

## Economic Factors Determining Poverty Levels among Women in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

Soy, Mary J<sup>1,2</sup>, Onyango, James<sup>2</sup> & Zurah, Mohammed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rift Valley Technical Training Institute

<sup>2</sup>University of Eldoret, Kenya

### Abstract

*Women roles within the society have remarkable impacts on poverty alleviation though they are susceptible to gender-based inequalities, uncompensated care giving and domestic duties. The specific objectives for the study were i) To Examine the gender wage gap among women ii) To determine source of income (Income generating activities among women iii) Examine the household expenditure patterns and iv) Assess economic status of women that makes them prone to poverty. Classical theory of poverty was used with explanatory research design. Structured questionnaires were administered to women aged 18 –60 to sample size of 397 with response rate of 95.72%. Qualitative and Quantitative data was analyzed and non-numerical data was captures in narration and tables. The study hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level and found a negative and insignificant relationship between poverty and education, while positive and significant effect associated with household size, employment, Income size housing types, water sources. The study also revealed that poverty level is significantly associated with source income, income level, mode of saving, credit/convenient loan ( $\beta = 11.783$ ,  $p$  value = 0.019). Poverty level is also statistically significant associated with adequate expenditure amount which includes expenditure spent on education, food and beverages, daily needs, water. For the economic status of women, there was statistically significant association between poverty and economic empowerment. This includes decision making in household, progressing in life, saving loan for emergency and current knowledge, skill, resource economically In conclusion, Langas region encountered challenges that determines poverty.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Household, Women

### Introduction

Poverty is a complex field of study without well-known causal and solution to the problem, women contribute significantly to mitigating this issue in a positive manner. As of 2011, approximately 767 million individuals were residing below the poverty line of US\$1.90 per person per day (adjusted for purchasing power parity). This accounts for nearly 11 out of every 100 individuals worldwide, equivalent to 10.7 percent of the global population, as indicated in the (World Bank report of 2013). Based on the (World Bank, 2018) data, it is revealed that in impoverished households, there were 104 women for every 100 men. Therefore, poverty could be done with and eradicated by human effort.

There is gender inequality according to World Development Report, (2012) shows that Women were treated differently from their male counterpart in areas such as education, job, or political responsibilities, with Cultural norms and values contributing to even gendered division of assets

which favors men, (Atozou, et al., 2017; Duflo, 2012). According to UNICEF (2020), inadequate and overcrowded housing, the risk of forced eviction due to land disputes, failure to pay rent or rates, insufficient safety measures, limited availability of clean water, inadequate waste management, limited access to healthcare services, lack of emergency assistance and law enforcement, and challenges in accessing high-quality government schools are some of primary factors contributing to urban poverty (Ryan, 2012; Otieno, 2020; Falola et al., 2020).

The broad objective of this study was therefore to analyze the economic factors that impact poverty levels in households focusing on women in the Langas areas of Uasin Gishu County. The specific objectives were:

- i) To examine the gender wage gap among women
- ii) To determine source of income (Income generating activities among women
- iii) To examine the household expenditure patterns
- iv) To Assess economic status of women that makes them prone to poverty.

The Null hypothesis stated that there was no economic factor has impact poverty level among women in Langas Estate, Uasin-Gishu county.

## **Literature Review**

Poverty is a complex notion and capacity of a household to financially support a specific range of commodities at a given point in time is not easy. Poverty can emerge from a deficiency in entitlements that include various fundamental rights, for example - access to healthcare, education, and the all-other human rights (Batu, 2017; Chamhuri et al., 2012; Davis & Sanchez-Martinez, 2014)

Lack of opportunities for economic engagement, limited involvement in significant decision-making processes, vulnerability to economic and other shocks such as illness, food crises, recessions, and inflation are some of the ways world bank identifies the complexities associated with poverty (World bank, 2013). World Bank (2013) further identifies the socio-demographic factors - age, gender, race and ethnicity, education level, marital status and household composition, geographical location, religion and belief system, family size and fertility, health and mortality, disability, and accessibility of services.

Household Income levels is measured using poverty line below which an individual is classified as poor. Other factors that affect income level include income inequalities, wage gap, occupational segregation, inadequate financial resources to meet their basic needs, unpaid care work of child care, eldercare, household chores and Lack of financial independence (Terjesen & Elam, 2012; Mouhammad, 2018; Gupta, 2021; Duflo 2012, Tripathi & Ahuja, 2022). Lack of access to education and skill development hinders women earnings potentials, healthcare, and reproductive costs strains household budget especially of those in low-income earnings and families headed by women (Brewer & O’Dea, 2012). Social safety nets and welfare programs may not address specific needs of women especially those of marginalized or from the minority groups making inability to get targeted support led to higher poverty rates.

Brewer and O’Dea (2012) further posit that household expenditure consist of multifaceted approach which includes allocation of resources which plays a role in managing daily expenses and allocation of resources for various need including food, education, healthcare, and other essentials. If the allocation of healthcare is insufficient or limited, women struggle to meet basic needs of their families leading to increased poverty, hardship and increase vulnerability to poverty.

Other aspects are social participation and networking which are brought out by women missing the opportunity for social activities, networking, learning activities, skill development and access to job opportunities.

Analyzing the relationship between economic factors and poverty level experienced by women-headed households in the Langas areas is paramount. In household income distribution, self-help groups (SHGs) assist women in internal loaning one another with regular repayments, assist in attaining self-sufficiency when they engage in diverse economic activities and help in strengthening their capabilities and enhancing their participation in the decisions making in their household (Kumar, N. 2021). Households should be conversant with the budget for their expenditure and practice the budget constraint instead of living above their means in order to be able to meet their expenditure and have savings (Maniriho, et al., 2021).

## **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Langas Estate, Uasin-Gishu, it is located in Midwest of Kenya's Rift Valley. Uasin Gishu urban population was 345,559 persons in 2019 with a poverty rate of 38.2 % in the year 2016. The population in this study area are a total of 62,998 women (KNBS, 2019) who live in the peri-urban area with varied demographic data such as age, marital status, social, and economic class, education level. A total sample size of 397 was used for the study. The instruments for data collection were a structured questionnaires which was used to elicit information on socio-demographic, household income and household expenditure of individual women. Both qualitative and quantitative data was used to arrive at the conclusion of the study.

Data obtained were analyzed with descriptive statistics. The inferential statistics involves the use of Pearson's Chi Square test and logistic regression model to test for association between categorical variables. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of women in Langas where various sources of income as well as their household expenditure were analyzed. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis on whether economic factors had impact on the poverty level of women in the study area and the result showed that household size, employment status and water sources were significant predictor of poverty level ( $p=0.021$ ,  $p=0.048$ ,  $p=0.049$  respectively).

## **Results**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents. Majority of the household revealed members in the family were 6 and above at 227 (59.7%). On education, it shows that majority of the respondents at 123 (32.4%) had completed High School and a technical/vocational program. On employment status, most respondents were traders at 151 (39.7%). On income size, it is indicated that most 262 (68.9%) of the women in Langas area earn less than Kshs 10,000 and less per month. Majority of the respondent live in a permanent house at 232 (61.1%) with their main source of drinking water was tap water from ELDOWAS at 332 (87.4%) and lastly the use Kerosene/paraffin at 52.9% for fuel.

### **Association between Socio-demographic Factors and Poverty Level**

The study findings in Table 1 reveals that there was no statistically significant association between poverty level and education level  $\chi^2(4, N = 380) = 5.99, p = .200$  as well as lighting  $\chi^2(1, N = 380) = .663, p = 0.415$

However, the study findings revealed that poverty level is statistically significant associated with house size  $\chi^2 (2, N = 380) = 6.898, p = 0.032$ , employment status  $\chi^2 (3, N = 380) = 8.571, p = .036$ , income size  $\chi^2 (6, N = 380) = 16.627, p = 0.011$ , housing type  $\chi^2 (1, N = 380) = 4.219, p = 0.040$ , and water source  $\chi^2 (1, N = 380) = 4.219, p = 0.040$ .

**Table 1*****Association between Socio-demographic Factors and Poverty Level***

			POVERTY LEVEL		$\chi^2$	df	P- value				
			Poor	Non-poor							
Household Size	1-2	f	43	20	6.898 <sup>a</sup>	2	.032				
		%	11.3%	5.3%							
	3-5	f	63	27							
		%	16.6%	7.1%							
	6 and above	f	127	100							
		%	33.4%	26.3%							
Education Level	Didn't Finish High School	%	15	14	5.993 <sup>a</sup>	4	.200				
		f	3.9%	3.7%							
	Didn't Finish High School, completed primary	%	66	31							
		f	17.4%	8.2%							
	High School	%	57	43							
		f	15.0%	11.3%							
	Completed High School vocational program	%	81	55							
		f	21.3%	14.5%							
	Degree/College graduate	%	14	4							
		f	3.7%	1.1%							
	Employment Status	Working full time for pay	%	57				29	8.571 <sup>a</sup>	3	.036
			f	15.0%				7.6%			
Working part time for pay		%	33	38							
		f	8.7%	10.0%							
Trader		%	89	53							
		f	23.4%	13.9%							
Not currently employed		%	54	27							
		f	14.2%	7.1%							
Income Size	<10000	%	159	94	16.627 <sup>a</sup>	6	.011				
		f	41.8%	24.7%							
	10000-20000	%	49	23							
		f	12.9%	6.1%							
	20000-30000	%	14	10							
		f	3.7%	2.6%							
	30000-40000	%	6	13							
		f	1.6%	3.4%							
	40000-50000	%	1	6							
		f	.3%	1.6%							
	50000-60000	%	2	1							
		f	.5%	.3%							
	60000 and above	%	2	0							
		f	.5%	0.0%							
Housing	Permanent	%	129	97	4.219 <sup>a</sup>	1	.040				
		f	33.9%	25.5%							
	Semi-permanent (iron sheets/wooden)	%	104	50							
		f	27.4%	13.2%							
Lighting	Electricity	%	32	16	.663 <sup>a</sup>	1	.415				
		f	8.4%	4.2%							
	Paraffin, kerosene	%	201	131							
		f	52.9%	34.5%							
Water Source	Private connection to water (borehole)	%	79	50	8.841 <sup>a</sup>	3	.031				
		f	20.8%	13.2%							
	Tap water (ELDOWAS)	%	128	67							
		f	33.7%	17.6%							
	Bore-hole	%	17	14							
		f	4.5%	3.7%							
	Protected well/spring	%	9	16							
		f	2.4%	4.2%							

**Logistic Regression of Socio-Demographic Factors Associated to Poverty Level**

Logistic regression of socio-economic factors associated to poverty level was run and the results are presented in Table below.

**Table 2**

*Logistic Regression of Socio-demographic Factors Associated to Poverty Level Variables in the Equation*

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
<b>Household Size</b>	.338	.147	5.297	1	.021	1.403	1.051	1.871
<b>Employment Status</b>	-.061	.102	.362	1	.048	1.129	.771	1.148
<b>Step 1a Income Size</b>	.166	.097	2.925	1	.087	1.180	.976	1.427
<b>Housing</b>	-.426	.224	3.631	1	.057	.653	.421	1.012
<b>Water Source</b>	.259	.131	3.874	1	.049	1.295	1.001	1.676
<b>Constant</b>	-1.299	.616	4.449	1	.035	.273		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Household Size, Employment Status, Income Size, Housing, Water Source.

Multivariate logistic regression indicated that household size, employment status and water source were significant predictor of poverty level (p=0.021, p=0.048, p=0.049 respectively). Households' size and water source increased the odds of being poor among women within the Langas area (Exp (B):95% CI; 1.403(1.051-1.871) and 1.295 (1.001-1.676) respectively).

**Table 3**

*Household's Poverty among Women Within the Langas Area*

Social Economic and Demographic Factors		Yes	Total
Adult or child malnourished	F	137	380
	%	36.1	100
Disrupted or curtailed schooling (a minimum of years 1-8)	F	263	380
	%	69.2	100
The absence of any household member who has completed 6 years of schooling	F	276	380
	%	72.6	100
Child mortality within the household within the last 5 years	F	144	380
	%	37.9	100
Access to safe drinking water	F	293	380
	%	77.1	100
Access to basic sanitation services	F	152	380
	%	40.0	100
Access to clean cooking fuel	F	243	380
	%	63.9	100
Possession of basic modern assets (radio, TV, telephone, computer, bike, motorbike, etc.)	F	254	380
	%	66.8	100

Access to reliable electricity	F	157	380
	%	41.3	100
Permanent housing	F	285	380
	%	75.0	100

The study findings reveal that majority of women in Langas area accepted that their schooling was disrupted or curtailed (a minimum of years 1-8) in the households. The finding further reveals that majority of the women accepted that there was no presence of any household member who had completed 6 years of schooling in their household. Further, the majority accepted that there was no child mortality within the household within the last 5 years. Also, majority of the women in Langas area accepted that not only did they have access to safe drinking water but that they had better access to clean cooking fuel. On the contrary majority of the women stated that they had no better access to basic sanitation services and that they could not access better and reliable electricity. In addition, most owned basic modern assets (radio, TV, telephone, computer, bike, motorbike, etc.) and they lived in Permanent housing.

## Conclusion

Most of the studies in the literatures dealt mostly with the role of women and their contribution to economic development. This study analysed economic factors that influences poverty among women in households. The study found that women in Langas spent less than Ksh.5,000 in a month on both daily expenses and periodic expenses hence indicating that the income does not match with the expenditure thus income is not sufficient which is equivalent to their wage gap. Majority of women do not involve themselves in economic empowerment activities and therefore they a lot of time for doing additional activities that do not improve their economic situation.

The study found that salary was the major source of income to women in Langas area paid when they trade and they have a challenge on social security benefits. The main investment platform for women in the area is Chamas (self-help groups), where most women keep their savings and also take credit/loans from the chamas. However, majority of women who do not take credit is because they lacked awareness on credit facilities or they have been advised otherwise by their households' partners.

Based on the findings, several papers have cited the importance of gender focused programs which include training, gender equality, and provision of micro finance to women and extension of technological information that could assist women to be empowered. (Rui et al., 2017). Gender differences have not been fully accounted for in the traditional poverty analysis, design and monitoring system which dramatically reduced the effectiveness of poverty reduction according to Rui et al., (2017,) and therefore it is necessary to analyze and address poverty issues from the perspective of gender.

## Recommendations

This paper recommends that women should be given equal participation in all sectors in the government. High sensitization on the strength of a woman especially when empowered educationally, financially, emotionally, and socially are necessary. In this study, the need for more practical ways of uplifting women to gain technical skills, hands on activities, how to run and manage business, importance of time management, need for women to have their own income, investments, have better paying jobs without having to consider their gender is recommended regardless of their marital status, stages in life, financial knowledge, personal



freedom even as they raise their families to the desired level, minimize gender based violence, develop right attitude towards life, being confident that they can amount to be people who can be dependent upon in the society and country as a whole as they believe in their abilities and purpose for living.

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