
Poverty as a Major Contributor to Neglect and Child Abuse in Canada

Introduction

Studies done in Canada have shown that children who were living in poverty stood a higher chance of developing health problems. Additionally, they are at risk of displaying disruptive behavior and also dropping out of school. Research has also shown that children who experience poverty both at an individual and at a neighborhood level are more likely to be involved in external and internal problems in their behavior. Moreover, child maltreatment has for long been associated with poverty and economic disadvantage. Families with low socioeconomic status pose a significant risk for abuse of children because the guardians are stressed by the financial hardship and the relationship it has with social support and accessibility of resources. Lack of funds also plays a crucial role in the quality of parenting and even the capacity of the parents through mental health or family dynamics.

Employment in Canada

Employment in Canada started falling in October 2008, nine months later in July 2009, it hit a low point. Employment declined by 2.5 percent of the working population. Studies revealed that a wide gap would be present in the labor market experience of Ontarians who were racialized and also those that were not. The rise in precarious work would impact racialized Ontarians negatively. Studies have also revealed that the rate of the racialized population would continue to grow faster than the total population who shape labor force in Ontario. Reports show that by the year 2031 more than 40% of the labor force in Ontario would be racialized as compared to 22% in 2006. Women who are racialized have a higher unemployment rate than racialized men. Racialized Ontarians have a low-income prevalence that is 73% higher than Ontarians who are not racialized. Moreover, Racialized Ontarians have a higher participation rate than Ontarians who are not racialized. Additionally, the unemployment rate is higher among them standing at 10.5% as compared to 7.5% for the rest of the Ontarians. This shows that the occupational and industrial distribution of employment is gendered and racialized. Data shows that discrimination in the workforce places barriers to good paying jobs and is a significant contributor to the increasing gap between Canadians who are racialized and those who are not. Women being the most represented in the unemployed population as well as the people working under minimum wage means that they are unable to take care of their children and families. Families living in poverty are not able to meet the basic needs of their families. They lack the resources financially and the ability to secure funds. Although there exist services and support which have

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been developed to meet the gap which is caused by lack of money, there is still a lack of the needed support. Economically disadvantaged families may also struggle to meet the basic needs of their families financially. Low-income families have continued to ask for their incomes to be assessed to determine if they are eligible to access programs and services. This, however, is not easy because the process has many rules, and the process needs many referrals and assessment before they can finally access the services.

Poverty in Women as a Contributor to Child Neglect

Immigrants, women, and radicalized workers are among the population most likely to be working for minimum wage. However, women form the largest share of workers who work under minimum wage. The link between morality and the ability of a mother to raise her young ones can be seen through ideas which are dominant within particular cultures. How mothers perform is derived culturally. In the West, for example, women are supposed to bear children and as loving and caring mothers they are supposed to be nurturing, affectionate and self-sacrificing. Mothers are built to meet the needs of others before their own needs. They are selfless, and they live for others before themselves. The provision, Protection, and teaching are tasked to mothers who ensure that they bathe their young and instill manners and social norms, this ensures that their offspring can engage in society normally throughout their lives. There are structural barriers that affect society and make it more likely for more women to be affected by poverty more than men, these restrictions make it difficult for more women to emerge from poverty. Among these barriers are Sexism, existing stereotypes about the nature of their work and also discrimination in employment and accessibility to services.

Additionally, Canadian women stand a higher chance of experiencing violence than their male counterparts. Vulnerability to poverty is brought about by violence mainly because the trauma leads to one partner who cannot work and most likely this is the woman and her family as they try to move away from the violence. Families that are led by single parents experience the highest levels of poverty, and single families are led by women. For women living in poverty, racialized women have lower rates of participation in the labor force and employment than other women. Additionally, the risk of unemployment is higher among them. Poverty-stricken women are less likely to participate in the labor force when they have children who are under six years old living in their households. They are more likely to actively participate when the children are above six years. Children who come from families that face economic hardship are faced with double the chance of being maltreated as compared to children coming from families which do not face economic hardship. Women in Canada and especially the women of color continue to be marginalized.

Employment Opportunities for Women in Ontario

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A majority of women and especially those who are in circles of poverty spanning many generations or those who have lower levels of education are forced to engage in multiple part-time jobs which provide a low wage just to provide for their families. These jobs are precarious and most of the time are in the informal sector. They lack rights protection and social support systems and benefits that could help curb vulnerability to poverty and the effects it has on society. Fields and professions that are women dominated are undervalued and are among the lowest paid jobs in the economic system of Canada. The wage gap presented by gender continues to persist, and it becomes increasingly hard for women to rise to positions of leadership. Children are at a higher risk of maltreatment in homes where their mothers have a history of childhood neglect themselves. A physically neglected child is a child who has undergone or is at risk of suffering physical harm in the hands of the caregiver occasioned by not providing adequately for the child including poor nutrition and living conditions which are dangerous and unhygienic. Studies in Canada have shown that a significant proportion of children who have been investigated by authorities dealing with child welfare are from families struggling with economic hardships. These children are faced with a higher risk of poor development and also difficulties in their education.

Neglect

Neglect can be defined as the absence of enough action, responsibility, and protection which are appropriate to the age and needs of the child. It can also be described as a failure to provide and also not supervising a child which exposes the child to serious harm and which meets the legal requirement for the involvement of the government through Child Aid Societies.

Studies have shown that neglect is more prevalent in homesteads where there is domestic violence and especially where the Woman is physically abused. Additionally families in which the guardians are drug abusers or where caregivers have a history of mental health. When the Child societies receive a report of neglect, then it is their job to investigate more and provide the next cause of action.

Effects of Abuse and Neglect in Children

Children who have experienced neglect respond differently to the Trauma; some children have long-lasting effects while others recover much quicker and with a lot of ease. Neglect and abuse have its physical, physiological and societal consequences. It is however impossible to separate these impacts in reality. Consequences that are physical such as brain damage can lead to psychological effects such as delays that are cognitive or difficulties while dealing with their emotions. These problems often appear as behaviors that are high risk. For example, a person is more likely to smoke or abuse drugs as a result of depression and anxiety. Additionally, high-

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risk behaviors could lead to health problems that are long-term such as STDs, cancer, and obesity.

Emotionally, the effects of neglect can lead to psychological consequences which could last a lifetime. They include low self-esteem, depression, and difficulties in their relationships.

The Child Aid Societies in Canada

For anyone who feels that a child is in need of protection, the go-to person is the CAS. It is the mandate of every professional to report to the CAS if they suspect abuse or neglect. This includes teachers and all other professionals including daycare workers. If they do not report them, they could be fined. The duty to report is ongoing, and this means that even when abuse is published, they still have to report if they think that the child has been abused or neglected any other time. A social worker is faced with a significant challenge of determining the cause of the neglect. They must develop if the parent does not have the necessary skills to take care of the child. Poverty can also be a major contributor meaning that a parent cannot adequately provide for the child because there are competing needs and the resources are limited. These different causes have different remedies, and it is the work of the child welfare worker to determine the best cause of action.

Concrete interventions can be beneficial to some families. For example, it would be tough for a family to live in a building that is falling apart and that is unsafe. If a child welfare worker could find such a family a decent place to live where the family would feel proud, then neglect can be reduced. Additionally, when daily stresses are alleviated through the provision of transport and daycare, then the parent can focus more on bringing up the children. Parents who feel better about themselves are better parents as compared to unhappy parents. Child welfare is an important player in linking families that are struggling to the many programs that are available in the community. At home set up, hands-on support is crucial. People learn how to be good parents as they receive support for themselves and also for their children along the way.

Studies show that workers in Child societies assess child neglect as lower risk as compared to physical or sexual abuse, this means that the intervention of child societies and contact with families is less. This is a slight contrast to practice in other areas where neglected children are placed outside the family home. They are of the opinion that due to the chronic nature of neglect a holistic approach is needed and also to take into account the life needs over a period. More attention, resources, and training are needed in prevention and intervention of child neglect. Additionally, a dual approach which includes supporting the needs of the individual parent and the development of parental competencies together with an approach directed at recognizing and dealing with the socio-economic context of these families is needed.

Conclusion

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The study above shows that poverty is a major contributor to neglect and abuse in children. To be able to address this issue, the first point would be to work on poverty alleviation in society and particularly among women who are most vulnerable. At times women are forced to choose between homelessness and living in poor and unsafe communities or returning to a partner who is abusive. Abuse by violent partners is a major contributor to child neglect because the abused partner would need to go and look for refuge in a safer place.

Additionally, the welfare societies should also make the environment where they place those under their conducive. Some women have past experiences with these welfare professionals, and this may affect how she interacts with welfare societies currently. Women who had been in welfare societies may have experienced neglect or abuse and may have been placed in residential schools and also out of home care. If these experiences are negative, then it can lead to mistrust and fear of people who are in positions of power and authority such as professionals in the child welfare associations. An approach which is centered on Women encourages the building of relationships, respect, and collaboration between women who are experiencing abuse, child welfare services and other providers of community service to ensure safety for women and children.

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