

## Women's Employment and the Re-allocation of Domestic Chores in Lagos, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examines the redistribution of household chores among household members as women work in formal and informal sectors. The relationship between women working hours and husbands' perception were assessed. Seven household chores were identified as domestic chores and 300 households were engaged in the study. Cooking, and laundry were correlated with hours women spend at work to determine their impact. The findings of the study revealed that men are more committed to conveying their children to and from school (71.1%) rather than to do other domestic chores. The study also shows that more women still cook (55.6%), wash and do laundry (63.3%) and shop for their households (79.6%). There was no significant statistical relationship ( $r$  value -0.0018) between women working for just 3-5hrs daily and cooking for their family. However, there was significant relationship between women that work for 6-8hrs and cooking ( $r$  - values of 0.0109). About 32% of working men do not want their spouse to work while 93% of unemployed husbands prefer their wives to work. The study concludes that better public policies will go a long way in spurring more equal practices in the domestic chores in addition to flexible task arrangements.

**Keywords:** Chores, Domestic, Employment status, Re-allocation and Women.

### Introduction

The need to promote gender balance in developmental activities has stimulated much attention since the 20<sup>th</sup> century when women were accorded an overly privileges that outweighs that of men due to their gender stereotype that promoted gender bias in the labour force (Ricardo *et al*, 2010). Twenty-five years (25) after the World conference on women in Beijing, Nigerian women have achieved considerable progress in sectors like education, labour market participation, community and public engagement, professional attainments, cultural and religious involvement and others where they had hitherto been limited. Women have increasingly become household heads and breadwinners and contributors to household financing, but despite these achievements, reports on gender in Nigeria shows that women still carry out their domestic tasks and most times transfer majority of the tasks to their husbands and other members of their households. The Beijing Declaration affirms national commitment to the inalienable rights of women and girls and their empowerment and equal participation in all spheres of life including the productive

economy coupled with SDG 8, but several limiting factors in the private and public spheres have continue to sustain women's burden and stress (Anosike & Fasona, 2004; Alahira, 2014).

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and international development partners such as UN agencies, the World Bank and others have worked collaboratively to improve women's participation, representation and voice in the public and private sphere. Women's role and participation in productive activities has evolved, demanding new roles from the men and metamorphosing into new family trend and patterns. According to Wayne *et al* (2017), the traditional responsibilities of men as territorial defenders, household heads, household protectors and as the breadwinner are fast becoming things of the past (Akanle & Oluwakemi, 2012).

The changing gender roles obviously disproportionately disagrees with the work of Fagan (2013), who postulated an economic theory of marriage which states that the benefit of marriage can only be achieved in the shared dependence of spouse differentiated roles. According to him, the woman can only be involved in home care, production of food and reproduction while, the man can be engaged in the full employment work. Mills (2015) in his time series study also argued that gender roles were functional necessity for marital stability and the viability of the society itself. These correspondingly unfit into one of the fundamental development objectives of organizations such as the World Bank which has recorded significant progress in gender mainstreaming in all sphere of women's life. Gender issues are entrenched and incorporated into its operational and analytical work through a variety of approaches (Boras *et al*, 2012; Aliaga, 2006).

Before the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, women have little influence over resources, restricting them on jobs and limiting their earning potential in enterprises in the labour market. Women's voices were limited with high rates of gender-based violence reaching alarming levels (Akanle *et al*, 2018). Freedom of movement and political voice pose huge constraints with attitudes and tradition perpetuating many inequalities across generations (World Bank, 2011). The aftermath of the 1985 conference therefore, created high opportunities for women who are now graduating more successfully, out numbering men in higher educational institutions and participating in formal jobs across different race, societies and ethnic groups (Fernandez *et al*, 2016; OECD, 1999) and leading to high percentage of women serving in the various formal and informal establishments with more taking on new responsibility such as paid workforce.

At the moment and in most part of the developing world, women participation in workforce has been perceived by many as having income benefit on the household economic lifestyle especially in homes where dual income earnings are required to boost up provisions. It has also increase women participation in political and economic decision making at different levels, enabling women to be more economically independent and supporting household

standard of living on one hand. on the other hand, this development has triggered the re-allocation of household roles and responsibilities including house chores within the family especially to husbands, children and other household members. In addition, there are array of complex changes, marital issues and family behaviours that emanate due to women's new roles as employer and employee which have been perceived differently by men.

As stated by Gornick, Cerrato and Cifre (2018), some of these roles include non-cohabitation of spouses due to long distant work place, declining fertility due to stress of job, female headed household, girl child taking up the domestic roles of the mother due to her long absence from home and the changing roles of men engaging in household chores in the absence of their wives. In addition, women employment has been argued to correspondingly transform male roles deeper into involvement in family responsibilities, especially caring for the children and cooking (Borelli *et al*, 2012; OECD, 1999; Moreno-Colom, 2017). Apart from the afore-mentioned, women also become overly self-actualized, influential and appear to defame the traditional role of women thereby weakening position of men and improving her economic opportunities for social empowerment and greater equity in the household (Ammons & Kelly, 2015). According to Gray (2018) one consequence of the effect of working woman is that the number of men in the labour force is decreasing with men being responsible for taking care of the children and the household chores. With this, the self-worth of the man is challenged by the woman, and sometimes deprived of conjugal right because of complaints of fatigue caused by jobs (Coltrane, 2000; Lin *et al*, 2017). Consequently, these result to frustration, abuse on the children, infidelity, domestic violence, polygamy practices and sometimes separations or divorces as well as spousal death.

Be that as it may, the assessment of the influence of the working women on the household especially as it is related to re-allocation of house chore have only received little attention in empirical studies in Nigeria due to its complexity and the connectedness of many factors including, globalization, economic emergence of many countries, international trade, industrial development, political, culture, religious as well as the spatial and geographical differences. This study therefore, examines the roles of men and women in the household chores, impact of their working hours on household chores such as cooking and laundry and men's perception about the impact using Ajeromi and Isolo LGA of Lagos, Nigeria as case study.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Description of Study Area**

Two locations were identified for this study in Lagos State. They are Ajeromi/Ifelodun and Oshodi Isolo Local Government Areas (LGAs) as indicated in Figure 1.

### **Ajeromi/Ifelodun LGA**

Ajeromi/Ifelodun LGA is situated in Badagry division area of Lagos state. It is located between latitude 6°45' N to latitude 6°45' N and longitude 3°31'E to longitude 3°34'E. The study area covers about 13.9km<sup>2</sup> and is bounded in the South by the Tincan Island, to the West by Badagry LGA and to the East by Apapa LGA. It has a population size of 1.9 million (Lagos Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The area lacks sufficient basic amenities such as good roads, drainages and portable water. The LGA comprises of 10 local communities namely; Aiyetoro Ajeromi, Araromi Ajeromi, Ashafa, Awodi, Cardoso, Layeni, Onibaba, Orodu, Temidire, and Tolu. It is characterized by poor planning structures. The major trade or occupation of the male in the LGAs is fishing, auto part sales and repairs, and the female engages in petty trade. The area benefits from the import trade filtering from the Apapa/Tincan port and so, some of its population engages in the sale of fairly used clothing, electronics and appliances.

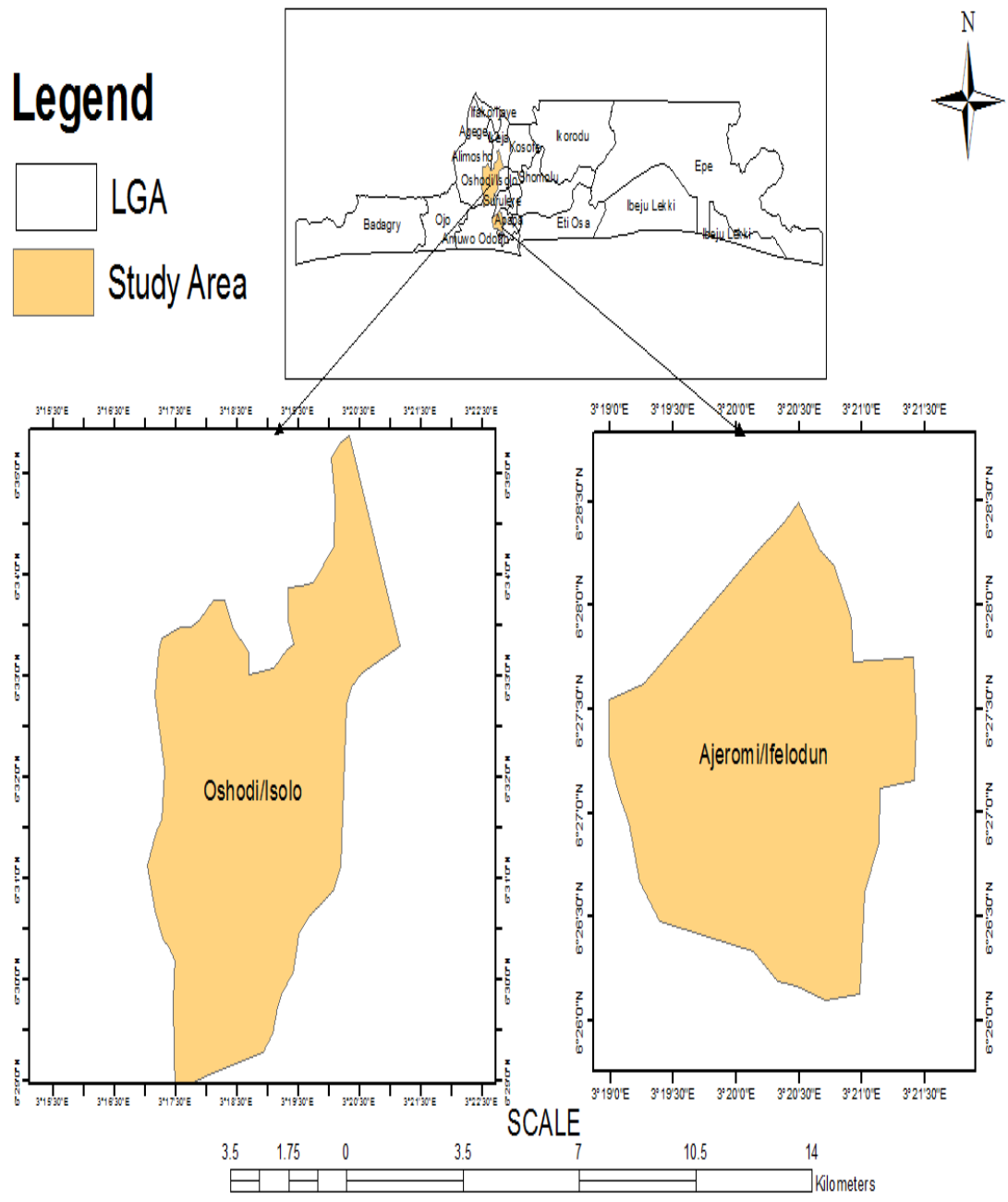


Fig 1. Study Area Maps of Ajeromi-Ifeledun and Oshodi-Isolo LGA.  
Source: University of Lagos GIS Laboratory 2016

## **Oshodi/Isolo LGA**

Oshodi/Isolo LGA is situated at the Ikeja division of Lagos state and was carved out of the erstwhile Mushin LGA. It is located in the Northwest of Lagos. It is located between latitude 6°53'N to latitude 6°54'N and longitude 3°28'E to longitude 3°33'E. The area has an elevation of 6 meters height above sea level. Using 2006 national population census projection, Oshodi/Isolo LGA has 1.5 million populations and an area of 45km<sup>2</sup>. It comprises of few residential zones, an International Lagos airport area, a few entertainment zones and some business/official areas. The area enjoys the privilege of hospitality business as a result of the presence of the airport. In addition, the direct access road to the sea port located at Apapa Wharf and Tincan Island port has promoted haulage businesses and necessitate the ease of the flow of goods and products to other communities in the environs.

## **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

Data for this study were collected through two (2) staged questionnaire administration, four (4) non-conventional Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and extraction of relevant information from the literature. The first questionnaire was structured during the first quarter of 2018 to randomly identified couples across socio-economic status, to solicit background information and also to seek their consent to participate in the second stage of the survey. The selection criteria include; married couples that live together of age 18-55 years, have children between one (1) month old to twelve (12) years of age and where women work in either formal or informal organization either as employer or employee. Information on household spouse employment, women reproductive chores apart from caring, pregnancy and breast feeding, working characteristics, household chores common in the household, time spent on activities, expenditure, income type, dependent size; the perception of men on women employment and the changing roles were elicited.

At the second stage, three hundred (300) copies of questionnaire were administered using the selected segmented household sampling techniques in 20 communities in the two-study area (LGAs), to solicit information on the socio-economic and household characteristics. A number of questions on who does what at the household level and hours spent on household chores were determined. Domestic chore scale was developed using 7 scale that measures chore based on the different tasks in the households. They are cooking, laundry, fetching of water, taking children to and from school, washing of plates, taking children for health care and shopping. Each member of the household was assessed based on the tasks each member does. In addition, the perception of men based on the FGD was assessed using a perception scale of the group of men at car parks, view centers, beer parlours, football pitch and recreation points to gather information on their perception on the impact of the increasing men participation in household chore due to the absent of their spouse from home. A likert scale was used as a psychometric scale to ascertain the respondent level of conformity to some questions in the questionnaire.

In order to assess the relationship between hours women spend at work place and its effect of chores, the two household chores (cooking and laundry) were selected. Measure of symmetry and internal consistencies of the data were estimated. Descriptive analyses and Pearson Correlations between working hours and cooking and laundry were determined. In addition, statistical significant of this relationship was determined. Recording of FGDs were transcribed to captured intensity of men perception and feelings about the spouse work activities (Likert, 1932; Jamieson, 2004; Carifio & Rocco, 2007). Data were represented in graphs, tables and charts.

## **Result of the Findings**

### **Re-allocation of Household Chores**

Based on the seven identified household chores namely, cooking, feeding the children, taking children to school, laundry and cleaning, fetching water, shopping for food stuff, taking children for medical care and washing of plates, the findings of the study revealed that men engaged in all household chores which traditionally are known to be women's responsibility, although, the magnitude and levels of men's involvement differs by households. As depicted on Table 1, 35.6% of the household cooking in the study area were found to be carried out by men (husbands and fathers), 4.5% were involved in laundry and cleaning of the house, 71.1% take children to school, 9.9% shop for food stuffs while 38.7% and 13.4% were involved in washing of plates and taking children to the hospital respectively when their wives are busy at work. This reveals that men are increasingly engaging more in unpaid work on a daily basis as more women involve in the workforce. This implies that gender differences as it affects domestic chores is gradually disappearing as men's participation in all sphere of domestic chores is becoming glaring and narrowing the traditionally "feminine" and "masculine" task and gender gap. The finding supports Ortiz-Ospina and Tzvetkova' (2017) assertion which pointed that the gender gap between men and women narrowed down from 32 percentage points in 1980 to 26 percentage points in 2008. Although the task re-allocation varies among households depending on factor such as the hours men work per day, nature of work and education and level of employment (Gary Barker, 2018). Apart from this, studies have revealed that the number of males in the workforce have been on the decrease as more women are engaged which create more time for males to support the spouse and children in domestic work (Ortiz-Ospina and Tzvetkova, 2017).

The study however revealed that men are more committed to regularly conveying their children to and from school (71.1%) rather than to do other chores, while despite the women's work in both formal and informal sector, more women still cook (55.6%), wash and clean (63.3%) and in addition shop for their households (79.6%). 28.2% of working women wash plates while 56.7% take their children for medical attention. This revealed that women combine paid and unpaid work and even work more hours per day than men do. According to Ricardo *et al* (2010) women carry out three times more of the daily care work than men, ranging from four to five hours per day in addition to the paid work women

do. As stated by the British Office for National Statistics (2016), women do almost 60% more of the unpaid work, on average, than men. The findings of the study do not vary from the general trend as seen in Uganda where women work 18% more than men in domestic chores and in India where women work 10 times more than men on these activities (Ortiz Ospina *et al*, 2018). Women spend on average, five hours on domestic work per day, while men spend less than one hour (OECD, 2018). However, factors that drive this state of affairs stem from the biological burden that is naturally imposed on the women and socially enforced by local institutions. However, for more advance nations, the introduction of labour-saving devices such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and other time-saving products, is another factor that contributes to the rise in married female labour force participation in the last century.

**Table 1 Distribution of Household Roles in the study area**

Chores	Husband		Wife		Children		Others: House-help, vendors and relatives	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Cooking</b>	101	35.6	158	55.6	5	1.8	20	7.0
<b>Laundry and cleaning</b>	14	4.5	180	63.3	30	10.6	60	21.1
<b>Taking children to school</b>	202	71.1	30	10.6	8	2.8	44	15.5
<b>Fetching water</b>	11	3.9	48	16.9	100	35.9	123	43.3
<b>Going to the Market</b>	28	9.9	226	79.6	0	0.0	30	10.6
<b>Washing of plate</b>	38	13.4	80	28.2	50	17.6	116	40.8
<b>Taking children for medicals</b>	110	38.7	160	56.7	0	0.0	13	4.6

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Children between ages 7 to 18 years were noted to majorly engaged in fetching of water (35.9%), washing of plates (17.6%), laundry and cleaning (10.6%), going to school by themselves (2.8%) and cooking for themselves (1.8%). The study also revealed that house-helps, neighbourhood vendors and extended family members play part roles in helping out in the domestic chores as 43.3% fetch water, 40.8% wash plates, 21.1% are engaged in cleaning and laundry, 15.5% take children to school, 7.0% cook, 10.6% go to shop for food stuff while 4.6% take children for medicals. This act has further support women's engagement in domestic chores.

### Impact of Women Working Hours on House Chores

In order to assess the relationship between hours women spend at work place and its effect of chores, the two identified women chores cooking and washing and cleaning (Laundry)



were selected and correlated with hours women spend at work weekly. The result as depicted in Table 2 revealed that there is no-significant relationship (r value -0.0018) between women that work 3-5hrs on paid job and cooking. This implies that the number of hours spent in work does not affect the worth of cooking chores as performed by women. For women working 6-8hrs, r value was found to be 0.0109 which shows a positive relationship.

**Table 2: Relationship between Women’s working hours and cooking chores**

Hours on Work	Variables			
3-5 hrs	Cooking	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.001812238
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.981065764
		Df	0	172
		Pearson Correlation	-0.001812238	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.981065764	.
		Df	172	0
6-8 hrs	Cooking	Pearson Correlation	1	0.106107326
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.336736513
		Df	0	82
		Pearson Correlation	0.106107326	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.336736513	.
		Df	82	0
more than 8 hrs	Cooking	Pearson Correlation	1	0.018647406
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.936056594
		Df	0	19
		Pearson Correlation	0.018647406	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.936056594	.
		Df	19	0

Source (Fieldwork, 2018)

This also means that women that spent 6-8hrs do less of cooking/dishes in the household. Similarly, women who spend 8hrs and above on their jobs do less of cooking chores according to the result which was significant (r = 0.018). For the relationship of women working hours and laundry chores as revealed in Table 3, the correlation result indicated that r-value was 0.015 and r-value 0.0125 for 3-5hrs and 6-8hrs respectively, which means there is a positive relationship in the number of hours spent by women on paid jobs and the amount of laundry they do. Invariably, women in this category do less of laundry chores regardless of the short time; 3-8hrs they expend on employment outside the household. However, the result shows -0.0536, a negative relationship for women working 8hrs and above. This means that the higher the number of hours spent on jobs by women do not affect the quantity of laundry chores they do.

**Table 3: Relationship between Women's working hours and laundry chores.**

Working Hours	Variables			
3-5 hrs	Laundry	Pearson Correlation	1	0.015627005
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.037836933
		Df	0	172
		Pearson Correlation	0.015627005	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.837836933	.
		Df	172	0
6-8 hrs	Laundry	Pearson Correlation	1	0.125158298
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.056637704
		Df	0	82
		Pearson Correlation	0.125158298	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.256637704	.
		Df	82	0
more than 8 hrs	Laundry	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.05365257
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	0.017332198
		Df	0	19
		Correlation	-0.05365257	1
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.817332198	.
		Df	19	0

Source (Field work 2018)

### Perception of Men on Working Women

The responses gathered from the four FGDs were scaled based on the working status of men as employed, unemployed, students and traders. The analysis further revealed that about 32% of working men do not want their spouse to work but for the economic support she gives, while 68% would prefer their spouse to work. For unemployed men, 93% prefer their wives to be on jobs while 7 % said no due to the importance of her being in the house

to look after the children. For the traders, 26% would prefer their wives to be on job while 74% gave no as response. The reasons given by most men who prefer their spouse to work range from economic support for high standard of living, wives been able to provide for petty needs, dual income earner advantages, etc. For those who are not happy for their spouse to work, reasons given include to reduced stress for their women, women been able to perform connubial rights, neglect of traditional roles by women, women subsidizing men roles etc. For the men who do more domestic chores due to the absence of their spouse from home, 64% of them believe the chores they do are not manly while, 14% of men feel resentful doing the chores and reason given were cultural, some said their ethnic background do not permit male to engage in female traditional chores, that in fact, such men are considered to be weaklings (Figure 2).

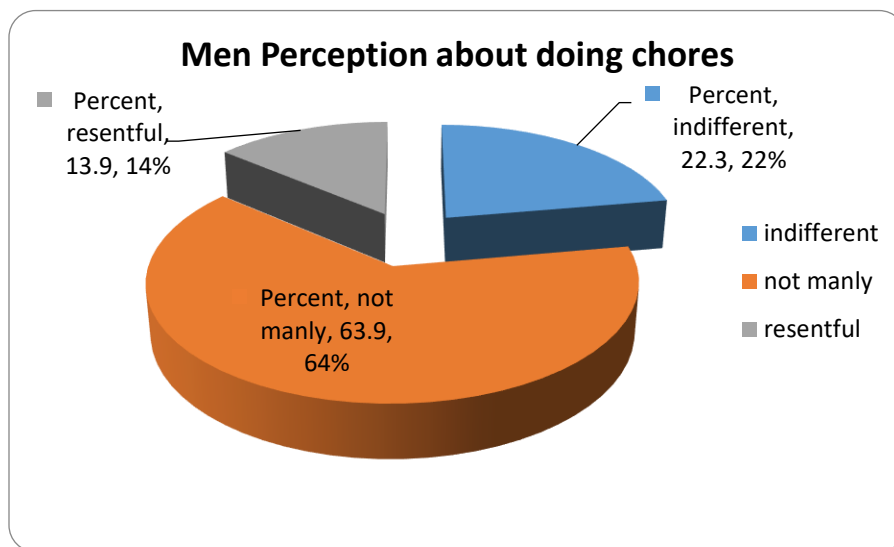


Figure 2: Men’s Perception on Working Spouse

Source (Field work 2018)

Some men gave reasons such as in-law taking undue advantages while, the woman will take for granted such gesture. However, 22% of men feel indifferent about doing those chores and the major reason given was to reduce stress on the woman. Interestingly, more men in this category were employed and they feel that civilization has placed a demand on egalitarian share of domestic chores in the households. Though, some of these men in the unemployed group disclosed that the only way to add value to the household was by taken up those chores while their wives were away on paid jobs.

## Conclusions

This study has examined women's employment and the re-allocation of domestic chores in Lagos, Nigeria and argued that more women are increasingly engaging in jobs that daily take them out of their homes thereby influencing their involvement in their traditional gender roles in the household and shifting their roles to other members of the household. The study findings revealed that men increasingly participate more in several domestic tasks as more women spend more hours at work. This supports the current assertion that the cultural gender roles differentiation is narrowing down so rapidly and the disparity is higher than decades ago. However, the space of narrowing the gender gap and promoting gender equality has only been more effective in work place than at the household levels where gender inequality remains deeply protected by cultural and social norms. Beyond this, it is believed that a man's perception which is modelled by the level of his education and family background can go a long way to reckoned with the global efforts towards gender equality and diversity in domestic tasks and unpaid household jobs because men have different idea about what being male implies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following;

- i. More men should be enlightened to support their spouses in household chores in order to minimize the burden women face while working.
- ii. Labour and time saving devices and gadgets can be made available in household to support those who work for long hours.
- iii. Every member of the household should be enlightened to take up tasks in situation where the woman of the house spends longer time at work. this will leverage the household task gap and further lessened the burden of stress and work/household conflicts that most women face.

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