Child belonging to a family whose income is below 60% of the United Kingdom's average income he/she is considered to be poverty-stricken (Barcena-Martin et al., 2018). Child poverty not only revolves around lack of income but it deprives the child of basic necessities such as shelter, clean drinking water, clothing and even human rights. It also results in health conditions such as malnutrition. Childhood poverty plays a crucial role in damaging the mental and physical health of a child in long as well as short term. The lack of basic necessities contributes in stunting a child's growth (Main and Bradshaw, 2016).

According to the reports produced by Social Metrics Commission (SMC) on extent of childhood poverty in UK enlisted below are the facts which depict the actual scenario of childhood poverty in UK:

* According to this report in the year 2018 over four million children were poverty-stricken in the UK which accounts to 30% of children (Schweiger, 2019).
* Over 40% of children living with single parents are poverty-stricken. Usually children belonging to single parent families are poverty-stricken due to the lack of another earner in their family, being prone to issues like gender inequality at work, child expenses (Barcena-Martin et al., 2018).
* Children belonging to minority groups have a high chance of being in poverty. Currently 46% of children belonging to minority groups are poverty-stricken compared to 26% of poverty-stricken children belonging to the White British families.
* In UK, having a job does not help in leaving the vicious circle of poverty. 72% of children experiencing childhood poverty belong to families where at least one person has a job (Roelen, 2017).
* Children belonging to large families are more prone to poverty than children living in small families. 43% of children who live in large families having three or more siblings are poverty-stricken (Evans, 2016).

According to the survey two costs striking the family budget are child care and housing expenses.

**Some basic causes of childhood poverty in UK are enlisted below:**

* The main contributing factor of childhood poverty is the lack of sufficient income of a parent, low income confines the earning of a household. Low income is not only caused by joblessness but also from working less than the required hours, having a low pay . These are in turn caused by,
* Long-term joblessness- when a person is jobless for a quite long term he/she experiences a loss of skill as well as difficulty in returning to work. This also results in change of attitude towards work. These factors contribute in generating low pay or even loss of work resulting in inability to cope up with child care expenses (Nolan, 2018).
* Two factors which reduce the earnings contributed by parents are parental ill health and instability of family. These factors also restrict the employment and working of the other parent making them more particular i.e. confined because of juggling between taking care of child or disable member and employment (Wolfe et al., 2016).
* Living in a large family with 3 or more children burdens the family budget. The size of a family play a major role in childhood poverty. Lack of sufficient income results in deprivation of basic necessities of children. A large family needs a high income in order to avoid poverty. Families with more children require more care and attention resulting in confined parental employment (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Dependency on alcohol and drugs is however low but it is has a profound effect on parents as well as children. So, the factors playing a major role in childhood poverty are currently parental joblessness and low wage. Other major factors contributing to childhood poverty are family instability, low qualification of parents, family size.

**Impact of childhood poverty:**

* Poor child health and wellbeing: Poor health outcomes resulting from poverty on children can occur in many ways such as limited resources for basic necessities such as clothing and shelter, stress of long term exposure to poverty, unhealthy lifestyles such as alcohol and drug dependency, poor health, education and employment opportunities, children being exposed to poverty also results in bullying, alienation because of having few peers and less social activities (Wolfe et al., 2016). Constant worries about low household income or poverty degrades mental health and makes anyone depressed and anxious resulting in frequent arguments and anger, an environment like this is very harmful for a child. There are cases in which children with mental health issues do not have the bus fare to afford a counsellor service and hence decide to battle it alone.
* Health inequalities have a major impact on poverty-stricken children. Children belonging to poor households or to deprived areas have a a greater exposure to poor health conditions compared to kids from affluent families (Main and Bradshaw, 2017). Poor health outcomes are evident in malnutrition, tooth decay, poor physical and mental health, teenage pregnancy, high infant mortality rate, deprivation from breastfeeding and so on. Childhood poverty is also associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Children experiencing childhood poverty have a high proportion in ACEs reports (Nolan, 2018).
* When considering educational outcomes by school achievement and cognitive development, children experiencing childhood poverty have worse result compared to children coming from affluent families. Factors which contribute to poor educational outcomes are low parental guidance and engagement with child's education, poor preschool education (Fitzsimons et.al, 2017).

**The psychological school of thought:**

Children belonging to the lower socioeconomic status have shown degradation in cognitive performance raised in environments of low socio-economic status show consistent reductions in cognitive performance in many areas, specifically cognitive control and language function such as decision making, planning and attention (Schweiger, 2019). There are certain mental illnesses which are aggravated by poverty such as anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia. Poverty can act as a consequence of mental disorder (symptoms of schizophrenia resulting in low socio-economic status) or just a casual factor (stress as a result of poverty which triggers depression). It has been demonstrated by psychological research that exposure to poverty has a wide range of negative impacts on the mental and physical health as well as well being of a child. The impact of poverty over children can be seen in various places such as home, neighborhood, social gatherings, communities as well as school (Lai et.al, 2019).

Negative conditions like substandard housing, malnutrition, lack of food security, unsafe neighborhoods, inadequate child care and health facilities, homelessness and poor education facilities are associated with poverty. Childhood poverty influences a child's academic achievement and also has several negative impacts such as abuse, college and school dropout, health problems, alcohol dependency, behaviour problems and developmental delays (Nolan, 2018). These conditions play a major role in hampering the growth of children stricken by poverty.

Considering UK being a rich country, it has a fairly big number of poverty-stricken people i.e. one fifth of the entire population accounting to 14 million of which 4.2 million are children suffering from childhood poverty (Schweiger, 2019). Children suffering from poverty are not only impacted by lack of material necessities but poverty damages their mental, emotional, physical as well as spiritual development. A 2009 study done on 9 and 10 year olds who belonged to different socioeconomic status was published in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, the study depicted that the children who belonged to lower socioeconomic status showed brain physiology patterns similar to an adult having a damaged frontal lobe, the frontal lobes facilitate cognitive functions like voluntary control, decision making, managing difficulties and so on (Main and Bradshaw, 2017). When the frontal lobe is damaged a person experiences difficulty in concentrating, decision making and voluntary control. Not only were this but problems concerning self-regulation and behavioral difficulties found in children belonging to lower socioeconomic status as well. Childhood poverty also results in in under development of brain resulting from little or no access to books, games, social interaction as well as health problems (Wolfe et.al, 2016).

Numerous psychological studies have found ill effects of poverty on the child's brain. An experiment in the year 2014 lead by Michele Tine depicted degraded verbal as well as visuospatial memory in children suffering from childhood poverty. Another study again pointed out irregular brain development in children belonging to low income groups (Main and Bradshaw, 2017). These conditions found in children can be long lasting. Another study published in 2016 found that adults who experienced poverty when they were children showed poor memory and distress (Bradshaw et.al, 2017).

**The sociological school of thought:**

According to the sociological school of thought childhood poverty is a social state characterized by lack of basic necessities for survival or lack of resources to meet the basic living standard for child. It means deprivation from the most basic things such as food, shelter, clothing and so on. Poverty stricken children are subjected to persistent starvation, inadequate health and education facilities and are subjected to alienation (Nolan, 2018). Sociological school of thought studies childhood poverty as a very wide subject concerning the entire society. Children who experience childhood poverty are mostly orphans and children belonging to financially weak families. These children are subjected to extreme lack of resources. Different countries have different variables defining the level of income falling under the poor category such as per capita income, economic development. For instance, making a queue for collecting water from a public standpipe might be considered a condition of poverty in developed countries but however this might not be a condition of poverty in developing countries (Brady et.al, 2016).

**Some basic causes for child poverty according to the sociological school of thought arrange listed below**:

* **Lack of proper education facilities:** One of the root cause for child poverty is lack of proper education facilities. Not all children have access to education. Poverty is a vicious cycle which cannot be broken until children or individual have opportunities to improve their living standards or lifestyle (Lai et al., 2019). According to a report published by UNESCO stated that over 170 million people could have defied poverty if they knew to read. Some other factors which create hindrance in getting education are lack of proper infrastructure such as roads, transport facilities, schools and bridges, discrimination and sexism experienced by minority groups, low wage and so on. (Barcena-Martin, 2018).
* **Warfare:** Wars and conflicts influence poverty to a great extent. During war economic development is at a halt. Children are highly impacted by wars such as losing their parents and becoming orphans, homelessness, starvation, poor health and medical facilities (Brady and Burton, 2016).
* **Climate change:** According to a report published by the World Bank, around hundred million people can be impoverished by climate change by the next decade. Climate change causes natural disasters such as storms, floods, droughts and so on. The natural disasters caused by climate change play a major role in childhood poverty by depriving children from shelter and food (Evans, 2016). Numerous houses are damaged by floods and storms resulting in homelessness of children.
* **Social injustice:** Social injustice such as racism, sexism plays a key role in impoverishment of children. Children who suffer from various forms of injustice have to struggle for education as well as job (Brady and Burton, 2016).
* **Lack of food and clean drinking water**: Poverty-stricken children are deprived of basic necessities such as food, water, clothing and shelter. Without even having access to these basic necessities one cannot break the vicious cycle of poverty (Brady and Burton, 2016).
* **Lack of Government support:** Interference of government is needed to resolve issues concerning poverty. The government need to support the poor children by providing them with social services, scholarships for their education, directing funds and making sure they reach the needy, providing children with good infrastructure and actively participating in welfare of children (Fitzsimons et al., 2017).
* **Lack of proper healthcare facilities:** Poverty-stricken children have a high risk of exposure to fatal illness. Unable to access proper healthcare facilities they are left to battle the illness alone. Not all families can afford proper medical facilities for their children as well as for themselves. Chronic illness such as cancer, schizophrenia and others are often experienced by children who are exposed to childhood poverty (Main and Bradshaw, 2017)

**Strengths and weaknesses of two school of thoughts explaining child poverty :**

The psychological school of thought studies childhood poverty as an individual subject by focusing on the individual's mental health and not the surrounding or environment the child or individual lives in (Evans, 2016). Childhood poverty is one of the most prominent problems faced by developed as well as developing countries being experienced by a large number of children. It is a vicious circle difficult for children to escape. The psychological school of thought focuses on the ill effects of childhood poverty on children's mental health such as stress, depression, impaired cognitive functions, and other mental health disorders. This school of thought studies the effects of poverty on mental health from every perspective (Brady and Burton, 2016). While psychological school of thought study everything about childhood poverty concerning human behaviour and human brain it fails to take in account the environmental factors which play a major role. Childhood poverty is not an individual subject to be studied as it is experienced by the entire society. This school of thought can help us in understanding the mental health condition of a child experiencing childhood poverty but it cannot help us in tracking the factors which lead to childhood poverty (Nolan, 2018).

The sociological school of thought studies childhood poverty as a matter concerning the entire human society. It studies every aspect of childhood poverty right from its perpetuation. Childhood poverty is a social problem experienced by countries worldwide. The sociological school of thought uses sociological imagination which helps them differentiate between personal problems and public issues (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Since childhood poverty is not a personal problem but a public issue it needs to be studied keeping in mind the environment and surrounding. Sociology being a social science offers a systematic approach to study the root cause of social problems. The social problem in context here is childhood poverty which is studied by the sociological school of thought by defining the relationship between the individual and the society. The social problems are understood by sociologists with the help of sociological imagination also known as sociological perspective (Fitzsimons et al., 2017). The sociological school of thought believes that every individual problem is deep rooted in the society. For instance, childhood poverty is not an individual's problem but a public issue which is faced by many people. The sociological school of thought studies childhood poverty from a much wider scope it fails to take in account the necessity of understanding the mental health of the child experiencing or suffering from childhood poverty (Roelen, 2017).

Any issue or problem which has its impact on a large number of individuals in a society is called a social problem or issue. A social issue is far beyond an individual's control. Childhood poverty being a social problem is better explained by the sociological school of thought. A systematic approach is offered by the sociological school of thought to study the root cause of social problems which the society experiences (Fitzsimons et al., 2017). The school of thought helps us to know what causes childhood poverty and what keeps it persistent. It is only through this school of thought that we can know why childhood poverty is occurring, the individuals falling victim to childhood poverty and other aspects. The sociological imagination helps in understanding the social problems faced by the society. It is believed by the sociological school of thought that every individual problem arises from society. There is a relationship between individual and society which is studied by the sociological school of thought. Since childhood poverty is a social problem it is studied from every aspect by this school of thought (Schweiger, 2019).

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