

The Complex Dimensions of Child Poverty and the Role of Social Work

Yelda Yılmaz

Research Assistant, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health Sciences, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Turkey

Ph.D, Student, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health Sciences, Istanbul University – Cerrahpasa, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract:

Purpose: This literature review aims to explore the multifaceted nature of child poverty, identify its root causes and long-term consequences, and examine the critical role social work plays in addressing and mitigating its effects.

Background: Child poverty emerged as a distinct social issue during the Industrial Revolution, characterized not only by material deprivation but also by the exclusion of children from full societal participation. It represents a complex intersection of economic, social, and policy-related factors that collectively undermine children's development and life chances.

Methodology: This review synthesizes findings from scholarly articles and policy reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes, impacts, and interventions related to child poverty, with a particular focus on the role of social work.

Findings: Child poverty is largely rooted in family poverty, which is influenced by unemployment, low levels of education, single-parent households, and unstable living conditions. Broader systemic forces—such as globalization, economic inequality, and population growth—further exacerbate the problem. The consequences are severe, affecting children's physical health, emotional well-being, cognitive development, and social integration. These effects often perpetuate cycles of disadvantage and contribute to intergenerational poverty.

Conclusion: Social work is essential in responding to child poverty through policy advocacy, direct support services, and preventive programs. By addressing both individual and structural factors, social work can help reduce the prevalence and impact of child poverty, promoting greater equity and opportunity for vulnerable children.

Keywords:

Child development, child poverty, family poverty, social protection, social work.