

Module 10: Poverty and Social Inequalities

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Poverty and social inequalities are contemporary issues that have affected millions and millions of people across the world. Poverty destroys lives by denying people access to their basic needs like food, shelter, and health services. Social inequalities, on the other hand, set the conditions for the structural limitation and exclusion of peoples to opportunities and resources based on their identity, orientation, or gender, among other things. Both poverty and social inequalities are not just a hindrance to one's survival and growth, they are—most importantly—also an impediment to our collective development as a nation.

In this module, both teachers and students are invited to understand how this two-pronged problem has evolved into a systemic inhumane reality that has reduced millions people to its most basic condition—mere biological existence that is devoid of dignity, future, and meaning. These systemic deprivations and often institutionalized limitations of wherewithal, opportunities, and resources among the population have resulted in widespread malnutrition, substandard shelter, health deterioration, miseducation, social exclusion, and marginalization, among others. Sadly, they have become part of our modern societies, legitimized in our weak institutions and practices, incorporated and entrenched in the historical legacies of our communities, and normalized in our contemporary biases and prejudices as a nation.

The topics here will help the learners discover how poverty and social inequalities emerge and continue to manifest, shape and influence our humanity and our future. The discussions that will be covered here are meant not just to educate but also to draw out learnings from experiences and realizations that can allow them to respond and contribute to the ongoing discussions and efforts to raise the awareness of our public and deepen our resolve to address widespread poverty and social inequalities in our midst.

| Most Essential Learning Competencies

- Examine the concept, characteristics, and forms of stratification systems using sociological perspectives.

| Content Standards

By the end of this module, learners are expected to demonstrate an understanding of:

| Performance Standards

By the end of this module, learners are expected to:

- Analyze aspects of social organization;

- Social stratification as the ranking of individuals according to wealth, power, and prestige;
- Social and political inequalities as features of societies and the global community
- Concepts and definitions that can help us make sense of poverty and social inequalities;
- Causes and drivers of poverty and social inequalities; and
- Roles of stakeholders on poverty and social inequalities.
- Identify one's role in social groups and institutions;
- Recognize other forms of economic transaction such as sharing, gift exchange, and redistribution in his/her own society
- Understand the importance of poverty and social inequalities in the Philippine context; and
- Demonstrate one's role in alleviating poverty and ending social inequalities in our society.

Lesson 1: What is Poverty?

What does poverty mean? What makes one poor? Who are the poor people in our society? Why should we care about poverty? These are just some of the questions that come to mind when we are asked about the topic of poverty. At present, it has become so difficult to answer these questions knowing that poverty has become a multidimensional and complex social phenomenon.

| Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, the student is expected to be able to:

- Determine the definition, forms and outcomes of poverty; and
- Recognize various ways poverty is determined these days.

| Key Concepts

- Poverty - lack in capability and control to meet basic needs and services
- Relative poverty - state of poverty in which an individual is unable to meet the local standards of living.
- Absolute poverty - condition wherein people are totally unable to meet basic needs and services.
- Subjective poverty - condition of lack based on individual realities.
- Needs - formed due to a lack of something crucial to a person.
- Necessity - something that improves one's condition, but is also something one can live without.
- Income - basic standard to know if one is able to meet their needs and necessities.
- Consumption - covers the amount of things an individual can pay or purchase.
- Poverty line - a measure of poverty that uses the average price of commodities needed for one's survival as the basis.

| Self-evaluation Form (Part 1)

Answer the following questions.

What comes to your mind whenever you see a beggar asking for alms in public spaces? How do you usually respond?

| Poverty

Poverty, in its most basic sense, is generally understood as the ‘deprivation in well-being’ (Houghton and Khandker 2009). This understanding assumes that our well-being is inherently tied up to our lack of control of the things that allow us to meet our needs. Therefore, for most of us, poverty is the absence of this relative control over resources to make ends meet. The measure of poverty, in other words, is done by comparing one’s access to and control of these resources, such as income and possessions.

Amartya Sen (born in 1933) is a highly celebrated economist who published works that tackle the subject matter of poverty in the contemporary times. In his most celebrated work, *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen presented the idea of freedom as a multifaceted phenomenon that does not only connote one’s ability to enjoy civil liberties and rights. Freedom also includes social opportunities, transparency, protection, and economic capabilities. This concept of freedom therefore assumes a holistic understanding of the development vis-à-vis poverty—which connotes what makes as human: biological, social, economic, and political.

Social scientists and experts nowadays have devised ways to understand poverty depending on how one sees it:

- a.) **Relative poverty** – is understood as a condition of living that allows people to access their basic needs. However, their earnings cannot meet the average level of standard living in their locality. This means that people who live in relative poverty can still live normally in their society, but cannot enjoy comforts such as having their own car to travel from one place to another;
- b.) **Absolute poverty** – is a kind of poverty that people experience where they cannot meet the necessities for them to live: food, water, shelter, and health services. People under this category unfortunately are extremely vulnerable to hunger, undernutrition, disaster, and pandemic outbreaks.
- c.) **Subjective poverty** – uses a different understanding of poverty where one’s perceptions and expectations are taken into account in gauging one’s place in the society. Here, the people are really

expected to be reflective of their situation; allowing them to define and make sense of their condition vis-à-vis their access to necessities and a comfortable life.

Measuring poverty is done in various ways. At the household level, the most popular one is by using *income* as the base in knowing one's ability to access one's needs and other necessities. Income is best understood as the total amount that resulted from one's consumption and one's assets (Haig 1921; Simons 1938; Haughton and Khandker 2009). The problem with this measurement is that it is too simplistic and that it tends to disregard other factors that happen in between consumption and assets that lead to income.

Looking at *consumption*, this measurement, in fact, can already reveal one's access to life necessities or basic needs. It is understood here that consumption is supposed to complement one's ability to purchase or pay (Haughton and Khandker 2009). However, just like income, consumption can also be problematic because it is difficult to measure given that there are goods and services that sometimes are not necessarily reflected in one's spending.

At present, measuring the *poverty line*, or the use of the average price of commodities needed for one's survival as the basis to know who is poor or not, is currently used in many societies. In this case, people whose meagre resources or income cannot reach the poverty line are considered to be living in poverty (Giddens 2006). Again, just like the previous attempts to measure poverty, this measurement falls short in taking into account the differences of cost of living in areas in a society: urban versus rural, or in cities versus towns.

At the aggregate level, poverty is measured by using indices that reflect a country's average income such as *Gross Domestic Product* (GDP). For most of us, this measure is used to know how a particular country is doing in terms of the total value of all the goods, services, and transactions that have been produced minus the costs that produced them within a specific period of time. The problem of this measurement, though, is that it does not cover other sources of income and consumptions within a country.

These days, many institutions and scholars are using more holistic and multidimensional ways of measuring poverty that take into account other factors and aspects that perfectly capture the condition of poverty. One of these measures is the *Human Development Index* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that highlights human capabilities as the main criteria of measuring development in a country. It is understood as the average measure of these three: one's life expectancy from birth, years of education, and gross national income per capita (GNI).

It is important to know what poverty is and how it can be measured because this issue involves some of the most vulnerable individuals, households, people, and sectors in our society. In times of trouble, the poor people are the first ones who experience the brunt of natural calamities, famine, wars, crises, and pandemic outbreaks. They are also the first ones who are abused and exploited by other people for profit and other illicit acts such as human trafficking, selling of organs, and other crimes.

Worse of all, poverty is aggravated by misgovernance, corruption, and abuse of power from the government. The impoverished population first feel the impact of substandard public services and goods—leading to their worsening situation, making things harder for them to survive.

In the Philippines, poverty incidence has ranged from 20.5 percent to 22.6 percent in recent years according to the World Bank (2020). Data on subjective poverty reveals a greater percentage, as 48 percent of Filipinos feel poor, 29 percent feel borderline poor, and 23 percent feel not poor in the second quarter of 2021. The largest

population of self-rated poor are found in Visayas with the number at 70 percent while Luzon and Mindanao having 38 percent and 51 percent respectively (Social Weather Stations, 2021).

Table 1.1
Annual Per Capita Poverty Thresholds and Poverty Incidence among Families by Region: 2015 vs 2018.

Region	Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold (in pesos)		Poverty Incidence among Families (%)		Coefficient of Variation	
	2015 ^u	2018 ^u	2015 ^u	2018 ^u	2015 ^u	2018 ^u
PHILIPPINES*	22,747	25,813	18.0	12.1	2.1	1.4
NCR*	25,188	28,682	2.8	1.4	10.7	10.4
CAR*	22,985	24,907	17.1	8.6	11.0	5.3
Region I*	22,762	27,055	14.0	7.0	8.4	9.6
Region II	22,622	25,099	13.1	12.5	7.9	6.4
Region III*	22,867	26,954	8.3	5.2	9.7	6.4
Region IV-A*	25,642	27,928	9.2	5.1	8.6	7.3
MIMAROPA*	20,369	23,315	18.0	10.5	11.0	6.5
Region V*	22,503	24,461	31.0	20.0	5.4	4.0
Region VI*	21,921	24,494	18.5	11.9	7.6	6.2
Region VII*	22,644	25,745	24.9	13.4	5.8	6.1
Region VIII*	22,398	24,987	33.0	23.9	6.2	3.6
Region IX*	22,557	25,650	29.7	25.4	7.0	4.3
Region X*	23,020	24,835	32.3	17.3	6.3	3.8
Region XI*	23,146	25,953	18.0	13.9	8.0	5.1
Region XII*	21,341	25,023	31.2	22.4	7.0	4.8
Caraga*	22,788	25,375	31.1	24.1	5.8	3.5
ARMM	22,650	27,715	53.8	54.2	5.2	2.6

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority
 u=updated; The 2018 estimates were updated following the availability of the final 2018 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), which now includes the new urban-rural classification based on the results of the 2015 Census of Population (POPCEN 2015), in addition to other changes that were made. To ensure consistency, the 2015 estimates were also updated using 2015 FIES with the new urban-rural classification from the POPCEN 2015.
 * Based on t-test at 90% level of significance, the observed change from 2015 to 2018 is significant.

[2018 Official Poverty Statistics](#)

Synchronous Activities

Activity: Did You Get It?

Instructions. The teacher should prepare an incentive, for example candies, for the class, and distribute these unevenly to students and/or not include some or few students in class.

Step 1. Pause for a moment and ask these questions to the students:

- Who has received the items? Who has not?
- What do they feel about what they have received and/or not received in relation to other students?

Step 2. The teacher should be able to articulate the points about ‘deprivation’ and the forms of poverty.
Step 3. In preparation for the next topic, the teacher should also get the input from the students about what they have noticed about the distribution of the candies in class. Is it done according to looks? Academic standing? Gender? Belief? Background?

| Asynchronous Activities

Activity: Jam-board activity

Instructions. The teacher shares the jam board to the students.

Students may post their own understanding of poverty using this guide:

- In which aspects do you think you are lacking, or what qualities do you have that make you perceive that you are in poverty?
- Explain why you think people experience poverty. Why does this lack meet the standards of poverty?

| Self-paced Learning (Optional Activities)

Activity: Video

Instructions. Watch this video: Can Extreme Poverty ever be eradicated?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEB4tvIRTXo>

Reflect on the following questions:

- Do you think poverty is something that we can solve?
- Can you suggest ways on how we can eliminate poverty?

Lesson 2: What are social inequalities?

| Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, the student is expected to be able to:

- Understand what ‘social inequalities’ means in society today;
- Know where we can observe social inequalities; and
- Become more aware of the manifestations they can take in this modern period, or how they appear these days.

| Key Concepts

- Social inequality - condition of unequal access to needed resources, services, and standing in society.
- Ethnic inequality - unequal distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities brought about by ethnic divides
- Slavery - condition when an individual is considered as the property of another
- Gender - social construct on one's behavior and performance in society.
- Class inequality - condition of unequal access based on income, and their access to wealth and means of production.
- Caste - a social group assigned to a person from birth.

| Social Inequalities

Social Inequalities, as understood recently, are the “condition where people have unequal access to valued resources, services, and positions in the society” (Kerbo, 2003, p.11 cited by Blackburn, 2008, p.251). In this sense, as compared to poverty, this unequal access pertains to an institutionalized limitation that conditions a person's access to what he or she needs or values in the society. Nowadays, these inequalities are determined by existing social stratifications that are based on attributes and backgrounds such as class, background, gender, and ethnicity.

Unlike poverty, social inequalities use bases that are not justified by reason or nature (Blackburn, 2008). Throughout the centuries, societies have formulated restrictions that helped them order and structure their social relations that eventually favor and privilege few at the expense of the many. For instance, 'ethnic inequality' uses one's ethnic background as the basis of giving preference or privilege. In some societies, people who belong to ethnic backgrounds such as Chinese, Indians, among others, are discriminated against for their culture, religion, practices, and clothing. These people experience both overt and subtle limitations for their development and growth in their workplaces, schools, and communities by discriminating against them to access good positions, quality education, and participate in communal activities, among other things.

Slavery is another form of social inequality. Slavery has been an institution throughout human history. There are a number of factors which makes people vulnerable to slavery, which include war, local conflict and ethnic hostilities. Many of those forced into slavery were prisoners-of-war, criminals and debtors. In the 17th to 19th centuries, slaves from Africa were frequently imported to American colonies.

Slaves were treated unequally with the general population and thus not given the same rights as free men. As a consequence, their ethnicity was often mistreated and discriminated against. This was made worse by social darwinism or the perceived superiority of Europeans over other “races,” and racial segregation.

The legacy of discrimination still pervades some societies to this day. Many Black communities in former European colonies, e.g., United States, South Africa, Brazil, have been neglected or undersupported by local

and national governments. These communities are also often plagued by poor housing, decrepit infrastructure, slow work mobility, underfunded education and less health subsidies. Despite recent reforms and changes in their policies and laws, people of color still experience systemic denial of opportunities, delays in promotions and racist treatments from their communities and governments.

Gender is another source of inequality that is also unjustifiable and intolerable in many ways. This social inequality goes way back to centuries when women have already been regarded as a lesser kind of people—having characteristics and attributes that are regarded as weak and vulnerable. In some countries, women are barred from working, studying, or occupying important positions in society. These days, even if societies have opened up opportunities to women, many still experience being denied better occupation, promotion, lesser benefits, unrecognized contributions, among others (Blackburn, 2008).

Across the globe, the struggle for gender equality that has started among women is now joined by its new allies in the LGBT+ communities. Just like women, people from the LGBT+ community such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders (thus LGBT), among many orientations, are also victims of widespread discrimination, exclusion and abuse.

Judith Butler (born in 1954) is a well-known gender theorist and feminist who focused on the subject matter of feminism and queer theory. In her work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), she theorized that sexuality and gender are both a social construct (not just gender as most people are saying). Gender identification, to her, is often complicated by our attempt to comply or perform expectations and dispositions of a particular gender. She also claims that heterosexuality, for it to dominate, reduces other forms of orientations as subversive or of a lower kind. This thinking has influenced contemporary debates and discussions on feminism and LGBT+.

Other forms of inequalities are *class inequality* and *caste system*, among other things. Class inequality is understood as a form of inequality that is based on one's income, access to wealth, or means of production in a society (Giddens, 2006). Our society, according to this stratification, is divided between the upper, middle, and lower classes, with the upper class having the bigger income or most access, middle class with moderate income or ample access, and lower class with minimal income or limited access. For centuries, this system has been used by scholars and activists in pointing out the unjust situation of the working class vis-à-vis the capitalist class. In a capitalist set up, the capitalists, or the owners of capital, usually get the bigger share of the profit at the expense of the hardworking laborers who run the factories, offices, and other work settings. In the long run, this system has led to the concentration of wealth for the upper class and systemic economic exclusion of the '99%' of the population.

Thomas Piketty (born in 1971) is a highly celebrated French economist whose works focused on understanding wealth/income inequalities in the age of global capitalism. In his book, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (2013), he claims that capitalism has caused this widespread income inequality that has lasted for more than two centuries. At present, he argues that this trend is becoming worse by the new form of wealth concentration that comes from inherited wealth and more access to the power of the upper class. In order to arrest this economic trend, he proposes a progressive income tax for the wealthy.

A caste system is a form of structuring a society similarly to the class system. A caste is assigned to a person for life (Giddens, 2006). In a caste society, people are sometimes prohibited to marry people from other social groups. The most well-known caste system is found in India, where they practice Hinduism. In the Hindu caste system, they structure their society into four: *Brahmins* (learned people and intellectuals), *Kshatriyas* (soldiers and rulers), *Vaisyas* (farmers and merchants), and *Shudras* (laborers and artisans) (Giddens, 2006). There are gaps in the rights that members from each caste exercise, such as access to employment, education and other services, and basic needs. However, Giddens (2006) observed that these conditions may become less rigid due to globalization.

These days, the aforementioned forms of inequalities aggravate the worsening conditions of peoples in various parts of the world.

In the Philippines, these forms of inequalities are scattered in our communities, institutions and practices. Many women are still discriminated against in their workplaces, schools, universities, and health facilities. Many individuals from the LGBT+ communities also face the same, if not worse, conditions or situations, in the sense that they are openly discriminated against and excluded in our society—based on our culture, biases, and prejudices. Millions of our workers up to now are still denied their security of tenure, benefits, social protections from their employers and workplaces. Together with poverty, these forms of inequalities have also caused so much injustice and harm to many people.

It is important to know what social inequalities are and how they manifest in our society today, because this issue involves the same most vulnerable individuals, households, people, and sectors in our society. These people are often the most vulnerable during times of crisis such as natural calamities, famine, wars, and pandemic outbreaks. Additionally, both the poor and the marginalized are abused and exploited by the same people for profit and other illicit acts such as human trafficking, selling of organs, and other crimes.

This is especially evident in the Philippines, as marginalized groups have suffered the most in the recent pandemic.. Indeed, many of those in the informal sector have had their livelihoods severely affected by the months-long lockdown. Those who were able to make a living had to face reduced mass transportation. In addition, public utility vehicles (PUVs) that the public can afford and access are unreliable, highly unmaintained, and lacking in safety measures (Africa, 2019). These same laborers were threatened with “no vaccination, no pay” and “no vaccine, no work” policies, to which labor groups have disputed (Medenilla, 2021). And those who were infected with COVID-19 faced preferential treatment in hospitals.

In the presence of misgovernance, corruption, abuse of power from the government, and weak political institutions, people who are victims of social inequalities experience overlapping forms of deprivation of life necessities and restriction to opportunities for them to live a decent life. These days many women, LGBT+, people of color, and abused workers among others, live below the poverty line. Poverty and social inequalities overlap in many societies. You can see overlapping qualities that are present in some people, like low-income women or LGBT who are black or belong to mixed ethnic backgrounds.

| Self-Evaluation Form (Part 2)

Instruction. Answer the following questions.

1. After learning about poverty and social inequalities, is there a change on how you will respond whenever you see a beggar asking for alms in public spaces? What are these changes? If there is no change that took place, why?

2. How will you apply the knowledge you have learned on poverty and social inequalities in improving Philippine society?

| Synchronous Activities

Activity: Discussion

Instructions. The teacher should divide the class into 5 and ask each group to talk about the difference between the forms of discrimination experienced by:

- women;
- the LGBTQIA+;
- ethnic communities; and
- socio-economic classes.

Step 1. The teacher should be able to articulate the points about these social categories and that the discrimination and exclusion happen both in subtle and overt ways.

Step 2. In preparation for the next topic, the teacher should also get the input from the students about

what they can do to help mitigate the effects of both deprivation (from poverty) and restrictions (from social inequalities)?

| Asynchronous Activities

Activity: Problem Tree

Instructions. Identify the root cause of the inequalities in our society.

Step 1. Discuss stems that make them possible and manifest in our society.

Step 2. Determine the effects of these inequalities in our society.

| Rubric for Discussions

	Excellent	Above Average	Developing	Needs Improvement
<p>Content:</p> <p>The central theme/idea/argument of the student's output is focused and supported by evidence which indicates mastery of the content.</p>				
<p>Organization:</p> <p>The flow of the discussion of the central theme/idea/theme is coherent.</p>				
<p>Presentation:</p> <p>The form and presentation of the central theme/idea is clear, persuasive, polite, and easy to understand.</p>				

| Learning Material

- [Structural-Functionalist Approach: Crash Course](#) (2017, April 11). Émile Durkheim on Suicide & Society: Crash Course Sociology #5 [Video]. YouTube.
- [Class Conflict Theory: Crash Course](#) (2017, April 17). Karl Marx & Conflict Theory: Crash Course Sociology #6 [Video]. YouTube.
- [Gender Conflict Theory: Crash Course](#) (2017, May 1). Harriet Martineau & Gender Conflict Theory: Crash Course Sociology #8 [Video]. YouTube.
- [Race Conflict Theory: Crash Course](#) (2017, April 25). Dubois & Race Conflict: Crash Course Sociology #7 [Video]. YouTube.
- [Symbol Interactionism Approach: Crash Course](#) (2017, April 25). Max Weber & Modernity: Crash Course Sociology #9 [Video]. YouTube.

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<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1505738/doj-chief-law-bans-no-vaccine-no-work-policy#ixzz7BJMfYkZD>

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Social Weather Stations (2021, July 25). *Second Quarter 2021 Social Weather Survey: 48% of Filipino families feel Poor; 23% feel Not Poor, 29% feel Borderline Poor*. Accessed from [Social Weather Stations | Second Quarter 2021 Social Weather Survey: 48% of Filipino families feel Poor; 23% feel Not Poor, 29% feel Borderline Poor \(sws.org.ph\)](#)

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