

Understanding Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the Twist and Turns of Measurement and Conceptual Misfit

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Abstract: To fight poverty in South Africa, one must understand the underneath causes, origin, factors and cases that make people fall into and remain in poverty. These the measurement criterion did not take into cognizance establishing a measurement and conceptual parameter for understanding poverty in the African setting. In literature, there are two main arguments to poverty measurement, unidimensional and multidimensional measurement to poverty. However, in a case where both measure seemed to evade inclusiveness, as to reason why poverty has remained transgenerational. We ask, in what ways, could poverty be reduced? What forms the basis of the relief – social grants? What are the conditions that makes people who fall into poverty from affluence remain in poverty in the country? The approach was adopted from Statistic South Africa and over 100 research papers. Results demonstrates that eighteen million individuals are under the social grant system with a population of merely over forty five million people. Millions of households and families are falling into deep poverty, and the social grant system is becoming unsustainable. This paper is a referendum on the need for a new method of understanding poverty and means through which it be approached. It also intends to demonstrate that poverty is not just a mere measure of income or consumption, but unfulfilled desires. With the intent of understanding how government can adequately conceptual poverty, thereby leading to a more realistic approach of poverty reduction.

Keywords: Desire fulfilment, living standard, poverty, poverty measurement and conceptualization, poverty reduction, wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

According to White (2016), poverty is not a respecter of race, nationalities, creed, gender or persons. Nevertheless, poverty is deeply rooted and predominantly epitomized in rural areas and poor homes. Poverty in this location are principally intergenerational, persistent, and deeply rooted. What is worrisome about poverty in these places is that it plagues a particular group more than others on the African continent, women and children. This is probably a mixture of the fact that poverty is not just a mere measure of income or consumption, but unfulfilled desires. Hence, it is a series of challenges or a web of chains and circumstances that builds one on another that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for those in poverty to build wealth and create some form of stability (White 2016).

To understand poverty one must first decode how poverty is conceptualised and ultimately how it is measured (Gumede 2008:5; Neil 2013:319). It is commonplace to argue that poverty is one of the principal challenges facing Africa among unemployment, poor governance, inept leadership and inequality. However, its bigger weakness lies beneath methodological, ontological, epistemological, and

conceptual issues regarding who is poor, in poverty and outside poverty.

That, the concept 'poverty' is vague, meaning different things from one individual, organisation, and government to the next. So also have the issue of measurement remained problematic. Over the years, its vagueness has affected its measurement. A reason discrepancy exists as to the measurement criteria and a conceptual definition for poverty. As a result, the consensus for poverty measurement has remained practically impossible (Deaton, 2006). Consequently, different measures unarguably generate different results (Bradshaw 2000). More irritating is that these results determine to a greater extent policy intervention in a country or area (Ravallion 1992). These differentials in results create problems for policy makers in formulating the right policy intervention (Magasela 2005). In some cases, understate poverty analysis, trends and profile. Making it difficult to tackle poverty when those in poverty remain unknown.

It is imperative to note, that to measure poverty we must define it adequately based on its many (multidimensional) attributes and wellbeing, including the functioning of humans and their capabilities (Sen 1999; Gumede 2007; 2008). These attributes (standard of living, education, fulfilled desires, relationships, engagement, positive emotions, and health among others) South Africa and the wider continent have failed to harmonise in either their measurement or

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conceptualisation connotations. Thereby, inhibiting policy initiatives and programmes that could have assisted in elevating those in poverty and those within the peripheral of the poverty zone. For policy, intervention and initiatives to be meaningful and result oriented; the concept and notion of poverty must be rightly and adequately conceptualised and measured. Otherwise, the efforts of governments and international organisations may be wasteful. The inability to measure and conceptualise poverty from a multidimensional or wellbeing approach has consequences, one of which is that it tends to limit the nature of government intervention or strategies for poverty alleviation with regards to where, who, how and what policy interventions are to be formulated and subsequently implemented in eradicating poverty in the country (Bradshaw 2000).

However, these are yet to be deeply rooted in South Africa and the wider continents perception of poverty. Thus, the notion of unidimensional or monetary components of poverty have gained prominence as the *one best way* for measuring or conceptualising poverty in South Africa. Nonetheless, the notion of poverty in contemporary social science philosophy depicts that money alone cannot be justifiably used in measuring or conceptualizing poverty in the 21st century (Townsend 2000; StatsSA 2000; Barrett 2005; Bowles, Durlauf, and Hoff 2006; de Janvry and Kanbur 2006; Gumede 2007; White 2016). Notwithstanding, money and food intake alone is adequate for measuring and conceptualizing, hunger. It is limited in measuring, conceptualizing or for understanding poverty. Since, the notion of poverty has far-reaching consequence to hunger.

CONTEXTUAL MAPPING OF THE POVERTY LINE

To understand who is poor, in poverty, or those that had escaped poverty. A threshold was proposed establishing a cut-off, which demarcates - the poor, those in poverty from those out of poverty (Gumede 2008: 7). The idea of separating these phenomena is to guarantee that policy interventions, directed to those that need them the most. The antecedent of the poverty threshold/ line is traceable to Charles Booth. In 1889, Charles Booth used the concept "poverty line" in dividing the people of London and Soho into those "in poverty" and those "in comfort" (Gille 1996). The essence was to determine income disparity in Britain as published in his book *Life and Labour of the People in London in 1889* (Gille 1996). Booth's recommendation was instrumental in establishing the

Pension Fund for the Aged in Britain, which assisted in preventing the spread of poverty to the elderly.

The concept gained credence with the study of the American philosopher Seebohm Rowntree in 1901. In his book: *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*. The idea shared by these philosophers, Booth and Rowntree, were primarily to measure those in comfort from those not in comfort, and to move those out of comfort to comfortable positions. By so doing, both philosophers influenced government policy interventions in their respective locality, Britain and America. Both authors, however, did not provide a conceptual stance for defining poverty neither did they link poverty to either food or money.

It was until 1964/ 65 when Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security Administration conceptualised the idea of poverty to consumption, which until date accounts for the food intake measure or consumption measure for poverty. Consumption, therefore presented a means for defining poverty. While a food intake of 2,000 calories, utilized as a measuring standard for poverty. The conceptual notion of Orshansky's presumption cannot be devoid from the physiological stage of Abraham Maslow's (1935) *hierarchy of needs theory*. This philosophy is accountable for the growth of unidimensional poverty measurement (Fisher 1997: 6). However, from the 1970s to date several authors as Kolm, Atkinson, Bourguignon, Tsui, Streeten, Nussbaum, Hart, Sen, Reddy, Pogge, Wash, Gumede, Budlender, Bond, Alkire, Foster, Santos, White, and Ravallion have argued for a much complex measurement framework for poverty. Against the state and the high rate of frustration amongst the world's poor, despite alleged global decline in poverty (Roser, 2016).

LITERATURE

This paper takes a swipe at two approaches, multidimensional measurement approach and wellbeing approach, while using desire-fulfillment theory to guide and direct the study.

Philosophically, socially, politically, and methodologically, there is tension when the concept, poverty is mentioned. This is feasibly because the term poverty is vague and sometimes misused, misplaced or overtly misunderstood, due to its vagueness. Therefore, has measuring and conceptualising poverty remained challenging (Deaton, 2006; UNHCHR 2012).

Over the years, several approaches for measuring poverty included capability approach (Sen 1990);

absolute poverty (World Summit 1995); income poverty approach (World Bank 1990s; Ravallion 1990s); consumption-based/ food intake poverty measure (Orshansky 1963); basic need approach (ILO 1970s); and inequality approach (World Bank 2005, 2006). As well as, decomposable poverty measures (Foster *et al.* 1984); direct and indirect measures of poverty (Ringen 1988); chronic poverty (Chronic Poverty Centre 2006); living-standards measurement study (World Bank Policy Research Department 'now called the Development Economics Research Group or DECRG' 1980). Including subjective measures of poverty, Totally Fuzzy Approach (TFA) (Dagum and Zenga 1990; Cheli and Lemmi 1995); well-being and subjective wellbeing (Allardt 1970s; White 2000; Alkire and Foster 2007, 2011)¹; multidimensional poverty (Kolm 1977; Streeten 1981; Atkinson and Bourguignon 1982; Maasoumi 1986; Tsui 1995; Lipton and Ravallion 1995; Alkire and Foster 2007 2011) among others.

Despite, the existence of these measures, what poverty is and the required intervention for those in poverty continues to portend a challenge in the 21st century. Hence, the proposition of Alkire and others.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF POVERTY

Multidimensional poverty deals with several indicators that characterised an individual or family in poverty. These indicators include *poor health, inadequate living standard, disempowerment, lack of education, and threat from violence and poor quality of work*. The argument for multidimensional poverty though long established as a means towards understanding poverty (see Kolm 1977; Streeten 1981; Atkinson and Bourguignon 1982; Maasoumi 1986; Tsui 1995; Lipton and Ravallion 1995) was overlooked until recently. It was only in the year 2010 that the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and several scholars of the initiative as Alkire, Foster, Santos, Seth, Robles, Suppa among others developed an index for measuring multidimensional poverty.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an acute poverty measurement guide for estimating those in poverty from over 100 developing countries. There are three major dimensions it measures: *standard of living, education, and health* and ten indicators *nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, water, electricity,*

flood, and assets (Alkire and Foster 2007 2011; Santos 2011; Alkire and Santos 2014: 252; HDR 2015; Alkire and Robles 2016). As stated elsewhere, that these dimensions and indicators are means through which mental and productive health of an individual or family maybe guaranteed.

According to WHO, mental and productive health is evident through the capabilities of the individual's or family's living condition or wellness. Essentially dealing with the capability of an individual or family to fulfill to their optimum, cope with daily stress of life, work fruitfully and productively, and contribute to their community.² However, this idea of multidimensional poverty measure has not gained providence in policy discourse and conceptual framing nor methodological adoption for the fight against poverty in South Africa, hence, the overreliance on social grant to eradicate poverty, which is antithetical to mental health and wellbeing.

WELLBEING

According to Tiberius "well-being is, by definition, what is good for you. If you achieve well-being in your life, you may not have lived a morally perfect life and your life may not have made any great contribution to art, world peace or progress, but you will have lived a life that is good for you" (Tiberius 2014). The level of an individual's mental alertness correlates with the individual's clear conviction towards attaining wellness or wellbeing. According to White (2015), wellbeing advocates for a more inclusive and purpose driven approach to development. That identifies flaws in policy, programme intervention, and addresses the real impact of societal decadence in people's lives. In an earlier study, White (2010: 159) decried that the philosophy of wellbeing is in the fulfillment to people lifelong desires in other to live productively and purposively.

The central idea of wellbeing is therefore fulfillment of purpose, happiness and accomplishment or simply put self-actualisation as seen in Maslow hierarchy of needs theory. It arrogates four promises to its users, the first been the 'well' in the 'wellbeing', which signifies approval/ assent (inner wellbeing). It also promises holistic approach of a being (synergy or unity of the soul, the body and the spirit) towards the unification and optimal utilisation of this human element to its

¹Erik Allardt 1970-, UNICEF/INNOCENTI 2010, EU 2006.

²http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

optimal capability (capability wellbeing). Traceable to the wellness or wellbeing of an individual's productive capacity (conscious and productive wellbeing). The third deals with the individual's priorities, drive, desires, goals and perspectives in life (subjective wellbeing). These are perhaps some reasons the money metric or food consumption index tends to undermine poverty. The question posed by Graham is particularly imperative at this time "does more money make you happier? Why so much Debate? (Graham 2010:219; Easterlin 2011).

Hence, the fulfillment of human needs and expectations exceeds money and consumption rather it leans to flourishing. Therefore, consuming 2000 calories per day is not the purpose of any human existence but a necessity to quench hunger. It becomes pertinent then to understand, why World Bank, Sachs, and several International Organisations and scholars believe that more money would automatically solve global poverty. When development sociologists have taught us that money creates a dependent syndrome, the much it can do is generate a cyclic of dependent individuals, groups and societies on the bourgeois of that society. Perhaps why do most International Organisations think that financial aid alone will automatically translate to development? There is therefore something much more than money that could resolve the complexities that creates dependency of the periphery in world-economy discourse (see Wallerstein 1974; 2013). Towards the realisation of their goals, wellbeing and happiness are crucial in ensuring fulfillment and optimal productivity of an individual's or family's living condition to money or food.

DESIRE-FULFILLMENT THEORY

Fulfilled desires are critical for achieving wellbeing and a healthy life. In *De Trinitate* (C. 416 C.E.), St. Augustine elaborated that the fulfillment of an individual's goal is the least necessary for achieving wellbeing. This is possibly because dissatisfaction in individual's life-goals is the rudimentary factor that inhibits the individual's human capabilities, which has the ability to create dependency and illbeing. These traits every human tries to desist or avoid. Since, human's sort for things that culminate into happiness and joy rather than pain and anguish. As portrayed in the *Ethics*, Spinoza (1677) reiterate thus, "in no case do we ... desire anything, because we deem it to be good, but ... we deem a thing to be good, because we ... desire it" (Spinoza 1677: Part III, Prop. IX). Reinforced in Aquinas (1274) *Summa Theologiae* on

beatitude, when he argued, "blessed man is he who has everything that he desires" (I-II.5.8). Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651), in referring to man's desire or appetite, affirms that, "whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*.... For these words of good [and] evil ... are ever used with relation to the person that useth them, there being nothing simply or absolutely so ... " (ch. 6). The need to understand what constitute good and evil are central to Hellenistic Ethics, and in human philosophy there is a clear pattern of trying to avoid what brings about pain and sadness. In that, during pain or sad moment the productivity of an individual is lowered, compared to when the individual is in high spirit or of good pleasure. Therefore, when desires are unfulfilled there is a kind of limitation it beings, which invariably deplete the functionings and capabilities of individual to reach their maximum. Hence, to achieve a healthy and peaceful society, the satisfaction of the desires of its people comes first. This is the core issue that poverty alleviation strategist must not just underestimate in South Africa but it harmonise it in fight against the scourge.

According to Heathwood (2014), the desire-fulfillment theory of wellbeing is known as the desire satisfactionism. Heathwood argued that desire-fulfillment theory maybe assessed in the light of the desire theory or preferentism. Implying

"what is good in itself for people and other subjects of welfare is our getting what we want, or the fulfillment of our desires, and what make things go worse for us is our wanting something to be the case when it is not or does not become the case" (Heathwood 2014: 1).

Hence, it is safe to say that the desire-fulfillment theory of Chris Heathwood is a sub-shoot of the desire theory of Martha Nussbaum.

The desire-fulfillment theory is critical in understanding subjectivism about wellbeing. In that, according to its notion of a good life is subjected to one's attitude towards deriving a life rather than the nature of those things themselves.

Several theories under the subjectivism of wellbeing exist: value-realisation theories, aim-achievement theories. Others may include; hedonism, and happiness theories but the desire-fulfillment theory is

the model for a critical understanding of all other forms of subjectivity wellbeing on the one hand, and adequate for the operationalising multidimensional poverty and capability approach in measuring poverty and most important explicitly tied to answering and directing the questions of the research. Hence, Haybron (2008: 3) submission that desire-fulfillment theory is regarded by some philosophers as the “theory to beat” and “a dominant account among economists and philosophers over the last century or so...”

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

The concept poverty is not entirely new to man but its levels, dynamics, index and the measurability of the concept overtime have remained problematic. While the World Bank, UN and other financial and beverage industries sees extremely poverty as spending below \$1.90 per day. Other international agencies as Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), DFID, GSDRC, and other schools of thoughts and authors in International Development (Sarah White, Selcuk Beduk, Sarah Bracking, Patrick Bond, Julian May, Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, James Ferguson, Vusi Gumede, Jeffrey Sachs, Budlender, Andrew Shepherd and Mike Rogan among others) see poverty as a multidimensional concept. Furthermore, a definition of poverty, according to StatsSA (2000) in *Measuring Poverty in South Africa* conceptualised the term poverty as, “the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and respect from others”. This definition though began with the understanding of the unidimensional measures of poverty in the theorem of basic needs, but later transfused to other dimensions of poverty as multidimensional poverty orientation with the inclusion of freedom, dignity, creativity, and fulfillment as enjoyment. This definition is arguably a derivative from Sen Amartya’s (1999) *‘Development as freedom’* book. Stipulated in the human capabilities referring to – reliable access to satisfactory nourishment, self-esteem and community participation that breeds individual fulfillment in communities.

POVERTY LINE

Poverty lines are tools that enable for statistical testing of poverty patterns and levels, in addition, to planning, monitoring and evaluation for poverty alleviation policies and programmes in a country (StatsSA, 2017: 114). Also referred to as the most

consistent way for measuring poverty over the years; which has been through setting of monthly average of income, which a family can survive from (Gumede 2010). The ideology that permuted the World Poverty measurement standard was the of estimating who’s poor and who’s is not, by stipulating a mark or what might be referred to as a goal post in measuring the state of poverty per time. According to Suryanarayana, “poverty line is nothing but this subsistence minimum generally expressed in terms of its cost” (Suryanarayana in Prakash 2014:1). From the definition by Suryanarayana, it is evident that the poverty line is a tool used in establishing the number of persons who are poor and those that have escaped poverty, as well as, the extent that these persons are under or above the poverty mark. Which is thus, helpful in government budgeting, in understanding the level of deprivation, the pace of development and growth, the pace at which poverty is been alleviated, and the income distribution and redistribution in terms of urban-rural poverty.

EXTREME VS. RELATIVE POVERTY

Extreme poverty is not merely a state of existence but also a process consisting enormous diverse dimensions and complexities (Khan 2001). A process signifying high prevalence of unemployment, lack of productive capacity, deprivation, insecurity, inequality, weak capacity and states, weaker institutions, poor governance structures, exclusion, and dependence. To collaborate this assumption of poverty been a process. The UN (1995) posits that “poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion.” By implication, several factors determine poverty to merely \$1.90/per day. The linkage between the eradication of extreme poverty and a single economic indicator (spending) of an individual threatens the assumption that solution for eradicating poverty, is conceived. This is probably because the \$1.90/ per day is established on fictitious assumption which seeks to better the beverage and food industries and strengthen the dollar economy than to eradicate poverty.

However, the World Bank, The Economist, Barack Obama, David Cameron among other NGOs has endorsed the idea of \$1.90 per day as a standard for

measuring extreme poverty (Wroughton 2013; BBC 2013; The Economist 2013). It is imperative to note that extreme poverty is relative (Samman 2013:1). Hence, its relativity (space, environment and time) should influence the perception of a measurement framework for poverty around the world. In that, the poverty line for Nigeria for instance should be different from the poverty line in South Africa considering the purchasing power parities of both nations. The study argues that the idea of \$1.90/per day is both unsuitable and unsustainable in determining who is extremely poor and who is not. In another words, the notion of the \$1.90/ per day resonates the idea of a blanket approach in measurement as the *one size fit all models*, which is criticized as been unstable, unrealistic, and unsustainable (Harford 2011: 311; Stringer 2014: x).

The unidimensional poverty and the need for reform in South Africa

In Charles Dickens novel titled, *David Copperfield*, the character Mr. Wilkins Micawber portrayed an eloquent understanding of the poverty threshold. As he frequently observes, “income twenty shillings, expenses nineteen shillings and six pence – result, happiness; Income twenty shillings, expenses twenty shillings and six pence – result, misery” (Deaton, 2006:8). This analogy is what Deaton referred to as, complete nonsense. The disturbing scenario about this is that this same method is what is been used in South Africa and the wider African continent in determining those in poverty from those out of poverty.

It is a truism that unhappiness is not a result of the lack of food/ money, but a result of unfulfilled desires or expectations. Unfulfilled desires in the end breed frustration. A frustrated individual is then a risk/ threat to society. Hence, argued elsewhere that insecurity and crime are attributes of unfulfilled desires, negative psychology and an inadequate quality of life other than the lack of food. It is important to flaw the notion that the lack of food manifests itself in illicit desires of individuals in society. Hence, in South Africa, one is considered to be poor or to have escaped poverty, based on the methodologies of unidimensional poverty measurement and conceptualisation, money and consumption. Thus, whether an individual is six Rands or six Cents above the poverty line, that individual is denied any form of intervention. Hence, the need for a multidimensional approach in the measurement of poverty, which takes into cognizance of other dimensions that initiatives economic growth and

personal development not merely of *poor health, inadequate living standard, disempowerment, lack of education, and threat from violence and poor quality of work*. However, must incorporate threats or factors that creates an atmosphere for increased poverty, education that does not fit industrial needs, improper family system, single parenthood and women entrepreneurs, and multinational and national wolves. This other indicators are proposed on the basis that the multidimensional index as proposed in 2010 by OPHI is not all-inclusion given South Africa’s history and development trajectory.

While world leaders, development practitioners and scholars are in search for other methods or criterion for measuring poverty from other standpoint than both money and food (WHO, Deaton, Alkire, Sen, Tholen, Pogge, Gumede etc.). South Africa has continued to rely on the money-metric and food consumption measure that has greater chance in undermining or understating actual poverty. Which probably has a way in limiting and inhibiting policy intervention to those in need. It as well, limits policy interventions to redress the development gap, thereby, resulting in a spate of poverty in South Africa.

The 2017 StatsSA report is a testament that a multidimensional measurement perception is due for poverty analysis in South Africa. Though the report demonstrated an oscillated perception of poverty trend, from 66.6% (31,6 million persons) in 2006 to 53% (27,3 million persons) in 2011, but increased to 55,5% (30.4 million person) in 2015 (StatsSA 2017). Buttresses the point made by Sen, Nussbaum, Alkire, Ravallion (recent), Reddy, Pogge, Foster, Greer, Thorbecke, Gumede, Budlender, Marley, and Bond among others, such as, “money is numbers and numbers never end. If it takes money to be happy, (one’s) search for happiness will never end.” If all a government cares about is to be seen as reducing poverty, the unidimensional measure for poverty analysis is opted, in that the government can decide to give social grant to people just below the poverty line as a means of poverty reduction (see Figure 1).

While both arguments above tend to contradict each other. The former bases its argument on other criterion than money, and the latter is hazardous and known for postponing the dooms day. Nevertheless, the arguments of the former is ignored largely in the South Africa policy documents and the wider African context.



Figure 1: Number of social grants disbursed between 2000 and 2016.

Source: Ndaguba and Hanyane (2018b).

Table 1: Inflation-Adjusted Poverty Line, 2006 to 2017 (Persons Per Month in Rands)

Year	Food poverty line (FPL)	Lower-bound poverty line (LBPL)	Upper-bound poverty line (UBPL)
2006	219	370	575
2007	237	396	613
2008	274	447	682
2009	318	456	709
2010	320	466	733
2011	335	501	779
2012	366	541	834
2013	386	572	883
2014	417	613	942
2015 (April)	441	647	992
2016 (April)	498	714	1,077
2017 (April)	531	758	1,138

Source: StatsSA (2017).

Poverty headcounts and the number of poor persons (2006, 2009, 2011 and 2015)

Poverty headcounts	2006	2009	2011	2015
Percentage of UBPL poor (%)	66,6%	62,1%	53,2%	55,5%
No. of UBPL (m)	31,6	30,9	27,3	30,4
Percentage of LBPL poor (%)	51,0%	47,6%	36,4%	40,0%
No. of LBPL poor (m)	24,2	23,7	18,7	21,9
Percentage of pop. Living in extreme poverty (below FPL - %)	28,4%	33,5%	21,4%	25,2%
No. of extremely poor persons (m)	13,4	16,7	11,0	13,8

StatsSA (2017).

Inversely, the idea of the latter, government in South Africa and the wider continent prioritized and utilized food consumption or money metric model, as against competing philosophies of multidimensional

poverty: capability approach to poverty, human development measures, wellbeing approach, fuzzy logic of measuring poverty, and PERMA logic among others in poverty conceptualisation and measurement.

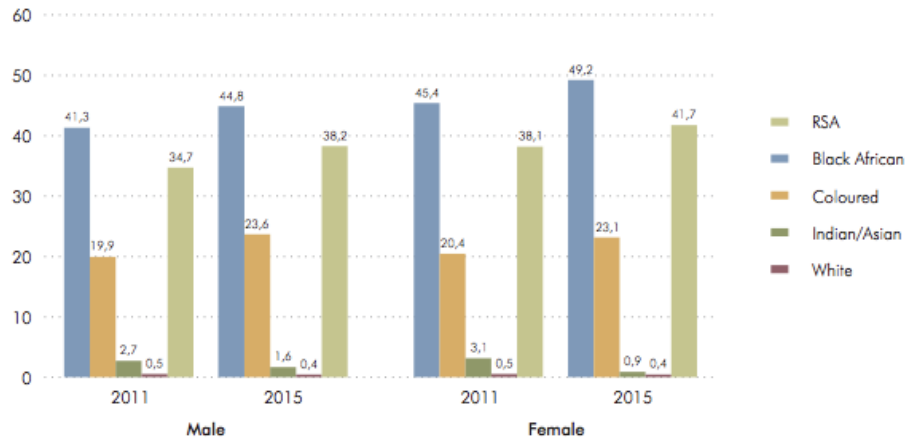


Figure 2: Proportion of population living below the lower-bound poverty line (LBPL) by sex and population group (2006, 2006, 2011 and 2015).

Source: StatsSA (2017: 19).



Figure 3: Poverty headcount by sex.

Source: Ndaguba and Hanyane (2018a).

It is succinct to state that without multidimensional attributes given to improving the quality of life, the fulfillment of an individual’s desire, and an improved engagement with communities on issues that confront them. The rate of poverty will continue to increase in South Africa.

THE TWIST AND TURNS OF MEASUREMENT

The way and manner poverty is conceived determines largely the way it is measured. When it is conceptualised from a unidimensional method, it is limited and exclusive to money and food, when it conceptualised from the multidimensional perspective, in some case, its ambiguous and other times unrealistic. Whether one conceptualizes from unidimensional or multidimensional perspectives there are still several limitations. In that, the pattern globally and in South Africa for dealing with those that fall under

the unidimensional poverty threshold, is the provision of food stamps and money, hence, because the unidimensional poverty only takes into cognizance of both variables. When poverty is conceptualised and measured from a multidimensional perspective, of which most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa abstain from, it may give the actual figure of those in poverty, as Alkire and her team utilized the philosophies associated with deprivation in Western countries. Without further interrogation to the philosophies of Africans in poverty (Deaton, 2006). What if: we fix our health system and educate more people, does it mean that the standard of living will ultimately improve? This might not be the case, in Africa today, according to the ILO (2016), the African continent has the highest number of working poor. It has the highest number of educated people in Africa’s history. Out of 17,000,000.00 graduates churned out by the over 668

universities in Africa, over 10,000,000.00 university graduates are unemployed. This goes to show that education alone might not be an automatic ticket towards ending poverty. Perhaps, one would wonder, is unemployment not one of the issues talked about in Dudley Seers assertion of development in Todaro Smith's book in 1977? Then why continue to make intervention based on means that does not bring about an adequate end? If the world and South Africa must be seen as fighting poverty, it must be perceived that it is fighting towards giving its citizens the ability of fulfilling their desire. One must understand that excitement and fulfillment of those during apartheid was simple liberation, and after the liberation of the country from erstwhile colonialist, the next was to improve the living standard of the people. This, the country still awaits and these are some of the reasons why the frustration and negative psychological activities rages. This argument is premised on the notion that the ends of humans needs are to live a fulfilled and satisfactory life, rather than to fill their belly with food.

This is not to dismiss the assumptions and prepositions of various methodologies for measuring poverty on either unidimensional or multidimensional perspectives, but the argument is that if all indicators are not well established according the context for which such an analysis is presented, what then will be the purpose of the measurement in the first place? If it can typify all the surrounding indicators and does give the right solutions to poverty alleviation, then of what good is measurement in itself? For these we are uncertain that there is not an existing *one-size-fit-all-approach* solution to these problems. More so, whether it is philosophically good to that have such believes as the one method approach for problem solving in all context.

Since, it is established that measurement determines interventions, then the idea of a measurement that takes into cognizance every variable that causes poverty, which makes those in poverty to remain in poverty, including those close to the peripheral of the poverty threshold are important. For these set of people/ household not to fall into poverty. Because Statistics in Africa had demonstrated that more people and households tends to fall into poverty, because of the death of a father, the death of the breed winner, dependency syndrome, mental health, and disability among others. These are debilitating uncertainties, about the extent of uncertainties that could plague a family in the African context, but are largely ignored in any measurement criterion. However, these might come at no simple fix, but it's worth the try

to set a nation towards a flourishing trajectory, that increases the chances of happiness, and fulfilled desires, than to continually give a false narrative that social grant from government is capable of solving poverty in the country.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the difficulties associated with the measurement and conceptualisation of poverty is very imperative. Because, without a proper knowledge of what poverty is (conceptualisation) (Ndaguba and Hanyane, 2018c). Where the poor resides (location). Including, how it should properly measure poverty from a multidimensional or transdisciplinary perspective (measurement). To what effect will government interventions be in the fight to alleviate poverty in South Africa? Wasteful government expenditure and quantum corruption.

It is essential to note that to measure poverty, we must define it adequately based on its many attributes and wellbeing, including its ability to ensure that people flourish given certain parameters, as the functioning of humans and their capabilities to live a good and fulfilling live (Sen 1999; Gumede 2008; 2007). Having in mind, those circumstances that threaten those in poverty and those around the periphery of the poverty line.

This attributes the study have demonstrated that South Africa have failed to harmonise or comply with, either in measurement or at the conceptualisation stage. Hence, the paper contends that the current conceptualisations of poverty in government dialect have several limitations, though a central failure in the methods, measures and strategies for alleviating is its inability to argue for either happiness or fulfillment. Since, the desire of humans is to reach saturation point in life (in essence to live a good, happy and fulfilled life) than to fill their stomach. This is probably why the assumption of desire-fulfillment is in sharp contrast to methods adopted for understanding poverty in South Africa and the wider African continent.

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