

Eliciting, applying and exploring multidimensional welfare weights: evidence from the field

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Paper Abstract:

By combining primary data on dimension importance collected in the field from three different samples (a total of 1,402 subjects) and nationally representative survey data, we offer a twofold contribution. The first one comes from an unincentivised questionnaire experiment, where the significance of the treatment effect shows that life domains are valued differently in a poverty vs a wellbeing frameworks. This opens the door to what we call a ‘concordance paradox’, and poses important questions not only on the anatomy of dimension importance but also on the essence of the notions of poverty and wellbeing. Our second offer relates to the so-called ‘weight or not to weight’ debate – i.e. to the issue of whether alternative sets of weights lead to qualitative differences in empirical analyses. On the basis of the sets of weights we derive in the field (from a student sample, a ‘development experts’ sample a more heterogeneous sample), we find that they do. Depending on which set of dimension importance scores is employed, opposite conclusions are reached on the trend of multidimensional poverty and wellbeing in the Dominican Republic.