

Outline some of the ways in which material deprivation may affect educational achievement.

Material deprivation is known as poverty. It is a lack of basic necessities such as adequate diet, housing, clothing or the money to buy these things. In education, material deprivation theory explains working class under achievement as the result of the lack of such resources. Unlike cultural deprivation theorists, who blame educational failure on the inadequacy of working class subculture, many other sociologists see material deprivation as the main cause of under achievement. Poverty is closely linked to educational under-achievement for example

- In 2006 only 33% of children receiving free school meals gained five or more GCSE's at A*-C, as against 61% of pupils not receiving free school meals.
- According to Jan Flaherty (2004), money problems in the family were a significant factor in younger children's non-attendance at school.
- Exclusion and truancy are more likely for children from poorer families, children excluded from school are unlikely to return to mainstream education, while a third of all persistent truants leave school with no qualifications.
- Nearly 90% of 'failing' schools are located in deprived areas.

There is a close link between poverty and social class. Working class families are much more likely to have low incomes or inadequate housing. Factors such as these can affect their children's education in several ways. The first reason is housing. Poor housing can affect pupil's achievement both directly and indirectly. For example over crowding can have a direct effect by making it harder for the child to study.

Overcrowding means less room for educational activities, nowhere to do homework, disturbed sleep from sharing beds or bedrooms. For young children especially, development can be impaired through lack of space for safe play and exploration. Poor housing can also have indirect effects, notably on the child's health and welfare. For example children in crowded homes run greater risk of accidents. Cold or damp housing can also cause ill health. Especially respiratory illnesses. Families in temporary accommodation suffer more psychological distress, infections and accidents. Such health problems lead to absences from school.

The second reason is diet and health. Marilyn Howard 2001 notes that young people from poorer homes have lower intakes of energy, vitamins and minerals. Poor nutrition affects health for example by weakening the immune system and lowering children's energy levels. This may result in more absences from school due to illnesses and difficulties concentrating in class. Children from poorer homes are also more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems. According to Richard Wilkinson 1996, among ten year olds, the lower the social class the higher the rate of hyperactivity, anxiety and conduct disorders, all of which are likely to have a negative effect on the child's education.

The third and last reason in which material deprivation may affect educational achievement is financial support and the costs of education. Lack of financial support means that the children from poor families have to do without equipment and miss out on experiences that would enhance their educational achievement. David Bull (1980)

refers to this as 'the costs of free schooling'. A study in the Oxford area by Emily Tanner et al 2003 found that the cost of items such as transport, uniform, books, computers, calculators and sports, music and art equipment, places a heavy burden on poor families.

As a result poor children may have to make do with hand-me-downs and cheaper but unfashionable equipment and this may result in being stigmatised or bullied by peers. Yet, for many children suitable clothes are essential for self esteem and 'fitting in'. For example, Tess Ridge 2002 in her studies examining poverty from the child's perspective.

Lack of funds also means that children from low-income families often need to work. Ridge found that children in poverty take on jobs such as baby sitting, cleaning and paper rounds. And that has often had a negative impact on their schoolwork. These financial restrictions help to explain why many working class pupils leave school at 16 and why relatively few go on to university. There is evidence that fear of debt deters poor students from applying. Students from poorer families starting university can expect to leave with substantial debts as a result of the introduction of fees for higher education. Dropout rates are also higher for universities with a large proportion of poor students for example 13% Sunderland, a large working class intake but only 1.4% at Oxford, where over four students out of 10 students come from private schools. The national audit office found that working class students spent twice as much time in paid work to reduce debts as middle class students.

In conclusion we can see clearly that material deprivation has a big effect on educational achievement. This is shown in the many reasons such as housing, diet and health and financial support and the costs of education. It is also clear in the statistics that I have discovered.