

Article 2: Human Development and Poverty

Poverty has often been assessed in relation to indicators of **human development** in the United States such as **life expectancy** (Canudas-Romo, 2018; Singh & Lee, 2021); **access to education (knowledge)** (Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Murnane, 2007), and **income (median earnings)** (Apergis et al., 2011; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016).

Poverty and Life expectancy

Poverty has been shown to negatively impact life expectancy throughout different stages of human development (Canudas-Romo, 2018; Singh & Lee, 2021).

For instance, a study looked at disparities in life expectancy prompted by education and poverty levels, occupation, and housing tenure in the United States over the period 1997 to 2014. Following that lead, researchers computed life expectancy, using National Health Interview Survey data linked to Mortality Death Index (N=1,146,271). Furthermore, they measured other life function indicators at different ages by assessing socioeconomic metrics categorized by sex and race/ethnicity (Singh & Lee, 2021).

The study found that poverty was negatively associated with life expectancy, and it provided the following insights:

- “Adults with at least a Master’s degree had 14.7 years higher life expectancy at age 18 than those with less than a high school education and 8.3 years higher life expectancy than those with a high school education.”
- “Individuals living in poverty had 10.5 years lower life expectancy at age 18 than those with incomes equal to / or higher than 400% of the poverty threshold.”
- “Laborers and those employed in craft and repair occupations had, respectively, 10.9 years and 8.6 years lower life expectancy at age 18 than those with professional and managerial occupations.”
- “Male and female renters had, respectively, 4.0 years and 4.6 years lower life expectancy at age 18 than homeowners.”
- “Women in the most advantaged socioeconomic group outlived men in the most disadvantaged group by 23.5 years at age 18.”
(Singh & Lee, 2021, p.1)

Overall, the study concluded that adults with lower education, higher poverty levels, in manual occupations, and with rental housing had substantially lower life expectancy compared to their counterparts with higher socioeconomic position (Singh & Lee, 2021).

Similarly, another study looked at a proposed measure of poverty-free life expectancy (PFLE), which combines health and economic status data to better assess mortality reduction targets (e.g., the Sustainable Development Goals), and proportions of a population spending considerable periods of life under a defined poverty threshold (Canudas-Romo, 2018).

According to this study, a 14 year-gap in life expectancy has been reported between the richest 1% of the population and poorest 1% in the United States. Thus, the researcher calls for an integrated approach to further explore the relationship between poverty and life expectancy using reliable measures (Canudas-Romo, 2018).

Poverty and Access to Education (knowledge)

Poverty has often been assessed as a highly limiting factor that compromises people's access to knowledge in their lifetime (Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Murnane, 2007),

To give an instance, a study looked at the effects of poverty on academic achievement (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Researchers argued that poverty indicates the extent to which an individual does without access to all sorts of resources, leading to financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical constraints. Moreover, they also indicated that people experiencing extreme levels of poverty oftentimes lack support systems, relationships, role models, and knowledge, contributing further to such constraints.

Hence, the study found that low academic achievement was closely correlated with lack of resources. These results supported previous research findings on the correlation between low socio-economic status and low academic achievement. Following that lead, researchers discussed strategies to assist teachers in helping close the poverty achievement gaps for students (Lacour & Tissington, 2011).

Another study indicated that children living in poverty tend to be concentrated in low-performing schools staffed by ill-equipped instructors. Moreover, individuals in the constrained populations are likely to leave schools without the skills needed to earn a decent living in a rapid changing economy. Drawing on this notion, the researcher argued that Congress should focus on improving high school graduation rates and students' skills through comprehensive access alternatives, rather than overly emphasizing their test score targets. It was also noted that Congress should strengthen states' incentives to improve the education of low-income students, and use competitive grants to enhance schools' education performance (Murnane, 2007).

Poverty and Income (Median earnings)

Researchers have found negative associations between poverty and income that overlap with multiple human development variables (Apergis et al., 2011; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016).

For instance, a study looked at the relationship between poverty and income inequality in the short and long run. Particularly, researchers sought to determine whether this relationship was unidirectional from income inequality to poverty (as prior research had suggested at the time), or if the relationship was rather bidirectional. Thus, researchers computed a multivariate analysis using a panel data set of 50 US states over the period 1980 to 2004.

Findings showed that a bidirectional relationship does exist between poverty and income inequality in both the short and long runs. Furthermore, income inequality and unemployment rate had a positive and statistically significant impact on poverty in the short run, while feedback relationships between poverty and income inequality were also found in the long run (Apergis et al., 2011).

On that note, another study looked at the effects of poverty and low-income on children's development and well-being (which is often considered one of the first and most crucial stages in human development) (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016). Researchers found that poverty and low income are causally related to worse child development outcomes, particularly in cognitive and educational capabilities. Moreover, they stated that the mechanisms through which poverty affects these outcomes include material hardships, family stress, parental and cognitive inputs.

Community context, timing, and duration also appeared to affect these outcomes—with early experiences of poverty, longer durations of poverty, and higher concentrations of poverty in the community (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016).

References

- Apergis, N., Dincer, O., & Payne, J. E. (2011). On the dynamics of poverty and income inequality in US states. *Journal of Economic Studies*, 38(2), 132–143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01443581111128370>
- Canudas-Romo, V. (2018). *Life expectancy and poverty*. The Lancet. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2214-109X%2818%2930327-9>
- Chaudry, A., & Wimer, C. (2016). Poverty is not just an indicator: The relationship between income, poverty, and child well-being. *Academic Pediatrics*, 16(3), S23–S29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2015.12.010>
- Lacour, M., & Tissington, L. (2011). The effects of poverty on academic achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(7), 522–527. https://academicjournals.org/article/article1379765941_Lacour%20and%20Tissington.pdf
- Murnane, R. J. (2007). Improving the education of children living in poverty. *The Future of Children*, 17(2), 161–182. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4495065>
- Singh, G. K., & Lee, H. (2021). Marked disparities in life expectancy by education, poverty level, occupation, and housing tenure in the United States, 1997-2014. *International Journal of Maternal and Child Health and AIDS*, 10(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.21106/ijma.402>