Determinants of Perceived Causes of Poverty among South Africa's Post-Apartheid Generation

Nokwanda Maseko[1], Diana Viljoen[2] and Paul-Francois Muzindutsi[3]

School of Economics, North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa
E-mail: [1]<nakita366@gmail.com>, [2]<Diana.Viljoen@nwu.ac.za>,
[3]<paul.muzindutsi@nwu.ac.za>

ABSTRACT Poverty alleviation remains a preoccupation of governments and other non-government organizations. Understanding how individuals perceive the causes of poverty is vital in developing strategies for poverty alleviation. This study used a self-administered survey to investigate how different demographic variables influence the perception of the causes of poverty of the post-apartheid generation in a South African University. Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used to assess the effect of various demographic variables on the three factors of perception of the causes of poverty, namely individualistic, structural and fatalistic factors. Tested variables were the age, gender, race, field of study, and home area of participants. The results of this paper revealed that perceptions of the causes of poverty of South Africa's post-apartheid generation are mostly affected by gender, race, and home area. The findings also suggest that the post-apartheid generation tends to blame society for the causes of the poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains one of the most pervasive and troubling problems that populations and governments the world over are still struggling with (Lesetedi 2003). The broadness of the concept of poverty has resulted in the development of numerous definitions of poverty. According to Sen (1985), lacking the capability that results in one being able to function within society can be viewed as poverty. Povety can also be defined as the situation in which families or individuals have limited resources (whether cultural, social or material), which leads to those people not enjoying the required standard of living as per the community of residence (Nyasulu 2010). In South Africa, where over sixty percent of the country's Black children live in poverty (Nicholson 2012), the situation was made worse by decades of laws (the apartheid system) meant to systemically put Black people at a social, political and economic disadvantage. However, besides a history of economic and political inequality, a failing education system, high unemployment, and a growing population have all contributed to the country's high poverty levels.

While South Africa's economic and political conditions have improved during the post-apartheid era, poverty remains one of the unresolved issues, with over 15 million South Africans de-pendent on social assistance (National Treasury 2014). The country's growth rate has consistently remained positive, with the gross domestic product (GDP) reaching 384.313 billion USD in 2012-2013, compared to 216.012 billion USD in 2004-2005. However, a high unemployment rate, coupled with a failing education system continue to hinder the prospects of eradicating poverty.

Often, the people's observations about poverty and its causes are influenced by lived experiences. This implies that there may be a link between the status of poverty and the perceptions of the causes of poverty. In addition to poverty status, other socio-economic and demographic factors may influence how people perceive the causes of poverty. Studies by Nasser et al. (2002) and Aliber (2002) have shown that variables such as gender, age, race and employement status have an effect on the perception of the causes of poverty. Davids (2010) and Hunt (2004) studied the perceived causes of poverty and their findings produced mixed results on the determinants of the perceived causes of poverty. Meanwhile, studies by Aliber (2002), Klasen (2000), Garidzirai (2013), Grobler and Dunga (2014) and Maseko et al. (2014) found that race is an important factor influencing perceptions of the causes of poverty in South Africa. The focus of this paper is to determine the demographic variables influencing the post-apart-

heid generation's perceptions regarding the causes of poverty.

Literature Review

For the purpose of determining the perceived causes of poverty, Feagin (1972) created the perceived causes of poverty scale, also known as the Feagin scale. This scale was validated and has been used in a number of studies (Aliber 2002; Carr and MacLachlan 1998; Davids 2010; Furnham 1985; Hine and Montiel 1999; Hunt 2004; Klasen 2000; Nasser 2002) with an aim to understand the perceptions of the causes of poverty. The Feagin scale splits the perceived causes of poverty into three categories, that is, structural factors (meaning poverty is the result of external factors, such as the poor being exploited by the rich), individualistic factors (meaning poverty is the result of internal factors, such as people wasting money on inappropriate items), and fatalistic factors (which suggest that poverty is the consequence of factors that people cannot control, such as having bad fate).

Previous studies have found that poverty levels and status are different across the different race groups. In South Africa for instance, Lund (2008) found that as a result of the country's apartheid legacy, poverty remains highest amongst Black people. The same can also be said about gender and poverty status. For instance, Todaro and Smith (2010) found that Black people are more likely to be poor than White people, and women and children, especially those in rural areas, are more likely to be living in poverty. This suggests that there might be differences in the way in which people perceive the causes of poverty. According to Salmond et al. (2006), gender is an important variable that influences how people perceive poverty. However, Davids (2010) found that gender did not significantly impact any of the three factors perceived as the causes of poverty. This suggests that there is no consensus on how various demographic variables affect the perceptions of the cause of poverty, implying that additional research on this topic is needed. Therefore, this paper assesses the determinants of perceived causes of poverty among the South Africa's post-apartheid generation.

Prior to the post-apartheid generation under study, South Africa was impacted by four specific generational eras. The first generation was the pre-apartheid generation, which made up a significant percentage of the votes during the 1994 elections. The early apartheid generation comprised people who turned 16 between 1948 and 1960, and had no experience of South African life before apartheid. Following this generation was the grand apartheid generation, born during the beginning of mass resistance of apartheid laws during the 1960s. After the grand apartheid generation came the struggle generation, which turned 16 between 1976 and 1996. This is the generation that witnessed and/or formed part of the violent struggle for liberation (Mattes 2011). Unlike the generations before it, the post-apartheid generation was born at a time when the country was beginning to bloom with economic opportunities following the end of apartheid. This is the generation born during an era when Mandela (1994) had declared that there must be work, bread, salt and water for all, an era where education was becoming less racial and Black people were getting more access to economic opportunities. Following the end of apartheid, the expectation was that the post-apartheid generation, unlike the generations before it, would be exposed to less poverty, better education systems, and better economic and political conditions, thus exposing it to more advantages than the previous generations had access to.

Better economic conditions and education systems were used as means of alleviating poverty following the end of apartheid. This created the expectation that the post-apartheid generation would not be exposed to hardship, thus supporting the belief that this generation's views of poverty would be different to those of the generations before. Hence, it is important to assess how generations view the causes of poverty.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection and the Research Instrument

A sample of 240 undergraduate students from a South African University was used. In order to obtain an unbiased sample, a non-random sampling method was used. This means that only undergraduate students aged 20 or below were asked to take part in the study. The questionnaires were handed out to students during a particular class, and were completed and returned to the researcher immediately. The

students were informed that participation was voluntary and non-participation would not affect their academic results. They were also informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. The correctly filled-in questionnaires considered for analysis totaled 203 (approximately 85% response rate). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section captured the different aspects of the students' demographic characteristics, while the second section contained questions about perceptions of the causes of poverty, known as the Feagin scale. This scale comprises twelve statements, where the respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement, using a Likert scale of 1 to 5. This scale provides the following options: Strongly agree (5), agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) (Shek 2004). These statements are as follows: 1) they lack luck, 2) they have bad fate, 3) they have encountered misfortunes, 4) they are born inferior, 5) they are not motivated because of welfare, 6) the distribution of wealth in society is uneven, 7) the society lacks social justice, 8) they are exploited by the rich, 9) they lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families, 10) they waste their money on inappropriate items, 11) they lack the ability to manage money, and 12) they do not actively seek to improve their lives.

Model Specification

This study followed others (Davids 2010; Hunt 2004), which used the principal component analysis (PCA) to construct indices of perceptions of the causes of poverty. PCA is a procedure of reducing variables into a small number of components accounting for maximum variance in a set of observed variables (Hatcher 1994). This means that PCA groups related variables into themes known as components. In the context of this study, the components are the three indices namely, individualistic, structural, and fatalistic. After identifying the perceived causes of poverty of the post-apartheid generation, this study used descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and binary regression to test how demographic variables affect each of the three indices.

The estimated binary regression for each of the three indices is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GEND_i + \beta_2 AGE_i + \beta_3 RACE_i + \beta_4 HOME_i + \beta_5 STUDi + \upsilon_i$$

Where: Y represents the students' perceptions of causes of poverty (1 for individualistic/structural/fatalistic and 0 otherwise), GEND is the gender of a student (1 for female and 0 for male), AGE is how old the student is in years, RACE is the race of the student (1 for Black and 0 otherwise), HOME is the home area of the student (1 for township area and 0 otherwise), and STUD represent a student's studies (1 for Humanities and 0 for commerce studies). β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4, and β_5, represent the coefficients to be estimated, while β_0 and υ_i represent the constant and the error term, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of Participants

Table 1 shows the demographic variables of the participants. The total number of the participants was 203, of which 58.6 percent were female. Of the 203 participants, 59.6 percent were aged 19 years, while 21.2 percent were aged 20 years, and 19.2 percent were 18 years of age. This shows that the participants fall within the age group targeted by this study, the post-apartheid generation. Keeping in line with the racial distribution of first-year students, as well as the campus, the data shows that 71.4 percent of the participants were Black, and only 28.6 percent were non-Black (White, Indian, Colored and others). The data also shows that thirty-six percent of participants come from the townships, while sixty-four percent originate from non-township

Table 1: Demographics (N=203)

Variable		Value	Number	Percentage
Age		18	39	19.2
		19	121	59.6
		20	43	21.2
Gender	Male	84	41.4	
	Female	119	58.6	
Race	Black	145	71.4	
	Non-Black	58	28.6	
Home Area	Township	73	36.0	
	Non-township	130	64.0	
Field of	Commerce	179	88	
Studies	Humanities	24	12	

areas (suburbs, urban and rural areas). Most of participants are enrolled in commerce studies as eighty-two percent of them come from the commerce studies.

The Formation of Indices: Application of PCA

PCA showed that all the variables can be classified under three components derived from the three perceptions of the causes of poverty. Reliability statistics performed on the data revealed a KMO of 0.704 (which is greater than 0.6 required for sample adequacy), while Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at one percent level of significance (p=.000), indicating that the performance of principal component analysis is appropriate (Pallant 2010). The fatalistic factor (factor 1) explains 24.89 percent of the total variance, with an initial eigenvalue of 2.988. The structural factor (factor 2) explains 17.99 percent of the total variance, with an initial eigenvalue of 2.160. The individualistic factor (factor 3) explains 14.69 percent of the total variance, and has an initial eigenvalue of 1.76. All three factors combined have a total variance of 57.59 percent.

Descriptive Analysis

Based on PCA results, three indices were constructed where statements 1-5 focused on the fatalistic index, statements 6-9 focused on the structural index, and statements 10-12 focused on the individualistic index. The mean for these indices showed that the post-apartheid generation perceives poverty to be the consequence of individualistic factors (M = 3.24, SD =

1.09), followed by structural factors (M = 3.18, SD = 0.90) and lastly, fatalistic factors (M = 2.40, SD = 0.80). This is unlike the findings of a study by Shek (2004), which found that Chinese adolescents were less likely to view poverty in terms of individualistic factors. However, one has to note that the individualistic index has a higher standard deviation than other indices, implying a high level of deviation from the mean in this index.

Using the grand mean for each index, two categories were generated for each index. If a participant's average score, for the individualistic index, for example, was equal to or above the grand mean for the index, then it was considered that the participant views the causes of poverty as individualistic. However, if the average score was below the grand mean for the index, then the participant does not perceive causes of poverty as individualistic. The same procedure was applied for structural and fatalistic indices. Binary data of 0 (No) and 1 (Yes) were generated for each index.

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of demographic variables within all indices. For instance, the results show that 63.10 percent of the 84 male participants view poverty as the result of fatalistic factors, compared with only 44.54 percent of the 119 females. On the other hand, 58.14 percent of the 43 participants aged 20-years-old view poverty as the outcome of fatalistic factors, compared with 50.41 percent of the 191 participants aged 19, and 53.85 percent of the participants aged 18-years-old. These results are similar to those of the structural and individualistic indices, which are expected as participants are in the same age range.

Table 2: Distribution of indices with the demographic factors

Factors		Fatalistic index (%)		Individualistic index (%)		Structural index (%)	
		No	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*
Age	18	46.2	53.8	43.6	56.4	48.7	51.3
	19	50.4	49.6	47.9	52.1	46.3	53.7
	20	41.9	58.1	55.8	44.2	51.2	48.8
Gender	Male	36.9	63.1	51.2	48.8	51.2	48.8
	Female	55.5	44.5	47.1	52.9	45.4	54.6
Race	Black	49.0	51.0	53.8	46.2	42.1	57.9
	Non-Black	44.8	55.2	36.2	63.8	62.1	37.9
Home Area	Township	49.3	50.7	50.7	49.3	38.4	61.6
	Non-Township	46.9	53.1	47.7	52.3	53.1	46.9
Field of	Commerce	49.2	50.8	49.2	50.8	49.7	50.3
Studies	Humanities	37.5	62.5	45.8	54.2	33.3	66.7

When it comes to the participants' race, the results show that 55.17 percent of the 58 non-Black participants perceive poverty to be the outcome of fatalistic factors, compared with only 51.03 percent of the 145 Black participants. There seems to be no major difference between race categories, but a large difference between Black and non-Black within the individualistic and structural indices are observed. A large number of non-Black participants (63%) tend to perceive poverty as individualistic compared to 46.2 percent of Black participants. For the structural index, 57.9 percent of the Black participants perceived the causes of poverty as structural compared to 37.9 percent of non-Black participants. These results suggest that Black students perceive the causes of poverty as structural, while non-Black students tend to see causes of poverty as individualistic. This is in line with expected results as the majority of Black students come from a previously disadvantaged background and are prone to blaming the system for the causes of poverty. These findings are similar to studies by Griffin and Oheneba-Sakyi (1993) and Kluegel and Smith (1986), which found that African Americans tended to view the causes of poverty as structural.

Results for home area are similar to the outcomes of the comparison based on race, where it is revealed that 53.08 percent of non-township respondents perceived poverty to be the result of fatalistic factors, compared with 50.68 percent of township respondents. The results for the fatalistic and individualistic factors are almost the same between students from township areas and those from non-township areas. However, the results of the comparison for the structural index show that 61.64 percent of the 73 township respondents perceive poverty to be the result of structural factors, compared with only 46.92 percent of the non-township respon-

dents. A plausible explanation for this lies within the nature of township areas, which are often underdeveloped urban living areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of apartheid, were reserved for non-Whites, principally Black Africans and Coloreds (Ellis 2003). Thus, township dwellers, who are more likely to be Black, will tend to blame the system for the causes poverty. A study by Hunt (1996) revealed an intersection between education, race and perceptions of the causes of poverty. This study found that African Americans with low education levels tended to blame poverty on structural factors, as is the case with Black South African students.

A comparison of participants based on their field of study shows that perceptions of the causes of poverty are high among the participants from the Faculty of Humanities. A comparison between major differences is observed with the fatalistic and structural indices. A higher percentage is observed in the structural index, where 66.7 percent of participants from Humanities perceived the causes of poverty as structural as compared to 50.3 percent participants from Economic Science and Information Technology. This suggests that Humanities students tend to view poverty as structural. In a study by Ljubotina and Ljubotina (2007) comparing perceptions of the causes of poverty amongst social work and non-social work students using the Attribution of Poverty Scale found that social work students were less likely to blame poverty on individualistic factors.

Correlation Between Indices and Demographic Variables

Table 3 shows the correlation for the structural index, individualistic index, fatalistic index, and the respondents' demographic variables. According to these results, while there is a neg-

Table 3: Pearson's correlation between indices and demographics

Factors		Fatalistic	Structural	Individualistic
Age	Coefficient	.030	-.017	-.078
	Sig. (P-values)	(.674)	(.811)	(.267)
Gender	Coefficient	-.183**	.057	.041
	Sig. (P-values).	(.009)	(.417)	(.564)
Race	Coefficient	.037	.181**	-.159*
	Sig. (P-values)	(.596)	(.010)	(.024)
Home Area	Coefficient	-.023	.141*	-.029
	Sig. (P-values).	(.745)	(.044)	(.684)
Field of studies	Coefficient	.075	.106	.022
	Sig. (P-values)	(.285)	(.133)	(.761)

**Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

ative correlation between the structural index and age, as well as the individualistic index and age, neither of these correlations are significant. There is also no significant correlation between the respondents' age and the fatalistic index, although this correlation is positive. This means that there is no significant association between age and respondents' perceptions regarding the causes of poverty.

There is a significant (at the 0.01 level of significance) but negative correlation between gender and the fatalistic index (-.183). This suggests that females are less likely to view poverty as the outcome of fatalistic factors than males. Table 3 also reveals that there is no significant correlation between gender and the structural as well as individualistic indices. This is unlike the correlation between race and the three indices, where the results show that the only significant correlation is between the structural index and the respondents' race. The correlation between race and the structural index is positive (.181) and significant at the 0.01 level of significance, implying that being Black increases the likelihood of viewing poverty as the consequence of structural factors. Although not significant, the correlation between the individualistic index, fatalistic index, and the respondents' race is negative, indicating a decline in the likelihood of Black respondents viewing poverty as the consequence of individualistic or fatalistic factors. The correlation between the field of study and the three indices is not significant. This suggests that there is not a significant association between field of study and perceptions of the causes of poverty. Overall correlation results seem to be in line with the descriptive analysis in Table 2. However, further analysis is needed to confirm the outcomes of the correlation and descriptive analysis.

Discussion of Regression Results

Estimates of the binary logistic regressions from the three indices are presented in Table 4. For fatalistic regression, only gender is statically significant at the one percent level of significance and it has a negative sign. This implies that being female, as compared to male, decreases the probability of perceiving causes of poverty as fatalistic. The odds ratio of 0.42 means that holding other factors constant, female participants are fifty-eight percent (0.42-1) less likely to perceive causes of poverty as fatalistic than male participants. This means that the probability of perceiving causes of poverty as fatalistic tends to decrease if the participant is female. This finding is similar to the correlation results and the outcomes from the descriptive analysis, which shows that a larger percentage of males perceived the causes of poverty as fatalistic. Although other variables are not statistically significant, they have expected signs, which confirm the constancy between regression results and outcomes of correlation and descriptive statistics. These results are in line with the findings from the study conducted by Salmond et al. (2006), which found gender to be an important variable influencing how people perceive poverty. More specifically, these findings are similar to Shek's (2004) study, which found that Chinese mothers were more likely than Chinese fathers to attribute poverty to fatalistic factors. Age, race, home area and the field of study have negative coefficients with a high p-value (>0.1), implying that the effect of these variables on the probability of perceiving the causes of poverty as fatalistic is not statically significant. This is in line with the studies by Garidzirai (2013), Grobler and Dunga (2014) and Maseko et al. (2014),

Table 4: Logistic regression result

Dependent	Fatalistic perceptions				Structural perceptions				Individualistic perceptions			
Predictors	β	S.E	Sig.	OR*	β	S.E	Sig	OR	β	S.E	Sig.	OR
GEND	-.866	.302	.004	0.42	.226	.299	.449	1.25	.067	.296	.820	1.07
AGE	-.055	.242	.822	0.95	-.181	.242	.454	0.83	-.285	.241	.237	0.75
RACE	-.297	.369	.420	0.74	.622	.367	.091	1.86	-.872	.370	.018	0.48
HOME	-.012	.342	.971	0.99	.351	.342	.304	1.42	.271	.337	.422	1.31
STUD	.784	.496	.114	2.19	.655	.498	.189	1.93	.472	.482	.328	1.60
Constant	1.765	4.617	.702	5.84	2.759	4.61	.304	15.8	5.90	4.591	.199	365.8

Chi-square10.094 (Sig. 039)10.490 (Sig. 042)7.768 (Sig. 099)
* OR (Odds Ratio) = Exp(â)

which found fatalistic causes of poverty are not significant among the South Africans.

Results from the logistic regression on structural factors show that the coefficient for race is negative and statistically significant at the ten percent level of significance. This implies that being a Black participant (as compared to non-Black) increases the probability of perceiving the causes of poverty as structural. The odds ratio of 1.86 implies that structural perceived causes of poverty are likely to be eighty-six percent (1.86-1) higher in Black students than non-Black students, holding other factors constant. This is similar to the correlation analysis, which reported a positive significant correlation between race and structural perceptions of causes of poverty. Furthermore, these results confirm the descriptive analysis, which showed that a larger percentage of Black participants were inclined to structural statistics. These results are in line with the findings from other studies (Davids 2010; Hunt 2004; Garidzirai 2013; Grobler and Dunga 2014), which found that Black participants tend to view causes of poverty as structural. The p-values values for remaining variables in the regression on structural causes of poverty are very high (>0.1), implying that their effect on structural causes of poverty is not statistically significant.

Results from the logistic regression of the individualistic factors show that the coefficient for race is negative and statically significant at the five percent level of significance. This suggests that being a Black participant (as opposed to non-Black) tends to decrease the probability of perceiving the causes of poverty as individualistic. The odds ratio of 0.48 implies that being a Black participant (as opposed to non-Black) tends to decrease the probability of perceiving the causes of poverty as individualistic by fifty-two percent (0.48-1), holding other factors constant. In other words, Black respondents are not more inclined to individualistic causes of poverty. This confirms outcomes from the correlation and descriptive statistics, which showed a low level of association between Black participants and the individualistic factors. These findings are in line with other studies (Klasen 2000; Nasser et al. 2002), which found that race has an effect on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Overall regression results confirmed the relationship between the various factors of perceptions of the causes of poverty and demographic variables such gender and race. Al-though coefficients for home area were not significant in the regressions, correlation and descriptive analysis showed that home area affects some of the factors of perceptions of poverty. For age, all three methods of analysis used in this study are in consensus that age was not linked to perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is purely related to lack of variability in age, as this study targeted a single age group (the post-apartheid generation). In the context of this study, the major determinants of the perceptions of the causes of poverty among South Africa's post-apartheid generation seem to be gender, race and home area.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated different demographic variables that influence the perception of the causes of poverty of the post-apartheid generation. These variables were age, gender, race, field of study, as well as the respondent's home area. Based on the findings, there is no significant difference in perceptions between respondents aged 18 to 20 years old. However, the results revealed significant correlations between the respondents' race and the three indices, as well as between the respondents' home area and the three indices. It is important to note that race often determines where a respondent's home area might be (since the majority of Black South Africans, regardless of age, reside in townships and rural areas). This suggests that race and home area can be grouped together to explain one important correlation with the three indices.

The three methods of analysis used in this study showed that age was not linked to perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is purely related to lack of variability in age, as this study targeted a single age group (the post-apartheid generation). The field of study was also not significant in explaining the perceptions of the causes of poverty. Overall, major determinants of perceptions of the causes of poverty among the South African post-apartheid generation are gender, race and home area. These variables mostly represent a group of students from low-income families, which were previously disadvantaged during the apartheid era. Findings of this study seem to suggest that the post-apartheid generation may not perceive causes of poverty differently from other generations but confirmed that South African youth from disadvantaged communities perceive society to be the cause of poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of this study revealed that members of disadvantaged communities tend to perceive society as the root cause of poverty, suggesting that policymakers should address the imbalances in South African communities. Programs such as the promotion of gender equality in low-income area may assist in addressing how individuals perceive poverty and its causes.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited in as much as it only analyzed the perceived causes of poverty in the post-apartheid generation. Extending the analysis to other generations could shed more light on the topic. Hence, further research can compare the perceptions of different generations to confirm whether the legacy of apartheid still has an effect on the post-apartheid generation's view regarding the causes of poverty.

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