

Gender Inequality in Parental Allocation of Domestic Chores in the Household: A Barrier to Sustainable Development in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender inequality, especially in allocation of domestic chores in the household, portends danger to achieving sustainable development. In view of the problem, this study investigates gender inequality in parental allocation of household domestic chores in Kwande LGA of Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions and three hypotheses guide the study. A sample of 224 parents comprising 112 fathers and mothers each was selected randomly which used survey design. The instrument of the study was developed by the researchers and validated. The reliability coefficient of 0.87 was determined using Cronbach

alpha's procedure. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 20. The findings of the study show that there is gender inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores. Parents allocate more domestic chores to girls than boys and fathers and mothers do not differ in allocation of the domestic chores. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended among others that parents should encourage boys and girls to participate in all domestic chores in the household regardless of their sex.

Keywords: Gender inequality, fathers, mothers, allocation, domestic chores, sustainable development.

Introduction

Gender inequality impedes economic growth. Specifically, gender inequality in education has a direct impact on economic growth through lowering the average quality of human capital, and has significant negative impact on economic growth and appears to be an important factor contributing to Africa's and South Asia's poor growth performance over the past 30 years (Klasen, 1999; Dallar & Datti, 1999; Mason & King, 2001).

But gender equality and sustainable development has an important link in a sense that it is a moral and ethical imperative. Hence, efforts to achieve a just and sustainable future cannot ignore the rights, dignity and capabilities of half the world's population of females who are the victims of gender inequality (UN Women, 2014).

Sustainable development, according to the World Commission on Environment and Development Report (WCED, 1987), must meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs which involves integrating the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

Building on the broad definition, the UN Women (2014) views sustainable development as economic, social and environmental development that ensures human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice now and in the future.

It is therefore very difficult to achieve sustainable development where gender inequality prevails. One form of gender inequality seems to exist in allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls. Domestic chores are household tasks which both boys and girls perform in the household but are regarded as non-economic and tend to be hidden or unvalued (Spence, 2006). Girls and boys in Kwande LGA perform domestic chores such as: cooking, washing dishes and toilets, making fire in the kitchen, fetching water, running errands, gathering fire-wood, looking after siblings and among other household tasks.

Though both boys and girls perform similar household tasks, girls are engaged in domestic chores more than boys (Kruger & Berthelon, 2007). Surprisingly, conventional measures of labour force often ignore the household tasks where girls are engaged that could potentially interfere with their schooling (Assaad, Levison & Zibani, 2001). Regrettably, since girls' domestic chores are often hidden under cultural norms as necessary and good for girls as wives and mothers of tomorrow, less attention is paid to their educational needs. When faced with limited resources and competing financial demands, parents prefer to invest in the education of their sons and not lose their daughters' vital contribution to the household through domestic chores (Spence, 2006).

Assaad, Levison and Zibani (2001) noted that girls' domestic labour is also regularly ignored in analysis of children's activities, in particular the potential for housework and child-care responsibilities to interfere with educational attainment has been overlooked. Nonetheless, the important link of gender equality in education and sustainable development cannot be ignored. There is growing evidence of the synergies between gender equality and social, economic and environmental sustainability.

When women have greater voice and participation in public administration, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investment in human development priorities, including health, nutrition

and access to employment (Challopadyoy & Duffa, 2004). Also, certain assets and productive resources are important for achieving food security and sustainable livelihood (Agarwal, 2010). Further, certain aspects of gender equality such as female education and women's share of employment can have a positive impact on economic growth (Kabeer & Natall, 2013).

There is, therefore, a compelling need to remove gender inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household to avert the potential risks associated with it. Gender inequality harms economic dynamism and poverty reduction, can trigger economic crisis, creates social exclusion and feeds into political tensions and conflicts (UN Women, 2014).

Parents are responsible for allocating domestic chores in the household to boys and girls and exert a lot of influence on them. It is argued that children learn a particular set of gender symbolic meanings for behaviours such as domestic chores by observing their parents' daily interactions, and then later draw on that repertoire of previously modeled behaviours to present themselves as masculine or feminine in similar behavior contexts (Cunningham, 2001).

Nonetheless, parents differ in their characteristics such as gender, education and employment and the influence they exert on their children in terms of allocation of domestic chores. Hence, it is expected that their allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls are likely to differ.

Theoretically, it is expected that when gender-inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household as a barrier to sustainable development is removed, girls will likely have more opportunities to go to school just as boys do. A lot of benefits will be likely derived from girls' schooling and it would contribute to sustainable development. However, there is no empirical evidence to show that gender-inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores exists, and parents differ in their allocation of domestic chores to boys and girls in Kwande LGA. Therefore, the problem of this study is — Does gender-inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household exist in Kwande LGA?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate gender-inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls. Specifically, the study investigates:

1. How fathers allocate domestic chores in the household to boys and girls.
2. How mothers allocate domestic chores in the household to boys and girls.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do fathers allocate domestic chores in the household to boys and girls?
2. How do mothers allocate domestic chores in the household to boys and girls?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Fathers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls do not differ significantly.
2. Mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls do not differ significantly.
3. There is no significant difference between fathers' and mothers' allocation of domestic chores to boy and girl.

Literature Review

Parental-Allocation of Domestic Chores

How parents allocate domestic chores in the household to boys and girls is largely influenced by many factors. There is a substantial evidence that parents allocate different domestic chores to their male and female children (Blair, 1992) and also that parents differently praise

and criticize sons and daughters for performing domestic chores (Block, 1984). Bandura (1997) has noted that children learn about gender appropriate behaviours of their parents by observing and imitating them and this is done on the everyday interactions in the household through ongoing behavioural displays.

Consequently, parental attitudes may also be related to children's attempt to divide or share domestic chores. Egalitarian gender-role attitudes among parents have been linked to the performance of domestic chores by children who are still living in the parental household (Blair, 1992; Goldschieder & Waite, 1991). Hence, growing up with parents who support equality between women and men may lead children to be more likely to share domestic chores. Cunningham (2001) has noted that greater support for egalitarian roles between women and men by the mother when the son is 15 years old increases the relative contribution of men to the stereotypically female housework at age 31.

Fathers' housework participation is an important predictor of both amount of time spent on housework and the degree to which tasks were divided by gender (Stafford, Backman, & Dibona, 1977). Further, children's attitudes are influenced by parental characteristics such as parental gender-role attitudes (Booth & Amato, 1994), maternal labour force participation (Mortimer & Sorensen, 1984; Wilkie 1987), and parental education (Thorton, Alwin & Camburn, 1983). Parental education attainment is expected to influence children's domestic chores performance. High levels of education may lead to greater domestic chores sharing among parents and could also contribute to parents' attempt to treat sons and daughters similarly in terms of tasks allocation (Cunningham, 2001).

Besides, many researchers argue that socialization into a particular set of attitudes toward appropriate family roles partially determines the way a given couple divides the labour in the household (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Goldschieder & Waite 1991; Greenstein 1996; Kamo 1980), that the relative amount a man's father contributed to the stereotypically female household chores when the son was very young predicts the relative amount the son participate in the same type of work

in adulthood. This means that later parental division of labour does not reduce the effects of the parents' early division of labour, suggesting an important role for modeling in early childhood.

Hence, among sons, there is a strong and positive effect of parental division of labour when the child was one year old on the son's allocation of domestic chores at age 31 (Cunningham, 2001). Furthermore, Cunningham noted that parental behaviours during early childhood appear to have a greater influence on children's domestic chores than do the parental behaviours during mid-adolescence, but early maternal attitudes are not as important as fathers' attitudes. Also, most studies find that men's attitudes about gender-roles are important determinants of household chores performance (Blair & Litcher 1991; Kamo 1988; Ross 1987), and many studies report that women's attitudes are important correlates of domestic chores allocation as well (Brayfield, 1995; Presser 1994).

In their separate studies, Hochschild, (1989), Shelton and John (1993) find that the time demands faced by households also affect domestic chores allocation – that the presence and number of children in a household not only raise the total household task load, but also lead to greater division of tasks by gender and proportionately more household chores hours for women compared to men, and that it is expected, as the number of children in the household increases, men will participate in a smaller proportion of the routine housework especially when the children are very young. This is because adolescents are commonly responsible for more household tasks than the very young children.

Similarly, previous research shows that young men and women are typically allocated different kinds of domestic chores (Blair, 1992), that girls are responsible for more domestic chores than boys (Peters, 1994), and that teenagers perform greater amounts of domestic chores if their mothers are employed. Mothers who devote a relatively large proportion of their time to paid employment may contribute to the erosion of gender stereotypical domestic chores behaviours in their children. Hence, the number of hours mothers spend on employment are

positively related to the amount of time children spend doing domestic chores especially for girls (Blair, 1992).

The preceding review indicates that in allocating domestic chores in the household to boys and girls, parents are influenced by many factors such as parental attitudes toward gender-role division of household tasks, mothers' employment, the number of young siblings in the household, the number of hours mothers spend on job and the early socialization which allocates different household tasks to boys and girls. However, the studies reviewed do not show that fathers and mothers differ in allocation of domestic chores to boys and girls, especially in Kwande LGA. Therefore, this study will investigate gender-inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls in Kwande LGA.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design because according to Hale (2011), this design can be employed where respondents are allowed to answer questions administered through questionnaires or interview schedules. The study was conducted in Kwande LGA of Benue State, and covered four clans: Ikyurav-Ya, Ishangev-Ya, Nanev and Turan. The population of the study comprised 415 parents who were identified at local 'bams' where males and females meet to deposit and withdraw some money. Parents were selected for the study because they are responsible for allocating domestic chores in the household to boys and girls. A total sample of 224 parents was selected randomly, 112 each for fathers and mothers.

Instrument

The instrument of the study, gender inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household (GIPADCH) was developed by the researchers. It is a structured questionnaire also adopted for the interview schedules. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, A and B. Part A contains the bio-data of the respondents (age, sex, marital status, number of children), while Part B has 17 items related to domestic chores. It is categorized into boy, girl, sex not matter. The instrument was validated by three professionals, one each in

sociology of education, gender studies, and measurement and evaluation. The draft questionnaire were given to the validators along with purpose of the study, research questions and the hypotheses, to assess both content and face-validity of the instrument. Based on amendments, the new version of the instrument was structured. The instrument's reliability coefficient was determined by conducting a trial-test on 20 parents outside the target population. Adopting Cronbach alpha's procedure, the reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained.

Data Collection

The researchers employed and trained four research assistants who understand and speak English Language and Tiv very well. They were trained to administer questionnaires to the parents at their homes or places of work and wait for them to complete the questionnaires and collect the completed questionnaires on the spot. They were also trained on how to conduct the interview schedules of the parents at their homes or places of work and record the answers on the spot. Besides, they were trained to ensure that the respondents do not copy from each other while completing the questionnaires, and also entertain questions arising from the exercise. This method ensured 100 percent return rate of the well completed questionnaires.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Programmes for Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM Version 20.

Percentages were used for answering research questions while t-test was adopted for testing null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Results

The data collected for the study were statistically analyzed and presented in tables in line with research questions and null hypotheses as follows:

Research Question One

How do fathers allocate domestic chores in the household to boy and girl?

Table 1. Percentages of fathers' allocation of domestic chores in the household

Items	Fathers allocation of domestic chores	Percentages		
		Boy	Girl	Sex not matter
1.	Who do you prefer to cook in the household?	2.68	*69.64	27.68
2.	Who do you prefer to assist on the farm?	*46.43	11.61	41.96
3.	Who do you prefer to wash dishes in the household?	3.57	*75.89	20.54
4.	Who do you prefer to look after the younger siblings?	9.82	*45.54	44.64
5.	Who do you prefer to wash family's clothes?	12.50	26.79	*60.71
6.	Who do you prefer to fetch water in the household?	7.14	*58.04	34.82
7.	Which child do you prefer to gather firewood?	12.50	*55.36	32.14
8.	Which child do you prefer to make fire in the kitchen?	13.57	*85.71	10.71
9.	Which child do you prefer to run errands in the household?	*64.29	8.93	26.79
10.	Which child do you prefer to sweep compound?	*66.96	6.25	26.79
11.	Which child do you prefer to hawk goods?	39.29	13.39	*47.32
12.	Which child do you prefer to care for elderly persons?	*41.07	18.75	40.18
13.	Who do you prefer to bathe the younger siblings?	4.46	*47.32	48.21
14.	Who do you prefer to take younger siblings to school?	33.04	8.93	*58.04
15.	Who do you prefer to sweep the kitchen?	5.36	*88.39	6.25
16.	Which child do you prefer to wash family's toilet?	*59.82	10.71	29.46
17.	Which child do you prefer to purchase food items?	13.39	*48.21	38.39

* The preference choice of fathers

Table 1 indicates that fathers preferred to allocate more domestic chores to girl than boy. The table also shows that fathers show slight gender indifference in allocation of domestic chores to boy and girl.

Research Question Two

How do mothers allocate domestic chores in the household to boy and girl?

Table 2. Percentages of mothers allocation of domestic chores in the household

Items	Fathers allocation of domestic chores	Percentages (112 Fathers)		
		Boy	Girl	Sex not matter
1.	Who do you prefer to cook in the household?	7.14	*77.69	15.19
2.	Who do you prefer to assist on the farm?	25.89	7.14	*66.96
3.	Who do you prefer to wash dishes in the household?	4.46	*82.14	13.39
4.	Who do you prefer to look after the younger siblings?	10.71	*49.11	40.18
5.	Who do you prefer to wash family's clothes?	15.78	*47.32	37.50
6.	Who do you prefer to fetch water in the household?	5.36	*62.50	32.14
7.	Which child do you prefer to gather firewood?	8.04	*67.86	24.11
8.	Which child do you prefer to make fire in the kitchen?	3.57	*81.25	15.18
9.	Which child do you prefer to run errands in the household?	26.79	17.86	*55.36
10.	Which child do you prefer to sweep compound?	*67.86	5.36	27.79
11.	Which child do you prefer to hawk goods?	29.46	26.79	*43.75
12.	Which child do you prefer to care for elderly persons?	23.21	*38.29	37.50
13.	Who do you prefer to bathe the younger siblings?	4.46	*63.39	32.14
14.	Who do you prefer to take younger siblings to school?	*55.36	6.25	38.39
15.	Who do you prefer to sweep the kitchen?	4.46	*89.29	6.25
16.	Which child do you prefer to wash family's toilet?	*69.64	7.14	23.21
17.	Which child do you prefer to purchase food items?	8.04	*66.07	25.89

* The preference of mothers

Table 2 indicates that mothers preferred to allocate more domestic chore to girl than boy. The table shows that mothers demonstrate slight gender indifference in allocation of domestic chores to boy and girl.

Hypothesis One

Fathers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boy and girl do not differ

Table 3. t-test of fathers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boy and girl

	Allocation	Mean	Standard deviation	N	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Fathers	Boys	47.88	28.167	17			
	Girls	63.53	27.427	17	-1.162	16	0.046

Table 3 indicate that the calculated t-value (0.046) is significant at 16 df ($P=0.05$), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that fathers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls differ. This means that fathers demonstrated gender inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls.

Hypothesis Two

Mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls do not differ

Table 4. t-test of mothers allocation of domestic chore in the household to boy and girl

	Allocation	Mean	Standard deviation	N	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mothers	Boys	42.18	28.018	17			
	Girls	69.82	28.018	17	-2.034	16	0.032

Table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value (0.032) is significant at 16 df ($P = 0.05$), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls differ. This means that mothers demonstrated gender

inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between fathers' and mothers' allocation of domestic chores to boy and girl

Table 5. t-test of fathers' and mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls

	Status	Mean	Standard deviation	N	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Boys	Father	47.88	28.167	17			
	Mother	42.18	28.167	17	-0.592	32	0.558
Girls	Father	64.12	28.167	17			
	Mother	69.82	28.167	17	-0.592	32	0.558

Table 5 indicates that the calculated t-value (0.558) is not significant at 32 df ($P = 0.05$), hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It is therefore concluded that fathers' and mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls do not differ. This means that both fathers and mothers demonstrated gender inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to investigate gender inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household as a barrier to sustainable development. The findings of the study indicate that parents demonstrate gender inequality by allocating more domestic household chore to girl. Specifically, the study finds that of the seventeen domestic chores performed by the children in the household, fathers allocated nine to girl, five to boy and three to 'sex not matter'.

Similarly, mothers allocated eleven domestic chores to girl and three each to boy and 'sex not matter'. The domestic chores that both fathers and mothers allocated to girls are cooking, washing dishes, looking after younger siblings, fetching water, gathering firewood, making fire in the kitchen, sweeping the kitchen, and purchasing food

items in the market. They considered sweeping the compound and washing family's toilet as domestic chores for boys.

Nonetheless, parents differed on what domestic chores for boy and girl to perform in the household. While fathers did not show sex-preference for allocating domestic chores such as washing family's toilet, bathing the younger siblings and taking them to school, mothers did not show sex preference in allocating domestic chores such as assisting parents on the farm and running errands in the household. In addition, the hypotheses that fathers' and mothers' allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls do not differ are all accepted and concluded that their allocation of domestic chores do not differ significantly.

Generally, the findings of the study indicate that there is gender inequality in allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls that more domestic chore is allocated to girls than boys. The findings of this study are in consistent with the study by Blaire (1992) that there is substantial evidence that parents allocate different domestic chores to their male and female children, but girls perform more domestic chores than boys (Peters, 1994). The findings of the study are also in line with Ritchie, Lloyd and Grant (2004), Edmonds (2006), and Kruger & Berthelon (2007).

There is substantial evidence that parental allocation of domestic chores in the household is often influenced by certain factors such as parental gender-role attitudes (Booth & Amato, 1994), maternal labour force participation (Mortimer & Sovesen, 1984; Wilkie, 1988), and parental education (Thorton, Alwin & Camburn, 1983). For example, fathers' housework participation is an important predictor of both amount of time spent on housework and the degree to which tasks were divided by gender (Stafford, Backman & Dibona, 1977). Parental education attainment is expected to influence children's domestic chores performance. High levels of education may lead to greater domestic chores sharing among parents and could contribute to parents' attempt to treat sons and daughters alike in terms of tasks allocation (Cunningham, 2001). Regrettably, gender inequality in allocation of domestic chores as a potential danger to achieving sustainable

development is often ignored. For example, conventional measures of labour force work often ignore the household tasks that could potentially interfere with girls schooling (Assaad, Levison & Zibani, 2001).

Unless gender inequality in any form, including parental allocation of domestic chores, is removed sustainable development may not be achieved. Gender inequality harms economic dynamism and poverty reduction; it can trigger economic crisis, create social exclusion and feed into political tensions and conflicts (UN Women, 2014).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should encourage boys and girls to participate in all domestic chores in the household regardless of their sex.
2. Parental gender-role attitudes of parents should be changed through providing education for fathers and mothers.
3. Male-parents should participate fully in domestic chores in the household to serve as model for their children.
4. Female-parents should engage in time-consuming workforce to create a need in the house for husbands and children to perform domestic chores.

Conclusion

This study investigated gender inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household to boys and girls as a barrier to achieving sustainable development in Kwande LGA, Benue State. The study finds that there is gender inequality in parental allocation of domestic chores in the household. More domestic chores are allocated to girls than boys by their parents. This portends danger to achieving sustainable development. Consequently, recommendations are made, and if implemented will likely contribute to achieving sustainable development.

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