



Child Poverty: a Cross Approach Analysis

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Abstract: This paper attempts to navigate through various theoretical framework to study poverty in general and child poverty in particular. It focuses on the situation of child poverty across nations and tries to analysis it from the policy perspective. Various concepts and definitions are reviewed on the basis of their theoretical orientations. Monetary approach, focused approach, human-right approach and multidimensional approach is discussed vividly. Multidimensional approach can be considered as an integrated approach which can include various other approaches to its Fould.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a critical challenge for every nation, small and big, developing and developed. For a long time, child poverty was hardly considered a major issue either by development theorists or by child rights activists. Even at the level of public policy planning for poverty reduction, child poverty suffered from a syndrome of policy exclusion. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child, coming into force in 1989, it was realized that the world falls short of guaranteeing a congenial environment for its child population where they can best develop their potential. Deprivations shroud the lives of millions of children, but hardly have they occupied a central space in the anti-poverty dialogues and discourses. This led to child poverty as a major social issue worldwide, and child poverty started making its way into many anti-poverty discussions and strategy formations. One of the earliest definitions of child poverty emerged with the pronouncement of the UNICEF in 2005 which stated that poverty is an environment that is harmful to children's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual development. Soon research established that child poverty is shaped by economic, demographic, and public policy changes (Cancian & Danziger 2009) and in turn, affects these facets of society in the long run. As a result, it is critical to broaden the definition of child poverty beyond traditional definitions like children suffering from deprivations due to low household income or low consumption levels. Despite this, child poverty is rarely distinguished from general poverty, and its unique features are hardly recognized (UNICEF, 2005). But since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, eradication of child poverty has become a strong international mandate and became a prioritized national agenda across the countries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Child poverty researches are few in number. This is well acknowledged by theorists. The complications of distinguishing it from household poverty limit the vision of scholars to take it up as a stand-alone research topic. Hick (2014) comments that there remains a need for greater attention to conceptualising, as well as measuring, poverty. In the same vein, Lister (2004) proposes that definitional clarity on child poverty which is still missing is important to determine both how poverty is measured and the responses adopted.

A few lead studies on this concept and the approaches used are discussed in this section.

Scholars like Abelev (2009); Ratcliffe and Kalish,(2017) clearly state that the lack of productive lives, low levels of educational attainment and poor health are the clear markers of child poverty. Chen and Corak offers a cross-country overview of Child poverty and its impact on public policy in North America and Europe. Levels and changes in child poverty rates in 12 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries during the 1990s is documented using data from

Luxembourg Income Study Project and a decomposition analysis is used to reveal the relative role of demographic factors, labour markets and income transfer from state. The engagement of mothers in the labour market lowered the child poverty rate. No single way or solution can be found to lower the rate of Child poverty. (Chen, 2008)

In 2007, UNICEF Innocenti Research Center builds and expands upon the analyses of Report card 6 which considered relative income poverty affecting children and policies to mitigate it. Report card 7 gives a pioneering, comprehensive picture of child well-being through the consideration of six dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, family and peer relationships, subjective well-being, behaviours and lifestyles informed by the convention on child rights.

Bradbury in addresses five major points i.e., Conceptual and measurement issues associated with a dynamic view of child poverty, Cross-national comparisons of child poverty rate and trends, Children's movement into and out of poverty, country specific studies of child poverty dynamics and policy implications of taking a broad perspective. The study goes beyond the standard analyses of child poverty only on the basis of income. (Bradbury, 2001)

Bradshaw tried to study the scenario of Child poverty in larger families. His study is based on secondary analysis of national and international data on child poverty during 2001. The national data set include the Family Resources Survey, the Millennium Cohort Study and the Families and Children Survey. The international data was drawn from European Community Household panel and the Luxembourg Income Study. It focuses on how the tax and benefit system impacts on family models. Child poverty is associated with poor child well-being and well-becoming. For a child to experience poverty just for living in a large family is referred as injustice. (Bradshaw, 2006)

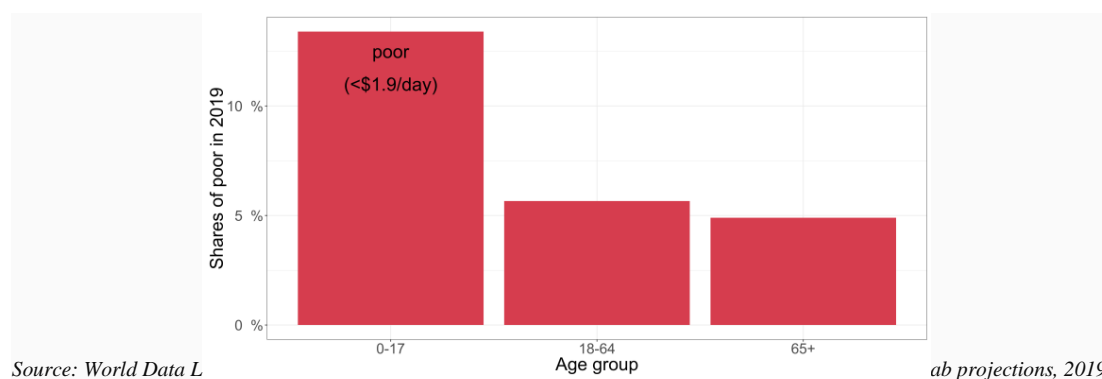
Bastos tries to evaluate poverty among children using a multidimensional concept of child poverty. It uses fuzzy set theory to evaluate deprivation intensity among children. It investigates the socio-demographic and economic characteristics that affect deprivation risk by estimating discrete choice model. It shows that children in large families or with uncommon compositions are at risk. Unemployed parents also contribute to the deprivation. It manifests in the issues related to education, health, housing and social integration. (Bastos, 2009)

Roelen in his paper proposes a country-specific poverty measurement, multidimensional and outcome based approach for measuring depth and severity of child poverty. It is done at the level of individual child using household survey data. The approach at the level of child present appropriate alternative for monetary poverty approach. The issue of child poverty has received increasing attention worldwide. (Roelen, 2010) Findings suggest that 37% of children live in poverty with areas of deprivation being water, sanitation and leisure. A large urban-rural divide, regional disparities and large ethnic inequalities are clearly visible in Vietnam. A tailor-made approach is a valuable new tool for policy makers as it enables identification and analysis of poor children, their characteristics and the area of deprivation.

Nobel, Write and Cluver in 2006 presents a child-centric multidimensional model of child poverty with both absolute and relative poverty component. Absolute components comprise of basic needs such as food and shelter where as relative components comprises of multidimensional concepts of poverty. Policy makers need to combine both the models to combat child poverty.

3. CHILD POVERTY: THE SITUATION

Children across nations bear the disproportionate burdens of poverty. It is estimated that the world houses around 700 million populations under extreme poverty conditions. Children constitute one-third of the global population, they constitute almost half of the population under extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2020). Before this in 2012, it was discovered through UNICEF's review of child well-being that across thirty-five industrialised countries 30 million children – one out of eight in the OECD was fast growing up poor (Yuster, 2014). Further, enumerations establish that child poverty is more than twice adult poverty. To quote the exact number while it is 17.5 per cent for children, it is 7.9 per cent for adults. A survey made in 2019 (Fenz and Hamel, 2019) projected that the 0 to 17 population group which is primarily the child population are worst affected by poverty.



According to the World Bank Group and UNICEF report released in 2020, one in every six children – or 356 million children worldwide – lived in extreme poverty. According to a new UNICEF projection, the COVID-19 epidemic will add more than 150 million children to the already high number of children living in poverty around the world (UNICEF & Save-the-Children, 2020). Children more than twice are likely to be extremely poor as adults (17.5 per cent of children vs. 7.9 per cent of adults). The youngest children are the worst off – nearly 20 per cent of all children below the age of 5 live in extremely poor households in the developing world.

Further, child poverty is a social universal for both economically advanced developed and poor developing nations. According to UNICEF, the rate of children living in poverty in 35 economically advanced countries ranged from 4.7 per cent in Iceland to 25.5 per cent in Romania. In the developing world, UNICEF estimates that 19.5 percent of children live in extreme poverty (living on less than \$1.90 a day), compared to 9.2 per cent of adults which is a sufficient indicator of the syndrome of poverty being a predominant child syndrome. Both in the developed and developing nations taken together, there are about 385 million children living in poverty around the world (UNICEF & World Bank Group, 2016).

Further, if the standardized norm of \$1.90 per day is taken as the poverty measure is taken into account, 356 million children belong to families which survive on this established standard or fail to reach this standard. But taken in terms of the basic resource deficit measures like a standard level of education, health, housing, education, water, sanitation and nutrition, 1 billion children fall short of them and are considered as living in the conditions of poverty. Survival issues grapple them every now and then. The youngest children are the worst off. Nearly 20 percent of all children below the age of 5 live in extremely poor households in the developing world (World Bank, 2020).

The increase in child poverty during the pandemic throughout the world has been a perceived resultant of school closure and an increase in child labour. The International Labour Organization and UNICEF have warned that the COVID-19 epidemic will put 9 million more children at risk.

The number of children in child labour has climbed to 160 million worldwide, an increase of 8.4 million in the last four years, with millions more in danger as a result of COVID-19's effects (UNICEF, 2020).

The pandemic exacerbated multidimensional poverty. No longer is poverty confined to economic deprivation. It touched many more dimensions than economic poverty. The number of children living in multidimensional poverty has gone up in the post pandemic period. Particularly the children who were already having no access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation or water experienced a more intense level of poverty and their number reached approximately 1.2 billion in 2020. It is estimated that additional 100 million children will be soon bearing the pangs of poverty soon (UNICEF, 2020).

The Indian situation is still more precarious in terms of child poverty. India alone is home to 30.3 per cent of extremely poor children living across the world. In absolute terms, 9.97 crore children in India live in poverty-stricken conditions. As per the reports of UNICEF and ILO (2019), India stands next to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of child poverty. A recent report by the Borgen project indicates that the pandemic which ushered in 2020 and still is in continuation has pushed 45 million more children in India into impoverished conditions. The global statistics, 2021 reveals that 36,800,974 million children i.e., from the age of 0 to 14 in India are in extreme poverty. While 11,216,926 children in the age group of 0 to 4 years thrive under extreme poverty situations, 12,103,639 in the age group of 5 to 9 are

found to be poor and 13,480,409 in the age group of 10to14 share the same plight. The age-wise poverty situation among children in India is projected in Figure No. 1.2

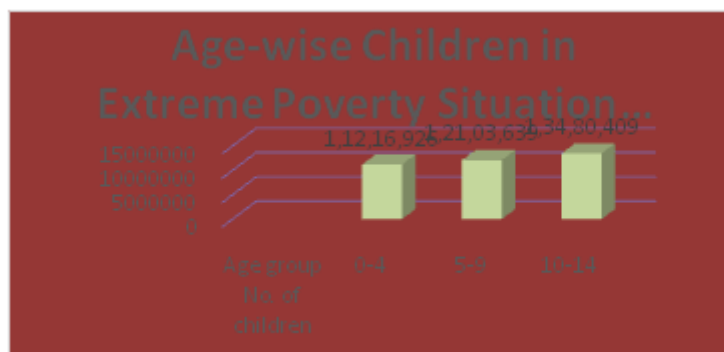


Figure1.2. Age-wise Children in Extreme Poverty Situation in India

Source: India Poverty Statistics 2021

4. CHILD POVERTY FROM POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Child poverty started adorning the global dialogues towards the fag end of the twentieth century. In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen summoned the nation-states to focus on policies to address the root causes of poverty and to give special priority to the needs of children.

Child poverty in its wholesome dimensions came into the global agenda with the dawn of the present millennium. As early as 2006, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for the first time adopted a global definition of child poverty. It was acknowledged that: children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of society. (UNGA, 2006, para 460).

Thus, this definition talked about child poverty in terms of deficit access to basic life resources and deprivation of the rights to protection and participation. Deficit life resources impair the lives of millions of children from their early childhood which prevent them to grow as healthy human capital. Deprivations of enjoying the basic child rights equally hamper the unfolding of the personalities of children and stand as a stifling block for their all-around development. Thus, there started a shift in the lens for looking at child poverty, the movement from monetary and economic measures to non-economic measures. In 2012 the Wellbeing analysis of children made by UNICEF asserted that poverty need not be measured only in terms of income-related deprivations, but needs to care for the well being of the children. By well-being, UNICEF brought to the limelight the measures like a child's health, care by family and community into which he/she is born, learning access and progression, safety and happiness.

In 2015 on the eve of the Davos meeting of the World Economic Forum, UNICEF outlined an ambitious 'Agenda for Every Child'. UNICEF insisted that child poverty should be made an integral part of poverty eradication and to reach out to the left-behind children whose number is millions. It was reiterated that this critical investment to eradicate poverty among children by ensuring their well-being will not only serve as an enabler to allow children to enjoy their child rights but will ensure a brighter future for the nations.

In 2015, subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals proposed to end poverty in all its forms. It is Goal 1 of the document. The Outcome Document of the OWG (2014) has proposed two targets of direct and indirect implications for children living in poverty. They are:

- Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day; and
- Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

- Further, Target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implies that both monetary and non-monetary or multidimensional (MD) child poverty will be assessed and monitored, with accompanying indicators created at the national level.

Thus, child poverty came into the centrality of global commitment and agenda. But around the turn of the twentieth-century child poverty was creeping into the discourses of academic research and adorned the priority area in the search of development organizations. The most primitive approach to studying child poverty was the conventional monetary approach used to measure adult poverty.

5. MONETARY APPROACH

The monetary approach is the traditional and the most widely used approach to measure and understand poverty. Monetary approaches to poverty assessment are based on a measure of income, consumption, or expenditures believing in the premise that if people have enough purchasing power, they will be able to meet their fundamental needs (Thorbecke, 2008; Tsui, 2002). The main tools used in this approach are the Poverty Line and the Basic Needs methodologies. The former prescribes a threshold below which people are classified as poor. The latter, on the other hand, constructs an index called the “Unfulfilled Basic Needs Index” or NBI in Bolivia. This index sets certain parameters of minimum goods and services needed to satisfy basic needs. Thus, the monetary approach is based on twin counts of welfare indicators and poverty lines. UNICEF conducted an internal survey on the measurement of child poverty in 160 countries in 2017 and noted that almost half of the countries measure using both monetary and multidimensional measures. However, UNICEF notes that monetary measures are twice as prevalent as multidimensional measures (UNICEF,2017). Multidimensional measures were a later development for measuring poverty. So, most of the countries still use the monetary approach to measure child poverty.

The simple assumption that the monetary approach makes is that households that are monetarily poor lack the purchasing power to fulfil the basic needs of the children and as such create deprivations of a high order among the children making them poor in the society. Thus, the monetary approach establishes that the link between household income and child outcomes is straightforward. Poor households breed poor children and poor households are those households that encounter a deficit monetary base. The highly debated “Less than 1 US\$ a day” poverty line is one of the most extreme examples of this approach and its limitations.

The flaws of the monetary approach have been well documented. They include the incorrect assumption that all traits for meeting basic requirements can be stated in monetary terms and purchased on perfectly functioning markets (Hulme and McKay, 2008). The second criticism relates to products getting converted into goods. To the critics of the monetary approach having enough monetary resources to buy a basic basket of products does not guarantee that they will be turned into that basket of goods (Alkire and Santos, 2014). The third criticism pertains to the argument that monetary resources are primarily measured at the household level, which does not capture intra-household distribution (Vijaya et al., 2014).

6. FOCUSED APPROACH

An important approach developed to look at child poverty is the focused approach which simply suggests that the nature of child poverty needs to be treated separately from adult poverty. It is because of the age, situation, and needs of the children which are differently different from that of the adult. Authors like Feeny & Boyden 2003; Mehrotra 2006; Roelen& Gassmann 2008 are ardent proponents of this approach. Childhood deprivations vary from adulthood deficiencies. Accurate identification of such dimensions can improve the design and targeting of poverty reduction strategies among children (White et al. 2002).

Around the turn of the new millennium, UNICEF (2005) became the pioneering development organization to suggest a multidimensional approach to the study of child poverty.

6.1 Multidimensional Approach

The Multidimensional approach to child poverty made a departure from the stereotypical monetary deprivation as the measurement and it clearly spelt out that child poverty needs to be seen in terms of deprivations and lack of access to goods and services needed for a child to develop as a full-fledged

individual with the enjoyment of child rights. In the Bristol study, UNICEF lists a basket of services, the lack of accessibility to which by the children can be termed as child poverty. The definition of child poverty provided by the UNICEF runs as follows “Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society”. This model of measuring child poverty developed by UNICEF is popularly known as the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) which soon captured the attention of policy planners, development activists and academicians to measure child poverty. This became the first foundational approach to studying child poverty across nations. To be more specific, Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) is a tool developed at UNICEF Innocent. It measures and defines multidimensional child poverty, based on the provisions pronounced in the Convention on the Rights of Children. MODA is adopted as a supportive tool in planning interventions and formulating policies that are more effective in tracking and tackling poverty among the most deprived children. MODA has been put into use by *low- and middle-income countries, in conflict regions and during humanitarian crises and displacement to survey the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*.

This coincides with the Child-Focused Multi-dimensional Model (CFMDM) referred to by Vaaltein and Schiller (2017). This model takes into account various levels of deprivation, good access to quality services, and, which denounce the child's ability to fully participate in society. Subsequently, the multidimensional approach came to be rated through material poverty, opportunity poverty and relational poverty. Material poverty basically refers to the lack of resources needed to ensure a decent life for a child. This has been focussed by Lister (2004) to whom material poverty leads to stress and scarcity to access and avail the essentials of life including nutritional food, safe water and secured shelter and instrumental services to well beings like health care and education (Spicker 2007). Opportunity poverty is discussed under the human rights approach. Relational poverty results from shame, guilt, and stigmatization often bar children to enjoy their well-being in society Walker 2014; and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2014). They also result from the lack of parental and family care and support and exclusion from the community.

6.2 Human rights-based Approach

For a long time, child poverty was not treated as a children's rights issue (Nolan and Pells, 2019). Of late it has adorned the discourses on child poverty. It itself is a multi-dimensional approach from a human rights lens. The Human Rights approach to child poverty believes that children's intellectual, physical, and emotional development can be harmed by poverty, which denies them access to essential human rights such as appropriate food, safe water and sanitation, primary health care, and basic education. Addressing the causes of child poverty is critical to achieving the broader goal of poverty reduction and ensuring the basic rights a child needs to enjoy in society.

The human rights approach to child poverty believes that child poverty needs to be seen beyond the deficiency in household income depriving the child of some basic needs. This approach insists that children must be placed at the forefront of breaking the cycle of impoverishment. It establishes a strong nexus between impoverishment and enjoyment of rights based on the observations of the Vienna Declaration of 1993. Child poverty and child rights are strongly linked (Nolan, 2019). Child poverty is a potential cause of child rights violations and is a potential outcome of such violations. It is also, in and of itself, a violation of a wide range of children's rights. This was spearheaded by Mary Robinson of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which was adopted and carried over by UNICEF to fight against child poverty. UNICEF started the advocacy that empowering children by protecting their human rights can bring them out of the cycles of poverty and vice versa. White, Leavy, and Masters (2003) have lean in favour of the human rights perspective. To these authors, when the basic opportunities of the children are curtailed due to poverty and disallow them to have a life of dignity, equality and security which are basic human rights, these children are said to be suffering from opportunity and social resources and they suffer from poverty. Due to the lack of opportunity, their right to life, participation and development are often jeopardized and their access to knowledge, and information becomes totally squeezed and they fail to have positive development outcomes. This puts them into perils of poverty.

Thus, as per the human rights approach, poverty is a complex phenomenon, influencing many aspects of life and infringing on a wide range of human rights. The focus of a human rights approach to child poverty eradication shifts away from raising income and toward recognising the rights of children. This approach emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the social institutions, community and individual actors of the society to allow each child to enjoy his rights in society. Resources need to be created and channelized in a responsible manner to respond to the needs of every child's human rights. The human rights approach looks forth for creating an equal world for all children across gender, class, locations and affiliations with the full enjoyment of their human rights which would become a panacea to child poverty.

As a part of this human right approach, the UN committee on economic, cultural and social rights describes poverty as a human situation marked by chronic conditions of deprivation of resources, competency, opportunities, choices, security and authority which are the prerequisite for a good standard of living. A decent standard of living demands the availability, affordability, and accessibility of quality resources, skills, and opportunities which enable the child to grow into full-fledged adulthood. When these components remain missing for a child it creates a situation of poverty within. Further, it adds two dimensions they are accountability and participation. When there is a lack of opportunities for a child to participate i.e., for active participation in the decision-making process. Due to lack of information, the language barrier i.e., also levelled as poverty emanating from the basic rights of participation. Similarly, lack of accountability for the child and access to opportunities on the part of the enviroing actors also leads to not only negligence but also to the denial of his enjoyment of resources and rights.

For accountability to be effective there must be appropriate laws, policies, institutions, administrative procedures and mechanisms of redress in order to secure human rights.

- Non-discrimination and equality- A human rights-based approach means that all forms of discrimination in the realisation of rights must be prohibited prevented and eliminated. It also requires the prioritisation of those in the most marginalised situations who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights.
- Empowerment- A human rights-based approach means that individuals and communities should know their rights. It also means that they should be fully supported to participate in the development of policy and practices which affect their lives and to claim rights where necessary.
- Legality- A human rights-based approach requires the recognition of rights as legally enforceable entitlements and is linked to national and international human rights law.

These are known as the PANEL principles.

7. CONCLUSION:

Thus, the foregoing discussions and stock taking clearly reveal that child poverty came into the discourses of social sciences and policy debates at a very late stage. Now it has taken a central space in all policy debates and designs. It had a start with the stereotypical idea of monetary deficit which was conventionally used by economists to measure adult poverty. But over the years the parameters in terms of approaches have undergone a paradigm shift. Today, child poverty has come into interdisciplinary dialogues. As such the definition of poverty has been expanded to a range of potential and realised 'capitals' that include cultural, social and political assets (Moore 2001; Uphoff 1999; Sorensen and Torfing 2003). This has led child poverty theorists to talk about the multidimensional approach to child poverty and finally, the supplementation of the human rights approach has given a holistic instrument to look at and measure child poverty. But it can be concluded that none of the approaches can be denounced as a measure to child poverty, but standalone they have their deficiencies. Only the multidimensional human rights approach can be treated as integrated approach to look at child poverty and they themselves include the monetary and the focussed approach.

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