



**Gendered Division of household labour and Care work during Covid-19 Outbreak:
Evidence from Pakistan**

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Abstract:

This study aims to check the impact of the COVID 19 outbreak on the gendered division of household labour and care work in Pakistan. In line with previous researches, this study has been carried out to examine situational changing patterns of gender roles in times of crisis. Previous literature depicts that women are more involved in unpaid work including household chores and care work. A sample of 469 men and women from different age groups, professions, marital statuses, and family types has been taken. Correlation analysis further shows that men are more involved in household chores than women however equally do care work. Moreover, men's age, education, and leave from work have an impact on the division of household chores and care work. This demonstrates that Pakistani society has gendered division of household work which is evident in trend of being gender-neutral regarding unpaid work in households during Covid 19 outbreak.

Key Words: Pakistan, household chores, care work, Covid 19, gender, situational changes.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic is not just a public health issue; it also has an economic, social, cultural, human rights, and gender dimension. These are several significant social and cultural implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on both women and men regarding the gendered division of reproductive labor. The household dynamics are often assumed to redefine in times of crisis, particularly family members staying together at home during the lockdowns. The outbreak has affected the labor market and exerted a significant influence on the amount of care work women perform in their households. Women have a significant share in unpaid work globally. Due to the outbreak, unpaid caregiving responsibilities are expected to increase and place exacerbated burdens on women. However, this paper will examine various ways in which the COVID-19 crisis has reshaped the gendered division of household labor across genders by replacing the traditional gender roles with the gender-neutral distribution of unpaid work, including household and care work.

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Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men are considered commanding figures and women are perceived as submissive partners inside and outside of the home (Ali et al., 2011). Traditional socially constructed gender roles and social values define that women are typically supposed to perform reproductive roles and men are expected to engage in productive roles (Zaman, Stewart, & Zaman, 2006; Ali, 2008). Moreover, most women perform household chores and care responsibilities for their extended family members, and men are unlikely to take part in unpaid work due to their socially accepted role as breadwinners. Moreover, men spend more time on paid work outside the home. However, during the ongoing crisis, the government imposed lockdowns and advised the public for self-isolation. This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak by using a time-use approach to assess the gendered division of household labor and care work. Gender Roles are essential to understand the family relationship between men and women during the current crisis. This article focuses on the two aspects of gendered unpaid work, including the share of housework and care work between men and women. Traditional gender norms support that women are supposed to perform caregiving responsibilities within the family, and men are involved in paid work (Martinez & Paterna, 2009; Blasko, Papadimitriou, & Manca, 2020). Recently, a European study reported that in the current pandemic situation, the housework and care work has disproportionately overburdened women by placing additional caregiving responsibility for taking care of family members, especially older adults self-isolating or at high risk (Blasko, Papadimitriou & Manca, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous literature on the household distribution has established the gender disparity in household work (Nitsche & Grunow, 2016); Leonard, 2001; Legerski, 2007; Baxter et al., 2004; Miller & Carlson, 2016; Van & Hooff, 2011) where women are more involved in unpaid care work and household chores (Murry et al., 2001; Coltrane, 2000; Eriskson, 2005; Blasko, Papadimitriou, & Manca 2020). In recent years, some studies showed that the trends have been shifting towards an egalitarian approach to household work and childcare due to women's participation in the labor market (Van & Hooff, 2011; Leonard, 2001; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016; Baxter et al., 2004; Miller & Carlson, 2016; Legerski, 2007). Moreover, some studies reported that the increasing amount of men's household chores are changing the traditional division of household labor (Shwalb et al., 2004; Lee & Han, 1998; Ishii-Kuntz et al., 2004; Yoon & Chung, 1999).

Previous studies have found a positive association between men's education and their involvement in household work (Berardo et al., 1987; South & Spitze, 1994; Bergen, 1991; Presser, 1994; Brayfield, 1992; Kamo, 1988; Brines, 1993; Hardesty & Bokemeier., 1989; Haddad, 1994) and occupational status with their involvement in housework (Berk & Berk, 1978; Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993). In contrast, another study concluded a negative association between men's housework involvement and occupational status (McAllister, 1990). However, working men with high education and income are less likely to perform household work (McAllister, 1990). Studies such as those carried out by Ruppanner, (2010) have demonstrated that men have started to contribute towards household work, but there is still a long way to go in terms of men's equal contribution toward household chores (Ruppanner, 2010).

Some studies (Denmark, Shaw, & Ciali, 1985) have found a relationship between marital status and housework. According to these studies, married women spend more time in housework as

compared to single women. However, studies found no relationship between men's marital status and their involvement in housework (South, & Spitze, 1994; Shelton & John, 1993a;). Literature also suggests that the number of children impacts the division of housework between men and women (Shelton, 1992; Gershuny, & Robinson, 1988). The household with more number of children accounted for increased women's participation in housework as compared to men (Berardo, et al., 1987; South & Spitz, 1994; Bergen, 1991; Shelton, & John, 1993a, b; Brines, 1994; Presser, 1994; McAllister, 1990). In contrast, studies such as those carried out by (Calasanti, & Bailey, 1991; Hiller, & Philliber, 1986; Douthitt, 1989) found no association between the division of housework and the number of children. Several researchers have examined the association between housework and family and found a positive relationship between men and women (Lye, & Biblarz, 1993). Moreover, another study reported that the involvement of husband in domestic work and family income is related to the conflicts within the family (Javed, Siddique, & Hussain, 2020).

This article explores the factors that contribute to changing gender roles and family relationships, including men's involvement in household work and care work while spending most of their time at home. Additionally, this paper examines the possible short-term impacts of the outbreak on the division of household work and care work during this global pandemic. Based on the literature, this study assumes that women are more involved in household chores and care work than men during the COVID-19 crisis.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants and Procedures

A co-relational study was carried out with a sample of 469, including men and women. The sample included 35 percent men and 65 percent women, ranging between 18 - 40 Years. Besides, the level of education included three categories: undergraduate 34 percent, graduate 33 percent, and postgraduate 32 percent. Moreover, 65 percent were single, 35 percent were married, 52 percent belonged to the nuclear family, and 48 percent belonged to the joint family system.

Measures

Perception about involvement in household chores

This self-constructed scale consisted of 6 items that measured participant's perceptions about men's performance in different household chores during lockdowns, including cooking, cleaning, and washing. Moreover, this scale only included the most common household chores among Pakistani families. The items were responded on the yes, no, maybe measuring format.

Perception about men's involvement in the care work

This scale was constructed to measure the men participants' perception of their involvement in care work during lockdowns. This scale consists of four items. Participants responded to each item in yes, no, and maybe format.

Socio-demographic variables were also measured for the detailed sample description, including gender, age, education, profession, marital status, family structure, number of family members, and household income. Moreover, three questions were asked about the lockdown, including: '*Are you staying at home?*' measured on a dichotomous scale, '*How long you stayed at home?*' measured

on “less than 15 days” and “more than 15 days” and currently on leave measured on a dichotomous scale yes or no.

DATA ANALYSIS

Firstly, researchers computed correlations to check inter-correlations between the scales of household work, care work, and their correlation with demographics, including age, education, profession, marital status, and family structure, number of family members, household income, and lockdown variables, mentioned table 1.

Secondly, researchers performed descriptive (mean and standard deviations) and coefficients separately for males and females between two scales; household work, care work and demographics age, education, profession, marital status, family structure, number of family members, household income, and lockdown variables, see table 2.

RESULTS

Correlations between Housework, Care Work and Demographics

Table 1 shows the descriptive analyses and inter-correlations of household chores, care work, demographics, and lockdown variables. However, the pattern of correlations shows that the share of household work is positively correlated with care work. Moreover, family structure is also positively associated with the division of household work, while the number of family members is correlated with care work. During the period of lockdown, staying at home is also positively associated with household chores.

Table 1: Summary of inter-correlations, Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on Household work and Care work with demographics and Lockdown variables

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	SD
Household Work	-												1.79	.39
Care work	.432*	-											2.07	.38
Age	.006	.024	-										1.44	.53
Education	-.043	.016	.448**	-									1.97	.81
Profession	-.038	-.088	.395**	.232**	-								2.44	1.62
Number of family members	-.044	-	-	-.101*	-	-							2.31	.79
Marital status	.024	.063	.504**	.241**	.339*	-	-						1.35	.47
Family structure	.094*	.006	.093*	.004	.054	.253**	.176*	-					1.48	.50
Household Income	-.057	.051	.145**	.254**	.058	-.017	.086	-.073	-				4.54	2.23
For how long staying home	-.027	.021	-.008	-.074	-	.044	-.057	-.041	.026	-			2.47	1.50
Leave work from	-.041	.001	-	-.058	-	.002	-.013	.039	-	.063	-		1.75	.43
			.158**		.235*				.094					

					*				*					
Staying home	.118*	.023	.167**	.058	.228*	-.021	.137*	.080	.024	-	-	-	1.22	.41
					*		*			.189	.193			
										**	**			

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Moreover, in table 2, the inter-correlations for male participants (n= 166) are presented above the diagonal, and inter-correlations for women participants (n= 303) are presented below the diagonal. Means and standard deviations for males are presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for females are presented in the horizontal rows.

Table 2: Summary of inter-correlations, Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on the Household work and Care work, Demographics and lockdown Variables as a function of Gender

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	SD	
Household Work	-	.489**	.336**	.063	-.094	.028	-.051	-.019	-.004	.050	-	-.143	.050	1.93	.36
Care work	.418**	-	.325**	.161*	-.036	.131	.066	.052	.176*	.030	-	-.165	.009	2.09	.33
Age	-.093	-.028	-	.463*	.278*	.574**	.136	-	.118	.035	-	.193	1.60	.56	
Education	-.108	-.047	-.054	-	.179*	.304**	.109	-.182*	-.264*	-	-.152	.092	2.00	.79	
Profession	-.145*	-.142*	-.049	.272*	-	.253**	-.036	-	.045	-	-.192	.152	3.09	1.74	
Marital Status	-.070	.021	.414**	.205*	.326*	-	.151	-	.067	-	-.007	.132	1.49	.501	
Family Structure	.095	-.029	.002	-.060	.019	.134*	-	.194*	.144	.020	-.165	.035	1.61	.490	
Number of family members	-.019	-.128*	-.146*	-.067	.060	-	.349*	-	.013	.170	.056	.001	2.20	.76	
Household Income	-.071	-.008	.188*	.252*	.099	.119*	-	-.042	-	-.089	-.274	.133	4.40	2.40	
For how long staying home	-.034	.021	-.004	-.086	-	-.056	-.015	-.033	.090	-	.134	-	2.30	1.49	
Leave from work	.035	.083	-.148**	.008	-	.002	-.016	-.036	.020	.015	-	-.180	1.72	.44	
Staying home	.094	.027	.011	.020	.129*	.007	-.004	.027	-.041	-	-.129	-.198	1.42	.49	
M	1.71	2.06	2.05	1.95	2.09	1.28	1.41	2.37	4.61	2.56	1.77	1.12			
SD	.38	.40	.28	.82	1.43	.44	.49	.80	2.13	1.50	.42	.32			

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed.)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Household chores are positively and strongly correlated with care work. Furthermore, the above table shows that men (M=1.93) are more involved in household chores than women (M=1.71). However, both are equally involved in care work, men (M=2.09) and women (M=2.06).

Moreover, women's age is not correlated to household chores and care work which shows that women do household and care work at every age ranged between 18 and 40 years. While men's age is positively correlated with household chores and care work which further shows that men's age has an impact on their involvement in household chores and care work.

Additionally, women's education is not correlated with household chores and care work which demonstrates that the level of women's education has no impact on their involvement in household chores and care work. On the other side, men's education is positively correlated with care work. This confirms that the level of education of men has an impact on their involvement in care work. It also implies that the high level of education of men is strongly associated with their involvement in care work.

The profession of women is negatively correlated with household chores and care work. This confirms that the women's profession harms their involvement in household work and care work. However, men's profession is not correlated with household chores and care work. Additionally, marital status and family structure have no impact on the division of household chores and care work for both men and women.

Number of family members is positively associated with care work for both men and women. However, marital status, family structure, and household income for both men and women are not associated with their involvement in household chores and care work.

Importantly, analysis of lockdown variables showed that *for how long staying at home* and *do you go outside* have no association with their participation in household chores and care work for both men and women.

However, currently, men's on leave is positively associated with their involvement in care work but not associated with household chores. In contrast women on leave is not associated with their involvement in household chores and care work.

DISCUSSION

Previous studies examined the relationship between housework and paid work. However, the relationship between housework and unpaid care work is under-explored in the scientific literature in the context of Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between the division of household chores and care work. It has particularly examined the involvement of men and women in household chores and care work during the lockdown in the current global pandemic.

The findings of this study have shown that the involvement of men in housework is higher than those of women. Additionally, men are more involved in housework in the feminine domain like (helping in preparing food, cleaning, and washing). Conversely, previous studies reported that men

are more involved in masculine chores (e.g., decision making & repairing home appliances etc.) (Cerrato, & Cifre, 2018). Following this, men and women equally do care work including (helping in feeding children and changing nappies) during the lockdown. This is not in line with the findings of previous studies which confirmed that women are more involved in traditional feminine chores (i.e., childcare) than men (Braun, Epstein, Stier, & Baumgartner, 2008; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

Thus, the evidence highlights that during the quarantine period staying home and spending more time with families, have a positive effect on the involvement of men in chores both in housework and care work. The above finding is consistent with the time availability approach which supported that the one who allocates less time to paid work can more participate in housework (Braun, et al., 2008).

Another finding revealed that currently, men on leave are more likely to be involved in care work. However, during the current scenario, many men are enjoying their leave from work. Men's participation in household chores has increased due to time availability which confirms equity theory in an equal division of household labor during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondly, the demographic variables also correlate with the housework and care work. Results highlighted that both men and women living in joint family systems are more involved in household work, care work as compared to nuclear family systems. Interestingly, it is also established that married men and women are more involved in household work and care work. This finding is supported by previous studies which found marriage as one of the predictors of inequality in the division of household work (Batalova, & Cohen, 2002; South, & Spitze, 1994).

Additionally, the results have also shown that age and education have no impact on the involvement of housework and care work for women. However, the profession of women is negatively correlated with household chores and care work that is in contrast to evidence which presents that housework, care work, and family conflicts are correlated with men's age and education.

However, this study shows that men's profession has no impact on their involvement in housework and care work. The resource dependency theory argues that education and income confer greater bargaining power (Brines, 1994; Bittman, et al., 2003). The family members who contribute less in household income are more likely to participate in housework (Braun, et al., 2008). Most researchers found that men's educational level is positively associated with their contribution to household work (Berardo, et al., 1987; Bergen, 1991; Brayfield, 1992; Brines, 1993; Haddad, 1994; Hardesty & Bokemeier, 1989; Kamo, 1988; Presser, 1994; South & Spitze, 1994).

Overall, the results do not support the assumption that women are more involved in household chores and care work than men during the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, during the current COVID-19 crisis, men are more involved in household work with their women family members and both men and women are equally contributing towards care work.

CONCLUSION

This study has made a significant contribution towards deepening our understanding of the nexus between the division of household work and care work during the COVID-19 in Pakistan. This study demonstrates that in traditional societies, the division of household work is highly gendered. However, this study shows a less gendered trend regarding share of household chores and care

work. Hence, time availability has become an important determinant in the division of household chores and care work as men's involvement has increased in unpaid work during the COVID-19 crisis. However, this study does not claim a permanent shift in gender roles rather this may be a temporary situational change.

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