

Journal of Policy Options

The Role of Individual Effort in Poverty Attribution: Insights from Ghanaian Students

Oyindamola Iwalehin^a

Abstract

In this paper, the attribution for poverty has been investigated by surveying 147 marketing students from Sunyani Polytechnic. These students were selected through a convenience sampling method, allowing the researchers to gather data from a readily available group of participants. The study is exploratory in nature, using a quantitative survey to collect primary data. A self-designed questionnaire was utilized as the primary tool for data collection, and the responses were subsequently analyzed using SPSS 16.0 software. To interpret the data, the study employed percentages and frequencies to provide descriptive statistics, along with One-Way ANOVA to assess the significance of any differences within the sample population. The combination of these methods provides an in-depth look into the students' perceptions and attributions related to poverty, offering insights into their understanding of the underlying causes. By using an exploratory approach, the study aims to generate preliminary findings that can pave the way for further research in the area of poverty attribution among students, particularly in a developing country context like Ghana. The statistical techniques applied allow for a clear presentation of the findings, ensuring that any significant patterns or correlations within the data are identified and discussed. The results of the study indicated that the individual perspective of poverty attribution was the most dominant explanation among the participants, compared to structural and fatalistic viewpoints. This suggests that the students primarily believe that poverty is a result of personal factors such as effort and responsibility, rather than external factors like societal structures or fate. It was further revealed that a significant majority of the respondents held the view that success largely depends on individual effort, and that work is seen as a valuable contribution to society. Given these findings, future research should aim to increase the sample size to improve the generalizability of the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of poverty attributions. Additionally, future studies should explore the relationship between educational levels and perceptions of poverty, as education may play a crucial role in shaping how individuals understand and attribute the causes of poverty. Investigating these aspects could offer deeper insights into how different groups perceive the issue and may provide important implications for education and policy interventions aimed at poverty reduction.

Keywords: Poverty Attribution, Student Perceptions, Ghana

JEL Codes: I32, A22, D91

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a pervasive issue that affects both developing and developed economies. Despite numerous efforts and policies introduced by governments to alleviate or even eradicate poverty, it continues to persist in all societies. Some policies aim at reducing poverty levels, while others are more ambitious, seeking complete eradication. However, the problem appears deeply entrenched and resistant to resolution in many regions. Various disciplines offer explanations for the causes of poverty, including economics, psychology, sociology, political science, philosophy, and religion. Each field provides different frameworks and perspectives on why poverty exists. Furthermore, attitudes and perceptions regarding the causes of poverty vary significantly across countries and cultural contexts, as highlighted by several scholars (Alberkt, 2006; Cerami and Vanhuyse, 2009; Inglot, 2008; Szikra and Tomka, 2009; Tomka, 2006; Kallio and Niemela, 2010; Lepianka, 2007; Halman and Oorschot, 2000). These diverse explanations reflect how individuals and communities perceive themselves and their economic status. While some people readily acknowledge their poverty, others may be reluctant to admit it, even if they live in impoverished conditions. This complexity in self-perception adds another layer of difficulty in addressing poverty, as societal and individual attitudes can shape how the issue is approached and resolved. Some researchers, such as Dudwick et al. (2003), have attributed poverty to the type of economic system a country operates under, including capitalism, socialism, command economies, and mixed economies. The economic structures of nations can play a significant role in either alleviating or exacerbating poverty. For example, capitalist systems may provide opportunities for wealth creation but may also create disparities if wealth distribution mechanisms are inadequate. Conversely, socialist systems may emphasize wealth redistribution but could face challenges in generating sufficient economic growth. African countries, in particular, are often considered poor, with structural challenges such as weak governance, low productivity, and limited access to education and healthcare (Garcia and Fares, 2008). These challenges have prompted many policy interventions across the continent, aimed at addressing poverty and fostering sustainable development. In Ghana, for example, successive governments have implemented various policies to tackle poverty. One key approach has been the development of infrastructural facilities to improve access to basic services, stimulate economic activity, and create jobs. The Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) is an example of a comprehensive policy

^a Department of Management Sciences, Sunyani Polytechnic, Ghana

initiative designed to ensure economic growth and address poverty issues. Such strategies typically focus on improving health, education, and infrastructure while promoting economic inclusivity to lift vulnerable populations out of poverty. By fostering economic growth and targeting poverty reduction, these policies aim to create a more equitable society in Ghana and other African nations.

Under the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) policy, GH¢500,000.00 was allocated for disbursement to beneficiaries, targeting vulnerable households, especially those with orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). This initiative offered bi-monthly conditional cash transfers of between GH¢6 and GH¢8 per month to around 2,000 households, aimed at helping meet basic needs and accessing essential services like healthcare and education. This financial support represents a crucial effort to improve living conditions and promote social inclusion among Ghana's most vulnerable populations. Further support was provided through the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II), with seven of ten planned employment modules rolled out across the country by August 2007. These programs engaged 107,114 youth, providing employment opportunities that directly addressed youth unemployment and contributed to poverty alleviation. Additionally, 186 functional women's groups from six regions, comprising 12,255 women, were trained in vital skills such as basic bookkeeping, credit repayment, savings, entrepreneurial skills, and micro-finance. This training empowered women to enhance their productivity, fostering financial independence and long-term poverty reduction.

The 2008 budget statement of Ghana reflected positive progress in the country's economic landscape. Ghana's GDP increased significantly, rising from 3% in 2000 to 6.4% in 2007. This growth contributed to a substantial reduction in poverty levels, with the country on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving extreme poverty by 2015. The Minister of Finance emphasized the sustained economic growth and improved living standards, noting that the government's policy orientation had successfully reduced poverty while creating a conducive environment for private businesses to flourish. Furthermore, statistical data highlighted a significant decrease in poverty, with levels dropping from 39.5% in 1998/1999 to 28.5% in 2005/2006. These indicators demonstrate that Ghana was making notable strides in poverty reduction and economic growth, improving the well-being of its citizens. Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping government policies, as studies have consistently shown that public perceptions can influence policy decisions. Understanding the public's views on the causes of poverty can provide valuable insights for policymakers seeking to develop effective interventions. In Ghana, while there has been a variety of policies aimed at addressing poverty, little attention has been given to exploring public perceptions of its root causes. To the knowledge of the researcher, very few studies have focused on the public's views on poverty in the specific study area. This research aims to fill that gap, contributing to the broader debate on poverty alleviation strategies in Ghana.

Furthermore, some previous studies have yielded mixed results on the causes of poverty, highlighting the need for further investigation. Despite numerous policies implemented to combat poverty in Ghana, a significant portion of the population continues to live in poverty. This persistent issue has motivated the researcher to embark on this study, with the primary objective of exploring public perceptions of the causes of poverty and identifying the factors that shape these perceptions. Understanding the public's views can provide a clearer picture of whether current and future poverty interventions are well-suited to addressing the problem effectively. Several theories have been proposed to explain the causes of poverty. Some researchers point to concepts such as individual blame, individual fate, social fate, and social blame. Others, including Feagin (1972, 1975), have categorized these explanations into three broad frameworks: individualistic, structural, and fatalistic. According to the individualistic explanation, poverty is attributed to personal failings, such as laziness, poor decision-making, or immoral behavior. In contrast, the structural explanation attributes poverty to societal factors, such as economic inequality, lack of access to resources, or systemic barriers. The fatalistic perspective suggests that poverty is the result of external forces beyond an individual's control, such as bad luck or fate. This study will explore these various perspectives to better understand the public's views on the causes of poverty in Ghana and how these views might influence policy development. The structural theory of poverty suggests that individuals are poor due to societal structures that create barriers to economic success. These structures include requirements such as formal education, certifications, job experience, and the ability to pass examinations and interviews, all of which may be inaccessible to certain individuals. As a result, even motivated and capable individuals may find themselves unable to escape poverty due to these institutional barriers. This theory posits that poverty is not solely an individual failing but rather a consequence of systemic inequalities that hinder access to opportunities. The fatalistic explanation, on the other hand, attributes poverty to uncontrollable and unforeseen factors, such as illness, accidents, or sheer bad luck. According to this perspective, some people find themselves in poverty due to circumstances entirely outside of their control, which may include unexpected personal or familial hardships. This theory underscores the role of fate in determining an individual's economic standing, suggesting that no amount of effort or preparedness can fully shield a person from poverty in certain cases. Van Oorschot and Halman (2000) expand upon these ideas with four explanations for poverty: individual blame, individual fate, social fate, and social blame. The individual blame perspective holds that poverty is a result of personal inadequacies, such as a lack of intelligence, work ethic, or motivation. In this view, poverty is seen as the direct consequence of an individual's choices or inherent weaknesses.

The concept of individual fate aligns with the fatalistic explanation, emphasizing that some people are poor simply due to bad luck, such as being born into poverty or facing unexpected life events that derail economic progress. Social blame, as a theoretical explanation, suggests that poverty is the result of larger social and economic forces that are beyond the control of individuals. This perspective points to impersonal and inescapable societal factors—such as economic crises, widespread unemployment, or political instability—as the primary causes of poverty. In this view, poverty is seen not as a personal failure but as a consequence of systemic issues that disproportionately affect certain segments of the population.

These various explanations offer a comprehensive understanding of how poverty is perceived and the different factors that contribute to its persistence in society. Understanding these perspectives is critical for policymakers as they seek to develop targeted interventions that address the root causes of poverty, whether they be individual, structural, or circumstantial. The social blame theory posits that poverty arises due to actions and policies implemented by powerful groups, institutions, or parties within society, which individuals affected by poverty cannot control. According to this theory, the poor are not responsible for their poverty; instead, societal structures and the decisions made by those in positions of power—such as governments, corporations, and other influential institutions—are the real causes. These groups are seen as contributing to systemic inequalities that lead to economic hardship for certain individuals and communities (Kainu and Niemelä, 2010).

Empirical studies on the causes of poverty across different countries, both developed and developing, have shown diverse reasons for poverty. In developed economies like the United States, Canada, and European nations such as Russia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, research highlights structural inequalities, economic policies, labor market conditions, and institutional discrimination as significant contributors to poverty. These studies often show that while individual factors, such as personal effort or lifestyle choices, can influence one's economic status, broader social and institutional factors play a crucial role in perpetuating poverty. In the United States, for example, poverty is frequently linked to systemic issues such as racial inequality, lack of access to quality education, healthcare disparities, and inadequate social safety nets. In post-communist countries like Russia and Hungary, the transition to market economies, coupled with weak social protection systems, has contributed to rising inequality and poverty rates. Estonia and the Czech Republic, which have experienced relatively successful economic transitions, still face challenges related to income inequality and social exclusion. These empirical studies underscore that poverty is not merely a result of individual failings but is deeply rooted in societal structures. The social blame theory thus emphasizes the need for systemic change and reforms to address the root causes of poverty, including the actions and policies of influential groups that contribute to economic disparities. By shifting the focus from individual responsibility to the structural and institutional factors, policymakers can design more effective interventions to combat poverty and reduce inequality.

Reutter et al. (2006) conducted a study in Canada revealing significant variations in the public's understanding of the causes of poverty, with a strong preference for structural explanations. A majority of respondents attributed poverty to factors like government policies and unequal opportunities for citizens. About 30% of the participants leaned towards a fatalistic explanation, believing that poverty was due to fate or bad luck, while more than half supported the intergenerational explanation, suggesting that poverty is passed down from one generation to another. Similarly, an opinion poll conducted by Ipsos News Centre (1999) found that 30% of respondents favored an individualistic explanation, believing that people are poor due to their own choices and actions. In contrast, 51% of respondents supported a structural explanation, arguing that poverty results from societal and institutional factors beyond the control of individuals. Regarding the factors influencing these variations in perceptions, several studies have found that demographic variables such as gender and age explain only a small part of the differences (Reutter et al., 2006; van Oorschot and Halman, 1999). For instance, studies by Carr and MacLachlan (1998), Cozzarelli et al. (2001), and Hunt (1996) noted that women are more likely to support structural explanations for poverty than men. Other variables, such as education and income levels, have been found to significantly explain variations in responses. Wealthier individuals tend to support individualistic explanations of poverty, suggesting that personal responsibility and effort play a major role in determining poverty, and they are less likely to support structural explanations (Reutter et al., 2006; Hunt, 1996; Bullock, 1999). Furthermore, those with higher income levels also show greater support for the intergenerational explanation, suggesting that they believe poverty is passed down through family circumstances rather than being the result of broader societal factors (Bullock, 1999; Reutter et al., 2006). This pattern across studies highlights the complexity of public perceptions of poverty and how personal circumstances, such as economic status and educational background, influence the way individuals attribute the causes of poverty. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for designing effective policies aimed at addressing poverty and inequality. While some studies suggest that wealthier individuals support individualistic explanations of poverty, Nasser and Abouchedid (2001) found evidence to the contrary, indicating that high-income earners actually tend to favor structural attributions of poverty more than low-income earners. This suggests that wealthier individuals may acknowledge the role of societal and institutional factors in creating poverty, such as economic inequalities and systemic barriers. Further research by Reutter et al. (2006) and Stewart et al. (2004) revealed that individuals with lower incomes are more likely to have a pessimistic view of their future economic prospects, perhaps reflecting their personal struggles with economic hardship. This pessimism could influence their perceptions of poverty, making them less likely to see structural solutions as feasible or effective.

However, the determinants of poverty attribution are not entirely consistent across studies. For example, Shirazi and Biel (2005) found mixed or inconclusive results when examining the factors that influence people's explanations of poverty. This highlights the complexity of how poverty is perceived across different contexts, with factors like income, education, and personal experience playing roles but not always leading to clear conclusions. Cultural factors have also been identified as significant influences on how poverty is perceived. In studies conducted by Bullock et al. (2003), Cozzarelli et al. (2001), Habtamu (1995), and Molvaer (1980), respondents often pointed to cultural elements as key contributors to poverty. Cultural beliefs, norms, and values can shape how poverty is understood, particularly in societies where poverty may be attributed to individual behaviors or community-based traditions. These findings suggest that the attribution of poverty is shaped not just by economic status or personal experience, but also by deeper cultural perspectives and worldviews. According to Wollie (2009), a study conducted in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, revealed that youth tend to attribute poverty more to structural factors, indicating an awareness of systemic issues contributing to poverty. The study

highlighted three primary dimensions of poverty attributions: fatalistic, individual, and structural. Each dimension offered a different perspective on the causes of poverty, with structural attributions focusing on societal and economic systems, individual attributions emphasizing personal responsibility, and fatalistic attributions considering uncontrollable external factors such as fate or luck.

Wollie's findings also showed that demographic and socio-economic variables significantly influence how people attribute the causes of poverty. Specifically, gender was a key factor in determining fatalistic attributions, with differences in how men and women perceive the role of fate in poverty. Education, on the other hand, emerged as a crucial determinant of individual attributions, suggesting that higher levels of education may lead people to attribute poverty more to personal responsibility or individual effort. Additionally, the study found that parents' income status significantly shaped structural attributions of poverty, implying that those from wealthier backgrounds were more likely to recognize the influence of systemic barriers and societal structures on poverty. These findings underscore the complexity of poverty perceptions and the role that demographic factors play in shaping individuals' understanding of economic hardship. The study highlights how socio-economic backgrounds, education, and even gender can influence how people perceive the causes of poverty, which can have important implications for policy development and poverty alleviation efforts.

According to the studies by Krediel (1998) and Guimond et al. (1989), respondents who are more sensitive to structural explanations for poverty suggest that societal systems and structures contribute significantly to keeping people in poverty. This view posits that the way society functions can limit individuals' opportunities to improve their competence levels and, consequently, their economic standing. It highlights how systemic factors, such as unequal access to education or employment, play a crucial role in determining poverty outcomes. Comparative studies of the causes of poverty across different economic contexts, particularly between developing and developed economies, have yielded noteworthy findings. Kainu and Niemela (2010) conducted a study that revealed intriguing differences in how poverty is perceived across European post-socialist countries. The study found that the "social blame" explanation—where societal structures or institutions are blamed for causing poverty—was the most popular view in these countries. This was followed by the "individual blame" explanation, which attributes poverty to personal failings, then "social fate," and finally "individual fate," which considers uncontrollable personal misfortunes like bad luck or illness. Countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, and Russia were particularly inclined to support social blame explanations for poverty. This suggests that in post-socialist contexts, people tend to view poverty as a result of systemic failures or the actions of powerful groups, rather than individual inadequacies or misfortunes. These findings provide a broader understanding of how historical, cultural, and economic backgrounds influence public perceptions of poverty, particularly in nations transitioning from socialist to capitalist systems. The studies by Lepianka (2007) and Lepianka et al. (2010) revealed that in the Czech Republic, the individual blame explanation for poverty is predominantly supported. This perspective holds that individuals are responsible for their own poverty due to personal failings such as laziness or lack of effort. Similar findings have been observed in the United States, where structural explanations of poverty are less favored, and individualistic explanations are more widely accepted (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Feagin, 1975). These studies indicate that Americans often view poverty as a consequence of individual choices and behaviors rather than systemic or societal factors.

In contrast, Feather's (1974) study highlights a significant difference between American and Australian attitudes towards poverty. Australians tend to reject the individualistic explanation of poverty, instead supporting the structuralist view, which attributes poverty to broader societal issues such as inequality, unemployment, or lack of access to resources (Saunders, 2002).

Other studies, such as those conducted by Albrekt (2006) and van Oorschot and Halman (2000), found that in countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, the individual explanation of poverty is not widely accepted. In these nations, the structuralist explanation is more prevalent, where poverty is viewed as a result of societal structures rather than individual failings. Interestingly, in Eastern European countries, such as those studied by Lepianka (2007), Gorshkov and Tikhnova (2006), and Stephenson (2000), both individual and structural explanations are supported, reflecting a complex mix of perspectives that consider both personal and societal factors in the understanding of poverty. These findings reflect how cultural, historical, and social contexts shape public perceptions of poverty, with significant variation between developed and developing nations, as well as between Western and Eastern Europe.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Of the 147 students who participated in the study, the majority were males, with 100 (68%) respondents, while females accounted for 46 (31.3%), with one missing response. The age distribution showed that 138 (93.9%) of the respondents were within the 18-29 age group, followed by 5 (3.4%) in the 30-44 age group, with four missing responses. Regarding religious affiliation, the majority were Christians, comprising 133 (90.5%) respondents, followed by Muslims at 12 (8.2%), and 1 (0.7%) respondent reported not attending church, with 1 (0.7%) missing response. In terms of religious service attendance, 48 (32.7%) of the students reported attending once a week, while 43 (29.3%) attended more than once a week, and 40 (27.2%) attended every meeting day. A small number, 3 (2%), reported never attending, and 11 (7.5%) attended occasionally. One respondent chose "other" as their answer, with another 1 (0.7%) missing response. The majority of students were in HND1, with 93 (63.3%) respondents, and 52 (35.4%) were in HND2, with 2 (1.4%) missing responses. In terms of household income, 94 (63.9%) of the respondents identified themselves as belonging to the middle-income group, followed by 22 (15%) in the low-income group, 11 (7.5%) in the high-income group, and 18 (12.2%) respondents who did not know their income group, with 2 (1.4%) missing responses. Regarding the source of household income, employment was the most common source, reported by 61 (41.5%) respondents. Social benefits or pensions

accounted for 6 (4.1%) responses, while private transfers, remittances, or gifts were sources of income for 28 (19%) households. Other sources were cited by 49 (33.3%), with 3 (2%) missing responses. A majority of the households worked to obtain income.

On the issue of ethnic minority status, 56 (38.1%) of the respondents indicated that they did not know whether they belonged to an ethnic minority, while 53 (36.1%) said they were part of an ethnic minority, and 35 (23.8%) said they were not, with 2 (1.4%) missing responses. As for ethnic languages, 115 (78.2%) of the respondents reported that their ethnic languages were written and taught in institutions, while 14 (9.5%) said their language was not written, another 14 (9.5%) were unsure, and there were 4 (2.7%) missing responses. The majority of respondents came from the Ashanti region, followed by 25 (17%) from the Brong Ahafo region, 16 (10.9%) from the Eastern region, 14 (9.5%) from the Upper West region, and 11 (7.5%) from the Northern region. Smaller numbers of respondents came from the Western (9, 6.1%), Central (8, 5.4%), Upper East (6, 4.1%), Volta (5, 3.4%), and Greater Accra (3, 2%) regions.

The results of the study revealed several insights into the perceptions and attitudes of the 147 respondents regarding various socio-economic issues. A majority of the respondents, 86 (58.5%), believed that maintaining order in the nation is crucial. This was followed by 34 (23.1%) who believed in giving people more say in important government decisions, while 16 (10.9%) prioritized protecting freedom of speech. A smaller number, 8 (5.4%), considered fighting rising prices as important, with 3 (2%) choosing other factors. A significant majority, 108 (73.5%), agreed or strongly agreed that the gap between the rich and the poor in Ghana should be reduced. However, 26 (17.7%) remained neutral, and 13 (8.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, 95 (66%) of respondents believed that the state should be strongly involved in reducing this gap, while 29 (17.7%) advocated for moderate involvement. A smaller group, 9 (6.1%), thought the state should not get involved, with 4 (2.7%) unsure of what the state should do, and 8 (5.4%) missing responses. Regarding satisfaction with life, 64 (43.5%) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their lives, while 41 (28.6%) expressed dissatisfaction. Another 39 (26.5%) were neutral, with 3 (2%) missing responses. Furthermore, 88 (59.9%) of respondents believed that they had control over their lives, while 27 (18.4%) felt they did not. Thirty respondents (20.4%) were neutral on this issue, and 2 (1.4%) had missing responses. The factors contributing to success were ranked by respondents, with personal effort being the most important (95.3%), followed by skills (93.2%) and intelligence (84.3%). Political factors were considered important by 27.2% of respondents, while only 7.5% attributed success to criminal or corrupt ties, reflecting an individualist approach to success. On the causes of poverty, injustice was considered the leading factor by 67.4% of respondents, followed by laziness (59.9%), the inevitable part of modern life (32.6%), and bad luck (27.7%). When asked to select only one main reason for poverty, the majority, 66 (44.9%), indicated laziness and lack of willpower as the primary cause, followed by luck (19%) and injustice (19%), with 11 (7.5%) citing the inevitable part of modern life. Another 11 (7.5%) respondents were unsure of the causes, with 3 missing responses.

In terms of self-perception, the majority, 96 (65.3%), did not consider themselves poor, while 15 (10.2%) identified as poor, and 21 (14.3%) were unsure. There were also 15 (10.2%) missing responses. However, when asked if they were rich, 54 (36.7%) responded no, while 50 (34%) said yes, and 30 (20.4%) were uncertain, with 13 (8.8%) missing responses. When asked about their knowledge of poor people within their communities, 98 (66.7%) responded affirmatively, while 27 (18.4%) said no, and 16 (10.9%) were unsure, with 6 (4.1%) missing responses. Additionally, when questioned about whether it is difficult for people to admit that they are poor, 75 (51%) agreed, while 44 (29.9%) disagreed, and 23 (15.6%) were uncertain, with 5 (3.4%) missing responses. Regarding work, a majority of 100 (68%) respondents believed that work should come first, even if it means less spare time. Additionally, 93 (63.3%) agreed that having a job is necessary for fully developing one's talents. A significant portion, 128 (87%), believed that work is a duty towards society, with 100 (68%) agreeing that people who do not work tend to become lazy. Interestingly, 63 (42.8%) of respondents indicated that it is not humiliating to receive money without having to work for it.

Table 1: Responses on Attitude Towards Work

Statements	Strongly Agreed Freq./%	Agreed Freq./%	Neutral Freq./%	Disagreed Freq./%	Strongly Disagreed Freq./%	Missing Response Freq./%	Total Freq./%
humiliating to receive money without having to work for it	19(12.9%)	34(23.1%)	28(19%)	30(20.4%)	33(22.4)	3(2%)	147(100)
People who don't work turn lazy	56(38.1%)	44(29.9%)	11(7.5%)	28(19%)	5(3.4%)	3(2%)	147(100)
Work is a duty towards society	54(36%)	74(50%)	14(9.5%)	3(2%)	na	2(1.4%)	147(100)
Work first if even less sparetime	35(23.8%)	65(44.2%)	31(21.1%)	9(6.1%)	5(3.4%)	2(1.4%)	147(100)
You need to have a job to fully develop your talent	50(34%)	43(29.3%)	17(11.6%)	23(15.6%)	12(8.2%)	2(1.4%)	147(100)

This table 1 summarizes respondents' attitudes towards work, providing insight into their views on various work-related

statements. The responses are divided into categories: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, and missing responses, with frequencies and percentages for each. On the first statement, "It is humiliating to receive money without having to work for it," opinions are fairly divided. A combined portion of respondents either strongly agree or agree, reflecting a sense of pride or belief in earning one's income through work. However, a significant number of respondents are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, indicating varying perspectives on this idea. Regarding the belief that "people who don't work turn lazy," the majority of respondents either strongly agree or agree, suggesting that most hold the view that work is essential to maintaining personal discipline and avoiding laziness. Only a small portion disagrees with this statement, showing that it is widely accepted among respondents.

The statement "Work is a duty towards society" receives strong agreement from most respondents, with a significant number strongly agreeing or agreeing. This indicates that a large majority view work as not only a personal obligation but also a contribution to the greater good. Very few respondents disagree with this statement, showing that it resonates strongly with the group. When asked if "work comes first even if it means less spare time," a majority of respondents agree, suggesting that many prioritize work over leisure. However, there is a noticeable portion of respondents who remain neutral or disagree, indicating that while many hold work in high regard, others value a balance between work and free time. Finally, in response to the statement "You need to have a job to fully develop your talent," the majority of respondents either strongly agree or agree. This suggests that most believe employment is crucial for personal growth and skill development. However, a smaller but notable group either remains neutral or disagrees, implying that some see talent development as possible outside of formal employment. Overall, the data reflects a generally positive attitude towards work, with many respondents seeing it as a crucial part of personal development, societal duty, and discipline. There are, however, nuanced views, particularly regarding the balance between work and free time, as well as the necessity of work for talent development.

The results of the one-way analysis revealed significant differences in responses based on various demographic variables, indicating that these factors influenced how individuals perceived and answered specific questions related to poverty, work, and societal issues. Gender significantly impacted responses on several topics. For example, respondents' views on whether the state should be involved in reducing poverty ($F=2.867$; $p=0.093$), whether people find it difficult to admit poverty ($F=2.875$; $p=0.092$), and whether respondents considered themselves rich ($F=3.405$; $p=0.067$) were all affected by gender. Additionally, satisfaction with life ($F=2.864$; $p=0.093$) and the belief that having a job is necessary for fully developing talent ($F=6.148$; $p=0.014$) were also influenced by gender. Age played a role in shaping respondents' views, particularly regarding whether poor people are unlucky ($F=3.965$; $p=0.048$). The year of study also influenced responses significantly, including views on the importance of skills ($F=3.895$; $p=0.050$), perceptions of injustice ($F=3.037$; $p=0.084$), the difficulty in admitting poverty ($F=3.700$; $p=0.056$), and the belief that having a job is essential for fully developing talent ($F=5.905$; $p=0.016$). Additionally, responses related to whether work is a duty towards society ($F=3.542$; $p=0.062$) were also impacted. Religious affiliation significantly affected responses in several areas. Views on intelligence ($F=2.633$; $p=0.075$), skills ($F=3.131$; $p=0.047$), criminal/corrupt ties ($F=5.102$; $p=0.007$), and the belief that poor people are unlucky ($F=2.741$; $p=0.068$) were influenced by religion. The perception that people who do not work turn lazy ($F=4.178$; $p=0.017$) was also significantly affected. The frequency of attending religious services shaped views on skills ($F=3.017$; $p=0.013$), individual effort ($F=2.364$; $p=0.043$), the perception of control over life ($F=2.017$; $p=0.080$), and whether work is a duty towards society ($F=2.078$; $p=0.072$). The region of respondents significantly influenced responses on whether the gap between the rich and the poor should be reduced ($F=2.380$; $p=0.016$), views on skills ($F=1.687$; $p=0.098$), criminal/corrupt ties ($F=2.699$; $p=0.006$), and whether poor people are unlucky ($F=2.101$; $p=0.033$). Responses regarding the necessity of having a job to fully develop talent ($F=1.924$; $p=0.053$) and whether people who do not work turn lazy ($F=2.448$; $p=0.013$) were also affected.

Household income levels impacted several responses, including views on the laziness of the poor ($F=2.390$; $p=0.054$), whether respondents knew poor people ($F=2.460$; $p=0.048$), and whether work should come first ($F=2.345$; $p=0.058$). The source of household income affected perceptions of injustice ($F=2.377$; $p=0.073$), the difficulty of admitting poverty ($F=4.538$; $p=0.005$), and whether respondents considered themselves rich ($F=2.171$; $p=0.095$). Finally, the beliefs held by respondents significantly influenced whether the gap between the rich and the poor should be reduced ($F=2.591$; $p=0.039$), views on skills ($F=2.926$; $p=0.023$), political factors ($F=2.292$; $p=0.062$), whether respondents knew poor people ($F=2.772$; $p=0.030$), whether it was difficult to admit being poor ($F=2.210$; $p=0.071$), and whether it is humiliating to receive money without working ($F=2.417$; $p=0.052$). The belief that work is a duty towards society ($F=5.353$; $p=0.000$) was also significantly affected. These findings underscore the complex relationship between demographic factors and individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards poverty, work, and social issues.

3. DISCUSSION

In this study, it has been found that there is significant variation in how the public understands the causes of poverty, with structural, individual, and fatalistic explanations all represented. However, the majority of respondents were more inclined to favor individualistic perspectives, attributing poverty primarily to individual effort, such as laziness (44.9%) and bad luck. This finding contrasts with previous studies conducted in other countries, such as those by Kainu and Niemela (2010), Wollie (2009), Reutter et al. (2006), Ipsos News Centre (1999), and Krediel (1998), where structural explanations were more favored. However, the current findings align with those of Lepianka et al. (2010), who also observed a tendency toward individualistic explanations. One potential explanation for this trend could be that all the respondents in the present study were from tertiary institutions, with a significant portion of them belonging to the middle-income group. This background may have influenced their inclination towards individualistic explanations of poverty. This finding supports

Feagin's (1972) argument that individuals within the middle-income group and with higher education levels are more likely to endorse individual explanations of poverty.

Regarding the keys to success, personal effort (95.3%) emerged as the most significant factor. Kainu and Niemela (2010) noted that those who see effort and hard work as central to success are more likely to endorse individualistic explanations of poverty, a statement corroborated by the findings of this study. The study also revealed that demographic variables such as gender and age, as well as socioeconomic factors like household income level, religious affiliation, region, and sources of household income, significantly influenced respondents' attributions of poverty and their attitudes towards success and work. These findings are consistent with prior research by Feagin (1972), Carr and MacLachlan (1998), Cozzarelli et al. (2001), and Hunt (1996) regarding demographic variables, and studies by Bullock (1999) and Nasser and Abouhedid (2001) concerning socioeconomic factors. As the majority of respondents belonged to the middle-income group, their responses favored individualistic explanations of poverty. Furthermore, political beliefs were found to significantly affect respondents' attitudes toward work and success, highlighting the broader influence of ideological perspectives on these attitudes.

4. CONCLUSION

The paper has established that three main poverty attributions—individual perspective, structural explanation, and fatalistic concepts—are prevalent in the study area. Among these, the individual perspective is the dominant view, which contrasts with the general assertion that developing societies typically place the responsibility for reducing poverty on the state. This suggests a need for efforts to shift individual orientations and behaviors. At the same time, the state's structures should be reviewed, as they also play a significant role in influencing poverty. Additionally, the social environment must be addressed as part of the solution. To effectively reduce poverty, measures should be holistic, covering all contributing factors. The respondents demonstrated a positive attitude towards work, believing that working is a person's contribution to society, further highlighting the importance of integrating work and personal responsibility into poverty alleviation strategies. Socio-demographic variables significantly influence respondents' perceptions of poverty attribution, attitudes toward work, and success, indicating that respondents have varying concepts for explaining poverty, success, and work motivations. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, economists, politicians, and other stakeholders in understanding the complexities of poverty and developing effective strategies to address it. Future studies should explore the relationship between parental education and poverty attribution to gain a deeper understanding of how family background influences these perceptions. Additionally, research could investigate the relationship between education levels, employment status, and poverty attribution to enrich the discussion. Expanding the sample size and employing structural models to establish cause-and-effect relationships will also provide a more comprehensive analysis. Further research should focus on public understanding of the broader effects of poverty, contributing to a more holistic approach in future policy interventions.

REFERENCES

- Albrekt, L. C. (2006). *The institutional logic of welfare attitudes: How welfare regimes influence public support*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Alesina, A., & Glaeser, E. L. (2004). *Fighting poverty in the US and Europe: A world of difference*. Oxford University Press.
- Bullock, H. E. (1999). Attributions for poverty: A comparison of middle-class and welfare recipient attitudes. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 29(10), 2059-2082.
- Bullock, H. E., Wendy, R. W., & Wendy, L. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56.
- Carr, S., & MacLachlan, M. (1998). Actors, observers, and attributions for Third World poverty: Contrasting perspectives from Malawi and Australia. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 138(2), 189-202.
- Cerami, A., & Vanhuyse, P. (2009). *Post-communist welfare pathways: Theorizing social policy transformations in Central and Eastern Europe*. Paigraive Macmillan.
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227.
- Dudwick, N., Gomart, E., & Marc, A. (2003). *When things fall apart: Qualitative studies of poverty in the former Soviet Union*. World Bank Publications.
- Feagin, J. R. (1972). Poverty: We still believe that God helps those who help themselves. *Psychology Today*, 6(2), 101-129.
- Feagin, J. R. (1975). *Subordinating the poor: Welfare and American beliefs*. Prentice-Hall.
- Feather, N. T. (1974). Explanations of poverty in Australian and American samples: The person, society, or fate? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 26(3), 199-216.
- Garcia, M., & Fares, J. (2008). *Youth in Africa's labor market*. The World Bank.
- Gorshkov, M. K., & Tikhonova, N. E. (2006). Wealth and poverty in the perceptions of Russians. *Sociological Research*, 45(1), 27-40.
- Guimond, S., Begin, G., & Palmer, D. L. (1989). Education and causal attributions: The development of person-blame and system-blame ideology. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 52(2), 126-140.

- Habtamu, W. (1995). Dominant values and parenting styles: Major limiting factors on the development of entrepreneurship in Ethiopia. In *Proceeding of the first Annual Conference on Management in Ethiopia* (pp. 1-15).
- Halman, L., & van Oorschot, W. (1999). Popular perceptions of poverty in Dutch society. Tilburg University.
- Hunt, M. O. (1996). The individual, society, or both? A comparison of Black, Latino, and White beliefs about the causes of poverty. *Social Forces*, 75, 293-322.
- Inglot, T. (2008). *Welfare states in East Central Europe, 1919-2004*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kainu, M., & Niemela, M. (2010). Attributions for poverty in European post-socialist countries. Paper prepared for the annual meeting of ESPANet, Budapest.
- Kluegel, J. R., & Smith, E. R. (1986). *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be*. Aldine de Gruyter.
- Kreidl, M. (1998). Changes in the perception of poverty and wealth: The Czech Republic, 1991-1995. *Czech Sociological Review*, 6(1), 73-97.
- Lepianka, D. (2007). Are the poor to be blamed or pitied? A comparative study of popular poverty attributions in Europe. Tilburg University.
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J. P. T. M., & van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72.
- Molvaer, R. K. (1980). *Traditions and social change in Ethiopia: Social and cultural life as reflected in Amharic fictional literature*. E.J. Brill.
- Nasser, R., & Abouchdid, K. (2001). Causal attribution of poverty among Lebanese university students. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 6(14), 205-220.
- Reutter, L. I., Veenstra, G., Stewart, M. J., Raphael, D., Love, R., Makwarimba, E., & McMurray, S. (2006). Public attributions for poverty in Canada. *Canadian Review of Sociology & Anthropology*, 43(1), 1-22.
- Saunders, P. (2002). *The ends and means of welfare: Coping with economic and social change in Australia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shirazi, R., & Biel, A. (2005). Internal-external causal attributions and perceived government responsibility for need provision: A 14-culture study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36(1), 96-116.
- Stephenson, S. (2000). Public beliefs in the causes of wealth and poverty and legitimization of inequalities in Russia and Estonia. *Social Justice Research*, 13(2), 83-100.
- Stewart, M. J., Reutter, L., Veenstra, G., Raphael, D., Love, R., Makwarimba, E., & McMurray, S. (2004). Left out: Perspectives on social exclusion and social isolation in low-income populations. *University of Alberta Social Support Research Program*.
- Szikra, D., & Tomka, B. (2009). Social policy in East Central Europe: Major trends in the 20th century. In *Post-communist welfare pathways* (pp. 135-156).
- Tomka, B. (2006). East Central Europe and the European social policy model: A long-term view. *East European Quarterly*, 40(2), 135.
- van Oorschot, W., & Halman, L. (2000). Blame or fate, individual or social? An international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. *European Societies*, 2(1), 1-28.
- Wollie, C. W. (2009). Causal attributions for poverty among youths in Bahir Dar, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 3(3), 251-272.