

Poor girls, boys, and adolescents. A social reality

Niñas, niños y adolescentes pobres. Una realidad social

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Abstract

This article focuses on a social reality that has occurred, is occurring, and will continue to occur in South America, and indeed, in almost the entire world: the despair and anguish that characterize the lives of minors who endure cruel hardships considered a form of modern-day slavery, without the rights guaranteed to them by most laws worldwide. This research, presented using an analytical and hermeneutic approach, highlights the grave situation of this societal group, which is hindering the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals because this delicate and crucial issue has not been addressed with due seriousness. This equates, according to some assumptions regarding this unfinished delineation of integration, to the increasing weakening of the family institution as its members are forced to find ways to alleviate their situation, including children and adolescents who are pressured to contribute some income instead of attending school and "wasting time" there, thus childishly juggling the disruption of their childhood or youthful future.

Keywords: rights, minors, extreme poverty.

Resumen

El propósito del artículo es el enfoque de una realidad social que ha ocurrido, ocurre y seguirá ocurriendo en Suramérica y por no decir, en casi todo el mundo, es el desconsuelo y la angustia por la cual transcurre "la vida" de las personas minoriles que soportan las crueles vicisitudes que se considera como una "moderna" esclavitud sin que priven los Derechos que la mayoría de las leyes en el mundo están dictadas para protegerles. Esta investigación se presenta en la modalidad Documental, Analítica y Hermenéutica donde se evidencia la grave situación de este grupo societal que se aleja del cumplimiento de los objetivos planteados en la Cumbre del Milenio por no haberse tomado con la debida seriedad este delicado y transcendental contenido. Lo que equivale, a algunos supuestos referidos a este inacabado deslinde de integración, a que cada vez más se debilita la institución familiar al tener sus miembros que rebuscarse un medio para aminorar la situación, incluyendo a las niñas, niños y adolescentes que se les inculca la obligación de colaborar con algún ingreso en vez de asistir a la escuela y "perder el tiempo" en ella puerilizando en malabarismos la ruptura de su infantil o juvenil futuro.

Palabras clave: derechos, personas minoriles, pobreza extrema.

Introduction

Taking into account the intricate context of the redefinition of power and the immoral concentration of wealth among certain individuals, in contradiction with an expansion and spread of poverty and, with it, hunger, as a consideration of the secular individual-society dilemma, always trusting in the expectations of a well-being that never arrives, perpetually evocative of great human sensitivity—it is for this reason that this minority group, composed of girls, boys, and adolescents, needs the necessary assistance to escape or change this situation. And if such assistance is not provided appropriately, this societal group will not ‘learn to fish while being given the fish,’ which will, paradoxically, lead them to remain poor.

From this perspective, economic misfortune and insufficiency must be approached from a myriad of coincidences or as an emotional disorder that can cause psychosocial failure or decline marked by deprivation, as a result of the cause-effect relationship. Therefore, it must be considered a multidisciplinary and complex circumstance from the moment the process of impoverishment begins until, through certain procedures, it is transformed through the evolution, progress, and development of the groups involved in this economic situation. Otherwise, these societal collectives will remain in the same situation indefinitely, excluded from the trappings of progress, from the erosion of institutional frameworks to the fragmentation of the social fabric and the influence of external factors. Hence, according to Guerra Velásquez (2009:143), who states: ‘Numerous are the evaluations and discussions that include historical, economic, cultural, and social analyses among the causes of poverty in the world.

This situation, which leaves very little to address the sectoral needs of its immense demand, increases the number of ‘boys and girls of and on the street’ as future unemployed individuals, thus perpetuating the culture of hunger and, with it, life in unhealthy, disorderly shantytowns—yet marked by complexity and chaos—simultaneously plagued by major disruptions in their changing reality, subject to the contingencies of time and space in which ‘one lives,’ and further enveloped in uncertainties and dreams of changes concerning the inequalities and differences that arouse the fears awakened by their altruistic side.

These stereotypes have reached proportions insufficiently addressed by the social sciences. Therefore, each governmental system, with the expediency that circumstances demand, must assume the inescapable commitment to promote concrete political actions to combat hunger and extreme poverty in this part of the continent—one as a consequence of the other—and to consolidate comprehensive educational, economic, and health systems that include and incorporate these individuals into a genuine democratic system of freedom, so that they may have a future different from the dark present they are currently experiencing.

It is public and well-known that these individuals who survive under conditions of extreme poverty, yet seek a formulation to build an identity based on facts of which there are thousands of pieces of evidence in this part of the continent—where it is noted that they sleep on cardboard boxes that the night provides them—have no hope that their situation will change, nor do they have confidence in themselves or in the authorities to change it, thereby becoming a harsh, undeniable, and unavoidable reality. This leads to one of the most dramatic situations in Latin America: ‘boys and girls of and on the street.’

These minors in situations of extreme poverty do not have a suitable place to spend the night; and if they do, it is an unhealthy shantytown lacking the necessary means of coexistence that the complexity, multidimensionality, and decline of reality demand. Consequently, they spend their lives on the street searching for sustenance, even if it comes from garbage. Because most have broken their family ties or these ties are very weak, they develop street survival strategies such as begging and certain marginal ‘jobs’ like ‘watching cars’ or selling some product in the informal economy—without this improving their conditions to enrich their reality or constructing a perspective of ‘family’ integration.

The particularity of these special societal groups is that they lack formal education, do not surpass the first grades of primary school, or are illiterate; and because they live on the street, they have no fixed place to situate themselves, simultaneously facing the inherent demands of a premise of openness in the sense of opening a theory to reality. Likewise, they suffer from inadequate nutrition, and their health is highly deficient, without achieving a fertile integration of one with the other. Following Mandry Llano (2009:163), who states: 'Health and poverty constitute two terms that are associated and closely related; almost always, this relationship is inversely proportional, that is, the less poverty, the greater the health; an increase in poverty corresponds to a deterioration in health.' To that extent, they do not find a congruent course of action, where reality remains perpetually postponed; any attempt to elucidate it is an exercise that cannot be allowed to succumb to the power of trivializations.

Furthermore, they lack family affection due to not having a nucleus in which to gather, so morality is not a privilege to be followed; and if it is necessary to beg or steal for sustenance, it must be done in order to survive. Another point to consider is that, just as they break relations with their family members as a factor of growth, they also do so with their community or neighborhood, forming street groups through forms of action, interaction, or contacts aligned with their same interests and subjected to similar risks, maintaining the same level of poverty and the losses of an aspiration within the warp of reality and the possibilities of the extension between the real and life itself, in a perpetual closure without openness.

Unfortunately, there is no exact number of how many minors are in this situation of extreme poverty in Latin America, a response that cannot be constructed because each country has a different rate, in addition to the individual growth of its population amid the effects of today's societies—which do not overlook the crucial nature of the ephemeral but exercise the confluences of the different and the unequal as a force field where the precariousness of the human condition, unjust distances, and pertinent ones continue to coexist as a construction of differences without possibilities for renewal, change, or ruptures in favor of freedom.

However, what is constant is that the number of people and families in this situation of extreme poverty is increasingly growing, due to the economic contraction generated post-COVID-19 and the political and economic situation of most countries in the region. Another consequence to consider is the abandonment of the father from the family nucleus, possibly due to domestic violence, leaving the mother and the rest of the offspring without corresponding sustenance, forcing the woman to go out to work or to send the minor children to the street to obtain some food to survive, she and the rest of her siblings—a situation not exempt from the apprehension between the implacable game of life to survive and the new searches for certainties that will not be, nor can be, accessible.

These human groups in critical poverty come from overcrowded households in slums and deprived areas, bounded by apprehension and need, unable to enter into the concept of a social structure. They are mostly found in nearby urban centers where formal or informal commerce is generated, where there is greater vehicular and pedestrian traffic to counteract the limitations of possibilities as a perpetual dynamic with an illusion of singularity.

This gives them guarantees of obtaining some sustenance from pious individuals who collaborate with them by offering some food or clothing upon seeing their condition of begging, as they are unkempt and wearing dirty, deteriorated clothes within the sphere of immediacy. In this sense, within this group remain minors who, due to not possessing an adequate education—that is, being illiterate—will join the ranks of the unemployed or underpaid workers with no expectations of improvement. Therefore, it is most likely that they will possibly increase the ranks of juvenile delinquents.

Hunger in the yotuh sector

The dehumanization of poverty and its dramatic expressions is a practice created to justify segregation and ethnic stereotypes, accepting an alleged tolerance of economic inequality, produced in its fully constitutive dynamism without exteriority, since the economically poor have always been linked to delinquency and violence by criminal justice, in addition to being associated with criminality in a denigrating manner. This signifies transversal referents and structural dimensions of complexity within the general conceptualization.

Another of the serious complications manifested by youth unemployment is the deployment of violence, crime, and the consumption and trafficking of prohibited substances, because they are recruited by criminal groups to join and increase criminal gangs, since they have no other means of survival in a society that discriminates against them for the mere fact of being poor and belonging to a humble family. This leads to, according to Alvarado Chacín (2003:433).

Corruption of various kinds that became widespread (...) along with economic recession, the constant decline of economic and social indicators, the deterioration of living conditions for the majority, and exclusion that even generated processes of social violence and anomie, sharpened contradictions, inequalities, and discontent, and led the collective to demand from the powers that be not only an end to poverty and exclusion but also the restoration of their hope through the construction of an inclusive political project, in which they would be taken into account and recognized as human beings and as citizens.

This impact, both at a personal and family level, notably affects Latin American countries, both individually and collectively, due to the absence of borders caused by human trafficking that occurs between different States, as populations seek to cover their basic needs by any means necessary, regardless of where they might achieve or obtain them.

Under these parameters, unemployment—as a worrying priority for this sector of the population—has increased even further, subsequently compounded by the health factor as a consequence of COVID-19, also being considered as the lack of jobs. This has been severely estimated among young citizens who have already completed their secondary education, causing a disincentive to achieve higher levels of education and better remuneration in the future, taking into account the daily processing of lived experience from the past and that which is constructed in the present.

This, without taking into consideration the extensive elucidation of the large percentage of young people who abandon their studies upon reasoning that it is useless to study if later they cannot escape poverty in the future or if they must dramatize it, because they cannot know what the immediacy of the next day holds for them or their final destiny, although always with the illusion that each one, in their diminutive solipsism, harbors a favorable change in their life—which almost mostly leads them to commit crimes to achieve, or at least momentarily, cover their primary need: 'hunger.'

Therefore, it is the limited access to the goods and services necessary for survival that causes the absence of minimum standards of well-being, such as health, education, housing, and full employment, which gives rise to—without this conduct being justified—their members committing crimes and being imprisoned with greater force than other social groups, with girls, boys, and adolescents being the most affected by 'inhabiting' an environment of poverty, delinquency, and misery.

The Latin American societal group comprised of persons under twenty years of age suffers the same or worse consequences as the rest of the low-income population, with the additional problems of unemployment, lack of education, and criminalization by authorities and the rest of the 'decent' population, who view the increase in juvenile delinquency with concern without addressing the main causes that provoke it. This problem of youth unemployment presents itself as a catastrophe for the economies of most countries in this part of the continent, due to the social and economic repercussions both for these individuals and for their families, aside from the consequences for the different governments, which will see an increase in violence due to the desperation of not being able to obtain sustenance for their maintenance, leading to regional political instability.

Another of the main problems presented by hunger in the youth population is the lack of capacity for them to access the educational system in their respective countries, because they cannot be incorporated due to 'budgetary constraints,' which notably affects future economies due to the lack of training of the workforce that will be required for the implementation of new technologies. Therefore, these particular societal groups are discriminated against and categorized as 'evil-doers and delinquents' by the rest of society without any general reason or due to particular and individual responsibilities, additionally suffering extreme and discriminatory mistreatment, which exacerbates confusion and distorts the original meaning of poverty, which is considered to be categorized and composed of outcast and incorrigible persons, regardless of whether each individual, alone or separately, and even within the participatory axis, is considered to form part of the shared foundation of poverty. Consequently, this generalized attitude generates fertile ground for stigmatization.

In this sense, the forgetfulness, disinterest, and neglect of the phenomenon called 'hunger' as a consequence of extreme poverty must not be accepted as an unsolvable social and economic situation for this segment of the population. Therefore, it is necessary for these groups to demand the attainment of Collective Rights in order to overcome once and for all, or at least minimize, the social and political discrimination and exclusion to which this sector of society is subjugated and subordinated. Thus, this cultural denigration to which this mistreated and invisibilized societal group is subjected by its own kind can be eliminated or at least attenuated through structural policies of improvement.

This, without taking into consideration the large percentage of young people who abandon their studies upon reasoning that it is useless to study in this useless and maladaptive system if later they cannot escape poverty, which leads them to perform precarious and underpaid jobs, or worse yet, to commit crimes to achieve, at least momentarily, covering their primary need, which is to satisfy or at least mitigate the suffering of hunger. The perspective of each of these beings is fundamentally a non-trans-situational subsistence, in the same proportions in which survival in all its forms manifests itself as 'their way of life.'

Although the family institution is considered a group united by consanguinity or law, in addition to mutually providing affection, love, and protection among its members, unfortunately the critical economic situation has almost made this bond disappear in these societal groups that are in critical poverty, which means that the entity of the family is increasingly weakened because all its members must scrutinize even garbage as a means to alleviate the lamentable situation of an uncertain and ungraspable future, given the extension of its factual fabric.

Under these parameters, girls and boys who participate in obtaining some sustenance are included, as they are instilled with the obligation to collaborate with some income instead of attending school and 'wasting time' there, according to their parents, which accentuates their condition of vagrancy—a condition that carries the particular significance for understanding the multiple effects of the radical differentiation and

distance between individuals and society. This situation and its forms of concretization increase the behavior of 'boys and girls of and on the street' as future unemployed individuals, perpetuating the culture of hunger and need that rests upon a relationship of immediate belief that leads them not to believe in nor accept 'another comfortable world,' and thus to maintain survival in unhealthy shantytowns.

Indeed, it is public and well-known that these individuals who survive under conditions of extreme poverty and with the notion of an admittedly imperfect society—facts of which there are thousands of pieces of evidence in this part of the continent, where it is stipulated that these people sleep outdoors on sidewalks, wherever the night finds them, lying on cardboard boxes—have no hope that their situation will change, nor do they have confidence in themselves or in the authorities to change it, in a kind of diffuse generalization of realities integrated into the processes of connection with the context, thereby becoming a harsh, undeniable, and unavoidable reality. This leads to one of the most dramatic situations in Latin America: the formation of boys and girls of and on the street.

This situation of helplessness of minors in critical circumstances is due, for the most part, to the absence of public policies that authorities and systems must dictate to control this scourge, regardless of the fact that governments are created for the improvement of countries. Although legal regulations in almost the entire world establish the duty to respect the right to security and protection of these minors as special subjects corresponding to their superior well-being precisely because they are boys, girls, and adolescents, in addition to human flourishing and the duty to maximize their prosperity and satisfaction as a deliberate end, the increase in extreme child and youth poverty and the change in the profile of the affected population are alarming. This is a relationship of complementarity between individual identity and collective identity.

In this regard, unfortunately, at present, the extreme situation of these minors means that more boys and girls from urban areas, previously middle class, now live in a considerable and relative poverty. It is public and well-known, as already noted, that these groups of minors in situations of excessive scarcity and destitution do not have an adequate, appropriate, or suitable place to spend the night; and if by chance they 'coexist with their family'—probably fragmented—they do so in an unhealthy shantytown without the necessary means of coexistence and under an identical sameness.

Therefore, most of 'their lives' are spent on the street searching for some sustenance, even if it is from garbage to satisfy their hunger. Most of them 'survive' alone or with a similar group, since most have broken their family ties or these ties are very weak; therefore, they develop street survival strategies such as begging and certain marginal 'jobs' like 'watching cars' or selling some product in the informal economy—a situation that escapes the order of its problematization, and most of these little beings suppose that 'this happens to others and not to them,' as a multiple consciousness in the lifeworld.

The particularity and intelligibility of the real and the social is that these child and youth societal groups lack formal education, do not surpass the first grades of primary school, or are illiterate; and because they live on the street, they have no fixed place to situate themselves. Likewise, they suffer from inadequate nutrition, and their health is highly deficient, which means a problem whose questions and answers are devised but not resolved by governmental spheres.

Furthermore, most lack family affection and love due to not having a nucleus in which to gather, so morality is not a privilege to be followed; and if it is necessary to beg or steal for daily sustenance, it must be done in order to survive.

Another point to consider is that, just as they break relations with their family members as a forced factor of involution, they also definitively separate themselves from their community or neighborhood where they were born or raised, forming street groups through forms of action, interaction, or contacts aligned with their same interests and subjected to similar risks, maintaining the same level of poverty. However, what is constant is that the number of people and families—not only boys, girls, and adolescents—in this situation of extreme poverty is increasingly growing, due to the economic contraction generated by the political situation of most countries in the region.

Another consequence to consider is the abandonment of the father from the family nucleus and, on some occasions, the mother as well—though not always—possibly due to domestic violence, which means leaving, in that case, the mother and the rest of the offspring without corresponding sustenance, forcing the woman to go out to work or to send the minor children to the street to obtain some food to survive, she and the rest of her siblings. This situation becomes a *Matiscentrada*, that is, a society centered around the mother. This quality does not guarantee possibilities for solving the problem, nor does it culminate the rupture that derives from an awareness of its partial condition.

These groups in critical poverty, without intentionality or awareness of their situation, come from overcrowded households in slums and deprived areas, and are cyclically and mostly found in nearby urban centers where formal or informal commerce is generated, where there is greater vehicular and pedestrian traffic, forming a natural relationship that immediacy implies. This gives them guarantees of obtaining some sustenance from pious individuals who collaborate with them by offering some food or clothing upon seeing their condition of begging, as they are unkempt and wearing dirty, deteriorated clothes given their objectified condition that is neither transferable nor transmissible.

In this sense, within this societal group remain minors who, due to not possessing an adequate education—that is, being illiterate—join the ranks of the unemployed or underpaid workers with no expectations of improvement. Therefore, it is most likely that they will increase the ranks of juvenile delinquents, having no glimmer of hope for change due to that experiential transit, with a consciousness permeated in representation of their own limits in an inadequate economic situation, with the condition of subjects who assume the problematization of the world in which they live under expectations that do not consist of a particular rationality.

The group comprised of persons, most of the time under twenty years of age, likewise suffers the same or worse consequences as the rest of the low-income population, with the additional problems of unemployment and underemployment due to lack of education and training, in addition to criminalization by authorities and the rest of the 'decent' population, who view the increase in juvenile delinquency with concern without addressing the main causes that provoke it, and without taking into account any adequate analytical reflection, but rather taking into consideration the representations of immediate experiences of the social world in which they dwell.

This problem of youth unemployment presents itself as a catastrophe for the economies of most countries in this part of the continent, due to the social and economic repercussions both for this societal group individually and for their families, aside from the consequences for the different governments, which will see an increase in internal violence due to the desperation of not being able to obtain adequate sustenance for their maintenance, leading to regional political instability. This affirmation corresponds to the order of representations that do not transcend the political order nor the possibility of structural change from an economic-social point of view.

Another of the main and serious problems presented by the despair in the youth population as a consequence of hunger and lack of capacity are the limitations in accessing the educational system in their respective countries—without falling into absolute limitation—in that it is almost always due to ‘budgetary constraints’ that they cannot be incorporated, which notably affects their future economies due to the lack of training of the adequate workforce required for the implementation of new technologies, as a finite and circumscribed starting point to solve a project with a futuristic vision as a conception of a multifactorial society in coexistence with one another.

However, even though education constitutes a factor of vital importance for individual and general personal development of each country, each young person must make the decision to study or not, with knowledge of the monetary costs that represent a significant portion of the meager income they may earn, which means: if they study, they do not eat; and if they eat, they cannot study—a secular issue of the question of the genesis of the social that cannot be resolved outside the consideration of the individual-society bipolarity. This school dropout is notably and negatively reflected in the skilled workforce, as the labor market increasingly demands greater and better knowledge.

Another factor, which is not a random indicator to consider, is that most educational systems in the southern part of the American continent do not train students ‘for work’—a forging constructed within the territory that each person fashions as a vital action from their own condition of the possibility of their existence, which barely transcends the boundaries of the family. Unfortunately, without implying a clear delimitation of boundaries or distancing from reality, neither a university degree nor a higher technical degree offers guarantees of access to employment; moreover, a young person who is illiterate has a greater probability of working than one who has completed primary or secondary education. This is due to the type of work that can be performed and the economic income to be received.

Another of the serious complications manifested by youth unemployment is the deployment of violence, crime, and the consumption and trafficking of prohibited substances, because young people are recruited by criminal gangs to join and increase criminal groups, since they have no other means of survival in a society that discriminates against them for the mere fact of being poor and belonging to humble families. This primary stage of this relationship is articulated from different sides and through different forms that begin in the most immediate exteriority, which barely transcends the residential boundaries where the family ‘dwells.’

This social impact, both at a personal and family level, notably affects Latin American countries, both individually and collectively, due to the absence of borders caused by human trafficking that occurs between different States, as populations seek to cover their basic needs by any means necessary, regardless of where they might achieve or obtain them, through the various forms in which the surrounding world and its referential contexts intervene in family spaces. This irregular situation leads to regional political instability because no government in the world is prepared to exercise control over such formidable immigration in a state of desperation.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), young people must choose between working in any lawful activity to somehow overcome extreme poverty—most of the time earning a meager wage, working long hours—or joining the informal economy by selling any dry goods or fruits, suffering climatic calamities and those caused by other people, or simply deciding not to work and dedicating themselves to criminal activities.

This panorama is the exclusion and poverty suffered by this population segment not only in this region of the continent but worldwide, which condescends to new structures as some substantial changes take place. This situation reflects the enormous magnitude of the intense crisis and uncertainty expressed in this sector of society. This youth behavior is intimately related to the rest of the Latin American population.

The poor who live in a human relationality where fear and hope converge with dignity have apparently become a governmental concern, having as a common denominator the desperate expression of this societal group, expressly singled out in electoral speeches as the most disadvantaged, but always promising social and economic well-being for all, without these programs being fulfilled or fully satisfying social demands.

This uncertainty translates into an impertinence to an imposition of adverse forces and to the increase of complexity as a despotic metaphor of the future. Therefore, these programs do not constitute a state policy to definitively end poverty but rather to somehow increase the country's economy, hoping that some devastated and helpless areas classified as extremely poor can develop economically.

It is necessary to have higher educational levels and less human deterioration due to nutritional and health problems so that youth groups can enter the labor market and try to escape poverty, although each individual refers to a unique and unrepeatably yet manifestly plural sociability when considering all these individual beings as a whole. However, education alone does not solve poverty; it certainly helps greatly if adequate economic conditions exist in the country. Therefore, one of the main problems in solving poverty—not the only one—is the training and job preparation of these youthful persons, because the uncertainty of youth unemployment as a consequence of their inexperience is assuming dangerous proportions in many countries, where their economies and educational systems cannot incorporate the number of young people who should annually enter the labor market.

Youth unemployment is an urgent issue that has demographic, economic, social, health, environmental, political, and legal repercussions, both for the State and for the individuals involved, and especially for families, if not properly addressed, given the referential entry point to possible security within the limits of daily life—a context in which a network of situations involved in generally changing particular and global relations is totalized. Additionally, gender gaps in labor inclusion, determined by the unequal distribution of the workload that falls on young women or not, must be taken into consideration.

With the lack of employment, the youth societal group, feeling psychically and emotionally unstable, being rejected and socially expelled, will increase crime, violence, and everything that entails toward the margins of the law, both to survive and to express their discontent and abandonment. Consequently, it is imperative that the young sector of society be incorporated into governmental policies, providing them with employment opportunities and sustainable, dignified, and decent means of livelihood to overcome poverty through honest work.

In these countries, young people must choose between working in the informal sector or not working at all. Due to various factors, they are not trained to perform the tasks demanded by employers; therefore, they must study and prepare for them, or perform long workdays for a meager income precisely because of their lack of knowledge. Labor inclusion is key to combating poverty, reducing informality and inequality, and advancing toward inclusive individual or general social development. Another factor excluding young people from employment is that, due to their economic situation, they find themselves outside the Formal Educational System; therefore, only a minimal number manage to complete basic or primary education due to dropout rates and survive in the informal economy, always carrying need on their shoulders.

Moreover, the system does not educate for work, as it does not teach the use of technical tools, technological equipment, and instruments that adequately train and empower individuals to perform special functions or specific trades. Likewise, very few—without being exclusive—due to their capacity, intelligence, and skill, and also being competitive, manage to establish themselves as independent workers or set up their own prosperous business, thereby demonstrating their own transcendence and self-improvement.

'Boys and girls of and on the street' are those under 18 years of age who do not maintain contact with their family members or these ties are very weak; they have broken all relations with their community and take the street as a natural habitat, displacing the family as an essential factor of growth and socialization. To this end, they develop diverse survival strategies that expose them to various types of risks and degradations, assuming their life as 'an established or imposed reality.' The population of this youth and child group does not remain static as partisans of certain forms of relativization that presuppose imbrications and mediations, because due to socioeconomic factors, it grows increasingly larger, which increases the deterioration of the quality of life of this societal sector, further advancing the progression of poverty and violence in these countries. According to what was established in the 'National Forum: Poverty' (2003:31): 'All Venezuelans share the conviction that the crisis we are going through today is deep, complex, and of enormous magnitude. It is expressed to us daily and in different ways, intensity, and faces, above all, youthful faces.'

Most of this social group is not on the street by their own initiative; rather, circumstances have led them to abandon 'their homes,' constituted on the basis of a destitute situation, suffering intra-family and extra-family violence and extreme poverty, with traditional domestic overcrowding, in addition to enduring hunger and helplessness. This results in deficient health, without being able to undertake a path of reconstruction due to their complex experiential environment—although this does not imply assuming the notion of society except as an aggregate of individuals. This group comes from slums and hamlets depressed by need, which, due to their reality, form around urban centers where the economy and commerce flow. Furthermore, there are no public or private schools in the sector nor health centers to care for them.

The survival strategies of these minors in poverty are based above all on begging, informal street vending, occupation in marginal activities, committing petty thefts and robberies, and accepting donations of food, clothing, and other belongings offered by charitable individuals or passersby in the environment where they 'dwell,' without assuming the notion of community. Poverty reduction requires time, effort, and political disposition from governmental authorities and civil society to combat it and minimize it to its greatest extent. Meanwhile, hunger requires immediate solution to prevent malnutrition in this population segment.

Conclusions

Children, girls, boys, and adolescents in situations of poverty—which could be described as begging with its dramatic expressions—represent an extreme situation of weakness and vulnerability that requires priority and urgent attention oriented toward confronting a multiple social challenge due to its complexity. They are found everywhere, but especially in urban centers, notwithstanding the questions and doubts regarding their own paradigms if their problems are considered within the indeterminacy of Chaos Theory.

This group maintains precarious and minimal health due to the lack of adequate food and the mistreatment of all kinds they receive daily from the rest of the general population, as well as from members of their own groups. Unfortunately, the impact of poverty results in the creation of a trauma from which recovery is almost impossible and which increases as time passes if there are no significant changes, becoming a psychosocial syndrome whose origin is based on having been raised in a destitute environment under conditions of extreme poverty.

Under these principles, España, L. (2004:29) states that 'from the cultural point of view, human behavior is not biologically determined. What we do, think, say, and feel is not brought with us at birth, but rather is constructed throughout life.'

This new generation of poor individuals—composed of girls, boys, and youth of or on the street—will find themselves enveloped in a situation of hatred and resentment against the rest of the population that is 'not so poor,' due to the absence of goods and services that 'others' possess but that are denied to them. This may be the most stimulating example that can be found in the imaginary of childhood regarding child and youth rebellion, as a way to release the conflict that may harbor within them from an early age.

This is without considering the 'rights' that members of the middle and upper social classes possess, which 'they do not share with the poor,' forcing the latter to live in mediocre conditions of inferiority. This transmission of poverty from generation to generation leads to its perpetuation in *saecula saeculorum* [forever and ever], without any possibility of glimpsing social change in the future.

Therefore, no explanation is needed for the predisposition of younger members to follow the example of their progenitors, as well as the environment where their initial life unfolds. And if the observed model is the conformity of being poor, along with 'getting by day to day by any means necessary'—whether by asking for help, performing 'street work,' rummaging through garbage, or committing minor illicit acts—that 'tradition will be followed' without significant changes, which will increase even more with each family cycle as 'the family' grows but does not evolve.

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