POVERTY AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY : A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Sociologically, poverty isn't just a lack of money, it's a multidimensional issue creating social exclusion, health crises like malnutrition and disease, poor education, and crime, while perpetuating inequality across generations. It fosters powerlessness, limits potential, and creates social tension by depriving individuals of basic needs and opportunities, impacting health, family stability, and social participation, often requiring systemic changes to address root causes like unequal resource distribution and capitalist structures.

Keywords : introduction, objectives of the study, Methodology, causes of poverty, Social impact of poverty, Findings, Suggestions, Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a condition in which individuals or families are unable to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, and healthcare. It is one of the most serious social problems affecting societies worldwide. Poverty not only affects the lives of individuals but also has a wider impact on communities and society as a whole. In poor communities, limited income, lack of education, and unemployment contribute to low living standards. Poverty often leads to malnutrition, poor health, child labor, and social exclusion. It also increases crime rates, hinders economic development, and creates inequality within society.

Poverty is a condition in which people lack sufficient income, resources, or access to basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare. It affects not only individuals but also society as a whole by contributing to social inequality, crime, poor health, and limited economic growth. This case study aims to examine the causes, consequences, and impact of poverty on a selected community or urban area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the causes of poverty in the community.
- To study the social and economic effects of poverty.
- To analyze the impact of poverty on education, health, and employment.
- To suggest measures for poverty alleviation.

AREA OF STUDY

Hassan is a city and district in south-central Karnataka, India, known as the "temple-architectural capital" for its rich Hoysala heritage, stunning temples like Belur and Halebid, and historical sites such as Shravanabelagola, Belur, Halebid, Sakleshpur. Important trading center with surrounded by coffee, cardamom, and rice plantations. A blend of traditional culture and modern development, with a focus on regional food like Ragi Mudde and Naati Koli Saambar.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to examine the causes of poverty and its impact on society by analyzing living conditions, income levels, education, health, and social challenges in a selected community. Understanding these issues is essential to develop effective strategies for poverty alleviation and social development. 50 peoples select in using the simple random sampling method of collecting the data.

CAUSES OF POVERTY

Unemployment and underemployment

Unemployment refers to a situation where individuals who are of working age, willing to work, and actively seeking a job are unable to find one. It is a primary indicator of economic health, reflecting how effectively a nation utilizes its labor force. Unemployment happens when people are able and willing to work, are actively looking for a job, but cannot find one. Unemployment can make people feel sad and worried. Sometimes, young people cannot find jobs after finishing school. Lack of jobs slows down the growth of a country. Unemployment can cause poverty and social problems. Governments try to create more jobs for everyone.

Underemployment is when people work in jobs that don't fully use their skills, training, or time, like working part-time when they want full-time, or a highly educated person in a low-skill job, representing a hidden form of unemployment where potential is wasted and economic contribution is limited, often due to economic downturns or lack of opportunities. It differs from unemployment by involving inadequate employment, leading to lower productivity, dissatisfaction, and potential poverty. Underemployment occurs when people have jobs, but the jobs don’t fully use their skills, education, or available working time. Underemployment means someone is employed but not to their full potential, either because they work fewer hours than desired (visible) or their job doesn't use their skills, education, or experience (invisible). For example, a college graduate working as a barista or a professional working part-time when they need full-time hours are examples of underemployment, which is distinct from unemployment (being jobless) and reflects inefficient use of labor in the economy.

Low income and irregular wages

Low income refers to households earning significantly less than the median or typical income in a region, often below 60% of the median, making it difficult to meet basic needs like housing, food, and healthcare, and is a key indicator of poverty, with specific definitions varying by country for social programs, housing, and financial aid. While definitions differ (e.g., India's LIG housing uses income brackets like ₹3-6 Lakhs), the core concept involves limited financial resources compared to the general population, leading to challenges in achieving well-being and development. Low income means earning too little money to meet basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare, and education.

Irregular Wages

Irregular wages refer to income that varies in amount or is paid at unpredictable times, common for freelancers, gig workers, or those in seasonal/commission-based jobs, unlike steady salaries. Managing it involves creating a budget based on *average* income, tracking essential expenses (needs vs. wants), building savings for lean periods, and potentially supplementing with side work to cover shortfalls, providing financial stability despite unpredictable paychecks. Irregular wages refer to income that is not steady or predictable.

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Lack of education and skills

Lack of education and skills creates a cycle of poverty by limiting job opportunities, lowering income, and hindering personal development, leading to poorer health, less civic participation, and reduced life expectancy, with significant societal costs and persistent gaps based on gender, location, and wealth. Key factors include poor infrastructure, social inequalities, and inadequate funding, while solutions involve investing in quality, accessible education with relevant skills training. Lack of education and skills means people do not have enough schooling, training, or practical abilities to get stable and well-paying jobs.

Social inequality and discrimination

Social inequality is the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges in society, while discrimination is the negative action or unfair treatment against individuals or groups based on characteristics like race, gender, caste, or religion, with discrimination often reinforcing existing inequalities, creating cycles of disadvantage, and harming mental health, especially for marginalized communities. Both stem from social structures and biases, leading to disparities in education, income, healthcare, and power, but inequality can exist without deliberate discrimination, though discrimination usually stems from inequality-driven prejudice. Social inequality refers to unequal access to resources and opportunities such as education, income, healthcare, and employment among different groups in society. Discrimination occurs when individuals or groups are treated unfairly because of characteristics such as Gender, Race or ethnicity, Religion, Disability

High cost of living and inadequate social support

A high cost of living combined with weak social support creates severe financial, mental, and physical health crises, leading to increased stress, anxiety, depression, food/energy insecurity, isolation, and worse health outcomes, disproportionately harming vulnerable groups like low-income families, women, and the elderly, requiring urgent, multifaceted government and community action to provide financial aid, housing, and robust mental health services. The high cost of living means that basic goods and services are expensive, making it difficult for people—especially low-income earners—to meet their daily needs.

Slower economic development

Slower economic development means a reduced pace of growth in a country's economy, indicated by lower GDP growth, high unemployment, and decreased investment, often stemming from factors like weak demand, structural issues (aging population, de-industrialization), policy errors, or global shocks, leading to less wealth creation and potential stagnation. While sometimes a temporary "slowdown," it can signal deeper, "secular" issues requiring policy attention, impacting business profitability, consumer spending, and overall financial stability.

Education impact on poverty

Children often drop out of school to support family income, Limited access to quality education reduces future opportunities, Families may struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, books, transportation, or digital devices. In some regions, children from poor households may miss school or drop out early to work or help at home. Poor Learning Conditions, Schools in low-income areas often have fewer teachers, overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and weak infrastructure. Lack of electricity, internet, or safe buildings makes learning harder.

Health and Nutrition Challenges, Poverty is linked to malnutrition, illness, and untreated health problems, which reduce concentration and attendance. Hunger makes it harder for students to focus, remember information, and participate in class. Psychological and Emotional Stress, Financial instability can cause stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem in students. Children facing constant stress at home may struggle with behavior, motivation, and confidence at school.

Lower Academic Achievement, Students living in poverty often score lower on tests and are less likely to complete secondary school or attend college. Limited access to tutoring, quiet study spaces, and enrichment activities widens the achievement gap. Reduced Parental Support, Parents in poverty may work long hours or lack formal education, limiting their ability to help with homework or engage with schools.

Possible Positive Interventions, Free school meals and healthcare, Scholarships and fee waivers, Early childhood education programs, Community support, mentoring, and after-school programs. Poverty doesn't reflect a lack of ability—it reflects a lack of opportunity. When economic barriers are reduced, students from low-income backgrounds can achieve just as well as anyone else.

Limited Access to Healthcare

People living in poverty often cannot afford doctor visits, medicines, health insurance, or preventive care. This leads to late diagnosis and untreated illnesses, which can become more serious over time. Poor Nutrition and Food Insecurity. Low income limits access to healthy, balanced food. Diets may rely on cheap, processed foods, increasing the risk of malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Unsafe Living Conditions. Poor housing may include overcrowding, poor sanitation, pollution, mold, or unsafe water. These conditions raise the risk of infectious diseases, respiratory problems, and injuries. Higher Stress and Mental Health Problems. Financial hardship creates chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. Long-term stress weakens the immune system and increases the risk of mental illness and substance misuse. Limited Health Education. Poverty can restrict access to health information, leading to poor awareness about hygiene, nutrition, sexual health, and disease prevention. This increases the risk of preventable illnesses. This leads to higher rates of asthma, cancer, and occupational injuries. Poor Maternal and Child Health. Pregnant women in poverty may lack prenatal care, increasing risks during pregnancy and childbirth. Children are more likely to experience low birth weight, developmental delays, and chronic illness. Due to combined health risks, people living in poverty often have a shorter lifespan compared to wealthier populations. Poverty is one of the strongest social determinants of health. It increases illness, reduces access to care, and lowers quality of life—but many of these effects are preventable with proper support.

Employment and Economy

Dependence on low-paid, informal jobs, Limited contribution to economic growth, People living in poverty often have less access to quality education, training, and vocational programs. This reduces their qualifications and limits them to low-paying or informal jobs. Poor communities may have fewer employers, weak infrastructure, and limited transportation, making it harder to reach workplaces. Lack of internet or digital devices also restricts access to online job applications and remote work. Poverty-related health problems (malnutrition, chronic illness, mental stress) reduce work capacity, attendance, and productivity. Frequent illness can lead to job loss or unstable employment. Employment opportunities often come through connections and referrals. People in poverty may lack access to networks that provide job information, mentoring, or career guidance. Individuals in

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poverty are more likely to work in temporary, seasonal, or informal jobs with low wages and no benefits. This makes income unpredictable and keeps workers trapped in poverty.

Discrimination and Social Exclusion

People from poor backgrounds may face stigma or discrimination based on address, appearance, or education level. This reduces hiring chances and career advancement. Child Labor and Early Workforce Entry. In extreme poverty, children may be forced to work instead of attending school, harming long-term employability. Early entry into low-skilled work limits future career growth. Cycle of Poverty and Unemployment, Poverty reduces employment opportunities, and unemployment deepens poverty. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle that is difficult to break without intervention. Poverty restricts access to stable, decent employment, leading to low income, job insecurity, and limited career growth. Addressing poverty through education, healthcare, and job creation is essential for improving employment outcomes.

Reduced Productivity and Workforce Quality

People living in poverty often have limited education, poor health, and fewer skills, which lowers productivity. A less skilled workforce reduces overall economic efficiency and competitiveness. Lower Consumer Spending, Poor households have very little disposable income. Low spending reduces demand for goods and services, slowing business growth and job creation. Poverty pushes people into low-paying, unstable, or informal jobs. This reduces tax revenue and weakens labor market stability.

Higher Government Spending

Governments must spend more on welfare programs, healthcare, food assistance, and subsidies. High social spending can limit investment in infrastructure, education, and development. Low incomes mean less income tax and consumption tax collected. This reduces government capacity to fund public services and economic development.

Slower Economic Growth

When large parts of the population cannot contribute fully, GDP growth slows. Innovation and entrepreneurship decline due to lack of capital and opportunities. Widening income gaps can lead to social unrest, crime, and political instability. Instability discourages investment and tourism. Poverty limits education and skill development for children. This reduces future human capital, keeping the economy trapped in long-term underdevelopment. Poverty weakens the economy by reducing productivity, demand, and growth while increasing public costs. Reducing poverty is not just a social goal—it is an economic necessity.

Social Issues of Poverty

Increased crime and substance abuse, Social exclusion and marginalization, Gender inequality and domestic challenges. Increased Crime and Violence. High poverty levels are often linked to theft, drug-related crime, and violence as people struggle to meet basic needs. Crime reduces community safety and increases fear and mistrust. Poverty contributes to physical illness, mental health problems, and stress, which affect family and community relationships. Social isolation is more common among people facing long-term poverty. Breakdown of Family Structures, Financial pressure can cause family conflict, domestic stress, and separation. Children in poor households may lack emotional support and stability. Limited Access to Education and Opportunity. Poverty restricts access to quality education, training, and social mobility. This deepens inequality and limits participation in society.

Homelessness and Poor Housing

Many people in poverty live in overcrowded or unsafe housing, or become homeless. This increases exposure to health risks and social exclusion. Social Exclusion and Discrimination. People living in poverty often face stigma, discrimination, and marginalization. They may be excluded from social, cultural, and political activities. Child Labor and Exploitation. In extreme poverty, children may be forced into labor, early marriage, or exploitation. This violates rights and harms long-term development. Weak Community Development. Poor communities may lack public services, recreation, and infrastructure. This reduces social cohesion and community trust. Poverty fuels many social problems, including crime, inequality, family instability, and social exclusion. Addressing poverty helps create safer, healthier, and more cohesive societies.

FINDINGS

- Poverty affects multiple aspects of life and limits opportunities
- Low income and poor living conditions are major contributors
- Education, health, and employment are most severely impacted

SUGGESTIONS

- Implement government welfare schemes effectively
- Promote education and vocational training
- Create employment opportunities and fair wages
- Improve access to healthcare and nutrition
- Encourage community participation and NGO support

CONCLUSION

Poverty has a deep and widespread impact on society, affecting health, education, employment, and social stability. Addressing poverty requires coordinated efforts from government, NGOs, and communities to provide education, employment, healthcare, and social support. Sustainable development and social inclusion are essential to breaking the cycle of poverty. A sociological study concludes that poverty is a multifaceted crisis, extending beyond mere lack of income to encompass deep social and political exclusion, hindering human development and creating cycles of deprivation, impacting health, education, and social cohesion, requiring multidimensional solutions focusing on capabilities, justice, and structural transformation to break intergenerational patterns. Poverty reduces social support, limits political participation, fuels inequality, and forces survival-focused decisions, ultimately damaging individual potential and national stability.

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