

THE DOUBLE BURDEN: WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND INVISIBLE LABOR AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

In the modern working experience, the female worker is left with an overload of labor (paid and unpaid) which is a phenomenon that is broadly articulated in literature as the double burden. This paper will explore the nexus of work-life balance (WLB) issues and invisible labor amongst women in formalized work settings in different national and sectoral settings. The paper is based on a synthesis of quantitative data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), McKinsey and Company, UN Women, as well as published ethnographic and interview-based research, as the foundation to create a multi-dimensional analysis of the existence of invisible labour within the domestic context and at the workplace itself. The research broadens the definition of invisible labor to include physical labor, the cognitive labor (mental load), emotional labor, the household management (administrative), and the informal contributions to the workplace that are systematically unacknowledged and unpaid. The paper concludes that women work 2.6 times the amount of unpaid work that men do across the world (OECD, 2022), that 58.2% of working women experience a high level of work-life conflict (McKinsey & Company, 2023), and that organizational structure and national policy systems moderate these results significantly. This essay contends that the invisibility of this labor is a structural injustice with quantifiable impact on the career advancement of women, their mental health, economic autonomy, and future security with respect to pensions. It ends with a proposal of a journey of organizational and policy-level interventions based on feminist organization theory and evidence-based human resource practice. These results have a direct impact on organizational policy-makers, leaders, HR practitioners, and those studying gender equity and the design of workplaces.

Keywords: invisible labor, double burden, work-life balance, emotional labor, mental load, cognitive labor, unpaid domestic work, gender inequality, organizational policy, female employment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last 50 years, the number of women in the formal labour force has increased significantly. The world average labor force participation rate by women in 2023 was 47.3 as opposed to 72.8 among male workers, a difference that, although it has been decreasing, still exists in virtually all national economies (ILO, 2023). Beneath this statistic, however, is a far more disheartening and permeating truth namely, millions of women who work in paid jobs also bear the brunt of unpaid domestic and caring work for the vast majority. This essentially doubly burdened load, sometimes known as the second shift or difficulty of the terms, in sociological writing, the double burden, is one of the most enduring and least understood modes of gendered disparities in contemporary societies.[1]

The consequence of this phenomenon is not usually just the amount of work completed by women, but the invisibility of much of this work. Invisible labor, which includes physical domestic work, emotional control, mental home management, and informal work at the workplace, is especially not counted, is hardly noticeable or even paid. It is doing the dirty work on the backstage of women's professional lives unknowingly eating up energy, time, career capital, and psychological well-being. The accumulating impact is an institutionalized penalty that accumulates throughout one's working life span and comes to play in terms of gender wage disparities, deficits in top executive roles, elevated burnout, and lower pensions.[2]

The paper is very serious with such invisibility both as a research problem and as a social problem. It contends that the comprehension of the dual burden involves pushing past the commitment to superficial arguments about flexibility or time management and addressing the structural, cultural, and organizational processes that render the unpaid labor of women to vanish into invisibility and at the same time make its invisibility disastrous. By combining both international and regional sources, the paper will record the magnitude of the problem, appeal to the feminist organizational theory and sociology of work as to the reasons and provide a set of evidence-based interventions that will challenge both the individual and systemic aspects of the issue.[3]

1.1 Research Objectives

The paper has four objectives that are related to each other. One, it aims at capturing and quantifying women workers in terms of the extent of work-life imbalance and invisible labor using up-to-date, official statistics. Secondly, it tries to theorize the processes by which invisible labor goes undetected in domestic unions as well as hierarchy in organizations. Third, it looks at the implications of invisible labor on the success of women in professional and personal life. Fourth, it recognizes and analyzes both individual, organizational, and policy-based evidence-based interventions.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The applicability of this question is not limited to academia. Leaders of organizations implementing systems of performance management, policymakers who develop systems of parental leaves, and people who negotiate conditions of their own relationships all work under assumptions of what work under the influence of the visibility or invisibility of some forms of labor. When the intellectual effort of organizing a child into their doctor visits, or the emotional effort of attending to a co-worker in the stress at work, is not factored into another decision that will flow downstream, it warps all other downstream decisions. The present paper argues that turning labor invisible is not just an exercise in semantics but one of the conditions of fair design of society and organization.[4]

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Double Burden: Historical and Conceptual Foundations

The idea of the double burden dates intellectually to the seminal work of the leading feminist theorist Arlie Hochschild, in her 1989 book *The Second Shift*, which she documented with longitudinal

analysis, that the working American women came home to a second, unpaid shift of household work. The time-diary analysis with her ethnographic approach has revealed that women actually worked about fifteen hours longer a week when paid and unpaid labor are combined, in comparison to their male counterparts. Although the time of day these hours change in different decades and depending on the country, the overall trend has turned out to be incredibly stable.[5]

Sociological theorists have since framed the twofold burden in the wider contexts of gender stratification. In placing women's domestic labor as structurally necessary to the reproduction of the labor force, which is a kind of work that capitalism relies on yet refuses to pay, Scott and Tilly (1975) placed women in a distinctive role as both the reproduction of the labor force and the reproduction of their own reproduction. Fraser (1994) postulated that the caregiving labor which ensures social reproduction was not included in the implicit model of the welfare state that considered the universality of the breadwinner. More recently, Cooper (2014) and Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) have followed the continuation of the double burden into neoliberal restructuring, demonstrating that moving the care work responsibility off the state onto the family has had a disproportionate increase in the total burden of women's labour despite an increase in their participation in paid labour.

Modern empirical studies continually validations are these theoretical projections. As per the data of OECD, published in 2022, in thirty-seven member countries, on average, women in thirty-seven of its member countries perform 2.6 times more unpaid labor than men. This would translate to an average of 3.5 hours per day of unpaid labour, the gap between women and men under full-time employment. Such discrepancies are much larger in developing economies in which the formal childcare regime is less robust and in which gender-based norms are more conservative.[6]

2.2 Defining and Theorizing Invisible Labor

Invisible labor cannot be directly superimposed on one concept of the academic literature. Instead, it serves as an umbrella to several interrelated and analytically distinct constructs. There are four main dimensions that are distinguished in this paper.

Physical domestic labor involves more tangible household chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping for groceries and basic childcare. Although it is more exposed than any other form, it is systematically undervalued as it is not part of the market economy, nor does it earn any wage or any official acknowledgement.

The anticipatory and managerial aspect of household operation is the cognitive labor or the mental load as it is also termed. In a qualitative research, which is widely cited and appeared in the American Sociological Review, sociologist Allison Damenger (2019) proposed four components of cognitive labor applied at home: anticipation of needs, finding the optimal solution, taking action and evaluation of the result. Daminger discovered that the number of cognitive labor taken by women was disproportionately higher among the households with both physical domestic and mental work as compared to those without a partner.[7]

Emotional labor is a study by Arlie Hochschild, who first defined emotional management as a management activity at work in the case of *The Managed Heart* (1983). Emotional labor in its application to the household setting involves the labor of working on the emotional environment of the domestic space: appeasing feuds, preempting emotional demands, offering psychological assistance and repressing their own emotional reactions in the name of the comfort of others. DeVault (1991) and Erickson (2005) applied the definition further to the family, stating that women are socially required to use emotional labour as an aspect of femininity itself, which made it blatant when absent and meek when present.

The most undertheorized aspect of work is the workplace invisible labor that describes the uncompensated and informal work women perform in their workplaces. In a research into academic departments, the study conducted by Babcock et al. (2017) showed that women were much more susceptible as a demographic to having been repeatedly requested to do non-promotable tasks, such as serving in a committee, mentoring junior staff, managing office social life, and providing administrative support which was not part of their official job roles. These roles, though they helped in the functioning of the organization were hardly considered in promotion.[8]

2.3 Work-Life Balance: Theories, Concepts and Gender Aspects.

Various definitions of work-life balance (WLB) exist as the lack of inter-role conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), the availability of a kind of enrichment between work and personal sphere (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006), and as a more practical understanding of a subjective belief that work and personal life are calibrated to the values and needs of the individual (Grzywacz and All of these definitions have various implications on measurement and intervention. The conflict-based definition that has predominated the empirical literature is concerned with such negative spillovers between domains as time spent doing work when it could be spent with family or with family taking attention that would be necessary in the work environment.

The gendered aspect of the WLB study has grown so much since the 1990s. The early work on WLB considered the conflict between work and family an experience that was universal without taking into account the structural differences of men and women in the work market and the family unit. Feminist scholars criticized this gender-neutralization, showing that women experienced qualitatively different sources of WLB challenge since they enter into paid labour and retain primary responsibility for the unpaid household labour. What will come out will be some sort of temporal and cognitive overload that is not merely the issue of having excessive hours of total work, but the issue of enduring two sets of expectations that cannot be met at the same time.[9]

In one cross-national study of sixteen OECD nations, Stier and Lewin-Epstein (2007) discovered that access to flexible work and affordable childcare both moderated the work-family conflict of women, but that structural provision resources worked more effectively in future societies that practiced an egalitarian attitude towards gender roles. This fact highlights the policy infrastructure-culture interaction, which is further discussed in Section 5 of this paper.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks guide the analysis in this paper. The initial observation of dual-earner family systems theory (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969) is that the household division of labor does not necessarily equalize when both members of the household work full-time. The theory hypothesises that with no active renegotiations, gender socialisation and structural limitations will predict a default division of domestic labour to females.

Resource theory (Blood and Wolfe, 1960) assumes that the power of domestic relationships including the power to evade household work is distributed based on the relative resources (income, education, occupational prestige) that the partners contribute to the household. Although the resource theory predicts increased domestic labor equality in the wife-husband couples who have two high earnings, empirical evidence has revealed that it is not a straight relationship as women, whose earnings are higher and occupy prestigious occupations, still end up doing disproportionate domestic work, a phenomenon that prompted the development of the idea of doing gender theory (West and Zimmerman, 1987) that claims that home work is[10]

The critical perspective on analyzing invisible labor at the workplace is through the feminist organizational theory (Acker, 1990). The idea of gendered organization, postulated by Acker asserts that organizations are not such purely gendered institutions as gender-neutral bureaucracies, but

composed on an implicit model of the ideal worker, unburdened by family life and free to work full-time, continuously, anywhere in the world. This structural male is an ideal worker even when the rules that inform an organization seem to be neutral in nature. In this reading, the invisible work of women in the workplace, however, is a non-privateised accommodation and a structural necessity created by organizations that cannot function without informal work yet cannot reward it nor do not want to acknowledge its existence.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The paper follows an integrative review approach by assessing in a systematic way the quantitative data, both quantitative and qualitative research results. An integrative review is suitable when the objective of research is to develop a holistic picture of a phenomenon by means of numerous kinds of evidence instead of regarding the efficacy of a particular intervention (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). The phenomenon being investigated, the double burden, is context-dependent and multidimensional, qualifying a mixed-evidence synthesis approach as a methodologically sound choice as well as making it a richer comparison to either of the extremes of the pure meta-analysis or the pure narrative review.[11]

3.2 Data Sources

In order to have depth and reliability, the study depended on the combination of both quantitative and qualitative sources. The data were gathered subsequently using quantitative measures of well-established international reports, including the international reports published in 2022-2023 by world institutions. The reason behind the choice of these sources is that they adhere to rigorous research practices, provide relatively recent information, and deal with various regions, which makes them fitting in the wider analysis.

To obtain qualitative information, the study has been using peer-reviewed journal articles dating back to the period 2010-24. These articles were borrowed from reputable academic journals that regularly publish articles concerning gender, employment and social structures. The emphasis was on the real-life experiences that tend to be non-numerical variables.

In order to find the required studies, certain terminologies were employed, including invisible labor, mental work, emotional work in families, two-job burden in women, gendered work-life balance, and undermotivated work. Studies that were not meeting clear criteria were excluded. These works were required to concentrate on working females, must be real data as opposed to opinions and must also have been published in peer-reviewed journals. This method contributed to the consistency and made the results rely on plausible and verifiable research.[12]

3.3 Analytical Approach

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data in tabular format so that the key statistics in any situation can be compared on a national and sectoral level. Thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008), which involves determining common themes across studies, comparing them and categorizing them into higher-order analytical scales, was used to analyze qualitative findings. The resulting structure was then interpreted to either the quantitative patterns or the reverse and a form of triangulation was made, which enhances the trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn based on either of the two types of evidence.

The article admits a number of methodological limitations. The issue is that Definitional differences in what constitutes/unpaid work or work-family conflict make cross-national data comparisons challenging. By structure, qualitative research cannot be generalized, and most of the

richest research conducted on the judgment of invisible labour has been done in affluent Western economies, restricting the generalizability of qualitative research. These are considered in Section 7.[13]

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

4.1 The Scale of the Double Burden: Global Quantitative Evidence

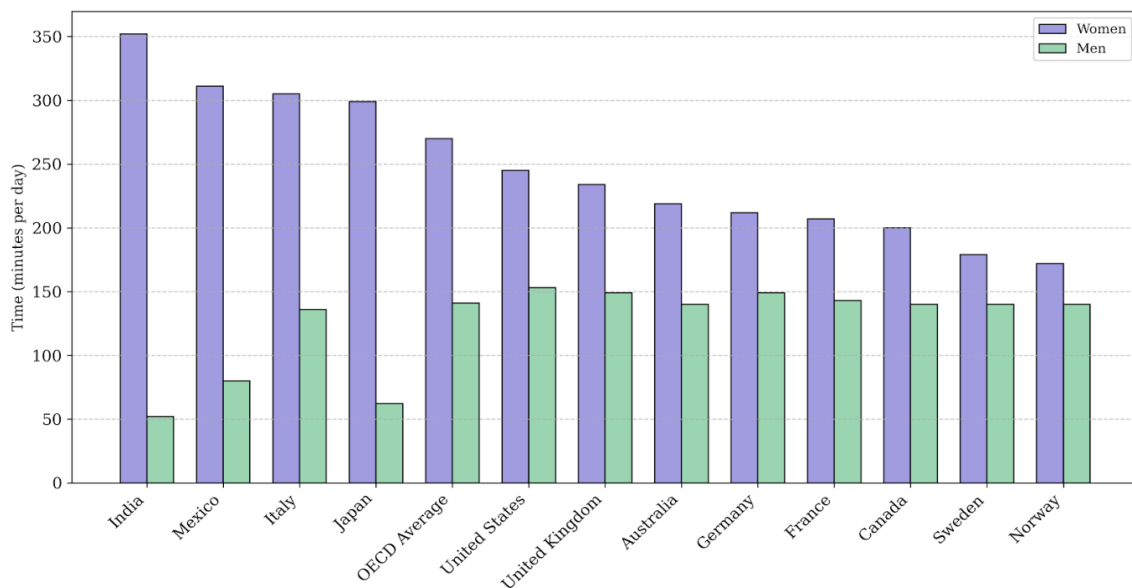
The summary of the main quantitative indicators recording the extent of the work-life imbalance and invisible labor in female employees all over the world is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Quantitative Indicators of Work-Life Imbalance and Invisible Labor Among Female Employees

Variable	% of Female Workforce	Hours/Week (Paid)	Hours/Week (Unpaid)	Source
Global Female Labor Participation	47.3%	34.2	19.4	ILO, 2023
Women in Part-time Employment	24.8%	20.1	22.6	OECD, 2023
Women Reporting Work-Life Conflict	58.2%	N/A	N/A	McKinsey, 2023
Women Performing Primary Caregiving	71.0%	N/A	16.8	UN Women, 2022
Gender Gap in Domestic Labor	N/A	N/A	2.6x (vs. men)	OECD, 2022

Source: ILO (2023); OECD (2022, 2023); McKinsey & Company (2023); UN Women (2022). WLB = Work-Life Balance. N/A = Not directly applicable

Unpaid Work Time by Gender: A Cross-Country Comparison



These data demonstrate some significant trends. The unpaid working labour gender gap (2.6x worldwide) is not only in developing economies but runs the entire OECD spectrum. In Japan, the proportion of women to men in unpaid employment is around a 5:1 ratio, demonstrating well-established cultural ideologies concerning gender roles, which have been ingrained even with the labor market being more of a formal participation. In the United States, the average hours of women doing unpaid domestic work have consistently resulted in 4.2 hours a day vs. 2.5 hours a day among men, reflecting a disparity in which the Bureau of Labor Statistics employed a series of its American Time Use Survey through several sequential versions of this survey in the past since 2003.[14]

Of interest is the McKinsey and Company (2023) discovery that 58.2 per cent of women working in the state have high work-life conflict. It does not rely on any one sector or group but is based on the responses of a survey of many women in industries, levels of organizations and family arrangements. It suggests that work-life conflict is not a peripheral or special phenomenon among female workers but a structural ground state. The same report concludes that women in managerial and senior professional jobs report equal or higher levels of work-life conflict than those in non-managerial positions, which upends the intuition that a rise in career progression decreases WLB issues.

4.2 Taxonomy of Invisible Labor: Forms, Frequency, and Visibility

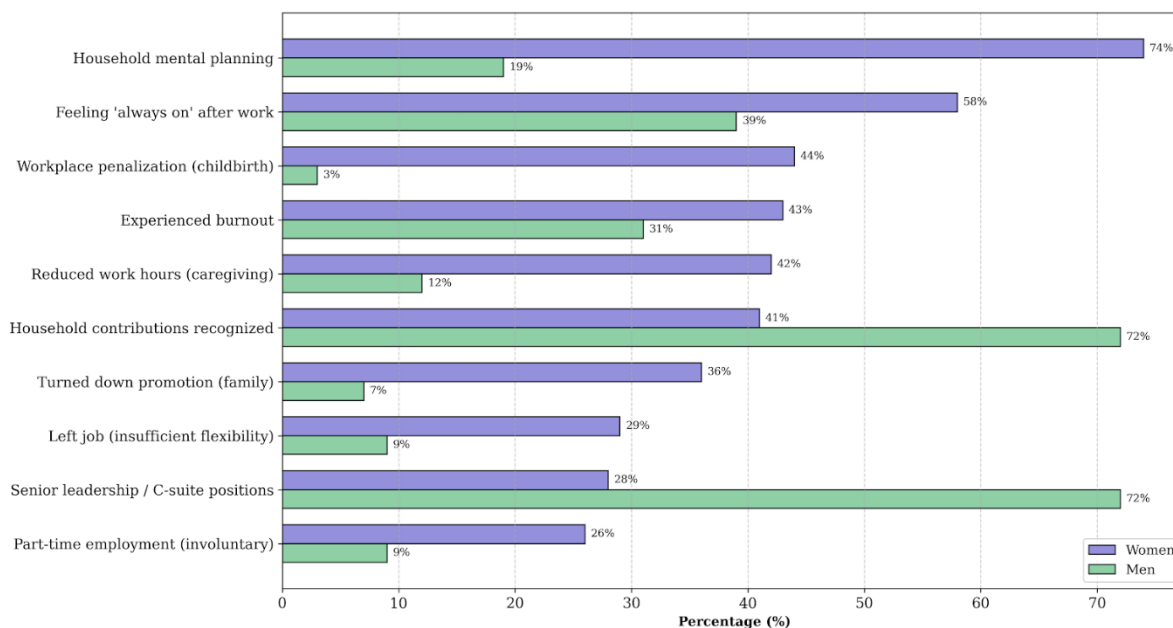
A taxonomy of types of invisible labor is used, based on estimates of time spent in each category each week and the average recognition these activities are given by the domestic partner and employers, is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Taxonomy of Invisible Labor Among Employed Women

Category	Examples	Estimated Hours/Week	Visibility to Partners/Employers
Emotional Labor	Managing family emotions, grief support, conflict mediation	6.4	Low
Cognitive Labor	Planning meals, scheduling appointments, tracking school events	4.2	Very Low
Administrative Labor	Managing finances, insurance, school paperwork	3.1	Low
Physical Domestic Labor	Cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare routines	12.3	Moderate
Workplace Invisible Labor	Office housekeeping tasks, mentoring junior staff informally, organizing social events	2.8	Very Low

Source: Daminger (2019); Hochschild (1989, 1983); Erickson (2005); Babcock et al. (2017); DeVault (1991); OECD Time Use Database (2022). Hours are approximations derived from time-use studies.

Gender Disparities in Workplace Dynamics and Household Responsibilities



The cumulative suggested by Table 2 is dramatic: when you add all five types of women, the average weekly time spent by the employees on invisible labor is estimated at 28.8 hours. Although it may represent an overlap of categories and the need to be able to recognize that not all women will do all types of invisible labor at any given time, this number points to a total burden of labor that is markedly above a typical working week. The accumulated weekly paid work (comprising about 34 hours on average worldwide) and this negative workload mean that a working week of more than 60 hours on top of caregiving and training duties is the fate of several working women.p[15]

Of particular interest are the low ratings of visibility of the cognitive and emotional labor. In a study conducted by Daminger (2019), female partners of couples that had reported equal levels of sharing chores continued to overwhelmingly shoulder a cognitive housework load. Spouses who felt themselves as equal participants were often oblivious to the fact that the anticipatory and organizational aspects of home operations were being run virtually by their female spouses. This invisibility is not just a perception; it is a culturally script-enforced invisibility, promoting domestic competence amongst women and conceptualizing cognitive labor as an act of spontaneity of personality, as opposed to teaching and demanding practice.

4.3 Invisible Labor in the Workplace

Outside of the domestic context, invisible labor also functions within an organizational framework in such a manner that it has explicit consequences on the career pathways of women. In a series of experiments and observational studies, carried out in academic and professional environments, Babcock et al. (2017) discovered that women were proposed to perform non-promotable tasks at much higher rates compared to men, and women willingly responded to such requests at much higher rates. The non-promotable duties encompassed the service in low-status committees, the assessment of student work not within formal teaching placements, departmental social organization, and informal emotional support of fellow employees.

Career implications of this discord are immense. Time wastage on non-promoting activities is time wastage that cannot be used to conduct research, develop clients, participate in projects that are highly visible and the types of output that take advantage of making promotions. Rudman and Glick (2001) determined in a meta-analysis that women turning down non-promotable tasks or demanding to

receive compensation for informal contributions were rated negatively compared to men who made the same refusal, which Babcock et al. (2017) explain as a non-promotable task trap.[16]

Another dimension of workplace invisible labor but a related one is the informal mentoring and supportive actions that women in senior positions take towards junior colleagues. According to a study conducted by Lapierre et al. (2018), female managers on average devoted 2.4 hours a week more than male managers to informal mentoring and pastoral care of subordinates. This discrepancy was not matched in performance appraisal and remuneration systems, and women gazing at their role models were given informal reputation sanctions as a result of cutting back on informal mentoring.

4.4 The Mental Health Dimension

The psychological outcomes of weeks or months of invisible work are well-reported and comprise the high risks of the generalized state of anxiety, major depressive episodes, work burnout, and fatigue of caregivers. In a 2023 Gallup World poll, women who work full-time and who had over 20 hours a week of unpaid household work in addition to their gainful jobs reported being stressed 34 percent more than similarly employed men with equal hours of household work. According to the survey of Stress in America by the American Psychological Association (2023), employed mothers were 1.8 times more likely to report chronic stress than employed fathers.

Importantly, the volume of the mental health burden of invisible labor is disproportionate to the volume in itself. As Williams and Boushey (2010) and more recently, Slaughter (2012) posit, the invisibility in itself, the lack of recognition, the absence of reciprocity and the implicit anticipation of effortless performance are what cause the particular type of psychological exhaustion related to the double burden. It is not that women have more work, but that they are systematically devalued in their work, which accrues over time and turns into a type of chronic grief in terms of time, capacity and possibility lost.[17]

5. CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Policy Environments and Their Effects

A comparative lens lets one see that the double burden does not affect all national settings equally and that policy settings have considerable buffering effects on the severity of the burden. Table 3 cross-tabulates the parental leave laws, childcare facilities and the relative values of female work-life balance as estimated in five countries at the end of the sample of different welfare state frameworks.

Table 3: Cross-National Comparison of Parental Leave, Childcare Policy, and Female WLB Outcomes

Country	Paid Maternity Leave (Weeks)	Paid Paternity Leave (Weeks)	Subsidized Childcare	Female WLB Score (0-10)
Sweden	68	10 (transferable)	Yes (universal)	8.4
Germany	58	8	Partial	7.1
United States	0 (federal)	0 (federal)	No	5.2
Japan	58	52 (available but <20% take-up)	Partial	5.8
India	26 (formal sector only)	0.67	Limited	4.1

Source: OECD Family Database (2023); World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2024); ILO Maternity Protection Database (2023).

The statistics given in Table 3 can be used to confirm a definite trend: those countries that are more lenient in terms of parental leave, childcare policies, and gender-neutral leave policies are always characterized by higher female WLB scores. The relatively positive performance of Sweden could not be explained only by the duration of the parental leave but by the organization of the Hellenic leave system where daddy quotes are used which provide a part of the parental leave to dads only and cannot be sold to mothers. This structural aspect matters since it institutionalizes paternal care, reallocates domestic labor in the home in a gradual manner, and destabilizes the structural connection between motherhood and career disadvantage.[18]

The United States is the most conspicuous outlier in a group of high-income countries with federally mandated paid maternity leave being the only OECD member to provide none. This policy gap puts a situation where the two-pronged burden is more upon the women in the lower-income occupations and those who do not have employer-sponsored benefits. The implications are increased turnover of the maternal workforce after giving birth and career sanctions in the long-term caused by disruptions in employment and the localization of the dual burden among disadvantaged classes and racial groups.

Japan is a very good case in point. A formal legislative provision on paternity leave by the country is amongst the most generous leaves in the world and fathers are entitled to up to fifty-two weeks of paid leave. The real turnout of Japanese fathers was however around 17.1% in 2022 (Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2023). This does not match the formal right and what is actually happening depicts one of the inherent weaknesses of policy analysis that only looks at regulations; people within organizations can impose non-official punishment for non-conformity and cultural expectations that can render progressive policies practically unsustainable.[19]

5.2 Sectoral Variation

In national settings, the phenomenon of the double burden differs markedly across the sectors and occupational classifications. The paradox of employment of women in the care sector (healthcare, education, social work etc) in particular is that their occupational requirements demand high levels of emotional and relational work within the workplace and thus limited emotional resources remain to carry out the unseen emotional work at home. These studies by Hochschild (1997) and, more recently by England, 2005 describe the work carried out by the direct care of people as being subject to a care penalty that is, such occupations are systematically underpaid in relation to their knowledge and effort involved and that the gendered composition of the occupation causes the underpayment.

The second type of double burden occurs when professionals and managers are taken up by women. This condition is brought about by the anticipation of being available at all times, and the always-on culture, inherent to most professional settings, that creates what Williams (2010) terms as time macho, which is a competitive imperative that requires the show of commitment to be identified via hours worked. Women here are subjected to conflicting demands of professional culture and domestic force which men at similar stages do not struggle as much resulting in higher rates of burnout in women at later stages of their careers as compared to men.[20]

6. ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

6.1 The Gendered Organization and Ideal Worker Norms

The most potent analytical resource to explain why women continue to experience invisible labor in the workplace despite its established official policies in favor of gender equality has been Joan Acker's (1990) development of the gendered organization. Acker also stated that organizations are

constructed on the basis of an unspoken image of the perfect worker: someone who does not have family obligations, whose whole life is structured around the demands of work. Such an ideal worker is not directly gendered within organizational policy but implicitly male in the sense that the conditions it operates on (absence of domestic commitment, ever availability, geographic mobility) are conditions that domestic organization and gender roles have traditionally made more available to men.

Modern-day research in organizations has found itself validating this structure by Acker numerous times in various industries and among various countries. Ely and Meyerson (2000) discovered that despite the clear gender-equality pledges made by the organization, gendered hierarchies existed in the organization but through informalized norms concerning the definition of leadership potential, commitment, and professionalism. Williams, Blair-Loy, and Berdahl (2013) found the particular flexibility stigma applied to professional workplaces: when employees chose the option of flexible jobs, it was thought that they were not as dedicated and were rated worse when it came to promotion, irrespective of their performance.[21]

6.2 Performance Management and the Invisibility of Informal Labor

The performance management system of most organizations is created to measure, appraise and compensate discernible, quantifiable results: sales, research publications, billable hours, project completions. The informal work done by women which they disproportionately give such as facilitating team social dynamics, pastoral care, administering administrative overheads and keeping collegial relations, is usually not reflected in formal performance measures.

The effects of this structural omission carry a compounding effect. These contributions cannot be valued due to the fact that they cannot be measured. The employees who do not want to make them are not punished, and those who do not make them are not rewarded at all because they are not valued. The outcome is the creation of a system where the operational functioning of organizations is being subsidized by the unpaid work of women, and also the lack of inclusion becomes cemented to the cultural belief that this work is free or the work of little submission.

Hekman et al. (2017) discovered that white male managers who reinforced diversity and inclusion programmes in their organizations were rated higher by supervisors compared to female and minority managers who reinforced them, an observation that was seen to reflect an assumption that diversity work is an authentic manifestation of values in white men but is expected performance by women and minorities. This paper demonstrates how the gendering division of invisible labor functions in the very areas that are supposed to be identified with the progressive organizational values.[22]

6.3 Remote Work, Pandemic Effects, and the Amplification of Invisible Labor

The COVID-19 pandemic created a natural experience in the dynamics of invisible labor. Because of the closure of formal places of work and the emergence of home as both the work and the home place at once, researchers conducted a study that recorded a drastic upsurge in the double burden of working women who were mothers at the same time. In a 2021 article, Collins et al. found in *Gender and Society* that motherhood in families who had two wage earners presented a 1.5 times greater likelihood of motherhood to decrease paid working hours in reaction to school and childcare shutdowns. Burnout and psychological distress were higher among women who continued full-time work throughout lockdowns, compared to men.

After the pandemic, the pattern of remote work has provided a more subtle picture as studied later. The outcomes of remote work suggest that working remotely is related to better WLB, less commuting time, more flexibility, and autonomy among women who are not mothers. Women with small children or older dependents have found their lives to be both benefited and negated by remote work: on the one hand, there is less temporal pressure due to the removal of commuting time, on the

other hand, there is more temporal pressure due to the boundary violation between work and domestic life, especially when both domestic expectations respond to having a physical presence at home.[23]

A 2023 study by Bloom et al. of a large professional services firm that studied hybrid work arrangements found that women who were working on a hybrid arrangement were more prone to work on days more consistent with the school pick up schedule and physician appointments rather than men, who were more prone to work on days when they were not attending school or had medical appointments, essentially recreating the temporal structure of the double burden when working in a formally flexible arrangement. This observation implies that structural flexibility, without a concomitant redistribution of domestic labor, simply results in a redistribution of labour outside the country and not the redistribution of the double burden.

7. CONSEQUENCES OF THE DOUBLE BURDEN: INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEMIC OUTCOMES

7.1 Career Progression and the Motherhood Penalty

The impact that the double burden has on the career advancement of women is one of the most studied effects of the burden. In labor economics, the motherhood penalty, the wage and promotion bias linked to having children, may, in part, be explained by the fact that having children may disrupt the career ladders due to the unequal division of labor at home. In a landmark study by Budig and England (2001) which used the U.S. Panel Study of Income Dynamics data, the study established a wage penalty of about 4 per cent for each child by mothers even after adjusting for experience, education, and work hours. This finding was validated and generalized by other studies on the national level.[24]

Notably, a motherhood penalty comes with a bonus of fatherhood: it has been shown, again and again, that the wage of men goes up after they have children in their home. In their experimental study performed by Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007), artificial job seekers were involved in the study and it was discovered that mothers were rated as much less competent and committed than childless women and fathers were rated as more committed compared to childless men. These divergent perceptions are based on the various assumptions that the organizations have regarding the degree to which parental status influences professional behavior, which in turn is based on varying expectations regarding the parental and non-parental roles in doing household chores.[25]

The implications of the higher level of management representation are punitive. According to McKinsey and Company (2023), the United States has 28 percent of its C-suite positions occupied by females despite half of the employees being in level positions, a broken rung effect where women do not ascend to senior leadership positions after working in middle management despite being a higher proportion of the employees in that level. This gap in the research study is attributed to a set of factors such as the visibility gap generated by non-promotable work overload, bias in performance appraisals and career disruption that comes with unfair parenting roles.

7.2 Economic Security and Pension Outcomes

The negative effects of a double burden on women are immense in terms of their economic security in the long-term. The identified problem is the pension gender gap or the disparity between the theoretical income men have upon their retirement and the theoretical income women have upon their retirement, which is directly resulting from the career paths dictated by the double burden. As of 2022, the pregnancy gap of average pensions in the European Union was around 30% based on the average euros every woman earned in comparison to the wages male employees received (Eurostat, 2023). This disparity is the result of a lifetime of low earnings, more part-time work, and extended career breaks, which to some degree are fueled by the requirements of invisible domestic work.

Women who downgrade paid labor time to fulfill housekeeping duties not only lose the immediate pay, but also pension plans, employer-based matching schemes, career capital and the returns

on increasing their pay with seniority. In 2022, the World Economic Forum projected that at current rates, the economic gender gap will not be closed in the next 131 years and that the economic contribution and opportunity indicators are stuck in most localities.[26]

7.3 Mental Health and Subjective Well-being

The effects of the double burden on mental health have been previously reported with a broad spectrum of methodologies such as survey research, clinical studies, and longitudinal cohort studies. Lim, Bogossian, and Ahern (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on 59 studies on work-family conflict and mental health and found a strong positive relationship between work-family conflict and depression, anxiety and burnout, with significantly higher effects found in studies involving women as opposed to men. Other more recent studies have narrowed the research results by elaborating on particular mechanisms.

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) put forward that volume plus lack of control (rather than amount of labor) can lead to the worst psychological effects. Women with little power to resist domestic labor requirements either due to expectations by their partners or due to lack of financial negotiations or even due to cultural scripts feel more psychologically distressed in comparison with women who do similar work but feel they had the option of doing so. This result bears significant implications for intervention design, implying that efforts toward decreasing labor volume, without changing the power relations and cultural expectations that limit women's choices, will have little effect.

8. INTERVENTIONS: FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

8.1 Organizational-Level Interventions

The most hopeful organizational interventions have a common structural feature that does not presuppose the different choices made by individual women, but alters the conditions of the organization that lead to unequal results. Four types of organizational interventions have proven to be effective.

First, non-transferable paternity and structured parental leave policies that encompass non-transferable paternity leave have been linked to higher domestic labor redistribution and less motherhood punishment. The more equitable domestic divisions of labor among workers are noted to be recorded in the organizations that provide paid parental leave, which has equal durations between both parents and who actively characterize the use of the leave as normalized by men to both men and women using managerial messaging and cultural cues (Rehel, 2014). The causal process is associated with the normative legitimization of paternal caregiving; that is, when the organizations indicate that caregiving is a duty common to men and women, they provide the grounds for more equal bargaining at the household level.[27]

Second, the non-promotable task trap can be mitigated by having an open and systematic system of performance evaluation that quantifies contributions where the contribution is not seen as such and compensates that contribution. Babcock et al. (2017) suggest that the process of assigning tasks to employees should be audited by organizations in order to reveal gendered practices, establish clear guidelines of what qualifies as a promotable contribution and to make sure that informal contributions are formally recognized as a valued input in evaluation systems.

Third, post-pandemic remote work research can offer perverse effects that can be prevented by flexibility policies thoughtfully planned and implemented. This demands that flexibility should be extended to every employee and not just as a special accommodation to mothers, flexible arrangements should not be regarded as a sign of lesser commitment and that the cultural connections within organizations work against the act of conflating physical presence and productivity.

Fourth, it takes intentional action on the institutional level of senior management to target the culture of invisible labor by taking on formality in mentoring and sponsorship systems. Informal

mentoring based on networks that are gendered and racially stratified is likely to reproduce hierarchies within organizations that rely on informal mentoring, since informal mentoring is self-selected, and along with network ties that are gender stratified and racially stratified. There are positive impacts of the structured sponsorship programs where high-potential junior women are matched with senior leaders who support their promotion in various organizational study situations (Hewlett, 2013).

8.2 Policy-Level Interventions

The evidence indicates five areas of priority at the national policy level. To start with, the only candidate intervention that has the strongest evidence regarding boosting female labor force participation, alleviating work-family conflict, and equalizing the household division of labor is universal access to affordable, high-quality childcare. On female WLB scales, as well as gender pay gap scales, countries that provide childcare on a universal or nearly universal basis are always doing better than others.

Second, parental leave systems should be designed following the Swedish example of having a significant non-transferable paternity leave element. Experience in those countries that have implemented this design tends to indicate that the design has permanent effects on the distribution of labor in the country that persist far beyond the duration of the leave (Kotsadam & Finseraas, 2011).

Third, the regulation of the labor market should consider the structural features that turn the long and inflexible working hours into a proxy of professional commitment. This involves limiting unpaid overtime and the right not to have to think about work-related communication during non-contracted working hours and that part-time workers will have equal benefits and promotion chances.[28]

Fourth, inclusion in national accounts would bring to the economic frontline the magnitude of domestic work without pay and generate the space to include it in policy-making. Unpaid labor in the home is included in the United Nations System of National Accounts with satellite accounts and some countries have started to estimate and publish the monetary value of domestic unpaid labor. In 2020, Australia estimated the worth of unpaid domestic work at about 50.6% of its GDP, which indicates the economic importance of this type of labour and the extent to which it is absent in traditional economic indicators.

Fifth, the system of social protection also needs to be redefined to lessen its reliance upon full-time, sustained, formal work as the fundamental foundation upon which benefit entitlement relies. The economic impact of the double burden has become institutionally embedded in the form of employment penalties, part-time work, and caregiving which further impact women.

8.3 Individual and Relational Interventions

As much as structural interventions are needed as well as more effective than individual ones, there are a few relational practices that can alleviate the burden of invisible labor at the household level as suggested in the literature. Studies of couples that accomplish relatively equitable domestic set-ups repeatedly point out explicit, continuing negotiation as a distinguishing factor. DeVault (1991) and, more recently, Daminger (2019) discovered that there is a higher probability of equitable distributions among couples who approach domestic labor as a problem of joint management, and not as a default role of one partner.

Educational-level pedagogical interventions, such as those presenting boys and girls with domestic competence and socializing care-giving into the gender-neutral requirement, have demonstrated positive outcomes in longitudinal research of the domestic labor patterns of program participants in their adult lives. The effects of school-based programs are small, but the scope of these methods is wide, and the initiatives are embedded in cultural scripts that are at the root of the problem of domestic labor inequality.[29]

9. DISCUSSION

9.1 Synthesizing the Evidence

The data compiled in this paper lead to a patterned and disturbing view of female employment. Those women who engage in the formal labor force do not just bring paid work to their lives but rather overlay it on an existing load of unpaid work, which by global average already surpasses total work commitment when the two are summed up: paid and unpaid. The kinds of work that add to this burden remain in most instances consciously unseen: they are naturalized, formalized or just not captured in any measuring system of value that organizations and economies use to conceive and reward their work.

The theoretical approaches discussed in Section 2 help to understand the reasons behind this invisibility. The notion of doing gender describes why domestic labor is not merely such a handy arrangement, but it is a performance of femininity that is self-reinforcing: women who defy doing this labor cannot experience social penalties in the same way that men who defy it do not. Gendered organization as explained by Acker is why the same logic applies to the presence of invisible workplace labor, in that the organizations need informal labor to run but have modeled their formal structures based on a perfect worker who does not recognize the need to perform the same. What is then created is a dilemma of a double bind where women are criticized because they work in plain sight, and they are criticized because they do not work in plain sight.

Section 5 in the cross-national comparative analysis shows that these results are not necessarily inevitable. The alternative policy environments that allocate caregiving responsibility more equally between men and women, those offering publicly funded options to private caregiving, and those introducing a normalization of paternal participation in the domestic life, have favorable effects on women on a variety of measures. This result is both hopeful and revealing: hopeful in that it shows that change is not that difficult, and challenging in that it shows just how far better results require fundamental cultural and institutional change as opposed to individual tweaking of organizational policy.[30]

9.2 The Intersection of Gender with Race, Class, and Disability

Necessarily, a more unified story of the experience of the double burden by women has appeared in this paper. It should be noted that this experience is significantly mediated by other aspects of the social position. The versions of the double burden that exist face women of color, women in low-income households, women with disabilities and women in informal or precarious employment are more severe and less subject to the organizational and policy interventions identified in Section 8.

The intersectionality framework, formulated by Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1991), through the interaction of the different systems of oppression, was designed to create unique disadvantage experiences. On top of the double burden, intersectional analysis, however, demonstrates that not only the gendered expectations of domestic work but also racial stereotyping of domestic competence, exclusion due to their low income by the fact that more privileged women have access to less stable job opportunities that reduce the double-burden, and the structural stigmas that prevent their upward mobility in their careers could affect low-income women of color. In this paper, the scope of the discussion is not enough to cover a complete intersection analysis of the double burden, but it is a valuable concern of future research.

9.3 The Role of Male Partners and Allyship

Another dimension of combating the double burden that is important and sometimes even neglected is the contribution of men, both as lovers in their home and as co-workers in the office. Studies in couples whose domestic setups are relatively equal in nature have repeatedly found that not only the career status of the woman, but also the attitudes of the male counterpart regarding gender equality are a strong predictor of the allocation of household labor. In a review of the quantitative literature on

housework, Coltrane (2000) discovered that one important predictor of domestic labor sharing was the ideological support of gender equality by men whether in relation to relative income and work hours.

At the organizational level, male leaders can also be active supporters of breaking the culture of assigning some forms of invisible labor to women, publicly acknowledging and compensating informal labor, and setting an example on the utilization of parental leave and flexible work mechanisms. It has been proposed that the incidence of uptake in low-level male employees when senior male leaders take parental leave rises significantly, and the impact spreads out among household labor distribution. This is a demonstration effect of the male leadership behavior indicating an untapped organizational change lever. [31]

10. CONCLUSION

The duality that female employees bear, is not their own fault, a poor fit in an organization, or a natural result of differences between men and women. It is a structural phenomenon that arises when gender norms, organizational design, policy structure, and economic structures interact to produce a systematic distribution of value to one type of labor and invisibility of another. This paper has documented the size and extent of such a state, theorized on its processes, examined its effects and determined the types of intervention that are most likely to have some impact.

The main point of the paper is that one of the main recipients of the double burden is found in the invisibility of the labor of women and not an accidental feature of it. Invisible labor is unequally paid: it is not measured. It cannot be redistributed since its distribution is not accepted. It cannot be reformed within organizational structures on the belief that it will be carried out, without charge, by women. The invisibility of labor can and must be rendered visible in national accounts, organizational performance indicators, domestic negotiations, and cultural stories, making it a pragmatic necessity to achieve equity.

There is nothing in the evidence surveyed in this paper to support despair or complacency. Nations where caregiving arrangements have been pushed beyond structural reform, through reforms on caregiving, have recorded significant improvement in the outcomes of WLB and career pathways of women. Companies that have modeled performance systems in which informal contributions to the firm are identified, and in which non-promotable task imbalances have been fought actively have made a quantifiable advance towards equity. Through these instances, it is clear that the double burden cannot be immune to change but it is change that is butting at the inadequate.

Future studies must focus on longitudinal types of designs that are able to trace cumulative impacts of both invisible labor over working lifetimes, intersectional designs that can disaggregate the results according to race, class and disability, and evaluation studies of particular organizational and policy interventions. Research into the existence of invisible labor in low-income and informal economies also provides a big gap: In this case, the burden of the double economic role can be most devastating, and women possess the weakest structural opportunities to reduce it.

The policy implications are obvious to policymakers: make universal childcare, recalibrate parental leave to encourage fathers to provide care, safeguard the rights of part-time workers, and incorporate invisible labor into national economic statistics. To organizational leaders: appoint auditors to tasks, standardize performance assessment, legitimate flexible working by both sexes, and address gender equity as a design requirement, rather than a compliance measure. To researchers: stick to the structural explanations that the analysis at the individual level can not offer.

It is a fact that the double burden is expensive and that it can be reduced through a combination of willpower and goodwill. The initial action would be to visualize it.

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