
Horrible Influence Of Poverty

This literature review of twelve previously published research articles has focused on summarizing some of the effects of poverty on children. The selected articles all focused on the major effect of poverty on children, and were sorted into four sub-categories or themes based upon a specific focus areas of this complex and not yet fully understood issue. These themes included developmental, educational outcomes, health, and parenting effects, and how they were impacted by children living in poverty.

Impact on Development

The developmental theme included reviews of four articles, each with a slightly different focus. In a paper researching the racial/ethnic differences in processes and effects (McLeod and Nonemaker, 2000) using a sample of 4-9 year old children from the 1992 wave of the Children of the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth data set, the conclusion was that a significantly stronger effect of the persistence of poverty over time on child problems was noted in Caucasians than for Hispanics, and for Hispanics more so than African American children. In focusing on the interpersonal impacts of poverty on Turkish children (Ozkan, Purutcuoglu, and Hablemitoglu, 2010), the topics of health, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, stress, parenting, literacy /education, housing and communities were discussed, concluding that this is a global issue with poverty in other countries impacting children in Turkey. The researchers also recommended that more research needed to be done to better understand this complex issue and the factors that impact it.

Bronfenbrenner's classic process-person-context-time model was used to explain the adverse effects of poverty on the socio-emotional development of children (Eamon, 2001). Eamon discussed the five structures of ecological environment in her paper, concluding that the results of poverty upon child development are well described by applying these classic analytical structures. Using a different structure than Bronfenbrenner to analyze available data (Wadsworth, Raviv, Reinhard, Wolff, Santiago and Einhorn), but with more analytical calculations included, reached that same conclusion as McLeod and Nonemaker, 2000 (i.e. that a significantly stronger effect of the persistence of poverty on child problems was noted in Caucasians than for Hispanics, and for Hispanics more so than African American children).

Impact on Education

The educational outcome theme included reviews of three articles, again each with a slightly different focus. In a paper discussing the effects of antipoverty programs on children's cumulative levels of poverty-related risk (Gassman-Pines and Yoshikawa, 2006), the conclusion reached was that overall reduction in the cumulative effects of poverty was much more important than any individual risk factor. This paper acknowledged much previous research in presenting analytical statistics, based upon New Hope and MFIP samples, confirming that the greater the cumulative effects of poverty on children, the worse socio-emotional and cognitive development impacts that occur.

The effects of child care quality on children' development while living in poverty (Votruba-Drzal,

Coley, and Chase-Lansdale, 2004) discussed the drastic increase in the overall number and percentage of children in child care since 1996 events, concluding that high quality care and nurturing environments mediated the negative effects of poverty, especially in relation to internalizing versus externalizing behaviors and educational outcomes. This paper further discussed gender differences, concluding that boys are more affected by the quality of child care than girls, and that, as hours per week spent in child care increased, quantitative skills improved and probability of scoring in the borderline or clinical range on total behavior problems declined accordingly. Another paper analyzing the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit developmental progress (Engle and Black, 2008) toward achievement of 2015 goals, used the Developmental Systems Theory (DST) to conclude that poverty induced stress on children and families interferes with developmental tasks, including school achievement. This paper recommends several characteristics of successful programs and targeted areas for future research, in both already considered developed and developing countries.

Impact on Health

Three articles researched the effects of poverty on the health outcome of children. In a paper discussing these effects (Aber, Bennett, Conley and Li, 1997), the fact that the research community acknowledges, and collected data to support a widely held conclusion that poverty causes negative cognitive developmental and health damage influencing life for many years. The research community was chastised for failing to agree upon a standard set of control variables for analyzing the collected data, and not reaching a clear consensus on how poverty should be addressed. The paper concludes by offering a basic model for use in this endeavor.

Another paper (Yoo, Slack and Holl, 2010) uses the risk and resilience framework to examine the association between children's adverse health outcomes, health-promoting behaviors exercised by caregivers and the positive assessment of children's health by caregivers.

The conclusion reached was that health promoting behaviors have an above and beyond cumulative effect than any individual health behavior effect, and the methods employed by society via collaborative program should be targeted to reduce the negative effects of poverty on childhood health. Another paper on this same topic (Wood, 2003) states that poverty is prevalent in the United States, disproportionately affecting children, noting that the trend increasing despite many efforts. It concludes by predicting that without economic and other social interventions, many more children will become caught in a cycle of poverty and despair.

Impact on Parenting

The effects of poverty on parenting of young children theme included reviews of two articles. A paper discussing these effects (McLeod and Shanahan, 1993) concluded two items: that families with histories of poverty influence children's mental health much more than the effects of current poverty, and that the body of evidence analyzed indicated minor race/ethnic differences in the relationship between poverty and children's mental health. Furthermore, the relationships of poverty and parenting behaviors to children's mental health were very similar for all race/ethnic groups, unlike the results discussed above in the developmental theme above. In another paper (Kaiser and Delaney, 1996) four groups of parenting mediation factors were discussed as closely related to affecting the outcomes of children in poverty. The logical conclusion and recommendation, is to focus efforts, programs and funding on those factors

most easily changed, rather than those most difficult to change.

Many researchers have tried to discover the various impacts poverty has on children in all aspects of their lives. The point of this literature review was to learn about the impacts on development, education, health, and parenting, which were frequently cited effects of children living in poverty. Many studies have shown that children did not develop as effectively when living in low socio-economic homes. Delayed development stunts their future academic growth and makes it more difficult to catch up in school.

Health effects, such as cognitive delays and poor nutrition, can impact a child well beyond any current stage of poverty. Finally, in many cases, poverty leads to excess parental stress, causing children to develop abnormally, and in many cases, child abuse. Each article expressed a need to intervene as all these factors are cumulative, causing these children to fall behind for their entire lives. However, none of the papers researched tried an intervention and studied the effects of it. If a program was found to be successful, many children's lives could be changed for the better.

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