

The connection between women inequality and child poverty



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Since the end of 19th century, women have been fighting for equality and justice. Unfortunately, until now, there are still disputes about women inequality in the world because of the resulting factors, such as child poverty. There has been changes to laws, such as the federal Divorce Act in 1986, to promote women equality, but the law still fails to protect women from becoming impoverished. According to CRIAW, women earn less than men even if they work in the same sectors or in the same jobs. From that fact, it is obvious that women are still not equal to men in society; therefore, it does make a difference whether your male or female. The stereotype that may explain women's inequality, in the job force is they're supposed to be homemakers and dependent on men.

According to CRIAW, Fifty-six percent of lone parent families headed by women are low-income, compared with 23% of those headed by lone parent men. One reason for this gap would be because women typically earn less money than men. Sixty-seven percent of minimum wage earners in Canada are women. I will be arguing how child poverty is an outcome of women's inequality using a feminist perspective. I will do so by comparing the implications from neo-liberalism and the law which contributes to feminization of poverty.

The first point I will be discussing, is the restrictions that neo-liberals enforced enabling restrictions on social assistance. Women are at a disadvantage, regarding, jobs and salaries compared to men that is why there are more women in poverty than men. As I stated earlier, 56% of families which are headed by women are low income. In other words, its a known fact that women do struggle with poverty. With that said, a reform <https://assignbuster.com/the-connection-between-women-inequality-and-child-poverty/>

that neo-liberalist proposed, that would “benefit” women and children, was to deduct money from social assistance payments from women who got other sources of income such as child support payments and the child tax benefit (p 256 LL). If women or children needed some sort of dental aid while on social assistance they were denied because it was considered not ‘essential’ to live. In other words, the social assistance plan was just enough for food and shelter, if you needed more assistance such as dental or eye care, you were denied. Welfare rates are not exactly enough, it is literally enough for food and shelter. All welfare rates in Canada have always been low, ranging between 20%-70% below poverty line. In other words, women are guaranteed to struggle even with welfare payments since they are just enough to keep you alive. The Conservative government is putting mothers in a position where they are literally counting each penny. Children need clothes, medical care, etc. How would social assistance cover children needs and day-to day expenses such as rent and bills? How is the percentage of women in poverty supposed to decrease if the government are restricting resources for women? In 1995, the government decided to cut more than 10,000 people off welfare – 89 percent of them women and 76 percent single mothers.

The reason for this cut was because they wanted women to go back to relying on men for economic support, causing women that are abused by their spouse leaving them no options, but to stay in the relationship.

If a woman were to get a divorce in the 1900’s, under the unity doctrine, she would have to give absolutely everything she owned to the husband; leaving

her in a bad financial state. After a divorce, studies have shown women are actually 76 percent poorer, whereas a man becomes 42 percent richer.

After a divorce, what are women suppose to do? Finding a job is difficult because of inequality and the government doesn't provide much aid. Women felt powerless in society because the stereotypes that they should be home makers while depending on their spouses, contribute to society's view. Women are looked at without any importance in society. This is clear when, in 2006, the conservative government cut the federal Status of Women Canada funding by 40%, then he also eliminated a program that funded legal challenges to equality rights for women and other groups. (p 152-153) The government not only cuts back in providing assistance to women that are struggling in poverty, but eliminating women support groups is absurd. This just shows that women have no priority or equality in society. Through their actions, neo-liberals do not find women inequality and women poverty to be much importance in society. Women are susceptible of poverty through the limited resources that are available to them i. e-social 'assistance'. She would be poor because social assistance wasn't a reliable, source of income.

Feminization of poverty is a well known fact. Poverty doesn't just occur to single mothers, it also occurs with women who are: elderly, immigrants, lesbians, women of colour and migrant women. My focus will be on factors that cause feminization of poverty happens. Labour market conditions, equalization, and social welfare are all factors which contribute to feminization of poverty.

In labour markets precarious employment, was the new role which women obtained, along with remaining responsibilities at home such as child care.

Why were these 'precarious' jobs singled out to women only? Women were the target for these jobs because as it stands, women live in poverty, and when depending on social assistance fails, they get to the point where they will take any job that will keep them and their children alive. In Canada, women can be working the same jobs with the same education and still get paid less; reason being, because of their gender. In other words, women automatically have a disadvantage in the job force just for being a female. In 1999, women earned \$18 000 less than men in a full time job over a course of a year. In 2008, almost 9 years after, women still make less than men in a full time position, \$17 900 less to make it exact.

Social welfare is a source which some women and mothers rely on when all else fails because of the inequality in Canada. Unfortunately, even social welfare is not always a reliable source because of the lack of aid they give. Over the years, social policy has changed in a few countries, as a result, their main objective is to get single mothers to get a source of income by obtaining a job

To put it bluntly, the government wants to get mothers out of poverty but not by helping them financially; instead wanting mothers to obtain a job moreover take care of her children. Raising children is a full time job which often doesn't get recognized because of the stereotypes that women are supposed to be homemakers. Men, on average, put in 4.1 hours of paid and 3.4 hours of unpaid labour; women put in 2.5 hours of paid and 5.2 hours

of unpaid labour (Clark 2001: 4). Since women are seen in society as homemakers, it is expected and known that they do more unpaid work than men, so why doesn't the government focus on helping them by increasing their social assistance or decreasing women inequality in order for women to obtain a job that is 'fair' and not 'precarious'? Therefore, labour market conditions, equalization, and social welfare is a result of feminization of poverty.

Feminization of poverty is an ongoing issue so what is the law doing about it?

There has been laws passed to achieve equality for women before the law.

On August 10, 1960, The Canadian Bill of Rights included section 1(b) the right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law. On December 15, 1995, the employment equality act was implemented and the purpose of this act was to correct the disadvantage that women, aboriginal people and people with disabilities had experienced in the workforce

. In other words, employers could no longer deny employment because of your gender, race, or disability. Although, the employment equality act was implemented, Why even after 13 years in 2008, women made less than men in full time positions? If the employment equality act was supposed to correct the disadvantage women experienced, then why hasn't it been corrected? Women are still getting paid less than men. When even the law fails what are women supposed to do, especially single mothers? In 1989, when The Divorce Act was passed, section 15.2 regarding spousal support states, "Promote the economic self-sufficiency of each spouse within

reasonable period". This is a big change for women because as I explained, <https://assignbuster.com/the-connection-between-women-inequality-and-child-poverty/>

before The Divorce Act women had no spousal support implemented, instead women were the ones that had to give everything they own to men, after a divorce. For single mothers, 15. 1 of The Divorce Act was introduced to enforce a father's responsibility to pay child support for all his children.

If the father is willing to pay, it wont be that hard to get the support, but if the father is not willing to pay, how far will the justice system go to make sure he pays up to his responsibilities? In 1992, 75 percent of the 91, 650 support orders in Ontario were arrears

. In other words, through the law, 75 percent of men owed there ex-wife's child support. From my experience with the law, I took my dad to court for child support, the next week he went to Russia and my case was basically closed. My lawyer told me there is nothing she can do if he is in another country. Although, there has been great changes in the law to achieve equality in society, how reliable is it? How far will the justice system go to enforce these laws?

As I have pointed out, women suffer in poverty because of inequality and neo-liberalism resulting in feminization of poverty. Feminization of poverty effects children eventually leading to child poverty. When women are treated inequality in society through welfare, work force and society, it doesn't only effect them but also their children both physically and mentally.