

## **Sociological Analysis of the Effect of Globalizing Poverty to Turkish Family Structure and Strategies Against Poverty from : The Point of Social Work Approaches**

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**Abstract:** Recent socio-economic and cultural effects of globalization have the main role in the increase of inequality among income groups and the inability to deliver social justice in the world and Turkey. This affects families with low and fixed-income families more deeply. Traditional socio-cultural structure and fabric of social relations began differentiating with poverty being experienced as a sub-cultural form. Economic, social and cultural results stemming from global capitalism leading the deepening of poverty and reproduction of an unequal structure by its nature; has a deteriorating impact on the traditional cooperative and solidarity patterns of the Turkish family. Families in poverty are getting weaker day by day and trying to come up with new strategies to break this vicious circle. Household head working in informal, marginal (underground) sectors in the urban settings, use of women's and children's labor for unskilled jobs, changing citizenship and kinship relations are the main areas of problem produced by the effects of poverty on the Turkish family from a sociological point of view. In line with social work models, development of strategies against poverty is of great importance for achieving social justice and enhancing social welfare.

**Key words:** Globalization • Family structure • New poverty • Urbanization • Sociological changes • Gecekondu • Post-fordist economical system • Social work • Social workers • Social problems

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The crisis of capitalist system that the world economy is based on, starting in 1970's because of diminishing profit margins led to deepening of some problems. Neo-liberal policies and the process called globalization starting from the early 1980's brought poverty, whose focal point is the unequal distribution of income and related problems.

Globalization is defined as flow of information, goods, capital and people exceeding political and economic borders [1]. This process got its place in the agenda by free and booming flow of capital around the world and emerging of new means of investment with development of new technologies gaining speed and becoming widespread with cheapening prices [2]. Widening existing markets by diversification of products or specializing in the existing market, bringing down the production costs as much as possible, increasing production by new technologies besides flexible production organizations, shifting production to geographical locations where control and cost of labor is easy, giving up of welfare state concept by cutting down social rights, public

services and social policies became the most important policies of this new era [3].

Poverty getting more serious with globalization, as in the world, makes the lives of families in poverty in our country more complicated besides consolidating culture of poverty which also means getting used to poverty. In this study, causality between poverty and globalization, in the context of the phenomenon of new poverty and in terms of its impact on Turkish family structure, will be discussed.

**Poverty and Globalization:** Globalization is a process containing winners and losers opportunities and disadvantages, paradoxically, at the same time. Giddens [4] divides the approaches towards globalization into two as skeptics and radicals. "Skeptics are more in the leftist politics, they especially gather at the old left. Governments can still keep the economic life under their control and welfare state can maintain its existence. According to skeptics, globalization is an ideology suggested by free market supporters, who want to narrow down state expenditure, aimed at abolishing the benefits of welfare state. What we see is at the very most a renewal

of the former world a century ago. An open global economy with intensive commerce including money trade also existed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Understanding of globalization based on neo-liberal policies deepens poverty and inequality across the world. In the last quarter of the century, during which economic and social problems peaked, poverty raised in an amount that have never been seen during any historical period. Especially in the underdeveloped regions of the world, the number of people in poverty is counted in billions [5]. Variables like operability of economic structure, added value it creates, distribution of income and resources, quality of work force, geopolitical position, education system, effect and variety of communication sector, technological infrastructure, sources of production, stability of political system, scope of public force, effectiveness of civil society, effectiveness of international organizations underlie poverty [6].

Around one fifth of the world population has a per diem income of one dollar, while half of the population has two dollars and the number of such people is increasing. In underdeveloped and developing countries, an average of ten million people dies of sickness and hunger every year since rich countries do not help them. However, this number is only twenty in England [7]. The content of the concept of underdeveloped is also the content of poverty. The concept of underdevelopment which is usually referred with the third world; comes with problems like overgrowth of population, rapid and poor urbanization, low national income per capita, unequal distribution of income, development of national economy according to the needs of industrialized countries, high level of foreign indebtment, unequal property relations, low level of industrialization, high level of unemployment, low level of literacy, undernutrition, poor sanitary conditions and inadequate health services, non-democratic regimes and social unrest [8].

According to the data from United Nations Development Program [9] total assets of 358 dollar billionaires are equal to the total income of 45% of the poorest population in the world. The total assets of the top 200 rich people of the world are more than the total income of two billion poor people. The total assets of three richest people in the world are higher than the total gross domestic products of the 48 poorest countries. 10% of the world population produces 70% of products and services and gets 70% of the revenue. Three billion people, constituting the half of the world's population, have a share of 6% in production. In 1999, out of 30.2 trillions of dollars produced; 24 high income countries in

which 25% of the world population lives took a share of 78% while low income countries constituting 40.5% of the world population got one thirtieth of the world revenue. This is why income per capita is near 26 thousand dollars in rich countries while it is 400 dollars in the low-income countries. The middle-income countries in which 44.5% of the world population lives have 2 thousand dollars income per capita and takes a share of 18% from the world revenue [10].

In more than a hundred countries, current income per capita is lower than it was 15 years ago. Around 1.6 billion people have a worse life than they had in the beginning of 1980s. In the early 1960s difference of the highest 20% and the lowest 20% was 1/30 while today it rose to 1/60 in which global wealth has increased tremendously [11].

Above data reveals that globalization process gradually increases existing inequalities. Globalization hides the disadvantaged groups from having even the minimum living conditions by abolishing welfare state administrations [12]. This leads the masses who were not used to be poor to become impoverished and permanently stay in that position which creates exclusion from the rest of the society defined as the new poverty [13].

#### **The Decline of Welfare Regimes and the "New Poverty":**

The most explicit feature of globalization is the emerging of poverty as the one which is out of the system. "There is a significant difference between the people who had a place within the system but became impoverished due to the diminishing real income in the previous periods and the present intra-system poverty experienced by the ones who are socially, politically and economically excluded without any power to struggle [14].

The new poverty is indeed a reflection of the fact that system does not need groups in poverty in parallel with the understanding of post-industrial society and economy into which the world enters rapidly. Capitalism, by the division of labor it constituted between the rural and the urban, caused the masses that are detached from rural and came to urban not to find any jobs in the formal sector which leads to a tendency towards working in irregular and informal jobs, being deprived of social opportunities like education, health and housing. Under these circumstances; poverty, shifting its form, emerges as a heavier, culturalized, excluded and underclass problem.

The new poverty, as Kaygalak [15] states, "in the past poverty was alleviated by social and occupational mobility and social programs carried out by the state. Diminishing number of jobs with social security, Post-Fordist economy characterized by unstable

workforce market getting permanent and employment regime narrow down the living chances of a large part of the population who try to break out of the poverty circle without education or any occupational skills”.

Neo-liberal policies, with the addition of racist, ethnic, religious prejudices and xenophobia, constituted the bases of a process primarily against the poor in cities [16]. The problem of new poverty emerged in the USA too and spread to Europe and the metropolises of other countries. With globalization and the new international division of labor, inequalities deepened both at the scale of the world and among regions and cities. From that moment on, “third worlds” began to flourish in the middle of metropolises. Such segments of society called “under class” or “out class” contain unemployed people, young women getting state assistance with illuminate children, the homeless, beggars, addicts of drugs or alcohol and criminals on the street [17].

In the process of globalization, the scale of poverty in our country is also changing. Today, the new poverty emerges as an important problem and as a life style in the big cities of our country.

**The New Poor and Change After 80s:** The problem of poverty has been intensifying from the 80s until today in our country. At the background of the growth of poverty and specifically income inequality in terms of economy, there were the negative impacts of neo-liberal transformation in our country.

With the coming of 1980s, the process of foreign expansion and liberalization brought an order in which decision making processes in economic life are formed by self functioning of the market in Turkey [18].

On the one hand, market prices were becoming determinant over the distribution mechanism of national accumulation and resources and on the other hand, the foundation of a policy towards state supported foreign expansion by taking a position in favor of capital in terms of employment and payments had laid.

The most prominent features of this period were preventing organization of laborers, privatization of state economic enterprises and politization of relations of production and economy. As a result, public services and related policies began to function against middle and low classes which deepened the problem of poverty.

During this process a class called rentier earning money out of money without any contribution to production emerged. If we connect this to poverty, the rentier in 1980s began to cooperate with the municipalities, which organize the state policies of deed

allocation and construction pardon at the local level, in order to get construction permits of the areas that can bring income as a populist approach detaching the urban poor from their class characteristics and class consciousness [19].

With the effects of neo-liberal policies, solidarity relations left its place to unequal power relations in social life and with these relations masses referred to as poor, including the ones in gecekondu areas, began to be stratified within themselves [20].

Thus, transformation beginning in 1980s in Turkey was not an era of breaking but rather a split about the subject of poverty. In this period, the phenomenon which was beginning to shift direction was the abolition of welfare state approach before it was began to put into practice. In this period state got away from its protective identity, culture of consumption and competition established and democracy, participation and active citizenship as the pillars of representative democracy had been replaced with “clients” making free and conscious choices among political delegations only during elections [21].

With coming of the 1990s, intensity of poverty increased compared to 1980s in our country. In this period, national income per capita decreased due to economic crises, distribution of income dramatically got worse in terms of income groups, rural urban distinction and regional differences, unemployment rates increased and informal economy grew gradually [21]. When the economic crises were accompanied by chronic inflation in nutrition and wholesale prices, poverty became a depression for low income groups throughout the country.

Crises between November 2000 and February 2001 deeply affected not only the self-employed, workers, civil servants and peasants but also the middle class and small businesses in our country. In this period, social downfall caused by poverty reflected to protests, suicides and mass demonstrations.

Undoubtedly, poverty has reflected reversely on the family which is considered to be the basic constituent of society and it is has been left alone during this process. Poverty acts like a deteriorating factor for functioning of the family. Functions of the family like care, nourishment, protection, assuring and maintaining a healthy environment for members are interrupted and sometimes completely disabled.

The next part of the text will discuss the main aspects of impoverishment of the family as the most important base of informal welfare system in our country.

**deepening of Family Poverty with the Decline of Informal Welfare Regime:** Growing unequal distribution of income and rapid inclination towards poverty after 1980s caused destruction of the informal welfare regime which had been protecting masses in poverty by cooperation and solidarity. Today, family and kinship relations which have been utilized as a tool for survival are resisting against collapsing and poor families turn to multiple employment strategies more intensely than ever.

In this period, families' inclination to migrate not only from rural to urban but urban to urban to break out of poverty cycle caused a transformation in *gecekondu* as a former phenomenon taking place in social life as a buffer mechanism. Due to the transformation of *gecekondu* areas into middle class zones, the most important solidarity source of poor families between rural and urban areas began to lose its function.

Increase in the number of roles referred to family caused exhaustion in this institution. Meaning, the problem of new poverty limits contribution to the family pool. The new condition of poverty in Turkey disabling the family pool deepens problems like feelings of helplessness, anxiety, exclusion, desolation and shame besides inability to meet basic needs like health and treatment, education and nourishment [20].

Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger [22], define the conditions where family coping strategies are disabled as follows: unemployment of the head of household/male members of the family (unemployment), inability of the head of household/male members of the family to work (impairment, sickness), conflicts in the family, inability of women to interact with social environment, restriction of working for women or unemployment of women, regional difference of ethnic/religious patterns, personal traits (not sharing, introversion, stinginess), poverty culture/unwillingness of family toward developing strategies, high number of dependent members (children, elderly, sick etc.) in the family.

Families composed mostly of elders, widows, the handicapped due to occupational accidents in young age, poor families with adult and unskilled members coming to urban areas without capital become isolated masses within their daily lives and away from employment and housing market mechanisms trying to develop strategies to maintain a life at the minimum level [20].

**The Recent Condition of the Head of Household:** Although occupation of the head of household in formal sector is an important support for the struggle against poverty, there are situations in which even the

employment of the head of household in formal sector is not enough alone. Head of household with regular income and a job with insurance provides one of the most important contributions to family's struggle against poverty, more precisely, weakens the links to poverty and ensures the freedom of family from depending on kinship and citizenship relations but this also began to fall short. Thus, in this recent condition we see the development of the phenomenon of deepening poverty meaning poor workers consenting to low wages parallel to the condition throughout the world.

**Labor of Women Gaining Importance:** Since women working outside is traditionally a problem in Turkey, women in poor families turn to jobs which can bring income within the house without separating from the children and enabling to continue caring them [22]. The poor who are obliged to accept any job to be able to maintain their living and income have to work in low-paid, temporary home based jobs since they are relatively deprived of income and time that is necessary to be able to invest for jobs with social security reproducing the cycle of poverty because home-centered jobs which require non-professional labor of women are out of social security and these employees become vulnerable to social risks like sickness, disability, pregnancy and senility.

Women's labor pushed out of regular and permanent working life due to growing unemployment and economic crises resulted in working in more irregular and temporary jobs. Statistics show that only one fifth of women in urban areas are working in jobs with social security. Cultural values imposing that the place of women is house and her duty is to be a mother, hinder women from accessing labor market and education opportunities sufficiently [23].

Women in poverty who cannot use their labor in a paying job try to contribute to management of the household with more effort. Especially, producing food for domestic consumption, restricting the amount of foodstuff, saving the day by shopping on trust or in partial payment, trying to provide social assistance, solidarity with neighbors in management of the kitchen [23], are the basic strategies of poor women in contributing management of the household.

**Income Based on Child Labor:** Prevalence of child labor especially seen in underdeveloped countries is a very important strategy for the impoverished in Turkey. In poor families children have to work in their early ages without completing their education which provides the most

important basis for reproduction of poverty [24]. The increase in the number of children working in the streets along with children in a workplace who are relatively in a better position gives us another picture of poverty. As a result of migration to big cities, unemployed families' children in the city are pushed to work on streets in their early ages and face a dangerous life [25].

Thus, families of most of the children working on streets are the ones which migrated to big cities and could not find any jobs in the formal sector. The children of these families who especially migrated in 1990s have a very high rate of absenteeism in terms of education. As Erder [26] points out, "these children are the most clear pictures of lack of education, migration and poverty reflecting to streets. It is obvious that the problem of women and the youth who are excluded from public sphere, young girls at homes isolated from labor market and children forced to work at young ages or street children is not being without a family". Therefore, it is useless to discuss children working on streets under the topic of child labor like other working children in terms of social policy.

#### **Transformation of Kinship and Citizenship Relations:**

The place of being a neighbor and coming from the same city (citizenship) is very important in terms of relations of social network and solidarity processes of the poor in our country. In the cities, especially as income and environment standards fall the will to be closer to relatives increases [27]. "Citizenship, being different than kinship, is something not related to individuals' descent but something constituted in the urban environment". When we consider citizenship relations, it is seen that people who come from the same geographical place form occupation communities and get organized under informal or formal institutions related to informal and enclosed areas of occupation. Citizenship institutions in today's world, where it is necessary to have networks of relations in the formal system to be able to articulate to the urban system, provides a meeting place for different political figures while facilitating entrance of the managers and leaders of such institutions to occupational communities by controlling people politically. Thus, the bond between the poor and relations of citizenship is the indirect tool for the populist relations between the poor and the politicians. Considering the fact that the poor have low political consciousness, citizenship institutions and relations are used by the people who came to cities first and have better socio-economic condition while new comers neither access neighborhoods of their own

citizens nor the network of social capital that they will provide and actually former popular solutions like living close to each other or uniting households left its place to efforts of the ones in good shape to leave such neighborhoods and go away from their citizens and relatives in need to establish a new life [28]. Thus, kinship relations are more functional for the struggle of the poor than citizenship relations in line with the reasons mentioned above. There relatives who try to live close to each other in terms of space are also neighbors which may lead them to informal solidarity relations on the bases of kinship and neighborhood but today even the bonds of kinship prove to be insufficient in struggling against poverty.

**Family Poverty in Terms of Social Work:** Social work is a profession, from the day it is born until today, as a historical mission, has been defending the excluded and oppressed groups and contributing to the social policies to develop welfare of these groups [29], acting in line with the aims of social justice, social peace, social development, social unity and social democracy [30]. Social work has always been with individuals, families and communities in difficult condition to provide them with the life suitable to human dignity and sedateness by undertaking their advocacy.

Growing phenomenon of poverty with the coming of globalization brought hunger and misery causing serious devastation in the social fabric of our country [31]. The worst negative impacts of poverty in our country can be seen clearly in the structure and functions of the family. Poverty in our country changed the tendency of production and use of resources within the family's social and economics processes, forced family to alternative strategies of survival, affected the power of the family in society, caused the family to adopt new norms of behavior. Poverty affects family's social position, roles, budget, mode of labor force participation, distribution of domestic responsibilities, asset condition, relations with social environment and tendency towards participating social life negatively. Changing circumstances reduce the life quality of the family, with deepening poverty the family is left with difficult situations like detaching from social relations, retreating and being excluded from social life. For all these reasons, the profession of social work has a great responsibility in directly or indirectly eliminating or at least easing family poverty. The professional focus of social work is to increase the level of social welfare by solving social problems [32]. In this point, professional intervention of social work becomes

increasingly important for the need to analyze the problem of poverty, determining the needs underlying this problem and actualizing policies and implications to meet these needs.

Social workers, who have to evaluate which ideologies direct the current social policies and models of social work, should make an effort towards changing social policies and approaches having destructive effects on social justice among social layers [33]. Social workers who are trying to struggle poverty which is intensified articulating with other social problems together with globalization has to know, where and how the social justice breaks.

### CONCLUSION

The majority of the Turkish population is experiencing the poverty which is gradually deepened as a result of globalization and inaccurate choices regarding social policy and the social problems stemming from that. Especially the family is getting weaker in this process and the strategies they develop to break the cycle of poverty are not efficient. Thus, in order to abolish numerous negativities resulting from poverty, a revisionist adjustment of social policy with a holistic approach focusing on poverty of the individual, the family and the society is needed in our country. To achieve success in the struggle against poverty in our country, the understanding of social state confined in thoughts should be activated with all its mechanisms. The common denominators that long-term development of our country will lean on are social justice and equality of opportunities. The spreading and deepening of social justice, prevalence of human factor in economic and social development is possible only through removing all the restrictions before its existing power and capacity and actualizing them. There is a great responsibility of social work profession and social workers at this point.

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