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State of the Underprivileged Population: A Case Study of Uganda

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Abstract

This study investigates disparities in poverty levels, the distribution of widows, the prevalence of working children, and the demographics of the elderly population across different regions in Uganda. Employing a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, the study relies on secondary data sourced from published reports by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). Key findings indicate significant regional poverty-level variations between 2006 and 2017 ($F = 18.616$, $p < 0.05$). However, there were no significant differences in the number of working children across regions ($F = 0.818$, $p = 0.542$) or in the gender distribution of elderly individuals across various sectors (mean difference = 13.2%, $p = 0.3983$). Significant disparities were observed between rural and urban areas in terms of access to basic amenities: blanket ownership (mean difference = 27.4%, $p < 0.001$), shoe ownership (mean difference = 31%, $p < 0.001$), and the frequency of consuming three meals per day (mean difference = 17.6%, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes with recommendations for targeted poverty alleviation interventions, particularly in the northern and eastern regions of Uganda.

Keywords: *Underprivileged, Poverty, Widows, Children, Elderly, Uganda*

1.0 Introduction

Uganda has experienced fluctuating poverty rates, with some regions witnessing marked improvements while others struggle with deep-seated economic challenges. Poverty has notably increased in the eastern, western, and central areas, while significant reductions have been observed in the northern region, particularly in sub-regions like Karamoja. Despite economic growth in some areas, inequality has widened, especially in the wealthier western and central regions, where poverty rates are below 5%, compared to over 50% in less affluent areas.

Underprivileged populations are defined as groups that face systemic barriers to accessing resources due to factors such as ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location. These populations often experience social exclusion, limited access to victim services, and disparities in the enjoyment of fundamental rights and living standards (Jarman, 1983; Shawky, 2018). Medically, underprivileged groups may include minorities, elderly individuals, urban slum dwellers, people with disabilities, and rural communities that lack adequate healthcare services (Jan Sundquist, Jarman, & Johansson, 1996; Jarman, 1984). Such populations face heightened risks of poverty, violence, and discrimination. They are often economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged, with limited opportunities for upward mobility. Refugees, immigrants, and ethnic minorities frequently fall into this category due to systemic exclusion and denial of fundamental rights and privileges (Reinhardt, Löpker, Noack, Rosen, & Klein, 2009).

Globally, extensive research has examined the conditions of underprivileged populations, highlighting disparities in healthcare access, educational opportunities, and economic outcomes. For instance, Bhatia, Swami, and Kaur (2010) estimate that four million people living with HIV/AIDS in India lack sufficient support beyond essential treatment. In Sri Lanka, Wijetunga (2014) explored the digital divide, while Reshadat et al. (2020) examined health disparities among underprivileged populations in Iran. However, existing literature largely overlooks the specific context of Uganda, particularly in areas such as poverty disparities, widow distribution, child labour, and access to basic amenities.

Despite the global focus on underprivileged populations, Uganda presents a unique case where regional disparities are pronounced. The eastern, western, and central regions have experienced rising poverty levels, while the northern region has seen notable improvements. This divergence underscores the need for localized studies to understand the specific factors contributing to these disparities. While some regions in Uganda have benefited from poverty reduction efforts, others continue to experience high poverty rates and limited access to essential services. The disparity is most pronounced between rural and urban areas and among different regions, with the northern and eastern regions remaining particularly vulnerable. Understanding these disparities is crucial for developing targeted interventions to address poverty and improve living conditions for underprivileged populations. The study was guided by the following alternative hypotheses:

Ha_1: There is a significant difference in poverty levels between different regions in Uganda.

Ha_2: There is a significant difference in the distribution of widows between different

regions in Uganda.

Ha_3: There is a significant difference in the number of working children between different regions in Uganda.

Ha_4: There is a significant difference in the proportion of elderly people distributed by gender across various sectors in Uganda.

Ha_5: There is a significant difference in blanket ownership between rural and urban areas in Uganda.

Ha_6: There is a significant difference in possessing at least two sets of clothes between rural and urban areas in Uganda.

Ha_7: There is a significant difference in shoe ownership between rural and urban households in Uganda.

Ha_8: There is a significant difference in the frequency of consuming three meals per day between rural and urban areas in Uganda.

2.0 Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach to analyse the state of underprivileged populations in Uganda. The research was based on secondary data obtained from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), including the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) and the Statistical Abstracts for 2017 and 2020. The descriptive design was chosen to systematically describe the characteristics of the underprivileged populations without manipulating any variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). The study exclusively utilized quantitative data to ensure objective analysis and facilitate the comparison of statistical differences across regions and demographics. Secondary data were sourced from UBOS reports, including the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) and the 2017 and 2020 Statistical Abstracts. These sources provided comprehensive data on poverty levels, demographic distributions, and access to basic amenities across Uganda.

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, including Independent Sample t-tests and One-Way ANOVA, were employed to test the study hypotheses (Shaw & Mitchell-Olds, 1993). **Independent Sample t-tests** were used to compare means between rural and urban areas, particularly in assessing access to basic amenities like blankets, clothing, shoes, and meal frequency. **One-Way ANOVA** was conducted to determine regional differences in poverty levels, widow distribution, child labour, and the gender distribution of elderly populations. The significance level was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$). Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software, ensuring robust and reliable results. The findings were interpreted based on *p*-values and F-statistics, providing a comprehensive understanding of the disparities among underprivileged populations in Uganda.

3.0 Findings

This section presents a summary of statistics, a test for normality, and the study findings based on One-way ANOVA and a two-sample t test as are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of statistics and normality results

Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	*P*-value for Normality Test
Poor persons in central region from 2006 to 2017 (millions)	4	.4	1.3	.875	.3686	.878
Poor persons in eastern region from 2006 to 2017 (millions)	4	2.2	3.6	2.700	.6164	.000
Poor persons in northern region from 2006 to 2017 (millions)	4	2.3	3.5	2.925	.5058	.843
Poor persons in western region from 2006 to 2017 (millions)	4	.7	1.6	1.200	.3916	.407
Widows in Kampala aged 15 years and above (%)	3	.0	58.9	33.367	30.2212	.568
Widows in central region aged 15 years and above (%)	3	1.0	55.2	33.333	28.5757	.384
Widows in eastern region aged 15 years and above (%)	3	2.2	59.1	33.367	28.8365	.687
Widows in northern region aged 15 years and above (%)	3	2.0	52.9	33.367	27.4358	.269
Widows in western region aged 15 years and above (%)	3	1.8	51.4	33.367	27.4300	.157
Working children in Kampala aged between 5 and 17 years	3	786	16370	6031.33	8953.871	.016
Working children in central region aged between 5 and 17 years	3	63088	288390	140660.33	127991.353	.055
Working children in eastern region aged between 5 and 17 years	3	39344	743122	287406.33	395178.186	.098
Working children in northern region aged between 5 and 17 years	3	67489	338382	162739.67	152292.053	.093
Working children in western region aged between 5 and 17 years	3	61836	132723	85898.67	40556.279	.031
Percentage of male elders aged 60 years and above based 7 characteristics	7	10.6	94.0	47.129	32.8685	.196
Percentage of female elders aged 60 years and above based 7 characteristics	7	16.4	89.1	60.314	22.5025	.653
People possessing a blanket in Rural area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	28.1	36.0	32.400	3.4199	.141
People possessing a blanket in Urban area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	56.8	63.5	59.783	2.7316	.927

Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	*P*-value for Normality Test
People in possession of at least two sets of clothes in rural area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	80.4	92.6	87.167	4.8161	.637
People in possession of at least two sets of clothes in urban area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	92.7	97.5	95.033	1.7084	.831
Household members in Possession of at least one pair of shoes in rural area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	44.1	58.0	50.367	5.7518	.089
Household members in Possession of at least one pair of shoes in urban area from 2006 to 2019 (%)	6	75.3	85.4	81.367	3.6258	.455
Proportion of people who take three meals per day in rural areas from 2010 to 2019 (%)	5	46.2	51.8	49.280	2.1347	.089
Proportion of people who take three meals per day in urban areas from 2010 to 2019 (%)	5	59.1	69.4	66.880	4.4268	.032

Source: Own computations based on UBOS 2017/2020

Table 1 presents the summary of statistics and the Shapiro-Wilk test for the variables' normality. The normality findings show that the variables with *p*-values above the 5% significance level were normally distributed.

3.1 Difference in Poverty levels in different regions in Uganda

The study investigated whether poverty levels in different areas of Uganda differed from 2006 to 2017. The findings are presented using One-way ANOVA in Table 2.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA findings on the difference in Poverty levels between different regions in Uganda

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.915	3	4.305	18.616	.000
Within Groups	2.775	12	.231		
Total	15.690	15			

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2017)

The findings from Table 2 indicate that there was a significant difference in Poverty levels in different regions in Uganda from 2006 to 2017 (F-value=18.616, P-value< 0.05). This may imply that the poverty level in the different areas of Uganda is not equally the same. The difference in poverty levels among regions in Uganda is indicated in Figure 1 below.

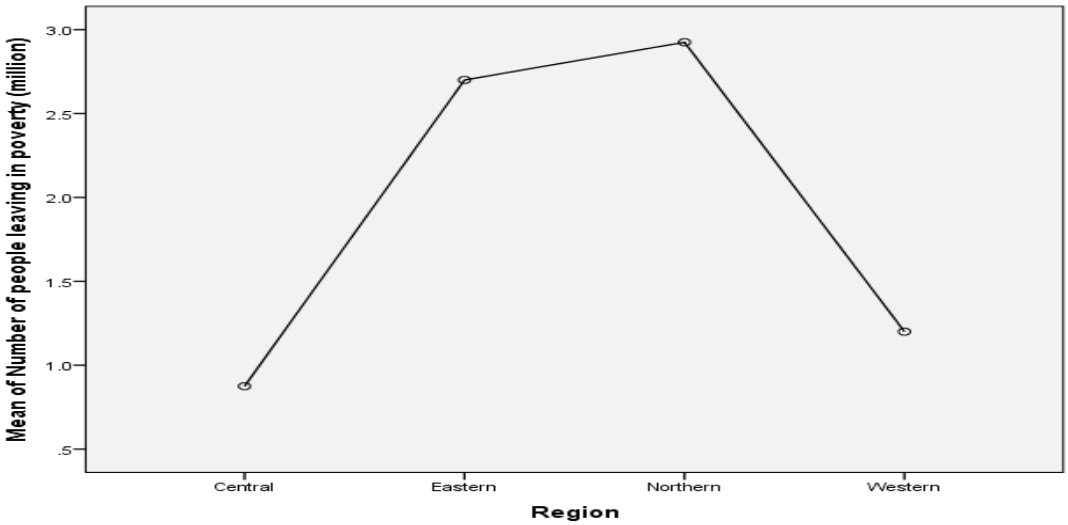

Figure 1: Line plot showing the difference in poverty levels in different regions in Uganda

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2017)

Findings presented in Figure 1 show that the northern region had more poor people, followed by the eastern and western areas, and the central region had the smallest number of poor people from 2006 to 2017.

3.2 The difference in the distribution of widows in different regions in Uganda

The study investigated whether the proportion of widows was significantly different across the regions of Uganda. It focused on widows aged 15 years and above, distributed between 15 and 29, 30 to 59, and 60 years plus. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA findings on the difference in the distribution of widows in different regions in Uganda

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.003	4	.001	.000	1.000
Within Groups	8133.133	10	813.313		
Total	8133.136	14			

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2017)

The ANOVA findings in Table 3 show that the proportion of widows from different regions was significantly the same (P-value>0.05). This indicates that all regions in Uganda have almost the same proportion of widows.

3.4 The difference in the number of working children in different regions in Uganda

The study examined whether there was a difference in the number of working children in different regions in Uganda. The working children targeted included those between 5 and 17 years old, divided into three categories: 5 to 11, 12 to 13, and 14 to 17. The results are

presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA results examining the difference in the number of working children in different regions in Uganda

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	129183319999.600	4	32295829999.900	.818	.542
Within Groups	394930875653.333	10	39493087565.333		
Total	524114195652.933	14			

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2017)

The study found no significant difference in the number of working children in different regions in Uganda (F-value=0.818, *p*-value>0.542). This implies that all areas in Uganda could have the same number of children engaged in child labour. However, the eastern region had the biggest number of children engaged in child labour, followed by the northern and central regions, while Kampala had the fewest.

3.5 The difference in the proportion of elderly people distributed by gender in different fields in Uganda

An attempt was done to find out if there was a significant difference in the proportion of elderly people distributed by gender in Uganda. The study looked at the gender distribution of elderly people in urban areas, employed in Agricultural sector, those in general employment, those who are household heads, those who have never been to school, those who are illiterate, and those who are widows. The findings are presented in Table 5 using two sample t test.

Table 5: Two sample t test results examining the difference in the proportion of elderly people distributed by gender in different fields in Uganda

```
Two-sample t test with equal variances
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Variable |     Obs        Mean    Std. Err.   Std. Dev.   [95% Conf. Interval]
---------+--------------------------------------------------------------------
Male_e~s |       7    47.12857    12.42311    32.86846    16.73032    77.52683
Female~s |       7    60.31429    8.505137    22.50248    39.50297    81.12561
---------+--------------------------------------------------------------------
combined |      14    53.72143    7.460041    27.91292    37.60499    69.83787
---------+--------------------------------------------------------------------
    diff |           -13.18571     15.0556               -45.98904    19.61762
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
    diff = mean(Male_elders) - mean(Female_elders)                t =  -0.8758
Ho: diff = 0                                     degrees of freedom =       12

    Ha: diff < 0                 Ha: diff != 0                 Ha: diff > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.1992         Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.3983          Pr(T > t) = 0.8008
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Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2017)

The study found that there was no significant difference in the proportion of elderly people distributed by gender in different fields in Uganda at 5% significance level (mean difference= 13.2%, P-value (0.3983)>0.05). The findings may imply that both elderly males and females were almost equally involved in different fields like employment, education, and government sectors. However, the observation from the findings also indicates that elderly females (60.3% on average in every field) were more engaged in different fields than males (47.1% on average in every field).

3.6 The difference in the proportion of people possessing a blanket in rural and urban areas in Uganda

The study established whether the proportion of people possessing a blanket in rural and urban areas was different in Uganda from 2006 to 2019. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Two sample t test results examining the difference in the proportion of people possessing a blanket in rural and urban areas in Uganda

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Blanke~l	6	32.4	1.396185	3.419942	28.81099	35.98901
Blanke~n	6	59.78333	1.115173	2.731605	56.91669	62.64998
combined	12	46.09167	4.215168	14.60177	36.81414	55.36919
diff		-27.38333	1.786881		-31.36475	-23.40191

diff = mean(Blanket_Rural) - mean(Blanket_Urban) t = -15.3247
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 10

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2020)

The results from the two-sample t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the proportion of people possessing a blanket in rural and urban areas in Uganda from 2006 to 2019 (mean difference=27.4%, *p*-value (0.000) <0.05). The results indicate that people possessing a blanket in urban areas had an average proportion of 59.8% per year compared to people in rural areas who constituted an average proportion of 32.4% per year. The decline in the number of people possessing a blanket in rural areas could be attributed to the lower earning levels compared to their counterparts in urban areas.

3.7 The difference in the proportion of people possessing at least two sets of clothes in rural and urban areas in Uganda

The study ascertained if the proportion of people possessing at least two sets of cloths in rural and urban areas significantly differed from 2006 to 2019 in Uganda. The findings are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Two sample t-test results showing the proportion of people possessing at least two sets of clothes in rural and urban areas in Uganda

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Clothe~l	6	87.16667	1.966158	4.816084	82.1125	92.22084
Clothe~n	6	95.03333	.6974557	1.708411	93.24047	96.8262
combined	12	91.1	1.547775	5.361648	87.69337	94.50663
diff		-7.866667	2.086198		-12.51501	-3.218328

diff = mean(Clothes_Rural) - mean(Clothes_Urban) t = -3.7708
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 10

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0018 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0037 Pr(T > t) = 0.9982

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2020)

The findings in Table 7 indicate that there was a significant difference in the proportion of people possessing at least two sets of clothes in rural and urban areas in Uganda from 2006 to 2019 (mean diff=7.9%, *p*-value (0.003) <0.05). The findings may imply that more people in the urban areas possess at least two sets of clothes compared to those from the rural areas of Uganda.

3.8 The difference in the proportion of household members possessing at least one pair of shoes in rural and urban areas in Uganda

The study assessed whether there was a difference in the proportion of household members possessing at least one pair of shoes in rural and urban areas of Uganda from 2006 to 2019. The findings are presented in Table 8 using a two-sample t-test.

Table 8: Two sample t test results examining the difference in the proportion of household members possessing at least one pair of shoes in rural and urban areas in Uganda

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Shoes_~l	6	50.36667	2.348143	5.751753	44.33057	56.40276
Shoes_~n	6	81.36667	1.48024	3.625833	77.56159	85.17175
combined	12	65.86667	4.857162	16.8257	55.17613	76.55721
diff		-31	2.775768		-37.1848	-24.8152

diff = mean(Shoes_Rural) - mean(Shoes_Urban) t = -11.1681
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 10

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2020)

The study outcomes in Table 8 show that the proportion of household members possessing at least one pair of shoes in rural areas significantly differed from that of urban areas from 2006 to 2019 in Uganda (mean diff=31%, P-value (0.000) <0.05). The implication is that more people in urban areas possess at least one pair of shoes than their counterparts in rural areas of Uganda.

3.9 The difference in the proportion of people who take three meals per day between the rural and urban areas in Uganda

The study further investigated whether the proportion of people who take three meals per day in rural areas significantly differed from that of urban areas in Uganda from 2010 to 2019. The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Two independent sample t test results showing the difference in the proportion of people who take three meals per day between the rural and urban areas in Uganda

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Meals_~l	5	49.28	.9546727	2.134713	46.6294	51.9306
Meals_~n	5	66.88	1.979747	4.42685	61.38334	72.37666
combined	10	58.08	3.110941	9.83766	51.04256	65.11744
diff		-17.6	2.197908		-22.66839	-12.53161

diff = mean(Meals_Rural) - mean(Meals_Urban) t = -8.0076
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

Source: Own computations based on UBOS (2020)

The findings from Table 9 revealed that there was a significant difference in the proportion of people who take three meals per day between the rural and urban areas in Uganda from 2010 to 2019 (mean diff=17.6%, P-value (0.000) <0.05). The findings may imply that people who would take three meals per day in urban areas were more than those in rural areas. For instance, 66.9% of the people in urban areas had access to three meals per day every year compared with an average of 49.3% of the people in rural areas.

4.0 Conclusions

The poor state of underprivileged people in Uganda has continued to increase, especially for those in rural areas. Concerning the poverty level, the results indicated that the poverty level has grown high in the northern and eastern regions of Uganda. The study noted that there is more child labour in the eastern region compared to the other areas in Uganda. Concerning access to basic needs (like blankets, clothes, and shoes) and three meals per day, people in urban areas were better off than those in rural areas. There is a need for some intervention aimed at fighting poverty among people in the most at-risk regions like the northern and

eastern regions of Uganda. There is a need for an awareness campaign in the east region to reduce the rate of growing child labour. The government and development partners need to support rural communities by providing basic needs like blankets, clothes, and shoes. People in the rural areas of Uganda should be encouraged to grow more food crops since this may fulfill the three meals that should be taken daily.

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