
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MALAWI: A CASE STUDY OF AREA 25 TOWNSHIP, T/A CHITUKULA, LILONGWE, MALAWI.

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ABSTRACT

Immigrants have become a significant force driving socio-economic change in many developing nations, including Malawi. While immigrants contribute to entrepreneurship, job creation, investment, and cultural diversity, concerns persist around social integration, competition for resources, and the sustainability of development outcomes (Popescu, 2025). This study examined the effects of Migration on socio-economic development in Area 25, Traditional Authority Chitukula, Lilongwe, Malawi. It focused on community knowledge of immigration, attitudes toward immigrants, and the practices of immigrants in shaping local development.

A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with data gathered through semi-structured interviews involving purposively selected participants, including local residents, immigrants, business owners, and key informants. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, with findings organized into key themes and sub-themes.

Results showed that immigration positively influences socio-economic development by expanding businesses, generating employment, increasing the supply of goods and services, fostering entrepreneurship, and intensifying market competition. Nonetheless, challenges were identified, such as limited knowledge exchange between immigrants and local entrepreneurs, negative stereotypes, mistrust, perceived job discrimination, inadequate sanitation, environmental pressures, youth substance abuse, and weak socio-cultural integration. Despite these issues, participants generally recognized immigrants as important contributors to local economic growth.

The study concludes that immigrants play a vital role in socio-economic development in Area 25, but their full potential depends on stronger social integration, better entrepreneurship support, improved knowledge sharing, effective governance, enhanced infrastructure, and sustainable environmental management. Recommendations include expanding entrepreneurship training, promoting inclusive employment, improving sanitation and environmental conservation, increasing financial support for local businesses, and fostering collaboration among government institutions, immigrant communities, and local residents to maximize the benefits of immigrants.

KEYWORDS: Immigration, Socio-economic development.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration plays a significant role in shaping Malawi's socio-economic development, influencing entrepreneurship, employment, cultural exchange, and community growth (Baulch Todd Benson & Erman, 2019). This study on assessing the impact of immigrants on socio-economic development in Area 25 town ship, examines both the contributions and challenges that immigrant communities bring, such as business competitiveness, knowledge transfer, and social integration. By analyzing these dynamics, the research highlights how inclusive policies, effective governance, and cooperative community attitudes can harness the potential of immigration to drive sustainable economic progress and peaceful coexistence in Malawi, particularly in Area 25 township, in Lilongwe.

Background of the Study

Immigration has become one of the most significant demographic and socio-economic phenomena of the twenty-first century. It plays a critical role in shaping economic development, labour markets, entrepreneurship, urbanisation, cultural diversity, and international relations across the world . People migrate across international borders for various reasons, including employment, business opportunities, education, family reunification, political instability, armed conflict, environmental change, and the search for improved living conditions. According to migration theories, particularly the Push-Pull Theory, Migration is influenced by conditions that encourage people to leave their countries of origin (push factors) and opportunities that attract them to destination countries (pull factors) (Ruyssen et al., 2012). Consequently, immigration has become an important contributor to both opportunities and challenges for socio-economic development in many

countries. Similarly, Area 25 township is affected by the impacts of immigrants on socio-economic development.

Problem Statement

Immigration has become a critical factor in Malawi's socio-economic development, particularly in urban communities such as Area 25, T/A Chitukula, Lilongwe. While immigrants contribute positively through entrepreneurship, employment creation, and cultural exchange, challenges such as limited knowledge transfer, poor sanitation, youth exclusion, and negative community perceptions hinder the full realization of these benefits. Despite the growing presence of immigrants, there is little empirical evidence on how their activities shape local socio-economic development or how host communities respond to these changes. This lack of research makes it difficult for policymakers and community leaders to design effective strategies that balance opportunities with challenges. Therefore, assessing the impact of immigrants on socio-economic development in Area 25 is essential to generate insights that can inform inclusive policies, strengthen integration, and promote sustainable growth in Malawi.

Research Objectives

Main Objective

To assess the impact of immigrants on socio-economic development in Area 25, Traditional Authority Chitukula, Lilongwe District, Malawi.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess community knowledge regarding the contribution of immigrants to socio-economic development in Area 25, Traditional Authority Chitukula, Lilongwe District, Malawi.
2. To examine community attitudes towards immigrants and its contribution to socio-economic development in Area 25, Traditional Authority Chitukula, Lilongwe District, Malawi.
3. To explore the practices of immigrants and their influence on socio-economic development in Area 25, Traditional Authority Chitukula, Lilongwe District, Malawi.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews literature on immigration and its impact on socio-economic development, providing both theoretical and empirical foundations for the study. It assesses

existing knowledge on immigration, community attitudes and practices, and their link to socio-economic growth. The chapter is structured into sections covering conceptual reviews, theoretical frameworks such as the Migration Hump Theory and KAP Framework, empirical studies, research gaps, and a conceptual framework showing relationships among study variables.

The review highlights that while migration has been widely studied globally and in Africa, little research has focused on how community knowledge, attitudes, and practices influence socio-economic outcomes at the local level in Malawi. This gap establishes the need for the present study, which builds its intellectual foundation on these insights to better understand the effects of immigration on socio-economic development in Lilongwe.

Conceptual Review

Migration

Migration involves the movement of people across international borders to live temporarily or permanently for purposes such as work, education, family, or humanitarian protection (Milan et al., 2024). It is shaped by push factors like poverty, conflict, and environmental decline, as well as pull factors such as stability, employment, and improved living standards. Over time, migration has boosted economies through labour mobility, entrepreneurship, innovation, and cultural exchange, while also increasing government revenue and consumer demand. Yet, it can pose challenges including strain on public services, job competition, environmental pressures, and social tensions if poorly managed (Bossavie & Özden, 2023). In Malawi, especially in Lilongwe, immigration from neighboring countries is reshaping socio-economic development, making integration and sound policies vital for maximizing its benefits.

Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development refers to the gradual improvement of people's economic and social well-being (Enterprise & Plans, 2022). It extends beyond economic growth by including access to education, healthcare, housing, infrastructure, and social inclusion. Progress requires both economic indicators such as jobs, entrepreneurship, and income, and social indicators like sanitation, security, and community participation. Migration supports this process by creating employment, fostering innovation, and expanding markets, though it can also strain public services if not properly managed. In Malawi's Area 25, the success of

socio-economic development depends on community attitudes, institutional support, and effective integration policies.

EMPERICAL REVIEW

Immigration has been widely studied as a key driver of socio-economic development in both origin and destination countries (Nkhoma, 2014). Empirical evidence shows that immigrants contribute to economic growth through labour participation, entrepreneurship, investment, consumption, and remittances, while also influencing social and institutional development (Chernobay et al., 2023). Immigrants participate in various sectors of the economy, where they help redistribute income, expand labour markets, and influence domestic investment priorities.

According to Chernobay et al. (2023), migrants play multiple economic roles including students who enhance human capital and knowledge transfer, entrepreneurs who create employment opportunities and stimulate innovation, and consumers who increase demand for goods and services, thereby influencing production and trade dynamics. In addition, migrant savers contribute to financial systems through remittances and banking investments, while migrant taxpayers support public revenue systems in host countries. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate that international migration is not only a demographic phenomenon but also a major economic force influencing development outcomes.

Similarly, Ummah (2019) emphasizes that remittances sent by immigrants to their countries of origin play an indirect but significant role in strengthening both home and host economies. These financial flows improve household welfare in origin countries while also supporting investment and liquidity in financial systems abroad, ultimately contributing to broader socio-economic development.

Knowledge on International Migration and Socio-economic Development

Knowledge regarding international migration is a critical determinant of how communities perceive and engage with immigration processes. Global estimates show that immigration is continuously increasing, with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs reporting approximately 258 million immigrants in 2017 (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2023). This reflects growing global labour mobility driven largely by labour market imbalances between sending and receiving countries.

Empirical evidence also highlights the economic significance of immigration through remittance flows. In 2018, global remittances reached approximately \$689 billion, with over

\$518 billion directed to developing countries (Mankgele & Fatoki, 2018). In several countries, remittances accounted for more than 20% of GDP, demonstrating their importance as a macroeconomic stabiliser and a source of foreign exchange.

Beyond macroeconomic indicators, knowledge of immigration is shaped by how communities interpret its developmental role. Some scholars view immigration as a household livelihood strategy that improves income, reduces risk, and enhances investment capacity. From this perspective, immigration is seen as a positive development tool. However, alternative views argue that immigration leads to brain drain and labour shortages in origin communities, thereby reducing local productivity (Nzima et al., 2019). This duality reflects differing levels of knowledge and interpretation within societies.

Furthermore, immigration is increasingly recognised as a response to socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Rao & Kesharwani, 2025). Migrants often seek improved livelihoods in urban or international destinations, and their remittances contribute significantly to improvements in education, healthcare, housing, and small-scale entrepreneurship in their home communities.

In addition, environmental and climate-related knowledge has become increasingly relevant in immigration studies. In Malawi, for example, climate change and environmental degradation have significantly influenced immigration patterns. Disasters such as Tropical Cyclone Freddy led to over half a million displacements in 2023 (Plan et al., 2024). While immigration can serve as a coping strategy to environmental stress, it can also increase pressure on resources in destination areas if not properly managed (IOM Malawi, 2025). This demonstrates that knowledge of immigration must also include environmental awareness and risk understanding.

Attitudes on International Immigration and Socio-economic Development

Attitudes toward immigration are shaped by economic perceptions, cultural beliefs, political discourse, and lived experiences. While immigration is often associated with economic dynamism and innovation, some scholars caution that migrant success is not universal, as many migrants operate under conditions of limited capital, insecurity, and structural disadvantage (Jones et al., 2019).

Economic motivations remain a key driver of positive attitudes toward immigration, particularly the search for better wages and employment opportunities. However, barriers such as language differences and lack of skills often influence migrant experiences negatively

(Magar, 2024). These challenges contribute to mixed attitudes regarding immigration benefits.

At the societal level, attitudes toward immigration are often influenced by perceived competition for jobs and resources. Research shows that while general attitudes may remain relatively stable over time, the salience of immigration as a political issue can fluctuate significantly, often shaping electoral behaviour and policy preferences (Dennison & Vrânceanu, 2022). In many contexts, heightened concern about immigration is associated with increased support for restrictive policies.

Cultural and racial preferences also influence attitudes toward migrants. Studies indicate that individuals are more likely to support migrants who share similar cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds, while showing resistance toward those perceived as different (Blinder and Richards, 2020). Such perceptions can shape inclusion or exclusion in labour markets and social systems.

In developing countries, negative attitudes are sometimes reinforced by misinformation and media narratives, which may portray migrants as competitors for jobs and business opportunities. In contexts such as South Africa, xenophobic sentiments have led to violence, social exclusion, and economic disruption, affecting both migrants and host communities (Hijam et al., 2022). The media plays a complex role in shaping these attitudes, although its exact influence is difficult to measure due to overlapping political and social factors (Dempster et al., 2020).

Overall, attitudes toward immigration directly influence whether communities support or resist immigration related socio-economic processes, thereby shaping development outcomes.

Practices of immigrants on Socio-economic Development

Immigration practices refer to the actual behaviours and actions undertaken by migrants and their households in response to immigration opportunities (Tshifhumulo, 2025). These include immigration decisions, remittance sending, investment choices, and participation in social and economic networks.

Empirical studies show that immigration practices are shaped by a combination of personal, socio-economic, and political factors in both origin and destination countries (Malibroda and Shevchuk, 2023). Immigration outcomes are also influenced by migrant identity transitions, particularly when migrants acquire citizenship in host countries, raising questions about belonging and integration (Chernobay., 2023).

One of the most significant immigration practices is remittance transfer. Lesejane (2022) notes that remittances contribute to household welfare and financial inclusion, particularly when funds are transferred through formal banking systems. These financial flows support savings, consumption, education, and investment activities, thereby contributing to socio-economic development in origin communities.

Immigration also contributes to skill development and innovation. Skilled immigration has been associated with technological advancement and economic growth, particularly in developing countries where immigration of skilled workers is increasing while developed countries rely on foreign expertise (Siddiqui, 2022). This demonstrates that immigration practices are not only economic but also developmental and technological in nature.

However, immigration practices are also influenced by social and cultural structures. Social inclusion or exclusion plays a major role in determining whether immigrants successfully integrate and contribute to development. Historical and contemporary immigration patterns show that immigration is shaped by uneven economic development, environmental pressures, and policy changes (Koshel & Yakovenko, 2020).

Despite its benefits, certain immigration-related practices can negatively affect socio-economic development. For example, xenophobic violence and exclusionary practices, particularly in some parts of South Africa, have led to loss of life, destruction of property, reduced economic activity, and strained international relations (Tella Review, 2022). Such outcomes reduce both migrant and host community welfare and limit the developmental benefits of immigration.

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Theory

The KAP Theory explains how knowledge shapes attitudes, which then influence practices (Ethics & Committee, 2018). Knowledge means awareness and understanding of issues like immigration causes, policies, and impacts. Attitudes are beliefs and perceptions formed from knowledge, which can be positive when people value immigrants' contributions or negative when misinformation fuels fear. Practices are the actions that result, such as supporting policies, investing remittances, or accepting immigrants. Although the theory assumes knowledge leads to positive change, external factors like poverty or politics can also affect behavior.

Push-Pull Theory of Immigration

The Push-Pull Theory describes migration as a result of forces pushing people away from their origin and pulling them toward destinations (Ndalama et al., 2025). Push factors include poverty, unemployment, conflict, and environmental decline, while pull factors involve better jobs, education, healthcare, and stability. Migrants often move to improve livelihoods and contribute to development through remittances, entrepreneurship, and labour. Critics argue the theory oversimplifies migration by focusing mainly on economic reasons, ignoring social networks and cultural influences. Despite this, it remains a useful framework for understanding why migration happens and its impact on development.

New Economics of Labour Immigration (NELM)

The NELM Theory views migration as a household decision rather than an individual choice (Nzima et al., 2019). Families send members abroad to diversify income, reduce risks, and overcome failures in local labour and credit markets. Remittances are central, helping households pay for education, healthcare, housing, and business investments. This theory highlights how migration reduces poverty and supports socio-economic development when remittances are used productively. While it assumes steady remittance flows, which may not always occur, NELM remains influential in explaining the developmental benefits of migration.

Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The three theories work together to explain how immigration connects to socio-economic development. The KAP Theory shows how knowledge shapes attitudes, which then influence practices toward immigrants. The Push-Pull Theory highlights the reasons people migrate, such as poverty or better opportunities abroad, while the NELM Theory explains how families use migration and remittances to improve welfare and development. Among them, the KAP Theory is the main framework because this study focuses on knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Together, all three provide a complete foundation for understanding how immigration affects communities and economies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method and Design

Qualitative research method was utilized by the researcher in this study for a number of reasons. The research assesses and offers a more in-depth, thorough, and detailed understanding of phenomena using non-numeric data, in contrast to quantitative research,

which focuses on quantifying and testing hypotheses with numeric data. Qualitative research is particularly concerned with describing and explaining relationships, individual experiences, and group norms. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore and outline the nature, significance, and benefits of qualitative research through a systematic review of relevant literature (Oranga & Matere, 2023).

The study aims at assessing more impacts of immigration on socio-economic development in three areas namely people's knowledge, attitude and practices. To acquire more knowledge, attitudes of immigrants as well as practices of immigrants, open ended questions were used in a questionnaire so that the respondents were given more platform to explain as they contribute. This research method limits the number of respondents to maximum of 30, hence to meet time frame and saturation of data.

Research Setting, Population and Sampling

The research was carried out in Area 25, a rapidly growing township in Lilongwe with many small-scale businesses and a dense population. Immigrants often settle here to access a large customer base, and the area is experiencing fast socio-economic growth, making it a key site for data collection.

Population refers to entire set of individuals having common characteristics (Willie, 2024). The study focused on Area 25, where shop owners and immigrants involved in socio-economic activities formed the target population. Participants were 18 years and older, and sampling was initially open but later limited to 30 due to data saturation. The results were applied to analyze knowledge, attitudes, and practices in exploring how immigration impacts socio-economic development while focusin is on quality, depth, and the richness of the data rather than quantity.

Purposive sampling was applied by selecting chiefs or block leaders from Area 25, since they oversee markets, welcome immigrants, and guide business activities. Their involvement provided valuable insights into immigration processes, socio-economic development, and community relations. By engaging them, the researcher gathered perspectives on trends over time and current challenges. This method was convenient and allowed for detailed data collection on how migration supports township growth. Overall, purposive sampling enriched the study by offering diverse viewpoints on immigration and socio-economic development.

Research Instrument and Data Analysis

Data for this research was collected by using open ended questionnaires, interviews as well as focus group discussions. These questionnaires were administered directly, with responses recorded in the participants' preferred language during interviews and focus group discussions. This approach ensured detailed insights into immigration and socio-economic development while making participants comfortable throughout the process.

A pilot study is a small-scale investigation carried out before the main research to test and refine methods, tools, and procedures. In this case, it was conducted in Mgoni area, Lilongwe, using the same questionnaire design with five respondents.

In this study, thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data by identifying themes and patterns. This method works well with open-ended questions and narratives, as it explores the meaning and depth of participants' experiences. It was particularly suitable for analyzing how immigration affects socio-economic development in Lilongwe, focusing on knowledge, attitudes, and practices. This study used the procedures outlined previously in different sections of the project, including the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study distributed 30 questionnaires, but all 35 were returned fully completed, resulting in a 100% response rate. According to Saunders et al. (2016), a response rate above 90% is considered highly satisfactory.

Response rate on knowledge

Target Respondents	Total Samples	Responses Received	Response Rate (%)
Business owners	25	25	100
Authorities	5	5	100
Total	30	30	100

Source: Field data collected

Responses rate table on Knowledge of people on immigrants' impact of socio-economic development in Area 25 township. (n=30)

No1	Knowledge findings	Number of respondents	Response Rate (%)
1	Immigrants contribute to business knowledge and skills among local Malawian business community	18	60%
2	Local Malawians mainly learn by observing and copying immigrants rather than through direct knowledge sharing	15	50%
3	Immigrants do not openly share technical business knowledge because they regard it as a business secret	12	40%
4	Local business people have limited knowledge of business laws, tax requirements and regulations	21	70%
5	Immigrants demonstrate greater interest and knowledge of Malawi's business laws and regulations in general	19	63.3%
6	Lack of formal business and tax training contributes to limited knowledge among local traders	23	76.7%
7	Immigrants have wider business exposure through previous experience and interaction with people from other countries from Dzaleka refugees camp	17	56.7%
8	Local traders need additional business, financial and technical knowledge to compete effectively	25	83.3%
9	Area 25's Nsungwi market is perceived as conducive environment for business	30	100%

Out of 30 respondents, 18 (60%) indicated that immigrants contribute business knowledge and skills to the local Malawian community, while 15 (50%) said locals mostly learn by observing and copying rather than through direct sharing. At the same time, 12 respondents (40%) noted that immigrants often keep technical knowledge private, treating it as a business secret. This suggests that although immigrants bring valuable expertise, the transfer of knowledge is not always open or direct.

Meanwhile, 21 respondents (70%) highlighted that local traders lack knowledge of business laws and regulations, compared to 19 (63.3%) who recognized immigrants' stronger awareness of these laws. A larger group, 23 respondents (76.7%), linked limited local knowledge to the absence of formal training, and 25 (83.3%) emphasized the need for more business, financial, and technical skills to compete effectively. Additionally, 17 respondents (56.7%) acknowledged immigrants' wider exposure through experiences such as those from the Dzaleka refugee camp, and all 30 (100%) agreed that Nsungwi market provides a conducive environment for business growth.

Response rate on Attitude

Target Respondents	Total Samples	Responses Recieved	Response Rate (%)
Business owners	25	25	100
Authorities	5	5	100
Total	30	30	100

Source: Field data collected

Responses rate table on attitudes of people on immigrants' impact towards socio-economic development in Area 25 township. (n=30)

No1	Attitudes findings	Number of respondents	Response rate
1	Belief that immigrants use rituals or witchcraft to achieve business success	8	26.7%
2	Belief that immigrants keep their business practices secret, contributing to stereotypes	12	40%
3	Rejection of the ritual explanation; differences attributed to hard work, discipline and longer working hours	10	33.3%
4	Perception that Area 25 community members need a change in attitude and work ethic to improve business performance	18	60%
5	Perception that immigrants preferentially employ and empower fellow immigrants	15	50%
6	Perception that local people, particularly youths, are segregated from meaningful business opportunities and mainly receive casual jobs	14	46.7%
7	Limited interaction between immigrant and local business people because of differences in beliefs and attitudes	16	53.3%
8	Envy and jealousy toward immigrant-owned businesses	13	43.3%
9	Negative attitudes contribute to anti-competitive behaviour, conflict and social tensions	11	36.7%
10	Need for both immigrants and locals to change their attitudes and promote cooperation for socio-economic development	22	73.3%

Out of 30 respondents, 8 (26.7%) believed that immigrants rely on rituals or witchcraft for business success, while 12 (40%) thought immigrants keep their business practices secret, reinforcing stereotypes. In contrast, 10 respondents (33.3%) rejected the ritual explanation, attributing immigrant success to hard work, discipline, and longer working hours. Furthermore, 18 respondents (60%) emphasized that the Area 25 community needs to change

its attitude and work ethic to improve business performance, and 15 (50%) perceived that immigrants tend to employ and empower fellow immigrants.

At the same time, 14 respondents (46.7%) noted that locals, especially youths, are excluded from meaningful business opportunities and mostly offered casual jobs, while 16 (53.3%) pointed to limited interaction between immigrants and locals due to differences in beliefs and attitudes. Envy and jealousy toward immigrant-owned businesses were reported by 13 respondents (43.3%), and 11 (36.7%) linked negative attitudes to anti-competitive behavior, conflict, and social tensions. Importantly, 22 respondents (73.3%) stressed the need for both immigrants and locals to change their attitudes and foster cooperation, highlighting the importance of collaboration for socio-economic development in Area 25.

Responses rate on practices of people on immigrants' impact towards socio-economic development in Area 25 township. (n=30)

No 1	Finding	Frequency responses	Percentage of respondents
1	High business competitiveness	11	36.7%
2	High security risks	1	3.3%
3	Youths alcohol, substance abuse affect socio-economic development	3	10.0%
4	Positive socio-cultural integration	2	6.7%
5	Poor sanitation due immigration	8	26.7%
6	Environment sustainability by immigrants	5	16.7%

Source: Field data

The study revealed that business competitiveness was the most frequently observed issue, reported by 36.7% (11 respondents), indicating that immigration has intensified rivalry among entrepreneurs in Area 25. The second most common concern was poor sanitation, noted by 26.7% (8 respondents), pointing to inadequate facilities and hygiene practices linked to immigration. Awareness of environmental sustainability among immigrant business operators was mentioned by 16.7% (5 respondents). Meanwhile, youth alcohol and substance abuse was highlighted by 10.0% (3 respondents), reflecting worries about declining youth involvement in productive activities. Positive socio-cultural integration was reported by 6.7% (2 respondents), suggesting limited but present benefits from social exchange and skill transfer between immigrants and locals. Finally, security risks were mentioned by 3.3% (1 respondent), showing that safety concerns exist but are less significant compared to other issues. Overall, the findings emphasize that business competition and sanitation are the

dominant challenges influencing socio-economic development in Area 25, while integration and security issues were less frequently raised.

FINDINGS

Immigrants in Area 25 were widely acknowledged for contributing business knowledge and skills, with 60% of respondents highlighting their role. However, knowledge transfer was often indirect, as half of the participants said locals mainly learn by observing rather than through direct sharing, while 40% noted that immigrants tend to keep technical expertise private. This indicates that although immigrants bring valuable expertise, openness in sharing remains limited.

Respondents also pointed out significant gaps among local traders. About 70% reported limited understanding of business laws, and 76.7% linked this to a lack of formal training. A large majority (83.3%) stressed the need for more business, financial, and technical skills to compete effectively. Immigrants were seen as having broader exposure, including experiences from the Dzaleka refugee camp, and all respondents agreed that Nsungwi market provides a supportive environment for business growth.

Social perceptions further shaped the findings. While 26.7% believed immigrants rely on rituals or witchcraft for success, 33.3% rejected this view, attributing success to hard work and discipline. Concerns about exclusion of local youths from meaningful opportunities were raised by 46.7%, alongside reports of envy and conflict toward immigrant businesses. Importantly, 73.3% emphasized the need for both immigrants and locals to change attitudes and foster cooperation. Overall, the dominant challenges were business competition and sanitation, while integration, youth involvement, and security issues were less frequently reported but remain relevant for socio-economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Malawi should reinforce immigration policies that align with national development planning to encourage entrepreneurship and investment while addressing social and environmental challenges.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry is urged to introduce entrepreneurship programmes, financial literacy, and mentorship initiatives to enhance knowledge sharing and business competitiveness. Similarly, the Malawi Revenue Authority should promote tax awareness and simplified education programmes to strengthen compliance and revenue collection.

The Lilongwe City Council needs to improve sanitation infrastructure at Nsungwi Market through better waste management and supervision to support growing commercial activity.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services should collaborate with local leaders to foster peaceful coexistence and reduce stereotypes and discrimination. Financial institutions are encouraged to expand affordable loan access for local entrepreneurs, while the Environmental sectors should promote conservation through tree planting, education, and sustainable resource management.

Community leaders are expected to build social cohesion through dialogue, conflict resolution, and engagement programmes, and youth development organisations should invest in empowerment, vocational training, and entrepreneurship to reduce substance abuse and increase youth participation.

Areas of Further Study

Future researchers should consider the firstly, the comparative studies between urban and rural communities to examine differences in the socio-economic impacts of Immigration. Then contribution of immigrants to employment creation and poverty reduction in Malawi.

The relationship between immigrants, public service delivery and urban planning in rapidly growing communities like Area 25. The role of government institutions in promoting the socio-economic integration of immigrants. Gender dimensions of immigrants and entrepreneurship in Malawi.

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