considered where the society and its functions, the way it is structured and the availability of opportunities is seen to be the cause, and lastly the psychological perception is when poverty is seen as the cause by some emotional failings of the poor. The difference between the psychological and the individualistic perception is that in psychological, poverty is perceived to be in the control of the victim, whereas in individualistic the poor is blamed for his condition.

The similarities between biblical approaches and conservative liberal ones lie in the fact that both have three components as the cause of poverty. These components are individual person, forces from outside and structures put by men.

Bernard (2004:448-465) in his article *“The causes of poverty: is a biblical understanding reflected in the experiences of today’s poor?”* argues against Wright’s stance where he accommodates the application of the causes of poverty in the Old Testament to the poor of today. Bernard (2004:448-465) conducted a research where they tested the biblical model on the causes of poverty as stipulated in the Old Testament is consistent with the experience of today’s poor. In his concluding remarks, Bernard (2016:461-62) said this:

The process of placing Wright’s model through framework synthesis involving data from this study on poverty has been fruitful: The results of our synthesis show that many of Wright’s assumptions have indeed been supported by the interviews and group discussions, but we have also observed the emergence of three significant subtleness: educational opportunities, employment, and adequate markets – and almost complete refutation of the theme of laziness.

Bernard’s argument is that no period can be put to the biblical model of the causes of poverty and apply them to the experience of the poor today. We need to be open enough to the reality that the Old Testament is speaking to people who live in an environment totally different from us. For example, of laziness, the Old Testament is speaking to a land-based economy and in that sense laziness as one of the causes of poverty makes sense (2016:462).

When one reads the New Testament, they are going to find out that it does not weigh in on the specific debate about the causes of poverty per se. What one would find in the New Testament is that it does focus on the needs of the poor person, which include physical care and justice, and also the requirement of those with wealth to support those who are poor (Cohick, 2019:16). Cohick (2019:16) observed that this is due to the fact that the ancient Roman world in which the New Testament was written rarely reflected on the causes of poverty. The sage of the time put their much effort in the reflection on the topics of moral questions surrounding wealthy and the moral failings of those who laboured for a living (Cohick, 2019:16).

However, according to Kotter (2015:46-47), the New Testament still offers a helpful insight as to what the causes of poverty are. Kotter (2015:46-47) mentions four factors that the New Testament presents as the causes of poverty. These are oppression by others, moral failures and foolishness, external calamities and the effects of living in the fallen world. The Book of James describes the case in which the landowners who were rich were withholding the wages of the

poor people who were working in their fields (Jas 5:1-4). James also describes incidents where righteous people who were opposing the rich were murdered so that the rich could carry on with living in luxury and self-indulgence (Jas 5:4-6).

Paul heard that in Thessalonica, there were some believers who were living in idleness (2 Thess. 3:11). He commanded the Thessalonians to keep away from such idle people but to work hard (2 Thess. 3:7-12). He also admonishes Titus to rebuke people who were lazy in the Church at Crete (Titus 1:12-13).

The New Testament also talks about people becoming destitute as a result of sudden calamities. In Acts 11, we hear of Prophet Agabus who prophesied about the famine in Jerusalem. This famine resulted in a lot of dependency for the believers. That is why in 2 Corinthians, we find Paul admonishing the believers to imitate the examples of Macedonians who were helping the poor in Jerusalem. There are instances where blindness, sicknesses, widowhood and orphanhood also made people poor in the New Testament. All these are the result of living in the fallen world (Kotter, 2015:47).

In summary, both the Old and New Testaments present sin which is the result of fall as the centre of the cause of all suffering including poverty. This is manifested when people become oppressive and exploitative, lazy and become the victims of natural disasters in the world.

2.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth analysis of the nature and extent of poverty in Malawi. It has emerged from this chapter that the historical and political contexts of Malawi also play a role in the pervasiveness of poverty in the country. The chapter has found that despite Malawi having enough natural resources, the country still languishes in dire poverty.

The chapter has given the definition of poverty that suits the Malawi context, in which poverty is understood as the experience of those lacking the basic needs of life and are exploited by the social systems.

The question of how poverty is measured in the context of Malawi has been dealt with, which led to the discussion of poverty dimensions in Malawi. The chapter has found that poverty in Malawi is pervasive and is manifested in many different ways of inequalities. It has been found that there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor in the country. Due to this inequality, the poor in Malawi are deprived of education, health and many other services that would improve their lives.

The chapter proceeded discussing factors that are causing poverty to be prevalent in Malawi. The factors like depending on failing agriculture, depending on donors, limitations on capital and many other factors have been discussed. If Malawi is to be successful in addressing poverty, there is need to pay close attention to the aforementioned factors.

From the biblical perspective, the definition of poverty has been given in this chapter. The chapter has found that poverty in the bible refers to lack of all sorts. This includes material lack or lacking power in the society which leads to the poor being trodden by those who are powerful. The chapter closes with the discussion of the causes of poverty from the biblical perspective. It has been found that sin is at the centre of all the causes of poverty cited in the Bible. Because of the fall which was a result of sin, all suffering and misfortunes that the world has, which poverty is one of them emerge.

This chapter has found that poverty is not an abstract concept. The understanding of poverty by both the Malawians and the Bible show that poverty relates patently to people in whatever context they are. People who are poor see it, feel it and experience it (Magezi, 2007:48). Therefore, whether by rules, principles, paradigm or symbols, the Bible shows that people who are poor are to be taken care by those who are more privileged (Magezi, 2007:48), as it will be the focus of chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ZAMBEZI EVANGELICAL CHURCH'S INVOLVEMENT IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN MALAWI

3.1 Introduction

Of all the religions found in Malawi, Christianity has had the most lasting impression on the development of the country. Malawi is pluralistic in its religious outlook (Matemba, 2011:329). Christians are the largest group with 82.7 percent: 54.3 percent Protestants and 28.3 percent Catholics; Muslims 13.0 percent; other religions 1.9 percent and 2.5 percent of the population is said to have no religions (Matemba, 2011:1; GoM, 2008). This chapter presents and analyses the empirical information gathered from ZEC church leaders regarding the way the Zambezi Evangelical Church has been involved in addressing poverty in Malawi.

The chapter has two sections. The first section presents the data of the empirical study on how the Zambezi Evangelical Church is addressing poverty. The second section discusses the findings of the empirical study. The aim of the chapter is to find out how the ZEC is faring with the issue of poverty in the country. The chapter comprises an examination of the church and the ZEC approaches in addressing poverty.

3.2 Empirical study context, data collection process and analysis

The Zambezi Evangelical Church denomination has churches in all the three regions of Malawi (the Northern, Central and Southern), in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and few congregations have been established in South Africa (Beaton, 2019:90). The empirical data presented and analysed focused on the Southern and Central part of Malawi. The rationale for omitting the Northern region is simply because there are few Zambezi Evangelical Churches.

The research approval was granted by the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (ethics number NWU-01888-20-A6) (see Annexure 1). Used structured interviews, the researcher conducted multiple interviews in the form of a structured questionnaire (see annexure A 4). Five pastors and seven members who are church leaders were purposively selected to participate in the study. Participants gave written consent to participate in the study (see annexure A 3 for consent form). The questionnaire was e-mailed to the participants who completed and sent it back. Follow up interviews with the participants was done telephonically as well as through WhatsApp calls to clarify areas that were unclear.

The interview was in the form of a questionnaire. The answers from the 12 participants were loaded by the researcher in the researcher's personal computer. In order to analyse the data

collected in the interviews, general principles of qualitative data analysis including coding and interpretation were done (Thomas, 2013:109, 239-42). The interpretation of data was based on a constant comparative method and led to network analysis of themes and sub-themes (Thomas, 2013:235-36). The themes were generated based on the study questions and research objective. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the answers to the interview questions by the participants are kept under password lock on the researcher's personal computer. After the period of five 5 years, the data will be destroyed as stipulated in the ethics section of this research.

3.3 Data presentation

3.3.1 What are the activities or programmes that the ZEC is involved in that aim to address poverty?

The ZEC reported doing different activities or programmes that are done to address poverty.

Seven people (58 percent) mentioned about the education programme that the Zambezi Evangelical Church is involved in. The ZEC has primary and secondary schools that are operating in Mitsidi, Blantyre and Mphepozinayi. These schools are helping in raising the education standard of many young people as one member put it, "the Synod has established a secondary school where the youths are given chances to learn. Education has the potential to reduce poverty." In relation to education, one member mentioned some basic training that some congregations are offering to their members on how to do small businesses.

The church also has relief aid programmes that are involved in giving aid during the times of disasters like flood and drought as it was mentioned by seven people (58 percent). To do this, the ZEC partners with other NGOs and sometimes funds are mobilised within different local congregations to help meet the need. Not only is the ZEC involved in giving relief aid, but also some congregations have orphanage centres as attested by two people included in seven people. Orphans and some needy children are supported by giving them some clothes and basic education.

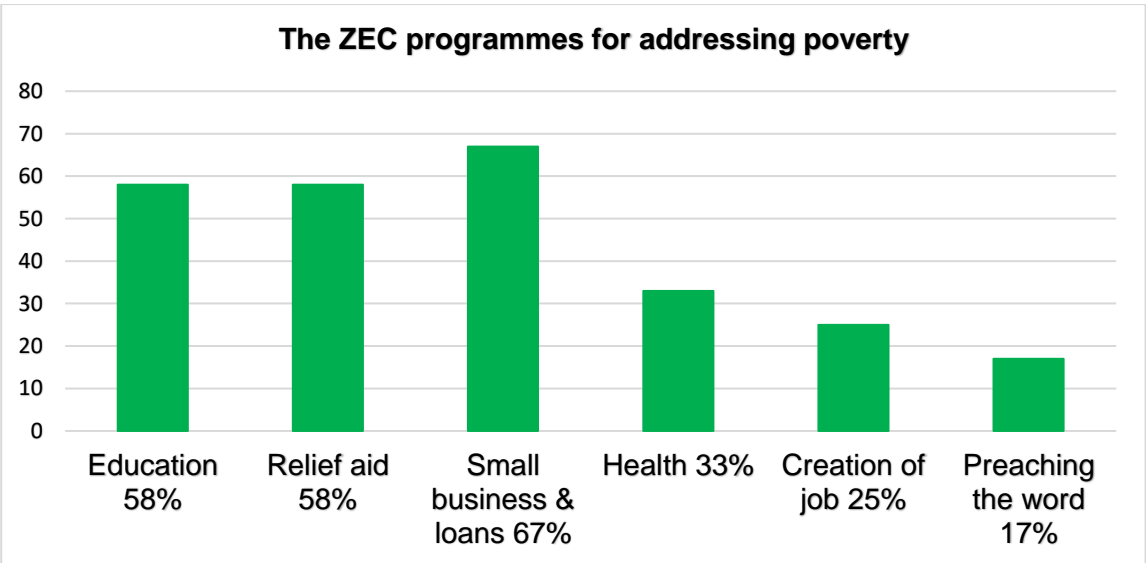
Eight people (67 percent) mention the small industrial business and loans programmes that the church is involved in. One pastor mentioned the few congregations who are involved in training the women to address poverty at the household level. The women are given some training in some vocation e.g. tailoring and in turn, helps them to boost the financial situation of their families. Related to business and loan programmes are the maize and rice mills, beekeeping, goat farming and the vegetable garden which ZEC has introduced to help people to be self-supportive. The maize and rice mills are meant to generate income for the congregations so that they can be self-supportive.

Four people (33 percent) mentioned the health facilities that the ZEC have at Ntonda, Nthorowa and Mitsidi. These health facilities are offering health service to people in the catchment area as it is ZEC’s conviction that it is healthy people who can contribute positively to the development of the nation.

Three people (25 percent) mentioned the creation of job opportunities in some of the congregation. When some churches need, for example, security officers, cleaners, builders, carpenters etc., they extend the vacancy to the church members and few people are benefitting from these jobs to improve their financial situations.

Two people (17 percent) referred to the preaching of the word in addressing poverty. The church uses the preaching of the word of God with the message of hope that inspires communities to believe that they can turn around their situations with God’s help. The preaching of the word is done based on the conviction that the preaching of the word is a key to dealing with poverty as people’s spiritual lives are being transformed, it helps seeing life with positivity and people are able to engage and overcome their fears.

Table 1

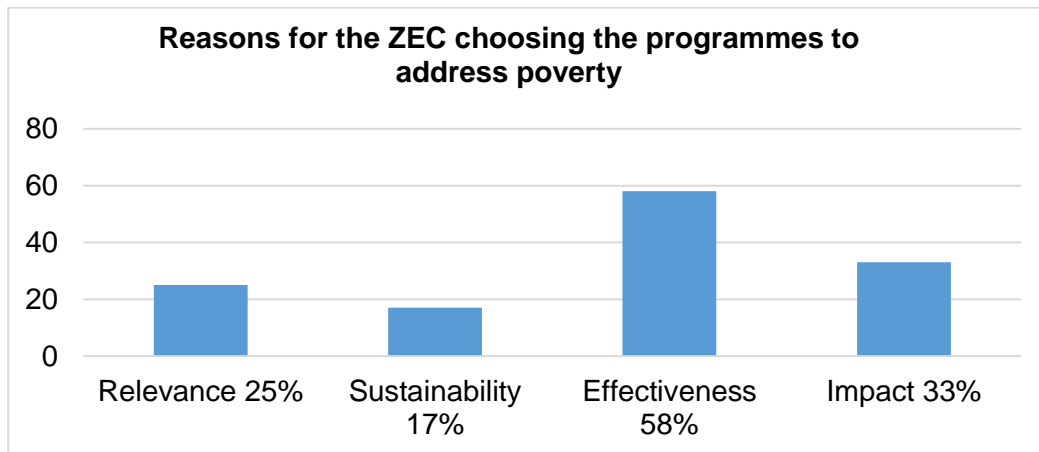


The analysis of the data shows that mobilising of the people to be involved in small business and the small loans that the women are involved in giving each other in the church are the most noted programmes that the ZEC is involved in. The education and relief aid come next as shown by the results of the research. Least in this list is the preaching of the word. It should be noted that there is no correlation between these programmes and their effectiveness. These results have shown what pastors and members perceive the ZEC doing to address poverty. To sum up, the data shows that the ZEC has programmes aimed at addressing poverty in Malawi.

3.3.2 What are the reasons for choosing these activities by ZEC?

The respondents reported that the programmes that the ZEC is involved in are chosen due to their relevance to Malawi context, their sustainability, their effectiveness and their impact on the communities. The participants mentioned that the education programme is chosen because of its effectiveness in dealing with poverty. When people are educated, there is a great probability of finding decent jobs that will enable them to come out of poverty. One pastor commented that “it is through education that one can easily have a better understanding of life. Hence be able to develop.” The health programme was also mentioned as crucial in combating poverty. It is only a healthy person that can manage to combat poverty. If people are unhealthy and sick, the hope of being victorious in the fight against poverty should be forgotten. This research found that these programmes are chosen in order for the ZEC not just to minister to the spiritual needs of the communities but also the physical needs of the people. The ZEC chose these programmes so that they can be holistic in the way the church serves its people. And also, the research found that these programmes are sustainable and relevant in the Malawian context. The effectiveness of the programmes that ZEC engages was mentioned by seven people (58 percent). Three people (25 percent) mentioned the relevance of these programmes. The programmes that are mentioned above are the ones that most Malawians are familiar with. For example, sharing of goats is relevant to Malawi rural setting. Two people (17 percent) talked about the sustainability of the programmes. These programmes are the ones that the ZEC can afford to sustain. Four people (33 percent) mentioned the impact that these programmes have in the communities. The difference between effectiveness and impact is that effectiveness is about being successful in producing the desired result, while the impact is about having a strong effect on the community. Thus, the programmes that the ZEC engages have a strong or positive effect in the community.

Table 2

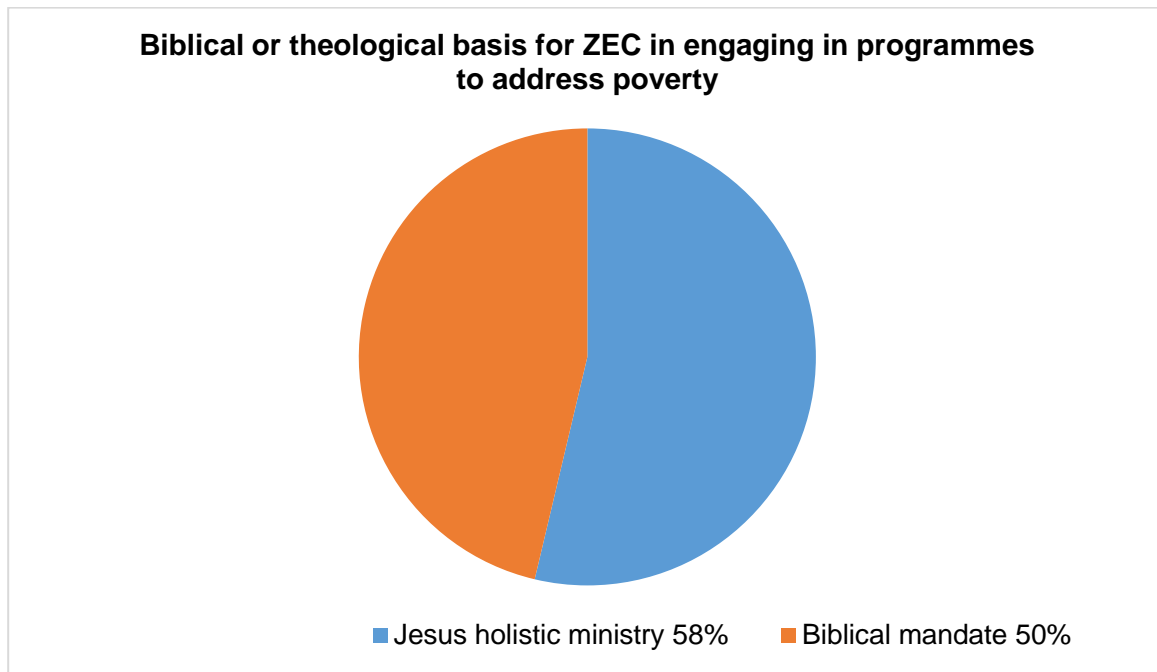


3.3.3 What is the Bible or theological basis for the ZEC engaging in such activities?

The findings of the research show that the ZEC engagement in the programmes to address poverty is based on the following twofold Bible or theological basis. Firstly, it is based on Jesus' holistic ministry approach which was mentioned by seven people (58 percent). Secondly, six people (50 percent) mentioned that it is mandated by God throughout the Old and New Testament to love and care for one another and also to bear one another's burden (Gal. 6:2). Linked with the biblical mandate is the truth that God is involved with the lives of His people. One of the pastors put it this way:

ZEC believes that God is involved in the affairs of his people. This conviction is based on the understanding and interpretation of the meaning of the incarnation of Christ. Jesus' coming is seen as a model that shows how's much God is involved in the affairs of his people. It is through this that the church has decided to take this incarnational approach to ministry.

Table 3

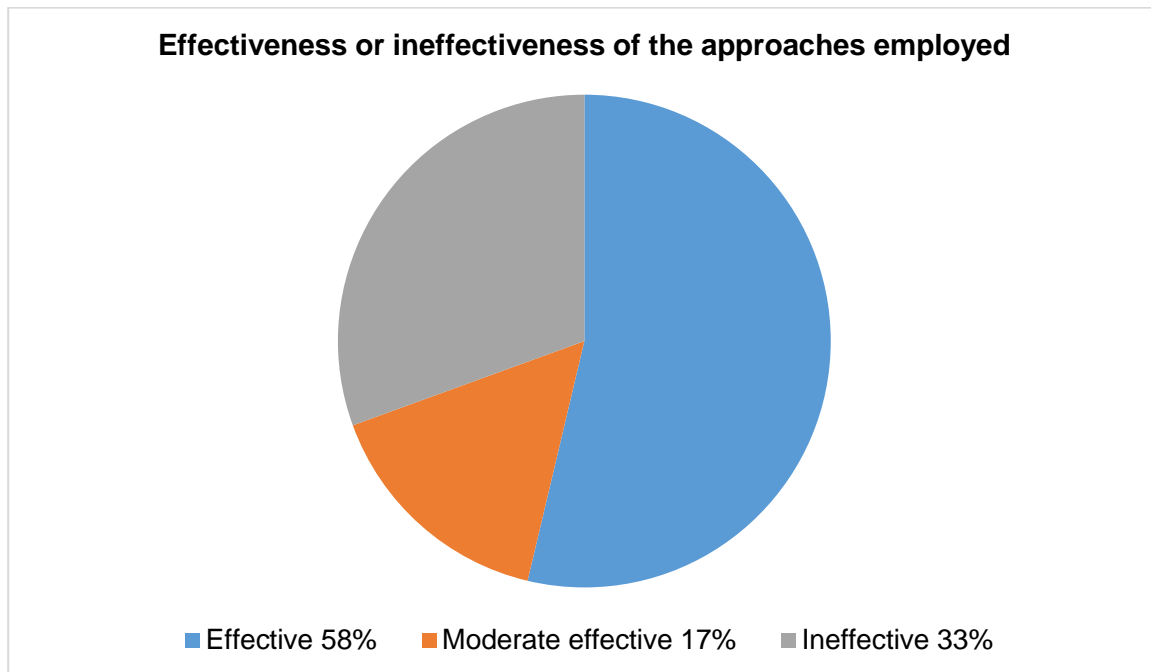


The research shows that the ZEC does address poverty because of the conviction that God wants the church to be the brother's keeper in caring for one another. This is shown in Jesus' ministry where he was not only involved in the spiritual aspect of people's lives but also in their physical needs. It is from the conviction that God is involved with the lives of his people and that he is calling the church to preach the Gospel and help the poor that the ZEC do these activities.

3.3.4 In what ways have the employed approaches been effective or ineffective in addressing poverty in the last 5 years?

The research has found that there are mixed results concerning the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the programmes employed by ZEC to address poverty. Seven people (58 percent) have mentioned that the programmes have been effective. Two people (17 percent) have said that the programmes have not been as effective as they meant to be. Four people (33 percent) have said that the programmes have not been effective at all.

Table 4



The participants mentioned that the financial status of few people in the various congregation has been improved as a result of the small businesses that they are doing. This has enabled the communities that are engaged in some of these programmes to generate enough income to enable them to pay fees for their children’s education and pay their medical bills. It was also mentioned that the effect is due to the fact that the health centres that the ZEC has offered medical services at a subsidised price which helps people who do not have enough money to access medical services. The health services offered to pregnant women has also been recommendable as one pastor has put it “the maternity wards have provided a safe haven for pregnant women to give birth. All of these would have been hard if the church was not involved in the society.” The participants mentioned that there are some people who went through the education services that the ZEC offers who have fared well with their studies and are employed with good jobs.

The two people (17 percent) who mentioned about the programmes being moderate in their effectiveness stated that the programmes have not been sustainable in supporting the people due to lack of resources by the church. Another reason mentioned for moderate effectiveness is that many people who are benefiting from these programmes have developed the mentality of dependency.

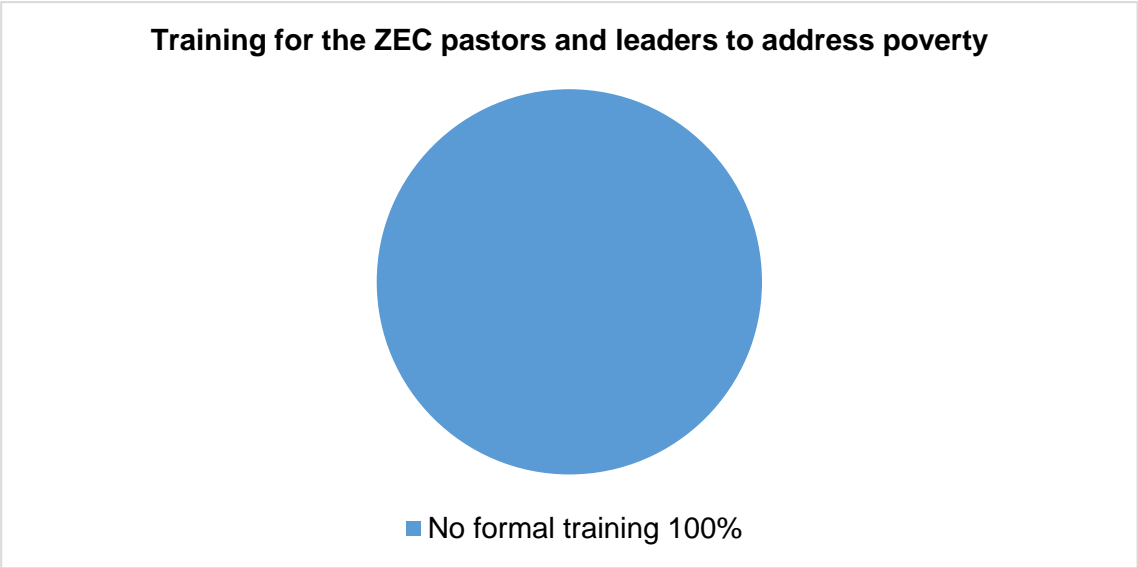
The reasons mentioned for the ineffectiveness of the programmes by four people (33 percent) are that the lack of resources by the church have made only a few people benefit from the programmes. These programmes have not been effective in addressing poverty at a larger scale.

Another reason mentioned is that because of the selfishness of some people, other people have not benefited from the goat sharing as they do not want to share the goats after they multiply. Another reason why the programmes is ineffective is because there is no structured approach in engaging with poverty issues.

3.3.5 What is the nature of training that pastors and ZEC church leaders undergo to prepare them to conduct such ZEC poverty activities?

All the participants were unanimous in affirming that though the ZEC is involved in addressing poverty, there is no formal training for pastors and leaders to prepare them to conduct the activities aiming to address poverty. The pastors are only given theological training and are exposed to mercy outreach ministry at one of the theological colleges that train pastors. The participants mentioned that there is informal training like that of leadership and administration that the pastors and leaders do participate once in a while.

Table 5



According to this result, all the participants agreed that there is no formal training being offered to the leaders. This is a grave issue as it shows how unprepared the ZEC is in addressing the poverty issues in the country. Training is very crucial when it comes to learning the approaches that the church can use to address poverty effectively. In the absence of training, addressing poverty will be unsuccessful.

3.3.6 How does the ZEC prepare its members to conduct activities aiming to address poverty?

The unanimity among the participants was also found in the research’s finding concerning the preparation of the members to conduct activities to address poverty. The research found out that there is no formal training that is given to members to help them to have knowledge on how to conduct the programmes aimed to address poverty. Locally, pastors teach their members on the goodness of taking part in the poverty reduction activities but not from a professional point of view. The research also found that the pastors preach encouraging their members to give, take care of the needy and Christian responsibility in society. Just like the pastors and the leaders, the research found that the same informal training for leadership and administration is extended to the members when they happen.

Table 6



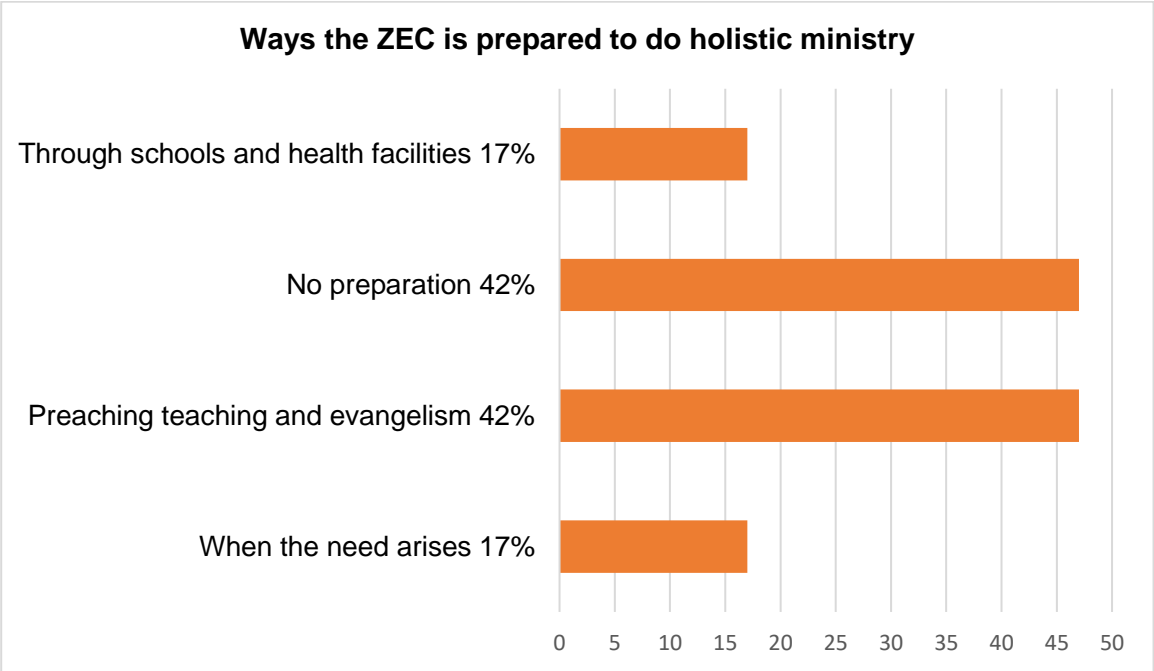
The fact that all the participants believe that there is no formal training for the members of the ZEC to prepare them to engage in addressing poverty is a very serious issue for the church. The church needs to see this as a red flag. There is no way that the ZEC can effectively engage in addressing poverty if the formal training to the members of the church is missing. Engaging in addressing poverty needs to be done cooperatively.

3.3.7 In what ways are ZEC prepared to do holistic ministry in order to address poverty?

The results of the research show the following. Firstly, two people (17 percent) mentioned that ZEC only engages in holistic ministry when a need arises. When there is a flood or drought, the

church uses the platform of preaching to reach out to the members so that they should not just pray but also donate and be involved in helping those in need. Secondly, five people (42 percent) mentioned preaching, teaching the word of God and also doing evangelism. The ZEC uses the pulpit to prepare the people to address poverty. It is also during the engagement in programmes like mission and evangelism that the pastors encourage their members to look for the welfare of others as stated by one pastor. Thirdly, five people (42 percent) mentioned that there is no preparation at all. This is shown with the fact that the church has no structured approach in doing the holistic ministry. Individual churches do their own things as they see fit. Fourthly, two people (17 percent) said that ZEC is prepared to do holistic ministry as it has the schools and health facilities that are impacting the communities.

Table 7



The results show that five people see that the ZEC is not prepared to do holistic ministry. At the same time, it equally shows that the way the ZEC prepares itself in doing holistic ministry is mostly through preaching. These results show that while the ZEC engages in the programmes to address poverty as mentioned above, still addressing poverty is not in the DNA of the church as there is not much preparation to do holistic ministry, according to the research findings.

3.3.8 What are the challenges that the ZEC experiences in engaging in poverty issues?

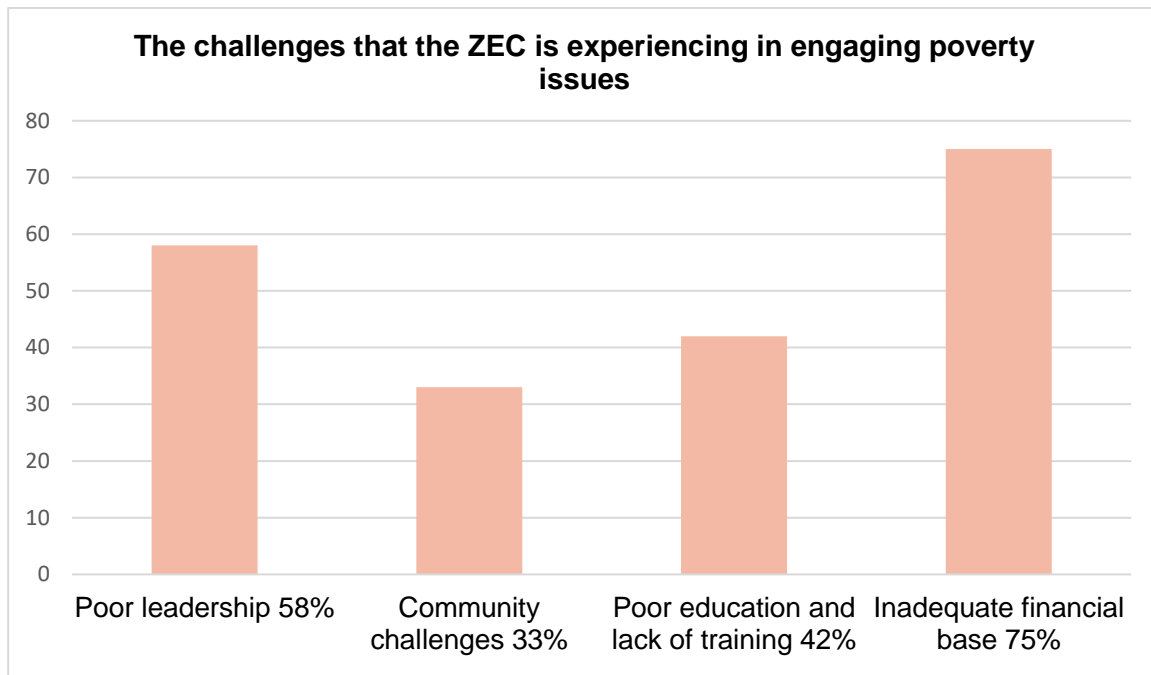
The participants for this research mentioned the following as the challenges that the ZEC experiences in engaging with poverty issues. Seven people (58 percent) mentioned poor

leadership as one of the challenges. One participant mentioned that there is a deficiency with the leadership of ZEC to exercise leadership in moving the church to address the challenges that the church is facing, for example, poverty. Related to the theme of poor leadership is the theme of a lack of accountability and transparency within the church leadership. This has been manifested in personalising the donors by the leaders of the church. One participant revealed that the lack of accountability and transparency demotivates many donors including members to give generously and this is putting the synod at an awkward position in as far as cash flow is concerned. And this negatively affects the implementation of poverty reduction programmes by the church.

Four people (33 percent) mentioned the community challenges of culture and high population of poor people in the country as some of the challenges faced by the ZEC. There is a high percentage of poor people in Malawi which makes addressing the problem of poverty to be a hard task for church. The challenges that the culture brings are firstly, young people are given into marriages by their parents with the expectation to be free from the responsibility of taking care of them. Secondly, many old people are resistant to changes hence they are antagonistic to new things that the young generation are presenting. The example given was using church premises by the young people for their studies.

Poor education of the leaders and lack of formal training was mentioned by five people (42 percent). It was mentioned that the education of a lot of many ZEC pastors is below standard and that affects how the pastors lead their members in a fast-changing environment. One participant mentioned that “the majority of church ministers lack the passion to excel further in education. Some even still believe there is no need for church ministers to acquire higher education other than the Bible alone.” The other factor linked to poor education is a lack of formal training. There is no formal training offered to the leaders of the church and to the people so that they could be equipped to effectively address poverty issues. Most of the leaders’ and members’ education is of poor status.

Nine people (75 percent) mentioned that ZEC’s major challenges are lack of resources and an inadequate financial base . The church has no reliable funds and donors to support poverty reduction activities. One pastor mentioned that most of the ZEC congregations are poor that they are unable to support the poverty reduction activities. One pastor lamented that “the church seems to be in a financial crisis almost all the year-round.” This is despite the fact that the church has been in operation for more than 125 years in Malawi (Mkweteza, 2017). The same pastor above affirmed that “there is no way the ZEC can effectively raise enough funds for engaging in poverty issues.”



Four issues emerge as major challenges that the ZEC is facing in engaging poverty issues. Inadequate financial base emerged as top on the list of challenges that the ZEC is encountering. This finding is not a surprise as it is directly linked to poor leadership which is one of the challenges mentioned by the participants. This result shows that poor leadership is contributing to ZEC not giving formal training and quality education to their leaders in order for them to be competent in addressing poverty issues. It is because of the same poor leadership that the ZEC is failing to find donors that could support their programmes to address poverty. These challenges of inadequate financial base and poor leadership were also noted by the then General Secretary Reverend Luckwell Mtima in the 125th-anniversary celebration speech. Mkweteza (2017) in the *Nyasa Times* quoted Reverend Mtima saying:

However, the journey has not been all that smooth sailing as we have had been challenges in terms of leadership as well as the ongoing constraint of financial resources. So, this is the day which we wanted to evaluate ourselves for the past years of existence and map the way forward.

Unfortunately, according to the results of this research, it shows that not much has been done to deal with the challenges mentioned as 3 years later after the speech, the same challenges are still a big challenge in the ZEC.

3.3.9 How could the church overcome these challenges?

Below are the findings that the participants suggested as feasible in overcoming the challenges mentioned above.

- There is a need to intensify resource mobilisation strategies. The church needs to come with tangible projects that would generate funds to effectively address the issue of poverty.
- Integrate livelihoods issues into the theological curriculum to prepare pastors for the programmes of addressing poverty.
- The Synod and the churches should be more accountable and transparent. The church leadership need to sort this out because even when the church finds reliable donors, this is crucial for their supporting of projects. This accountability and transparency should proceed in ensuring that the right people are engaged to run different activities.
- The church ministers and administrators should be helped to improve their educational qualifications so that they can be competent in addressing poverty. They also should go through formal training on how they can address poverty in their different congregations. The ZEC needs to be intentional in educating and training their leaders.
- The church needs to use its assets and land to build or cultivate to raise income for the poverty alleviation projects. One of the participants in the research study mentioned that ZEC has a lot of land that is just staying idle. If the ZEC could utilise this land with modern farming projects, there is a great chance that they can overcome the challenge of the inadequate financial base for engaging in addressing poverty in Malawi.
- Empowering members to engage in income-generating activities rather than being dependant.

A thorough discussion on how the ZEC could overcome the challenges that they are facing in engaging in addressing poverty will be presented in chapter 5. These insights mentioned by the research participants will be integrated with the literature on how the challenges to address poverty could be overcome.

3.4 Discussion of the findings

The objectives of the empirical study were two-fold. Firstly, it was done to explore the Zambezi Evangelical Church's current contribution in addressing poverty. Secondly, it was done to understand the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines employed by the ZEC to address poverty in Malawi to ensure that its work is biblically informed and practically relevant.

According to the findings of this study, firstly, it has been found that the ZEC is involved in programmes that are aimed in addressing poverty in the country on a small scale¹³. According to Kaiya (2008:30), there have been different theological models that different denominations have been holding on to when it comes to the church's involvement in socio-economic issues. Gama (2006:2) presented four different theological models that theologians have adopted in the context of the church's involvement in social issues in Malawi, which are the separation, the prophetic, the identification and transformational models.

From this study, it shows that the ZEC does not support the separation model which encourages a divorce between the church and the state (Gama, 2006:40). The fact that the ZEC is amenable to addressing poverty in the country shows that they understand the church's role in development. Theologians who hold to the separation model propose that Christians are strangers in the world, therefore, they should totally abstain from anything related to this world (1 Pet. 2:11). In the separation model, the passage from Romans 12:2 is interpreted as a reference to Christians not participating in world affairs (Gama, 2006:40; Kaiya, 2008:31). Christians should be ready to suffer in this world and not try to put things right. Instead, they should be ready not to be identified with the world the same way Moses refused to be identified with Egyptians who raised him (Heb. 11:25). Those who propose this model state that being separated from the world is part of being obedient to God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi are the modern proponents of the separation model. Kaiya (2008:31) and Jere (2019:216) state that an evaluation of Jehovah's Witnesses who are booming in Malawi shows that they do not contribute to any social development of the country. They focus on building structures merely for religious purposes, but do not contribute anything that pertains to the development of the country.

Jere (2019:216) pointed out that though the separation model has the strength of having one area of focus which is evangelism, but it has more weaknesses as it lacks ways of demonstrating God's love and care for the poor and the oppressed. In the context of Malawi where poverty is rampant, this model is irrelevant as it overlooks addressing the issues of poverty. Therefore, this model needs to be dissuaded in Malawi. Msangaambe (2011:157-58) put it very beautifully when he argued for the interrelation between the church and the society:

At the same time, people who form the church are also members of society. In a biblical paradox, members of the Body of Christ are in the world but do not belong to the world.

¹³One pastor explained that the small scale refers to the ZEC having no coordinated programme which presents the position of how poverty is addressed. The ZEC congregations are addressing poverty independently and this makes measuring the impact of those employed programmes difficulty.

But, while they are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), they are directly involved with the issues of this world on a daily basis. They are affected and infected by political unrests, social injustices, natural disasters, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and many other social evils. So, what happens in the society has a direct impact on the church's life and vice versa. The church that turns a deaf ear and a blind eye to what happens in the society, forfeits its missional responsibility and ceases to be relevant.

The church and society should interrelate because they co-exist, share the same members and that both are God's creation. The ZEC understands this truth very well as shown by the study.

There is enough evidence from the study that shows that the ZEC, in a way, subscribes to the identification model which encourages the participation of the church in social issues. Gama (2006:63) points out that the identification model recommends that the church should participate in the matters of the societies, rather than pointing fingers to the government. The examples that are given from the Old Testament are the stories of Joseph in Genesis and Daniel in the Book of Daniel. These two Old Testament figures reflect what the identification model is all about. Rising to one of the highest positions in secular governments did not stop them to follow what God required them to do. They were able to live under both kingdoms; the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the earth (Kaiya, 2008:32).

However, Gibbs and Ajulu (1999:59) noted that the identification model failed to address the issues of injustices in the society in Malawi. For example, Gibbs and Ajulu (1999:58, 59) argue that after Malawi got independence in 1964, church members from Presbyterian congregation became closely involved in politics and gained high positions in government but rarely challenged Kamuzu Banda's abuse of power. The Presbyterian Church became so assimilated with the government's activities that gradually the church lost its ability to admonish or speak pastorally to the government (Gibbs and Ajulu, 1999:59). Chester and Timmis (2007:118) argue that the church is the instrument which demonstrates the potency of God's grace by reversing the effects of the fall in the societies. Therefore, it is very important that the church addresses things in the society that are not as God designed them to be.

There are some theologians that hold on to the transformation model. The transformation model believes that the structures of life can be converted and changed. The proponents of this model accept as true that attitudes of people can be changed within a community or culture (Kaiya, 2008:33). This model is based on the eschatological expectation in which the belief is that the whole society will be changed for the better when the *Parousia* takes place, hence the fulfilment of the total transformation of society will be reached during the second coming of Jesus (Gama, 2006:86; Kaiya, 2008:33; Jere, 2019:217). Gama (2006:86) explains that the supporters of the

transformation model disprove withdrawal like the supporters of separation model and they do not accommodate like the supporters of identification model, but rather they do advocate optimistic towards the transformation of a culture hoping that the society will change for better. The belief here is that if Christians are involved in social issues and act in a Christian manner, then things can get better (Kaiya, 2008:33). In Malawi, a lot of Pentecostal Churches subscribe to this model. According to Kaiya (2008:33), this model also has its flaws in the sense that just like the separation model and identification model, it fails to address the politicians on socio-economic injustices because it does not take into consideration the social analysis, and it fails to take actions and speak out against the injustices.

The prophetic model proposes that the church should speak out against all injustices and take the cause of the marginalised in society. Like the Old Testament prophets who spoke boldly against all social ills, the church should take a stand to address issues that encourage the oppression of the poor. Since the poor and the oppressed are not heard when they cry in the societies, the church needs to be their voices. In so doing, the church supports the poor, the oppressed, the marginalised and the voiceless in the society just as God in the Old Testament used the prophets to confront ill behaviours that perpetuated the predicaments of the poor (Jere, 2019:218).

The example in Malawi where the church assumed this prophetic responsibilities into the society was in 1992 when the Catholics bishops wrote a pastoral letter that addressed the social ills that were happening in the country. This forced the Kamuzu Banda's government to go for a referendum that led to democracy in the country (Mijoga, 1996:55).

While the prophetic model is recommended as a suitable approach out of the four theological models in the context of Malawi, the study has not shown that the Zambezi church embraces this model. The in-depth interviews with the respondents revealed that the preaching of the word is done in a church setting. Unlike other denominations like Catholics and Presbyterians who openly address the social issues, the ZEC has never done that before by themselves¹⁴. The nature of poverty in Malawi calls for the church to use the prophetic model as it is relevant to address some issues in the societies that are enhancing the prevalence of poverty in the country. The prophetic model has a preferential aspect of the marginalised in society and can address the root causes of the injustices that make poverty to be inescapable by a lot of Malawians (Jere, 2019:218). Jere (2019:218) quoted Collins who states that the church has authority that God has given it. This should make the church to go beyond reactive responses when serving the communities. As the

¹⁴The ZEC is a member of the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) and Public Affairs Committee (PAC) which address social issues in Malawi. It is only through these organizations that the ZEC can be said to addresses social issue in the country but not independently.

church is the hope for the majority of Malawians, however, it is important that the church should act in doing social work. The Church should not overlook the need to tackle the root causes of poverty in Malawi. The church needs to take its prophetic role in addressing issues that make people to be poor and to be oppressed. The church needs to be the voice of the voiceless and the power of the powerless. For instance, issues like corruption, inequality and greed in the country are some of the factors that are making poverty prevalent in Malawi. The ZEC cannot deal with these issues in silence. It needs to speak out and be a prophetic voice in confronting such behaviours. The statement made by the Lutheran World Federation (2002:27) calls for the church to adopt its prophetic role in dealing with societal ills. The LWF (2002:27) states that:

In its efforts to react to the needs of the suffering and marginalised, the church has to exhaust all possibilities and use all instruments at its disposal. But these conditions cannot be healed by charitable attention alone. The nature of structural poverty alone requires that one should attack its causes by appropriate methods and try to get to their roots at the structural level. In other words: the factors that damage and humiliate life, that prevents the fulfilment of basic needs and produce human injustice and dependence must be dealt with at the level of their causes and not (or not only) at the level of their consequences.

The respondents revealed that the programmes addressing poverty are chosen due to their relevance, sustainability, effectiveness and impact. While these reasons are valid for choosing those programmes, one thing that is very important is missing. The lack of research in choosing their programmes is a challenge that the researcher faced during this study as he found that there are no other previous studies that have been done on poverty in the Zambezi Evangelical Church. As noted, before, the ZEC has been in Malawi for a long time and forms part of the history of the country. However, it is so sad to see that no one has done any research or whatsoever on poverty as per what the General Secretary of the ZEC communicated to the researcher. This in a way reveals a lack of intentionality and seriousness in addressing the issues of poverty by the ZEC. Myers (2017:176) observed how churches do not use the knowledge that the social sciences can contribute to addressing poverty. He noted that the social sciences have the most potential for helping the church function competently in the world (2017:176). However, it is to the disadvantage of the Church that most churches do not avail themselves to use the insights that these disciplines offer. Doing research is very crucial in addressing poverty as it encourages community participation which is critical to effective development (Voorhies, 1996:125; Myers, 2010:21).

The study has revealed that the programmes chosen by the ZEC aim to minister the whole person. This shows that the ZEC understands the centrality of embracing the holistic ministry approach. This is based on the theological concepts that God wants people to love one another in caring for

their needs and that he is involved in the lives of his people. Jesus himself demonstrated this in his ministry when he not only preached the gospel but also healed the people from their various ailments and provided food miraculously in some occasions. This shows that God is involved in the lives of people when he sent His Son and became a man to redeem humanity. Myers (1996:214) insightfully stated this:

Of all people, Christians should best understand the importance and effectiveness of an incarnational approach to helping others. The gospel is an encounter with a person, not merely a message. Life with Christ is just that. Even the two great commandments – loving God and loving our neighbour are relational in nature. Transformation is about relationships before it is about anything else.

Notwithstanding the fact that the ZEC does participate in addressing poverty in Malawi, the study has revealed some serious deficiencies in the way the ZEC prepares to do holistic ministry. Firstly, the study has shown that there is no formal training that pastors, church leaders and members undergo to prepare them to conduct the activities that are meant to address poverty. What is the problem with this? Just as research is very important when it comes to having knowledge of how effective a problem can be addressed, training is of the same importance. Karia *et al* (2016:10) and Long *et al* (2016:475) pointed out that training and development in an organisation is an educational process whereby those trained can learn new information as well as re-learn and reinforce existing knowledge and skills. It is very important for an organisation to think of new options and methods of training and skills that can enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Long *et al* (2016:475) vividly affirm that increase in training activities helps organisations to perform better and improve an organisation's future value.

With the ZEC having no formal training for the church to learn skills on how to address poverty in this modern world, it shows that there is a lack of intentionality with the ZEC holistic ministry approaches. There are no structured and proven methods of addressing poverty that the church is employing as shown by the research. Every church does whatever they feel is going to yield results. This shows that while the ZEC is trying to address poverty, simultaneously, there is a lack of empowerment by the ZEC leadership when it comes to addressing poverty. When there is a lack of empowerment, there is a great possibility of failure to succeed (Linthicum, 1991:25). Linthicum (1999:25) said that the leaders of any organisation need to be equipped and supported so that they can effectively undertake the responsibility given to them. This is to empower them. It is not by accident that most of the participants mentioned poor leadership as one of the challenges that the church is facing. This poor leadership is manifested in the lack of strategic plans to address poverty by the church. The Lutheran World Federation (2017:21) clearly point out the importance of leadership in avowing that good leadership, management and accountability

are crucial to confronting poverty and injustice in Africa. It is very sad to see that in most African churches and communities, there has been a lack of good leadership and management leading to poor results of programs and projects (LWF, 2017:21).

All these factors mentioned above show that the ZEC is not well prepared to do the holistic ministry as mentioned by the respondents. Because the ZEC is not prepared to do the holistic ministry, it is very difficult for the church to find donors who can fund programmes whose owners are not prepared to make those programmes effective. No wonder lack of donors was mentioned as one of the challenges that the ZEC is facing.

This research has revealed that there is a problem with the way the Zambezi Evangelical Church is preparing to do holistic ministry. This unpreparedness is shown in the fact that the ZEC Synod has no coordinated programme which states the ZEC position on addressing poverty and gives direction to the congregations on how they can tackle poverty. The study has revealed that the ZEC has good intentions in wanting to address poverty, but at the same time, there is a lack of capacity to effectively engage in poverty reduction initiatives. There is a lack of well-developed guidelines to inform the church to effectively engage in addressing poverty (Janse van Rensburg and Breed, 2011:2). As Magezi and Mutowa (2018:125) observed that despite the agreement for churches to engage in holistic ministry, there is a dark area regarding how it can be done practically. This is in agreement with the findings of this study where the ZEC seems to have no direction as to how poverty could be addressed in the church. Myers (2010:121) notes well when he said this:

For the last twenty years, evangelical holistic mission activists have acted. They have gone out and done transformational development. Doing is good. But there is more to doing than just acting.

The fact that there is a willingness within the Zambezi Evangelical Church denominations to engage in holistic ministry shows that there is a great potential for ZEC to have effective programmes that would combat the problem of poverty in the country if they work on the recommendations of this study. The recommendations on how the ZEC could engage in addressing poverty effectively based on the findings of this study will be dealt with in chapter 5.

3.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth analysis of how the Zambezi Evangelical Church is addressing poverty in Malawi. The first part of the chapter has presented the results of the empirical study that was conducted among the Zambezi Evangelical church pastors and leaders. There are two important findings that the study has shown. Firstly, the ZEC understands what a

holistic ministry approach is. This is shown in their attempt to minister to the whole aspect of a person. Secondly, the study has shown that even though the ZEC understands and employ a holistic ministry approach, their preparation for doing holistic ministry is lacking. The ZEC does not have any formal training to prepare and equip both the leaders and the members to effectively address poverty. There is a lack of strategic plans in executing these activities by the church which in turn impede the desired outcome hence the prevalence of poverty in Malawi.

The second section has discussed the findings of the empirical study. Looking at the findings of the empirical research, it shows that the Zambezi Evangelical Church might be employing the identification model. According to the findings of the study, the ZEC participates in social issues. They have programmes like education and health which aim to address problems like illiteracy and healthy issues in the society. However, it seems the ZEC has a problem of using the prophetic model in the addressing of social issues. This is shown by the silence of the respondents to mention anything related to the church being a prophetic voice in dealing with poverty. This is because the ZEC has never openly address the social issues in Malawi.

The challenges that the respondents and the problems that this study has found with the way the ZEC prepares itself for doing holistic ministry will be addressed in chapter 5 when discussing the strategies of action that the Zambezi Evangelical Church need to make to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact in poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEOLOGICAL DISCERNMENT OF POVERTY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MALAWI

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is going to look at the poverty situation in Malawi from God's perspective. The chapter deals with Osmer's (2008:4) normative task, namely, "what ought to be going on from the perspective of the Bible?"

In order to help with what God says concerning poverty, this chapter will first select some passages from the Old Testament and do some text analysis on what they say about poverty. After doing that, the chapter will proceed with the exegesis from the Book of Leviticus 25. This passage has been chosen because it clearly states the measures that need to be taken in order to deal with poverty. The chapter will discuss whether the Jews practised the laws that this passage stipulates and if so, which books in the Old Testament show that. The principles that this passage present will be used to help with answering the question, what ought to be going on? The debate among the biblical scholars on whether the principles from this passage can be directly applied today will also be discussed.

The second part of this chapter will look at poverty in the New Testament. There are a number of passages from the New Testament that will be analysed in order to arrive at what the Bible says about poverty in the New Testament. Acts 2 passage will be analysed in order to get a clear picture of God's desire and apply the principles within the context of Malawi. Thus, the principles that will be drawn from the exegesis of both the Old Testament and the New Testament passages will be applied in the situation of Malawi.

4.2 The Old Testament and poverty

In the Old Testament, poverty is understood, firstly as a lack of economic resources and material goods (Magezi, 2007:45). And secondly, the Old Testament denotes poverty as oppression, as well as political and legal powerlessness (Magezi, 2007:45, Hartin, 1070:2000). Therefore, from the Old Testament perspective, poverty is seen as being in need and being abused by the people who have great power. Those who are poor in the Old Testament are said to be those who have no capacity to provide the essentials of life for themselves. The Old Testament shows a deeper concern for the poor (Carrol, 2003:881). Poverty is a common phenomenon in the Old Testament. The people of the Old Testament and the writers of the books were familiar with the concept of poverty and how it affected the people (Scheffer, 2013:1). The Old Testament portrays God as the One who cares for the poor (Kaiser, 2015:29). This statement is vividly supported with a

number of passages in the Old Testament, where God is seen as being in solidarity with or identifying with the poor (Deut. 26:6-9; Prov. 19:7, 17; 14:31).

There have been some disagreements among the biblical scholars as to what extent God identifies with the poor. According to Sider, God identifies Himself with the poor in the sense that He is on the side of the poor (Sider 2005:62-63). The fact that God is unbiased, does not include that God is neutral. Sider (2005:62) points out that:

God, however, is not neutral. His freedom from bias does not mean that he maintains neutrality in the struggle for justice. The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history exalting the poor and casting down the rich who got that way by oppressing or neglecting the poor. In that sense, God is on the side of the poor. He has a special concern for them because of their vulnerability.

Pixley and Boff (1989:20-21) agree with Sider (2005) that God is on the side of the poor and argue that God's preferential for the oppressed does "constitute an integral element in the Exodus narrative, which has a foundational character for Israel (and) exercised a basic influence over virtually all the books of the Bible" (Pixley and Boff, 1989:21).

Kunhiyop (2008:148) argues against Sider in that God does not take anyone's side. Kunhiyop alludes that God does not take any side of any people group, social class or race. Kunhiyop (2008:148) quotes Chilton criticises Sider when he said: "whose side is God on? Not the rich; not the poor; not any social or economic class; not any race." It should be noted that Sider's (2005:62) statement above clearly negates biasness on God's side. However, while there is no bias with God, at the same time, He does not tolerate the poor being oppressed. It is in this sense that Sider (2005:62) states that God is on the poor's side. Therefore, Sider's interpretation of God being on the side of the poor is true.

4.2.1 Poverty in the Pentateuch

The criticism by some scholars that the Old Testament concern for the poor is an interest of later redactors, does injustice to the pervasive ethical impulse of the Pentateuch (Carroll, 2003:881). The Pentateuch is very rich in its narratives, legislation and nuanced vocabulary which supplies a clear testimony of the demand to care for the poor (Carroll, 2003:881). This is contrary to what Hartin (2000:1071) observes when he said that "the narrative literature of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history show little interest in the poor." Against Hartin's observation, there is clear proof that caring for the poor was one of the important themes of the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch shows Yahweh's deep love for the poor (Kaiser, 2015:32). It is because of His love for the poor that He instituted laws among the Israelites which warranted that the poor were being taken care of as well as empowered to be able to provide for themselves. Commenting on these laws, Corbett and Fikkert (2012:38) say that: "the commands were so extensive that they were designed to achieve the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty among Gods people..." Thus, by instituting these laws, God's desire was that there should be no poor people in His covenant community (Deut. 15:4).

4.2.2 Legislation for the poor in the Pentateuch

God in the Pentateuch gave the laws that attempted to provide a safety net for the unsuccessful and weak members of Israel's community (Carroll, 2003:884). Carroll (2003:884) stated that "the Pentateuch prescribed a series of charitable acts and legal measure that were designed to aid the poor in their distress."

4.2.2.1. The Gleaning Laws

The gleaning laws were created by God in order to provide for the poor and the oppressed. According to Atkinson (1983:60), these laws are expressed in terms of God's character . The fact that the structure of the gleaning laws in Leviticus is coupled with the frequent reminder, "I'm the Lord your God," teaches that the general purpose of the Torah is to direct Israel to emulate God's holiness (Baker, 2016:6). This is the demonstration of God's kindness, mercy and charity to others (Baker, 2016:6; Sherman and Goldwurn, 1990:341). That is the reason why God in the Mosaic Law gave several stipulations that dealt with how the Israelites were to harvest in their fields so that those who were poor or unable to provide for themselves could have food provisions. Having seen how God provided for them during the Exodus, Israel could not help but reflect and extend the same grace towards the less fortunate among them (Baker, 2016:6). In Leviticus 19:9-10 it states that:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God (ESV).

Thus, the gleaning stipulations required that: the Israelites should not harvest the crops in the edges of their field, they were not to harvest the second time in their fields in case they missed some of the crops during the initial harvest, they were not to gather any crops that had fallen on the ground and they were not to harvest their fields bare, the remaining harvest was to be left for the poor and it was rightly theirs according to God's directives. Commenting on the gleaning laws,

Wright (1996:178) commented that “to harvest in such a way as to leave no gleanings would be to deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice.” Thus, according to Wright (1996:178), leaving off the crops in the field was more than generosity but rather it was doing what was just or right.

The gleaning laws given in Deuteronomy reflect God’s grace and provision towards Israel when they were still slaves in Egypt. Baker (2016:6; Hubbard;1988:136) adds that God is the rightful landowner of all Israel. Therefore, all crops grown belong to him. In addition to using farmers as the means of cultivating the ground and nurturing his crops, “God uses farmers as the main instrument to show his grace and provision to the poor” (Baker, 2016:6).

Apart from ensuring food provisions for the poor the gleaning laws also empowered the poor to work for themselves rather than depend on handouts. The poor were to go in the fields and do the actual harvesting for themselves.

4.2.2.2 Sabbatical Year

During the Sabbatical year, the land was to remain fallow (Lev. 25:3; Exod. 23:10). This rest was meant to replenish the land of its nutrients. The crops that grew naturally in the fields during this season were free to be eaten by the poor, strangers and the animals. (Lev. 25:6-7, Exod. 23:11). Thus, this ensured that the poor had food provisions. The Israelites who were enslaved during this period were to be released (Deut. 15:12-18) and debts were to be cancelled (Deut. 15:1). By cancelling their debts and releasing those who had been enslaved, it allowed them to have a fresh start. Besides having a fresh start, it prevented the poor from getting into deep poverty, because being released from debt and enslavement empowered them to work and provide for themselves.

4.2.2.3 The Jubilee

The other law is the Jubilee. Like the Sabbatical year, the land was to remain fallow (Lev. 25:11) and its natural produce was free for all; the owners of the land, the poor, strangers and animals. During this season, all prisoners and captives were to be freed (Lev. 25:39-55), all debts were to be cancelled (Lev. 25:23-38) and land which was sold was to be returned back to its original owners (Lev. 25:28). God through the year of Jubilee ensured that the poor and the needy in Israel had food provisions. The year of Jubilee also ensured that wealth was not concentrated in the hands of a few through the reverting of the land to the original owners. The reverting of the land to its original owners also ensured that no one got into deep poverty, in an agrarian community where land is essential for making provisions, having no land exposed individuals to poverty as well as being exploited by those who had the land. The year of Jubilee was an institutionalised structure that affected everyone automatically (Sider, 2005:69). It also allowed

for self-help and self-development so that once the land was returned, the poor person could once again provide for his own living (Sider 2005:69; Schrotenboer, 1973:21).

The passage of Jubilee repeatedly returns to the exodus account as the motivation for gracious treatment of the poor (Lev. 25:38), 42, 55). Furthermore, the declaration that Yahweh was the divine benefactor who blessed the land (Lev. 25:23; cf. Deut. 15:4-6, 10) and the attention on the Sabbath (Lev. 25:1-7; cf. Lev. 26:34-35, 43) pointed back in the end to the creation and first Sabbath rest of Genesis 1—2 (Carroll, 2003:884-85).

4.2.2.4 The Triennial tithe law

The final law to be considered is the triennial tithe which is found in Deuteronomy. God's requirement through this law was:

At the end of every three years, you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do (Deut. 14:28-29) (ESV).

This law required that the Israelites set aside one-tenth of their produce. The tenth would make food provisions available for the Levites who had no land but also the destitutes such as the widows, orphans and the sojourners. Wright (2004:174) says that "Deuteronomy makes the alleviation of the suffering of the poor a matter of obedience to the divine will...." This truth is reflected in the tithing law. In giving the tithe, the Israelites were not just being generous, but they were being obedient to God's commands and by doing this God blessed them.

The Pentateuch shows God's concern for the plight of the poor. His law ensured that the poor had provisions but also empowered to work and provide for themselves.

4.2.3 Poverty in the wisdom writings

The wisdom literature presents various aspects of poverty, its causes and dangers and like in the Mosaic Law and the Prophetic literature, it also presents God's concern for the poor. The wisdom literature also shows that the poor are embedded in poverty not because of what they have done, or even failed to do, but because of what has been done to them. Showing God's concern for the poor, the Psalmist (12:5) said this: "because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will arise," says the Lord. I will protect them from those who malign them." Kaiser

(2015:36) commented that “despite the worst efforts of wicked men, the wisdom books emphasise that God is directly involved in acting on behalf of those who present such special needs.”

The wisdom writings stress the point that those who have material blessings must help the needy generously (Prov. 29:7). The king who is godly will free the poor person who calls to him and will have pity on the feeble (Psalm 72:4). Blomberg (1999:61) quotes Gillingham saying that:

The psalmist was deeply convinced that God was concerned not only about the alleviation of all aspects of material deprivation but also for the relief of the deep religious needs which the vicissitudes of life presented. They saw quite clearly that physical and spiritual well-being before God were two sides of the same coin.

God’s concern for the poor in the wisdom writings is shown in the following ways.

4.2.3.1 Oppressing the poor is to show contempt to God

He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker (Prov14:31; 17:5). Habtu (2006:769) commented that “how people treat the poor displays their faith in the.” As part of his creation, the poor bear Gods image, therefore when one oppresses them, he is in effect showing contempt to God who is their creator. In contrast, Proverbs 19:17 informs us that “whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord”, thus by being generous to the poor one is in effect lending to God.

4.2.3.2 God defends the poor

“Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the Lord will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them” (Prov. 22:22-23). The poor though perceived as having no one to defend them, proverbs informs that God intervenes on their behalf and executes punishment on those who rob them. Righteous living before God involves assisting the poor. In the Near Eastern world, a man’s virtue was measured by his treatment of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. If he protected and provided for this group, he was respected as being a nobleman. This is demonstrated in the Book of Job when his three friends had accused him of not walking in righteousness, Job defended himself by mentioning his care for the widows, orphans and the poor among many other things he had done (Job 29; 31:13-23; cf. 24:1-25). In the Ancient Near East culture, the story of Job shows that the culture understood that righteous living before God involved caring for the poor.

The wisdom literature thus shows that God desires that the poor should not be mistreated and that those with means should be able to assist them.

4.2.4 Poverty during the monarchy and the Prophets

During the theocratic rule, God instituted laws that ensured that the poor were taken care of by the covenant community of Israel. Nevertheless, “the condition of the poor worsened during the days of the monarchy – especially under kings David and Solomon – as some became fabulously rich and others fell behind” (Kaiser, 2015:34). There were a number of factors that caused this disparity. Kunhiyop (2008:144) pinpointed that by the time of the Israelites’ monarchy, the laws seemed to have been disregarded as the nation experienced dramatic political and economic changes. Wealthy landowners took advantage of hard times and wars to oppress the poor. Thus, from the perspective of the prophets “being poor became synonymous with being oppressed” (Kunhiyop, 2008:144). Wright (2004:175) vividly elucidated that “the major issue was not purely the fact of material poverty alone, but primarily one of injustice and oppression.” So, during the time of the prophets not only did the poor lack but they were oppressed and exploited. Subsequently, various prophetic books rebuke the Israelites for their mistreatment of the poor (Kaiser, 2015:34).

God’ care for the poor is shown in the following ways in the Prophetic Books.

4.2.4.1 God condemns ill-treatment of the poor through unjust laws and deprivation of their rights

Gods concern for the poor is seen in his condemnation of the Judges who passed unjust laws that were oppressive as well as denied the poor of their rights. Isaiah 10:1-3 states:

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! What will you do on the day of punishment? (ESV).

Here, God through Isaiah rebukes the rulers and magistrates in Judah who were passing unrighteous laws and giving out unjust sentences that were leading to the poor being deprived of their rights, and widows and orphans being robbed. Yilpet (2006:816) commented that:

Through the prophet, God warns the wicked leaders that one day they will be called to account for their behaviour . The intoxication of power often blinds those who oppress their people. They believe that they have set up the laws that will protect them, but all their machinations will be useless on the day of reckoning.

4.2.4.2 God supports justice and cares for the poor

God advocated justice and care for the poor and needy. Zechariah (7:9-10) says that:

Thus, says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.

In Zechariah 7, a delegation from Bethel had come to inquire from the Lord whether they should continue to observe particular Jewish fasting (7:3). However, their problem was that they were diligent in observing rituals but yet their hearts were far away from God. Responding through Zechariah, God tells them to display their devotion and obedience to him by showing justice and mercy to the widow, the fatherless, the stranger and the poor. Obedience to God is demonstrated when one shows love and justice to the poor. Feinberg (1990:10) commented that the less fortunate and the unprotected are always the special charge of the Lord; any kindness shown them is especially pleasing to him.

4.2.5 Summary of the Old Testament on poverty

To ensure that the poor are treated well, God gave the laws in the Pentateuch on how the poor should be treated. In the writings, He continued to stress that the poor have a special place in God's heart, so they are to be taken care of. Those who despise the poor despise their creator, who is Yahweh. And in the Prophets, God's desire is that the poor should not be taken advantage of. Instead, they are to be shown kindness and mercy. When the poor are taken care of, God is delighted.

To give a brief summary of what God's desire is regarding the issue of poverty in Malawi based on the Old Testament theology of poverty is that the poor in Malawi are God's creation. For that purpose, they are to be treated with honour and dignity. Therefore, the issues of exploitation of any other form should be condemned as that is against God's desire for the poor.

God wanted the poor to be cared for in the same way He cares for them. Every believer who is blessed materially should be thinking of how to take care of the poor people. This should not be in the form of prayers and good expository sermons but in a practical way in which the poor are being served.

4.3 Exegesis of Leviticus 25

4.3.1 Introduction

Leviticus 25 falls into a section called the law of holiness, which starts from Chapters 17 to 26. The overriding theme in this block material is that Israel is to be set apart from all the other people, just as her God is holy and set apart from all other beings (Lev. 20:24, 26). They are to maintain this holiness by strict observance of the divine laws thus the second theme of the chapters 17-26. Leviticus 25 is the chapter that deals with economic and social relationships. The chapter is in the form of laws regulating property and labour relations. Sider (2005:65) asserted that:

God requires radically transformed economic relationships among his people because sin has alienated us from God and from each other. The result is personal selfishness, structural injustice, and economic oppression.

Because of this reason elucidated by Sider, God gave the laws to the Israelites for the concern of those who are poor in the covenant community.

The pressing question to answer is: “why this passage from all the passages in the Old Testament that talk about poverty and how poor people should be treated?” Leviticus 25 shows God’s desire pertaining to wealth and poverty (Sider, 2005:67; Harrison, 1980:223). Sider (2005:67) explains that the fact that Israel was a holy nation, they had to set their mind and heart upon God and his holiness and not to think in terms of accumulating property for themselves lest they would become materialistic as the surrounding nations. So, the laws found in Leviticus 25 act as a curb for the rich not to increase their holdings at the expense of the poor (Harris, 1994:160; Wright, 1990:178).

In chapter 2 it has been argued that there is rampant inequality in Malawi that is contributing to worsening of poverty in the country. There are principles that can be drawn from this passage which would be relevant in dealing with the poverty situation in the country. The issues of whether Leviticus 25 was ever used by the Jews and the debate about its relevancy today will be dealt with later.

4.3.2 The sabbatical Year (25:1-7).

Chapter 25 begins with a discussion of the sabbatical year. The sabbatical year is also mentioned in Exodus 23:10-11 and Deuteronomy 15:1-18. God commanded his people that every seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath just as the weekly Sabbath that the Israelites themselves enjoyed (v4). The similar command in Exodus 23:10, 11, clearly explains the social reason that is described in these verses from Leviticus. The fourth law in the Decalogue demanded that every

person regardless of their social status are to rest. The poor just as the rich are to rest on this day. The purpose of resting in Exodus 23:12 is that everyone may “be refreshed.” The Sabbath day makes every inhabitant of the land equal to one another. Now, this equality is being extended in the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee. As God rested on the seventh day of His work of creation (Gen. 2:2), He extends the same privilege to His creation and longs them to enjoy their belongingness to God, who is God of no partiality. While the sabbatical year alleviated the predicament of the poor and gave them a new start (Sider, 2005:67), every seventh sabbatical year an attempt was made to give them a new start (Sider, 2005:71).

Verses 5-7 shows Yahweh’s concern for the poor. The natural produce of the land in the seventh year would feed the poor as in Exodus 23:11 explicitly put it. Also, the similar passage in Deuteronomy clearly states that the slaves were to receive their freedom and that the freed slave was to be supplied with material things so that he could have a means to earn his own way (Deut. 15:13-14; Exod. 21:2-6) (Sider, 2005:71).

4.3.3 The Jubilee (8-35)

The English word Jubilee derives its name from the Hebrew word *yobel*. Baker (2003:702) asserted this to the definition of the word jubilee: “the word *yobel* is probably related to the word for a trumpet made from a sheep’s horn that was blown to announce the Jubilee year.” Nevertheless, according to Baker (1998:47), there are some Old Testament scholars like Robert North who have disputed the etymology of the word *yobel*. He has proposed *yobel* as connected to a verb *yabal*, which has the rendering like “to bring back,” or “to lead forth” (Baker, 1998:47). Baker continues to say that this suggestion is supported by the translation of *yobel* in the Septuagint as ‘*aphesis*’ (liberation). Josephus has referred to *yobel* as “freedom” (Whinston, 1960:iii). Ramban Nahmanides as quoted by Radner (2008:266) is another Old Testament scholar who established an alternative explanation to the word *yobel*. According to Radner (2006:266), Nahmanides sees *yobel* as the source of the movement whose sense can be seen in the river of Jeremiah 17:8, which makes all the trees planted by it fruitful. He sees Jubilee as “tied to the secret of creation, of creating itself, and to its origins” (Radner 2006:266).

The view of explaining *yobel* as the movement back to its source has been expanded in Rabbinic views consistently maintaining that the etymology of *yobel* is “back to its source” with respect to Psalms 76:11 (Kaplan,1982:12). Hirsch (1989:2) explains suitably the tradition of ‘back to its sources’ - the causative form of *yobel* as an act of “bringing a person to where he is suited to be, or a thing to whom it really belongs” (Kaplan, 1989:2). Thus, he argued that the correct rendering of the word *yobel* is “home bringing” which puts Jubilee as returning home, a returning to the source of all things who distributes them, or the restoration to God’s own true purpose.

Looking at the context of Leviticus 25, it is clear that this translation of *yobel* makes sense and connects very well to the purpose in which God gave this legislation to His people.

4.3.4 Observance of jubilee and its purpose – 8-12

“Seven weeks of years” v 8. The Jubilee year was to happen probably the year after the sabbatical year (Baker, 2003:702). The year of Jubilee was to take place after the seven years of Sabbath which implies after the 49th year. However, Baker (2003:702) mentions that there are some scholars like Chirichigno who argues that the Jubilee coincided with the Sabbatical year, hence its absence in the rest of the Old Testament books.

After the seven Sabbath years, a special year was to be observed. This was the year of Jubilee which fell on every fiftieth year. It started with the blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement (v 9). The purpose of the year of Jubilee was to proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants (v10). The word that is translated as liberty in v 10 is a Hebrew word *deror*. Barry (2007:874) mentions that that this word is a feudal word from the Accadian (*an*) *duraru* which means “freedom” or “liberty.” It is here in Leviticus 25 where such announcement is found that *deror* should regularly and automatically take place in the year of Jubilee at the command of Yahweh, who is the owner of all land (v23). This law was to be in force for all the inhabitants of the land. It is so amazing how God set that this year should start on the Day of Atonement when the whole nation had just received the forgiveness from their sin. In a way, God designed the year of jubilee to be a true reflection of what he has done for the entire Israel nation, in forgiving of all their sins, should also be reflected by his people in forgiving the debts of others. God purposed this legislation of Jubilee for both physical and spiritual freedom. Tidball (2005:295) put this statement:

The entire year was to be characterised by the twin ideas of liberty and return. Freedom from labour and freedom from debt were to go hand in hand with restoring broken family ties and repossessing lost family property. The hope of returning to one’s roots at the jubilee would sustain many who had fallen on hard times.

God wanted His people to live in freedom as Tidball (2005:292) sees that the main purpose of the year of Jubilee, set forth in Leviticus 25 is “to provide a way out for those who fell into debt.

4.3.5 Effects of Jubilee upon possession of property – 13-34

Verse 13 echoes verse 10. It is showing one of the effects of the year of Jubilee which is: “...each of you shall return to his property” v 13. The land that was sold was to be returned to its original family. This law had implications for the sale of the land in any year. The number of years or

harvests before the Jubilee were determinants for the price of the land when selling (vv14-17). Harris (1994:161) links vv14-17 to the fact that God wanted no family to be permanently disadvantaged.

In all this social registration, the citizens must cooperate for the successful operation (v18). Israel's regard for the poor was supported by the knowledge that the Lord is God and that he has respect for the poor (Exod. 22:27). The success of these laws was dependent on Israel's obedience (v18-22). If they keep the laws here, they will live *securely*. The word *securely* in Hebrew is *betah* which connotes security and confidence (Coleman, 1990:106). The hypothetical objectors in v 20 have the sabbatical year only in mind, hence the question: "what shall we eat in the seventh year...?" This system would not work except for the special blessing of God, who owned both the land and the people and had his sovereign purpose for both (Harris, 1994:162). Verse 21 highlights the importance of the providential blessing of God. God would bless the nation of Israel upon their obedience with a surplus that would suffice all the years that they were to leave the land uncultivated.

The heart of the year of Jubilee lies in v23. God Himself says that: "*the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.*" When the Israelites have taken possession of the Promised Land, God gave them to enjoy all the benefits of the land. But one thing that God wanted them to always remember was that on whatever circumstances, "they had no ultimate title to the land- it was owned by God" (Wright 1990:201). Accordingly, their status in the promised land, Canaan, was to be compared to that of an alien who was living in their midst. Tidball (2005:292) avers this about the aliens living among the Israelites, "they belonged, and they had a certain measure of protection but at the end of the day they did not possess it." Here is where the importance of the land in an agrarian community was and is to be viewed. The proprietorship of land was, and is, an indispensable constituent in economic activity as well as in providing a family with its identity and the basis of its security. Therefore, when God gave this law of the year of Jubilee, He was concerned that there should be equality among His people.

There were three ways in which the release of the land was to be granted. The first case was when a brother became poor and sold his property, his nearest redeemer was to come and release what his brother had sold. He was to buy back from the purchaser and restore it to its former possessor. The second case was that if there was no redeemer because there were no relatives, or because the relatives were all too poor, and that he had earned enough to buy back his property, then he had to calculate the years of purchase, and return the surplus to the man who had bought it (vv26-27). The third case was that if a man had not acquired enough to buy back his property, then the property was to be in the hands of the buyer till the year of Jubilee,

and then it was to “be released,” that is to become free again so that the impoverished seller could enter into possession without compensation (v 28).

Verses 29-34 direct that the property to be redeemed was only in the unwalled city. The property in the walled city was to be redeemed within a year, failing which would result in the buyer having the property in perpetuity (v30). No reason is given for exemption, however, Chingota (2006:165) conjectures that apparently, it was because the walled property had no direct connection with the land and its cultivation that it would not be redeemed after a year of being sold. The houses in the villages were covered by the provision of redemption probably because farmers and shepherds dwell in them (Chingota, 2006:165). The Levites’ property was also of a special class (vv32-34).

4.3.6 The protection of the poor (35-55)

There are three cases that are covered by the Mosaic Law in this section on loans (cf. Exod. 22:25; Deut. 23:19-20).

The first case is that of loans without interest (vv35-38). The word “*you shall support him*” in v 35 literally means “*you shall seize him*” (Harris, 1994:162). The assumption is that the creditor has detained his debtor like a resident alien while he works off the debt. As the debtor is working off the debt, he himself serves as a pledge for its payment, and no further interest or second interest could be charged. Coleman (1990:106-7) remarked that loans to the needy fellow Israelites were not to involve interest. Rather, the needy one was to be assisted by being allowed to reside with one of the community and to enjoy the same privileges as a stranger or foreigner who, although he could not own land, was permitted to accumulate property and live in comfort as a free man (Coleman, 1990:106-7). Otherwise, a poor man could never work off his debt and support himself if he were to be charged interest. The creditor should not exploit the poverty of a brother with a purpose to enrich himself (Chingota, 2006:164). The basis for this act of mercy that the Israelites are to show to their poor brothers is the fact that God showed them mercy in delivering them from being enslaved by the Egyptians (v38).

The second case was the contracted servitude for debt (vv39-46). If the situation becomes worse for a brother that he has no credit to obtain a loan and he takes the initiative of selling himself as a slave (v39-43), the buyer should treat him simply as a hired servant who sells only his labour and not his freedom (Chingota, 2006:166). At the jubilee, he is to go free, go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers (vv40-41). Baker (2003:703) postulates that the return of the land coinciding with slave release would give freed slaves the resources to make a new start.

Jews were not to be enslaved by their compatriots. Slavery of other nations was permitted, and they were not to be redeemed as the Israelites. From a fellow Israelite, only a contracted servitude was permitted (vv44-46).

Lastly, the contracted servitude to an alien (vv47-55). If an Israelite sold himself into the service of a resident foreigner, he could be redeemed by a near kinsman, or he could redeem himself (vv. 48, 49). The amount to be paid for his freedom was to be in proportion to the time remaining for the jubilee (vv50-52). While in service to a local foreigner, the Israelite was to be treated with respect as a hired servant (v53). If he was not able to be redeemed or to redeem himself, then he was to go free at the jubilee year (v54).

In v 55 it shows that the provisions for the Jubilee Year had as their guiding principle in the fact that the Israelites were servants of the Lord and could not be sold permanently into the service of another. Similarly, since the land was the Lord's, it must return from time to time to the possession of those Israelites to whom it had been originally allotted. Chingota (2006:166) beautifully summarised the principle from Leviticus 25 in that "as a members of one stock, human beings should strive to realise of the common good. This common good, rather than individual profit should be a driving force for all human activities."

4.3.7 Principles from Leviticus 25

The theological foundation on which the reason of establishing the legislations of the year of Jubilee lies in verse 23 where God says, "*the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.*" From this, the principle is that God is the ultimate owner of all property on earth. People should use their properties (wealth) in the affairs of God. God graciously allows people to occupy the property for a period of time but not to use it as a means to exploit the poor by amassing great wealth for themselves. Kiuchi (2007:465) states that:

In conformity with this, the institution of the Jubilee year is designed to inculcate in the mind of the Israelites the realisation that they possess nothing in this world and that the land and its produce are only a gift from the Lord. In a true sense, this truth means that in the year of Jubilee the Israelites are to return to the state they had when they were redeemed from the land of Egypt.

Secondly is the principle of community solidarity which is found in the command, "*you shall not wrong one another*" and occurs twice in v14 and v17. God is protecting those people who had fallen on the hard times and they had to sell their property to make ends meet, not to be browbeaten by others. Because one was in debt, this could easily undermine the "social

foundations of Israel and their respect for one another as equals” (Hartley, 1992: 424). God sees all His people as equals and He initiated the Laws of Jubilee to make sure that this equality should be seen among His people. It is clearly seen in the laws of jubilee how God defends the cause of the underprivileged and the impoverished. He does not only sympathise with their predicament, but He actively provides His people with a concrete way of salvaging them from it. God is the One who forbids taking advantage of one another. Instead, He wants all people to show compassion for one another. He is totally against taking gain of those who are financially susceptible. At the time of Jubilee, the gathering of economic and social disproportion nursing toward feudalism was to be restored to a decentralised, open evenness.

The social effects of the Jubilee redistribution of territory were of a significantly egalitarian nature. Ideally, the Jubilee legislation was meant to curb a well-marked division of society into classes and to prohibit the exploitation of the poor by the landowners. Reading the books of the major and the Minor Prophets, it is apparent that the children of Israel declined in observing this law of Jubilee if at all they did. The prophets Isaiah and Amos who ministered around eighth-century BC strongly confronted the rich people who took advantage of the poor people.

Thirdly is the principle that God wants his people to promote social justice. He does not condone slavery among the brethren. In Malawi, many poor people are being taken advantage of by making them work hard jobs for long hours and their wages are very low, a practice that James in the New Testament condemns (Jam. 5:1-6). This is evil. God wants justice to prevail in the world (Amos 5:24). Although slavery was not abolished in ancient Israel, a number of regulations were designed to limit its effect. In Exodus 21:2 we read:

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything (NIV).

When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, but in the seventh, he shall go out a free person, without debt (NRSV).

When someone became bankrupt in the ancient world, he was often forced to sell himself or his children into slavery in order to pay his debts (cf. 2 Ki. 4:1-7; Ne. 5:5). So, it is stipulated that an Israelite who is underprivileged to the extent of becoming a slave of another Israelite may only be held for a maximum of six years before he is released. In other words, he was not to be a permanent slave in the full sense of the word but enters into a working contract as a bonded labourer (‘hired worker’, NIV for a limited period of time (cf. Lev. 25:39-43). This regulation is quite different from that which applied to foreign slaves, who were usually enslaved for life (Lev. 25:44-46).

When the people of Israel left their slavery in Egypt, they became a free nation. This freedom was given by the Lord God, as recalled in the prologue to the Israelite constitution (Ex. 20:2). Because of that, they were forbidden to oppress the weak within their own society (Ex. 22:21-23:9) or to enslave fellow Israelites (Lev. 25:38-42). Unfortunately, in the ancient world, as in the modern world, there were always those who tried to control and restrict others, and so reduced their freedom. One of the great themes of the sabbatical and jubilee years in the Bible is freedom (Merrill, 1966:89). The people of God should be able to enjoy the freedom which he has given them, and if that is not the case then action must be taken to restore that freedom. A number of measures with that in mind are associated with the holy year. One of the most important things is the liberation of slaves and the provision of capital so that they can make a new start as free men and women. Parallel to that, if debtors are unable to repay their debts by the time the holy year comes, then the debts are to be cancelled so that they are freed from a burden that it has become clear they are unable to bear.

Fourth, the intactness at which God values the family and the clan. The property was to be returned to those who had disposed of it so that the family and the clan structure of Israel could be sustained intact. As the separation between property and family was liable to arise from the indebtedness, a freeing from burdens was the requirement for the return and thus for the restoration of the order of things as originally constituted. Gane (2004:443) commented this:

Not only does the land rest; it returns to its original owner. Not only do agricultural workers rest by not planting or harvesting; they return to their own clans and land. Not only does the economy rest; debts that have kept people under obligation claim them no more. This legislation stresses the desirability of economic self-sufficiency and the need to treat people undergoing economic hardship with kindness and respect.

All these principles behind the purpose of the initiation of the Jubilee year, tie very well to one principle which is to prevent the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor, who in turn get poorer. God purposed the year of Jubilee to put a limit to the greediness of people. Socialism says that none shall own the property, but the message of the book of Leviticus is that none shall lose the property. Equal status is at the heart of chapter 25 of Leviticus.

Lastly, the principle that the poor should be given the opportunities to succeed. No one is to be ruthless towards the poor. Instead of taking advantage over the weak, there should be ways in which the poor are given a fresh start (Deyoung and Gilbert, 2011:151). The Jubilee laws did something better than just reactive assistance (which might be called for in some circumstances). The jubilee gave the poor opportunities. It gave them access to capital which was land. It granted them new freedoms. This was intelligent assistance. Instead of giving every poor person a

handout, it is better to give them opportunities that make economic self-sufficiency a possibility. Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:152) stated that “the year of Jubilee didn’t do for the people what they needed to do themselves. But it gave the poor tribes, clans and families another opportunity, by God’s grace, to make something of themselves.” Therefore, the poor need to be given some opportunities where they can flourish.

These principles show what God’s desire is for the poor in His word. They are timeless principles that can be applied to the poverty issue in Malawi.

4.4 Did the Israelites ever use the law found in Leviticus 25?

It is very important to look into whether the Israelites ever practically used the law found in Leviticus 25. There is no place in the Old Testament where the year of jubilee had ever been explicitly realised. However, Tidball (2005:300), objecting to the idea of Jubilee never been realised in the Old Testament posited this so adamantly, “absence of evidence, however, is never evidence of absence.”

There are a number of passages in the Old Testament that suggest that the principles of the year of jubilee were applied.

4.4.1 In the Book of Nehemiah

While there are some doubts as to whether the legislation for the year of Jubilee was ever used in the time of the Old Testament, the story of Nehemiah stands out as one of the few places which may have used the Jubilee principles. King Cyrus issued a decree for the Jews in exile to return back home in Palestine (Ezra 1.1-11). Everything needed to be rebuilt again for the Israelites including the temple and the city walls and gates. Nehemiah records a story where he himself asked the King Artaxerxes to go back to Palestine to rebuild the walls and the gates of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8).

While the work of rebuilding the walls was in progress after the period of being frustrated by their enemies, there was something more than Jerusalem physical structure that threatened the life of the returned exiles. An economic crisis had led some Jews into slavery and others mortgaged their property. Chapter 5:1-5 records the problem and describes a classic example of the gap between the rich and the poor and the way the rich sometimes tend to control things so that they get richer while the poor get poorer, a thing that the laws of Jubilee tended to curb. This was the case of pure exploitation, and what made it worse was that it occurred not between the other nations and the Jews, no. But this occurred within the Jewish community among those who should have been helping one another.

The book of Ezra records of those who had come back from the exile who returned with many worldly goods. Ezra gave a record of their possessions, reporting in summary that they were fifty-four hundred articles of gold and silver (Ezra 1:11). In addition, king Cyrus had himself opened his treasury and contributed to the articles belonging to the Temple of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7). Once in Jerusalem, many of the Jews were either wealthy enough or had prospered sufficiently to panel their homes, a luxury one time reserved only for the kings (Hag. 1:4). When the Temple was finished, the people gave generously for its embroidery (Neh. 7:71-72).

By the time of reaching chapter 5, things had changed. There was a famine in the land that was caused by the lack of rain which resulted in the consequent failure of crops. Another problem was also the King's taxation. While all of these things were happening, the people's complaints were genuine. Nehemiah left the peripherals behind and goes to the heart of the problem. Barber (1991:89) says that, "outward circumstances can easily be rectified, but unless the root cause is dealt with the problem will only recur". After evaluating the circumstance, the most thing that Nehemiah saw as the root was exploitation. The better-off Jews had been exploiting those who were less well-off to the point of reducing some to slavery (v5). Because of the desperate situation of their fellow brothers who were in dire poverty, the more affluent Jews took advantage of this to amass more wealth to themselves, a thing which Nehemiah confronted by saying, "the thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nation's our enemies?" (Neh. 5:9).

When confronting those rich people who were exploiting the poor, Nehemiah reminded them that what they were doing was contrary to the walk in the fear of God. By this time the people who returned from exile were very much familiar with the phrase "the fear of the Lord." It was the term that has been used throughout the Torah and the Prophets which refers to the keeping of God's commandment (Deut. 6:13). The assumption is that Nehemiah pointed out that what these rich people were doing was against the Old Testament. Probably he referred to this passage in Leviticus 25:35; 39-41.

The measures that Nehemiah took are exactly like the ones that are in the Jubilee legislation. Nehemiah demanded the offenders to immediately cancel all the debts and interest due and also the return of any property that had been used in repayment. He demanded the abandonment of the loans on pledge (v10) which could so easily lead to the loss of property and debt slavery. By doing this he pointed to the heart of the Jubilee legislation, which enforces equality among the Israelites. He also showed by what he demanded the people to do that within the community open-handedness is to be desired to personal advantage.

4.4.2 In the Book of Isaiah

The second place to investigate as to the allusion of the aspect of the principles of the year Jubilee is in the book of Isaiah. It is evident that the people of Israel really had difficulties with keeping the laws of Jubilee. But God does not compromise with His word. He does not change what Has come from His mouth on the basis of our failure to keep His word. His word fulfils the purpose for which He sent it (Isa. 55:11).

Chapter 5 of Isaiah, the prophet reprimands the rich people who were exploiting the poor by taking their land. He cried out against the system of his day this way, “woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land (v8). What was happening was that the rich were endlessly expanding the ownership of their houses and fields so that all the land was in danger of becoming the property of the few (Ridderbos, 1985:70). Besides that, this was happening unjustly, this frustrated the will of God to which the land was divided evenly among the tribes of the Israelites to be their inheritance.

Israel was an agricultural state and getting more field meant depriving others the means by which they were surviving. As a result of this, “a citizen’s legal independence and the fulfilment of his obligations to the Lord were both bound up with the possession of house and field. (Ridderbos, 1985:70). The story of Naboth in 1 Kings 21 depicts this more vividly. This story is a demonstration of how fields were so important in the lives of the Israelites. The exploitation of the rich by getting the land unjustly which resulted in God punishing the whole family of Ahab for taking both Naboth’s field and life. In this passage of Isaiah, God threatens destruction to the people who were unjustly piling houses and fields for themselves (5:9). By the way, Isaiah was reminding them of their covenant to be obedient to the law that God had given them. In this reproaching of the rich, what was in the mind of the prophet was the legislation of the year of Jubilee. The land grabbing was contrary to the basic principle of the Law of Moses. Leviticus 25:23 says that the Lord is the one who owns the land and that all His people should get a fair share of it. It is apparent that these people became brazen to listen to Isaiah or justified their actions for doing what they were doing (Isa. 5:18-20).

Another passage in the book of Isaiah which alludes to the laws of the jubilee is Isaiah 61:1-4. In this text, the prophet reinterprets the jubilee year eschatologically:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favour and the day of vengeance of our God. (NIV)

This passage shows the principle of liberty that God intends for His people. For the scholars who object to the practical aspect of the year of jubilee in the Old Testament find it here that the year of Jubilee was an ideal to be fulfilled by the coming Messiah (Webb, 1996:234). The 61st chapter of Isaiah is about an anointed preacher who has got a burden of preaching about the year of the Lord. There is consensus among the Old Testament scholars that the reference here is the year of Jubilee described in Leviticus 25. As found in Leviticus, on the year of Jubilee, it was the year to proclaim release in which debts were cancelled, slaves were freed, and people who had been forced to sell their property received it back again. The message of the anointed preacher of proclaiming freedom employs accurately the same Hebrew as the command in Leviticus 25:10 (Webb, 1996:234). Taking this passage to its context, this was the prophecy concerning the future of the Israelites after the exile. The words of this prophecy meant to encourage the Israelites in their particular situation. Their release from captivity and the return to their own land was in itself the year of Lord's favour. In this prophecy, the Israelites will receive comfort and healing for their broken hearts and lives in the good news of the pardon of their sins.

According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ at the beginning of His ministry in Galilee in Luke 4 quoted this passage and mentioned that the fulfilment had come. Whatever in practice the year of Jubilee represented in the Old Testament, the reality of it is found in Christ Jesus (Col 1:17).

4.4.3 In the Selected Minor Prophets

One of the themes of Minor Prophets was social justice (Yilpet, 2006:1049). This is found in the recurring word of judgement upon the social injustice that was prevalent among the children of Israel.

In Hosea 5:8-12, God threatening to destroy Judah because of what they were doing in fighting for the border with Benjamin (Carew, 2006:1019). What the Kings of Judah were attempting to extend their northern border by forcefully annexing the territory of Benjamin was equivalent to moving boundary stones (5:10). Carew (2006:1019) commented that these stones marked the extent of a family's land, and moving them amounted to theft of land, which would deprive people of the ability to support themselves. That is why the practice is strictly condemned by God in Deuteronomy, Leviticus and here it draws the wrath of God.

In the time of prophet Amos King, Jeroboam had led the nation of Israel to great prosperity and prestige, largely through trade, agriculture and the reclamation of land from its enemies, but its material triumph had been more matched by spiritual tragedy and what the bible says about king Jeroboam's reign in forty-one years is so artless and dishonourable: "... he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 14:24). Amos drew attention to the people who owned both a 'winter

house' and a 'summer house' to others who had 'houses of ivory' (Am. 3:15), to others who had built the "hewn houses" (5:11). This shows how luxuriously the rich lived their lives at the expense of the poor who were struggling financially during the same time. This kind of lifestyle made God angry because He does not condone the exploitation of the poor (Blanchard, 2012:77-79).

Lastly, in the book of Prophet Micah. In chapter 2:1-11, Micah denounces social sins beginning with the corrupt, with the wealthy landowners who seized the land and the property of the poor, something that God had prohibited in the land of Israel (Lev 25). These people coveted fields, lands and houses and they seized them even if it means defraudment (2:2). Such coveting was prohibited in the 10 Commandment (Ex. 20:17). The loss of land would condemn people to poverty since agriculture was the source of their livelihood (Yilpet, 2006:1051). God gave the laws of Jubilee so that the greediness of man could be controlled.

4.5 The debate of the relevance of Leviticus 25 today

There has been an ongoing debate as to whether the law in Leviticus 25 is still applicable today. Bergsma (2007:1) has mentioned how the ancient Israelite jubilee has exercised a powerful influence on the religious imagination of the Jews and Christians. When one looks at the African American spiritual tradition, the cultic calendar of the Catholic Church and the writings of modern liberation theologians, the year of Jubilee is at the centre serving as the symbol of freedom, both spiritual and material, and inspired effort to attain it.

However, there are some disagreements among scholars pertaining to the relevance of Jubilee today. Harbin (2011:698) and Lindsley (2015:64) have argued that the Old Testament institution of Jubilee is not applicable today. Among other objections that Harbin (2011:696) presents as to the irrelevance of jubilee is that there is no link between an agrarian society where families all possessed land and were largely self-reliant to today's highly integrated post-industrial society, where many have few ,if any capital assets to lease out. Thus, the current idea of the "jubilee principle" is not a valid understanding of the Old Testament institution as it violates hermeneutical principles of interpreting the texts (Harbin 2011:696). In agreement with Harbin is Chilton (1981:34). Chilton does not see the direct link between the sabbatical and jubilee laws in Leviticus 25 and today's society. Scheffler (2013:7) stated that Pentateuch does not present the law as having universal inclusive applicability, but rather as the laws that are meant to be obeyed within the context of Israel itself, which is conceptualised as a family. This statement of Scheffler implies that the sabbatical and jubilee laws in Leviticus 25 should never be understood outside Israel's context.

Scholars like Sider (2005:73) and Bergsma (2007:1) argue that while there is no direct link between the specific provisions of the year of jubilee to today's modern technological society, however, the principles of the year of jubilee are still important today. Barry (2011:895) agrees with Sider and Bergsma when he said that the Old Testament concept of the sabbatical and jubilee years are neither out-dated nor fringe details of the canon of Scripture. Rather, they are an essential part of, and indeed one of the hermeneutical keys to interpreting, the whole. Thus, they are still applicable today.

While the debate still goes on, this study looks at the abiding validity of all the Old Testament as Blomberg (1999:39) put it, "every command [from the Old Testament] reflects principles at some level that are binding on Christians (2 Tim. 3:16)." Therefore, the passage Leviticus 25 is relevant as far as we can draw some principles and apply them to our present day.

4.6 Poverty in the New Testament

The New Testament's understanding of poverty needs to be considered according to the context (Magezi, 2007:48). While the word poverty in the New Testament may be understood as denoting spiritual poverty, the key understanding of this word implies lacking the necessities of life like food, drink, clothing, shelter and health (Magezi, 2007:48). Hartin (2000:1071) explains that besides the economic consideration of the term poverty in the New Testament, it also focuses on the lack of honour, social status, and powerlessness which leads to the oppression of the poor.

4.6.1 Roman Empire economic system

The 1st century in which the New Testament was written, the Roman Empire developed mechanisms for maintaining multifaceted inequality, and like all so-called civilised societies, the empire promoted justifications that made the inequality seem normal, or at least inevitable (Friesen, 2008:19; Garnsey and Horsely, 1987:125; Bell, 1998:190).

Friesen (2008:19) gives three fundamental ideas for considering the economic facets of the Roman system of inequality. First, the Roman imperial economy was preindustrial. The vast majority of people lived in rural areas or in small towns, with only about 10 to 15 percent of the population in big cities of ten thousand people or more (Friesen, 2008:19; Temin, 2006:136).

Second, Friesen (2008:19) states that there was no middle class¹⁵ in the Roman Empire during the writing of the New Testament. Because the economy was primarily agricultural, wealth was

¹⁵Temin (2006:135) explains that a very small elite group was at the top of society and the economy, which was comprised of several hundreds of senators and several tens of thousands knights which held great wealth in form of land. At the end of the distribution were farmers and farm laborers, both free and slaves.

based on the ownership of the land. Most land was controlled by a small number of wealthy, elite families. These families earned rent and produce from the subsistence farmers or slaves who actually worked the land. With their wealth and status, these families were able to control local and regional governance, which allowed them to profit also from taxation and from governmental policies (Friesen, 2008:19; Temin, 2006:135-36). These same families also controlled public religion (Friesen, 2008:19). This shows how inequality was a serious problem in the New Testament.

Third, poverty was widespread both in rural and urban areas (Friesen, 2008:19; 2004:1). Jongman (2008:594) sheds light on how poverty was widespread in the Greco-Roman Empire. He pointed out that throughout the Roman Empire the sign of poverty, misery and destitution were obvious (2008:594). "Many inhabitants of the Roman Empire only eked out a meagre living, their skeletons grim testimonies to malnutrition and disease. Health remained a scarce good even for the rich" (Jongman, 2008:594).

The social-economic structure described above is an important framework to understand poverty in the New Testament. Oakman (1986:142) explains that in all the areas that the Roman Empire conquered, it also repossessed the land. Because of this reason, a lot of people lost their fertile and farmable land and was integrated into royal domains or upper class which comprised of emperor, senators, the procurators and provincial chiefs. This class had vast expanses of land even though they made up only 1 percent of the population of the Roman Empire. This resulted in intensive exploitation of farmers, the concentration of land in the hand of a few and non-elites carrying the burden of rents and taxes (Oakman, 1986:77).

4.6.2 Jesus and the poor

Poverty in the New Testament can be traced back to the historical Jesus who according to the oldest witness, he was poor himself (Luke 9:58) (Scheffler, 2013:8; Moyer, 1975:820). The sacrifices that Jesus' parents offered in the temple (Luke 2:24) adequately shows that his family was also poor. The synoptic Gospels present Jesus' life as one of self-chosen poverty (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58).

God's concern and care for the poor is a constant theme both in the Old and New Testament. Jesus demonstrated in his life that he followed the Old Testament teaching about the concern for the poor and he taught the same lesson to the disciples (Mark 14:15; John 13:29). He pronounced

In between closer to the bottom than the top was the group of skilled and often literate tradesmen and service workers who provided varied goods and services for senators and knights. This group was too small to be called a middle class. That is the reason why the middle class is considered nonexistent in Roman Empire.

the poor blessed (LK 6:20-21; Mt 5:3). He preached the good news to the poor (Luke 7:22; Matt.11:5). He cared for them through the multiplication of the bread and gave his disciples the responsibility of caring for them (Mk 6:36, Luke 12:33; Mark 10:21; Luke 16:19, 31) (Schaffler, 2013:8). He made a statement that poor people will always be there, but this did not diminish his concern for them and aid to them (Moyer, 1975:820). Jesus and the disciples had a common treasury from which the contributions were made for the poor (John 13:26).

Even though Jesus did not directly speak openly against economic injustices, he did raise his concerns through different parables that were recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. For example, the parable of the vine-growers (Mark 12:1-9). This parable portrays the agrarian conflict prevailing in Palestine during Jesus' time (Witherington, 2001:321; Kakwata, 2015:6). Healy (2008:235) sheds the light that the Mark 12:1-9 parable may also give a sketch of the situation of absentee landlords who owned land in Israel, a situation that had been the source of dissension for a long time. Jesus also noted the behaviour of the poor, and praised a poor widow's generosity, contrasting it with that of the scribes who were exploiting the poor (Mark 12:38-44) (Kunhiyop, 2008:155). In Luke 4 Jesus announced what the Good News that he came to proclaim was about. He defines his gospel as an announcement of the good news to the poor and oppressed (Luke 4:18, 19).

The Gospels present Jesus repeatedly reaching out to those who were the poor and marginalised of the society: women, Samaritans, lepers, children, prostitutes and tax collectors. He encouraged the rich man to distribute his wealth to the poor (Matt 19:21). He inculcated an attitude of mercy toward debtors (Luke 7:41ff). The guest for a banquet should be the poor, maimed, lame, and blind because they could not repay (Luke 14:13, 14).

In Matthew 25, Jesus taught something radical which shows how important the poor are in the sight of God. The very entry into heaven is dependent on one's service of the poor, the needy and the outcasts. Thus, Jesus shows that not helping the poor, the needy and the outcasts is a sin that can cause one to go to hell.

4.6.3 Paul and the poor

There have been scholars who have argued that Paul was not concerned with the issue of poverty in his writings. For this reason, there is very little relevance of Paul's theological deliberations with regard to issues of poverty to either historical reconstruction or contemporary theological consideration (Longenecker, 2010:1). Among other scholars who argue for Paul's lack of concern for the poor are Davids (2005) and Hoppe (2004). According to Davids (2005:358), apparently,

Paul's imminent eschatology¹⁶ made social issues of less importance to focus on. Agreeing with this observation is Hoppe (2004:158), who argued that Paul's belief in the imminent return of Christ "made dealing with socioeconomic problems at any great length unnecessary." However, Longenecker (2010:1) argues that care for the poor is shown to be an integral part of the good news that Paul preached. While economic assistance for the poor was not sufficient in and of itself, nor was it exhaustive of the good news of Jesus, for Paul, it was not supplemental or peripheral to the good news. Care for the poor was thought by Paul to be an essential hallmark of the corporate life of Jesus followers (Longenecker, 2010:1).

There is ample evidence from his letters that Paul cared for the poor. In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells the believers in Rome that he was going to Jerusalem with the aid for the poor which the churches of Macedonia and Achaia contributed (Rom. 15:25-28). In Galatia, Paul told the Galatians that he was anxious to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10). He demonstrated his care for the poor when he wrote to the Corinthians, encouraging them to give to the poor believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8, 9). This is a sure demonstration that just like Jesus, Paul had a heart for the poor.

4.6.4 James and the poor

James wrote his letter to admonish the believers that faith which does not accompany works is dead (Jam. 2:14-26). The letter in chapter 2:1-7 criticises the dominant social system and the judicial systems (Friesen, 2008:24). James presents a hypothetical situation where a rich person in a synagogue is being favoured over an impoverished fellow. James says that in the community of believers such kind of a thing should never happen as it contradicts the faith of the Lord Jesus who always received the poor.

In the second passage is James chapter 5, James criticises a fundamental feature of the Roman system of inequality. The rich landowners were exploiting the labourers who worked in their fields. As mentioned before, the primary means by which the elite minority generated and maintained their wealth was through the land. The situation of poor people forced them to work for the rich in exchange for subsistence wages or provision (Friesen, 2008:25). Garnesey and Saller (1987:67) explain that the poor were paid with low wages by the elites for the services of their labour who in turn charged them rent, appropriated their crops and demanded payment of taxes.

¹⁶1 Corinthians 7:30, 31, "And those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away (ESV).

4.7 Summary of poverty in the New Testament

Just like the Old Testament, the New Testament has the poor at the heart of the gospel. Jesus' priority in his mission was to turn to the attention of the poor who literary dominated the land of Palestine and the whole Roman Empire. Jesus did not just preach to the poor, but he showed the care for them by physically attending to their needs. The same attitude was with the Apostle Paul. His ministry showed that helping the poor was not a peripheral thing but integral. Thus, the New Testament puts the poor as the class of people whose attention should not be neglected by anyone who professes to be a believer in Christ (Jam. 1:27).

Jesus cared for the poor. He provided for their physical needs in some instances. The Christians who are the representatives of Christ on earth should continue with the responsibility of caring for the poor just as Jesus did.

4.8 Exegesis of Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37

4.8.1 Introduction

The church has just begun with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost Day as Jesus promised. One of the challenges that the church needed to deal with during the first century was poverty. As noted, before, poverty was pervasive in the 1st century across the Roman Empire (Jongman, 2008:594; Friesen, 2008:19), and this did not exclude the church.

Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 are clear passages in the New Testament that show how the Church dealt with the problem of poverty. However, there is a problem with how these passages should be viewed - whether as a descriptive or prescriptive. Jeon (2013:11) presents two problems that come with interpreting the above two passages prescriptively. First, he argues that there is no other place in the New Testament that the scenarios in these passages are found. Second, it brings "the error of anachronism by confusing the philosophical underpinnings and historical circumstances of collectivism with the motivations and practices of the first Christians" (Jeon, 2013:11) (Voorwinde, 2010:47). While there is consensus among many scholars that Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 are descriptive passages, there is a danger of throwing a baby with the bathwater. Stott (1990:84) clearly points out that these passages talk about generosity and care for the poor. The clear thing is that the church came up with a solution to combat the problem of poverty which was prevalent among other believers. The scripture is clear that the solution worked (Acts 4:34). And that is the reason why these passages were chosen to help with the principles that the word of God teaches on how the church can deal with poverty.

4.8.2 The response of the believers to the teaching of the apostles

The whole passage in perspective here comes after the sermon that Peter preached in 2:14-36. Verses 42, 43, 46-47 capture what the first Christians did following their conversion in response to the gospel message. There are four activities that are listed in v 42 that the early Christians were devoted to doing. These include the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. Marshall (2008:88) makes a case that these four activities are considered as four elements which characterised a Christian gathering in the early church. The word translated “fellowship” is a Greek word *Koinonia*. This word is a term found in Greco-Roman literature to express the mutuality and commitment characteristic of marriage (Achte-meier, *et al.*, 2001:171-73). Fellowship in this context may be understood to be that mutuality expressed by both shared activity and shared possession (Peterson, 2009:160; Jeon, 2013:2).

It is clear that what the early church did in this passage was the results of the teaching of the apostles. The helping of the needy came about from their conviction of what the apostles teach on how to help the needy based on what they saw Jesus doing and taught them to do.

Verse 43 shows the effect that the infant church’s growth had on the people. Peterson (2009:162) explains that “the awe” (*phobos*) that came upon every soul suggest an enduring sense of awe-inspired by the consciousness that God was at work in the midst of the early church. This was proved by the many wonders and signs that were being done by the apostles.

Verses 46 and 47 show the attending of the temple together and continual meeting of the early church in their homes as a sign of their fellowship and unity. Their Christian fellowship manifested itself also in their eating together in their homes. They did this with gladness and generous hearts. It shows that they were not forced to do what they were doing but it was as a result of their changed life which was characterised by the praising of God for his mercy in their lives. Jeon (2013:3) commented that the author of Acts wants to show how the new community began to connect in profoundly intimate and familial ways.

4.8.3 Unity of the believers in all things (44, 45)

Verses 44, 45 show the distinctive feature in the way the early believers lived together and practised some kind of joint ownership of possessions (Marshall, 2008:89). The meaning of this is made clear in verse 45 where it says that people sold their possessions so that the proceeds might be used to help the needy.

There is enough evidence from the New Testament that what they did was not meant to be a norm for all churches of all times (Marshall, 2008:90; Stott, 1990:83; Peterson, 2009:163; Bock,

2007:152). This was not repeated in the churches that the apostles planted later in the Book of Acts. Barrett (1994) postulated that the early church did this for the eschatological reason where they expected Christ would return soon. However, as Bock (2007:153) noted, the reason for the selling of their properties was not eschatological but social. They were motivated by concern for the needs of the community (Bock, 2007:153). It might be that they were influenced by the teaching of Christ about self-renunciation (Luke 6:30-36; 12:13-21), or from the Old Testament and Deuteronomy 15:4-5 (Marshall, 2008:90; Bock, 2007:153; Polhill, 1992:121).

Sider (2005:79) gave a very good comment on what motivated the believers in the 1st century to sell their property in this statement:

What then was the essence of the transformed economic relationships in the Jerusalem church? The best way to describe their practice is to speak of sweeping liability for and availability to each other. Their sharing was not superficial or occasional. Regularly and repeatedly, “they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had a need” (2:45). If the need was greater than the current cash reserves, they sold the property. They simply gave until the needs were met. The needs of the sister and brother, not legal property rights or future financial security, were the deciding factors. For the earliest Christians, oneness in Christ meant sweeping liability for and availability to the other members of Christ’s body.

The early believers practiced their unity not only in creeds and sermons. They demonstrated their unity by united in all things. The basic line in this passage is that they did something about the needy who were among them.

4.9 Exegesis of Acts 4:32-37

4.9.1 Introduction

Chapter 4:32-37 is almost a repetition of what chapter 2:42-47 presents. The author might have intended to highlight the peculiar lifestyle that the early church lived. This lifestyle was reiterated in the unity, generosity, and spiritual vibrancy of the recent converts and the authority of the apostles (Jeon, 2013:4).

4.9.2 The unity of the believers (v32)

Once again, the author of Acts emphasises the dimension of the unity that the early believers had. Verse 32 gives a hint that the church which began with some 120 believers on the Pentecost day has now been multiplied, hence the use of the Greek word “*plethous*” which is best translated

as “*multitude*.” (Bock, 2007:213). By using the word “*plethous*” the author wants to emphasise that the unity described here did not happen among ten people. Most people find it easier to be united when they are few. Despite the fact of its size, the church had a common mind and purpose (Marshall, 2008:115).

The unity described is the unity of heart and soul (see Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13). Van der Horst (1989:46) comments that the expression *one heart and one soul* was proverbial, equivalent to *one spirit* and pointed to real friendship.

The unity was demonstrated in the fact that nobody regarded his property as being under his own control but was prepared to regard it as for the use of the whole community. Peterson (2009:204) highlights that these believers formed a closely-knit community which they used their homes for the benefit of the church. As already noted above, this verse does not intend to teach communalism as the way of dealing with poverty, but it teaches the genuine concern that the early church had to meet the needs of the impoverished (Bock, 2007:214).

4.9.3 The commitment to reach out to the needy (vv33-37)

Verse 33 shows that the church was able to live in unity and have things in common as a result of God’s grace which was upon them all. This same grace helped the church in that there was no needy person among them (v34). It is this grace working among the believers that transformed their lives to come to a place where they would sell their lands and houses and bring the proceedings at the feet of the apostles (v35) (Bock, 2007:214; Peterson, 2011:205). God’s desire as given in Deuteronomy 15:4 that there should not be any poor among God’s people was realised by the early church (Marshall, 2008:115). Stott (1990:107) quotes John Calvin commenting this:

We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others.... They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man’s own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon the earth, the common use of water, air and sky.

Verses 36, 37 introduce a man called Joseph who was called Barnabas by the apostles. Barnabas, whose name means the “son of encouragement” sold his field and brought the proceedings to the apostles’ feet. The fact that he had land in the first century as explained above, shows that he was a wealthy and educated person (Peterson, 2011:206). As his name’s

interpretation (son of encouragement), Barnabas was identified as one generally known for his kindness and support for others (Acts 9:26-27; 11:22-26; 15:37).

4.9.4 Principles from Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37

The following are the principles drawn from the above passages that explain God's desire regarding poverty.

First, concern for the poor should move the concerned into the action of generosity (Acts 2:45; 4:34). The early church did not only have a constitution that stated that they should help the poor. Rather, they practically found ways on how they dealt with the problem of poverty. It does not help to have a very good constitution that states about addressing poverty if it is not going to help to move into action.

Second, the best way possible for the church to deal with poverty is by promoting unity among the believers (Acts 2:42; 4:32). The fact that the early church was united in all aspects of life, caused believers who had material blessings to see the needs of other impoverished members and found possible ways to deal with the problem. Without genuine unity in the church, it is difficult to address the needs of the poor. Jesus himself identified with the poor by becoming poor, so that he could understand how poverty feels. After experiencing poverty in his life, he was able to minister effectively to the needs of the poor people. The challenge with a lot of people today in the church is that they are willing to be united with the poor people only spiritually but not materially. When believers are united in the same way as the church in the 1st century, there is a great possibility that the church can have an impact in addressing poverty.

Lastly, the church can only minister to the poor as far as the grace of God is been given in great measure (Acts 4:33). To minister to the poor in an effective way that would impact their lives needs God's grace. The church has been given this grace. What needs to happen is to use this grace in helping those people who are disadvantaged.

4.10 Summary and conclusion

The chapter has presented what God's desire is regarding the poor in Malawi from both the Old and New Testament. It has been found that the poor are at the heart of God. They are not to be ill-treated in any other way as that displeases the Lord. God himself provided various laws in which he stated how the poor should be treated. The gleaning laws, the sabbatical year, the year of Jubilee and the triennial tithe law were some of the laws that God introduced to help in caring for the poor.

The exegesis of Leviticus 25 which is one of the vital passages that deals with the issue of how to address poverty among God's people in the Old Testament has been presented. In the next chapter, the principles presented from the exegesis of Leviticus 25 will form part of the recommendations on how the Zambezi Evangelical Church should effectively address the issue of poverty in Malawi.

In the New Testament, there have been similar findings to that of the Old Testament where Jesus has shown the concern for the poor throughout his ministry. The chapter has also shown that Apostle Paul in his ministry had the concern for the poor just like Jesus did contrary to the view of many scholars who have argued that Paul did not have a heart for the poor.

The chapter has also presented the findings from the letter of James where he had condemned the partiality that was shown to the rich people of his time over the poor people. He also has condemned the exploitation of the poor by the rich people during the 1st century. Partiality and exploitation are to be condemned in societies.

The findings from the exegesis of the Book of Acts summarise the New Testament theology of poverty. God desires that the church should show the concern for the poor by being practically involved in the caring for the poor. Helping of the poor by the early church was not a peripheral. It was not an issue of either-or. Caring for the poor was as important as the preaching of the gospel. God's desire is that the poor in Malawi should be taken care of at all cost.

CHAPTER FIVE: WHAT THE ZAMBEZI EVANGELICAL CHURCH SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ITS HOLISTIC MINISTRY AND ENHANCE ITS IMPACT IN POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVES

5.1 Introduction

Having looked at the nature and the dimension of poverty in Malawi in chapter 2, and how the Zambezi Evangelical Church is addressing poverty in chapter 3, and the challenges that the church is facing in the process, this chapter is designated to present some recommendations based on the findings of the empirical study and from the principles that have been learnt from the word of God in chapter 4.

According to Osmer (2008:176), “practical theology often provides help by offering models of practice and rules of art.” It is through these models of practice that leaders get a general picture of the field in which they are acting and the ways they might shape the field they are dealing with toward the desired goal. In this chapter, specific guidelines about how the ZEC can carry out particular actions or practices that will lead to a change in their approach to addressing poverty effectively will be presented. In presenting the recommendations, this chapter combines the findings of chapters 2, 3 and 4, and come up with some practical ways which would help the ZEC to effectively address the issue of poverty in Malawi.

5.2 Recommendations for the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry

The following are recommendations that the respondents mentioned would help the ZEC to effectively do a holistic mission.

- The ZEC needs to invest in their leaders by giving them proper training to deal with poverty issues.
- The ZEC needs to establish a separate department that should be commissioned to deal with poverty issues.
- The ZEC needs to come up with projects and strive to find donors.
- The ZEC needs to take a prophetic role in addressing the social ills in the societies that encourage the oppression of the poor people.
- The ZEC should encourage and empower people to be involved in income-generating activities rather than to rely on handouts.

From the exegesis of Leviticus 25 and what the Old Testament teaches about poverty, the following are the principles that were learnt.

- People should use their properties (wealth) in the affairs of God
- The principle of community solidarity
- The principle that God wants his people to promote social justice
- The intactness at which God values the family and the clan
- The principle that the poor should be given the opportunities to succeed

From the New Testament and the exegesis of Acts 2:42-47; 4:42-42, the following principles were drawn.

- Concern for the poor should move the interested parties into the action of generosity (Acts 2:45; 4:34).
- The best way possible for the church to deal with poverty is by promoting unity among the believers (Acts 2:42; 4:32).
- The church can only minister to the poor as far as the grace of God is been given in great measure (Acts 4:33).

Looking at the nature and extent of poverty, and from above recommendations by the respondents and the principles from the word of God in the Old and New Testament, the researcher has come up with practical guidelines that the Zambezi Evangelical Church could do to improve the holistic ministry .

5.2.1 ZEC should address the issue of leadership

The empirical study showed that the issue of poor leadership is one of the serious challenges that the ZEC has that is contributing to their ineffectiveness in addressing poverty. Not only is in the Zambezi Evangelical Church that the issue of leadership is a problem but also in most of the Christian denominations in Malawi (Stauffacher, 2013:45). Leadership plays a significant part in the success of any organisation and especially for any church if they want to address the issue of poverty (Mathole, 2005:336). In the absence of effective leadership, no organisation can work efficiently. Therefore, the ZEC needs to address the issue of leadership so as to be effective in addressing poverty in Malawi.

The problems that the respondents mentioned with the leadership of the ZEC are as follows:

- Misuse of resources entrusted to the church by the donors. This is proven by lack of accountability and transparency by the leadership.

- There is no continuity when the administration changes, the new office bearers must seek their own donors due to personalisation of donors. The same applies to projects when management changes. The previous office bearers leave with their resources.
- Lack of capacity building within ZEC leadership.
- Most pastors' education is below standard. Pastors and leaders are not given any formal training to address social issues. The theological knowledge that they acquire in Bible colleges is enough.

How could the ZEC address these issues of poor leadership? Below are some of the proposals by the researcher that might be helpful to the ZEC in addressing leadership issues.

First, the ZEC needs to help their leaders to understand the spirit of servant leadership. According to Snodgrass (1993:7), the concept of servant leadership is based on the life and person of Christ and his example as a servant leader. Agreeing with Snodgrass is Creft (2004:7), who refers to Matthew 20:28 where Jesus is telling his disciples that he did not come to be served, but to serve. Stone *et al* (2003:352) insightfully indicated that a servant leader is not one who is interested in serving themselves but serving others. They are always looking at the needs of others before their own. They do not lord their powers over others but use those powers to care and love people. Servant leaders invest their time developing and discipling others; they develop trust, credibility, and respect from others. They are vulnerable, honest, and humble (Stauffer, 2013:31; Stone *et al.*, 2003:7).

The understanding of servant leadership will help in creating an awareness among the ZEC leaders that the reason why leaders are chosen in any organisation including the church, is to serve people. People in the church choose leaders with the expectation that they will direct them to achieve the mission of the church. They are not chosen to accomplish their own missions but the one that Jesus already set out. Whatever the church's mission is, it should align with the umbrella mission of serving others. Unfortunately, most African church leaders have not embraced the concept of servant leadership. According to Kretzschmar (2002:47), the term "servant" can be so confusing for many African church leaders because it carries with it many negative connotations. An African view of leadership is of someone who has the power to command others and they in fear obey him. One research participant shared a story of the fracas that happened within the ZEC leadership in 2008 due to hunger for power. There were some

individuals who were in the top leadership of the ZEC who wanted to restructure the church government for their own benefit of staying in power¹⁷.

Secondly, the ZEC needs to address the issues of transparency and accountability within the leadership of the church. One participant of the empirical study mentioned that a lot of members within the ZEC are withholding their support for the church for fear of not knowing how their money would be used. This is a very bad scenario. The ZEC is a very big church in Malawi and to hear that there is a lack of transparency and accountability within the ZEC leadership is not a good story. The ZEC needs to create clear checks and balances for accountability and also promote the building of trust and accountability. The way this could be achieved is by making sure that the people who are chosen or called for pastoral or leadership training should be those of proven character. It is very sad to see that most of the churches are not using the characteristics spelt out in Paul's Pastoral letters when choosing church leaders. Hendricks (2010:1) pointed out that theological education has contributed greatly over the past century as far as Christian leadership is concerned. No one can argue against such a contribution that theological training has achieved in Africa. However, Naidoo (2005:iii) in her research found out that many theological institutions are focusing more on the cognitive and academic aspects of theology on the expense of spiritual formation. She observed that most curriculum is designed for enhancing perceptions, but very little is designed for enhancing one's own character or spiritual life (Naidoo, 2005:iii).

Thirdly, the ZEC needs to invest in training and equipping pastors and leaders to address poverty. The importance of theological training has already been emphasised above. But addressing poverty needs more than just theological training. The researcher had a privilege of studying at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi (EBCoM) where the ZEC also send their pastors for training. It was disgraceful to see that a lot of pastors who were trained from ZEC had no Malawi School Certificate Examinations (MSCE)¹⁸ which enables one to pursue higher education. These are the people who cannot write and speak proper English and they do their studies in the vernacular language (Chichewa). The researcher is not against the idea of training such people for ministry. The thing is that we are living in a different era to that of the 20th century. We are in the 21st century where there is rapid growth in technology and knowledge. For the ZEC leaders to be effective in addressing poverty, they need to be competent. They need more knowledge about how to address poverty effectively. The researcher thinks it is high time that the ZEC should

¹⁷The ZEC has a system of running church governance where one among the pastors is chosen to be a General Secretary for the period of 5 years. After the 5 years, they have another elections where one is chosen to run for the same 5 years. It is because of this system that caused those top leaders to want to cling in their position of power.

¹⁸The MSCE is a qualification issued when one passes a national examination in the fourth year of secondary education. It is equivalent to O level certificate.

reconsider who they are training for the leadership position bearing in mind the changing world that we are living in. It used to work perhaps some time back training people who have a good education but not now. The ZEC can do this by raising the standard of who applies for theological training. Furthermore, the ZEC must invest in training of the leaders who would specialise in dealing with poverty and other societal problems. Poverty is a big issue in Malawi. Addressing it effectively would not come by lack but by proper planning and investing. How would ZEC achieve this? First of all, the researcher proposes that leaders who have both character and academic qualities must be identified within the ZEC church. After identifying them, they are to be sent for formal training whether in Universities or organisations that are competent in training people how to address poverty in the societies. Alternatively, the ZEC needs to make a proposal where theological curriculum issues should be incorporated with extensive training on how poverty should be addressed hence helping the leaders to have knowledge and skills in addressing poverty. Khan and Ali (2019:3) quote a Chinese proverb that says, “to plan one year, sow seed; to plan ten years, plant trees; and to plan 100 years, develop human resources.” Khan and Ali (2014:3) continued to elaborate from this Chinese proverb that when an organisation thinks of training its leaders to effectively address issues, it is not a short-term strategy. Rather, it should be addressed from the long-term perspective. In training the leaders, they learn knowledge, skills and attitude (behaviour) that are critical for the organisation success (Khan and Ali, 2014:3). The ZEC needs to invest in leaders who would transform the church. Osmer (2008:183) has this to say on transformational leaders:

The distinction between task competence, transactional leadership, and transforming leadership provides us with a first language to think about leading change. Yet, it tells very little about the goal of change: change to what end and for what purpose? This is determined by reflection on the purpose of an organisation and its ability to achieve this purpose in a particular setting. In the church, this involves theological reflection on several key questions: what is the mission of the congregation? How is this mission best carried out in a congregation’s present context? How is this mission best carried out in a congregation’s present context? What role do leaders play in guiding the congregation toward the fulfilment of its mission, and what changes might need to take place for this to occur?

In summary, the ZEC needs to address the issue of leadership in the ways presented above as effective leadership is critical in steering the church in the right direction when it comes to addressing poverty.

5.2.2 The ZEC needs to establish a separate department/organisation that should be commissioned to deal with poverty issues.

In addressing leadership issues, it has been proposed that the ZEC needs to train leaders who will be specialised in dealing with the issues of poverty and other societal problems. After such leaders have been trained, the next stage is to form a separate department/organisation within the ZEC that would specifically target the addressing of poverty. This is the well biblical proven model that the early church used in Acts 6. Appointing of people with giftings on how to deal with poverty issues. These are the people who have been formally trained and know what they are doing. They are the leaders who have been trained in how to engage government officials in the cause of addressing poverty in the country without any compromise (Janse van Rensburg and Breed, 2011:2).

The first task for this department/organisation would be to raise funds. The ZEC needs to intensify resource mobilisation strategies. Raising funds for the projects aiming to address poverty is a hard job. Kunhiyop (2008:183) rightly observed that many African fund-raisers are vague in the sense that they want money for projects, but the projects are not well defined for the donors to support. The ZEC needs to make sure that this vagueness that Kunhiyop (2008) is describing should not be ever happening in their efforts to raise funds. That is where the importance of training leaders who would be competent in such kind of initiatives come in. Kunhiyop (2008:183) has these guidelines that would be helpful in raising funds for projects for poverty alleviation. As a foundation, it is important to think carefully about the needs, the sources from which funds are going to be sought and limitations in terms of time, resources and cost-effectiveness (Kunhiyop, 2008:183).

The first step in developing a strategic plan after laying the foundation according to Kunhiyop (2008:183), is to develop a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the department/organisation. This would help to give a clarity of why your department/organisation exists, its values, what it does to fulfil the mission, and what its potential impact would be if funding were available. These need to be clearly spelt out so that it can give a clear picture to donors of what your organisation stands for.

The next step as Kunhiyop (2008:183) puts it is to set specific goals and objectives for the fundraising campaign. These goals can be formulated in broad terms but there is a need to specify objectives and they should be measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time-determined. These objectives are very important as they help in measuring the success and failures of raising support. After this is done, the department/organisation needs to decide on action steps which

outline the particular activities necessary to accomplish the objectives and goals (Kunhiyop, 2008:184). The following information should be provided when asking for donation:¹⁹

- A description of an organisation
- An outline of its mission
- A list of its major achievements
- A summary of the current financial situation
- A description of its goals, major projects and targets
- A statement of the resources needed

According to Maqbool *et al* (2019:149), researches show that faith affects the fundraising in the organisation. In the Faith Based Organisations (FBO), people are motivated by the faith, due to this they give more money. This is to support that as a church, the ZEC has the opportunity to raise funds for their projects. Mehrotra and Delamonica (2007:320) stated that in recent years, donors themselves have been willing to allocate resources to objectives that alleviate poverty. All donors agree that universal provision of basic social services is an integral part of a strategy of donor support for poverty alleviation. If the ZEC could properly structure their projects for addressing poverty, chances are high that such projects would be funded if the leadership issue has been dealt with.

The second task would be to empower people in societies to engage in the battle fighting against poverty. The principles that were drawn from the exegesis of Leviticus 25 help in this regard to empowering. From the Pentateuchal policies of Jubilee and gleaning, the poor were enabled to provide for themselves through their own work in both short and long term. The gleaning laws guaranteed that the poor person could eat tomorrow, and the Jubilee would guarantee each family's right to ownership, which would allow them to produce a surplus for themselves in the future. Instead of doing everything for the people, they need to be empowered to be independent. Kalilombe (1999:186) precisely affirmed this when he said this:

They [the poor] must be enabled to shake off the enslaving myths of their ignorance and incapacity. They must learn to identify their real needs, to assess the resources at their disposal and to accustom themselves to getting organised for purposive action.

There are a number of ways that the ZEC could empower people in the communities. As a church, it is very important to have a relief aid organisation and this is what the ZEC is said to be doing according to the respondents. However, the ZEC needs to be wiser in running relief aid

¹⁹Adopted from Kunhiyop, 2008:184

programmes as it has been proven that it may help in making some people dependant in some situations (Corbert and Fikkert, 2012:102; Mathole, 2005:114). Voorhies (2009:605) has this warning:

Christian organisations have launched massive relief efforts, but these efforts only bring temporary help and must not be confused with development. Relief primarily focuses on what the outsider must do to help the victim, not what people must do to help themselves. Such relief efforts can be viewed as detrimental if prolonged because they take away the incentive for local production and development.

One participant in the study vividly pointed out the ineffectiveness of the programmes that the ZEC is engaged in addressing poverty in that they encourage dependency on the part of those assisted. In order to avoid this, the ZEC needs to do the following. First, the community participation in dealing with poverty needs to be encouraged by the church as it strives to work in partnership with the poor to raise them up from poverty (Jere, 2019:236). Instead of creating the tendency of dependancy on the part of the poor, the ZEC needs to empower the poor by equipping them with some skills and knowledge with which they will be able to use to earn a living. Jere (2019:236) pointed out that “continuous handouts paralyse the poor and make them lose confidence in their effort and ability to sustain themselves as they get used to licking the fingers of the rich.” To this, Nurnberger (1999:319) said, “but handouts are never a good solution. Peripheral groups must be empowered to make greater contributions to the process of production.” Joda-Mbewe and Hendricks (2003:288) quoted Burkey saying that community participation promotes the need for the poor to develop new skills and knowledge through informal educational experiences in which they are actively participating as subjects instead of remaining passive objects. The poor must be organised to take charge of their situation and thus develop for themselves the actions they will take to deal with the essential forces that are destroying their communities and make them powerless (Linthicum, 1991:31). And it is the responsibility of the ZEC to make sure that the poor are empowered. As land was the basic capital in an agricultural society and God through the Jubilee legislation made sure that every family at a certain point should have their land back if sold because of poverty, thus, God wants every person and family to have access to the productive resources so that if they act responsibly, they can earn an adequate income and be dignified members of their communities (Sider, 2020:21). Just as knowledge is obviously important capital in this information society, the ZEC in applying this principle from Leviticus 25 should try to make sure that knowledge and skills should be accessed (although not exclusively) by every person. The ZEC can do this by empowering people in their education.

The department/organisation will need to intensify in conducting training for the communities to address poverty. The training should be frequent, for example, happening at least twice a year. With the training, people are taught skills and knowledge on how they can effectively address poverty. The training should be conducted by experienced people who are competent with the topic of addressing poverty rather than those who lack knowledge and expertise in the topic. These professionals should conduct researches and involve the communities in order to come up with structured programmes that would effectively address the issue of poverty. In so doing, people are empowered to deal with poverty themselves. The skills on how to do modern farming and the use of irrigation, doing small businesses, searching of jobs for those who have qualifications, creating their own jobs by engaging in different industries and many other skills should be taught to people. Some of the things above are done by some congregations within the ZEC as voiced out by some respondents, but they need to be intensified. In doing this, the ZEC is giving the families and the whole community what they need to move beyond dependency on relief into a condition of economic self-sufficiency (Keller, 2010:114). This is what was intended in the Sabbath and Jubilee principles. Here is what Wright (1996:261) says:

[God's] law asks us... to find means of ensuring that the weakest and poorest in the community are enabled to have access to the opportunities they need in order to provide for themselves. Opportunities may include financial resources, but could also include access to education, legal assistance, investment in job opportunities, etc. Such things should not be leftovers or handouts, but a matter of rights.

5.2.3 The ZEC needs to assume a prophetic role in addressing poverty

The Bible shows that God cares for the poor. The whole point of establishing the legislations of Sabbath, Jubilee and all others in the Old Testament was to make sure that the poor are cared for and not been taken advantage of by being exploited. The fact that a good percentage of poverty in Malawi is perpetuated by human structures and sin, should move the ZEC to take responsibility in addressing these issues. Instead of speaking behind other organisations and associations, the ZEC needs to assume a prophetic role and speak out against these systems and behaviours in the government and societies that promote the prevalence of poverty. How would they do this?

First, preach the gospel and challenge Christian nominalism in the country. A lot of people say that they are Christians, but their behaviours do not show that they are one. Christianity in Malawi is a river one mile wide and one inch deep (Statham and Voeltz, 2014:1). There is an inevitable relationship between sin and poverty (Myers, 2007:86; Wyngaard, 2013:244; Kakwata, 2016:273). Sin is not only confined to the individual level; it manifests in the social structures as

well. Thus, there is a link between social ills and sin related to poverty (Kakwata, 2016:290). Mathole (2005:135) rightly posits that the experiences of the poor are broader than just the economic aspect, even if it does significantly affect human life. Therefore, finding better economic solutions is not guaranteed to be a remedy for all the societal problems that people face. Thus, as Christian witnesses, the gospel must not be reduced to only address economic issues. We should rather be holistic in dealing with all aspects of human reality. In light of the above, the ZEC should continue to preach the gospel prophetically by challenging nominalism and sin. To be a Christian is to be transformed within (Padilla, 2010:97). Breaking with every evil thing and cleaving to what is good are actions intrinsic to identification and union with Christ Jesus. The gospel does not just give us a ticket to heaven, but also transforms the inner person to produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Matt. 3:8) (Padilla, 2010:97). If people who claim to be Christians and at the same time indulge in sinful behaviours of corruption and greed in Malawi understand what the gospel is all about and apply this in their lives, there will be a tremendous improvement in addressing poverty in the country. The ZEC can achieve this by intensifying their evangelism programmes.

Second, the ZEC should assume prophetic voice in promoting social justice in the country by being a mouthpiece for the voiceless. God's will for the poor as seen in the Bible needs to be enforced in the communities through the church's prophetic role. The ZEC should challenge corruption and greed that has paralysed Malawi's economy both in the government and in churches. The fact that people have rebelled against God and bring about selfishness and unjust social structures that oppress the poor, the ZEC should help in addressing selfishness that inclines every person to use any power they possess for selfish advantage (Sider, 2020:19). Pereira (2010:iv) pointed out that the church as a prophetic voice must make known the will and the ways of God. This is the voice that speaks to issues of social justice, social responsibility and social reconstruction. The church must condemn all aspects of oppression, exploitation and other injustices. The church must entrench democratic values and be the voice that calls for integrity and accountability (Pereira, 2010:iv). As noted above, poverty in Malawi is also perpetuated by human agents (Jere, 2019:3). Therefore, the ZEC needs to assume the responsibility of taking more aggressive interventions on social, economic and ethical issues in addressing the root causes of poverty in Malawi. This can be achieved not only by preaching in the ZEC pulpits but using radios, TVs, literature, pastoral letters and many other means.

Third, the ZEC should assume prophetic voice in challenging rampant inequalities in the country. Marriot *et al* (2018:5) note that there is a staggering difference between the rich and the poor in Malawi. Most of these inequalities are not natural. They come as a result of the poor being oppressed or exploited. In this regard, the ZEC need to address issues of justice and try to care

for the weak, the poor and the marginalised in the society who are the victims of all forms of inequality.

The ZEC needs to encourage people to use their wealth in the affairs of God. But how would the ZEC do that? First, the ZEC should teach the principle of tithing to its members. One of the respondents of the empirical study mentioned that a lot of ZEC members do not tithe. It has been proved that one of many models that can help break the materialistic stronghold among Christians is the principle of tithing. By assuming a prophetic role just like Malachi and Haggai in the Old Testament did to the congregation of Israel who was not tithing, the ZEC should think of challenging people's hearts by encouraging them to tithe. Second, by preaching the generosity of God who lavishly blessed us in Christ Jesus so that we can be a blessing to other people. Sometimes people do not see the reason to be generous. They need to be reminded that the generosity of God moves us to be generous to others. God has provided enough resources in the world to meet the needs of a man. Christians should not use the complexities of economics as an excuse for being meagre. Believers need to dedicate themselves not only to verbal evangelism but also to relieving human need as part of sharing the good news (Clouse, 2000:1009).

5.2.4 The ZEC should help in fostering true unity in the church

People should be united in the ZEC to the extent of being moved to help one another out of poverty. This unity goes beyond social unity amongst church members which is apparent. In most of the churches, the idea of unity serves as a mask that covers up the efforts of the dominant class in society to maintain its position (Wilson and Letsosa, 2014:3; Ebayo, 200:43). The unity that the ZEC should strive to foster in the church should be like the one in the book of Acts where the church was moved to share their belongings because they felt what the poor were feeling. Sider (2005:209) observed that it is unfortunate that churches no longer understand or experience biblical koinonia to any significant degree. A church that claims to be one in the Lord, but the unity is not shown in sharing their wealth with those whom the Lord has united himself, is a contradiction in terms (Wilson and Letsosa, 2014:3). The church is supposed to be where the rich should totally identify themselves with the poor as does the Lord Jesus (Wilson, 2014:3). This unity demands that believers' time, money and their selves are available to one another (Sider, 2005:209). Unfortunately, this is not the case with many Christian denominations. Meeks (1989:179) mentioned about the mystery of unity in Christian church through the Eucharist. According to Meeks (1989:179), the Eucharist uncovers the fundamental shared meaning of all social goods. All believers are invited freely to this meal, the only provision being "one's awareness of all those other who are invited to share the meaning of all social goods through Christ's body, namely the poor, the oppressed, the sinners and the dying" (Meeks, 1989:179).

Meeks (1989:180) pointed out this:

The household of God is meant to be a peculiar sphere of distribution because it as a special meaning of social goods derived from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its household rules of distribution are meant to conform to God's own distribution of righteousness. This distribution does not do away with every need, but it sees every need in relation to God's justice. This distribution does not do away with every hunger, but it transfigures every hunger and thirst into the hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Meeks observation (1989:180) is similar to that of Jere (2018:6) where true unity is seen as a way in which the poor in the church can be empowered economically-wise. The early believers in Acts were united in such a way that the plight of the poor became the church's concern and ways to deal with poverty were brought up. According to Christenson (2015:14), when people are united in their relationship with God, it will translate into noble horizontal action between man and fellow man. God transforms the hearts of people in true unity causing them to look at each other with a human heart, which is translated into action for the poor and the needy around (Jere, 2018:6). This is exactly what happened with the early church in Acts and what the ZEC should strive for. The ZEC can manage this by encouraging the interfamily fellowship (house churches) which would foster the unity where sharing begins at a personal level and spread equally into other dimensions of life in support of the poor. The ZEC needs at all cost to strive for this, otherwise, poverty will remain a challenge in Malawi.

5.2.5 The ZEC should partner more with the government and other stakeholders in more developmental programmes

The education and health programmes that the ZEC is running are a recommendable job. However, the work can be expanded. There are different challenges apart from education and health that the ZEC can partner with the government. For example, the conservation of nature, sporting activities, music and culture, tourism and many other things. These things seem not to be the focus of a lot of developmental projects by churches. But the matter of fact is that there are many people in Malawi who have failed with education but have done well with other things that have helped them to be out of poverty. Frank Gabadinho Muhango is one of the examples that Malawians can look to and say not only education makes one beat poverty. Frank Mhango who is playing for Orlando Pirates did not do well with his education. He even failed the Junior Certificate Examinations according to Manda (2016) in *the Nation*. But, as of today, he managed to beat poverty by being a professional football player. Such things like sports are not seen as the channels of poverty reduction by the church in Malawi. That is why there are few churches

which the researcher does not know that may run sports programmes as a channel for poverty reduction.

5.3 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has presented some practical recommendations that the ZEC can use to do holistic ministry effectively. The recommendations that have been presented in this study are based on the findings of the empirical study and the principles that were drawn from the word of God. According to the completed empirical results, it showed that the major issue for the Zambezi Evangelical Church to effectively address poverty in Malawi was the leadership. Therefore, this chapter has presented some practical ways in which the ZEC could follow in order to deal with the leadership problem.

This study has also recommended that the ZEC should establish a separate department/organisation that should deal with poverty issues. This has been recommended as the results of the study showed that there are no structured programmes for addressing poverty by the ZEC. The department/organisation established will make sure that poverty is addressed within the ZEC in the right way in order that it can be effective.

The study also has recommended that the ZEC should assume a prophetic role to deal with poverty in the country. The nature and dimension of poverty in Malawi call for the church to not only be involved in relief projects but to speak out against the issues that are causing the prevalence of poverty in the country. While the ZEC has been assuming the prophetic role in the back of associations and organisation, this study recommends that it should address these things openly as it is the responsibility of the church to do so.

The study has proceeded to recommend authentic unity in the church as a way to address poverty in the country. The early church in Acts managed to deal with the challenges that poverty posed within the community of believers by being united. This unity was not artificial but authentic in that the church was moved to address the plight of the poor among them. By the ZEC encouraging unity as in the Acts, there is a possibility that poverty within the church could be lessened, as the rich Christians will help the poor.

Lastly, the study has recommended that the ZEC should seek to partner with the government and other stakeholders in a number of developmental programmes. The focus should not just be in relief aid, education and health. There are other programmes that the church can support and yield the results in being effective in addressing poverty.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ZAMBEZI EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN ADDRESSING POVERTY IN MALAWI

6.1 Introduction

The poverty situation in Malawi as presented in chapter 2 is ubiquitous and needs serious attention. This study of the public dimension of Practical Theology: The contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi has made attempt to present what the Zambezi Evangelical Church should do in order to effectively address poverty in Malawi. Therefore, this chapter presents a conclusion of the study. This study has been done with the expectation that the ZEC would benefit the most from the results found as it helps the church to know what is needed for the ZEC to effectively engage in the holistic ministry. The research was divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 offered an introduction as the foundation of this research. Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 were guided by Osmer's tasks (2006:4) of empirical theological interpretation which are the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task and pragmatic task.

6.2 Summary of chapter 1

Chapter 1 aimed to cover the background of the research problem, the research methodology and the structure that supported the research project, stating the overall objective of the project, which was to understand and recommend an improvement for the Zambezi Evangelical Church's contribution to addressing poverty in Malawi from a holistic perspective. In order to achieve the overall objective, the main question that this research attempted to answer was this: How could the Zambezi Evangelical Church be improved to contribute to addressing poverty in Malawi from a holistic ministry perspective? In order to clarify the main question, the following sub-questions were posed:

- What is the nature and the extent of poverty challenges in Malawi?
- What is the Zambezi Evangelical current contribution in addressing the problem of poverty in Malawi?
- What are the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively?
- What recommendations could be made to the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact on poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi?

The response to the above questions is summarised in the following conclusions:

6.3 Summary of chapter 2

Chapter 2 aimed to answer the following question: What is the nature and extent of poverty challenges in Malawi? The objective of this chapter was to present a description of nature and the extent of poverty challenges in Malawi.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. The pervasiveness, depth and severity of poverty in the country prove that truly Malawi is the poorest country. The definition of poverty in Malawi context was given as the experience of those who lack basic needs and are also oppressed socially. The poor are the people who do not have food, shelter, clothes health services and education. These are the people who according to the measurement of poverty in Malawi, are living below the poverty line.

The gap between the rich and the poor is very wide. This gap is manifested in the consumption of goods, in the places where they live, in the access to education and in the access to health services. The economy of the country is growing at a retarded rate. This is because Malawi largely depends on agriculture for its economy. The agricultural sector is facing challenges of the changing due to factors like drought, floods and scarcity of agricultural inputs like fertiliser and irrigation schemes. This failure in agriculture has contributed to the prevalence of poverty in the country as many people depend on agriculture for their living. There are other factors that are causing poverty to be prevalent in Malawi which chapter 2 has discussed. The situation of poverty in the country seems to offer no hope of victory as it keeps on worsening despite the efforts to alleviate it.

6.4 Summary of chapter 3

Chapter 3 aimed to answer this question: What is the Zambezi Evangelical Church's current contribution in addressing poverty in Malawi? The objective of this chapter was to explore the Zambezi Evangelical Church's current contribution in addressing the problem of poverty. In order to achieve the objective, the empirical study was conducted among the pastors and leaders of the ZEC. There were 12 participants, 5 pastors and 7 leaders.

The Zambezi Evangelical Church is involved in different activities or programmes that aim to address poverty. They have education, health, relief and aid and many other things that different congregations do to address poverty. The ZEC chooses these programmes as they are crucial in combating poverty. For example, the education programme helps people to be educated, and

once they are educated, they can find jobs and improve their living conditions hence lifting themselves out of poverty.

The ZEC does address poverty because of the conviction that God wants the church to be the brother's keeper in caring for one another. Jesus' approach of ministry is an example for the ZEC to follow where Jesus is not only meeting the peoples' spiritual needs but also their physical needs. The ZEC participates in addressing poverty in an attempt to be holistic in their approach of ministry. There are mixed responses concerning the effectiveness of these activities conducted by the ZEC. One response shows that the activities conducted have been effective in the sense that there are few people who have benefitted from the programmes whose poverty condition has improved and have managed to take care of their families. The other response shows that the activities conducted have moderately been successful as mentioned above that it is only a few people who are benefitting from such activities. And another response shows that the programmes have not been effective as many people who are benefitting from such programmes have developed the spirit of dependency.

The ZEC has no formal training for their pastors and leaders to prepare them to conduct such activities. The emphasis for the pastors is theological training. There are once in a while seminars on leadership and management that the ZEC conduct which does not give the pastors and leaders thorough knowledge on how to address poverty in order to be competent. The programmes to address poverty are conducted by individual congregations and not being controlled and monitored by the leadership of the ZEC. Each congregation does whatever they see it fit.

The ZEC is encountering a number of challenges in their endeavour to fight against poverty in the country. The challenges of poor leadership, poor training for the leaders to address poverty, projects lacking funding, growing percentage of poor people in the country, are main ones of other challenges that the ZEC is facing.

From the discussion of the results of the empirical study, it emerged that poor leadership is the major contribution that is making the ZEC to be ineffective in addressing poverty. Because of poor leadership, training for pastors and leaders to address poverty is not prioritised. It is because of the same poor leadership that the ZEC cannot raise funds to run projects for addressing poverty that would positively impact the communities.

6.5 Summary of chapter 4

Chapter 4 aimed to answer this question: What are the integrated holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively in Malawi? The objective for this chapter was to understand the integrated

holistic ministry principles and guidelines that Scripture provides that can help the Zambezi Evangelical Church to address poverty effectively in Malawi.

Both the Old and New Testament show that God cares for the poor. In the Old Testament, this is shown in the legislations that God gave for the safety of the poor and the weak in the Pentateuch. First, the gleaning laws. The gleaning laws in Leviticus 19:9-10 prohibited the Israelites to harvest the crops in the edges of their fields, barring them to harvest a second time and not to gather any crops that had fallen on the ground. This was done so that the poor could be provided with something to eat. Poverty should not make someone lack food while others have it. Second the Sabbatical Year. The crops that grew naturally during the Sabbatical year were left for the poor, strangers and animals (Exod. 23:11). The slaves were released, and the debts were cancelled. By this, the poor were empowered to work and earn a living. Third, the jubilee. The Jubilee was given to the Israelites to ensure that wealth was not concentrated just in the hands of the few. That is why they were commanded to revert the land to the original owners. Land in an agrarian community was a great capital. Hence, God made sure that capital was provided to every person after some time so that they could start afresh. Fourth, the Triennial tithe law. The tenth of the Israelites produce was set aside for the Levites, the widows, the orphans and the sojourners. This was to ensure that the destitutes had food provisions provided. The Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament show that God cares for the poor and He calls His people to do alike.

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated in his life that caring for the poor is a prime concern for God. He cared for the poor by not only preaching the Good News to them but also practically caring for their needs in his ministry (John 13:26). The Apostle Paul and other apostles followed Jesus' example by making the care for the poor their concern (Gal. 2:10). In the Book of Acts, the early church lived in obedience to their Master Jesus by practically taking care of the poor among them. They were so united, that they together fought poverty and made sure that no one was in need among them. In the New Testament, the caring of the poor was as important as the proclamation of the word. The Bible shows that taking care of the poor is one of the roles that the church has in societies.

6.6 Summary of chapter 5

Chapter 5 aimed to answer this question: What recommendations could be made to the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry and enhance its impact on poverty reduction initiatives in Malawi? The objective for this chapter was to recommend theological and practical approaches that could be adopted by the Zambezi Evangelical Church to improve its holistic ministry as well as enhance its impact in poverty reduction activities in Malawi.

Based on the results of the empirical study and the principles from the word of God, the following recommendations were made for the ZEC:

- The ZEC should address the issue of leadership. This is due to the fact that poor leadership has a negative impact on the church. The ZEC needs to address this issue of poor leadership by encouraging servant leadership, addressing the issues of transparency and accountability and investing in training the pastors and the leaders of the church in the addressing of poverty.
- The ZEC needs to establish a separate department/organisation that should be commissioned to deal with the issue of poverty. This department/organisation should fulfil the following tasks. First, raising of support in order to run projects that will target poverty. Second, empowering people to engage in the fight against poverty by giving people knowledge and skills that they can use to help themselves come out of poverty.
- The ZEC should assume the prophetic role. Instead of addressing the societal issues on the back of other Christian associations and organisations, the ZEC needs to come in the forefront and be the voice of the poor and the marginalised. There are some systems and behaviours that are making poverty to be prevalent in Malawi which should be condemned. The ZEC can do this by preaching the gospel and challenge nominalism within Christianity in the country, promoting social justice and challenging the inequalities. The ZEC also should challenge the people to use their wealth in the affairs of God.
- The ZEC should help to foster true unity in the church. As it was seen that unity was the cause that moved the early church to care for the needy among them, the same should be encouraged within the ZEC.
- The ZEC should partner more with the government and other stakeholders in more developmental programmes. There is a need for the ZEC to expand its work in addressing poverty by partnering with the government and other stakeholders. It is not only education and health that can bring development in the country. Other things like sports and tourism need to be also boosted in the country and the ZEC can collaborate in boosting such developments.

6.7 Conclusion

This study used the practical theological framework developed by Osmer (2008). The four basic guiding questions of the task of practical theology were employed. The nature and the extent of poverty in Malawi was described as this study attempted to answer the first question of the task of practical theology which is what is going on? The prevalence of poverty in Malawi has been found to be the product of different factors combined.

While the ZEC is engaged in addressing poverty in the country, there have been some issues with the way they are doing it. With leaders not formally trained themselves on how to address poverty, the individual congregations do whatever they feel it is going to work in their various situation. This makes it difficult to measure the success of the programmes employed as the addressing of poverty is not monitored by the leadership. Thus, the conclusion of this study agrees with Jere's statement (2018:2) that the increase of poverty in Malawi is contributed by the lack of serious poverty reduction efforts at a local level which if effectively done would lead to poverty reduction at a national level.

The Bible clearly shows that God has a concern for the poor. He wants them to be treated well and also to be cared for in situations where they cannot provide for themselves. The church has the responsibility of caring for the poor and also to help them to come out from poverty. The church should not just be involved in giving relief to the poor but should endeavour to empower the poor to come out of their poverty situation.

The ZEC can improve the way it is addressing poverty by working on its leadership, establishing a department/organisation that would look into poverty issues, assuming a prophetic voice, help in fostering the true unity in the church and partnering more with the government and other stakeholders.

The challenge that poverty poses in Malawi does invite the Church to answer this question: Beyond clerical paradigm, does the church have a solution to the problems that societies are facing? This question demands that those who are the "church" should seriously consider how they can impact the society. Since 1980's, there has been a paradigm shift from the church focusing only on the discussions about God to engaging in the public realm (Cahalan, 2005:63; Juma, 2015:4). Juma (2015:1) states that the goal of one's training for theology should not solely been focused on serving the church but also to serve the world. Therefore, it is in the context of serving the world that theology needs to be practical hence its public dimension.

6.8 The limitations of the study

The focus of the study was the contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi. The fact that there is no research done on the topic of poverty within the Zambezi Church was challenging as there was no data to compare with the findings of this study. It should also be noted that the Zambezi Evangelical Church is one of the biggest churches in Malawi. This study is based on only 2 Regions (the Southern and the Central regions) and there were 12 participants in the interviews. Therefore, the researcher believes that the results of this study reflect the Zambezi Evangelical Church's involvement in addressing poverty in Malawi.

6.9 Areas for further study

There is a need to explore more in the following two areas:

- Where should the Evangelical church start so they can be effective in addressing poverty? This is because it seems like there is not a lot of research done in this topic. While there are a lot of researches done on the church and the poor, there is not much on where the church should start in addressing poverty. Should they build more schools, hospitals, roads etc.?
- How should the Evangelical church work together with the government in addressing poverty in Malawi? This will investigate the relationship between the government and the church in addressing social problems. How best can the church utilise the government in addressing social problems?

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A 1: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER FOR STUDY



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24 February 2020

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Theology Research Ethics Committee (TREC)** on 24/02/2020, the Theology Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: The public dimension of practical theology: The contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof V. Magezi Student: P. Nanthambwe

Ethics number:

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Institution Study Number Year Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date: 2020/03/01

Risk Category:

Minimal

Expiry date: 2021/02/28

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the TREC:
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.**
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the TREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*

- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and TREC reserves the right to:
 - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
 - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process; – withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the TREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.***
- *TREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Rudy.Denton@nwu.ac.za.*

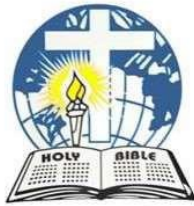
The TREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the TREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof Rudy Denton
Chairperson NWU Theology Research Ethics Committee

ANNEXURE A 2: THE LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH WITH THE ZAMBEZI EVANGELICAL CHURCH



Zambezi Evangelical Church

Discipling Nations for Christ

30th April 30, 2020

Dear Patrick Nanthambwe,

Re: Letter of Approval to conduct a research with Zambezi Evangelical Church

After meeting the required conditions of the Zambezi Evangelical Church Mitsidi Synod to enable carry out a research for your study purposes. I, on behalf of the General Secretary and on my own behalf grant you permission to do your research. As per our agreement we are looking forward to seeing the results of your research. I wish you all the best

Yours truly,

Rev W Muwalo
Deputy General Secretary

All correspondence to
The General Secretary, Mitsidi Synod Office, P.O Box 490, Blantyre.

Email: zecmitsidisynod@yahoo.com/ Cell: 0991692389. Matthew 28:19-20.

ANNEXURE A 3: PASTOR'S AND LEADER'S INTERVIEW INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The public dimension of Practical Theology: The contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU- 01888-20-A6

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof. Vhumani Magezi

POSTGRADUATE STUDENT: Patrick Nanthambwe

ADDRESS: 16 Mare Street, Roodepoort, Johannesburg.

CONTACT NUMBER: (+27) 719382875

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of my MTh research. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary**, and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Faculty of Theology Ethics Committee of the North-West University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Theology Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

The research aim is to understand and recommend improvement for the Zambezi Evangelical church's contribution to addressing poverty in Malawi. The research is done with a view to provide a public dimension of practical theology that is theologically sound and yet relevant to communities of affected by poverty in Malawi.

Why have you been invited to participate?

The participants have been selected to participate in the interviews based on their long experience and leadership roles they have played in the ZEC. As such they are well placed to provide the required information responding to the questionnaires. Secondly, the members have been chosen based on being a committed member of ZEC for ten years or more and their experience for members of the denomination. Based on this they are able to provide information relevant for the research study.

What will be expected of you?

You are expected to share your experiences, comments and thoughts on how the ZEC is contributing to address poverty based on what you have observed or experienced.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

You will gain awareness on how as the church we can effectively address the issue of poverty. There are no costs involved or any form of remuneration. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

The risks in this study are very minimal. Some (if any) of you might be emotionally and physically exhausted in responding to the questionnaires. In order to curb this, the duration to complete the questionnaires has been extended in order to make sure that the emotional and physical exhaustion does not negatively affect the participation of the research. The benefit that the participants will get is more than the risks.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

Anonymity of your findings will be protected by using pseudonyms for everyone who participate in responding to the questionnaires. Your privacy will be respected by not sharing what your responses to the questionnaires are.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

They will be kept in a lockable cabinet and will be destroyed after five years.

How will you know about the results of this research?

Only the general findings will be shared with you through the academic public domain and relevant channels.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study because this is voluntary participation without any funding attached to it. There will thus be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact Patrick Nanthambwe (Researcher) at +27 719382875 (patricknanthambwe@yahoo.com) or Prof Magezi (Research Promoter) at +27 82921 0847 (Vhumani.Magezi@nwu.ac.za) if you have any further questions or have any problems.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: The public dimension of Practical Theology: The contribution of the Zambezi Evangelical Church in addressing poverty in Malawi.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to
.....
- I did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above.
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

ANNEXURE A 4: DATA COLLECTION WITH QUESTIONNAIRES

1. What are the activities or programmes that the ZEC is involved in that aim to address poverty?
2. What are the reasons for choosing these activities by ZEC?
3. What is the Bible or theological basis for the ZEC engaging in such activities?
4. In what ways has the employed approaches effective or ineffective in addressing poverty in the last 5 years?
5. What is the nature of training that pastors and ZEC church leaders undergo to prepare them to conduct such ZEC poverty activities?
6. How does ZEC prepare its members to conduct the ZEC poverty activities?
7. In what ways are ZEC prepared to do holistic ministry in order to address poverty?
8. What are the challenges that the ZEC experiences in engaging in poverty issues?
9. How could the church overcome these challenges?
10. What recommendations should be made to ZEC to effectively do holistic ministry that addresses poverty?