

زانکۆی سەڵاحەددین-هەولێر

Salahaddin University –Erbil

**The Impacts of Poverty on the Families Functions from the Perspective of Parents**

 Submitted to the department of (**social work**) in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of B.A in (social work)

  Prepared by:

**Hero Jaafar Hamd**

**Eman Talhat Abdullah**

 Supervised by:

**Sangar Youssif Salih**

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**Abstract**

The research on families who are poor, and how poverty affects the work of the family system, we chose this subject because poverty is an important and global issue that affects families and creates many other problems. The aim of this study is to know the bad effects that are caused by poverty in families and knowing the causes of poverty and the role of government agencies in helping poor families. Semi-structured interview was used to gather original data. The data were gathered in the directorate of Social Safety Network in Erbil.

We found that there is a relationship between poverty and illiteracy, and that the lack of good job opportunities and the size of the family and the government played an important role in helping the poor through financial assistance and providing basic needs for their lives.

And our literature revealed that poverty creates many other social problems, such as crime, murder, divorce, drug use but not in our sample.

**Chapter one: Introduction**

**Research problem**

Poverty affects people’s lives on many aspects, especially when they are deprived of different opportunities including opportunities to work, study, live in a healthy life and retire safely. Lack of income, adequate healthcare, education, access to housing and the quality of the local environment, all affect people's wellbeing. Our understanding of poverty includes all these dimensions. (Gordon,D., 2006)

Poverty is now a multi-faceted development problem. Poverty can be easily identified and characterized by backwardness, in capacity, economic incapacity and the number of unemployed in the population, which then triggers income inequality and demographic disparities**.**

Poverty can be defined as a living condition with a very low standard of living**.** Poverty can also be defined as the inability to meet basic human needs**,** especially food**,** clothing and shelter. (Ali, A., et al 2020).

In a newly released assessment, the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, found that  22.5% of Iraq's children population lives under the poverty line. Each citizen of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, whose daily income is less than $1.9, enters the homes of those living below the poverty line, and at the family level, each family has a daily income of less than $9.5, below the poverty line.

While poverty is a global problem and multi-facet, it is really important to see how poverty in Iraq and Kurdistan region affects different settings and institutions. More precisely, what is not well clear is how poverty affects family as a social structure and its function(s).

**The objectivities of the research. .**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the factors that lead a family to be considered as poor (living under poverty line), it is also intended to address other issues resulted from poverty at the family level, lastly, this study aimed at highlighting expected roles of governmental institutions to reduce family poverty.

**Research questions :**

This research wants to answer the following specific questions;

**1**. What are the causes of family poverty?

**2**. To what extend does family poverty lead to other social problems?

**3**. What are the expected roles that government institutions should play to reduce family poverty?

**Definition of Concepts**​:

**Poverty:**

Poverty is a problem in unmet human physical need. That is, persons and families in poverty lack the goods and services needed to sustain and support life and the income to purchase the goods or services which would meet those needs. (O'Boyle, E.J., 1999) Poverty is also characterized by the deprivation of basic needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information. (Palmer, M., 2011) Additionally, people are considered poor when they are unable to satisfy their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, and health. Using minimum costs of food and other necessities as poverty criteria. (Yapa, L., 1996)

**Family function**

The family function model theory was proposed by Epstein in1987. He considers the process the family system is the nucleus, and assumes that the primary function of the family is to-provide an appropriate environment.
physical, psychological, social and other developmental conditions of family members. To regconize basic functionality, the home system must perform a variety of tasks, including basic tasks(such as responding to and clothing life lines), development tasks (such as tuning
and promote member growth and development)and crisis tasks (such as managing all kinds of family emergency). ( dai ,Lwang,L 2015)

Family is an important social environment in which a specific system of values, culture of behaviour and social standards is shaped. It passes on to the young generation the entirety of social, axiological, cultural and caring conditions. These tasks are carried out by parents by fulfilling the family functions. (Sławomir ,G 2022)

**Literature review**

Scholars analyze the conceptual underpinnings of poverty, focusing on its evolution, multifaceted definitions, and poverty reduction efforts over the past 50 years. Using secondary data analysis, a research conducted by Watkins (2005) and mentioned in the **Cobbinah et al’s research ,2013)** showed that one-size-fits-all approaches to poverty reduction have been largely unsuccessful, and recommends treating poverty as a global phenomenon. But it is resolved at the local level using the local index. To achieve sustainable development, developing countries must focus on meeting the basic needs of their populations and commit to ensuring a stable economic and political environment. Given that more than 2.5 billion people in the world earn less than US$2 a day and face the reality and severity of poverty.

Data on Iraq's poverty measures are mostly out of date. Extreme resource poverty in Iraq was relatively low in 2012. Based on the international measure of US$1.90 per day, about 800,000 (2.5 million Iraqis) of the then 32 million Iraqis lived in extreme poverty. In 2012, according to the US$5.50 Poverty Measures, 57% of Iraqis lived in resource poverty (about 18.2 million) and nearly 19% of Iraqis (about 6 million) lived in Iraqi poverty. lived below the national poverty line (less than US$3.20) per day. (Sida, 2022**)**

Scholars previously investigated the relationship between poverty and family functioning. Studies aimed to examine how living in poverty affects the functioning of family institutions. Banovcinova, et al (2014) focused on the function of the family in dimensions based on the McMaster model, as they used The Family Assessment Device. The results indicated a relationship between poverty and dysfunctional family functioning. To achieve their goals and assess the functioning of the family system, they considered the McMaster model of family functioning. This model is based on system theory and its main assumptions are: (1) all parts of the family are interconnected; (2) no part of the family can be understood in isolation from the rest of the family system; (4) Family structure and organization are important factors that strongly influence and determine the behavior of family members. (5) The transaction patterns of the family system strongly shape the behavior of family members. As they found, family stress caused by problems in the family's economic functioning affects the way parents fulfill their parenting role. The focus of their research is on the context of Slovakia. The results of their research show that poverty is a negative factor in family functioning. They also found that family functioning and its dimensions have been proven to be affected by inadequate income. From these results, it became clear that poverty is one of the factors that affect child-rearing. Therefore, they suggest that social workers working in low-income households should turn their attention to this area of family functioning.

Reports indicate that a major reason for resource poverty in Iraq is the lack of employment opportunities for its growing population. Factors such as armed conflict, political instability, and environmental degradation have created a worsening investment climate, increased risk, and limited employment opportunities in the private sector. (Sida, 2022**)**

Juby ,C., Rycraft,J.R (2004)addressed that poverty affects many people and their families. Empirical research shows that resilient families have adequate support systems, have points of internal control, believe in higher authority, and practice lower comparisons. By understanding the characteristics and situations that enhance family resilience, social workers can design more effective programs to help families experiencing poverty. Building resilient and productive families increases family stability and chances of survival. Their study explored attributes and conditions related to resilience in adversity, especially poverty, and how social workers can help clients develop or strengthen these problem areas in order to maintain family cohesion. is focused on This focus does not mean that the problem lies with individuals or families and that other factors should be ignored. It should not prevent you from considering other issues that may affect your family. Potential risk factors such as gender discrimination, violence, lack of work and other opportunities, and poor housing conditions can all affect poor families and create stressful situations that lead to family separation. These problems cannot be solved individually and require system-wide reform.

Since 2012, Iraq has endured a series of crises. This includes the war against Dash, which has led to mass movements of people, forced displacement, unemployment, the climate and environmental crisis that has disrupted education, and the global Covid-19 pandemic. This has led to significant increases in poverty and unemployment rates. By 2022, some 2.5 million Iraqis were in need of some form of humanitarian assistance due to the difficulty of returning to their home communities. In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, the number of Iraqis living below the national poverty line is estimated to have increased by 10 percentage points to nearly 30 percent. Unemployment and food insecurity also increased. The main causes of household poverty can be related to lack of economic opportunity, which is greatly influenced by public investment, economic structure and access to education for household heads. The main causes of child poverty deprivation appear to be related to poor living conditions and poor health, which correlates with household heads' inability to access formal and secure employment opportunities. Several factors, such as lack of adequate investment, an uncompetitive and undiversified economy, are slowing the job creation process in Iraq. The recent pattern of conflicts and crises has limited government investment in job growth and created institutional obstacles, and the lack of welfare benefits in Iraq's private sector has left people with and without access to public employment. Access to education is one of the main factors in the future economic and political participation of women and girls, as well as men and boys, or, conversely, vulnerability to poverty. UNICEF found that 3.2 million primary-age children were out of school and 355,000 internally displaced persons (48%) were out of school due to conflict and underinvestment in education in recent decades. In 196 elementary schools, the truancy rate for girls was the highest at her 11% compared to her 5% for boys. Dropout rates are high in secondary school, with 60% of girls between the ages of 14 and 18 reported not attending school, compared to 43% of boys. At all stages of education, where home and social norms influence the developmental trajectory of many girls, girls reportedly lack control over their educational pursuits, exacerbated by Iraq's deteriorating economy.198 Dropout rates for girls are often severe. Household responsibilities and employment either in the family or in new households by marriage. Premature pregnancy increases health risks for both mother and child and affects the economic situation of households, so child marriage has a major impact on poverty, including health. As mentioned earlier, child poverty manifests itself mainly in malnutrition and housing conditions, and is closely related to household socioeconomic status and household head education level. Therefore, there is a strong link between early school dropout rates, early forced marriage and poverty. (Sida, 2022**)**

Poverty is an increasingly prevalent problem in today's society. The number of low-income households continues to grow. According to National Board of Labor, Social Affairs and Family statistics for December 2016, families with dependent children make up 35.38% of the total number of recipients of social assistance benefits. (Banovcinova, et al, 2014) At the same time, insufficient public investment in social services such as health, education and social safety nets keeps people out of poverty. (Sida, 2022**)**

Family is the most important socializing factor. Their job is to provide children with a stable and safe environment for their overall development. The role of parents is to instill in their children the values and norms that are accepted in society. This is a prerequisite for the child's successful integration into society. Therefore, the educational function of the family is considered one of the most important functions. However, this property is affected by many factors. Banovcinova, et al, (2018) conducted a research andthe purpose of their study was to examine how poverty affects upbringing. The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) was assessed along five dimensions: (1) positive involvement with the child, (2) supervision and monitoring, (3) use of positive disciplinary techniques, and (4)Thus consistency. and was used for data collection. (5) Use of Corporal Punishment. The sample he was divided into two groups, the first group consisting of her 188 parents in poverty. The reference group consisted of parents living in households with income levels (N-188).Analysis of the results revealed differences between parents living in poverty and those with a standard income, especially in monitoring and monitoring, but also in the use of positive disciplinary techniques. On the contrary, there was no significant difference in parental cooperation or use of corporal punishment. From these results, it became clear that poverty is one of the factors that affect child-rearing.

Most research on attitudes to poverty focuses on individual causality to explain why poor people are poor. These studies focus on three types. What do Europeans think is the cause of poverty?

Causes of poverty: individualistic, social or structural and fatalistic: In the first group, people blame the poor themselves for their poverty. For example, they view poor people's behavior as undesirable because of their addiction, such as drugs or alcohol, laziness, weakness, lack of commitment to overcome obstacles, or low intelligence.second group, From a social perspective, social causes predominate, with individuals blaming either society itself or contextual factors (political, economic, cultural) (e.g., supportive or discriminatory behavior by other citizens). Finally, people attribute poverty to fatalistic causes when they believe that poverty is the result of bad luck or fate. B. When poor people suffer from illness or disability, or are victims of accidents that determine their future**.(** Da Costa, L.P. and Dias, J.G., 2015. P 1)

**Chapter three:**

**Methodology:**

Qualitative research methods are designed in a manner that helps reveal the behavior and perception of a target audience with reference to a particular topic. There are different types of qualitative research methods like an in- depth interview, focus groups, ethnographic research, content analysis, case study research that are usually used. The results of qualitative methods are more descriptive and the inferences can be drawn quite easily from the data that is obtained.Qualitative research methods originated in the social and behavioral sciences. (QuestionPro, 2020)

For this research, qualitative method has been used to gather information and collect data. Choosing this methods, is a great way for gathering information. We also tried to get in-depth opinion from participants, simply because qualitative method can help us to understand the attitude of participants on our research topic and understand why the participants think the way they do. We utilized semi-structured interview as a tool to gather the credible data.

We decide to choose our sample purposely, the participants should be those who are considered poor and live under the poverty line. To answer the question of our research, we interviewed with poor families who visited the Social Protection Network administration to receive financial assistance. We conducted 6 interviews with poor parents to collect our data (**see appendix 1**). That was the best place to gather information for this research simply because that administration already identified those who are considered as poor families.

In order to analyze the gathered data, we relied on the general research questions as the main themes, then we tried to identify similar/different answers based on the questions.

**Research limitation**

* To benefit from writing our research, we searched a lot in some libraries but we didn't find any books or researches written in Kurdish language about poverty. This may affect the quality of the literature review to not be well contextualized.
* One of the obstacle that we faced was the recruitment of the participants for the interviews, then considering the Social Protection Network administration, where we were able to find poor families for the interviews was the best solution. This may affect the findings that only reflect those people who take advantage of the financial support from the government.
* Another obstacle was that participants refused to record their voices , and only one allowed us and they answered our questions very briefly. Consequently, we were not able to capture all the ideas in details shared during the interviews.

**Chapter four:**

**Finding and Discussions:**

Six people were interviewed, confidentiality rules were followed. Also, using code instead of their names .We asked them some questions relevant to the goals of this research. In the following, we are presenting the findings based on the main research questions.

* **Causes of family poverty:**

Looking at the responses from the participants, we found that most of the interviewees do not have good education to help them to find a good job to generate high family income. It can be stated that “having low education level and have not had a good opportunity to get a suitable job lead them to not be protected from poverty.” That's why we see that these families don't have a good living condition and another reason for poverty is the size of families that because of the large number of family members the needs increased and this creates a burden on the families.

“Illiterate is a major cause of poverty, because if individuals do not have a good education and are not educated, they will not be able to find a suitable job in the future due to lack of certificates.”

As already mentioned in the literature poverty is a problem in almost all nations in the world , Much has been argued about the causes of poverty. The consensus of the economists and development practitioners is that income inequality, conflicts, location, natural disasters, ill health and disability, inheritance of poverty, education and skills, and gender discrimination may cause poverty in the world. We see that poverty is a global problem and many studies have been done in countries around the world that there are many reasons for families to suffer from poverty they can’t provide for their needs. Also another causes of poverty is illiteracy Low capacities through lack of education, vocational skills, entrepreneurial abilities, poor health and poor quality of life.(Addae Korankye, A., 2014. pp.147-153.)

Scholars also believe that "Poor people are poor because (1) they don't know how to manage their money," (2) they "spend money on inappropriate things," and (3) " they waste money.( Davids, Y.D. and Gouws, A., 2013. P1201). This means that if poor people have little amount of money, they should be educated enough to know how to manage the amount for their expenses.

Three participants of our research talked about their economic situation and stated that “our financial situation was very bad and that the income we have is not enough and that we could not live on our monthly income, which is something between 250,000 and 300,000 IQD”

Families with very poor financial conditions and unpaid monthly income, which forces them to borrow money from their relatives, friends. to provide for the basic necessities of their lives and because of the high price of goods and food and the cost of services such as water, electricity that all this puts on the shoulders of poor families and because of the large number of family members who have more needs and the necessities of their children going to school such as buying pens and notebooks that often poor families can't afford to buy these school items, that the total life needs are difficult to provide for by poor families‏, that's why poor people are obliged to ask other people for help to provide these needs.

and 2 of the participants who’s financial situation was moderate and “ their monthly income was between 400-500 IQD “ That these families have asked for less help from others according to their ability and monthly income they have provided their needs.

But these families hope their monthly income will rise so that they can provide most of their living needs without asking for help from anyone. Families with moderate financial status can only provide some of the needs but cannot provide half of the other needs‏Often their children ask for expensive goods that they can't afford to buy for their children.

In general, families with bad financial conditions cannot provide all the necessities in their families for their children, which makes these families obliged to ask for help from others.

* **Family poverty implications:**

Most of the participants said that because of poverty, we didn't have any social problems, they said that they had small problems but they solved it.

As we interviewed, participants pointed out that despite the discomfort and hardships of life, they have faced because of poverty, they are satisfied with the life they have. But according to previous research, poverty causes a number of problems. Many scholars and social commentators argue that high levels of economic inequality are having a negative impact on society. They argue that inequality benefits only a few wealthy citizens and most suffer the consequences. The 2008 financial crisis reinvigorated these debates. For example, in their bestseller, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) describe economic inequalities as social distrust, impaired mental and physical health, overconsumption, drug addiction, obesity, and the failure of the education system. Associated with various social ailments. For them, it is not material poverty that creates these problems, but the context of inequality.

There is a direct link between poverty and Crime. It is assumed that people living in poverty are therefore much more likely to commit property crimes than the general population because they profit more from each Crime.(Zhao , et al , 2014). Despite the fact that researches in other countries found the relationships between poverty and crime, it does not seem that there is this relationship in the Kurdistan region, at least based on our sample.

* **Role of government in family poverty reduction:**

Many of the poor families who participated in the answer to the question agreed and believed that government agencies should do something to reduce poverty. they said that “ governmental and private organizations also play an effective role in helping the poor. That the government through these institutions and organizations can provide financial assistance and basic necessities such as food and clothing to poor families who cannot buy these needs “ , “ Also Government agencies and organizations should also be responsible for providing the needs of poor children, such as school education needs for children whose families cannot provide for them “ .It is also necessary to find solutions to the problems of poor people through government agencies and government agencies that are specific to helping poor families and to help them financially and to try to find the ability of young people and those who are able to choose a suitable job for the poor so that they can provide for their living needs.

The government should help all poor families through these institutions equally and without discrimination among citizens regardless of any difference and provide equal opportunities for all poor people to receive financial assistance given by the government to poor people The government should help all poor families through these institutions equally and without discrimination among citizens regardless of any difference and provide equal opportunities for all poor people to receive financial assistance given by the government to poor people.

Many participants said that “the government has an important role in reducing poverty government should provide monthly payments to the poor, as a result of job opportunities for poor people so they can meet their needs”. “ Poor families are demanding that the government offer services to poor families without distinction. disabilities in their families should pay monthly money to those who are members of the diet and cannot do a job to get money and provide for their needs”.

“And government can reduce poverty through education, which means the government needs to build more schools for every stage and schools need to be at a new and ideal level of education so that we can get a good Job in the future Poor families are demanding that their children study in a good school so that they can successfully complete their stages of studies and get good certificates so that their children can have a good and suitable job in the future

 because of their certificates”.

This will be because the government will pave the way for them.And the government needs to provide all kinds of services for poor people to provide for their basic needs, such as (food, clothing and health care). And those with very poor financial conditions should be provided with a suitable place to stay.

**Conclusion**

The term poverty refers to the condition or condition in which people or communities lack the financial resources and necessities necessary for a minimum standard of living. As such, their basic human needs cannot be met. Poverty-stricken people and families lack adequate shelter, clean water, healthy food and medical care. Each country may have its own criteria for determining the poverty line and counting the number of people living in poverty.

It is important to remember that poverty is a socioeconomic condition that is the result of multiple factors, not just income. These factors include race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and little or no access to education. Like children, adults living in poverty experience worse health outcomes, including higher mortality and increased risk of mental illness (such as depression and addiction). The stress of poverty, combined with inadequate access to health care and limited financial resources for treatment, exacerbates health conditions and makes parenthood even more difficult.

This research intended to explore the causes that lead a family to live in poverty and the implications of poverty at the family level as well the expected roles of governmental actors to reduce family poverty. During this study, we found that the main cause of poverty is illiteracy, and those who are illiterate cannot have their own work in the future.

And poor people can't live normally and provide anything they want because poor people are deprived of many rights to life. and the lack of job opportunities for citizens is another reason for poverty. Poverty also can cause a variety of social problems such as divorce of spouses. And in doing this study, we found that poverty has an impact on child education. Poverty is a widespread problem in today's Kurdistan region, with many older families and more children and children in need of needs whose families are unable to provide for them because of poverty.

**Recommendation**

1.The government should help the poor financially through government agencies and provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, and accommodation for the poor.

2.The government should provide more job opportunities for citizens to protect families from poverty and provide for their needs with the amount of money they get.

3.The government should take advantage of the resources that have economic benefits and raise the country's income such as profiting through agriculture, business that benefits

citizens.

4. Reducing poverty requires attention, both on what the government needs to do and what individuals need to do.

5. Ensuring that everyone has a good education, providing high quality primary education for all children in low-income families. Because if children from poor families complete their studies, they can have their own work in the future and provide for their basic needs.

6. Poor families face more crime in order to provide for themselves, so they resort to crime. If the government helps poor people and provides them with their needs, the crime rate will also decrease.

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**Appendix # 1**

Description table of the participants

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Families  |  Age | Gender  | Place  | Number of family members  | Literacy level |
| Family 1 |  52 | Male | Daratu |  8 | Illiterate |
| Family 2 |  40 | Female  | Roshnbiry |  7 | Illiterate |
| Family 3 |  46 | Female  | Kasnazan |  6 | Primary  |
| Family 4 |  27 | Female  | Tobzawa  |  5 | Illiterate |
| Family 5 |  52 | Female  | Mamzawa |  9 | Primary  |
| Family 6 |  50 | Male | Bnaslawa  |  7 | Illiterate |