

Nobody Cares to Pay Women for Care Work in Pakistan

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Though it is essential for advancing human capabilities, care work is often taken for granted and undervalued because it is non-paid. It also contributes to economic living standards and social well-being, thus enabling individuals to engage in paid work. However, unlike paid work, care work is not assigned a monetary value in the national economy of Pakistan. In the Human Development Report 2016 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the ranking of [Pakistan](#) on the Human Development Index (HDI) is 147th in the world.



I work 24/7 but get nothing in return

[Pakistan](#) Bureau of Statistics conducted a national large-scale time-use survey using a time diary in 2007. This survey was the 1st survey of its kind. It gathered data about unpaid child rearing, nursing care and other household labor comparing differences between women and men. In March 2018, Data2X released a new report [Invisible](#) (“Invisible No More? A Methodology and Policy Review of How Time Use Surveys Measure Unpaid Work”). According to the report, unpaid household and care work performed by women has risen in prominence as a major challenge in official statistics.

The first words a Pakistani husband says to his wife on his return home after work are often as follows: “What did you do the whole day except for resting?” Similarly, a question which is repeatedly asked about a woman is like this: “Does she work, or is she simply a housewife?” From these two examples, the collective mindset of Pakistani society is exposed. The irony lies in the fact that society at large and policymakers in particular do not recognize the value of care work.

If a woman or housewife does not complete everyday unappreciated chores such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children, the ill, or the elderly, and many more other tasks with responsibility, then someone must be hired instead of her to perform such household tasks, while she does it totally free of charge. This fact is also gloomy in that people are ready to pay a servant but not to their mother, wife, sister or daughter for the same household chores.

In Pakistan, women who stay at home to complete household chores are not considered as working women. People only value work which gets remuneration in return. However, looking after the home and family is the toughest work ever. If Pakistani mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and daughters-in-law were paid for the care work, just imagine what their bank balances would be like.

The lives of Pakistani rural women are more problematic than those of urban women because rural women milk cows, clean barns, bring firewood, fetch water, cook, wash clothes, care for family, among other household duties.

Another dilemma of Pakistani society is discourteous attitudes towards working women. Family members including in-laws and a husband of a working woman expect her to perform household chores along with her job. They consider her as a super woman.

Pakistani men do not share the load of household chores with their women. They think that their work is done by providing financial support to the family and they put other work burden on their women.

One drawback of men's not sharing household responsibilities with their women is that most of highly educated women in Pakistan waste their talent by staying at home due to the housework burden. If men shared their work burden, the women might be able to build their careers.

The working hours of paid jobs in Pakistan are mostly from 9 am to 5 pm with 1 or 2 holidays. Whereas, the women who are carrying out household tasks can't enjoy holidays. They work for 24 hours. There is no difference between day and night for them. For example, a mother cares and nurtures her child the whole day. She attends the child even at night and cannot sleep if the child is crying. Meanwhile, the father sleeps the whole night because he is the breadwinner and has to go to work in the morning, and therefore his rest is mandatory and no one is allowed to disturb him.



I have no time for myself. Family care is my responsibility.

It is high time to break the gender stereotypes in Pakistani society. Mechanisms must be made by policymakers to educate men to share household chores with women, in order to lessen the burden of women and to provide them a comfortable environment and suitable place in the society. Women are the axis around which the whole society revolves, and thus their work must be recognized and their contribution to the survival of a family must not be forgotten.



Life of Rural Women is much harder than urban women of Pakistan