Breaking the Chains of Poverty: Unraveling the Influence of Decent Work in Cameroon's Journey towards Prosperity

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to establish a relationship between decent work and poverty and what improvements of decent works would do in breaking the chains of poverty to propel Cameroon towards prosperity. The study, conducted on cross-sectional data of the fourth round of the Cameroon Household Consumption Survey, used the two stage least squares estimation strategy and found out that with decent work factors, such as wages, fair remuneration, employment security, and an encouraging environment for developing skills, household incomes would increase and poverty in Cameroon reduced. This therefore implies that improvements in decent work opportunities will be a sure way of reducing poverty levels in the country. Considering the positive effect of decent work on the reduction of poverty, efforts by the policymakers should focus on creating an enabling environment for decent work. This shall include putting in place labour regulations that protect workers' rights, promote fair wages, and offer social protection. By giving precedence to policies that improve the availability of decent work opportunities, governments can contribute to other socio-economic objectives of reducing poverty and improving food security outcomes in Cameroon.

Key Words: Decent Work, Poverty, Prosperity

INTRODUCTION

As noted by the ILO in 1999, 'Decent Work' has succeeded in acquiring international currency in the past years. This has been recognized by a number of international players including various United Nations' bodies, the European Commission, and the G8, comprising France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, Canada, and Russia (Bell & Gibbons, 2007). Several dimensions of employment quality have been attracting increasing attention from empirical studies and public policy makers. According to Burchell et al. (2014), analysts have recognized that for many people, having a job may be inadequate to ensure even a minimum basic standard of living. It is precisely in the context of changing employment conditions in respect of wages, stability, and career prospects—a dual process of globalization and liberalization—that continuous calls for labour market flexibilisation have served to underpin the quality of employment as at least an equally important subject of study as traditional indicators such as employment or unemployment rates.

Decent work is not just a Sustainable Development Goal; it is also a means for sustainable development. The more people in decent jobs, the more resilient and inclusive will be the economic growth. The more growth is enhanced, the more it follows that more resources will be available to provide decent jobs. It is a very simple equation that has, however, been largely ignored in international policy-making, both before and even after the financial crisis of 2008. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity that can make a difference and transform the lives of billions. Decent work is generally described as that which: gains a fair income; gives a secure way of employment and safe working conditions; assures opportunities for personal development, social integration, and social protection payment for the workers; pays social protection for the workers and their families; offers prospects for personal development and social

integration; and where workers are free to express themselves and better organise themselves (Stokke, 2015). Decent work is an idea that has brought out wide and diversified dimensions known to relate to work today, and it has presented them in a term for all people to appreciate. It has three other components, which are explained as the pillars of decent work. They include promoting employment, extending social security, guaranteeing a worker's right, and promoting social dialogue.

The concept of decent work entered the development agenda in the developed world explicitly as far back as 2006, when the first European Consensus on Development stated that "the EU will contribute to strengthening the social dimension of globalisation, promoting employment and decent work for all". Back in 2017, the European Consensus on Development brought EU development policy closer to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 8th Sustainable Development Goal reaffirming explicitly full, productive, and decent employment—inclusively, leaving no one behind, and universally, everywhere in the world, (Latek, 2017).

Long before now, meaningful or decent work has been identified as one of the major routes out of poverty available to people. Thus, as Narayan, et al., 2000 avert, decent work should provide adequate and secure standards of living amongst its other monetary and psycho-social benefits. They further argue that productive work that aids workers elude poverty is a universal desire of workers, (Narayan, et al., 2000). If an economy needs to reduce poverty, then it should increase the number and quality of the work opportunities available and the social condition for all its citizens, (Kantor et al., 2006). Since work represents a major source of income, enhancing job quality, according to the ILO 1999, can enhance material well-being and family stability and be instrumental in developing a virtuous cycle of poverty alleviation. Some of the strategies for Promoting Decent Work and Economic Growth include investment in education and training, support for small businesses, fair wages and working conditions, promoting entrepreneurship, promotion of gender equality, encouragement of trade, innovation, and infrastructure investment (Kantor et al., 2006)..

According to the International Labour Organization, 2020, over 340 million jobs will have to be created by 2030, in addition to the 190 million needed to address unemployment today. Of the nearly 200 million people out of work today, almost 65 million are young. Even with work, 300 million people live in extreme poverty – on less than $1.90 a day. Attention must be sufficient for the need of governments and private employers to do enough to provide decent work within the economy for all its inhabitants. This becomes more necessary since most obtainable work has been characterized by many detrimental dimensions which can be considered as constituting 'indecent employment'. Indecent practices of employment, such as child labour, poor wages, and longer and indecent working hours, lead to inadequacy in the sense that apparently an employed individual fails to meet the minimum needs of a minimum standard of living. In this respect, productive employment is always used as a means to material and non-material social development, and as such, it works towards fulfilling the obligations imposed by society in health, education, social security, and food security.

Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has witnessed a tremendous decline. During the last decade, the world's population living below the $1.90 per day international poverty line reduced from 1.1 billion (16% of world's population) in 2010 to 698 million (9% of world's population) in 2022 (World Bank, 2022; Development Initiative, 2019; Amar et al., 2020). However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukrainian war which has manifested itself with global food price hikes and other global crises, the number of persons living below the $2.15 poverty line has increased from about 70 million in 2019 to about 700 million in 2022 (World Bank, 2022; Azu et al., 2022). Even though global poverty has again taken a downward trend, the different crises have retarded the world's efforts to end poverty by 2030. Following the current trend, it is estimated that about 7% of world's population (574 million people) will be living in extreme poverty in 2030 (World Bank, 2022; Valensisi, 2020). Extreme poverty in developed countries is very low as compared to other parts of the world. According to the World Bank, only about 1% of people living in high-income countries live below the $2.15 per day poverty line in 2022, as against 35% in Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance (World Bank, 2022a). The success in reducing extreme poverty in developed countries is partly due to decades of high and sustained rates of economic growth.

Progress in reducing extreme poverty in Africa has not been even throughout the continent. Even though the rate of extreme poverty has decreased in Africa from 56% in 1990 to about 34% in 2022, different sub-regions have

experienced different levels of successes (World Bank, 2022; Asongu & Le Roux, 2019; Sala-i-Martin & Pinkovskiy, 2010). For instance, in 2019, only 3% of people in Northern Africa lived below the $1.90 per day, 36.89% and 33.5% in the Western and Eastern Africa respectively, while up to 45.1% of people in Southern Africa lived in extreme poverty. In 2018, while countries like South Sudan, Central African Republic and Burundi had extreme poverty rates greater than 70%, other countries like Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria had only about 1% of their population living in extreme poverty (African Development Bank, 2022; International Monetary Fund, 2022; Fosu, 2018). Several international bodies like the World Bank and the IMF have highlighted poverty reduction as one of their key priorities and have set action plans and targets to gauge the trend in their efforts.

The year 2020 saw a rise in poverty as determined by the international poverty threshold for the first time since 1998. Globally, it was projected that 88 million to 115 million people lived in poverty in 2020, and that number would rise to 23 million to 35 million in 2021 (World Bank, 2020). The majority of these newcomers to extreme poverty are found in Sub-Saharan Africa (26–40 million) and South Asia (49–57 million). Poverty reduction is a key development objective in many developing countries, but not much attention is given to its linkages with food security. Thus, it is not surprising that the world is not on track to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by the timeline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2021). Decent work is therefore a compulsory step for any strategy to build household resilience and thus improve food stability (FAO, 2012).

The employment landscape in Cameroon is influenced by several factors including economic growth, educational attainment, and demographic trends. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the unemployment rate in Cameroon has fluctuated over the years but remains notably high among young people aged 15-24. This demographic often experiences joblessness due to a mismatch between education and market needs, as well as limited access to vocational training programs. Social protection systems in Cameroon are underdeveloped compared to international standards. The government has made efforts to implement social safety nets; however, these initiatives often fall short due to inadequate funding and poor infrastructure. The existing social protection schemes primarily cover formal sector workers, leaving a large segment of the population without adequate support.

Understanding the effects of decent work on poverty in Cameroon is crucial for policy formulation and implementation. It can help policymakers and stakeholders design targeted interventions and strategies that address the specific challenges and opportunities in the Cameroonian context. Additionally, such research can shed light on the potential barriers and facilitators to achieving decent work and reducing poverty in the country, thereby guiding the development of effective policies and programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have examined the nexus between decent work and poverty. For instance, Olabiyi, (2022) carried out a study on decent employment and poverty alleviation for socio-economic development and its implications for the wellbeing of the citizenry in South Africa. The goal of this study was to examine if decent work can contribute to alleviating or eradicating poverty and thereby improving the socio-economic development of society and the well-being of individuals. It employed a qualitative, thematic analysis of selected reported cases of perceived 'indecent' or non-meaningful employment from both informal and formal sectors. The findings showed that encouraging decent work contributed greatly in alleviating poverty and improving the socio-economic development of the people in South Africa.

Oppong, (2019) wrote on decent work and the working poor: evidence from Ghana. The goal was to empirically investigate factors that account for the probability of someone working decently in the Ghanaian economy and to test whether the probability of working decently has any relationship with one's poverty status. The findings showed that women are more likely to experience decent work than their male counterparts and that education has a significantly positive influence on the probability of an individual engaging in decent work. In the same line, Ogunrin and Adekunle, (2017) also studied decent work and poverty eradication among micro-entrepreneur recharge-card vendors in Nigeria with the goal to examine the decency of work and poverty eradication among them. Their findings showed that the vendors' daily investment in card procurement and average sales per day suggests that the financial commitment by most of the vendors will guarantee a daily profit that will be greater

than the $1.25 UN benchmark.

Kabanda, (2016) carried out a study on the effect of employment on poverty reduction in Rwanda: an empirical analysis, with main objective to investigate the micro-economic relationship between employment and poverty indicators. The findings showed that decent employment strategies contributed to keep working poverty at level in Rwanda. In an earlier study by Hughes and Haworth (2011), they looked at how the integration of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) decent work agenda into strategies for reducing poverty has made it possible for the ILO and the World Bank to work together more closely. Their work begins by discussing multilateral approaches to poverty reduction and identifying criticisms of structural adjustment programmes and the policy prescriptions of the Washington Consensus as key prompts for closer cooperation with the ILO. The findings reveal that integration of decent work into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) is identified as a key platform for poverty reduction.

Based on the literature review of previous studies on the nexus between decent work and poverty reduction in different countries, including South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Rwanda, a literature gap can be identified that necessitates further study in Cameroon. Although several studies have examined the relationship between decent work and poverty in various countries, there is a lack of specific research on the effects of decent work on poverty in Cameroon. While the existing studies provide valuable insights into the positive relationship between decent work and poverty reduction in different contexts, it is important to understand this relationship within the specific context of Cameroon. Cameroon has its unique socio-economic dynamics, labour market conditions, and policy environment that may influence the effects of decent work on poverty reduction differently compared to other countries. Therefore, conducting a study in Cameroon is necessary to fill this literature gap and provide tailored evidence on the effects of decent work on poverty reduction in the country. By addressing this literature gap through a specific study in Cameroon, policymakers and stakeholders would be better equipped to make informed decisions and implement evidence-based interventions to promote decent work and reduce poverty in the country.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Description

The study makes use of cross-sectional secondary data. Cross-sectional data refer to observations of many different individuals (subjects, objects) at a given time, each observation belonging to a different individual. The data are from the fourth round of the Cameroon Household Consumption Survey (ECAM 4) conducted in 2014 by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). It aims to produce indicators on the living conditions of the populations. These indicators should enable the updating of the poverty profile, monitoring and evaluation of the national development strategy (NDS30) and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This objective can only be achieved if the data collected in the farm are of good quality. The study covers a sample of approximately 10,303 households consisting of 2,980 female-headed household and 7,323 male-headed households. The survey made use of the simple random sampling technique as each household had the same probability of being selected for the interview. All household members drawn are registered in the household questionnaire. The survey questionnaire contained principally thirteen (13) sections numbered 00 -12 which addressed all households residing in urban, semi-urban and in the rural areas (NIS, 2014). The questions used from the questionnaire targeted variables regarding the food expenditure, total household consumption, unemployment status, age of house hold head, sex of household head level of education of household head, revenue status, migration status, marital status, occupational sector, religion, house hold size (number of persons), composition in terms of share of age group, possession of farmland, home ownership status, place of residence, etc.

Poverty is captured here as the total household expenditure per adult equivalence. It is given as total household expenditure proxy to household income divided by adult equivalent or size of household.

Decent work is measured by an index constructed as inspired by the works of Duffy et al., (2017); Ferraro et al., (2017); Anweh & Ndamsa, (2018); Oppong, (2019) and Bougema, (2023). Here, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is used to construct a composite index of decent work, comprising of the following primary variables; (i)

worker has a social security number; (ii) enterprise where individual works is registered with social insurance; (iii) individual has a contract or agreement; (iv) possession of a payslip; (v) does the household head belong to any syndicate or a similar association of employees; (vi) number of hours per week devoted to work; (vii) paid annual leave; (viii) worker is satisfied with his job and (ix) paid sick leave. The selection of indicator variables to be used is based on previous empirical works, economic theories, and dataset in hand. Our composite index is built using categorical variables, inspired from Pagès, (2003, 2005) and Bocquier et al., (2010) to track different aspects of decent work.

3.2 Model and Estimation Techniques

Poverty is the dependent variable and decent work is the main independent variable. It is regressed among other control variables and it shows the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. This model which is inspired by the works of Islam, (2020) and Oppong, (2020) is stated as shown in equation (3.1) below.

$$\boldsymbol{Pov_i} = a_0 + a_1 \boldsymbol{Dw_i} + \boldsymbol{X_{ii}} + \boldsymbol{u_{1i}} \dotfill (3.1)$$

$$\boldsymbol{DW_i} = Q_0 + Q_i \boldsymbol{Z_i} + \boldsymbol{X_{ii}} + \boldsymbol{u_{2i}} \dotfill (3.2)$$

Equation (3.1) is shows the direct effect of decent work on poverty while equation (3.2) is the reduced form equation presenting decent work as a function of both the included and excluded instruments, due to its endogenous nature in the model.

Where;

$\boldsymbol{Pov_i}$ Represents the poverty status of household i,

$\boldsymbol{Dw_i}$ Represents the decent work status of household i and is the main independent variable here,

$\boldsymbol{X_i}$ Are the economic control variables used here to explain poverty (age, gender, marital status, household size, educational level, occupational sector, dependency ratio),

$\boldsymbol{Z_i}$ Are the instrumental variables (benefits from social insurance contributions on main job, benefits from medical facilities from main job) to correct for endogeneity bias between decent work and poverty,

a_0, $a_{1, i}$, Q_0, Q_i and $_i$ Are parameters to be estimated and $\boldsymbol{u}$ is the error term. The

subscript $\boldsymbol{i}$ indicates that the observations are obtained across individuals.

In the pre-tests, decent work is endogenous to poverty and very common when using household survey data. For example, decent work reduces poverty because it provides workers with an adequate means of sustaining themselves and their families. On the other hand, poverty exposes workers to precarious working conditions and exploitative labour. Most poor people, out of necessity, accept bad working conditions, which include but are not limited to low wages, long hours of work, hazardous workplace conditions, and insecurity in their jobs.

Hence, to resolve the problem of endogeneity arising between decent work and poverty, the endogenous covariate (decent work) is regressed on a set of included and excluded instruments as shown in equation (3.2), which is the reduced form (first stage) equation.

One key factor in explaining poverty is age, where individuals at different stages of life may go through different experiences that put them in the given economic circumstances. Age can be another possible variable to influence an individual's capability of getting a stable job and out of poverty, (Marchand, 2016).

Gender thus plays a considerable role in explaining poverty, and according to Sen, 2001, it is generally recognized that more women are poor than men.

The next key area to explain poverty is marital status, conditional on how it reflects household income, financial

stability, and access to resources, (McLanahan, 2008).

It is also not hard to accept that the size of the household directly determines its economic resources since larger households normally have more people to feed and financially sustain. The bigger the household size, therefore, the greater the financial burdens they may bear, making it even more difficult to achieve the fulfilment of their most basic needs so as to escape poverty, (Fusco, 2020).

This is followed by education attainment, which touches on a wide sphere within a person's economic well-being. In most cases, this factor may mean poverty perpetuation or alleviation. This relationship arises from various key mechanisms: access to employability, earning potential and social mobility, (Tilak, 2002).

Much of the reasons for poverty are also explained by the occupational sector, which is very instrumental in securing employment opportunities, wages, and job stability. Occupational sector refers to the different categorization of jobs and industries in the economy, such as agriculture, manufacturing, services, and professional occupations.

A high dependency ratio refers to the sizeable proportion of the working-age population to dependents, with serious implications for the level of poverty in a country. A high dependency ratio affects economic development, social welfare programs, labour market dynamics, income inequality, and government budget constraints through different channels, (Vijayakumar, 2013; Ilmiyarni, 2023).

To this regard, social insurance contributions on main jobs present a rather significant contribution towards decent work by offering their due benefits to workers. In general, social insurance programs are aimed at protecting workers and their families against financial risks resulting from illness, disability, unemployment, or old age. One major way in which such benefits from social insurance contributions have a bearing on decent work is that they accord financial security to the worker and his family at times of need, (Khembo, 2015).

The existence of medical facilities greatly supports the realization of decent work by ensuring health and well-being improvement. Because of access to health care of good quality, the employees become much healthier to prevent absenteeism and, therefore, tend to be more productive. Mental health condition support can also be provided with medical facilities, which will increase job performance. Medical facilities also play a vital role in the promotion of occupational health and safety in the workplace, (Lopez, 2021).

The models are estimated by means of the Two-stage least squares (2SLS). The 2SLS is a statistical method used in econometrics to address endogeneity, which occurs when an independent variable is correlated with the error term in a regression model. This correlation can lead to biased and inconsistent estimates of the coefficients. 2SLS is particularly useful in situations where instrumental variables are available to address endogeneity and it provides consistent estimates of the parameters, which converge to the true population values, (Wooldridge, 2012).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Effect of Decent Work on Household Poverty in Cameroon

The main objective of this study is to assess the influence of decent work on household poverty in Cameroon. Table 4.1 presents the estimates of the OLS technique in column (1) and the second stage instrumental variable regression estimates in column (2).

To assess the validity of the results presented, econometric tests were conducted. Endogeneity constitutes a fundamental problem in econometric analysis. Failure to address this problem leads to bias results, (Ullah et al., 2018). Looking at the Durbin-Wu-Hausman χ^2 test for endogeneity in table 4.1, the coefficient stands at 3.177, significant at 10%. This shows that there are problems of endogeneity in the data. As such, the OLS estimates are bias. We therefore focus on the Instrumental variable two stage least squares (IV2SLS) estimates. To assess the validity and strength of the instruments, we conducted the Cragg-Donald F-Stat [Stock-Yogo at 10% relative bias]. The above tests stand at 269.728[19.93]. Given that the Cragg-Donald F-Stat is greater than the Stock-

Yogo at 10% relative bias, we conclude that the instruments are valid and strong.

Since we have one endogenous regressor and two identifying instruments for decent work, there is a need to check whether over-identification restrictions hold. To test for the identification, we conducted the Sargan–Hansen test. An equation is considered over-identified when there are more instrumental variables (IVs) than endogenous variables in a structural equation model, (Bastardoz et al., 2023). The Sargan test conducted has a value of 0.756 with p-value of 0.3847 as shown in table 4.1. Given that the p-value of the Sargan test is insignificant, we conclude that the over identifying restrictions are valid, meaning that the instruments are uncorrelated with the error term in the model.

The model's goodness of fit such as the adjusted R-squared for the effects of decent work on household poverty in Cameroon is 0.566. This indicates that 56.6% of variations in household poverty in Cameroon are accountable for by variations in decent work and the other control variables included in the model. Also, the Wald/Chi^2 test for the overall significance of the model is 134.44, significant at 1%. This shows that the model is globally significant at the 1% level. As such, the regression coefficients can be used for forecasting and for policy recommendations on how promoting decent work contributes to poverty reduction in Cameroon.

Table 4.1: Regression Results on Effect of Decent work on household poverty in Cameroon

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
	OLS Log POV	**IV REG results Log Pov (IV reg)**
Main independent variable		
Normalised Decent Work	0.003***	0.004***
	(0.000)	(0.001)
Control Variables		
Household size	-0.068***	-0.068***
	(0.005)	(0.005)
Age of household head	0.003***	0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male	-0.085***	-0.086***
	(0.029)	(0.029)
Marital status of household head	0.032	0.030
	(0.026)	(0.026)
Christian Religion of household head	-0.140***	-0.140***
	(0.035)	(0.035)
Muslim Religion of household head	0.053**	0.052**
	(0.023)	(0.023)
Primary education of household head	0.138***	0.133***
	(0.040)	(0.040)
Secondary education	0.313***	0.298***
	(0.042)	(0.042)

Tertiary education	0.666***	0.635***
	(0.052)	(0.054)
Urban milieu of residence	0.334***	0.328***
	(0.027)	(0.027)
Private Sector of activity	-0.068*	-0.071*
	(0.038)	(0.038)
Informal non-agricultural sector	-0.122***	-0.071
	(0.036)	(0.045)
Informal agricultural sector	-0.303***	-0.238***
	(0.045)	(0.057)
Dependency Ratio	-0.662***	-0.657***
	(0.064)	(0.064)
Littoral	0.032	0.031
	(0.032)	(0.032)
Adamawa	0.004	0.000
	(0.059)	(0.059)
East Region	0.003	-0.009
	(0.053)	(0.054)
Extreme North	-0.230***	-0.224***
	(0.047)	(0.047)
North	-0.227***	-0.220***
	(0.050)	(0.049)
North West	-0.405***	-0.413***
	(0.051)	(0.051)
West	-0.090*	-0.092*
	(0.049)	(0.049)
South	-0.017	-0.032
	(0.047)	(0.048)
South West	-0.078*	-0.089**
	(0.045)	(0.045)
Constant	13.588***	13.530***
	(0.087)	(0.093)
R^2 Pseudo	0.5682	0.5657
Wald/Chi2 test	123.22***	134.44***

Cragg-Donald F-Stat [Stock-Yogo at 10% Relative bias]	--	269.728[19.93]
Sargan Statistics[P-Value]	--	0.756[0.3847]
Durbin-Wu-Hausman χ^2 test	--	3.177[0.0747]
Observations	2,511	2,511

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1 (Standard errors are in parenthesis)

Source: Computed by the researcher, (2024)

Specifically, looking at the regression coefficients in table 4.1, we notice that the coefficient of decent work judging from the IV2S regression results in column (2) is positive showing that improvements in decent work or promoting decent work leads to an increase in income levels of households and thus, falling poverty. This therefore means that promoting decent work will lead to an increase in the decent working score. Hence, on a quantitative point of view, a unit increase in the decent working score will lead to a 0.4% increase in the household head's income or a 0.4% fall in poverty status. This coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% level of significance, as such; we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that decent work has a significant effect on household poverty in Cameroon. That is, decent work will lead to an increase in income levels of household heads and hence a reduction in poverty and this is in accordance with the works of Hughes & Haworth, (2011); Kabanda, (2016); and Olabiyi, (2022).

The control variables also have an effect on poverty in the regression equation of the effect of decent work on poverty and are presented as follows.

Looking at the household size, there is a significant and negative effect on poverty status of household heads. Larger households experience a drop in income, and therefore rising poverty as shown in column (2) of table 4.1.

For gender, male headed households experience rising poverty since a negative relationship is observed between household expenditure and male headed homes.

Christian headed households experienced rising poverty when compared to other religions since a negative relationship is observed between household expenditure and Christian headed homes. Their Muslim counterparts on the other hand experienced falling poverty when compared to other religions since a positive relationship is observed between household expenditure and Muslim headed homes, judging from IV2S results in column (2) of table 4.1. This is significant at 1% level of significance.

Examining the activity sector, households with household heads employed in the informal agricultural sector experienced rising poverty when compared to those working in the public sector. This is as a result of the negative relationship existing between household expenditure and the informal agricultural sector, judging from the IV2S results in column (2) of table 4.1.

The milieu of residence shows that households located in urban areas experienced falling poverty of 32.8% when compared to those living in rural areas, since a positive and significant relationship is observed between household expenditure and rural milieu of residence. This is according to the findings from the IV2S estimates in column (2) of table 4.1.

Age is also a very important control variable in that it influences a household head's level of experience, skills, and productivity in the labour market. Looking at the findings from the IV2S results in column (2) of table 4.1, as a household head gets a year older, they experience falling poverty in that household since a positive relationship exists between household expenditure and age of household head.

Education is not left out as it shows a positive and significant relationship between household expenditure and

education of the household head. For the various levels, since there is a positive and significant correlation between household expenditure and primary school headed families, households with household heads who attended primary school saw a 13.3% decrease in poverty compared to households with household heads who had no education. Again, households with secondary school household heads experienced falling poverty of 29.8%, when compared to households with household heads who had no education, since a positive and significant relationship exists between household expenditure and secondary school headed households. Further, households with tertiary school household heads experienced falling poverty of 63.5%, when compared to households with household heads who had no education, since a positive and significant relationship exists between household expenditure and tertiary school headed households.

Looking at the dependency ratio, a negative and significant relationship is observed between household expenditure and dependency ratio. In other words, dependency ratio negatively and significantly affects household poverty. Therefore, an increase in dependency ratio leads to rising household poverty, judging from column (2) of table 4.1. This is the ratio of the inactive labour force, (age ≤ 15 and > 65) to the active labour force ($15 < $ age ≤ 65).

The findings further reveal that households in the Extreme North, North, North West, West, and South West regions experience rising poverty when compared to those in the Centre region, since a negative relationship exists between household expenditure and region of residence of household.

Findings that show a positive relationship between decent work and household poverty levels can thus be easily explained by some theories, for example, in Cameroon. One of the ways that can lead to poverty reduction is the integration of decent work in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Even though they did their study with the population of the US as a case study, considering the different economic characteristics than in Cameroon, ILO advocates for decent work in all countries to turn around the global malice of poverty in all its forms and related ills. Cameroon can also mainstream decent work measures into their poverty reduction strategy length papers and to advance situations that can lead to decent work.

Decent work is defined as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity" according to the ILO. It can be furthered through investing in education and training, support for small business, the promotion of fair wages and working conditions, entrepreneurship, gender equality in the labour market, trade, innovation, and infrastructures. As a general rule, work is decent and gives a fair income, a secured form of employment, and safe working conditions. If, for instance, Cameroon embraces the situations that promote decent work, then it is on the track of fighting against poverty.

This is also attested to by the discovery of Olabiyi, (2022) which revealed that decent work encouragement did a lot in alleviating poverty of the people of South Africa as it improved their socio-economic development.

Several theories also explain these positive and significant relationships between decent work and poverty, such as the capability approach. In this case, the importance of decent work is underlined in so far as it enhances people's capabilities to function well in society and to cap poverty. Precisely, decent work will trigger a rise in the income levels of household heads and hence a poverty reduction.

As represented by human capital theory, the skills, knowledge, and education that an individual receives are considered an asset that determines an individual's level of productivity and earning capability. In this regard, decent work, which is assumed to involve aspects of good pay, security of employment, as well as skills up scaling opportunities, increases an individual's human capital. With increased human capital, one is more likely to increase their earning ability and depower poverty (Becker, 2009; Teixeira, 2010). Therefore, when people in Cameroon get access to good quality work, they are in a position to develop and enhance their skills; hence, higher incomes and reduced levels of poverty.

The quality of work is, according to Job Quality Theory, among the major factors that determine how well-being and economic outcomes for individuals are fashioned out. Decent work entails multiple dimensions of job quality regarding fair remunerations, social protection, and a safe working environment. Studies have found out that good job quality positively relates to enhanced job satisfaction, productivity, and economic welfare of employees

at large. Where there is access to decent work in Cameroon, it increases satisfaction, better performance, and hence higher income levels, which in the end reduce poverty.

Decent work is directly linked to the process of social inclusion, which may be defined as an individual's access to resources to facilitate his integration into society. This is achieved through offers of employment, the possibility of social protection, and spaces for social participation. Decent work with the possibilities of being socially protected could provide dignity to an individual and may, in the long run, include him/her. Policies and practices for socially inclusive settings might create equality, hence bridging gaps between different groups, and improving well-being. Studies have pointed out the positive relationship between social inclusion and poverty reduction. Therefore, with the creation of decent work opportunities, Cameroon will enhance social inclusion—better employment opportunities for persons from poor backgrounds, ultimately increasing their incomes to escape poverty.

A very typical case is that of Cameroon, which can actually depict the features of a dual economy, constituted by the formal and informal sectors. The formal sector shows better working conditions, higher wages, and greater social protection compared with the informal sector. The government can make the workers enjoy their sectors of activity where they can benefit from improved working conditions and higher incomes by encouraging decent work even within the informal sector. According to Fokam (2019), the drive can reduce poverty since people can have more stable and better jobs that help improve their living standards.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The positive coefficient of decent work in the regression shows that an improvement in decent work goes together with an increase in household income in Cameroon. Hence, improving opportunities for decent work can be a way to reduce the level of poverty within a country. Decent work, including factors such as fair wages, job security, and opportunities to build up skills, contributes to human capital. This enhances their chances of earning their way out of poverty. Strengthening labour laws to ensure that workers have access to decent work conditions is crucial. This includes enforcing minimum wage laws, ensuring safe working environments, and providing avenues for grievance redressal. Also, encouraging entrepreneurship through microfinance initiatives can empower individuals to create their own jobs. To align workforce skills with market demands, the government should invest in vocational training programs and partnerships with private sectors. This would help equip individuals with the necessary skills to secure decent jobs that pay well, thereby increasing household income. The government of Cameroon should implement labour policies that specifically address gender disparities in the workforce. This includes ensuring equal pay for equal work, promoting women's access to traditionally male-dominated sectors, and enforcing anti-discrimination laws. By creating a more equitable labour market, women can contribute to household income, thereby improving overall economic stability.

Hence, with access to decent work, individuals in Cameroon are able to acquire and enhance skills, leading to increased earnings and a reduction in levels of poverty. Since decent work has a positive impact on reducing poverty, policymakers should create an enabling environment for decent work. This may include labour laws that protect workers' rights, fair wages promotion, and social protection. Any government can significantly contribute to poverty alleviation and improved food security outcomes among a host of other socio-economic targets in Cameroon by focusing on policies that put decent work opportunities at the forefront

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