PSYC 444
PSYCHOLOGY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Session 1 – Psychology and Poverty Alleviation-Part 2

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At the end of the session, the student will be able to

• Discuss the psychological interventions needed to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment in the country.

• Initiate ideas or develop models to create own jobs or to be self-employed.
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Psychological Approaches to Poverty Reduction
Reading List


Topic One

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO POVERTY REDUCTION
There is a lot of psychology in the experience of poverty and thus any action to reduce it must also involve psychology. For instance in a global study that examined poor persons’ views about poverty, one said:

“Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being independent on them, and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help”  –Lavita 1998.
Poverty reduction has traditionally been within the domain of economics, but psychology has not featured prominently in addressing this crucial global issue. In marking the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17th October, 2012, the American Psychological Association issued a statement.
In the statement, they indicated

• “While we do not deny the importance of economic policies and measures, the purpose of this statement is to advocate that governments, UN agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, address psychosocial factors as significant, complementary dimensions associated with poverty and its alleviation” (APA, 2012, p. 1)
They identified the following psychological markers that should be considered in alleviating poverty:

- The importance of psychosocial empowerment,
- Improving mental health, and
- Psychosocial well-being to the achievement of sustainable poverty reduction.
Psychosocial empowerment

• Ghana’s graduate unemployment is standing at about 80%. According to a ISSER report issued in 2014, tertiary institutions in the country churn out about 250,000 graduates each year, but only less than 5% get jobs. Psychological research shows that:

• Being engaged in decent work in itself promotes psychosocial empowerment by developing a sense of ownership, optimism, and efficacy/confidence in one’s ability to be effective in dealing with challenges.
In this regard psychologists can be involved in:

- Training in entrepreneurship and income generating activities.
- Life skills development training.
- Promoting social equality (through advocacy).
- Promote engagement in decision-making and capacity building.
- Encourage volunteerism among the youth.
Mental health and social protection

- The psychological and social science literature increasingly confirms that poor mental health is both a **cause** and a **consequence** of poverty, which often includes:
  - Conditions of isolation,
  - Lack of education and economic opportunities and resources,
  - Inadequate access to health and mental health care and other social services, especially in rural areas.
These multiple stressors interact to cause

• Anxiety and depression which have negative impacts on the ability of individuals to cope, resulting in the persistence of poverty.

• In this regard, psychologists can:

• Deliver mental health services in rural and urban areas where poverty is biting most in the country.

• Trained faith-based institutions with skills and competencies needed to help those with mental health issues.
• Institute training programs to help employees from both private and public institutions on mental health issues.

• Introduce mental health in the curricula of our educational institutions, especially at the basic schools.

• Advise government to institute more social protection programs to assist the vulnerable.
Psychosocial well-being

• The WHO (as at 2011) still defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

• Much research in the field of psychological and related sciences especially that of Positive Psychology, Clinical and Counseling Psychology, Social Psychology and Industrial/Organizational Psychology, has established the relationship between work and wellbeing.
• Psychologists should be ready to work with entire communities about projects that have relevance with community and overall life development. These projects can range from improving educational enrolment, engagement in agriculture productivity, etc.
Sample Questions

1. How can psychology contribute to reducing the unemployment challenge in the country?
2. Discuss the psychological approaches for reducing poverty in our communities.