

Exploring Gendered Dynamics in Performing Domestic Care Activities

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Abstract

Women's domestic care work has been overlooked and is considered unproductive. It is rarely counted in the domestic, communal, and national economies. This research explores the total time men and women spend on domestic care activities the economic value they perceive and the market value of these domestic activities. The research design of the study is quantitative and uses only the domestic care dimension of the tool developed by Tabassum et al. (2023). The total sample of 530 participants, i.e., 170 males and 360 females, was selected from the inner areas of Rawalpindi, Pakistan, using simple probability random sampling. The results revealed significant gender differences in time spent on domestic care activities, with females spending 86,158 hours per month while men spent only 16032 hours per month, meaning women spent more than five times more. The findings further revealed the perceived economic value by the participants to be 9.76 million rupees in a month, while the market-based economic value was 20.44 million rupees in a month, which is four times higher than the perceived economic value, showing the undervaluation of these domestic activities by participants. The study emphasizes the need for a more equitable recognition of roles and contributions within the domestic sphere and the necessity of redistributing gender roles and reevaluating social assumptions regarding the financial and emotional costs involved with these vital obligations.

Keywords: Care, Domestic, Gender, Unpaid, Value, Work

Background of the study

Care is a range of activities that promote the well-being of homes and communities. Caregiving encompasses direct caregiving for individuals, housework, and unpaid community work, including volunteer work and care for friends and neighbors (Maestre & Thorpe, 2016). Klein (2021) succinctly underscores that care is not merely a luxury, but a necessity, a force that supports and nurtures individuals in their endeavors (Maestre & Thorpe, 2015). A gendered narrative emerges within the context of caregiving, revealing a stark division. A division that is engraved by societal norms that designate care predominantly to women (Klein, 2021). Gendered norms define duties and obligations and create conditions that maintain the duality, in which, women and girls provide unpaid care for society's well-being (Rost, 2021). Various research studies emphasized a significant gender discrepancy in the distribution of time devoted to these domestic care activities, wherein women bear the majority of the burden. In their study, Rubiano-Matulevich, & Viollaz, (2019) stated that on average, women dedicate a considerably greater number of hours per week to domestic care responsibilities than men. Dorji et al., (2020) also mentioned that women devote twice as much time to unpaid care as men,

regardless of their income or family status. However, this labor is not a straightforward equation; it is a multifaceted interplay of societal dynamics. Dorji et al. (2020) underscore the paradox of unpaid care labor, which is concealed behind market transactions, is disregarded despite its social value, and yet provides a public benefit that transcends economic concerns.

Women have been neglected and undervalued in the household, community, and/or national economy due to their contributions to family domestic labor being treated with little respect. This contribution is considered unproductive and has no financial worth. Economic surveys fail to recognize and acknowledge women's economic contributions, ignoring a large sector of the economy. This unseen sector is otherwise critical for the smooth functioning of a family and has a significant impact on the broader economy (Ferrant et al. 2014).

This invaluable contribution is concealed by hurdles such as unequal distribution, which results in time poverty, the invisibility of their efforts, and the weight that jeopardizes their well-being. Maestre and Thorpe (2015) provided a detailed account of how pleasure and satisfaction can rapidly transition into exhaustion and restriction, thereby further entrenching women in societal hierarchies. A contradiction is concealed beneath the surface: the capitalist system's dependence on unpaid caregiving, a foundation that frequently goes unnoticed.

The unpaid care work done by women is not limited by geographical boundaries; it resonates throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Crisologo (2022) shared the statistics that women account for 60% of the 187 million hours spent daily on unpaid activities. This gender disparity has a ripple effect on households. It is a testament to the dedication of women, as an average of 4 hours and 32 minutes is spent on unpaid care each day, and a testament to their resilience in the face of overwhelming responsibilities (UN Women, 2022). The intricacies of this discourse become increasingly complex as it progresses. Unpaid care labor is both a foundation and a constraint for the development of human capital, societal participation, and the well-being of women. Dong and An (2014) unravel this complex equilibrium, which impedes women's equal participation in the labor market due to the burden of care work.

The economic consequences of unpaid care labor are evident beyond the confines of domesticity. Stuart (2014) posits that this labor could represent a significant portion of the GDP if it were assigned a monetary value, a hidden treasure that is yet to be recognized. It is a realization that encourages policymakers and experts to imagine a world in which caregiving is not confined by gender. A vision in which male involvement is encouraged, and in which the potential of women is not restricted by care labor, but rather enhanced by their societal engagement. As Folbre (2006) emphasizes, a comprehensive comprehension is achieved: the cost of care includes debts and sacrifices, as well as profound bonds, intrinsic satisfaction, and invaluable services for dependents.

The dimension of unpaid labor, which has been neglected, is given prominence in this economic and societal context (Picchio, 2017). It is an essential element, a propelling

force that supports both economies and households. It reflects the multifaceted roles that women play, as Singh and Pattanaik (2020) reveal the complex interplay of restrictions, choices, and vocations that propel women into this field. The complex interplay of caregiving and its gendered subtleties becomes apparent when society expectations clash with personal ambitions, which are elaborately shaped by factors like age, marital status, family size, as well as caste, and religious background (Samantroy & Giri, 2015). Care is a thread that unites lives, communities, and ecosystems within the intricate tapestry of existence. Unpaid care labor predominantly performed by women, is an unquestionably vital yet underappreciated force, from its gendered division to its societal implications. By acknowledging and valuing the contributions of women to the care industry, it may be possible to prevent social and gender inequality in the development of sustainable communities.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions of the study:

- How much time do men and women spend on domestic care activities?
- How do men and women perceive the economic value of domestic care activity?
- What is the market-based economic value of domestic care activities?

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to explore and find out the types of tasks men and women perform in the household and also the time spent on each activity in the old city of Rawalpindi. The target population comprised the residents of Rawalpindi of one union council No.38 and the locality of 'Rehmat Abad'. Using a non-probability purposive sampling technique, 530 participants took part in this study. Out of the 530 sampled participants 300 were from Union Council No.38 and 200 from 'Rehmat Abad'. Additionally, data were collected from specific subgroups, like 100 pregnant women, a sample of 100 female participants from different paid working categories like public sector primary school teachers, Lady Health Workers (LHWs), and domestic workers, and the remaining 300 from the males and females from the selected communities.

The data for the current study was collected through the survey method by using a questionnaire developed by Tabassum et al., (2023) in their recent study on 'Measuring Women's Contribution in Care Economy: Constructing Survey Based Indexed Questionnaire'. The Questionnaire consists of five dimensions namely child care, elderly care, domestic care, and the care of persons with special needs, and one additional component i.e., reproductive care. Only one dimension i.e., domestic care dimension was included. The collected data was entered using the software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Before data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and informed consent was obtained ensuring their voluntary participation. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and their responses were anonymized to protect their

privacy. Data were stored safely and only authorized researchers have access to this data. The researchers were mindful of their own biases and preconceptions, ensuring that these did not influence the data collection process or analysis.

Calculation of economic value

Following the study of Suh (2021), the economic value of domestic care activities is measured as:

$$V = \sum_{i=1}^N [D_i f_i (H_i * 60 + M_i) / 60] * W_j$$

Where V is the total economic value of all respondents for performing composite domestic and care activity,

D_i = No. of days performed a certain activities in a month by a respondent

f_i = frequency of doing a certain activity

H_i = Hours spent on a certain activity in a day

M_i = Minutes spent on a certain activity in a day

W_j = wage per hour

The wage rate for calculating the economic value for domestic care activities is considered the minimum wage i.e., 32 thousand (w.e.f. July 2023, as announced by the Government of Punjab).

A worker is required 40 hours to work in a week, using the minimum wage, we've converted per hour wage using the formula below:

$$W_j = \frac{32000 \text{ minimum wage in a month}}{(40 * 4) \text{ hours in Month}} = 153.85 \text{ Rupees per hour}$$

Results and discussion

This part of the study describes the major findings. Following are the details,

Table 1:

Descriptive Statistics of quantitative aspects of demographics

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	530	33.5	10	17	65
Monthly household income (in rupees)	530	45,214	28583	2000	200000
Education of respondents	530	8.7	4.9	0	18
Total time spent in 24 hours	530	7.2	4.3	0	20

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of quantitative aspects of participants. The mean age of participants is 33.5 years, with a minimum and maximum of 17 and 65 years respectively. The monthly income of a household varies from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 200000. The education of participants has an average of 9 years of schooling, with a maximum of 18 years of education. The average time spent on domestic care work is 7.2 hours a day, with a minimum of zero hours and a maximum of 20 hours a day.

Table 2:

Descriptive Statistics of qualitative aspects of demographics

Variables	Obs.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	530	Male	170	32
		Female	360	68
Marital Status	530	Never married	48	09
		Married	437	83
		Divorced	43	08
		Widowed	2	0.4
Employment Status	530	Employed	186	35
		Not working	270	51

		Self-employed	74	14
Family System	530	Nuclear	230	44
		Joint	300	56
Type of household earners	530	Dual earner	267	50.5
		Single male earner	223	42
		Single female earner	40	7.5
Feeling while doing these activities	530	Fresh	46	8.7
		Better	80	15
		Fine	150	28.3
		Fatigued	203	38.4
		Drained	51	9.6

Table 2 depicts gender, marital status, family system, types of household earners, and overall feelings of participants for performing domestic care activities. The gender-wise representation of participants shows 32% males and 68% females. The majority of participants were married (i.e., 83%), followed by never married and divorced (9% and 8% respectively) and the least is widowed which is less only 0.4%. The employment status of participants includes 35% employed, 51% unemployed, and 14% self-employed. The types of household earners include dual earners 50.5%, single male earners, 42% and single female earners 7.5%. 38.4% of participants feel fatigued while doing domestic care work, followed by fine with 28.3% and 15% of participants feeling better. Out of the total, 9.6% responded to being drained and only 8.7% felt fresh in doing domestic care activities.

Time spent on domestic care activities

The following section covers the gender differences in the time spent on domestic care activities:

Figure 1:

Mean gender differences in time spent per day on domestic care activities

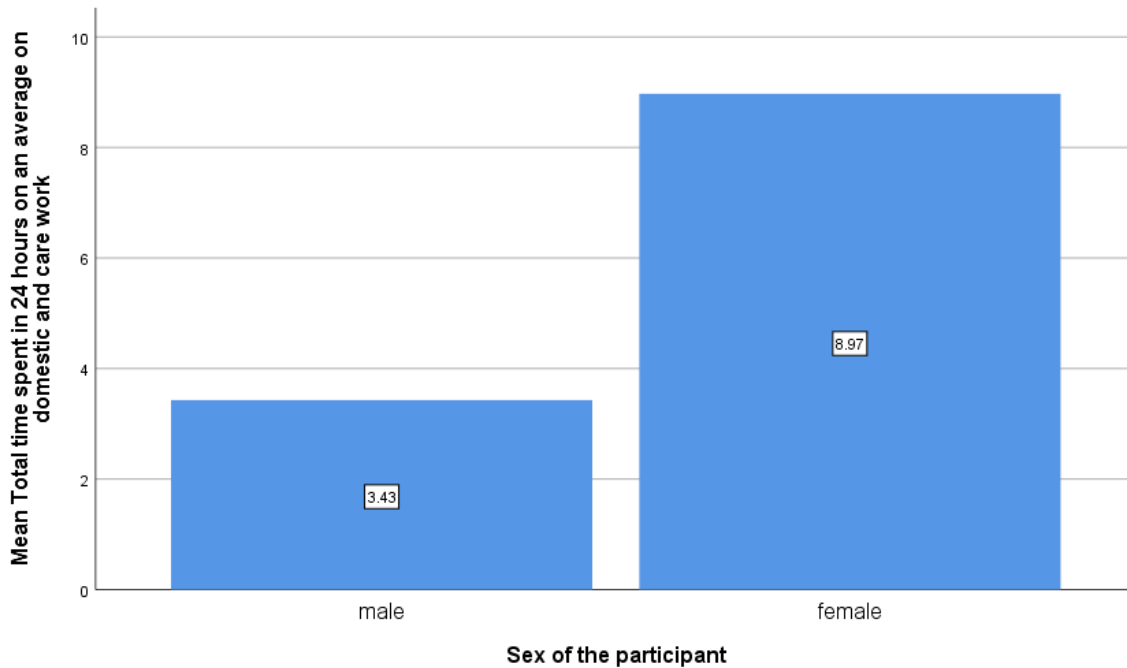


Figure 1 shows the mean time spent per day by males and females in different domestic care activities. It reveals that females spend around 9 hours a day on average on domestic care activities. Whereas males spend 3.4 hours on average on domestic care activities out of 24 hours. It is pertinent to mention that females spend almost three times more time spending on domestic care activities than males.

Figure 2:

Gender difference in time spent per month on cleaning activities in domestic care

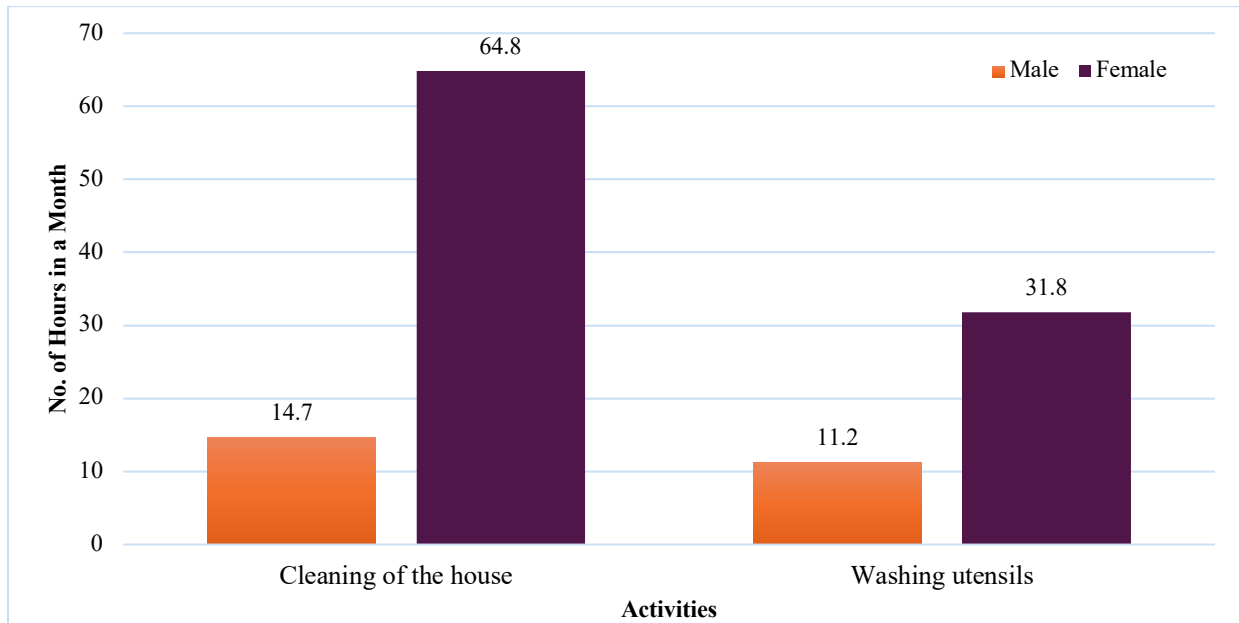


Figure 2 shows the gender differences in spending time based on several hours in a month on cleaning of house and washing utensils. Females spend more time cleaning of house and washing utensils 64.8 and 31.8 hours in a month whereas males spend time only 14.7 and 11.2 hours in a month. Various research studies emphasized a significant gender discrepancy in the distribution of time devoted to these domestic care activities, wherein women bear the majority of the burden (Rubiano-Matulevich, & Viollaz, 2019).

Figure 3:

Gender difference in time spent on preparing and serving different meals to family and guests

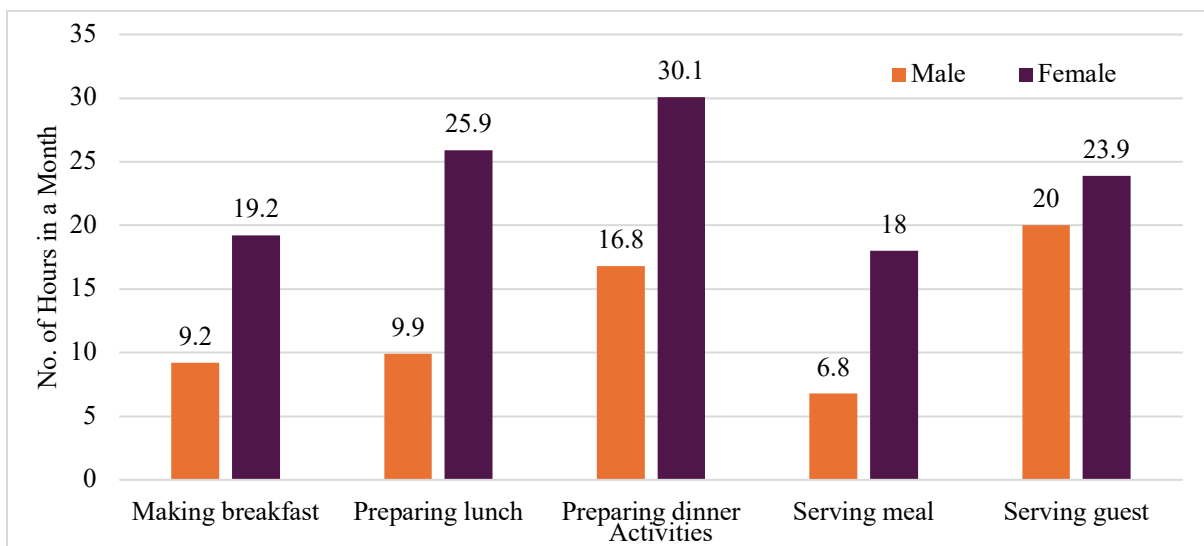


Figure 3 reveals time spending based on number of hours in a month on preparing food and serving meals to the family and guests. Females spend more time for preparing dinner, followed by lunch, and then making breakfast as 30.1, 25.9 and 19.2 hours on average in a month. Whereas males spend 16.8, 9.9, and 9.2 hours per month on average for preparing dinner, lunch, and breakfast. The time for serving meal is 18 and 6.8 hours in a month for females and males respectively. While serving guest, females spend 23.9 hours and males spend 20 hours per month. The results are similar to the study conducted in 2008 by Fontana and Natali that discovered, women in Tanzania dedicated three times more time than males to caregiving and household chores.

Figure 4:

Gender difference in time spent on washing, and ironing clothes in domestic care activities

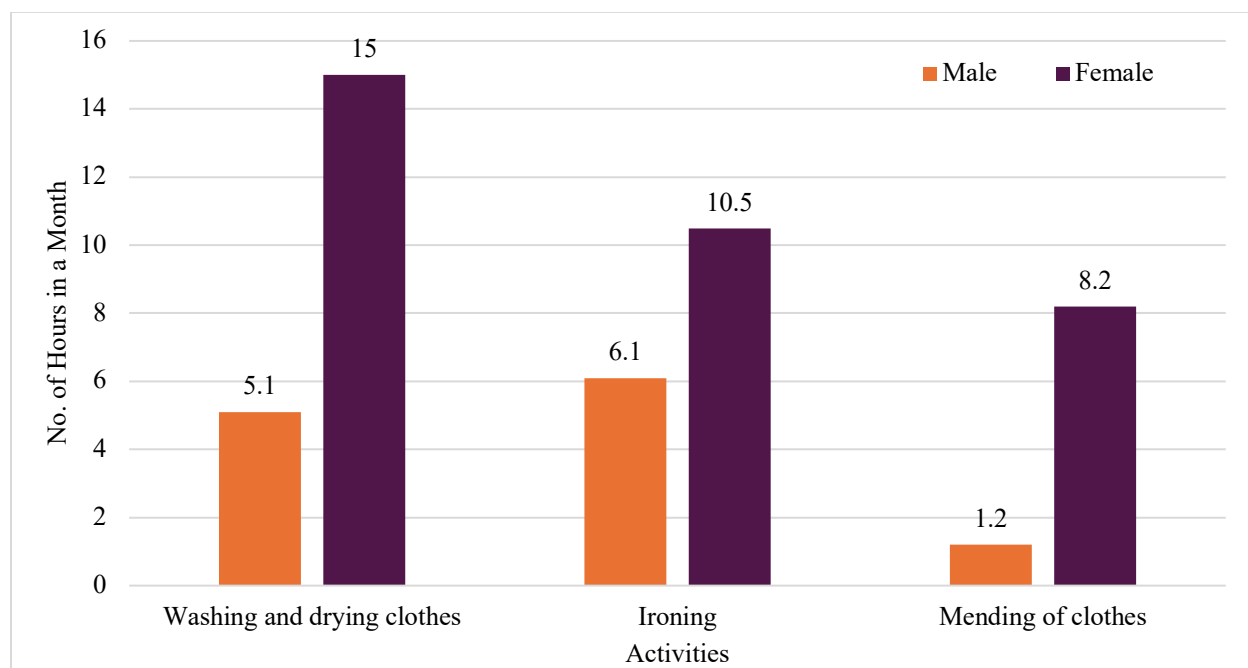


Figure 4 shows the time spent based on the number of hours in a month on washing, ironing, and mending of clothes by males and females. Females spend more time in each activity that is 15, 10.5 and 8.2 hours in one month as compared to males who spend 5.1, 6.1, and 1.2 hours per month. The results are supported by the ILO report (2018) that mentioned that regardless of demographic or cultural contexts, women devote significantly more hours per week to unpaid care work than males.

Figure 5:

Gender difference in time spent per month on shopping for domestic care activities

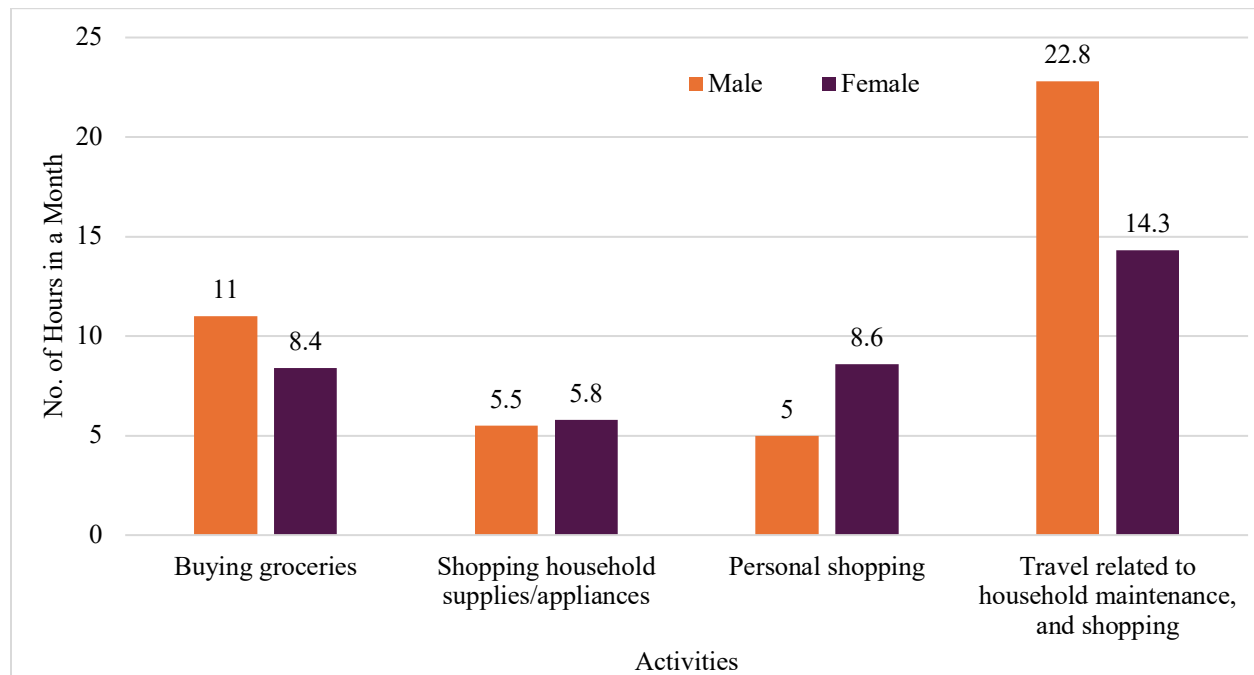


Figure 5 highlights time spend based on number of hours in a month for shopping. It reveals that males spent substantially larger amount of time in a month as compared to females. These activities comprise of doing groceries, shopping household supplies/appliances, personal shopping and travel related to household maintenance and shopping. Males spend 11, 5.5, 5 and 22.8 hours in one month while females spend 8.4, 5.8, 8.6 and 14.3 hours per month for the sequence of above-mentioned activities. It is very much evident from Pakistani culture where mobility of women is restricted, therefore males spent more time on shopping than females. While the time spent for shopping of household personal shopping by females outweighs than males.

Figure 6:

Gender difference in time spent on collection of household supplies for domestic care activities

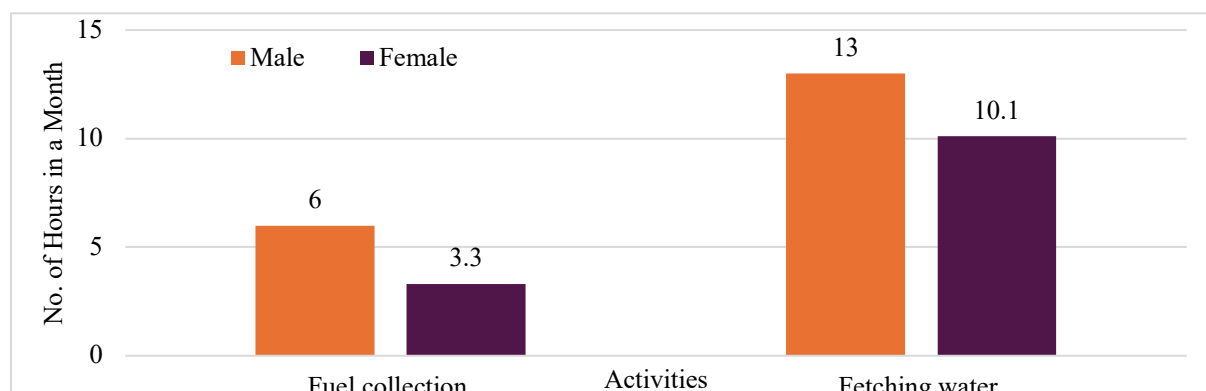


Figure 6 shows time spend based on number of hours in a month on collection of household supplies for domestic care. These activities (consisting of fuel collection and fetching water) are related to outdoor activities. Males are spending 6 and 13 hours in a month while females are not much far from males, they are spending 3.3 and 10.1 hours per month for fuel collection and fetching water in urban context of Pakistan.

Figure 7:

Gender difference in time spent per month on livestock management and gardening

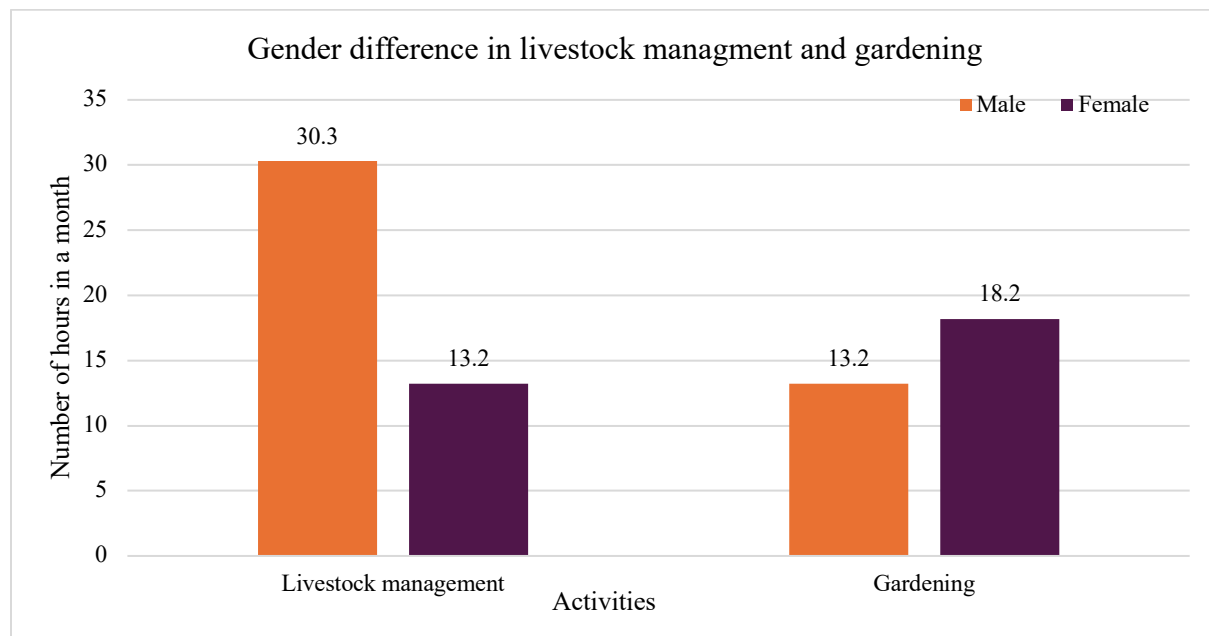


Figure 7 reveals time spend based on hours in a month on livestock management and gardening. The figure highlighted that females are more inclined towards gardening as they spend 17.2 hours per month on it while males are spending 12.2 hours on these activities. The time spent on taking care of livestock is dominantly by males than females that is 30.3 and 13.2 hours per month in an urban setting of Pakistan.

Figure 8:

Gender difference in total time spent on different dimensions of domestic care activities

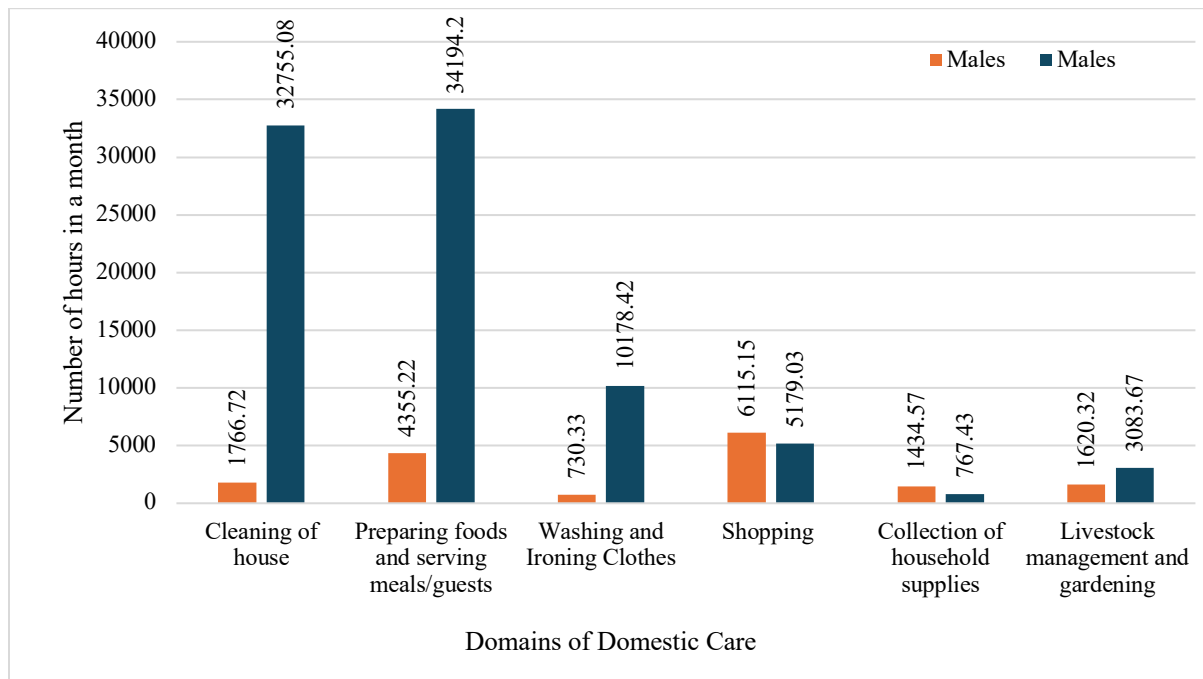


Figure 8 illustrates the gender difference in time spent based on the number of hours per month on different activities of domestic care. Females spend the most time on preparing food and serving meals to the family and guests, followed by cleaning of house, washing and ironing of clothes, shopping, livestock management and gardening, and collection of household supplies. The quantum for this domestic care is: 34194.2, 32755.08, 10178.42, 5179.03, 3083.67, 767.43 hours for one month. Male spent the highest time on shopping (6115.15 hours), followed by preparing food and serving meals/guest (4355.22 hours), cleaning of house (1766.72 hours), livestock management (1620.32 hours), collection of household supplies (1434.57 hours) and washing/ironing of clothes (730.33 hours) per month. It is understandable that male spent higher time than females on the dimension of domestic care which are related to activities outside of house (i.e., shopping, collection of household supplies, livestock management). On the other hand, the activities related to indoor tasks including cleaning of house, preparing food, washing/ironing clothes and even gardening, females dominate in spending higher time than males. These results are supported by the study conducted Arora (2015) that analyzed data on time allocation in Mozambique and discovered that males dedicate around 1.5 hours per day to household duties, but women spend over five times as much time, namely 7.6 hours (Dhungel, 2022; Rios-Avila, et al., 2021).

Figure 9:

Gender difference in total time per month spent on domestic care activities

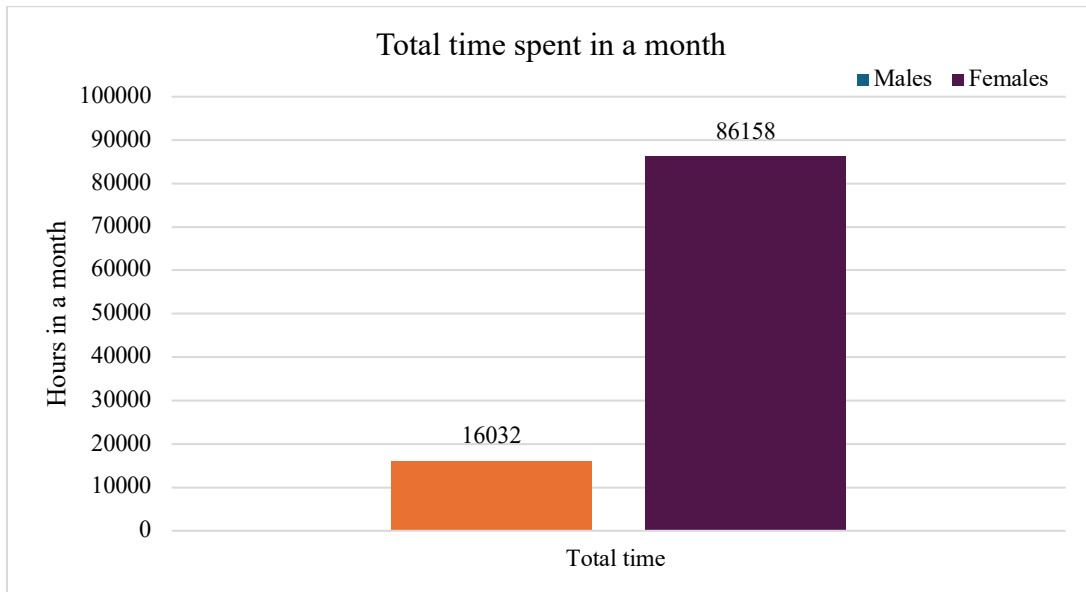


Figure 9 shows the total time spent by males and females in different 19 domestic care activities in a month. It reveals that females spend around 86158 hours in total in a month on domestic care activities. Whereas males spend 16032 hours in total on domestic care activities in a month. It is pertinent to mention that females spend almost more than 5 times higher time spending on domestic care activities than males.

Economic Value of Domestic Care

Figure 10:

Gender difference in economic value of different dimensions of domestic care activities

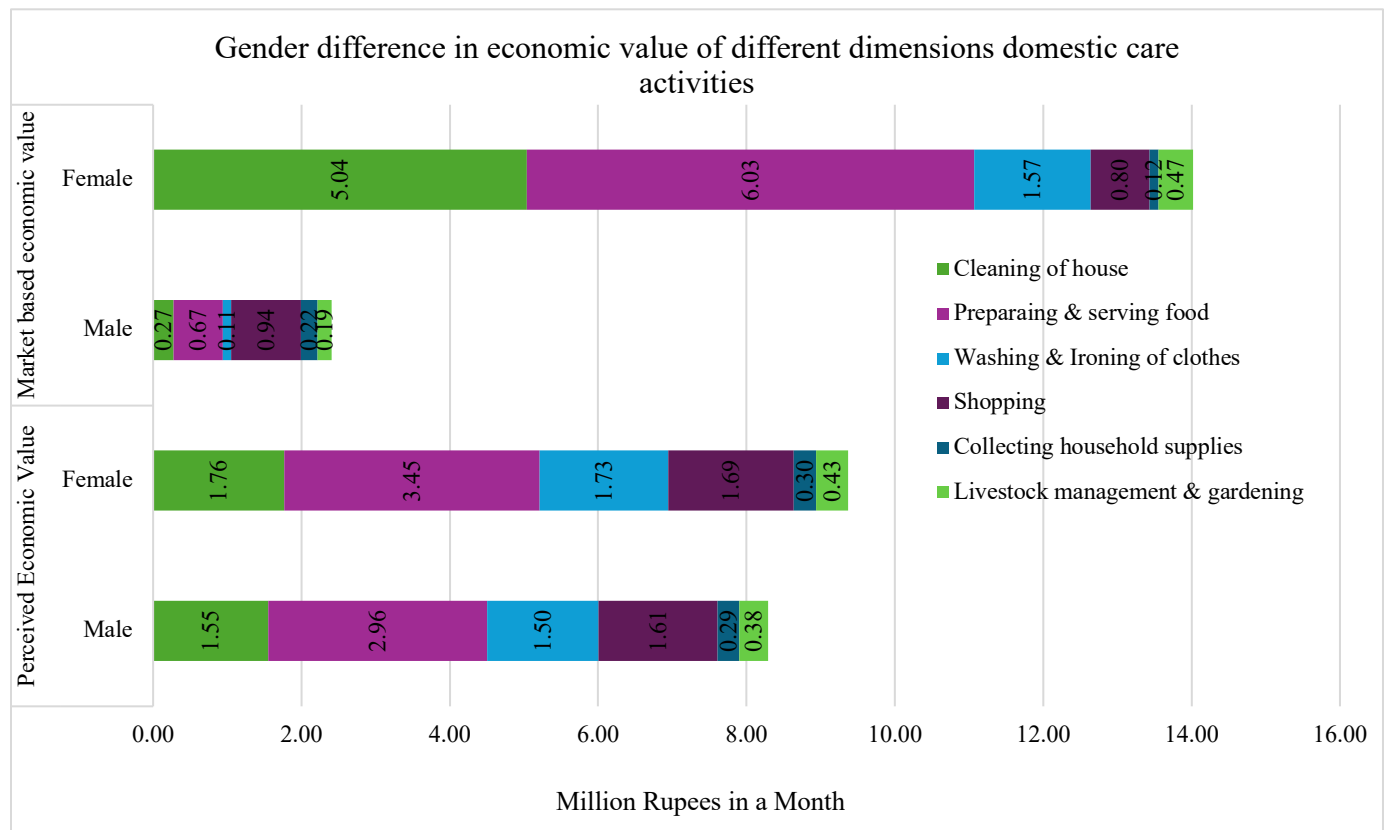


Figure 10 illustrates the economic value of various domestic care activities, as perceived and determined by the market. For women, the perceived economic value of cleaning the house is 1.76 million rupees per month, while for males, it is 1.55 million rupees. However, the actual market-based value of female economic value (5.04 million rupees) which is higher than the perceived value, indicating that females are undervaluing their contributions. The perceived economic value of the preparation and serving food is 3.45 million rupees for females and 2.96 million rupees for males per month. In contrast, the market-based economic value for women is significantly higher (6.03 million rupees), indicating that they are undervaluing their responsibilities. Conversely, the value for men is low (0.67 million rupees), indicating that they highly value their contributions to domestic tasks. The perceived value of washing and ironing clothes is higher for women than for men (1.73 million rupees versus 1.50 million rupees per month), while the market-based economic value is higher for women (1.57 million rupees versus 0.11 million rupees per month). This indicates that males place a high value on their role in the washing and ironing of clothes. The perceived economic value for household shopping is 1.61 million rupees for males and 1.69 million rupees for females while the market based economic value for household shopping is 0.94 and 0.80 million rupees for males and females respectively. This indicates that both males and females' priorities their contribution. In the similar manner, collection of household supplies, the perceived economic value for

females is 0.30 and 0.29 million rupees for males. While the market based economic value calculated for the same activities for females is 0.12 and 0.22 million rupees for males. This shows that participants prioritize their involvement in these activities. The last activities of livestock management, perceived economic value for females is 0.43 million rupees and 0.38 million rupees for males per month. While the market-based economic value for these activities for females is 0.47 and 0.19 million rupees for males. A lot of researches indicate that caregiving activities are frequently under value in terms of financial recognition and compensation to females (Kolovich, et al., 2024; Maestre, & Thorpe, 2016; Grimshaw, & Rubery, 2007). This has been mentioned that the reasons behind this gender disparity is due to traditional associated activities which are neglected and male-dominated in major societies and industries of the world (Oxfam, 2020).

Figure 11

Gender difference in total economic value of domestic care activities

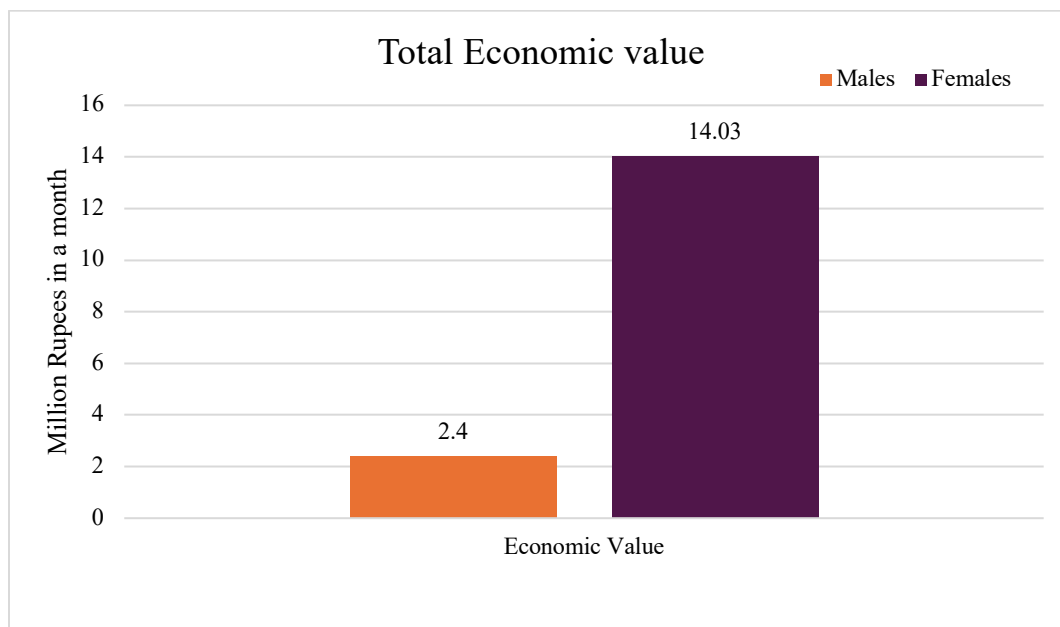


Figure 11 shows the total economic value for 19 domestic care activities by males and females in a month. For females the total economic value of all these activities worth 14.03 million Pakistani rupees while for male, the economic worth is 2.4 million Pakistani rupees in a month based on 19 domestic care activities which are calculated on the minimum wage rate of workers on a monthly basis.

Conclusion

Domestic care responsibilities between men and women are not equally shared in Pakistani society but there is a huge disparity between them to perform these activities. There are 19 domestic care activities that are measured in the urban context of Pakistan. The average daily commitment of males to these activities is 3.4 hours per day, which is significantly lower than that of women, who perform approximately 9 hours per day on these activities. The total time spent by females is more than 86000 hours per month as compared to males, this time spent is 16000 hours per month. The economic value calculated against these activities for females is 14.03 million Pakistani rupees while the economic value for males is 2.4 million Pakistani rupees per month. This shows a significant gender difference based on the government per month minimum wage for workers. Despite this gender-based disparity, unpaid caregiving labor remains a critical component of society, providing maintenance to communities and individual lives. Addressing this gender disparity is important to promote sustainable development, enhance social well-being, and to promote gender equality. To achieve this objective, it is essential to encourage male involvement in caregiving responsibilities and ensure that caregiving responsibilities are organized in a manner that facilitates women's participation in society, rather than impedes it. It is imperative that we acknowledge and provide support for the valuable contributions of women in the care industry to create a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable future for all.

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