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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), recognize that eliminating poverty and achieving gender parity are critical to fostering overall wellbeing and ensuring that everyone has access to quality healthcare and social protection. Particularly in the modern health and care sectors, the relationship between gender equality and ending poverty is essential to advancing health, welfare, and sustainable development. Women and other marginalized groups are frequently disproportionately impacted by poverty, lack of access to healthcare, and economic opportunities, demonstrating the close connection between poverty and gender inequality. Addressing these issues is not only essential for improving the health outcomes of vulnerable populations but also for creating equitable, resilient healthcare systems.

The universal nature of health and wellbeing underscores its centrality to sustainable development, with healthcare systems acting as a critical pillar for economic stability and social progress (Meka et al., 2024). In the fields of health and care, poverty restricts access to essential services, and gender inequality makes differences in workforce participation, education, and healthcare delivery worse. To achieve sustainable development in the healthcare industry, inclusive policies that tackle these discrepancies, empower marginalized populations, and guarantee equal opportunity for men and women to succeed are necessary. According to Meka et al. (2024), fostering justice in these areas is morally required and a prerequisite for attaining long-term economic and social progress.

Introduction to concepts

Wellbeing refers to the overall quality of life and encompasses various dimensions, including physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Wellbeing is measured using subjective indicators, such as self-reported life satisfaction and emotional states, and objective indicators, including income, education, and health metrics, which together provide a comprehensive view of an individual's quality of life (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). It is a holistic concept that signifies not just the absence of illness but also the presence of positive attributes such as happiness, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose (Dodge et al., 2012). To improve societal cohesiveness and economic stability, people's capacity to manage stress, participate in constructive activities, and give back to their communities is influenced by their level of wellbeing (Huppert, 2009). Additionally, health practitioners and politicians should take wellbeing into account because it is associated with better health outcomes, lower healthcare expenditures, and increased productivity (Ryff, 2014).

Sustainability is the practice of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, balancing environmental, social, and economic considerations. Sustainable development is a development paradigm that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses three interlinked dimensions: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Brundtland, 1987). This all-encompassing strategy makes sure that social inequity and environmental deterioration are not caused by economic advancement. Because it tackles the urgent global issues of poverty, climate change, and resource depletion while fostering social justice and resilience, sustainable development is essential. (United Nations, 2015). By fostering sustainable practices, we can create a balanced relationship between human activities and the Earth's ecosystems, ensuring a stable and thriving planet for future generations (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1946). This broad definition emphasizes that health encompasses various dimensions, including emotional and psychological wellbeing, which are essential for individuals to lead fulfilling lives and perform daily activities effectively. Health is crucial because it directly impacts individuals' quality of life, productivity, and longevity. A healthy population contributes to economic growth and social stability, reducing healthcare costs and enhancing overall societal wellbeing (Marmot,

2017). Furthermore, promoting health can help prevent chronic diseases, improve mental health, and address health inequalities, fostering a more equitable society (Bodenheimer and Berry-Millett, 2009).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interlinked global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals aim to address a wide range of global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice (United Nations, 2015). Specific targets and indicators are included with each goal, giving nations a framework for implementing policies and tracking their progress towards sustainable development. The SDGs are significant because of their universal application and the comprehensive strategy they encourage, which guarantees that social inclusion and environmental sustainability coexist with economic prosperity. By providing a clear framework for collaboration among governments, civil society, and the private sector, the SDGs encourage collective action and mobilization of resources to create a sustainable future for all (Sachs, 2015). Furthermore, the SDGs are vital for addressing the urgent global issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need for resilience and sustainable recovery strategies (United Nations, 2020).

Goal 1. No Poverty

Evaluating the UK's progress in meeting the goal for no poverty

No poverty refers to the eradication of extreme poverty and the reduction of all forms of poverty worldwide. It involves ensuring that individuals and families have access to essential resources, such as food, clean water, healthcare, education, and safe shelter. The concept is enshrined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1), which calls for ending poverty in all its forms by promoting economic growth, creating jobs, and implementing social protection systems (United Nations, 2015). It also emphasizes addressing inequality and providing opportunities for vulnerable populations, ensuring that no one is left behind in efforts to improve quality of life and reduce hardship (World Bank, 2020).

1. The Child Poverty Strategy (2014-2017)

The **Child Poverty Strategy** was developed to reduce the number of children living in poverty across the UK. It focused on three key areas: supporting families in work, improving living standards, and raising educational attainment. The strategy aimed to break the cycle of poverty by helping parents secure employment, access affordable childcare, and improve the home environment, ensuring children have a stable start in life. It also introduced reforms to the welfare system to support low-income families more effectively (HM Government, 2014).

2. The Universal Credit Programme

Universal Credit is a welfare reform initiative aimed at simplifying the benefits system and reducing poverty. It replaces six means-tested benefits with a single monthly payment for working-aged people. By encouraging employment through financial incentives, Universal Credit is designed to help individuals and families move out of poverty by making it easier to transition into work while still receiving support. It also provides additional benefits, such as housing assistance and support for children and disabled individuals, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to addressing poverty (Department for Work and Pensions, 2018).

Critical Review of the Child Poverty Strategy (2014-2017) and Universal Credit Programme

1. Child Poverty Strategy (2014-2017)

The Child Poverty Strategy was a comprehensive plan that sought to lower child poverty through education, better living conditions, and job assistance. The strategy received harsh criticism for relying too much on employment as a way out of poverty, even though it made significant strides in raising awareness of the issue of child poverty. One of the main concerns

was that, despite having jobs, many families still live in poverty due to low wages, precarious employment, and insufficient childcare support (Lansley and Mack, 2015). The strategy's focus on getting parents into work did not adequately address in-work poverty or the rising costs of living, such as housing and utilities, which disproportionately affect low-income families (Brewer et al., 2019).

Moreover, the strategy faced challenges in meeting its targets, especially after changes in welfare policies that critics argued increased child poverty rates. For example, the cap on welfare benefits and cuts to tax credits disproportionately impacted families with children, limiting the effectiveness of the strategy in tackling poverty comprehensively (Hood and Waters, 2017). As a result, although the strategy was well-intentioned, it failed to fully address the systemic issues of income inequality and living costs that perpetuate child poverty in the UK.

2. Universal Credit Programme

Universal Credit was introduced as a major reform of the UK welfare system, with the aim of simplifying benefits and encouraging people to work by removing the disincentive of losing benefits when transitioning into employment. In theory, the single payment structure and gradual reduction in benefits as earnings increase were intended to provide a smoother path out of poverty (Millar and Bennett, 2017). However, in practice, the programme has faced substantial criticism. One of the key issues has been the five-week waiting period for the first payment, which has caused many claimants to get indebted, fall behind on their rent, and experience food insecurity (Reeves and Loopstra, 2020). This delay has proven extremely detrimental to low-income households that lack the resources to bridge the gap, worsening poverty instead of improving it. Furthermore, many users have experienced financial hardship because of the system's complexity, administrative mistakes, and delays, undercutting the program's aim of alleviating poverty (Cheetham et al., 2019).

Another major concern has been the **impact of Universal Credit on vulnerable groups**, including disabled people, single parents, and those with mental health issues, who have struggled to meet the conditions of the programme, such as the requirement to look for work or attend regular job appointments (Patrick, 2020). For these groups, the punitive nature of benefit sanctions has worsened poverty rather than encouraging long-term employment or financial independence.

Both the **Child Poverty Strategy (2014-2017)** and **Universal Credit** reflect the UK government's focus on employment as a key mechanism for reducing poverty. However, this approach fails to fully consider the complexities of modern poverty, including in-work poverty, rising living costs, and the barriers faced by vulnerable groups. The Child Poverty Strategy lacks the resilience needed to address underlying economic injustices, while the design flaws in Universal Credit have caused many people to fall into greater poverty due to administrative challenges and delays. These programs' effectiveness hinges on a more all-encompassing, inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of poverty, including housing costs, income disparity, and access to high-quality social services, in addition to employment.

Evaluation of the UK Government's Progress in Implementing "No Poverty"

Progress in Reducing Poverty Rates

The UK's poverty rate, particularly among working-age adults and children, remains a significant issue despite various initiatives. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022), approximately 22% of the UK population lives in relative poverty, defined as households earning less than 60% of median income. Due in part to austerity measures and social changes like Universal Credit, the number of children living in poverty has increased, surpassing 4 million in recent years (Bourquin, Joyce, and Norris Keiller, 2020). Although employment has been marketed as a major means of escaping poverty, the rise in in-work poverty—two-thirds of impoverished children reside in working households—has restricted the effectiveness of this strategy (JRF, 2022).

Child Poverty and Austerity

The **Child Poverty Strategy (2014-2017)**, which aimed to reduce child poverty by supporting parents into employment and improving living conditions, has not significantly improved child poverty rates. The abolition of key targets from the **Child Poverty Act** in 2016 further weakened the government's accountability in addressing this issue (Brewer et al., 2019). Additionally, austerity measures and cuts to welfare spending—such as reductions in tax credits and housing benefits—have disproportionately affected low-income families, contributing to a rise in child poverty. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) warned that such cuts would continue to drive child poverty upwards unless more substantial investment was made in welfare and social services (Hood and Waters, 2017).

Recent Developments and Future Prospects

While the UK government has introduced some initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, such as increasing the National Living Wage and implementing job creation schemes, these measures have been insufficient in tackling the root causes of poverty. The government's **Levelling Up Agenda**, intended to reduce regional inequalities, has yet to demonstrate substantial results in terms of poverty reduction. Critics argue that without significant reforms to welfare policies, affordable housing provision, and childcare, poverty levels will remain high, particularly among children and marginalized groups (Mackley, 2021).

The UK government's main welfare reform initiatives have produced a range of results, with little progress made in enacting No Poverty. In the near future, the UK is unlikely to reach its No Poverty targets unless it tackles the underlying problems that fuel inequality, especially in-work poverty, and housing affordability. Recommendations for Achieving the Goal of "No Poverty" in the UK

Achieving the goal of **No Poverty** requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the systemic barriers contributing to poverty. Below are several recommendations supported by evidence from numerous studies and reports:

The recommendations for no poverty are the following.

1. Enhance Universal Credit and Welfare Support

To reform the Universal Credit system to reduce waiting times, increase payment levels, and eliminate punitive sanctions that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

The supporting evidence for this research indicates that the five-week waiting period for Universal Credit payments often leads to financial hardship, food insecurity, and increased reliance on food banks (Reeves and Loopstra, 2020). Increased use of food banks was linked to the introduction of Universal Credit, according to the Trussell Trust, underscoring the urgent need for legislative changes to ensure low-income households receive timely assistance (Trussell Trust, 2020). Eliminating punitive measures would guarantee that people in need can get the help they need without running the danger of experiencing more financial instability (Patrick, 2020).

2. Increase the Minimum Wage and Support In-Work Poverty

Raise the National Living Wage (NLW) to ensure that full-time workers earn a wage sufficient to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

The Living Wage Foundation estimates that around 4 million people in the UK are in in-work poverty, many of whom are employed in low-wage jobs (Living Wage Foundation, 2023). Increasing the NLW to a living wage would not only help workers meet their basic needs but also reduce dependency on welfare benefits. Studies have shown that raising the minimum wage can lead to improved health outcomes for low-income workers, as financial stability positively impacts mental and physical health (Baker et al., 2019).

3. Improve Mental Health Support and Wellbeing Initiatives

Enhance mental health support services, particularly for low-income families and individuals facing poverty-related stressors.

Mental health issues are prevalent among low-income populations, exacerbating challenges related to employment and financial stability (McManus et al., 2016). Support for mental health has been shown to dramatically increase people's capacity to find and keep a job, which lowers poverty levels (Graham et al., 2021). Holistic care that considers both mental and physical health requirements can be provided by incorporating mental health services into primary care and community support programs.

Health Inequalities and Access to Care

The UK's ongoing health disparities are one of the main obstacles to achieving the No Poverty objective. According to research, those who live in poverty have worse health outcomes than those who are more fortunate.

This disparity is evident in metrics such as life expectancy, with a reported gap of nine years between the richest and poorest populations (Marmot, 2020). Access to healthcare services is often limited for low-income groups, who may face barriers such as affordability, transportation issues, and a lack of availability of services in their local areas (Buchan et al., 2020). The implementation of the **NHS Long Term Plan** aimed to address these disparities; however, funding constraints and ongoing austerity measures have impeded progress, perpetuating a cycle of poor health and poverty (Buchan et al., 2020).

2. In-Work Poverty and Mental Health

The rise of **in-work poverty** poses a significant challenge to the health and wellbeing of individuals striving to improve their economic circumstances. While employment is often viewed as a pathway out of poverty, many jobs in the UK are characterized by low wages, unstable hours, and insufficient benefits (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022). This precarious employment situation has a detrimental effect on mental health, as individuals grapple with the stress and insecurity associated with low-paying jobs, leading to issues such as anxiety and depression (McManus et al., 2016).

Addressing the complex nature of poverty requires the efficient integration of social and health care services, which presents another difficulty. In addition to medical care, many low-income families also need social support services including daycare, mental health care, and housing aid.

The UK government's efforts to integrate health and social care through initiatives like the **Better Care Fund** have faced barriers, including insufficient funding, and varying local governance structures that hinder collaborative approaches (NHS England, 2019).

3. Sustainable Development and Environmental Factors

Sustainable development encompasses not only economic growth but also social equity and environmental sustainability. Poverty adversely affects individuals' ability to make healthy lifestyle choices, as low-income communities often lack access to fresh food, safe housing, and recreational facilities (Public Health England, 2019). Another challenge is the effective integration of social and health care services, which is necessary to address the multifaceted character of poverty. Many low-income families require social support services including childcare, mental health care, and housing assistance in addition to medical care.

Goal 2. Gender Equality

Evaluating the UKs progress in meeting the goal for gender equality

Gender equality refers to the state in which individuals of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in all areas of life, including social, economic, and political spheres. Regardless of gender identity or expression, it entails making sure that everyone may engage fully and freely without facing prejudice, discrimination, or stereotyping. Dismantling the structural obstacles and cultural norms that support inequality, creating an atmosphere where different viewpoints are respected, and giving people the freedom to make decisions that impact their lives and general well-being are all necessary to achieve gender equality. Gender equality is essential for creating inclusive societies that promote fairness, justice, and sustainable development.

The Gender Equality Strategy (2020): This government initiative outlines the UK's commitment to promoting gender equality across various sectors, including employment, education, and health. It aims to address issues such as the gender pay gap, violence against women, and representation in leadership positions. The strategy emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders to create a more inclusive society where gender equality is prioritized.

The Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Programme (WEGEP): Launched by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), this program aims to enhance the social,

economic, and political empowerment of women and girls in developing countries. The initiative's main goals are to ensure equal access to education and work, empower women's leadership, and provide resources and assistance to solve obstacles to gender equality.

Critical Review of the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Programme (WEGEP)

The Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Programme (WEGEP) represents a significant commitment by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to address gender disparities in developing countries. One of its strengths is its integrated approach, recognizing that women's empowerment is multifaceted and requires addressing social, economic, and political barriers. WEGEP seeks to establish an enabling environment where women can flourish by allocating funds and supporting programs that advance women's leadership, educational opportunities, and economic growth. To guarantee that interventions are lasting and culturally appropriate, the program also places a strong emphasis on working in conjunction with neighborhood organizations (McKinsey & Company, 2015). However, despite these strengths, the programme has faced criticisms regarding its scope and implementation. Critics argue that while the initiative focuses on empowering women, it often fails to engage men and boys in discussions about gender equality, potentially leading to resistance or backlash against the changes being proposed (UN Women, 2020).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of WEGEP can be hampered by the contextual challenges in the countries it aims to serve. Political instability, cultural norms, and economic barriers can limit the impact of the programmer's initiatives. For example, in regions where gender-based violence is prevalent, empowering women through education and economic opportunities may not be sufficient if systemic issues remain unaddressed (Buvinic & O'Donnell, 2016). The success of WEGEP relies on a comprehensive understanding of the local context and the integration of gender equality initiatives into broader development strategies. Additionally, continuous monitoring and assessment are necessary to gauge the program's effectiveness and make sure it adjusts to the changing requirements of women and girls in various geographical areas (World Bank, 2020). In summary, WEGEP offers a strong framework for advancing gender equality, but its success depends on its capacity to adjust to regional circumstances and involve every member of the community in the fight for gender equality.

The UK government has made notable progress in implementing gender equality through various initiatives and legislative measures over the past few years. Key achievements include the introduction of the Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations in 2017, which mandates that

organizations with 250 or more employees report their gender pay gaps annually, thereby increasing transparency and accountability (UK Government, 2017). Initiatives like the Hampton-Alexander Review, which established goals for female representation on boards and in senior management positions within FTSE 350 businesses, further demonstrate the government's dedication to elevating women in leadership roles. (Hampton-Alexander Review, 2020). Despite these advancements, challenges remain, particularly regarding the persistence of the gender pay gap, which has shown only gradual reduction and is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on women's employment (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Overall, while significant strides have been made, ongoing efforts are necessary to ensure sustainable progress towards true gender equality in the UK.

Significant strides have been made by governments worldwide toward gender equality, with policies increasingly focused on empowering women, reducing gender pay gaps, and addressing gender-based violence. Legislative reforms have addressed issues including maternity leave, access to education, and job discrimination in numerous nations, demonstrating a strong commitment to attaining gender parity (UN Women, 2023). However, progress is uneven and often impeded by cultural, economic, and political barriers, particularly in lower-income regions where systemic inequalities remain entrenched. According to data from international organisations, economic inequality still exists, and women are still under-represented in top positions, despite improvements in their representation in leadership roles (World Economic Forum, 2022). Additionally, issues like unpaid domestic labor and limited access to health services disproportionately affect women, indicating that while advancements have been made, considerable challenges remain (OECD, 2023).

Implementing gender equality in health, wellbeing, and sustainable development in the UK's healthcare system faces significant challenges. Gender disparities persist in healthcare access, outcomes, and the social determinants of health, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized gender groups. Structural biases in medical research, healthcare policy, and clinical practice often prioritize male-centric data, leading to misdiagnosis and inadequate treatment for women (Womersley & Ripullone, 2021). Socially driven determinants like economic inequality and unpaid caregiving roles further exacerbate health inequalities (Bambra et al., 2020). Furthermore, austerity measures and cuts to public services have disproportionately affected services relied upon by women, particularly mental health, and social care (Beresford et al., 2022). Addressing these challenges requires policy reforms that embed gender-sensitive approaches and tackle both direct and indirect health determinants, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5 and SDG 3) to foster a more equitable

healthcare system (World Health Organization, 2020). Achieving gender equality is a complex objective that calls for adjustments in the fields of education, policy, the economy, and society. These are some important suggestions backed up by data from case studies and research.

These are a few recommendations for achieving this goal.

1. Promote Gender-Inclusive Policies in the Workplace

Organizations should implement and enforce gender-inclusive policies, such as equal pay, parental leave, and flexible working hours. These policies reduce gender disparities and support work-life balance, which is often a greater challenge for women due to societal expectations around caregiving (World Economic Forum, 2020).

According to research, companies with gender-inclusive policies experience lower turnover and higher job satisfaction among employees (Brewis, 2021). The UN Women's 2020 report also highlights that companies prioritizing gender equality outperform those that do not, with some studies suggesting up to a 15% increase in profitability (UN Women, 2020).

2. Strengthen Educational Access and Support for Women and Girls

Improving access to quality education for girls, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, can help break cycles of poverty and dependency. Programs that provide scholarships, address school safety, and incorporate STEM education for girls are essential (Bose, 2018).

Studies have shown that countries with higher rates of female education exhibit higher economic growth rates, and educated women tend to reinvest more in their families and communities (World Bank, 2019). For example, a study from the World Bank found that every additional year of schooling increases a woman's income by 10-20% (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

3. Address Gender Bias and Discrimination in Leadership Roles

Increasing women's representation in leadership positions, both in government and corporate sectors, can foster more inclusive decision-making and serve as a model for gender equality. Mentorship programs and diversity quotas have been effective strategies in addressing this gap (Hoobler et al., 2018).

Research shows that companies with more women in leadership roles tend to perform better in terms of financial outcomes and social responsibility (Catalyst, 2020). Studies also suggest that mentorship programs that connect women with senior executives increase the likelihood of promotion (Byron, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, prioritizing health and wellbeing is essential for enhancing overall quality of life, productivity, and long-term wellness. This report highlights that a proactive approach—one that includes balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, stress management, and adequate sleep—can have significant benefits not only for physical health but also for mental and emotional wellbeing.

The evidence gathered emphasizes the interconnected nature of lifestyle choices and health outcomes. Policies and initiatives that support accessible healthcare, mental health resources, and wellness education are crucial in enabling individuals to make healthier choices. Additionally, fostering environments in workplaces, schools, and communities that promote

healthy habits can reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases, improve mental resilience, and support a more sustainable approach to public health.

Going forward, a focus on continuous learning, regular health assessments, and community support structures will further empower individuals to maintain and enhance their wellbeing. Embracing an integrated approach that integrates the physical, mental, and social dimensions of health will be key to building a healthier, more resilient society.

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