

SOCIETAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS EQUAL SHARING OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS BY MEN AND WOMEN IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine societal attitudes towards the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work within households by men and women in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. It is argued that unpaid care and domestic work is mainly done by women due to patriarchal historical practices which puts women in compromising positions that subordinate them to men. Women's contribution to the economy through unpaid care and domestic work is said not to be recognised as important because it is difficult to assign any economic value to it. This article used semi-structured interviews to probe societal attitudes towards the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work within households by men and women. The article concludes that even though women do most of the unpaid care and domestic work in South Africa, more men are now aware of the importance of sharing household labour and are getting more involved than previously done.

Keywords: Domestic work ,Economy , Patriarchal ,Unpaid care,

1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action which was promulgated and signed by one hundred and eighty-nine (189) states in 1995. South Africa is therefore obliged to take into consideration the requirements of the treaty which calls for the recognition of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women as contributing to the economy (Budlender & Brathaug, 2002: 1). Women's unpaid work is argued to be crucial in contributing to poverty alleviation (Waring, 2003) mostly because it is done voluntarily. The treaty calls for governments to implement gender impact analysis

of economic policy making to ensure equal opportunities for women, to undertake legislative reforms, to give women equal access to economic resources and to measure unpaid care and domestic work performed by women. The article aims to investigate societal attitudes towards the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work within households by men and women. Unpaid care and domestic work done by women is argued to be contributing to the world's economy and yet this is not recognised since it is work done by women (George *et al*, 2009: 10; Kabeer, 2012: 14; Orr & van Meelis, 2014: 33 UN-Women, 2015:83).

Women spend more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men because patriarchy relegates unpaid work to women because it is deemed to be inferior and has no economic base. In achieving objectives of this article, the authors' uses literature to contextualise unpaid care and domestic work, using the Marxist theoretical perspective for unpaid and domestic work, the putting of unpaid and domestic work into national accounts and the division of unpaid work and domestic work at household's level and the discussions of the results collected in the four municipalities of Mpumalanga province.

2. DEFINING UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid care and domestic work refers to work that is necessary for the subsistence of life and health, care of the elderly, handicapped, child bearing and rearing, socialisation of children, teaching, feeding, transporting and all essential emotional and psychological work which goes into developing people so that they become productive members of society, which is mainly done by women (ECLAC, 2007:6; Budlender, 2008: 1; Kabeer, 2012: 14; Orr & van Meelis, 2014: 34; UN-Women, 2015: 82). Unlike paid work which normally happens between 9h00 am and 17h00 pm (George et al, 2009: 13), unpaid care and domestic work has no time limits. It happens throughout the day and sometimes depending on whether there are sick family members who need care, or the availability of children. It is argued that men are able

to work and contribute openly to the economy because women, whether sisters, mothers, aunts supply free care and domestic work for them (George et al, 2009:11). The involvement of women in the care of their families makes it possible for them to contribute directly to economies whilst women's contribution remains indirect and thus discreet or invisible to the eyes of patriarchal remnants.

3. MARXIST PERSPECTIVE WITH REGARD TO WOMEN AND UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK

The Marxist perspective argues that the reason women find themselves in the position where they are exploited, oppressed and discriminated against is because of the way men in society have been socialised. Men have been socialised in a way that they regard the exploitation, oppression and discrimination of women in the workplace and at home as a normal practice. The oppression, discrimination and exploitation of women in the workplace by men is said to be regarded as normal to the extent that it naturally spills over into the homes and relationships with women everywhere. This also leads to the economic exploitation of women because the position that men occupy is that of power in which men are able to make decisions that favour them than women. Women are then consistently socialised into submission and doing unpaid labour such as domestic work in the households. They also see themselves as the sole care providers hence their roles are determined as domestic workers

and child minders and not in positions where they can influence sound decision making issues about own life and issues around and about themselves.

The Marxist perspective suggests that women often find themselves in a master servant relationship with. This reveals itself well in circumstances where women do unpaid work both in the household and on cultivated land. This behaviour is seen as a capitalist behaviour in which men benefits more than women in the relationship. This is comparable towards the Marxists calls employer – employee exploitative relationship. What is important about this perspective is that despite the unequal power relationship between men and women which is as old as nature itself, men are however not seen or regarded as enemies of the women folk. This is because even though the relationship is seen to disadvantage the other party (women), both parties have worked to see to it that it works, as it has for decades and to date. Marxist feminists however indicate that for equality to prevail, for discrimination, oppression and exploitation to cease, the capitalist system needs to be overthrown by the oppressed and the exploited mass (Pati, 2006: 14; Sarikakis, Rush & Grubb-Swetnam, 2009: 505; Standford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010: 3; Zake, 2011; Tschurennev, 2013: 266) so that a democratic and free society can be achieved. The exploitative relationship as mentioned by Marx above is the cause of women being regarded as a source of cheap labour for men, both inside the house and in the community, hence the need for

equal distribution of household labour between men and women.

4. THE INCLUSION OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK IN THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

The International Conference of Labour Statisticians agreed in 2013 to include unpaid care and domestic work in the System of National Accounts (SNA). These are internationally agreed standard set of economic activity in accordance with strict accounting conventions based on economic principles. It is used to measure, analyse and evaluate the performance of an economy. It thus provides information about the economy's assets and liabilities and the wealth of its inhabitants at a particular period. It also provides information about the behaviour of institutional units such as non-financial and financial corporations, government units, households as units by giving information on production, consumption an accumulation of assets about them (EC, IMF, OECD, UN & World Bank, 2008: 1; Budlender & Brathaug, 2002: 1). The shortcoming about SNA is that it is mainly concerned with services that are produced and sold in monetary terms which exclude services that are produced but cannot be measured in monetary terms even though they contribute indirectly to the economy such as women's unpaid care and domestic work.

Unpaid care and domestic work is said to be falling outside the scope of the SNA (STATS SA, 2010: 1; UN-Women, 2015: 83) hence the call during the

International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013 to include unpaid care and domestic work in the System of National Accounts. The challenge however remains on how to put financial value on unpaid care and domestic work done by women.

According to Budlender & Brathaug (2002: 6), Budlender (2008: 34), and George *et al* (2009:13), assigning economic value to women's unpaid care and domestic work can be done by calculating (i) replacement value, which is calculated on how much it would cost to replace unpaid labour with paid labour on current wages for the same work; (ii) opportunity value, calculated based on how much women would be earning if they were participating in the labour market instead of doing unpaid work; (iii) labour input, calculated by considering the average wages plus benefits earned by the lowest and highest paid multiplied by hours spent on each task; (iv) output method, where a household is regarded as a producer and thus production and calculation is based by pieces of work done such as number of laundry pieces washed, number of children cared for, number of rooms cleaned and so forth.

Each has to be counted and priced; and finally (v) through pay equity, which involves the calculation of jobs based on skill, responsibility and effort. The focus is on the job and not the person doing it. However, there are those responsibilities such as hugging and lovemaking which cannot be measured in economic terms.

5. THE DIVISION OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Women need enhanced influence over household decision-making, especially with regard to decisions about the division of household labour so that they can also influence its direction. Socialisation of humanity is said to have played a role in determining division of household labour. There are responsibilities traditional responsibilities for men and women which were determined by one being female and male respectively which still dominate human society today. This kind of socialisation has often reinforced the position of women as inferior to that of men. There is a need for women to have enhanced influence over household decision-making, especially over household division of labour including the use of household income. Some perspectives of literature on the gender division of labour at household level, argues that reproductive roles or Non-SNA production performed by women disadvantages them because these roles are not seen as important and relegated to women whilst productive roles or SNA production is performed by men.

Customary practices relegate Non-SNA production such as taking care of the family, fetching of firewood, water, taking care of the sick, attending community engagements like funerals, to women. These roles are important but do not have financial value placed on them unlike productive roles like making decisions about what crops to plant, access to the markets, profit

made from sale of crops, which are assigned to men. It thus becomes important that the gender division of labour in the household does not disadvantage women and make it difficult for them to participate in the broader economy (Brown, 1994: 27; Reeves & Baden, 2000: 8; Prakash, 2003: 2; ECA, 2004: 69; UN, 2005: 10; Blackden, 2006: 5; UN, 2009: 5; World Bank, 2012: 217). Better educated women are said to have more bargaining and decision-making powers than women with low literacy levels (Brown, 1994: 35; Argawal, 1997; Marks, Bun & McHale, 2009; Domingo, 2013: 7). It is argued that better educated women have knowledge of structures that support them and due to their education know their rights than most rural women, who have low literacy levels and are economically dependent on their men. The independence of women with high literacy levels puts them in better position to pay for domestic work instead of doing it themselves because unlike women with low literacy levels, they have the means to do so.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach adopted in the article was mainly qualitative in nature. Semi-structured Interview schedules were used to collect data from members of the community in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The purpose was to investigate their attitudes towards equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work within households by men and women in their Province, which is one of the nine (9) provinces that make South Africa.

The study was conducted within the three districts in the province, namely, Gert Sibande, Ehlanzeni and Nkangala. The province has a total of seventeen (17) local municipalities but only four of the municipalities were chosen because of their proximity to the capital city (Nelspruit). A sample size of one hundred and twenty-three (123) members of the community was considered in which data was collected by utilising semi-structured interview schedules with identified participants.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The article examined societal attitudes towards equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work within households by men and women in the Mpumalanga Province. The South African society, especially the Nguni group (*Swazi's and Ndebele's*) that forms the greatest part of Mpumalanga province are highly patriarchal in practice. This article therefore used semi-structured interview technique to solicit information from the communities' perception of equal sharing of unpaid and domestic work between males and females.

This study was conducted intentionally to determine how culturally conservatives' communities in the Mpumalanga province view our countries constitutional obligations of gender equality. In attempting to determine that the semi-structured interview questionnaire probed the following in order; 1) gender of the respondents, 2) Communities perceptions on equal sharing of households labour and 3) Communities perception of equal sharing of

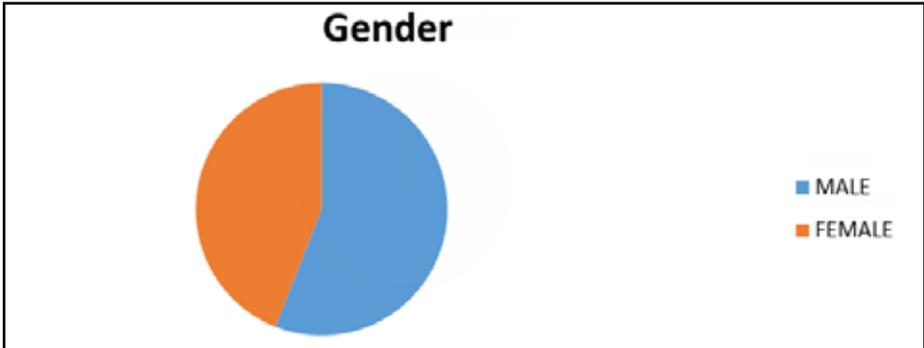
power and decision-making between men and women.

7.1 Gender of respondents

Until today gender studies still persists that women are still not considered in important decision matters. Gender

discrimination continues to be visible in all aspects of human life with women being discriminated against while men are favoured by the system. South Africa is one of those societies heavily affected by gender stereotyping (Sebola, 2015).

The respondents in terms of gender showed as follow:



The findings indicate that there were more males than females who participated in the study. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents were males and forty-four percent (44%) females. The figure shows that women are in minority at 44% compared to 56% of males that participated in the study.

It is also not so clear on how males in the rural areas can dominate females on gender issues because an upheld view is that men in the rural areas are likely to be in minority as most of them are to be far away from their households working for their families.

This reveals an overrepresentation of male dominated opinion on the results to be obtained. Numerous studies unless if they are purposefully made for women ever shows male participating than women or unless not predetermined face to face interviewers will talk to a male in the family than a female and simply often because women have to get opinion of a man in the household in order to give an interview. This reality often goes against a held theory than there are more fe-

7.2 Responses of opinions of equal sharing on household labour

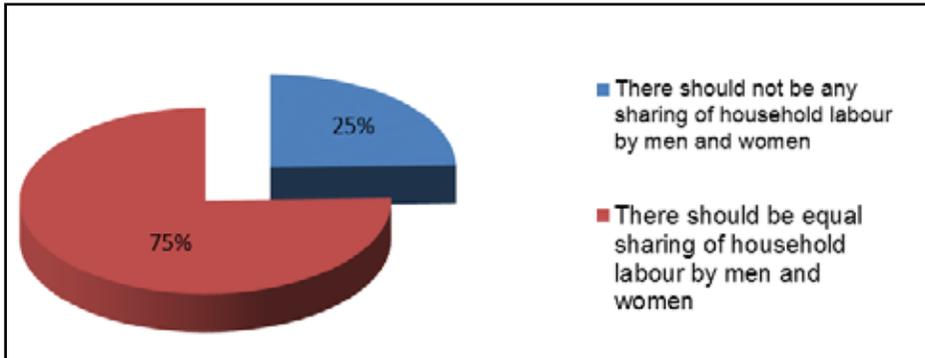
The family institution is key in socialisation and it is often blamed for socialising girl and boy children differently, fostering division amongst the two.

Boy children are naturally socialised to be brave, trained to be heads of households at an early age, to be leaders, whereas girl children are socialised to be home makers, passive

and strive to please men on the social environment (Kambarami, 2006: 2; Wallace, 2007; Marks, Bun & McHale, 2009; Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010: 10; Hamieh & Usta, 2011: 11; Sultana, 2011: 8).

In determining the perception of the residents of Mpumalanga of their perception of equal sharing of household labour between men and women, their responses showed as follow:

Figure 2: Perception on equal sharing of household labour



The majority of the respondents (75%) are of the opinion that equal sharing of household labour between men and women is appropriate. This shows a favourable progress and change of people's attitudes against tradition. It is very surprising considering the conservativeness of the area in which the study was conducted. But considering the fact that the majority of participants have their age group ranging from 18-40 (86%)

compared to 14% of age group ranging from 41-56, it may only mean that the participants are youthful and capable of understanding and coping with the changing social structures set by global gender associations.

Most of these participants mentioned modern phrases such as "bonding", financial independence of modern women and "equality clauses" in the constitutions as a reasonable ground to support the sharing of households labour between men and women.

A different opinion existed for the (25%)

of respondents who disagreed about the equal sharing of household labour. These are probably an older generation that is failing to cope with the democratic constitutional changes that promote equity between women and men in the social environment.

Their arguments are mostly old fashioned such as the patriarchal division of labour. They cite old practices such as "chores meant for women which cannot be done by men", women's responsibility to take care of a man and children", "house work as women's responsibility"

“uncommon chores for men in the kitchen” and that “men are economic providers in households”. Lobola is viewed as a justification enough for men and women to have different responsibilities in the household.

It is however important to note that women's financial contribution has been cited as a reason why women should share decision-making and have men assist with unpaid care and domestic work.

One point they argue clear is that as much as these change does not change the payment of lobola to the bride, women should continue doing households chores alone.

This literally means that women who do not contribute financially within households do not have a voice and must thus continue doing unpaid care and domestic work without assistance from men.

These can only confirm that patriarchy continues to relegate household chores to women because of their perceived inferior status in society (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 28; Coetzee, 2001; Johnson & Johnson 2001; Kambarami, 2006; Stopler, 2008: 1; Sultana, 2011: 2).

It can then be surmised that financially independent women have strong bargaining powers as compared to unemployed women.

Table 1: Below depicts the involvement of both men and women in SNA (paid work) and Non-SNA production (unpaid care and domestic work) by geographical area in South Africa.

GEOGRAPHY TYPE	SNA production			Non-SNA production		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Urban formal	48.7	36.1	42.2	70.9	90.2	80.8
Urban informal	52.6	40.0	46.5	75.9	93.1	84.2
Tribal areas	53.0	44.8	48.6	80.2	94.4	87.8
Rural formal	72.2	55.6	64.7	67.5	91.3	78.3
Total	51.3	39.9	45.4	74.1	91.8	83.3

Source: STATS SA (2010)

The participation rates differed very little for women and men across geographical areas which is an indication that men are getting involved in Non-SNA production albeit at a low rate, than previously thought.

The participation rate for SNA production by women remains the lowest in all geographical areas. This means that most women are either not employed or are employed

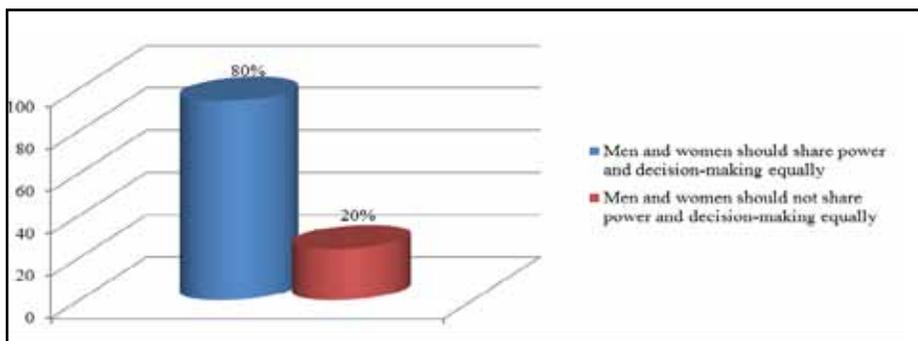
7.3 Responses on the equal sharing of power and decision-making between men and women

The gender division of labour at household level based on reproductive roles played by women such as fetching water and firewood, taking care of the sick, attending community activities such as funerals, disadvantages them because these roles are not seen as important. Household labour impacts on women's participation in the broader economy and equal sharing

of power and decision-making

(Brown, 1994: 27; Reeves & Baden, 2000: 8; Prakash, 2003: 2; ECA, 2004: 69; UN, 2005: 10; Blackden, 2006: 5; UN, 2009: 5; World Bank, 2012: 217). The variable was used to determine respondents' opinions on equal sharing of power and decision making between men and women which has a bearing on how the division of household labour is done.

Figure 3: Assessment of attitudes on equal sharing of power and decision-making between men and women



Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents agreed that women and men should share power and decision-making, whilst twenty percent (20%) of the respondents disagreed.

Those who agreed to equal sharing of power and decision-making said the South African constitution stated that everyone is equal. They also indicated that women are human beings and should enjoy their human rights too. They also indicated that the equal sharing of power and decision-making paved a way for good communication between couples. Others cited the financial contribution women make in

households as also giving them the right to have opinions and thus decision-making powers in households.

The Ehlanzeni focus group shared the sentiment and further indicated their dissatisfaction with the failure of countries to implement resolutions taken with regard to equality such as the signing of treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Dis-

crimination Against Women of 1979 and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995.

Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents who disagreed to the equal sharing of power and decision-making said women were inferior to men according to culture and thus were in no position to share power and decision-making on equal basis with men.

They indicated that women can hold high positions at work but when they get home they must know their positions that they are women and not heads of households, a notion supported by perused literature which states that women are regarded as inferior to men (Brown, 1994: 27; UN, 2009: 5; Prakash, 2003: 2; Njuki, Kruger & Starr, 2013: 13). The Christian Bible is also said to affirm the low position of women in society (Kambarami, 2006: 4; Stopler, 2008). Physical strength was also quoted as contributing to the superior status of men. Women are cited as weak, emotional, irrational and lacking of the ability to make decisions. The sharing of power and decision-making by men and women is said to create problems in relationships.

The South African Constitution of 1996 which advocates of equality of sexes by eliminating all forms of discrimination is well known by the majority of the respondents. They all indicated that equality of sexes according to the constitution and hence advocated for the equal sharing of power and decision-making. Patriarchy is said to define women in terms of reproductive

roles and thus relegates them to inferior positions a statement disapproved by eighty percent (80%) of the respondents who advocates for equal sharing of power and decision-making. (Palama, 2008: 12; Albertyn, 2009; Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010:9; Johnson & Johnson, 2011; Sultana, 2011: 3; Kabeer, 2012: 12). However, the small percentage of respondents who showed patriarchal tendencies in the responses confirms perused literature's affirmation about women being inferior to men.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the information gathered and given in this article, it can be deduced that the role women play in society in terms of provision of unpaid care domestic work plays a crucial role in society by ensuring healthy and happy families, workforce and society. The invisibility of women's unpaid work as having an economic value however plays a role in the subordination of women in society. Those who are seen to make tangible contributions to the economies who are mainly men are seen by society as having power and that trickles down to family situations where women are regarded as not important.

Although societal attitude seems to be changing in terms of the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work by men and women, it cannot be denied that it is women who still do the bulk of work because even if they are involved in paid work and contributing tangibly to economies, they are still

burdened with unpaid care and domestic work as compared to men who do paid work. It thus becomes important that the value of unpaid care and domestic work done by women be recognized for inclusion in the System of National Accounts. The study therefore recommends that:

- More research be done to determine societal attitudes towards the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work by men and women within household in different geographical settings in order to allow policy makers to analyse and compare results.
- More surveys on time use by women and men are done to assist in determining the economic value of unpaid care and domestic work.
- Countries that signed international treaties with regard to advancing gender equality and equity be compelled to report on work done with regard to the provision of the Beijing Platform for Action's dispensation which obliges countries to take into recognise the value of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women as contributing to the economy.
- Raise awareness on socialisation processes that subordinate women to men especially with regard to the equal sharing of unpaid care and

domestic work by boy and girl children and men and women.

Governments play a role in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, health care and day care facilities in order to lessen the burden for women, such as walking long distances to fetch water and firewood. This will enable women to be involved in other means of contributing to the economy whilst lessening the burden of time poverty which is faced mainly by women.

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