

THE REFLECTION OF URBAN POVERTY ON CHILD POVERTY

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Abstract: The most active and vulnerable subjects of the problems and challenges in urban areas are children. Urban areas impact child development negatively. In various studies conducted, it has been proven that child development and behaviour formation are determined by the spaces interacted with rather than the intelligence and character. Therefore, the environment with which the child interacts plays a crucial role in child development and growing to be healthy individuals. This study aims to identify the negative impacts of shortcomings in the planning of spaces and the lack of psycho-social support in this processes as well as the negative impacts of urban poverty on children based on the interaction between children and urban areas in order to ensure high benefit of children. This study has been prepared within the scope of literature review. As the result of literature review conducted, it has been identified that the risk of facing poverty and being affected by poverty is higher among children compared to adults. Furthermore, it is stated that poverty experienced during childhood could often be the indicator of poverty to be experienced during adulthood, as well.

Keywords: Urban Poverty, Child Poverty, Urbanization, Child Welfare

Introduction

The phenomenon of urbanization which emerged after industrialization depending on migration from rural to urban, has led to reveal urban poverty as a multidimensional concept. Globalization that came in view with urbanization, has extended the sphere of influence of poverty. The globalization, the neoliberal policies and privatization emerged with urbanization has extended the sphere of influences. It, also has spread and increased urban poverty.

Problems such as social and economic inequalities, structural problems, inadequate urban policies, lack of sanitation, low education levels, unemployment, deficiencies of housing and social integration are among the most important causes of urban poverty. Urban poverty is also the source of many social problems as inability to adapt to the urban areas in terms of social, cultural, economic and psychological aspects, squatting, dysfunction of urban transformation and urban design process, the growth of the informal sector, the increase in crime rates, increase in domestic and communal violence, the inability to prevent the street working children and child labor. The children are the most active and the most defenseless subject of urban space difficulties and problems. The aim of this study is reveal the negative effects of urban poverty on children. This study was prepared within the literature research. As a result of the literature research, it is reported that the risk of encountering poverty and its negative effects is higher for children than adults. Moreover, it is stated that the poverty in the period of childhood, may be a heraldist of poverty in adulthood.

Urban poverty-stricken children become impoverished in terms of biopsychosocial aspects. Poverty and impossibility, which caused by urbanization process, can prevent access to the most basic services such as education, nutrition, health. A lot of problems, which resulted from reflections of urban poverty on child poverty, such as opportunities of inequality, social exclusion, social injustice, security-deprived neighborhoods, the differences between living conditions, can cause deprivation, developmental disorders and permanent damage in children's inner world in many aspects. According to result of child welfare researchs, all of this problems have led to serious violation of right because of countries that accepted convention on the rights of the child and have the child protection system.

Literature Review

1. Poverty

Poverty is an old but recently discovered social problem description of which changes depending on the period. Zastrow (1991) identifies two approaches to describe poverty.

The first one is *absolute poverty (in a narrow or traditional sense)* which is described as failure to meet vital needs (such as eating, drinking, clothing and sheltering that will prevent death and enable survival) required to live and to support yourself and your family due to lack of money. The UN Criteria describe absolute poverty threshold as Access to Food, Sheltering, Clean Drinking Water, Hygiene, Health, Education, Information and Services ensuring the continuation of human life while the World Bank describes it as daily intake of minimum 2400 calories.

The second suggested concept is *relative (in a broader sense) poverty*. This concept, in addition to the basic needs stated above, refers to the state of failure to reach to the traditional living standards of the society and lagging behind. This situation reflects the failure to reach the lowest living standard. It only appears when individuals compare their living standards with another's.

Brody (1970), on the other hand, divided poor people into three categories including upper class, middle class and lower class.

In this classification, *upper class* represents poor individuals who do not necessarily have low level of income and whose current income amount equals to the special needs; *middle class* represents poor individuals who have low level of income and who are below the minimum living standard (generally large families); and *lower class* represents poor/ (Poor Poor) individuals who survive with social assistance payments.

Two important concepts related to poverty are income poverty and human poverty. Income poverty is described as the state of failure to achieve sufficient income level in terms of meeting required basic needs of the individual or household in order to survive or meet the minimum living standard. Human poverty, on the other hand, is handled as a concept including absolute and relative poverty descriptions and having a more comprehensive meaning. This concept, accepted by the United Nations, emphasizes the requirement of having financial, political, social and cultural opportunities to meet basic needs in addition to the monetary opportunities with the aim of ensuring human development and living a humane life. As a result of this approach, poverty appears to be a multi-dimensional concept. Human poverty is defined as the situation with lack of education opportunities, malnutrition, short lifespan, lack of employment opportunities, insufficient mother and child health, fear of future, catching preventable diseases, lack of freedom and lack of basic human competencies such as power (Kaya, 2011:37-38).

Amartya Sen, who provides one of the most important conceptualizations regarding poverty, explains that it is possible to handle poverty with both absolute and relative poverty approaches. While economic development defines and measures development through national income increase per capita based on the level of income and consumption, "*human development approach*", which does not deem an income-oriented development understanding appropriate, places people in the centre of development emphasizing the expansion of all economic, cultural, political and social preferences and options of individuals. In this approach, while increase in the income levels of individuals is accepted as an important factor and a prerequisite for development, it is stated that improvement in the income level is insufficient solely to measure actual welfare, and increase in the health services, education and social safety, etc. directly contributes to the life quality and increasing this quality (Sen, 2004: 202). *Capacity approach* creates a multi-dimensional perspective for human welfare. Rather than concentrating on people's income levels and expenditures, this approach concerns about the question "what is equality" included in political philosophy by focusing on "what people can" and "what they can be" in an effective way. (Nussbaum, 2005; Robeyns, 2005).

Poverty concept is directly related to the unmet needs of individuals or children. Each unfulfilled need constitutes a poverty component. According to Barker, poverty represents the elements desired to be obtained in terms of physical, spiritual and social aspects in order for individuals to continue their lives, maintain their good positions and fulfil their tasks (2003: 56). Deficiencies regarding physical, psychological, economic, cultural and social elements required by individuals to maintain their lives and good positions and to function properly constitute their problems. Therefore, problems are defined by needs.

Poverty problem is faced especially by the elderly, disabled, women and children both in developed and developing countries.

Another important issue is the way of measuring poverty. There is not a standard approach to identify and describe poverty. Discussions on poverty are generally conducted through the measurement of national and international comparisons by benefiting from the reasons of poverty. When poverty are measured in terms of monetary aspect, income increasing policies are considered as solutions. International organizations, on the other hand, handle poverty in a multi-dimensional way especially based on the United Nations human rights (Vandemootele, 2000).

2. Urban Poverty

Urban areas, beyond a physical concept, are the places ensuring shelter, psycho-social interaction and development (such as socialization, playing, gaining self-confidence and feeling safe) while contributing to social interaction and development.

Urbanization phenomenon emerging depending on the migration from rural to urban areas after industrialization caused the appearance of urban poverty which is a multi-dimensional concept.

According to the World Bank, Urban Poverty is described as "limited access to employment opportunities and income, insufficient and unsafe sheltering and services, violence, unhealthy environment, limited or lack of social protection mechanisms and limited access to education and health services". (Zülfikar, 2010:11).

Eight different factors impacting urban poverty are defined as follows (Dinçoflaz, 2009:34-35):

- Insufficient income,
- Insufficient and unstable resource availability,
- Insufficient sheltering,
- Insufficiency of public infrastructure services,
- Deprivation of social safety,
- Failure to sufficiently protect poor people in the functioning of legal system,
- Ineffectiveness and weaknesses of poor people in decision-making processes,
- Silence of poor people.

Alternate poverty (poverty-alternately) is another poverty concept closely related to urban poverty. Alternate poverty (poverty-alternately) represents the increase in wealth and welfare levels of certain groups over others as a result of citizenship and unequal power relations among poor people living in urban areas (Kocatepe, 2011:28). In alternate poverty, poverty is handled within a process on the basis of social relations. According to this concept, poor individuals using right sources and channels transfer their poverty to other poor newcomers. In this approach, poor individuals living in the urban areas rent out or sell the lands they occupied to the poor people recently migrating to the urban areas and therefore, they get rid of poverty and transfer their poverty to the newcomers in time (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2009: 79).

Urban poverty may cause many problems such as irregular urbanization, unplanned growth, triggering socio-economic impossibilities, failure to achieve healthy living conditions, deprivation of public services, exposure to urban safety problems and to the risks in the urban breakdown areas (such as negligence-abuse-drug addiction-violence-being forced to commit crime) and many other impossibilities.

3. Needs of Children and Child Poverty in Urban Sense

It is possible to define children, whose physiological, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural needs cannot be met, who cannot obtain rights defined within the scope of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (such as living, participation, protection and development) and fall behind the welfare system, as *Poor Children (child poverty)*. Poverty is experienced both in developed and developing countries. Therefore, international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations carried out various researches on this issue. When poverty is analysed in more detail, it is observed that it manifests the biggest and the most important impacts on children. Child development is prevented by poverty. Those who experience poverty during childhood are under a higher risk of facing poverty in the future, as well. Due to the vicious cycle emerging at this point, poverty is transferred to the upcoming generations (Durgun, 2011).

Poverty and deprivation concepts in the children's lives cause failure to meet needs of the child. While reviewing the literature, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs model regarding human needs, Max-Neff's (1991) human scale development, Peet and Bossel's (2000) ethics-based system model regarding basic needs as well as models for gender needs appear prominent in the proper identification of children's needs. Being aware of children's needs is important in terms of designing and identifying the features of an urban space in line with the development

processes of children. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, each child has 4 basic needs and rights, namely "living, participation, protection and development". Each child needs feeding, sleeping, moving and to be protected in order to develop as of the moment they were born. In addition, children have basic spiritual needs such as loving, to be loved, to be looked after, feeling successful and sufficient and gaining freedom like other individuals (Uçar, 2013, p. 15). Researchers such as Piaget, Montessori and Werner emphasize in their studies that interaction of children with the environment constitutes the basis of development, and the environment includes measurable physical components on cognitive-perceptual development. Considering that children use observation, exploration, trial and error methods while learning, it is a widely accepted truth that they need a physical environment with various resources (Kirazoğlu, 2012, p. 16).

4. Relation between the Child and City/Space

Spaces hosting daily life, especially the housing areas, do not serve only as shelters but also as natural stages where social interactions and relations are experienced. Differences between the living spaces identify the life quality in terms of accessibility or inaccessibility to public services. Repetition of opportunities and lack of opportunities in the spaces and their results bear important consequences for children living there (Erder,2002:26-30; Ümit,2007:103) Impacts of the spaces on the structure and functioning of society and on children cannot be underestimated. Experiences, emotions, hopes and concerns of children are shaped through spaces (Philo, 2000). As we cannot think children apart from their social relations, it is also not possible to think them apart from the spaces where these relations are shaped (Sibley, 1995). Therefore, the relation of children with the spaces refers to their socialization area beyond a physical space where they establish social relationships and gain social experiences (Moss and Petrie, 2002).

Physical environment and urban spaces (particularly open areas) that children interact with play an important role in child development and growing to be healthy individuals (Zomervrucht, 2005). Physical environment of children includes various active open areas and spaces such as the sheltering area and its surroundings, school and playgrounds in parallel to their physical, perceptive, emotional and social development. These spaces mainly shape children's both social and private lives. However, urban spaces pose dangers for children as a result of decrease in open areas and increase in traffic density and safety problems due to disordered housing caused by rapid and unplanned urbanization. Due to these dangers, children are deprived of open areas and streets where they freely move and develop. This spatial deprivation negatively impacts the development process, personality formation, behaviours, attitudes and reactions of children. Improving life quality of children, whose social, cultural and perceptive development is negatively affected by the reflection of problems caused by urbanization to the spaces, is of crucial importance for the future of the society (Al-Khalaileh, 2004; Tandoğan, 2014: 19-20).

Needs of an adult have an hierarchical structure. Human needs are ranked in the order of importance as biological needs, safety, sense of belonging, bonding, prestige, self-actualization (improving skills) and intellectual, emotional and aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1968). Apart from adult needs, one of the basic vital needs of children is playing. Playing contributes to children's physical development, socialization, perception of life, personality formation and transfer of the culture to the next generations (Çukur, 2009).

For children feeling the challenges of living in urban spaces the most, it is quite important to build child-oriented structures and conduct policies, implementations and designs in urban planning in line with children's needs. Therefore, child-friendly city concept is frequently emphasized and relevant activities are conducted with the aim of making urban spaces more habitable for children. *Child-friendly city* refers to a space with qualities contributing to the physical, psychological and social development of children so that they would become self-valuing individuals in the future. In physical terms, urban spaces should arouse positive feelings among children, provide opportunities for game activities, make them feel safe and an equal part of the society along with other individuals through the behaviours of adults (Churchman, 2003). Furthermore, child-friendly city aims to ensure that "children citizens" are active in the decision-making processes regarding the urban areas they live in; are able to express their desires and thoughts about the urban area; participate in family, society and social life; meet their basic needs such as health, education and sheltering; benefit from healthy water and health services at the maximum level; are protected against abuse, exploitation and violence; walk on the streets safely; meet and play with their friends; have green areas with animals and plants; live in a clean environment; participate in cultural and social activities; and have access to all services regardless of their race, religion, income, gender and disabilities (Unicef, 2004: 1)).

Conclusion and Discussion

The most active and vulnerable subjects of the problems and challenges in urban areas are children. Urban breakdown areas in the centres or periphery of urban areas, which do not have healthy living conditions and public services and where urban safety problems and poverty reach dangerous levels, may cause developmental disorders

and damages in the inner worlds of children in many aspects. These problems caused by urban insufficiency can also be reflected in children's lives by transforming into serious problems such as negligence, abuse, violence, being forced to commit crime, exclusion, othering and impossibilities, and these can cause irreversible severe traumas. As a result of these, children may create insecure bonds with the environment and society; feel hatred, grudge and anger; and many other behavioural disorders such as aggression, stress, loneliness and introversion may arise, and their tendency to fight/conflict may increase. Furthermore, they may be forced to be engaged in illegal affairs and commit crime in order to eliminate social and spatial inequalities they experience in their own way, to fight poverty and to survive.

Realizing required arrangements and practices to make children's living environment more "*child-friendly*"; in other words "informative, guiding and advocate " is important in terms of creating spaces that can answer the needs and desires of children. The social and spatial arrangements should be made to get the most basic rights, social integration and healthy development to children. Moreover, while studies about the urban policies and child welfare including the all children are ongoing, safe environment should be provided on every child, based on 'participation, protection, development and survival rights', focusing on the 'social justice and equal opportunities' as stated by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Urban areas should provide physical spaces supporting social interaction, equal opportunities, accessibility, self-esteem and cultural identity where children can meet their basic needs such as social justice, equality, sheltering, education, health and playing in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Besides, children's needs, expectations and desires should be met, and they should be provided with safe environments in the developmental periods. Institutions and civil society organizations responsible for urban safety, urban policies and welfare of children have to carry out comprehensive legislation, policy and planning activities based on social justice, equality, participation of children, children's rights and human rights. Furthermore, it is required to include scientists, academicians, local governments, trade associations, employers and social politicians in these activities to carry out inter-disciplinary professional team works handling children along with their needs using an integrated approach.

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