Feminization of poverty within rural households of Thulamela Municipality in South Africa

By

Matimba George Ngonyama

University of Venda

(PHDRDV)

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FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY WITHIN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS OF THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

By

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(11622585)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in Rural Development (PHDRDV) Degree

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DECLARATION

I, Matimba George Ngonyama, hereby declare that the work, "Feminization of Poverty within the Rural Villages of Thulamela Municipality of South Africa" presented for the Doctor of Philosophy in Rural Development (PHDRDV) Degree, submitted to the Institute for Rural Development, School of Agriculture at the University of Venda has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or another university. It is original in design and in execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Student's Signature ---------- **Date** 09/09/2016

Ngonyama M.G.

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"Feminization of poverty" is a concept that has been a subject of interest for social and economic development scientists since the 1970s when Diana Pearce coined it. Over the past decades, many studies have been carried out in order to gain deeper insights into it. Most of the studies have revealed that female-headed households are poorer than the male-headed ones. However, two major conceptual and methodological weaknesses are evident in the studies, viz.: presenting different types of female-headed households as a homogeneous mass with the uniform characteristics; and the use of monetary metrics and household consumption as baseline indices and principal causes of feminization of poverty. Based on the situation articulated above, it can be argued that the current approaches fail to capture the dynamics inherent in the various types of female-headed households. Moreover, there is a paucity of literature generated through interrogating the views of the people embedded in poor communities. Yet, these have deep knowledge on what poverty means to them, its characteristics and who they perceive to be most affected. Against this background, exploratory sequentially integrated mixed methods studies were undertaken in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. The studies, which sought the perceptions of youth and adults of both sexes in three villages, were designed to: (i) derive the interest group-perceived meaning of household poverty, its determinants and characteristics; (ii) dichotomize types of households and analyse their dynamics; and (iii) analyse the coping strategies that various types of rural households used.

A qualitative research approach was employed for the first phase of the study. The study explored community members' perceptions on the meaning of household poverty, its determinants and characteristics. Perceptions of community members on the poorest households and coping strategies to enhance their livelihoods were also explored. The criterion purposive sampling method was used to select the 51 respondents from the three villages. The sample comprised men, women as well as in and out of school youth. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The collected data were analyzed using the Thematic Content Analysis method. The most common definitions of poverty were the inability to meet basic needs (76 %) and insufficient monthly income (47 %). The following were perceived as the major characteristics of poverty: inability to meet daily basic needs (54 %), lack of regular income (37 %), poor state of family dwellings (35 %), and tattered clothing items (24 %). Lack of employment opportunities (84 %) and low level of education and skills (51 %) were regarded as

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the major causes of poverty. Almost half of the respondents (47 %) perceived male-headed households of unemployed men as the poorest, followed by the widow-headed households (31 %) and other types of female-headed households (27 %).

In phase 2 of the study, multiple stratification and purposive sampling methods were used to select 151 respondents from the same villages as in phase 1. They represented cohorts of men, women plus in and out of school youth. Recruited contact persons from each village coordinated the mobilization of community members. Data were collected using a questionnaire, which was developed through consolidating the results of phase 1. The questionnaire contained 13 items that described the characteristics of poverty. Data were collected through 151 self-administered individual questionnaires and 13 focus group discussions. Respondents ranked the various characteristics of poverty to compare the different types of households. Effects of gender and age on each characteristic of poverty were determined using the Mann Whitney test. The Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney tests were used to determine if there were differences in perceived poverty among the villages. There were no differences in the perceived effects of age group on all the 13 characteristics of poverty ($P > 0.05$). However, female respondents agreed more than male respondents in most of the 13 characteristics ($P < 0.05$). The residents of Mahonisi village consistently agreed more ($P < 0.001$) with most of the perceived characteristics of poverty than their counterparts from Jimmy Jones and Mahonisi villages. Households in which the married male head resided in the village were perceived to be worse off followed by those in which widows and widowers were the heads.

The results of this study revealed that although poverty existed in all the household types, there was no evidence of feminization. In fact, the poorest households were those in which the male head resided in the villages. Thus the notion that female-headed households were the poorest was invalid when shared views of rural community members were taken into account. This implies that current social protection policies and strategies that are biased towards female-headed households should be reconsidered. For South Africa, the results of this study suggest that the Department of Social Development and also the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) should reconsider their support systems, taking into account that specifically targeting female-headed households as the most needy might actually be worsening poverty in the most vulnerable male-headed ones. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed: (i) conduct a broader and robust study to determine whether the views of community members of Ward 14 resonate with those in other rural areas of South

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Africa, (ii) determine the relationship between alcohol consumption and household poverty; (iii) explore whether masculinization of poverty exists within rural households; and (iv) the typology of households used in this study is unique, has never been used in poverty studies and thus forms the basis of making more objective and appropriate targeting decisions on social protection.

Key words: Household, poverty, feminization, rural areas

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To my wife, Mrs. Susan Ngonyama and my three boys: Vutlharhi, Nsuku and Ntsako. May this study be a source of inspiration to all of you. *Vatsonga va ri dyondzo i xithlangu ndzangu wanga*
(The Vatsonga people say education is the shield my family)

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AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
FHHs	Female Headed Households
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MHHs	Male Headed Households
MRC	Medical Research Council
SANCO	South African National Civic Organization
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SA-PPA	South African Participatory Poverty Assessment
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan
UNIVEN	University of Venda
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

'Feminisation of poverty' was conceptualized in the 1970s by Diana Pearce, a United States of America (USA) sociologist. She had discovered that the number of female-headed households (FHHs) that suffered poverty disproportionately was increasing at a much faster rate than other types (Pearce, 1978). She further noted that many of these women became pauperized and relied heavily on the welfare system for survival. This was despite the fact that many had achieved economic independence from their husbands due to their participation in labour force and in some cases divorce (Pearce, 1978).

Although the concept was conceptualized in the 1970s, it was only in the mid-90s that it was added to the lexicon associated with development (Chant, 2008). The 'feminization of poverty' thesis has been responsible not only for drawing attention to the 'great number of women living in poverty. The concept also attributed for highlighting the impact of macro-economic policies on women. It further calls for women to be recognized in the development process and promoting consciousness of the existence and vulnerability of FHHs (Wennerholm, 2002). This conceptualization was coloured by two broad areas of concern: the general development debate and feminists' interests. The intersection of these two concerns with poverty has paved the ground for the 'feminization of poverty' as a concept, both to how the term has been conceptualized as well as to the critique of its use (Wennerholm, 2002).

It was for the same reason that Williams and Lee-Smith (2000: 1) contended that: 'The feminisation of poverty is more than a slogan: it is a marching call that impels us to question our assumptions about poverty itself by examining how it is caused, manifested and reduced, and to do this from a gender perspective'. The three most commonly identified elements of the 'feminisation of poverty' are: (a) that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor; (b) that this trend is deepening; and (c) that women's increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Moghadam, 1997, Chant, 2003 , Chant, 2009). The concept has gained its popularity during the last two decades. Many studies having been commissioned on the subject across the world as the interest from both researchers and governments grew (Chant, 1997; 2003; 2007; Arndt, 2002; Bhorat and van der

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Westhuizen, 2008; Dungumaro, 2008 and Posel and Rogan, 2009). Empirical evidence from across the world confirms that female headed households suffered increased incidence of poverty when compared to other household types, confirming the long-held view (Pearce, 1978; Brady & Kall, 2008; Goldberg, 2009; Rogan, 2013). The increased poverty in these households was evident in the growing number of women and children who were poor as observed by Heintz and Jardine (2008).

There is therefore a consensus and an acknowledgement from the international community that poverty is both quantitatively and qualitatively different for FHHs when compared with their male counterparts. This is attributed to both the economic and social discrimination that women in general continue to face when it comes to access to education, health care, food security, access to land and labour market (Arndt, 2002; Dominelli, 2004; Sewpaul, 2005; Triegaardt, 2009). In their recent study Kang'ethe and Munzara (2014) found that FHHs' susceptibility to poverty was mainly attributed to the multiple roles they play within the family. They argue that in addition to being sole breadwinners in the family, women heads must also play a double role of being the mother and taking the place of the father to their children. The phenomenon stifles women's chance to engage in full employment as they are sometimes forced to physically be with their children especially when they are young (Kang'ethe and Munzara, 2014).

In South Africa, the African National Congress-led government has, in the past two decades, implemented policies and prescripts geared at women empowerment. Policies such as the Affirmative Action, research findings continue to reveal that the country has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world in which equality of all citizens is guaranteed. In particular, chapter two guarantees the right to equality of all citizens and affirms the democratic values of human freedom, equality and freedom (Bobo, 2011). In addition, the country is also a subscriber to international declarations such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, despite all the guarantees and commitments made, majority of women in South Africa remain subjected to numerous harmful cultural and religious practices across all sectors and in all communities, impeding their access to rights. Research findings reveal that a gender poverty gap in terms of income that is skewed against women continue to exist more than two decades since the dawn of democracy (Rogan, 2013). This poverty gap is even more significant at the household level with households headed by women more than poorer than households headed by men (depending on the measure used) (Rogan, 2013). Of the affected group, rural FHHs have been found to be in a dire situation as they are forced to subscribe to tribal authorities who do not

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favour women (Bobo, 2011). Another observation worth noting is that Individuals in FHHs are also less likely to be economically active than individuals living in households with male household heads (Statssa, 2009). This is attributed to the low earning capacity and insufficient/inadequate public benefits (Roman, 2011). Statistics reveal that most of the country's FHHs relied on government-funded social welfare grants as their main source of household's monthly income. The statistics further show that FHHs are more likely than MHHs to indicate remittances (14% to 6%) (Statssa, 2011).

However, despite the invested interests over the past four decades, feminization of poverty remains a controversial subject with authors failing to reach a consensus on its meaning. The challenge with many of the existing studies is that most of them often referred to "feminization of poverty" without adequate specification or substantiation, and that they do not necessarily highlight aspects of poverty that are most relevant to women at the grassroots level (Chant, 2006). Consequently, most poverty studies seem to target women-headed households while in reality male headed households are as much vulnerable to poverty like any other household type. Three important critiques of this literature remain. The first is the tendency to treat households as unified entities without recognition of intra-household tensions or power dynamics. The second is the treatment of households as bounded units to the exclusion of investigating the extended family and inter-household connections in which households are embedded (Guyer, 1981, Clark, 1984 and Folbre, 1986). The third is the need to situate female-headed households in appropriate historical and geographic contexts.

Therefore, discussing women's poverty by limiting the study solely to examining female heads of households may not encompass the overall experience of South African women, particularly those living in rural areas. It was for the same reason that Feminist scholars tried to deconstruct this group by bringing attention to its variation and complexity. Female-headed households are often reported as being more dependent heavy, and having low socio-economic status (Chant, 1997; 2003; 2007; Datta and McIlwaine, 2000; Fuwa, 2000; Posel, 2001 and Varley, 1996). Most literature on female-headship in Africa focuses on children's wellbeing and households' economic wellbeing (e.g. Buvinic, 1997). The problem with most of the existing studies is that they fail to reveal and acknowledge the heterogeneity of FHHs. In fact, most poverty analyses do not disaggregate groups of women; rather, they assume that all FHHs types are vulnerable and poor. Such an approach has serious pitfalls as it fails to acknowledge the different household dynamics that define each household type.

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This approach often neglects to expand the discussion into the experiences of individual household type which may reveal other causes of poverty. These shortcomings further mask variation in vulnerability and risk within and across contexts. This in turn affect our understanding of the relationship between poverty, vulnerability, and female headship. It is therefore important that sub-groups of these households always be used as a distinctive factor whenever studies relating to poverty among households are considered. This is because these sub-groups are often governed by different household dynamics with unique needs and aspirations, making them heterogeneous, rather than homogeneous groups. Furthermore, the characteristics of these subgroups vary considerably between contexts depending on a number of factors, including the extent of social support available and the degree of social legitimacy accorded to different types of FHHs (Baden and Milward, 2000). It is therefore this researcher view that such family dynamics require the disaggregation of this heterogeneous group into subgroups.

Furthermore, many studies on feminization of poverty have relied on household's income and expenditure patterns, mostly from national surveys, to make a determination on the welfare of FHHs. The challenge with it is that it is a one-dimensional approach and may make women's poverty appear less significant (Chant, 2010). A broader perspective should be taken on women's poverty which goes beyond discussions of the income status of female householders should therefore be considered. In addition to the income aspect, the measurement of poverty should also encompass other aspects such as how the poor perceived poverty and its accompanying characteristics as well as the welfare of each household type. It is only through multi-dimensional approaches to studying poverty that a true state of FHHs Vis a Vis MHHs can be revealed.

In addition, South African government has for the past two decades put in place measures that seek to empower women, both socially and economically. It is important to also explore the difference that these women have made in improving the lives of the women, particularly those in rural areas. Furthermore, women in rural areas continue to be the backbones of their households and continue to work hard in trying to provide for their families. Yet their knowledge, skills as well as their potential to successfully provide for their families continue to be overlooked by many researchers studying household poverty. Many women today make personal choice not to get married, a consequent of a variety of reasons, ranging from abusive relationships to a desire to make their own decisions with regard to the running of their households. Therefore the

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present study attempts to apply a new conceptual framework by looking at different types of FHHs and MHHs as units of analysis instead of looking at them as two homogeneous groups as it has been the case with many studies.

This study therefore aimed at examining the causes and characteristics of poverty as well as the coping strategies of individual household types. It was envisaged that such an approach will provide a vintage point through which a determination about the most vulnerable household(s) could be made. At the same time, this study expands the unit of analysis to the individual FHHs and MHHs groups. Such an approach will lead to a thorough interrogation of individual subgroups. This could subsequently leads to the identification of the most vulnerable groups among both the FHHs and MHHs. Such an approach could further aid the government and development agencies to move away from mostly ineffective "one size fits all" poverty alleviation strategies to a more context specific poverty alleviation strategies addressing individual needs of different household types. The reason for choosing villages located within Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality was mainly because the poverty rate for female householders appears at a high level.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Feminization of poverty has been a subject of interest for researchers and governments alike since its conceptualization by Diana Pearce in the 1970s. Many studies have since been carried out to date as people tried to determine its existence within their own context and its implications on female-headship and poverty. However, many of these studies are characterized by two major conceptual and methodological weaknesses. Firstly, many of these studies present different types of female-headed households as a homogeneous mass with the same characteristics. Secondly, monetary poverty and household consumption seem to be used as baseline indexes and major causes of feminized of poverty. The challenge with the current approaches is that firstly, they fail to capture the household dynamics of different types of female-headed households. Secondly, many of the studies seem to neglect the views of the poor who are the experts on what poverty means to them, its characteristics and who they perceived to be most affected by poverty. Furthermore, statistics show that majority of households in Limpopo Province were female-headed and resided in rural areas. However, limited empirical data currently existed on the existence of feminization of poverty in these grassroots communities and its implications for rural development and poverty alleviation. Taking the issues explained above, the current study recognized the view that the lack of

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information on the state of poverty in various types of households in Thulamela Municipality had serious implications for rural development and anti-poverty programmes. This situation necessitated conducting a study that might provide scientifically-generated information, obtained from those directly affected, on the existence and implications of feminization of poverty among FHHs in rural areas.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to explore the existence of feminization of poverty among various types of households in rural areas of Thulamela Municipality in order to suggest informed intervention strategies. The study had the following specific objectives:

a) to determine the meaning of poverty as perceived by community members in rural areas;

b) to assess the determinants of poverty in households based in rural areas;

c) to determine the major characteristics of household poverty as perceived by community members in rural areas;

d) to assess the strategies various types of households use to cope with poverty;

e) Determine the poorest household types as perceived by community members in rural areas; and

f) Make recommendations for more gender-sensitive, poverty alleviation strategies, focusing specifically on further research, policy and development practice

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

a) How do people in rural communities define poverty and well-being, including their own conceptions of vulnerability to being poor?
b) What are the major determinants of household poverty in rural areas?
c) What do people in rural communities perceive to be the major characteristics of poverty within various types of households located in their communities?
d) Are female-headed households more susceptible to poverty than male-headed households?

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e) What do community members in rural areas perceive to be the most common causes of poverty within various types of households in rural areas?

f) What do community members perceive to be the most common strategies various types of households in rural areas use to cope with poverty?

1.5 Operational Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

In this study, *household* refers to "a group of people who normally live and eat together in the same dwelling and consider themselves a unit in making plans and decisions about daily life" (Moser, 1996: 49).

Rosenhouse (1989:4) defined *head of household* as "an individual who has a regular presence at home and has an overriding authority in important household decision matters and provides a consistent and economic support" applies in this study.

The South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SA-PPA) (May, 1998: 38) defined *poverty* as isolation from the community, lack of security, low wages, and lack of employment opportunities, poor nutrition, and poor access to water, having too many children, poor education opportunities, amongst other." This definition is appropriate for use in this study.

The definition of *female-headed household* adopted for use in this study is the one that the International Labour Organization (ILO Thesaurus, 2005: unnumbered) proposes, viz. "….. where either no adult male are present owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage or widowhood, or where men, although present, do not contribute to the household income".

Medeiros and Costa (2008:11) define *feminization* as an action, a process of becoming more feminine. Thus, the precise definition of *feminization of poverty* depends on two subsidiary questions: what is *poverty* and what is *feminization*? Poverty is lack of resources, capabilities or freedoms that are commonly called the dimensions of poverty. The term "feminization" is used to indicate a gender-biased change in any of these dimensions (Medeiros and Costa, 2008).

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1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The general introduction to the study is covered in Chapter 1. It encompasses the background and the significance, objectives, the statement of the research problem, research questions and definitions of operational concepts. In Chapter 2, the focus shifts to 'Review of Literature on the Feminization of Poverty". The origins of the "feminization of poverty" concept, its meaning and existing literature on it that is drawn from existing literature is covered. Evidence of feminization of poverty is drawn from various parts of the world, starting with international perspectives before focusing on African and then South African realities. Special attention is also devoted to an examination of South African policies on gender equality and women empowerment. The thesis has adopted a paper format. Therefore, chapters 3-6 are based on empirical data collected during the first phase of the study, which was mainly exploratory and qualitative. Each chapter consists of its title, abstract, introduction, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion. In particular, chapter 3 contains the findings on the types of rural households most vulnerable to poverty based on the perceptions of key informants. Key informants-perceived causes of poverty among rural households are presented in Chapter 4. The perceived characteristics of rural household poverty are then explained in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the coping strategies that heads of different types of households use in an attempt to mitigate the impact of poverty are explained. The results of a quantitative study on perceived characteristics, causes and coping strategies used to combat poverty are presented in Chapter 7. Chapter eight is a synthesis of the contents of Chapters 1-7. In it are the following sections: general discussion, methodological issues and general overview of the study. The overview of the study addresses issues pertaining to stakeholder participation, acknowledgement of gender roles, major outputs of the study. Thereafter, conclusion and recommendations are made specifically paying attention to further research, policy and development practice.

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2.1 Introduction

There is growing evidence not only of a substantial increase in woman-headed households all over the world but also of the severely disadvantaged economic condition of these households. These women are amongst the poorest of the poor belonging to what may be termed a "Fifth World" (Mohiuddin, 2011). Marital status, lack of access to productive resources and income were identified as some of factors that increased their vulnerabilities. (Mohiuddin, 2011). The purpose of this chapter was to review the existing literature on the concept of "feminization of poverty". Some of the aspects covered include; the history of feminization of poverty as well as empirical findings of studies conducted on the subject across the world. The chapter concluded by reviewing the gaps in literature which characterized the feminization of poverty concept.

2.2 The history and emergence of the concept of feminization of poverty

Williams and Lee-Smith (2000: 1) contend: 'The feminisation of poverty is more than a slogan: it is a marching call that impels us to question our assumptions about poverty itself by examining how it is caused, manifested and reduced, and to do this from a gender perspective'. The term was originated in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States of America. Its conceptualization emanated from the debates encompassing women/gender and the high rate of poverty among FHHs in the United States of America (Chin-sung Chung, 2006 and Wennerholm, 2002).

This conceptualization was coloured by two broad areas of concern: the general development debate and feminists' interests. The intersection of these two concerns with poverty has paved the ground for the 'feminization of poverty' as a concept, both to how the term has been conceptualized as well as to the critique of its use (Wennerholm, 2002). The three most commonly identified elements of the 'feminisation of poverty' are: (a) that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor; (b) that this trend is deepening; and (c) that women's increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Moghadam, 1997, Chant, 2003 in Chant, 2009). According to Wennerholm (2002) the 'feminization of poverty' thesis has been responsible not only for drawing attention to the 'great number of women living in poverty' but in highlighting the impact of macro-economic

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policies on women, calling for women to be recognized in the development process and promoting consciousness of the existence and vulnerability of FHHs.

The term "feminization was made popular by Diane Pearce after her study, which focused in the gender patterns in the evolution of poverty rates in the United States between the beginning of the 1950's and the mid 1970's (Pearce, 1978). Diane initiated her study after observing that two-thirds of the poor in the U.S. were women over the age of 16 and that women's economic status had declined from 1950 to the mid-1970s. FHHs, she noted, had formed a larger and larger percentage of the poor. This decline took place even though more women had entered the labour force in those years (Vargas and Boris, 2009). In her research she used two concepts of feminization of poverty, the first being "an increase of women among the poor" and the second "an increase of FHHs among the poor households", the latter becoming the core definition in Pearce's work (Pearce, 1978).

2.3 Feminization of Poverty: World's Perspective

2.3.1 Feminization of poverty: Asian-Pacific Region

Research findings have revealed that FHHs in most countries within the Asia-Pacific region, particularly those residing in rural areas are confronted by several challenges, making them vulnerable to poverty. These challenges seem to be perpetuated by traditional and cultural practices that usually lead to gender inequalities against women. These existing cultural and traditional practices in most countries continue to increase the marginalization of women from land and resource usage rights (in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies), thereby increasing the feminization of poverty (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2009). Most Asian societies remain a patriarchal ones where gender inequality remains a severe impediment to development and one of the most visible violations of human rights (CEDAW, 2009).

Women continue to face, at times severe inequalities, in all spheres of life: social, cultural, economic and political. This is despite the fact that the country is a signatory to the CEDAW and that men and women have equal rights under the country's constitution (CEDAW, 2009). Cultural practices also have been found to be the main obstacle to the FHHs' emancipation. For instance in Bangladesh Habib (2010) found that because of patriarchal society, the husband

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has a unilateral right to divorce his wife without even showing grounds, resulting in the increasing cases of divorce, separation and abandonment. Even in cases where the husband re-marries, Habib (2010) reported that he seldom looks after the first wife which makes it difficult for the woman to adjust to the newly family circumstances. This in turn forces the first wives started to live separately and run their households by themselves (Habib 2010).

For instance in Solomon Islands the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) (2008) found that FHHs in rural areas are over-represented in the lowest quintile (20%) of households. This suggested that these households are amongst the very poorest in these areas. Overall, FHHs are estimated to account for 6.5% of all households, but account for around 7.3% of all those households falling below the basic needs poverty line (UNDP, 2008). In India its social and cultural practices continue to be biggest obstacle that continues to condemn FHHs to live of poverty. This is because they restrict women's access to work and education. These cultural practices dictate that girl children spend more time in household's chores while boy children spend their time learning skills that will make them economically productive (Dunlop and Velkoff 1999; Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa, 2004).

Of the vulnerable women groups in the region, widows have been found to be the most vulnerable (Habib, 2010). The research findings have revealed that widows from some countries within the region find it difficult to meet their families' basic needs. The widows' vulnerability could be seen in Bangladesh where Habib (2010) found that widows suffer neglect after the death of a husband, with no one from the surviving family members coming forth to take over the responsibilities of the dead husband. This in turn forces the widow to take the role of breadwinning in order for the family to survive (Habib, 2010). One possible explanation for their marginalisation and social exclusion of widows is that in a context of modernisation and commoditisation of social relationships, intra- and inter-family relations are increasingly determined by poverty and material well-being rather than traditional socio-cultural norms (Tvedten, *et al.*, 2008). This means that as women, they find it difficult to participate in labour market as freely as men do due to their limited skills (Dunlop and Velkoff 1999).

Perhaps one of the biggest challenge that continue to subject women, particularly the female household heads to endless poverty is a lack of asset. Ownership of physical and financial assets constitutes one of the main means of generating income and hence expenditures and consumption. In addition to being means of production, some assets also generate rent

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(housing and land), interest (savings), and profit (land, business assets), or components of income (Deere, Alvarado and Twyman, 2010). According to Rustagi and Menon (2010) assets ownership have major implications for women's economic and social rights and they are equally effective for reducing the vulnerability and dependence levels of women. These views are consistent with the earlier study by Deere and Doss (2006) who found that women's ownership of assets is likely to prevent them from falling into poverty and destitution, thus leading to better outcomes for their children.

The above arguments are based on the fact that women use property and social assets to negotiate for the right to work, control their own income, move freely, and live without spousal violence (Friedemann-Sanchez, 2006). Furthermore assets constitute an important buffer during emergencies, since they can be pawned or sold (Antonopoulos and Floro 2005). However, despite the importance of asset ownership as outlined above, women in most Asia-Pacific region continue to be denied an opportunity to own assets. The major influence and constraint in women's ownership and access to land and property, apart from economic and social structures, stems from the operation of customary laws, especially marriage and inheritance practices (Rustagi and Menon, 2010).

The historical, political, legal, economic and socio-cultural and religious differences prevalent among these countries have led to widespread variations in asset ownership and control among women of this region (Rustagi and Menon, 2010). A typical example could be seen in Bangladeshi society where because of cultural practices, married daughters are expected to give up their inheritance rights in exchange for the right to visit their father's/brother's home (Zahan, 1999). This is done to keep positive relations with their natal families and to ensure continued visiting and support in times of crisis (White, 1992; Zahan, 1999). In India, while the practice of dowry usually means that women may receive gifts in marriage which may include assets such land, livestock, jewellery, sewing machine and vehicle, in most cases they do not have control over such assets. In some cases ownership of the gifts received as dowry is not a right of the women, but is subject to inter-personal relations and family considerations, even resulting in dowry-related violence and deaths (Rustagi and Menon, 2010).

Poor asset ownership, cultural practices and labour discrimination against women carry serious repercussions as the lack of property or resources put them in a more dependent and vulnerable position, making them more susceptible to food insecurity (Habib, 2010). Food

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insecurity has been found to be the biggest challenge facing FHHs in most Asian countries. Asian women continue to be vulnerable to food insecurity despite their considerable efforts to earn adequate incomes to feed and manage their families. Research findings reveal that ultra-poor women and their children suffered from chronic food insecurity punctuated by periods of absolute food deprivation (McIntyre, Rondeau, Kirkpatrick, Hatfield, Islam and Huda (2011).

Research findings in many parts of Asia attribute FHHs' vulnerability to food insecurity to several factors. One of the many challenges as observed with many FHHs in the region is that women heads tend to own less land as compared to their male counterparts (Miwa, 2005). Even if a household holds enough area of land for growing their staple food, Miwa (2005) found that this is not usually a solution as most lack the labour force needed to till the land. These views were supported by McIntyre et al (2011) who found that FHHs usually face a variety of gender-specific obstacles that limit their ability to produce food, and thus to potentially benefit from an increase in food prices.

As a result of the persistent chronic food insecurity, obtaining sufficient food for their families therefore become a constant preoccupation and a persistent daily struggle for all the female heads (McIntyre *et al.*, 2011). Such obstacles could be seen in Cambodia where Miwa (2005) found that while men are responsible for overall agriculture including farmland maintenance and cattle care, women are in charge of what most societies perceived to be "feminine tasks". This included house chores, childcare, smaller animal care such as fowl and pigs, general agriculture, and weaving silk textiles for cash income. This leaves women with minimal time to focus on farm maintenance, resulting in low harvest (Miwa, 2005). Their situation is exacerbated by the fact that FHHs tend to consume proportionally more food than MHHs, and thus they are hit harder by the impact of high food prices on consumption Zezza, Davis, Azzarri, Covarrubias, Tasciotti and Anriquez (2008).

However, in contrast to the above findings and the conventional and worldwide view that FHHs are vulnerable, the Kazakhstan and Samoan FHHs have been found not fit the normative model of FHHs characterized by low income, poor asset-base and vulnerable to food insecurity. In Kazakhstan the poverty rate among households headed by men was found to be significantly higher than that of households by women. This is attributed to the fact that women are found mostly in urban than in rural areas where poverty is mostly concentrated (Jha and Dang (2009).

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In Samoa single mothers have been found without the characteristics typically used to define FHHs such as being lone mothers, who are socially isolated, stigmatised and marginalised, powerless and poor. Rather they have strong familial relationships, where other women and men as father, brothers, uncles, or cousins have daily presence (Stewart-Withers, 2011). The Samoan's FHHs advantage over their counterparts is the presence of additional adult family members. Steward-Withers (2011) revealed that the presence of other adult members around means that domestic chores can be divided up as opposed to relying on one adult woman–wife or mother. This arrangement means that women can be more flexible with work schedules and be physically more mobile as they are able to delegate childcare obligations or domestic responsibilities whilst they worked. It is within this context that the Samoan women do not fit the stereotypes of FHHs in general (Stewart-Withers, 2011).

Stewart-Withers (2011) further reported that unlike women in certain parts of the region like Bangladesh and India, Samoan FHHs' enjoy several rights and benefits that enhance their food security. Women have property rights with the extent that they have access to a plantation land at 94%. This means that not only did FHHs have access to subsistence food but could also sell any surplus that they did have in local markets, or through the informal sector. In addition, women have the ability to generate and/or access a cash income with most households having a wage(s) coming in at 88%. Just as many FHHs in the household/wider household earned the wage as did men (Stewart-Withers, 2011).

in their study to determine whether FHHs suffered more food insecure than MHHs in Bangladesh, Mallick and Rafi (2010) found no significance differences in the food security between the two groups among the indigenous ethnic groups in Bangladesh. Similar findings were found in Vietnam where Ke (2007) study revealed that while female heads have a much lower human capital status with respect to general and professional education, there are however no signs that FHHs are poorer or live in worse conditions than male headed households. These results were consistent with those of Omar et al (2009) who found that while most of the female heads are low earners, majority of them have multiple sources of incomes which help to cushion the impact of poverty. In addition to being full-time employees, these women also receive financial assistance from different sources which include; Religious Departments, State Welfare Departments, former husbands and children who are already working. Furthermore while widows in countries like India struggle to make a living, Malaysian widows receive pension money of their late husbands who were former government employees.

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It can be summed up that majority of the respondents are getting sufficient financial assistance to support their households (Omar *et al.*, 2009).

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2.3.2 Feminization of Poverty: United States of America

United States of America is amongst the highly ranked economies in the world with Economy Watch (2010) reporting that its 2010 Growth Domestic Product was estimated at $14.6 trillion dollars. However, despite being a powerhouse in world economy USA is also confronted with poverty issues. In 2010 about 15.1 percent of its citizens lived in poverty. This number was highest poverty rate the country experienced since 1993 (US Bureau of Census, 2010). Of the poor people, poverty rates are the highest for families headed by single women, particularly if one is black or Hispanic. Single motherhood is a very common occurrence in the USA with data showing that around half of today's mothers will spend at least some time as the sole custodial parent, this is according to Women's Legal Defence and Education Fund (2012). The high rate of fatherless families in the country are as a consequence of factors such as divorce, separation, death, or imprisonment while nearly half are as a result of out-of-wedlock births (Ellwood and Jencks, 2002).

The research further revealed that these households have been found to experience high rates of poverty as compared to other households (Snyder, McLaughlin and Findeis, 2006) with their poverty rate far above the average in high income countries even though the single mother employment rate in the U.S. is also above the average (Women's Legal Defence and Education Fund, 2012). In 2010 the US Bureau of Census revealed that in 2010 31.6 percent of households headed by single women were poor compared to 15.8 percent of those headed by men and only 6.2% of married couple (US Bureau of Census, 2010). Recently it was revealed that two fifths of single mother families are poor, triple the poverty rate for the rest of the population (The Women's Legal Defence and Education Fund, 2012).

In addition, the cross-national indicators of poverty among single mothers show that the risk of post-tax and transfer poverty is higher in the country at more than 35% as compared to Sweden's less than 2% (Misra, Moller, Strader and Wemlinger, 2012). It has also been found that of the FHHs living in the non-metro areas of the US, over one-third of them live in poverty and the vast majority of these households have children present who also bear the brunt of poverty (Snyder *et al.*, 2006). Of the poor FHHs types in the USA, African American, Puerto

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Rican, Hispanic, and Native American-headed were found to have the highest poverty rates (HAC, 2006, Snyder, McLaughlin and Findeis, 2006). These families have been found to be five times more likely to be poor than are married-couple families; and regardless of employment status, they experience a variety of material hardships (Heflin, 2006).

The limited employment opportunities, and lower wages and lack of adequate childcare as compared to their male counterparts all contribute to the economic problems faced by FHHs (HAC, 2006). High unemployment rate amongst the female heads have been found to be the main contributor to high poverty rate amongst FHHs. According to Mather (2010) single mothers are more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared with mothers in married-couple families. Even in few cases where these mothers are employed, majority of them are working in lower-wage retail, service, or administrative jobs that offer few benefits.

The lack of adequate child is seen as another major contributor of poverty amongst these households. Although childcare for infants and toddlers is not a significant predictor of poverty for partnered mothers, it is however a significant for single mothers (Misra *et al.*, 2012). Just like in other regions, American female heads find it unusually difficult to work long hours mainly because in addition to being a salary earner, they must also care for their children (Ellwood and Jencks, 2002). The challenge is that as seen in the Asian region children of the female heads are often bear the brunt of the poverty. According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2007) children living in female-headed families are nearly five times more likely to live in poverty than their counterparts living in married-couple families.

Another challenge that compounds the FHHs to poverty as already seen in the Asian region is a low asset base. Deere, Alvarado and Twyman (2010) contend that "the set of opportunities available to individuals within households is in large measure conditioned by the assets that they own, be human, physical, financial, natural and social capital assets". Their argument lies on the fact that while income and expenditure flow variables, assets constitute a stocks which are considered to be more stable than either income or expenditure measures. Thus asset ownership gives a better picture of the capacity of people to manage their vulnerability to poverty (Deere *et al.*, 2010). However, many families in the United States have been found to have accumulated few or no assets, rendering them "asset poor" than "income poor". This means that they lack asset-base to provide a financial cushion should they face unemployment or illness (Grinstein-Weiss, Yeong Hun, Min and Pajarita, 2008).

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Lack of employment opportunities coupled with low asset base means American FHHs means the monthly household income is inadequate to meet the dietary needs of the family, leading to food shortages. Food insecurity is not restricted to FHHs in developing countries and research have shown that even those FHHs from developed economies like the United States of America (USA) are vulnerable to food shortages (Rabinowich, 2009). In 2007 the USA had some 12.4 million children living in food-insecure households, most of who were from FHHs. In 2009 more than 30.2% of FHHs with children living in the US were experiencing food insecurity compared with only only 14.3% of married couple families, and 11.3% of households with no children under age 18.

These households had a prevalence rate of food insecurity that was almost three times the national average of 30.2% vs. 11.1% (Chilton, Rabinowich, Council, and Breaux, 2009; Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2009). According to Eamon and Wu (2011) the food insecurity amongst FHHs is mostly characterized by family running out of food and the inability to afford to eat balanced meals. One of the major causes of food insecurity amongst FHHs is an increase in the price of a main staple food which can lead to a substantial drop in ability to purchase other needed goods (Cohen and Garett, 2009). This impact is normally felt the greatest by the poorest households, who spend most of their monthly income on food (Cohen and Garett, 2009).

2.3.3 Feminization of Poverty: Latin America

Several research studies have been conducted in most Latin American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, and Mexico to determine the existence of the feminization of poverty phenomenon. While results have revealed that FHHs form a greater share of households in extreme poverty (Arriagada, 2002), there is however no solid evidence of a process of feminisation of poverty was revealed (Medeiros and Costa, 2007). In their study, Medeiros and Costa (2007) found that unlike in other regions like Africa and Asia, there was no significant difference in the incidence, intensity or severity of poverty among men and women, when intra-household inequalities are not taken into consideration. It was only when intra-household inequalities were simulated that measures of poverty for women increased, with the incidence of poverty among women increasing by 4-10 percentage points (Medeiros and Costa, 2007).

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In fact female heads in countries like Mexico feel more secure financially without men, even when their own earnings are low and/or prone to fluctuation. They also claim to be better able to cope with hardship when they are not at the mercy of male command and are freer to make their own decisions (Chant 1997). Chant (2008) recently found that although separation, divorce and widowhood are usually associated with relative poverty, separation and divorce in Latin American countries may also be liberating for women. Perhaps another factor that needs to be considered with Mexican FHHs is that majority of those between ages 18–44 and 45–59 are more likely than their older counterparts to be located in metropolitan areas, than in rural areas where poverty is mostly concentrated (Finley, 2007). Another advantage that De Facto FHHs enjoy in Mexico is that are more likely to receive remittances from internal and international migrants, resulting in little or no differences in poverty indicators between male- and FHHs (Villarreal and Shin, 2008).

In Jamaica Sandys (2001) found that FHHs are relatively well off mainly because most of the female heads are composed of younger generations of working women. In addition, unlike in Africa and Asia, Jamaican widows who are energetic entrepreneurial gain respect as the main decision maker, a role which she may never have enjoyed in marriage. Another factor to be revealed is that Jamaican matriarchal households can be strongly self-supporting. Even in old age, Jamaican widows' economic contribution to the family as household managers and carers of grandchildren and the sick helps to protect them from the negative attitudes directed towards older women in other parts of the world (Sandys, 2001).

Perhaps one advantage that FHHs in Latin America have over their Asian and African counterparts is that they are not subject to contradictory plural legal systems. It is rather the machismo, or male chauvinism, that has kept many women in subordinate roles and discriminated against, especially in education and employment opportunities (Sandys, 2001). Sandys argued that women's low status throughout their lives is reflected in the poverty and isolation of widowhood when they become old, and the family has migrated and split up.

However, even though Medeiros and Costa (2007) found no solid evidence of a process of feminisation of poverty in most Latin American countries, there are some countries such as Costa Rica and Brazil where feminization of poverty continue to swell. In Costa Rica quantitative data from the country suggests that poverty is 'feminising', especially in respect of FHHs, who, since the early 1990s, have constituted a progressively greater share of the population

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classified as poor (Chant, 2009). In Brazil, Soares and Silva (2010) revealed that many women are still engaged full time in traditional chores, such as domestic tasks and caring for other household members, especially children and the elderly, and/or for their extended families. Most of them rely on the income of their husband and/or other relatives. Women's lack of economic autonomy tends to reduce their bargaining power within the household as well as limiting their livelihood opportunities. Preoccupation with traditional chores means women are more likely to be 'time poor' than men, forcing them to accept an informal job that allow them a more flexible schedule than a formal sector job (Silva and Soares, 2010).

Even in cases where women are employed, they are however still paid less than men with the same qualifications and in similar occupations/jobs. This is despite the fact that wage discrimination is considered illegal in Brazil (Silva and Soares, 2010). The Brazilian women's situation is no different to those in Chile and Colombia. In Colombian and Chilean women with a higher education level earn 79 and 73 per cent of men's salary in respectively (Silva and Soares, 2010). Moreover, the wage gap increases with the level of education, which suggests the existence of a glass ceiling, even for well-paid women in the formal sector (Silva and Soares, 2010).

The increased in feminization of poverty In Costa Rica resulted in the government introducing several initiatives that are tailor-made to assist women living in poverty. One such initiative was the introduction of Law for Women in Conditions of Poverty of 1998 through which female household heads were offered, over a three-year period, a modest *asignación familiar temporal* (stipend) for up to six months. During this period women were expected to take courses in personal development (including the building of self-esteem) and in employment-related training (Chant, 2009). This law was later replaced by the introduction of an economic initiative called 'Creciendo Juntas' [Growing Together]. This initiative became a major inter-agency venture which was extended to all women in poverty, even though the priority was given to female household heads. The aim of the initiative was to provide for micro-enterprise initiatives in order to promote greater labour force insertion as well as the completion of basic education and housing benefits (Jimenez, 2002 and Chant, 2009). Initiatives such as this continue to make it possible for poor women to rise above the poverty line and meet the basic needs of their families.

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Perhaps the biggest distinction between most Latin American FHHs and those from other regions is that they have a better chance of owning property. Research findings have revealed that female heads have better chance of owning property as compared to their African and Asian counterparts. In Haiti and Mexico, Deere, Alvarado and Twyman (2010) found that female heads have as much chance of owning assets as their male counterparts. In Haiti male heads are about 60.4 percent more likely to have title to their landownership compared to female heads' 54.8 percent. In Mexico opportunities for women to own a land are even higher with about 89.6 percent of female heads having titles to land compared to 87.5 percent of couples and 82.7 percent of male heads respectively (Deere *et al.*, 2010).

However, it is not in every Latin American country that women enjoy similar rights with men when it comes to asset ownership. In Nicaragua for instance, Deere et al (2010) found that there was a large gender asset gap, particularly in rural areas. This gap is attributed to several factors. This includes; the tendency for men to individually own the most valuable farm animals, farm equipment, and installations; as well as the underrepresentation of women among rural homeowners (Deere *et al.*, 2010).

2.3.4 Feminization of Poverty: The Middle East

Just like in most African countries, most Middle East countries are patriarchal societies which still uphold cultural practices that treat women as second hand citizens and inferior to men (Sandys, 2001). The labelling of women as inferior is clearly visible in a country like Palestine where home is seen as a woman's legitimate ideological and physical space (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). Her procreative role is that of a mother and wife whose function is to carry out household responsibilities. In contrast a man is expected to dominate the world outside the home and performs his productive role as a breadwinner (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). These practices encourage men to be more achievement-driven and competitive than women, and to be better able to fulfil themselves.

The societal expectations in these countries are that men should be more dominant than women and above all to dominate them (Haj-Yahia, 2005). In Pakistan these practices continue to afford male members of the family better education to equip them with skills to compete for resources in public arena, while female members are imparted domestic skills to be good

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mothers and wives (Haj-Yahia, 2005). These practices are rooted in the economic, social, religious, political, and educational structure of society, as well as that of the state (Haj-Yahia, 2005).

The need for control over women has resulted in some countries requiring women to have male company when leaving the house, making it difficult for them to attend educational facilities and engage in business activities independently (International Poverty Centre, 2008). Furthermore, women in most Middle East countries are subjected to economic constraints and discrimination, which are usually imposed on them to a greater degree than men, both within and outside of the family (Haj-Yahia, 2005). This in turn leaves women with very few alternatives and opportunities to create their own choices in order to change the realities of their lives (Haj-Yahia, 2005; Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009).

Research findings further revealed that just like in most regions, widows are the most marginalized group of the female heads. A typical example could be seen in Afghanistan where under the Taliban government, widows are denied an opportunity to participate in paid employment. This in turn lead to an increased in the numbers of widows and children begging in the streets often leaving them suffering from malnutrition, ill health and depression, which in many cases leads to suicide (Sandys, 2001). In Myanmar huge numbers of widows are struggling to bring up their children and to care for sick and disabled victims of the conflict. Malnutrition among widows is widespread and they are particularly vulnerable to violence, particularly the sexual harassment by soldiers. The pressure on widows to provide for their children and the dearth of alternative employment opportunities forces most destitute widows to sell their daughters to trafficking agencies for money (Sandys, 2001).

As in most regions, most female heads in Palestine's West Bank struggle to get into the formal labour force with only 13% of the Female heads being economically active, a percent slightly lower than the rate for women labour force participation in the West Bank of 15.2% according to PCBS (2009b). The issue of high unemployment rate amongst female heads was also found in Iran where Zarhani (2011) reported that about 86% of the total women-heads of households' population were not actively involved in job market. One probable explanation for the high unemployment in Iran could be lack of good and affordable child care systems (Kristiansen, 2003). This then compels most women to seek work in the private and unofficial sectors (Motie,

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2004) and jobs such as laundry and sewing that would allow them to work from home which allow them to also look after their children (Kristiansen, 2003). However, the challenge with jobs in the informal sector is that they are characterized by low wages (Tveden *et al.*, 2008) making it difficult for women to meet their households' basic needs.

However, research findings show a different employment trends in certain parts of the Middle East. In studying female heads of households in Gaza Strip and West Bank, Khalifa (2010) found that more than two third of the economically active Female heads (66.4%) are regular wage employees,13.9% self-employed, 9.8% irregular wage employees, 6.4% employers, and only 1.5% are employed in family businesses.

Cultural discriminations on asset ownership and labour force lead to food insecurity amongst FHHs as already seen in other regions. In Iraq the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) (2008) reported that women-headed households, particularly those residing in rural areas are more likely to be food insecure. Perhaps an interesting issue to note about Iraqi women is that their situation is different from other countries. In addition to labour challenges and child care responsibilities, their situation is further exacerbated by conflict situations which continue to restrict their physical mobility to security concerns (Cosit, 2010). In studying poverty and FHHs in Jeddah City, Saudi Arabia Fadaak (2010) found that high cost of living as a consequence of high food prices makes it difficult for female heads to afford good quality food products. This in turn forces them to resort to buying the cheapest food available regardless of its poor quality.

In their analysis of Bangladeshi women's accounts of daily food routine McIntyre, Rondeau, Kirkpatrick, Hatfield, Islam and Huda (2011) found that chronic and pervasive food insecurity is punctuated by acute episodes of absolute food deprivation. This is normally as a result of seasonal fluctuations in earnings, rising food prices, illness disrupting work, and healthcare costs. Women were further constrained by social norms and gender roles that influenced their ability to work outside the home. In their study to determine whether FHHs are more food insecure in Bangladesh, Mallick and Rafi (2010) suggested that lower food insecurity of the FHHs among the indigenous ethnic groups was due to two factors: (i) the absence of restrictions on the females to participate in the labour force and (ii) informal redistributive mechanism. Both the factors arise from their socio-cultural and religious differences from the Bengalis.

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2.3.5 Feminization of Poverty: Eastern Europe

In Russia, increases in divorce and non-marital childbearing together with an unbalanced sex ratio are the major demographic factors contributing to the growth of single parenthood (Lokshin, Harris and Popkin, 2000). Perhaps the leading cause of female headship of in this region particularly amongst elderly women is life expectancy. The average life expectancy for women in Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, and Ukraine combined is 75 years, compared to 65 for men (Buvinic, Lunde and Sinha, 2010).

The problem is not only that women tend to live longer than men, but because they are also disadvantaged in the patriarchal societies in which they live, leading to increased vulnerability and poverty. Societal expectations on gender roles expect men to be breadwinners while women should be housekeepers (Buvinic *et al.*, 2010). As already seen in other regions like Asia, responsibilities of women in this region are also predominated by childcare and household tasks. This in turn has a negative influence on the employment as they only have limited time to take up full-time employment (Hofacker, Stoilova and Riebling, 2011). For instance by year 2000 there were almost half a million Ukrainian women temporarily absent from work because of childcare and maternity leave (Ganson & Laux, 2004). However this denies women an opportunity to participate in the labour market, leaving them totally dependent on their husbands. Even those who are fortunate enough to be employed most are concentrated in lower-income industries that require less effort such as government-sponsored low-income health care industries, education and culture.

The problem however, is that they face continuous discrimination and receive lower wages (Kurbanova *et al.*, 2011). The challenge is that from that meagre salary, women must cover the households' monthly expenses and also finance their children's education through the same meagre salary. This in turn put restrictions on their ability to save money for the future (The World Bank, 2000). This means that in situations where pension schemes accrue mainly to employees, women who have not worked in the formal sector for most of their adult lives become even more heavily reliant on their husbands' status and pensions. Older women who are single, widowed, or divorced are especially vulnerable, receiving few or none of the entitlements received by men (Buvinic et al 2010). A typical example is that of the Russia

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widows whose pensions are very small that they often fail to cover the bare physiological necessities of the elderly population (Hofacker *et al.*, 2011).

The situation of this group could also be attributed to the disparities when it comes to the amount of money they receive, with men receiving higher amount as compared to women. In addition to being restricted by household activities low wages, women lack access to land, skills training, finances and equipment. They are often denied participation in political decision-making even though they assume responsibility for the survival of the family (Kurbanova, Lonc and Szentpali, 2011).

However there are research findings showing that FHHs in some East European region are not poorer than their male counterparts. In Ukraine for instance Klaveren, Hughie-Williams and Nuria (2010) found that there was no identifiable wage discrepancy between men and women in several sectors. The study revealed that while average earnings in education, health and social work are considered remarkably low, the situation is applicable to both females and males (Klaveren *et al.,* 2010). In Albania De Facto FHHs do not show higher risk of falling into poverty than male headed households. Part of the explanation may be that these women live in households with migrants whose remittances improve their income position (World Bank, 2007; Bhaumik, Gang and Yun, 2008).

2.3.6 Feminization of Poverty: Southern Europe

The research findings reveal that FHHs in South European countries seem to be well-off compared to their counterparts in other regions such as in the Middle East, USA and Africa. In Spain while divorce has resulted in the number of female headship tripling from 36 072 in 1998 to 110 036 in 2008(Gonzalez-Gonzalez, Bretones, Galera and Fernandzez, 2011), these women enjoy several benefits that cushion them from poverty. For instance Lacroix (2006) reported that despite legal formalities associated with divorce or separation, men and women take equal responsibility for children in the case of shared custody. Fathers essentially focus on meeting their children's material or physical welfare requirements, whereas many mothers are constantly preoccupied for their children's emotional and mental development, as well as their daily needs (Lacroix, 2006).

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In addition divorced women In Spain have strong family support systems with most returning to their parents' home upon the dissolution of their marriage. Their need to return home is done seeking to meet needs typical of the classical stereotype male role, such as financial support and accommodation (Gonzalez-Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011). Their need to go back home after divorce could also be attributed to the fact that in countries like Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, the extended family usually provide assistance in meeting housing needs after divorce (Dewilde, 2008). In addition to the family support, Spanish FFHs also enjoy a series of state-sponsored benefits that make them well-off when compared to their Asian and African counterparts. Since 2008, the members of officially recognised single-parent families now benefit from a series of state, regional and local aids and allowances, such as: reduced public transport fares or aid for private vehicle purchase; reduced fees at publicly-run schools and in services, transport and crèches; advantages when requesting educational grants as well as places or enrolment at educational centres; equal tax relief as for families with three or more children (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011).

Of the FHHs in Southern Europe, those in Sweden have been found to be better off than in other countries. Perhaps the explanation could be that they have among the highest labour force participation rates in the entire world (Tarkhanova, 2010). Furthermore, their biggest advantage is that unlike their African, Asian and Middle East counterparts, Sweden's family benefit programs are designed to meet virtually all contingencies (Ginsburg and Rosenthal, 2006). This includes among others; pensions, support for the unemployed that includes benefits, child allowances and decent houses for all.

Another major difference between Swedish women and those from other regions like Africa lies on the child care responsibilities (Ginsburg and Rosenthal, 2006). While in other regions women's mobility is restricted by child care responsibilities, the Swedish government guarantees generous "package" of social policies for lone parents and it provides cheap childcare services of high quality and thoughtful childcare policies (Tarkhanova, 2010). This service which is organized and heavily subsidized at municipal level free women mothers to enter the labor force or pursue education (Ginsburg and Rosenthal, 2006). The availability of the service ensured that by year 2000, 86 percent of mothers with pre-school children and 94 percent of mothers with school children were actively participating employed (Björnberg and Dahlgren, 2003).

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Of the reviewed Southern European countries, Portugal has been found to be found to be a country where FHHs seem to experience poverty. In Portugal lone parenthood amongst FHHs is generally as a result of women's involuntary separations that leave them with the children (Bastos *et al.,* 2009). Old and isolated women and lone-parent families headed by women were found to be the groups most affected by income poverty and deprivation. Half of the women experiencing chronic poverty belonged to this category with most of them receiving low pensions as a consequence of irregular or low participation in the labour market when active, and they live with serious constraints in terms of health (Bastos *et al.,* 2009). Portuguese women's situation is further exacerbated by the country's gender conditioned labour market which is still embedded in the Portuguese social system, enhancing their vulnerability to poverty (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011).

2.3.7 Feminization of Poverty in Africa

Over the past decade the African Continent has seen few of its women achieve serious milestone by rising to occupy positions of authority within the continent and beyond. Of the most notable achievements was Doctor Ramphele's appointment as the Managing Director of Human Development of the World Bank, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becoming the first women President in Liberia and Africa. Quite recently the continent had celebrated the appointment of Joyce Banda as the first women president of Malawi and the second in Africa as well as the election of Dr. Nkosazana-Dlamini Zuma's as the head of African Union Commission. While the achievements of these women could be seen as a victory for all women in Africa, it is however on a very small scale as majority continue to be subjected to daily challenges resulting from consistent poverty. As it will be seen below, combinations of cultural practices, societal expectations and poor asset base means most women, particularly those in rural areas continue to live below poverty lines.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Due to Cultural beliefs and gender stereo types, women in countries like Uganda have been labelled as weak, emotional and are known to do better only in domestic work like cleaning house cooking, looking after men and children and involvement in subsistence farming (Mategeko, 2011). In Africa, the higher proportion of FHHs is found in rural and this was ascribed partly to the absence of males within the family due to labour migration to urban areas (Ellis and Adams, 2009). These men normally leave their wives behind and migrate to urban

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areas in search of employment (Lloyd and Blanc, 1996). According to Bigombe and Khadiagala (2003) internal migration in the African continent forms a significant component of the livelihood systems of millions of families. For years, migration from rural to urban areas has been the essential mechanism for job opportunities, social mobility and income transfers (Bigombe and Khadiagala, undated). This means that a large number of FHHs in rural areas are "left-behind" households whose male members have migrated to urban areas in search of employment (Lloyd and Blanc, 1996). In Nigeria the presence of FHHs was due to death of male heads, migration, divorce and economic reasons Olorunsanya and Omotesho (2012).

In Rwanda, Musahara (2004) found that the FHHs have a significantly higher incidence of poverty of compared to that of MHHs. Similar findings were revealed in Nigeria where Adewuyi and Akerele (2010) also found that FHHs are more vulnerable to poverty than the male headed households. FHHs are often considered to be more vulnerable to poverty because of their tighter time schedule and income constraints than male headed households. Of the FHHs in the region, widows seem to be the most vulnerable group to poverty with research findings showing that they are poorer than any other group. In the North Central Nigeria, Olorunsanya and Omotesho (2012) found that the widow-headed households recorded the highest incidence of poverty (94%).

In Kenya the *International Federation of Women Lawyers* (FIDA) (2008) revealed that widows are the most marginalized with most getting evicted from their homes along with their children after the death of their husbands, leaving them with nowhere to go. This desperate situation forces them to migrate to urban "slums" where they eke out sub-standard living, and often must resort to sex for necessities for themselves and their children. The problem in Kenya is made worse by lack of statutory guidance on the division of matrimonial property at divorce in that country, forcing women to leave their marriages with nothing but the clothes on their backs (FIDA *et al.*, 2008).

In Rwanda, widows and divorced, separated or abandoned women are often stigmatised and easily accused of prostitution which makes it more difficult for them to engage in certain income-generating activities, such as beer brewing, and makes them more vulnerable to violence (Koster, 2008). Furthermore Schindler and Brück, (2007) earlier found that the society consider widowhood as a symbol of disorder which result in widows being excluded from different types of networks, ones that are significant for accessing all types of productive assets and resources. This group's situation is exacerbated by limited capital endowments and the difficulties they face

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in accessing their husband's capital endowments as a result of inheritance practices. These practices allow relatives of the dead husbands to seize all their husbands' properties after upon their deaths (Koster, 2008, Schindler and Brück, 2007).

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing FHHs is they have little asset base with Khalid and Akhtar (2011) arguing that these households are postulated to be poorer than MHHs because women are less likely to have access to productive assets like land and other resources necessary for starting income generating activities. Several research findings in the region have revealed that the HIV/AIDS epidemic usually leaves women with depleted households' assets after the husband's death as the in-laws sale and/or repossess the family assets, leaving them with nothing (Williams, 2003; Oleke, Blystad and Rekdal, 2005). The situation persists to exist even in the modern era mainly because most societies in the region still hold on to the deep-rooted cultural practices that give males priorities and preferences that continues to empower males to the detriment of the female counterparts, leaving them feeling enslaved and putting them on the sidelines (Okoroafor and Nwadiaro (2011).

The co-option of these customary laws by the male practitioners through the use of religious texts and cultural values are often reflected in the denial of even some of the existing rightful provisions allowing for women's access to land and property (Rustagi and Menon, 2010). These discriminatory cultural practices deny women an opportunity to own assets and an access to economic and material resources, inheritance of landed property (Okoroafor and Nwadiaro (2011). In Mali Wing (2009) found that inheritance and marriage continue to be controlled by customary law under which individual rights and particularly women's rights are often denied in favour of preserving tradition (Wing 2009). Traditional law in Mali dictates that daughters inherit only half of what sons inherit and husbands are the sole owners of family property. Marriage only accords married women protection and some rights such as the use of a plot of land but these rights are contingent on marital status and they are forfeited immediately upon divorce/separation and widowhood (Van de Walle, 2011).

Similar findings were revealed in Uganda where Asiimwe (2009) found that married men ensure that the matrimonial home is solely registered in their names regardless of whether or not their wives contribute to the construction costs. The husband sees his action as normal and acceptable because culturally a home belongs to the man. This situation in contrast to that of most developed countries where legal structures guarantee married women of co-ownership of

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the matrimonial home regardless of whether the married women financially contribute to the home project or not (Deere and Doss 2006). In some African countries, a woman's access to property is usually determined by the rules her ethnic group. In some cases, a woman usually leaves with a few clothes and some utensils (Asiimwe, 2009).

In Ethiopia, while the legislation clearly entitles women to have equal right to have an equal share of all of household properties, it has however been revealed that women continue to be marginalized when it comes to land and continue to receive smaller plots or marginal land Zergaw (2007). Zergaw (2007) study further revealed that women continue to be disadvantaged regardless of what had been noted in the case of inheritance and other forms of family transfers. The challenge facing Ethiopian women is that tradition favours males in land inheritance and it entitles a man to landownership when he marries. Owning land is considered not necessary for a married woman as there is a belief that a man already has ownership of land at the time of marriage (Zergaw, 2007).

Another challenge facing FHHs in most Sub-Saharan African countries is the fact that most of them are poorly educated, rendering them unemployable. Studies in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria have revealed that FHHs continue to be significantly less educated when compared to their male counterparts (Auma, Lagat and Nagigi, 2010; Menale, Ndiritu and Shiferaw, 2012). In Nigeria, Doctor (2011) argued that women continued to experience challenges associated with low educational attainment and the inability to control resource. This is despite efforts to ensure that women globally attain higher status in society and the family. This submission was corroborated a year later by Olorunsanya and Omotesho (2012) who in their study of the North Central Nigeria found that 60 percent of adult household members in the FHHs had informal education compared to only forty percent of adult household members in the MHHs. The low education amongst women in most African countries is that society still looks at a woman as simply a potential wife. This view of women makes most parents reluctant to send girl children to school since that will leads to unnecessary delay and is wastage of resources. As a result, many women have not gone to school, and those who dropped out have found it hard to upper grade due to social exclusion (Gells, 1995). As seen in preceding regions, the discriminations women face either in the society, family or labour market usually leads to food insecurity. Similar situation also plays itself in this region.

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Research findings continue to identify food insecurity as the biggest challenge facing most FHHs in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa (Babatunde, Owotoki, Heidhues and Buchenrieder, 2007; Kumar and Quisumbing, 2011; Menale, Ndiritu and Shiferaw 2012). In their study of Kwara state Nigeria, Babatunde, Owotoki, Heidhues and Buchenrieder (2007) found that most FHHs were more susceptible to food insecurity than their male counterparts. These findings are consistent with those of Kumar and Quisumbing (2011) who in their study in Ethiopia found that FHHs are more likely to report having difficulty meeting their consumption needs. On average, these households face problems in satisfying their households' food needs for a period of about four months, which is significantly higher than the corresponding figure for MHHs. Food insecurity in the region has been attributed to several factors. One such factor is the women's lack of access to a large and fertile land. Research findings on some of Sub-Saharan Africa countries struggle to access quality land. This is despite the fact that women form the majority of farmers producing 90% of food (Auma, 2010).

In Kwara state of Nigeria, Babatunde et al (2007) found that women's less access to and utilization of fertile land in that state exposes women to shortage of food. These findings are consistent to that of Auma (2008), Auma, Lagat and Nagigi (2010) and Menale, Ndiritu and Shiferaw (2012) who in their studies of Kenya found that some of the critical factors leading to food insecurity amongst FHHs is that on average FHHs owned and cultivated smaller land parcels farm size and education level compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, Auma, et al (2010) found that FHHs were less efficient in agricultural production as they produced about half the production of MHHs and disposed 38% of the produce in the local market with negative implications on both household food security and commercialization of agriculture.

The differences in farm size is statistically significant mainly because the probability of being food secure and food expenditures increase with farm size and level of education (Menale et al (2012). Apart from absolute farm size difference, Menale et al (2012) further found that FHHs have less quality land with about 13 per cent of the cultivated area owned by FHHs falling under poor soil fertility category compared to 8 per cent owned by MHHs. The study further revealed that forty-nine per cent of the total cultivated land owned by MHHs is good to medium fertile land compared to 39 per cent of FHHs owned land. Similar results were revealed by Nimoh, Samuel and Yeboah (2012) who in their study of rural households in Northern Ghana found that MHHs cultivated an average of 1.24 ha while FHHs averagely cultivated 0.91 ha. However the above findings are in contrast to that of Deji, Abas and Opoku-Asiama (2010) who in their study

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of Nigeria's Osun State found no significant difference between MHHs' and FHHs' ease of access to major agricultural resources such as capital, land, labour, extension services, in-organic fertilizer, herbicides, and tractors with the exception of access to seedlings and livestock feeds.

In Rwanda, while the difference is not as wide and not as significant as in Ghana, It is however generally assumed that women face more constraints with regard to access to land than do men with Koster (2008) findings revealing that the mean size MHHs farm holdings was 0.60 hectares compared to FHHs farm holdings' only 0.56 hectares. In a study of northern Mali, Christiaensen and Boisvert (2000) found that FHHs are less vulnerable to drought shocks in part due to community solidarity which more readily kicks in for them. In particular, widows and married women may have access to support from brothers or uncles. Official food aid and family food transfers are found to provide significant insurance mechanisms.

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Perhaps these contrasting findings could be attributed to the fact while in Osun state FHHs acquire their farmland either through inheritance or took over the ownership of the household's farmland in the absence of their husbands (Deji *et al.,* 2010) inheritance adopted by most African countries like the rural Northern Ghana families dictates that males inherit most of the property (Nimoh *et al*., 2012). The difference may also be associated to low use of land quality enhancing inputs (fertilizer and manure) and plots managed by FHHs are relative far from their dwellings. In addition, FHHs rent out more land than MHHs. This may likely affect quality of land in case tenants do not properly manage rented in lands (Menale *et al.,* 2012). In addition to the availability of land, Babatunde *et al.* (2007) further found that the age of household head, household size, dependency ratio and susceptibility of households head to sickness increased also contribute to the food insecurity amongst the FHHs in Kwara state.

Southern Africa

Many of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member States are signatories to some international conventions on civil & political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights such as the; United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW); the SADC Gender Declaration of 1997 and the 2008 Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development. In addition, Southern African countries have participated in many world conferences/summits held in pursuance of equality, equity and the

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empowerment of disadvantaged groups such as the Beijing Conference in 1995, the series of World Summits and the World Social Forum. However, despite all these commitments, majority of women in the region are still living in poverty.

Southern Africa has the highest average proportion of FHHs on the continent – approximately 34% of households with children are female-headed. The high incidence of rural poverty among FHHs in Southern Africa is as a result of migrant labour to South Africa (O'Laughlin, 1997). As the South African mines emerged as the main employer of wage-labour within the region, accords between mining capital and colonial powers in early 20th century resulted in exodus of young men from neighbouring countries to South African mines (O'Laughlin, 1997). In Zimbabwe, the substitution of cash for cows in *lobola* payments has made migration a typical option for many young men who aspired to get married. Many remain as migrants throughout their working years as they had to work in order to send remittance home (Zimbabwe Human Development Report 2003). The migration of men from their native countries to South Africa meant that women were responsible for basic food provisioning and for the care of the young and the old (Bourdillon 1976, Davison 1997O'Laughlin, 1997). However, migrants often set up second households in urban areas leaving rural wives to largely fend for themselves until the migrant needs to return, leading to FHHs (Zimbabwe Human Development Report 2003).

Another factor playing a crucial role in the vulnerability of FHHs as seen in other regions is the issue of property rights and ownership. Property rights were seen as so fundamental to women's empowerment that they were one of the first goals fought for by first-wave feminists in the nineteenth century (Sweetness, 2008). This is because the ownership of physical and financial assets constitutes one of the main means of generating income and hence expenditures and consumption (Deere, Alvarado and Twyman, 2009). This is evident in the case of land and agricultural production, but equally relevant in the case of the urban informal sector where ownership of consumer durables may also constitute business assets and make possible a broad range of income generating activities (Deere *et al.*, 2009).

However, women in most developing countries still find it difficult to have access and own assets of meaningful value (Horrell and Krishnan 2007; Takane, 2007, Sweetness, 2008). Sweetman (2008) argued that the impact on women of denial of their property rights is that they are totally dependent on marriage and other relationships with men for access to the means to

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live. In Zimbabwe, Horrell and Krishnan (2007) found that the lack of assets could be the reason for the low productivity among these households with asset-poor households being more likely to have access to smaller pieces of land than MHHs. In Malawi Takane (2007) found that the low productivity in own-farm cultivation among the FHHs stemmed mainly from the low application of fertilizer, an input that was beyond the reach of the poorer households due to the price. The high cost of inputs, especially of fertilizer, has prevented resource from poor FHHs from improving maize self-sufficiency through increased productivity and from engaging in high-return agriculture such as tobacco production (Takane, 2007).

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing rural women as also noted in other regions is that their owning of land is on condition that they remain married to the man. A married woman's continued access to land in such a system is conditional upon her bearing children and, in some cases, providing labour to secure household food and raise children (Paradza, 2011). The land these women have access to however is primarily under the control of their husbands. This arrangement put women at a disadvantage because the husband might decide to dispose of the land on the market and/or marry another woman, both of which would reduce the land under the woman's control. This however has the potential to weaken her tenure as well as control of decisions and their ability to enter into transactions over the land (Paradza, 2011).

The problem confronting rural women that usually leads to low asset base is that in most Southern African countries majority of rural women continue to be involved in customary marriages (Paradza, 2011). The difficulty with customary marriage though is that the law in some of these countries either do not recognize or marginalize such a marriage. This is because, in traditional society, the land and all that is on it belongs to men. Under customary law, all property acquired during marriage is under the sole control of the husband. This discrimination, coupled with the influence of traditional practices is a significant obstacle in the quest for women's empowerment (Oduol, 2001). In Mozambique for instance the law states that in a situation where a woman enters into a polygamous marriage, only one wife can be married in a civil marriage and the rest must be customary marriages not recognised by the laws of the country (Paradza, 2011).

This means that upon divorce or death of a husband, women are abandoned and find it difficult to lay claim to property attained whilst in marriage. In some cases, men knowingly refuse to enter into a civil marriage with a woman preferring to maintain a customary marriage, so as to

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deny their spouses property rights to which they are entitled under formal law (Sweetman, 2008 and Paradza, 2011). With no possibility of leaving with the means to make a living somewhere, these women are often forced to continue living in a relationship with a man who sees and treats them as a chattel (Sweetness, 2008).

Another explanation to the restriction to property access and ownership amongst rural women could be that most Southern African countries are patrilineal systems. Under a patrilineal system, divorced and sometimes widowed women are extremely vulnerable. This is because upon divorce or death of the husband, their usufruct rights to land are revoked and they are denied access to implements and become outsiders in the community. In rare cases the usufruct rights may be continued but divorced women are usually left with marginal land or little equipment or cattle (Paradza, 2011). In Malawi, Takane (2007) found that while a widowed wife may remain in the late husband's village with her children and continue cultivating the husband's land, she has no right to transfer the land to her patrilineal kin. Her land right in patrilineal societies is that of a custodian and she is expected to take care of the land until the legitimate heirs, her sons, grow up to take over the land. Although the widowed wife's rights to cultivate her late husband's land is guaranteed, landholding rights remain with the husband's patrikin and the wife has no right of land disposal (Takane, 2007). This temporal land right of a widowed wife is in accordance with patrilineal inheritance rules.

Cultural and patrilineal practices in Southern African societies mean that widows also face the risk of asset grabbing by the in-laws upon the death of the husband. According to Sandys (2001) property-grabbing" and "chasing off" is part of the common experience of widows whether animist, Christian, Hindu or Muslim regardless of their ethnic group, caste or culture. Widows are likely to leave and/or be forced out if they are stripped of immovable and moveable property by the husband's relatives in a practise known as property grabbing (Izumi, 2007). A study in Malawi found that 30% of widows experienced property grabbing in Malawi compared to 3% of the widowers (Ngwira 2008). The findings were consistent with McFerson (2010) who found that in the event of divorce or widowhood, women children commonly lose the houses they lived in. In addition these women are often stripped of the right to use their husband's land, which they may have tended for years, thus losing their main source of income (Sweetman, 2008). The denial of women's right to inherit marital homes and property more often cripples the

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chances of women and children surviving economically after the death of husbands and fathers (Sweetman, 2008).

The above findings raise attention to the fact that the long-held cultural practices and customs in most African countries continue to deny women from owning assets of value which in turn exposes them to endless poverty. Sandys (2001) and Mategeko (2011) summed it well by arguing that without inheritance rights for land and other productive assets, women find themselves at risk of permanently remaining in severe chronic poverty which will render them totally dependent on the charity of their husband's relatives.

Another challenge compounding female heads' situation in the region is their lack of formal educational qualifications. Chaudhry and Rahman (2009) argued that education is the most important instrument for human resource development. It has become a universal human right and an important component of opportunities and empowerment of women. This is because it boosts their wages and that returns to education for women are frequently larger than that of men (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). However empirical research continues to show that women are lagging behind when it comes to education attainment (Tveden *et al.*, 2008). Women's relative lack of education, training and experience contribute to their lower earnings. Moreover, women's disadvantage in education is a vicious circle, since lower returns to female labour force participation also act as a disincentive to future investment in female education, perpetuating the problem (Baden and Milward, 1997). Sandys (2001) argued that poverty of female heads, particularly widows are exacerbated by illiteracy, and a lack of education and training, forcing them to seek employment with low wages and returns (Tveden *et al.*, 2008). In Mozambique female attendance is lowest and the drop-out rate highest, partly due to a stronger perception of boys as future breadwinners and socio-cultural practices of early marriage and high teenage pregnancy rates among girls (Tvedten *et al.*, 2008).

Another challenge facing Zimbabwean women as observed by Krishnan (2006) is that they are unable to enter into contracts without their husband's joint involvement, thus they cannot own property independently. Even when male household heads are absent women may still be subject to their authority and, in rural villages, may also have to defer to their husband's male kin who will be concerned to protect the position of male heirs (Krishnan, 2006). The woman is then expected to return to her own kin and to be supported by them (Krishnan, 2006).

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Another contributory factor to female headship as already seen in other regions is widowhood and divorce. In Mozambique, the research indicates that the large majority of such FHHs are headed by widows and divorcees, with a very low proportion of single mothers (i.e. women who become pregnant and do not have a relationship with a man). A number of qualitative studies emphasize how divorcees and widows are among the poorest and most marginalized family units in that country (Arnaldo 2002, MISAU 2005). The challenge facing widows is that many of their extended families are also poor simply can and simple cannot afford to support old and unproductive family members such as old widows (Rosário *et al.,* 2008). In addition, rigid and long, drawn-out mourning and burial rites may restrict them from working in the public sector for a long period of time (Sandys, 2001).

Perhaps one of the many challenges facing FHHs in Southern Africa as in the rest of Africa is the size of households. In Botswana Moepeng and Tisdell (2008) found that the incidence of poverty of household heads was shown to increase with the size of the household, and that the relationship is more marked for FHHs than for MHHs. Similar findings were found in Malawi where in his study of rural Malawi, Takane (2007) found that the dependency ratios of the FHHs were higher than those of the MHHs. This burden of care for the young, elderly and ill has limited women's opportunities to diversify from increasingly risky and non-viable agricultural livelihoods (Paradza, 2011). Single mothers struggle to provide for their families because in addition to poor asset base, they are also likely to be involved in informal sector characterized by low wages. According to Takane (2007) the average income per adult equivalent unit (AEU) of the FHHs tends to be less than that of MHHs with MHHs earning more income than their female counterparts.

A typical example of salary disparities were found in Zimbabwe where Horrel and Krishnan (2006) reported that by 2006 around three quarters of FHHs and only two thirds of MHHs fall below the poverty line of Z$8315. Of these groups nearly two fifths of widow-headed households have incomes below Z$2500 per annum per person compared to one twentieth of de facto FHHs. Furthermore, widowed households were found to be more likely to be found amongst the very poor. This is in contrast to the de facto FHHs which were found to be less likely to be among either the very poor or the considerably better-off than the male-headed household (Horrel and Krishnan, 2006).

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Not only do women earn less than men and are poorer than their male counterparts, but also work longer hours and have an increasingly heavy responsibility for household provisioning, which has significant implications for their situation in life (Chant 2007; Tvedten, Paulo and Montserrat, 2008). In addition to the generally gender related economic gap there are disadvantages particular to FHHs. Most strikingly, households led by women carry a "double day burden" if their heads have to handle domestic work and the role of main earner simultaneously (Moghadam, 1997).

2.3.7.3 South Africa

South African has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world in which equality of all citizens is guaranteed. In particular, chapter two guarantees the right to equality of all citizens and affirms the democratic values of human freedom, equality and freedom (Bobo, 2011). In addition, the country is also a subscriber to international declarations such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, despite all the guarantees and commitments made, majority of women in South Africa remain subjected to numerous harmful cultural and religious practices across all sectors and in all communities, impeding their access to rights. Rural women are especially vulnerable as they are forced to subscribe to tribal authorities who do not favour women (Bobo, 2011). Of the vulnerable group, FHHs have been found to be in a dire situation. The rate of FHHs in South Africa has been on the rise since the mid-90s with Statistics South Africa revealing that of the 9.35 million families the country had in 1996, over 3.5 million of them were FHHs (STATSA, 1996). 5 years later, 4.78 million of the 11.2 million South African households in 2001 were female headed (STATSA, 2001).

The observations are further supported by the figures in the table below which shows that individuals living in FHHs continue to account for a disproportionately large share of the poor. The figures show that despite the fact that only 43% of households were headed by women in 2005/06, between 55% and 57% of the poor lived in FHHs. Unfortunately the concentration of poverty in FHHs was also accompanied by an increase in the proportion of households that were headed by women. Between 1995 and 2005/06, the proportion of households headed by women increased from 34% to 43% (Roux and Adams, 2006).

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Table 2 1 Shares in population and poverty, by gender of household head, 1995 and 2005/06

Household Head	1995			2005/06		
	Population share	Share of poor		Population share	Share of poor	
		R322 poverty line	R174 poverty line		R322 poverty line	R174 poverty line
Male-headed	66.2%	57.7%	55.9%	56.5%	45.1%	42.6%
Female-headed	33.8%	42.3%	44.1%	43.4%	54.8%	57.3%

Source: Bhorat and van der Westhuizen (2008)

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As seen in the entire Southern African region, male labour migration has also been found to be the primary reasons for female-headship in South Africa (Posel, 2001). Male labour inter-migration stemmed from the country's past history where colonial powers forced the natives into paid work by levying taxes that required them to earn money (Howitz, 2001). This situation forced males to migrate from rural to urban areas (Posel, 2003). The migrant labour situation negatively impacted many poor men, forcing them to be separated with their families for a long time (Richter, Chikovore and Makusha, 2010). In addition to the male migration, South Africa is also faced with high divorce rates. According to Statistics South Africa, the past decade has seen a marked increase in divorce rates, with the African groups increasing from 18% to 35% (STATSSA, 2008).

Another contributory factor leading to absent fathers is low marriage rate amongst the black population. According to Richter and Panday (2006) South Africa has the lowest marriage rate on the continent, second only to Namibia. Richter et al (2010) attributed the low level of marriage to the young men's inability to pay the mandatory *lobola* that is required by the family of the bride. Many young black men struggle to secure regular employment and therefore afford to meet the financial obligations they are expected to meet prior to getting married. This means that even in cases where the partners already have a child, the man would not be able to stay with the woman and be a family. Furthermore, being unemployed make young fathers to feel ashamed in being unable to support their children, leading them to avoid being part of their children's lives (Ritchter *et al.*, 2010).

The above-mentioned factors mean that the country continues to experience unprecedented levels of absent fathers. In 2002 it was found that less than 40% of black children ages 15 years or younger lived with their fathers, compared to almost 90% of White and Indian children. This meant that about 63% of black children, especially those in poor communities were living in families with absent fathers (Ellis and Adams, 2009 and Posel and Devey 2006; Adams and Ellis, 2009). The situation has meant that children grow up with absent fathers, leaving women to assume the role of fatherhood.

A study by Dungumaro (2008) demonstrated that FHHs in South Africa tend to be larger, more likely to have heads without employment, and have less access to basic services. Study findings have also demonstrated that poverty amongst the FHHs have continued to widened even during the post-apartheid period. For example, in 1997, approximately 67 per cent of

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FHHs were poor compared to only 38 per cent of MHHs have In South Africa, recent work (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen, 2008; Posel and Rogan, 2009a).

Elderly and widowed women who live alone have been found to be most vulnerable to poverty and health setbacks. This group of women is often isolated from society, living in houses that are in terrible disrepair and often go hungry due to lack of food(, Rosenblatt and Nkosi, 2007; Statssa, 2009). As already noted in other parts of Southern Africa region, these women's dire situation is compounded by the social and cultural practices that forbid them from partaking in most activities during the grieving period. For instance in their study of Zulu widows, Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) found that while practicing *Ukuzila* which is a Zulu word for "mourning, widows are not allowed to attend social functions such as weddings. Furthermore, the society sees this group as outcasts who practice witchcrafts, making people avoid them and to treat them with disdain (Rosenblatt and Nkosi, 2007).

In South Africa Pauw and Mncube (2007) found there is a growing number of studies indicating that food insecurity, hunger and poverty exist with Hindson *Mcintosh and Associates* (2003) arguing that regardless of its relative wealth and well-developed economy, the country is still beset with prevalent poverty and food insecurity. This was supported by Machethe a year later who reported that many poor South Africans are faced with the challenge of rapidly growing unemployment, and they struggle to fight food insecurity and eradicate poverty (Machethe, 2004). Fuwa (2000) attributed women's vulnerability to food insecurity to the "triple burden:" (i) the female head, who is the main income earner, faces various disadvantages in the labour market and many productive activities, (ii) she is also responsible for maintaining the household including household chores and child care in addition to working outside, and thus she is "activity burdened," and (iii) she faces a higher dependency ratio for being the single income earner (Fuwa, 2000). The issue of the impact of high dependency rate was further elucidated by Moghadam (2005) who argued that female-household heads face higher poverty risks because they are more likely to support dependents than their male counterparts, especially in developing country contexts. Mallick and Rafi (2010) further suggested that lower food insecurity of the FHHs among the indigenous ethnic groups was due to two factors: (i) the absence of restrictions on the females to participate in the labour force and (ii) informal redistributive mechanism.

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Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the [illegible] South Africa which make them more susceptible to poverty is the high number of dependents. It has been found that FHHs contain a higher number of dependents, are more likely to have heads without employment, and have less access to basic services when compared to MHHs (Dungumaro, 2008). These submissions are supported by Statssa which revealed that FHHs are on average larger than male headed households (3, 7 persons per household compared to 3, 3 for males) with a higher total dependency ratio (0, 8 to 0.4). This means that there are 0, 8 dependents for each person in his/her working ages (15-64) in these households. Many of these dependents are children (on average 33% of these households consist of children compared to only a fifth for MHHs (Statssa, 2010).

One major contributor to higher dependency rate according to Statssa is that FHHs are more likely than male ones to be extended households, containing other family members like brothers, sisters and nieces and nephews, and less likely to contain only a single generation (Statssa, 2010). These findings were collaborated by Rogan (2010) who found that working age adults in FHHs were residing with twice as many nonworking age household members compared with MHHs in South Africa by 2006. Rogan (2010) further found that FHHs are considerably more likely than MHHs to include both young children (younger than 11), and older children (ages 11 to16). By 2006, it was estimated that approximately 60 per cent and 43.7 per cent of FHHs included young and older children respectively, compared to 41.3 per cent and 26.4 per cent of MHHs. Over the period, therefore, a growing share of FHHs had no resident males of working age and relative to MHHs, households headed by women took on increasing responsibilities for the care of children (Rogan, 2010).

The province is predominantly rural, with 72.5% of its population living in rural areas compared to 32.8% in urban areas (Elsenburg, 2005). Census (2001) reported that as in other provinces, poverty afflicts mainly the females, and mostly Black women, especially in the rural and peri-urban areas (Census, 2001). The province has the highest proportion of FHHs with 49%, followed by Eastern Cape which has 45% and in KwaZulu-Natal which observed 44% (Statssa, 2010)

As in Kwazulu-Natal, many of the FHHs in Limpopo face the hardship of a reduced ability to take up economic opportunities. They have a restricted access to finance, information, and agricultural training and niche markets for their produce. Women also are overburdened with the

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tasks of constructing their huts, collecting water and firewood. They also are responsible for shouldering the care of children, the old and the infirm without access to adequate social services (Wellington, 2003). More often than not these families find themselves at a disadvantage because they typically depend on one income earner, which impacts on their standard of living. The situation is normally compounded by the fact that absent parent (typically the father) often does not contribute financially or emotionally to the well-being of the family (Ellis and Adams, 2009). This poses a problem as the role of both parents are critical, not only for providing material support but also for psychosocial support for the development of children into well-balanced adults (Ellis and Adams, 2009).

Furthermore, FHHs have been found to be less likely than their male headed counterparts to have access to water, adequate sanitation, or access to refuse or waste removal. Statssa (2010) revealed that residing in rural areas can have a detrimental effect to FHHs. Although the survey did not officially identify rural areas, the fact that many of these households are located in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal which are mostly rural, coupled with the observation that almost a fifth of these households still reside in traditional structures, can lead one to the conclusion that many of these FHHs are located in 'rural' areas where it is much more difficult to provide basic services (Statssa, 2010).

Of the five Districts, the Statssa (2004) revealed that Mopani had the highest number of households headed by females in the age group 15–49 years, followed by Bohlabela and Waterberg. Sekhukhune had the lowest number of FHHs in this age group (Statssa, 2004). Mopani and Bohlabela had the highest number of households headed by females in the age group 0–14 years, followed by Capricorn and Vhembe. Waterberg had the lowest number of households headed by females. Sekhukhune had the highest number of households headed by females in the age group 50–64 years, followed by Capricorn and Waterberg. Vhembe had the lowest number of households headed by females in the same age group. Sekhukhune had the highest number of households headed by females in the age group 65+ years, followed by Capricorn and Vhembe. Mopani had the lowest number of households headed by females in this age group (Statssa, 2004).

2.4 Problems with feminization of poverty concept

Chant (2008) contend that although the 'feminization of poverty' thesis has undeniably had some advantages, its current constitution and adoption however pose a number of problems for

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analysis and policy alike. One of the major analytical problem with the 'feminisation of poverty' thesis was highlighted by Chant (2008) who argued that most researchers on the subject over-emphasis on income as the primary determinant of poverty amongst FHH. This means that more often than not they neglect other complex and/or abstract dimensions of poverty in the process. This submission is consistent with the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) (1997) assertion that the concerns with identifying people affected by poverty and the desire to measure has resulted in many countries using the money matrix, at times obscuring the fact that is too complex to be reduced to a single dimension of human life. This is because although obtaining and quantifying information on social and subjective aspects of privation is difficult, collecting data on incomes or consumption is arguably no less problematic (Chant, 2008).

A typical example proving that consumption is an ineffective tool to measure poverty can be seen in Louat, Grash and Var der Gaag (1993). In their study on the welfare implications of female headship in Jamaican households, their findings revealed that when using the simplest comparisons of mean per capita consumption level between FHHs and MHHs, FHHs were found to be poorer than MHHs in Jamaica. However, adjusting consumption for household composition greatly lessens the force of the conclusion (Louat, Grash and Var der Gaag, 1993). Over and above the fact that information on incomes, consumption (and assets) are usually only available for households in aggregate and are difficult to convert into individual levels according to gender, age and so forth (Klasen, 2004).

Chant (2008) further argued that the value of income data in supporting the 'feminisation of poverty' is dubious for two main reasons. First, income, along with longevity, is argued to be one of the few indicators which is less robust in confirming women's relative privation than other criteria such as access to land and credit, decision-making power, legal rights within the family, vulnerability to violence, and (self) respect and dignity (Johnsson-Latham, 2004b). In short, the privileging of income may underestimate the extent to which poverty is feminised or feminising, and deflect attention from other factors pertinent to women's disadvantage.

The feminisation of poverty suggests that when women are without men, their situation becomes worse. However, research has shown that female headship may have positive aspects (Baden and Wilward, 2000) and that some women are actively choosing household headship as a means by which they are able to enhance the well-being of their households and/or exert more control over their own lives (Baden, 1999). An example could be seen in Latin

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America where Chant (2008) found that although separation, divorce and widowhood are usually associated with relative poverty, they may also be liberating for women.This is consistent with her earlier findings which show that female household headship may be experienced as positive and empowering, having freed the women from dependence and male domination (Chant, 1993). Baden and Milward, 2000) assert that female heads are likely to be less constrained by patriarchal authority at the domestic level. This may in turn lead to experience of greater self-esteem, more personal freedom, and more flexibility to take on paid work, enhanced control over finances and a reduction or absence of physical and/or emotional abuse.

For instance, female heads are able to use whatever income they themselves or other household members earn at their own discretion, to avoid the vulnerability attached to erratic support from spouses, or simply to enjoy a greater sense of well-being because their lives are freer from conflict, coercion or violence (van Driel, 1994; Jackson, 1996; Chant, 1997b). Hence, "even if women are poorer in income terms as heads of their own household, they may feel they are better off and, importantly, less vulnerable". Furthermore, the establishment of such households may be a reflection of an increasing unwillingness of some women to continue living in situations where they feel powerless and vulnerable in their relationships with men (Kabeer 2007). This could be because these households are likely to be less constrained by patriarchal authority at the domestic level (Baden and Milward, 2000).

Female heads may also experience more personal freedom, more flexibility to take on paid work, enhanced control over finances and a reduction or absence of physical and/or emotional abuse (Baden and Milward, 2000). Moreover, women in female-headed households often have greater autonomy and control over resources which could result in the well-being of their children being better than in male-headed households at the same level of income (Kennedy and Peters, 1992; Kennedy and Haddad, 1994 in Baden, 2000). This is supported by Blumberg, 1995 and Chant, 1997a) who found that observations from a variety of contexts suggest that children in female-headed households may actually be better off than their counterparts in male-headed units in respect of educational attainment, nutrition and health. The international literature shows that there is a stronger tendency for female-headed households to allocate more resources to food, education, health and other necessities than male-headed households (Quisumbing 2003, and Chant, 1995). For instance in Costa Rica, Chant (2009) found that despite low incomes, female heads of household and their children in Guanacaste often survive better than their counterparts in male-headed households. This is partly because female

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headship tends to eliminate the problems of inequitable labour and uneven resource inputs and outcomes. This could be attributed to the fact that the expenditure patterns of FHH are more biased towards nutrition and education of their dependants than those of MHH (Chant, 1995).

This is in contrast to men who spend money on themselves and doing little to help their households move out of poverty, men's time inputs into family life often leave much to be desired (Chant, 2007). Perhaps an explanation to this occurrence could be that women's preferences are more likely to be 'other-'oriented than self-oriented, with considerable evidence to suggest that women prioritise investments in children to a greater extent than men (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2003). Quisumbling and Maluccio (2003) found that in many countries, the higher the share of resources controlled by women within households, the more tends to be spent on education while Johnsson-Latham (2004) stated that mothers tend to be much more preoccupied with satisfying their children's food needs than fathers. Explanations for child-oriented spending among women have included, inter alia, compliance with socialised expectations of maternal altruism, taking responsibility in the absence of alternatives, or because investments in children help to ensure that women will be cared for in old age, especially where there are few alternative sources of support (Chant, 2007).

Indeed, although women do not usually choose to stay single or to engineer the dissolution of their marriages or unions, in the interests of their own or others' well-being, they may well opt to remain alone rather than return to ex-partners or form new relationships (Chant, 1997a; Bradshaw, 1996). It is therefore of paramount importance that we always bear in mind that a woman's decision to maintain a household of her own may very well be a voluntary decision one that may, for instance, serve as an avenue out of a relationship marred by violence. If poverty is understood not only as income poverty but as a massive restriction of choices and options, a step of this kind, not taken in isolation, may also mean an improvement of women's life circumstances. (Rodenberg, 2004)

In terms of basic definitions and assumptions, Chant (2006) have noted that one problem about the "feminization of poverty" is that women are either presented as a homogeneous mass, or are differentiated solely on grounds of household headship. The same views were earlier highlighted by Joshi who argued that researchers efforts to understand the consequences of female headship on poverty and the welfare of children has often been obscured by the tendency to treat female-headed households as a homogeneous group (Joshi, 2004).

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Many researchers both locally and internationally have consistently treated these groups as homogeneous group with similar challenges. This approach has led to limited data on the intra-disparities factors that determine the vulnerability of each group to poverty. The limited data has in turn left a gap in the existing knowledge with regard to issues such as the status, stage in the life course, household composition, food security status, coping strategies as well as the intensity or severity of their poverty. Contrary to most researchers' belief, female headed households are highly heterogeneous group with different types of FHHs with different reasons for becoming female-headed (Chant, 2003a). Their differentiation derives from a wide range of factors including routes into the status, stage in the life course and household composition. These, and other axes of difference, can exert mediating effects on poverty and thereby defy their categorical labelling as the 'poorest of the poor' (Fuwa, 1999 and Chant, 2003a).

Another problem that the author has identified about the concept is that it gives an impression that FHHs are more susceptible to poverty than the ones in co-parenting arrangements. This connotation has been disputed by many researchers. For example, Chant (2007) argue that while having to cope single-handedly can be difficult for lone mothers, especially those with young children, we cannot necessary assume that co-resident fathers make life any less problematic. The presence of two parents in the same residence gives no guarantee of either financial or emotional support (Baylies (1996 in Chant, 2007). These views are further supported by Hewitt and Leach (1993)) who argued that, 'father absence' can be just as prevalent in male- as female-headed households and that rather than improving economic circumstances for households, paternal co-residence can undermine these through secondary poverty or the exploitation of mothers, whether on account of wilful neglect, egoism or lack of effort (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997; Delamonica, Donahue, and Alberto 2004).

Delamonica *et al.* (2004) further argue that life without men in some instances can thus be better for all concerned: for women, because they may not have a great deal to lose economically, labour-wise or in terms of stress from the absence of a partner, and for children. Given the difficulties women often face in male-headed units in respect of exerting control over men's expenditure or to realise their own preferences, female headship can offer an appealing alternative since as the main decision-makers, women are better able to act upon their preferences, in which the well-being of their dependents is usually uppermost (Chant, 2007 and Delamonica et al 2004).

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2.5 Gaps in the Literature on Feminization of Poverty

Firstly, most of the reviewed literature often divides the households into two broad categories (FHHs and MHHs). What most of the studies failed to do is to further dissect these two broad groups into different groups in order to investigate the distinct characteristics of each group. There are four types of households from within each group. FHHs are divided into; FHHs (divorce), FHHs (death), FHHs (migration) and FHHs (personal choice) while MHHs are divided into; MHHs (married), MHHs (divorced), MHHs (migration) and MHHs (death). However, in Limpopo Province, the few studies carried out on the topic have neglected to incorporate the individual circumstances of the above mentioned households. Studying these households as two broad categories without further dissecting them into individual household types means that we won't be able to clearly get a grasp of the poverty trends of each household type within the two categories. For instance, the circumstances of a female head of a working age that is running the family due to a husband's migration and that of an old widowed woman who lives with grandchildren are unlikely to be the same. Investigating the incidence of poverty as well as the vulnerability of poverty of each of the eight household types might give us a clear picture on how to effectively combat poverty by addressing the needs of different household types.

Another major gap identified from the reviewed literature is that in most studies both De Facto FHHs and De Jure FHHs are presented as a homogeneous mass with similar challenges. The problem with this "one size fits all" approach is that it leads to limited data on the intra-disparity factors that determine the vulnerability of each group to poverty. In South Africa, the limited data on the intra-disparities that determine vulnerability amongst different household types has left a gap in the existing knowledge with regard to issues such as routes to the status, stage in the life course, household composition, food security status, coping strategies as well as the intensity or severity of their poverty. In studying the different types of households, this study aims to investigate the circumstances of each household type which make it vulnerable to poverty. Furthermore, by investigating these households as heterogeneous groups, the study aims to identify poverty trends among the household types. This could, in turn, help policy-makers formulate poverty alleviation policies that address the needs of a specific household type.

The third gap identified from the review is that most studies, particularly in South Africa, seem to neglect the benefits that single women might enjoy by being heads of their households. There is a likelihood that single-parenthood could be rewarding to women as it might free them from a

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patriarchal authority and domestic abuse at the domestic level. This may in turn lead to experience of greater self-esteem, more personal freedom, and more flexibility to take on paid work, enhanced control over finances and a reduction or absence of physical and/or emotional abuse. A typical example of such benefits could be seen in Chant's studies of the Latin American. The studies revealed that if empowered, women heads may better be able to further their personal interests and the well-being of their dependents. The women are better able to cope with hardship when they are not at the mercy of male command and are freer to make their own decisions (Chant, 1995; 1997 and 2008). It is therefore of paramount importance to investigate and document the benefits that female heads, particularly those residing in rural areas, might enjoy as being heads of their households. This might in turn help to change the held perceptions which see the group as the poorest of the poor.

2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The conceptual base of this study is located in the Human Poverty Theory introduced by Amarta Sen and made popular by the United Nation. According to Cagatay (1998:7) the human poverty concept refers to "the denial of opportunities and choices for living a most basic or "tolerable" human life". The concept takes into account more than the minimum necessities for *material* well-being (Cagatay, 1998). In adopting this approach, the researcher wishes to divert from the traditional approach which uses monetary terms and household consumption as baseline indexes and a major determinant of feminization of poverty. The traditional approach which uses household expenditure and consumption has been considered a major determinant of poverty in many countries for a very long time. According to the UNDP (1997) the concerns with identifying people affected by poverty and the desire to measure has resulted in many countries using the money matrix, at times obscuring the fact that is too complex to be reduced to a single dimension of human life (UNDP, 1997).

This has resulted in many researchers arguing that the method is unreliable in assessing poverty since its measure is cast in a narrow framework that focuses on income alone and ignores the intra-household disparities (Fakude-Parr, 1999; United Nations Development Plan, 1999; and Malaba, 2006). According to Ballara (2005) the consumption/income approaches to poverty assume that the benefits of an income increase in poor households "trickle down" to all members equally. Although income focuses on important dimensions of poverty and seen as a necessary tool to measure poverty in FHHs, it however gives only a partial picture of the many

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ways human poverty can be blighted (UNDP, 1997; Fakude-Parr, 1999; and Malaba, 2006). For instance UNDP (1997) argued that someone can enjoy good health and live quiet long but be illiterate and thus be cut off from learning and from communication with others. On the same vein another person may be excluded from participating in the important decision-making processes affecting her life. However, the problem is that the two individual's level of income only cannot be used to fully capture the two people's deprivation. As a result of its narrow focus, the money matrix has since been declared an unsatisfactory measure of "feminization of poverty and cannot consequently be used as a sole determinant of poverty (Fakude-Parr, 1999).

Another challenge facing rural women around the world is that societies continue to exclude them from decision-making processes that affect their lives (UNDP, 1997). Although women are on the front line of household and community efforts to escape poverty and cope with its impact, they are however do not have a voice in decision making either in the household, community or in national and international arenas (UNDP, 1997). This has resulted in calls by some authors for a multidimensional view to poverty and deprivation rather than solely relying on income or consumption expenditures per capita to determine poverty (Sen, 1993). It is for this reason that in the 1990s the United Nations came up with the concept of human poverty, a concept considered more holistic method of measuring poverty using the human poverty/deprivation approach (Malaba, 2006). The approach draws heavily on the conceptual framework provided by Amartya Sen which conceptualises poverty or deprivation in terms of the absence of certain basic capabilities to function (Sen, 1997).

Its development was as a result of UNDP's main argument that poverty is not only about the lack of income to purchase basic needs as assumed by the money metric poverty measures, but should also look at wider aspects of deprivation such as lack of a long and healthy life, knowledge, lack of access to health care, safe water and sanitation, lack of adequate food, freedom of participation and human rights (UNDP, 1997 and Malaba, 2006). These, along with many other indicators of human development and deprivation should be used for monitoring poverty as they affect women and men differently (Fakude-Parr, 1999).

The concept of human poverty is multi-dimensional and makes clearer the relationship between gender inequalities and poverty and makes it possible to disaggregate the household and analyze the relative poverty or well-being of household members (Fakude-Parr, 1999 and Ballara, 2005). In expatiating the concept, Fukuda-Parr (1999) indicated that while lack of

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material means for a decent standard of living is an important dimension of poverty, it is however not the only one. Neither can deprivations in other dimensions be explained merely by low incomes. Fakuda-Parr therefore believes that poverty of choices and opportunities can be more relevant than income for policy-makers and others in taking action to eradicate poverty for they focus on the deep-seated structural causes of poverty and lead directly to strategies of empowerment (Fakuda-Parr, 1999).

Human poverty should therefore be considered as a preferred alternative to be used as a gender-desegregated measure of human poverty (Fakude-Parr, 1999, Malaba, 2006). This approach is more relevant for an engendered understanding of poverty than income since it sheds light on the relationship between gender inequalities and poverty. The concept further makes it possible to disaggregate the household and analyze the relative poverty or well-being of household members (United Nation Development Plan, 1990, Fakuda-Parr, 1999).

Although these gender differences often lead to lower incomes for women, important choices and opportunities are related to other human outcomes (Fakude-Parr, 1999). In most societies throughout the world, women continue to face restrictions on their choices and opportunities that men do not (Fakude-Parr, 1999). Gender inequalities on income, access to productive inputs such as credit as gender biases in labour markets and social exclusion that women experience form the basis for the greater vulnerability of women to chronic poverty (Gacatay, 1998).

The UN's Human Development Report of 1997 reported that human poverty rates have been reduced in well over 100 developing countries during the recent years with child death rates in developing countries, life expectancy has increased by more than a third, primary school enrolment has increased and more rural communities are now receiving clean water (United Nations, 1997). However, not everyone has benefited from these achievements, with women and children continuing to be affected by poverty. According to IFAD (2001) women continue to be disadvantaged and excluded from education, landholding and, in some countries, nutrition and health care. These in turn reduce their security and esteem while in some countries they slow the fertility transition.

Women are further constrained by their reproductive and household responsibilities (UN, 1997; Miya, 2005 and Stoilova, Riebling, and Hofäcker, 2011. This in turn has a negative influence on the employment as they only have limited time to take up full-time employment (Stoilova,

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Riebling, and Hofäcker, 2011). Women have less access to land, credit and employment opportunities that can help them and their children escape poverty (UN, 1997 Gacatay, 1998; Okoroafor and Nwadiaro 2011; Van de Walle, 2011) This has resulted in over one-third of FHHs living in poverty, majority of them having children present who also bear the brunt of poverty (Snyder *et al.*, 2006). In USA the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2007) reported that children living in female-headed families are nearly five times more likely to live in poverty than their counterparts living in married-couple families.

Although both men and women play substantial roles in southern African economies, they are not equally distributed across the productive sectors, nor are they equally remunerated for their labour. It is widely recognized that there is often a gender bias against women in the labour market in term of wage earnings and job opportunities (Cockburn *et al.*, 2007). Women are over represented in low-skilled, low-paying jobs and the wage gap between male and female earnings persists, particularly in the low and semi-skilled occupations (May, 1998; Bhorat 2009), caused mainly caused by the sectors in which they are concentrated, their social status and their labour status (Baden and Milward, 1997).

Female heads typically work for lower wages and have less access to assets and productive resources compared to men owing to gender bias against women (Rajaram, 2009). This situation is further exacerbated by legislative measures which have either excluded or not been enforced in relation to most of women's economic activities, concentrated in casual labour or informal sector work (Baden *et al.*, 1997). These gender-based inequalities directly and indirectly limit economic growth in southern Africa, and diminish the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts (Lopi, 2004). The lower wages that women earn as compared to men is the principal contributor to the concentration of poverty among FHHs (Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane, and Rama, 2004). Chant (2007) argues that since informal employment is not only poorer paid, but less regular, lacks in fringe benefits, social security coverage and pensions, the short- and long-term implications for female heads of household, and ipso facto, their children, are potentially serious. This trend is associated with, if not increasing poverty, then increasing vulnerability and insecurity among women (Baden and Milward, 1997).

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CHAPTER 3. GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLD POVERTY IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF WARD 14

3.1 Introduction

Alcock (1997:21) contends that "It is arguably the issue of definition which lies at the heart of the task of understanding poverty. We must first know what poverty is before we can identify where and when it is occurring or attempt to measure it, and before we can do anything to alleviate it." This premise was used to argue that a community-based definition of poverty should be clarified before determining whether feminization of poverty existed. The fact that poverty is a broad, mostly subjective concept that means different things to different people is a challenge. It is multidimensional with respect to its symptoms, multivariate in its causes and dynamic in its trajectory (Mowafi and Khawaji, 2005; Akindola, 2009). Its multi-dimensionality means that it is a product of many interlocking factors that cluster in poor people's experiences and definitions of poverty (United Nations, 1999). The multidimensional nature makes it difficult for scholars to define poverty adequately (Ibietan, Chidozie and Ujara, 2014). As a result of this challenge, many scholars continue to use the one-dimensional income and consumption approach when defining and attempting to determine if feminization of poverty exists. This method is simplistic, mainly convenient and fundamentally flawed (Webster and Engberg-Pederson, 2002; Saunders, 2004; Akindola, 2009). Application of the approach often neglects the fact that poverty covers a wide range of experiences and marginalizes some lived experiences (Webster and Engberg-Pederson, 2002).

The number of researchers who are now conscious of the need to involve poor people directly affected by issues that are not well understood by outsiders is gaining momentum (Kabubo-Mariara *et al.*, 2009; Aryeetey *et al.*, 2013; Savadogo et al. 2015). Savadogo *et al.* (2015) specifically argues that community members seem to know the most adequate definition of poverty, which reflects their lived experiences. This is mainly attributed to the fact that their understanding is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon usually associated with academics, politicians, economists and consultants (Davids *et al.*, 2005). These views are consistent with those of Savadogo *et al.* (2015) who argued that community members have a better feeling of poverty and might understand all the arguments for that". The people who live and work in an area are often in a better position to observe the economic status of fellow community members over a long period. This makes them better able to judge or assess

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the levels of wealth and poverty of local households, which also echoes the views of scholars such as Davids *et al.* (2005), and Rufus and Akindola (2009). The arguments explained above necessitated carrying out a study that would help clarify the community-perceived definition of poverty and its associated characteristics. This chapter was meant to provide an alternative way of defining poverty with a view to use the descriptors to determine if there was "feminization of poverty" in households in Ward 14.

3.2 Research Methodology

3.2.1 Introduction

As already alluded to in chapter one, the aim of the study was to explore the existence of feminization of poverty among various types of households in grassroots communities of Thulamela Municipality in order to suggest informed intervention strategies. In order to achieve this, an appropriate research design needed to be chosen. In this chapter, the aspects of research process and design employed for this study are discussed. This includes the research design adopted, sample and sampling method, data collection method and instrument and data analysis.

3.2.2 Description of Study area

The study was carried out in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality, which is located in Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa (Figure 1). Thulamela Municipality is one of the four local Municipalities that make up Vhembe District Municipality. Makhado, Musina, Mutale are the other local municipalities. Ward 14 is located in Thulamela B, a place that is dominated by Xitsonga/Shangaan speaking people. Ward 14 is comprised of five villages, namely; Mphambo, Shigamani, Mahonisi, Jimmy Jones and Dinga. These villages are characterized by dusty streets, mud houses, high unemployment and poverty rates as well as poor service delivery. Lack of employment opportunities means informal trading and social support grant become the main sources of income for most households. Other households survive from remittances they receive from family members who have immigrated to many of the country's major cities and mines to work as unskilled labour. As indicated earlier, Ward 14 is characterized by lack of service delivery. As a result, community members participated in a mass action where community members from Malamulele and surrounding villages successfully lobbied for the establishment of their own independent municipality, albeit through protracted violent protests.

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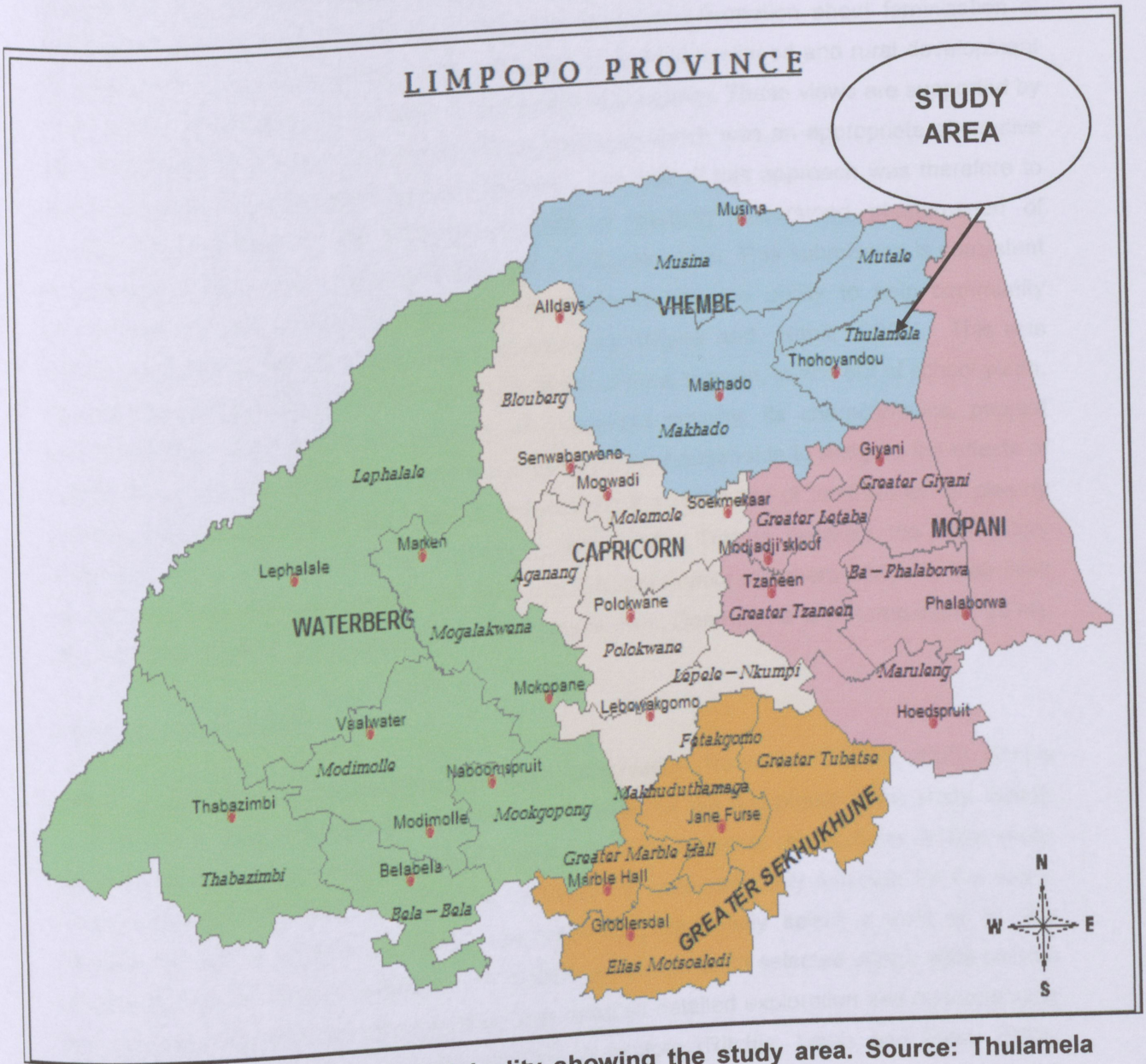


Figure 3 1 Map of Thulamela Municipality showing the study area. Source: Thulamela Municipality

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3.2.3 Research Design

The exploratory research design was adopted in this study. Exploratory research is a kind of research carried out for an issue which has not been clearly defined (Dudovsky, 2011). The method was appropriate for this study because dearth of information about feminization of poverty and its potential implications for increased household livelihood and rural development existed in the grassroots communities of Thulamela Municipality. These views are supported by Meredith (1998) who noted that exploratory research approach was an appropriate alternative approach where "the variables are still unknown". The use of this approach was therefore to provide more details of the hitherto unknown or partially understood phenomenon of feminization of poverty in Thulamela Municipality of South Africa. This submission is consistent with earlier findings which revealed that the approach has the ability to help community developers identify the existence of any phenomena (Bhana and Kanil, 2001). This was achieved by soliciting the perceived views of cohorts of men, women, in and out of school youth, and community leaders on the meaning of household poverty, its characteristics, poorest household types and coping strategies employed by poor households to mitigate the effects of poverty. This was done with the views of determining the existence of feminization of poverty within grassroots communities of Thulamela Municipality. This is because the exploratory research has the ability to unearth the meaning that community members attach to their lives and experiences (Francis, Makatu, Kabiti, Mahlawule, Kori, Dondofema and Ramoshaba, 2014).

3.2.4 Sampling method

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting observation (Rubin and Babbie, 2005). Simple random and purposive sampling methods were adopted for the first phase of the study. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were employed to select respondents for this study. Three out of the five villages that make up Ward 14 were randomly selected for the study. Criterion purposive sampling method was used to purposefully select a total of 51 key informants from all the three villages. The sample units from each selected village were chosen because they had particular characteristics that enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes the researcher wished to explore (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). Therefore inclusion criteria were used to purposefully select the respondents. Gender and age were used as the main criteria in the sampling process. It was crucial to ensure that the views of each interest group were solicited. As a result 29 males (57 %) and 22 (43 %) females were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The sample was further divided according to

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adult and youth respondents. The inclusion of age as a criterion was important for two reasons. Firstly, it guaranteed that all relevant age groups were included to ensure sufficient representation within each group. Secondly it ensured that any differences in perspectives between adults and youth due to age were adequately explored and captured (Ritchie, *et al.*, 2003) The youth group was further subdivided into in-school and out of school youth. The following additional criteria were also adopted:

a) The respondent had to be a community member of the three villages that were under study; and
b) Number of years the respondents' families had resided in the village. Only those who had lived in their villages for at least five years prior to the study qualified to participate.

Local organisers, who were selected with the help of community leaders, were enlisted to assist with mobilizing respondents within their respective villages. These community contact persons were those that the leaders perceived to be well-known and respected citizens. Assigning this responsibility to the community contact persons was also based on the assumption that they had adequate knowledge and a solid understanding of the local residents. After mobilizing community members, the contact persons organized meetings where the principal researcher outlined the purpose and nature of the study. Separate meetings were held with youth and adults. This was done in order to ensure that an environment was created for the youth, in particular, to ask questions and express their views without the threatening presence of adults.

3.2.5 Data collection methods and techniques

3.2.5.1 Pre-data collection arrangement

In order to ensure that a rigorous study of high quality was carried out, a research team was assembled. Two research assistants, one a holder of a Masters degree and the other the holder on an honours degree were recruited. The assistants were thoroughly briefed on the data collection techniques to be used as well as on the ethical considerations. Three community contact persons from each of the three villages where the study was undertaken were recruited. The three helped in mobilizing community members who participated in the study. A digital voice recorder was used to record conversations. Signed informed consent was secured prior to the

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interviews and it also covered use of the tape recorder. Appointments for the interviews were made using a telephone and local contact persons. Respondents were accorded the opportunity to choose their preferred locations for the interviews. Allowing the key informants to choose the venues for the interviews was done to ensure that they felt most comfortable during the course of conversations.

3.2.5.2 Data collection process

Data were collected through in-depth interviewing the 51 selected respondents referred to above. Focus groups were constituted as follows: (a) in school female and male youth; (b) out of school female and male youth; (c) men and women; and (d) traditional leaders and Ward Committee members. Some biographical data were collected prior to each key informant interview. This included age, gender, and marital status, number of years one had stayed in the village, family size and highest level of education. The following uniform set of open-ended questions was used to guide the key informant interviews:

a. Would you please describe in detail what the concept of poverty mean to you?
b. What would you say are the most common characteristics of poverty within poor households in this village?

Two research assistants were recruited and trained in data collection, particularly in conducting interviews. Thereafter, they actively participated in the data collection. A digital voice recorder was used to record conversations as the respondents discussed issues relating to poverty. Signed informed consent was secured prior to the interviews and use of the tape recorder. Interviews were conducted at informants' preferred locations, which were mainly included homes, playgrounds and workplaces. Allowing informants to choose the venue for the interview was done to ensure that they felt most comfortable when participating in the study. Appointments for the interviews were made using telephonic communication. Interviews were mostly conducted in Xitsonga language, which is a native language for communities in Ward 14. The use of the native language was done to ensure that the key informants clearly understood the questions asked. Also, this made them able to freely express their views in a language they were most comfortable with.

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3.2.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is described as "a process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 150). Thematic Content Analysis (Cresswell 2009) was used to analyze the transcripts and notes taken during the interviews. The first step of analyzing collected data involved the researcher familiarizing himself with the collected data (Marshall and Rossman (1999). The step involved transcribing and translating the audio recorded material collected during fieldwork into English. The transcripts were then read many times, summarized and matrices composed out of them. Notes were taken as the researcher gained general insights of what the respondents were saying about the meaning of poverty and its accompanying characteristics (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The second step of data analysis involved generating categories and themes from the respondents' perceived views on the meaning of poverty and its characteristics. The results were then placed into the main category of "causes of poverty." In addition, the various statements drawn from the data were coded. A manual coding system was used. This involved writing a code alongside passages that reflected themes. Different colour highlighting pens were then used to highlight emergent themes (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Themes were linked and informative quotes selected prior to writing up the information in a logical and coherent manner.

3.3 Ethical considerations

The University of Venda's Health, Safety and Research Ethics Committee issued an ethical clearance certificate that signified approval of the study (Certificate number SARDF/14/CRD/01/2803) (Appendix 4). Traditional leaders in each one of the three villages granted permission to carry out the study. This was a result of a series of meetings held with the leaders to explain the main purpose of the study, specific focus and its importance. As reported above, all the people who participated in the study signed an informed consent letter prepared for this purpose. Furthermore, the research team made a commitment to give comprehensive feedback in a community gathering once the study was completed.

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3.4 Results

3.4.1 Socio-demographic Information of Households

Table 3.1 presents the demographic details of 51 community members participated in this study. As already indicated these respondents were purposefully selected from the some of the villages located in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality.

Most of them (41 %) were from Mahonisi village, followed by those from Shigamani (30 %) and Jimmy Jones (29 %). About 60 % of the study respondents were males. The proportions of male respondents per village were approximately 53 %, 57 % and 60 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages, respectively. It was also observed that more youth (15-35 years old) participated in the study. The youth constituted 67 % of the total number of respondents in Jimmy Jones village, 67 % in Mahonisi and 67 % in Shigamani. The table further reveals that majority of respondents in each village reported a "never married status. The figures of never married respondents are broken down as follows; Jimmy Jones (47 %), Mahonisi (71 %) and Shigamani (73 %). The proportions of "married" respondents per village were approximately 33 % for Jimmy Jones, 24 % for Mahonisi and 20 % for Shigamani villages respectively. A low level of "divorced" was observed in all villages. The proportions for divorced respondents were approximately 13 %, 5 % and 7 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively. A low level of "widowed" respondents was also observed in all villages. The proportions for widowed respondents were 7 %, 0 % and 7 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively.

Table 3.1 further reports on the educational qualifications of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (51 %) reported that they had high school education but never obtained their matric qualifications. The proportions of respondents with "high school education with no matric" per village were approximately 47 %, 57 % and 47 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively. The table also shows the proportions of respondents with matric qualifications for each village. The proportions are as follows; Jimmy Jones (40 %), Mahonisi (29 %) and Shigamani (47 %) respectively. Low number of respondents had post-matric qualifications. The proportions of those with post-matric qualifications are 13 % for Jimmy Jones, 14 % for Mahonisi and 7 % for Shigamani villages respectively.

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Table 3 1 Demographic details of respondents who participated in the study

Variables	Names of the Villages		
	Jimmy Jones	Mahonisi	Shigamani
Number of respondents	15	21	15
Gender			
Males	8	12	9
Females	7	9	6
Age group			
In school Youth	5	7	5
Out of school youth	5	7	5
Adults	5	7	5
Marital status			
Never married	7	15	11
Married	5	5	3
Divorced	2	1	1
Widowhood	1	0	1
Educational qualifications			
Never went to school	0	0	0
Primary schooling	0	1	0
High school but no matric	7	12	7
Matric qualification	6	6	7
Post-matric qualification	2	3	1
Employment status			
Employed	2	3	4
Unemployed	11	13	8
Self-employed	3	5	3

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

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The table further reveals the employment status of the respondents. Majority of respondents (63 %) reported the "unemployed" status. The proportions of the unemployed respondents were 73 %, 62 % and 53 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively. Low number of respondents reported the "employed" status. The proportions of the employed were; Jimmy Jones (13 %), Mahonisi (14 %) and Shigamani (27 %) respectively. Low level of respondents who reported "self-employed" status was also recorded. The proportions of self-employed respondents were 20 %, 24 % and 20 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively.

3.4.2 Perceived meaning of poverty

The most common components of the definition of poverty as perceived by youth and adults of both sexes are presented in Table 3.2. Lack of basic needs and lack or low household income were the principal subthemes of the definition of poverty.

Failure to meet the most basic needs was regarded as the most common meaning of poverty at individual and household levels. As shown in Table 1, 76 % of the respondents were of the view that poverty referred to a situation where a household struggled to meet its basic daily needs, which included food, clean water and sanitation, clothes and proper shelter or housing. The following excerpt from an interview with a man in one of villages confirmed this perception:

> *Poverty in my understanding is when people struggle to meet the daily basic needs. For example you find that an individual is unable to buy things like mealie meal; sugar and washing and bath soap. Even when they do manage to afford these needs, they afford them after a very serious struggle. They can obtain them by asking from other people because they can't afford them by themselves. That is what I call poverty.*
>
> Male community member

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Table 3.2 Meaning of poverty as perceived by various interest groups in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality

Perceived meaning of poverty	Women (n = 11)	Adult males (n = 11)	Youth: females (n = 11)	Youth: males (n = 11)	Community leaders (n=5)	Ward Committee members (n=2)	Total (n = 51)
Inability to meet daily basic needs	■■■■■■ ■■■■■	■■■■■■	■■■■■■ ■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■	■■	39
Lack or low of household income	■	■■■■■	■■■■■ ■■■	■■■■■■■ ■	■■■	■	24 7
Being an orphan with nothing to sustain oneself		■■■	■■				5
Lack of information	■■■	■■					4
State of being poor			■■	■■			3
Being mental or/and physically disabled		■	■■				

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Keys: ■ means respondents identified the meaning of poverty

n means the number of respondents

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Another common view that 47 % of the community members cited as a definition of poverty was lack or low monthly household income. It was argued that this problem was the reason why households struggled to secure their basic daily needs. One female respondent articulated this well when she said:

> *I am referring to the lack of money because money is the only thing that simplifies life within the household. Money has the ability to cushion one's household from poverty. You see, households that are experiencing poverty usually have the will to get out of their situation but there is nothing that they can do to better their situation because there is no money in the house.*
>
> Female community member

Some of the respondents (14 %) pointed out that for them poverty also meant being an orphan and without any form of income. Five respondents (10 %) also defined poverty as people's lack of information on how to access services. The services in question included securing funds to start a business or income-generating projects, and how to apply for a bursary. In addition to the above descriptions of poverty, about 8 % of the respondents defined poverty as the 'state of being poor'. Another view of the meaning of poverty, though not so popular (6 % of the respondents) was that poverty referred to a situation where an individual suffered from either mental or physically disability. This meant that households with disabled persons were regarded as poor.

3.4.3 Specific characteristics of poverty in rural areas

The ranked community-perceived characteristics of poverty are shown in Table 3.3. Household struggle to meet daily basic needs, household have no source of income and family dwellings are in a state of disrepair were the principal subthemes of the characteristics of poverty.

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Table 3.3 Characteristics of poverty as perceived by various interest groups in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality

Characteristics of poverty	Adult females (n=11)	Adult males (n=11)	Youth: females (n=11)	Youth: males (n=11)	Community leaders (n=5)	Ward Committee Members (n=2)	Total (n=51)
Household struggle to meet daily basic needs	■■■■■	■■■■■■ ■■	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■	■■	27
Household have no source of income	■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■	■	■	19
Family dwellings are in a state of disrepair	■■■■	■■■■■	■■■	■■■	■■■		18
Members wear tattered clothes	■■■■■	■■	■■	■■■		■	12
Members beg for food from neighbours	■■	■■	■■	■■	■		9

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: ■ means respondents identified the characteristic of poverty

n means the number of respondents

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More than half of the respondents (54 %) indicated that the most obvious sign of an impoverished household was that often it struggled to afford the basic commodities essential to ensure its members' wellbeing or survival. Various commodities, among them food, shelter, clothes, sanitation, access to primary health care and reliable supply of clean potable water in the home, were cited as the major commodities and services. The views of a male and also female respondent that elucidated this view are presented, verbatim, below:

> *"Mhhh, allow me to list them. First, the family fails to afford to buy food they way they should. That's one characteristic. There are also families that go to bed every night on empty stomach because there is nothing in the house to eat. There are also families that when you see them having something to eat then you must know that they have really struggled to obtain such food while other families find it easy to obtain the same food. These are some of the key characteristics of poverty in the village".*
>
> Male community leader

> *Ok, the characteristics of poverty include not having a shelter to sleep in with your family, inability to afford clothes to keep yourself warm, as well as an individual's inability to afford food to eat*
>
> Female Ward Committee member

It was revealed (37 % of the respondents) that households that did not have a member who earned regular income were poor. The most common explanation given in support of this view as a characteristic of poverty was that households without a regular income earner found it difficult to afford food and clothing for its members. One male youth explained this issue as follows:

> *"Let us say the head of a household is not working, the family does not have any source of income. That family is suffering from poverty. In addition to that, you can see from the way the members of this household live that they are suffering and that they need help. Usually these households need help with food and clothes".*

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Male youth community member

About 35 % of the respondents further indicated that another sign of an impoverished household is the poor state of the family house(s). Respondents indicated that poor households reside in dilapidated houses that are mostly in a state of disrepair. One woman put this issue into perspective, as indicated in the verbatim excerpt presented below:

In addition to making sure that basic needs were met, you will find that the roof of your hut is leaking and needs repairs as well. The problem is that the money they are giving you is not enough to make sure that the huts are in proper conditions. I mean even if you wanted to build a house, can you make enough bricks to complete a house with a R1000, 00, no you cannot, and you will be playing. You will struggle until you die.

Female community member

Twelve respondents (24 %) reported that persons who wore cheap or tattered clothes were said to be members of poor households. This characteristic is closely linked to household income, meaning that members would better afford to buy new clothes if there was a reliable bread winner. The views of a woman and female youth presented below provide further clarify this observation:

The first thing that you will observe upon entering a poor household is the ragged clothes that the family members will be wearing

Female community leader

Children and their parents do not have enough clothes and repeat the same clothes day after the other.

Female youth community member

Parents from poor households cannot even afford to buy the school uniform for their children. You see children wearing worn out uniform to school.

Male community member

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3.5 Discussion

Poverty is a complex and multi-dimensional concept. This is why different people often explain in dissimilar ways. Thus, subjective definitions are unavoidable because of reliance on individual's personal circumstances such as socio-economic and household characteristics. The primary aim of this study was to clarify how youth and adults of both sexes who resided in Ward 14 of Thulamela defined poverty. The specific characteristics of this phenomenon were then identified and documented. Lack of access to basic daily needs and not having a reliable source of income are consistent with the main features of absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is defined as the inability to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter and avoidance of disease. Poverty as lack of access to basic needs/goods explains the phenomenon in material terms. It specifically uses consumption-based categories to explain the extent and depth of poverty, including determining who is poor or not (Olowa, 2012). All the categories of respondents perceived poverty to be a condition where members of a household struggled to meet their most basic needs necessary for their daily survival. The most obvious needs included nutritious food, clothes and proper housing. This definition confirmed those from studies conducted in the past (Sumner, 2003; Maiangwa, 2009; Asikhia, 2010; Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013). The fact that all the interest groups involved in this study defined poverty as the household's inability to meet daily basic needs was not surprising. Ability to meet the most basic needs of people such as nutritious food, shelter, adequate housing and education are important measures of household welfare (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013).

Financial instability within a household was also perceived to be a subcomponent of the definition of poverty. All the participating interest groups of adults and youth regarded lack of income which members of households could use for their sustenance as a characteristic of poverty. Some respondents even argued that lack of income meant that the household failed to meet its daily needs, often leading to destitution. Some carried out in the past (Akindola, 2009; Ayiemba *et al.,* 2015) reported similar results. Ayiemba *et al.* (2015) explained that poverty was a multi-dimensional concept that encompassed inadequacy of income and deprivation of basic needs and physical infrastructure. Financial instability compromised people's quality of life and thus trapped them in a deepening cycle of debt and related obligations (Shirindi *et al.*, 2015). Failure to generate income is often used to determine the welfare of a household. Akindola (2009) explains this challenge as follows "it is those things that money can buy that people want from money".

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Dilapidated housing, members begging for food to eat and also wearing tattered clothes were the other identified characteristics of poor households. The groups pointed out that most poor people resided in seriously dilapidated, mostly thatched huts that were unfit for human habitation. The huts had leaking roofs as well as cracked and moldy walls. The poor state of the houses often exposed the household members to rain and uncomfortable wind, which sometimes resulted in diseases. It was explained that the houses belonging to poor households were in a state of disrepair mainly because of lack of income. Most of the households were reportedly failing to buy enough food with the money they earned from their transient jobs and/or social grants. Thus, it was impossible for them to save any money to use to fix their houses.

The poor state of members' clothes was another characteristic of a household living in poverty. As one woman noted, *"the first thing that you will observe upon entering a poor household is the ragged clothes that the family members will be wearing*". Not having enough clothes meant that both parents and children wore the same clothes every day. Learners from such households wore the same school uniform throughout the week, a practice that was locally coined as "wash and wear". This meant that an individual washed a clothing item, waited for it to dry and then wore it again. Clothing items used this way aged fast and often got torn yet to the households did not have the means to new ones.

These results of the current study highlighted the fact that lack of financial muscle often made poor households struggle to afford basic necessities such as clothes, including school uniforms. Coupled with this was the finding that lack of reliable monthly income within most rural households resulted in members of affected households struggling to afford basic necessities. Because of their dire and desperate situations, most poor households were forced to seek external assistance from good Samaritans, who sometimes donated old clothes to them. Lack of employment opportunities forced most households to rely on social welfare grants, remittances from relatives working elsewhere and transient jobs such as domestic work as their main sources of income. These coping strategies are covered in much greater detail in Chapter 5. Musemwa *et al.* (2013) and Shirindi *et al.* (2015) found similar results in their own studies focusing on the strategies that poor households in rural areas used.

Households' inability to meet their monthly obligations could be attributed to the high cost of living as a resulting of drought, increase in electricity tariffs and high inflation rates, among other

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factors. For instance, South Africa is currently experiencing one of the worst droughts in recent history. The El Niño weather effect, whose origin is warming of the Pacific Ocean, exacerbated the financial woes of the household. The worsening food prices that were triggered by the drought as well as the increased electricity tariffs were not matched by increases in household income (Musemwa, 2013). For instance, an 80 kg bag of mealie meal cost R540 while the price of a cabbage was R22. These are staple foods for many of rural households and any change in prices is likely to have a significant impact on their disposable income and food security status. The high unemployment rates coupled with these adverse conditions have placed severe pressure on ordinary South Africans already struggling to meet their household needs and ensure food security (Labadarios, Mchiza, Steyn, Gericke, Maunder, Davids and Packer, 2011 and Dodd and Nyabvudzi, 2014). It was therefore not surprising that respondents identified family struggling to meet its daily basic needs and lack of income as some of the most common characteristics of household poverty.

3.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the definition(s) of poverty and their accompanying characteristics as perceived by community members. Community members of Ward of 14 of Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province were interviewed. The findings reveal that community defined poverty in terms of access to basic needs and income. Respondents perceived poverty to mean both the inability to meet one's basic needs as well as lack of income. The findings also revealed a positive relationship between the perceived definition(s) of poverty (inability to meet basic needs and lack of income) with the perceived characteristics. Of the identified characteristics, inability to meet the basic needs, lack of household income, ragged income and dilapidated households were the most popular. One can therefore conclude that rural people defined poverty the same way despite one's gender or age. Strategies must be put in place to stimulate rural economic development to aid in the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas.

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3.7 Recommendations

Given the results obtained in this study, the following recommendations are made:

a) A detailed and robust study need to be conducted to determine whether the perceived characteristics of grassroots community members of Ward 14 resonate with those of people in other rural communities.

b) Conduct a study to determine the prevalence of the perceived characteristics of household poverty among the different household types found in rural areas

c) Future anti-poverty strategies should focus on addressing both the absolute and relative poverty.

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CHAPTER 4. CAUSES OF POVERTY AMONG RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AS PERCEIVED BY GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES OF WARD 14 IN THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Abstract

Poverty, regarded as deprivation with respect to income, clothing, housing, education and health care, pervades rural South African society. However, location-specific literature on the determinants of poverty and strategies for combating it in rural communities is still scarce. An exploratory study that sought to fill this dearth in information through unraveling the perceptions of rural community members on the major determinants of poverty was conducted. Obtaining the views of the residents of rural communities on the determinants of poverty is an opportune starting point for developing community-based and context-sensitive interventions to reduce household poverty and improve food security. Data were collected from 51 purposively sampled community members in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. The sample comprised female youth (n = 11), male youth (n = 11), adult female (n =11), and adult male (n = 11), community leaders (n=5) and Ward committee members (n=2). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Interviews were audio-taped with the written consent of the respondents. Data were coded, processed and analyzed using the Thematic Content Analysis method. The major determinants of household poverty revealed by this study included lack of employment opportunities, low level of education and teenage pregnancy. It is prudent to carry out studies that assess the effectiveness of current government policies that recognise the strengths and address weaknesses of the diverse types of households commonly found in rural areas.

4.1 Introduction

Poverty is one of the major challenges facing many of the world's developing countries today. It is estimated that 780 million of the world's hungry people live in developing countries (Food and Agriculture Organization: FAO, 2015). In South Africa, although it has been reported that poverty rates decreased between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics South Africa: STATSSA 2011), the problem remains a major issue in local, national and international debates. Approximately, 10.2 million people still live in extreme poverty and 23 million more are classified as moderately poor (STATSSA 2014). The situation is particularly dire in rural areas where deprivation in terms of income, clothing, housing, education and health care is rampant. Sartorius, Sartorius, Tollman, Schatz, Kirsten and Collinson (2009) support this view and contend that in South Africa, rural poverty is a contentious issue. It affects previously disadvantaged rural communities more than

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other population groups (Pauw and Mncube 2007; Twala 2012). The country has a highly skewed bi-modal economy (Sartorius et al 2009), which compounds the challenges facing rural communities. Consequently, the national economy has in most instances been centred around the major metropolis to the detriment of rural areas where 70 % of the country's poor reside (Sartorius, Sartorius, Chirwa and Fonn 2011). Although this is the case, location-specific literature on the causes of poverty and related strategies for combating it is still scarce. The dearth of information on the perceived causes of poverty in rural communities means the government currently relies on information from "experts" who often lack a balanced understanding of the poor's daily struggles. As a result, many researchers are now conscious of the need to involve poor people in the process of identifying and analysing their own livelihood challenges rather than relying on the experiences of people who are far removed from their daily realities and struggles (Aryeetey, Jehu-Appiah, Kotoh, Spaan, Arhinful, Baltussen 2013; Savadongo, Soures, Sie, Parmar, Bibeau and Sauerborn 2015). This is mainly attributed to the fact that the poor's understanding of their situation is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon that academics, politicians, economists and consultants often use (Davids et al 2005).

Thus, the need to explore the causes of poverty through engaging rural communities cannot be questioned. Kyei and Gyekye (2011) concurred with this view and highlighted the need for analyzing the factors that caused the high unemployment rate, particularly in rural areas. The need to understand what the poor perceive to be the causes of poverty may also offer insights into how to combat it (Grobler and Dunga 2014). In this chapter, the perceptions of various interest groups in some rural communities in Limpopo Province of South Africa with respect to the causes of poverty among local households were explored.

4.2 Research Methodology

4.2.1 Description of the study area

The study was carried out in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province, South Africa (Figure 3.1).

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4.2.2 Research design

This study was qualitative and exploratory in nature. Qualitative research design was appropriate because the study sought to distill an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of grassroots community members on the meaning and characteristics of poverty as were also noted by Flick (2009). The exploratory research design was adopted in this study. Exploratory research is a kind of research carried out for an issue which has not been clearly defined (Dudovsky, 2011). The study was exploratory also, because this was the first time that research on feminization of poverty was conducted in Thulamela municipality. The method was appropriate for this study because dearth of information about feminization of poverty and its potential implications for increased household livelihood and rural development existed. These views are supported by Meredith (1998) who noted that exploratory research approach was an appropriate alternative approach where "the variables are still unknown". The use of this approach was therefore to provide more details of the hitherto unknown or partially understood about the causes of household poverty. This was going to aid in determining the existence of the phenomenon of feminization of poverty in Thulamela Municipality of South Africa. This submission is consistent with earlier findings which revealed that the approach has the ability to help community developers identify the existence of any phenomena (Bhana and Kanil, 2001). This was achieved by soliciting the perceived views of cohorts of men, women, in and out of school youth, and community leaders on the causes of poverty among grassroots communities. This was done with the views of determining the existence of feminization of poverty within grassroots communities of Thulamela Municipality. This is because the exploratory research has the ability to unearth the meaning that community members attach to their lives and experiences (Francis, Makatu, Kabiti, Mahlawule, Kori, Dondofema and Ramoshaba, 2014).

4.2.3 Sampling method

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting observation (Rubin and Babbie, 2005). Simple random and purposive sampling methods were adopted for the first phase of the study. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were employed to select respondents for this study. Three out of the five villages that make up Ward 14 were randomly selected for the study. Criterion purposive sampling method was used to purposefully select a total of 51 key informants from all the three villages. The sample units from each selected village were chosen because they had particular characteristics that enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes the researcher wished to explore (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003).

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Therefore inclusion criteria were used to purposefully select the respondents. Gender and age were used as the main criteria in the sampling process. It was crucial to ensure that the views of each interest group were solicited. As a result 29 males (57 %) and 22 (43 %) females were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The sample was further divided according to adult and youth respondents. The inclusion of age as a criterion was important for two reasons. Firstly, it guaranteed that all relevant age groups were included to ensure sufficient representation within each group. Secondly it ensured that any differences in perspectives between adults and youth due to age were adequately explored and captured (Ritchie, *et al.*, 2003) The youth group was further subdivided into in-school and out of school youth. The following additional criteria were also adopted:

c) The respondent had to be a community member of the three villages that were under study;
d) Number of years the respondents' families had resided in the village. Only those who had lived in their villages for at least five years prior to the study qualified to participate.

Local organisers who were selected with the help of community leaders, were enlisted to assist with mobilizing respondents within their respective villages. These community contact persons were those that the leaders perceived to be well-known and respected citizens. Assigning this responsibility to the community contact persons was also based on the assumption that they had adequate knowledge and a solid understanding of the local residents. After mobilizing community members, the contact persons organized meetings where the principal researcher outlined the purpose and nature of the study. Separate meetings were held with youth and adults. This was done in order to ensure that an environment was created for the youth, in particular, to ask questions and express their views without the threatening presence of adults.

4.2.4 Data collection

An interview guide was used to obtain answers to the questions that underpinned the study. The following broad question guided the interviews: What do you consider to be the major causes of poverty among different types of households found in your village? Arrangements were made with the respondents prior to interviews with regard to where interviews were to be conducted. This was done in order to increase the chances of success of the study. Conducting interviews within the familiar surroundings was important because of the need to make respondents more

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comfortable. When this is achieved, interviewees normally freely share information on their perceptions about the subject under investigation, attitudes, constraints and experiences (Neuman 1997). Interviews were conducted using Xitsonga, which is the native language in Ward 14. The use of the native language was done to ensure that the interviewees clearly understood the questions. In addition, this made them able to freely express their views in a language they were most comfortable with. As indicated earlier, an audio tape recorder was used to capture and store the conversations. This was only used after the informed consent of the interviewees had been confirmed. Apart from complementing note taking, the audio tape recorder ensured accurate capturing and safer storage of data for later analysis. It took 20-25 minutes to conduct each interview.

4.2.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is described as "a process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 150). Thematic Content Analysis (Cresswell 2009) was used to analyze the transcripts and notes taken during the interviews. The first step of analyzing collected data involved the researcher familiarizing himself with the collected data (Marshall and Rossman (1999). The step involved transcribing and translating the audio recorded material collected during fieldwork into English. The transcripts were then read many times, summarized and matrices composed out of them. Notes were taken as the researcher gained general insights of what the respondents were saying about the meaning of poverty and its accompanying characteristics (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The second step of data analysis involved generating categories and themes from the respondents' perceived views on the meaning of poverty and its characteristics. The results were then placed into the main category of "causes of poverty." In addition, the various statements drawn from the data were coded. A manual coding system was used. This involved writing a code alongside passages that reflected themes. Different colour highlighting pens were then used to highlight emergent themes (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Themes were linked and informative quotes selected prior to writing up the information in a logical and coherent manner.

4.2.6 Ethical considerations

The University of Venda's Health, Safety and Research Ethics Committee issued an ethical clearance certificate that signified approval of the study (Certificate number SARDF/14/CRD/01/2803). Traditional leaders in each one of the three villages granted

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permission to carry out the study. This was a result of a series of meetings held with the leaders to explain the main purpose of the study, specific focus and its importance. As reported above, all the people who participated in the study signed an informed consent letter prepared for this purpose. Furthermore, the research team made a commitment to give comprehensive feedback in a community gathering once the study was completed.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Socio-demographic Information of Households

Data used for this chapter were collected from respondents drawn from some of the villages found in Ward 14. The respondents included male and female adults as well as male and female youth (table 3.1).

4.3.2 Determinants of poverty

In Table 4.1 the identified themes pertaining to the determinants of poverty among rural households of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo Province are presented. The themes that were identified were grouped according to Feagin's three factors, namely; individualistic, structural and fatalistic.

4.3.2.1 Structuralistic Factors

Lack of employment opportunities (84 %) was identified as the major determinant of poverty. All groups concurred that lack of employment opportunities played a significant role in perpetuating poverty in the rural areas of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality (Table 4.1). The following extract puts the issue of unemployment in perspective:

> *"Being unemployed means people do not have decent income and therefore cannot fulfill their basic needs. The children cannot go to institutions of higher learning because their parents cannot afford the fees charged.*
>
> Male community member

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Table 4.1 Determinants of poverty as perceived by residents of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality of South Africa

Causes of poverty	Adult female (n = 11)	Adult male (n = 11)	Female youth (n = 18)	Male youth (n = 11)	Community members	Ward Committee members	Total (n = 51)
Structuralistic factors (external and economic factors at fault)							
Lack of employment opportunities	●●●●●● ●●●	●●●●●● ●●	●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●	●●	●●	43
Individualistic factors (poverty caused by the poor themselves)							
Low level of education and skills	●●	●●●●●	●●●●●● ●●●●●	●●●●●	●●	●	26
Lack of information	●	●●●●●	●	●	●		9
Teenage pregnancy	●	●●●●		●			6
Fatalistic factors (factors beyond society's control)							
Diseases (HIV/AIDS)	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●	●●		13
Death of parents	●	●●●●●	●●●	●			10

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: ● indicates that respondents have identified the indicator as the characteristic of poverty

n indicates the number of respondents who have identified a determinant of poverty

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Low level of education and lack of skills (51 %) was identified as the second most common determinant of poverty in rural areas. Both the adult male and the female youth groups identified it as another reason why there was an increased incidence of poverty within rural households. This was supported by some respondents from both the adult female and male youth groups. The following excerpt from a male youth illustrates how low level of education contributed to entrenching households in poverty:

> *"Poverty affects most of those who have no schooling as well as those who have not completed their primary education.*
>
> Male youth community member

Lack of information (18 %) was also identified by adult male group to be another contributory factor to high poverty rate within the households found in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Respondents from this group believed that dearth of information that rural people can use, especially regarding how to apply for bursaries, register a cooperative or secure funding for a business was a common problem facing residents of rural areas. A man in one of the villages in the study summed up consequences of lack of information as follows:

> *"Look, lack of knowledge results in young girls finding themselves with children. Some even get infected with HIV/AIDS. My understanding is that this happens mostly because of lack of information. I also mentioned the type of poverty where parents struggle to send their children to school. This sometimes happens because parents lack of information to understand that it was possible to send their children to school with the little money they had. There are several ways that can be used to fund the child so that he/she can continue with her studies. That's the reason I say sometimes this poverty is caused by a lack of information".*
>
> Male community member

Adult male group (12 %) also believed that teenage pregnancy contributed towards many rural households falling below the poverty lines. Respondents from this group argued that girls tendency of falling pregnant multiple times with the aim of receiving child support grant perpetuated poverty in most rural areas. The following extract from an adult male clearly summed it up:

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Another cause is of poverty is unplanned pregnancies. You sometimes find that even young girls fall pregnant at a very early age. In some instances they are influenced by the issue of receiving monthly grant. Sometimes you find them boasting to each other saying I am going to get paid and things like that. The problem with the grant is that it is not enough to meet one's basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter, leading the family to fall below poverty line. Another cause of poverty is that of lack of employment opportunities for villagers. You find that there are no jobs that the community members can do to bring in an income for their families.

Male community leader

4.3.2.2 Individualistic factors

Low level of education and lack of skills were regarded as the joint second most common causes of poverty across the three villages. The following excerpt from a male youth illustrates how low level of education contributed to entrenching households in poverty:

"Poverty affects most of those who have no schooling as well as those who have not completed their primary education.

Male community member

Men identified lack of information as a trigger of high poverty rates within households. Specifically, the men cited lack of information on how to apply for bursaries, register co-operatives or secure funding for businesses as the major impediments. A man in one of the villages summed up the consequences of lack of information as follows:

"Look, lack of knowledge results in young girls finding themselves with children. Some even get infected with HIV/AIDS. My understanding is that this happens mostly because of lack of information. I also mentioned the type of poverty where parents struggle to send their children to school. This sometimes happens because parents lack of information to understand that it was possible to send their children to school with the little money they had. There are several ways that can be used to fund the child so that he/she can continue with her studies. That's the reason I say sometimes this poverty is caused by a lack of information".

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Male community member

Another major issue that men believed entrenched households in poverty was the worsening teenage pregnancy. Girls were reported to have adopted the strategy of falling pregnant multiple times, aiming to take maximum advantage of the child support grant which the government had introduced as a social protection measure. The following view of a male youth in Shigamani village articulated this well:

> *Another cause is of poverty is pregnancies among under aged persons. You sometimes find that even young girls fall pregnant at a very early age. In some instances they are influenced by the issue of receiving monthly grant. Sometimes you find them boasting to each other saying I am going to get paid and things like that. The problem with the grant is that it is not enough to meet one's basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter, leading the family to fall below poverty line. Another cause of poverty is that of lack of employment opportunities for villagers. You find that there are no jobs that the community members can do to bring in an income for their families.*

Male youth community member

> *Poverty is caused by these young girls who deliberately fall pregnant with the hope of getting the government grant. The problem is that their actions only increase the number of members of households that are already in poverty, making the situation worse. What they don't seem to realize is that the grant money is never sufficient to adequately take care of the family.*

Male community member

4.3.2.3 Fatalistic factors

Diseases were also identified as another cause of poverty. More than half (55 %) of the adult male group believe that HIV/Aids is another cause of poverty among rural households. This submission is supported by female youth group (22 %). The following words from respondents articulated the issue even better:

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"Looking at my village, there are several causes of poverty. Diseases come first among the main things that bring poverty to the family. For example, these days you have diseases like HIV/AIDS. You find that both the husband and wife are infected and get sick where they eventually pass away and the children are orphaned. Sometimes you find that the children are still very young and are expected to take over the responsibilities of the parents, meaning that they become both mothers and the fathers of their households so prematurely".

Female community member

HIV/Aids causes poverty in that the family often uses the money meant to buy the household's basic necessities to try and get the treatment for the sick person. As a result, the focus of the family members shifts from meeting the basic needs of the household into saving the life of the sick person. That will in turn exacerbate the poverty within that family.

Male youth community member

About 20 % of the respondents further identified the deaths of parents as another determinant of poverty. The impact of parental death is evident from the following extract from an interview with a female youth of school-going age:

"Death of parents is devastating to the surviving children, especially if they are still of school-going age. The death of parents is just like opening doors for poverty to come into the family. There won't be any income, meaning the members of the household will have to rely on social grants for survival. The grant is not enough to meet all household needs"

Female youth community member

4.4 Discussion

As indicated earlier, this chapter explores the causes of poverty within rural households as perceived by community members themselves. There is a consensus among all groups that structural factors (lack of employment opportunities) were the major determinant among rural households in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Feagin (1972) describes structuralistic factors as those factors where both external and economic forces are at fault. The fact that all groups have identified lack of employment opportunities as the major cause of poverty was not

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surprising. The unemployment rate in South Africa remains one of the highest in the world (Mail and Guardian 2015). According to the National Treasury (2011), only 1 in 8 working age adults under the age of 25 have a job compared with 40% in most emerging economies. In addition, about 42% of the country's young people under the age of 30 are currently unemployed compared to less than 17% of adults over the age of 30 (National Treasury 2011). Employment is one of the most significant determinants of the welfare of any nation and any significant changes will subsequently affect the living standard of any household, regardless of the age and gender of the occupants (Kwabena, Kyei, Kwame and Gyekye (2011). Respondents argued that the high prevalence of poverty in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality was as a result of high unemployment rate among people of working age.

Individualistic factors also dominated respondents' perceived views as the major causes of poverty. Individualistic factors relate to the belief that poverty is caused by the poor themselves (Feagin, 1972). Feagin is of the view that the decisions that the poor consciously take are to blame for their poor economic status. Such decisions include among others, lack of effort to find employment as well as a tendency to waste money on inappropriate things (1972). Low level of formal educational qualifications and skills was identified as the major individualistic determinant of poverty in rural communities of Thulamela Municipality. Both adult male and female youth groups reported that low level of education and skills as a bottleneck that hinders villagers from securing meaningful employment. Male youth also concurred with this viewpoint. Respondents from these groups argued that high rates of unemployment and poverty among rural areas are the consequent of the villagers' lack of the necessary skills needed by employers. The fact that both male and female youth groups identified low level of education and skills as the major determinant of poverty was not surprising. Education remains a critical issue in the development of youth, particularly in remote rural areas of South Africa (Francis, Mamatsharaga, Dube and Chitapa 2011). However the country's youth continues to face uncertain future characterized by lack of skill and high unemployment rates. The high unemployment rate among this group is attributed to lack of necessary skills, rendering them unemployable. Both the male and female youth groups reported a positive relationship between low level of education and lack of skills with high unemployment rate among youth in rural areas. This observation is supported by the National Treasury (2011) which reported that unemployed young people tend to be less skilled and inexperienced, with 86% reported to have no further or tertiary education while two-thirds have never worked (National Treasury 2011). This shortage of skills among this group is regarded as a key factor preventing the achievement of country's targeted growth rates

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(Erasmus and Breier 2009). This is because young people are not acquiring the skills or experience needed to drive the country's economy forward (South African Department of Treasury, 2011).

Furthermore majority of the rural households mostly spent the income made from the informal activities on basic needs such as food and clothes. As a result majority struggled to finance their children's tertiary education, leading to a vicious cycle of poverty (discussed in detail in chapter 4). These findings are consistent with earlier studies which found that most poor households spend more money on food and less on education (Sweetman 2001; Ahmed, Hill, Smith, Wiesmann and Frankenberger 2007). It is a common practice among the poor households to drastically change their spending habits and consumption patterns to ensure food security in a sustained manner as noted. This include cutting down spending on education and health and cutting down on the quality of food they eat (Sweetman 2001). Investing less on the education meant children from poor households had limited opportunities to access tertiary education. This affirms the observation by Lyndy van den Barselaar, a Managing Director of Manpower South Africa. During her interview with the Mail and Guardian newspaper, Lyndy indicated that the high incidence of poverty among South African youth meant millions are unable to pursue secondary and tertiary education or training. This in turn presents a challenge in terms of their skills development and employment prospects (Mail and Guardian 2015).This negatively affects their future prospects of securing employment with better pay and benefits. These views affirm the findings by Dubihlela and Sekhampu (2014) who found that poverty had a negative impact on the education of the children and severely limit their future opportunities for social and economic development. Braun (2008) argues that such limitations often undermine the poor's ability to break out of poverty, leading to intergenerational cycle of poverty. Studies revealed that children growing up in poverty complete less schooling, work and earn less as adults and are less likely to receive public assistance and suffer from poor health (Coley 2013).

It was also not surprising that male adults also identified low level of education and skills as one of the major determinants of poverty in rural areas. In most African cultures a man is considered head of the household. By virtue of being the head, his household and the community at large expect him to provide for the family. Most men therefore take pride in being the provider in the house. However majority of men in rural areas lack the necessary qualifications and skills needed for them to secure employment. This in turn makes it difficult for them to adequately

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take care of their households, resulting in an increased level of poverty within their households. Statistics show that Limpopo province has the lowest adult literacy rate among the three provinces with high rural populations, the other two being the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal (Statistics South Africa, 2013). These findings are consistent with earlier findings by Kyei and Gyekye (2011) who concluded that illiteracy and incomplete secondary education were strong predictors of unemployment in Limpopo. It was therefore natural that men identified low level of education and skills as a magnet for household poverty. Education is considered to be the single most important poverty-reduction tool (Verner 2004). Empirical studies conducted across the world found that the probability of finding employment rises with higher levels of education (Berg 2008; Kyei and Gyekye (2011). According to Jeffrey and Basu (1996) education improves income, helps meet basic necessities and raises the living standards of households and thus causes a decrease in human poverty. These findings were later confirmed by Kyei and Gyekye (2011) who found that education directly affects poverty reduction through increasing earnings/income or wages (Kyei and Gyekye. 2011). Indirect effects of educational attainment on poverty are the result of the ability to fulfill basic needs such as water and sanitation, utilization of health facilities and shelter (Jeffrey and Basu 1996). The connection between education and poverty operates through three mechanisms as identified by Berg (2008). The first mechanism is that more educated people earn more money than the less educated. This is consistent with the human capital theory which revealed that high level of education often results in increased salary. This is because education enhances workers skills and making them more productive and valuable to employers (Janjua and Kamal, 2011). The second mechanism is that education improves economic growth and thereby economic opportunities and incomes. Lastly, Berg indicated that education brings wider social benefits for the poor. This includes lower fertility, improved health care of children and greater participation of women in the labor force.

Lack of information among rural community members was said to be another individualistic cause of poverty. Most rural people were reported to be lacking access to information on how to improve their lives without relying on the government of the day. Examples of the information indicated as crucial were: how to register a business, secure start-up capital and accessing bursaries for tertiary qualifications. Perhaps this could explain the adult male's observation that children from poor households often dropped out of school. The government through its National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) programme offers destitute students bursaries and loans to study at public colleges and universities. However lack of information in rural areas

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meant most of these children were unaware of these opportunities. Lack of information could also explain why young girls were deliberately falling pregnant as reported by adult male group. The group reported that poverty was also caused by girls who deliberately fell pregnant multiple times in order to increase the child support grant (CSG) they received. Child support grant is a social assistance mechanism which the South African government pays through its Department of Social Development to enable children from low-income earning caregivers to provide basic needs (Social Development, 2008). Some respondents argued that the practice was a clear sign that rural girls were oblivious to the fact that social grants only offered temporal financial relief and couldn't be used as one's main source of income. These views are congruent with those of Lambani (2015) who found that girls were of the erroneous view that the CSG ensured their financial freedom. The behaviour also revealed their shortsightedness and lack of foresight in realising the long-term financial implications of raising multiple children as a single, unemployed mother.

According to Thobejane (2015) teenage pregnancy has been identified as one of the primary causes of poverty since girls do not plan for themselves and their children before giving birth. Research findings revealed that although the CSG significantly mitigates the effects of poverty (United Nation Children Fund 2008; Wright, Noble, Ntshongwana, Neves and Barnes 2014; Zembe 2015), the money was not adequate to permanently move a household out of poverty. These views buttress the findings of an earlier study which showed that the amount of grant which is currently at ZAR350 or USD24.67 was grossly inadequate relative to the needs of the recipients (Wright *et al.,* 2014). The current CSG is currently lower than the $1.25/day threshold to make a substantial difference in the lives of children. It also seemed that girls were unaware that the unsafe sex also exposed them to health risks such as HIV/Aids. According to the United Nations Children Fund: UNICEF (2002), the vast majority of young people have no idea how HIV/Aids were transmitted or how to protect themselves from the disease. According to Awotidebe, Phillips and Lens (2014) adolescents with high knowledge of HIV infection are more likely to use condoms for every sexual encounter. One can therefore deduce that poverty within some rural households was as a result of girl-children's misinformed decisions resulting from lack of information.

In addition, fatalistic factors were also identified as major determinants of poverty within rural households. Fatalistic are factors that are beyond societal control. This includes bad luck, bad fate and high dependency ratio (Keagin, 1972). Of the fatalistic factors HIV/Aids and parental

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death were identified as the most common determinants. Adult male group identified HIV/Aids as another contributory factor to the high incidence of poverty among rural households. These views were supported by few respondents from the female youth (table 4.1). The group members revealed that as their health deteriorates due to the advanced stage of their disease, some household heads were now bedridden. This meant that they could not work anymore, leaving their households without a source of income. It was further revealed families of the infected often seek alternative treatment from *sangomas* (traditional healers) and prophets. This means that funds meant for the sustenance of the household were now being diverted towards these treatments, worsening the household poverty in the process. Gilbom (2002) also found that serious adult illness often put households under enormous financial strain. He attributed this to medical expenses and the inability to farm and work for wages. Affected households no longer had a source of income, which resulted in the depletion of the family's financial reserves. As a result, the families struggled to meet their most basic needs and were invariably food insecure.

The advanced state of the parents' sickness also meant that the eldest children in the households became *de facto* heads of households. They assumed parental responsibilities and also took care of their ailing parents. Their other responsibilities included carrying out household chores and caring for younger children. Although such affected children received support from local home-based care givers in taking care of their parents, the assistance only lasted for one or two hours per day. Thus, for most of the day the children acted as their parents' primary care givers. This puts emotional and mental strain on the affected children. A local teacher in one of the villages reported that this added responsibilities often led to a drop in school performance. Lack of household income as a consequent of parents' incapacitation means the children do not enjoy a proper diet, health care and good hygiene, all of which are essential for active performance in the classroom (Achoka 2005). Therefore, it can be concluded that the sickness of parents creates a vicious cycle of poverty within the households in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality.

Adult male group has also identified death of parents as another significant contributor to an increase in incidence of poverty in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Group members reported that the death of parents meant that the surviving children no longer had a reliable source of income. Respondents argued that the child social grant which is often the main source of income for households without parents is barely enough to meet their needs. As a result, most

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of these households often struggle with issues of food security and also struggled to meet other basic needs such as proper shelter and health needs. It was further reported that the poor economic situation often forced the eldest children to drop out of school. Lack of money for tertiary education as well as the need to supplement to supplement the household's income, which is mostly from government's social grants, were given as reasons dropping out of school.

4.5 Conclusions

This study highlighted various factors that members from grassroots perceived to be the causes of household poverty in their communities. Structuralistic factors (lack of employment opportunities), individualistic factors (low level of education and lack of information) and fatalistic factors (diseases and death) were perceived to be the major causes of poverty in grassroots communities. These results are useful for both rural development and policy development because they highlight factors that continue to place the poor below poverty level, particularly in rural communities. Furthermore, the results of this study are crucial criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the current poverty alleviation strategies in addressing the causes of poverty at grassroots level. Perhaps of particular importance is that the findings represent the voice of the poor, making them more appropriate tool to determine the plight and the aspirations of the poor.

4.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

a) Bottom-up approach should be considered when formulating poverty alleviation strategies with the views of the poor being used to inform policy making.
b) There is also a need for the implementation of location specific, pro-entrepreneurial programmes geared at stimulating rural-based small and medium enterprises to create employment opportunities.

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CHAPTER 5. GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE EXISTENCE OF FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY WITHIN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS OF THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Abstract

The existence of feminization of poverty among female-headed households (FHHs) remains a bone of contention for authors worldwide since Diane Pearce introduced the concept in the early 1970s. While extensive research on the subject have been carried out around the world, few studies from South African context currently exists, particularly in rural provinces like Limpopo where majority of households are female-headed. This study therefore sought out to explore the views of community members in rural areas on what they perceived to be the household types most vulnerable to poverty. The aim was to make a determination on the existence of the feminization of poverty in rural areas. An exploratory, qualitative method was adopted. Data were collected from 51 purposively sampled community members in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. The sample comprised female learners (n = 11), male learners (n = 11), ordinary women (n =11), ordinary men (n = 11), Ward Committee members (n = 2) and other community leaders (n = 5). Respondents' perceptions were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-taped for analysis with the written consent of the respondents. Collected data were coded, processed and analyzed using the Thematic Content Analysis method. Male headed households of all types (i.e. married, widowed, divorced) of unemployed males and those headed by middle-aged widowers were perceived to be the most vulnerable. The inability to diversify income-generating activities and spending patterns interests were identified as the major contributory factors to MHHs' poor socio-economic status. On the other hand, reliance on husbands' financial support and lack of skills were perceived as the major contributory factors for middle-aged widows' vulnerability to poverty. The findings of this study act as a challenge to policy makers to seriously consider the formulation of gender and context-specific anti-poverty strategies geared at addressing the needs of different household types. Such policies will allow for proper identifications of the poor within the different segments of the community. This will then lead to the proper implementation of strategies designed specifically for such groups.

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5.1 Introduction

The existence of feminization of poverty among female-headed households (FHHs) remains a bone of contention for authors worldwide since Diane Pearce introduced the concept in the early 1970s. Since then the plight of FHHs has been recognized by academic researchers and development practitioners alike (Nickanor, 2013). This was after it was observed that there was an increase in the incidence of poverty among this group. The increase in the incidence of poverty was first observed in the 1970s by Diane Pearce, resulting in the coining of the term, "feminization of poverty" (Pearce, 1978). This was after her study, which focused on the gender-based patterns in the evolution of poverty rates in the United States of America (USA) between the beginning of the 1950s and the mid-1970s. Pearce initiated her study after observing that two-thirds of the poor in the USA were women more than 16 years old. She also noted that the economic status of women had decreased between 1950 and the mid-1970s. The three most commonly identified elements of the 'feminisation of poverty' are: (a) that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor; (b) that this trend is deepening; and (c) that women's increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Moghadam, 1997, 2005).

Several studies have so far been carried out throughout the world (Chant, 1997; 1998, 2003; 2007; Bhorat and C. van der Westhuizen, 2008; Dungumaro, 2008 and Posel and Rogan, 2009) as the interest on the subject from both governments and scholars grew. The growing interest in research on household headship arose because of the increase in FHHs as well as the perceived economic and social differences between female- and male-headed households (MHHs) (Sekhampu, 2012). According to Sekhampu, FHHs have become concerns because of the high incidence of poverty and food insecurity in those households. This therefore necessitates the carrying out of empirical studies that will help determine the best and sustainable approaches to be used to arrest the situation. In South Africa, the country continues to witness a significant increase in the proportion of FHHs. In its report titled, "Living Conditions of Households in South Africa", Statistics South Africa (STATSSA, 2011) reveals that 44% of the country's households are female-headed. This represents an increase of 2% from that revealed by the National Census of 2001 (STATSSA, 2001; 2011). In Vhembe District, although there has been a decrease in the proportion of FHHs from 55% in 2001 to 53% in 2011, these figures remain too high (STATSSA, 2012). The rise in the number of these families therefore necessitates the carrying out of empirical studies to help understand their socio-economic and poverty status.

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The large proportion of FHHs is attributed to the country's unique circumstances that affect the structure and situation of families. These circumstances include, among others, migration due to contemporary macro-economic conditions; non-marriage and high mortality rate resulting from premature death brought on by HIV/AIDS pandemic (Posel, 2001; Goebel, Dodson, Hill, 2010; Gilbert, Selikow, Walker, 2010; Holborn and Eddy, 2011 and STATSSA, 2012). Paternal death has also been identified as the major player in the deterioration of family structures. In 2002, the Medical Research Council (MRC) predicted that about 4.7 million South African children under the age of 18 would be paternal orphans by 2015 (MRC, 2002). Recent statistics show that Limpopo Province has the third highest paternal orphans in the country. According to STATSSA's 2010 report on social profile of South Africa, Kwazulu-Natal has 27% paternal orphans, followed by Eastern Cape (19%) and Limpopo (15%) (STATSSA, 2010). This means that mothers are increasingly forced to take up the responsibility of being an income earner, a position traditionally assigned to the father.

There has also been a shift away from a husband-wife traditional family structure as women choose not to get married. Despite claims that marriage provides the most stable backgrounds for children, its popularity continues to dwindle (Beckford, 2012). This is because women increasingly prefer to raise kids on their own than in a marriage. According to Richter and Panday (2006), this shift has resulted in South Africa having the lowest marriage rate in Africa. What is particularly worrying is that both the number and the proportion of children with absent, living fathers are increasing in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly among Africans (Holborn and Eddy, 2011). The same scholars report that an increase in the proportion of living but absent fathers increased between 1996 and 2009, from 42% to 48%. Over the same period the proportion of fathers who were present decreased from 49% to 36%. In addition, women are more likely to take the main caring responsibilities for the children in case of divorce or separation as noted by Beckford (2012). Despite an increase in the number of FHHs over the past decade, limited empirical data currently exists on the state of different types of FHHs when compared to different types of MHHs in Thulamela Municipality. Lack of empirical data means that the Municipality currently has limited information to guide the formulation and implementation of future poverty alleviation strategies. The aim of this chapter was therefore to determine the poorest household types as perceived by community members. Identifying the poorest household types will aid in making a determination on the existence of feminization of poverty within the rural communities of Thulamela Municipality.

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The results of this study may also help the government to formulate a gender and context specific poverty alleviation projects

5.2 Research methodology

5.2.1 Description of study area

The study was carried out in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province, South Africa (Figure 3.1). Respondents included male and female adults as well as male and female youth (Table 3.1).

5.2.2 Research design

This study was exploratory in nature and a qualitative design will be used. According to Sarantakos (1998), research that is exploratory in nature is usually carried out when there is not sufficient information about the subject under investigation or when the formulation of hypotheses is difficult or impossible. Exploratory study was appropriate for this study since there was currently limited information on the exploration of the poorest rural households as perceived by community members of Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province.

5.2.3 Sampling method

Simple random sampling method was used to randomly select Shigamani, Mahonisi, and Jimmy Jones as sampled villages. Criterion purposive sampling was then used to select 51 respondents from the sampled villages. The numbers of people in each of the six groups constituted for this study were as follows: female youth (22%), male youth (22%), ordinary women (22%), ordinary men (20%), community leaders (10%) and Ward Committee members (4%). It was necessary to constitute such a diverse sample because of the need to source the views of individuals in different sex, age and social standing groups. A respected member of each village who understood local protocols helped to identify and mobilize the persons interviewed in this study. Each interviewee had either stayed or worked within the villages for at least five years. The interviewees who matched these criteria were expected to provide reliable, in-depth and relevant information.

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5.2.4 Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews were carried out with purposefully selected key informants from rural communities found within Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. This method was selected as it provided an opportunity to minimize variations in the questions posed to the respondents and to make sure that all relevant topics are covered (De Vos, 2002). Respondents were visited at their homes and appointments were secured with each one of them. Informed consent of respondents was obtained prior to data collection. The consent form explained the purpose and nature of the study, gave assurance of anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study. The aim and objectives of the study were explained and the respondents agreed by signing the consent form. Interviews were conducted in Xitsonga, a local language for the study villages. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the respondents.

The following questions guided the interviews:

a) What would you say are the poorest household types in your community?
b) Why are the households the poorest when compared to others?

5.2.4 Data Analysis

Collected data were translated, transcribed and thematically analyzed. Thematic analysis is a process that involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). The six steps outlined by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006) were adopted. The first step involved the researcher familiarizing himself with the collected data by going through the data from the tape recorder, field notes and interview transcripts. The second step involved identifying themes that emanated from data relating to the aims of the study. Step 3 entails coding (breaking up the relevant data in understandable means). Step 4 is elaboration (getting fresh view of the data by exploring themes more closely) and Step 5 is interpretation and checking the data (the researcher provides clarification and assessment of the data). Data were coded according to concepts and categories used in the paper, and from these, excerpt files were compiled that collected material from interviews that dealt with the same issue. Excerpts are presented using the preservationist approach (Weiss, 1994), that is, material is presented in the original speech so as to reproduce the words recorded on tape as accurately as possible. Verbatim vernacular words, with English translation in parenthesis, are inserted in places for emphasis.

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5.2.5 Ethical considerations

The University of Venda's Health, Safety and Research Ethics Committee issued an ethical clearance certificate that signified approval of the study. Traditional leaders in each village granted permission to conduct data collection. This resulted from a series of meetings held with the leaders to explain the main purpose of the study and its importance. All the people who participated in the study signed an informed consent letter prepared for this purpose. Furthermore, the research team committed to give comprehensive feedback in a community gathering once the research report was completed.

5.3 Research Results

5.3.1 Socio-demographic Information of Households

Data used for this chapter were collected from respondents drawn from some of the villages found in Ward 14. The respondents included male and female adults as well as male and female youth (table 3.1).

5.3.2 Poorest household types as perceived by community members

Table 5.1 shows the poorest households in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality as perceived by community members of the rural communities. Male-headed households were perceived as the poorest households, followed by those headed by widowers which is followed closely by FHHs of all groups. FHHs of never married women and those of women divorcees were perceived to be among households least vulnerable to poverty.

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Table 5 1 The poorest household types as perceived by community members of rural villages in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality

ıseholds more :cted poverty	Adult females (n=11)	Adult males (n=11)	Youth: females (n=11)	Youth : males (n=11)	Community leaders (n=5)	Ward Committee members (n=2)	Total (n=51)
Hs: unemployed e (all groups)	●●●●●●	●●●●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●	24
Jure FHHs: owed	●●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●	●●			16
ıs: All groups		●●	●●●●●●● ●	●	●	●●	14
Jure FHHs: er married	●	●●●●●●	●●●●	●			12
Jure FHHs: ɔrced	●	●●●	●●●		●		8
HS: mployed ried couple	●	●●●					4
Facto FHHs: e migration		●●●	●				4
HS: migration		●●	●				3

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: ● indicates that respondents have identified the indicator as the characteristic of poverty

n indicates the number of respondents who have identified the poorest household

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Table 5.1 shows that 24 or 47 % of the respondents perceived all types of male-headed households of unemployed men as heads as the poorest household types. The following excerpts represent respondents' views of MHHs' poverty status:

> *I think the households that are most affected by poverty in my community are those that are headed by men who are not working*
>
> Male community member

> *When comparing between female-headed-households and male-headed-households I would say male-headed households where the men are not working are the poorest*
>
> Female community member

> *Families that are mostly worse off than others are those that are being headed by unemployed males*
>
> Female Ward Committee member

Table 5.1 also shows that 16 or 31 % of respondents identified female-headed households of widowed women as the poorest households when compared to other household types. Some respondents had the following say:

My observation is that households where the head is a widowed woman are the ones that are most affected by poverty when compared with other household types

Female youth community member

> *I think the widowed headed households are the most affected households compared to other households*
>
> Male youth community member

About 27 % identified all types of FHHs as the poorest households when compared to other household types. Some respondents had this to say:

> *The poverty rate of female-headed households is higher than on male-headed households in my community*
>
> Male youth community member

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Most of the female-headed households in our community live under extreme poverty compared to other households

Female youth community member

Other households perceived as poorest were FHHs of never married women (24 %), FHHs headed by divorced women (16 %), MHHs of unemployed married couple (8 %), FHHS resulting from male migration (8 %) and MHHs resulting from female migration (6 %).

Table 5.2 reveals that about 67 % of the respondents have attributed MHHs' poor economic status to men's inability to diversify income-generating activities. The issue of men's inability to diversify could be seen from the following excerpts:

"It is different because where the father is staying with his children; the father can never go and work as a maid. You will find that he only has his children's SASSA grant cards as a family income and there is no other source of income. But with women, she will look for a job as a maid and do other things that can generate income for the family. This income is complemented by the monthly child grant that she receives for her children which makes the situation better.

Female youth community member

The reason why I say that is because women have the ability to come up with strategies like starting their own small business or looking for jobs as maids in order to generate some sort of an income for themselves. On the contrary, most men do not usually think of strategies they can use to make money. What most of them do is just to loiter around the village the whole day doing nothing useful. So yes, MHHs struggle more than FHHs".

Male youth community member

5.3.3 Perceived reasons for the households' poverty status

5.3.3.1 Perceived reasons for MHHs' poor status

Table 5.2 presents the respondents' perceived reason for the increased incidence of poverty in MHHs.

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Table 5 2 Perceived reasons for the increase in the incidence of poverty among MHHs

Reasons why MHHs are most affected by poverty	Adult females (n = 6)	Adult males (n = 8)	Youth: females (n = 4)	Youth: males (n = 6)	Total (n = 24)	%
Inability to diversify income	• • • • • •	• • •	• • •	• • ••	16	67
Spending patterns	• •	• • •		• •	7	29
Most are unemployed and rely on child support grant	•				1	4

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: MHHs = Male-headed households

• indicates that respondents have identified the indicator as the characteristic of poverty

n indicates the number of respondents who have identified the poorest household

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Inability to diversify was identified as the major cause of MHHs' poor economic status. The following excerpt from a woman community member put the issue into perspective:

It is different because where the father is staying with his children; the father can never go and work as a maid. You will find that he only has his children's SASSA grant cards as a family income and there is no other source of income. But with women, she will look for a job as a maid and do other things that can generate income for the family. This income is complemented by the monthly child grant that she receives for her children which makes the situation better. But where there is only a man things become very difficult, a man cannot run a household by himself. This in turn makes the poverty situation in his household very serious. This is mainly because you will find that the man does not have a job so he only relies on child grant and this money is too little to buy most of the things such as clothes and school uniform".

Woman community member

Men's spending patterns have also been identified as another contributory factor of poverty within MHHs (Table 5.2). About 29 % of respondents identified it as the contributory factor. The following citation illustrates this perception:

Male headed households are the worst households associated with poverty. Male are powerful than females but when it comes to taking care of their family, they are weak. Men sometimes leave their children alone and disappear for the whole weekend spending money with girlfriends

Female youth community member

Most men who are heading their families with the absence of a woman in the house usually spend whatever money they have on things like alcohol, neglecting their responsibilities at home in the process.

Male community member

Perceived reasons for widow-led FHHs poor status

Respondents' perceived reasons why FHHs where the head was a widow are presented in Table 5.3.

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Inability to diversify was identified as the major cause of MHHs' poor economic status. The following excerpt from a woman community member put the issue into perspective:

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Male community member

Perceived reasons for widow-led FHHs poor status

Respondents' perceived reasons why FHHs where the head was a widow are presented in Table 5.3.

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Table 5 3 Perceived reasons for the increase in the incidence of poverty among FHHs of widowed women

Reason why FHHs: widowed women are the poorest	Men (n = 6)	Men (n = 5)	Youth: females (n = 3)	Youth: males (n = 2)	Total	%
They were reliant on their late husbands for everything	• • • •	• • •	•	• •	10	63
Low level of education	• •	• •	• •		6	37

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key • indicates that respondents have identified the indicator as the characteristic of poverty
n indicates the number of respondents who have identified the poorest household

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Reliance on husbands was identified as the main contributory factor to the poor economic status of households headed by widowed women. About 63 % of those who identified these households as the poorest households identified it as the cause. The following excerpts put the issue in perspective:

> *If you find that a man is working and he died this mean that that it will be difficult for his wife to raise children by herself since she is unemployed"*
>
> Female youth community member

> *When their husbands were alive they used to do everything for them. So when they died they didn't leave any money for them so that life can continue to go smooth like it used to be when they were still alive. The widows will then have to go on job hunting in order to feed and clothes their families.*
>
> Female community member

In addition, 37 % identified low level of education as another cause of poverty among FHHs where widowed women are the heads. Following is an excerpt from an interview with male youth from one village that puts this issue into perspective:

> Most w*idowed women possess a low level of education in my village. As a result they lack the skills on how to generate an income for their families*
>
> Male youth community member

5.3.3.3 Perceived reason for FHHs (all types) poor status

The reasons why some respondents perceived FHHs of types as poorest are presented in table 5.4. Table 5.4 reveal that about 72 % of respondents identified low level of education as the major cause of poverty among this household type. . A man in one of the villages summed up the consequences of low level of education as follows:

> *The unemployment rate among women is very high. This is caused by lack of education where women are bound to work for less income*
>
> Female youth from community member

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Table 5 4 Perceived reasons for the increase in the incidence of poverty among FHHs (all types)

Reason for FHHs' poor economic status	Women (n = 6)	Men (n = 5)	Youth: females n=3	Youth: males n=2	Total	%
Low level of education	• • • •	• • •	•	• •	10	72
High dependency ratio		• •	• •		4	28
Total					14	100%

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: FHH = Female-headed households

• indicates that respondents have identified the indicator as the characteristic of poverty

n indicates the number of respondents who have identified the poorest household

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In addition, 28 % identified high dependency ratio as another cause of poverty within these households. One man had this to say on high dependency ratio:

> *Female-headed households often have a high number of dependents as women give birth to multiple children in order to increase the child support grant they receive from the government. The problem is that the money is never enough since a larger family requires a larger budget to survive.*
>
> Male community member

5.4 Discussion

The study revealed that grassroots community members perceived all types of male-headed households (married, divorced, widowed, female migration) to suffer increased incidences of poverty as compared to other rural household types. These findings contrasted earlier studies which found that female-headed households were more likely to be poor than their male counterparts (Gürkana and Sanogo 2011). Inability to diversify and spending patterns were identified as the major contributory factors. Of the identified self-serving interests, alcohol consumption has been identified as the most common. There was a consensus among respondents that most rural men spent the little money they make from transient jobs on *mporosi* (traditional beer). These findings authenticate those of Rubio-Marín (2009) which revealed that men are more likely to spend money on pleasures such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, leisure activities such as sports and sexual conquests.

Respondents argued that it was common for male heads to leave their families for an extended period of time while spending time with their friends drinking alcohol. These findings authenticate those of Masinde (2014) who metaphorically stated that most men in rural areas were "married to alcohol" while women took care of their families. One possible explanation for men's alcohol consumption could be limited job opportunities in rural areas and resulting frustrations of not being to provide for their families. Preceding studies revealed a connection between unemployment and alcohol assumption among rural men (Birech, Kabiru, Misaro and Kariuki, 2013 and Cozzarelli and Markham 2014). Men are socialised to take pride in being able to financially provide for their families (Boonzaier and De la Rey, 2004). There is a saying among Vatsonga people that says, "*Wanuna u vonaka hi mintirho ya yena" (A man is seen by the work he does for his family)*. These societal and cultural expectations put an additional pressure on men to effectively "play" the role of

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they find themselves in. While women fight poverty by diversifying their household income, men spend the little money they have on alcohol which only offers them temporary relief to their poverty.

The study further identified De Jure widowed female-headed as another group with increased incidence of poverty. Sixteen (16) respondents have indicated that this group was worse off compared to other groups. Of the widows, those considered too old to be employed but not old enough to receive old age grant are thought to be the most vulnerable. Reliance on husband for financial support as well as low level of education was identified as the main reasons for their economic woes. Respondents contended that majority of these women never held down a job in their lives. Instead they relied entirely on remittances from their husbands who worked in big cities and mines mostly as migrants for financial support. These practices are consistent with long held cultural practices from most patriarchal societies that perceive women's role as that of a child minder whose place is in the kitchen (Dunlop and Velkoff 1999; Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa, 2004). The consequent of this practice is that it usually leaves women disempowered and reliant on their migrant husbands for financial support.

Reliant on their husbands meant that these women were prone to life of destitution upon the death of the husband. The widows' situation is exacerbated by lack or low level of education. Respondents argued that low level of education had a negative impact on their employability. Chaudhry and Rahman (2009) argued that education is the most important instrument for human resource development. It has become a universal human right and an important component of opportunities and empowerment of women (Chaudhry and Rahman 2009). Despite the critical role that education play in the empowerment of women, this study revealed that majority of rural widows lacked formal education. These findings confirm the findings of earlier studies (Sandys, 2001; Edewor and George 2012; Asiazobor 2013). These studies found that large proportions of widows have no formal education, have low income and therefore lack economic empowerment.

Lack of education among the aged women was also identified during the United Nations 2nd World Assembly on Aging held in Madrid, Spain as the major contributing factor to their poverty in old age, presumably in comparison to men (United Nations 2002). Lack of education among most middle-aged rural women could be attributed to both the country's apartheid history as well as the long held cultural practices within most black communities which denied women access to education. The apartheid government systematically implemented strategies geared at either

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denying or discouraging black children from accessing formal education. For instance the government ensured that schools for Blacks were too far away from farms and small rural holdings where most Black families lived and worked as labourers. This meant that Black children had to walk several kilometres under adverse weather conditions in order to attend schools for Black children (Quan-Baffour 2012).

These conditions coupled with the political insecurity in the country at that made it difficult for small children, especially girls, to travel on foot through the bush to attend schools. The socio-economic and political climate led to many of the Black children who grew up during apartheid either dropping out or never went to school (Quan-Baffour 2012). The consequence is that without formal education, these rural folks who are now in their forties and fifties have no means of making an income. Instead they are now sitting on the periphery of the economic sector without basic knowledge and skills to actively participate in the socio- economic activities of the new South Africa (Quan-Baffour 2012).

Harmful cultural practices could have also played a significant role in most middle-aged widows being denied access to formal education during their childhood. Interviews with some elderly community members revealed that in the past Vatsonga cultural practices dictated that girl children spend more time doing household's chores in preparation for a marriage while boy children went to school. These revelations are consistent with the cultural practices in most patriarchal communities in Africa and Asia that discourage girl children from attending school. For instance, in Mozambique Tvedten et al (2008) who found that female attendance was lowest and the drop-out rate highest. This was partly due to a stronger perception of boys as future breadwinners and socio-cultural practices of early marriage and high teenage pregnancy rates among girls. Upon getting married the women's role would have been to give birth and look after the children, till the fields and look after the households. This means that with limited skills these women were always going to find it difficult to secure some sort of employment.

Respondents contend that the difference between middle-aged widows and young widows is that the former still have energy to be involved in a variety of income generating activities while the latter are considered to have low level of energy. Middle-aged are also considered to have passed their working age with most employers preferring younger people for both semi-skilled and unskilled labour. It is only in few cases where middle-aged women are employed as domestic workers. Unlike the other households that have children who receive child support grant which is

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used to mitigate the effects of poverty, most middle-aged widows' children are adults and do not qualify for the grant . It is only in few cases where an old woman is living with grandchildren and the family is able to survive from their social grant payment. Community members argue that this group situation is aggravated by the fact that most of them are not yet old enough to receive an old grant. According to the department of Social Development (2008) a women should be aged 60 years or older in order to qualify to receive a grant. One can therefore conclude that unemployed middle-aged rural widows with neither skills nor support system are more vulnerable to poverty than other female heads.

In addition 14 community members have identified all groups of FHHs to be more susceptible to poverty than any other group. Low level of education, reliant on child support grant and high dependency ratio were identified as the major contributory factors. Respondents indicated that majority of female heads had a low levels of education. Low level of education and formal skills left most of these women either unemployed or underemployed. Even those who are working are usually employed in low paying jobs. Lack of meaningful employment meant most of these women relied on their children's monthly social grant for survival. However respondents argued that while the social grant made a positive difference in these households, it was however not enough to meet all their basic needs. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that some women gave birth to multiple children with the intention of increasing the amount they will receive from the social grant. However they soon realize that the money is not sufficient to support them and their children, leading to increased incidences of poverty within the household. These findings are consistent with earlier studies which revealed a positive relationship between the size and composition of households and increased incidences of household poverty (Baiyegunhi and Fraser (2014; Afera, 2015 and Ranathunga, 2015). Respondents argued that large family size required a bigger budget to cover every household member's individual needs (i.e. clothes, school fees, food etc.). However the child social grant amount of R330.00 was not enough to meet all these needs, regardless of the number of grant-receiving children in the household. The argument was that as the number of household members increase, so will be the household budget, making this practice a self-defeating one. These findings validate those of Baiyegunhi and Fraser (2014) who found that poverty in larger families could be as a result of much pressure exerted on the limited resources at the household level.

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5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine what community members perceived to be the poorest household(s) among the different types of household found in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality in South Africa. The empirical results of this study revealed that male-headed households with unemployed heads are perceived to be the poorest group when compared with other types of households. , followed by FHHs: widowed and then FHHs: all groups. Inability to diversify income-generating activities coupled with incorrect spending patterns were the two major contributory factors for MHHs' poor socio-economic status. Unemployed male heads were unable to diversify their income generating strategies. Instead they focused on one and mostly unreliable strategy at a given time. It was further revealed that while female heads spent their income on the welfare of the family members, MHHs spent their money on self-serving interests such as alcohol. On the other hand reliant on late husbands and low level of education were identified as contributory factors for middle-aged widows' poor status. It was revealed that most middle-aged relied on their husbands for financial support. This meant that they often struggled to survive after their husbands' passing. Their situation was further exacerbated by the fact that most had low level of education, making it virtually impossible for them to secure employment in the formal sector. Low level of education, reliant on child support grant and high dependency ratio were identified as the major contributory factors to all groups of FHHs. One can therefore deduce from these findings that all types of rural households are equally vulnerable to poverty despite the gender of the household head. These findings therefore support the notion that the general assumption that FHHs were more vulnerable than MHHs had limited validity in a context of shared views by rural community members.

5.6 Recommendations

Given the results obtained in this study, the following recommendations are made:

a) A broader and robust study should be carried out to determine whether the views of community members from villages of Ward 14 resonate with those of people in other rural communities of Thulamela Municipality.
b) A study to be carried out to determine the relationship between alcohol consumption and household poverty among MHHs in rural communities
c) An exploratory study to determine the masculinization of poverty within grassroots communities of South Africa

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CHAPTER 6. GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF THE COPING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY POOR HOUSEHOLD POVERTY TO IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF WARD 14

Abstract

Households in rural areas adopt a wide range of strategies to cope with poverty. Available literature suggests that gender and geographical location significantly influence the type and nature of coping strategies. Because of this, context-specific studies are justified. In this paper, the findings of a study conducted to determine the strategies that households used to enhance livelihoods and food security in Thulamela Municipality of Limpopo Province in South Africa are presented. Data were collected from 50 purposively sampled community members in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. The sample comprised female youth (n = 11), male youth (n = 11), ordinary women (n =11), ordinary men (n = 11), Ward Committee members (n = 2) and other community leaders (n = 5). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the respondents. Interviews were audio-taped with the written consent of the respondents. Data were coded, processed and analyzed using the Thematic Content Analysis method. Male and female-headed households used different coping strategies. Female heads of households were involved in street trading and working as domestic workers. In contrast, male heads were involved in manual labour, in particular building houses, digging pit latrines and thatching houses. The findings show that the coping strategies used by both MHHs and FHHs in rural households were gender-specific and survivalist in nature. However the findings further revealed that unlike male heads, female heads had the ability to diversify their coping strategies which complemented their monthly wages. One can therefore deduce that rural women are better equipped to minimize the effects of poverty in their households than their male counterparts. It was recommended that informal traders should receive training and financial support that could help them generate higher incomes and also create jobs.

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6.1 Introduction

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Over the past two decades, the South African government has made significant progress in reducing poverty in the country. However, it is still estimated that there are 10.2 and 23 million extremely and moderately poor people (Statistics South Africa: STATSSA, 2014). These statistics equate to 20 % and 46 % of the people who experience extreme and moderate poverty (STATSSA, 2014). The situation is particularly dire in rural areas where deprivation with respect to income, clothing, housing, education and health care is rampant. Empirical studies continue to reveal that rural poverty in South Africa is a contentious issue and that previously disadvantaged rural communities are particularly affected (Pauw and Mncube, 2007; Sartorius, Sartorius, Tollman, Schatz, Kirsten, and Collinson, 2009; Twala, 2012). A cocktail of social, political and economic factors that exist within these areas exacerbate the situation. Limited access to insurance, credit, and labour markets are commonly identified as the primary causes of the persistent poverty (Barnett, Barnett and Skees, 2008). As a result, poor households in rural communities use various coping strategies to counter the effects of poverty, food insecurity, conflict and environmental stresses (Alemu, 2012; Berman, Quinn and Paavola, 2013; Dlamini and Tabit, 2014). Snel and Staring (2001) define coping strategies as "all the strategically selected acts that individuals and households in a poor socio-economic position use to restrict their expense or earn some extra income. This extra income enables them to pay for the basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter) and not fall too far below their society's level of welfare". Even though there has been considerable research in most developing countries that sought to determine the coping strategies that poor rural households used (Maxwell and Caldwell, 2008; Garba, 2011; Berman *et al.*, 2013; Gupta, Gupta, Singh, Seth, Agarwal, Mathur, 2015), it is not clear whether those that poor rural households in South Africa, particularly in Thulamela Municipality use are the same. A better understanding of the poor rural households' coping strategies might be a good starting point in the process of developing community-based and context-sensitive interventions to reduce household poverty and improve food security (Gupta *et al.*, 2015). Maxwell and Caldwell (2008) contend that studying the coping strategies of any region is crucial because it allows researchers to measure the benefits of interventions such as food aid programmes. Furthermore, it provides information on whether there is any impending food crisis. Generation of gender-specific information enables formulation and implementation of appropriately targeted poverty alleviation strategies.

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6.2 Research methodology

6.2.1 Description of the study area

As already alluded to in chapter three, the study was carried out in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality, which is located in Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa (Figure 3.1).

6.2.2 Research design

This study was exploratory in nature and a qualitative design will be used. According to Sarantakos (1998), research that is exploratory in nature is usually carried out when there is not sufficient information about the subject under investigation or when the formulation of hypotheses is difficult or impossible. Exploratory study was appropriate for this study since there was currently limited information on the strategies used by different household types from grassroots communities to enhance livelihoods and food security.

6.2.3 Sampling method

Simple random and criterion purposive sampling were used to sample respondents who participated in this study. Simple random sampling method was used to randomly select the three villages. Criterion purposive sampling method was employed to select 51 respondents who participated in this study. The sample was divided into six cohorts, namely; men, Women, female youth, male youth, community leaders and Ward committee members. The proportions of the sample from each cohorts were 22 %, 22 %, 22 %, 20 %, 10 % and 4 % for female youth, male youth, women, men, community leaders and Ward Committee members respectively. Gender, age group and social standings were used as inclusion criteria. It was necessary to constitute such a diverse sample because of the need to source the views of individuals in different sex, age and social standing groups. A respected member of each village who understood local protocols helped to identify and mobilise the persons interviewed in this study. Each interviewee had either stayed or worked within the villages for at least five years. The interviewees who matched these criteria were expected to provide reliable, in-depth and relevant information.

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6.3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through face to face, semi-structured interviews. Respondents were interviewed at the comfort of their own home within familiar surroundings. This was important because of the need to make them more comfortable. When this is achieved, interviewees normally freely share information on their perceptions about the subject under investigation, attitudes, constraints and experiences (Neuman, 1997).An interview guide was used. Interviews were carried out in Xitsonga because this was the local vernacular language that allowed the respondents to express themselves more freely and comfortably. An audio tape recorder was used. Apart from complementing the researcher's note taking, the audio tape recorder ensured accurate capturing and safe storage of data for later analysis. It took 20-25 minutes to complete each interview.

The following question guided the data collection process: What would you say are the coping strategies that poor household types employ to generate an income and improve livelihoods in your community?

6.3.5 Data Analysis

Audio recorded material was transcribed and translated to English. Thematic Content Analysis (Cresswell, 2009) was used to analyze the transcripts and notes that the researcher took during the interviews. The transcripts were read many times, summarized and matrices composed out of them. The results were placed into the main category with the title, "coping strategies". In addition, the various statements drawn from the data were coded. Themes were linked and informative quotes selected prior to writing up the information in a logical and coherent manner.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Socio-demographic Information of Households

Data used in this study were collected from community members drawn from villages located within Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Respondents included male and female adults as well as male and female youth (Table 3.1).

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6.4.2 Coping strategies

In Tables 6.1 and 6.2, the various strategies that poor rural households used to cope with poverty in Thulamela Municipality are summarised. They are presented taking into account the sex of head of household as a factor of poverty.

6.4.2.1 Coping strategies used by FHHs

Table 6.1 presents the coping strategies employed by FHHs in grassroots communities to mitigate the effects of poverty as perceived by community members.

As shown in Table 6.1, female headed households mostly adopted non-agricultural coping strategies to combat poverty. Working as a domestic worker was most popular. One participant had this to say about this strategy:

> *"As for the female heads of households the most popular method is that women in our community work as "aunties". Aunties are people who work for others as maids".*
>
> Male community member

Coping strategies for female-headed households

Petty trading

Most female heads were involved in petty trade, in particular selling fruits and vegetables, and washing clothes for cash. Women's involvement in these business initiatives was aptly captured in the following excerpts extracted from interviews with male and female respondents:

> *"Sometimes these women are able to start micro business ventures. When the situation in the family is dire, the women start small businesses selling things like tomatoes at Malamulele town in order to get something. Sometimes they start their own backyard gardens where they grow vegetables such as tomatoes, which they then sell to community members".*
>
> Female community member

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Child support grant

All the groups identified the child support grant as an effective tool which female heads of households used to cope with poverty. Respondents believed that women used the money to buy food and other basic necessities of the household. Other coping strategies identified in this study included transient jobs for example washing clothes and selling firewood (11). Below is an excerpt that illustrates the importance of the grant on female-headed households:

> *"Most women used the money they received on behalf of their children to buy food, school uniform and Christmas clothes"*

6.4.2.2 Coping strategies that male-headed households used

As was the case with female-headed households, respondents identified several coping strategies that males use to cushion the impact of poverty within their households (Table 6.2).

House construction

House construction was identified as the most common coping strategy among MHHs in grassroots communities. Some female respondents described this in the following ways:

> *"One of the most popular strategies used by males is that of working as assistants to builders operating in the community doing things like mixing concrete and other stuff. That's the most common piece job around.*
>
> Female community member

> *"With heads of households, the most common strategy is building. Most of them get hired by certified builders to work as their assistants to do things such as mixing concrete, carrying bricks and plastering. But the problem is that most of them do not have the necessary building skills. This disadvantages them because they do not always get hired due to the poor quality of their work".*
>
> Female community member

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Table 6 2 Coping strategies employed by MHHs as perceived by community members

Coping strategies	Adult females (n = 11)	Adult males (n = 11)	Female youth (n = 11)	Male youth (n = 11)	Community leaders (n = 5)	Ward committee members (n = 2)	Total (n = 51)
Transient jobs							
Building people's houses	●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●	●●●●●	●●●	●	23
Digging pit toilets and septic tank	●	●●	●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●●	●●	20
Fencing other people's yards	●	●	●●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●	●	17
Roof thatched houses for locals	●●	●	●●●●●●	●●●●●	●●		16
Self-employment							
Small businesses	●	●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●●●●		●●	19
Selling firewood	●●●●	●●●●●	●	●●●●●●	●●●		19
Fishing	●	●●●		●			5

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: ● = indicates that respondents identified the indicator of the coping strategies male-headed

households commonly relied on

n = the number of respondents who have identified the coping strategy

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Manual tasks such as digging pit latrines or toilets and septic tanks was another popular type of "piece job" for local unemployed male heads of households. Twenty (20) respondents observed that rural unemployed male heads made their income from these activities. Below is an extract from one interview with a female respondent. It confirmed that this strategy was in used in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality:

> *"Other available piece jobs that a man can get from time to time include digging pit toilets and septic tanks for other people for money"*
>
> Female community member

In addition to the strategies revealed above, sixteen (16) interviewees identified thatching huts for local community members as another coping strategy that men used. Fencing people's homesteads, plumbing, fixing door locks and being hired to herd livestock for a fee were other notable coping mechanisms. It was revealed that some men were often hired to plough fields for a fee during the rainy season.

6.5 Discussion

Faced with lack of salaried jobs, heads of poor households in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality resorted to various income-generating activities to sustain their livelihoods and ensure food security. Roberts (1994) explains the importance of this strategy by contending that pooling resources helps families to avoid entrapment in a self-perpetuating culture of poverty. In the current study, self-employment and casual jobs were the major livelihood strategies that both male and female heads of households used. This highlights the fact that the households relied on a range of diversified resources and opportunities at their disposal in their attempts to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Taking this observation into account, it can be argued that rural livelihoods in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality were not solely reliant on agriculture as might have been thought to be the case. Instead, they pursued a diverse array of income-generating activities. Diversification of income generation decreases a household's vulnerability to financial shortfalls when other external remittances are lost (Gowele, 2011). The combination of petty trading, social welfare programmes, economic activities and labour trade is consistent with what Francis, Makatu, Kabiti, Mahlawule, Kori, Dondofema and Ramoshaba (2014) observed in the mainly Venda-speaking Ward 2 of Thulamela Municipality. These coping strategies differ from those that poor households in other African and Asian countries used (Shariff and Khor, 2008; Akerele, Momoh, Oguntona and Shittu, 2013; Zemedu and Mesfin, 2014). In Nigeria, Akerele *et*

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al. (2013) found that eating less preferred and inexpensive food as well as reducing portion sizes was common among poor households. This observation partly contrasted the reality in Malaysia where Shariff and Khor (2008) found that borrowing money to buy foods, remittances from family members, relatives and neighbours and reducing the number of meals were the most common coping strategies among most poor female-headed households. More recently (Zemedu and Mesfin, 2014) found that in Ethiopia, sale of livestock, building savings, food aid and credit from the government were common. These findings suggested that although there were similarities in the coping strategies that the poor households in various countries used, there were also inter-country differences.

In the current study, all interest groups identified petty trade as a strategy used to cope with poverty. The respondents revealed that most female heads of households set up some income generation activities. This confirms the observations made in earlier studies (Little, 1999; Onyenechere, 2011). Little (1999) revealed that in Africa, informal trading was common in sprawling peri-urban areas. Also, he argued that the proliferation of petty traders in Africa represented the fastest growing segment of the labour market.

It was reported that there were limited work opportunities in the villages in Ward 14. This forced unemployed family heads to resort to creating their own employment. Other scholars such as Mitullah (2003), Balasubramanian, Srinivasan, Vaidhyasubramaniam (2012) and Njaya (2014) have also contended that limited economic opportunities, gender bias in education, and augmenting husbands' incomes forced many poor people to get involved in petty trading.

Among the petty trading initiatives that female heads used, street vending was most popular. This was a direct selling system which involved a trader establishing a selling stall from which he or she sold some products (Kumburu, Liheta, Makungu and Warsanga, 2013). In Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality, most women were involved in street trading. They sold various goods, among which were fruits and vegetables. These findings confirmed those of several authors (Mitullah, 2003, Azmat and Samaratunge, 2009; Adhikari, 2011), who pointed out that street vending was a growing sector of small-scale economic activity among poor women. In South Africa, Lee (2004) found that women constituted 70 % of street traders. The popularity of street trading among women originates from the fact that it is a simple way of generating income and only requires small capital investment, education and skills (Adhikari, 2011, Balasubramanian, Srinivasan, Vaidhyasubramaniam, 2012; Onyango, 2012).

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It was observed in the current study that most women traders operated at the nearby Malamulele town. The stalls were usually established in densely populated areas such as the bus or taxi ranks, along busy roadways or in front of supermarkets. The women consistently stocked vegetables (tomatoes, cabbages, carrots and onions) and fruits (mangoes, oranges, apples and bananas) for sale. The respondents argued that women preferred to sell their goods in Malamulele instead of their villages because the town offered them a better direct access to a larger consumer base. Malamulele was both a place of work and Central Business District (CBD) for both the town's residents and surrounding villages. As a result, large numbers of people converged in the CBD every day to either work or buy groceries. Street vendors argued that trading in town was attractive because of the higher profit margins associated with it when compared to doing business in the villages. Having access to a large number of consumers maximized the traders' chances of realising bigger sales of goods and ultimately, higher profit margins. In order to avoid transportation costs for their goods, most women traders stored their goods in town overnight. All these observations revealed that street vending played a significant role in enhancing the livelihoods and food security of female-headed households.

Apart from street vending, women often were employed as domestic workers, in particular serving as maids for affluent families within their villages. The daily domestic work included sweeping and cleaning, washing clothes, cooking and cleaning dishes after meals, taking children to and from day care centres, and general upkeep of the house.

Limited opportunities within their villages of residence forced most women to migrate to far off places such as Polokwane, Pretoria and Johannesburg. Those who succeeded in securing employment sent back remittances to their families. The families then used the money to meet the household's basic needs such as food, clothing and school fees. Some respondents even reported that they knew women who used the money to fund their children's tertiary education. There is ample of evidence in literature that shows that although the migration somewhat destabilised many families, it significantly increased food security (Ukwatta, 2010; Guo, Chow, & Palinkas, 2011; Kwabena, Senadza and Afriyie, 2014). Most respondents argued that the coping strategies empowered most female heads of households because they were able to buy food, pay school fees and buy school uniform for their children.

The findings presented above contrasted those obtained in the Gowele (2011) study in Kwazulu-Natal Province of South Africa. In the latter study, it was found that female-headed households were severely food insecure compared to their male counterparts. Limited access to formal education, livestock ownership and reliance on social support grants (child support in

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particular) influenced these differences. In this study in Thulamela Municipality, it was revealed that despite the existence of numerous obstacles, rural women adopted a milieu of innovative ways of generating income. This meant that women from Thulamela Municipality had the ability to diversify their income despite challenges confronting rural women.

Self-taught artisan activities such as masonry and plumbing were popular strategies for coping with poverty among unemployed men. Men built houses, dug pit latrines and septic tanks, fixed doors and thatched houses for a fee. With the cash generated from these activities, men were able to buy food, clothes and meet other households' basic necessities such as paying for electricity. These findings support those of Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, Van Blerk and Chipeta (2011) in studies of income generating activities in Lesotho and Malawi. Even though this was a plausible strategy and important in generating income, the interviewees argued that this type of work was unreliable. However, while respondents acknowledged the significance of these activities, they argued that most of these survival strategies were either seasonal or opportunities for earning an income through them were limited. For instance, tilling the land only happened during summer while thatching of huts was mainly done during winter. Thus, the strategies could not be relied on as a regular source of income. In addition, rarely were there appreciable opportunities for artisan-related work in rural areas. One respondent put the unreliability of men's survival strategies in perspective by saying:

> *"The problem with these piece jobs, however, is that they come once in a blue moon, making them an unreliable source of income".*

The preceding observations concurred with those of Ndhleve, Musemwa and Zhou (2012), who observed that contract jobs did not significantly reduce the risk of inadequate access to food. Male heads of households often had to wait for long periods of time before they could secure the next job, making income earning inconsistent. This meant that the nature of piece or contract jobs that male heads employed had limited impact in alleviating poverty within their households. According to Van der Merwe (2011), for households to be food-secure, their members should have stable incomes. It was pointed out that the money earned from fixing doors and locks was usually inadequate to sustain the needs of households. The fact that most men were not certified builders compounded their situation and made community members reluctant to hire them. Moreover, the willingness of most male heads of households to adopt strategies that did not require skills acquired through formal training reflected their extreme desperation to access income-generating opportunities. Ndhleve *et al.* (2012) concurred,

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contending that non-agricultural employment often arose from the survival strategies of rural households' inability to secure self-employment.

In the current study, both male and female heads also relied on the ecosystem as a survival strategy with selling of firewood being identified as the most common strategy. Respondents from the female group have observed that both male and female heads harvested dry wood from the bush which they then sold to other community members. This observation was supported by adult male and male youth groups. The fact that poor households were selling firewood as a way of generating income was not surprising. Most rural areas in Thulamela Municipality still had vast amount of forest land, making firewood readily available for harvesting. In addition, most rural dwellers still preferred using firewood to cook despite their households being electrified. As a result respondents observed that many poor household heads considered harvesting firewood for sale the easiest alternative way of diversifying their antipoverty strategies. These findings are consistent with many past studies (Lars-Erik, 1993; Moser, Prentice, and Frazier, 1998; Assan and Beyene, 2013; Yelsang and Millar, 2013; Chirau, Nkambule and Mupambwa, 2014). These studies revealed that most people in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa always depended on natural resources to construct livelihoods income. It was however revealed that most used this strategy to supplement the income generated from other activities. It was therefore common for women who worked as domestic workers during the week to be harvesting firewood over the weekend. There was however those who observed that selling firewood could be a very profitable business if managed well. Some respondents indicated that they knew of women who had turned the strategy into a successful business venture with customer base that extended to the neighbouring villages. The money generated from the sale of firewood was mostly used to meet the needs of the household. Based on these findings it is safe to deduce that there was a positive relationship between firewood trading and food security and increase in the livelihoods of poor household.

Although natural resources were crucial in meeting the household needs of poor households, cutting down trees, hunting and fishing without proper permits are illegal activities in South Africa. This is part of a broader natural strategy to protect the environment. Yet, in the current study, the people who were involved in fishing did not have any permits. This implies that they were operating illegally and were subject to a fine and/or jail term if caught. It seemed their willingness to fish illegally while being aware of the possible consequences reflected the level of desperation of most of the male heads of households as they tried to provide for their families. The observations on illegal use of natural resources to combat household poverty and food

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insecurity trigger many questions especially with respect to sustainable use of natural resources. One such question is how natural resources can be used as poverty fighting tools in a sustainable manner. The Biologist, Garrett Hardin, clearly illustrated the issue of sustainable use of natural resources. In his "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin, 1968), he argued that when many herdsmen had equal access to a common pastureland, there would be those who eventually exploit it in order to maximize their own profit/benefits. This invariably resulted in severe consequences such as depletion of the grazing land and other direct downstream effects for other animal rearers and their animals. Aligning the Hardin (1968) argument with this study, presumably people in rural areas were likely to feel entitled to use natural resources such as fish and firewood as they wished. The existence of rules governing how these resources should be utilized might not have mattered. According to Hardin (1968), there is always a need to combat the laissez-fair approach, which allows people to do as they please. Despite the Hardin (1968) Tragedy of Commons" theory being such a useful tool to use to understand the dynamics of using communal resources, many social scientists have expressed reservations about it.

6.6 Conclusion

The study in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality in South Africa revealed that heads of poor rural households relied on a cocktail of coping strategies geared towards generating income needed to meet basic needs. In the midst of limited formal employment opportunities in rural areas, the informal economy was the major means of survival for both male and female-headed households. The coping strategies were distinctly gender-specific. Street vending and working as domestic workers were most common strategies that poor female heads of households used. Male heads of households adopted coping strategies that mostly involved hard labour, namely building houses, fixing doors and digging pit latrines. The findings show that the coping strategies used by both MHHs and FHHs in rural households were gender-specific and survivalist in nature. However the findings further revealed that unlike male heads, female heads had the ability to diversify their coping strategies which complemented their monthly wages. It can be deduced that rural women are better equipped than men to combat the effects of poverty.

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6.7 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

a) Further studies to be carried out to determine the economic viability of the coping strategies used by FHHs visa vis MHHS; and
b) Exploratory study to be carried out to determine whether the findings of this study echoed the views of community members from other grassroots communities across other South African ethnic groups.

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CHAPTER 7: MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF POVERTY AS PERCEIVED BY THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF WARD 14 IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY

Abstract

The aim of this study was to quantify the characteristics of poverty that were identified during the key informant interviews. Group and individual matrix ranking exercises were carried out with respondents from the three randomly selected villages of Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo Province. Selected community contacts from each village were asked to recruit a group of community members. The main qualifying criterion was that a respondent must be a native resident of the sampled village. A total of 151 respondents were randomly recruited participate in the study. A total of 44 respondents (29 %) were sampled from Jimmy Jones village. About 51 respondents (34 %) were recruited from Ka-Mahonisi village and a total of 56 respondents (37 %) were randomly selected from Ka-Shigamani village. Of the selected respondents, 91 were males and 60 were females. The data collection exercises were divided into two phases. The first phase entailed group ranking and the second phase involved individual ranking. The focus groups were conducted separately for men and women to allow for free discussion. Data for this phase were collected through the use of matrix ranking questionnaires. Self-administered individual questionnaires as well as focus group activities were carried out. The questionnaire contained items relating to the characteristics of poverty. Respondents were requested to rank the characteristics of poverty items against the different types of households. For each characteristic, respondents were allocated 60 points which were to be distributed across the ten household types (appendix 3). Respondents ranked the characteristic across households based on its perceived prevalence within each household. An A3 page was used for the group questionnaire and the A4 was used for individual questionnaire. The ranking process involved respondents allocating a number for each household type based on the perceived popularity of the characteristic within each household. The higher the allocated number, the higher the prevalence of the characteristic on the corresponding household type. The results revealed that many of the characteristics of poverty are perceived to be more prevalent among MHHs of unemployed married men, FHHs of widowed women, MHHs of grandfather and FHHs headed by a grandmother. A deduction can therefore be made that these households were more vulnerable to poverty when compared to the other household type. Based on the results, it is further safe to conclude that there was no feminization of poverty in rural villages of Thulamela Municipality. The findings of this study act as a challenge to policy

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makers to consider the family dynamics of each rural household type when developing anti-poverty policies and strategies.

7.1 Research Methodology

7.1.1 Description of the study area

As already alluded to in chapter three, the study was carried out in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality, which is located in Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa (Figure 1). Thulamela Municipality is one of the four local Municipalities that make up Vhembe District Municipality. Makhado, Musina, Mutale are the other local municipalities. Ward 14 is located in Thulamela B, a place that is dominated by Xitsonga/Shangaan speaking people. Ward 14 is comprised of five villages, namely; Mphambo, Shigamani, Mahonisi, Jimmy Jones and Dinga. These villages are characterized by dusty streets, mud houses, high unemployment and poverty rates as well as poor service delivery. Lack of employment opportunities means informal trading and social support grant become the main sources of income for most households. Other households survive from remittances they receive from family members who have immigrated to many of the country's major cities and mines to work as unskilled labour. As indicated earlier, Ward 14 is characterized by lack of service delivery. As a result, community members participated in a mass action where community members from Malamulele and surrounding villages successfully fought for the establishment of their own municipality independent from Thulamela Municipality. This was after community members accused the Thulamela Municipality of neglecting their communities while channelling all resources towards Thohoyandou, an area dominated by Tshivenda-speaking people.

7.1.2 Research Design

A qualitative method was also used for this study. Given that the study sought to explore the perceptions of youth and adult community members on the existence of feminization of poverty, a participatory action research (PAR) design was adopted. The PAR entails building a close working relationship between researchers and intended beneficiaries in the entire investigation (Francis *et al.,* 2014). In the current study, deliberative polling process was used. The process allowed for an active participation by all community members who participated in the study, particularly during data collection. Matrix ranking questionnaire anchored the entire study. The

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findings presented in chapter 4 (perceived characteristics of household poverty) were used for instrument development. The developed instrument was then used to quantify the perceptions of the respondents gathered during the 1st phase of the study. A total of thirteen variables were identified. Among variables that were identified included unemployed members of the households, uneducated members of the households and sickly children. Matrix ranking exercises were carried out with the respondents. As it will be seen in the synthesis chapter, the design further allowed for a direct comparison and contrasting of qualitative results with quantitative statistical results in order to validate the results of the former (Creswell and Clark, 2007). The 2nd phase of the study was emphasized.

7.1.3 The Respondents

Respondents for this phase were community members from the three randomly selected villages of Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo Province. Selected community contacts from each village were asked to recruit a group of community members. The following interest groups were established in each of the three villages; male adult groups (adults), female groups (adults), male group (youth) and female group (youth). Each one constituted a reflection circle.

7.1.4 Sampling method

Multi stratification and criterion purposive sampling methods were employed to select respondents for this study. Firstly, a stratified sampling method was used to divide community members in the three villages into four cohorts. These cohorts included adult males, adult females, male youth and female youth. Secondly, criterion sampling method was used to select respondents from each of the four cohorts. The sample units were chosen because they had particular features or characteristics which enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wished to study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Three main qualifying criteria were used to select the respondents. Firstly, the respondent should have resided in the study area for a minimum of five years at the time of the study. Gender and age group were also used as inclusion criteria to select the respondents. A total of 151 respondents were selected to participate in the study. The proportions of the respondents were 56, 51 and 44 for Shigamani, Mahonisi and Jimmy Jones respectively. Of the selected respondents, 91 respondents were males and 60 were females (Table 7.1.).

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7.1.5 Data collection

Group and individual ranking exercises were carried out with community members selected from the three villages. The questionnaire development was guided by the results of the 1st phase as presented in chapter 4. The results of phase 1 revealed 13 characteristics which community members perceived to be the most common signs of household poverty in rural areas. The 13 characteristics were then consolidated into a questionnaire with ranking items (appendix i). The questionnaires were translated into Xitsonga, a local language for residents of Ward 14. Translated questionnaires ensured that respondents understood the instructions. Figure 7.1 is a summary of the entire second phase of the study.

7.1.5.1 Social preparation

Prior the commencement of the data collection activity, the researcher first revisited the traditional leaders to re-establish the contact initially made during the first phase of the study. A community contact from each of the three villages was recruited to be part of the data collection activities. Community contacts were individuals the researcher deemed to be a "people's person" and knowledgeable about the dynamics of their community. In one of the villages a community contact was recommended by one of the community leaders.

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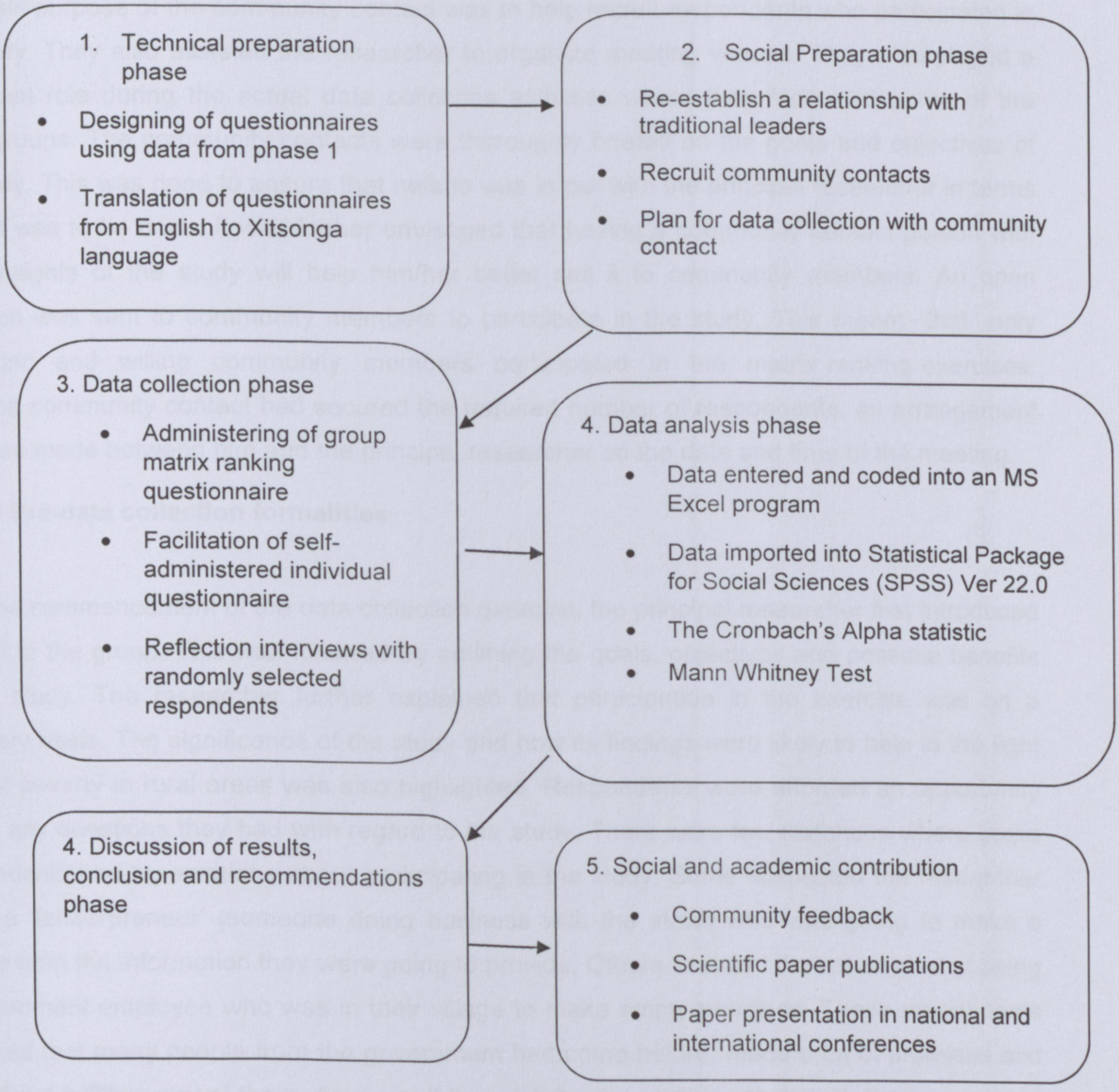


Figure 7.1 Summary of research approach used to for the 2nd phase study on feminization of poverty in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Source: Adapted and modified from Francis *et al.* (2014)

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The main purpose of the community contact was to help recruit respondents who participated in the study. They also assisted the researcher to organize meeting venues. They also played a significant role during the actual data collection activities where they facilitated some of the focus groups. The community contacts were thoroughly briefed on the goals and objectives of the study. This was done to ensure that he/she was in par with the principal researcher in terms of what was to be done. It was further envisaged that having a community contact person with deep insights of the study will help him/her better sell it to community members. An open invitation was sent to community members to participate in the study. This meant that only interested and willing community members participated in the matrix ranking exercises. After the community contact had secured the required number of respondents, an arrangement was then made between him and the principal researcher on the date and time of the meeting.

7.1.5.2 Pre-data collection formalities

Prior the commencement of the data collection exercise, the principal researcher first introduced himself to the group. This was followed by outlining the goals, objectives and possible benefits of the study. The researcher further explained that participation in the exercise was on a voluntary basis. The significance of the study and how its findings were likely to help in the fight against poverty in rural areas was also highlighted. Respondents were afforded an opportunity to ask any questions they had with regard to the study. There were few instances where some respondents had reservations about participating in the study. Some suspected the researcher to be a 'tenderpreneur' (someone doing business with the state) who was going to make a fortune from the information they were going to provide. Others accused the researcher of being a government employee who was in their village to make empty promises. These respondents indicated that many people from the government had come before, made a lot of promises and left without fulfilling any of them. As a result they didn't want anything to do with the government anymore. The researcher had to explain that the study was for academic purposes only and that no financial gains were to be derived from it. In some instances the researcher was compelled to produce a student card to validate his status as the University of Venda student. After all concerns and questions relating to the study were clarified, interested community members were given consent forms to sign as a confirmation of their voluntary participation (Annex 3).

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7.1.5.3 Matrix ranking exercises

As already indicated, data for this phase were collected through the use of matrix ranking questionnaires. Group and self-administered individual questionnaires were administered. The questionnaire contained items relating to the characteristics of poverty. Respondents were requested to rank the characteristics of poverty items against the different types of households. For each characteristic, respondents were allocated 60 bean seeds which were to be distributed across the ten household types (Appendix i). Respondents were asked to state in which of the ten household type characteristic was more prevalent than other household types. The ranking process involved respondents allocating a number for each household type based on the perceived popularity of the characteristic within each household. The highest allocated number indicated the high prevalence of the characteristic on the corresponding household type. On the contrary, the lower number meant the characteristic was perceived to be less prevalent within the corresponding household. Respondents started with focus group activities. The group activity took a minimum of one and half hour to complete. Upon completion of the group activity individual respondents where requested to complete the self-administered questionnaire. Individual questionnaires were done to determine the views of individuals that were independent from the influences of group members. Research assistants and community contacts assisted those who couldn't read and write to complete the questionnaire. Respondents took an average of 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete their questionnaire. A3 page was used for the group questionnaire and the A4 was used for individual questionnaire. Data collection activities were carried out in community halls and schools. However there were few instances where respondents offered their homes as the meeting point.

7.1.5.4 Format of focus groups

Focus groups were constituted in each village that participated in this study. Gender and age-group were two criteria used to categorize the groups. These groups were categorized into female adults, female youth; male adults and male youth (Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Each focus had between 8 and 12 respondents. In cases where numbers of respondents exceeded 12, two or more reflection circles were constituted. This made it easier to manage the deliberations within the group. The focus group discussions were conducted separately for men and women. The purpose was to limit cultural or traditional practices that might have prevented women to openly participate in the presence of men.

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Figure 7.1 Members of adult male and male youth group participating in deliberative polling. Source: Author's compilation



Figure 7.2 Members of adult female and female youth group participating in deliberative polling. Source: Author's compilation

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7.1.5.5 Facilitation of focus groups

A team comprising of the principal researcher, community contact, research assistants and group leaders facilitated the focus groups. A group-elected group leader and the community facilitated the focus groups. A group leader was an individual elected by group members to facilitate the discussions. Their role was to ensure that the smooth running of the reflection and that every member participated. Few reasons influenced the decision to assign community members to facilitate the group activities. Firstly, it was very important that the completed group questionnaire represented the views of every member of the group. However the researcher envisaged that there were likely to be respondents in each group with domineering tendencies who were likely to dominate the discussions. It was for this reason that familiar faces were assign the role of group facilitators. This was to ensure that even those with introvert personalities felt free to participate. Such approach created an environment that allowed for the views of both the extroverts and introverts to be harvested. Secondly, the approach was adopted to ensure that the process remain community-focused with community members leading the process. The research assistant's role was that of an administrator. Her role was to make fields notes and ensure that there was an enough supply of stationery such as pencils and erasers. The assistant was also responsible for time management. Each group took a minimum of one and half hours to complete the activity. On the other hand the principal researcher took the role of an overseer. His role was to give guidance and to answer arising questions from the group with regard to the completion of the questionnaire. Observing the group from the background also allowed the researcher to make observations and make notes of group members' interactions. Facilitation entailed ensuring that democratic space was created to amplify the voices of all the respondents.

7.1.5.6 Data handling and storage

Data processing exercise started during the field work visits. The first step involved checking each completed questionnaire for completeness. The researcher and the assistants checked each completed questionnaire for inconsistencies and inaccuracies before respondents could disperse. This was done to ensure that all questionnaires were accurately completed and that entries for all aspects were covered. In particular, the researcher and his team checked on whether the ranking score for each aspect was correctly calculated. In cases where anomalies were identified, the questionnaire was returned to the participant concerned to address them. This approach was found to be effective because for each focus group, the principal researcher

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was guaranteed questionnaires that were 100 % complete. The approach also helped the researcher to save money by avoiding situations where inaccuracies were discovered during data capturing, forcing him to either phone or drive to the study villages to requests respondents to address.

7.1.6 Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis involved the capturing of the collected data. A template was designed using an MS Excel program for the purpose of capturing the collected data. The principal researcher and one of the research assistants captured the data into the template. The process of capturing the collected data took place during the month of March, 2016. The MS Excel file containing the captured was imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for analysis. This was done in order for statistical analysis to be carried out. Firstly, descriptive statistics was applied to the basic characteristics of the sampled respondents. This employed both frequency and means to describe the data which included data related to gender, marital status, age, education level, and employment status of the sampled respondents.

The Cronbach's Alpha statistic was calculated to test for reliability of data. This was estimated to be 0.847. Thereafter, the means and standard deviations for each characteristic of poverty were computed taking into account sex, age group, village of residence and household headedness as factors of each individual respondent's perception. The size of the dataset (1 520 elements) necessitated the use of Shapiro-Wilk to establish if data was normally distributed. It was found to be not normally distributed thus justifying using non-parametric tests for analysis. Mann Whitney test was used for the age and gender categories because both had only two categories. Results of the Mann Whitney test assisted in reaching a decision of whether gender and age group played a role on how respondents perceived the characteristics of poverty. For the villages, because there were three categories, Mann Whitney test could not be used since it only tested for two categories, Instead Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to determine whether perceptions of the same characteristics of poverty differed across villages and types of households. Pairwise comparison was used to perform preliminary diagnosis. The 1st phase of the results revealed that there were no significant differences for characteristics "children carry no pocket money to school", household members live in dilapidated houses", "members of the households survive by begging from others", "members of the households suffer from

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malnutrition" and "household members often have inadequate food supply". Consequently, Mann Whitney test was not carried out for the identified characteristics since they were rejected in the preliminary diagnosis. Instead Mann Whitney test was carried with only those where statistically significant differences were observed. Only those relevant variables "members of the household are unemployed", "members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs, "members of the households are uneducated, "members wear ragged clothes", "inability to finance children's tertiary education", "members of the households are frequently sick", "children look pale and sickly" and "members of the household rely on food parcels from the government". Pairwise comparison was used to compare villages against each other, i.e. village 1 against village 2, village 1 and village 3. Mann Whitney tests were also carried out to compare different household types against each other. This was done to determine whether inter-household differences regarding respondents' perceptions of the characteristics of poverty.

The Mann Whitney test was used to establish if there were any differences in the perception of characteristic of poverty due to age group and sex of respondents. In order to determine whether perception of the same characteristics of poverty differed across villages and types of households, the Kruskal Wallis test was used. Pairwise comparisons of characteristics found to significantly vary across the villages and types of households were then made using the Mann Whitney test. This was done to identify conclusively whether there was any evidence of feminization of poverty.

7.2 Results

7.2.1 Socio-demographic Information of Households

Table 7.1 shows that 151 community members participated in this study. Most of them (37 %) were from Shigamani village, followed by those from Mahonisi (34 %) and Jimmy Jones (29 %). About 60 % of these study respondents were males. The proportions of male respondents per village were approximately 66 %, 65 % and 52 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages, respectively. It was also observed that more youth (15-35 years old) participated in the study. The youth constituted 68 % of the total number of respondents in Jimmy Jones village compared to 63 % in Mahonisi and 58 % in Shigamani.

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Table 7 1 Demographic information of respondents who participated in phase two of the study

Demographic variables	Names of the Villages		
	Jimmy Jones	Mahonisi	Shigamani
Number of respondents	44	51	56
Gender			
Males	29	33	29
Females	15	18	27
Age group			
Youth	30	32	33
Adults	14	19	23
Marital status			
Never married	31	29	32
Married	11	20	20
Divorced	2	2	1
Widowhood	0	0	3
Educational qualifications			
Never went to school	1	0	1
Primary schooling	4	1	6
High school but no matric	15	33	29
Matric qualification	13	14	12
Post-matric qualification	11	3	8
Employment status			
Employed	0	3	9
Unemployed	29	34	42
Self-employed	15	14	5

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

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Table 7.1 also presents the marital status of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (61 %) were never married. High proportions of respondents with a "never married" status were observed in all villages. Jimmy Jones recorded the highest never married respondents (70 %) followed by Shigamani and Mahonisi villages at 57 % each respectively. The proportions of "married" respondents per village were approximately 39 % for Mahonisi and Shigamani villages and 22 % for Jimmy Jones respectively. A low level of "divorced" was observed in all villages. The proportions for divorced respondents were approximately 5 %, 4 % and 2 % for Jimmy Jones, Mahonisi and Shigamani villages respectively. A low level of "widowed" respondents was also observed in all villages. It was only at Shigamani village that 5 % of the respondents indicated that they were widowed.

In Table 7.1, the educational qualifications of the respondents are presented. Majority of the respondents (51 %) reported that they had high school education but never obtained their matric qualifications. The proportions of respondents with "high school education with no matric" per village were approximately 65 %, 39 % and 34 % for Mahonisi, Shigamani and Jimmy Jones villages respectively. The table also shows that 26 % of the respondents had a matric qualifications. The proportions of those with a matric qualification per village were Jimmy Jones (34 %), Mahonisi (27 %) and Shigamani (21 %). The results further reveal that 15 % of the respondents held a post-matric qualification. Table 4.3 shows that the proportions of people with a post-matric qualification per village were as approximately 25 %, 14 % 7 % for Jimmy Jones, Shigamani and Mahonisi respectively. The table further shows that 7 % of respondents only had primary education while 2 % reported a "never went to school" answer.

Table 7.1 further presents the employment status of the community members of Ward 14 who participated in the study. Of the 151 respondents, 70 % were unemployed. The proportions of unemployed people per village were approximately 75 %, 67 % and 66 % for Shigamani, Mahonisi and Jimmy Jones villages respectively. In addition, 22 % of respondents indicated that they were self-employed. The proportions of self-employed respondents per village were Jimmy Jones (32 %), Mahonisi (27 %) and Shigamani (9 %). The results further revealed that of the 151 respondents 8 % were permanently employed.

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7.2. Effects of gender, age and village of residence on perception of feminization of poverty

Table 7.2 shows the mean ranks allocated to characteristics of poverty, considering sex, age group and village of residence of respondents in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality.

Effects of age group and gender

The results revealed that the perceptions of youth and adults on all the identified 13 characteristics of household poverty were found to be the same ($P > 0.05$). Female respondents agreed more than male respondents that "children carry no pocket money to school" and "members of the households are frequently sick" ($P < 0.01$), and "household members live in dilapidated houses", "members wear ragged clothes", "members of the households survive by begging from others", "inability to finance children's tertiary education" and "children look pale and sickly" ($P < 0.05$) clarified the characteristics of household poverty in Ward 14.

No statistically significant differences in perception were observed between male and female respondents regarding "members of the household are unemployed", "members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs", "members of the households are uneducated", "members of the households suffer from malnutrition" and "household members often have inadequate food supply" as characteristics of household poverty.

Effects of village

The residents of Mahonisi village consistently agreed more with the perceptions, "members of the household are unemployed", "members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs", "members of the households are uneducated" and "children look pale and sickly" ($P < 0.05$) and "members of the households survive by begging from others", "members of the households are frequently sick", "members of the households suffer from malnutrition" and "members of the household survive with food parcels from the government" ($P < 0.01$). There were no significant inter-village differences with respect to the remaining characteristics of poverty.

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Table 7 2 Mean ranks for perceptions of characteristics of poverty, considering sex, age group and village of residence of respondents in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality. Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Characteristics	Gender		Age Group		Village		
	Males	Females	Youth	Adults	Jimmy Jones	Mahonisi	Shigamani
a) Members of the household are unemployed (Income)	749.65	770.35	765.79	748.25	763.02	802.33	729.98
b) Members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs (Income and type of employment)	750.26	770.72	749.25	772.73	765.86	801.86	729.43
c) Members of the households are uneducated (Education)	746.37	775.93	754.98	764.66	742.47	807.80	742.06
d) Children from the households do not carry pocket money to school (Income)	731.25	795.11	756.01	762.00	739.36	800.21	747.44
e) Household members live in dilapidated houses (Housing/Provision of basic needs)	738.78	783.85	765.05	748.09	751.64	801.27	737.21
f) Members wear ragged clothes (Clothing/Provision of basic needs)	738.80	786.09	757.18	761.56	746.52	821.09	731.58
g) Members of the households survive by begging from others (Provision of basic needs)	739.08	785.72	757.94	760.49	736.92	802.95	748.69
h) Inability to finance children's tertiary education (Income)	739.09	784.56	756.22	761.71	737.26	823.20	735.55
i) Members of the households are frequently sick (Health status)	733.85	792.73	759.39	758.46	742.83	830.48	728.66
j) Members of the households suffer from malnutrition (Food and nutrition – basic needs)	757.68	760.77	762.77	753.69	758.10	791.77	740.61
k) Household members often have inadequate food supply (Food and nutrition security – basic needs)	746.55	774.51	764.22	750.44	742.80	797.20	746.91
l) Children look pale and sickly (Health status)	735.67	790.28	768.38	745.80	761.23	800.65	733.32
m) Members of the household rely on food parcels from the government (Provision of basic needs)	755.07	756.07	743.89	771.80	747.88	814.45	726.74

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7.2.4 Comparing household types using characteristics of poverty as criteria

Table 7.3 reveals the results of the comparison of household types using characteristics of poverty as criteria as perceived by community members. Male-headed households headed by married males were perceived to be the poorest. Other household types perceived to be poor included households headed by widowers, and those headed by grandfathers and grandmother.

Highly significant differences were observed in the perception of most poor households based on the 13 identified characteristics. Households in which the married male head resided in the village were perceived to be worse off than the female-headed. The respondents agreed that all the 13 manifestations of household poverty were most evident in the households in which the head was male and married followed by those with widows and widowers as heads. The next poor households were grandfather and grandmother-headed. Households where the heads were divorced males or females were said to be equally poor but better off when compared with the preceding types. In addition, the latter types of households were poorer than those in which the heads were either migrant, working females or males. This meant that these were the least poor of all the types of households in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality.

7.5 Discussion

The aim of the present study was to determine the existence of feminization of poverty within the rural villages of Thulamela Municipality. Unlike most preceding studies that used household income and expenditure to make such a determination, the current study sought to explore the perception of community members Respondents were asked to rank 13 items listed as characteristics of poverty. These items were identified during the key formant interviews carried out during the first phase of the study. The mean scores were allocated to characteristics of poverty in terms of sex, age group and village of residence of respondents in Ward 14 of Thulamela Municipality.

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Table 7 3 Results showing respondents' comparison of different household types against the given characteristics of poverty. Source: Ngonyama (2015)

CHARACTERISTICS	MHHs: married	De Jure FHHs: never married	De Facto FHHs: male migration	MHHs: female migration	MHHs: widowed	De Jure FHHs: widowed	FHHs: Grandmother	MHHs: Grandfather	MHHs: divorced	De Jure FHHs: divorced	Sig
a) Members of the household are unemployed	983.30^{a}	691.37^{b}	548.55^{c}	407.50^{d}	868.65^{e}	868.65^{ef}	877.80^{eg}	857.39^{eh}	642.41^{bi}	833.88^{ej}	***
b) Members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs	932.54^{a}	687.67^{b}	546.46^{c}	625.17^{bd}	814.90^{e}	814.90^{ef}	837.32^{eg}	798.80^{h}	737.67^{hi}	792.75^{hj}	***
c) Members of the households are uneducated	973.07^{a}	693.23^{b}	672.69^{bc}	542.25^{d}	796.50^{e}	796.50^{ef}	781.32^{eg}	834.05^{h}	703.55^{i}	794.53^{ej}	***
d) Children carry no pocket money to school	897.19^{a}	707.35^{b}	619.24^{c}	486.37^{d}	853.00^{ae}	853.00^{af}	870.43^{ag}	867.16^{ah}	677.66^{ci}	750.80^{bj}	***
e) Household members live in dilapidated houses	838.81^{a}	748.49^{b}	471.72^{c}	559.50^{d}	847.47^{ae}	847.47^{af}	947.54^{g}	865.09^{ah}	681.83^{i}	771.84^{bj}	***
f) Members wear ragged clothes	885.65^{a}	730.32^{b}	465.06^{c}	483.29^{cd}	873.40^{ae}	873.40^{af}	926.23^{g}	882.80^{ah}	718.47^{bi}	749.19^{bj}	***
g) Members of the households survive by begging from others	900.90^{a}	697.20^{b}	498.37^{c}	476.10^{d}	938.08^{ae}	938.08^{af}	882.24^{g}	847.03^{gh}	651.39^{bi}	766.94^{j}	***
h) Inability to finance children's tertiary education	924.05^{a}	713.70^{b}	444.24^{c}	520.38^{d}	854.01^{e}	854.01^{ef}	919.42^{ag}	880.16^{eh}	676.01^{i}	797.95^{j}	***
i) Members of the households are frequently sick	842.15^{a}	688.37^{b}	507.16^{c}	570.41^{cd}	787.20^{e}	787.20^{ef}	910.24^{g}	924.70^{h}	757.98^{ei}	812.40^{j}	***
j) Members of the households suffer from malnutrition	872.92^{a}	696.71^{b}	454.69^{c}	527.82^{d}	843.70^{ae}	843.70^{af}	893.94^{ag}	927.06^{h}	736.38^{i}	790.73^{ij}	***
k) Household members often have inadequate food supply	867.88^{a}	748.01^{b}	450.07^{c}	517.52^{d}	856.43^{ae}	856.43^{af}	859.99^{ag}	869.32^{ah}	747.78^{bi}	810.58^{aj}	***
l) Children look pale and sickly	791.86^{a}	666.76^{b}	635.23^{bc}	584.03^{d}	770.78^{ae}	770.78^{af}	900.87^{g}	919.11^{gh}	732.06^{ai}	815.16^{j}	***
m) Members of the household survive with food parcels from the government	779.18^{a}	656.40^{b}	502.13^{c}	470.55^{d}	885.14^{e}	885.14^{ef}	969.66^{g}	947.16^{gh}	693.74^{bi}	762.47^{ab}	***

Key: * = P < 0.05 ** = P < 0.01 *** = P < 0.001

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No statistically significant differences in perception were observed between male and female respondents regarding "members of the household are unemployed", "members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs", "members of the households are uneducated", "members of the households suffer from malnutrition" and "household members often have inadequate food supply" as characteristics of household poverty. The fact that there was a common agreement between males and females with regard to the above statements as characteristics of household poverty was not surprising. These characteristics are inter-connected and all emanate from limited opportunities that currently characterize most of South Africa's rural areas. It was noted in chapter 4 that lack of employment opportunities was one of the major determinants of poverty among rural areas. South Africa's unemployment rate remains one of the highest in the world (Statistics South Africa, 2015). According to the National Treasury (2011), only 1 in 8 working age adults under the age of 25 have a job compared with 40% in most emerging economies. In addition, about 42% of the country's young people under the age of 30 are currently unemployed compared to less than 17% of adults over the age of 30 (National Treasury 2011).

Lack of employment opportunities is exacerbated by low education and skills level among rural villagers. "Education provides a foundation for eradicating poverty and fostering economic development. It is the groundwork on which much of economic and social well-being of the citizens is built. Education is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency, by increasing the value and efficiency of the labour force and consequently raises the poor from poverty" (Omoniyi, 2013). However, rural areas are characterized by low educational and skills as already alluded to in chapter 4. These findings are consistent with earlier findings by Kyei and Gyekye (2011) who concluded that illiteracy and incomplete secondary education were strong predictors of unemployment in Limpopo. Statistics show that Limpopo province has the lowest adult literacy rate among the three provinces with high rural populations, the other two being the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal (Statistics South Africa 2013). The gravity of the situation could also be noted among the respondents who participated in the current study. Of the 151 respondents, 51 % never had high school education but never obtained matric certificates and only 15 % obtained a post-matric qualification. Such limitations significantly minimize the chances of rural villagers from securing a job in the formal sector with better pay and benefits.

Limited job opportunities as well as low level of education and skills forced individuals to resort to transient and low paying jobs as sources of household income. As already noted in chapter 6, most households rely on transient, mostly gender specific jobs. It was revealed that female heads are involved in street trading and working as domestic workers while male heads were involved in manual labour, in particular building houses, digging pit latrines and

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thatching houses. While respondents acknowledged the impact of these jobs in diluting the effects of poverty in most households, the fact that they are survivalist in nature make them unreliable sources of income. It was therefore not surprising that no statistically significant differences ($P > 0.01$) were also observed between males and females with regard to characteristics of poverty "household members often have inadequate food supply" and "members of the households suffer from malnutrition". The challenge facing many of the rural households as noted in chapter 6 is that they relied on transient jobs to generate an income. It was recorded that the money generated from these jobs is seldom enough to ensure food security for most rural households. A household without a reliable income often suffered a shortfall of their daily calorie intake. Inadequate daily calorie intake exposes the young children of the households to malnutrition. These findings authenticated earlier studies which identified poor diet as the main immediate factor that contributes to the development of malnutrition in children (Hien and Kam, 2008 and Linnemayr, Alderman and Ka, 2008).

High statistically significant differences were observed between males and females with regard to characteristics of poverty "children carry no pocket money to school" and "members of the households are frequently sick" ($P < 0.01$), and "household members live in dilapidated houses", "members wear ragged clothes", "members of the households survive by begging from others", "inability to finance children's tertiary education" and "children look pale and sickly" ($P < 0.05$). Female respondents agreed more than male respondents that these statements clarified the characteristics of household poverty in Ward 14. Few possible explanations could justify these differences. Few possible explanations could justify these differences. Firstly, most women in rural areas play the role of primary caregivers within their families. They are the ones who are responsible for the general welfare of the children. As revealed earlier, female heads often spend whatever income they generate on meeting their households' basic needs (i.e. food, clothes, education and proper shelter). That is, adults have natural instincts towards providing for their children. This observation authenticated the findings of Johnsson-Latham (2004) who found that mothers tend to be much more preoccupied with satisfying their children's food needs than fathers. Therefore, the sight of children wearing ragged clothes is a sign of their inability to meet their children's basic needs. Explanations for child-oriented spending among women have included, inter alia, compliance with socialised expectations of maternal altruism, taking responsibility in the absence of alternatives, or because investments in children help to ensure that women will be cared for in old age, especially where there are few alternative sources of support (Chant, 2007). It is therefore natural that women will perceive factors that threaten the wellbeing of the children as signs of household poverty. Collapsing the two reasons, it can be concluded

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that women's perceived characteristics of poverty are skewed towards the welfare of the members of the households, particularly the children.

In addition to the gender variables, the study further sought to determine whether respondents' perceptions of the characteristics of poverty in rural households differed in terms of age. The results of the analysis showed that there were no differences on how the youth and adult respondents perceived most of the characteristics. However, adults agreed more than youth ($P < 0.001$) with regard to the characteristics of household poverty "members wear ragged clothes", This difference could be attributed to how much value both adults and youth place on certain determinants of poverty The results revealed that adults placed more weight on members of household's inability to afford proper clothing items", poor households are unable to finance their children's tertiary education" and "children look pale and sickly" as a characteristic than the youth. These findings authenticate earlier studies on the subject (Kalinde, 2014 and Savadogo, Souares, Sie, Parmar, Bibeau and Sauerborn, 2015).

In studying the concept of poverty among Magobbo smallholder farmers in Zambia, Kalinde found that adults perceived not having proper beddings and being poorly dressed as the characteristic of poverty. The youth agreed more than the adults that poor households were those which exhibited the following characteristics: "Members of the households suffer from malnutrition" and "household members live in dilapidated houses". An interpretation of these findings could be that that young people tend to place more on the tangible features of the households more than adults.

Perhaps the most interesting results from the Mann-Whitney test were those measuring inter-villages differences. The results revealed no statistically significant inter-village differences ($P > 0.05$) on perceptions of community members of Jimmy Jones and Shigamani villages with regard to all the characteristics of poverty. The fact that there were no differences with regard to how community members from the two villages perceived how poverty manifested itself was not surprising. Rural areas are often constrained by high unemployment rates, low wages and low levels of income as well as inadequate investment (Bertolini, Montanari and Peragine, 2008). In Limpopo province majority of rural villages are characterized by limited job opportunities high illiteracy rates. Statistics show that the province has one of the lowest adult literacy rate in the country (Statistics South Africa 2013). The high illiteracy rate and incomplete secondary education have been found to have strong predictors of unemployment in the province (Kyei and Gyekye, 2011). These findings were validated by those of the first phase of the current study with respondent perceiving lack of employment opportunities and low education and skills level as characteristics of household poverty.

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The test results further revealed statistically significant inter-village differences on perceptions of community members of Jimmy Jones and Mahonisi with regard to the characteristics of poverty "members of the households are frequently sick" ($P < 0.01$) and "members of the households are uneducated", "members wear ragged clothes" and "members of the household rely on food parcels from the government ($P < 0.05$). Community members of Mahonisi village constantly agree more with the characteristics than those from Jimmy Jones village. No significant inter-village differences ($P > 0.05$) were observed on perceptions of community members with regard to the remaining characteristics of poverty. The results further revealed that statistically significant inter-village differences were observed between community members of Mahonisi and Shigamani villages with regard to "Members of the households are frequently sick" ($P < 0.001$), "Members of the household are unemployed" "members are engaged in transient and low-paying jobs" and "Members of the household rely on food parcels from the government" ($P < 0.01$) and "Members of the households are uneducated", "Children look pale and sickly" ($P < 0.05$). Community members of Mahonisi village constantly agree more with the perceptions than those from Shigamani village. The results show that while members of Shigamani and Jimmy Jones villages shared similar perceptions with regard to how poverty manifested itself, there were marked differences between these villages and Mahonisi villages. One plausible explanation for these differences could be that poverty was more prevalent in Mahonisi village than the other two villages. Impromptu interviews held with some of the community members during the matrix ranking exercises revealed that majority of households were destitute and struggling to make end-means.

The results revealed that MHHs of unemployed married were among the perceived poorest households in rural areas. The results revealed highly statistically significant differences with regard to characteristics of household poverty "members of households are not educated", "unemployed family members", "members engage in transient and low paying jobs", "members often rely on external help for survival" and "members of the households often suffer from health-related problems". Respondents perceived these households to exhibit these characteristics more than the other household types. Mann-Whitney tests were also carried out to determine whether differences existed between individual household types. The results of the tests revealed that respondents perceived the characteristics of household poverty to be more prevalent in MHHs of married than most of the other household types. However comparisons between MHHs of married men and MHHs: grandfather revealed that the characteristics were perceived to be more prevalent in the latter than the former. The same results were found between MHHs married and FHHs grandmother.

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Few possible explanations could justify these differences. The first explanation relate to the viability of the coping strategies used by these households to enhance livelihoods. It was revealed in chapter 6 that lack of employment opportunities in rural areas forced household heads to resort to transient and low paying jobs in order to make a living. These strategies included tilling the land, fixing doors, working as house construction assistant and selling firewood. However, as already noted in the preceding chapters, most of these survival strategies were either seasonal or opportunities for earning an income through them were limited. Consequently, most men struggled to generate enough money from these activities to able them to adequately take care of their households. The second explanation relates to men's inability to diversify their income generating activities. The findings of chapter 4 revealed that while women diversify their transient jobs in order to supplement their income, men often relied on one specific job. It was revealed during the key informant interviews that rural men would choose a particular transient job and focus solely on it. However many of the transient jobs that men mostly participated in were mostly on temporary basis and characterized by low and erratic income. While respondents acknowledged the role of these activities in generating income for those involved in them, employing any of them as the household's only source of income was not a sustainable source of income. The popular argument was that most of these strategies were either seasonal or opportunities for earning an income through them were limited. Their situation is further exacerbated by the fact that most men had no formal qualifications for the trade they are often involved in (construction and plumbing). This in turn limits their opportunities to secure employment on a regular basis. It was for the same reasons that rrespondents deemed strategies used by men unreliable sources of income. On the contrary women are thought to have the ability to diversify their income generating activities. As noted in chapter 6, it was not uncommon for a woman to be involved in multiple income generating activities simultaneously.

Another explanation relates to the spending patterns employed by most rural men. As already noted in chapter 6, men spend the little money earned from the transient jobs on self-serving interests. Perhaps the most telling finding about the welfare of MHHs relate to their spending patterns. It was common among male heads to use their wages indulging in traditional beer and extra-marital affairs while making little economic contribution towards the welfare of their households. These findings authenticate those of Masinde (2014) who metaphorically stated that most men in rural areas were "married to alcohol" while women took care of their families. It was even revealed that some of these men often demanded their children's grant money from their wives to use for their own pleasures. This consequently leaves the household without the financial means to meet its basic needs. The problem however is that their pursuit of self-serving pleasures not only undermines the household's economic well-being, but also pushes women in a two-parent household to work

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harder resulting in less mother-child contact as Chant (2007) observed. On the contrary, women head of households have been found to use their income on the welfare of their children. These findings are consistent with those Bradshaw and Linneker (2003) who found that women's preferences are more likely to be 'other-'oriented than self-oriented. Quisumbling and Maluccio (2003) found that in many countries, the higher the share of resources controlled by women within households, the more tends to be spent on education while Johnsson-Latham (2004) stated that mothers tend to be much more preoccupied with satisfying their children's food needs than fathers.

The impromptu interactions with respondents during the second phase also revealed that the poor economic status among MHHs of married men was exacerbated by high dependency ratio. Respondents argued that most households of unemployed men are characterized by high number of dependents. This was attributed to the fact that unemployed men had too much time in their hand. They therefore use sex with their wives as a past time activity, resulting in multiple births. Some respondents also observed that these households were also characterized by high teenage pregnancy among unwed girls which further add to the number of dependents within the household. This observation is consistent with earlier findings which found that household size and dependency ratio increased the household's probability of falling into poverty (Saidatulakmal and Riaz, 2012). One can therefore deduce that the combination of reliance of transient jobs, inability to diversify income, self-serving spending patterns as well as high dependency ratio has serious implications on the economic welfare of these households.

The results of the inter-household comparisons revealed highly significant differences ($P < 0.001$) between household headed by widows and the other household types with regards to most of the characteristics. Respondents perceived households headed by middle-aged widows to be poorer than other household types. It was perceived that members of these households were unemployed, uneducated, relied on transient jobs, lived in dilapidated households and relied on external sources for assistance. These findings validate those of the key informant interviews. It emerged that women in this age group had limited access to formal education. Most of them never held down a job and relied heavily on their husbands who worked mostly as migrants for financial support. However the death of a husband meant they no longer had any source of financial support and their lack of skills coupled with the age renders them unemployable. These findings are consistent with those of Tanzima (2010) who found that widows suffer neglect after the death of a husband, with no one from the surviving family members coming forth to take over the responsibilities of the dead husband. This in turn forces the widow to take the role of breadwinning in order for the family to survive (Tanzima, 2010). One possible explanation for the marginalisation and social exclusion of widows is that in a context of modernisation and commoditisation of social

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relationships, intra- and inter-family relations are increasingly determined by poverty and material well-being rather than traditional socio-cultural norms (Tvedten *et al.*, 2008). This means that as women, they find it difficult to participate in the country's formal sector as freely as men do due to their limited skills.

Another plausible explanation for this group's poor economic status is that of the country's apartheid's history as well as long held cultural practices within most black communities which denied women access to education. Many factors existed during apartheid designed by the then government to either deny or discourage black children from accessing to education. For instance the government ensured that schools for Blacks were too far away from farms and small rural holdings where most Black families lived and worked as labourers. This meant that Black children had to walk several kilometers under adverse weather conditions in order to attend schools for Black children (Quan-Baffour, 2012). These conditions coupled with the political insecurity in the country at that time made it difficult for small children, especially girls, to travel on foot through the bush to attend schools.

The socio-economic and political climate led to many of the Black children who grew up during apartheid either dropping out or never went to school (Quan-Baffour, 2012). The consequence is that millions of economically active women in rural areas are now sitting on the periphery of the economic sector without basic knowledge and skills to actively participate in the socio- economic activities of the new South Africa (Quan-Baffour, 2012). In addition social and cultural practices among Black communities previously denied girl children access to education. Interviews with adult community members revealed that in the past Vatsonga cultural practices dictated that girl children spend more time in household's chores while being prepared for marriage. Upon getting married the women's role would be to give birth and look after the household and the children while their husbands worked as migrants in faraway cities. These practices are consistent with cultural beliefs from most patriarchal societies that perceive women's role as that of a child minder whose place is in the kitchen (Dunlop and Velkoff 1999; Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa, 2004). The consequent of this practice is that it usually leaves women disempowered and reliant on their migrant husbands for financial support. Reliant on their husbands for financial support means these women become destitute in case of divorce or death of a husband. Lack of formal educational qualifications significantly diminishes these individuals' chances of securing employment in the formal sector, forcing them to eke a living in the informal sector. However, most jobs in the informal sector require strength and endurance to execute, making it difficult for them to hold down a job. It is only a limited number of middle-aged women who still secure work working as domestic workers.

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Statistically significant differences were further observed between FHHs headed by a grandmother and most of the other household types. Respondents perceived that most characteristics of household poverty (i.e. unemployed household members, uneducated members, transient jobs and members living in dilapidated house) were more prevalent in households headed by grandmother than most of the households. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as that of Hwa-Ok (2006). This study revealed that poverty was the greatest among households that are headed by single, uncouple grandmother living with grandchildren in the absence of the children's parents (Hwa-Ok, 2006). However there were no statistically significant differences ($P > 0.05$) between households headed by a grandmother and those that are headed by the grandfather. The mean scores show that respondents perceived these households to be equally affected by poverty. It was observed that both household types were more likely to exhibit all of the 13 characteristics. These households were more likely to have unemployed and uneducated members, were more likely to live in dilapidated households and were likely to experience food shortages than some of the least poor households like those headed by never married women. Several assumptions could explain the differences. Firstly, many of these households were observed to be reliant on social welfare grants as their main source of income. While the social grants have been found to be a key poverty fighting tool, respondents argued that the money was seldom enough to meet all the needs of the households. These findings authenticated those of Dodd and Nyabvudzi (2014) who found that grants may not be sustainable in terms of providing a living wage for the beneficiaries (Dodd and Nyabvudzi 2014). These households' poor economic status was exacerbated by high food prices and electricity tariffs. Respondents felt that the increase in the price of staple food such as mealie meal and bread meant most of these households often suffered from food insecurity.

Second assumption is the household head's inability to diversify their income-generating activities due to restrictions brought about by age. Some respondents indicated that unlike, younger female-heads who are still energetic, most grandfathers and grandmothers were old and sickly, making it difficult for them to perform any kind of a job. This consequently meant they were forced to rely on theirs and their grandchildren's social grant. Their poor economic status of grandfathers was further exacerbated by the fact that most worked in the informal sector during their working days. As a result most did not build enough wealth to sustain them during their golden years. It was further observed that most grandmothers, as with middle-aged widows, never held a job during their working years. This meant they also had no other financial means to support themselves in their golden years. It was therefore not

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surprising that these households were more likely to exhibit all of the 13 identified characteristics.

Households in which the heads were divorced males or females were said to be equally poor. However, their economic status was perceived to be better than those of headed by married men, grandmothers and grandfathers. Two but contradicting explanations could be given for these households' poor economic status. The reason for the poor economic status of households headed by divorced males could be found in chapter 5. It was observed that men who are heading a household without the assistance of a female adult often struggled to provide for their children. This was attributed to their inability to run households. Respondents argued that these men often struggled to perform household chores that are traditional viewed as "woman's work). These included cleaning the house, cooking, buying household essentials and bathing the children. Instead these men often left their children to fend for themselves while they are out entertaining friends and girlfriend. This is also consistent with rural men's spending patterns. It was also observed in chapter 5 that rural men often spend money on self-serving interests.

On the other hand, the poor economic status of households headed by divorced women could be attributed to their poor financial muscles. It was revealed during the informal discussions with the respondents that most of these women often come out with nothing but the custody of their children. Respondents observed that most of these women were married to men who worked in informal sector. It is was reported earlier that informal sector was characterized by low incomes. Low income as well as men's inability to diversify meant men struggled build a meaningful asset and financial base. Consequently when divorced, women, most of whom were housewives leave the marriage with nothing to help them start with their new lives. As a result these women were often forced to start building their lives from scratch post-divorce. These women had to start building home for themselves and their children and ensuring that there was food to eat. However their reliant on their ex-husbands and their limited work experience meant they often found difficult to find a meaningful work.

However, households headed by De Facto female-headed households resulting from migration and those headed by men because of female migration were found to be less poor than the preceding households. As table 7.3 revealed, both households were less likely to exhibit all of the 13 characteristics. Monthly remittances received from the migrated partner have attributed to these households' improved livelihoods. It was perceived that these households were better off compared to the preceding households because of the constant and reliable monthly income they receive. The statistics further show that FHHs are more

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likely than MHHs to indicate remittances (14% to 6%) (Statssa, 2011). According to Bigombe and Khadiagala (2003) internal migration in the African continent forms a significant component of the livelihood systems of millions of families. Limited job opportunities in rural areas have forced many residents of working age to migrate to cities to seek employment. Most of these migrants find work as unskilled and semi-skilled workers in cities like Johannesburg as well in mines around the country. These migrants will then send the portion of their monthly salaries to their families back in the village. The money is then used to meet the needs of the households such as groceries, clothes and school fees. It was for the same reason why members of these households were perceived to be less wear ragged clothes, experience food shortages and suffer from malnutrition.

The findings further revealed that households headed by never married were found to be least poor compared to the preceding household types. Community members perceived most of the characteristics to be less prevalent in these households. It was observed that members of these households were less to be unemployed, uneducated, or rely on external help for survival. It was further observed that children from these households were less likely to suffer from malnutrition and other sicknesses associated inadequate food supply. These findings authenticated those of Oginni, Ahonsi and Ukwuije (2013) who found that FHHs in Nigeria were less likely to be poor than their male counterparts. These households' perceived better economic status could be attributed several factors, most of which were already alluded to in chapter 6. Firstly, most community members argued that unlike middle-aged widows, majority of these women were still energetic and could still partake in many income-generating activities. The findings of chapter 6 revealed that majority of young and unmarried mothers engaged in multiple income generating activities. It was common for a woman to be working as a domestic worker during the week. During weekends the same woman would go to the bush to harvest dry wood to be sold as firewood. The same woman would still make time to go and wash clothes for other people for a fee. Furthermore, most of these women receive child-support grant on behalf of their children. This money is often used to supplement the income generated from the above-mentioned activities. It was further observed that most of the unmarried mothers participated in savings club, commonly known as "*xitokofela" (*Stokvel). According to Matuku and Kaseke (2014), stokvels are "self-help initiatives designed to respond to the problems of poverty and income insecurity in communities". It was observed that most unemployed young mothers in rural villages often came together to form a savings club. Members would then determine how much each member should contribute and how the money was to be distributed. Each member would then be required to make a mutually agreed monthly contribution towards the coffers of the club. There are normally two ways in which the accumulated amount is utilized.

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The first one involved equally dividing the saved amount, including its interests among club members to be used as they wished. It was observed that most club members used their share to buy things such as groceries, clothes and pay for their children school fees. However it was reported that there were instances where some women used the money to build houses and even paid for their children's tertiary fees. It was for this reason that members from these households were less likely to wear ragged clothes and live in dilapidated when compared to those compared by married men and grandparents. The second approach involved using the accumulated amount to buy bulk food and non-food groceries. The groceries are then distributed among club members with every member receiving an equal share. It was revealed that some of the households survive from the groceries for more than six months.

The findings show that social savings club plays a critical role in ensuring food security among rural households. This could subsequently offer an explanation of why these households were perceived to be less likely to suffer from inadequate food supply and malnutrition when compared to those headed by married men and grandparents. Women's ability to belong to social clubs/networks implies that most women have a way of pooling together to support one another, especially in times of need. It also goes to explain that women are more strategic than men when it comes to securing food for their families, proving the assumption that FHHs are likely to cope better with food security situations than male headed households (Masinde, 2014).

7.6 Conclusion

The results revealed that while poverty generally affects all households in rural villages, community members of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality perceived some households to be more vulnerable to household poverty than others. Ranked on the basis of the prevalence of the perceived characteristics of poverty, the following households were found to suffer increased levels of poverty than other household type: households headed by married men, widows and widowers as well as grandmothers were perceived to be poorer than the other household types. Characteristics of household poverty were perceived to be more prevalent among these households than any other household type. It was observed that members of these households are mostly unemployed, uneducated, suffer from sicknesses and food insecurity, wear ragged clothes and live in dilapidated dwellings. It was further revealed that these households often relied on external help for basic needs. The fact that households with married men as heads were perceived as among the poorest should be seen as a shift from the traditional view which considered women as more vulnerable group.

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These findings also highlighted the need to move away from generalized poverty alleviation strategies to targeted interventions. These strategies should consider additional factors such as the gender and age of the household head as well as household dynamics of each individual household type. Taking these additional factors into account will help to accurately characterize vulnerable households and to better target actions.

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8 GENERAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The concept of "feminization of poverty" has captured the attention of governments and social researchers since its conceptualization by Diana Pearce in the 1970s. Empirical findings on the subject revealed that feminized poverty encompasses far more than just matters of income or individual suffering. It has the potential to ensnare successive generations in a vicious cycle of suffering and hopelessness, which threatens the health and well-being of women and their families. Despite these implications on the welfare of those affected, few empirical studies have been conducted to determine the existence and implications of poverty among FHHs in rural areas of South Africa. None of the studies conducted so far have focused on the nature of poverty within different types of FHHs compared to their male counterparts. Most of these studies fail to reveal and acknowledge the heterogeneity of FHHs. The poverty analyses rarely disaggregate groups of women, implying that it is assumed that all FHHs types are vulnerable and poor. They fail to acknowledge the various dynamics that define each household type. The study therefore sought out to explore the existence of feminization of poverty among various types of households in rural areas of Thulamela Municipality through the use of case study and participatory research approaches. However, unlike the previous studies which mostly used the income and expenditure patterns to make a determination, this study explored the perceptions of community members of the sampled villages. In order to fulfill this broad objective the following sub-objectives were articulated:

a. to determine the meaning of poverty as perceived by community members in rural areas;
b. to assess the determinants of poverty in households based in rural areas;
c. to determine the major characteristics of household poverty as perceived by community members in rural areas;
d. to assess the strategies various types of households use to cope with poverty;
e. Determine the poorest household types as perceived by community members in rural areas; and
f. Make recommendations for more gender-sensitive, poverty alleviation

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strategies, focusing specifically on further research, policy and development practice

The next section of this chapter addresses the aspects such as the significance of the study, research and methodological issues, the major outputs, use of the findings in terms of contribution to the existing body of knowledge, socio-economic policy development and recommendations for future research. This work is presented as a challenge to anti-poverty policy development practitioners and social researchers to improve upon the lives of the poor, particularly those residing in rural areas.

8.2 Justification of the Study

The prevalence of women living below the poverty level is not a mere circumstance or coincidence, nor is it just a women's issue. It is a matter of human concern. Feminized poverty encompasses far more than just matters of income or individual suffering. If our government allows it to perpetuate, it will ensnare generation after generation in a vicious cycle of poverty and hopelessness, threatening the health and well-being of women and their families (Koster, 2008). However, despite the implication of this issue on women's lives, few poverty studies in the study area compare poverty in terms of different household groups and individual household's characteristics such as household size, education, gender and age. This in turn makes it difficult to find in the literature, studies that have an empirical account of a vulnerability to poverty (expected poverty) profile of the different household types in an area. Neither is much literature available on how to discriminate among different sources of vulnerability to poverty among rural South Africans. Furthermore, current policies may be focusing more on current poverty profile which may not be necessarily effective for those vulnerable households, particularly in rural areas.

8.3 Methodological Issues Arising from the Study

In this section, some of the methodological issues that arose from the carrying out of the study are reviewed. Firstly, prior to discussing the key methodological features of this study it is important to first discuss the term "poverty" in the context in which it was used in this study. The

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fact that poverty is a broad, mostly subjective concept that means different things to different people necessitates this clarity. As Savadogo *et al.* (2015) found, to better understand the meaning of poverty, one must consult those living in poverty. This is because poor community members seem to know the most adequate definition of poverty, which reflects their lived experiences. This understanding is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon usually associated with academics, politicians, economists and consultants (Davids *et al.*, 2005). In line with these submissions, community members' perceptions on the meaning of poverty as reported in chapter 3 were considered the integral components of this study. Secondly, it was also important that to honour the customs and cultural practices of Vatsonga people which dictate how one should conduct themselves as guest in their village. One such practice dictates that a stranger pays a courtesy visit to the Chief's kraal bearing gifts to announce their presence and the reason for their presence. In line with this customs, the researcher made arrangements to meet with the chief of each village prior the commencement of the study. The purpose of these meetings was to outline the purpose of the study to the chief, seek their permission to conduct the study in their villages using their subjects as respondents.

Another methodological maze that the researcher had to weave through relates to convincing members of the community to voluntarily participate in the study. There were issues that community members raised which threatened to derail the data collection process, particularly for the 2nd phase. Firstly, there were instances where some community members were reluctant to participate in the study. Respondents suspected that the researcher was a government employee who only came to make empty promises. They indicated that they were tired of government people who came to their villages with promises of jobs and other services only to disappear without fulfilling any of the promises made. Others suspected the researcher to be a 'tenderpreneur' who had won a contract with the government to conduct research in their villages. Their concern was that the researcher was going to make millions from the information they were going to provide while they receive nothing. It took a lot of explanation from the researcher to convince them that the study was for academic purposes only and that no financial gains will be derived from it. In some cases the researcher had to produce documents such as the letter from the university to confirm his association with the university. Community members' reluctance to participate in the study could be interpreted as the population's dissatisfaction with the sustained lack of quality service delivery in their communities.

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The second issue that needed to be overcome relates to the duration of some of the data collection processes that needed to be completed. For instance, the matrix ranking exercise was a long and tedious process which took a minimum of 4 hours to complete. There were instance where some respondents complained of being hungry and tired and subsequently withdrew their participation. However the number of those who withdrew was less than 5 % of the sample. As a result such withdrawals did not make a significant impact on the findings of the study.

8.4 Stakeholder Participation

The researcher engaged with the community leaders of the sampled villages prior the commencement of the study. The researcher arranged meetings with individual Chiefs where information relating to the study was disseminated. The primary purpose of these meetings was to help them make informed decisions regarding giving permission to the research team to start carrying out the study. In addition, the researcher met with leaders of the community structures such as South African National Civic Organizations (SANCO) from each village. The aim of these meetings was to get the buy in from these structures and to seek guidance on how to proceed with the study. Intense discussions ensued, particularly focusing on contentious issues and modalities of the research as well as the benefits accruing to those who would participate. One of the burning issues which arose from these meetings was that of the benefits that the community was going to accrue from the research. Leaders were concerned that people often came to carry out surveys in their communities under the pretext that findings of such surveys will yield benefits for community members. However most of these people often disappeared upon the completion of their research work, leaving the community with unfulfilled promises. The researcher had to explain that his study was for academic purposes only and not financial. At the end there was unanimous agreement that the study was needed and it should be implemented as planned.

8.5 Acknowledging Gender Roles

The literature revealed that female-headed households are often a focus of analysis for most poverty-related studies. This is because these households are considered most vulnerable and

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therefore deserve more focus. Yet male-headed households, particularly those in rural communities and headed by unemployed men are as much vulnerable. These households also encounter similar challenges that their female counterparts are often confronted with. Such challenges encompass a full range of social and economic challenges. As the empirical findings revealed in chapter 5, lack of employment opportunities, low level of education and diseases are the most common determinants of poverty in rural areas. These determinants equally act as hindrances to improved livelihoods and food security for both groups. However the daily struggles and frustrations of unemployed men which is often result from their inability to provide for their families seem to be ignored. Consequently, most anti-poverty interventions and development programmes from both the public and private sector seem to target women while in reality men are equally vulnerably to poverty. Therefore for rural poverty to be successfully arrested, "one-size fits all " anti-poverty strategies and programmes should be discarded and be replaced by gender and location-specific strategies and programmes.

8.6 Major Outputs of the Study

The main empirical findings are chapter specific and were summarized within the respective empirical chapters:

a) Grassroots Community Perceptions of the meaning of poverty in Thulamela Municipality of South Africa;

The aim of this chapter was to answer the research question "how do people in rural communities define poverty and well-being, including their own conceptions of vulnerability to being poor? Its findings was meant to provide an alternative way of defining poverty with a view to use the descriptors to determine (later) if there is "feminization of poverty" in rural households of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality. The findings revealed that most respondents defined poverty as the individual/household's inability to generate a monthly income and the inability to meet daily basic needs necessary for one's survival (i.e. food, clothes and shelter). The empirical findings revealed that there were no differences on how members of rural communities of Ward 14 defined poverty. Both males and females defined poverty in economic terms as well as the inability for a household to meet its daily basic needs. One can therefore deduce that poverty gender does not play has no influence on how people from impoverished villages defined poverty.

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Grassroots Community Perceptions of the Determinants of Poverty among Rural Households in Thulamela Municipality of South Africa

The aim of this chapter was to answer the question "what are the major determinants of household poverty in rural areas? The empirical findings revealed that community members perceived rural household poverty to be the consequent of three factors. Firstly, most respondents attributed household poverty to lack of employment opportunities (structuralistic factor) that currently characterizes life in rural areas. Community members also identified low level of education and skills, lack of information and teenage pregnancy (Individualistic factors) were also identified as major causes of poverty in rural household. Other identified determinants included diseases and the death of parents (fatalistic factors) as causes of poverty in most rural households. These findings revealed that rural poverty didn't emanate from nothingness, but was a consequence of multiple factors. These factors should be used to inform the formulation of future anti-poverty alleviation strategies.

Grassroots Community Members' perceptions on the characteristics of Poverty within Rural Households of Thulamela Municipality

The empirical findings revealed that majority of the respondents perceived the following to be some of the signs that individuals/households were living in poverty; members of the household are unable to meet their daily basic needs such as adequate food, members wear tattered clothes, household does not have a reliable source of income and they reside in dilapidated dwellings. A worrying challenge unraveled by this study was the fact that certain types of rural households were still defined by their inability to meet daily basic needs. This is despite the fact that several anti-poverty strategies have been implemented and billions of rand having been invested towards the fight against poverty over the past 22 years. These findings should therefore be used as a call to policy makers to seriously consider carrying out a robust analysis of the current policies on their effectiveness as poverty alleviation tools. The results of such an analysis could give guidance on whether there was a need for policy reforms of government's poverty-alleviation policies.

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Grassroots Community Members' perceptions on the Existence of Feminization of Poverty within Rural Households of Thulamela Municipality

The empirical findings of the study revealed that community members perceived MHHs of unemployed heads (married, divorced, widowed and migration) as well as FHHs of middle-aged widows to be more vulnerable to poverty than other types of households. Male-headed households' poor economic status was attributed to two major factors, namely; inability to diversify household income and spending patterns. Most rural men were found to rely on single, mostly transient and unreliable jobs for a living. Findings further revealed that most men often spend the money earned from the transient jobs in pursuit of self-serving interests such as alcohol and women. This consequently leaves the household without the financial means to meet its basic needs. On the other hand, reliant on husband's income and low level of education were identified as the main reasons for widows' poor economic status. Reliance on husbands' financial support meant that women are left destitute upon their husbands' passing.

Grassroots Community Perceptions of the Coping strategies employed by poor Household Poverty to improve livelihoods

Empirical findings revealed that coping strategies that poor people in rural areas employed were gender specific. Petty trading (i.e. street hawking and selling of firewood) and working as domestic workers were identified as the most popular strategies among FHHs. In contrast, transient jobs (i.e. working as builders, fixing doors and digging pit toilets) and selling of firewood were identified as most common amongst MHHs. The findings of these study revealed that the gender of a household had a big influence on the nature of coping strategies used to enhance the livelihoods and ensure the household's food security. The findings further revealed the fact that community members possessed entrepreneurial skills, which if nurtured can enhance individual households' socio-economic status and revitalizes rural economy. Public-private partnership programmes aimed at enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of budding entrepreneurs. These programs should focus on business activities that villagers are already involved in as revealed by the study.

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8.7 Contribution to the body of knowledge

In addition to practical implications, the present study also contributed to existing literature in several ways. Firstly, review of literature on the subject revealed that most of the preceding studies on feminization of poverty have consistently treated these groups as homogeneous group with similar challenges. However such an approach often neglects to expand the discussion into the experiences of individual household type which may reveal other causes of poverty. These shortcomings mask variation in vulnerability and risk within and across contexts, which may, in turn, affect our understanding of the relationship between poverty, vulnerability, and female headship.The limited data have in turn left a gap in the existing knowledge with regard to issues such as the status, determinants of poverty and its occupying characteristics for each household as well as the coping strategies. This study attempted to close the identified gap through the adoption of a new conceptual framework. This approach looked at different types of FHHs and MHHs as units of analysis instead of treating them as two homogeneous groups as it has been the case with many studies. Such an approach provided a vintage point through which a determination about the most vulnerable household(s) could be made. The aggregation further allowed for the comparison of the individual households in terms of poverty manifestations and coping strategies used to mitigate the subsequent effects.

The study offered a new approach of determining the existence of feminization of poverty within a specific context. Instead of using monetary terms and household consumption as baseline indexes, the perceptions of the residents of villages in Ward 14 of Thulamela were engaged. Villagers were afforded an opportunity to share their views on whether feminization of poverty existed or not. This was a deviation from statistical estimates which often reflect the judgments and ideologies of those who exert political pressure on behalf of the poor (Saunders, 2004). Statistical approaches have been considered a major determinant of poverty in many countries for a very long time. However, many findings have since shown that the use of income and expenditure as a sole determinant of one's welfare status was inadequate. Many researchers now advocate for alternative ways to be used in determining the vulnerable groups. One such ways is the need to involve poor people directly affected by issues that are not well understood by outsiders (Kabubo-Mariara *et al.*, 2009; Aryeetey *et al.*, 2013; Savadongo *et al.*, 2015). It was for this reason that the community-based approach was adopted for this study.

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8.8 Contribution to Socio-economic Development Policy

The South African governments have since 1994, implemented several anti-poverty strategies geared at poverty reduction amongst the poor. Considerable investments continue to be made into the initiatives. While the implementations of these strategies have somehow improved the lives of the poor, they have however struggled to lift the poor from below the poverty line. Statistics reveal that many households continue to swim against the tide of poverty despite all the efforts already made. Statistics South Africa revealed that the country's poverty rates have increased. The findings of this study may therefore help us to better understand the pattern of economic resources available to different rural household types in Thulamela Municipality. The findings are also likely to reveal the degree to which poverty is manifested and reduced in each household type. The findings of this study further provide a deeper understanding of the linkages between vulnerability and poverty. Gaining a better understanding of the characteristics, constraints and social support systems of different poor households will lead to the development of an appropriate intervention system for combating rural poverty at family level.

8.9 Recommendation for Future Research

The findings have created a number of opportunities for future research, both in terms of research and policy development. Firstly, the findings of the current study revealed that the coping strategies used by rural households were gender-specific and survivalist in nature. There is a need to carry out a robust and detailed analysis of the coping strategies used by different household types to determine their viability and sustainability in enhancing livelihoods and food security. The findings of this study revealed that in general MHHs of unemployed males are more vulnerable to poverty when compared to other households, disputing the existence of feminization of poverty. These results further created an opportunity for future studies to be carried out in order to validate the current findings. Such studies might also be directed at exploring the intra-disparities factors that determine the vulnerability of different type of households to household poverty. The findings of the current study also revealed that household head's spending patterns had serious implications on the welfare of the household. These findings necessitate the carrying out of a comparative and robust analysis on spending patterns and intra-household resource allocation of different types of rural households and their

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implications on household food security.

Limpopo province remains one of South Africa's poorest provinces. This is despite noble efforts that the provincial government continues to make in trying to change the economic status of its citizens. There is therefore a need for a robust inter-district analysis to determine people's perceptions to poverty with regard to its meaning, determinants and characteristics. The findings of such studies are likely to add new dimensions to the existing model of the adopted economic activity and the wellbeing of members of the households from each district. Chapter 6 analyses livelihood strategies with the results revealing a relationship between gender and the nature of coping strategies adopted by poor households. A thorough analysis of these coping strategies might assist in the formulation and implementation of strategies aimed at enhancing the economic viability and sustainability of these coping strategies.

8.10 Conclusions

Review of literature revealed that most of the studies on the subject made their determination that FHHs were disproportionately poor compared to MHHs based on land ownership. They argued that women's poor economic status was attributed to landlessness. However, in most South African rural areas, the land belongs to the chiefs making the issue of land ownership. Furthermore, the country has seen a significant decline in subsistence household farming. Many of the rural households have long abandoned farming as a source of income and now relied on food purchased from the market. The land ownership issue cannot therefore be used as a yardstick to determine the economic welfare of the household in rural households.

The common phenomenon occurring across most of the reviewed regions is that women are concentrated in informal labour sector. In parts of Asia, Africa, and Middle East, the cultural and social norms do not allow women to have much labor productivity outside the home as well as an economic bargaining position within the household. While it is true that South African women, particularly those in rural areas still experience social inequality which deprives them of capabilities, particularly employment, the country has made significant in-roads in ensuring gender equality. Most research findings have identified women's dominance in the informal sector as another principal contributory factor for their poor economic status. However, the findings of this study revealed that the issue of unemployment in rural areas equally affects both males and females. As a result both groups resort to informal sector for employment. The difference is that while males often relied on one income generating activity, women are able to

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complement their wages by diversifying their income generating strategies. In differentiating the two groups in terms of their income-generating capabilities, most respondents indicated that women *"va wa va pfuka"* or *"vakikirika"* while men *"vati nwela byalwa"*. This meant that women will try everything to generate an income while men often focused on drinking alcohol. It was revealed in chapter 6 that unlike men, rural women have the ability to employ multiple income generating activities at a given time.

The existing literature further attributed the existence of feminization of poverty in FHHs to women's multiple roles (wage earner, child care and household chores). It is argued that these factors restricted their mobility and participation in the labour force. It is further argued that women's situation, particularly those living in regions such as Asia, Middle East, Sub-Saharan and Southern Africa is exacerbated by lack of affordable child care systems which often forced them. In South Africa, the government, through the Department of Social Development, has invested a lot of money in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme. This programme has resulted in many community crèches being built across the country, including in rural areas. The establishment of such centres means that there is a safe place where women can take their children to while they go to work. This has significantly increased the women's mobility. It was therefore not surprising that women were involved in multiple income generating activities. Child care responsibilities cannot therefore be used as a restrictor to women participating in income generating activities, albeit in informal sector.

Furthermore, preceding studies have given an impression that women needed a man to have an improved economic status. The findings of this study have however shown that being a single woman was not a determinant of poverty. It was interesting to note from the findings that female headed households of never married women were perceived to be better off economically when compared to male headed households of married men. Respondents of the 1st phase revealed that these women had the ability to diversify their income generating activities, thereby supplementing their monthly wages. It is therefore critical that we always bear in mind that a woman's decision to maintain a household of her own may very well be a voluntary decision one that may, for instance, serve as an avenue out of a relationship marred by violence. If poverty is understood not only as income poverty but as a massive restriction of choices and options, a step of this kind, not taken in isolation, may also mean an improvement of women's life circumstances (Rodenberg, 2004). The findings of these study revealed that while poverty is prevalent in rural areas, there is not conclusive evidence of the existence of feminization of poverty.

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Appendix 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE: 1ST PHASE (KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS)

1. What does the word "poverty" mean to you?
2. What would you say are the major characteristics of household poverty that you observe in your village, taking into account the various types of households (Female-headed households (never married; divorced; widowed; husband works far from home in the city), male-headed households (divorced; married; widowed and wife works far from home)
3. Rank the various types of households found in your village, starting with the one you regard as worst associated with poverty?
4. Please provide reasons for your ranking.
5. What are the major factors that worsen poverty among the various types of households found in your village? Be certain that the factors are presented such that you start with the major one and proceed systematically until you get to the least important.
6. What would you say are the most common strategies that different types of households found in your village use to generate an income and ensure food security?

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Appendix 2: INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP MATRIX RANKING QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE STUDY ON THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY WITHIN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Gender **Male** ☐ **Female** ☐

Age category Youth (less than 35 years) ☐ **Adult (35-60 years)** ☐ **Adult (more than 60 years)** ☐

Households that are most affected by poverty

Instructions

Assume you have been given R100.00 to distribute among the different household types as listed below, depending on how poor the household is. How much were you going to allocate to each of the ten household types? Household that will receive a bigger share of the money is the one that you consider to be most affected by poverty.

TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS	Money allocated to each household type
1. Male headed households where the man stays with his wife and children	
2. Female headed households where the head is an unmarried woman	
3. Female headed households resulting from male migration	
4. Male headed households resulting female migration	
5. Male headed households where the head is a widow	
6. Female headed households where the head is a widower	
7. Female headed households where the head is a grandmother	
8. Male headed households where the head is a grandfather	
9. Male headed households where the head is a divorcee	
10. Female headed households where the head is a divorcee	

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CHARACTERISTICS OF POVERTY WITHIN POOR HOUSEHOLDS

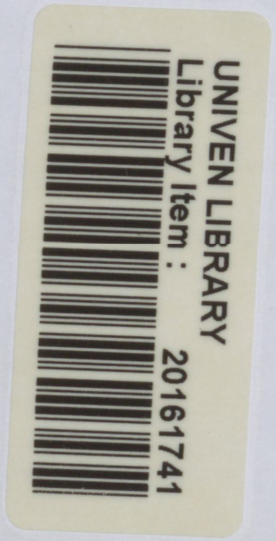
CHARACTERISTICS OF POVERTY	TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS									
	MHHs: Married couple	FHHs: never married women	FHHs: male migration	MHHs: female migration	MHHs: widow	FHHs: Widower	FHHs: Grandmother	MHHs: Grandfather	MHHs: divorcee	FHHs: divorcee
1. Members of the household are unemployed										
2. Members of the household are involved in transient and low paying jobs										
3. Members of the household have low level of education and skills										
4. Children go to school without money to buy lunch										
5. Household dwellings are dilapidated and in dire need for repairs										
6. Community members wear ragged clothes										
7. Members of the households survive by begging from other community members										
8. Children are unable to further their studies										
9. Members of the households are often sick										
10. Children often suffer										

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from malnutrition										
11. Members of the households are often food insecure										
12. Children always look pale and untidy										
13. Members of the household rely on government-issued food parcels										

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Appendix 3: Consent form

Informed Consent Form

Feminization of poverty within rural households of Thulamela Municipality in South Africa

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate): .....

1.	The aims and objectives were explained to me in a language that I understand.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project and I am conscious to the fact that I will not derive any personal incentive for participating in the study.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalized for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6.	If applicable, I give consent for my interview with the researcher or his assistant be audio-taped for the purpose of data analysis	☐
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
8.	I understand that the information I will give will be for academic purposes only.	☐
9.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher:

_____ _____ _____

Name of Researcher Signature Date

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Table 6.1 Coping strategies used by female-headed households as perceived by community members of Ward 14 in Thulamela Municipality.

coping strategy	Adult females (n = 11)	Adult males (n = 10)	Female youth (n = 11)	Male youth (n = 11)	Community leaders (n = 5)	Ward committee members (n = 2)	total (n = 50
Working as maids/domestic workers	●●●●● ●	●●●●	●●●●●●● ●●●	●●●● ●	●●●	●●	30
Petty trading	●●●	●●●● ●●	●●●●●●	●●●● ●●	●●●●●	●●	28
The child support grant	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●		14
Transient jobs (washing clothes, tilling people' fields)	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●	12
Selling firewood	●●●●		●●●	●●	●●		11

Source: Ngonyama (2015)

Key: ● indicates that respondents identified the indicator of the coping strategies female-headed-households commonly relied on

n indicates the number of respondents who have identified the coping strategy

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