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The Impact of Poverty and Social Inequality on Spiritual Stability: Modern Approaches

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Annotation: This article analyzes the phenomena of poverty and income inequality from economic and philosophical perspectives. Information is provided on the essence of poverty and income inequality, their interconnections, the factors influencing them, and their relationship with spiritual stability. Issues of the fairness of resource distribution in society, social equality, and human well-being are discussed. Furthermore, the causes of the growing inequality in modern economic systems and its socio-spiritual consequences are highlighted.

Key Words: Poverty, economics, income inequality, Gini coefficient, solutions, social justice, sustainable development, prosperity, economic development, philosophical approach, policies.

Introduction

It is no secret that poverty remains a highly pressing problem today. Under the conditions of modern globalization, this issue has become even more complex, manifesting itself not only as an economic problem but also as a philosophical and moral one. From a philosophical standpoint, poverty is viewed not merely as material deprivation but as a restriction of opportunity and a narrowing of freedom, whereas from an economic standpoint poverty is defined by a person's lack of sufficient income to satisfy basic needs.

Income disparity intensifies social stratification and hinders sustainable development. Countries around the world have been struggling with this problem for a long time. According to United Nations data, 1.1 billion people worldwide currently live in poverty. In this regard, the urgency of the problem is further revealed in the words of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, delivered at the Second World Summit for Social Development: “We believe it is time to create a new financial architecture for combating poverty in order to broadly mobilize resources for the social programs of developing countries. In this regard, we propose establishing a Global Social Justice Fund that would provide practical assistance in reducing social inequality and poverty,"[1]

Methodology

In order to reveal the essence of the problem, this article employs methods of statistical data analysis, income assessment through the Gini coefficient, and dynamic analysis. To gain a fuller understanding, it is first necessary to clarify what poverty actually is.

Poverty refers to a situation in which the income of an individual or a family is insufficient to fully meet the needs necessary for living (food, clothing, housing, healthcare, education, and others), or it can be defined as a term describing a low level of population income, consumption capacity, and access to resources.[2] In short, poverty is the social condition arising from low income and the factor that gives rise to numerous other problems. A high level of poverty has always been a pressing issue, and it is generally divided into three main types: absolute poverty (a degree of poverty in which a person cannot satisfy even the most essential needs), relative poverty (a standard of living considerably lower than the average living standard in society)[3], and multidimensional poverty (measured not only by money but also by numerous factors such as education, health, and living conditions)[4]. Regardless of type, various factors give rise to poverty in society, including unemployment, low levels of education, weak economic development, health-related problems (people with disabilities or illnesses that prevent them from working cannot earn income), natural disasters, and income inequality. If such problems are not prevented, a rising level of poverty in turn gives rise to a number of new problems, in particular a slowdown in economic development, a decline in quality of life, restricted access to quality education, crime and delinquency, an increase in social inequality, and others.[5]

In order to grasp the essence of the problem, it is worthwhile to examine income inequality, which figures among both the causes and the consequences of poverty.

Thomas Piketty, professor at the Paris School of Economics, states in his work *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* that "when the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of output and income, capitalism automatically generates arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities."[6] In his research, Piketty demonstrates that the growth of capital income outpaces that of labor income, and shows that this situation intensifies inequality. At the heart of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* lies a deceptively simple yet alarming formula: $r > g$, where r is the rate of return on capital and g is the rate of economic growth. If r exceeds g over the long term, wealth accumulates faster than income, leading to ever-increasing inequality. Piketty argues that, left unchecked, modern capitalism is drifting toward a "patrimonial capitalism"[7] in which inherited wealth dominates, posing a threat to democracy and economic justice. This, in turn, becomes a further basis for the growth of social inequality in society.

As can be understood, income inequality refers to the unequal and uneven distribution of income between the wealthy and poor segments of the population, that is, to a persistent gap between them. Factors contributing to this include differences in education levels among various social strata, differences in profession and qualification, unequal employment opportunities, disparities in owned property and capital, and inequality in regional

[1]YuzNews. Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Second World Summit for Social Development.
[2]Azamaliyeva M. "The Concept of Poverty and Its Economic-Social Foundations." Link.
[3]"Types of Poverty" (Perlego). Link.
[4]Multidimensional poverty: an analysis of definitions, measurement tools, applications and their evolution over time through a systematic review of literature up to 2019. Link.
[5]World Bank. Poverty Overview. Link. OECD. Understanding and Measuring Poverty. Link. UNDP. Multidimensional Poverty Index. Link.
[6]Thomas Piketty. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. – 696 p.
[7]"Patrimonial capitalism" is an economic system in which wealth and capital are primarily transferred through inheritance (from parents to children), and economic power becomes concentrated in the hands of a small elite.

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development.[8] In this regard, the "capability approach" advanced by economist-philosopher Amartya Sen is of great importance, explaining poverty as a person's inability to make use of opportunities. His work *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981) showed that falling wages, unemployment, rising food prices, and inefficient food distribution can lead to famine. His views prompted policymakers to keep food prices stable.[9]

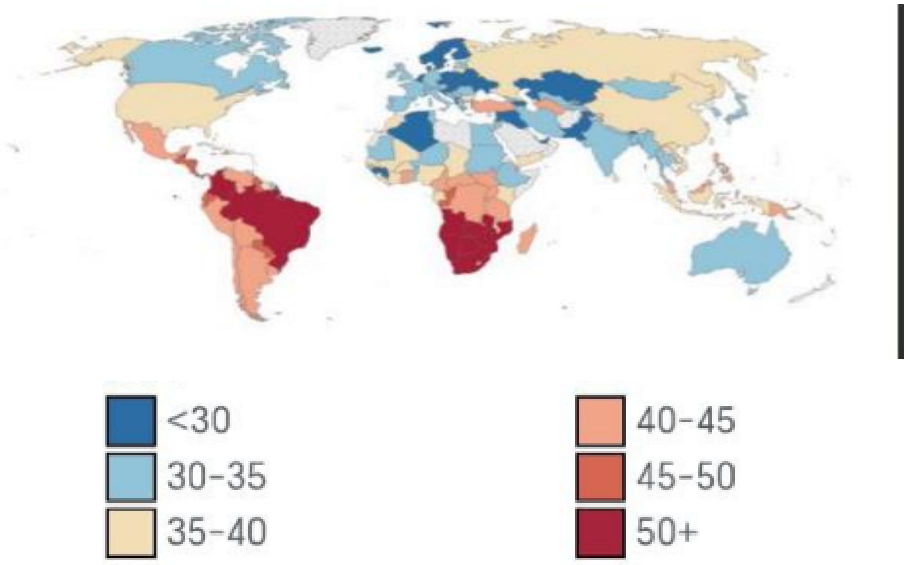
Overall, while the wealthy segment of society continues to develop and improve its standard of living day by day, the increasingly precarious situation of the poor segment prevents any state from achieving economic prosperity. In such a country, no matter how much income the wealthy population earns, the country as a whole cannot be considered wealthy.

Research Results

In order to see the extent to which income inequality, alongside numerous other factors, currently affects poverty, it is necessary to examine statistical data.

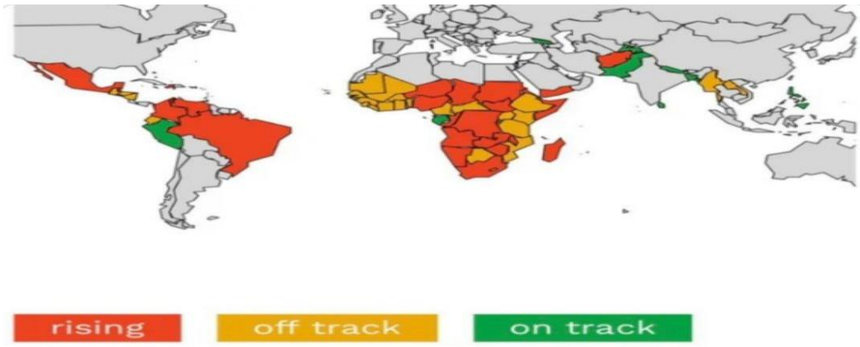
To measure inequality in income, the World Bank uses the Gini coefficient (developed by Corrado Gini). This method measures inequality among frequency-distribution values, such as income levels, on a scale of [0;1], or from 0 to 100%. A Gini coefficient of 0 indicates that income or wealth values are identical across the entire population, whereas a coefficient of 1, or 100%, represents the highest possible level of inequality among these values — meaning that a single individual (or a small group) holds all the wealth while the rest have none.[10]

Gini coefficient (%) on the world map, 2022 (Wikipedia: World Bank report)



Let us now turn our attention to the poverty level of regions with high inequality indicators.

[8]World Bank. Poverty Overview. Link. OECD. Understanding and Measuring Poverty. Link.
[9]Britannica — Amartya Sen.
[10]Wikipedia — Gini coefficient.



World Bank research, 2024. Income of less than $2.15 per day

As the two sources above indicate, in regions with unequal incomes, poverty also remains one of the rapidly growing problems. According to World Bank data, regions with high income inequality also continue to have high poverty levels. For instance, the Republic of South Africa has a high Gini coefficient, with a large share of the population living on low incomes. Taking South Africa alone as an example, its income inequality by Gini coefficient was recorded at around 47–52% as of 2022 (in 2008–2009 it stood at 63–70%, the highest figure in the world).

Although this indicator declined following the introduction of a new tax system, it is still too early to consider it satisfactory. The number of people earning less than $2.15 a day in the country makes up more than half of the population.[11] It follows that poverty and income inequality are interrelated. In order to reduce poverty within its territory, every country must combat income inequality.

From a philosophical perspective, the issue of income inequality is closely linked to social justice. According to John Rawls's theory, inequality in society can be justified only when it serves the interests of the least advantaged group. This approach demonstrates the need to develop social protection systems within modern state policy. In his view, economic and social inequalities in society do not require absolute equality, but they must operate under conditions of equal opportunity for all and, in particular, must improve the welfare of the poorest.[12]

Looking at the situation in Uzbekistan, numerous reforms have been carried out in our country aimed at reducing poverty, and based on statistical data we can say that these reforms have been effective.

Positive results have been achieved in Uzbekistan in reducing poverty.[13] However, income inequality is reported to be increasing. For example, in 2023 the Gini coefficient rose from 0.31 to 0.35. The faster growth of income among the wealthiest segment is slowing down the process of poverty reduction.

Between 2015 and 2022, the poverty rate in Uzbekistan was halved, recording one of the best results among European and Central Asian countries. Specifically, the country's poverty rate fell from 36% in 2015 to 17% in 2022 — a better result than the overall figures for the Europe and Central Asia region, where the rate fell from 13% to 8% over the same period. In its blog, the World Bank noted that the figure for Uzbekistan fell from 17% in 2021 to 11% by 2023:

"Growth in household incomes was the main driver of poverty reduction. Wage growth accounted for 60 percent of the progress achieved in reducing poverty. The next most important factor was social transfers, as the government modernized and expanded key programs to support certain groups of the population. At the same time, improvements in pension provision also had a positive effect," the World Bank blog states.

[11] Wikipedia — Gini coefficient.
[12] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — "John Rawls" entry. Link.
[13] World Bank. Uzbekistan Poverty Assessment / Country Economic Updates. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2022–2023. Link.

Nevertheless, World Bank experts have noted a rising level of inequality, which is slowing the pace of poverty reduction. Income growth has occurred mainly among the wealthier segments of the population.

In 2023, the Gini coefficient rose from 0.31 to 0.35 points. As a result, the poverty rate declined by only 3.1 percentage points instead of 5.5. It has been noted that between 2022 and 2023, the income of the poorest 10 percent of the population grew by only 6 percent, while the income of the wealthiest 10 percent grew by more than 30 percent. Thus, the rapid growth in the wealth of affluent citizens is deepening the problem of economic inequality and hindering the reduction of poverty.[14]

Discussion

The research results show that regions with high income inequality also rank highest in terms of poverty, and that combating poverty without addressing inequality does not yield the expected results. The rise of poverty and social inequality negatively affects not only economic indicators but also mutual trust, social solidarity, and spiritual stability in society.

Poverty and inequality give rise to a number of social consequences in society:

− an intensification of social conflicts;

− an increase in crime rates;

− a decline in the quality of health and education;

− a weakening of social trust, and other effects.

These processes negatively affect the sustainable development of society.

Thus, by restricting the population's economic opportunities, poverty and social inequality negatively affect education, social trust, and civic responsibility. This, in turn, weakens the spiritual stability of society and poses a risk to sustainable development. Conversely, effective state policy and social protection measures can mitigate these negative effects.

Countries around the world recommend using various economic and philosophical approaches to solve this problem.

− Improving tax policy (fiscal policy) can help reduce this problem. This policy includes a progressive tax system — that is, setting higher tax rates for higher-income groups and directing the resulting tax revenues toward supporting the poor.[15]

− Investing in education and human capital: social protection should be strengthened by expanding access to preschool education, allocating grants for higher education to children from poor families, and expanding the population's income-earning opportunities through training in modern professions currently in high demand in the labor market. Ensuring that social benefits reach only those genuinely in need produces good results.[16]

In addition, the use of conditional cash transfers is quite effective — specifically, it is worthwhile to direct funds to children from low-income families on the condition that they attend school and undergo medical check-ups. This approach has been tested in Brazil.[17]

In the labor market, the rights of every worker must be protected, and they must be provided with decent living and working conditions. For this, the government needs to establish a minimum wage that takes all relevant factors into account. Providing financial assistance to low-income families to start their own businesses also helps reduce the problem. Alongside job creation, it is advisable to lease land to low-income farmers on a long-term basis so

[14] Kun.uz. "Rising economic inequality has slowed the pace of poverty reduction in Uzbekistan — World Bank."
[15] World Bank. *The Distributional Impact of Fiscal Policy.* Washington, DC: World Bank. Link.
[16] World Bank. Human Capital Project. Link. UNDP. Human Development Report. Link.
[17] World Bank. Strengthening Conditional Cash Transfers and the Single Registry in Brazil.

that farms and household plots can be used efficiently. If policies aimed at reducing poverty are not combined with measures to mitigate income inequality, their long-term effectiveness may remain limited.

Turning to the philosophical aspect of solving the problem, it can be said that strengthening the principles of social responsibility and solidarity in society, and creating a spiritually stable environment, form the basis for achieving important results.

Overall, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of poverty and social inequality not only as economic phenomena but also as factors affecting the spiritual stability of society. It also reveals the relationship between economic indicators (including the Gini coefficient) and spiritual-social stability. The novelty of the study further lies in the fact that Uzbekistan's poverty-reduction policy and the impact of income inequality on spiritual stability were assessed in their interrelation, and practical proposals were developed for reducing them.

Conclusions And Recommendations

1. In regions with high income inequality, poverty levels also remain relatively high. This confirms that poverty must be reduced not only through economic growth but also by ensuring fairness in income distribution.

2. Theoretically, this problem can be explained not only through economic approaches but also through philosophical concepts — the principles of social justice, equal opportunity, and human dignity. In particular, J. Rawls's "theory of justice" and A. Sen's "capability approach" make it possible to interpret poverty not only as a lack of income but also as a person's inability to make use of real opportunities.

3. Uzbekistan's experience shows that, although significant progress has been achieved in reducing poverty, rising income inequality is negatively affecting the effectiveness of this process. Sustainable poverty reduction therefore requires not only social assistance but also systemic economic reforms.

Practical recommendations:

1. Developing a "Spiritual Stability Index." It is proposed to introduce a national indicator that, alongside economic indicators, assesses trust, civic engagement, and social solidarity in society.

2. Regular monitoring of income inequality. It is recommended that analysis be conducted by region on the basis of the Gini coefficient and other social indicators, and that state policy be shaped on the basis of this data.

3. Expanding equal opportunities in education. Expanding grants, scholarships, and free vocational training programs for children from low-income families.

4. Expanding targeted education programs in poor regions. Equal opportunities can be increased, especially for young people, through vocational training, digital skills development, and support for entrepreneurship.

5. Targeting the social protection system. Improving digital monitoring and the unified social registry to ensure that benefits and assistance reach only those genuinely in need.

6. Improving minimum wage policy. Preventing excessive widening of income disparity by ensuring decent wages for work.

7. Strengthening social cohesion and responsibility. Intensifying advocacy work to develop a culture of solidarity, social justice, and civic responsibility in a spiritually stable society.

In conclusion, poverty and income inequality are not only economic but also profound philosophical problems. Solving them requires, alongside economic reforms, an approach grounded in justice, equality, human dignity, and the formation of a spiritually stable environment.

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