



THINK LABOR

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On Women's Back: India Inequality Report 2020

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Introduction

The gendered division of labor begins right at home, where females are caregivers and men are breadwinners. These unequal gender dynamics are a result of patriarchal divisions, social norms, and unjust customs. Moreover, the burden of unpaid work falls on younger women and girls, suppressing their aspirations to educate and acquire respectable jobs. On the other hand, the mobility of boys remains unrestricted in any shape or form. The Oxfam report, titled 'Unpaid Care Work and Violence Against Women and Girls at a Crossroads: A Case for Behaviour Change of Dominant Social Norms', addresses this issue in its latest India Inequality report.



Key Highlights

1. While urban and rural Indian women spent 312 and 291 minutes per day, men spent only 29 and 32 minutes per day on unpaid care work, respectively, according to an ILO report.
2. In a typical Indian household, unpaid caregiving is an integral part of women's identity, making it onerous to redistribute it among men and women. Instead of a short-term resolve, it requires a depth of collective action against the social construct of gender roles within and without the household.
3. One reason why women take up part-time jobs or seldom escalate to higher managerial positions within an organization is their role as mothers, due to which they usually are paid low. Utilitarians and economists recognize this as a basis of the fall in Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP), arising a need to account for unpaid work in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
4. For the younger demographic, the picture looks the same. A 2018 National Commission for Protection of Child Rights report states that while 60 percent of girls from the age of 15 to 18 years were engaged in household care work, about 40 percent were out of school. Even in communities where girls are allowed to pursue education, migrating to other states, or even districts, to proceed with higher education is forbidden.
5. Apart from social norms, women suffer from violence, both in the household and public spaces, restraining their mobility and employment. Academic analysis centers on skewed sex ratios, the agency of women from vulnerable socio-economic classes, not going into deeper underpinnings of violence. Anecdotal evidence supports the claim, reflecting upon triggers that can lead to spousal violence, some of which are not cooking well, refusing work, etc.
6. Data from Oxfam India Household Care Survey (2019) suggests that 54.4 percent of men would resort to beating if women left the house without permission, while 86.4 percent will harshly criticize such a move.
7. The gender unequal society discriminates against women who participate in community events, sit in the village square and speak in public spheres. Many castes in rural Udaipur and other parts of India practice the tradition to veil, manifesting women's humility.
8. Despite all the discrimination faced by women, they work long hours to support their husbands and children. Even then, the workload they bear is disproportionate, results in spillover effects on other aspects of their lives - education, employment, and freedom, mobility. The line between private or reproductive labor and public or productive labor remains a blur, especially for homemakers. There is a pressing need to initiate gender sensitization and behavior-change strategies across schools. Further, campaigns must support progressive models of de-gendered labor - in household and public spaces.

Read more: https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Oxfam_Inequality%20Report%202020%20single%20lo-res%20%281%29.pdf.

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