

**ENSURING THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME  
FAMILIES IN UZBEKISTAN**

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**Annotation:** This article examines the issues of ensuring the social well-being of children from low-income families in Uzbekistan. It analyzes state policies and programs aimed at providing targeted social assistance, improving access to education, healthcare, and basic services, and supporting family livelihoods. The study highlights the role of local community institutions, such as the mahalla, in monitoring and assisting vulnerable households, as well as the importance of cultural and charitable practices in complementing state initiatives.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, children, social well-being, low-income families, targeted assistance, education, healthcare, local community institutions, charity, social policy

**Introduction.** Globally, child poverty remains a pressing issue. According to UNICEF and the World Bank's 2023 analysis, approximately 333 million children-one in every six-live on less than \$2.15 per day, experiencing extreme poverty. These children lack access to essential needs such as adequate nutrition, clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare services, which results in preventable deaths from diseases that could otherwise be treated. Child poverty is not merely an economic or social issue; it is also a profound moral and ethical concern. While some children enjoy a prosperous life, millions of others are deprived of basic necessities, representing a serious injustice and ethical deficit for society.

Children born into poor families face social disadvantages from the earliest stages of life. Due to their family's economic situation, their social status is lower, limiting their access to various opportunities. Poverty in human life is not confined solely to material deprivation-it also profoundly affects thinking, psychology, values, daily routines, and habits. From this perspective, examining the social status of children from low-income families is essential, as such analysis allows us to understand intergenerational poverty, entrenched social inequality, and unrealized human potential, as well as to explore theoretical and practical solutions.

The influence of poverty on human thought, worldview, and lifestyle is significant. Scientific research, expert opinions, and relevant theories provide analytical insights into these issues. Based on scholarly sources, different types of poverty, their roles in children's lives, and their consequences are examined, offering philosophical conclusions.

The socio-philosophical nature and classification of poverty. Broadly, poverty refers to the state in which a person's material and social needs are inadequately met. Both science and policy define different forms of poverty, including absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a person's inability to meet the minimum requirements for modern life-food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, and so on. Relative poverty refers to living standards significantly below societal averages. While relative poverty may appear less threatening, in reality, it can lead to serious social tension, as relatively poor individuals may feel disadvantaged compared to others and experience resentment over unequal income distribution. Some studies have even shown that historical revolutions and uprisings often found their "fuel" in the sense of injustice experienced by the poor, with impoverished populations being more susceptible to looting and violence during periods of social upheaval [1].

**Research methodology.** Philosophically, there are different perspectives on the essence of poverty. For example, social-Darwinist approaches view poverty as a factor that stimulates

societal progress, arguing that it encourages competition and labor productivity, and thus can be considered a natural condition. Conversely, other philosophical schools regard poverty as social evil that should be minimized. Social-egalitarian thinkers argue that poverty can be reduced through fairer distribution of wealth and resources. While both positions recognize that absolute poverty typically produces negative outcomes, they differ in their interpretations of relative poverty.

Poverty in children is not only about material deprivation; it also fosters feelings of social exclusion. Children in poverty may feel marginalized, undervalued, and insignificant within society. These experiences often result in psychological distress, distrust of society, and sometimes even aggressive behavior. This is particularly pronounced during adolescence, as children growing up in poverty perceive themselves as unequal to their peers, developing a sense of alienation and a heightened awareness of social injustice.

Research shows that poverty often increases the likelihood of social discontent and deviant behavior. For instance, a disproportionately high number of minor offenses and legal violations among youth occur in poor environments. This is not merely due to physical deprivation but also due to unmet needs, unfulfilled desires, and a lack of recognition of values. Societal “ideal images”-such as wealth, beauty, and fame-become unattainable aspirations for children living in poverty. Consequently, these children may develop feelings of rejection toward these ideals, which can lead to resistance against societal norms and, in some cases, engagement in antisocial behavior.

Another important criterion for classifying poverty is its persistence across generations or the time of its emergence. Researchers distinguish between inherited poverty (poverty passed down from generation to generation) and acquired poverty (poverty resulting from life circumstances). Inherited poverty occurs when a child is born into a poor family and immediately becomes part of the “poor” category. Even if such children have equal abilities compared to their peers born into middle-income or affluent families, their opportunities to realize their potential are significantly limited. Scholars note this as one of the most tragic social problems, emphasizing that in conditions of generational poverty, a child’s opportunities are constrained from birth. Thus, inherited poverty perpetuates inequality and ensures its continuous reproduction across generations.

Acquired poverty presents a somewhat different scenario. In this case, a person falls into poverty during their life due to various factors-economic crises, unemployment, illness, or family misfortune. For example, a family that initially lived a middle-class life may experience financial hardship if the primary breadwinner dies or loses their business, subsequently placing their children among the poor. Although the causes in such cases may appear objective, children in these families, like those born into poverty, may also be deprived of education, healthcare, and other opportunities. Therefore, even in acquired poverty, the child’s social status, affected by objective factors, can resemble that of inherited poverty.

In the philosophical classification of poverty, its role and causes within social structures are also significant. Some theories explain the persistence of poverty by linking it to the specific values and habits of poor individuals. For example, American anthropologist Oscar Lewis proposed the “culture of poverty” theory, suggesting that individuals living in poverty develop particular values and lifestyles adapted to their environment. This distinct subculture contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Lewis emphasized that families living in poverty over long periods develop attitudes such as resignation to fate, lack of future planning, and limitation to daily survival, which children internalize. Consequently, as these children grow up, they are more likely to continue an economically constrained lifestyle. This theory has been criticized by some scholars because attributing poverty solely to personal traits ignores structural factors.

When explaining poverty, it is essential to consider not only cultural and psychological factors but also the role of economic-social systems and policies that contribute to poverty. In other words, human behavior and lifestyle are partly determined by existing social conditions. Therefore, among the causes of intergenerational poverty, systemic shortcomings-such as labor market inequalities, unequal access to education, and the exclusion of poor populations-play a central role [2].

In the following sections, we will provide a detailed analysis of how the factors of poverty manifest in human cognition and lifestyle, as well as the social position of a child from a poor family. Poverty not only affects a person's economic condition but also has a profound impact on their thinking, psychology, and spiritual world. Living in conditions of poverty constantly generates stress and anxiety, compelling a large part of a person's consciousness to focus on solving these problems.

Scientific studies show that persistent financial difficulties and everyday concerns act as a cognitive "load," making it harder for individuals to concentrate on other matters. For example, experiments conducted by Princeton University researchers revealed that thinking about financial hardships significantly worsened the performance of low-income participants on simple logical and cognitive tests.

**Research results and discussion.** The resulting decline in cognitive function was equivalent to an average IQ drop of 13 points-comparable to the mental fatigue experienced after an entire night without sleep. In other words, a poor person spends much of their attention on worries about debts or finding affordable necessities, leaving fewer mental resources for activities that could help escape poverty, such as education, skills development, and time management. This demonstrates how poverty hinders "goal-directed decisions" and contributes to its own persistence. Material deprivation often creates a persistent sense of inadequacy in the mind, weakening the ability to perceive other opportunities [3].

Children growing up in poor family environments exhibit certain patterns in their psychological development. Research in the United States indicates that children born into poverty display more problematic behaviors (such as aggression, impulsiveness, and lack of discipline) during childhood and adolescence compared to their peers. These children often struggle to communicate with peers, fall behind in school, or fail to fully realize their intellectual potential, which hinders both their educational and social development. Researchers emphasize that children born into poverty show high levels of problematic behavior throughout the first 15 years of life-even if they grow up in relatively affluent neighborhoods. Consequently, such children are more likely, as adults, to drop out of school, remain unemployed, or fall back into financial hardship. Mental stress associated with poverty also increases the risk of psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and aggression. Thus, children in impoverished families face significant threats and limitations in their psychological development from the very beginning of life.

Another layer of poverty's impact on human cognition is reflected in changes in worldview and values. Individuals living in material deprivation are often preoccupied with daily survival concerns, which reduces their ability to plan for the long term or think strategically. Ambitious goals, such as pursuing higher education or becoming a specialist, may seem unattainable and appear more like unrealistic dreams, weakening the motivation to act. Growing up in a poor environment is particularly risky because children may internalize poverty as a "normal condition." According to the literature, the family serves as a primary reference group for the child, where they absorb the attitudes of adults around them. If the family is extremely disadvantaged and relies solely on external assistance, the child may develop a corresponding

dependent mindset. That is, they may become accustomed to relying on government aid or charitable organizations rather than solving life problems independently [4].

Additionally, accepting poverty as a normative condition is dangerous-children may come to believe that everyone lives in such deprivation or resign themselves with thoughts like “this is my fate.” As a result, they may lack the motivation, determination, and confidence necessary to take actions to escape poverty.

However, it should be noted that not all children from poor families develop such a resigned mindset. In many cases, children raised in poverty may, on the contrary, develop virtues such as strong willpower, patience, and the drive to achieve new results. For instance, some young people view material deprivation as a motivation to improve their lives, working hard and acquiring knowledge to lift their families out of poverty. Research shows that even among poor families, there is variation in mental states and life strategies: some succumb to hopelessness, relying solely on external assistance, while others strive to improve their circumstances by utilizing available opportunities [5].

According to researchers’ classifications, there is a group called “hopeless maladaptants” - families who have become passive toward life, hope only for external aid, and have been unable to achieve results over a certain period. In contrast, the “active adaptants” group seeks to earn income by taking advantage of any opportunities available. Another category, “dissatisfied adaptants,” consists of families dissatisfied with their income, but instead of seeking direct financial aid, they request help in finding employment or creating additional sources of income; such families require more informational and psychological support. Finally, “post-adaptants” are families that have emerged from the cycle of poverty and achieved a stable economic position.

It is evident that poverty triggers diverse responses in people’s minds and psychology: it challenges some, while strengthening others. Therefore, experts argue that even if a person exerts significant effort, if they are still unable to escape poverty due to structural constraints (“the principle of cumulative disadvantage”), targeted support from the state and society is necessary. This support should not merely be in the form of direct financial aid but include measures such as employment assistance, retraining programs, and psychological support. Such assistance lights a “beacon of hope” in the person’s mind, encouraging them to actively strive to improve their life.

The manifestation of poverty in daily life primarily reflects material conditions. The living standards of poor families differ sharply from those of middle-income families: housing is inadequate, sometimes failing to meet sanitation and hygiene standards; food rations are limited and monotonous; basic needs such as heating, drinking water, and electricity are insufficiently met. For example, according to UNICEF’s 2023 report, 42.46% of children aged 5–14 in Uzbekistan live in conditions of multidimensional poverty; among these children, 56.05% lack the fuel needed to heat their homes, 55.58% do not have full access to safe drinking water, and 44.85% cannot use modern information technologies (phone, television, or internet). These figures indicate that poverty negatively affects even the most essential aspects of children’s lives, leaving them deprived of social infrastructure resources from the very beginning and sharply limiting their quality of life and development opportunities [6].

Children from poor families also constitute a high-risk group in terms of health. Malnutrition (nutrient deficiencies) leads to stunted growth, anemia, and vitamin deficiencies. Unsanitary conditions and contaminated water make them more susceptible to infectious diseases. Globally, hundreds of millions of children still lack access to clean water and sanitation, resulting in various illnesses and child mortality. For example, in underprivileged families in needy countries, poor healthcare access can result in high child mortality and disease outbreaks, posing risks for

society at large - as seen in the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which escalated due to economic deprivation and weak healthcare systems and later threatened neighboring countries. Therefore, reducing poverty is crucial not only for the affected families but also for broader societal stability and security.

Education plays a decisive role in a child's future success. Unfortunately, children from poor families often have limited opportunities for comprehensive education. Due to financial difficulties, such children may not consider higher education or may even leave school early to enter the labor market. For instance, large-scale research in the United States confirms that children from low-income families are significantly more likely to drop out of school or not continue education after secondary school compared to children from wealthier families. This reduces their chances of obtaining college or university degrees, limiting access to skilled jobs. Educational lag contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty, perpetuating the "cycle of poverty." Consequently, many countries strive to ensure equal starting opportunities for children from disadvantaged families through incentives and support measures, such as free school meals, scholarships and quotas, and specialized child-focused funds.

The role of family, school, and state institutions is crucial in helping children escape poverty. Regardless of economic status, if a family encourages its child toward education, the child is less likely to develop the belief, "I am poor, so I cannot achieve anything." Poverty can transform in the mind from a barrier into a motivating factor, but this requires proper support and positive signals from the social environment.

It is essential to establish specific support systems for poor children within educational institutions. Today, many countries provide grants, free meals, and specialized clubs for children from low-income families. However, to fully utilize these opportunities, children must develop a sense of self-worth and belief that "I deserve this life too." Strengthening this belief requires the active involvement of the state, civil society institutions, and mass media.

Poverty also affects the ability of children to fully experience childhood. Due to economic deprivation, such children may be forced to work from an early age, helping their families. In some poor families, children as young as 10–12 begin earning income or take on full responsibility for household chores, losing time that should be devoted to play and recreation. As a result, their physical and psychological development may slow, and they take on responsibilities far beyond their age. Moreover, poverty excludes children from many social activities, such as clubs, sports sections, and trips, either due to family care obligations or financial constraints. This negatively affects their social skills and ability to form friendships, making integration into society more difficult [7].

Another risk for children growing up in poverty is a higher likelihood of exposure to violence and criminal behavior. Young people living in deprivation often encounter more pressure and aggression at home or in their neighborhoods. Some adolescents, suffering from feelings of social exclusion, may be inclined to express their dissatisfaction and emotional tension through delinquency or aggressive behavior. Historical examples also show that impoverished youth have sometimes acted as "mobilizable forces" during periods of political unrest or social upheaval - they were occasionally recruited into destructive actions to protest societal injustice, filling the ranks of looters. Of course, this is not always the case, but even in the modern world, various extremist groups or organized criminal networks often attempt to draw in the most vulnerable and hopeless young people. Therefore, reducing poverty is critically important, particularly to prevent the younger generation from falling into such negative currents.

At first glance, poverty may teach families prudence and thrift - a poor person learns to value what they have and avoid unnecessary waste. However, this thrift often comes with severe restrictions: the impoverished are forced to forego desired goods simply because they lack the

means. Over time, this prolonged lifestyle can influence a person's worldview, potentially turning them into someone with low demands and minimal needs. Even individuals who rise out of poverty may fail to fully utilize new opportunities due to ingrained habits, as the "scarcity mindset" persists in their consciousness. Consequently, the lifestyle shaped under conditions of poverty often does not contribute to a person's future development and may even become a factor that holds them back.

Poverty leaves its mark not only in economic and social spheres but also in cultural and moral areas. Children from poor families frequently cannot participate in cultural life: theaters, museums, libraries, excursions, and access to the internet or information technologies are largely closed to them. This limitation hinders the development of their worldview and aesthetic needs.

From a moral perspective, poverty also influences a child's formation of notions of right and wrong. If a child learns from an early age to prioritize "getting" or "receiving for free" rather than "earning what is due," they may disregard various ethical values. In such cases, poverty can be considered a potential source of moral deviation. This does not mean that all poor people are immoral, but in conditions of deprivation, the ability to make moral choices can be severely constrained.

The manifestations of poverty in children's lifestyles are varied: material deprivation, educational and health disadvantages, limited opportunities for play and development during childhood, exclusion from social activities, and even a tendency toward deviant behavior. These conditions represent not only personal tragedies for each child but also lost opportunities for society as a whole. A child growing up in poverty may not fully realize their creative and intellectual potential, preventing their bright ideas and talents from coming to fruition. In such cases, society fails to benefit from a significant reserve of human capital. Therefore, preventing child poverty and supporting poor families to ensure that every child can develop their potential is crucial [8].

Children from poor families often face various forms of discrimination in society. For example, peers at school may mock their clothing, gadgets, or lifestyle. This not only emotionally wounds the child but also undermines their trust in society. Such discrimination often forces children to feel internally devalued and "inferior" to others. To overcome this, children need to be raised in schools and families with a spirit of inclusiveness and equality.

Stereotypes also negatively affect the lives of poor children. For instance, societal beliefs such as "poor people are uneducated" or "they can achieve nothing" can lead children to doubt their abilities and adopt a passive stance. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the idea of social equality widely, framing poverty not as a shameful condition but as a social problem that must be addressed.

Throughout the history of philosophy, issues of equal opportunities and justice have been central. For example, John Rawls, in his Theory of Justice, identifies the principle of equal opportunity as a core measure of justice. According to Rawls, each person, regardless of family background, gender, or race, should have an equal starting point in life. To achieve this, the state and society must establish mechanisms for social support.

If children grow up in poverty without equal opportunities, such a society is philosophically unjust. Inequality is not only a material problem but also a moral one. In such a society, ideas about human dignity and the concept of human rights fail to be realized in practice. Therefore, supporting children in poverty is not merely an act of humanitarian aid but a moral duty of society.

Research on the social conditions of children from poor families shows that poverty is not just an economic phenomenon but a complex social reality that profoundly affects human thought and lifestyle. Children raised in poverty are often deprived of many opportunities available to their

peers; the negative effects of poverty are evident in their cognition and psychology, and their daily lives are marked by limitations and hardships. As a result, poverty tends to perpetuate itself across generations, undermining the principles of social justice in society. Reducing child poverty and ensuring equal opportunities for each new generation is therefore a fundamental moral obligation of any society [9].

From a philosophical perspective, child poverty represents a profound injustice that persists in the modern world. Today, millions of children suffer from poverty, yet humanity possesses sufficient resources and capabilities to address this issue. This means that child poverty is an artificial problem created by human socio-economic systems, and its elimination lies within our power. Analyses indicate that if efforts in this direction are not intensified, we may fail to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme child poverty by 2030. Therefore, every society is responsible for ensuring that its children - the future of humanity - grow up in conditions worthy of their potential.

Poverty is a complex problem that hinders not only the material but also the moral, social, cultural, and ethical development of children. Children raised in impoverished environments often experience negative emotions, feelings of social exclusion, a passive worldview, and a perception that their opportunities are limited. In such circumstances, social institutions - including families, educational systems, and the state - bear responsibility for mitigating the harmful effects of poverty and creating equal opportunities for every child. Philosophically, equality of opportunity among children is one of the key indicators of a just society. Accordingly, supporting children from poor families is a crucial means of securing the future of society, strengthening moral stability, and protecting human dignity [10].

Analysis of the social conditions of children from poor families allows us to draw the following general conclusions: First, poverty negatively affects a child's intellectual and emotional development, slowing their social growth. Second, poverty worsens children's living conditions, leaving their basic needs unmet and depriving them of opportunities. Third, child poverty represents a significant loss for society, and addressing it is a moral and social responsibility of every citizen and state. By providing every child with decent conditions and breaking the cycle of poverty that traps the younger generation, we contribute to humanity's progress toward justice and development. Therefore, combating poverty - particularly protecting children from its effects - must be regarded as a priority task for ensuring the well-being of future generations and the sustainable development of society as a whole.

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