

APPLYING “MERGING OF KNOWLEDGE” TO UNVEIL THE HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY IN MAINLAND TANZANIA

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to apply a qualitative participatory approach termed “*Merging of Knowledge*” to determine the hidden dimensions of poverty. The qualitative approach took on board people with a practical experience of poverty to participate in all stages of the study as co-researchers on an equal footing with academics and practitioners. This qualitative, participatory study was employed across five regions of the Tanzania mainland and employed purposive sampling techniques to recruit 283 respondents across different regions, districts, gender, and age. The knowledge generated from the three peer groups (people in poverty, practitioners, and academics) was merged through analysis, discussion, and reflection within the team at different stages. This study was able to disrupt a patterned cultural relationship that disassociates people in poverty from defining the nature of poverty and participating in decisions about what to do about it. Through this study, thirteen dimensions of poverty were identified: three commonly known dimensions and ten hidden dimensions of poverty. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the *Merging of Knowledge* approach should be used for future research on issues where strong hierarchies of knowledge exist, and where the involvement of all participants on an equal footing at all stages of research from data collection to analysis and dissemination is not well articulated and practiced.

Keywords: Participatory approaches, merging of knowledge, people experiencing poverty, dimensions of poverty, multidimensional poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the oldest and most resistant viruses that bring about devastating diseases in developing countries today (Tazoacha, 2001). Although poverty has been widely researched, it is still one of the major barriers to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2019). One of the reasons why poverty has continued to be challenging is that most researchers on poverty have employed a conventional approach which has positioned academics at the heart of the research, neglecting people in poverty. Research projects of such a nature tend to serve the interests of academic researchers rather than people in poverty (Bray *et al.*, 2020).

Besides, poverty is a multidimensional concept that reflects the multifaceted challenges faced by people living in poverty (ECOSOC, 2017) and deprivations that take place across a broad range of dimensions (ECOSOC, 2017). By multidimensionality, it means that the experience of poverty has many general as well as context-specific dimensions or aspects (World Bank, 2021). That implies, when dealing with poverty, it should be known that it is caused by many factors and that tackling it needs multiple strategies. Some ways in which poverty is context-specific are that the experiences of poverty vary by country (Santos and Alkire, 2011; ECOSOC, 2017), area (rural vs urban) as well as age (young vs old), and gender (men vs. women) specific.

Given the lack of agreement over the nature and content of poverty's multidimensionality and the lack of involvement of people living in poverty in defining it, there is an urgent need to identify the dimensions of poverty through a deeply participatory methodology that enables the genuine co-production of knowledge. Responding to the above challenge, All Together in Dignity (ATD) and researchers from Oxford University conducted a study in six countries namely: Tanzania, Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Since the study was international, an International Coordination Team (ICT) was formed and prepared research tools, provided advice and worked closely with the National Research Teams (NRTs) from each country.

The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the dimensions of poverty using a participatory approach called "Merging of Knowledge", which ensures that people with direct experience of poverty participate in all stages of the study on an equal footing with academics and practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multidimensional poverty

The Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, which established the 17 SDGs, was adopted with some contradictions (Godinot and Walker, 2020). SDG 1 ("End poverty in all its forms everywhere") is multidimensional while target 1.1 ("By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day") is unidimensional (Godinot and Walker, 2020). However, it is officially recognized that among the 17 goals, "eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (United Nations, 2019). Its seven associated targets aim, among others, to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, and reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty (*ibid.*). In the same vein, the World

Bank (2021) has shown a serious commitment to fighting poverty in all its dimensions.

Surprisingly, despite talking about the reduction of poverty in all its dimensions, the terms "poverty in all its dimensions" has never been officially defined (Bray *et al.*, 2020). Still, Target 1.2 and indicator 1.2.2 repeat the phrase 'poverty in all its dimensions' and emphasize 'according to national definition' (United Nations, 2019). That means besides poverty being multidimensional, it is also area or country-specific, therefore, it is the responsibility of a nation to identify its dimensions against which strategies will be drawn and progresses measured in fighting poverty (UNICEF, 2017).

Developing nation-specific dimensions of poverty makes a lot of sense since there is no single universally accepted definition of poverty (ECOSOC, 2017). Rather, the concept of poverty is rooted in different societies' values and obeys the particular logic of individual countries. In this regard, the definitions employed have to be understood, at least in part, concerning particular social, cultural, and historical contexts (Wetengere, 2019). That demands the development of a clear definition of poverty as a basis for meaningful comparison and to enable the concept of multidimensional poverty to be mainstreamed in policy development and measurement (Bray *et al.*, 2020).

As indicated earlier, poverty is not only multidimensional and country-specific (Santos and Alkire, 2011; ECOSOC, 2017), but also area, age, and gender-specific. For instance, in 2018, the World Bank (2021) found that four out of five people below the international poverty line lived in rural areas. This nature of poverty suggests that any attempt aimed at reducing poverty requires more attention to the rural economy (World Bank, 2002). Similarly, the World Bank (2021) found that half of the people in poverty are children, and women represent a majority of people in poverty in most regions and among some age groups. This shows the importance of taking on board area specificity, age, and gender in determining dimensions and developing strategies to reduce poverty.

Measurement of Poverty

While there is broad agreement on the multidimensionality of poverty, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda, there is no consensus on a common understanding of the definition or the dimensions of poverty that should be included in approaches to address multidimensional poverty (ECOSOC, 2017; Bray *et al.*, 2020). Most international organizations have been measuring poverty based on insufficiency in income (Beduk, 2019; ECOSOC, 2017). However, it has been generally agreed that income or other money-based dimensions are necessary and important, yet not sufficient (ECOSOC, 2017).

Since the early 20th century, poverty measurement has primarily used individual or household income for the identification of people in poverty (ECOSOC, 2017; World Bank, 2017). For instance, in the 1990s, the World Bank (2017) defined extremely poor people as those living on 1\$ and less per day, it was increased to 1.25\$ and less per day in 2005 and to 1.90\$ and less per day in 2011. Despite the dominance of income as a measure of poverty, international organizations have noted that poverty was for the 'poor people', more than lack of income (Narayan *et al.*, 2000; World Bank, 2001).

To address the multidimensionality of poverty in poverty measures, the Human Poverty Index (HPI) was developed as the first such measure, later replaced by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2010 (Santos and Alkire, 2011). The MPI is composed of three dimensions made up of ten indicators: education (years of schooling and school attendance), health (nutrition and child mortality), and living standards (cooking fuel, sanitation, water, electricity, floor, and assets) (*ibid.*). While the MPI has been designed for international comparability and thus its dimensions and indicators are fixed across countries (*ibid.*), it should be noted that poverty is context specific. Thus, while nations are encouraged to adopt this methodology, they are also urged to make use of indicators relevant to their

countries' specific situations (Santos and Alkire, 2011).

Despite recognizing the multidimensionality of poverty, most researches on poverty were based on views, interpretation, and analysis of academics neglecting the insights of people living in poverty (Bray *et al.*, 2020). Such approaches for studying and addressing poverty tend to serve the interest of researchers rather than the people in poverty. That implies that there is a high risk that interventions based on those studies may not meet the needs and priorities of people living in poverty (Dotter and Klasen, 2017; Beduk, 2019).

Attempt to Incorporate People with Direct Experience of Poverty

Efforts to address the alienation of people living in poverty from defining poverty have brought participatory approaches to poverty and generated definitions of poverty derived from the insights of those with lived experience of poverty daily, tailored to specific countries' contexts. These include, notably, the World Bank's Voices of the Poor project (Narayan *et al.*, 2000), and fieldwork across six countries to develop the Individual Deprivation Measure (Bissell, 2015; Wisor *et al.*, 2014). While inclusive in their approach, these and related studies did not share analytical decision-making with people in poverty. Thus, they failed to include the perspectives of the poor in defining the dimensions of poverty and conceptualizing it in policy, research and practice.

Based on the above, Wresinski (1980) opined that there was a need to combine the perspectives of people in poverty with those informed by notably researchers and welfare employees who need to respond professionally to the circumstances and needs of people in poverty. According to Wresinski, that is the best way to resolve the conundrum because people in poverty know better what it means to live in poverty. His view was endorsed in 1996 by the UN Commission for Human Rights (Godinot and Walker, 2020). In its Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, this Commission stated that we need to ensure the active, free, informed and meaningful participation of persons living in poverty

at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of decisions and policies affecting them (CHR, 2012).

The underlying proposition is that though knowledge derived from each peer group is equally valid and important, knowledge born from lived experience differs from that arising from either professional experience or academics (Bray *et al.*, 2020). While people experiencing poverty have lived in poverty and expressed what touches their lives most, academics/researchers and welfare employees/practitioners have only been informed about poverty in various ways (Wresinski, 1980). So, the differences in knowledge show differences in experience and interpretation of the surroundings/world.

What Does "Merging of Knowledge" Add to Knowledge on Poverty?

Meaning of Merging of Knowledge

The Merging of Knowledge (MoK) is a dynamic process that creates the 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 (ENGAGE, 2021). MoK was first implemented in 1997 by ATD Fourth World with academics, practitioners, and people living in poverty. Explaining how MoK works, Moraene Roberts, an ATD activist in London, argued to reflect what happens when two streams merge into a river: each stream is mixed with the other to form one river, which can never again be separated, and then both rush forward more powerful than before (ATD Fourth World USA, 2013).

Roberts claimed that if policy formulation would start with people living in poverty, thinking together with policymakers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers, they would produce a much more powerful and effective policy drawn from different sources of knowledge of peer groups (*ibid.*). MoK creates the kind of dialogue that is so often missing in our society by bringing together people of different backgrounds and experiences and facilitating the honest exchange of ideas among

them. The MoK methodology recognizes and seeks to redress prolonged episodes in the past in which people in power have effectively silenced the voices of the people most marginalized by poverty and in which public discourse and policy debate is colored by the perceptions and assumptions of those who observe poverty (Walker, 2014).

Ethical considerations

The MoK process is based on ethical and epistemological principles: every person who has direct experience with poverty has potentially the means to understand and interpret his or her life situation (ATD, Tanzania, 2019). But if this personal life experience cannot feed into the common life experience of a social or professional group, it remains fragile (*ibid.*). It is the sense of belonging to a social or professional group that reinforces and consolidates the knowledge that each person possesses (*ibid.*). MoK ascribes equal status to the knowledge built by each group of individuals regardless of their background or social position. It acknowledges the role of power in the way that knowledge is typically produced by seeking to engage those with the least voice in a peer-group setting and to facilitate their interaction over sufficient periods to build the levels of self-confidence and mutual trust required for open and honest communication.

Identification of the peer groups

The outreach stage was required to identify and recruit people in poverty, academics, and practitioners who will participate in the later stages. People living in poverty were identified by the local village/street leaders who knew people living in poverty in their respective areas. The outreach activities were conducted in collaboration with the ATD Tanzania Team and friends of ATD working in the areas. The identified potential participants were visited by the ATD Tanzania Team either at their homes or their workplaces to verify if they met the project criteria and to explain the objective of the research and the importance of their participation. The project requirements included: minimal possession of assets, means of production, income,

condition of dwellings, occupation status, physical appearance as well as clothing, and education.

During the verification phase, there were a few instances where those selected did not meet the requirements so, were dropped. Those who met the requirements were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their participation in their respective peer focus group meetings. The same outreach process was used to identify social welfare practitioners and academics. These were selected based on their professional roles and a mix of gender.

Empowerment of the ATD TNRT

After the identification and recruitment of the ATD TNRT was completed, the team went through a series of training within and outside the office. The training was meant to empower the team members, particularly those in poverty, as a way to unite and solidify the team, build confidence and trust within and across the peer groups, and remove the fear of self-expression within and across the peer groups. The underlying premise is that without confidence, trust, and fearlessness among members of the team, members would not be sincere to express their experience with poverty. One person living in poverty indicated that he felt shameful to express some of his experiences of living in poverty to other people. It is due to the above that empowerment was vital 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.

Process of merging knowledge

The MoK consisted of a five-step process and started by dividing participants into three peer groups, then brought everyone together to discuss subjects relating to poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019). This process created an environment of mutual respect and trust that allowed a real exchange of knowledge to happen. Step 1, individuals within each peer group met to identify characteristics, causes, and effects of poverty which are commonly known as attributes of poverty that they think were important. During this step, people in poverty met for 2-3 consecutive days, while academics and practitioners met for only half

a day. This was because people in poverty needed more time to reflect and contemplate their life experiences in poverty, whereas academics and practitioners had to memorize what they were informed about poverty. Various techniques such as photo-speak, body mapping, word synonyms, and card-sorting were used to stimulate participation.

Step 2, individuals within each peer group met and shared their thoughts, then compiled a comprehensive list of attributes of poverty, and after thorough discussion within the peer group, the list was organized into clusters of closely related attributes of poverty to form dimensions of poverty. Step 3, representatives of different peer groups within a district met for 2-3 days to merge the dimensions which are closely related to form dimensions for rural and urban areas separately at the district level. Step 4, representatives of peer groups from rural and urban districts met to merge the dimensions which are closely related to form general dimensions of poverty (rural and urban areas together) at the national level. Step 5, the ATD TNRT met and merged the dimensions closely related, to form national dimensions for five regions of Mainland Tanzania.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative participatory design termed merging of knowledge to meet its objectives. Further, phenomenological design was employed to study lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people living in poverty understood poverty. Also, delphi technique was employed to answering research questions through the identification of a consensus view across poverty experts (peer groups).

Study Area

This research was conducted in Tanzania Mainland, which was divided into five zones, namely: Western, Northern, Coastal (Eastern), Southern, and Central zones. The selection of the zones was done to ensure that the whole of Tanzania Mainland is represented. In total, the research managed to reach five regions (one from each zone); ten districts (two from each

region), five rural and five urban; and 20 villages/streets (Table 1).

Three criteria guided the selection of the study areas. The first criterion was based on the distribution of the Tanzanian Mainland regions according to the Human Development Index (HDI) as presented in the Tanzania Human Development Report (THDR) of 2014 (UNDP, 2015). Though Tanzania is

characterized by low levels of human development in general, Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro are slightly better than the others. By contrast, Dodoma, Njombe, and Kigoma had the least human development (ibid.). The second was to select areas where ATD Fourth World is working with and knows people in poverty; and lastly, the accessibility of the proposed study areas.

Table 1: Selected study areas per zone, region, district, and village/street

Zone	Region	District	Village/Street
Coastal (Eastern)	Dar es Salaam	Kinondoni: urban	Kunduchi, Tandale, Kambangwa and Boko
		Ilala: urban	Kipawa and Ferry market
Central	Dodoma	Kondoa: rural	Keikei and Sambwa
		Bahi: rural	Igubule and Nkhome
Northern	Kilimanjaro	Moshi: urban	Mwereni
		Hai: rural	Mkarama
Southern	Njombe	Njombe: urban	Idundilanga and Kambarage
		Ludewa: rural	Mangalanyene and Luvuyo
Western	Kigoma	Kibondo: rural	Kibondo and Rusohoko
		Kigoma Ujiji: urban	Rubuga and Kibirizi
Total	5	10	20

Source: ATD Tanzania National Research Team - TNRT (2019)

Study Population

The study population comprised two main categories namely, people living in poverty and people not living in poverty, both from the urban and rural settings as follows:

(i). People living in poverty:

- Men and women of working age from 18 to 60 in rural and urban sites;
- Children 9 to 16 years of age, including those with special needs (primary and secondary school children) in rural and urban sites;
- Older men and women, 60 years or older in rural and urban sites; and
- Other groups of people living in poverty like albinos and street children.

(ii). People not living in poverty:

- Practitioners (health and social workers, teachers, extension officers); and
- Academics (high learning lecturers and researchers).

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling techniques in selecting representative regions, districts, villages, streets, and the study population. Maximum variation sampling was used to select zones, regions, districts and villages to capture the widest range of views possible. Also, expert sampling was used to select people with a high level of knowledge about poverty who can provide valuable insights into the root of the problem.

Sample Size

The ATD Tanzania National Research Team (TNRT) was able to meet and discuss with a total of 45 peer focus groups on multiple occasions. In total, 283 people were reached in both urban and rural clusters together (Table 2).

Table 2: Total number of participants and type of peer groups involved in the study

Categories of Peer Group	Number of Peer Groups	Sex		Total Number of Participants
		M	F	
People Experiencing Poverty				
(i). Working age from 18 to 60	18 (9 of women)	44	55	99
(ii). Elderly above 60 years old	7 (3 of women)	26	21	47
(iii). Young people between 16 & 18	1 mixed group	4	4	8
(iv). Children between 9 and 16	8 mixed group	32	30	62
Sub-Total	34	106	110	216
People Not Living in Poverty				
(i). Social Welfare Practitioners	7 mixed group	23	19	42
(ii). Academics from higher learning institutions	4 mixed group	18	7	25
Sub-Total	11	41	26	67
Grand Total	45	147	136	283

Source: ATD, Tanzania National Research Team - TNRT (2019)

Data Collecting Instruments

Data were collected through peer focus-group discussions. A research guide and tools were developed to enable researchers to facilitate the peer-group discussions and also to help the participants generate knowledge about various issues of poverty, which lead to determining dimensions of poverty. Data collection and analysis were done by the ATD TNRT in collaboration with the peer groups or their representatives.

Other methods used to complement MoK for data collection were: literature and documents on related topics; participants' observations of the conditions of people living in poverty; interviews of people living in poverty to get their perception of the multidimensional nature of poverty; narratives or quotes from individual life stories on people's experience with poverty; and recordings and transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Since the data were collected from different sources using different methods and tools, the ATD TNRT first cross-checked their reliability and validity to identify overlaps, contradictions, and inconsistencies. This was done by cross-referencing

with relevant peer groups, referring to secondary data, and reviewing notes and transcriptions made by team members. Data analysis involved writing notes and checking the recurring themes or issues from different peer groups as well as secondary data. In addition, the ATD TNRT shared their field experiences to note down common issues to complement the descriptive data collected from individuals living in poverty.

Knowledge generated from the peer groups was 'merged' through analysis, discussion, and reflection by the ATD TNRT; with emergent conclusions critically reviewed by the initial peer groups or their representatives. The ATD TNRT used the MoK approach to analyze the outcomes from the peer groups. The members of the ATD TNRT with direct experience of poverty made a synthesis from the reports made by the peer groups with people living in poverty, the practitioners did the same from reports made by the peer groups of practitioners, and likewise the academics. These three syntheses were the starting point for the deliberations toward MoK, resulting in the joint production of one single list of dimensions of poverty and their characteristics.

A MoK event lasting 2 - 3 days was organized with members of each of the peer groups to discuss the list produced by the ATD TNRT. The team then put forward its analysis taking into account the new data

produced during this event. The result of this process was not only a list of dimensions but also new, enriched insights about the reality of poverty from different peer groups in each of the studied areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dimensions of Poverty

Initially, a total of sixty-seven dimensions of poverty were identified from five selected regions in Mainland Tanzania. The dimensions were reviewed and merged by the ATD TNRT step by step. The merging process finally produced thirteen dimensions of poverty: three traditional or commonly known and ten hidden dimensions.

Traditional or Commonly Known Dimensions of Poverty

These dimensions are commonly known but they still have an impact on the lives of people, especially people in poverty (ATD Tanzania 2019). These dimensions are covered under the Alkire-Foster Multidimensional Poverty Index and have been used by the United Nations Development Program since 2010 (Godinot and Walker, 2020). Such a multidimensional measure “offers an essential complement to income poverty indices because it measures and compares deprivations directly”. However, the dimensions do not yet fully reflect the experiences and views of people in poverty (*ibid.*). The commonly known and popularly called traditional dimensions (ATD Tanzania 2019) are:

(i). Poor Quality of Education

Definition: Refers to the type of education that does not provide skills and knowledge to help individuals become creative and independent in the struggle against poverty.

Description: Education is crucial to development particularly when it comes to fighting against poverty (NORAD, 2014) and it is vital, especially for people in poverty (Addae-Korankye, 2014; Kapur, 2019). Besides increasing the likelihood of having a well-paid job and therefore reducing the chances of suffering from income deprivation,

education affects many aspects of life, considered fundamental attributes of individual welfare (Omoniyi, 2013). For instance, literacy and numeric skills are used in many daily activities, like doing business, and illiterate people suffer from social exclusion and face serious difficulties in accessing information (*ibid.*). Poor people are also said to lack access to relevant skills and knowledge, education, and personal development that could improve their livelihoods (Addae-Korankye, 2014). Poor quality of education can lead to a low level of life aspiration, lack of confidence, and ignorance of the law.

People in poverty who cannot afford quality education are affected in terms of low levels of awareness on important issues like birth planning, knowledge about improved farming, and management of resources. They suffer from a lack of entrepreneurial skills, an inability to reach individual potential, and high levels of illiteracy.

(ii). Ill Health

Definition: This dimension refers to poor physical or mental conditions that give rise to health problems.

Description: Most people in poverty are often subjected to several hazardous conditions which cause them to become weak and sick. Ill health among people living in poverty can be caused by many factors, such as lack of access to health facilities (Addae-Korankye, 2014) because of poor infrastructure, insufficient medicines in local health centers, cost of treatment, lack of proper medication, poor diet, hard and precarious work, poor living environment and other hardships, accidents, and aging, among others. Persistence illness reduces the ability of people, particularly those living in poverty to participate in food production and income-generating activities; diminishes their ability to acquire the necessities of life like education, health, water, food, and housing; frequent illness leads to physical disability and even death. When all these happen, the likelihood of falling deeper or continuing to live in poverty is high (*ibid.*).

When a household is affected by any disease, the little resources they have are spent on treating the sick (Addae-Korankye, 2014). In a worst-case scenario where the breadwinner dies, those who are left behind have no resources to support themselves, thus leading to poor lifestyles (*ibid.*). A person with ill health spends a lion's share of their time and money on health rather than on development projects (Wetengere, 2012).

(iii). Income Poverty

Definition: This refers to having insufficient income to meet basic needs and social obligations, to maintain harmony within the family, or to enjoy good living conditions.

Description: Most people living in poverty are poor due to a lack of sufficient money to pay for their necessities of life. Without sufficient money, it may be challenging to get the necessities of life and people may be compelled into debt to cover their basic needs and become dependent on others at the risk of exploitation and greater economic insecurity. When adults' incomes are so low, their children are forced to work to support their families putting them in physical danger and at risk of abuse. In supporting the above Mora (2017) indicated that cash transfer has not only helped poor families climb out of poverty but has also improved social mobility. Low-income people face greater barriers to accessing medical care, they are less likely to have health insurance, receive new drugs and technologies (Chokshi and Khullar, 2018).

The Hidden Dimensions of Poverty

These dimensions have been mentioned by people living in poverty as important in their experiences of poverty, but they have been largely overlooked. They are well-known by sociologists, ethnologists, and even economists but they are considered hidden because they have gone unrecognized in the sense that they have not been considered seriously by developing indicators such as \$1.9 a day or HPI or MPI. For that reason, they have not been considered in policy discussions. So, how these dimensions

interact to shape the experience of poverty has not been properly understood.

(i). Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter

Definition: Refers to poor places where people in poverty live and poor shelters they possess;

Description: People in poverty are forced to live in poor environments. Some of the conditions include poor settlements and congested areas without sanitation facilities and flooded areas; poor roofing and wall structure materials, too small and poor quality house; and dirty surroundings, with dirty flowing or stagnant water, scattered garbage, and polluted areas. These places suffer combinations of isolation; lack of infrastructure; lack of services like safe drinking water, health and sanitation facilities, and schools for their children; pollution; environmental degradation; and vulnerability to disasters like drought, floods, and landslides. As people in poverty rely more directly on the environment than the rich for their survival, they are mostly on the receiving end of environmental problems (Bharadwaj, 2016). For children, the home represents the primary source of emotional support, material security, and secures social relationships. Unfortunately, their accommodation is often of poor quality, with shared amenities for washing, eating, bathing, and using the toilet, and lack privacy and space for playing.

(ii). Solidarity of People Living in Poverty

Definition: This dimension is about coping strategies employed by people living in poverty to help one another materially or morally in times of need.

Description: Often, people living in poverty tend to share the little they have with others, possibly reducing their scarce resources and keeping them in poverty. However, this habit creates courage and hopes of survival and the feeling of a shared struggle and solidarity, helping to prevent despair or suicidal thoughts. Examples include sharing food, lending one another clothes or household utensils, planning

a social gathering together, and doing collective work such as small-group farming or wedding ceremonies.

(iii). Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation of Women and Children

Definition: This dimension describes the way women and children are treated in society, particularly when the situation is linked to poverty.

Description: In situations of poverty, women and children are the most vulnerable groups. They suffer from social maltreatment characterized by violations of human rights, like oppressing widows, not allowing women to make decisions, forcing children into labour, forcing early marriages on daughters, and inflicting corporal punishment on children at home and school. Children are used at home as a labour force and punished at school when arriving late or/and dirty. The situation can be exacerbated by harmful traditions, customs, and cultures; wrong beliefs; and local governments' weak enforcement of laws for the protection of women and children.

When women are denied their right to property during divorce proceedings (property acquired when the couple were together), they have no freedom of choice, are not able to contribute ideas, and have very limited decision-making power. They are forced into poverty, and this has become a major cause of poverty for many women. They also suffer from a lack of equity and equality in the community, for example, customary land ownership, inheritance, and education opportunities. Women are prevented by their husbands from undertaking paid work and also are constrained by a patriarchal and male-dominated system. This happens to all women whether rich or poor, but women living in poverty are most severely affected as it undermines their efforts to get out of poverty and makes them fall into extreme poverty.

(iv). Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behaviours

Definition: This dimension explains how people living in poverty are likely to be more affected and suffer from bad conduct at an individual, family, or community level.

Description: People living in poverty may fail to conform to accepted societal norms or moral standards and adopt harmful social behaviour or practices. These may be both a contributory factor to poverty and the negative consequences of poverty, for people who endure it. People in poverty who are addicted to excessive drinking of alcohol, drug abuse, gambling, and unnecessary celebrations put themselves at a high risk of falling into extreme poverty because they abuse the few resources they have that might help them move out of poverty. Though this dimension is not specific to people living in poverty, people in poverty are also susceptible to harmful behaviour such as law-breaking, unwillingness to apply themselves, and abandoning their families.

(v). Traditional and Cultural Practices

Définitions: Traditional and cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations.

Description: Different social groups in Tanzania have specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to specific groups of socially vulnerable people (Addae-Korankye, (2014) for example, women, people with disabilities, and girls. These harmful traditional practices, which in their effects contribute to poverty, include early marriages, witchcraft beliefs, early pregnancy, dowry obligations, and a preference for sons and what that implies for the status of girls. Under this dimension of poverty, the participants were particularly concerned with witchcraft beliefs. Witchcraft is a word denoting spiritual evil in the African context. Beliefs in witchcraft are widespread and are used to explain the unequal distribution of good and bad fortune (Chakamba, 2020).

In most parts of Tanzania, harmful beliefs underlie the use of witchcraft, whereby people across society believe that they can become rich or successful at the expense of other people's well-being. The large sums of money spent on witchcraft can have severe repercussions on household budgets among people living in poverty. Witchcraft beliefs have particularly negative consequences for socially vulnerable groups in society. People with albinism, old women with red eyes, people with disabilities, and young people have been subjected to suffering and death linked to these harmful beliefs. Kidnappings and disappearances of children have increasingly been associated with witchcraft beliefs. Other examples include killings of albinos; and young people in Njombe and Simiyu regions harbouring the ill-advised fallacy that by using the private organs of deceased people, they could bring fortune to their business (*ibid.*).

(vi). Deficiency in Implementing Institutional Policies

Definition: Deficiency in implementing institutional policies to meet people's needs.

Description: Some institutions mandated to listen and tackle poverty and improve people's lives have frequently failed to do so. Sometimes this means living with the consequences of government failure to enforce existing policy and law, of unfair distribution of resources and services, and persistent injustice, oppression, and repression of people living in poverty. It also means having no access to justice and no voice in decisions made by the government or within civil society. Often, there is a lack of integrity, transparency, and accountability for some people entrusted to work with people in poverty, particularly in development programs.

Poverty can only be fought in the presence of strong institutions, and equitable distribution of resources (Addae-Korankye, 2014). This requires a non-corrupt government and programs well designed to fight poverty. However, programs are not fully implemented because funds allocated end up in the

hands of corrupt individuals, and due to poor governance, those in authority have failed to apprehend the corrupt (*ibid.*).

(vii). Constraints to Smallholders' Agricultural Livelihoods

Definitions: Refers to many obstacles facing smallholder farmers in rural areas that prevent them from benefiting from agricultural ventures

Description: Smallholder farmers face many challenges such as inadequate extension staff; high cost of agricultural inputs; lack of reliable markets; lack of price information; over-dependence on seasonal and unreliable rain; effects of climate change on farming; unreliable water for irrigation, and exploitation by middlemen. Often, middlemen exploit farmers by cheating on scaling and offering prices lower than the product deserves, due to farmers' weaker bargaining position and lack of market information. This result concurs with Wetengere (2021), which revealed that middlemen traders often buy crops from rural areas at a low price before harvest when farmers are short of cash. In such a situation, farmers have no option other than to sell their crops at giveaway prices.

These constraints lead to low productivity and poor quality of agricultural products. Whatever little is produced; smallholders farmers face more barriers like bans, requirement for permits, and poor roads to access reliable marketplaces. Consequently, agriculture is not seen by people in poverty as a profitable venture because it has failed to take them out of poverty. Besides farming for many years, they still suffer from income poverty and experience frequent food shortages. Most farmers use their rudimentary ways of doing things and some use their land to grow crops that are just enough for subsistence survival and nothing goes to the market for sale (Addae-Korankye, 2014).

(viii). Discrimination and Social Exclusion

Definition: Refers to how people living in poverty are denied opportunities to participate in different

economic, social, political, and cultural activities in the community.

Description: Poverty is a highly stigmatized social position, and the experience of poverty in an affluent society can be particularly isolating and socially damaging. Social difference and "otherness" - being perceived as somehow different from other people in society as a result of poverty - have a profound impact on people's lives. People in poverty have basic needs that are not addressed in development plans nor prioritized in national policies because they are not allowed to participate in development plans. As a result, their social exclusion and stigma are reinforced. Lack of participation, voice, and money among people in poverty, and individualistic tendencies among members of the community, inhibit and prevent those living in poverty from being able to become fully involved in socio-economic development. Without the active participation of people in poverty, no inclusive development can be achieved, and hence poverty persists. The decline of traditional social cohesion and erosion of traditional social security systems are also major factors that have led to increased discrimination and social exclusion of people in poverty and hence perpetuate poverty.

(ix). Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care

Definition: Explains how children from families living in poverty are not protected and cared for by parents and the community at large.

Description: Though protection and parental care for children is a cross-cutting issue, that is, it affects both the rich and the poor; this dimension is primarily focusing on people living in poverty. Extreme poverty makes parents restless. They spend most of their time, often all day long, searching for means to feed their families because they lack a reliable source of income. This has negative effects on children as they lack time with their parents who are out working every day, leaving the children alone, without food, and unprotected. Children

living in poverty resort to being street children looking for food and begging, and engaging in harmful practices like prostitution, drug abuse, and theft. It is rare to find children from well-off families begging on the streets. The same happens to foster children who lack parental care because of several factors, including being orphans. Foster institutions might not provide the same care and protection that children get from their parents. These children, lacking love and parental care, become affected psychologically and this affects their growth and childhood.

Members of the community do not consider that caring for neighbourhood children is their responsibility. This is because local community social security systems have deteriorated, and the existing legal protection laws for children are not reinforced at the local level and by members of the community. This has resulted in many dangerous situations for children such as kidnapping, killings, and disappearances of children due to a weak sense of community responsibility and inadequate social security systems.

(x). Poverty-Related Psychological Effects

Definition: Poverty-related psychological effects are direct consequences of extreme poverty caused by hardship and suffering.

Description: People in extreme poverty experience intense physical, mental, and emotional suffering accompanied by a sense of powerlessness to do anything about it (ATD Tanzania, 2019). The hardships and suffering include negative thoughts and emotions that never go and can be overwhelming: lack of peace of mind; constant fear and worry of what could happen; emotional stress and anxiety caused by the difficulty of coping with uncertainty; shame related to living conditions and the need to ask for help; unbearable pain in losing relatives and being separated from children; and despair and discouragement when no end to poverty is in sight. These can provoke levels of frustration, anger, depression, and hopelessness that lead to self-neglect or even suicide.

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

Challenges Facing Merging of Knowledge as a Research Methodology

However important MoK is to enable people in poverty to be truly co-researchers, with others, to identify dimensions of poverty, it faces the following challenges:

Persistence lack of trust and confidence, and fear

People in poverty have a life-long experience of stigmatization, shame, and despise that cannot be overturned in a few years. Despite extensive training done to empower the team as a way to solidify it, build trust and confidence and remove fear among the team, still there were some elements of lack of trust, confidence, and fear that occurred within and across the peer groups. People in poverty did not always trust and even have confidence in themselves, and the situation worsened when they came into contact with learned people. On the other hand, academics and practitioners felt that they were the source of knowledge. So, the main concern here is how to facilitate working together as a team, and in particular, to enable people in poverty to air their views freely, and the academics and practitioners to listen and see people in poverty as co-researchers.

Some important dimensions vanish in the final analysis

During the early stages of identifying dimensions, there were some dimensions that were identified in the rural and urban areas and were considered important but vanished during the later stages of merging the dimensions. For instance, the dimension “water shortage” was identified by women in rural areas and “absence of peace” identified by small business persons in urban areas all did not appear in

the final analysis. Unfortunately, these dimensions were mentioned by people in poverty. When this happened, the TNRT agreed to ensure that these dimensions feature as attributes of the agreed dimensions within rural or urban contexts. Also, it was agreed that during dissemination the vanished dimensions should be mentioned in specific areas where they were identified.

Differences in the understanding of poverty

There are significant differences in understanding aspects of poverty - a gap between people in poverty and people without that experience. Whereas people in poverty have experienced poverty and therefore know better what poverty is and which dimensions touches their life most; practitioners only work with people living in poverty, and academics are only informed about poverty through various means. So, their knowledge about poverty reflects differences in life experiences, perceptions, and priorities for addressing poverty. Having that in mind, there is a need to prioritize knowledge from people with lived experience in poverty, particularly when differences occur.

Merging of knowledge is wrongly seen as money and time consuming

MoK as a research approach is often seen as money and time-consuming. In reality, however, MoK devotes time and money to empowering and equipping people living in poverty to become active participants during and after research. At the same time, it teaches academics and practitioners how to work with people living in poverty and allow them to voice their concern and all together create relevant knowledge. In that way, MoK addresses the issue of power imbalances among the three groups through training and empowerment by building trust, confidence, and fearlessness sustainably.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most research on poverty today, even the so-called “participatory research”, has mainly remained “extractive”, considering people living in poverty as

mere informants whose knowledge about poverty is analyzed by poverty experts. This patterned social relationship disassociates people in poverty from defining the nature of poverty and action to be taken against it. Such kind of research may require less time and money and often tend to empower the so-called poverty experts, who then advise policy-makers but disempowers people in poverty by disassociating them from analyzing the information. As a result, the knowledge created may not be relevant to people in poverty and therefore fail to eradicate poverty. This is how traditional participatory research has been perpetuating rather than combating poverty!

On the contrary, the application of MoK in Tanzania has shown a real shift in the participant's status and a distribution of power among participants who are often overlooked in other participatory research. By actively involving people in poverty, MoK was able to address power imbalances among peer groups through training and empowering them, and by so doing building trust, confidence, and fearlessness in a sustainable manner. In such a way, all participants were actively engaged on an equal footing to identify hidden social-economic barriers to poverty eradication that could not be unearthed without the involvement of the people in poverty. This study, therefore, recommends that the MoK approach should be used for future research on topics where strong hierarchies of knowledge exist and where the inclusion of participants at all stages of research from data collection to analysis may not be well articulated.

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