



Living Longer, Living Harder
Ageing in Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh

av

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Abstract

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The overall aim of this dissertation is to understand the lived experience of ageing in extreme poverty in developing countries, in this case Bangladesh, a country that hosts a large number of extreme poor and ageing population. By focusing on the role of the family, the most neglected pillar of welfare, this dissertation sheds new light on the microprocesses of welfare politics. By doing so, it unravels the complexity and precariousness that characterises the lived experiences of the older persons, and the relational embeddedness of ageing in extreme poverty, which often makes bargaining, under conditions of scarce resources, an essential process.

This dissertation seeks to make contribution at the empirical, theoretical, and methodological levels. *Empirically*, it explores processes of generational transfer of disadvantages that create the conditions leading to the experience of extreme poor late life. *Theoretically* it helps us reconceptualise extreme poverty as ‘agency poverty’ associated with ageing. By adopting a life course approach, the dissertation advances our understanding of ageing and extreme poverty being inspired by postmodern and postcolonial in-sights, thus highlighting the importance of othering and agency erosion mechanisms. The dissertation also formulates the concept of ‘relational security’, arguing that the older persons’ search for wellbeing and security primarily revolves around their relations. The level of ‘relational security’ is therefore a crucial marker of wellbeing and security during the late life. Lastly, *methodologically*, and relying on an activist approach, the dissertation challenges some of the conventional ways of doing research. It emphasises the need both to duly recognise the power and agency of the vulnerable research participants and to facilitate a space to exercise their power and agency. It also advocates for researchers to be more mindful about their accountability to the research participants.

The dissertation discusses the policy implications of the findings and highlights that poverty policies and interventions should be concerned about ‘agency poverty’ and add provisions that contribute towards restoring older persons’ agency by, for example, empowering them politically. Policymakers also need to be aware that individuals’ different levels of relational embeddedness play a critical role in determining the outcome of policy interventions tackling extreme poverty in old age.

Keywords: Ageing, Agency, Extreme Poverty, Generational Bargain, Life History Interviews, Othering, Postcolonial, Qualitative, Social Policy, Welfare Regimes

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