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İÇİNDEKİLER

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"Bu kitapta yer alan bölümlerde kullanılan kaynakların, görüşlerin, bulguların, sonuçların, tablo, şekil, resim ve her türlü içeriğin sorumluluğu yazar veya yazarlarına ait olup ulusal ve uluslararası telif haklarına konu olabilecek mali ve hukuki sorumluluk da yazarlara aittir."

MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND GENDER ECONOMIC NORMS IN EAST AFRICA: DOES POVERTY HARDEN OR ERODE ATTITUDES ON WOMEN'S LAND AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS?

Mahat Maalim IBRAHIM[1]

Salim SAIDY[2]

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender economic inequality in sub-Saharan Africa is simultaneously a structural and a normative phenomenon. Its structural dimensions, comprising wage differentials, occupational segregation, differential land titling, and unequal access to credit, are well documented (Duflo, 2012; World Bank, 2020). Its normative dimension, the system of beliefs that assigns differential economic entitlements to men and women and thereby legitimizes structural inequality, is less analytically tractable but equally consequential. Normative frameworks that endorse male priority in employment or deny women's equal right to land do not merely reflect economic inequality; they actively reproduce it by shaping hiring decisions, inheritance practices, intra-household resource allocation, and the political viability of redistributive reform (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). Understanding what generates, sustains, and potentially erodes

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these frameworks is therefore a question of both scientific and developmental urgency.

Sub-Saharan Africa presents a context in which the normative reproduction of gender economic inequality intersects with acute material deprivation. Across the region, majority of citizens report frequently going without basic necessities such as food, water, medical care, and cash income (Mattes & Patel, 2022). Deprivation of this magnitude is not normatively neutral; rather, material scarcity reshapes the evaluative standards through which individuals assess entitlement, fairness, and distributive justice (Elster, 1983; Mattes & Patel, 2022; Merton, 1958; Nussbaum, 2000). In a context of resource scarcity, where economic survival depends on household labor coordination and access to productive assets, attitudes toward gender-based economic allocation may shift in ways that are functionally adaptive but normatively regressive.

Whether poverty hardens or erodes gender economic egalitarianism, and whether that effect operates differently for men and women, are empirical questions that the existing literature has not satisfactorily answered. Men and women experiencing equivalent material deprivation may arrive at diametrically opposed normative conclusions: men, whose relative economic position within the household is threatened by poverty, may harden patriarchal attitudes as a form of status defense; women, whose subordination is made more acute by poverty, may develop more egalitarian normative positions as a form of experiential critique. This divergence, theorized through the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999) and the social identity literature on threat-response (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), has not been empirically identified through interaction-based econometric modeling in the East African context.

This paper does so, deploying Afrobarometer Round 9 data from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda with ordered logit estimation and Lived Poverty Index-by-gender interaction terms. The study makes two contributions. First, it provides the econometric identification of the gender-conditioned poverty effect on gender economic attitudes in East Africa, distinguishing the separate normative trajectories of men and women under material stress. Second, it documents large country-level heterogeneity in gender economic attitudes, advancing the institutionalist argument that normative frameworks are not solely the product of individual-level characteristics but are also shaped by national legal architectures, customary law systems, and political economic structures.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities Approach, developed by Sen (1999) and elaborated by Nussbaum (2000), holds that human flourishing is constituted by the substantive freedoms, or capabilities, that individuals are able to exercise rather than by their formal entitlements or income levels alone. Central to this framework is the recognition that persistent deprivation constrains individuals' opportunities to achieve valued functionings and participate fully in economic and social life. Applied to gender relations, the approach emphasizes that women's exclusion from land ownership, wage employment, and educational opportunity represents a deprivation of fundamental capabilities rather than merely a shortage of resources. This framework predicts that material deprivation, by narrowing the range of opportunities available to individuals, shapes how economic rights and entitlements are evaluated. At the same time, since women often experience deprivation through gender-specific constraints,

poverty may heighten awareness of unequal opportunities and generate stronger support for economic equality than among men.

2.2. Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from membership in social groups, and that threats to group status motivate strategies of identity protection and differentiation. This framework predicts that material deprivation, which threatens the provider identity of men in patriarchal cultural contexts, will motivate a reaffirmation of gender-differentiated economic entitlements as a status-protective response. Men experiencing poverty are predicted to have hardened attitudes toward male job priority, not because they rationally calculate that such attitudes serve their interests, but because egalitarian attitudes constitute a threat to the social identity through which they maintain self-esteem and social standing in spheres where material success is the primary marker of masculine status (Connell, 1995). This mechanism operates through identity threat rather than normalization, and it predicts hardening rather than accommodation.

2.3. Adaptive Preferences

The Adaptive Preferences perspective, introduced by Elster (1983), holds that individuals systematically revise their preferences downward in response to structural constraints, internalizing the unavailability of certain options as their own non-desire. This produces what Elster (1983) characterized as the sour-grapes mechanism: the fox who cannot reach the grapes decides they were sour. Regarding gender economic norms, women in highly deprived, patriarchal societies may suppress egalitarian preferences not because they have reasoned their way to acceptance of inequality but because chronic exposure to that inequality has eroded the evaluative standpoint from which it

could be criticized. The key empirical implication, however, is that the intensity of this preference adaptation is a function of deprivation severity: where deprivation is most acute, the distance between normative aspiration and lived reality is greatest, and the psychological pressure toward preference revision is strongest. At the extreme, however, acute deprivation may produce the opposite effect: a re-politicization of gender inequality as its material consequences become impossible to ignore (Duflo, 2012; Sen, 1999).

2.4. Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) predicts that the political and attitudinal consequences of deprivation are not functions of absolute material conditions but of the gap between what individuals believe they are entitled to and what their circumstances permit them to achieve. In our case, this framework offers a gendered prediction: men whose material position has deteriorated relative to their expectations of male economic provision will experience a relative deprivation of status that activates resentment of egalitarian norms perceived as threatening their residual claims to economic priority. Women, whose baseline expectations of economic entitlement have historically been suppressed, experience deprivation differently: the same material deterioration may activate awareness of gender-specific injustice, generating normative claims rather than defensiveness. Runciman's (1966) distinction between egoistic and fraternalistic deprivation is pertinent here. Men experience poverty as egoistic deprivation of individual status, while women may experience it as fraternalistic deprivation of a group-level injustice, producing divergent normative responses from identical material conditions.

3. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

3.1. Gender Economic Attitudes in Africa

The empirical literature on gender economic attitudes in Africa has documented persistent patriarchal normativity alongside significant cross-national and individual-level variation. Jakiela & Ozier (2016), using experimental methods in Kenya, demonstrate that women strategically conceal economic gains from male household members, revealing the behavioral consequences of normative gender hierarchies in resource allocation. Hallward-Driemeier et al. (2013), examining legal reforms across Africa, find that formal legal equality in property rights has limited impact on actual gender gaps in land ownership, implicating normative resistance rather than legal architecture as the binding constraint. Duflo (2012), in a review of gender inequality and development, concludes that improving women's economic status does not automatically translate into attitudinal egalitarianism as cultural and normative frameworks exhibit substantial inertia.

Afrobarometer-based research has documented both the prevalence and the correlations of gender attitude disparities across sub-Saharan Africa. Gyimah-Boadi and Asunka (2021) report that support for men's preferential access to employment remains majority-endorsed across much of West and East Africa, while attitudes toward women's land rights are comparatively more egalitarian, which portrays an asymmetry between employment and property domains. Bauer and Burnet (2013), examining Rwanda's post-conflict gender normative shift, demonstrate that institutional interventions, specifically legislative quotas and land registration campaigns, can accelerate attitudinal change, but that these effects are moderated by individual-level socioeconomic positioning.

3.2. Poverty, Gender, and Normative Change

Demographic and Health Survey analysis across sub-Saharan Africa consistently identify poverty as a predictor of gender-traditionalist attitudes (Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Peterman et al., 2011). However, these analyses treat poverty as a main effect rather than examining its interaction with the respondent's gender. Demographic studies find that men in the lowest wealth quintiles are more likely to endorse male economic priority than those in higher quintiles, while women show a more complex and non-linear pattern (Ellsberg et al., 2015). Stephenson et al. (2008) report from Ethiopia that female poverty is associated with lower normative demands for economic autonomy.

The empirical evidence indicates that higher educational attainment is the most robustly egalitarian predictor of gender norm endorsement across multiple African contexts (Behrman, 2015; Jayachandran, 2014; Kabeer, 2005). Duflo (2012) argues that education operates through two channels: direct exposure to egalitarian normative frameworks and indirect effects through economic empowerment and labor market integration. Also, country-level variation in gender attitudes has been linked to differences in customary law systems (Platteau, 2000), religious composition (Seguino, 2011), and state gender-responsive institutional capacity (Tripp, 2010), all of which operate at the institutional level above individual socioeconomic characteristics. Drawing on the theoretical and empirical literature, the study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Higher lived poverty increases support for men's job priority. The effect is expected to be strongest among men.

H2: The positive effect of lived poverty on men's job priority is weaker among women than men.

H3: Higher lived poverty reduces support for women's equal land rights. This effect is expected to vary by gender.

H4: Education is expected to be the strongest predictor of egalitarian gender attitudes across both outcomes.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data

This study utilizes the Afrobarometer Round 9 survey data collected between October 2021 and June 2023 (Afrobarometer, 2023). The sample is restricted to four East African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, yielding 9,600 respondents (2,400 per country), reduced to N = 8,889 after listwise deletion.

Two outcome variables are used. Men's job priority (MJOB) measures agreement that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce, on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree, patriarchal endorsement). Women's land rights (WLAND) measures the agreement that women have equal rights to own land, on the same scale, where higher values indicate egalitarianism. The key predictors are the Lived Poverty Index (a continuous composite of five deprivation items ranging from 0 to 4), a female gender dummy, and their interaction. Fourteen individual-level controls and country fixed effects with Ethiopia as the reference category are included throughout. Table 1 contains detailed variable descriptions.

Table 1. Variable Descriptions

Variable	Abbreviation	Description	Scale
Men job priority (MJOB)	MJOB	Agreement that men have more right to job when scarce	1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree
Women land rights (WLAND)	WLAND	Agreement that women have equal right to land	1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree
Lived Poverty Index	LPI	Average frequency of going without five basic necessities	0=Never; 4=Always
LPI x Female	LPI x FEM	Interaction: lived poverty and female gender	Continuous
Female	FEM	Dummy: respondent is female	0=Male; 1=Female
Age	AGE	Respondent age in years	18-120 (continuous)
Urban residence	URB	Dummy: respondent lives in urban area	0=Rural/peri-urban; 1=Urban
Education level	EDUC	Highest education level completed	0=None; 3=Post-secondary
National economic conditions	NECON	Assessment of current national economic conditions	1=Very bad; 5=Very good
Personal living conditions	LCON	Assessment of own living conditions	1=Very bad; 5=Very good
Civil servant corruption	CORR	Perceived proportion of civil servants who are corrupt	0=None; 3=All of them
COVID-19 income loss	COVID	Dummy: household lost income due to	0=No; 1=Yes
Economic discrimination	DISCRIM	Frequency of unfair treatment by the government on economic grounds	0=Never; 3=Always
Mobile phone ownership	MOBILE	Dummy: respondent owns a mobile phone	0=No; 1=Yes
Bank account ownership	BANK	Dummy: respondent owns a bank account	0=No; 1=Yes
Employment status	EMP	Employment status: 0=inactive; 1=unemployed seeking; 2=part-time; 3=full-time	0-3 ordinal
Kenya	KEN	Country dummy: Kenya (reference: Ethiopia)	0=No; 1=Yes
Tanzania	TZA	Country dummy: Tanzania (reference: Ethiopia)	0=No; 1=Yes
Uganda	UGA	Country dummy: Uganda (reference: Ethiopia)	0=No; 1=Yes

Source: Afrobarometer Round 9 (2021–2023). N = 9,600 (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda).

4.2. Methodology

Both outcomes are measured on five-point ordered Likert scales whose categories carry a natural ranking but cannot be assumed to be equidistant. Ordinary least squares estimation is therefore inconsistent in this setting (Long, 1997; McCullagh, 1980). Therefore, the study employs the ordered logit model, derived from a latent continuous propensity Y_i^* linked to the observed ordinal response through a threshold mechanism (Greene & Hensher, 2010). The cumulative probability that individual i falls in category k or below is:

$$P(Y_i \leq k) = F(\alpha_k - \beta_1 \mathrm{LPI}_i - \beta_2 \mathrm{FEM}_i - \delta \cdot \mathrm{LPI}_i \cdot \mathrm{FEM}_i - \beta_3' \mathrm{X}_i - \gamma_c C_i) \quad (1)$$

where α_k are the ordered threshold parameters; LPI_i is the Lived Poverty Index; FEM_i is the female dummy; X_i is the vector of individual-level controls; C_i denotes country fixed effects; and $F(\cdot)$ is the logistic cumulative distribution function. The underlying latent variable equation is:

$$Y_i^* = \beta_1 \mathrm{LPI}_i + \beta_2 \mathrm{FEM}_i + \delta \cdot \mathrm{LPI}_i \cdot \mathrm{FEM}_i + \beta_3'^{\mathrm{X}_i} + \gamma_c C_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where β_1 captures the poverty effect for male respondents (the reference group), δ is the interaction parameter identifying the differential poverty effect for female relative to male respondents, and ε_i is logistically distributed. The observed ordinal outcome Y_i is linked to the latent propensity Y_i^* through the threshold rule:

$Y_i = k$ if and only if $\alpha_{k-1} < Y_i^* \leq \alpha_k$ $(k = 1,2,3,4,5)$ with $\alpha_0 = -\infty$ and $\alpha_5 = +\infty$ by convention, yielding four estimated thresholds per model. The logistic link function is:

$$F(z) = \frac{e^z}{1 + e^z} \quad (3)$$

The fully expanded specification with all controls is:

$$Y_i^* = \beta_1 \mathrm{LPI}_i + \beta_2 \mathrm{FEM}_i + \delta \cdot \mathrm{LPI}_i \cdot \mathrm{FEM}_i + \beta_3 \mathrm{AGE}_i + \beta_4 \mathrm{EDUC}_i + \beta_5 \mathrm{URB}_i + \theta' \mathrm{Z}_i + \gamma_c C_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where Z_i contains: national economic conditions (NECON), personal living conditions (LCON), civil servant corruption (CORR), COVID-19 income loss (COVID), economic discrimination (DISCRIM), mobile phone ownership (MOBILE), bank account ownership (BANK), and employment status (EMP). Model 3 uses MJOB as the outcome, while Model 4 uses WLAND. All parameters are estimated by maximum likelihood. The log-likelihood function is:

$$\ell(\alpha, \beta) = \sum_i \sum_k 1\,(Y_i = k) \cdot \ln[F(\alpha_k - \mathrm{X}_i'\beta) - F(\alpha_{k-1} - \mathrm{X}_i'\beta)] \quad (5)$$

where $1(\cdot)$ is the indicator function. Optimization uses the BFGS quasi-Newton algorithm. The net poverty effect for female respondents is:

$$\frac{\partial Y_i^*}{\partial \mathrm{LPI}_i}\Big|_{\mathrm{FEM}=1} = \beta_1 + \delta \quad (6)$$

A negative δ in Model 3, poverty hardens patriarchal attitudes less among women; a positive δ in Model 4 indicates that poverty suppresses land rights egalitarianism less, or partially activates it, among women.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and discusses the main findings.

Table 2. Ordered Logit Estimates: Lived Poverty, Gender, and Economic Attitude Norms

Variable	Model 1 Men Job Priority (MJOB)	p	Model 2 Women Land Rights (WLAND)	p
Panel A: Key predictors				
Lived Poverty Index (LPI)	0.112*** (0.034)	<0.001	-0.091*** (0.034)	0.008
LPI × Female	-0.155*** (0.046)	<0.001	0.089* (0.048)	0.063
Female (ref: male)	-0.543*** (0.077)	<0.001	0.599*** (0.080)	<0.001
Panel B: Controls				
Age	-0.007*** (0.001)	<0.001	0.005*** (0.001)	0.001
Urban residence	-0.006 (0.044)	0.892	0.002 (0.046)	0.965
Education level	-0.304*** (0.027)	<0.001	0.128*** (0.028)	<0.001
National economic conditions	0.014 (0.019)	0.462	-0.017 (0.020)	0.401
Personal living conditions	-0.011 (0.020)	0.586	0.006 (0.021)	0.773
Civil servant corruption	0.036 (0.026)	0.167	-0.022 (0.027)	0.416
COVID-19 income loss	0.022 (0.044)	0.614	-0.035 (0.045)	0.441
Economic discrimination	-0.018 (0.022)	0.416	0.017 (0.022)	0.441
Mobile phone ownership	0.043 (0.052)	0.408	-0.094* (0.054)	0.080
Bank account ownership	-0.037 (0.049)	0.449	0.018 (0.051)	0.724
Employment status	-0.003 (0.017)	0.860	0.072*** (0.018)	<0.001
Panel C: Country fixed effects (reference: Ethiopia)				
Kenya	-0.204*** (0.062)	0.001	-0.267*** (0.063)	<0.001
Tanzania	0.045 (0.063)	0.476	0.395*** (0.067)	<0.001
Uganda	0.325*** (0.060)	<0.001	-0.377*** (0.062)	<0.001
Observations	8,889		8,873	
Log-likelihood	-11,717.5		-10,768.7	
AIC	23,477.1		21,579.4	

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds. Standard errors in parentheses. p-values are two-tailed. *** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.10.

5.1. Lived Poverty and Patriarchal Attitude Activation

The LPI main effect in Model 1 is positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.112$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H1: poverty hardens patriarchal job-priority attitudes among men. The mechanism is coherently explained by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), in contexts where masculine identity is constituted by the provider role, material deprivation triggers a reaffirmation of male economic entitlement as a status-protective response rather than a rational calculation. The LPI-by-female interaction is large, negative, and equally significant ($\delta = -0.155$, $p < 0.001$), yielding a net poverty effect for women of -0.043, which reverses direction entirely. H2 is strongly confirmed. This divergence is theoretically consequential: men and women experiencing identical material deprivation arrive at diametrically opposed normative positions, consistent with Runciman's (1966) distinction between egoistic deprivation, which activates status defense among men, and fraternalistic deprivation, which activates egalitarian claims among women experiencing gendered poverty.

5.2. Poverty and Women's Land Rights

In Model 2, the LPI main effect is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.091$, $p < 0.01$), confirming the main effect of H3: poverty erodes support for women's land rights among men, consistent with Nussbaum's (2000) adaptive preferences prediction that deprivation contracts the evaluative standpoint from which equality claims are advanced. The LPI-by-female interaction is positive and marginally significant (0.089, $p < 0.10$), providing partial support for H3's moderation component: women's deprivation partially counteracts this adaptive suppression, suggesting that acute material stress can re-politicize land rights as a gender-specific injustice rather than accommodate its absence. Employment status is positive and significant (0.072,

$p < 0.001$): higher labor market participation strengthens land rights egalitarianism, net of poverty and all controls.

5.3. Education, Controls, and Country Fixed Effects

Education exhibits the largest coefficient magnitude among the individual-level predictors across both models (-0.304 in Model 1; 0.128 in Model 2, both $p < 0.001$), confirming H4. Among the individual-level covariates, education exhibits the largest coefficient magnitude and the most consistent association with egalitarian gender attitudes across both outcome dimensions. This is consistent with Kabeer's (2005) argument that education expands relational capabilities rather than merely transmitting information. The baseline gender gap is large and net of all covariates: female respondents are more egalitarian on job priority (-0.543, $p < 0.001$) and more supportive of land rights (0.599, $p < 0.001$). Age shows divergent effects (-0.007 on MJOB; 0.005 on WLAND, both significant), indicating generational normative evolution in opposite directions across the two domains. Mobile phone ownership marginally reduces land rights support (-0.094, $p < 0.10$), a finding that warrants further investigation.

Country fixed effects reveal considerable institutional heterogeneity that individual-level characteristics cannot explain. Uganda is the most gender-conservative context in the sample, exhibiting significantly more patriarchal job-priority attitudes (0.325, $p < 0.001$) and significantly lower land rights support (-0.377, $p < 0.001$) than Ethiopia, reflecting the persistence of clan-based customary tenure arrangements that the 1998 Land Act formally challenged but whose implementation remains contested (Tripp, 2010). Tanzania presents a theoretically instructive asymmetry. The country does not differ significantly from Ethiopia on job priority (0.045, $p = 0.476$) but is more egalitarian on land rights (0.395, $p < 0.001$), mapping directly onto the

domain-specific reach of its 1999 Land Act and Village Land Act. Kenya exhibits a mixed pattern relative to Ethiopia. It is significantly more egalitarian regarding men's job priority (-0.204, $p < 0.001$) but significantly less supportive of women's equal land rights (-0.267, $p < 0.001$). That these differences survive comprehensive individual-level controls confirms that national legal architectures and customary normative frameworks operate as independent determinants of gender economic attitudes, above and beyond the socioeconomic composition of the population.

6. CONCLUSION

Material deprivation and gender intersect in ways that conventional analyses obscure. This study shows that poverty does not generate uniform normative responses. It hardens patriarchal attitudes among men while nudging women toward egalitarianism, producing divergent normative paths from identical material conditions. Education emerges as the strongest associate of egalitarian gender attitudes attitudinal change, operating with a magnitude that exceeds all other individual-level predictors across both employment and land rights dimensions. Country fixed effects confirm that institutional landscape, comprising customary tenure systems, legislative reform efforts, and state capacity, shape gender economic norms independently of individual socioeconomic composition. These findings call for policies that simultaneously target the normative rigidity that poverty reinforces among men, accelerate female educational attainment in Uganda and Ethiopia, where gender conservatism is most obvious. Therefore, domain-specific legislative strategies should be pursued rather than regional harmonization, given that egalitarianism in land rights and employment equality responds to structurally different institutional conditions.

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