



Investigating the Impact of Gender, Age, and Parenthood on Household Chores: A Study of Delhi NCR

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Abstract

This study investigates gender disparities in household work and examines how age and parenthood influence the time spent on domestic chores. Using a quantitative approach with convenience sampling, data were collected from 66 respondents through a structured online survey. The results reveal significant gender differences in household chore distribution, with women consistently spending more time than men, especially on cleaning, washing, and laundry. Age also plays a significant role; individuals above 26 years reported notably more involvement in housework compared to younger individuals. Furthermore, having children was strongly associated with increased hours spent on domestic tasks, particularly childcare and eldercare. These findings highlight the persistence of gendered divisions of labor and the compounding impact of age and family structure on unpaid household responsibilities. The study contributes to ongoing discourse on gender roles, domestic labor, and the invisible load disproportionately carried by women in households.

Keywords: *Unpaid Work; Household Chores; Gender Inequality; Time-Use Patterns*

1. Introduction

As defined by the Gender and Work Database (n.d.), unpaid work refers to the production of goods or services that are consumed by those within or outside a household, but not for sale in the market. According to UN Women, Asia and Pacific (2016), the cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, elderly and sick at home by family members, commonly known as unpaid care and domestic work, is often taken for granted although it is vital for both people's well-being and the functioning of the market oriented economy; Globally, women work more than men: on average they perform at least two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. This implies that women, particularly the poorest and most disadvantaged women, have the double burden of both paid and unpaid work. Recognizing and

addressing the contributions of unpaid work is crucial to creating a more inclusive and accurate understanding of economic productivity.

Based on the information by UN Women Asia and Pacific (2016), Unpaid care and domestic work have an opportunity cost, which is key in discussions on the impacts on women's development. This concerns the effective use of human resources as the most valuable resource of development. Its impacts are multidimensional throughout all spheres: education, employment, participation in political life and health. The impacts are greater on poor women who are not able to access expensive private services and technologies that would relieve their strenuous unpaid care and domestic work, especially in poor and remote areas underserved by public support. As indicated in the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights of the United Nation General Assembly, "unpaid care work is positioned as a major human rights issue" (UN General Assembly, 2013). Having no enjoyment or access to good health, education services and decent work with good pay due to the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, women's rights are violated. Thus, unpaid care and domestic work is an influencing factor on the realization of women's rights.

Women across the globe continue to disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid domestic labor, a trend that is evident in nearly every country, regardless of economic development or cultural context. ILO (2024) states that, Globally, around 1.6 billion women and 800 million men are outside the labour force, with 45% of these women and 5% of these men citing care responsibilities as the reason for their non-participation. Among women aged 25 to 54, the proportion citing care as the reason for being outside the workforce rises to two-thirds (379 million women). Women with lower education and those in rural areas also face higher barriers to workforce participation due to care responsibilities.

The overwhelming burden of unpaid domestic and caregiving labor has far-reaching economic consequences for women. A report from McKinsey Global Institute (2016) estimates that if women participated in the workforce at the same rate as men and had equal access to paid work opportunities, global GDP could increase by 28 trillion dollars by 2025.

Many recent studies have focused on this problem. A study (George and Shaji, 2024), tried to calculate the economic worth of the unpaid domestic work that Indian housewives perform but which is not included in the national income statistics. Methods like opportunity cost and replacement wage had been used to estimate a salary to the unpaid work. The findings of the study revealed that the opportunity cost for women engaged in unpaid domestic duties post-marriage and motherhood enumerated to approximately from Rs. 15-18 lakhs over their working life span. Another study (Singh and Pattanaik, 2020), examined the magnitude and factors that influence the unpaid domestic work status of women in India. Women are engaged in unpaid domestic work because of three factors - constraints (social and religious), choices (failure of market and states to provide essential provisioning), and career (low opportunity cost of unpaid work in the market). To accomplish the objectives, the data from various sources both at the micro and macro levels were utilized in this study. The study found that the disproportionate share of domestic work among women is linked to the lack of access to paid employment and women's low status (in terms of education and wealth) in society.

Krishna (2022) examined the nature of unpaid work performed by women and the role of socio-economic factors in explaining the willingness of unpaid women to undertake work in the labour market, using data from unit-level records of employment and unemployment and labour force surveys. Data was sourced from recent employment and unemployment surveys (EUS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). According to the usual principal approach of the EUS, the number of women participating in unpaid domestic work increased from 134 million to 173 million in the rural sector and from 68 million to 83 million in the urban sector between 2004–05 and 2011–12. From a policy perspective, governments should encourage unpaid women who are willing to participate in the labour

market to do so, by reinforcing measures such as provision of basic facilities. A study (Reddy et al., 2021) which examined the time allocation between paid and unpaid work along with wage rates, imputed earnings, and occupational structure among men and women and according to different social groups to establish the extent to which the rural labour market is discriminated by sex and social group. The paper analysed the data using labour supply model and wage model. The study found that males spend more significant hours on economic activities compared to females. As a result, a vast monetary income gap between men and women is observed, even though women work more hours if economic and non-economic activities are considered.

While gender remains a central factor in the distribution of unpaid labour, other socioeconomic variables—such as household income, education level, marital status, and parenthood—also significantly influence the time spent on household work. Yet, these dynamics are often underexplored, especially within higher socioeconomic groups where such labour may be less visible but no less significant. Understanding what is missing or unaccounted for in conventional assessments of domestic work is essential. It sheds light on structural inequalities and helps reframe how we value and recognize unpaid contributions within households.

This study aims to examine gender-based differences in the division of household labour and to assess the influence of age and the presence of children on the average time spent on chores. Adopting a quantitative approach, the research draws on survey data collected from residents of Delhi NCR who belong to the upper socioeconomic strata, offering insight into domestic labour patterns within this specific demographic.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Aim and Hypotheses

The primary objective of this study is to examine how household labour is divided across gender lines and to analyze the extent to which factors such as age and the presence of children influence the average time spent on domestic chores. The study specifically focuses on individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in the Delhi NCR region, aiming to capture patterns that may be overlooked in broader national analyses.

Following are the hypotheses of the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the time spent in total work done in a household based on gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the time spent in cleaning the house based on gender.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the time spent washing the dishes based on gender.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the time spent cooking based on gender.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the time spent doing the laundry based on gender.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference in the time spent in childcare based on gender.

H₀₇: There is no significant difference in the time spent in eldercare based on gender.

H₀₈: There is no significant difference in the time spent in dropping kids to school based on gender.

H₀₉: There is no significant difference in the time spent in total work done in a household based on age.

H₁₀: There is no significant difference in the time spent in cleaning the house on the basis of age.

H₁₁: There is no significant difference in the time spent washing the dishes based on age.

H₁₂: There is no significant difference in the time spent cooking based on age.

H₁₃: There is no significant difference in the time spent doing the laundry based on age.

H₁₄: There is no significant difference in the time spent in childcare based on age.

H₁₅: There is no significant difference in the time spent in eldercare based on age.

H₁₆: There is no significant difference in the time spent in dropping kids to school based on age.

H₁₇: There is no significant difference in the time spent in total work done in a household based on having kids.

H₁₈: There is no significant difference in the time spent in cleaning the house based on having kids.

H₁₉: There is no significant difference in the time spent washing the dishes based on having kids.

H₂₀: There is no significant difference in the time spent cooking based on having kids.

H₂₁: There is no significant difference in the time spent doing the laundry based on having kids.

H₂₂: There is no significant difference in the time spent in childcare based on having kids.

H₂₃: There is no significant difference in the time spent in eldercare based on having kids.

H₂₄: There is no significant difference in the time spent in dropping kids to school based on having kids.

2.2 Research Design and Data Collection

This paper employs a quantitative approach as standardized scales and surveys were used for the purpose of achieving the research objective. The study collects data using convenience sampling through a Google form survey. The survey was divided into four sections- demographic information, employment-related information, house help-related information, and information related to personal engagement in housework. Under the demographic information section, data for indicators such as age, gender, marital status, number of children, education level was collected.

Data on employment status included variables such as current employment (employed/unemployed), total effective work weeks per year, average weekly work hours, and annual income. To capture the extent of external domestic support, respondents were asked to report the specific household tasks their house help assist with, along with the monthly compensation paid for these services. In the section on personal engagement in household work, participants provided estimates of the number of hours they personally spent on various domestic responsibilities. These included tasks such as cleaning, dishwashing, cooking, laundry, childcare, eldercare, and transporting children to school (Datt,2024).

2.3 Sampling and Sample Characteristics

The study employed a convenience sampling technique. The survey had a total of 84 respondents, but due to inconsistencies in responses 18 participants were removed. The final sample size amounted to 66 units. One-third of the total respondents were aged 18 or below, approximately 21% from 27-35 years, 18% from 36-45 years, 15% from 16-26 years, 9% from 46-55 years, and only 3% from 56-65 years. The sample was equally divided between the age category of under and over 26. Out of the 66 people surveyed, 53% of respondents were females and 47% were males. Moreover, 44% of people were employed full time, 35% were students, 12% were self-employed, 7.5% were homemakers, and 1.5% were retired. Lastly, 59% of the respondents were single, 39.5% married, and 1.5% widowed.

2.4 Ethics and Informed Consent

Prior to the initiation of data collection, explicit informed consent was procured from all participants in the study. This was enacted by explaining things briefly at the start of the Google Form survey. This way, participants agreed to be a part of the study right when they began answering the questions. This undertaking was reinforced through a definitive statement as follows: "By proceeding with the survey, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided and voluntarily consent to participate in this study." It was guaranteed that the information they provide will be kept confidential and their identity will be revealed to no third party. Furthermore, including the aspect that there is no potential risk of responding to the survey, along with the fact that they could terminate their participation at any point of the study, if they feel any sort of discomfort.

3. Results and Discussion

This section investigates if gender, age and having children affect the total number of hours spent in household chores.

Table 1: Independent T-Test Analysis of Total household work done in a week based on Gender

Household Work Categories	Gender	n	M	SD	t	p
Total Work done in household	Male	31	12.77	15.66	-2.09	0.041**
	Female	35	23.99	26.81		
Time spent cleaning the house	Male	31	1.61	1.48	-2.93	0.005***
	Female	35	31.13	2.63		
Time spent washing the dishes	Male	31	0.48	0.92	-2.58	0.013**
	Female	35	1.71	2.65		
Time spent cooking	Male	31	3.26	4.96	-1.32	0.193
	Female	35	5	5.79		
Time spent doing laundry	Male	31	0.79	1.82	-2.65	0.01***
	Female	35	2.26	2.64		
Time spent in childcare	Male	31	3.52	8.7	-1.55	0.127
	Female	35	8	14.41		
Time spent in eldercare	Male	31	2.58	5.29	-0.38	0.702
	Female	35	3.09	5.36		
Time spent in dropping kids to school	Male	31	0.53	1.42	-0.62	0.539
	Female	35	0.74	1.34		

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

As shown in Table 1, there are significant differences in time spent in different household chores between males and females. For total hours spent in household chores in a week, females ($M=23.93$, $SD=26.81$) maintained higher scores than males ($M=12.77$, $SD=15.66$), $t=-2.09$, $p<0.05$. Hence, H_{01} stands rejected. Similarly for Time spent cleaning the house females ($M=3.13$, $SD=2.63$) maintained higher scores than males ($M=1.61$, $SD=1.48$), $t=-2.93$, $p<0.01$, H_{02} stands rejected. Females ($M=1.71$, $SD=2.65$) again, maintained higher scores than males ($M=0.48$, $SD=0.92$), $t=-2.58$, $p<0.05$ for Time spent washing the dishes, H_{03} stands rejected. Even for Time spent doing the laundry, females ($M=2.26$, $SD=2.64$) maintained higher scores than males ($M=0.79$, $SD=1.82$), $t=-2.65$, $p=0.01$, H_{05} stands rejected. As observed in the table, there is no significant difference in time spent in cooking, childcare, eldercare and dropping kids to school on the basis of gender; Hence, H_{04} , H_{06} , H_{07} , H_{08} are retained.

It is evident by the table that women overall do significantly more household work than men because of deep-rooted gender norms, cultural expectations, and traditional roles that assign domestic responsibilities primarily to women. These patterns are established early in childhood and reinforced across generations, with girls and young women expected to participate more in household chores than their male counterparts (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). As seen, cleaning, washing, doing the laundry are the “cleaning” chores which men are not significantly spending more time in. According to the way society is set up, all of these tasks are heavily ingrained in women but cooking, childcare, eldercare are still places where men are coping up and spending their time. Cooking is sometimes regarded as requiring more skill, creativity, and planning compared to routine chores like cleaning or laundry. This can elevate its status in the hierarchy of household tasks, making it seem less menial. It also involves nurturing others through food, which can be viewed as a more rewarding or meaningful activity than other chores (2025). This finding supports the results of previous research saying that, “The sociality of cooking is not only about homosocial leisure but also a way for men to maintain heterosocial relationships and assume domestic responsibility.”

This caregiving aspect elevates eldercare above simple chores because it requires empathy, skill, and often specialized training, distinguishing it from tasks like cleaning or laundry that are repetitive and less socially valued (Vitality Care, 2024). Eldercare aims to maintain the senior’s independence and quality of life by providing not only physical assistance but also emotional and social support, which routine household chores typically lack (Regal Home Health Care, 2023). Dropping kids to school is often viewed as part of parenting duties that contribute to children's safety and well-being rather than mere household maintenance. Parents or caregivers driving or walking children to and from school engage in a role that supports the child’s daily routine and social development, which is valued beyond the physical effort involved. This transportation provides children with safety, structure, and opportunities for social interaction and learning. University of Toronto states that Walking to school, for example, increases children’s physical activity, alertness, and readiness to learn, positively impacting academic performance and attention (2015).

Figure 1 compares the average weekly time spent by males and females on various household chores. In every chore, females consistently spend more time than males. Females dedicate more hours in cleaning the house, washing the dishes, laundry, and childcare than males. Males have contributed comparatively more in cooking, eldercare and dropping kids to school, but their involvement is still lower than females. The average total time spent in household work done by women is almost double than done by men.

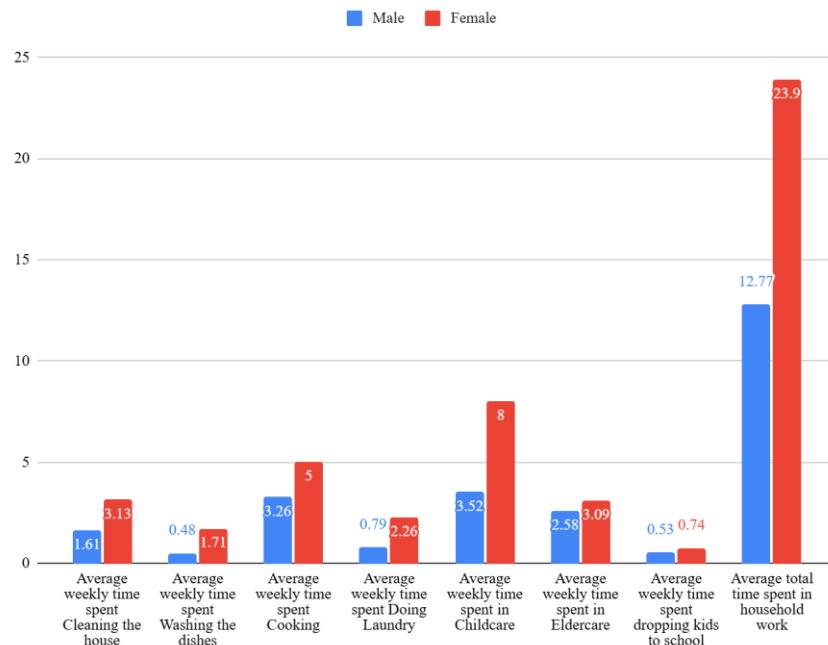


Figure 1: Average Time Spent of Different Household Chores on the basis of Gender (N=66)

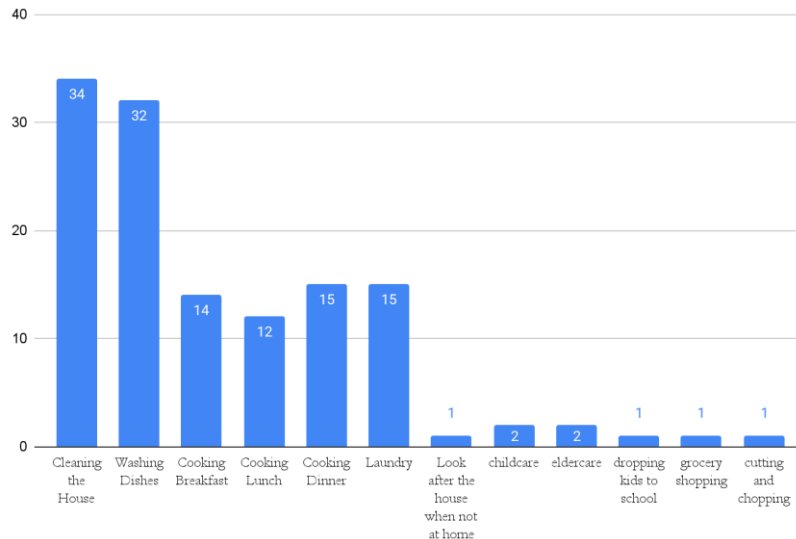


Figure 2: Count of Work Done in Household by House helps (N=34)

This bar chart shows us the different categories of chores assigned to house helps as provided by female respondents. Out of the 34 women, all of them are assisted by house help for cleaning the house, 32 of them need help with washing dishes, 14 with cooking breakfast, 12 with cooking lunch, 15 with cooking dinner and laundry each, 2 with childcare and eldercare each, and 1 each with looking after the house, dropping kids to school, cutting and chopping, and grocery shopping. As seen in Figure 1, women spend 23.9 hours on average in a week in household chores, that is almost double of work men are doing. The most time spent by females is in childcare, cooking, cleaning, and eldercare. However, for males, it is

childcare and eldercare. As seen in Figure 2, with deeper dive into female respondents, the paper tries to take a look into what chores are dedicated to house helps by females, and the graph showcases that activities like cleaning, washing, cooking, and laundry are the four major activities that are delegated to most house helps in Delhi NCR which is why their time cuts down. Whereas, in contrast, childcare, which is the highest category for them, is not seen to be delegated as much.

Table 2: Independent T-Test Analysis of Work Done in Household in a Week based on Age (N=66)

Household Work Categories	Variable	n	M	SD	t	p
Total Work done in household	Over 26 years	34	30.35	26.49	5.15	<0.001***
	26 years and under	32	6.3	6.07		
Time spent cleaning the house	Over 26 years	34	3.32	2.6	3.69	0.001***
	26 years and under	32	2.45	1.36		
Time spent washing the dishes	Over 26 years	34	1.96	2.66	3.63	0.001***
	26 years and under	32	0.27	0.51		
Time spent cooking	Over 26 years	34	6.03	6.74	3.08	0.004***
	26 years and under	32	2.22	2.47		
Time spent doing laundry	Over 26 years	34	2.21	2.58	2.33	0.023**
	26 years and under	32	0.89	1.99		
Time spent in childcare	Over 26 years	34	11.18	15.23	4.16	<0.001***
	26 years and under	32	0.28	1.28		
Time spent in eldercare	Over 26 years	34	4.44	6.05	2.67	0.01***
	26 years and under	32	1.16	3.74		
Time spent in dropping kids to school	Over 26 years	34	1.22	1.72	4	<0.001***
	26 years and under	32	0.03	0.18		

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

As shown in Table 2, there are significant differences in time spent in different household chores between ages over 26 years and under 26 years. For total hours spent in household chores in a week, over 26 years ($M=30.35$, $SD=26.49$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=6.3$, $SD=6.07$), $t=5.15$, $p<0.001$, H_{09} stands rejected. Similarly for Time spent cleaning the house over 26 years ($M=3.32$, $SD=2.6$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=2.45$, $SD=1.36$), $t=3.69$, $p=0.001$, H_{10} stands rejected. Over 26 years ($M=1.96$, $SD=2.66$) again, maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=0.27$, $SD=0.51$), $t=3.63$, $p=0.001$ for Time spent washing the dishes, H_{11} stands rejected. For time spent in cooking, over 26 years ($M=6.03$, $SD=6.74$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=2.22$, $SD=2.47$), $t=3.08$, $p<0.01$, H_{12} stands rejected. Even for Time spent doing the laundry, over 26 years ($M=2.21$, $SD=2.58$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=0.89$, $SD=1.99$), $t=2.33$, $p < 0.05$, H_{13} stands rejected. Similarly for Time spent in childcare, over 26 years ($M=11.18$, $SD=15.23$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=0.28$, $SD=1.28$), $t=4.16$, $p=0.01$, H_{14} stands rejected. Over 26 years ($M=4.44$, $SD=6.05$) again, maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=1.16$, $SD=3.74$), $t=2.67$, $p=0.01$ for Time spent in eldercare, H_{15} stands rejected. Even for Time spent in dropping kids to school, over 26 years ($M=1.22$, $SD=1.72$) maintained higher scores than under 26 years ($M=0.03$, $SD=0.18$), $t=4$, $p<0.001$, H_{16} stands rejected.

Table 3: Independent T-Test Analysis of Work Done in Household in a Week based on Having Children (N=42) [non-students]

Household Work Categories	Variable	n	M	SD	t	p
Total Work done in household	No	18	8.39	7.01	-5.72	<0.001***
	Yes	24	39.94	25.76		
Time spent cleaning the house	No	18	1.97	1.71	-2.77	0.009***
	Yes	24	3.88	2.72		
Time spent washing the dishes	No	18	0.89	0.83	-2.25	0.033**
	Yes	24	2.35	3.04		
Time spent cooking	No	18	3.33	3.63	-2.36	0.024**
	Yes	24	7.38	7.26		
Time spent doing laundry	No	18	1.64	0.18	-1.4	0.168
	Yes	24	2.73	0.86		
Time spent in childcare	No	18	0	0	-4.85	<0.001***
	Yes	24	15.83	15.99		
Time spent in eldercare	No	18	0.56	1.34	-4	<0.001***
	Yes	24	6.04	6.54		
Time spent in dropping kids to school	No	18	0	0	-4.63	<0.001***
	Yes	24	1.73	1.83		

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Similarly, in Table 3, there are significant differences in time spent in different household chores between people having kids and not having kids. For total hours spent in household chores in a week, having children (M=39.94, SD=25.76) maintained higher scores than not having children (M=8.39, SD=7.01), $t = -5.72$, $p < 0.001$, H_{17} stands rejected. Similarly for Time spent cleaning the house having kids (M=3.88, SD=2.72) maintained higher scores than no kids (M=1.97, SD=1.71), $t = -2.77$, $p < 0.01$, H_{18} stands rejected. Having kids (M=2.35, SD=3.04) again, maintained higher scores than no kids (M=0.89, SD=0.83), $t = -2.25$, $p < 0.05$ for Time spent washing the dishes, H_{19} stands rejected. For time spent in cooking, having kids (M=7.38, SD=7.26) maintained higher scores than no kids (M=3.33, SD=3.63), $t = -2.36$, $p < 0.05$, H_{20} stands rejected. Similarly for Time spent in childcare, having kids (M=15.83, SD=15.99) maintained higher scores than no kids as they spent no time in childcare, $t = -4.85$, $p < 0.001$, H_{22} stands rejected. Having kids (M=6.04, SD=6.54) again, maintained higher scores than no kids (M=0.56, SD=1.34), $t = -4$, $p < 0.001$ for Time spent in eldercare, H_{23} stands rejected. no kids spent no time dropping kids to school, having kids (M=1.73, SD=1.83), $t = -4.63$, $p < 0.001$, H_{24} stands rejected. As observed in the table, there is no significant difference in time spent in laundry on the basis of having children; Hence, H_{21} stands retained.

It is clear from Table 2 and 3 that as you age, the number of responsibilities and household chores increase, despite your gender, education level, or income level. Younger adults tend to do fewer chores, possibly due to living arrangements, less responsibility for household management, or fewer family obligations; they are more inclined towards educating themselves, playing, and growing. A study conducted in the context of the Indian subcontinent also found that it would be expected that older women compared with younger women would be more likely to be primarily responsible for household tasks, including feeding the family (Vikram et al., 2023). As seen in Table 2, the number of responsibilities increases by the age of 26, as people get a full-time job or get married and further have a child. Household chores increase when you have children primarily because children add to the daily demands of the household and require additional care, supervision, and maintenance tasks. Parenting involves not just routine chores but also tasks related to childcare such as preparing meals, cleaning up after children, managing their belongings, and providing emotional and physical care, increasing the time they put into

the chores. This finding supports the results of previous research showing that the presence of children thus multiplies the number and variety of chores because parents must manage both their own tasks and support children's needs and participation in household maintenance (Tepper et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine differences in household work based on gender and to assess whether age and parenthood influence the amount of time individuals spend on domestic chores. The findings clearly demonstrate that women continue to bear a disproportionately high burden of household labor compared to men, especially in routine and repetitive chores such as cleaning, dishwashing, and laundry. While men show marginally higher participation in cooking, eldercare, and school-drop duties, their overall contribution remains significantly lower. Moreover, individuals above the age of 26 and those with children spend substantially more time on household tasks, indicating that domestic responsibilities intensify with age and family obligations.

These findings have far-reaching implications. At a societal level, they underscore the persistence of gendered expectations and the undervaluation of unpaid labor, particularly in urban Indian households. Despite growing discourse around equality, domestic spaces remain sites of entrenched inequality. Policymakers and employers must recognize the unpaid domestic workload as a barrier to women's economic participation and well-being. Workplaces can incorporate this understanding into flexible work arrangements and paid caregiving leave to support more equitable sharing of responsibilities. At the household level, the results call for a reevaluation of internal role distributions. Efforts must be made to dismantle stereotypical associations between gender and domestic labor through education, early socialization, and awareness campaigns that promote shared responsibility among all genders.

However, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on convenience sampling reduces the generalizability of the findings, and the self-reported nature of responses may introduce bias. Future research should aim to replicate these findings with a more diverse and representative sample and incorporate longitudinal or qualitative methods to explore how domestic labor evolves across life stages and in different family structures. Ultimately, this study adds to the growing evidence that gender equity must extend beyond public and professional spheres into the private realm of the household if true parity is to be achieved.

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