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Employment Status, Gender and Lived Poverty Index (LPI) in Africa

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Abstract

The study focused on employment status and gender as predictors of the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) in Africa. Data were collected through an evaluation survey design. Study participants comprise 2,500 individuals over 18 years of age, spanning both genders equally. Respondents were selected from five subregions in Africa. According to the study, employment status significantly predicted LPI, but gender did not contribute to the prediction. More empirical research is needed to confirm the predictive powers of employment status and gender on LPI. Additional studies are also required to determine other important predictors of LPI.

Keywords: Africa, Employment Status, Evaluative Survey, Gender, Lived Poverty Index

Introduction

Africa has experienced sustained economic growth for nearly two decades (Adika, (2020). The continent's per capita income is rising steadily, and regional growth is outpacing the global average. Yet, there are worrying signs that rapid economic growth has not translated into comparable reductions in poverty (Wade, 2020). In Africa, concerns are growing that the continent's economies don't create enough jobs, especially for women (ACET, 2013). Compared to the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, the regional unemployment rate remains relatively stable since 2000 (Ncube, Anyanwu, & Hausken, 2014). Only middle-income countries such as Algeria, Botswana, and South Africa have unemployment rates over 15 percent. In the low-income economies of the region, unemployment is extremely low, falling between 1 and 5 percent for countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda (Page & Shimeles, 2015).

The reason for this is not that Africa is doing exceptionally well in creating jobs. Rather, it is due to an expanding informal sector that absorbs African workers unable to find wage jobs. Low- and lower-middle-income countries have low levels of official unemployment, but very high levels of informal employment. Self-employment and informal employment are the largest employers of labour in both rural and urban areas, so there is no job security in many countries (Williams & Lansky,2013). Except for Botswana, Nigeria, and South Africa, less than 20% of sub-Saharan African (SSA) labour force entrants find wage employment (AfDB, 2012).

According to Kabeer (2021), three out of four jobs in SSA can be classified as "vulnerable" since workers often work on their own accounts or as unpaid family workers. The high proportion of working poor in the overall labor force indicates poor quality employment. The International labour organization (ILO) reported that 81.5 percent of workers in SSA were classified as working poor, compared to 39.1 percent worldwide (ILO, 2011). Afrobarometer Round 7 survey, conducted across 34 African countries between 2016 and late 2018, demonstrates that employment patterns in Africa have halted improvement on living standards and the "Lived Poverty Index" (LPI) is once again on the rise, but not equally across both genders (Mattes, 2020).

Even though gender inequality persists throughout the world, these disadvantages are particularly severe in developing countries (Heise, et al, 2019). Although the direction of causality is unclear, countries with above-average gender inequality, as a group, have higher LPI than countries with more gender equality. And this holds true despite taking into account per capita GDP (Diaz-Sarachaga, Jato-Espino, & Castro-Fresno, 2018). This suggests that gender inequality must be

considered in extreme LPI contexts since the two frequently co-occur. Though there is no simple way to understand the complicated bi-directional relationship between gender inequality and LPI, we can identify some of the critical links. A few of these links include the burden of unpaid household work; the inability of women to acquire and keep assets; gender-based violence; and child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM).), among others. The previous description implies that the distribution of LPI between men and women in Africa is unequal.

Despite previous studies on the relationship between employment status and LPI as well as gender and LPI, there is much to be learned about the dynamics between poverty and gender. In addition, no study has empirically examined the effects of employment status and gender simultaneously on LPI. Furthermore, most of the previous studies evaluating Africa as a study area had a small sample size and inadequate coverage; as a result, they were not accurate representations of the five regions of Africa. Consequently, Sonnentag and Zijlstra (2006) contends that insufficient sample representation leads to reduced power and margin error, resulting in inaccurate results. These factors drive the current study, which focuses on employment status and gender as predictors of Lived Poverty Indexes in Africa.

Objective

To determine the relationship of employment status and gender on Lived Poverty Index (LPI).

Research Question

Is there a statistically significant relationship between gender and employment status on Lived Poverty Index (LPI)?

Hypotheses

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between gender and employment status on Lived Poverty Index (LPI).

Ha: There is a statistically significant relationship between gender and employment status on Lived Poverty Index (LPI).

Method

A survey evaluation design was used in this study. The study population consists of 2,500 individuals aged 18 and older from both sexes equally. Respondents were selected from five subregions of Africa: Northern Africa, Eastern Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and Western Africa. Africa is the second-largest and second-most populous continent in the world, after Asia, with 1.3 billion people and as of 2018, it accounts for about 16% of the world's population. According to Swanson, Harry, Africa's population possesses the youngest median age of all continents; 19.7 years of age as of 2012.

In order to collect primary data for this study, a hand-delivered questionnaire titled "Employment Status, Gender and Economic Status" was developed to assess respondents' employment status, gender and economic status. The questionnaire is designed to enable respondents to provide relevant data needed for the study. In this study, secondary data was obtained from the Afrobarometer dataset with a mean age of 37.01 years (Afrobarometer, 2020). In this case, the statistical test is a multiple linear regression analysis since there are two independent variables and a dependent variable, making three variables. Employer Status and Gender are the categorical variables related to the Independent Variables (IVs). As a continuous variable, Lived Poverty Index is the Dependent Variable (DV). The assumptions for regression are that the two predictors are outcome variables and should be quantitative. Both variables have a normal distribution, and the relationship between them is linear. In this study, there is no extreme bivariate outliers, no interaction between variables, the variance score is homogeneous, and the sample size large. A SPSS statistical tool was used to analyze the data, and the results were presented.

Results

Table 1 showing ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	306.412	2	153.206	175.191	.000[b]
	Residual	11094.860	12687	.875		
	Total	11401.272	12689			

a. Dependent Variable: Lived Poverty Index (average index of 5 poverty items)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q101. Gender of respondent, Employment Status

Table 1 showed ANOVA findings with a statistically significant multiple regression F (2, 12687) = 175.191, p<0.000. The overall regression was statistically significant with an effect size of 0.027, which is also the statistical power.

Table 2 showing Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.164[a]	.027	.027	.9352

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q101. Gender of respondent, Employment Status

b. Dependent Variable: Lived Poverty Index (average index of 5 poverty items)

Table 2 showed that R Square and Adjusted R Square are the same 0.027, which meant that the two predictor variables of Gender and Employment status predicted liver poverty index of 0.027 (2.7%). Thus, the predictability of both variables being responsible for lived poverty index is small, less than 3 percent of the predictors of lived poverty. Therefore, many other factors and variables are involved in determining lived poverty of the African population.

Table 3 showing Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.414	.028		50.837	.000	1.359	1.468
	Employment Status	-.333	.018	-.165	-18.718	.000	-.367	-.298
	Q101. Gender of respondent	-.040	.017	-.021	-2.362	.018	-.072	-.007

a. Dependent Variable: Lived Poverty Index (average index of 5 poverty items)

Table 3 showed the coefficients to be statistically significant for both Employment Status 0.000 and Gender 0.018. The Unstandardized coefficient for employment status beta is 0.333 with CI 90.367 to 0.298) and gender is 0.040 with CI (0.072 to 0.007). That meant that for every increase of employment status by 1 unit, the lived poverty index is increased by 0.333 while controlling for gender. Also, for every increase in gender by 1 unit, the lived poverty increases by 0.040 while controlling for employment status.

Figure 1 showing Histogram

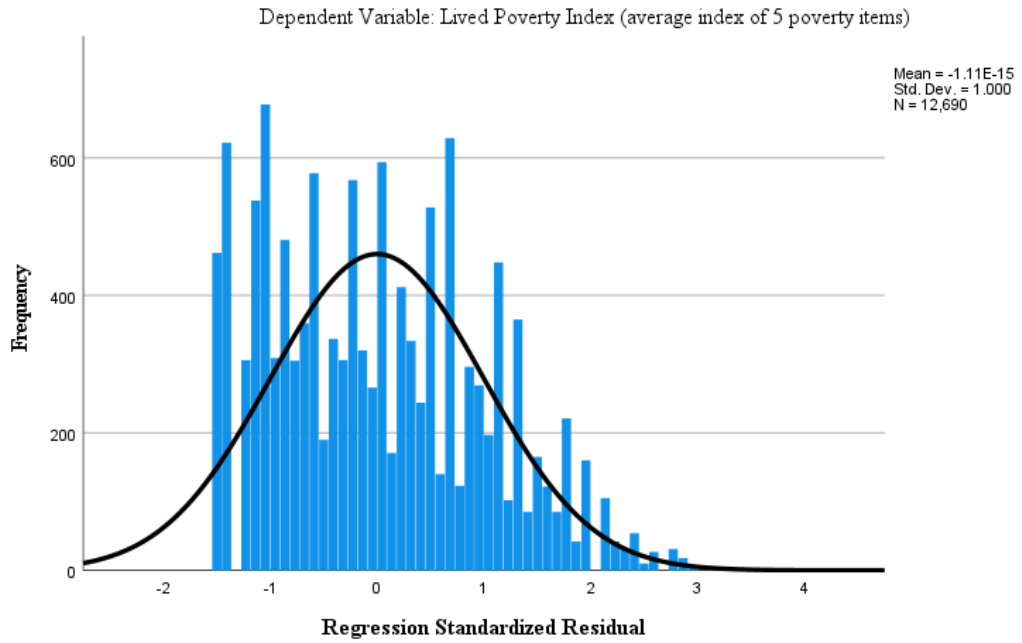

Figure 1 showed a histogram with normal distribution confirming that the assumption of linearity was met. The sample size of over 12,000 used confirmed that it's a quantitative study and that assumption is also met. There are no extreme outliers in the figure. Therefore, I could safely conclude that my research is reliable and valid. Thus, the findings answered my research question that there is a statistically significant relationship between employment status and gender on Lived poverty index.

Discussion and Social Change Implications

In this study, employment status and gender were examined as predictors of Lived Poverty Index in Africa. This study added to the empirical position of gender and employment status as factors associated with LPI in Africa by demonstrating their predictive power. Results showed that the higher the occupation, the lower the LPI, in agreement with previous studies (Mwabu & Thorbecke, 2004; Nkurunziza, 2006; Odhiambo, 2011; Page & Shimeles, 2015; Snyman, 2012). According to a study, an increase in employment status was associated with a significant reduction in teachers LPI (Sargent & Hannum, 2005). In both the LPI and the human poverty index (HDI) of special education teachers, substantial declines were observed. In some of the most underdeveloped countries in Africa, where the LPI is very high, the decrease in unemployment status is indicative of severe unemployment conditions. In contrast to previous studies which reported that women have higher LPI in Africa (Bankole & Eboiyehi, 2003; Budlender, 2005; Kehler, 2001; Posel & Rogan, 2009), the present study found that gender does not determine LPI.

As a result, providing jobs at the individual level will increase their purchasing power, self-esteem, and ability to care for themselves and their families. Consequently, productivity and poverty will be reduced, and many of the people with multiple sources of income could be employers, thereby enhancing and improving society. Furthermore, the government can cut taxes for companies both nationally and internationally and make doing business easier; in exchange, these companies will hire more employees. The government can also offer low-interest loans for people who qualify to encourage self-reliance and to serve as an incentive for their families, communities, and nation at large.

A limitation of the present study is that it did not examine the Afro-Asian countries that are part of Africa by delineation of borders. The inclusion of such regions in future studies is suggested to provide a

complete representation of Africa. A questionnaire that assessed respondents' employment status and LPI has also not been widely validated. Therefore, through a cross-cultural validation procedure, further research is needed to determine the instrument's factor structure and internal consistency.

Conclusion

This study examined employment status and gender as predictors of the Lived Poverty Index in Africa. The study found that employment status predicted LPI while gender was not a significant predictor of LPI. More empirical studies are needed to confirm the predictive powers of employment status and gender on LPI. There is also need for further research to determine other significant predictors of LPI. An additional analytical study will be needed to determine if the predictor variables moderate the outcome variable.

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