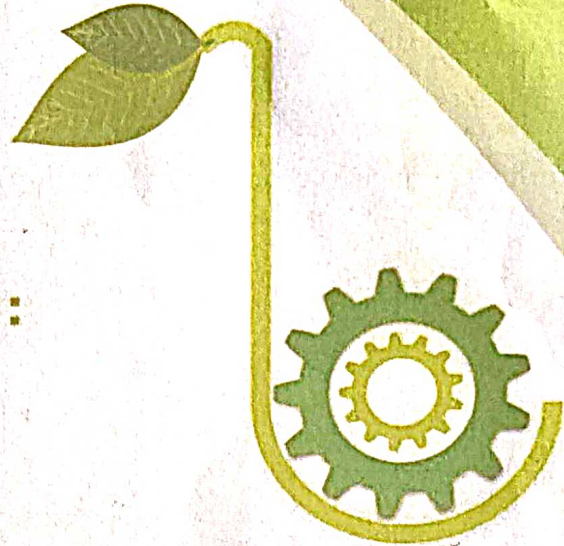




8th International Conference on
**Economic Growth and
Sustainable Development :
Emerging Trends**

November 29 & 30, 2023



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that

Amith S M

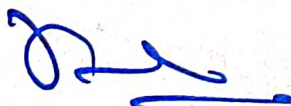
has participated in the 8th International Conference on Economic Growth and
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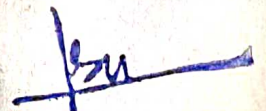
The Global Response to Feminization of Poverty: Understanding its Causes and Consequences

and the paper was co-authored with

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The Global Response to Feminization of Poverty: Understanding its Causes and Consequences

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Abstract

The feminization of poverty is a phenomenon where women are disproportionately affected by poverty, stemming from various factors such as gender discrimination, unequal pay, and restricted access to resources and opportunities. According to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, women experience higher poverty rates than men, with the 1.5 billion people living on one dollar or less daily being women and children. Thus, "feminization of poverty" acknowledges that poverty is not a gender-neutral issue but intersects with gender profoundly, leading to distinct challenges for women. The study aims to analyze the factors contributing to the feminization of poverty and explore strategies for addressing the feminization of poverty in developing and underdeveloped countries. The paper will also analyze:

Impact of globalization on feminization of poverty

Intersectionality and feminization of poverty

Impact of government policies

Role played by UN agencies in tackling the issue of feminization of poverty.

Keywords: Feminization, poverty, UN, gender-neutral



Introduction

"Feminization of Poverty" denotes the phenomenon where women represent a disproportionate share of the world's poor. It highlights the trend that a higher percentage of women, compared to men, live in poverty. According to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, women experience higher poverty rates than men, with the 1.5 billion people living on one dollar or less daily being women and children. The concept emphasizes the intersection of gender and poverty, showcasing how women are economically disadvantaged. Various systemic and structural factors often link poverty's feminization to women's economic marginalization, including gender-based discrimination, unequal access to education and employment, and social norms that limit women's economic opportunities.

Social worker Dr Diana Pearce coined the term "feminization of poverty" in the late 1970s, emerging as a critical concept within feminist scholarship and social policy analysis. It gained prominence as scholars and activists sought to draw attention to the growing disparities between men and women regarding poverty rates and economic well-being. Breaking down the term into its constituent parts helps in understanding its etymology:

"Feminization" refers to the process of making or becoming more feminine. In this context, it refers to the disproportionate representation of women among the impoverished population, emphasizing the gendered nature of poverty.

"Poverty" refers to being extremely poor, lacking the means to access necessities and resources essential for a decent standard of living.

Thus, by conceptualizing poverty as a gendered issue, the term "feminization of poverty" brought attention to how women are affected by socioeconomic inequalities, structural barriers, and discriminatory practices.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. Secondary data sources, such as academic journals, reports, and statistical databases, will be the main data collection method. The research will focus on a variety of indicators, including income disparities, educational attainment, labor force participation, and access to essential services, to assess the extent of poverty's feminization in different countries.

Scope of the study

This study aims to investigate and analyze the multifaceted factors contributing to the feminization of poverty. It places a strong emphasis on the recognition that poverty is inherently gendered, with women shouldering a disproportionate burden. The research explores the intricate interplay between globalization and the perpetuation of poverty cycles, with a particular focus on how these effects manifest in the lives of women. Furthermore, this study underscores the imperative for government intervention and the implementation of increased affirmative action measures to effectively address the issue of the feminization of poverty. Lastly, the study acknowledges and underscores the significant role of United Nations (UN) agencies in combatting the feminization of poverty and highlights their contributions in this regard.

Limitation of the study

The study's feminization of poverty comprehensively has specific limitations. It does not provide an exhaustive exploration of every facet of the feminization of poverty, acknowledging the complexity of the issue. Furthermore, the study's examples of effective strategies to combat this problem are limited to a

select few nations, which might restrict the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, the paper falls short in conducting an in-depth critical examination of the flaws in various policies and their lack of gender neutrality, missing an opportunity to uncover and address structural issues contributing to the persistence of feminized poverty.

Factors that Influence the Feminization of Poverty

Throughout history, women have consistently faced systemic barriers that impede their ability to obtain resources, opportunities, and authority in decision-making. Historically, societal norms and expectations have often limited women to domestic responsibilities, making them economically vulnerable. Across diverse societies, women's lack of access to formal education and economic opportunities has facilitated their dependence on males for financial sustenance. Women, alongside these cultural factors, traditionally receive lower remuneration than men for comparable work. The persistent wage discrepancy has contributed to the cycle of poverty as women contend with constrained financial resources. In addition to limited access to leadership positions and restricted promotion opportunities, professional discrimination has hindered the ability of women to escape destitution.

Furthermore, historical events such as conflicts and economic recessions have pushed women further into poverty, affecting them disproportionately. In times of conflict, widowhood, and displacement are commonplace occurrences for women, resulting in the deprivation of their residences and means of subsistence. Additionally, economic contractions may lead to employment reductions, with women being especially vulnerable to unemployment due to discriminatory recruitment practices based on gender.

Thus, political, economic, and social factors intricately intertwine with the feminization of poverty, and some of the factors contributing to it are:

Insufficient Opportunities for Education and Employment: Gender inequalities continue to endure in numerous geographical areas, frequently due to financial limitations, cultural restrictions, and societal demands that restrict the educational prospects of women. The restricted availability of education contributes to the continuation of a poverty-disempowerment cycle, impeding the ability of women to achieve economic autonomy and upward social mobility.

The Gender Wage Gap: Inequities in remuneration between males and females endure in numerous sectors and vocations. Gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination significantly contributes to the perpetuation of this disparity by indirectly reinforcing occupational segregation and directly reducing women's earnings. Furthermore, the gender wage disparity has enduring ramifications, amassing across successive generations and exacerbating the financial vulnerability experienced by older women.

Occupational segregation Further compounds the feminization of poverty by disproportionately confining women, particularly women of color, to menial employment with restricted career advancement prospects and meager compensation. Other factors contributing to the gender poverty gap closely intertwine with this phenomenon, such as inequitable educational opportunities and wage discrepancies. Furthermore, societal norms and expectations often reinforce occupational segregation that discourages women from pursuing careers in higher-paying fields and perpetuates the devaluation of women's labor.

The Financial Burdens of Caregiving: Single mothers, especially those who have never been married or are members of minority communities, frequently encounter more significant economic obstacles than married women or single males. Furthermore, single mothers may face restricted access to resources, including credit, land, inheritance, and financial instability. The absence of adequate financial support and stability may impede the capacity of unmarried mothers to escape the recurring cycle of poverty.



Uncompensated Care Work: Encompasses duties such as caring for children elderly individuals and performing household tasks. Uncompensated caregiving fails to receive compensation and lacks acknowledgment, resulting in detrimental consequences for women's health, education, and general welfare.

Insufficiency of Supportive Policies: Several countries, including the United States, need work-family policies that support individuals in balancing paid employment with caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, the persistent gender wage gap further amplifies the financial vulnerability of women, limiting their capacity to obtain employment and promoting discriminatory behavior within the workplace.

Discrimination and Violence Against Women: Assault can manifest in numerous ways, encompassing physical, sexual, emotional, and economic dimensions. Gender-based violence engenders extensive consequences beyond the victim's immediate physical harm. It undermines the overall well-being, confidence, and self-esteem of women. Gender-based violence frequently necessitates the displacement of survivors from their homes, places of employment, and social networks. It may substantially augment their economic susceptibility and heighten their poverty probability.

Discriminatory Policies and Legislation: These discriminatory policies frequently result in a ubiquitous gender wage gap, whereby women are compensated significantly less than men for performing equivalent labor. Moreover, limited opportunities for women to attain positions of authority and decision-making in both government and business, in addition to the wage gap, compromise women's economic security. Insufficient representation in leadership roles perpetuates gender inequality, thereby fostering the formulation of policies and practices that fail to acknowledge women's distinct obstacles and needs sufficiently.

Insufficient Justice Accessibility: Women who experience violence, discrimination, or other forms of abuse face barriers to obtaining effective legal remedies. These barriers may include inadequate knowledge of their rights and the limited availability of legal resources; financial constraints preventing them from obtaining legal representation and support; and societal stigmatization and cultural norms discouraging women from reporting abuse or seeking justice. As a result of gender bias within the legal system, cases involving gender-based violence and discrimination are inadequately investigated, prosecuted, and sentenced.

These barriers to justice hinder women's capacity to alleviate poverty and perpetuate the cycle of violence and gender inequality that disproportionately impacts girls and women in some of the most impoverished regions worldwide.

Impact of Globalization on Feminization of Poverty

The correlation between feminization of poverty and globalization is complex and subject to the influence of numerous factors. Significantly, this encompasses the inequitable weight that women bear considering the adverse repercussions of worldwide economic integration, alongside the obstacles confronted by women compelled to migrate due to globalization, heightened vulnerability, and destitution. Furthermore, globalization's uneven distribution of advantages further amplifies gender inequality, culminating in increased economic discrepancies and a worsening of destitution among women. Furthermore, there is apprehension regarding the possibility that globalization could hinder women's empowerment, as evidenced by socio-economic indicators, including maternal mortality rates.

Globalization, particularly in developing countries, has been linked to employment losses, as corporations exploit impoverished conditions by offering low-paying labor under unfavorable conditions. While advocates contend that granting women employment opportunities advances gender equality, these

positions often entail significant drawbacks, including meager compensation, precarious employment, and limited access to social safety nets. The nature of employment losses during periods of economic recession is gender specific. The reductions in employment that primarily affect women are attributable to the fact that they occupy positions in sectors that are more susceptible to economic fluctuations. Additionally, it exacerbates the trend of pushing more women into unstable, poorly compensated jobs or leaving them facing unemployment, intensifying the feminization of poverty.

The imposition of user fees and the privatization of services have impeded women's access to healthcare and education as a direct result of the effects of globalization. These alterations often result in increased costs for the services, with a disproportionate burden falling on impoverished women. As poverty rates decline in several nations, increased educational attainment shields women from destitution. By impeding impoverished girls and women's access to healthcare and education, privatization and user fees may, nevertheless, serve to perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

Intersectionality and Feminization of Poverty

Initiated in the late 1980s by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, the notion of intersectionality emphasizes the significance of recognizing how diverse social categories intersect and influence one another, thereby influencing the opportunities and experiences of individuals in society. This statement underscores the notion that various dimensions of identity—including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation—intersect and exert mutual influence, thereby shaping the opportunities and experiences of an individual.

It is impossible to overstate the profound influence that race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status have on the feminization of poverty, given that these variables substantially affect women's opportunities, access to resources, and social mobility. The impoverished population disproportionately represents women belonging to minority communities, specifically those of African and Hispanic heritage. Entrenched prejudices, systemic inequities, and discriminatory policies in education and employment contribute to their increased susceptibility to poverty. Furthermore, the widening wage disparities disproportionately impact women from marginalized communities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that affects these women and their families.

African American women face considerable obstacles, including financial deprivation, limited economic opportunities, and unfavorable health consequences due to the "racial feminization of poverty," an intersection of race, gender, and socio-economic status that profoundly affects their lives. Additionally, higher poverty rates affect LGBTQ+ people because of discrimination in the workplace, lack of legal protections, and social stigma. Poverty disproportionately impacts Indigenous women who face prejudice based on their gender and ethnic identities. Systemic racism, cultural deterioration, and marginalization further compound their financial hardships. The intersecting identities highlight the necessity for a more all-encompassing strategy in tackling poverty and its multifaceted effects on diverse marginalized communities.

Impact of Government Policies

The Beijing Conference underscored the significance of governmental policies in shaping the correlation between poverty and women. As a result, governments were compelled to realign their anti-poverty endeavors, particularly emphasizing addressing the unique requirements of women, especially in rural regions. Prominent initiatives such as PROGRESA serve as paradigmatic models for addressing the feminization of poverty through their comprehensive interventions encompassing education, health, nutrition, and employment, among other facets of the lives of disadvantaged women. Governments can disrupt the cycle of poverty and advance gender equality by placing social services and accessible

healthcare at the forefront of their agendas. It is exemplified through the proactive strategies employed by Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland, which have effectively diminished the feminization of poverty through inclusive social protection systems, affordable childcare, and improved equal opportunities.

Strategic policies have additionally facilitated significant advancements in poverty reduction and gender equality in Rwanda and Costa Rica. The prioritization of women's economic inclusion and empowerment by Rwanda has substantially enhanced women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Similarly, significant progress has been made toward gender equality and reducing the poverty rate among women because of Costa Rica's emphasis on social investment. These instances underscore the efficacy of customized policies and interventions in tackling the obstacles encountered by women residing in economically disadvantaged communities.

Considering the prevalence of the feminization of poverty, governments should deliberate on the following policy recommendations for potential implementation:

Social protection initiatives that are sensitive to gender differences and provide women-specific aid, such as financial assistance, childcare subsidies, and vocational training.

Healthcare policies consist of preventive care, reproductive health services, and mental health support specifically designed to meet the unique needs of women.

Workplace policies that promote equitable compensation and equal pay can enhance women's economic empowerment.

Education policies that demonstrate responsiveness to gender issues prioritize equal opportunities for all to obtain high-quality education and address barriers such as gender biases and prejudice.

Role Played by UN Agencies in Tackling the Issue of Feminization of Poverty

With an emphasis on empowering young women and girls to enhance their general welfare, United Nations agencies, including UN Women and UNICEF, devise and implement policies, programs, and initiatives targeting the underlying causes of poverty and gender inequality. Regarding the feminization of poverty, UN Women, an organization committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women, assumes a significant obligation. It is responsible for ensuring that women have the autonomy to utilize economic and educational opportunities and access them effectively. The objectives of UN Women are to promote equitable resource distribution, assist in formulating policies within intergovernmental organizations, and advocate for the crucial role of women in ensuring food security. Additionally, it acknowledges and highlights women's substantial contributions through both unsalted and compensated labor in the workplace, family, and community.

By protecting children's welfare, especially those most susceptible to violence, conflict, natural disasters, extreme poverty, and other hardships, UNICEF combats the feminization of poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), embraced by United Nations Member States in 2015 to diminish inequality, foster peace, and establish prosperous societies, are conspicuously aligned with UNICEF's dedication to eliminating child poverty. Working towards a more inclusive and equitable future that breaks the cycle of poverty, UNICEF actively promotes the welfare of children and their families. To improve the living conditions and opportunities of more than sixty thousand impoverished women residing in 198 communes across twenty-eight provinces, UNICEF has supported a project in Vietnam that has supplied these women with essential resources and aid.

UNICEF assumes a preeminent position in facilitating young women's educational opportunities and self-empowerment, thereby challenging the cycle of poverty and fostering the socio-economic progress of their respective communities. Supporting female involvement in STEM fields that have historically been male-dominated, these programs provide mentorship, access to high-quality educational resources, and assistance in overcoming academic challenges.

UNICEF adopts a comprehensive strategy to tackle the feminization of poverty, which goes beyond nutrition and healthcare to incorporate the welfare of mothers and children. This approach must acknowledge the critical contribution that women in developing nations make towards combating poverty, starvation, and malnutrition. In Mexico, for instance, the 1997-launched PROGRESA initiative assists disadvantaged women in employment, education, health, nutrition, and education, emphasizing improving their reproductive health; these programs strive to improve family welfare and economic stability.

In its pursuit to combat the feminization of poverty and advance gender equality, UNICEF additionally places significant emphasis on advocacy and awareness-raising endeavors. The primary objectives of these campaigns are to promote diversity, dismantle gender-based preconceived notions, and nurture comprehension and compassion. An illustration of this is the initiatives by UNICEF to promote more significant equity and equality by bringing attention to domestic violence and dismantling patriarchal norms and systemic biases. These initiatives facilitate the active participation of boys and men as allies in the fight against toxic masculinity, challenge detrimental gender norms, advocate for women's political agency, and support gender equality through media and educational campaigns. These endeavors seek to promote inclusive and sustainable policies and effect enduring changes through the establishment of alliances with local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government agencies.

Strategies for Addressing Feminization of Poverty

Approaches to mitigating the feminization of poverty encompass several domains. Increasing enrollment and support for educating females in impoverished regions should be given priority through community engagement and awareness programs, among other initiatives. Furthermore, it is imperative to prioritize establishing secure educational environments for female students, guaranteeing the currency of curricula, and providing sufficient training for educators. Furthermore, by ensuring fair distribution of financial aid and favorable conditions for women to pursue higher education, developing countries can facilitate the growth of prospective leaders and implement enduring reforms. Mentorship and scholarship initiatives can assist in removing cultural obstacles that impede women's access to higher education.

Achieving equal compensation and comprehensive benefits for women in the workplace can significantly mitigate income inequalities and fortify their economic autonomy. In order to accomplish this, it is imperative to implement policies that advocate for equitable compensation and family-friendly work environments.

Promoting women's political engagement is idealistic and vital in the struggle against the feminization of poverty. The formulation of more comprehensive policies that address the requirements of marginalized women may result from an increase in the number of women in political leadership positions. Activities such as fostering self-help groups, integrating women into local governance structures, and engaging them in community-based organizations effectively promote women's participation in community-level decision-making. These approaches are crucial for successfully implementing strategies to alleviate poverty.

Feminization of Poverty concerning India

A prolonged concern in India, the feminization of poverty continues to impact a substantial portion of the population. Numerous interrelated factors comprise this phenomenon. The financial reliance of women on male relatives is a consequence of traditional gender roles that restrict them to unpaid domestic work. Feminists are even more susceptible to poverty because patriarchal-influenced cultural norms restrict their access to resources, property rights, and decision-making authority.

In addition to impeding women's capacity to attain personal fulfillment, destitution impedes their access to fundamental human rights. Premature births and malnutrition among children and women result from inadequate sanitation, healthcare, and nutrition access. Constant human trafficking, forced labor, and exploitation are commonplace for women from disadvantaged origins who are economically vulnerable; these practices perpetuate the cycle of poverty and impede their comprehensive development.

The Indian government has implemented several initiatives to tackle these challenges. The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) seeks to empower rural women through skill development, access to credit, and means of subsistence. A reservation policy guarantees the participation of women in local governance bodies. In contrast, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) campaign seeks to improve the education and well-being of young females. However, to achieve substantial results, these endeavors necessitate more robust execution and reinforcement.

In addition to governmental interventions, providing microcredit, vocational training, and financial literacy by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like SEWA and Kudumbashree is vital to women's empowerment. Through establishing their businesses, these initiatives empower women to achieve economic autonomy and thus disrupt the recurring cycle of poverty. Despite some progress, significant challenges remain that must be surmounted, particularly in healthcare infrastructure improvement, overcoming cultural barriers, and addressing gender-based violence.

Sustaining increased endeavors to address violence against women is imperative to establish a safe environment promoting their social and economic progress. Fortifying healthcare infrastructure and ensuring women have unrestricted access to premium services are essential in preventing destitution and advancing women's empowerment. The government's continuous educational campaigns and advocacy against deeply ingrained gender norms can effectively promote gender equality and women's empowerment alongside efforts to mitigate poverty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, increasing women's political participation is crucial in addressing poverty's feminization. Through enhanced representation, women can attain more significant opportunities and freedoms, thereby ensuring that policy decisions, particularly in the intricate context of globalization, duly consider their distinct concerns and requirements. Women can exert influence over policies and initiatives that advance gender equality and mitigate globalization's adverse effects on women's welfare through active participation in political affairs.

In addition, it is critical to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women to establish a global economy that is more equitable and inclusive, ultimately benefiting every sector of society. To adequately confront the feminization of poverty, it is imperative to embrace intersectional approaches. These methodologies acknowledge and address the unique obstacles women encounter with various forms of prejudice, including those associated with gender, socio-economic standing, and disability.

Adopting an intersectional framework necessitates recognizing the multifaceted challenges and requirements of impoverished women and formulating policies and initiatives that specifically target the obstacles encountered by women whose identities intersect with poverty. Furthermore, it necessitates anti-poverty initiatives considering the complex dynamics between privilege and various forms of discrimination. Fundamental components of this methodology encompass the following: advocacy for equitable and inclusive employment and educational prospects for women across all socio-economic backgrounds; facilitation of affordable childcare and social support services to mitigate the arduousness of unpaid caregiving; and promotion of diverse representation in positions of authority to devise policies that are inclusive and address the requirements of all women. By incorporating Intersectionality into policymaking and advocacy, it becomes possible to formulate more all-encompassing and pragmatic approaches to tackle the feminization of poverty. It, in turn, advances the cause of greater social justice and gender equality.

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