

POVERTY IN THE EYES OF CHILDREN

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Abstract

Filipino preschool children's views about poor people, and what they can do to help them are explored in this paper. Results show that children can make sense of the poor's experiences with various forms of deprivation. Confined to short-term solutions, their responses about helping the poor are derived from observations of how their parents have provided assistance to help them. This study recognizes children's rights and their capabilities to express their views and participate in decision-making on matters that affect their society. Understanding poverty through the eyes of children who have not experienced poverty may inform our awareness on how they construct meanings that may have implications on how they regard the poor and the vulnerable; as well as how they may build alliances and partnerships with them to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable communities, and create a world fit for children and future generations. Further research may be geared towards discovering the views of children from both urban and rural areas and indigenous communities, and of children experiencing poverty that inform not only the ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues confronting research with children but how actions can take shape in the social development arena.

Introduction

Many images and interpretations come to mind when poverty is mentioned. Income-based poverty measures have always been widely used and considered to be the most objective measures of poverty (Short, 2016). Also referred to as the subsistence minimum approach (Midgley, 2014), it is reflected both in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the MDGs, the poor were identified as people living on less than \$1.25 a day, while in the SDGs, they are currently recognized as those living on less than \$1.90 a day.

Over the years, various discussions and studies on the subsistence minimum approach have shown that income is not a complete measure of poverty (Minujin et al., 2006; Todaro & Smith, 2009). It has also been criticized as a grand strategy of the market economy to influence people's

minds and fuel consumption needs (Rahnema, 2006). Likewise, it has been considered to exclude a “wider dimension of ill-health, illiteracy, hunger and other forms of deprivation that characterized the lives of poor people, their families and communities” (Midgley, 2014, p. 44).

During the World Summit in Copenhagen, 117 members of the United Nations agreed on the definition of absolute poverty as a “condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services” (UN, 1995, p. 57). This continues as the only internationally agreed definition of poverty that is used for policy purposes.

Experts have been engaged in debates on how to define and solve poverty. Countless anti-poverty policies and programs have been enacted and implemented (Midgley, 2014; Todaro & Smith, 2009; Torres, 2011). Noticeably, it has always been the experts who have a say on poverty. Hakovirta and Kallio (2016) noted that adults as subjects have dominated the study of poverty for many decades, while studies that pertain to children’s perceptions of poverty are rare especially in indigenous communities and with younger children (Attree, 2006; Tafere, 2012; Weinger, 1998).

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Philippines is committed to upholding and protecting the rights of all Filipino children under 18 years of age, and in providing a foundation to support meaningful participation of children and youth in development activities. To further strengthen this commitment, the Philippine National Strategic Framework Plan for Development for Children, 2000-2025 or Child 21 was crafted to ensure that children’s participation is incorporated into policies for children.

It is in this context that this researcher embarked on a small exploratory study that sought to answer the following questions: What is poverty in the eyes of young children? What do they know about people living in poverty? What can children do about people living in poverty?

With the adoption of the MDGs at the turn of the new millennium, and the SDGs in 2015 that set the direction for poverty alleviation policies and programs, poverty remains at the forefront of economic and social development discourse in the Philippines. Taking from Minujin et al. (2006), “children experience poverty as an environment that is damaging to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development” (p. 483).

Thus, it is imperative to focus not only on the elimination of child poverty but also in directing strong efforts towards attaining SDG 11 – Build Inclusive, Safe and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. This paper hopes to contribute to social development discourse by drawing from the UNCRC principle that “the children are subjects of rights and not merely objects of charity.” The author recognizes that, regardless of age, gender, and social status, child participation is an essential component in removing barriers to social development.

Focus on Child Poverty

According to Newhouse, Bacerra, and Evans (2016), “poverty rates for children are higher at any poverty line” (p. 7). Compared to adults, they are twice more likely to experience its brunt. In 2013, there were 385 million children in extremely poor households worldwide who lived on less than \$1.90 a day. Poverty rates are slightly higher in younger children than in older children. Ninety-four percent of poor children are found in low income and lower income countries, and most of them are in rural areas. They also pointed out that household income is reflective of children’s socio-economic status. Hence, impoverished households have poor children. There is a need “to explore the characteristics of poor children in greater detail, and analyze the variations across child poverty rates across countries, and whenever possible, to also consider non-monetary aspects of child poverty” (p. 19).

The first ever internationally agreed definition of child poverty states:

...children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic healthcare services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of society (UN General Assembly, 2006: paragraph 46).

In 2003, Gordon and his colleagues studied how children in developing countries fare in relation to seven measures of severe deprivation. Severe food deprivation results from severe anthropometric failure where the child’s weight is three standard deviations below the median of the international reference population. Children are considered experiencing severe water deprivation when they use surface water like

rivers for drinking, and the nearest source of water is 15 minutes away from the house by foot. Lack of access to a toilet facility in the place of residence or no private or communal toilets or latrines may result in children experiencing severe deprivation of sanitation facilities. Not being immunized against diseases and not being able to receive medical attention when ill with diarrhea is an indication of severe health deprivation. When children are living in cramped spaces with more than five people in a room and in houses with no flooring, they are considered suffering from severe shelter deprivation. Severe educational deprivation is manifested when children 7 to 18 years old have never attended school or are out of school. And lastly, children who have no access to radio, television, telephone or newspapers at home are severely deprived of information. Over one billion or 56% of children in low- and middle-income countries are experiencing one or more forms of severe deprivation while South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have severe deprivation rates of more than 80%. Rural children are reported to be suffering the most.

Filipino Children in Poverty

In the Philippines, the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC, 2011) stated that child poverty has three measures: “children living in poor families, deprivation of basic amenities such as electricity, potable water and sanitary toilet facilities, a child development index which is a composite of health, education and quality of life indicators” (p. 29). Children from poor families are vulnerable to sickness and diseases, dropping out of school, and reduced food consumption which may lead to severe malnutrition. In this report, child poverty is in line with Gordon’s (2003) seven measures of severe deprivation.

Despite the robust Philippine economy with an average growth rate of six percent a year since 2005, many Filipinos are still suffering from extreme hunger especially in regions with a high poverty incidence. The estimated number of poor families increased from 3.8 million to 4.2 million in 2012 (NSCB, 2013), and the UNICEF Country Program for Children 2012-2016 noted that child poverty remains high at 41%.

While there is a need to consider income poverty among children as an important indicator in the analysis of children’s poverty, Reyes et al. (2014) pointed out that it does not encapsulate the multi-dimensionality of Philippine poverty as well as the multiple and overlapping deprivation that poor children experience. In 2009, around four million children suffered from severe deprivation of shelter and sanitation facilities. Children in

slum areas increased from 1.3 to 1.4 million since 2003 and about 260,000 children suffered from severe shelter deprivation. Moreover, 6.5 million did not have access to electricity in their homes and 3.4 million faced severe information deprivation. In 2011, poverty was responsible for keeping 5.5 million children away from school as they were forced to work to contribute economically to their families, making them less employable in better paying work in the future. It was also found that older children and boys are more likely to be engaged in child labor than girls.

Caragay, Adaro, and Rolle (2016) reported that poverty and the yearning to help their families satisfy their basic needs encouraged child laborers to work in the sugarcane industry. Similar to the findings of Reyes et al. (2014), these child laborers experienced a host of severe deprivations. Sixty-one percent of the participants obtained elementary education and only 25% reached secondary level. Lack of financial resources for school requirements was responsible for the high dropout rate. They also suffered from severe health deprivation since they lacked work benefits that cover work-related injuries and illnesses like cuts and wounds from farm tools and sharp leaves, fractures, snake bites, muscle pain, skin irritation, and sunburn. Oftentimes, their families would spend for their medical treatments thus taking away money for food and other needs that also resulted in severe food deprivation causing stunting among these children. Meanwhile, 52% spent close to 16 minutes to fetch water from sources like deep wells, public hand pumps and pipes, while 15% fetched water from rivers, streams, and surface water making them suffer from severe water deprivation. Since majority belonged to large families with six to eight members living in small houses made of light materials provided by their employers, these child laborers experienced shelter deprivation. For lighting, 20% used kerosene while 18% used petrol lamps, which meant that they do not have electricity at home thus limiting their access to television and the Internet making them severely deprived of information.

Children's Perception of Poverty

Short (2016) stated, "a large literature shows that our perception of who is poor depends on which measures we use" (p. S46). Rahnema (2006) observed that, while people from different cultures and traditions have developed their own concepts of who the poor are, the common idea across concepts of poverty dwell on "the lack of something or unsatisfied needs" (p. 38). He added that, historically defined in every culture, poverty is both contextual and culture-specific. People have devised their own ways and wisdom to identify the poor and assist them to resist destitution. Studies

suggest that learning about things like poverty is a complex undertaking that appears to begin in early childhood.

Vygotsky (1978) posited that children's learning of concepts happens on two related levels—the social level and the individual level. Children's ideas about their world are not only products of their social interactions about specific structures disclosed by individuals they deal with, but are also based on how they interpret the world around them. Vygotsky also stated, “under adult guidance and in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86), children are able to acquire knowledge, solve problems on their own and attain a higher level of cognitive processes (Vygotsky, 1978; 1979).

Intergenerational transmission is a significant factor in influencing how the privileged regard the poor and how the poor think about themselves (Bullock, 1999). A comparative study among preschoolers ages three to five years old from middle- and low-income groups regarding their awareness and understanding of social class differences revealed that children from both groups “can make global distinctions between rich and poor and have a few ideas about these discrepancies” (Ramsey, 1991, p. 81). The author also found that children acquired impressions about wealth and poverty through books, media, and interaction with their families and other adults.

Hakovirta and Kallio (2016) stated, “even relatively young children have certain impressions and perceptions on what the poor and the rich are like” (p. 321). Similarly, Weinger (1998) found out that poor American children are aware of their deprivations and the gaps in terms of income and wealth. Because they consider themselves living in small shabby houses, wearing old hand-me-down apparel, and acting differently from their more affluent peers, they believe that they would not be fully accepted in socio-economic circles other than their own. Meanwhile, Tafere (2012) learned that rural and urban poor children describe their own poverty characterized by an overall scarcity, and lacking in basic necessities such as food, clothing, and proper housing, and lacking in resources such as income, livestock, and farmland.

Children's Participation

With the recognition that children are not merely recipients of adult-crafted policies and programs as well as the widespread favorable reception of children's visibility in democratic processes (Lansdown, 2001), the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (2007) noted

the increasing participation of children in public decisions, engagement in international and national discussions, and involvement in grassroots advocacies within various cultural and political systems worldwide.

Homans (2004) found that older children from many parts of the globe could successfully participate in shaping policies, implementing and monitoring of National Plans for Actions through countrywide consultations and training aimed at reducing poverty, trafficking, and violence against children. Take for example the participatory budgeting process in Cordoba City, Spain, through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, which involved children regarding how the municipal budget should be allocated and used. This initiative resulted in children's education being given priority in the budget. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, children were involved in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the development of the National Youth Strategy. Yet there is still a need to develop mechanisms for monitoring children's participation in such initiatives.

In the Philippines, the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC, 2014) reported that child participation in different aspects of program planning and implementation has brought positive results among children, especially in the way they interact with parents, teachers, community leaders, and agency workers. They also demonstrate desirable behaviors, improved communication skills, and a higher level of self-confidence and self-esteem. Children who have "higher levels of participation in school and in the community are more likely to protect themselves from possible abuse, exploitation or discrimination, than children who are not involved at all" (p. 4).

Bessell (2009) found the presence of "innovative children-centered approaches to development such as child-facilitated events and organization of children" (p. 313) in the Philippines. However, at the heart of the practice of involving children are the seeming lack of a clear definition of child participation and the poor understanding of policy makers about it. The prevalent adult views of children, cultural and social contexts, and the traditional regard for seniority and respect for elders pose great challenges to child participation. Similarly, CWC (2014) remarked that the primary challenges to child participation are limited resources and logistics, inadequate capacity to promote children's involvement, parents' and teachers' refusal to involve children, and the community's beliefs that children are not yet capable of making sound decisions.

Figure 1 shows how children who have not experienced poverty may develop concepts and perceptions of poverty as influenced by their participation rights and interactions with social and political institutions, thereby informing how they will regard the poor as well as build partnerships with them to eradicate poverty and achieve social development.

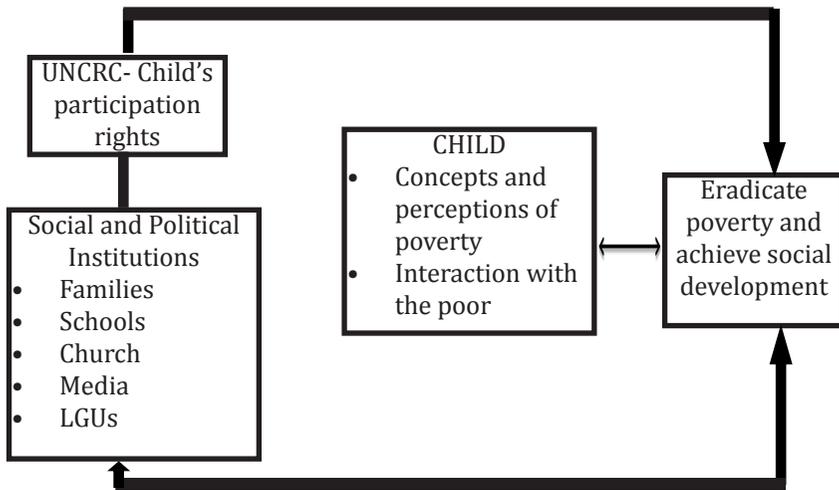


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study on Poverty in the Eyes of Children

Exploring Young Filipino Children’s Perceptions of Poverty

Studies on poverty among preschoolers three to five years old and among those who have not experienced poverty are rare in the Philippines. The preschool stage is considered part of the formative years where much cognitive, moral, and socio-emotional development occurs. Young children have the capacity to identify motives of human action, which are indications of an early emerging cognitive and socio-moral competence that propels them to respond and act on things such as determining who are rich and who are poor, giving empathy, helping others, and donating to needy classmates (Denham et al., 2003; Loureiro & Souza, 2013; Margoni & Surina, 2016; Ongley, Nola, & Malti, 2014).

With only age as the criterion, 15 children from three preschool classes were selected through simple random sampling from the class lists provided by their teachers. To protect the children’s identities, this study has adopted fictitious names for them.

This study was conducted at a laboratory school in a state university where faculty, students, and local and international researchers conduct observations of preschool children, and engage in practicum and research. Permission was obtained in writing from the school authorities. The teachers of three classes introduced the researcher to the children and requested them to cooperate with her. A quiet corner in the classroom was provided during class hours for the interview to be conducted.

Prior to the interview proper, the researcher asked for the children’s permission and explained that they could stop the interview at any time. The language used was that which the children are fluent in. The researcher did not force them to answer, write or draw anything. She remained sensitive to their cues throughout the interview. While all of them were comfortable with her, one child did not answer the question about where poor people are found and one child did not draw anything.

Table 1. Sampling Distribution

Age	Total
3	5
4	5
5	5
Total	15

Context-bound patterns and information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) resulted from generating categories and themes from data collected from the interview. Answers that are relevant to the study were highlighted or labeled. Once meaningful statements were generated, they were clustered to represent different themes related to the research topic. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from the children and their drawings.

Results

Not all the children in this study have a concept of poverty. Seven out of the 15 children declared either “I do not know” or “I have not seen a poor person,” while the rest were able to talk about poor people.

Table 2. Frequency of children with and without a concept of poverty

With a concept of poverty	With no concept of poverty	Total
8	7	15

Three three-year-olds, one four-year-old, and three five-year olds did not have a concept of people living in poverty. The following are their answers:

“I don’t know.” – Benny, 3 years old

“I have not seen a person living in poverty.” – Inna, 3 years old

“I don’t know. I have not seen one.” – Marina, 3 years old

“I have not seen a poor person.” – Lia, 4 years old

“What is it? I have not seen one.” – David, 5 years old

“What is poor?” – Eddie, 5 years old

“I have not seen a poor person.” – Ana, 5 years old

Follow-up questions were asked to confirm whether they understood the question or not. These yielded the same results.

Eight out of the 15 children view the poor in a variety of ways. The succeeding section presents the children’s answers and corresponding drawings about them, as well as their suggested actions on how to help the poor.

Two three-year old children shared the following:

“... *Ang taong may pilay at ubo... Lolo ko yon. Matanda na. Hindi na sya makatayo at makalakad.*”

(...Someone who has broken limbs and coughs...my grandfather. He is old. He can no longer stand up and walk.) – Dezza, 3 years old (See Figure 2.)

“Kaya malungkot sila...Walang bahay at pagkain.
Walang tatay at nanay.”

(That’s why they are sad. They have no house and food...no father and mother.) – Sandra, 3 years old (See Figure 2.)

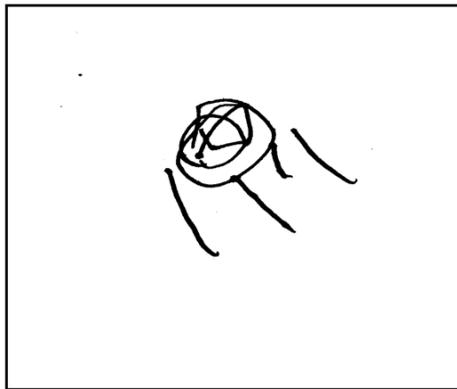


Figure 2. Drawing by Dezza, 3 years old

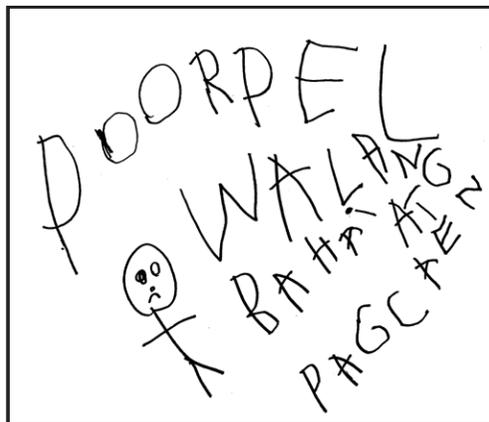


Figure 3. Written production by Sandra, 3 years old ¹

“Poor people.. *Walang bahay at pagkain.*” (No house and food.)

¹“PEL” in Figure 3 stands for “people.” The child’s written output is recognized as inventive spelling, a writing stage in children’s literacy development. For further reading, refer to Tongson, EC. (December, 2014) Teacher’s interaction styles during sociodramatic play that promote reading and writing among preschoolers. *Social Science Diliman*,10 (2), 56-99, and Otto, B. (2008). *Literacy development in early childhood reflective teaching from birth to eight*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Dezza explained that, since her grandfather can no longer walk and is elderly, she considers him poor. Sandra shared that her mother told her what being poor means. For Dezza, a poor person is found at the doctor's clinic, while Sandra did not give an answer.

In terms of what can be done to help people living in poverty, Dezza said bringing her grandfather to the doctor is her solution while Sandra shared that giving them food and a home would get them out of poverty.

The three four-year-olds provided the following answers:

"...Naka wheel chair kasi hindi sya makapagsuot ng slippers."

(Someone who is in a wheelchair because he/she could not wear slippers.) – Mara, 4 years old (See Figure 4.)

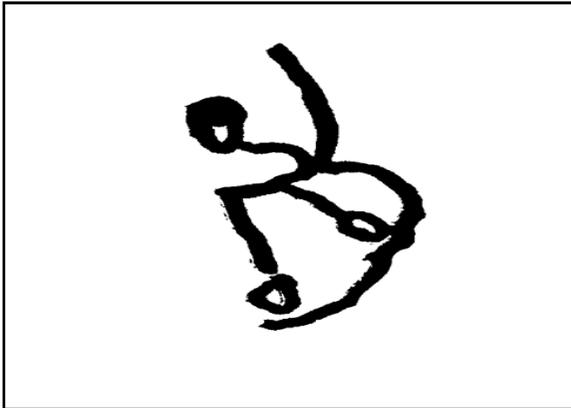


Figure 4. Drawing by Mara, 4 years old

"...Poor are the street children...They sleep in their houses on the street. The street children are sad because they don't have a family." – Hannah, 4 years old (See Figure 5.)

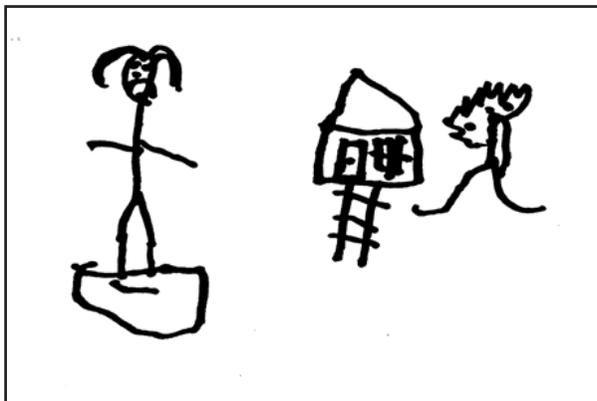


Figure 5. Drawing by Hannah, 4 years old

“...Hindi sya makatulog kasi wala syang bahay kaya pwede syang masagasaan.”

(He/she could not sleep because he/she does not have a house so he/she could be run over by a vehicle.) – John, 4 years old (See Figure 6.)

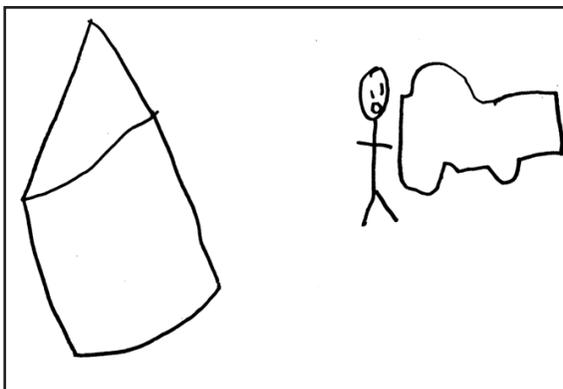


Figure 6. Drawing by John, 4 years old

“...No money...walang damit at sira-sira ang damit... walang bed. Madumi sila.”

(Someone who does not have money, no clothes, with tattered clothes...and no bed. They are dirty.) – Lia, 4 years old (See Figure 7.)

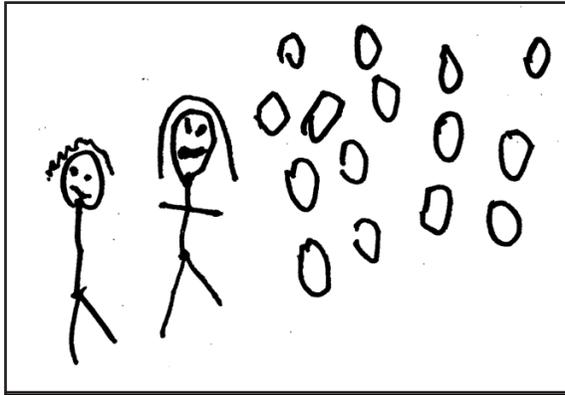


Figure 7. Drawing by Lia, 4 years old

For Mara, poor people are seen in hospitals because they cannot walk. According to Hannah and John, they are found on the streets while Lia mentioned that they are outside, “*sa labas.*”

Mara’s concept of being poor was a product of her seeing Boggart, her cousin, who could not walk. Hannah explained that, on her way to school, she always sees children begging on the street. Her father told her that they are called street children. John and Lia shared that their mothers told them what poor means.

Regarding how to help the poor, Mara suggested pushing Boggart’s wheel chair around, while Lia shared her mother’s advice of showing kindness by giving them money to buy a house and clothes. Hannah’s way of helping the poor is by giving street children toys that other children no longer use and for carpenters to build their houses.

The five-year-olds had the following answers regarding the poor:

“...*napapagod sila...kasi pinapahirapan sila.. walang makain.*”

(They are tired...because they are abused...No food.)

– Gem, 5 years old (See Figure 8.)



Figure 8. Drawing by Gem, 5 years old

“A poor person could not walk and carry objects.” – Bruce, 5 years old

Bruce did not draw anything about poor persons but he explained that he just knew what they look like. Gem disclosed that her neighbor is poor, as told to her by her grandmother.

In terms of what can be done for the poor, Gem thought of helping them by providing them food and assisting them in doing things. Bruce said that they need to take medicines so they would not have a hard time walking and carrying objects. For these two children, poor people are in a house.

Discussion

This study noted that, despite their tender age, eight of the children who participated in this study are aware that poor people are “experiencing deprivation of resources, choices, security and power” (UN HCHR, 2001) such as financial resources for buying the most basic human needs. Income has been considered as the conventional indicator of poverty among individuals (Rahnema, 2006; Midgley, 2014; Todaro & Smith, 2009). Lia identified lack of income or money as an indicator of poverty. Two children mentioned that poor people experience food deprivation, while four children mentioned shelter deprivation. John

mentioned that, due to shelter deprivation, the poor could meet an accident. His drawing (Figure 6) shows a car that is about to bump into a surprised and terrified person. Their answers are in line with Gordon's (2003) study on the seven measures of severe deprivation. Like the children in Weinger's (1998) and Tafere's (2012) studies, they are aware that the poor experience various deprivations. However, their concept of poverty revolved around more tangible measures—food, clothing, shelter, and health deprivations.

Four children mentioned that the poor belong to sub-groups such as elderly, persons with disability, and children, who are the most vulnerable to the ill effects of poverty, which restricts their access to opportunities and privileges that lead to inequality and marginalization (Gordon, 2003; Mapa, Davila, & Albis, 2010; Mori & Yagamata, 2009; Sanchez, 2008; Torres, 2011, UNICEF, 2005).

This study is consistent with earlier studies that children's understanding of the economic system that distinguishes the rich and the poor was obtained from their immediate environment and how social institutions like the home, school, and media hold discussions about wealth and poverty (Bullock, 1999; Ramsey, 1991). Children's concepts about their world are products of their interaction with more knowledgeable members of society (Vygotsky, 1978; 1979). Except for Bruce, all of the children in this study who have a concept of poor people learned about it through their parents and relatives. Take for example Hannah who learned about street children from conversations with her father on her way to school. John and Lia learned about the poor from their mothers, while Gem became aware that their neighbor is poor through her grandmother.

Almost all of the children's drawings in this paper depicted sad faces, an indication of how the children make sense of how people feel when they are hungry, homeless, sickly, or unable to walk due to disability. While the participants did not show any indication that they have experienced poverty themselves, this study affirms that children may learn about the world by observing, acting on objects, and interacting with people (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009; Halik & Webley, 2011; Ramsey, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

This study also reveals that children's responses about helping the poor were derived from observations on how significant adults have provided assistance to the poor, in most cases, simple practical, random acts their families have done. For instance, Lia cited her mother telling her to be kind to the poor by giving them money for food, clothes, and shelter. Similarly, Gem, Hannah, and Sandra mentioned giving the poor

their basic needs. Dezza, Mara, and Bruce stated that providing medical assistance and supporting them when moving around are their ways of helping the poor.

Vygotsky's theory (1978) could help explain why seven children in this study responded "I don't know" or "I have not seen a poor person." Perhaps, their parents had not disclosed to them specific structures and processes about poverty and its impact on people.

Implications

The UNCRC provides the cornerstone for all children to exercise their rights to express their views freely. This study does so for children, as the author recognizes children's rights and capabilities to articulate their insights regarding development issues like poverty. With the growing recognition that children constitute a social group and that they are valuable members of society, involving them on matters that affect their lives and society is a necessary step towards a better and fuller understanding of how and why a particular social order works and how social development could be achieved in the long run (Clark, 2005; James, 2007; Mayall, 2008; Tafere, 2012).

Regardless of its abstractness and multi-dimensionality, poverty cannot be hidden even from the eyes of children like those in this study who have not experienced it. While their concepts of poverty provide a picture of suffering and sadness, and their non-conventional views of being poor such as being differently-abled or sick do not automatically imply poverty, this study provides glimpses of their limited exposure and interactions with the poor. Meanwhile, children who are themselves poor have a way of making sense of their situation, which may be different from other children's standpoint (Bullock, 1999; Ramsey, 1991; Tafere 2012; Weinger, 1998).

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that the more experienced members of society have an important role in assisting children understand the complexity of the social world. They can "scaffold" (Berk & Winsler, 1995) children in comprehending the conditions of the poor. Relating this with Rahnama (2006) who pointed out that each culture has developed its own concept of poverty and has devised solutions to prevent destitution, understanding and finding a solution to this long-standing and serious problem could be derived by means of cooperation and collaboration. While the concept of poverty among children in this study is limited to

concrete forms of deprivation, and their answers to poverty are confined to short-term solutions, it was revealed that it is never too early for anyone to make sense of what the poor are experiencing.

Understanding poverty from the eyes of children will not be complete without reference to their cognitive and moral stage, because children develop higher cognitive functioning and more complex skills as they relate to themselves and others (Loureiro & Souza, 2013; Vygotsky 1978; 1979). As children grow older, they become more aware of social and economic inequalities, and discover new and useful ways of solving poverty that consider the aspirations of the poor and the vulnerable present in their culture (Halik & Webley, 2011; Ramsey, 1991).

It is not always necessary for persons to experience poverty firsthand in order for them to have an interest in it as “the poor and their friends, regardless of the societies to which they belong, can indeed do a lot to change their fate” (Rahnema, 2006, p. 44). Drawing from the literature and from the findings of this study, one can claim that there is hope for a better world for everyone where there is no poverty (SDG 1) and where cities and communities are sustainable (SDG 11) for the benefit of future generations. Likewise, the vision that every Filipino child is “actively participating in decision-making and governance, in harmony and in solidarity with others, in sustaining the Filipino nation” (Child 21, p. 5) will not be far behind.

James (2007) pointed out that, whether children’s ideas will be dismissed by adults or not, asking them “is not only about letting children speak; it is about the social world that children’s perspectives can provide” (James, 2007, p. 262) that inform not only the ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues confronting research with children but how actions can take shape in the social development arena (Homans, 2004; James, 2007; Lansdown, 2001; Tafere, 2012). As experts continue to work closely with children, they have found that children are competent social actors who are capable of expressing themselves and participating in decision-making (Mayall, 2008). With the UNCRC as an anchor, studies and development work with children over the past three decades suggest that various hurdles could be overcome by means of finding new ways of working with and for children (CWC, 2014; Hart, 1992; Homans, 2004; IAWGCP, 2007).

This study is one of the first attempts to understand poverty from the eyes of Filipino children ages three to five years old. With its limited

scope and very small sample size, future research can be conducted in urban, rural, and indigenous communities using a bigger sample size employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Since this study was conducted among children who have not experienced poverty, research studies on children's perception of poverty that consider socio-economic status and gender may be conducted. Likewise, how and why parents and other adults discuss poverty with children can be explored, identifying their motivations to talk about it and how they involve children in solving it. Future studies may likewise investigate how social and political institutions fashion the standpoint of children regarding the UNCRC.

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