



**Full Length Research Article**

**CHILD POVERTY: THE SHOCKING INS AND OUTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Child poverty rates are edging up in many countries creating a risk society. It is endangering the fate and future of the child population of the world. This present research paper on "Child Poverty: The Shocking Ins and Outs" aims to shed light on the complex issues of child poverty and its impact on the children during their development period. The paper is the outcome of a micro study in the city of Bhubaneswar. Quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods have been applied to elicit the real information relating to the issue under treatment. The study discovered that child poverty brings deprivations, vulnerability and exclusion. Poverty brings resource deficit, difficult roles, risks, strained relationship for a child and prevents the enjoyment of rights. Child poverty creates a risk trajectory. Deprivations and disadvantages bring them a negative perception. The study concludes the conventional monetary approach cannot be taken as the sole measure of child poverty. Right based approach, role assessment according to age, risk factors encountered by a child, nature of relationships a child establishes with others and possession of the quantum and quality social, emotional, cultural, and moral and knowledge resources should be taken as the yardsticks to measure child poverty.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Poverty is ever devastating. Childhood poverty is more damaging as it generates development delays and establishes social, cultural and economic adversities for a growing child. Childhood poverty is the stemming point of disadvantages, disparities. Problems like hunger and homelessness cast their lasting impact on competence building of a child. As UNICEF (2005) observes millions of children around the world miss out on their childhood as a result of poverty. Poverty deprives them of the capabilities needed to survive, develop and thrive. It makes children more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, discrimination and stigmatization. Based on such alarming observations, the present study also made an attempt to develop an insight into the impacts of child poverty from the voices of the children suffering from it. These insights are incorporated in the present paper.

**Research Background:** In the beginning years of the twenty-first century, it is estimated that 600 million (Report, 2004) children in the world are growing up in poverty. The high velocity economy has failed to arrest poverty among children.

This staggering proportion has significant and long term implications for the development of the society. Since recent past, economists like Stiglitz (2005) and Sen (2013) assert that adult poverty has its foundations in child poverty whose depth and dimensions are increasing every day. But studies on child poverty are scantily available. An overview of the literature on child poverty brought out the following research gaps in the topic.

- Regular literature proliferation on child poverty is there in the western countries. Scanty studies are done in the South Asian countries.
- Gender dimension of child poverty gets little reflection in the existing studies on child poverty.
- All literature insists upon the stereo type causes and consequences of child poverty pertaining to lack of access to material conditions of life.
- Child poverty studies in India are ignored in Indian academic researches.
- Regional studies on the issue are missing and in the context of the state of Odisha there is absolutely no research studies on child poverty.

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**Research Objectives:** Drawing upon the above lacunae in research on the issue and the significance of the issue, the current paper aims at three main objectives:

- To determine the extent of poverty experienced by the sample children.
- To trace out the social consequences of child poverty in terms of deprivations suffered, exclusions experienced and vulnerabilities faced by a child.
- To enlist the disparities suffered by a child in terms of access to resources, in discharging roles and responsibilities, in enjoying rights, in encountering risks and in having relationship with the surrounding members.

**Research setting:** The present study was conducted in the city of Bhubaneswar of Odisha.

**Research Design and Methods Used:** The study adopted an exploratory research design and tried to make a judicious blend of quantitative and qualitative analysis to arrive at authenticated findings. For the purpose, a well designed interview schedule was prepared to derive standardized data for statistical treatment. Observation tool and personal interaction outcomes have been supplemented to strengthen the research outcomes.

**Samples chosen:** A total number of 100 samples were chosen on random basis from the Chandrasekharpur area. The sample was drawn from Salia Sahi slum of the area. Care was taken to include children from different age groups ranging from 6 years to 14 years which is designated as the primary schooling year and childhood period.

**Study Outcome:** The present study discovered that out of 100 samples 88 children admitted that they encounter and experience poverty in their daily life. 66 of them mentioned about the absolute and acute poverty they suffer from while 22 percent reported that they suffer from relative and mild poverty. Thus, the study landed at the conclusion that poverty paralyses a major chunk of children. So, the study tried to make a detailed query about the impact of poverty on them.

The study noted that all the children admitted in unequivocal terms that childhood poverty is detrimental to the healthy development of a child. Its consequences are far reaching. It generates resource crunches, brings early responsibilities, difficult roles at tender age, jeopardizes rights, invites risks and strains relationships. In the present paper, efforts are geared to delineate such damaging effects experienced by poor children with factual evidences that emerged from the field observation.

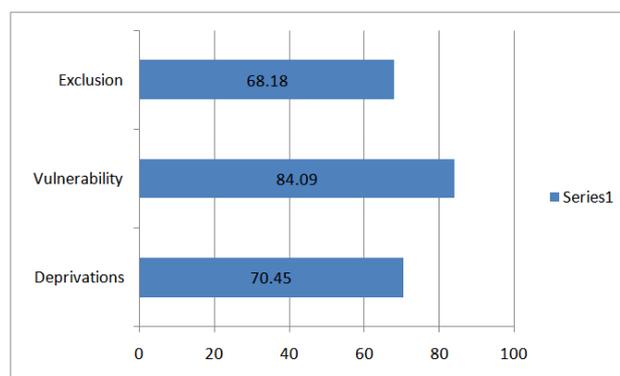
Deprivation simply implies some lacunae that make a child under privileged in arranging a minimum acceptable standard of living for him/her. When basic human needs are unmet it is called deprivation. Traditionally, this measure was used by the economists. The famous Bristol study (2003) (Gordon *et al.*, 2003) used the deprivation measure of child poverty. It insisted upon the dimensions of child well being and rights related to deprivation. In the present study, the short term and long term deprivations in terms of deficits of basic needs faced by a child are discussed.

Vulnerability simply means exposure to damages and hazards. UNDP (2004) defines vulnerability as “a human condition or process resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors which determine likelihood and scale of damage from the impact of a given hazard”. Exclusion implies isolation, a sense of unrelatedness or connectedness. It is often visualized as alienation and estrangement leading to non participation in day to day community affairs. Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process (Ruth Levitas, *et al.*, 2007). It involves the lack of or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the principle of fairness, equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

In this context, the study tried to locate the types of impact child poverty has on the children in society. The result that emerged from the study is presented in Table No. 1

**Table 1. Distribution of the respondents in terms of the impact they visualize poverty has on their lives (multiple choice)**

N=88		
Type of impact	Frequency of children encountering	Percentage
Deprivations	62	70.45
Vulnerability	74	84.09
Exclusion	60	68.18



Thus, the study established that poverty affects the general well being and quality of life of the children making them highly vulnerable, deeply deprived and severely excluded and the share of children claiming these being 84.09 percent, 70.45 percent and 68.18 percent respectively.

The study tried to measure the depth of deprivation by taking into considerations certain parameters. The deprivation indexes are:

- Deprivation in physical ability resulting in low energy level to become productive, frequent morbidity rate and stunted physical growth.
- Deprivations in cognitive ability resulting in poor learning achievements, low intelligence level, poor class room interactions, low exposure to information.
- Deprivation in terms of emotional gratification resulting in discontentment.

- Deprivation in having a descent and quality life marked through early entry into labour market, early marriage, early acquisition of responsibilities.

Vulnerability is also presented in terms of its magnitude. In this context, the Chambers (1989) Ellis (2000) classification model is referred to. Chambers and Ellis classify vulnerability into internal and external. External side includes

- Risks, shocks and stresses visible and identifiable in nature

The internal side includes

- Defenseless position and humiliation inflicted on a child.

Exclusion parameters that are derived from the study include:

- Exclusion from peer groups.
- Exclusion from social or collective activities
- Exclusion from social services
- Feeling of powerless and voiceless in groups
- Confinements

Further, the study has taken care to conceptualize deprivations, vulnerability and exclusion in terms of a continuum. The depth of deprivations, vulnerability and exclusion suffered by the respondents in terms of parameters is presented in Table No.2

**Table 2. Distribution of sample children on the basis of the depth of deprivation, vulnerability, exclusion faced (multiple choice)**

M=88

Impacts of Poverty	Faced By Children in Number and Percentage				
	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extreme	Total
Deprivation	-	5 (8.06)	15 (24.19)	42 (67.74)	62 (70.45)
Vulnerability	04 (5.41)	06 (8.11)	30 (40.54)	34 (45.95)	74 (84.09)
Exclusion	34 (56.67)	06 (10)	12 (20)	08 (13.33)	60 (68.18)
Total	38	17	57	84	88

(Figures in parenthesis represent percentage)

Note: Deprivation symbolized by:

- Deprivation in physical ability
- Deprivation in cognitive ability
- Deprivation in emotional gratification
- Deprivation in happiness

Vulnerability symbolized by:

- Risks and shocks
- Stress
- Neglect
- Humiliation

Exclusion symbolized by

- Alienation from surrounding and interacting members
- Isolation from social and collective activities
- Banned from using civic and social services
- Confinements

The continuum of “mild” is experiencing one parameter, “moderate” is experiencing two parameters, “severe” is experiencing three parameters “extreme” is experiencing all the four parameters. As it becomes perceptible from the above table, 67.74 percent children encounter extreme deprivation while 24.19 percent experience severe deprivation which indicates that abject poverty is chronic to children. These children report that they become succumb to different diseases which go neglected, unattended and their undernourishment, poor sanitary conditions, lack of access to safe drinking water, make them physically fragile reducing their productivity. In sports, games, physical activities, they find themselves exhausted.

They have a deprivation of physical energy due to poor intake and lack of health care emanating from the poverty they encounter. In terms of cognitive ability, they report that they are far behind their friends. The lack of interest of their parents, lack of investment of time, money and energy to stimulate them intellectually by their parents, lack of exposure to quality education make them trail behind their friends. They fail to comprehend the class room delivery and participate meaningfully in the class room transactions and their learning performance becomes extremely poor. In terms of emotional gratification, they too report to be poor. Because, they lack love, affection, warmth, sympathy, sharing, caring and company of their parents. Finally, when they become losers in all these aspects, they also become unhappy. They miss a happy and a healthy childhood. Girls are found to be more deprived in comparison to the boys.

Vulnerability rate is extreme for 45.95 percent children and severe for 40.59 percent children. Those children who suffer from extreme form of vulnerability reported that they encounter risks and shocks of myriad forms like risks of food insecurity, risks of health hazards, gang involvement. Calamities escalate the magnitude of their risks and often they become homeless. They also experience stress when they become temporary child labours, beggars engaging them in some income earning pursuits. Girls reported that they enter into forced child marriages and sometimes they are insecure with the apprehension of being trafficked. Neglects are received by them from family members, friends at schools, teachers in the class rooms and community members. They are prone to violence getting easily battered and scolded. Poverty too brings humiliation. When they lack the essentials needed for playgrounds and class rooms, peers and teachers humiliate them.

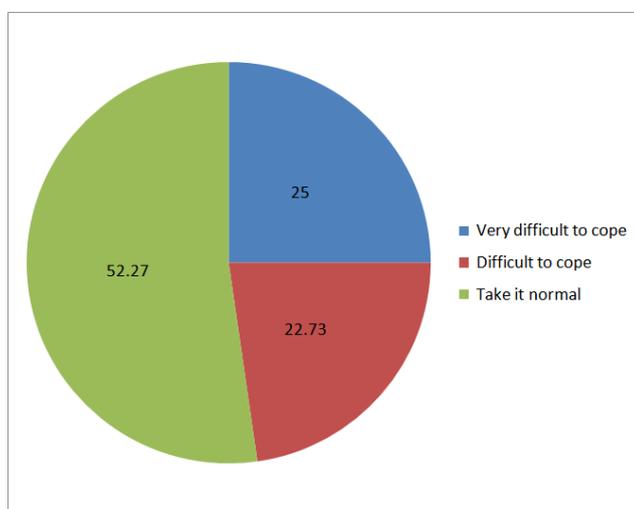
“Exclusion” as a consequence of childhood poverty is mildly felt by 56.67 or moderately felt by 10 percent respondents. It does not have the severe or extreme exposure like deprivation and vulnerability. As the urban centers are more individualistic, cosmopolitan and the households are concentrated on income basis, the experience of vulnerability is neither extreme nor severe. The few children who experience it suffer from acute poverty. Particularly, the SC and ST migrant children were detected to be alienated from the higher caste children in the schools and they feel the negligence when they are not accorded importance by the teachers, are not included in the school representing teams, in

class room transactions and are allotted with separate seats by their friends in the class rooms. Isolation is experienced by a meager number of children when they are thoroughly side tracked in school functions, community celebrations and feasts. Few are banned from using civic facilities like club houses, swings, see-saws, slides in the park etc. Confinement is exclusively a female phenomenon. Girls are trebly disadvantaged because of their caste, gender and poverty. The study outcomes are presented in Table 3

The five fold impacts can be described with deficit resources, difficult roles and responsibilities, infringed rights, exposure to greater risks, and strained relationships. A child suffering from poverty is found with resource deficit. Resources include economic resources, social resource and intellectual resource which strengthen the child as a potent human resource. Physical resource refers to the infrastructural support like finance, infrastructure to ensure him a descent living. When he/she faces a resource crunch he/she finds himself or herself

**Table 3. Forms of exclusion and their manifestation on the children**

Forms of exclusion	Manifestation Forms
Alienation from interacting members	Negligence expressed by friends, teachers, non-representation in school teams, not figuring important in class room transactions
Isolation from social activities	Games, celebrations, festivals, feasts, functions
Banned from enjoying civic facilities	Club houses, parks
Confinement	To stereotyped activities in schools and home assignments



However, the study came to a conclusion that deprivations, vulnerabilities and exclusion resulting from childhood poverty are strongly inter-related with each other. They create a “risk trajectory” one risk leading to the other form of risk. Deprivations boost vulnerabilities and exclusion. So, a child misses a good quality of life, his/her well being is disturbed and security is at stake due to poverty. Poverty makes him/her powerless and voiceless. The children who reported to be suffering from deprivations, vulnerability and exclusion were asked to mention their ability to cope up with them. It was noted that there is a variation in the coping ability of the children. 25 percent of children reported that they find it very difficult to cope with the situations arising from poverty while 22.73 percent find it somewhat difficult to cope with. It was astonishing to detect that 52.27 percent children take it normal which indicates that they accept the situations arising out of poverty as common and have developed resistance to them. Their feelings are deep, but their reactions are so normal that they develop very good coping mechanisms. Perhaps long term suffering is responsible for developing this coping mechanism. Poverty not only generates disadvantages for the child but also brings forth gross disparities among them. The study has arrived at a fivefold impacts that run as consequence of childhood poverty as reported by the sample children.

in a disadvantageous position in comparison to his fellow beings. As a human resource too, his capability becomes limited and underrated. He becomes powerless, esteem-less and voiceless which leads to inequalities and disempowerment of the child. Due to poverty the child’s intellectual development is blocked. He does not get an enriching and enabling environment to stimulate his intellectual ability. The deprivation experienced by the children in resource distribution is presented in Table No.4.

Insert Table.4 here

Thus, child poverty brings a feeling of deprivation. This deprivation is felt in terms of access to economic resources by 52.27 percent respondents and intellectual resources in terms of skill, knowledge and deprivation by 51.14 percent children covered under the sample. Only 31.82 percent children report about the deprivation of social resources like equal treatment and esteem. Limited circle and lack of identity crisis at this stage do not bring in them deep deprivation feeling relating to social resources. A child experiencing poverty finds himself with a diminished role which does not commensurate to his age or stage. Accordingly, he is burdened with heavy responsibilities not undertaken by his age mates. This affects his development and brings forth disparities for him. In the present study, an informal discussion with the girls suffering

from acute absolute poverty revealed that they have witnessed their friends undergoing early marriage, early motherhood, shouldering domestic and sibling care responsibilities at home. Boys reported that poverty pushes them into labour market as child laborers and sometimes into child beggar and often the boys told they have seen their friends entering into criminal activities like black marketing, smuggling, drug paddling etc. due to abject poverty. Such possibilities await them every moment. These roles are superimposed on them against their will and never accord them a dignified status. In the present study, this is the practice witnessed by the children among some of their friends and none of them have experienced it by self. The greatest impact of childhood poverty is on child rights. Poverty infringes child rights. It debars and denies a child to enjoy his rights. The study observed from the reporting of the children that children suffering from absolute poverty are in a disadvantaged state in enjoying their right to life, education, health and environment. Their survival, protection, participation and development are challenged when they fail to avail opportunities needed to lead a descent life. In this context, the research tried to develop an indicator based deprivation jeopardizing the type of child right which is presented in Table 5

victimize the poor children. Criminal involvements, association with terrorist groups become common consequences of poverty for boys while early marriage, shouldering sibling care responsibilities, trafficking and getting indulged as sex workers become the natural outcomes for the girls due to poverty. Thus, the study noted there are some common risks and there are some gender specific risks emanating from poverty. Relationships are recorded to be getting strained due to child poverty.

The children under observation reported that poverty brings strained interpersonal relationship which has a traumatic effect on them. Their normal relationship with parents, peers, teachers and community members are driven by their poor condition and it changes the attitude and behavior of others towards them. They are considered as burdensome and liabilities for others which is reflected through their reactions and response. The relationship of these poor children with their surrounding members in presented in Table 7. Thus, the above table makes it clear that the relationship of the child suffering from acute poverty is very much strained particularly with teachers, parents and peers as reported by 65.22 percent, 52.17 percent and 43.48 percent children respectively.

**Table 4. Distribution of the respondents on the basis of resource deprivations (multiple choice)**

Nature of Resource	M=88	
	No. of children experiencing deprivation	Percentage
Economic Resource (Capital, Institutions, Infrastructure)	46	52.27
Social Resource (Equal treatment and esteem)	28	31.82
Intellectual Resource (Knowledge, skill and information)	45	51.14

**Table 5. Dimensions of child poverty jeopardizing child rights of the sample respondents (multiple choice)**

Lack of access to	No. and percentage of respondents	Nature of child rights jeopardized (M=66)			
		Survival	Protection	Participation	Development
Education	46 (69.7)	-	-	46 (100)	46 (100)
Health Services	46 (69.7)	46 (100)	46 (100)	-	46 (100)
Sanitation	58 (87.88)	24 (41.38)	58 (100)	-	-
Safe drinking water	62 (93.94)	62 (100)	62 (100)	-	-
Good living conditions	66 (100)	66 (100)	66 (100)	50 (75.76)	50 (75.76)
Recreation	60 (90.91)	-	-	54 (90)	60 (100)
Healthy environment	52 (78.79)	52 (100)	52 (100)	48 (92.3)	40 (76.92)
Habits & hobbies	46 (69.7)	24 (52.17)	40 (86.96)	40 (86.96)	46 (100)

(Figures in parenthesis represent percentage)

Note: 66 children in the study reported that they suffer from acute poverty. These children were asked to mention about the infringement of their rights.

The foregoing table represents the nature of child rights infringed upon for the children suffering from absolute poverty. It is noted that right to survival and protection are affected by the lack of access to health services, sanitation, safe drinking water sources, good living condition, healthy environment and opportunity to healthy habits. Rights to participation and development are challenged when a child experiences disadvantages in accessing to good education, good living condition, recreation, good environment, good habit formation and pursuing of hobbies. Child poverty brings forth insurmountable risks to the lives of the children. The sample children were asked to mention the risks they foresee that grapple the poor children. In this context, the risks faced by the poor that were voiced by them are represented in Table 6. Thus, the above table reveals a series of risks the poor children foresee. Food insecurity, health hazards, homelessness and child labor are the common risks that

Community members are rather indifferent. Parents fail to give them due focus and attention, peers are apathetic and teachers express a negative attitude. Girls reported to be at a greater suffering end as they are regarded as burdens by parents and trailers by teachers who are heavily loaded with gender bias which gets reflected in their attitude and behavior. Peer attitude is not that very negative and community members are more indifferent. When the interpersonal relationship becomes "bad" and "worse" for a great majority of poor children, it provides an impression of a very strained relationship. A strained interpersonal relationship negatively contributes for the personality development of the child and in many instances jeopardize their enjoyment of child rights. The study concludes the conventional monetary approach cannot be taken as the sole measure of child poverty. Right based approach, role assessment according to age, risk factors encountered by a child, nature of relationships a child

**Table 6. Distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of the risks that they foresee for the poor children**

Types of Risks	M=66	
	Number of children foreseeing	Percentage
Food insecurity	46	69.7
Homelessness	40	60.61
Health hazards	42	63.64
Child labour	35	53.03
Child Beggary	21	31.82
Gang involvement	18	27.27
Criminal involvement	25	37.88
Drug Addict	15	22.73
Indulgence in Drug paddling	18	27.27
Association with terrorist groups	28	42.42
Trafficking	25	37.88
Illicit engagement as sex workers	25	37.88
Early marriage and motherhood	28	42.42

**Table.7 Distribution of the Respondents On The Basis Of the Relationship They Experience With Others (Only the Children Who Experience Acute Poverty Were Asked To Mention Their Relationship)**

Interpersonal Relationship with	N=66			
	Very Good	Good	Bad	Worse
Parents	04 (6.06)	08 (12.12)	10 (15.15)	24 (36.36)
Peers	06 (9.09)	12 (18.18)	08 (12.12)	20 (30.3)
Teachers	-	06 (9.09)	10 (15.15)	30 (45.45)
Community Members	-	06 (9.09)	30 (45.45)	10 (15.15)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage

Establishes with others and possession of the quantum and quality social, emotional, cultural, and moral and knowledge resources should be taken as the yardsticks to measure child poverty. Poverty has a very detrimental effect on the child. Both the ins and outs of child poverty are shocking. The outs of poverty on children are almost visible in nature and are discussed in terms of deprivations of various types often highlighted by the economists. But the ins is seldom reflected. The ins is far more dangerous than the outs and is not easily traceable or tackled. It requires persistent effort on the parts of the community, voluntary organizations and the Government to address the outs and identify the ins and bring solutions to them by strategic interventions. This can create a congenial environment for children to develop as potential future human resource of the society.

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