



Causes of Poverty and its Impacts on Criminality

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is a multifaceted social issue that significantly contributes to various forms of criminality. This study explores the intricate relationship between poverty and crime, emphasizing the underlying causes of poverty, including lack of education, unemployment, and social inequality. This study aims to explore the relationship between poverty and criminality, highlighting how socio-economic factors like educational deficits, unemployment, and systemic inequalities contribute to criminal behavior. It seeks to uncover how these causes drive individuals to engage in crime, either as a survival strategy or due to marginalization. The significance of this research lies in its ability to illuminate the complex relationship between poverty and criminality, offering valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and social organizations. This work employs library method and descriptive, explanatory, and analytical research approaches. Most of the sources are reputable and trustworthy textbooks, scholarly published and unpublished journal articles, law reports, and online websites related to the research area. The research reveals two key findings: first, high poverty rates correlate with increased crime, particularly property and violent offenses. Second, limited access to quality education and stable jobs drives individuals in impoverished areas to engage in criminal activities. These findings underscore the need for targeted educational and vocational programs to reduce crime and alleviate poverty.

KEYWORDS: poverty, causes, relationship, impacts, criminality.

INTRODUCTION

Since the time humans first set foot on this world, they have been grappling with challenges. This is because human needs and desires are vast, while the resources to fulfill them are limited. However, there is a class of people who possess more resources than they need in their lives, while another class exists that, in order to survive, lacks even the most basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter. This class of people lives in a state of poverty and deprivation, and we can refer to them as the poor and destitute. As we observe today, most people around the world have changed their way of life, and only a small number continue to lead their lives and daily affairs in the light of Islam. They are hopeful for the implementation of Islamic laws and principles, which are derived from divine revelation and the sayings of the Prophet.

With millions of people and communities affected, poverty continues to be one of the most urgent and enduring issues facing nations around the world. It is characterized not only by the lack of material prosperity but also by the inability to obtain basic necessities including enough food, clean water, housing, medical care, and education. Social isolation and marginalization are common outcomes of poverty, which keeps people stuck in a vicious cycle of deprivation from which it is hard to break free. Poverty has an impact that goes well beyond just financial difficulties; it profoundly affects behavior and changes the fundamental fabric of communities. Poverty is steadily increasing worldwide, as the population grows while resources become more limited and scarcer. Various factors contribute to the rise of poverty, many of which have been highlighted through research. Poverty not only brings economic challenges but also has significant social and moral consequences. In societies where poverty is prevalent, there is often an increase in insecurity and instability. This is because people, in their struggle for survival, may resort to theft, robbery, murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and other un-Islamic and unethical activities.

The link between widespread poverty and a surge in crime is among its most alarming consequences. People who live in poverty and have few options for school, work, and career advancement may resort to criminal activity in order to survive. When socioeconomic injustice and exclusion are coupled with the desperation brought on by not being able to meet basic requirements, it frequently fosters criminal activity. An in-depth examination of the economic, social, political, and environmental elements that contribute to poverty is necessary to comprehend the connection between poverty and crime. It also necessitates investigating the ways in which these elements fuel an increase in crime in underprivileged areas. Policymakers, social workers, and researchers can more effectively address the fundamental problems that sustain poverty and crime by looking at this complicated interplay. This will result in more all-encompassing solutions that try to lower both. To put it simply, combating poverty is about building a more equitable and safe society for everybody, not merely about improving economic circumstances.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Global poverty rates are rising, which presents a serious threat to social order and moral behavior in local communities. The many facets of poverty lead to a cycle of deprivation that impacts people and families from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds as the world's population continues to grow and resources become more limited. In addition to impeding economic growth, this widespread poverty raises frightening levels of

crime and insecurity. Desperation frequently leads people to commit unlawful and immoral crimes like stealing, drug trafficking, and violence in communities when they are unable to meet their fundamental requirements. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the complex relationship between poverty and criminality in order to create policies that effectively address poverty's social and economic aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poverty is a multifaceted issue that has been extensively studied across various disciplines, including economics, sociology, and criminology. This literature review aims to synthesize key findings regarding the causes of poverty and its impact on criminality, highlighting the interconnectedness of these phenomena.

Causes of Poverty

There are a number of research that point to economic volatility as a main factor that contributes to poverty. According to Ravallion (1998), the continuation of poverty is greatly influenced by a number of factors, including but not limited to unemployment, poor salaries, and a lack of access to capital. In a great number of developing nations, economic policies that do not effectively support fair growth contribute to the worsening of income disparity, which in turn drives marginalized populations deeper into poverty.

Chevalier and Lanot (2002) assert that a cycle of poverty is difficult to escape since lower educational attainment is associated with fewer employment options and poorer earning potential. Because resources are limited and educational institutions receive inadequate funding, underprivileged people are disproportionately impacted by the lack of access to high-quality education.

Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) research demonstrates how political unrest and corruption impede social progress and economic growth. Public resources are frequently mishandled in nations with bad governance, which results in insufficient support networks for the impoverished.

. According to Wilkenson and Pickett (2009), countries with high levels of inequality also typically have greater levels of social unrest, which can prolong cycles of crime and poverty. Social institutions that perpetuate inequality, like discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and class, make poverty even more entrenched.

Impact of Poverty on Criminality

The relationship between poverty and criminality has been a subject of considerable interest. According to a study by Cohen and Felson (1979), individuals in impoverished conditions may turn to crime as a means of survival. This desperation often manifests in theft, drug trafficking, and other illegal activities, as individuals seek to fulfill their basic needs.

Sampson and Groves (1989) claim that impoverished areas frequently have weaker social bonds and less collective efficacy, which creates an atmosphere that is favorable to crime. Social disorganization theory posits that poverty contributes to a breakdown in community social structures, leading to higher crime rates.

Many researchers link poverty to increased rates of drug abuse and gang involvement. A study by Merck et al. (2008) highlights how economic hardship can drive individuals, particularly youth, towards gangs and drug culture as a means of escaping their circumstances and finding a sense of belonging.

The literature shows how different economic, social, and political factors influence poverty and criminality, exposing a complicated interplay between the two. Reducing crime rates and creating safer, more equitable communities require addressing the underlying causes of poverty, which include social inequality, economic

opportunity, and education. Future studies should keep looking into these connections, concentrating on practical solutions and legislative initiatives that help break the cycle of poverty and crime.

INTRODUCTION TO POVERTY

linguistically, poverty refers to the absence of wealth or a deficiency in material possessions. It is also considered the opposite of wealth, and the boundaries of poverty are defined by the extent to which a person's resources are insufficient to meet their basic needs. (Abadie's dictionary, <https://abadis.ir/fatofa>). Poverty is a condition in which a specific group of people is unable to provide even the most basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. In other words, if a person is unable to meet a certain standard of living and cannot fulfill those basic needs, then that person is considered poor or needy. Once they are able to meet that standard, they are no longer considered poor. (Wahdat, 2022).

Some scholars have said that poverty refers to neediness and indigence, meaning a person who has nothing. However, others disagree with this view and argue that poverty and indigence are not the same. In the general sense, poverty means having a need, and the opposite of this is absolute wealth. In absolute need, not only does one require wealth, but there are also other necessities. People's needs are not limited, as every person requires something. (Zahidi, 2016). This is why people are dependent on Allah Almighty and nothing in the universe can attain the attribute of absolute richness.

In Islamic law, poverty refers to a state where a person does not possess wealth that reaches the level of *Nisab* (the minimum threshold for obligatory charity or zakat). Wealth is defined as having enough wealth that meets or exceeds the *Nisab* threshold. Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on them), and some other scholars define poverty in terms of a person owning something, but it is not sufficient to meet their needs. Additionally, Imam Ahmad states that poverty is when a person does not have fifty dirhams or their equivalent in gold. Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) suggested that this amount is forty dirhams. (Zahidi, 2016). Similarly, Islamic scholars have differing interpretations regarding essential and basic needs. Some scholars consider only shelter, clothing, and food as essential, while others have added additional necessities depending on the time, circumstances, and place. For example, in today's era, the means and facilities required for transportation, as well as the need for various fruits and medicines to maintain good health, are considered essential. Likewise, the need for resources to provide education and learning opportunities for one's children is also included in these necessities.

KINDS OF POVERTY

There are various types of poverty, each with different characteristics and impacts. Two of the most widely recognized forms are absolute poverty and relative poverty.

1. Absolute poverty

In this type, people are considered absolutely poor when they lack the necessary resources to meet their basic needs. Such as food, clean water, shelter, and healthcare. When determining this form of poverty, it is assessed how many people live in such conditions where, for instance, their daily income is shown to be around one dollar. (Wahdat, 2022).

2. Relative poverty

In 1979, economist Peter Townsend conducted significant research on this type of poverty and introduced the theory of *relative deprivation*. Some experts believe that measuring individuals who live below the poverty line and are relatively poor means comparing their income to a set poverty threshold. For example, if the poverty line is set at \$360 annual income, a person earning \$350 annually and another earning \$300 are both considered poor. However, the person earning \$350 is relatively poor compared to the other, as they live just below the relative poverty line. (Wahdat, 2022).

CAUSES OF POVERTY

The causes of poverty can be categorized into several broad categories. Some of the key causes are as follows:

1. Personal or individual causes

Personal or individual causes of poverty refer to factors that are specific to individuals and their circumstances. These causes often relate to a person's background, choices, and immediate environment. Here are some key personal causes that can contribute to poverty.

- a. **Lack of Personal Ability:** This refers to the inability stemming from low intelligence, physical weakness, and advanced age, which can trap a person in poverty. A significant number of individuals in society face these types of challenges and are unable to work to meet their needs. (Saleem, 2022).
- b. **Earning a Livelihood:** One of the most dangerous causes of poverty is laziness, which is not only a moral issue but also a social plague that leads to the backwardness of countries and nations. Islam has prohibited this, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sought refuge in Allah from laziness, saying, "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from grief, anxiety, laziness, and indolence." (Saleem, 2022).
- c. **Illness:** This is also a two-fold cause of poverty. A sick person not only becomes unable to work and thus falls into poverty, but they are also required to spend a significant amount of money on their treatment. As a result, any earnings they may have gained through hardship are spent on medical care, leaving them in a state of poverty once again. (Bezoon, 2012).
- d. **Betrayal:** Betrayal can lead to a person's unemployment, making them unable to provide for and support their family. In such cases, the individual becomes incapable of earning a livelihood, which contributes to poverty. (Bezoon, 2012).
- e. **Old age and aging:** Apparently, this is considered a major cause of poverty, but upon closer examination, it does not seem as significant compared to other causes. This is because there may be individuals who have been supported and provided for throughout their lives. Additionally, in European countries, particularly in England, France, and Germany, the system of pension determination addresses the problem of the elderly, ensuring that they are not left in poverty. (Wahdat, 2022).

2. External causes of poverty

External causes are those that relate to the social and economic conditions of the environment in which a person lives. In other words, these causes do not pertain solely to an individual but also to those individuals who live in the same community as that person. External causes can be further divided into two categories.

a. Natural causes

Natural causes refer to those factors beyond human control, occurring due to the will of Allah Almighty or natural phenomena. For instance, natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can result in widespread destruction, displacing populations and destroying infrastructure. Floods can lead to loss of crops and livestock, severely affecting food security and livelihoods. Droughts can trigger famine, making it difficult for communities to access sufficient food and water, resulting in malnutrition and health issues. Moreover, extreme weather conditions, whether excessive heat or severe cold, can strain resources and disrupt daily life, affecting agriculture and energy supply. Diseases and epidemics can diminish the workforce and place an enormous burden on healthcare systems, leading to increased poverty and instability. (Farinda, 2013).

b. Social causes

Social causes of poverty encompass factors that are influenced by the broader societal context rather than individual characteristics. These factors can significantly impact an individual's ability to secure the necessary resources for a decent quality of life. The contributing factors are as follows:

First, injustice and the unjust acquisition of people's wealth encompass various acts such as theft, forcibly taking someone's property, usury, deception in trade, under-measuring and weighing, and hoarding.) Kaihan, 2017). Second, disorder in industry arises from the presence of industrial capitalists and poor factory management, leading to issues like hoarding, the elimination of small industries, control over workers' wages, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Poor management can also result in overproduction, forcing a reduction in production and causing layoffs or wage cuts, both of which contribute to poverty. This situation may provoke workers to strike or revolt, leading to widespread unemployment. Third, unjust distribution is a complex issue that has yet to find an effective solution among economists and social scientists. Fourth, wars are a social phenomenon that destroys communities, depletes wealth, increases poverty, reduces essential revenues, and decreases the number of experienced workers. Fifth, population growth places pressure on natural resources, often exceeding their capacity, which lowers living standards and raises poverty rates. Other contributing factors include the lack of utilization of natural resources, deterioration of public health, lack of natural resources, decreases in wages, lack of cooperation and compassion among people, and disorganized planning for resources beneficial to the public. (Kaihan, 2017).

IMPACTS OF POVERTY ON CRIMINALITY

Through a number of processes, poverty has a considerable impact on criminal activity. People in poverty frequently turn to crime to pay for necessities like food and housing, particularly when there are few chances for gainful employment. Social disarray may occur in high-poverty settings, eroding community relationships and making people more susceptible to criminal influences. Furthermore, exposure to criminality might normalize such behavior in young people, and common mental health conditions can cause substance misuse and impair judgment. Increased arrest rates brought on by law enforcement presence in these regions can feed the vicious loop that criminal records restrict employment opportunities in the future. Reducing crime and improving community well-being requires addressing poverty through better access to mental health care, work opportunities, and education.

Poverty often leads individuals to engage in certain criminal behaviors. These behaviors may include:

- 1. Poverty leads to highway robbery (Harabah):** Poverty is a major contributing factor to highway crimes, or Harabah. When fundamental needs cannot be met by legal means, people in severe financial difficulty may turn to robbery as a means of surviving. Some people see crime as a more accessible source of income because of the dearth of steady work prospects in underprivileged communities. In these communities, social disintegration also weakens law enforcement and decreases cohesiveness, which increases the likelihood of criminal activity. Overall, addressing the root causes of poverty through social and economic development is crucial for reducing the incidence of highway crimes and promoting safer communities.
- 2. Poverty leads to homicide.** When a segment of the population experiences severe financial hardship and is unable to meet their basic needs, they may resort to desperate measures. Rather than engaging in crimes like robbery, these individuals may commit acts of violence against their own family members, including their children or dependents, whom they feel responsible for providing for. This tragic outcome is often driven by the overwhelming stress and hopelessness associated with poverty, leading to a breakdown in social and familial bonds. In such dire circumstances, the instinct for survival can tragically manifest in extreme violence, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive social support systems to address the root causes of poverty and prevent such devastating actions.
- 3. Poverty leads to theft:** The crime most frequently committed due to poverty is theft. Individuals facing financial hardships often feel compelled to steal in order to fulfill their basic life needs. This desperation drives them to secretly take the belongings of others, as they seek to secure essential resources for survival. Such actions highlight the relationship between economic deprivation and criminal behavior, underscoring the need for comprehensive solutions to alleviate poverty and reduce crime rates in affected communities.
- 4. Poverty leads to mental health disorder:** In society, many individuals cannot bear the burden of poverty and quickly lose their mental stability, leading to various mental disorders. These mental health issues can create a cycle of despair, pushing individuals toward criminal behavior as a means of coping with their distress. The desperation resulting from their circumstances can make them more susceptible to engaging in unlawful activities, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty and crime. Addressing the mental health needs of those living in poverty is crucial to breaking this cycle and fostering a healthier, more stable community.
- 5. Poverty leads to corruption:** People and groups may feel forced to participate in corrupt activities as a method of surviving when they lack access to fundamental resources and possibilities. To obtain vital goods or services, for example, people in grave financial straits may turn to bribery or embezzlement, which they frequently justify as being necessary for their well-being. Furthermore, because disadvantaged groups may rely on dishonest authorities to provide them with access to essentials like food, medical care, or education, poverty can compromise the integrity of institutions. Because of this dependence, corruption becomes more commonplace, which prolongs poverty and reduces prospects for social and economic growth. Therefore, fighting corruption and advancing a more just and equal society depend on tackling poverty.

CONCLUSION

Poverty is a serious and complex issue that affects cultures all around the world. Because of the numerous interconnected personal, social, and economic elements that contribute to it, it is a complex problem that calls for careful consideration and action. Because they frequently lack access to basic resources and opportunities, people in poverty are more vulnerable and may resort to criminal activity as a last resort. Poverty and crime have a cyclical link; as crime rates grow in regions with lower incomes, communities experience greater deterioration, leading to a compounding effect that is hard to undo. A rise in violent crimes, theft, and other criminal activity as people try to meet their fundamental needs—such as food, shelter, and security—are just a few of the ways that poverty affects criminality. Additionally, the psychological effects of poverty might result in mental health problems, which raise the risk of criminal activity. People may turn to crime as a coping strategy for their difficult circumstances as well as a means of survival due to the emotional discomfort brought on by financial uncertainty. To effectively address poverty and its implications on criminality, a comprehensive and holistic approach is essential. This approach should focus on improving access to quality education and vocational training, which empowers individuals with the skills needed to secure stable employment. Creating job opportunities, particularly in areas that are economically disadvantaged, can significantly reduce reliance on illegal activities as a means of income. Additionally, implementing effective social support systems, such as food assistance programs, affordable housing initiatives, and mental health services, can provide a safety net for those at risk of falling into the cycle of poverty and crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By implementing the following recommendations, various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders, and individuals can work toward breaking the cycle of poverty and crime, fostering safer and more equitable communities for all. It requires a collective effort, sustained commitment, and innovative thinking to create meaningful change and improve the lives of those affected by poverty.

1. The government is proposed to significantly enhance their efforts in combating poverty. They should implement various projects aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty, which can lead to its elimination in society. This could involve developing job creation programs, providing vocational training, enhancing access to education, and improving social welfare systems to support those in need.
2. Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the community about the underlying causes of poverty and its connection to crime. Promoting understanding can help reduce stigma and encourage collective action toward solutions.
3. The non-governmental organizations are recommended that specialize in poverty alleviation and crime prevention. These organizations can provide valuable resources, expertise, and support in implementing effective programs.
4. Establish comprehensive social safety nets that include food assistance, housing support, and healthcare access. These programs should target vulnerable populations to help them meet their basic needs and reduce the pressure that can lead to criminal behavior.

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