

# Ranking the Importance of Dimensions of Poverty with People Living in Poverty

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## Abstract

This study employed an explanatory sequential design involving quantitative and qualitative methods to highlight the different dimensions of poverty and explain their importance. This study aimed to rank the importance of the dimensions of poverty with people living in poverty participating as co-researchers on an equal footing with academics and practitioners. The quantitative section of the study used a “*pair-wise comparison*,” and the qualitative section was a focused-group discussion that provided insights into the findings from the comparison. The comparisons revealed that the different dimensions of poverty have different impacts on people’s lives. While some dimensions shape the experience of poverty more than others, some make life most intolerable, and some have the greatest impact on improving the quality of life if addressed first. This study recommends that poverty be understood and addressed as a multifactor issue. Second, since different dimensions have different impacts on people’s lives and not all dimensions can be addressed at once, they need to be addressed according to their importance. Finally, because there are knowledge differences in poverty between peer groups, there is a need to employ a research approach that will disrupt a patterned relationship that disassociates people in poverty from defining the nature of poverty and how it affects them.

**Key Words:** Ranking, people in poverty, poverty dimensions, participation, Tanzania

## Introduction

One of the decisive challenges in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate extreme poverty is the alienation of people with direct experience of poverty from active participation in defining the dimensions of poverty and how it affects them (Commission for Human Rights (CHR), 2012; Bray et al., 2022). Attempts to address this challenge have brought participatory approaches to poverty into the mainstream. They derive definitions of poverty from the insights of those with a direct daily experience of poverty in diverse environments. Some well known studies include the World

Bank’s Voices of the Poor project (Narayan et al., 2000) and fieldwork across six countries to develop the Individual Deprivation Measure (Wisor et al., 2014; Bessell, 2015).

While inclusive of their approach, these and related studies did not share analytical decision-making with people experiencing poverty (Bray et al., 2022). Consequently, they often fail to incorporate the perspectives of people living in poverty and exclude them from active participation (Wetengere et al., 2022). Thus, the knowledge created is not relevant to people living in poverty, and has failed to eradicate poverty (Wetengere et al., 2022). This explains why

traditional participatory research has perpetuated poverty rather than combating it.

For instance, according to the Ministry of Finance and Planning (Tanzania mainland) (2019), 26.4 % of the population living in poverty is defined as those whose consumption is below the national poverty line of TZS 49,320 per adult equivalent per month. Such people cannot meet their basic consumption needs (World Bank, 2018).

According to a report on poverty, extreme poverty is most prevalent in rural areas (United Nations Statistics, 2019). Furthermore, SDGs resolution requires eradicating extreme poverty everywhere (target 1.1) and halving the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty *in all its dimensions according to national definitions* (target 1.2) (Bray et al., 2020). Strangely, despite mentioning the reduction of poverty in all its dimensions, the term “*poverty in all its dimensions*” has never been officially defined (Bray et al., 2020, p. 2). Still, the resolution emphasizes ‘*according to the national definition*’ (United Nations, 2019). This means that, besides poverty being multidimensional, it is also area or country-specific. Therefore, it is a nation’s responsibility to identify its dimensions against which strategies and measurements of progress in fighting poverty are drawn (UNICEF, 2017; Wetengere et al., 2022).

In response to the above challenges and reflecting on the United Nations’ aspiration to eradicate poverty, All Together in Dignity (ATD Fourth World), conducted a study in Tanzania (Bray et al., 2020) to determine the dimensions of poverty and rank them according to their importance. In the study, people experiencing poverty were involved in all stages of the research as members of national research teams alongside academics and practitioners (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Patrick, 2020). This study employed a tool termed “*pair-wise comparison*” to rank the dimensions and then merged them to form one list.

### **Merging of Knowledge and its contribution to poverty alleviation**

This study uses the Merging of Knowledge (MoK) approach to address these objectives. The Merging of Knowledge approach is a dynamic process that creates conditions so that the experiential knowledge held by people living in

poverty can engage in dialogue on an even footing with scientific and professional knowledge (Wodon, 2018; ENGAGE, n.d.). Explaining how MoK works, Moraene Roberts, an ATD activist, argued to reflect on what happens when two streams merge into a river. Each stream is mixed with the other to form one river, which can never be separated again, and then both rush forward more powerfully than before (ATD Fourth World USA, 2013). Roberts claimed that if policy formulation allowed people living in poverty to work together with policymakers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers, they would produce a more powerful and effective policy drawn from different forms of knowledge from each group. MoK creates a kind of dialogue that is often missing in our society by bringing together people of different backgrounds and experiences, and facilitating the honest exchange of ideas among them (ATD Fourth World USA, 2013). The underlying proposition is that, although knowledge derived from each peer group is equally valid and important, knowledge born from lived experience differs from either professional experience or academics (CHR, 2012; Bray et al., 2020). While people experiencing poverty have lived in poverty and expressed what touches their lives, academics/researchers and welfare employees/practitioners have only been informed about poverty in various ways (Wresinski, 1980). Thus, differences in knowledge show differences in the experience and interpretation of the surroundings/world.

### **Dimensions of Poverty Identified**

As a result of employing MoK, through which people with direct experience of poverty with academics and practitioners were actively involved, a total of 13 dimensions were determined. Three of the total dimensions were traditional or commonly known, and 10 were hidden dimensions (ATD Tanzania 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022).

#### **a) Tradition or commonly known dimensions of poverty**

These dimensions are commonly known, but they still impact people’s lives, especially those with a direct experience of poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). Since 2010, these dimensions have been covered under the Alkire-Foster Multidimensional Poverty Index and used

by the United Nations Development Program (Godinot and Walker, 2020; OPHI, 2021). This multidimensional measure is an essential complement to income poverty indices because it directly measures and compares deprivation. However, these dimensions do not fully reflect the experiences and views of people living in poverty. The commonly known and popular traditional dimensions (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022) are as follows:

- i. Poor Quality Education: Denotes the type of education that does not provide skills and knowledge to help individuals become creative and independent in the struggle against poverty (CONCERN, 2022).
- ii. Ill Health: Refers to poor physical or mental conditions that give rise to health problems (CONCERN, 2022).
- iii. Income Poverty: Means having insufficient income to meet basic needs and social obligations, maintain harmony within the family, or enjoy good living conditions.

#### **b) The hidden dimensions of poverty**

These dimensions have been mentioned by all peer groups as having a significant impact on the lives of people living in poverty but have been largely overlooked by many researchers (ATD Tanzania 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). These include well-known sociologists, ethnologists, and economists. However, they are considered hidden because they have gone unrecognized in the sense that they have not been seriously considered by developing indicators such as \$1.9 a day, the Human Poverty Index (HPI), or the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (OPHI, 2021; Godinot and Walker, 2020). For this reason, they have not been considered in policy discussions. Thus, how they interact to shape the experience of poverty must be properly understood. The hidden dimensions (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022) include the following.

- i. Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter: Refers to poor places where people live in poverty and the types of shelters they possess.
- ii. Solidarity of People living in Poverty: Denotes coping strategies employed by people living in poverty to help one

another materially or morally in times of need.

- iii. Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation of Women and Children: Describes how women and children are treated in society, particularly when the situation is linked to poverty.
- iv. Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behaviors: Explains how people in poverty are more likely to be affected and suffer from bad conduct at the individual, family, or societal levels.
- v. Traditional and Cultural Practices: Harmful traditional and cultural practices reflect the values and beliefs of community members for periods often spanning generations.
- vi. Deficiency in Implementing Institutional Policies: Deficiency in implementing institutional policies to meet people's needs.
- vii. Constraints on Smallholders' Agricultural Livelihoods: Obstacles facing smallholder farmers in rural areas that prevent them from benefiting from agricultural ventures.
- viii. Discrimination and Social Exclusion: Describes how people living in poverty are denied opportunities to participate in economic, social, political, and cultural activities.
- ix. Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care: Explains how children from families in poverty are not protected and cared for by parents and the community.
- x. Poverty-Related Psychological Effects: Poverty-related psychological effects are the direct consequences of extreme poverty caused by hardship and suffering.

#### **Ranking the Importance of Dimensions of Poverty**

While determining the dimensions of poverty nationally is important (United Nations, 2019) for policy implementation to eradicate poverty, ranking the dimensions in terms of their importance to the lives of people living

in poverty is extremely important. The premise underlying ranking the dimensions of poverty in terms of their importance is that governments and/or development partners do not have enough resources to deal with all dimensions simultaneously, and ranking the dimensions based on their importance becomes inevitable.

In addition, these dimensions do not have the same weight in terms of their effects on people, especially those living in poverty. Different dimensions of poverty have different effects on people living in poverty. On that ground, ranking the dimensions of poverty with people experiencing poverty together with academics and practitioners was considered vital in determining their importance in the lives of peer groups (ATD Tanzania, 2019).

The main objective of this study is to rank the importance of the dimensions of poverty among people living in poverty, academics, and practitioners. Specifically, the importance of the dimension of poverty is determined in the following ways:

1. The dimension of poverty that shapes the experience of poverty most.
2. The dimensions of poverty which make life most intolerable.
3. The dimensions which should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of the people.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The central part of the paper used quantitative pairwise comparison ranking to establish the importance of the dimensions of poverty to determine which dimensions should be given priority when it comes to relieving poverty in communities. Then, the study used the qualitative part through a focus-group discussion, where the groups met to merge their findings from the quantitative part and determine the ranking of each dimension.

### **The Population Involved in Ranking of the Dimensions of Poverty**

The people who conducted the ranking exercise were divided into two categories: (i) people living in poverty—men and women of working age, and (ii) people not living in poverty—practitioners and academics.

### **Sampling Technique**

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select representative zones, regions, districts, villages, and the study population (ATD Tanzania, 2019). Maximum variation sampling was used to select zones, regions, districts, and villages to capture the widest possible range of perspectives. Additionally, expert sampling was employed to select individuals with a high level of knowledge about poverty, which can provide valuable insights into the root of the problem.

Local village leaders who were aware of where they lived identified people living in poverty. The identification was conducted in collaboration with the ATD Tanzania Team and friends of the ATD living and working in the areas. The participants had to meet the project criteria, which included minimum assets, income, means of production, and education. During the verification phase, a few participants selected did not meet the project criteria and, hence, were dropped. Those who met these requirements were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their participation. The ATD Tanzania team used a similar method to identify and approach practitioners and academics based on their professional roles and achieve a mix of genders.

### **Empowerment of the ATD Tanzania National Research Team ( TNRT)**

After the identification and recruitment of the ATD TNRT was completed, the team underwent a series of training sessions within and outside the office. The training was meant to empower team members, particularly those living in poverty, to unite and solidify the team, build confidence and trust within and across peer groups, and remove the fear of self-expression within and across peer groups. The underlying premise is that without confidence, trust, and fearlessness among team members, particularly those living in poverty, members would not be sincere enough to express

their experience of poverty (Skelton & Kalisa, 2017). One person living in poverty indicated that he felt ashamed to express his experiences of living in poverty. It is due to the above that the empowerment process was crucial to MoK since self-expression which was the main source of information, particularly for people living in poverty, depended solely on confidence, trust, and fearlessness built within the team.

### **Sample Size**

The ATD TNRT comprised 12 members: six people in poverty, three practitioners, and three academics, ranking and merging the dimensions of poverty according to their importance.

### **Data Collecting Instruments**

Since the dimensions of poverty were already determined, the task of the peer groups was to rank the dimensions according to their importance (ATD Tanzania, 2019). The ranking was performed by each peer group separately, and then their rankings and results were discussed with other peer groups, and thereafter came up with one ranking list. A research guide and tools called *pairwise comparisons* were employed to facilitate team discussions. The discussion helped participants generate knowledge, enabling them to rank the dimensions of poverty according to their importance (ATD Tanzania, 2019).

Other methods employed to complement the ranking exercise for data collection were literature and documents on related topics, narratives or quotes from individual life stories on people's experiences with poverty, and recordings and transcriptions.

### **Data Analysis**

Since each peer group's ranking of dimensions was performed separately and then combined to merge the rankings of different peer groups, the ATD TNRT cross-checked their reliability and validity to identify overlaps, contradictions, and inconsistencies (ATD Tanzania, 2019). This was done by cross-referencing relevant peer groups, referring to secondary data, and reviewing notes and transcriptions made by team members. Data analysis involved writing notes and checking recurring themes or issues from different peer groups as well as secondary data (ATD Tanzania,

2019). In addition, the ATD TNRT shared their field experiences to note common issues to complement the descriptive data collected from individuals living in poverty.

Knowledge of ranking generated from the peer groups was 'merged' through analysis, discussion, and reflection within the ATD TNRT; with emergent, a list of ranking agreed upon by all peer groups. After the final ranking, the ATD TNRT analyzed the outcomes from the peer groups as follows: members of the ATD TNRT with direct experience of poverty made a thorough analysis to see if their views were reflected in the final ranking; the practitioners and academics did the same. These three syntheses were important for the deliberations towards the ranking of joint production of a single list of the ranking of dimensions of poverty.

The merging of ranked dimensions from each peer group exercise lasted for 1 to 2 days. The team then conducted an analysis that considered the new data produced during this event. The result of this process was not only a list of ranking of dimensions but also new, enriched insights into the reality of poverty from different peer groups in each studied area.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Ranking the Dimensions of Poverty According to their Importance**

After the 13 dimensions of poverty were determined, the ATD TNRT comprised six people with direct experience of poverty, three academics, and three practitioners who expressed their opinions as to which dimensions are the most important from different angles (ATD Tanzania, 2019). The importance of the dimensions was determined as follows:

- Which dimensions shape the experience of poverty?
- Which dimensions of poverty make life most intolerable?
- Which dimensions of poverty should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life?

Therefore, each peer group of the ATD TNRT ranked the dimensions separately, and then the three peer groups merged the dimensions according to each of the above criteria to form a

list, as indicated in Tables 1, 2, and 3. The results are as follows:

### Ranking the dimensions of poverty that most shape the experience of poverty

The first exercise aimed to rank the dimensions of poverty based on which dimension most shaped the experience of poverty ( ATD Tanzania, 2019). To be able to carry out this exercise, each peer group (people living in poverty, academics, and practitioners) compared each dimension against every other one. This process adopted a tool called *pairwise comparison* ( ATD Tanzania, 2019). For instance, when two dimensions (say, X and Y) were compared, the members of the peer group asked the question “for a person to be considered poor is it necessary for her/him to experience this dimension?” or “for a person to be considered poor is it sufficient for him/her to experience this dimension?” If the answer was yes for dimension

X, then dimension X shaped poverty more than dimension Y (ATD Tanzania, 2019).

In this case, as indicated in Table 1, each peer group horizontally compared the Poor Quality Education (PQE) with every other dimension. The dimension that was considered by a peer group as most shapes poverty is written in the table. For instance, from Table 1, when PQE was compared with Ill Health (IH), IH was considered as a dimension that most shapes the experience of poverty, and IH was written in column 3 from left and row 2 from above. Because PQE cannot be compared with PQE, the second column remained blank. The same exercise was conducted for all the dimensions.

After each peer group completed this exercise, the three peer groups came together to discuss and merge their results and came up with one list, as depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Dimensions of Poverty, Which Most Shape the Experience of Poverty*

	PQE	IH	IP	EIS	SPP	VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	Total	Rank
PQE		IH	PQE	11	2										
IH			IH	12	1										
IP				IP	10	3									
EIS					EIS	VAE	EIS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	2	10
SPP						VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	0	11
VAE							VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	VAE	PPE	2	10
VHS								TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	VHS	PPE	3	9
TCP									DIP	CSA	DSE	TCP	PPE	5	8
DIP										DIP	DIP	DIP	DIP	9	4
CSA											CSA	CSA	CSA	8	5
DSE												DSE	DSE	7	6
APC													PPE	2	10
PPE														6	7

Source: ATD Tanzania (2021)

### Abbreviations

<b>PQE</b>	Poor Quality Education
<b>IH</b>	Ill Health
<b>IP</b>	Income Poverty
<b>EIS</b>	Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter
<b>SPP</b>	Solidarity of People Living in Poverty
<b>VAE</b>	Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children
<b>VHS</b>	Vulnerability of Harmful Social Behavior
<b>TCP</b>	Tradition and Culture Practices
<b>DIP</b>	Deficiency in Implementation of Institution Policies
<b>CSA</b>	The Constraint of Smallholder’s Agriculture Livelihood
<b>DSE</b>	Discrimination and Social Exclusion
<b>APC</b>	Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care
<b>PPE</b>	Poverty-Related Psychological Effects

Table 1 shows that the five dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty are ill health, poor quality education, income poverty, deficiency in implementing institutional policies, and constraints of smallholders’ agricultural livelihoods. Of the five top dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty, three are traditional or common knowledge dimensions, and the rest are hidden dimensions.

The persistence of ill health reduces people’s ability, particularly those living in poverty, to participate in food production and income-generating activities. This diminishes their ability to acquire the necessities of life, such as education, health, water, and food. Frequent illnesses can lead to physical disability and even death. When this occurs, the likelihood of falling deeper or living in poverty is high.

The poor-quality education dimension suggests that most people living in poverty cannot pay for their school. As a result, they lack the knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to exploit surrounding resources and cannot obtain well-paid jobs.

In addition, most people living in poverty are poor, because they lack sufficient money to pay

for basic necessities. Hence, they experience poverty. One of the reasons why the traditional or commonly known dimensions were mentioned as the dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty is that these dimensions are often mentioned, known, and recognized by peer groups and policymakers.

**Ranking of dimensions of poverty that makes life most intolerable**

The objective of the second exercise is to rank the dimensions of poverty from those with the greatest negative impact on life to those with the least negative impact. To do this, each peer group separately compared each dimension against each other and followed the procedure as indicated in the first exercise. As mentioned above, when two dimensions (e.g., X and Y) were compared, the team members asked the question, “*which dimension X or Y makes life more intolerable?*” If the answer is Y, then the dimension Y is more intolerable than X. The findings of this study are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Dimensions of Poverty Which Makes Life Most Intolerable*

	PQE	IH	IP	EIS	SPP	VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	Total	Rank
<b>PQE</b>		IH												7	6
<b>IH</b>			PQE											11	2
<b>IP</b>				IH										3	10
<b>EIS</b>					IP									6	7
<b>SPP</b>						VAE								0	13
<b>VAE</b>							VHS							9	4
<b>VHS</b>								VAE						4	9
<b>TCP</b>									DIP					1	12
<b>DIP</b>										CSA				5	8
<b>CSA</b>											DSE			2	11
<b>DSE</b>												DSE		10	3
<b>APC</b>													PPE	8	5
<b>PPE</b>														12	1

Source: ATD Tanzania (2021)

Table 2 shows the top five dimensions of poverty that make life the most intolerable: (1) poverty-related psychological effects, (2) ill health, (3) discrimination and social exclusion, (4) violence, abuse, and exploitation of women and children, and (5) absence of protection and parental and community care.

Of the five top dimensions that make life most intolerable, ill health was the only traditional dimension; other dimensions such as poverty-related psychological effects, discrimination and social exclusion, violence, abuse, and exploitation of women and children; and absence of protection and parental and community care were hidden dimensions. An important feature of these dimensions is that they directly touch a person's body (physical, mental, and psychological). Therefore, the direct pain and suffering associated with it make life intolerable. The fact that most dimensions were hidden shows the importance of unrecognized dimensions of poverty in people's lives, particularly those in poverty. The highly ranked dimensions are as follows:

**Poverty-Related Psychological Effects:**

People living in extreme poverty experience intense physical, mental, and emotional suffering accompanied by a sense of powerlessness to do anything about it (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). Hardship and suffering include negative thoughts and emotions that never go and can be overwhelming.

Parents suffer, children suffer, and they suffer from each other. These sufferings reinforce one another, making life intolerable. The intensity of suffering can lead to avoiding contact with others for fear of being judged or shamed, which can contribute to social isolation and psychological scars (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022).

**Ill Health:** Poor people are often exposed to diseases, degenerating illnesses, and death. Regular illness leads to bodily suffering.

**Discrimination and social exclusion:** When a person is discriminated against and excluded, she/he does not feel like a normal human being. Usually, the basic needs of people in poverty are never addressed in official development plans, nor are they prioritized in national policies, because people in poverty rarely participate in development plans. They are socially excluded and stigmatized. Their weak participation, lack of voice and money, and individualistic tendencies among community members inhibit them from becoming fully involved in socioeconomic development. This makes them poorer, leading to increased discrimination and social exclusion. Hence, perpetuating poverty and making life intolerable.

**Ranking of dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life**

The third exercise was intended to rank the dimension of poverty that should be addressed first to have the greatest impact on the quality of life of people living in poverty. To do this, the team compared each dimension against each other and followed the same procedure as explained in the two previous exercises. In this exercise, the team members asked, 'Which dimension would bring greater improvement in quality of life, addressing dimension X or dimension Y? If the answer was Y, then addressing dimension Y would have a greater impact on life than addressing dimension X. The findings of this study are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Dimension of Poverty that Should be Addressed First to Bring About the Greatest Improvement in the Quality of Life*

	PGE	IH	IP	EIS	SPP	VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	Total	Rank
<b>PQE</b>	PQE													12	1
<b>IH</b>		IH												10	2
<b>IP</b>			IP											7	4
<b>EIS</b>				EIS										2	9
<b>SPP</b>					SPP									0	10
<b>VAE</b>						VAE								4	7
<b>VHS</b>							VHS							8	3
<b>TCP</b>								TCP						7	4
<b>DIP</b>									DIP					10	2
<b>CSA</b>										CSA				6	5
<b>DSE</b>											DSE			5	6
<b>APC</b>												APC		3	8
<b>PPE</b>													PPE	3	8

Source: ATD Tanzania (2021)

Table 3 shows that the five first-ranked dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life are: (1) poor quality education, (2) ill health and deficiency in implementation of institutional policies, (3) vulnerability to harmful social behavior, (4) income poverty and tradition and culture practices, and (5) constraints on smallholder agriculture livelihood.

Of the five top dimensions that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in quality of life, all traditional or commonly known dimensions were mentioned: poor-quality education ranked first, ill health ranked second, and income poverty ranked fourth. Others were hidden dimensions: deficiency in the implementation of institutional policies was ranked second, vulnerability to harmful social behavior was ranked third, traditional and cultural practices was ranked fourth, and constraint of smallholder's agriculture livelihood was ranked fifth. This shows the importance of unrecognized or hidden dimensions of poverty in improving the quality of life of people, particularly those living in poverty.

**Poor Quality Education:** When this dimension is addressed first, it will support the fight against poverty in other dimensions. For instance, education on drinking clean water, eating healthy foods, and preventing diseases will reduce diseases, and education on witchcraft will reduce witchcraft beliefs and bring about development. In addition, education that provides relevant knowledge and skills increases the likelihood of getting a well-paid job and increasing income.

**Ill Health:** When this dimension will be addressed first, most people would be healthy and engage in productive activities, students would study smoothly and become more knowledgeable, and money saved from treatment of diseases would be spent on productive activities. Consequently, life will improve in many aspects of a poor society.

**Deficiency in Implementing Institutional Policies:** Poor implementation of policies is the main cause of many dimensions of poverty. Therefore, when this dimension is addressed first, there will be a great improvement in other

dimensions and the overall quality of life of people.

**Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior:** When this dimension is addressed first, that is, preventing people from engaging in excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse, gambling, and unnecessary celebrations, a lot of money and time is freed and allocated to productive activities. In addition, people's health would improve by refraining from alcohol consumption and drug abuse.

**Traditional and Cultural Practices:** When harmful traditional and cultural practices (Addae-Korankye, 2014) such as witchcraft beliefs and killing of people with albinism, old women with red eyes, and people with disabilities (Chakamba, 2020) are dealt with first, there would be a lot of income freed for productive activities, and suffering and death will be reduced.

## Lessons Learnt

### The Complexity of Dimensions of Poverty

The findings of the overall ranking of the dimensions of poverty (Tables 1, 2, and 3) show the joint views of peer groups on the importance of these dimensions in their lives. This shows the different effects of poverty on people's lives. The fact that the dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty are not necessarily the ones that make life most intolerable, nor are the ones that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life, shows the complexity or multifaceted nature of poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). This is likely because the dimension of poverty comprises different attributes: the characteristics, causes, and consequences of poverty.

This is contrary to the known belief that the dimension of poverty can be a characteristic, cause, or consequence of poverty. For example, it may not be easy to establish whether Ill Health is a characteristic, cause, or consequence of poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019). In real life, Ill Health can be a characteristic, cause, or consequence of poverty. For instance, for a person who often becomes sick, the frequency of illness can be a characteristic of poverty. Similarly, a person who gets sick often can easily fall into poverty due to the considerable amount of time and money

spent on treatment or taking care of a sick person rather than on development projects. In addition, Ill Health can be a consequence of poverty if a sick person cannot afford to take preventive measures or receive proper treatment when falls sick. Consequently, such sickness may last longer or become permanent.

### **Different Dimensions have Different Impacts on the Lives of the People**

This study reveals that different dimensions have different impacts on people's lives. For instance, the dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty are those that most poor people are familiar with, or often experience in life. On the other hand, the dimensions which make life most intolerable are those that directly hurt the body (physically, mentally, and emotionally) leading to intense suffering and making life intolerable!

With regard to the dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in quality of life, these dimensions had an impact on other dimensions (ATD Tanzania, 2019). Therefore, addressing these dimensions would lessen the effects of other dimensions and bring the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people. It is due to the above that the ATD TNRT thought that if poor education is addressed first, it will lessen the impact of other dimensions and therefore improve the quality of life.

### **The dominance of Academics and Persistence Lack of Trust and Confidence, and Fear**

Since the ranking of the dimensions of poverty came after the process of MoK was completed, it was expected that all peer groups would have learned to work together on equal footing. In contrast, academics still tend to exercise dominance over others and consider themselves more knowledgeable than other peer groups (ATD Tanzania, 2019). During the ranking process, academics dominated the discussion and held forceful arguments over other peer groups, which were not relevant to people living in poverty. For instance, academics use English words that are unknown to people living in poverty. In this way, they were removed from the discussion. Practitioners had similar behaviors. However, whenever that happened, one member would

remind other members of the MoK principles to facilitate effective teamwork (i.e., to enable people in poverty to air their views freely, and academics and practitioners to listen to people living in poverty).

Furthermore, despite extensive training and efforts to empower and solidify the team, build trust and confidence, and eliminate fear among team members, there are still some elements of lack of trust, confidence, and fear within and across peer groups (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). Members of the team were of the view that more time than the 3 years life span was needed to change the thinking and behavior of the peer groups.

### **Differences of Knowledge About Poverty Among the Peer Groups**

There are significant differences in understanding the importance of poverty: a gap in knowledge between people experiencing poverty and those without that experience (Wetengere et al., 2022). While people living in poverty have lived experiences of poverty and therefore know better what poverty is and which dimensions touch their lives more, practitioners and academics are only informed about poverty through indirect means. Over time, and through vivid depictions of poverty by those with direct experience, academics and practitioners in the TNRT started to assign greater weight to knowledge born from lived experience and prioritize it during the collective analysis when differences of opinion occurred (Fricker, 2007). The best way to involve people in poverty was to ask them to give their views first and then bring academics and practitioners on board.

Conversely, when academics were allowed to give their views first, there were tendencies for people living in poverty to say, "I concur with what the professor has said". If that were allowed, it would be the professors' opinion that has been taken, and not of the other peer groups. It was also noted that, in responding to poverty-related issues, the three peer groups had different views. People living in poverty answered based on their lived experience of poverty, practitioners based on what they saw from people living in poverty because they worked with them, and academics based on their research findings and what they learned in school. This example shows why it

is important to rely equally on knowledge from people in poverty to address power imbalances that normally prevent their full participation.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that different dimensions affect people's lives, particularly those living in poverty. While some dimensions mostly shape the experience of poverty, some dimensions make life more intolerable, and some dimensions could bring about the greatest improvement in quality of life when addressed first. Further, although hidden dimensions have been unrecognized in the sense that they have not been considered in developing indicators and in policy discussions and implications, they have a significant impact on the lives of people, particularly those with direct experience of poverty.

In addition, the study concluded that the dimensions that most shape the experience of poverty are not necessarily those that make life more intolerable, nor are the dimensions that bring about the greatest improvement in quality of life when addressed first (CONCERN, 2022). Finally, there was a knowledge difference between people who lived experience of poverty, that is, people living in poverty, and people informed about poverty, that is, academics and practitioners.

### Recommendations

First, the dimensions of poverty that most shape the experience of poverty are not necessarily those that make life more intolerable, nor are the dimensions that bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people when addressed first; poverty needs to be understood and addressed as a multifactor issue. Second, since different dimensions have different impacts on people's lives, and since not all dimensions can be addressed at once due to limited resources, there is a need to prioritize or rank them according to their importance. Third, because there are knowledge differences in poverty between peer groups, there is a need to employ a research approach that will disrupt a patterned cultural relationship that disassociates people living in poverty from defining the nature of poverty and how it affects them.

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