

Programme: Master in Sociology

SEMESTER- III

Postgraduate Department of Sociology

Patna University, Patna

Compulsory Paper: C.C. 11 (SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA)

UNIT II: POVERTY

POVERTY:

Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty means that the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs can't be met. Poverty-stricken people and families might go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention. Each nation may have its own threshold that determines how many of its people are living in poverty.

Understanding Poverty:

Poverty status in the United States is assigned to people that do not meet a certain income threshold, which is set by the [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#). Poverty rates in the United States—the percentage of U.S. population living in poverty—are calculated by the U.S. [Bureau of Census](#).

According to 2018 Census figures, more than 38.1 million people in the U.S. lived below the poverty line, which was 1.4 million fewer people than in 2017. However, the measurement of poverty excludes the following people:

- Institutionalized people
- People living in military quarters
- People living in college dormitories
- Individuals under the age of fifteen

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living.
- Poverty-stricken people and families might go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention.
- As of January 2020, the U.S. poverty income threshold for a family of four \$26,200 per year.

Poverty is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter. However, poverty is more, much more than just not having enough money.

The World Bank Organization describes poverty in this way:

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time.

Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action -- for the poor and the wealthy alike -- a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities.”

In addition to a lack of money, poverty is about not being able to participate in recreational activities; not being able to send children on a day trip with their schoolmates or to a birthday party; not being able to pay for medications for an illness. These are all costs of being poor. Those people who are barely able to pay for food and shelter simply can't consider these other expenses. When people are excluded within a society, when they are not well educated and when they have a higher incidence of illness, there are negative consequences for society. We all pay the price for poverty. The increased cost on the health system, the justice system and other systems that provide supports to those living in poverty has an impact on our economy.

While much progress has been made in measuring and analysing poverty, the World Bank Organization is doing more work to identify indicators for the other dimensions of poverty. This work includes

identifying social indicators to track education, health, access to services, vulnerability, and social exclusion.

There is no one cause of poverty, and the results of it are different in every case. Poverty varies considerably depending on the situation. Feeling poor in Canada is different from living in poverty in Russia or Zimbabwe. The differences between rich and poor within the borders of a country can also be great.

Despite the many definitions, one thing is certain; poverty is a complex societal issue. No matter how poverty is defined, it can be agreed that it is an issue that requires everyone's attention. It is important that all members of our society work together to provide the opportunities for all our members to reach their full potential. It helps all of us to help one another.

Poverty is a social condition that is characterized by the lack of resources necessary for basic survival or necessary to meet a certain minimum level of living standards expected for the place where one lives. The income level that determines poverty is different from place to place, so social scientists believe that it is best defined by conditions of existence, like lack of access to food, clothing, and shelter. People in poverty typically experience persistent hunger or starvation, inadequate or absent education and health care, and are usually alienated from mainstream society.

Poverty is a consequence of the uneven distribution of material resources and wealth on a global scale and within nations. Sociologists see it as a social condition of societies with an unequal and inequitable distribution of income and wealth, of the de-industrialization of Western societies, and the exploitative effects of global capitalism.

Poverty is not an equal opportunity social condition. Around the world and within the U.S., women, children, and people of color are far more likely to experience poverty than are white men.