

The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Poverty: A Review of Contemporary Research

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Abstract

This study critically examines the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, its measurement challenges and modern methods of addressing it. In addition to income-based measures, poverty encompasses several dimensions that require a comprehensive understanding. A large body of literature was identified through a systematic search of several databases using relevant keywords. Through a rigorous filtering process, the selection was narrowed down to 88 articles, which are reviewed in depth to identify research gaps and contribute to the existing literature. The study highlights the importance of selecting appropriate indicators that capture the various aspects of poverty and go beyond monetary considerations. It highlights the importance of reliable and timely data, standardised measurement approaches and subjective assessments of well-being to capture people's life experiences. Multi-dimensional poverty indices, such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and the Capabilities Approach, are known to provide comprehensive measurements and information for targeted interventions. By addressing research gaps on the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, this study aims to improve understanding and contribute to evidence-based policies and interventions to promote inclusive societies and comprehensive poverty reduction efforts.

Keywords: Multi-Dimensional Poverty, Poverty Measurement, Poverty Dimensions, Poverty Indicators, Poverty Assessment.

Introduction

Poverty is a widespread problem that affects people all over the world. It is not just about not having enough money; poverty is a complex problem with various dimensions. It encompasses factors beyond income, including limited access to essentials such as food (Okoye & Lin, 2023), education (Acharya et al., 2023) and healthcare (Xu et al., 2023), as well as social exclusion (Au, 2023). The motivation for this research stems from the realisation that poverty goes beyond the conventional understanding of a lack of financial resources. It encompasses a range of intertwined factors that create a complex web of disadvantages.

This research paper aims to explore the different aspects of poverty and how they are interconnected. By examining the insights of experts and researchers in the field, we hope to gain a better understanding of poverty and find effective ways to combat it. To begin, we will look at the historical development of poverty research and how our understanding of poverty

has evolved over time. In the past, poverty was often measured only in terms of income, but we now know that it encompasses much more. Scholars such as Derek Headey and Maria Emma Santos have played an important role in expanding our understanding of poverty, as their contributions on Google Scholar show.

Next, we will examine the different dimensions of poverty. These include the economic dimension, which includes problems such as insufficient income and high unemployment. We will also look at the social dimension, which includes limited access to education, health care, housing and other essential services. Finally, we will look at the cultural dimension, which is about how cultural beliefs and practises can influence poverty and its perpetuation. We will also explore the links between these different dimensions of poverty. For example, economic disadvantage can lead to social disadvantage and vice versa. Cultural norms and practises can also have an impact on economic and social outcomes. Understanding these complex interrelationships will give us a more comprehensive view of poverty and help us develop more effective strategies to alleviate it.

In the final section of the paper, we summarise the key findings from the studies we have examined. By synthesising this information, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of poverty and its multi-dimensional nature. This knowledge will help us find ways to address poverty more effectively and bring about positive change in society.

Defining Poverty and Understanding its Multi-Dimensional Nature

Poverty in its comprehensive meaning refers to a state of deprivation and lack that goes beyond mere financial scarcity. It encompasses a complex interplay of various interrelated dimensions that prevent individuals and communities from meeting their basic needs and enjoying an adequate standard of living. Our understanding of poverty has evolved considerably over time and goes beyond a narrow focus. We have moved beyond focusing on income and exploration to examining the intricate web of factors that contribute to the persistence of poverty.

To capture the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, we need to consider more than just lack of cash. While income poverty remains an important consideration, it is important to recognise that poverty goes beyond financial constraints. It encompasses a number of interrelated dimensions, including limited access to education, health care, housing, clean water, sanitation, nutritious food, social protection and opportunities for social and economic participation.

The historical development of poverty research has shaped our understanding of this complex issue. Early approaches to poverty measurement relied primarily on income-based thresholds. Traditional income-based poverty measures have long been used to assess and understand the extent of poverty in society. However, these measures have certain limitations that prevent us from fully understanding the complex nature of poverty. One of the most important limitations of income-based measures is their narrow focus on monetary resources (Amarante et al., 2022). These measures typically define poverty based on a specific income threshold below which individuals or households are considered poor. While income is undoubtedly an important aspect of poverty, it does not capture the full range of factors that contribute to deprivation and exclusion. People's experiences of poverty are influenced by several interrelated dimensions such as education (Acharya et al., 2023), health care (Xu et al., 2023), housing (Brown et al., 2023; Ceriani et al., 2023), social support (Au, 2023) and access to basic services (Trounstine & Goldman-Mellor, 2023; Widomski & Musz-Pomorska, 2023).

Moreover, income-based measures often overlook differences and variations in the cost of living between different regions and social groups (Jung et al., 2023; Pratheepa et al., 2023; Xiong et al., 2022). A fixed income threshold may not adequately reflect the different needs and challenges faced by people in different contexts. For example, the cost of housing or health care may differ significantly between urban and rural areas, making it difficult to capture the true extent of poverty through income measures alone.

Another limitation is that income-based measures do not account for non-monetary forms of deprivation (Karnik & Peterson, 2023; Soseco et al., 2022; Yoo, 2023). Poverty is not just a lack of money. It also includes limited access to education, health care, sanitation, nutrition and social opportunities. If we focus only on income, we overlook the broader dimensions of poverty and miss important insights into the factors that perpetuate poverty and hinder social mobility.

A more integrated approach to poverty acknowledges the multi-dimensional nature of deprivation and recognises the interplay between different dimensions of well-being (Halkos & Aslanidis, 2023; Jain et al., 2023; Li & Marquez, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). This approach takes into account factors such as education, health care, housing, social integration and empowerment. By incorporating these dimensions, we can better understand the complexity of poverty and develop targeted interventions that address the specific needs and challenges of individuals and communities.

One framework that argues for an integrated approach to poverty measurement is the capability approach proposed by economist Amartya Sen. The capability approach goes beyond income and focuses on people's capabilities — the freedoms and opportunities they have to live a life they value (Sen, 1999). It emphasises the importance of enabling people to access education, health care, social support and other resources necessary for their well-being. This approach emphasises the need to address not only income poverty but also the broader factors that limit people's choices and opportunities. Another influential figure, Peter Townsend, emphasised the social dimensions of poverty. His work highlighted the importance of social exclusion, the influence of relationships and the role of social networks in the experience of poverty (Townsend, 2014). Townsend's research underlined the interconnectedness between poverty and social factors and emphasised the need to consider the broader social context when addressing poverty.

Other scholars such as Francois Bourguignon, Anthony Atkinson and Kai-yuen Tsui have also made important contributions to the understanding and measurement of multi-dimensional poverty (Atkinson & Stiglitz, 2015; Bourguignon & Chakravarty, 2003; Tsui, 2002). Their work explores the conceptual underpinnings of multi-dimensional poverty, addresses methodological challenges and emphasises the importance of including subjective dimensions and individual freedoms in poverty assessments.

Search Process and Filtering: Uncovering the Dimensions of Poverty

In order to comprehensively research the dimensions of poverty, a systematic search for suitable methods was conducted in the databases Scopus and Web of Science (WOS), with a focus on the field of economics. Relevant keywords such as 'poverty', 'economic dimensions of poverty', 'social dimensions of poverty', 'psychological dimensions of poverty' and 'environmental dimensions of poverty' were used. The search yielded a considerable number of articles from the field of economics, which shows how extensive the research on poverty is from an economic perspective. Specifically, 4,862 articles were found on Scopus and 3,530 articles on WOS with the keyword 'poverty', illustrating the extensive work in this area.

The subsequent search for the individual dimensions of poverty further contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the topic. For 'Economic Dimensions of Poverty', 135 articles were found on Scopus and 84 articles on WOS, highlighting the great interest in studying economic aspects such as income inequality and economic inequality. A search for 'Social Dimensions of Poverty' found 249 articles on Scopus and 134 articles on WOS, showing that social factors contributing to poverty are also recognised in the field of economics. A search for 'Psychological Dimensions of Poverty' found about 20 articles on Scopus and 14 articles on WOS, indicating the growing awareness of the psychological impact of poverty. Finally, the search for 'Environmental Dimensions of Poverty' yielded about 75 articles on Scopus and 51 articles on WOS, highlighting the growing attention to the relationship between poverty and environmental factors.

The search process included not only Scopus and WOS, but also other databases such as Google Scholar, Report and Working Paper, which increased the range of literature available. This comprehensive approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the economic dimensions of poverty and its intricate links with social, psychological and environmental factors. By integrating several databases, a comprehensive and robust analysis of the research landscape on the dimensions of poverty was achieved.

While the search yielded a considerable number of articles in the field of economics, a rigorous filtering process was applied to ensure that only high quality and relevant studies were included. Screening involved assessing the titles, abstracts and keywords of the articles, excluding those that did not directly relate to the dimensions of poverty or did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria. The inclusion of multiple databases and the careful filtering process were intended to ensure that the most relevant and reputable studies were included in the review.

As a result of the rigorous filtering process, a final selection of 88 articles was identified that met the inclusion criteria. These carefully selected articles will be thoroughly reviewed and analysed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of poverty and their interrelationships. The in-depth study of these selected articles will not only provide valuable insights into the existing knowledge on poverty dimensions, but will also identify potential research gaps and areas that need further exploration. By identifying these research gaps, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by highlighting areas that need additional investigation and suggesting new avenues for future research.

Economic Dimensions of Poverty

Poverty is a complex problem with many dimensions, and understanding its economic determinants is critical to addressing its causes and developing effective solutions. In this section we will look at the economic aspects of poverty, including income inequality, unemployment and lack of access to resources. We will look at recent studies that examine these factors and their impact on individuals and society, shedding light on the broad nature of poverty.

Income inequality or the unequal distribution of income within a society has far-reaching implications for poverty (Azimi, 2022; Darmalinggam et al., 2022; Y. Liu & Cheng, 2022; Zhang & Liu, 2022). When there is a significant gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor, it leads to a situation where some individuals have access to abundant resources and opportunities while others struggle to meet their basic needs. The concentration of wealth among a few individuals or groups exacerbates income inequality and widens the gap between the rich and the poor (Cingano, 2014; Headey et al., 2023). As a

result, people with lower incomes often have limited access to quality education, health care, housing and other essential resources, making it difficult for them to improve their economic situation and escape the cycle of poverty.

Unemployment is another major economic factor contributing to poverty (Kittiprapas, 2023; Pishnyak et al., 2023; Sengupta, 2023). When people are unable to find stable employment or face long-term unemployment, this not only leads to a loss of income but also hinders their ability to meet their basic needs and achieve a decent standard of living. The lack of a reliable source of income limits an individual's ability to meet their daily expenses, access essential services and plan. In addition, long-term unemployment can have a detrimental effect on self-esteem, mental health and general well-being of those affected, further compounding the challenges of overcoming poverty (Nichols et al., 2013).

Lack of access to resources such as education, health care and essential services is another dimension of poverty with significant economic implications (Khan, 2001; World Bank, 2001). Education is widely recognised as a crucial route out of poverty, as it provides people with the knowledge and skills they need for employment and advancement. However, limited access to quality education, particularly in disadvantaged communities, perpetuates inequalities in education and prevents people from escaping the constraints of poverty (OECD, 2012). Similarly, inadequate access to health care and basic services is a significant barrier for people in poverty as they struggle to maintain their health and well-being, leading to a further deterioration of their economic situation (Anwar et al., 2023; Coste & Bousmah, 2023).

Recent studies have shed light on the economic aspects of poverty and its impact on individuals and society. For example, economists have examined the relationship between income inequality and poverty, highlighting how income inequality contributes to the persistence of poverty (Fink et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). These studies emphasise the importance of addressing income inequality to reduce poverty rates and promote social and economic equality.

In addition, scholars have examined the impact of unemployment on individuals and communities (Achdut & Refaeli, 2020; Farré et al., 2018). These studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of long-term unemployment on individuals' mental health, social inclusion and overall quality of life. Understanding the link between unemployment and poverty is critical for policymakers to design targeted interventions that support job creation, skills development and social safety nets, with the aim of reducing poverty rates and improving the well-being of those affected.

In addition to income inequality and unemployment, lack of access to resources has also been a topic of recent research. Studies have highlighted the importance of equitable access to quality education and health services to alleviate the economic inequalities that perpetuate poverty (Bollyky et al., 2023; Trani et al., 2023). By addressing these inequalities and ensuring equal opportunities for all people, especially marginalised populations, societies can break the cycle of poverty and promote inclusive and sustainable development.

Social Dimensions of Poverty

Education is a critical social determinant of poverty, having a major impact on an individual's economic prospects and opportunities. Access to quality education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to improve their livelihoods and break the cycle of poverty. However, inequalities in access to and quality of education increase inequality and hinder social mobility. Research consistently demonstrates that people with lower levels of

education are more likely to experience financial hardship and have limited employment opportunities (Biney, 2023; Rambaud et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2023). Investment in education, especially for marginalised communities, is critical to reducing poverty and promoting inclusive development.

Health care is another crucial social factor influencing poverty development. People living in poverty often have limited access to quality health services, leading to greater health inequalities and financial burdens. The inability to pay for health care or the lack of health insurance coverage exacerbates the challenges faced by individuals and families in poverty. Current research highlights the strong link between poverty and poor health outcomes and emphasises the need for comprehensive health policies and interventions that address the specific needs of disadvantaged populations (Aaltonen et al., 2023; Pishnyak et al., 2023). By providing fair access to health services, implementing preventive measures and promoting health equity, societies can mitigate the health consequences of poverty and improve overall well-being.

Housing, as a fundamental social determinant, has a significant impact on poverty. Adequate and affordable housing is essential for individuals and families to thrive and escape poverty. However, the lack of affordable housing and inadequate housing conditions contribute to the persistence of poverty. People living in poverty often face overcrowded housing, substandard housing and unstable housing situations, which prevent them from demonstrating stability and security. Current research highlights the link between housing instability and poverty and emphasises the urgent need for policies and initiatives that prioritise affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness (Fleming et al., 2023). By addressing housing inequalities, promoting safe and affordable housing options and implementing supportive housing programmes, societies can alleviate the burden of poverty and improve overall well-being.

Social exclusion is a pervasive social factor that exacerbates poverty and perpetuates inequality. It refers to the processes by which individuals or groups are marginalised, denied opportunities and excluded from full participation in society. Poverty and social exclusion are closely intertwined, as people living in poverty often face discrimination, stigmatisation and limited social networks. Research consistently highlights the detrimental effects of social exclusion on individuals' economic prospects, mental health and social inclusion (Hossain et al., 2022; Pohlan, 2019). Recognising and addressing the social dynamics that contribute to social exclusion is critical to comprehensively addressing poverty and promoting inclusive societies.

Psychological Dimensions of Poverty

Living in poverty can have profound psychological effects on individuals, particularly in terms of their mental health. The chronic stress associated with financial instability, limited resources and insecure living conditions contributes to increased rates of mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. Research consistently shows a higher prevalence of mental health problems among people experiencing poverty (Knifton & Inglis, 2020; Macintyre et al., 2018). The constant worry about meeting basic needs and the lack of control over one's circumstances significantly affect emotional well-being and contribute to mental health problems.

In addition to mental health, poverty can also have a detrimental effect on an individual's self-esteem. The experience of poverty can cause people to internalise social stigmas and develop a sense of shame or inadequacy. The inability to afford necessities and

the belief that they are falling behind others can undermine self-esteem and self-confidence. Research has highlighted the negative impact of poverty on self-esteem, particularly among marginalised populations (Doi et al., 2019). Low self-esteem can further hinder an individual's ability to seize opportunities, believe in their own abilities and break free from the cycle of poverty.

Moreover, poverty significantly affects an individual's overall well-being. Poverty limits access to resources that are essential for a fulfilling life, such as a good education, health care and leisure activities. The constant struggle to meet basic needs and the lack of social support systems can lead to reduced well-being. Studies have shown the negative impact of poverty on overall life satisfaction and happiness (Oishi et al., 2022; Sulkers & Loos, 2022). The long-term consequences of poor well-being go beyond the individual level and can also affect communities and societies as a whole.

Furthermore, the psychological dimensions of poverty can have intergenerational effects. Children growing up in poverty are particularly at risk of experiencing negative psychological consequences. The stressors associated with poverty can affect cognitive development, educational achievement and social-emotional well-being, perpetuating the cycle of poverty across generations. Research has shown that childhood poverty has lasting effects on mental health, self-esteem and overall life outcomes (Doi et al., 2019; Schmidt et al., 2021). Addressing the psychological impact of childhood poverty is critical to breaking this cycle and promoting positive development.

Recognising and addressing the psychological impact of poverty is critical to developing comprehensive strategies to alleviate poverty and promote the well-being of affected individuals and communities. By providing access to psychosocial services, promoting social support networks and building self-confidence and resilience, societies can help people overcome the psychological challenges associated with poverty and improve their overall quality of life.

Environmental Dimensions of Poverty

Poverty is not only a consequence of economic factors, but is also closely interwoven with environmental conditions. Environmental factors such as climate change, natural disasters and resource depletion play a crucial role in perpetuating poverty and creating a cycle of vulnerability for affected individuals and communities.

Climate change, largely caused by human activities, poses major challenges to poverty reduction efforts worldwide. Rising global temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and intensifying extreme weather events have profound consequences for communities and ecosystems. The negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income countries and marginalised communities (Abeygunawardena et al., 2009). Smallholder farmers, who rely heavily on agriculture for their livelihoods, are particularly vulnerable to climate variability and extreme weather events. Droughts, floods, heat waves and storms can destroy crops, reduce yields and undermine food security, leading to loss of income and increased vulnerability of rural populations (Godde et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2020). The resulting food insecurity, economic instability and displacement further exacerbate the cycle of poverty.

Natural disasters, often exacerbated by climate change, have serious immediate and long-term impacts on poverty. These catastrophic events, including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and forest fires, can lead to major loss of life, displacement and damage to infrastructure. Natural disasters that disproportionately affect those already living in poverty

deepen existing inequalities and impede social and economic progress. After a disaster, affected communities struggle to recover and rebuild, leading to persistent poverty and reduced well-being. Studies have shown that vulnerable populations, such as people living in informal settlements or in areas prone to environmental hazards, are particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of natural disasters (Frankenberg et al., 2013; Satterthwaite et al., 2020).

Resource depletion, including unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and ecosystem degradation, is another critical environmental factor that perpetuates poverty. Limited access to clean water, deforestation, soil erosion and pollution directly affect the livelihoods of individuals and communities. These environmental challenges lead to reduced agricultural productivity, reduced availability of energy sources, compromised health and increased vulnerability (Tuomisto et al., 2017). The consequences of resource depletion include reduced income opportunities, food insecurity and impaired well-being, which further entrenches poverty and hinders sustainable development.

Addressing the environmental factors that perpetuate poverty requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. This includes strategies that promote environmental sustainability, poverty reduction and resilience building. Efforts should focus on improving climate resilience, adopting sustainable agricultural practices and investing in natural resource management. Strengthening disaster preparedness, early warning systems and post-disaster recovery mechanisms are crucial to mitigate the negative impacts of natural disasters on vulnerable communities. In addition, the promotion of renewable energy sources, the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns and the implementation of effective environmental policies help to break the cycle of poverty and environmental degradation.

By recognising the complex interaction between environmental degradation and poverty, societies can promote sustainable development that addresses the root causes of poverty while promoting environmental awareness. Comprehensive strategies that integrate environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation and resilience building are essential to help affected people and communities and create a more equitable and sustainable future.

Policy Responses and Interventions

Dealing with the multi-dimensional nature of poverty requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that recognises the interplay of the various factors that contribute to poverty. Policy approaches and interventions have evolved over time to go beyond income-based measures by recognising the need to take into account economic, social, environmental and psychological dimensions.

One effective policy approach is the implementation of comprehensive social protection programmes. These programmes provide a safety net for individuals and families living in poverty, offering financial support, access to health care, education and social services. Research shows that social protection measures such as conditional cash transfers have positive impacts on poverty reduction and well-being. Malaysia, for example, has introduced the People's Income Initiative (PII) in 2023 to assist 130,000 vulnerable people and eradicate extreme poverty. The PII aims to support participants through monthly financial assistance, hire-purchase options and wage subsidies. The initiative prioritises economic activities in the agriculture and food sectors and involves consolidating beneficiary lists into a single database for efficient aid delivery (Malaysia, 2023).

Investment in quality education is another important measure to address multi-dimensional poverty. Access to education equips people with knowledge and skills and empowers them to break the cycle of poverty. Policies that focus on improving education infrastructure, enhancing teacher quality and promoting inclusive education can lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged people and communities. For example, the Education for All initiative in South Korea has shown positive impact by promoting student-centred, participatory learning approaches and strengthening community engagement (Jeong, 2020). This approach has not only improved educational outcomes but also contributed to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

To address the health dimension of poverty, policies that ensure access to quality health services are essential. Universal health coverage initiatives, such as those implemented in countries like Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Samoa and Papua New Guinea, have significantly improved health outcomes and reduced financial barriers to health care for low-income populations (Bank, 2021). These programmes emphasise equitable access to basic health services, including screening, treatment and financial protection, thereby reducing the burden of health expenditure on individuals and households.

Promoting sustainable livelihoods and inclusive economic growth is another important strategy to address poverty comprehensively. Policies that promote entrepreneurship, provide vocational training and facilitate access to credit and markets can empower individuals to generate income and improve their economic well-being. For example, the introduction of the SME Working Capital Loan and Enterprise Finance Scheme in Singapore has empowered financially disadvantaged small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and improved their socio-economic conditions (Koh, 2021).

In addition, addressing the environmental dimension of poverty requires policy interventions that promote sustainable development practises, environmental protection and climate resilience. Initiatives that focus on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, natural resource management and climate change adaptation can help mitigate the negative impacts of environmental degradation on vulnerable populations. For example, the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) programme in the Philippines has successfully empowered local communities by promoting reforestation, environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods (Guiang et al., 2001).

Measurement and Evaluation of Poverty

Measuring poverty comprehensively and accurately presents a number of challenges due to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the diverse experiences of individuals and communities (Santos, 2019). Effectively capturing the complex reality of poverty requires a nuanced approach that goes beyond traditional income-based measures. This analysis addresses the challenges associated with comprehensive poverty measurement and examines contemporary methods and tools that have appeared to address these challenges.

One of the main challenges in measuring poverty comprehensively is choosing the right indicators that capture the different dimensions of poverty (Beck et al., 2020; Fusco & Kerm, 2022). Traditional income-based measures, such as the poverty line, have long been used as benchmarks for assessing poverty. However, these measures have been criticised for their narrow focus on monetary resources and for not taking into account other critical aspects of poverty such as access to education, health care, housing and social inclusion. To address this limitation, multi-dimensional poverty measures have been developed that incorporate several indicators and dimensions simultaneously. These measures provide a more

comprehensive understanding of poverty by taking into account a wider range of deprivations that individuals may face.

Data availability and quality pose another significant challenge in measuring poverty comprehensively (Alena, 2018; Dang & Lanjouw, 2021). Collecting reliable and up-to-date data on different dimensions of poverty can be particularly challenging, especially in low-income countries or regions with limited resources for data collection. Additionally, variations in data collection methods, definitions, and survey designs across countries can affect the comparability and accuracy of poverty measurements. Efforts are being made to improve data collection systems and ensure data quality, such as through the use of standardized survey instruments and the establishment of national statistical offices. However, further investments and capacity-building are needed to strengthen data infrastructure and enhance data collection mechanisms.

Measuring poverty comprehensively also requires grappling with the issue of subjective well-being and subjective assessments of poverty (Szukielojc-Bienkunska et al., 2022; Venkatapuram, 2013). Objective indicators alone may not fully capture individuals' lived experiences of poverty, as beliefs of poverty can vary among different cultural, social, and economic contexts. Therefore, incorporating subjective indicators, such as self-assessment of well-being and life satisfaction, can supply valuable insights into individuals' experiences of poverty. However, interpreting and standardizing subjective indicators can be challenging, requiring careful consideration of cultural and contextual factors to ensure exact and meaningful measurement.

Contemporary methodologies and tools have appeared to address the challenges of measuring poverty across multiple dimensions (Tsui, 2002). One widely used approach is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). The MPI incorporates indicators related to education, health, and living standards to supply a comprehensive measure of poverty. By finding individuals who experience multiple deprivations, the MPI not only shows who is poor but also sheds light on the range of deprivations they face. This information allows policymakers to develop targeted interventions that address specific dimensions of poverty and prioritize resources effectively.

Another notable approach is the capabilities approach, developed by economist Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999). This approach emphasizes the importance of assessing individuals' capabilities and freedoms to live a life they value, beyond monetary aspects alone. It focuses on measuring people's opportunities to achieve well-being in various domains of life, such as education, health, and social participation. By shifting the focus from income to capabilities, the approach recognizes that poverty is not solely defined by income but also by the lack of essential freedoms and opportunities necessary for individuals to lead fulfilling lives.

To overcome data limitations and improve poverty measurement, advancements in technology and data analysis techniques are being used. Big data and satellite imagery, for example, can supply valuable insights into poverty dynamics and spatial patterns, enabling policymakers to target interventions more effectively (Asian Development Bank, 2021; Hargreaves & Watmough, 2021; Mathenge et al., 2023). These innovative approaches use large-scale datasets to supplement traditional survey-based data collection methods, offering new possibilities for monitoring and measuring poverty across different dimensions.

Additionally, efforts are being made to enhance participatory approaches in poverty measurement. Engaging communities and individuals in defining and assessing poverty indicators can capture local perspectives and empower marginalized groups (Ames et al.,

2001; Sohel & Ali, 2010; Economic Commission for Europe, 2017). Participatory methods involve consulting with the people experiencing poverty, allowing them to contribute their insights and experiences. By incorporating their voices, participatory approaches ensure that measurement frameworks accurately reflect the realities and priorities of those affected by poverty.

Future Directions and Research Gaps

Addressing the gaps in existing research on the multi-dimensional nature of poverty is critical to improving our understanding and developing effective strategies to address poverty comprehensively. To achieve this, future research should focus on several key areas. First, the intersectionality of poverty needs to be explored more deeply, i.e. how factors such as gender, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status influence individuals' experiences of poverty (Siddiqui, 2023). This intersectional analysis can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the particular challenges faced by specific populations.

Second, it is important to understand the dynamics and pathways of poverty (World Economic & Forum, 2023). While current research often provides static measures of poverty, longitudinal studies that follow individuals and households over time can uncover the factors that contribute to upswings or perpetuate cycles of poverty. By capturing the complexity of poverty trajectories, researchers can develop policies and interventions that address the causes and dynamics of poverty.

In addition, a contextual approach is needed to examine the specific contextual factors that shape experiences of poverty (Liu, 2022). Poverty is influenced by social, cultural, economic and political dynamics, and understanding local realities and contextual nuances is critical. By considering the unique challenges faced by communities in different regions and countries, researchers can develop context-sensitive interventions and policies that effectively address poverty.

The inclusion of subjective well-being and agency is another important aspect of future research. Examining how poverty affects mental health, self-esteem and overall well-being, as well as individuals' ability to cope with poverty-related challenges, provides a more holistic understanding of poverty. The use of mixed methods that combine objective indicators with qualitative findings can capture the lived experiences of people in poverty (Bleynat & Segal, 2021).

Addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty requires interdisciplinary collaboration. Poverty is a complex problem influenced by economic, social, environmental and psychological factors. Collaboration between researchers from different disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology, public health and environmental sciences can provide a comprehensive understanding of poverty and lead to innovative solutions that take into account the multi-layered dimensions of poverty.

Finally, research should focus on policy evaluation and impact assessment. Rigorous evaluations using quantitative and qualitative methods can identify the outcomes and impacts of different poverty reduction strategies. It is crucial to assess both the intended and unintended consequences of policies, as well as possible trade-offs. This evidence-based approach can help policymakers develop more effective and targeted poverty reduction interventions.

Conclusion

A review of contemporary research on the multi-dimensional nature of poverty has yielded several important findings that underscore the importance of a comprehensive approach to

poverty reduction. First, poverty is a multi-faceted problem that goes beyond mere financial scarcity. It involves a complex interplay of various interrelated dimensions such as education, health care, housing, social exclusion and environmental factors. Understanding poverty in its entirety is critical to developing effective strategies that address its underlying causes and provide sustainable solutions.

A key finding is the need to move beyond traditional income-based measures of poverty and adopt a more holistic perspective. While income undoubtedly plays a crucial role, other dimensions of poverty must also be taken into account, including access to basic services, social support networks and opportunities for social and economic participation. By taking these dimensions into account, policy makers and practitioners can develop interventions that address the different needs and challenges of people and communities experiencing poverty.

In addition, research highlights the importance of recognising the complex interrelationships between the various factors that contribute to poverty. Poverty is not an isolated phenomenon, but is influenced by a complex interplay of social, economic, environmental and psychological dynamics. Understanding these interdependencies is critical to developing integrated policies and programmes that address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and achieve meaningful impacts.

Another important finding is the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to poverty reduction. Factors such as gender, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status intersect and shape individuals' experiences of poverty. By taking these intersecting identities into account, policymakers can develop tailored interventions that address the specific needs and challenges of different groups, promoting more equitable outcomes.

The implications for policy and practice are clear. Policy makers need to move from a narrow focus on income measures to a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction. This includes implementing integrated policies that address inequalities in education, improve access to health care, provide affordable housing, promote social inclusion and mitigate the impact of poverty on the environment. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach and the promotion of collaboration between actors from different sectors can lead to evidence-based strategies that effectively address the multi-faceted dimensions of poverty.

In summary, the review of current research on the multi-dimensional nature of poverty highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction. By acknowledging the various dimensions of poverty, understanding the interplay of different factors and addressing the specific needs of different populations, policy makers and practitioners can develop effective strategies that promote sustainable poverty reduction. This research calls for a change in fundamental assumptions about how we conceptualise and address poverty, which will ultimately lead to more inclusive and equitable outcomes for individuals and communities.

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