

Labour and Exclusion in Gender

Perspectives: Gender and Politics of Unpaid

Care Work

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Abstract:

To provide a safe lifestyle and environment for the perpetuation of the human race, the institution of marriage was created by various societies based upon an agreement by a man and woman to become husband and wife to form a family. The study is not necessary to tell sometimes to state that, who is taking care of the household work in an average middle class family. But the study is about the recognition of that work done by women in the family, as their responsibility and the so called value system will screw her up, if in case she is not able to perform those activities well. If any work has an economic value, the care work which is not paid and even not recognized, will definitely have a priceless value.

In many countries, a major goal of the process of liberalization has been to push women to take up paid employment. The burden of supporting the family is increasingly falling on women as men become involuntarily or voluntarily unemployed or their incomes are insufficient for the survival of the families. (Neetha N, 2008). In India, though there has been no explicit state intervention, economic reforms have tremendous impact on the livelihoods of a large section of the population. The participation of poor and middle class women in the labour market has become critical for the survival of families. Though the participation of economic activities of the family somehow made empowered but still the traditionally made constrains of the unpaid household work which is consider as a less standard work and the responsibility of the same pull her back most of time from active social and political participation.

Key word: unpaid work, care work, gender, economy

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Introduction

Unpaid work is perhaps the biggest contribution that women make to the economy.

What is unpaid work?

Society holds to certain assumptions about what constitutes 'work.' For example:

- Work is something you have to do - it's drudgery, not pleasure.
- Work is what happens during the work day from 9 am to 5 pm.
- Work is work when you're paid to do it.
- Work is what happens outside the home.

Many of these assumptions about what work is do not fit with the reality of women's lives. Much of women's work is not structured into workdays but instead intermixed with socializing and play. Many women do many things simultaneously and sometimes have trouble naming which is work and which is not as not all the work is drudgery. Some work, like playing with children, breastfeeding a baby, or tending a garden, can actually be quite enjoyable. As well, much of women's work happens inside the home and much of it is unpaid.

House and yard work, care of children, and care and assistance to seniors. Volunteer work with community or charity organizations is not included. While this definition is limited, it is a significant first step in measuring and recognizing women's unpaid work

Hazards of Unpaid Work

The lack of remuneration for much of women's work has a direct relationship to women's economic security. When women are spending their time on unpaid work, they are not doing paid work. Because only the latter is remunerated, women are earning potential decreases dramatically. The lack of recognition of unpaid work is a chief contributor to women's higher rates of poverty around the world.

Because unpaid work is unpaid, many women must try to fit in paid work around it creating increasingly stressful lives. One Canadian study showed that 38% of working mothers are severely time stressed; averaging 74 hours of paid and unpaid work each week.⁵ the situation for single mothers is particularly difficult as they are unable to rely on another partner to bring in an income. UNPAC's sister organization, the Brandon Women's Centre, published a report called

"No Time Left for Me: A Reality Check on the Impact of Government Policy on Women's Caregiving Work" highlighting the experiences of single moms.

Because most unpaid work takes place in the home, women who do primarily unpaid work can be isolated and at greater risk of physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. Women who do many hours of caregiving work each week need support and need people who will in turn care for them.

Benefits of Unpaid Work

Despite the drawbacks, for many women unpaid work is both tremendously rewarding and satisfying. Taking time to raise one's own children is an experience many women do not want to pass up. For many women, unpaid caregiving work gives them an opportunity to directly experience the results of their labour; the love of their family is more satisfying than money. Many women are frustrated at not being able to afford to take care of their families in a way that feels right to them.

Measuring Unpaid Work

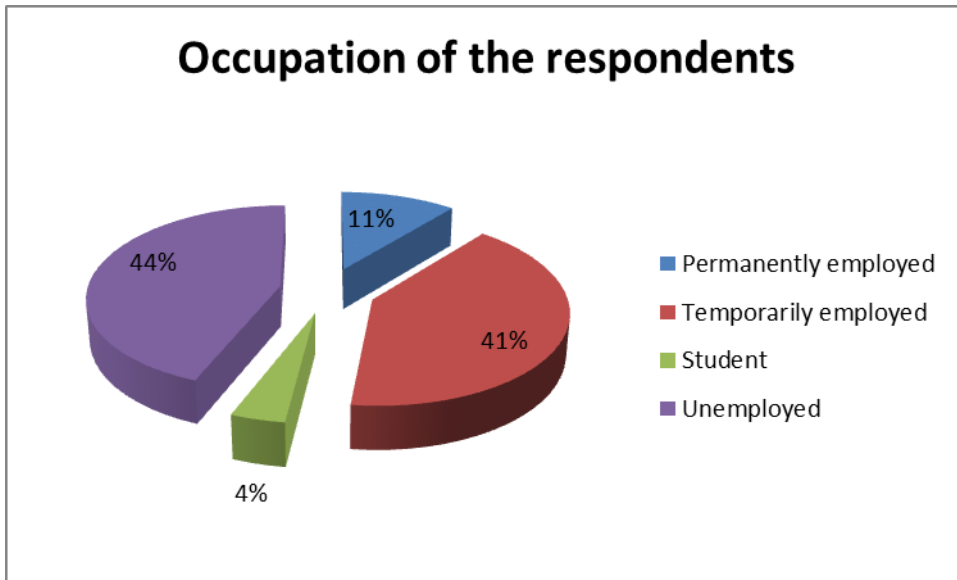
In ancient times, men and women might have the same value for their works. But as the time gone, since women's unpaid work has no money value attached to it, from the world began to use currencies. And that's why it took many years for governments to even measure the hours dedicated to unpaid work. Because of this, much of women's activities were not taken into account in the development of laws and policies. This omission exacerbated existing inequalities. Measuring unpaid work was one of the major challenges to governments that came out of the UN Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 as well as the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Platform for Action that developed out of Beijing calls for national and international statistical organizations to measure unpaid work and reflect its value in satellite accounts to the GDP.*

Care work, which is central to the existence of any society, is organized differently in varied economies. The fact that care work is highly gendered, invisible and unpaid/less paid is uniform across economies, but the social organization of care, the processes involved and its implications differ across countries depending on economic and social policies and its interaction with social values and norms. Understanding of these aspects is important not only in terms of contextual specific analyses, but also in deriving alternative strategies that are otherwise often

guided by the existing normative assumptions of care. I used the daily routine analysis to assess the time of working and to calculate a minimal pay for the works they done.

Occupation of respondents:

Figure No. 1



The respondents were from various professions who were permanently as well temporarily employed (11% & 41%), students (4%) and unemployed (44%).

Acknowledgment/ recognition for unpaid works

The following table shows the recognition of the works done by respondents in their households. It is really astonishing factor that an employed women have more acceptance and their works have been acknowledged compared to the unemployed women. The politics behind this can be analysed as the economic activity/earning capacity of former than the later.

Table No.1

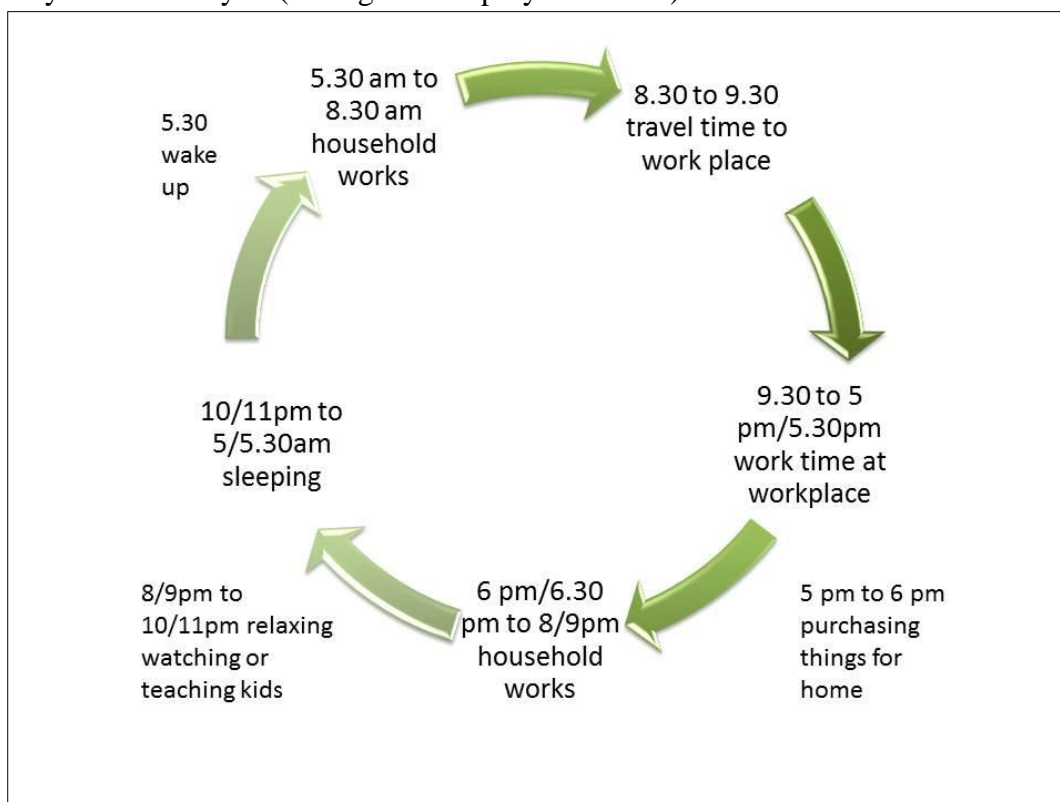
Category Work	Employed		Unemployed	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Look after kids	80%	20%	42%	68%
Cooking	40%	60%	20%	80%

Cleaning	40%	60%	20%	80%
Washing	40%	60%	20%	80%
Taking care of old parents	60%	40%	450%	55%
Look after husband	20%	80%	15%	85%
Gardening/Agriculture/Animal husbandry	82%	18%	60%	40%

Economic versus Non-economic Work

In India, unlike that in the case of other countries, was seen largely as an instrument for improving statistics on labour use and national income. Thus, unpaid care work, which should have been the main focus of such a survey (in the context of other regular employment and unemployment surveys), figured only as a secondary stated objective of the survey. This is clear from the introduction of the report on TUS published by the CSO, which gives an account of the purposes of TUS in developed and developing nations.

Daily routine analysis (average for employed women)

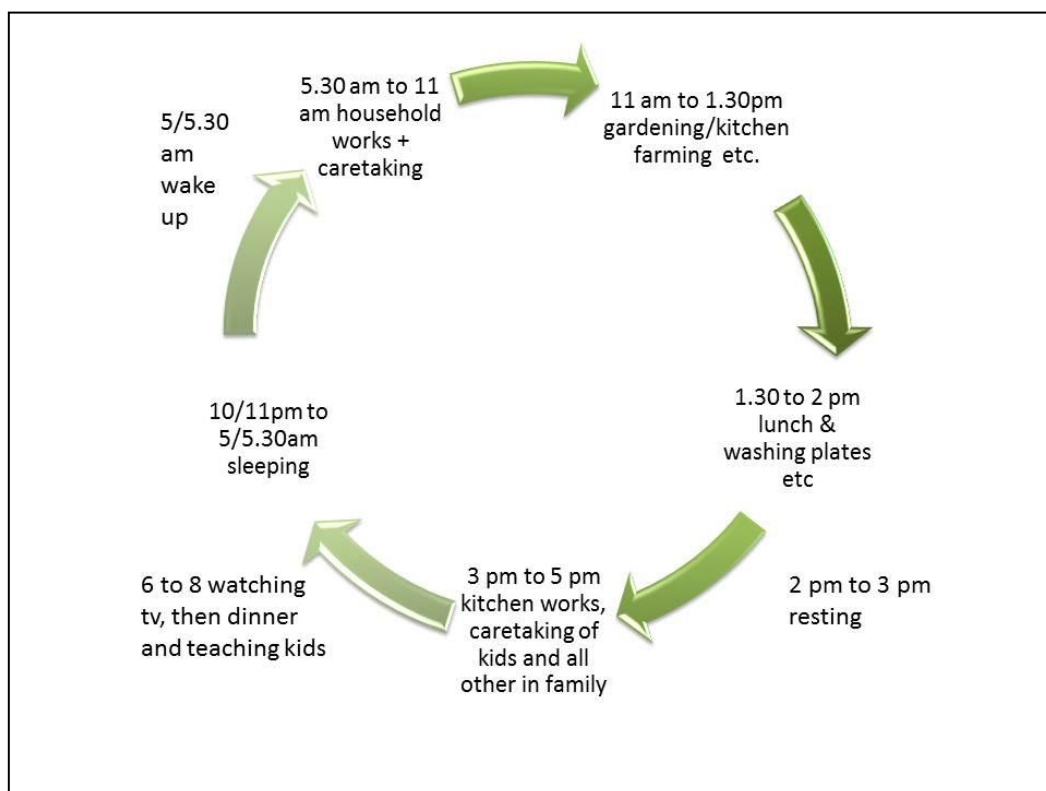


Source: Survey data

An average of the daily routine analysis of the employed women was prepared to analyse the time of working as well the relaxing time of them. From this the researcher found that they are carrying out their house hold works including the care work as well the other kind of work inside the home in which she is not helped by her husband for atleast 6 to 8 hours which is unpaid and most of time not recognized too. Her social spaces were found to be less since the responsibility of care work s at home. But her paid works and the travel time made her to be social compared to unemployed women. And they are getting less time for giving attention to the children’s studies which is a complain made by them and the sleep time also is sometimes less for them compared to the other members of the family. This leads to a conclusion that the unpaid work and the economy of the unpaid work that done by the employed women may have a higher value than the paid work which they doing. The profession of the respondents varies from the teaching, bank employ, journalist, sales women etc.

If calculating the economy of these works they are doing, they will be paid for the household work which have a minimum economic value of 300 per day (for 7 to 8 hours). Annually, their contribution will be more than one lakh to the family as well the nation.

Daily routine analysis (average for unemployed women)



Source: Survey data

Unemployed women respondents who were called “house wives” and known to not have any works were found to working continuously in their households for 7 to 10 hours in a day. And those are unpaid too. The recognition for these works are also less for the house wives when it understood as their ‘responsibility’ to do all these work without complain. The works include care work, economically productive works as farming and animal husbandry too for which the economic yield is their but not directly gained by the women.

If calculating the economy of these works they are doing, they will be paid for the household work which have a minimum economic value of a minimum 600/- per day all together for the other productive works they are doing, being in home, Annually, their contribution will be more than two lakh to the family as well the nation.

Conclusion

The study concludes the phenomena of less acknowledged and less recognized unpaid works of the women. The patriarchal system followed by the society is the reason for ignoring this productive works. The worth of humanity can't be calculated in monetary terms, but our worth is measured and valued every day. There is a very elaborate structure of wages and salaries that tell us how much we are worth in the market economy. The basic assumption in determining worth in our economic system is that productive work is worth what is paid for it. By this definition then, unpaid work is not productive because it is not paid for! The almost universally accepted United Nations System of National Accounts that the GDP in part makes up, divides human activity into market and non-market activity. The two are distinguished not by the nature of the activity, its social benefit, but whether or not money changes hands.

However the non-productivity concept of unpaid work is ridiculous since those works are the most important than anything and have to be recognized and acknowledged. The patriarchy pays the politics for not accepting the fact of the effort of women and the feministic observations and voices are raised up against this issue also.

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* Beijing Platform for Action, Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women.