

Analysing the Determinants of Poverty among Female-Headed Households: The Case of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a critical and complex phenomenon in developing countries, South Africa included. Over the years, poverty has escalated significantly, particularly in Africa, while it has declined in most developed regions. The worsening statistics in Africa have raised concerns of a lack of understanding of poverty among policymakers and governments. In South Africa, poverty has been increasing, with more than 50 percent of households living in poverty. Additionally, approximately 26 percent of females live in extreme poverty, while at the same time the country is experiencing a growing trend of female-headed households continually identified as vulnerable to the indignities of poverty compared to male-headed households. Although poverty in South Africa has been studied extensively, existing literature shows that it is still a debatable topic, since the dynamics have not improved much, but rather worsened in recent years particularly post-apartheid. Using the 2018 general household survey data with a sample of 19 219 observations collected by Statistics South Africa, the primary objective of the study is to examine the determinants of poverty among female-headed households in South Africa. The study uses the following statistical methods: descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations and a binary logistic regression. The estimated results show that factors such as education level, employment status, age, gender, race, household size and marital status determine the poverty status of female-headed households. Females experience higher levels of poverty when compared to their male counterpart using the upper bound poverty line.

Keywords: Poverty, household, female-headed household, male-headed households, South Africa