

Poverty & Its Various Facets in the Current Circumstances

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Abstract

For a sociologist, poverty is a social evil. A social worker does modalities related to poverty alleviation. An anthropologist sees the phenomenon as an obstacle in the human race. For a student of human development, it hinders the development right at the budding stage. A philosopher has so many unanswered questions related to poverty. An economist sees the phenomenon as a multidimensional process. Public health sees the phenomenon as the background of all ill health where as an epidemiologist sees it as a stage of health in the domain of epidemiology. In India, Bollywood made movies like 'Mother India' & 'Boot Polish' to portray poverty. Least of all, it is a tool that politicians use 24*7. The current article sees the phenomenon of poverty in the current circumstances especially in India. Process, obstacles, challenges, opportunities, emerging issues, alleviation strategies are all discussed upon in the article. Views of academicians, policy makers, nobel laureates, politicians, executives, civil society organizations & think individuals & institutions are embedded in the current article.

Keywords- Poverty, MDPI, RCT, Social Safety Net, Deprivation.

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INTRODUCTION

There is an inherent issue of increasing geriatrics population across the globe. Here also, the issue of poverty is a cross-cutting issue. Poverty is inherently gendered in old age when older women are more likely to be widowed, living alone with no income & with fewer assets of their own & fully dependant on family for support. Thus, the process of feminization & ruralization of this older population will continue to increase. Hence, policies must be designed to suit their specific needs.[1]

As per the report of World Poverty Laboratory in 2024, extreme poverty which is less than Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of \$2.15 was brought to less than 3% in India.² Along with this, there were reductions in inequality as well. As per NITI Aayog, nearly 25 crores or 250 million exited Multi-Dimensional Poverty (MDP) as per the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MDPI) from 29.17% to 11.28% between 2013-14 & 2022-23. This was possible because high growth & large decline in inequality have combined to eliminate poverty for the PPP of \$1.9 poverty line that closely correspond to the official Tendulkar poverty line. The inequality coefficient i.e. the Gini coefficient decreased from 28.7 to

27.0 in rural areas while it decreased from 36.7 to 31.9. [2-4]

In India, through welfarism, the poverty reduction strategy of Garib Kalyan moved from Antodaya to Sarvodaya approach. Other efforts include the JAM trinity of Jandhan, Adhar & Mobile & the PM SvANidhi Yojana for street vendors addressed poverty. [5,6,7]

The section below describes the various facets of poverty & one of the major facet is 'inequality' which is an inherent part of the vicious cycle of poverty & health.

Literature Browse

The text books on Preventive & Social Medicine mentions 'poverty' as the background of all morbidities & mortalities. These book mentions that poverty is an integral part of a death certificate as all causes of deaths due to deprivation can be attributed to poverty. [8,9,10] In reality, there is another big obstacle to poverty in the background. It is the concept of 'inequality'. [11]

Inequality is measured through the Gini coefficient. It is a statistical measure of how unequal a distribution is. It is often used to measure income inequality within a country. It is mentioned in the section above this section of the article. It measures how much a distribution deviates from perfect equality. A ratio between 0 & 1 is measured where 0 represents perfect equality & 1 represents perfect inequality. Gini coefficient is calculated using the Lorenz curve that plots the cumulative percentage of income against the cumulative number of recipients. [11]

Gini co-efficient was developed by Italian stastician Corrado Gini & was published in 1912. It does not account for structural changes in a population that can significantly impact economic inequality. Gini coefficient is used by policy makers & researchers to analyze & address income inequality. It is used in credit risk modeling & to address the accuracy of fraud detection models.[11]

Gini coefficient is an index for the degree of inequality in the distribution of income or wealth. It is used to estimate how for a country's wealth or income distribution deviates from an equal distribution. [11]

State Bank of India's research report on poverty released on 3.1.2025 & based on Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES) found that the rural poverty declined from 25.7% in 2011-12 to 4.86% in FY 2024. Urban poverty declined from 13.7% in 2011-12 to 4.09% in FY 2024. [12,13] The MDPI of NITI Aayog cites that poor nutrition is a major contributor to MDP in nearly every state while those with better access to education &

health care services tend to have low MPI scores. Experience tells us that investment in health, education & living standards drive improvements that would further reduce MDP. [14] The National Council of Applied Economic Research's paper cites that poverty dips to 8.5% in 2024 from 21% in 2011-12. Reasons are attributed to food subsidy, social protection, safety nets & suggested that safety nets, risk, insurance while building in flexibility & institutionalizing framework. [15,16]

The special issue of World Health Organization's macroeconomics & health issue mentions that poverty & ill health are interrelated. Poor countries have worst health outcomes in comparison to the rich countries. This association reflects 'causality' running in both the directions. One direction is that 'poverty breeds ill health' & 'ill health keeps poor people poor'. Inequalities exist in health between the poor & the non-poor & on the consequences for impoverishment & income inequality associated with health care expenses. The paper further mentions that effective policies are intended to combat the causes of inequalities. Unfortunately, very little is known about the impacts of such policies although a wealth of measurement techniques & considerable evidence exists on the extent & causes of inequalities. [17]

Academicians have also used the Randomised Control Trials (RCT) to assess & reduce poverty. Further, they have cited that the five pillars that shape poverty outcomes are nutrition, microcredit, education, poverty traps & impact of small interventions. Usually, a nutrition-based understanding of poverty is done. The reality is that the consumption does not change whether money is given or grains. This gives rise to the hypothesis that nutrition does not improve automatically with rising income. On the contrary, better outcomes could come from changing preferences & behavior & not only outcomes. [18]

The paper also mentions that failures in social policy are driven by three factors. These are intuition, ideology & inertia. Broad prescriptions like good governance, democracy, rule of law & trade policy are not sufficient by themselves. Basically, it offers solutions to alleviation of poverty on a long-term basis & not temporarily. [18]

DISCUSSION

The measurement of poverty started with the concept of calorie intake. Further, it moved to income thus giving the concept of poverty line. The nation moved further through the expenditures on food items & other expenses. Still moving, it delved into assets like land. Further, the poverty wheel moved onto safety nets, insurance, safety mechanisms so that the nation can differentiate between short term and long-term poverty alleviation.

Following the footsteps of the MDPI at the global level, the nation settled at the development of MDPI by NITI Aayog with 12 indicators rather than 10 of the global level. [19]

CONCLUSION

Currently, the nation sees the poverty lens through a dimensional triad. These are 'health', 'education' and 'standard of living' with one third weightage. Each of these dimensions have 3,2 &7 indicators respectively and each indicator has a deprivation criteria & weightage. The House Hold must get 33.3% weight to pass the poverty test.

This means the nation has to activate all the three sectors in order to move people out of not poverty, not extreme poverty but multi-dimensional poverty. As mentioned above, the nation has to move beyond broad prescriptions that addresses poverty usually.

After all, poverty is a dynamic & contextual process with respect to time. That's why we have seen so many actions & reactions related to poverty have flown down from top to bottom. All stakeholders must be ready to address this dynamic social issue with respect to time and context at the village, block, district, state, nation, region and global level.

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The lead author declares that it is a review article and the contents are suggestive in nature.

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