

## Consensual Poverty in Britain, Sweden and Bangladesh: A Comparative Study

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### Abstract

*The study focuses on the construction of a normative deprivation index for Bangladesh, which in the traditions of Townsend (1979), Mack and Lansley (1985, 1992), Halleröd (1994) and Gordon et al. (2000), underscores items the lack of which would constitute poverty. However, unlike these studies, the present study does not measure the head count ratio but explores the dynamics of this normative construction of deprivation in terms of demographic and socio-economic variables. The data for this study come from a sample survey of 1,914 respondents, 1,207 males and 707 females, from all over Bangladesh in 2000. The normative deprivation index for Bangladesh in 2000 shows that 17 items out of 69 appear significant at the level of  $\alpha=0.1$  in inter-item total correlation and more than 50 percent of respondents perceive their absence as constituting poverty. More than 70 percent respondents agree on the importance of 7 items: (i) three meals a day for children, (ii) two meals a day for adults, (iii) quilt for every member of the household; (iv) milk for babies, (v) celebration of religious festivals, (vi) pillow for every member of the household, and (vii) one pair of all-weather shoes. The British society during 1960s was more concerned with cooked breakfast, children's birthday party and a week's holiday, whereas during 1980s and 1990s, it was more preoccupied with heating, toilet, bath, beds and damp free home. However, during late 1990s, there was a shift of trend towards hospital visit and two meals a day. The Swedish society had more medical priorities than others and viewed glasses, vacuum cleaner and telephone as more necessary than bed, heating, toilet and bath as perceived by the British. In terms of correlates, the Bangladesh deprivation index is found significantly related to occupation, education and age followed by residence, income and gender. Thus the experience of poverty is specific to time and space; it is society-subjective and normative.*

### Introduction

Most research on poverty focus on the measurement of poverty and the construction of income poverty line for the purpose of determining the extent of poverty. This is evident in the early studies of poverty in England (Mayhew, 1861; Booth, 1889, 1902; Rowntree, 1901).<sup>i</sup> Based on subsistence, the poverty line for a 'moderate family' of man and wife and 3 children in 1898-99 was constructed as less than 21s. per week in London (Booth, 1902-3) and 17s. 8d. per week at York (Rowntree, 1901).<sup>ii</sup> This subsistence model has influenced nearly all subsequent studies in England (Bell, 1912, Davies, 1909, Reeves, 1914, Bowley and Burneet-Hurst, 1915, Bowley and Hogg, 1925, Soutar, Wilkins and Florence, 1942).<sup>iii</sup> An adaptation of the Rowntree method was used by the US Department of Agriculture in its Social Security Administration Poverty Index in 1959 (Orshansky, 1965, 1967).<sup>iv</sup> The 1964 report of the Council of Economic Advisers set out the \$3000 poverty level for the United States, and was subsequently refined to form the official poverty line.<sup>v</sup> Such an official poverty line, however, is non-existent in Britain. This resulted in the researchers' dependence on other statistical indicators like benefit provisions and income benefit. Thus a poor was defined as anyone having an income at or below the level of supplementary benefit<sup>vi</sup> or below 60 per cent of median income.<sup>vii</sup> Nonetheless, surveys by Townsend (1979), Mack and Lansley (1985, 1992) and Gordon et al. (2000) initiated a new trend in poverty discourse in Britain. This was labeled as consensual poverty in which respondents were asked to name items the lack of which would constitute poverty according to them.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2005) interrelates human poverty with human development, and uses three composite indexes<sup>viii</sup> to define and measure poverty, Human Development Index (HDI), Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) and Gender-Related Development Index (GDI). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) views poverty as multidimensional deprivation (OECD, 2001:37) and moves away from the notion of absolute

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poverty to capacity poverty.<sup>ix</sup> The World Bank defines poverty as unacceptable human deprivation in terms of economic opportunity, education, health and nutrition, as well as lack of empowerment and security. <sup>x</sup> In the Western and the Third World poverty discourses, there are five broad indicators of poverty definition and measurement (Gordon et al., 2000:72-75). They are summarized in Figure-1 below:

<b>Poverty measurement</b>	<b>Major representative work</b>
1. Consensual indicators:	Townsend (1979); Mack and Lansley (1985); Gordon and Pantazis (1997)
2. Social exclusion:	Levitas (1999); Silver (1994); Gore and Figueiredo (1996); Room (1995)
3. Subjective measures:	
a. Income proxy:	Viet-Wilson (1987)
b. Consensual poverty lines	Walker (1987), Halleröd (1995a)
c. Socio-vital Minimum Income Level	Callan et al. (1989); Townsend and Gordon (1991); Townsend et al. (1996, 1997); Saunders and Matheson (1992); Brodbury (1989); Callan and Nolan (1991)
4. Income thresholds:	Abel-Smith and Townsend (1965)
5. Budget standards:	Rowntree (1901, 1941, 1951); Beveridge (1942); Bradshaw (1993); Orshansky (1965)

Source: Gordon et al. (2000:72-75).

**Figure-1 Poverty Discourses in the Western and the Third World**

In Bangladesh, poverty studies follow budget standards approach and mainly concentrate on the measurement of poverty and the estimation of its magnitude. The other approaches of poverty measurement have been neglected. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) has monopolized this type of research on poverty and due to its academic background, it only produced poverty monologue, construction of income poverty line. For this purpose, two official methods-- (a) direct caloric intake (DCI) and (b) cost-of basic needs (CBN)-- are used to estimate poverty line in *Household Expenditure Survey, 1995-96* (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1998) and *Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000* (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001:55).<sup>xi</sup> Whereas other surveys like the *Poverty Monitoring Survey of 1994*, *Poverty Monitoring Survey of 1999* and *Poverty Monitoring Survey of 2004* have used Food Energy Intake (FEI) method. In 2004, this measure yields two separate income poverty lines for urban and rural areas of Tk.906 and Tk.595 respectively (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2004:10).<sup>xii</sup>

Such mainstream poverty research has been recently criticized by Sen and Hulme (2004) in their measurement of chronic poverty. Ahmed's (2004a) analysis of UNDP survey on Tanore and Gaibandha was a departure from the economic tradition, and was probably the only empirical survey on different types of poverty in rural Bangladesh. In the urban context, Ahmed (2004d) also used non-economic notion of poverty.<sup>xiii</sup> Though most recently some studies have introduced few questions to capture people's perception regarding poverty status, these are not explored rigorously.

The context of poverty studies clearly demonstrates that the concept of poverty is a political one (Alcock, 1993:3). Since the concept is politically charged, its measurements are also tailored to suit the political agenda (Ahmed, 2004b). The controversy between Rowntree and Townsend as mentioned earlier is a clear proof. In addition to that, each measure of poverty has developed in a given spime or space and time (Rahnema, 1993). This results in difficulties and frustrations for cross-cultural poverty researchers. The different poverty assumptions are called "discourses of poverty" (Veit-Wilson, 2000: 141-164).<sup>xiv</sup> It is argued that in the U.S., the economic and behavioral discourses are dominant while the structural discourse is dominant among the British social scientists (Veit-Wilson, 1998 a: 41-48 and 92-100).

The need for a sociological conceptualization of poverty is felt in the academic arena of Bangladesh. Led by Bangladesh Sociological Society, a 2004 seminar on Exploring the Sociological Perspective of Poverty, underscored the need for challenging the concept of income poverty (Islam, 2004; Khan, 2004). It also emphasized the importance of empirical survey on Bangladesh poverty and alternate subjective measurement of poverty (Ahmed, 2004c). Except for

that study by Ahmed (2004c), there is no attempt in Bangladesh to construct consensual poverty or poverty based on the people's perception of the normative deprivation.

### **Objective of the Present Research**

At the backdrop of such intellectual climate in Bangladesh, the present study focuses on the construction of a normative deprivation index, which in the traditions of Townsend (1979), Mack and Lansley (1985, 1992), Halleröd (1994) and Gordon et al. (2000), underscores items the lack of which would constitute poverty in Bangladesh. However, unlike these studies, the present study does not measure the head count ratio but explores the dynamics of this normative construction of deprivation in terms of demographic and socio-economic variables.

### **Data Source and Methodology:**

The data for this study come from a sample survey in 2000 of 1,914 respondents, 1,207 males and 707 females, from all over Bangladesh. Originally, the study was designed to be exclusively urban. However for the sake of bare comparison, a small number of rural respondents, to the extent of 78, are included in the survey. All 6 divisional cities were sampled. The division-wise breakdown of sample is: Barisal=200 (10.4%), Dhaka=1,000 (52.2%), Chittagong=300 (15.7%), Khulna=150 (7.8%), Rajshahi=200 (10.4%), Sylhet=64 (3.3%). A national sample frame of 10,000 developed for the UNESCO's need assessment for non-formal education (Ahmed et al., 1988) was used to select respondents. Like Townsend (1979), a list of 69 deprivation indicators of the style of living of the Bangladeshi population is made. This covers diet, clothing, fuel and light, home amenities, housing and housing facilities and childcare. A close-ended interview schedule with an option of being open-ended is directly administered to the respondents by the interviewers. The respondents are asked to indicate which of the items they consider important without which they would feel socially deprived and poor. But unlike Townsend (1979), Mack and Lansley (1985, 1992) and Gordon et al., (2000), respondents could add new items if their choices were not found in the list provided. This is what Halleröd (1994) did in his consensual poverty. Like them, a normative deprivation index is constructed by retaining those items from the list that more than 50 percent of respondents consider important and the absence of which would make them poor.

### **Characteristics of the Respondents:**

Most respondents are in the age group of 30-39, and together with the age group of 20-29, they constitute nearly 66 percent of the respondents. Moreover, they are well-educated as more than half of them have Bachelor's and higher degrees. Only 10 per cent respondents reported to be unemployed. The occupational structure shows that most of them are service holders (28%) and professionals (13%). A chunk of them are housewives (12%), small business (10%), manual workers (8%), medium business (5%) and students (4%). Commensurate with their occupation, most respondents have low income; the average monthly income is Tk.1,538. Their average income is higher than the 2004 poverty lines of Tk.906 and Tk.595 monthly for urban and rural Bangladesh respectively (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2004:10). Around 62 percent have monthly income of up to Tk.1,000, whereas 18 per cent have monthly income ranging between Tk.1,667 and Tk.8,333.

### **Consensual Poverty in Bangladesh in 2000**

Table-1 below gives the normative deprivation index for Bangladesh in 2000 and shows that 17 items out of 69 appear significant as more than 50 percent of respondents perceive their absence constituting poverty. More than 70 percent respondents agree on the importance of 7 items: (i) three meals a day for children, (ii) two meals a day for adults, (iii) quilt for every member of the household; (iv) milk for babies, (v) celebration of religious festivals, (vi) pillow for every member of the household, and (vii) one pair of all-weather shoes. Table-1 further shows that in the urban areas, in addition to shoes, charger light, fan, cable TV, even umbrella have become part of the necessity, without which one is perceived as a poor. It is worthwhile to note that 52 items, which were dropped off from the index included items like wrist watch, wardrobe, ornaments, bicycle and toys for children, refrigerator, cigarette, music lesson, telephone and computer. In the rural

areas tube-well, cow, shallow machine and power tiller were common items. Such a perception is culturally derived as the social norm of particular time and space determines the notion of deprivation. A decade ago, it was impossible to think that the absence of a cable TV or mobile phone would constitute an agenda for poverty definition of Bangladesh. Even now, it may appear shocking to many. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that a status item like celebration of religious festivals is ranked fifth in the deprivation index. The Table clearly demonstrates the change that has taken place in the standard of Bangladesh urban life.<sup>xv</sup>

**Table-1 Normative Deprivation Index in Bangladesh, 2000 (in per cent)**  
(n=1,914)

No.	Items	Yes	N
1	Three meals a day for children	91.1	1,914
2	Two meal a day for adults	85.7	1,914
3	Having quilt for every member of the household	79.1	1,914
4	Milk for babies	78.0	1,914
5	Celebration of religious festivals	77.5	1,914
6	Have pillow for every member of the household	76.1	1,914
7	One pair of all-weather shoes	73.0	1,914
8	Having charger or hurricane lamp	69.9	1,914
9	Regular monthly savings	69.2	1,914
10	A fan for home	63.7	1,914
11	Warm clothes and Blankets	62.7	1,914
12	Fresh fruits or vegetables every day	60.2	1,914
13	Separate bed for every children 10+	56.9	1,914
14	Having an umbrella	56.4	1,914
15	Having a radio or TV with cable connection	54.9	1,914
16	Meat or fish or vegetables equivalent every other day	52.9	1,914
17	Best outfit for special occasions	52.1	1,914

Source: Field Survey, 2000

In addition, Table-2 below gives the item total correlation of deprivation scale and shows that all 17 items are significant at the level of  $\alpha=.01$ . However, 7 items found most important in terms of percentage, lose their relative significance and some of them disappear. Thus most correlated items in the scale are: pillow, all weather shoes, quilt, warm clothes, a cable television, meat or fish equivalent every other day and an umbrella.

**Table-2 Item Total Correlation of Deprivation Scale in Bangladesh, 2000 (N=1,914)**

	Item	Item correlation	Mean of item	Significance level
1	Pillow for every member of the household	0.605	0.76	0.01
2	One pair of all weather shoes	0.590	0.73	0.01
3	Quilt for every member of the household	0.577	0.79	0.01
4	Warm clothes	0.572	0.63	0.01
5	A cable television	0.569	0.55	0.01
6	Meat or fish equivalent every other day	0.563	0.53	0.01
7	An umbrella	0.555	0.56	0.01
8	Charger	0.554	0.70	0.01
9	Separate bed for every children 10+	0.544	0.57	0.01
10	Celebration of religious festivals	0.543	0.78	0.01
11	Fresh fruits or vegetables everyday	0.542	0.60	0.01
12	Regular monthly savings	0.535	0.69	0.01
13	Two meals a day for adults	0.485	0.86	0.01
14	A fan at home	0.480	0.64	0.01
15	Three meals a day for children	0.465	0.91	0.01
16	Baby milk	0.444	0.78	0.01
17	Best outfit for special occasions	0.433	0.52	0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2000

## Comparison Between United Kingdom, Sweden and Bangladesh

### (a) Consensual Poverty in the United Kingdom, 1968-1999

The survey on normative deprivation during 1968-69 by Townsend (1979) can be regarded as one of the earliest research that paved the way for studies on consensual poverty. As a reaction against Rowntree's conceptualization of poverty as absolute, he used the deprivation indicator method of poverty definition.<sup>xvi</sup> He asserted that need/deprivation was relative and could be objectively determined and measured by drawing up a list of key indicators of standard of living, the lack of which would constitute deprivation. He also restated his conceptual definition later (Townsend, 1993:36).<sup>xvii</sup> In his survey, Townsend turned to people's subjective understandings of poverty and used three measures of poverty: (a) the state's standard, (b) the relative income standard and (c) the deprivation standard. A list of 60 deprivation indicators, expressed as yes/no questions, of the style of living of the population was built up. This covered diet, clothing, fuel and light, home amenities, housing and housing facilities, the immediate environment of the home, the characteristics, security, general conditions and welfare benefits of work, family support, recreation, education, health and social relations (Townsend, 1979: 249, 251). This was presented to 2,050 households. Around 40 of these elicited yes/no answer patterns highly correlated with income. For illustrative purposes, a summary "deprivation index" consisting of 12 items was compiled to cover major aspects of dietary, household, familial, recreational and social deprivation (Table-3). All the items were found significant with low levels of net disposable income when a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was computed. The level of significance varied between  $\alpha=0.05$  and  $\alpha=0.001$  (Townsend, 1979:250:T-6.3).<sup>xviii</sup>

**Table-3 Townsend's Deprivation Index for UK, 1968-69 (n=10,048)**

	Poverty Item	Per cent of population	Pearson Correlation coefficient	Level of significance
01	Has not had a cooked breakfast most days of the week	67.3	0.0559	0.001
02	Children: Did not have party on last birthday	56.6	0.0660	0.016
03	Has not had a week's holiday away from home in last 12 months	53.6	0.1892	0.001
04	Has not had an afternoon or evening out for entertainment in the last two weeks	47.0	0.1088	0.001
05	Adults: Has not been out in the last 4 weeks to the relative or friend for a meal or snack	45.1	0.0515	0.001
06	Household does not have a refrigerator	45.1	0.2419	0.001
07	Children (<15): Has not had a friend to play or to tea in the last 4 week	36.3	0.0643	0.020
08	Adults: Has not had a relative or friend to the home for a meal or snack in the last 4 weeks	33.4	0.0493	0.001
09	Household does not usually have a Sunday joint (3 in 4 times)	25.9	0.1734	0.001
10	Household does not have sole use of four amenities indoors	21.4	0.1671	0.001
11	Does not have fresh meat (including meals out) as many as four days a week	19.3	0.1821	0.001
12	Has gone through one or more days in the past fortnight without a cooked meal	07.0	0.0684	0.001

(Source: Townsend, 1979:250-T-6.3)

The deprivation scores for different households was constructed on the basis of this index and summarized as the modal value for households in each income range. They were then compared with the incomes of households expressed as proportions of the supplementary benefit entitlement for those households. A modal deprivation by logarithm of income as a percentage of supplementary benefit scale rates was plotted onto a graph falling into two clear lines (Townsend, 1979: Figure-6.4: 261). One line represented the changing position on the deprivation index of the bottom five income groups as income rose, whereas the other line indicated the variability of the top seven. The bottom five income groups were those with a household income below 140 per cent of supplementary benefit entitlement. Townsend claimed that the point where the lines met

constituted a “threshold of deprivation.”<sup>xxix</sup> This could be treated as an objective definition of relative poverty, the poverty line being 140 per cent of supplementary benefit entitlement. Thus he found approximately 23 per cent household as poor (Townsend, 1979: 271).

Table-3 above gives a list of items the lack of which constituted poverty for the United Kingdom in 1960. Only three items-- no cooked breakfast most days of the week, no birthday party for children in last year and no week's holiday away from home in last 12 months— constituted poverty items, which were agreed by more than 50 per cent of the population. However, all twelve items listed in the Table were found to be statistically significant and together, constituted the deprivation index.<sup>xx</sup>

Using the deprivation indicator method of Townsend to define poverty and poverty line, two studies in 1983 and 1990 were conducted in Britain by Mack and Lansley (1985; 1992). In 1983 an opinion poll for a television program called ‘Breadline Britain’ was conducted to determine people’s perception of the normative deprivation. They defined poverty as “an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities. This means that the ‘necessities’ of life are identified by public opinion and not by, on the one hand, the views of experts or, on the other hand, the norms of behaviour per se.” (Mack and Lansley, 1985:39). Thus, similar to Townsend, they included both personal consumption items and social activities in their definition of necessities.<sup>xxi</sup> On the basis of their findings, they created a list of 21 basic necessities that more than 50 per cent of respondents considered important for a normal life. More than 90 per cent of respondents agreed on the importance of a further 5 necessities: heating, an indoor toilet and bath, a bed for each member of the household, and a home free from damp. The respondents were also asked whether or not they thought each potential indicator was necessary to avoid hardship. Then they were asked whether they lacked those indicators and whether this lack was due to the lack of resources to purchase them.<sup>xxii</sup> Poverty was thus defined as a lack of 3 or more of the 26 necessities, and severe poverty was defined as a lack of 7 or more necessities. Thus, according to these 26 necessities and their presence or absence among British households, they measured poverty levels in 1983 (Mack and Lansley, 1985) and in 1990 (Mack and Lansley, 1992). In terms of poverty threshold-- a lack of 3 or more items-- they found around 21 per cent of the UK population as poor in 1990 (Mack and Lansley, 1992) as against around 14 per cent in 1983 (Mack and Lansley, 1985:89), a rise of 7 per cent in 7 years or a percent each year. As their approach is grounded in socially defined need,<sup>xxiii</sup> it is labeled as “consensual deprivation indicator” (Fisher, 2001).<sup>xxiv</sup>

Drawing from the pioneer works of Townsend and *Breadline Britain* survey of Mack and Lansley, Gordon and his colleagues carried out a similar survey in 1999 called *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain* (Gordon et al., 2000).<sup>xxv</sup> They arrived at a socially constructed necessities through a questionnaire administered to 1,534 households and created a list of 35 items out of 54 items that more than 50 per cent population considered important for a normal life. The items ranged from bedding, heating, damp-free home to holiday away from home, dictionary and outfit for social occasions. Out of these 35 items, six items like a TV, a fridge, beds and bedding for everyone, a washing machine, medicines prescribed by a doctor and a deep freezer were dropped from the analysis.<sup>xxvi</sup> Gordon et al. set a threshold for deprivation, based on an enforced lack of two or more necessities amalgamated with a low income. On the basis of possession of necessities, the survey found that around 72 per cent of people, including 10 per cent vulnerable to poverty, lacked just one or none of the items as they could not afford them. This is followed by 28 per cent surveyed population who lacked two or more necessities. This also included 2 per cent who had risen out of poverty. Thus 35.9 per cent of the population could be classified as overall poor – 25.6 per cent poor and 10.3 per cent vulnerable to poverty (Gordon et al., 2000: 18). As mentioned earlier, Breadline Britain survey set lack of three or more socially perceived necessities as the poverty threshold, which was directly comparable to the Poverty and Social Exclusion survey (Gordon et al., 2000). The surveys indicated the trend of poverty in Britain: the number of poor households increased substantially over time from 14 per cent in 1983 to 21 per cent by 1990 and 26 per cent by 1999. The situation is more akin to Booth’s 30.7 per cent poor in 1888 and Rowntree’s 28.0 per cent in 1899. Though the British society became much more

affluent since the early 1980s, in terms of enforced lack of necessities, there has been a dramatic rise of poverty by 2000 for the low income group.

**Table-4 Deprivation Index for Britain, 1999 (in Per Cent)**  
(n=1,534)

	Items	Considered Necessary	Don't have, Don't want	Don't have, Can't afford	Variation
1	Beds and bedding for everyone	95	0.2	1.0	-80.0
2	Heating to warm living areas of the home	94	0.4	1.0	-60.0
3	Damp-free home	93	3.0	6.0	-50.0
4	Visiting friends or family in hospital	92	8.0	3.0	166.7
5	Two meals a day	91	3.0	1.0	200.0
6	Medicines prescribed by doctor	90	5.0	1.0	400.0
7	Refrigerator	89	1.0	0.1	900.0
8	Fresh fruit and vegetables daily	86	7.0	4.0	75.0
9	Warm, waterproof coat	85	2.0	4.0	-50.0
10	Replace or repair broken electrical goods	85	6.0	12.0	-50.0
11	Visits to friends or family	84	3.0	2.0	50.0
12	Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas	83	2.0	2.0	0.0
13	Money to keep home in a decent state of decoration	82	2.0	14.0	-85.7
14	Visit to school, e.g. sports day	81	33.0	2.0	1550.0
15	Attending weddings, funerals	80	3.0	3.0	0.0
16	Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day	79	4.0	3.0	33.3
17	Insurance of contents of dwelling	79	5.0	8.0	-37.5
18	Hobby or leisure activity	78	12.0	7.0	71.4
19	Washing machine	76	3.0	1.0	200.0
20	Collect children from school	75	36.0	2.0	1700.0
21	Telephone	71	1.0	1.0	0.0
22	Appropriate clothes for job interviews	69	13.0	4.0	225.0
23	Deep freezer/fridge freezer	68	3.0	2.0	50.0
24	Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms	67	2.0	3.0	-33.3
25	Regular savings ( of £10 per month) for rainy days or retirement	66	7.0	25.0	-72.0
26	Two pairs of all-weather shoes	64	4.0	5.0	-20.0
27	Friends or family round for a meal	64	10.0	6.0	66.7
28	A small amount of money to spend on self weekly not on family	59	3.0	13.0	-76.9
29	Television	56	1.0	1.0	0.0
30	Roast joint/vegetarian equivalent once a week	56	11.0	3.0	266.7
31	Presents for friends/ family once a year	56	1.0	3.0	-66.7
32	A holiday away from home once a year not with relatives	55	14.0	18.0	-22.2
33	Replace worn-out furniture	54	6.0	12.0	-50.0
34	Dictionary	53	6.0	5.0	20.0
35	An outfit for social occasions	51	4.0	4.0	0.0

(Source: Gordon et al, 2000: 14-15 T-1)

#### **(b) Consensual Poverty in Sweden, 1992**

In response to the British survey by Mack and Lansley (1985,1992), Björn Halleröd (1994a, 1994b) developed the Proportional Deprivation Index (PDI), a modified version of Mack and Lansley's approach, using 1992 Swedish data set. Instead of including only items from the preliminary list which more than 50 percent of the population identified as necessities, the PDI

includes all items from the preliminary list, but gives each item a weight which is the proportion of the population identifying it as a necessity. However his proportional deprivation score found age as one of the determinants in the construction of necessity. Table-5, which gives the deprivation index for Sweden 1992, shows that the five most important deprivation items are: medical treatment and medicine, access to dentist, vacuum cleaner, glasses and telephone. These clearly show the difference between the British and the Swedish as well as the Bangladeshi social structures.

**Table-5 Deprivation Index for Sweden, 1992 (n=793)**

	Consumption item	Necessary, should be able to afford	Would like to have but cannot afford
01	Medical treatment and medicine if necessary	99.2	0.5
02	Examination by dental surgeon once a year	96.5	1.6
03	Vacuum cleaner	96.1	0.6
04	Glasses, change of glasses if necessary	96.0	2.2
05	Telephone	95.6	0.3
06	Householders' comprehensive insurance	95.6	0.9
07	A hot meal each day	95.2	0.9
08	Washing machine	92.1	2.6
09	Freezer	90.2	2.0
10	Public transport for one's needs	87.9	3.7
11	Modern dwelling (bath/shower, WC, central heating, stove and refrigerator)	84.4	1.4
12	Self-contained accommodation	81.5	1.6
13	Not more that two persons in each bedroom	76.7	3.2
14	A hobby or leisure activity	73.6	5.6
15	New, not second-hand clothes	73.5	6.5
16	TV	70.2	0.8
17	Presents for friends and family at least once a year	69.5	1.3
18	Daily paper	65.2	5.7
19	A hair cut every third month	63.2	3.7
20	A holiday away from home for once week a year, not with relatives or friends	54.5	15.1

(Source: Halleröd, 1994:11-T-2)

Table-6 below, which gives a comparative bird's eye view, further shows the significance of spime (Rahnema, 1993) in the construction of normative deprivation. There is not only the difference of space but also the difference of time in a given society. The British society during 1960s was more concerned with cooked breakfast, children's birthday party and a week's holiday, whereas during 1980s and 1990s, it was more preoccupied with heating, toilet, bath, beds and damp free home. However, during late 1990s, there was a shift of trend towards hospital visit and two meals a day. As mentioned earlier, the Swedish society had more medical priorities than others. Even in terms of amenities, there was a difference, the Swedish viewed glasses, vacuum cleaner and telephone as more necessary than bed, heating, toilet and bath as perceived by the British.

Bangladesh society of 2000 showed similarity with the British society of 1999 regarding two meals a day. If quilt is loosely interpreted as part of bed and bedding, then another shared item could be added to its score. But the Bangladeshi society differed from the western societies regarding other culturally constructed necessities, for examples, heating, toilet, bath, telephone, vacuum cleaner and glasses. It is interesting to note that baby milk is regarded as a necessary item in the Bangladeshi society.



**Table-6 Five Most Important Poverty Items in UK, Sweden and Bangladesh**

	United Kingdom			Sweden	Bangladesh
	Townsend, 1968-69	Mack and Lansley, 1983, 1990	Gordon et al., 1999	Halleröd, 1994	Ahmed, 2000
Has not had a cooked breakfast most days of the week	X				
Children: Did not have party on last birthday	X				
Has not had a week's holiday away from home in last 12 months	X				
Has not had an afternoon or evening out for entertainment in the last two weeks	X				
Adults: Has not been out in the last 4 weeks to the relative or friend for a meal or snack	X				
Heating to warm living areas of the home		X	X		
Toilet		X			
Bath		X			
Beds and bedding for everyone		X	X		
Damp free home		X	X		
Visiting friends or family in hospital			X		
For adults, two meals a day			X		X
Medical treatment and medicine if necessary				X	
Examination by dental surgeon once a year				X	
Vacuum cleaner				X	
Glasses, change of glasses if necessary				X	
Telephone				X	
For children, three meals a day					X
Quilt for every member of the HH					X
Baby milk					X
Celebration of religious festivals					X

**Correlates of Consensual poverty in Bangladesh**

Once the deprivation index is constructed, it is pertinent to ask which factors are associated with the index. The deprivation index is found significantly related to selected demographic and socio-economic variables. The key variables – gender, age, education, occupation, income and residence – are tested against all 17 items that comprise the deprivation index. Given the predominance of nominal level of measurement, the chi-square test is preferred for measuring the association between variables. Many associations between independent variables and items of the deprivation index are found significant at  $\alpha=.001$ ,  $\alpha=.01$  and  $\alpha=.05$  levels of significance. Table-7 gives the summary of the significant association found at chi-value and shows that occupation, education and age are the key determinants of the consensual poverty in terms of number of items in the deprivation index they are significantly related to. Next in importance are residence and income. Gender appears to be least influential in the construction of social necessity.

**Table-7 Summary of Chi-Square Test on Deprivation Index by Gender by Age by Education by Occupation by Income and by Residence (N=1,914)**

Items	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Income	Residence
For children, three meals a day	X <sup>2</sup> =11.209 df=1; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =25.799 df=5; α=.001	-	-	-	-
For adults, two meals a day	-	X <sup>2</sup> =18.046 df=5; α=.01	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> =12.674 df=3; α=.01	-
Quilt for every member of the HH	-	X <sup>2</sup> =13.146 df=5; α=.05	-	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> =16.535 df=1; α=.001
Baby milk	X <sup>2</sup> =49.971 df=1; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =30.646 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =94.445 df=10; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =35.634 df=3; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =47.837 df=1; α=.001
Celebration of religious festivals	X <sup>2</sup> =23.626 df=1; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =25.893 df=6; α=.001	-	-	-
Pillow for every member of the HH	-	X <sup>2</sup> =20.996 df=5; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =26.595 df=10; α=.01	X <sup>2</sup> =24.473 df=3; α=.001	-
One pair of all weather shoes	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> =26.526 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =42.945 df=10; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =18.683 df=3; α=.001	-
Charger	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> =32.079 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =40.274 df=10; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =17.309 df=1; α=.001
Regular monthly savings	X <sup>2</sup> =8.209 df=1; α=.01	X <sup>2</sup> =12.792 df=5; α=.05	-	X <sup>2</sup> =22.962 df=10; α=.05	-	X <sup>2</sup> =8.960 df=1; α=.01
A fan at home	X <sup>2</sup> =9.154 df=1; α=.01	-	X <sup>2</sup> =31.713 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =53.280 df=10; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =18.667 df=3; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =14.204 df=1; α=.001
New clothes/warm clothes	-	X <sup>2</sup> =19.798 df=5; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =24.324 df=10; α=.01	-	X <sup>2</sup> =9.747 df=1; α=.01
Fresh fruits/vegetables everyday	-	X <sup>2</sup> =18.776 df=5; α=.01	X <sup>2</sup> =38.854 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =38.941 df=10; α=.001	-	-
Separate beds for every children 10+	-	X <sup>2</sup> =24.793 df=5; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =54.055 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =43.121 df=10; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =11.268 df=1; α=.001
An umbrella	-	X <sup>2</sup> =15.657 df=5; α=.01	X <sup>2</sup> =33.071 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =54.685 df=10; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =42.579 df=1; α=.001
A cable television	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> =52.231 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =58.691 df=10; α=.001	-	-
Meat/fish equivalent every other day	-	X <sup>2</sup> =23.351 df=5; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =21.803 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =27.631 df=10; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =20.319 df=3; α=.001	-
Best outfit for special occasions	X <sup>2</sup> =63.000 df=1; α=.001	-	X <sup>2</sup> =46.481 df=6; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =135.231 df=10; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =59.959 df=3; α=.001	X <sup>2</sup> =50.245 df=1; α=.001

The Table-7 above and Figure-2 below show that out of 17 items constituting deprivation scale,

- **occupation** is significantly related to 13 items – baby milk, pillow, all-weather shoes, charger light, regular monthly savings, fan, new/warm clothes, fresh fruits/vegetables, separate beds for grown up children, umbrella, cable TV, meat/fish equivalent and best outfit for special occasions;
- **education** is significantly related to 11 items of the deprivation index-- baby milk, celebration of religious festivals, all-weather shoes, charger light, fan, fresh fruits/vegetables, separate beds for grown up children, umbrella, cable TV, meat/fish equivalent and best outfit for special occasions;
- **age** is significantly related to 10 items of the deprivation index-- three meals a day for children, two meals a day for adults, quilt for every member, pillow for every member, regular monthly savings, new/warm clothes, fresh fruits/vegetables, separate beds for grown up children, umbrella and meat/fish equivalent;
- **residence** is significantly related to 9 items of the deprivation Index: quilt for every member, baby milk, charger light, regular monthly savings, fan, new/warm clothes, separate beds for grown up children, umbrella and best outfit for special occasions;

- **income** is significantly related to 7 items of the deprivation Index-- two meals a day for adults, baby milk, pillow for every member, all-weather shoes, fan, meat/fish equivalent and best outfit for special occasions; and
- **gender** is significantly related to 6 items of the deprivation index-- three meals a day for children, baby milk, and celebration of religious festivals, regular monthly savings, fan and best outfit for special occasions.

Deprivation Item	Correlates					
	Occupation	Education	Age	Residence	Income	Gender
01 Milk	X	X	-	X	X	X
02 Pillow	X	-	X	-	X	-
03 Shoes	X	X	-	-	X	-
04 Charger	X	X	-	X	-	-
05 Savings	X	-	X	X	-	X
06 Fan	X	X	-	X	X	X
07 Clothes	X	-	X	X	-	-
08 Fruits	X	X	X	-	-	-
09 Bed	X	X	X	X	-	-
10 Umbrella	X	X	X	X	-	-
11 TV	X	X	-	-	-	-
12 Meat	X	X	X	-	X	-
13 Outfit	X	X	-	X	X	X
14 Festivals	-	X	-	-	-	X
15 3-meal	-	-	X	-	-	X
16 2-meal	-	-	X	-	X	-
17 Quilt	-	-	X	X	-	-
Total:	13	11	10	9	7	6

**Figure-2 Significant Correlates of Deprivation Index**

### (1) Occupation and Deprivation Index

Table-8 which gives the cross-tabulation of 13 items of the deprivation index by occupation, shows that there is no clear pattern of the relationship between variables. Broadly, it can be said that:

- Milk is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of housewives (91%) followed by medium business (83%), unemployed (82%), small business (81%) and professionals (80%).
- Pillow is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of farmers (89%) followed by housewives (81%) and professionals (80%).
- A pair of shoe is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups—students (86%), farmers (83%) and housewives (82%).
- Charger light is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups-- farmers (87%), students (82%) and manual workers (76%).
- Savings is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups-- students (76%), manual workers (73%) and housewives (73%).
- Fan is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups-- students (83%), housewives (73%) and unemployed (72%).
- Clothes are considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups-- farmers (77%), petty business (77%) and students (73%).
- Fruit is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of students (78%).
- Bed is considered as a necessary item by the good majority of medium business (65%), retired persons (64%), professionals (62%) and students (62%).
- Umbrella is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low occupational status groups-- farmers (89%) and petty business (71%).
- TV is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of students (82%).

- Meat is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of students (72%).
- Outfit is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of housewives (75%).

**Table-8 Deprivation Index by Occupation (N=1,914)**  
(in percentage\*)

Occupation	Deprivation Index												
	Milk	Pillow	shoes	charger	savings	Fan	Clothes	Fruits	Bed	umbrella	TV	Meat	outfit
Unemployed	81.9	64.8	78.9	68.8	67.8	71.9	60.8	57.8	55.3	47.2	55.8	54.8	66.8
Retired	72.7	77.3	63.6	63.6	54.5	63.6	54.5	59.1	63.6	59.1	40.9	45.5	31.8
Housewife	90.8	80.8	82.1	76.0	72.5	73.4	63.8	67.2	55.9	60.3	62.9	62.0	74.7
Student	77.5	78.9	85.9	81.7	76.1	83.1	73.2	77.5	62.0	66.2	81.7	71.8	64.8
Farmer	49.1	88.7	83.0	86.8	45.3	43.4	77.4	58.5	39.6	88.7	64.2	47.2	17.0
Manual Workers	67.1	75.5	75.5	76.1	72.9	61.9	60.0	61.9	36.1	61.3	53.5	47.7	39.4
Petty business	58.2	79.9	76.9	74.6	67.2	63.4	76.9	66.4	57.5	70.9	69.4	47.0	39.6
Small business	80.7	73.5	69.1	67.4	71.3	64.6	61.9	66.9	59.1	53.6	52.5	50.8	55.8
Service	79.4	75.2	65.1	66.8	67.4	60.6	59.7	52.2	59.8	51.8	51.0	49.3	43.9
Medium business	82.6	72.8	72.8	75.0	70.7	68.5	60.9	50.0	65.2	47.8	42.4	59.8	60.9
Professional	80.4	80.4	71.4	58.4	72.2	52.2	60.0	62.9	62.4	54.7	46.1	52.2	51.4

\* Each cell represents the row percentage of each occupational category along "yes" response to each item of index.

## (2) Education and Deprivation Index

Table-9 which gives the cross-tabulation of 11 items of the deprivation index by education that appeared significant, also shows that there is no clear pattern of the relationship between them. Broadly, it can be said that:

- Milk is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of high level of education— Bachelor's (82%), Master's (81%) and higher secondary educated (80%).
- Celebration of religious festivals is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of low level of education— some secondary (86%), primary (84%) and illiterate (81%).
- A pair of shoes is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of medium level of education— some secondary (84%), and low level of education--illiterate (79%) and primary (78%).
- Charger is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of medium level of education— secondary (77%) and some secondary (76%), and low level of education--illiterate (83%) and primary (78%).
- Fan is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of medium level of education— secondary (73%).
- Fruit is considered as a necessary item by the good majority of all educational levels except that of Master's.
- Bed is considered as a necessary item by the good majority of high level of education— Master's (64%) and Bachelor's (62%), and medium level of education—secondary (62%).
- Umbrella is considered as a necessary item by the majority of all educational levels except that of higher secondary.
- TV is considered as a necessary item by the overwhelming majority of secondary level of education (71%).
- Meat is considered as a necessary item by the good majority of Bachelor's (58%).
- Outfit is considered as a necessary item by the majority of medium and high educational levels except Master's.

**Table-9 Deprivation Index by Level of Education (N=1,914)**  
(in percentage\*)

Level of education	Deprivation Index										
	Milk	Festivals	Shoes	Charger	Fan	Fruits	Bed	Umbrella	TV	Meat	Outfit
Illiterate	69.2	81.2	78.6	82.9	50.4	65.8	32.5	64.1	46.2	52.1	35.9
Primary	66.5	83.5	78.0	78.0	64.0	59.1	49.4	57.9	56.7	48.2	43.9
Some Secondary	71.8	85.5	83.8	76.1	50.4	63.2	49.6	65.0	59.8	45.3	42.7
SSC	74.1	77.8	75.1	77.3	73.0	61.6	61.6	69.2	71.4	55.7	55.7
HSC/Diploma	80.3	80.0	73.6	63.5	65.2	63.2	51.9	48.7	53.3	44.6	59.4
Bachelor's	82.0	77.5	73.1	67.0	67.5	65.1	62.3	57.2	58.7	58.2	58.4
Master's & above	80.9	68.9	64.1	67.0	59.6	46.5	63.6	50.3	42.6	55.1	44.9

\* Each cell represent the row percentage of each educational category along "yes" response to each item of index.

### (3) Age and Deprivation Index

Table-10 below shows that there is a rudimentary pattern of the relationship between age and 10 items of deprivation index.

- Among the middle aged (40-49), the majority, between 93 per cent and 60 per cent, agree on all ten items.
- In contrast, the old (60 and above) have more agreement on pillow, clothes, bed, umbrella and meat
- Whereas the young (up to 39 years) agree more on 3-meal, 2-meal and fruits.

**Table-10 Deprivation Index by Age (N=1,914)**

(in percentage\*)

Age Group	Deprivation Index									
	3 meals	2 meals	Quilt	Pillow	Savings	Clothes	Fruits	Bed	Umbrella	Meat
<20	80.7	80.7	78.9	64.9	57.9	64.9	70.2	56.1	63.2	64.4
20-29	87.4	81.2	74.5	71.8	64.8	56.3	53.1	51.4	52.9	47.5
30-39	93.9	86.8	80.9	78.2	71.6	62.7	62.4	54.5	53.7	50.5
40-49	93.1	90.6	83.6	81.7	70.8	70.3	64.2	63.6	63.1	59.2
50-59	91.0	86.8	77.8	70.7	74.3	65.9	63.5	67.1	58.7	59.9
60 & above	89.9	85.5	76.8	81.2	68.1	66.7	58.0	66.7	66.7	58.0

\* Each cell represents the row percentage of each age group along "yes" response to each item of index.

### (4) Residence and Deprivation Index

Table-11 shows that there is a clear pattern of the relationship between residence and 9 items of deprivation index. The rural residents agree more on quilt (97%), charger light (91%), new/warm clothes (79%) and umbrella (92%), whereas urban residents agree more on baby milk (79%); monthly savings (70%), fan (65%), separate bed (58%), and outfits for especial occasions (54%). Thus the perception of deprivation is influenced by their specific living experience and the normative standard. In this sense, urban-rural difference clearly institutes the notion of normative deprivation in Bangladesh.

**Table- 11 Deprivation Index by Residence (N=1,914)**

(in percentage\*)

Residence	Deprivation Index								
	Quilt	Milk	Charger	Savings	Fan	Clothes	Bed	Umbrella	Outfit
Rural	97.4	46.2	91.0	53.8	43.6	79.5	38.5	92.3	12.8
Urban	78.3	79.3	69.0	69.8	64.5	62.0	57.7	54.9	53.8

\* Each cell represents the row percentage of each residential category along "yes" response to each item of index

### (5) Income and Deprivation Index

Table-12 shows that there is no clear pattern of the relationship between yearly income and deprivation index, all income groups, especially the high income group (Tk.20,000-Tk.100,000) agree more on 2 meals for adults (91%), baby milk (87%), pillow (82%), and shoes (81%), whereas “no income group” agree more on fan (72%) and outfits for special occasions (67%). Since many retired persons and housewives reported no income, most probably their family background influenced their responses. Therefore their present income status has little influence over their identification of index items.

**Table- 12 Deprivation Index by Annual Income (N=1,914)**  
(in percentage\*)

Annual income	Deprivation Index						
	2 meals	Milk	Pillow	Shoes	Fan	Meat	Outfit
Nothing	82.4	81.9	64.8	78.9	71.9	54.8	66.8
Up to Tk.11,999	84.3	73.6	75.3	70.6	60.1	49.1	45.3
Tk.12,000-Tk.19,999	88.4	85.2	82.0	68.8	66.7	62.4	59.3
Tk.20,000-Tk.100,000	91.0	86.6	82.0	80.5	69.8	59.6	63.1

\* Each cell represents the row percentage of each income bracket along “yes” response to each item of index

### (6) Gender and Deprivation Index

Table-13 shows that there is a consistent pattern of relationship between gender and deprivation index: the females agree more than males on all six items— 3-meal, baby milk, celebration of festivals, savings, fan and outfit. In fact, except fan, all these six items have some gender tint. Since females are more concerned about baby milk, food, festivities, outfit etc., they appear to have a clear gender bias. This shows that perception of deprivation has distinct gender grounding.

**Table-13 Deprivation Index by Gender (N=1,914)**  
(in percentage\*)

Gender	Deprivation Index					
	3 meals	Milk	Festivals	Savings	Fan	Outfit
Female	93.9	86.7	83.6	73.1	68.0	63.9
Male	89.4	72.8	74.0	66.9	61.1	45.2

\* Each cell represents the row percentage of each occupational category along “yes” response to each item of index

### Conclusion:

From the above study, it is found that Bangladesh’s definition of poverty emphasizes incorporation of 7 items – three meals a day for children, two meals a day for adults, quilt for every member of the household, milk for babies, celebration of religious festivals, pillow for every member of the household, and one pair of all-weather shoes. Given the dearth of studies in this area, it is extremely difficult to draw any comparative conclusion. Further studies in this field are required. What is evident in the midst of statistical maze is the fact that perception of poverty is linked to certain socio-economic and demographic variables though the trend is not consistent and clear at times. This was also evident in the case of proportional deprivation score as found by Halleröd (1994). From this study, it can be concluded that the wholesale importation of economic definition and measurement of poverty has cast a disastrous spell in the sociological research of poverty. To anchor poverty in the given spimes (Rahnema,1993), it is absolutely necessary to abandon economic notion as well as the so-called objective definition. The experience of poverty

is specific to time and space, therefore it is society-subjective and in this sense, normative. A proper sociological definition of poverty and its measurement should begin with normative deprivation, preferably consensual one rather than with universalistic ideal-type.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> In England, the interest on the estimate of the household ratio or extent of poverty is linked with political agenda. This is why King and other investigators were interested in the number of paupers. Thus the scientific study of poverty dates from the investigations of Booth (1889) and Rowntree (1901) at the end of the 19th century. It was Booth's *Life and Labour* (1892-7) survey of London, started in the East End in the 1880s, that combined the elements of first-hand observation with a systematic attempt to measure the extent of poverty. He drew up a map of poverty in London based on the street as his unit of analysis. The early account of Eden, *The State of the Poor* published in 3 volumes in 1797 contained data from over 100 parishes and details of family budgets. In the style of the time, the full title of the book is a catalogue of its contents: "*The State of the Poor: or a history of the labouring classes in England, from the Conquest to the present period; in which are particularly considered, their domestic economy, with respect to diet, dress, fuel, and habitation; and the various plans which, from time to time, have been proposed and adopted for the relief of the poor: together with parochial reports relative to the administration of work-houses, and houses of industry; the state of the Friendly Societies, and other public institutions; in several agricultural, commercial and manufacturing, districts. With a large appendix; containing a comparative and chronological table of the prices of labour, of provisions, and of other commodities; an account of the poor in Scotland; and many original documents on subjects of national importance.*" Engels (1892) and Mayhew (1861) provided insight into the condition of the poor in urban England. Recently, the social effects of early industrialization is well documented in *From Artisans to Paupers: Economic Change and Poverty in London, 1790-1870* by Green (1995) and in *Poverty, Inequality and Health in Britain, 1800-2000: A Reader* edited by Smith, Darling and Shaw (2001).

<sup>ii</sup> Rowntree (1901) intended to compare the situation in York as a typical provincial town with that found by Booth (1889) in London. His method represented a significant departure in that it was concerned with individual family incomes. He also developed a poverty standard based on estimates of nutritional and other requirements, rent and sundries.

<sup>iii</sup> Bowley pioneered the development of sample survey methods in his survey of the working-class households in Reading during 1912-13 (Bowley, 1913) and Five Towns survey in 1915 (Bowley and Burnett-Hurst, 1915). Following these, a many local studies were subsequently conducted. Rowntree himself repeated his survey of York in 1936 (Rowntree, 1942) and 1950 (Rowntree and Lavers, 1951), which demonstrated the effectiveness of the post-1948 British welfare state on the elimination of poverty by the combination of full employment and the new social benefits. Doubt was cast to such survey findings and using secondary analysis of a national survey, Townsend and Abel-Smith (1965) showed that in 1960 about two million people fell below the social security safety net level. This led Townsend (1979) to undertake his massive survey of UK during 1960s and conceptualize poverty as the relative deprivation and asserted that poverty in Britain did not decline as claimed by Rowntree and other subsequent surveys.

<sup>iv</sup> Townsend (1979:46-49) criticizes the U.S. notion of poverty as static and proposes a concept of relative poverty grounded in the idea of deprivation, which are of three kinds: (a) objective, (b) normative and (c) subjective.

<sup>v</sup> In the United States, poverty line developed by Hunter in 1904 was used in a series of studies to produce 'minimum comfort' and other budgets for New York City. In 1949 the Joint Committee on the Economic Report published on low income families. During the 1960s the problem of poverty received systematic study,. However previous work of Galbraith (1958), Lampman (1959) and Harnngton (1962) aroused the attention of the public, politicians and academics.

<sup>vi</sup> Supplementary benefit is a means-tested cash benefit paid by the state to people whose income did not reach a level deemed appropriate by Parliament for subsistence.

<sup>vii</sup> In 1988 supplementary benefit was replaced by income support. This is also commonly practiced in most European countries. This measure has dramatically increased the head count ratio of poverty throughout 1980s before falling from the mid-1990s onwards and reached its peak in 2004 to 16 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent in 1979 (Flaherty et al., 2004:43).

<sup>viii</sup> The three composite indexes are measured as follows:

**(i) Human Development Index (HDI):** The HDI is a summary measure of human development in three basic dimensions, (a) a long and healthy life, (b) knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate (with  $\frac{1}{3}$  weight) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with  $\frac{1}{3}$  weight) and (c) a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita PPP US\$1 for low-income countries like Bangladesh. Once the dimension indices have been calculated, HDI is estimated as a simple average of the three dimension indices (Anand and Sen, 1994):  

$$\text{HDI} = \frac{1}{3} (\text{life expectancy index}) + \frac{1}{3} (\text{education index}) + \frac{1}{3} (\text{GDP index})$$

**(ii) Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) for the low income countries:** HPI-1 measures deprivation in the three basic dimensions of human development captured in the HDI, (a) a long and healthy life as measured by the probability at birth

of not surviving to age 40, (b) knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and (c) a decent standard of living as measured by the percentage of the population not using improved water sources and the percentage of children under five who are underweight (Anand and Sen, 1997).

$$\text{HPI-1} = \left[ \frac{1}{3} (\text{probability at birth of not surviving to age 40} \times 100^3 + \text{adult literacy rate}^3 + \text{unweighted average of population not using improved water sources and underweight children under age five}^3) \right]^{\frac{1}{3}}$$

**(iii) Gender-Related Development Index (GDI):** GDI is an adjusted HDI to reflect the inequalities between men and women. It is calculated from the unweighted average of three component indices, (a) equally distributed life expectancy index, (b) equally distributed education index and (c) equally distributed income index (Anand and Sen, 1995).  $\text{GDI} = \frac{1}{3} (\text{life expectancy index}) + \frac{1}{3} (\text{education index}) + \frac{1}{3} (\text{income index})$

<sup>ix</sup> “An adequate concept of poverty should include all the most important areas in which people of either gender are deprived and perceived as incapacitated in different societies and local contexts” (OECD, 2001:38). Thus it includes five dimensional capability deprivations as an index of poverty. They are: 1. **Economic capabilities:** ability to earn an income, to consume and to have assets, which are all key to food security, material well-being and social status. 2. **Human capabilities:** health, education, nutrition, cleans water and shelter. These are crucial means to improving livelihoods. 3. **Political capabilities:** human rights, a voice and some influence over public policies and political priorities. Deprivation of basic political freedoms is a major aspect of poverty. 4. **Socio-cultural capabilities:** participation as a valued member of a community. They refer to social status, dignity and other cultural conditions for belonging to a society. 5. **Protective capabilities:** ability to withstand economic and external shocks. They are important for preventing poverty. Insecurity and vulnerability are crucial dimensions of poverty with strong links to all other dimensions.

<sup>x</sup> World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) Sourcebook sets out 5 interrelated dimensions of poverty, (a) income/consumption, (b) health, (c) education, (d) security and (e) empowerment. Generally speaking, urban poverty and vulnerability can be related to three distinctive characteristics of urban life: (i) commoditization or reliance on the cash economy, (ii) environmental hazard stemming from density and hazardous location of settlements, and exposure to multiple pollutants, and (iii) social fragmentation or lack of community and inter-household mechanisms for social security, relative to those in rural areas. Lack of tenure security is considered as a specific dimension of urban poverty and vulnerability (Moser, Gatehouse and Garcia, 1996).

<sup>xi</sup> Under DCI method, two types of poor are distinguished, (i) hardcore poor and (ii) absolute poor. Hardcore poor refers to having less than 1,805 k.cal per person per day, whereas absolute poor means having less than 2,122 k.cal per person per day (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2004: 9). The CBN method constructs poverty line, which represent the level of per capita expenditure at which the members of households can be expected to meet their basic needs, food and non-food. The functional form of the model is:

$$1ny = a + bx + e$$

Where  $y$ =per capita monthly expenditure, food and non-food  
 $x$ =per capita per day calorie intake  
 $e$ =disturbance term

Using a price index, cost of living is estimated for a base year (1991-92), and then updated for 1995-96 and 2000. Making comparisons of poverty rates over time requires that the basic-needs bundles used to estimate poverty lines in different years are of constant value in real terms. The allowance for non-food consumption yields two poverty lines, (i) lower: which incorporates a minimal allowance for non-food good for those who could just afford the food requirement, and (ii) upper: which makes a generous allowance for non-food spending for those who just attained the food requirement (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001:55-56).

<sup>xii</sup> In the study by the Asian Development Bank (1997), urban absolute and hardcore income poverty lines are determined at Tk. 3500 (US \$88 equivalent) and Tk. 2500 (US \$63 equivalent) per household per month respectively. Thus the concept of poverty and its measurement has remained heavily economic, and all poverty measurement ultimately boils down to income poverty. Even Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) have an income component.

<sup>xiii</sup> To capture the dynamic of urban property, both slum and non-slum poor have been studied by Ahmed (2004d) using AV Framework of Moser et. al. (1996). In addition, the notion of capacity poor by Sen (1983) has also been used to locate the poverty gap and to construct a scenario of the heterogeneity of urban poor.

<sup>xiv</sup> A discourse of poverty is a package of assumptions—often unspoken or taken for granted—about the nature of poverty, the nature of the people whose poverty is being discussed, and the nature of the knowledge that is relevant to dealing with poverty.

<sup>xv</sup> The construction of poverty definition can become meaningful only when it is anchored in the *spimes* or socio-cultural space-times (Rahnema, 1993:159).



<sup>xvi</sup> Rowntree's third study of poverty in York (Rowntree and Lavers, 1951) showed much lower levels of poverty than his earlier studies. It confirmed the impact of welfare state in reducing poverty. Townsend's approach is drawn from the relativist critiques of the postwar complacency based on Rowntree's work mentioned above. His definition of consensual poverty follows: "Poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation. ... The term is understood objectively rather than subjectively. Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities ... I have suggested that an alternative, and more objective, conception [of poverty] might be founded on 'relative deprivation' -- by which I mean the absence or inadequacy of those diets, amenities, standards, services and activities which are common or customary in society. People are deprived of the conditions of life which ordinarily define membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfil membership of society, they are in poverty" (Townsend, 1979: 31, 915).a

<sup>xvii</sup> "People are relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life - that is, the diets, amenities, standards and services - which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfill membership of society they may be said to be in poverty" (Townsend, 1993:36).

<sup>xviii</sup> Townsend selected 12 items which were relevant to the whole population rather than to particular groups. He gave each household a score on a deprivation index. The higher score meant more deprivation. He compared the deprivation score to their total income. However, he did not find any single item by itself or pair of items by themselves, to be "symptomatic of general deprivation" (Townsend, 1979: 252). Thus he concludes: "People are idiosyncratic and will indulge in certain luxuries and apply certain prohibitions, for religious, moral, educational and other reasons, whether they are rich or poor. Families in certain situations are not necessarily deprived if they do not have a week's holiday; or if they do not have an afternoon or evening outside the home; or if they do not have a Sunday joint, because they may have other compensating activities or customs" (Townsend, 1979: 252).

<sup>xix</sup> He defines it as "a point in descending the income scale below which deprivation increased disproportionately to the fall in income" (Townsend, 1979: 271). Townsend described these households as suffering from poverty. They constituted nearly 23 per cent of the population. According to him the government rates for means-tested benefits were more than 50 per cent too low, falling short of the minimum need. As income falls, families withdrew from ordinary family-type things resulting in social exclusion.

<sup>xx</sup> Townsend's formulation is considered as "ground-breaking" step in the pursuit of a relative definition of poverty (Alcock, 1993:71). However, his list of deprivation indicators was criticized as it did not take into account of taste as an explanation of the lack of particular indicators (Piachaud, 1981; 1987) and the statistical technique which produced the threshold by the use of modal value (Piachaud, 1981; Desai, 1986). A reanalysis of Townsend's data by Desai (1986) produced the same threshold confirming the validity of Townsend's overall approach. It is argued that Townsend's approach and the threshold are a behavioral and not a consensual definition of poverty line as they involve the judgment of experts in the determination of acceptable indicators of deprivation (Alcock, 1993:71). These deficiencies were taken into account in later studies.

<sup>xxi</sup> But Mack and Lansley (1985:41-43, 45, and 47) differed from Townsend in two important ways. First, they chose indicators of deprivation from series of items classified as necessities or non-necessities by respondents of a national survey. Second, those reporting lack of a specific item, a further question was asked whether this was because they did not want it, or it was something they wanted, but could not afford (Fisher, 2001). If the respondents answered that it was a matter of choice, then they were not classified as being deprived of that item. Thus they avoided the criticism that Piachaud and others had directed against Townsend.

<sup>xxii</sup> Mack and Lansley did not confine themselves to one segment of human needs. They viewed potential human needs "not only in terms of personal 'consumption' but also...in terms of *social* activities" (Mack and Lansley, 1985: 44). In their instructions to Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) for designing the Breadline Britain survey, they noted that the socially acceptable minimum standard of living that they wanted to explore "may cover not only the basic essentials for survival (such as food) but also access, or otherwise, to participating in society and being able to play a social role" (Mack and Lansley, 1985:50). Their work is referred to as "the whole enterprise" which consists of the television series, a booklet, and the book. It is praised as "a fine model for social investigation in the eighties" (MacGregor, 1985:575).

<sup>xxiii</sup> This approach has subsequently been used in surveys conducted in other European countries. For example, using indicators drawn from Mack and Lansley's, the work of Irish researchers examines households that experience basic deprivation (Callahan, Nolan, and Whelan, 1993). This approach was subsequently used by Joanna Mack, Stewart Lansley, David Gordon, Christina Pantazis, and colleagues in the 1990 Breadline Britain survey, conducted by MORI for the LWT series *Breadline Britain in the 1990s*, with additional funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for analysis of the data (Gordon and Pantazis, 1997b). Moreover, the tradition was also further carried by Gordon, Pantazis, Townsend, and colleagues in the 1999 *Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain*, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and conducted by the Office for National Statistics (Gordon et al., 2000).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Veit-Wilson (1987:200) argues that it is a majoritarian rather than a consensual approach to poverty as it ignores important cultural differences in living standards within the British society. However, it initiated a theoretical debate on the decision to designate as necessities those items identified as such by 50 percent--rather than some other percent--of the population.

<sup>xxv</sup> "It is to the credit of London Weekend Television (LWT) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that they have funded the kind of detailed study of deprivation in Britain that the government and the academic research councils have not been prepared to finance" (Gordon and Pantazis, 1997b: 1). Similar appreciation also came from Harold Frayman (1991).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Because these six items did not add to the validity to the definition of deprivation of necessities as they did not distinguish between rich and poor.

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