

Poverty and Addiction: Understanding the Relationship and Triggers

Luoman Chen ^{1, *, †}, Jiamin Xu ^{2, †}

¹ Chongqing No.1 Secondary School, Chongqing, China

² The Affiliated High School of Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China

*Corresponding author Email: xjm_241013@163.com

†These authors contributed equally.

ABSTRACT

This is a review paper and we briefly discussed poverty and addiction, in terms of their definition, triggers, and close relationship between each other. We have searched through materials and articles on the Internet, especially research papers, for a series of collations and a listing of the main ideas. Besides this, we also added our own judgments and statements of opinion. The present study firstly gives some professional definitions and the main causes of each keyword. And then laid out some statements and evidence given by systematic and credible experiments to ensure poverty and addiction have strong connections. The main research question is: How can poverty be a major factor leading to addiction? The present study summarized some significant factors specifically. Several authors have explored the causes of poverty and addiction and the close relationship between them. It is generally believed that poverty has several indirect factors leading to addictive behaviors, leading to different degrees of addictive behaviors. In this paper, a summary review of the existing literature is conducted to explore the main reason why poverty is the main factor leading to addiction, and through the analysis of completed systematic, credible completed experiments, some new ideas and evidence are obtained to prove the close relationship between poverty and addiction. We also propose solutions to some of the existing problems.

Keywords: Poverty, Addiction, Triggers, Connections

1. INTRODUCTION

The disadvantage of addiction should be important or we would not start the whole research. It is widely believed that for the vast majority of people, being addicted to something is not beneficial behavior. In people's perception, addiction means pursuing it at any cost and beyond the bounds of self-control. As for a more professional definition, addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. ([1]St. Joseph Institute, Drug, and Alcohol Addiction, Family Resource, June 18th, 2018) In general, addiction has primarily two kinds, substance addiction, and behavioral addiction. ([2] ASAM, U.S.A) Substance addiction (or drug addiction) is a neuropsychiatric disorder and a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior, and behavioral addiction is an intense desire to repeat so action that is pleasurable or perceived to improve well-being, or capable of alleviating some personal distress, despite the awareness

that such an action may have negative consequences. As for substance addiction, it would lead to serious physical disorders, such as an increased strain on the liver, seizures, stroke, mental confusion, brain damage, and also problems with memory, attention, and decision-making. ([5] Zhiling Zhou, Fred Uquillas, Huijun Wang, Xiaomei Wang, Definition of Substance and Non-substance Addiction, November, 2017) For some people with behavioral addictions, they w act uncontrollably in ways that harm themselves or others. For example, addiction to stealing can intensify with constant self-blame, and addiction to gambling can place a huge burden on the average person and their family.

Another important factor included in the present study is poverty. Poverty is the state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and necessities needed for a minimum standard of living. Poverty means that a person's income level is so low that they are unable to meet basic human needs. ([3] JAMES CHEN, MICHAEL SONNENSCHN, PATRICE

WILLIAMS, Poverty Definition, January 24th, 2022) Poor people and families may not have access to basic food and shelter, such as adequate housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical care. Each country has its own criteria to determine how many of its people live in poverty. Notably, according to the Census Bureau, 37.2 million people lived in poverty in the United States in 2020, an increase of nearly 4 million people relative to 2019. And according to the World Bank, only 100 million people will be in extreme poverty because of the burst of COVID-19. Now, poverty as a problem is getting worse. As for why it is where it is today, economic shocks, food insecurity, and climate change are all contributing factors. ([4] <https://mind.help/wmha/profile>) One of the most important consequences of poverty is addiction.

We first understand addiction through the concept of addiction. That is, it comes from drug dependence or drug addiction. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Committee of Experts, drug addiction is a mental state caused by the interaction between drugs and the body, and sometimes the physical state. It shows compulsive behavior and other reactions to using the drug continuously and regularly, in order to feel its mental effects or to avoid discomfort caused by drug discontinuation. We state that the connotation of addiction covers both substance (drug) addiction and behavioral addiction. For our judgment, we regard addiction as a mental illness that refers to an individual's strong or uncontrollable repeated desire to abuse a drug or carry out a certain activity. Although he knows that doing so will have various adverse consequences for himself, it is still beyond his control.

We mainly divide it into the following four factors:

- 1) The lack of social support increases the stress of the people who are suffering from poverty and then leads to their mental illness.
- 2) Powerlessness for the poor to change their poverty situation and addiction dependence from generation to generation.
- 3) The wideness of the gap between the rich and the poor caused major blows and chasms for the poor.
- 4) The various degrees and forms of addiction or exhibit addictive behaviors of people in different age groups increase the difficulty of solving problems.

2. STRONG CONNECTIONS

Based on the study and research of Tim Winter and Maia Szalavitz, the authors briefly talk about poverty and drug addiction. They experimented to investigate the proportion of poor people among the number of people who die from drugs. They started their investigation in places with high densities of drug-using populations. They requested the government to get the needed data, while they posted a questionnaire on the local website and

got a lot of available data, they also found some people who were addicted to drugs or their family members and interviewed these people according to the list provided by the government. The results showed that poverty was only one broad factor, which also included many characteristics, such as low status, high arrest rates, and mental disorders. In their study, the vast majority of people who died from drug overdoses in the United States since 2006 lived in poor areas. Based on a study of income levels and addiction, they found that for heroin addiction, the prevalence was more than three times higher among those earning less than \$20,000 a year than those earning more than \$50,000 a year. The rate of addiction among the unemployed was twice as high as among those who had jobs. Finally, they concluded that poverty was a significant factor in addiction.

In Vijaya and Femi's study, the relationship between low economic status and increased incidence and prevalence of mental illness has become increasingly apparent. ([6] Poverty, social inequality and mental health, Vijaya Murali and Femi Oyeboode, Cambridge University Press, 02 January 2018) And, according to the survey, it is widely accepted that poverty is both a determinant and a consequence of poor mental health status. They found from studies in New Haven in 1958, where a team of social scientists and psychiatrists studied an urbanized community centered in New Haven, Connecticut, that mental illness was associated with social stratification, and in the Midtown Manhattan Study conducted in 1963 Cornell University Medical College conducted a large-scale investigation of mental disorders in adults in midtown Manhattan, where early years The experience of poverty was directly related to the high incidence of mental distress in adulthood, and in surveys released by the Office of the Census and Surveys, there was a positive correlation between the percentage of the population that was unemployed and the rate of acquisition of mental illness. This also simultaneously allowed for a significant increase in the rate of drug use. Another important finding is that there are differences in the availability and use of treatment modalities and facilities by social class. This could then be an explanation for the gradient of illness across classes. Patients from the upper or middle social class had lower levels of hallucinations and delusional symptoms compared to those from the lower social class. This is because people from higher social classes have easier access to knowledge about psychiatric disorders, including the addiction of course, so they are able to seek help or treatment in a timelier manner. Conversely, for people of lower status, their ignorance and tolerance allow for higher rates of morbidity. Thus, there must be a link between poverty and addiction.

3. MAIN FACTOR AND CONSEQUENCES

3.1. Main Factors lead to Poverty

3.1.1. Transmission from Generation to Generation

Some differences in cultural background, regional development, and education level will lead to the transmission of poverty from generation to generation in a certain group. This transmission from generation to generation is difficult to stop or to stop this vicious circle needs to pay a considerable price. ([9]Paul Welford, Anna-Karin Danielsson, Hélio Manhica, Parental substance use disorder and offspring not in education, employment or training: a national cohort study of young adults in Sweden)

3.1.2. The Lack of Poverty Alleviation Policies

For poverty alleviation, some governments hold an evasive attitude. Several possible situations are listed as follows: first, the base number of poor people is too large; second, the social nature leads to the neglect of the poor. At the same time, some government policies to deal with poverty are outdated and do not adapt to the new level of economic development, resulting in these policies being no longer effective. ([11] Lipton, M., & Ravallion, M. (1995). Poverty and policy. Handbook of development economics, 3, 2551-2657.)

3.1.3. The Harsh Natural Environment

The lack of natural conditions may also lead to a region falling into poverty, or it is difficult to get out of poverty. The main manifestations are as follows: first, the inconvenient transportation leads to the disconnection between an area's economic model and educational model and modern society; 2、 In the agricultural development stage of social development, a certain area has a relatively small population because it is not suitable for farming. Therefore, with the development of society, there is a period of rapid population growth, but the level of education and living services in this area is too low to match.

3.2. Consequences of Poverty

We mainly take teenagers, youth, and middle-aged as the ideal research object. We initially divided them into divided into teenagers (less than 18 years old), youth (18-35 years old), middle-aged (36-55 years old) several groups, and described respectively.

① Underprivileged teenagers

We believe that teenagers from poor families are more likely to suffer from addiction than ordinary teenagers. According to the data of the World Bank database, up to

now, there are data of teenagers trapped in poverty, while according to the data of the study, there are data of teenagers suffering from addiction. ([10] Manhica, H., Straatmann, V. S., Lundin, A., Agardh, E., & Danielsson, A. K. (2021). Association between poverty exposure during childhood and adolescence, and drug use disorders and drug-related crimes later in life. *Addiction*, 116(7), 1747-1756.)

First of all, poor adolescents tend to have family disharmony, poor living environments, and other factors that affect their mental health. (Data) Poor adolescents have more serious mental disorders.

Secondly, poverty can make teenagers suffer psychological problems because they can't get pleasure from comparing with their peers.

The material conditions of some families are not rich enough to constitute the condition of children's comparison, and even in some poor families, the living standard of children is always lower than their classmates, such children in the process of growing up are easy to form a psychological inferiority complex. In a society it is widely believed that compare the wind, once some point in the lack of family education, coincided with the children at school or social circle is a material wealth of society in the comparison group, inferiority complex heart serious child, because they will be more afraid of material conditions is inferior to others and was sidelined by their peers, Therefore, under the joint action of the inner interest and the external environment, some poor children are also more and more like to compare, but cannot get the capital to compare, some of these children will inevitably have psychological problems.

We believe that such possible psychological problems are most likely behavioral addictions. On the one hand, poor teenagers may become addicted to excessive consumption. On the other hand, they also realize that this behavior has disadvantages. Therefore, we believe that the excessive consumption behavior of poor adolescents is a manifestation of addiction.

At the same time, the objective living environment of poor adolescents may make them more likely to be exposed to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Teenagers in the inquisitive phase will give it a try, and without help from their families, teenagers are more likely to develop substance addiction.

To sum up, the poverty of teenagers can lead them to suffer from addiction disease.

② Underprivileged middle-aged

We believe that there are three main reasons for the addiction of poor youth and poor middle-aged people. ([1]St. Joseph Institute, Drug and Alcohol Addiction, Family Resource, June 18th, 2018 <https://stjosephinstitute.com/understanding-the-relationship-between-poverty-and-addiction/>)

1. Increasing stress. (Worrying about how to afford shelter, food, and other basic needs cause a tremendous amount of stress.)

2. Increasing thresholds: feelings of hopelessness. (When meeting the difficulties of daily expenses, the dream of going to college, buying a house, starting a business, or traveling around the world seems impossible.)

3. Decreasing self-esteem.

4. Decreasing social support. (Low-income adults are unlikely to have a strong social support network just because they spend all their energy trying to survive every day.)

5. Decreasing access to health care. (Untreated mental health or poorly controlled chronic diseases may lead to the use of drugs or alcohol from self-treatment symptoms.)

From what has been discussed above, the young adults and the middle-aged suffer from addiction due to poverty.

3.3. Poverty leads to Addiction: Social Factors

In Martin's research analysis, he delves into whether there is a strong link between poverty and addiction. ([7] Martin Yim, ADDICTION AND POVERTY CONNECTED, JULY 20, 2015) He concluded through the Internet and small local surveys of the poor and drug-addicted populations that substance abuse may even be a causal factor in poverty. He found that people who were financially stressed as children and young adults had higher rates of tobacco use later in life. This hints at an inextricable link between poverty and addiction. Even though there are now conflicting papers, these phenomena do lead to a clear and important point. Poverty and addiction are interrelated. They are very closely related and contribute to each other. Drugs can harm a person's mental state, which in turn leads to mentally unstable people seeking pleasure and liberation, advancing substance abuse. Subsequently, due to excessive intake, people become unconsciously addicted. In order to obtain drugs to sustain the pleasure, people then do whatever it takes to obtain them while suffering the effects of the side effects. The dual physical and psychological ravages can cause people to lose their jobs or employment opportunities, which in turn can lead to even greater poverty. This can lead to a vicious cycle of poverty and addiction. At the same time, poverty also means a shortage of resources, which leads to low literacy rates, low educational attainment, and increased resentment toward society, which inadvertently leads to addiction to drugs.

3.4. Association with Addiction

After integrating these research data, we found some

of the most direct links between poverty and addiction. 1) The consumption of addictive goods will directly lead to family poverty. 2) People below the poverty line are more likely to have addictive behaviors than those above or below the poverty line, and these behaviors will be more difficult to quit. 3) Exposure to poverty early in life seems to increase the risk of adult addiction, especially drug addiction.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we have found that there is a link between poverty and addiction, and they could affect each other. We found that Transmission from Generation to Generation, The Lack of Poverty Alleviation Policies, and The Harsh Natural Environment can lead to poverty and that poverty can lead to relaxation and instant pleasure. After poverty, people become addicted to other substances such as drugs. Other social factors such as discrimination and self-esteem can lead to drug dependence. Through our exploration of papers and materials, we have found that poverty can indeed lead to addiction, and addiction can lead to further poverty.

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