



CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

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Abstract

Society gives people rights because they are human and not just because they are citizens of a state. Equality for all women is guaranteed by the Indian constitution. Article 15 says that citizens cannot be treated differently because of their religion, race, caste, or sex. In 1993, the Indian parliament passed the Protection of Human Rights Act, which defines human rights as the individual's right to life, liberty, and dignity. However, women in India remain marginalized in numerous ways seven decades after independence. A deprivation of resources, capabilities, or freedoms—commonly referred to as the dimensions or spaces of poverty—is poverty. A gender-based shift in any of these dimensions or spaces can be referred to as feminization. Feminization is an activity, a course of turning out to be more female. A shift in poverty levels that is more discriminated against women or households headed by women is known as the feminization of poverty. The concept of a "feminization of poverty" was popularized in the 1990s but the idea dates back to the 1970s. It must be stated that Diane Pearce's study, which looked at how poverty rates in the United States changed between the beginning of the 1950s and the middle of the 1970s based on gender patterns, helped popularize the idea of feminization of poverty. More specifically, it refers to an increase in the disparity in poverty rates between men and women. Feminization of poverty would also be characterized by an increase in gender inequalities as this is one of the determinants of poverty. Women, particularly those heading female headed households in the developing nations, bear an unequal share of poverty. This indicates that women are more likely than men to be poor, that their poverty is more severe than that of men and that the number of women living in poverty is rising worldwide. Understanding poverty as a multi-agent process is made easier by the concept of social and cultural exclusion. Social and cultural norms in many developing nations restrict women's access to formal employment. The concept of inclusion underpins each interpretation of social exclusion. Social inclusion is our society's capacity and willingness to keep all groups within reach of our expectations—the social commitment and investments required to ensure that all people have access to our shared aspirations, life, and wealth. The goal of social inclusion is to ensure that everyone is valued in society. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of social inclusion has gained a lot of traction as a central idea that informs both community practice and policymaking. This was primarily in response to issues like growing income disparities, material poverty, and unemployment all over the world. In practice, equal rights for women are essential to a democratic society. Equal opportunities must be provided for women to participate in and influence the country's future.

Keywords: *Poverty, Feminization, Gender Inequality, Human Rights, Social Inclusion*

Introduction

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Society gives people rights because they are human and not just because they are citizens of a state. Equality for all women is guaranteed by the Indian constitution. Article 15 says that citizens cannot be treated differently because of their religion, race, caste, or sex. In 1993, the Indian parliament passed the Protection of Human Rights Act, which defines human rights as the individual's right to life, liberty, and dignity. However, women in India remain marginalized in numerous ways seven decades after independence. A deprivation of resources, capabilities, or freedoms—commonly referred to as the dimensions of poverty—is poverty. Statistics enable us to measure poverty numerically. Even before taking gender into account, poverty is difficult to quantify statistically. When gender is taken into consideration, measuring poverty becomes even more challenging. From a gender perspective, the main obstacle is that poverty is typically measured at the household level rather than an individual level. Classifying households according to the gender of the household head is the most common solution to this issue. Many people believe that the household head and the breadwinner are the same person. Analysts of poverty generally agree that a poverty measure that only considers money is not ideal. The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI), which goes beyond income, is probably the most well-known poverty measure. The three factors that make up the HDI are health, education, and income. The HDI is adjusted for gender inequality to produce the Gender Development Index (GDI).

A shift in poverty levels that is more discriminated against women or households headed by women is known as the feminization of poverty. Although the idea of feminization of poverty dates back to the 1970s, it gained popularity in the 1990s. It is important to note that Diane Pearce's study, which examined how gender patterns influenced changes in poverty rates in the United States between the beginning of the 1950s and the middle of the 1970s, helped spread the idea of feminization of poverty. More specifically, it refers to an increase in the gap between men and women in terms of poverty rates. Since one of the factors that contribute to poverty is gender inequality, feminization of poverty would also be characterized by an increase in these disparities. Over the past three decades, the number of families headed by women has dramatically increased, making it harder to fight poverty. According to Quisumbing and Haddad, female household headship is a diverse phenomenon whose causes must be investigated when studying poverty. Additionally, it would be beneficial to employ additional methods of evaluation in addition to those based on income: Approaches that prioritize social indicators (such as mortality, health and nutrition, and time allocation) and aim to evaluate individual capability factors (such as access to resources, education level) may reveal gender biases and their causes more clearly.

According to a 1992 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) study, the number of rural women living in poverty in developing nations has nearly doubled to 565 million, with 374 million of these women living in Asia and 129 million in sub-Saharan Africa. While rural men's poverty has increased by 30%, rural women's poverty has increased by 48%." It is believed that women, particularly in developing nations, bear an unequal share of poverty. According to United Nations Development Programme (1995) report, 70 percent of the world's poor are women. More than 1 billion people in the world today, the great majority of whom are women, live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in the developing countries - stated the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

Objectives of the study

- To find out whether women face a higher intensity of poverty than men in all developing nations by going through secondary sources such as reports, journals
- To find out the reasons behind the occurrence of feminization of poverty

Methodology of the study: The article has been written by employing secondary sources of data collection such books, journals, and reports.

Theoretical framework of Feminization of Poverty

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The "feminization of poverty" is currently a phenomenon of great concern to the government, social scientists, politicians, and feminists. Research has revealed that women, as a group and regardless of class, are more vulnerable to poverty than men and that, consequently, women's poverty has different causes than the poverty of men. Census data do not differentiate between social classes; researchers have information about income, sex, racial, and ethnic categories of analysis, and this reinforces the tendency to frame the discussion in terms of statistical rather than theoretically significant categories of analysis. The determinants of women's poverty, it is therefore implied in the analysis, are factors that affect all women and place all women at risk. Undoubtedly, women face a higher power of poverty than men in all countries. Poverty indicates complex absence of assets which might vary from one family to another; females remain the worst sufferers. At the point when the families experience less or no profit the principal thing that is chopped down are the necessities of the females. Basic reasons for the feminization of poverty are single working individuals in the family, normally; women are given the duty of taking care of the entire family which is an immense measure of work with practically no money related benefit. Feminization of poverty is not only about lack of income, but also of lack of opportunities due to gender discrimination. Employment opportunities are severely restricted for women worldwide. Women are often barred from materially controlling their environment due to unequal access to profitable and fulfilling occupational opportunities. A large proportion of women are employed in informal workplaces, reducing the regulation of their employment. This makes it more difficult for women to address workplace grievances and ensure safe and legal working conditions. Feminization of Poverty is a collective outcome of several factors, be it access to education or lack of health facilities that are available for women.

Female headship can be attained in a number of ways. These include marital breakdown which includes divorce and separation, the death of a spouse, inability of male member to earn due to age or health issues. Changes in mortality and marriage rates, divorce and separations, and out-of-wedlock births contribute to the increase in female-headed households. Also, women's higher life expectancy contributes to the increasing number of women over 65 years of age living alone, and a substantial proportion of these women are poor. Male unemployment, lay-offs, and decline in wages are also crucial correlates of women's poverty; such factors correlate with marital stress and violence, separation or divorce, and can make family formation impossible. Poor men who are chronically unemployed or underemployed cannot form families or stay with their families, particularly in states where welfare policies deny eligibility to two-parent families.

Female Headed Households' household incomes fall as a result, increasing their likelihood of poverty. It was discovered that this is a significant contributor to both the gender poverty gap and female poverty. In the United States, men and women had poverty rates of 10% and 15%, respectively, in 2015. Women typically hold low-paying jobs and are less likely to pursue advanced degrees. The gender pay gap exist which indicate that women earn significantly less than men, despite having the same level of education and working in the same field. The average disparity in wages between men and women who are employed is referred to as the gender pay gap or gender wage gap. Equal pay for equal work for both sexes is emphasized in Article 39(d) of the Indian Constitution, making it constitutionally binding. In addition, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 stipulates that men and women must be paid equally if they perform work of similar nature. The disparity in pay between men and women in our country can be closed with the assistance of this Act. In India, men earn 82% of the labor income, while women earn 18%, according to the World Inequality Report 2022. One of the factors that lie at the very heart of poverty is gender inequality. There are certain categories of issues: the gender wage gap, which primarily results in jobs with higher pay for men and lower pay for women; the economic, legal, social, cultural, and other factors contribute to inequality in resource access and women's limited ability to defend their interests. Understanding poverty as a multi-agent process is made easier by the concept of social and cultural exclusion. Social and cultural norms in many developing nations restrict women's access to formal employment. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of social inclusion has gained a lot of traction as a central idea that informs both community practice and policymaking. This was primarily in

response to issues like growing income disparities, material poverty, and unemployment all over the world. In practice, equal rights for women are essential to a democratic society. The goal of social inclusion is to ensure that everyone irrespective of their gender and social status is valued in society. In other words, the primary objective of social inclusion policy is to uphold and protect the human rights of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including women. Equal opportunities must be provided for women to participate in and influence the country's future.

The feminist explanation for the feminization of poverty is also the focus of this paper. It is common knowledge that having children results in low earnings for women (Budig and England, 2001; Folbre, 1977). This is due to an assortment of reasons. The children will be in the care of their female parents. This reduces the amount of time they have available to earn money. It also prevents women from taking jobs that require a lot of travel and longer working hours. Additionally, families with only one adult breadwinner are more likely to be led by a single mother and this result in a decrease in household income. A household is more likely to end up in poverty when there is only one earner and the earner is laid off, sick, or works fewer hours as a result of an economic slowdown or recession. This is because there is no one else in the household who can make up for the lost income. Also, there is the issue of gender segregation in the workplace. Women's wages and incomes will be lower than men's if they are systematically excluded from higher-paying occupations (Bergmann, 1986; Zellner, 1972). Despite the fact that historically class and race had been the primary structural determinants of poverty, the increasing tendency of women to seek employment or to manage the household on their own has added a new factor: gender. For men, poverty is often the consequence of unemployment and a job is generally an effective remedy. The developing countries statistics on poverty, according to International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), are dominated by households headed by women (See Table 1 below). That female-headed households tend to be the poorest, has been pointed out by Indian economist Gita Sen. This certainly appears to be the case in India, where FHHs are primarily widows and Chen and Dreze note that widowhood is identified as a cause of deprivation, which justifies targeting widows and FHHs for social assistance.

Table 1

FHH as a percentage of all households: IFAD estimates

All Developing Countries	23 percent
Asia	9 percent
Asia (excluding China and Japan)	14 percent
Sub Saharan Africa	31 percent
Near East and North Africa	17 percent
Latin America and the Caribbean	17 percent

Source: Jonathan Power, 1992: Table 3, p.6

Poverty has a negative impact on the global economy as a result of the increasing role that women play in the economy, both as mothers and as household leaders. Additionally, the disadvantages of poor nations fuel a destructive cycle of population growth, environmental degradation, and poverty. Poverty has many dimensions and is difficult to measure. In terms of dollars and cents, it is insufficient income. However, in terms of the human condition, it is inadequate nutrition and health care, education, lack of employment opportunities. In their annual Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced a new index in 1996 that reflects the percentage of people lacking three basic, or minimally essential, abilities: to be healthy and well-nourished (as indicated by the percentage of children under five who are underweight); to reproduce in a healthy way (as measured by the percentage of babies born without medical attention); and to be educated (as indicated by illiteracy rates). This index primarily

measures women's deprivation. Only 21% of the population in developing nations, or 900 million people, is considered to be "income poor," with incomes below the World Bank's definition of poverty. Calculations indicate that 37% of the population, or 1.6 billion people, lack these three essentials of well-being. Women make up the majority of the 700 million extra poor. The notion that women bear more than their fair share of capability-based poverty is supported by statistics that demonstrate that women lag behind men in terms of well-being. The 1995 UNDP Human Development Report's principal coordinator, Mahbub ul Haq, described women's achievements over the past few decades as a story of mounting capabilities and restricted prospect. Because of persistent sexual discrimination in employment and wages, the majority of women work for low wages.

Conclusion

Women and female-headed households may be more susceptible to poverty for a variety of reasons, including a lower income, illiteracy, early marriage and childbearing, divorce, and gender gaps in educational attainment. Inferences regarding the process of feminization have been drawn from trends in female headship, shifts in the pattern and structure of employment, and socio-cultural factors that continue to influence gender relations. There are at least three ways that we can draw the conclusion that poverty affects women the most severely. First, women are at a distinct disadvantage compared to men and face poverty-inducing conditions because of gender inequalities and the underachievement of women's capabilities in many nations. Second, they earn less than men despite working longer hours at both productive and reproductive activities. Thirdly, cultural, legal, and labor market restrictions on their social and occupational mobility limit their ability to break free from poverty. The severity of poor women's deprivation and the greater challenges they face in lifting themselves—and their children—out of poverty may be the most pressing issue. Poverty reduction and the prospects for human and economic development are put in jeopardy by gender inequality. Gender parity must be viewed as a prerequisite for both the advancement of development and social justice. Because it is an essential component of the fundamental principle of social solidarity, governments have an obligation to work toward the prevention and eradication of women's poverty. We must advocate for girls and women to have equal access to all human rights, including the right to be free from violence, the right to sexual and reproductive health, the right to justice, the right to be free from poverty, socioeconomic equality, and the right to participate in decision-making.

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