Addressing the Invisible Poverty of Generations

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ABSTARCT: *Poverty is defined as a state or situation in which an individual or a group lacks the financial means and necessities for a basic quality of life. Poverty is defined as a situation in which one's earnings from work are insufficient to meet fundamental human requirements. In this post, I share some of the results of a research I did on individuals who grew up in poverty but have overcome it via education. All of the participants in this research came from a family of poverty and went on to college or university. Six white men, 11 white females, two Hispanic males, two African American males, two Hispanic females, and one Asian female were among the primary participants, who ranged in age from 22 to 60. The results yielded a number of conclusions. Participants expressed their feelings of shame and embarrassment as a result of growing up in poverty. They felt that outsiders blamed them for their poverty. At all phases of their life, participants encountered physical, emotional, social, and economic obstacles to reading and education. Participants' comments regarding looks, employment, fundamental necessities, such as shelter, food, and health care; money; and control over one's life were particularly noteworthy.*

KEYWORDS: Employment, Food, Health, Housing, Poverty, Social.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the state of being poor, a person does not have enough material possessions or income to meet his or her basic needs. Poverty can be characterized by social, economic, and political factors. Absolute poverty measures compare an individual's income to the amount required to meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, in order to determine how poor, they are. When a person is unable to meet a minimum level of living standards when compared to other people living in the same time and place, this is referred to as relative poverty. So the threshold below which one is considered to be in relative poverty can differ significantly from one country to another, or even from one society to another. As of 2019, the majority of the world's population lives in poverty: (in Purchasing Power Parity dollars) 90% of people live on less than $30 per day, two-thirds live on less than $10 per day, and 10% live on less than $1.90 per day, according to the World Bank (extreme poverty)[1].

Poverty is a major concern for many governments and non-governmental organizations, which work to alleviate it by providing basic necessities to those who lack the means to support themselves. It is possible that these efforts will be hampered by limitations on the government's ability to deliver services due to factors such as corruption, tax avoidance, loan conditions, and the brain drain of health care and educational professionals. Welfare, economic liberties, and the provision of financial services are all examples of strategies for increasing income in order to make basic needs more affordable for everyone. The poorest citizens of middle-income countries, on the other hand, have disproportionately failed to benefit from their countries' increased wealth[2].

In addition to income, poverty is also measured in terms of the individual's basic needs at any given time. Since World War II, life expectancy in the developing world has increased significantly, and the developing world is beginning to close the gap with the developed world. Every developing country in the world has seen a decrease in the number of children dying. It has decreased from 56 percent in the mid-1960s to less than 10 percent today in countries with a daily per-capita supply of food energy of less than 9,200 Kilojoules (2,200 kilocalories) in the 1990s, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Literacy, access to safe drinking water and electricity, as well as the availability of essential consumer goods, all show similar patterns[3].

In the early hours of the morning outside the Opera Tavern in Stockholm, a band of beggars is waiting for the delivery of leftovers from the previous day's meal. The year is 1868 in Sweden. Poverty can also be defined as an aspect of unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, which manifests itself as social exclusion, dependency, and a diminished ability to participate in society or to form meaningful connections with other people. Poverty can be experienced as a lack of opportunities to participate in and develop meaningful connections with other people in society. Those who are suffering poverty, for example, may benefit from increased ties to the mainstream, which can be achieved by providing them with relational care. Research conducted by the World Bank with more than 20,000 poor individuals in 23 countries for its

"Voices of the Poor" report reveals a number of characteristics that poor people consider to be a component of poverty. The following are examples: abuse by those in positions of authority, disempowerment by institutions, exclusion from certain areas of the country, gender relationships, lack of security, limited capabilities, physical limitations, precarious employment, difficulties in social relationships, ineffective community organizations, and discrimination. People's reduced "capacity" to live the types of lives they value may be a consequence of their diminished "capability" to live the kinds of lives they value, according to an analysis of social dimensions of poverty. Lack of access to information, education, health care, social capital, and political influence are just a few of the social elements of poverty that may exist[4].

1.1 Appearance:

A world in which beauty was essential and one of the factors by which they were evaluated was described by the participants, and this was a contributing cause to their dislike of and estrangement from school. A large number of respondents described instances in which they were humiliated or embarrassed by their poverty, or in which they were ashamed by the looks of their parents or other relatives. Cleanliness, hairstyles, clothes, and shoes were often mentioned in stories concerning physical appearance. Julie said, "Everyone could tell I was poor because of my tattered clothing, terrible shoes, and free lunch vouchers," and she continued, according to Kimberly, a second responder, "no one wanted us around" because "our hair was filthy and stringy, and most people made us feel like we didn't belong." Participants were aware that their parents' physical looks were not regarded typical after hearing such tales.

1.2 Job Prospects:

People who answered the survey said that their aspirations for their future employment were influenced by their parents and others in their lives. When asked, "When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?" 87 percent of those who answered said they had no specific job or professional aspirations. The vast majority said that they had never considered themselves to be "someone." "All I wanted was to live and grow up," Larry said. "I've never regarded myself to be deserving of any kind of position." Seventy-two percent of the girls who had selected a future goal said that they wanted to be mothers when they were grown up. Six men also expressed an interest in becoming parents in the future. When asked how they planned to make a livelihood, 85 percent of those who responded said that they would locate "some sort" of employment opportunity. In the survey, 69 percent of the respondents' parents were dependent on assistance, disability payments, or migrant labor[5].

Participants discussed employment as though they were abstract ideas. They were unable to provide a clear description of the position they were looking for. When asked about their childhood jobs, respondents identified three categories, all of which were familiar and visible: jobs that they had witnessed performed in their communities, such as police officer, hair cutter, clerk, office worker, food server, and truck driver; jobs that were held by people they knew, such as working in manufacturing, textiles, fishing, a glass factory, a cannery, sign painting, and seasonal migrant labor; and jobs that were held by people they did not know, such as working in the military. Additionally, 71% of those who took part in the survey said that their own personal value was determined by the kind of job their parents performed or did not do[6].

Jobs or occupations were seen as important by the respondents as being closely related to their social-class environment. Growing up, they were not exposed to professional employment possibilities outside of what was available in their local towns, and the majority of those opportunities did not require a college degree.

1.3 Insufficient Housing, Food, And Health-Care Services:
1.3.1 Housing:

Participants said that they were unable to participate because of a lack of appropriate accommodation. When asked about their emotions of guilt and their impression that their house was "different," the majority of participants said that their family housing status had a role in these sentiments and perceptions. According to Tammy, "I would never be able to bring anybody home from our landfill." Others have reported having additional people living at home, living in a dirty environment, or living in a vehicle. Vicki shared a touching memory of a visit to a friend's home: "She had bowls that matched. It was very nice." "I've always wanted dishes that weren't Golden Soft margarine containers," says the author.

The majority of respondents wished for improved living conditions. It was interesting to hear their tales of how they cleaned, built, and repaired the areas where they lived, but no matter how hard they worked, the majority of participants said that they were still embarrassed of their living conditions. Eighty-six percent of those who took part in the survey spoke about their attempts to make their houses more attractive[7].

1.3.2 Food:

Food was one of the most often mentioned topics throughout the discussion. Ninety percent of those who answered the survey revealed personal experiences about how food was a barrier for them. Participants expressed their frustration with not having enough food or the humiliation they felt when they had to buy food using food stamps. Others were embarrassed by the fact that they had to carry "cold pancake sandwiches" or "tea in a mayonnaise jar" to school, and they felt inferior since they didn't have the same food that the rest of the class was consuming.

The majority of those who attended recounted their experiences with hunger. They were able to relate to one another as they described feeling weak and wobbly as a result of not having enough to eat. This degree of hunger had a negative impact on not just their sense of self-worth, but also on their physical health. It was noted by the majority of participants that their families were "sick all of the time."

1.3.3 Health:

It was stated by almost all respondents that they and their family members received little or no medical treatment. Ninety-seven percent of those who answered the survey said they couldn't recall ever going to the doctor or knew of anybody in their family who had ever gone to the doctor. They were witnesses to a great deal of illness and a great number of early deaths. "I had no idea people went to the doctor," Norm said. I was under the impression that everyone had gone to the ER." Other than the absence of medical treatment, participants stated that they seldom had the money to buy medicines, or that if they did have the money to acquire prescriptions, they shared the medication, including antibiotics, with other family members and friends. Participants also said that they did not get dental or vision treatment. Rick confessed that he had never seen a dentist. Until you required artificial teeth, I didn't even realize you were meant to do that. These remarks not only demonstrate a lack of access to health care, but also a lack of knowledge about the availability of such treatment[8].

1.4 Contexts of Education:

The majority of respondents (98 percent) said that education had little or no significance in their early lives and that it was just not essential to them. They were almost unanimous in their belief that early schooling was just something they "did" without understanding why. Some of the most often stated reasons for attending school were because it was required by law, they "had to be there," and they "simply went and never gave it a second thought." More than two-thirds of those who took part in the survey said that education came naturally to them. Numerous people said that, despite having received excellent marks, they lacked direction and did not comprehend what they might do with a college degree[9].

The group's ability to communicate about schooling in their personal life was restricted. All respondents agreed that their everyday concerns were the primary focus of their life, and almost all (96 percent) said that education was simply not addressed in their households. No one ever inquired as to how well you were doing in school. Participants said that the absence of communication regarding education sent the impression that it was unimportant and that no one cared about the subject matter. In the survey, 96% of respondents said that their friends were also from low-income families and that they were under peer pressure to forego formal educational opportunities. "I never connected studying with being successful," Larry said. "I just believed that bright children performed well, while others, such as myself and my friends, did not."

In addition, the educational levels of their parents had an impact on their children's aspirations for their schooling. None of the respondents' parents had completed more than a high school diploma, and the majority (96 percent) of those who answered the survey wanted to do just a bit better than their parents. Given the fact that the vast majority of their parents had little more than a tenth-grade education, many of the children set a goal of completing high school. Even that, however, was beyond the imagination of 59 percent of those who took part in the survey. According to Tammy, "I could never see myself completing high school." Getting through eighth grade would be a great achievement since no one I knew had gone beyond that point. The extent to which a person was anticipated to progress in school was also influenced by his or her gender. Almost all of the interviewees remembered being taught that education was just for males and that girls were expected to marry[10].

The respondents were unable to include education in their long-term plans because of the poor regard they had for education in their homes, the absence of discussions regarding educational issues, and the nearly complete absence of educational objectives in their lives. Understanding and appreciating educational settings are essential in developing a need and a desire to learn about the significance of higher education

and to pursue it. The majority of them were unaware that a college degree might help them rise beyond the level of poverty to which they were used to living.

1.5 Economic Constraints:

Everyone who answered the survey said that not having enough money to purchase basic needs contributed to their sentiments of despair. Ninety-one percent of those polled said that if they didn't have money, their lives were out of their hands and that they had no ability to alter their circumstances. When asked what money meant to them and their families, 98 percent of those who answered the survey said it represented safety, security, and the ability to make choices. "People who have money have a lot of options," James said. Without money, things are a lot more difficult. No one chooses to be without financial resources. My parents put forth a lot of effort. They made payments on a home for 10 years under the impression that it was their ticket to security, only to discover that the bank did not have a deed. They were completely wiped out." Respondents believed that they would be unable to pursue personal, educational, and social possibilities due to a lack of financial resources.

In addition to feeling that they had no control over their finances, members in the focus group also expressed emotions of inner shame and humiliation as a result of their lack of control over their life. The majority of those who took part in the discussion spoke about responding to events in their lives rather than creating or selecting their own destinies. Many of the participants expressed the belief that they had something personally wrong with them, and that this was the root cause of their plight. Life, as Jared put it, "just occurs." 'No one makes any plans.' Poor people see life as though it has spun out of control and there is nothing they can do to stop it."

1.6 Teachers' Responsibilities:

There was a general impression among respondents that the majority of elementary and secondary school instructors "didn't give a damn." The majority of students had never had instructors who had safeguarded them or reached out to them. A large majority of respondents (94 percent) also said that instructors "didn't know what to do with children like them." Their complaints included being continuously ignored or sent to the back of the room since they were so far behind the rest of the group. Twelve of the twenty-four participants in the focus group indicated that they had learning impairments that had not been identified. Their intelligence was questioned in some instances, but it was discovered that they had a learning impairment that stopped them from completing their education. On the other hand, some children were mistakenly labelled as having learning impairments when they did not. Bill, for example, was classified as a bad student, but he subsequently discovered that he required tongue surgery, which he describes as follows: I wasn't being naive. No one was interested enough to look into it." A similar situation occurred when Lynne was unable to read from the board due to a visual issue, but the instructors were "uninterested in finding out" what was causing her problems in reading.

Teachers were largely seen as the "enemy" by the participants. They shared tale after story of how they had been humiliated by their instructors. The majority of those who took part in the survey said they were frightened of their instructors. In fact, just four out of the twenty-four participants in the focus group reported having a good connection with their instructors. Participants who had bad encounters with instructors stated that they dealt with the teachers' conduct by "acting out" or withdrawing and being quiet the majority of the time. Lynda's remark serves as an illustration of the kind of quiet that poverty may create: "I was able to draw enough attention to myself with my clothing and shoes. I didn't want to have to raise my hand again and draw anything else."

Furthermore, the majority of respondents (89 percent) said that they did not think their instructors had faith in their abilities. This was brought up again and again during focus-group interviews. The majority of participants said that their instructors had a negative effect on their life, and many still express dissatisfactions with how they were handled and "pushed aside." While participants believed that their instructors had the capability of ensuring that they were valued and protected from mockery or violence, they thought that they did not use that capability. In addition, the majority of participants said that instructors used examples from the middle class to illustrate the topics they were teaching. They were unable to connect to instances that had little or nothing to do with the impoverished environment in which they were living at the time. Because aspects of the participants' reality were not included in the curriculum, the students themselves felt marginalized as a consequence of their participation.

People who took part in the study expressed their belief that their life might have turned around sooner if they had encountered instructors who believed in them and treated them as if they were "someone." Despite the fact that they did not want to be singled out for negative reasons, the majority of participants said that they wished instructors had showed them what they were excellent at.

Because of their teachers' lack of knowledge of social class, almost all respondents felt as if they did not belong at their current institution. The majority of respondents said that they felt there was little or no understanding of their experiences growing up in impoverished families. For white responders, socioeconomic status was a source of extra embarrassment. According to them, it was almost anticipated that individuals from minority groups would grow up in poverty, while for white people, it was nearly expected that they would grow up in luxury since they were white. Of course, the invisibility of social class posed obstacles for all respondents across racial lines in educational settings, regardless of whether or not the respondents' social class matched or exceeded standards established by their teachers.

The majority of respondents said that they felt empowered when they started to realize, as a consequence of their education and their contacts with others from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, that they were not the cause of their own poverty. "I was overjoyed when I found out about the class," Bill said. "Finally, I had the vocabulary and expertise to comprehend and assist others realize that I was not defective, and that neither was my family," says the author.

2. DISCUSSION

The results of this research shed light on the social, economic, political, and personal variables that affect the prospective academic achievement of kids from low socioeconomic status and/or generational poverty. The Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire said in a lecture delivered at the University of Santa Cruz in 1990 that each society "programmes" its citizens by defining what is normal and what it takes to be a member of the community. Children from families living in generational poverty learn from an early age that their families are not "normal," but rather that they are defective because they do not have the "right" look, food, home, employment, or communication style, among other things. It is these kinds of messaging that put the responsibility on people who live in poverty and further their estrangement from middle-class society. Children from low-income families learn at an early age that their "poor" choices or "bad" conduct contributed to their plight by hearing it from others. It is uncommon for structural reasons of poverty to be addressed or understood, such as a lack of living-wage employment for individuals with low literacy or a lack of affordable housing for those with restricted earnings. Since a result of their isolation, students from generational poverty are more likely than others to internalize their experiences, as they seldom engage in a meaningful manner with individuals who have benefitted from schooling. Most of those who took part in the research did not grow up thinking that education was important or that education was just for "those like themselves." Their family lacked the financial means to lift themselves out of poverty.

Unfortunately, instructors are often ill-equipped to give students from families who have experienced generational poverty with the tools they need to break the cycle of generational poverty. For example, university teacher educators may instruct instructors to "keep their distance" from their pupils and to "avoid becoming personal" with them at times. In order to educate children to escape generational poverty, the polar opposite of this approach is required. It is essential for these kids to establish meaningful relationships with adults in order to externalize their impoverished circumstances. Internalizing poor circumstances as personal shortcomings has a negative impact on self-esteem, educational aspirations, and one's capacity to ask for assistance when required. The fact is that a large number of instructors are not even aware of the components and difficulties of poverty, much alone feel equipped to offer the sort of advice that would assist young people in getting out of it.

In their focus groups, and in the additional responses to questionnaires, the participants in the study agreed that understanding the underlying causes of poverty was critical in releasing them from the false sense of responsibility that they felt for the social condition of their peers in their communities Despite this, discussions of the structural roots of poverty are uncommon in the educational environment. Even though school rules often require that racial problems (which, like other factors, impede individuals from achieving their full potential) be taught and handled, we do not have the same knowledge of the social class difficulties that also inhibit success.

3. CONCLUSION

My own personal experiences of growing up in generational poverty, as well as the perspectives of study participants, may help us better understand what is required to increase literacy rates among children from low-income families. For these kids to be able to take on the difficult job of becoming read and educated, they must overcome the social-class, cultural, and intellectual divides that exist. Taking the time to hear the stories of people who have lived through generational poverty compels us to face the insufficient ways in which we, as a society and in educational settings, deal with social-class disparities. Given the very low percentages of individuals living in generational poverty who acquire literacy and earn college degrees, we must evaluate the little progress we have achieved in achieving educational equality in this area over the last few decades. The information, experiences, and suggestions provided by those who participated in this research may assist us in taking action. It is my life's work, as well as my degree and desire, to assist individuals of all races who are stuck in generational poverty. I want them to be able to choose between literacy and higher education as legitimate choices. But only if the voices of people suffering with generational poverty and their views are heard and understood will this be possible.

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