

Current Trend in Gender Stereotypes and Unpaid Care Work: Evidence From Three Countries, the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana

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Unpaid caregiving is a worldwide phenomenon. 42% of women cannot secure jobs because they are responsible for caregiving. Women and girls undertake more than 75% of unpaid care work in the world. The UN Sustainable Development Goals 5 and target 5.4 aim to promote the rights and well-being of women and care providers but will remain unattainable if the rising trend in unpaid care work is 'unchecked'. To interrogate present developments in unpaid care work, this article critically examines the trend in three countries: the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Ghana. This study is important because, despite years of awareness, there appears to be an uneven change in the situation of unpaid care work globally. Gender stereotypes continue to be a cultural concern. This paper leveraged the Altercasting Theory and textual content analysis method. The study concludes that there is still a need to improve the situation of unpaid care work as it is not adequately indexed in the national economic indicators of some countries.

Keywords: unpaid care work, gender stereotypes, economic indices activists, development, global

INTRODUCTION

An important yet unnoticed aspect of human growth in the domestic domain is unpaid care work. It offers domestic services for the convenience of the community and the home, such as laundry, grocery shopping, and water retrieval. People ought to view it as a form of labor that merits legal recognition and reward. Government and society should not mistakenly perceive it as trivial or irrelevant. Achieving gender equality and advancing social justice depends on acknowledging and appreciating unpaid care labor. Without recognition, women frequently conduct this kind of job, which perpetuates gender disparities and undervalues women's contributions to society. To achieve gender equality, society must address the gender divide in labor and ensure that women's work is not undervalued or taken for granted by recognizing and respecting unpaid care work. Governments can also act to assist and offer resources to those who perform unpaid caregiving, such as social safety programmes and access to inexpensive daycare.

Unpaid work is defined as any worthwhile endeavor performed by a person for their own home or the benefit of another without payment. These activities are productive because they make use of limited resources to meet human needs. According to Ferrant et al (2014) "Unpaid care work refers to all unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework and voluntary community work" (p.3). Likewise, OECD observes that unpaid care work includes caring for children, elderly and sick people (Rost, 2021; Power, 2020). It also includes washing, cooking, shopping, cleaning and helping other families with their chores. Elson (2000) observed that unpaid care work involves time and energy in supporting human well-being, arising out of social or contractual obligations, including

marriage and parenting as well as less formal societal relationships. Furthermore, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS 2013), broadened the particulars of the definition which must include “five mutually exclusive forms of work:

- Own-use production work comprising the production of goods and services for own final use.
- Employment work comprising work performed for others in exchange for pay or profit.
- Unpaid trainee work comprising work performed for others without pay to acquire workplace experience or skills.
- Volunteer work comprising non-compulsory work performed for others without pay.
- Other work activities (not defined in this resolution).” (Charmes 2019. p.10)

These parameters are also in tandem with the United Nations’ understanding of unpaid work.

Overall, the definitions capture the heart of what is meant by unpaid care work in this setting, taking care of domestic duties, and providing for the weak and dependents in families and communities. These activities include caring for vulnerable people or wards who are neither compensated nor seen as contributing to the national GDP, such as a mother nursing her infant or a child cooking for parents who are elderly.

According to Power (2020), the Global Citizens Organisation, women and girls perform more than 70% of unpaid housework globally, and, in 89% of households women perform the majority of household work. Customarily many women across the world spend a lot of hours doing unpaid work like school runs, cooking, fetching water, cleaning the house, and taking care of their children and other people without being properly remunerated. This informal regular job helps to sustain other individuals to make their life less challenging so that they will have the time to engage in other jobs and activities that authorities formally recognized as prescribed employment in other sectors.

Despite this enormous contribution that is principal in most societies, these tasking services are hardly recognized as formal employment. The most alarming concern is that it is neither captured as National GDP nor considered when debating national policies connected with the economy of nations. If considered at all, it does not form part of serious consideration for concerted attention. The International Labour Organisation according to the OECD estimates that the total value of unpaid care work ranges from 10% to 39% GDP of some nations as it contributes more to the economy than manufacturing, commerce, and transportation. In the global North, a lot more hours are spent by women in unpaid domestic work than men. This is based on the insinuation that most domestic work is the natural turf of the female gender, Society has instilled this belief on women through socialization and culture.

Accordingly, Ferrant (2014) points out that “...Women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men. Due to gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative, women across different regions, socio-economic classes and cultures spend an important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles” (p.1). This is in addition to their paid activities if the woman is in paid employment, thus creating the “double burden” of work for women. Consistently for generations, gender stereotypes as a social derivative have instilled in women from a tender age that they are (by nature) created for domestic unpaid jobs. This cuts across global culture as it is not restricted to any civilization. Atim and Awodala (2020) expatiate on this universal challenge by pointing out the outcome of a study conducted by UN Women (2018) on 33 countries, which shows that girls aged 7-14 do more housework than boys of the same age and perform other tasks, including care of younger siblings. This practice goes for women generally and they are not compensated by the government for it. Given the universality of this issue, if not tackled, it will continue to hinder attainment of SDG 5 on gender equality.

The authorities across the globe have not placed sufficient interest in this matter because they do not conceptualize it as primary. However, it is imperative to consider it as part of national planning that can stem the tide of the exploitation of women in unpaid domestic work. The current attitude to unpaid work infringes on the fundamental right of women to social and economic empowerment and limits their contribution to the economic development of the nations. Therefore, this paper sets out to take a critical look at unpaid care work and the place of women in three nations. One in the northern hemisphere-the

United Kingdom and two in the Southern hemisphere - Ghana, and Nigeria in West Africa. The choice of the three nations is deliberate to measure the rate of awareness and how far the three countries have fared in recognizing unpaid work as part of national economic growth. As unpaid work differs very much in societies of various stages of development, a common denominator seems to be the infinite elasticity of unpaid work: it can be stretched or contracted, if necessary` (Swiebel,1999). The people's culture and social system play a strong role here, hence the comparative investigation.

This study will examine the advancements achieved in the two countries in the South regarding gender imbalance caused by unpaid work and the extent to which the problem has improved or worsened in these countries. In terms of women's labor force involvement and how households divide their time between paid and unpaid work, there are significant cross-national variances. (Lewis 2009; Orloff 2009). Studies repeatedly reveal that women perform the bulk of unpaid domestic work in every country, despite decades of progress towards gender equality in the workplace (Craig and Mullan, 2011). The study will focus on unpaid work in three countries: the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana. The study anticipates that the UK may have made advancements on this issue, and this will be used to evaluate the situation in Nigeria and Ghana as well as assess the efforts made to eradicate the gender-based imbalance in unpaid employment.

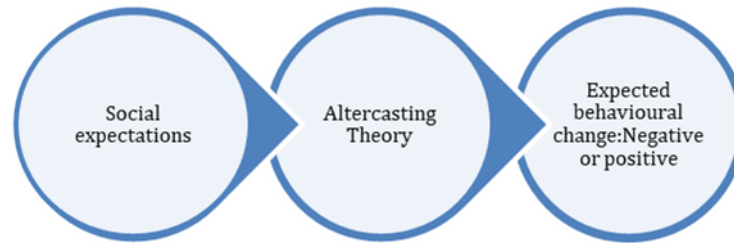
The study is significant because it highlights the ongoing discrimination that women experience in both industrialized and developing nations (Akhtar et al, 2023; Apotsu et al, 2023; Guvenen et al, 2022). These studies show that women in the Global North spend a disproportionate amount of time on unpaid household chores in comparison to men, creating a double burden of duties because they also perform paid jobs. This lopsided distribution of unpaid labor restricts women's economic options as well as their ability to participate in both social and political processes and achieve total emancipation. (Klemmer, 2023). Additionally, the gender gap in unpaid labor is more prominent in the Global South because of other elements including poverty, limited access to education, and cultural norms that uphold conventional gender roles. The strain of unpaid labor is worse for women in these areas by additional obstacles such as restricted access to resources and services. This keeps the cycle of gender inequity constant and makes it harder for women to leave the constraints of their traditional roles. In addition, because unpaid work is unacknowledged or recognized and because women's contributions to society are frequently disregarded and underestimated, women are marginalized by unpaid work. As a result, establishing gender equality and empowerment for women in the Global South remains extremely difficult.

GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review: Altercasting Theory

This study is based on the context of the Altercasting Theory, which Eugene Weinstein and Paul Deutschberger created in 1963. This theory seeks to project a specific behavior in a person to evoke a particular response and attitude. "Altercasting has been established as a potentially effective strategy for inducing compliance" (Turner et al, 2010). Altercasting is based on the idea that people are socially conditioned to behave in a certain way to live up to the expectations of the public's compliance-seeking mindset. This typically entails a person being projected to play a certain role or have a certain attitude that is congruent with a specific private or social expectation. Usually, pressure from society is used on the individual or group in question to comply with the request made. This position heavily depends on the social contract, which serves as the foundation for a certain behavior as the framing style (Milfeld & Pittman, 2023; Witty, 2023). It could be used negatively or positively. Making someone behave in a socially acceptable way may be part of the positive role, but an alternative behavior in a way that is socially offensive may also be acceptable in society owing to cultural attitudes and conventions which is the goal of the negative Altercasting.

FIGURE 1
THE PROCESS OF BEHAVIORAL CHANGE IN ALTERCASTING THEORY



Concept: Researcher

The person occasionally might not be aware of this expected function that has been accepted by society. The topic of this study, which examines the function of compliance in three nations—the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana regarding gender and unpaid employment, is consistent with Altercasting Theory. Negative Altercasting actions have been imposed by society and culture regarding unpaid work as the responsibility of the female gender, and society has accepted that unfavorable idea. Therein lies the relationship between the topic and the theory.

Gender Stereotypes and Unpaid Care Work in the UK

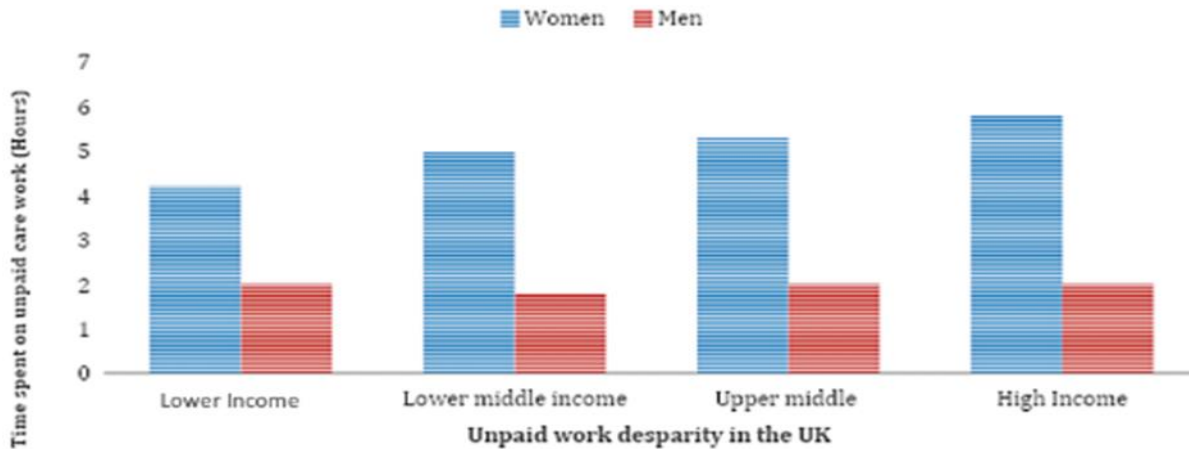
Gender inequality and unpaid care work are global issues. In most nations around the world, women dominate the unpaid employment sector despite all efforts to close the gap. According to statistics, the issue affects women more severely than men. OECD (2023) reports that the global gender disparity in unpaid care work shows globally that 48% of females performed unpaid housework, compared to 14% of men. In Central America and the Caribbean, 60% of women performed unpaid labor compared to 20% of men, and 46% of women in Europe and Central Asia did unpaid labor compared to 23% of men. In East Asia and the Pacific, 41% of women and 12% of males worked unpaid jobs. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 52% of women and 18% of males performed unpaid caregiving tasks. In the Middle East and North Africa, 46 % of women performed unpaid care work compared to 10% of men, and in South Asia, 50% of the women did unpaid care work compared to 10% of men.

Women continue to provide unpaid caregiving duties more frequently than males in the United Kingdom. For women’s career advancement and broader gender equality, this continuing gender gap in caring obligations has profound consequences. Despite improvements in gender equality and an increase in the proportion of women in employment, societal norms and conventional gender roles continue to influence how unpaid caregiving is distributed. Since they must not only meet their professional obligations but also take on the caregiving duties for children, aging parents, or other family members, women frequently find themselves managing roles. Nearly half of the working-age women are providing an average of 45 hours of unpaid care every week, while 25% of men provide 17 hours, according to a study in *The Guardian* highlighting the gulf in unpaid care work (Topping, 2022). This indicates that females dominate this informal sector which is barely recognized in the economic indexes of the country. The survey goes on to further buttress this reality through a deeper statistical analysis by indicating that women in the UK provide 23.2billion hours of unpaid childcare which is estimated to be worth £382bn annually, while men provide 9.7billion hours worth £160bn. Consequently, the study buttresses that this has formed an indicator for gender disparity as a driving force of gender-based inequality in the workplace (Topping, 2022).

Women may be significantly burdened by this unequal distribution of caring responsibilities, which may impede their ability to advance professionally and constrict their ability to achieve financial independence. Furthermore, cultural expectations and norms support these gender roles by frequently elevating the caregiving skills of women while downplaying their professional achievements. This diminishes the acknowledgement and significance of their employment outside the home and furthers the myth that women are solely responsible for providing care. Women consequently frequently struggle to

balance their personal and work lives while receiving little appreciation for their caregiving efforts. Since it promotes gender inequality and reduces women’s possibilities for job progression and financial independence, this imbalance not only affects women personally but also has larger ramifications for society. An illustration of unequal unpaid care labor by gender in the UK may be found below.

FIGURE 2
UNPAID WORK DISPARITY IN THE UK ACCORDING TO INCOME LEVEL



Source: Adapted From OECD Library

The social norm that demands women put caregiving ahead of their own goals and objectives promotes traditional gender roles and impedes the advancement of gender equality. Furthermore, the absence of appreciation and encouragement for the caring work done by women can result in feelings of annoyance, exhaustion, and even dissatisfaction which can damage relationships with others and have a detrimental effect on general well-being. Additionally, because of the asymmetry in caring obligations, women may suffer long-term financial consequences such as lower pay, fewer career possibilities, and less money saved for retirement. In general, there has not been enough action taken to reduce the gap and deal with the fundamental issues in the UK’s uneven allocation of caregiving (Dotsikas et al, 2023; Jirovsky & Rieder, 2023; Magda et al, 2023). While there have been initiatives to support gender equality at work and motivate men to take on greater caregiving duties, development has been gradual. The notion that women are responsible for providing care is still strongly influenced by cultural norms and societal standards. In addition to perpetuating gender stereotypes, this makes it more difficult for women to engage fully in the workforce and attain financial autonomy.

The UK government has attempted to decrease the gap through legislation, but much more work must be done in this area to achieve true gender equality. The UK government has made great strides in addressing gender inequality through laws like the Equality Act of 2010, individuals are still legally safeguarded against prejudice in the workplace and greater society. (www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act, 2010). It accomplished this by combining all previous anti-discrimination laws into a single Act, streamlining the law’s interpretation, and enhancing protection in specific situations. and the implementation of shared parental leave. There are still obstacles preventing males from taking on caregiving tasks and preventing women from fully participating in the workforce. Social norms, unconscious biases, and a lack of accessible, inexpensive childcare services are amongst these obstacles. In industries and occupations, women continue to earn less than their male counterparts due to the gender pay gap. To close this gap and build a culture that honors and encourages equitable caring participation.

According to government statistics on the gender pay gap in unpaid employment, women continue to carry a disproportionate share of the responsibility for providing unpaid care (Zapata Roman et al, 2023; Tripathi et al, 2022). Women worldwide perform over three times as much unpaid care work as men do,

according to the UN. This includes tasks like cleaning, cooking, and looking after young or elderly family members. In addition to restricting women's economic potential, this lopsided distribution of unpaid work also keeps gender inequities alive in society. Governments and policymakers must address this problem and put in place measures that support gender equality in caregiving.

Overall, women spent far more time providing unpaid care in the UK than did men, and mothers were more likely than fathers to reduce their working hours or alter their schedules for childcare. (McMunn and Xue, 2021). The likelihood of long-term carers and stay-at-home spouses reporting higher levels of psychological distress and gender discrimination was higher.

Comparatively, the UK's ranking in unpaid work shows that women continue to carry a disproportionate share of the burden of unpaid care work. A study by the Office for National Statistics found that women in the UK devote an additional 60% of their time to unpaid caregiving and domestic duties compared to men (Home - Office for National Statistics, 2021). This difference perpetuates traditional gender norms and expectations in addition to having an impact on women's capacity to participate fully in the workforce. Progress has been made in gender equality in tackling the proportion of unpaid care that women bear in the UK, however, there is still a long way to go before there is a fair and balanced division of unpaid work in the UK.

Gender Stereotypes and Unpaid Care Work in Nigeria

Before colonial times in African society, especially in Igbo culture in Nigeria, communal and collective handling of unpaid care work was one of the cultural attributes. Relations, dependents and family members assist in doing house chores at home and in the community to lessen the burden on any particular individual and to aid social commitment. The communal work is carried out in turns according to families depending on their needs at that moment. People take pride in helping relations or communities for little or no remuneration (Ihunnah, 2022). However, with modernization, this practice has drastically changed because unpaid housework has been redefined by Western conception. Now, it has been seen as one of the drivers of gender inequality because it is mostly now done by women, just as in other societies outside Africa. The culture has drastically transformed according to modern trends. In Africa, it is estimated that most unpaid care work is conducted by women. About 75% of this duty is conducted by women and girls in Nigeria (Millennium Goals Report, 2012). As noted by Herrera & Torelli (2013) in other contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, social norms and religion influence gender roles and are deeply entrenched, resulting in women doing virtually all unpaid work in the household. Even when women are in paid employment, that does not result in the redistribution of unpaid work (Herrera & Torelli, 2013).

Commenting on the prevalence of unpaid work, Nanko and Teng- Zeng (2022) indicate that within Africa, there are significant disparities between men and women in the discharge of unpaid care work. In South Africa and Mauritius, for instance, available data from UNDP (2016) indicates that women spend between two to three hours more on unpaid care work than men. Women spend their time doing unpaid housework, as against men who spend similar time looking for paid jobs. In a study conducted by the British Council Nigeria (2012) on unpaid housework, they found out that the subjugation of women by unpaid housework relates to the perpetuation of patriarchal agenda that is culture driven. Accordingly, "Inequalities persist and are sustained by existing, mainly patriarchal powers, be they of religious or cultural origin or based on dominant economic models" (Adebola, 2020, p.2). This implies that "In Nigeria (...) women become primarily responsible for childcare, maintaining homes, washing, cooking, fetching firewood and water for drinking, as well as unpaid work such as helping with planting and harvesting farm produce and fetching firewood. The report further explains that due to unpaid care work responsibilities, women are also more likely to occupy low-level posts that offer them the flexibility they need to manage their households while working" (Atim & Awodola, 2020. p.30).

In Nigeria, the essential outcome of socialization and culture is the persistent involvement of girls and women in unpaid work which is not recorded in economic development and the annual GDP of the country. Due to the lack of adequate government action, women's unpaid care work challenges have increased due to a lack of direction and a working document. This has made it possible for care work not to be visible in Nigeria and the responsibilities in this sector have rested with women. As more people spend time at home

due to crises in Nigeria like riots and during Covid -19, the burden of care rests with the women who will perform the household chores. As noted by Nagarayan (2020) women rise earlier than the men to fetch water and at the same time are under pressure to provide food; particularly as new aid distribution modalities do not always reach them. As these happen, they take on more responsibility which may result in health challenges due to pressure. Some organizations have succinctly described this problem in the following statements: According to the International Labour Organization (2018), Nigerian women devote 60% more daily time to childcare than men. School closings and stay-at-home recommendations also increase the amount of unpaid care that women provide (Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center, Women for Women International, and Gender Action for Peace and Security, 2021).

Further, information from Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (2018) on Unpaid Housework shows that women in Nigeria make a considerable contribution to unpaid housework, devoting an average of 30 hours per week to household duties. Along with cooking, cleaning, and childcare, this also covers other duties like fetching water, gathering firewood, and taking care of the family's agricultural needs. The enormous amount of time and effort spent on unpaid housework is frequently overlooked and underestimated, which contributes to the persistence of gender disparities and the constrained economic prospects for women in Nigeria. Even though Nigerian women play a vital role in maintaining families and communities through their significant domestic labor, the government disregards and undervalues their contributions. The astounding average of 30 hours per week spent on household chores includes not only customary duties like cooking, cleaning, and childcare but also physically taxing jobs like fetching water and gathering firewood. Nigerian women also must take care of the family's agricultural requirements, which adds to their already heavy workload. However, the lack of acknowledgement and appreciation for their efforts helps to maintain gender disparities and limits the opportunity for women to succeed economically in Nigeria.

Women's work is frequently devalued and neglected, despite the significant contributions they make to their families and communities. This inhibits women's potential to earn money and achieve financial independence as well as supports the social norm that they should put their family responsibilities before their education or careers. As a result, Nigerian women experience disproportionate poverty and confront formidable obstacles to achieving economic emancipation. Unpaid care work has a significant negative economic and national GDP impact in Nigeria, as there are significant ramifications for the economy and society from this imbalance in the distribution of care work which could have contributed to the advancement of the economy.

Consequently, women frequently become locked in a cycle of poverty and limited economic options because of the strain of unpaid caregiving, this has enormous ramifications for the economy in addition to having an impact on their financial stability (Tacoli, 2012; Fapohunda, 2012; Uzoamaka et al, 2016). Women's potential contributions to productivity and economic growth are severely reduced when they are unable to participate fully in the workforce due to the obligations of caregiving. Furthermore, the persistent gender imbalance in society is a result of the undervaluation and underpayment of care work. The obligation of caring for children, aging parents, and other family members falls disproportionately on women and can assume hours and energy.

As a result, they have few opportunities to seek training, education, or employment that could lead to higher wages and greater economic stability. Consequently, women frequently find themselves in unstable, low-paying positions or need social welfare programs to make ends meet. The absence of economic prospects further restricts their capacity to make investments in their own and their children's futures, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Nigeria ratified both the Optional Protocol and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. Additionally, the nation ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and most importantly, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which was ratified by Nigeria in 2005. The country also adopted the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995. However, these promises have not been followed through in practice, and local implementation is still not strong enough. Despite

higher labor force participation, data from the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) indicate that women spend their time providing unpaid care for others (Atim & Awodol, 2020). In the same vein, Angel-Urdinola and Wodon (2008), cited in British Council Nigeria (2012), found that society expects men to provide for the family according to patriarchal ideals, while women are expected to take care of the home. As a result, women are now primarily in charge of the home. They are also more likely to take low-level positions that offer them the flexibility they need to manage their households while working, because of their unpaid caregiving duties (British Council Nigeria, 2012). In conclusion, more still needs to be done by Nigeria on unpaid care work. Only researchers and representatives from international organizations are paying attention to the state of unpaid care work in Nigeria. There is no organized government effort to develop an official policy to recognize the impact of unpaid care work so that the sector could support Nigeria's economic expansion.

Gender Stereotypes and Unpaid Care Work in Ghana

Ghana is a nation in West Africa that has similar socio-political and geographic traits to Nigeria. Due to its shared colonial history, English is now the second official language. Ghana's societal structure has historically included a substantial amount of unpaid care labor. Most of this responsibility has traditionally fallen on women, who are also responsible for caring for children, elderly or ill family members, and household duties. In light of this, Nanko and Zeng (2022) write, "Studies from the Ghana Time Use Survey (GTUS) conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (2014) suggest that women dominate in the area of unpaid care work while men dominate in paid work" (p.121). Although crucial for the health of families and communities, these responsibilities are frequently overlooked and underestimated, which causes gender disparities and economic disadvantages for women. To solve these problems and advance gender equality and social development in Ghana, it is essential to comprehend the dynamics and effects of unpaid care work. Like many other nations, women in Ghana bear a disproportionate amount of the responsibility for unpaid caregiving.

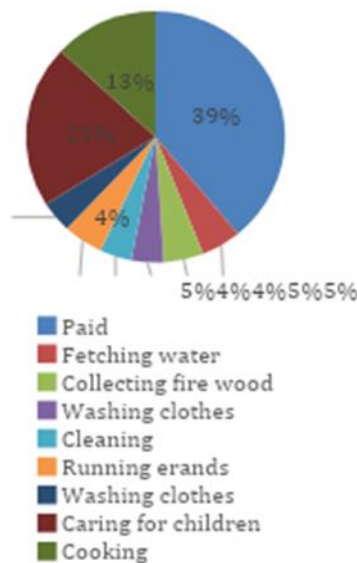
Women devote an average of six hours per day to unpaid caregiving, compared to men's two hours per day, according to a survey by the Ghana Statistical Service. This substantial disparity affects women's financial autonomy and involvement in the formal labor market in addition to maintaining traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Furthermore, the undervaluation of unpaid caregiving contributes to the persistence of gender disparities and restricts women's possibilities for social and economic growth (Owusu & Kumi, 2023). Women are consequently frequently compelled to put caregiving duties ahead of seeking education, career promotion, or entrepreneurship. This disparity affects not only women but also the general advancement and development of society. Due to the overwhelming amount of unpaid care work they perform, women often find it difficult to fully participate in the labor market, which limits their ability to support the economy and lowers their chances of being financially independent. Additionally, the perception that caregiving is entirely a woman's job is maintained through the undervaluation of unpaid care work, reinforcing conventional gender stereotypes and impeding the advancement of gender parity.

In terms of paid work, Nanko and Zeng (2022) report that men in Ghana spend, on average, more time than women engaging in subsistence-oriented productive activities and formal sector employment: Men work in the formal sector for 65 minutes on average, compared to 23 minutes for women. The undervaluation of women also has wider societal repercussions because it reduces their possibilities for leadership roles, job progression, and higher education. Many women are forced to make challenging decisions between their career objectives and their caring responsibilities because they lack access to inexpensive and high-quality daycare options. This has an impact on the economy in addition to their financial security. Productivity suffers and innovation is stifled when a sizable percentage of the population is unable to fully engage in the labor market. Additionally, the absence of affordable childcare services has a disproportionately negative impact on low-income families, aggravating already existing inequities and maintaining the cycle of poverty. To develop a more diverse and equal workforce, society must understand how important it is to support working parents, especially women. We can enable women to follow their career aspirations, contribute to the economy, and ultimately remove barriers that impede advancement and advancement in society by making investments in accessible, high-quality childcare. Furthermore, research

(Zagel & Van-Lancker, 2022; Guvenen et al, 2022; Herrera Torelli, 2013) has indicated that nations with higher rates of female labor force participation tend to see long-term economic gains from having adequate childcare choices.

Studies on unpaid care work in Ghana reveal that women and girls perform the majority of the work, with little help or acknowledgement from the state or society (Owusu & Kumi, 2023; Nanko & Zeng, 2022; Ferrant et al, 2014). Cooking, cleaning, parenting, and taking care of old or ill family members are examples of this invisible and frequently underappreciated labor. According to Ferrant et al (2014), Cooking and caring for children make up for the majority of Ghanaian women’s daily unpaid tasks: 13% and 21% of their total working time or 20% and 35% of their unpaid working time, respectively. Other unpaid activities, such as fetching water, collecting firewood, washing clothes, and washing dishes require approximately the same amount of time and represent a total of three hours per day.

FIGURE 3
STATISTICS REPRESENTING UNPAID CARE WORK IN GHANA



Adapted From Ferrant et al (2019). Design by the Researcher

Unpaid care work has a critical role in maintaining families and communities, but it is frequently ignored in development agendas and policymaking, which contributes to gender inequality and the cycle of poverty. To underscore the need for a more inclusive strategy to address these concerns, we will go further into the unique difficulties experienced by women and girls in Ghana when it comes to unpaid care work in this paragraph.

Most unpaid care work in Ghana is performed by women and girls, who put in many hours a day on jobs that are crucial to the welfare of their families and communities. This significant load not only prevents them from pursuing educational and professional opportunities but also helps to maintain gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles. In Ghana, social expectations and cultural norms frequently place a higher value on providing for others than on the personal growth and goals of women and girls. As a result, women are more likely to have restricted access to options for employment, education, and decision-making, which furthers their status as social outcasts. This cycle of gender inequality impedes the advancement of women as well as the general growth of the nation. To ensure that women and girls may participate fully in all parts of life, it is essential to eliminate the structural hurdles that stand in the way of this and to advance gender equality as a basic human right. We can build a more inclusive and just society in Ghana by empowering women and girls, which will benefit society.

The stereotype that caring is a woman’s responsibility is also reflected in the paid care sector in Ghana. According to Ghana Statistical Service (2014), women make up the bulk of healthcare professionals in

Ghana, with a startling 90% of nurses and midwives being female. This high percentage of women in the care industry not only upholds traditional gender roles but also the idea that caring for others is exclusively a woman's task. To combat these prejudices and advance gender equality in the care industry, there have been recent efforts and movements. The "Men in Care" campaign is one such project that aims to get more men to enter the fields of nursing and midwifery (Dumbaugh et al., 2014; Aborigo et al., 2018). This initiative attempts to diversify the care workforce and increase opportunities for both men and women by questioning traditional conventions and expectations surrounding caregiving. In the paid nursing profession, there exists a gap in pay and leadership position between the majority female workforce and their male counterparts. Groups like the Ghana Nurses and Midwives Association have pushed for legislation to address gender gaps in the healthcare industry and assist women in leadership roles (Ferrant et al., 2014). This further buttresses the argument that even when women get into paid care work there remains a disparity in their pay compared to that of men which is why the Ghana Nurses and Midwives association are advocating against this disparity. This campaign has created an awareness of the burden of unpaid care that women bear in the informal sector. These initiatives are essential in breaking down the deeply ingrained preconceptions that limit men's and women's potential to succeed in caregiving roles as well as empowering women in the profession. We can remove the obstacles that stop people from pursuing their love for giving care and support to others by fostering gender equality in the care workforce (McCarthy, 2018).

It is crucial to understand that providing care is not only the responsibility of one gender and that everyone, regardless of gender, should be able to contribute to this important industry. We can promote a more welcoming and compassionate care environment that benefits both carers and people in need of care with improved representation and assistance. We may challenge societal conventions and prejudices about caregiving duties by advocating for gender equality in the care workforce. Men have traditionally been encouraged to seek occupations in more "masculine" fields whereas caregiving has traditionally been considered as a mostly female role. Mutual surveillance served as the basis for social control in "traditional" Ghana because of the conviction that social (dis)order is a joint responsibility (Akoensi, 2017). However, this antiquated perspective not only prevents men from discovering their passion for providing care but also upholds the notion that providing care is a lesser or less significant work. These detrimental perceptions can be abolished, and a more inclusive and varied care industry can be promoted by removing these barriers and encouraging men to work in the care industry and also at home. Additionally, by including people of both genders in caregiving roles, we may offer care that is more varied and comprehensive. Men bring special experiences, views, and talents to the table that can be very helpful to individuals receiving care. We may challenge established conventions and build a more just and compassionate society by appreciating and embracing the contributions of men in caregiving. It is important to understand that providing care is an essential component of being human and is not exclusive to one gender or the other.

Similarities and Differences in Gender Stereotypes and Unpaid Care Work in the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana

When comparing the cultural, social, and economic environments of the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana, similarities and contrasts in gender stereotypes and unpaid caregiving can be seen. Gender stereotypes around unpaid care work are slowly changing in the UK as more people are realizing the value of men helping with childcare and home duties. However, because women are frequently expected to take the lead in providing care, conventional gender roles still exist to some extent. In contrast, Nigeria and Ghana show more extreme gender discrepancies in unpaid care work, where women are disproportionately responsible for childcare and domestic duties (Datta et al, 2006).

These discrepancies can be ascribed to societal expectations, patriarchal institutions, and cultural norms that value men's responsibilities as providers of support and women's roles as carers. In Nigeria, for instance, social convention expects that women should put their families before their careers, sometimes resulting in little chances for women to work outside the home for pay. Because women are left with the dual burden of unpaid caregiving and low economic empowerment, this feeds the cycle of gender inequality in society (Duffy and Amenia, 2019) Similar to this, patriarchal systems and conventional gender norms

in Ghana further restrict women's prospects for personal and professional progress by reinforcing the notion that they should be primarily responsible for childcare and housework. This makes it extremely difficult for women in Ghana to enter the formal labor force and obtain positions that pay well. Their inability to support themselves financially is hampered by this, which further feeds the cycle of poverty and inequalities based on gender. Furthermore, the absence of accessible and reasonably priced childcare services makes things worse because the social structure forces women to choose between providing for their families and pursuing employment prospects.

Unpaid care work and gender stereotypes are significant problems in Ghana, Nigeria, and the UK, though they may take different forms in each. In the three countries, males are frequently expected to be the breadwinners while women are frequently expected to take care of children and handle home duties. However, the extent and nature of these stereotypes can vary based on cultural, economic, and social factors specific to each country. To buttress this, according to Powell et al (2009), "Gender culture is a major factor in the work-family interface. While both national culture and individual gender attitudes influence individuals' opportunities and behaviors, norms affect couples differently in different countries. To address and challenge the gender inequities that are fueled by these assumptions, it is essential to understand these similarities and variances.

For instance, traditional gender norms have gradually shifted away in the UK in recent decades because of the dynamics of culture. Women have challenged the idea that their primary function is to be caregivers by joining the labor and pursuing careers. Women still encounter substantial obstacles and disadvantages in the workplace, such as the gender wage gap and low representation in senior roles, notwithstanding this progress (Madsen et al, 2017; Winkel et al, 2021). On the contrary, traditional gender roles continue to be established in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies. Women are discouraged from pursuing ambitious careers and are encouraged to put their families first. As a result, there is a large gender gap in these nations' employment prospects and wages. Women are underrepresented in well-paying professions and industries, and they frequently experience cultural prejudices and discriminatory behaviors that impede their advancement.

As women are supposed to prioritize their household duties over their jobs, the pressure to conform to societal standards worsens the gender gap. Many intelligent and skilled women in Nigeria and Ghana are thus unable to make the most of their abilities and contribute to the workforce, which results in the loss of priceless talent and the potential for economic growth. It is a problem that needs to be addressed on a national scale in both countries. Governments and organizations must act proactively to remove these obstacles and establish a setting that is welcoming and equitable for women. Implementing policies that promote gender equality, such as paid parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and affordable childcare, can help alleviate the burden on women and enable them to pursue their professional aspirations. According to Hegewisch and Lacarte as cited in Hess et al,(2020)" Reasons for part-time work, and the likelihood of working part-time over the life cycle, vary strongly between women and men, and women are much more likely than men to work part-time because of child care and other family care obligations" (p.1). Additionally, promoting a culture that recognizes and advances women's career growth requires addressing cultural norms and assumptions surrounding gender roles. Women's untapped potential can help nations prosper economically, innovate more effectively, and innovate more. According to studies, organizations with diverse leadership teams outperform their rivals, and nations with better gender equality also have higher levels of overall human development and well-being (Wang et al., 2022; Pavez, 2021). In addition to helping people and businesses, empowering women in the workforce also makes society more inclusive and equal.

Governments, organizations, and individuals must collaborate to foster an atmosphere where women may succeed professionally and fully contribute to the development of their communities and countries. Compared to the other two countries under consideration, the UK has made notable strides in addressing the issues of gender imbalance in unpaid housework thanks to political and social awareness campaigns. There is still work to be done in Nigeria and Ghana to achieve gender equality in unpaid care work to bring it to par with international standards. The biggest obstacles to achieving gender parity in both nations,

Nigeria and Ghana, are a lack of government programs, a concentration on culture, and a lack of social consciousness.

In furtherance of closing the lacuna of gender imbalance in unpaid care work, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) has proposed a roadmap of the 3Rs framework, which was later developed into “5Rs”, to unpaid care work, including Reward for care workers and their representation in social dialogue on issues that affect them and society at large. These recent commitments build on the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which recognizes the importance of tackling the unequal distribution of unpaid work between men and women as an essential step towards achieving gender equality.

The 5Rs approach is a human gender-responsive action to mitigate unpaid care work inequalities and to reduce social hindrances that stop women from entering the formal sector of employment. According to Chauhan and Joshi (2021), the ILO 5R could be summarized as follows: Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward and Represent unpaid care work. They are further detailed out as follows.

Recognize

- Incorporating measures of paid and unpaid care work in national statistics and in measures of economic progress.
- Measuring time-use and unpaid care work and its distribution within families and communities.
- Tracking care in public policies and investments.
- Documenting the social and economic multipliers of investments in care.
- Recognizing women’s work and care responsibilities across their life course.

Reduce

- Increasing access to care-relevant infrastructure and time- and labor-saving technologies.

Redistribute

- Investing in quality, affordable, and accessible care services.
- Ensuring care-friendly and gender-responsive social protection systems.
- Implementing gender-responsive maternity, paternity, and parental leave policies.
- Implementing family-friendly workplace policies and arrangements.
- Shifting social norms on care.
- Engaging men and fathers in care.
- Developing care-relevant training and advocacy tools.

Reward

- Ensuring decent work for all care workers, including in the informal economy.
- Extending social protection to informal workers.

Represent

- Formalizing care and domestic work.
- Promoting freedom of association, social dialogue, and collective bargaining for care workers.
- Ensuring equal opportunity and treatment for migrant care workers.”

The gender parity in unpaid care labor will significantly improve when the UK, Nigeria, and Ghana implement these ILO rules, and the global economy will benefit as a result. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which recognizes the significance of addressing the unequal allocation of paid and unpaid labor between men and women as a crucial step towards attaining gender equality, serves as the foundation for these more recent commitments. The SDG 5 on gender equality and target 5.4 further sets out concrete actions to be taken to address unpaid care work.

METHODOLOGY

The desk research and textual content analysis as a qualitative approach is the methodology for this study. This approach is thought to be appropriate and trustworthy for exploring public and governmental attitudes toward unpaid care work in the study's participating nations. To conclude, an analysis of this paper was conducted using content and related articles from EBSCO, Google Scholar, Scopus ProQuest, PubMed, UNESCO, and ILO media sites and libraries, as well as multiple internet sources, magazines, newspapers, multiple library materials, books, conference proceedings, surveys of prior research, and videos. To gather pertinent and up-to-date bits of information on the subject, pertinent materials from sources that fit the scope of the study were listed and critically assessed. For textual analysis, additional supplemental information for discourse was also taken from many secondary sources. As the flow of information moves more and more online, data collection by academics is becoming less reliant on direct human interaction. To collect and disseminate data remotely for academic research, more traditional methods have been supplanted by the Internet and other media platforms (Rush et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2023; Rakasiwi & Setyowibowo, 2023). These sources provided information that was used in the desk research to make judgments on the subject at hand. This extensive investigation gave the researcher access to the most recent information and opinions on the subject.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Ghana were the three countries included in this study. According to the analysis of the topic from Internet secondary sources, the UK has consistently worked to reduce the gender gap in unpaid care work through a variety of government, private, and corporate measures. There is still more work to be done in this area for Nigeria and Ghana. The following table provides examples of these areas.

TABLE 1
INDICATION OF ACTION AREAS BY THE THREE COUNTRIES TO CLOSE THE GENDER GAP IN UNPAID CARE WORK

Rating of UK, Nigeria, and Ghana Indicating Action Areas to Close the Gender Disparity in Unpaid Care Work				
SN	Indicators	UK	Ghana	Nigeria
1	Laws	AV	PA	PA
2	Policy action	AV	PA	NA
3	National Campaigns	AV	PA	NA
4	Education Campaigns	AV	PA	NA
5	Improved childcare options	AV	PA	NA
6	Flexible work conditions	AV	NA	NA
7	Government support programme in times of crises.	AV	PA	PA

Key: Available: AV. Partially Available: PA. Not available: NA
Concept by the Researcher

The table summarizes the study's findings and provides an overview of how the gender gap in unpaid labor is being closed in the study's target nations. The bulk of the texts concur that there is still a lot to be done in bridging the gender gap in unpaid care work on a worldwide scale. While the Global South still needs to put in more effort to close this social divide, the Global North is consistently working to do so.

As the table above suggests, closing the gender disparity in unpaid care work in the UK, Ghana and Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of the problem, which include cultural norms, gender roles, and lack of government support. For Nigeria and Ghana, strong legislations and policy actions can be put in place to protect the rights of women and promote gender equality, including

laws that mandate paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and equal pay for equal work. National campaigns and education programs can raise awareness about the importance of unpaid care work and its impact on women's economic and social well-being.

Improved childcare options, such as affordable and accessible daycare centers, can also help reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women. Flexible work conditions, such as remote work and part-time options, can enable women to balance their care responsibilities with paid employment. Government support programs, such as social protection programs, can provide a safety net for women and families in times of crisis, such as natural disasters or economic downturns.

Although the UK has legislation in place to reduce gender inequality, more government support programs are required. For example, tax credits and child benefit payments can help families that are caring for others financially. Support for caregivers may also be offered, such as training opportunities and respite care. For Ghana, government support programs, such as social protection programs and cash transfer schemes, can provide financial assistance to families with caring responsibilities. Support for carers, including training and access to health services, can also be provided.

Closing the gender disparity in unpaid care work in the UK, Ghana and Nigeria requires a comprehensive and sustained effort from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and private sector, to address the underlying causes of the problem and promote gender equality.

CONCLUSION

This study compared unpaid caregiving practices in Ghana, Nigeria, and the UK to assess gender stereotypes. Certain criteria were utilized to rate each nation's performance in unpaid care work for the three countries considered in this study: Ghana, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. In addition to increased daycare alternatives, flexible work schedules, and government support programs during crises, they also include laws, policy actions, national campaigns, and laws. From the data analyzed above, only the UK has consistently used a multifaceted strategy to try to close the gender gap in unpaid care work. To bridge the gender gap in unpaid care work, there is still much work to be done in Nigeria and Ghana. Considering the environmental and societal conditions, approaches to tackling the gender disparity in unpaid care work should be treated as a global issue. Studies have shown that the Global South, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, used as microcosms for this work, have not done well to effectively narrow the widening gender gap in unpaid care work, despite some countries, especially in Western countries, doing well in formalizing unpaid care work.

RECOMMENDATION

Generally, Antonopoulos (2008) suggests an audacious plan to lessen gender-based gaps in unpaid care work. She emphasizes the need for comprehensive anti-poverty policies that consider gender differences in paid and unpaid labor. These policies continue gender-based inequality by ignoring the systemic and human factors that cause poverty. Considering these, this study makes the following recommendations:

- Gender equality and campaigns to address unpaid care work should be interpreted and implemented based on the peculiarities of culture of each nation, due to differences in location and social context, particularly in the Global South. The universal appeal has failed. However, such tailored responses must be geared towards reducing the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls.
- There should be a criteria to gauge each nation's development in this field. Second, this will be achievable when countries prioritize tackling unpaid care work and enact laws, policies and fund holistic programmes to address it.
- To raise awareness from an early age, studies on unpaid care work and gender equality should be included in all levels of schooling, from primary to tertiary.
- A review of literature materials should be conducted to remove books that promote unpaid care work as the role for women and girls.

- The government should create more opportunities in the formal sector for the employment of more women to liberate them from the burden of unpaid care work.

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