



## The Impact of Poverty on Human Health and Well-being: A Qualitative Exploratory Study

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### ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a global challenge affecting multiple dimensions of human life. Health and well-being play a pivotal role in sustaining economies, politics and life. This study examines the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of humanity and assesses its effects on the economy. It identifies the underlying drivers of poverty and how to address them. A qualitative exploratory framework from a theological perspective was employed. Data were collected from 32 participants aged 18 – 67 through semi-structured interviews, and participants were purposively selected. Using thematic data analysis approach three main themes emerged. The findings indicate a strong correlation between poverty, economic growth, well-being and human health. Poverty affects livelihoods and has significant social and emotional effects including loneliness, discrimination, hypertension, cardio-vascular disorders and substance abuse. Furthermore, poverty has a bidirectional relationship with economic development and migration, reflecting both positive and negative influences. The study underscores the need to strengthen social protection policies and consider shifting paradigms of poverty that support and constrain contemporary policy. Further research is necessary to ascertain the drivers of poverty and improve eradication strategies. Multi-sectorial collaboration involving the state, NGOs, and religious organizations is recommended.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Well-Being, Health, Economic development, Poverty alleviation.

### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a persistent global challenge that threatens the well-being of human beings and societies. It affects the social, political, health, economic, spiritual dimensions of life, well-being of individuals, and contributes significantly to global mortality rates (Siddique et al., 2022; Julia et al., 2025). Its impact on health extends beyond physical illnesses, influencing emotional well-being, financial stability, and access to essential services. The poor and vulnerable groups often struggle to afford healthcare, which further increases their health risks. Women, children, and marginalized groups are disproportionately affected (Evans & De France, 2022). Growing up in impoverished environments can influence behavioral patterns and psychological development in adulthood. Human well-being often assessed in subjective indicators such as happiness, is shaped by access to resources, social environments and material possessions (Toshcov, 2022; Yang et al., 2025). Subjective well-being relates to people's perceptions and their evaluations of their own lives (Zhan et al., 2022). Poverty can be defined as the lack of essential means of survival including food, shelter, access to healthcare, and clothing (Neaime & Gaysset, 2018; Zhu et al., 2022). It is driven by multifaceted factors encompassing unemployment, inequality, discrimination, lack of education, climate change, lack of access to entrepreneurship finance, politics, and economic vitality (Xin et al., 2022; Singh & Singh, 2025; Boaheng et al., 2024; Marchi et al., 2022; IPCC, 2022). Consequently, poverty not only affects people's livelihoods, but also hinders economic development (Yang et al., 2025). Poverty further influences education, housing, religious participation, access to water and energy (Jin et al. 2020). These interrelations highlight the complex dynamics between poverty, health and the well-being of humanity. They also necessitate integrated and

multidisciplinary approaches to combat poverty. For example, chronic diseases have significant consequences on income, health and well-being of humanity underpinning deprivation cycles (Mandleni et al., 2018).

Although poverty is not the sole determinant of poor health outcomes, existing research demonstrates a strong correlation between low socioeconomic status and adverse physical and mental health conditions. These include depression, dementia, hypertension, and mental disorders (Siddique et al., 2022). Similarly, poverty leads to physical weakness, social inferiority, discrimination, powerlessness, vulnerability and humiliation (Singh & Singh, 2025). Poverty has been associated with malnutrition, lack of shelter, lack of education, and unemployment (Khurshid, 2023). Older adults often experience loneliness due to limited formal employment opportunities and social networks which hinders their social interactions. This results to physical and mental health challenges including depression, cardiovascular disorder, increased substance abuse, and suicide attempts ((Tang, 2020; Singh & Singh, 2025). These traits are not only common among adults, but also visible among the youth (Evans & De France, 2022). Poverty and unemployment also reduce agricultural productivity particularly in rural communities. People living in rural settings mostly rely on agricultural production. Due to poverty and unemployment, their capability to produce food has declined (FAO, 2024). This is further exacerbated by climate change causing heavy storms, drought and uncertainties for agricultural productivity (IPCC, 2022). Similarly, Siddique et al. (2022) reported a strong correlation between poverty and low education levels. The poor often struggle to complete secondary schooling or obtain higher education due to lack of funds. This limits their ability to attain decent employment opportunities. The importance of education in promoting the well-being of humanity can never be over emphasized. Education opens up opportunities for employment and improves human productivity (Klimczuk et al., 2024; Xin et al., 2022).

Although numerous studies examined the impact of poverty on the health and well-being, most of these studies rely heavily on statistical analysis and rarely incorporate theological perspectives. This study addresses that gap by examining participants' lived experiences through a descriptive exploratory framework. It also integrates a theological framework into the descriptive framework to gain broader insights into how poverty affects human well-being acknowledging that humans are not only social but also spiritual beings as reflected in the creationist theology (Genesis 1: 26-28). The aim of this study is to examine the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of humanity and its effect on economic development. It investigates underlying drivers of poverty and identifies strategies to address them. A theological framing is essential in complementing social science's reflections by considering how poverty and vulnerability relates to humans' inner convictions about life (Kgatlé, 2017; Khumalo, 2025). The theological framework in this exploratory study is justified as it provides a richer understanding of the impact of poverty to the well-being and human health; along other frameworks (Panggarra & Budiman, 2025; Mahlalela & Khumalo, 2025). This study is guided by two research questions:

- a) What are the effects of poverty on the health and well-being of humanity?
- b) How is poverty affecting economic development?

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by combining qualitative insights with theological reflections and highlights key socio-emotional experiences often under-explored in qualitative research. The association between poverty, well-being, and health is complex and well documented across numerous studies. Studies have shown that poverty is the main contributor to health issues and ultimately affects the well-being of human beings (Siddique et al., 2022; Zhao & Wu, 2022; Evans & De France, 2022). Health issues affect households' income and also increase its expenditure mainly due to procuring medication and other necessities (Jasso et al., 2024). Additionally, poverty affects social relationships and engagements. Often times the poor do not feel the need to socialize with others potentially because of their high stress levels and unhappiness. This leads to poor social networks and low sources of support which further perpetuates their frustrations and loneliness (Zhao & Wu, 2022). According to Iles et al. (2019) poverty affects human decision making and behavior due a number of factors such as financial stress, anxiety and lack of adequate sleep. The poor tend to make short term decisions which have an impact on their long term livelihoods, based on poverty propelled desperations (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017).

Since poverty is not only a socioeconomic issue but also a moral and ethical concern, this study

integrates a theological interpretive lens. From a theological lens a brief understanding of human origins or creation is necessary. Theological framings, suggest that human beings are an important part of creation. According to the creationist theory God created human beings and entrusted them to be stewards of the environment (Genesis 2:15). For example Genesis 1:26-28 emphasizes human's stewardship role, which implies access to resources necessary for sustainability. Similarly, the Genesis narrative suggests that God commanded human beings to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). Some scholars posit that the command or permission whereby God instructed humanity to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth validates the important attributes of humanity (Iwamony, 2024; Panggarra & Budiman, 2025; Genesis 1:28). In entrusting humans to be guardians, He gave them the right to benefit from the environment in various ways such as getting food, have access to water, and acquire medication from plants (Purwanto & Kristiawan, 2025; Addai & Boaheng, 2025). Biblical narratives suggest that God willed that people should not suffer or lack and should be in good health (John 10:10; Psalm 34:9-10; 3 John 1:2). Subsequently, a theological framework on social justice, compassion and stewardship offer ethical and moral foundations for addressing socioeconomic issues including poverty. This framework is grounded in the belief that human beings were created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity (Sele & Wanjiku, 2024).

The command to be fruitful and multiply is one that can be construed to indicate not lacking, substantiating other biblical narratives (3 John 1:2; John 10:10). Some scholars argue that this multiplication incited by scriptural text is solely aligned to multiplication in number. However, scholars like Panggarra & Budiman (2025) propose that this multiplication is multi-faceted. Consequently, it can mean both to multiply in number and figuratively in material possessions. While there are variations in viewpoints, theological narratives oppose poverty (Galatians 2:10; Sele & Wanjiku, 2024). While the term poverty is not explicitly stated in biblical annals, the concept is entrenched in several scriptural texts which make reference to the poor and the meek (Luke 4:18; Isa. 11:4; Deuteronomy 15: 11; Matt. 5:5; Galatians 2:10). Some scholars support the foundational biblical context of poverty (Addai & Boaheng, 2025; Kpalam, 2025; Panggarra & Budiman, 2025). In theological framings, poverty can be understood as spiritual or materialistic. Spiritual poverty relates to lacking in spiritual nourishment and detached from the desire for God. In contrast material poverty is associated with worldly possessions oblivious to the need for God (Addai & Boaheng, 2025). In secular frameworks, poverty can be categorized into absolute poverty, moderate poverty, and relative poverty. Absolute poverty relates to inability of households to meet essential survival needs. It is associated with extreme hunger and limited access to healthcare, lack of safe drinking water, unable to afford clothing, unaffordability to attain decent education, lack of shelter and sanitation facilities (Kgatle, 2017). On the hand, moderate poverty implies that the basic needs are met to some extent, but not adequate for decent livelihoods. Relative poverty is associated with household income levels below certain prescribed parameters of national income (Balasubramanian et al, 2022). While poverty levels vary, in every level the health and well-being of individuals are affected to some extent.

The relationship between poverty, economic development and migration is equally important and complex. Economic development is important in addressing abject poverty. Economic growth creates employment opportunities, and avails revenue for the development of schools and health care facilities both in urban and low income communities. Similarly, economic development creates incentives that enable the poor to access these facilities such as social grants, cash transfers, free education, agricultural inputs, food donations, and other social protection provisions (Mandleni et al, 2018; Sele & Wanjiku, 2024; Zhu et al., 2022). Additionally, economic growth helps in strengthening food security and minimizes inequality. To a large extent, economic growth is associated with an increase in employment remunerations and increases the minimum wage. An increase in the minimum wage correlates with a decline in poverty (Klimczuk et al., 2022). However, some scholars reported a negative association between economic development and poverty (Xin et al., 2022; Addai & Boaheng, 2024). Studies have shown a correlation between an increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and decline in poverty (Nguyen et al. 2020; Zhu et al., 2022). Findings by the World Bank (2019) suggest that vulnerable households are less likely to be disadvantage simultaneous. They also indicate that people from low-income communities are not inherently vulnerable.

Studies have shown that migration is equally important for economic development portraying migration as bidirectional. It is bidirectional in the sense that it has positive and negative

influences on economic growth, operating in different channels such as migration to escape poverty, migration that exacerbates poverty, and poverty that prevents migration (Lenhardt, 2023). Migration can serve as an escape from poverty and can be exacerbated by it. It can increase poverty if people are forced to migrate by adverse conditions such as climate, shortage of economic opportunities, conflicts, or political upheavals. Similarly, it can be prevented by lack of resources such as funds and access to technology (IOM, 2022). If forced, those affected may experience worsened poverty in their host countries. While migration can contribute to improved economic prospects for individuals and host countries, it can also lead to exploitation, vulnerability, discrimination, conflicts, and labour shortages in countries of origin (Marchi et al., 2022). It can also restrict equitable resource distribution and intensify inequality (Widaryoko et al., 2025; Săseanu et al. 2024). Some scholars raised concerns about this brain drain, suggesting that while the host countries benefit the country of origins experience labor shortages (Lenhardt, 2023; IOM, 2022).

Poverty reduction or perhaps eradication is essential in order to ensure the well-being of humanity and improve their health conditions. It is also important in promoting long term economic stability and is influenced by policies and politics (Addai & Boaheng, 2025). The United Nations' sustainable goals prioritize poverty alleviation together with other goals (Zhu et al., 2022; Iles et al., 2019). To ensure effective poverty eradication, targeted policies that address the drivers of poverty and promote fair resource allocation are required. From a theological framework poverty alleviation is an ethical and moral obligation that contributes to human sustainability and well-being (Săseanu et al. 2024; Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 25:35-40 proverbs 19:17). To address the problem of poverty, states should continue to implement social protection initiatives. The enhancement of social protection policies should be integrated harnessing a multi-faceted approach which includes other social partners such as NGOs and religious organizations.

This descriptive exploratory study examined the impact of poverty on human health and well-being. The qualitative exploratory framework integrated with a theological lens, provides an in-depth contextualized perspective in understanding how poverty affects people's lives (Putra et al., 2025). It allows for a deeper understanding of contextual and unstructured non-numeric data and involves having conversations with participants to establish perceptions and lived lives in a natural setting (Permatasari et al., 2024). Data were collected from 32 participants who were between 18 and 67 in age range. According to Ahmed (2025), a small number of participants is justified in qualitative research based on its ability to ascertain the why and how poverty impacts human behavior through exploration of perceptions (Ahmed, 2025). Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to purposively selected participants. Data was analyzed thematically; manual coding was used to facilitate intimacy with the data. This allowed for closer engagement with emerging patterns and enhanced conceptual sensitivity. Themes emerged and were validated through checking with participants and cross-referencing with a broad range of scholarly literature. Participation was voluntary; therefore people who were not willing to participate were excluded. All participants signed informed consent forms and their identities were anonymized for ethical reasons.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussions of this study. After the thematic data analysis, three themes emerged and they are: a) Perceptions of poverty. b) Poverty, economic development and migration. c) Effects of poverty on human health and the well-being. The findings of this study are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Key findings of the study**

Item	Findings
<b>Economic and social factors escalating poverty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of resources and unemployment</li> <li>○ Low education levels</li> <li>○ Vulnerability (people living with disability, sickness, handicapped, marginalised groups such as women and children).</li> <li>○ Inequality and discrimination.</li> <li>○ Effects of climate change on agricultural</li> </ul>

	productivity.
	○ Entrepreneurship challenges (lack of capital).
<b>Impact on health</b>	○ Health deterioration and increased mortality
	○ Malnutrition
	○ Increase substance abuse
	○ Mental and physical health issues (includes depression, loneliness, high blood pressure, dementia, and cardio-vascular disorder.
	○ Poor self-care and sleep disorder
<b>Social and emotional effects</b>	○ Isolation
	○ Loss of dignity
	○ Loneliness
	○ Physical weakness
	○ Social inferiority
	○ Powerlessness
	○ Discrimination
	○ Vulnerability
	○ Humiliation
<b>Implications for economies and migration</b>	○ Labour migration
	○ Brain drain
	○ Increase in crime rate
	○ Urban congestion
	○ Challenge on food security and agricultural productivity
	○ There is a need for integrated social protection.
	○ A need for spiritual nourishment.
	○ There is a need for further research on how to deal with poverty.

### Perceptions of poverty

Participants stated that poverty is a major challenge in their society exacerbated by unemployment and lack of access to resources. Most participants emphasized that even if poverty does not directly affect an individual, it indirectly effects extend families members who rely on support. They based this finding on the insinuation that one way or another, there would be that unemployed individual in the extended family. Consequently, employed individuals have to support the unemployed relative. Poverty was found to be widespread particularly in the rural communities, validating Siddique et al. (2022)'s disposition. These communities were portrayed to mostly rely on agricultural production for income and food. With the increase in climate change, agriculture has been negatively affected partly because of the uncertainty in rain and droughts. While families still try to venture into agriculture, it does not guarantee sufficient produce (FAO, 2024; IPCC, 2022). Similarly, participants revealed that poverty is escalated by inequalities. Women and people living with disabilities are unable to secure certain employment opportunities. Female participants voiced concerns about this discrimination suggesting that there should be equal opportunities for all without gender or age discrimination. This finding aligns with Singh & Singh (2025) who posit that poverty leads to different levels of discrimination. Age discrimination was also noted, with older adults stating they were often overlooked despite their experience. Older participants further stated that some companies tend to recruit young people based on the assumption that they are still active and energetic. One participant validated this by saying;

*“Some Companies no longer hire us old individual because they assume we are lazy or no longer active.*

*But that is not always true. Most adults respect employment and they would probably perform better than the youth. Some of the youth don't respect the opportunities they get. Instead they spend a lot of time on social media, interacting with their peers, wasting a lot of valuable time which they could be using to learn. The other advantage of the elderly is their experience in their different fields. They can be helpful in teaching the youth the job."* [Participant 6]

This finding suggests that discrimination based on age and gender contributes to unemployment. This finding aligns with Singh & Singh who reported that discrimination and inequality contribute to unemployment. They also result in powerlessness, vulnerability and humiliation (Singh & Singh, 2025). Participants also attributed poverty to the lack of proper education. Education was viewed as essential for securing employment. This finding aligns with Xin et al. (2022) who state that education promotes entrepreneurship skills and helps in eradicating poverty. Participants revealed that those with proper academic qualifications have better chances of getting employed. Even getting a job as a laborer in fields such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction and mining, a minimum qualification would be completion of higher secondary qualification. Participants reported that poverty prevents many from completing secondary school or accessing higher education (Valle et al., 2022). Scholarship opportunities were described as limited and targeting high achievers..

Entrepreneurship opportunities were depicted as available. However, entrepreneurship was also seen as requiring capital money and reserves for when the business does not thrive (Klimczuk et al., 2024). Access to markets was also seen as challenged for most participants. Some participants expressed reliance on religious faith for coping with poverty, citing scriptural text that promises divine provision (Philippians 4:13; Luke 1:13; Hebrews 11:1). They further suggested that God provides for their needs (Philippians 4:19). Some mentioned that they have been living in a state of poverty for prolonged periods of time, yet they are still alive. One male participant said;

*"My family is very poor and no one is employed. We often get food from planting a backyard garden, but during the winter season, we don't plant because of the cold and scarcity of water. In the midst of our poverty, we find ourselves having something to eat. I can only say that this provision is from the divine. I honestly think we have been able to survive this long through the grace of God"* [Participant 21]

This finding suggests that there is a kind of sustenance that is not dependent on materialism, but it is a spiritual kind that springs from the divine realms. Other participants also alluded to this kind of grace. Drawing from their responses, it became evident that there is spiritual sustenance beyond public social protection or employment. Biblical narratives also validate the notion of spiritual sustenance and provision. For example, biblical annals state that God supplies the needs of His people according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). Some other participants also stated that life itself is a gift from God, emphasizing that poverty should not define humanity.

Poverty was also associated with isolation, loneliness, and loss of dignity. Youth participants also agreed on these sentiments. Seemingly, societies don't respect individuals who are unemployed and this leads to frustrations and stress for most unemployed individuals. This finding is supported by Tang & Chou (2024) who also reported a correlation between poverty and the mentioned factors. According to their study, poverty is a strong contributor to loneliness more especially, for adults and it has a significant impact on their wellbeing. It is associated with physical and mental health while also contributing to increase in high blood pressure, diabetics, depressive symptoms, and suicide attempts. Dahlberg et al. (2022) also agreed with Tang & Chou validating that these symptoms are a consequence of poverty. Emphasizing the effects of

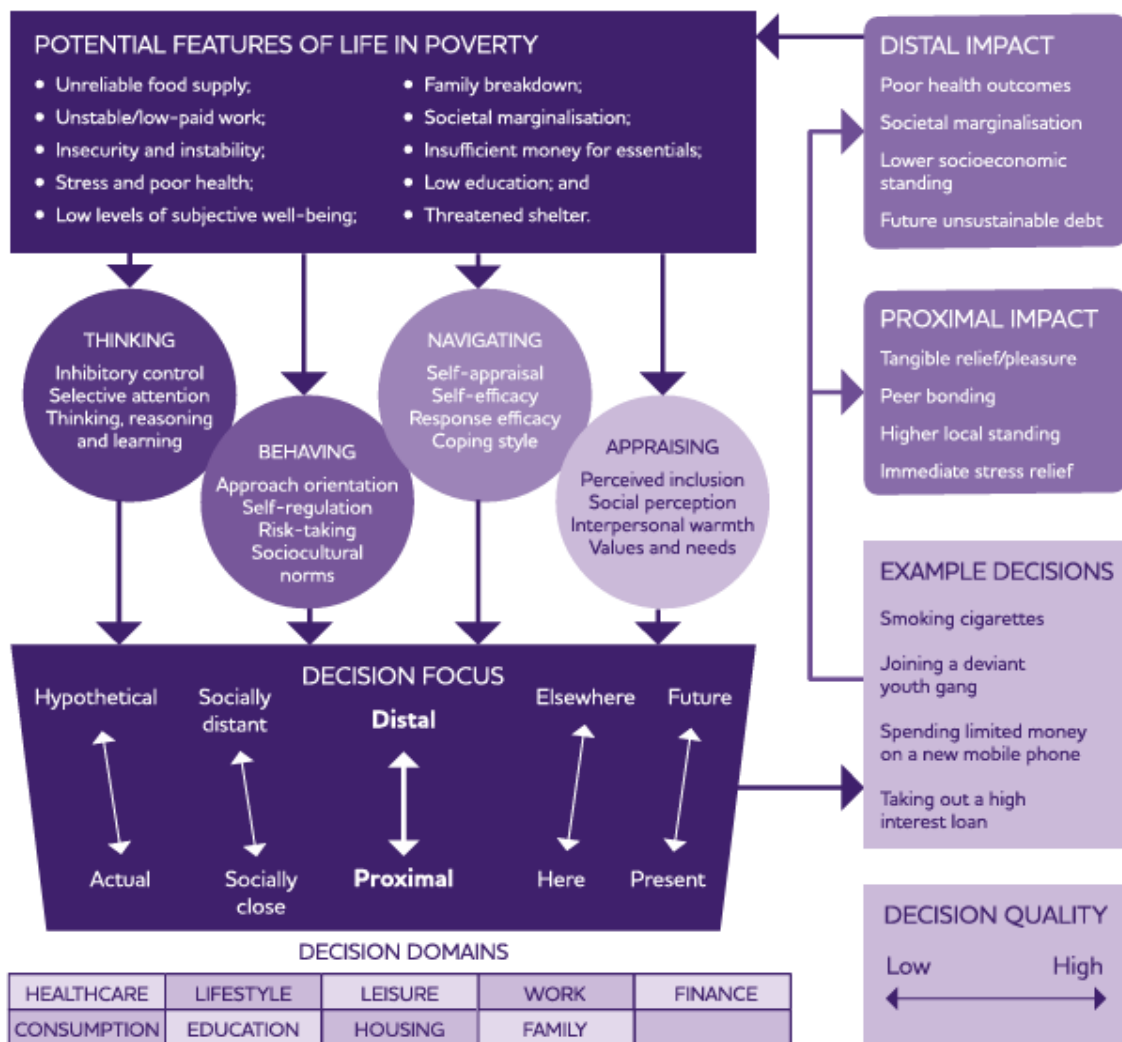
poverty on health, one participant said;

*“My family is very poor and sometimes we don’t even know where we will get food from. This has cause a lot of depression on me such that my high blood pressure is always a challenge. Due to our lack, I don’t have friends and sometimes I feel so lonely and discriminated. I’m really concerned about my health mainly because I don’t even have enough money to access health care.”[Participant 22]*

Based on the above statement, it became evident that poverty contributes to depression and loneliness. Similarly, this finding suggests that financial lack constrains access to health care (Xin et al., 2022; Evans & De France, 2022). Participants averred that poverty contributes to discrimination, lack of self-care, emotional strain, and affects sleeping patterns. Adult participants even stated that they go to bed late, but also wake up early. This poses risks for their health. There were concerns regarding the insufficient support rendered by states. However, participants expressed appreciation for support from the state such as social grants for the elderly and for people living with disabilities, food parcels and, agricultural inputs. NGOs were also praised for the assistance especially with relief support, like issuance of food, and temporary structures in cases of natural disasters. Similarly participants acknowledged support from the state which was extended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Church and other religious organizations were considered as very helpful to the poor and vulnerable groups. According to participants, church leaders sometimes go home to home offering prayers for families and also praying for the sick. While there is little financial support from the church, participants were grateful for the prayers. However, some participants revealed that NGOs like World Vision which is a religious organization, renders a lot of assistance to vulnerable groups and communities at large. Youth participants especially, female acknowledge the support they get from NGOs offering them sanitary pads and trainings on entrepreneurship skills. Finally, participants averred that poverty affect their decision making abilities. According to participants, it is very difficult to agree or disagree with initiatives made to help the poor. They stated that, due to their circumstances, they feel unable to make choices freely. Additionally, participants highlighted that poverty clouds their judgments in a number of ways such as behavior, thinking, and navigating through life’s challenges. Consequently their choices and behaviors may have long term implications on their livelihoods. This finding aligns with (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea (2017) who reported a correlation between poverty and the human decision making process.

Wang et al. (2022) posit that all human beings have a right to choose and have a right to benefit from all God provided resources. Similarly human beings have the right to food, shelter, education and health care (Khurshid, 2023; Xin et al., 2022). Figure 1: gives a demonstration of a framework for understanding decision making in the context of poverty. This framework shows the different decision making domains such as decisions associated with health care, lifestyle, education, and family. Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea (2017) suggest that poverty has implications on all these decision making domains (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). In a theological perspective, biblical narratives associate poverty with personal choices and behaviors, emphasizing the need for accountability (Addai & Boaheng, 2025). Scriptural text advocate that laziness leads to poverty and hard work leads to prosperity (Proverbs 10:4). Similarly, Proverbs 20:21 notes that ‘The wise save valuable food and olive oil, but fools consume theirs fast.’ Furthermore Proverbs 6:6-11 advices humanity to consider the ways of an ant which stores up food in summer in readiness for dry periods. These examples highlight the importance of hard work and making wise choices in order to prevent poverty.



**Figure 1. A framework for understanding decision-making in the context of poverty**  
(Source: Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017)

### Poverty, economic development and migration

The findings of this study show that poverty has undeniable implications for economic development. Migration emerged as a prime topic that drives or repels economic growth. Participant agreed that poverty drives, which has both positive and negative economic implications. According to participants the positivity is embedded in the benefit of acquired labor to the host countries. According to IOM (2022) global economies are in need of labor particularly in the health, agriculture, mining and construction sectors. Participants indicated that migration of skilled and unskilled labor especial in the agriculture sector, poses a threat to food security (FAO, 2024). While destination countries benefit from the additional labor, countries of origin experience labor shortages. Participants further suggested that there is an increase in the migration of highly skilled labor because of limited opportunities. This finding is consistent with Kgate (2017) who classified poverty as absolute, moderate and relative. Some individuals migrate in search of better opportunities or better income (relative poverty) and others are forced by absolute and moderate poverty to relocate (Lenhardt, 2023). According to the findings of this study, unskilled labor migrates mainly due to limited opportunities for them. This is a global concern which calls for states to create more jobs more jobs for all. However, Marchi et al. (2022) assert that there are challenges associated with the migration of people both



within nations and in a global context. Poverty also leads to massive national migration of people particularly from rural communities to urban centers in search of opportunities.

While migration has its benefits, participants perceived increased migration as potentially contributing to criminal activities particularly when economic expectations are unmet. The sale of drugs and indulgences in other organized crime such as human trafficking, money laundering and identity thefts is on the rise. This poses a threat to the safety of other people especially the youth. According to the findings of this study, immigration contributes to conflicts, and political upheaval such as xenophobia (Marchi et al., 2022). Often times, Citizens of certain nations are portrayed to be angered by the influx of migrants. Supposedly, migrants occupy positions which are rightfully theirs. Participants also asserted that some citizens are angered by migrants partly because, they are accept minimum pay without much complaining. Migration was associated with congestions in urban areas and labour exploitation. Participants acknowledge the efforts by the government and the private sector for creating employment opportunities. However, they agreed that these opportunities were inadequate. One participant said;

*“I must say that the government and the private sector try to make jobs available. However, not everyone is able to get a job. Based on the fact that I don’t have a tertiary qualification, it’s hard for me to get a decent job. I only rely on temporary employment which doesn’t last long.”*

This finding portrays a correlation between the level of education, employment and poverty. It was validated by other participant who thought that education has a significant impact on the livelihoods of humanity, contributes to poverty reduction, and has implications on economic growth. This finding is consistent with other scholarly literature which reported a link between the level of education and proneness to poverty. Studies have shown that economic growth contributes in creating jobs, availing incentives such as social grants, cash transfers, and food distributions which benefit the poor including the uneducated (Sele & Wanjiku, 2024; Zhu et al., 2022). The findings of this study indicated that economic growth does not always lead to poverty reduction. They suggest that, it is possible for the economy to grow and yet people still have no access to social and economic opportunities such employment and funding for entrepreneurship startups. Zhu et al. (2022) also reported a negative correlation between economic development and poverty alleviation. All participants acknowledge the assistance they receive from the state, NGOs, and the Church such as grants and sometimes food provisions. In a theological context, support from the church is considered an ethical and moral obligation. Sele & Wanjiku (2024) assert that the church and religious organizations has long been an important pillar in assisting the poor and vulnerable groups, uplifting their dignity. They provide social welfare, education, spiritual nourishment, and prayer for the needy following a moral obligation.

### **Effects of poverty on human health and the well-being**

Participants agreed that the human health is an important and has direct implications on the sustainability of life and the economy. They emphasized that poverty undermines both physical and mental health. Health was associated with the ability to be productive at work, contribute valuable ideas in politics, culture, and participate in spiritual upliftment. Similarly, all participants averred that poverty contributes highly to the escalating death rate. Hunger and stress issues, were reported to contribute to the health deterioration leading resulting to death in certain instances. Participants noted that even if they have access to some food, that food is unbalanced. They further stated that health practitioners recommend a balanced diet, of which they cannot afford. This finding is substantiated by Siddique et al. (2022) who reported the same effects of poverty. Health experts suggest that human beings must have a balance diet which

includes starch, proteins, vegetables and fruits. Participants consistently linked poverty to adverse health outcomes, citing hypertension, emotional distress and limited access to healthcare facilities (Evans & De France, 2022). While governments make strides in subsidizing health care in public hospital and clinics, participants stated that the queues are very long in public hospitals and they sometimes attend to a limited number of patients per day. Similarly, medication is not always available compelling patients to purchase their own medication from pharmacies. According to participants, the poor and vulnerable groups are cannot afford purchasing medication from the pharmacies. Patients, who can afford, get help from private hospitals. These hospitals were portrayed as expensive and unaffordable by the poor. These perceptions are in alignment with existing literature that demonstrates a strong association between socioeconomic challenges and deteriorating physical and mental health. In validating this assertion, one participant said;

*"For me, being poor has been a real challenge and caused me sleepless nights. I also high blood pressure, but sometimes I am unable to go to hospital because of lack of funds for transport and paying for medication. I hope the government can increase the support they give to us." [Participant 24]*

Some participants suggested that there is a correlation between poverty and high birth rate. Unemployment and limited fun activities were associated with an increased involvement in intimate activities. This practice coupled with lack of funds to procure birth control tools increases the birth rate. Adult participants averred that if they are married, some of their partners forbid the usage of protection such as condoms. There were concerns about this act, suggesting that it contributes to sexually transmitted illnesses. The poor were portrayed to have a high risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases like human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-AIDS). This finding aligns with Kalichman (2022)'s study on ending HIV hinges on reducing poverty. The study reported a correlation between poverty and the spread of HIV-AIDS, validating that limited access to resources and inequality are likely to contribute to the spread of infectious diseases (Kalichman, 2022; Li et al., 2022). It was revealed that when diagnosed with the virus, the poor are unable to have adequate supply of antiretroviral therapies (ARTs) due to limited funds. Youth participants asserted that poverty compel them to rely of their male partners for support. Some were described to have multiple partners which subject them to chronic illnesses. Furthermore, youth participants highlighted that some of their counterparts end up selling their bodies due to poverty. Prostitution was described as common coping mechanism for some unemployed youth. further spreading the risk of acquiring infectious diseases.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of humanity, integrating a theological perspective into qualitative study. It highlighted key socio-emotional experiences often under-represented in qualitative research. The findings reveal that poverty contributes to numerous health problems and social challenges including crime, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Conditions such depression, loneliness, high blood pressure, and cardio-vascular were prominent. The findings of this study underscore the importance of promoting social protection initiatives and building supportive community environments to alleviate the negative impact of poverty. Poverty has necessitated policy implications for governments. Governments should continue implementing social protection policies in their efforts to eradicate poverty. These policies should be integrated infusing different stakeholders such as NGOs and religious organizations. There is a need to take stock of the paradigms shifts in poverty that support and constrain contemporary policy on poverty. More research is required to understand the drivers of poverty and examine relevant modern approaches to address poverty. Policy development processes should include consultations with the affected parties to better understand their needs. Governments should provide targeted cash transfers for the poor and vulnerable. Additionally, mobile mental health screen facilities should be provided in low income areas. The promotion of climate resilient agriculture and support is necessary. Governments and relevant stakeholders should implement programs to address substance abuse in low income communities. This

study is limited by its relatively small sample size. Additionally, it only examined perceptions from that small sample. Therefore, the findings cannot reflect a comprehensive stance on the impact of poverty and the well-being of humanity. This study recommends further, comparative denominational studies, mixed methods studies, and policy case studies to gain a broader understanding of the effects of poverty on humanity.

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The author would like all the participants of this study

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