

Session 1504: The risks of poverty to health and family well-being.

Zina Nimeh – Abstract

Single poor female! Social protection strategies of female heads of poor households in Jordan

In both developed and developing countries, studies have shown that female-headed households tend to have different demographic, sociological and microeconomic characteristics from male-headed households. The purpose of this paper is to look at this issue in Jordan and to analyze the characteristics and strategies of female headed households. This is done by identifying the types of female-headed households and which ones are more likely than others to be poor, why they are more likely to be poor, how does being poor financially coexist with other socio-economic problems, and what are consequences of poverty for children in these households

Female-headed households are part of the social make up in Jordan. As of 1996, 4% of all family households were headed by a woman. The paper looks at the composition of the households headed by females in terms of the presence or absence of minor children, location, education and the household head's employment.

The papers uses data from the level of living conditions surveys that were conducted in 1996 and 2003. An in-depth analysis of the determinants of poverty is conducted and is analysed alongside social policies that following the 1980's economic crisis were moving away from social inclusion to more "neo-liberal" social policies.

Initial findings show wage employment to be the most effective deterrent of poverty. Having additional adult relatives who contribute to the household income were strong positive factors in avoiding poverty. On the other hand, each additional minor child increased a household's odds of falling into poverty.

A household lacking male-earned income had a much higher probability of being poor, even after controlling for income, children in these households were less likely to attend school and more likely to work. I argue in this paper how strategies designed to help female-headed households get out or stay out of poverty should address the education and employability.