

Work hours, gender ideology and household labour: A research among women in four distinctive East Asian countries

Abstract

Women's labour force participation has increased worldwide. However, women are still doing the largest share of domestic tasks in the household. This study uses data from the East Asian Social Survey, cross-national survey data set: *Families in East Asia* (2006). The influence of the hours that women spend on paid labour and women's gender ideology on the amount of domestic tasks East Asian women do is researched. It was found that East Asian women that spend more time on paid labour do less household work than women that spend less time on paid labour. Furthermore, East Asian women with a more traditional gender ideology do more household labour compared to women with an egalitarian gender ideology.

Keywords

Household labour; East Asia; Work hours; Gender ideology; Woman

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1. Introduction

The division of domestic tasks is an often addressed subject. It is discussed by men and women in their daily life and often mentioned in the media. In an article in the Times, Eve Rodsky addressed the problem of the division of domestic tasks, or rather the lack of division in her household, and she noticed that this is a problem many other households experienced (Rodsky, 2019). In his article in the Guardian Oliver Burkeman also tries to unravel why it is that the vast majority of women are responsible for most of the household chores (Burkeman, 2018). Besides the growing concern about the division of household tasks in the media, scientists have also looked into this topic. When women started participating more and more in the workforce worldwide, it was expected that this would slowly lead to a more equal division of tasks in the household between man and woman (Presser, 1994). This, however, is not seen in reality. The labour force participation of women has continued to increase in most countries, while an increase in man's participation in the household has failed to happen yet (Breen, 2005). The unequal division of domestic tasks is seen in East Asia as well. In China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea, researchers found that women do more household labour than men (Qian & Sayer, 2015). The focus of this research is on these four East Asian countries, considering the large amount of previous research available on western countries and lack of research on East Asian countries. Furthermore, East Asian societies are characterized by traditional patriarchy values, in which the traditional roles of men and women are still very much present. This might lead to making a more equal division of household tasks in East Asian households to occur even less.

Researchers have suggested that the hours spent on paid labour by spouses might influence the division of domestic tasks in the household. The hours spent on the labour market were found to be negatively related to the hours spent on household tasks for women in the United States, Norway and Sweden (Angrist, Lave, & Mickelsen, 1976; Kalleberg & Rosenfeld, 1990). This shows that when women spend more hours on the labour market they have less time for household labour. Furthermore researchers found that the more time one spouse spends on paid labour, the more time the other spouse spent on domestic labour (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). The relation between hours spent on paid labour and the division of domestic tasks could be explained by the relative resource theory (Shelton & John, 1996). Although previous research about the theory has found

contradicting results. Studies have found that women are responsible for the main share of the household regardless of their employment status and the hours spent doing paid labour. This was also observed with women whose husband is unemployed, even though the unemployed husband does do a larger share of the household tasks compared to employed husbands, the women are still responsible for sixty percent of the household tasks (Brayfield, 1992). Furthermore, previous research concluded that regardless of the relative resources that the men or women have, the wife does the main share of the household tasks. (Kroska, 2004). Much of the previous research is focussed on the relationship between paid labour of both spouses and the household task division. However, not much is researched on the direct influence of the hours that women spend on paid labour and how much household labour she does. The lack of previous research about this specific relationship results in an interesting topic for this research.

Another possible explanation for the stagnant gender division of domestic labour along with women's increasing labour force participation in East Asia is the existence of traditional views of gender roles. In most, the man is seen as being responsible for the paid labour and the woman for child care and household tasks (Ickes, 1993). However, the empirical findings are somewhat mixed and solely western. Scholars found that women that have a more egalitarian gender ideology spend more hours on paid labour than women with more traditional gender ideology (Crompton & Lyonette, 2007; Cunningham, Beutel, Barber & Thornton, 2005; Vella, 1994). It was also found that the husbands of women that held more egalitarian gender role attitudes spend a relatively greater amount of hours doing domestic tasks compared to the husbands of women with less egalitarian gender attitudes (Cunningham, 2008). Furthermore, scholars found that there is a relationship between gender ideology and domestic work only for men who have an egalitarian gender ideology when their wives have an egalitarian gender ideology too (Greenstein, 1996). A comparative study among Norway, Britain and the Czech Republic has shown that although all three countries hold a more egalitarian view of gender roles, the division of household tasks seem to have stayed rather traditional (Crompton, Brockmann & Lyonette, 2005). Here again, most of this research is focused on the relationship between both the husbands and wives and gender ideology. There is a lack of research about the relationship of women's gender ideology and the amount of household labour she does.

The previous mentioned research is based on western societies. It could be expected that there are differences in non-western societies. Western societies are characterized as individualistic societies that value individual autonomy and self actualization. In western societies, equality in marriage is conformed. East Asian societies, however, are characterized by Confucianism and focus more on collective goals and patriotism. Marriage in East Asian societies traditionally consist of a strict arrangement in marital gender roles and gender hierarchies (Qian & Sayer, 2015). With this cultural context about East Asia, the question is raised how the hours spent on paid labour by women would influence the amount of domestic tasks women do in East Asia. Furthermore, would a women's gender ideology influence time spend on domestic tasks by women as well in the East Asian cultural context? Considering that there is not much previous research on this subject about women in East Asian households, this research gap could make this research a relevant addition in the research field. The research question that will be answered in this research is:

To what extent does hours spent on paid labour and gender ideology among women influence the amount of domestic tasks women do in East Asian households?

Data derived from the East Asian Social Survey, cross-national survey data set: Families in East Asia from 2006 where used to put the research question to the test. The countries that will be included in this research are China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. In the data, South Korea is referred to as Korea, so for convenience in this research it will be referred to as Korea as well. Because the data that the respondents provide about the spouse's participation in household tasks is not subjective, it is decided that the analysis will be more reliable if the focus will be only on the female respondents household task participation.

2. Theory and hypothesis

2.1 Relative resource theory

An explanation for the division of household tasks is the Relative resource theory. The Relative resource theory assumes that household task division is divided by the spouses relative resources. The spouse that has the most of these resources has the most leverage to bring into a negotiation about the division of household chores (Shelton & John, 1996). These resources consist of things like education, wages, occupational prestige and hours of paid labour. The husbands are typically the ones that do most of the paid labour and bring in the most money, while the wives usually do the lion's share of childcare and the household chores. In East Asia 74.9 percent of men are represented in the paid labour force and only 59.6 percent of women are. Moreover, there is still a wage gap present between men and women in East Asia, where in Korea the wage gap is even a notably 36.7 percent (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). So even when a woman is represented in the workforce, she often brings in less money for the same work that men are doing. This results in that the man in a lot of cases brings in the most of the relative resources, which makes him able to negotiate his way out of doing (unpleasant) household tasks (Diefenbach, 2002). Considering the Relative resource theory it could be expected that when one of the spouses brings more economic resources to home he or she could argue his or her way out of doing domestic tasks. In East Asia women are still much less represented in the workforce than men (The World Bank, 2019), and earn lower wages than men (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Because of this, the male spouse in East Asia commonly possesses the larger share of the relative resources in the household. This results in the female spouse having to do the larger share of the household tasks. Therefore, it would be expected that:

H1: When women in East Asia spend less time on paid labour, the time they spend on household labour increases

2.2 Gender ideology theory

According to the Gender ideology theory, the division of household tasks is not dependent on relative resources both partners bring into a relationship but on how both of the partners identify him/herself regarding marital, occupational and familial roles that are directly linked to gender (Diefenbach, 2002). According to this theory, there are three forms of gender ideology: traditional, transitional and egalitarian gender roles. In households with traditional gender ideology, domestic labour is ascribed to women and paid labour to men. Even though the women might spend equal or more hours on paid labour than men, women would still be responsible for the main share of the household tasks. This division too comes from the husband's identification as male in traditional gender roles, by refusing to adopt characteristics that are ascribed to female roles (Diefenbach, 2002). Men who are (partially) economically dependent on their spouse tend to overcompensate their masculinity by 'doing gender' in other aspects of life, like not or contributing less in the household tasks (Shelton & John, 1996). In egalitarian households, men and women are perceived as equal. More egalitarian gender role attitudes by man have been found to be related to a more equal division of household tasks between two spouses (Presser, 1994; Ross, 1987; Shelton & John, 1996).

Confucianism has a long-existing influence on East Asian societies. Social order and showing respect for superiors is an important aspect of the Confucian ideology. A part of this is the outranking of man in the social order to women (Gao, 2003). According to the Confucian ideology, women are mainly responsible for household tasks and men are responsible for paid labour. Resulting from the influence of confucianism, East Asian societies are characterized as societies with more traditional gender ideologies. Considering the historical-cultural context where East Asian countries are characterized by confucianism this may lead to a normalization in East Asian countries of more time investment on household tasks by women compared to men (Qian & Sayer, 2015). According to the Gender ideology theory it could be expected that in East Asian societies, the division of household labour will be affected by the strength of the traditional gender ideology. Therefore, it is expected that:

H2: East Asian women with a more traditional gender ideology carry out more of the household tasks than women with a more egalitarian gender ideology

3. Method

3.1 Data

This study used data from the East Asian Social Survey (EASS), Families in East Asia, 2006 (Chang, Y., Iwai, N., Kim, S., & Li, L., 2006). The survey was conducted from June to December in 2006. The East Asian Social survey consists of four surveys, the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS), Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) and Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS). Different aspects of social life from these countries are examined and combined in the survey. The survey focuses on family dynamics and in addition demographic variables are included. The data included basic information about the respondents like age and gender, furthermore information about gender ideology and household tasks is available as well. A common module is included in the data for all four surveys. Therefore, the questions asked about subjects like gender ideology in the four surveys are comparable. The inclusion of specific questions about household tasks in the comparable surveys and the inclusion of questions about gender ideology makes this dataset very suitable for this research. For each of the countries the response rates were: China 38,5 percent, Japan 53,3 percent, Korea 65,7 percent and Taiwan 42 percent.

3.2 Measurements

The respondents *Domestic work participation* is measured with the questions ‘How often do you do the following?’

Prepare the evening meal, do the laundry, clean the house, shop for groceries, take out the garbage. For this question a Likert scale with seven balances responses was used, with responses ranging from almost every day to never. For the 5 questions a mean score was calculated to create a variable which measures the overall score of domestic work participation. Where a higher score indicates less domestic work. The variables are recoded so that the values are the other way around. A higher score on *domestic work participation* now indicates women doing more domestic work, which makes more sense when interpreting the analysis.

Furthermore the *work hours* by the respondent was measured using the question ‘Respondents hours worked weekly’ that was asked in the survey. The respondent could choose from all hours ranging from 0 to 52 hours worked weekly.

Gender ideology of a respondent is measured using the following questions:

‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:’

‘It is more important for a wife to help her husband’s career than to pursue her own career’. ‘A husband’s job is to earn money;’. ‘Men ought to do a larger share of household work than they do now’. ‘During economic recession, it is all right for women to be laid-off than prior to men’.

To answer the questions a Likert scale was used as well with seven balanced responses ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7). One’s *gender ideology* is measured by taking the mean score of the respondent’s answer to all four questions. The answers range from 1 to 7, with a higher value indicating more egalitarian gender values. All the variables are recoded the other way around, unless for the variable ‘Men ought to do a larger share of household work than they do now’, because this variable already is measured the other way around. So now a higher value on *gender ideology* indicates more traditional gender values. This was done so that all variables are in the same direction, and the interpretation of the analysis would make more sense in combination with the variable *domestic work participation*.

Additionally, three control variables are added into the analysis. The first control variable is *age*, considering that different generations might differ in gender ideology. The variable *age* has a range from 22 years to 50 years old. Second *education level* is added, since education might influence the women’s relative resources. Years of schooling is used to measure one’s education. Table 1 shows an overview of the statistical description of all the variables. Last the variable *country* is added, to control for the respondents origin. This originally continuous variable is recoded to a categorical variable for the four different countries.

Table 1. *Statistical description*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Domestic work	1298	1.00	7.00	6.471	.771
Gender ideology	1298	1.00	7.00	3.639	.912
Work hours	1298	1	126	44.71	16.409
Age	1298	22	50	38.46	6.956
Education	1298	0	23	10.82	3.881
China	1298	0	1	.459	.498
Japan	1298	0	1	.157	.364
South Korea	1298	0	1	.207	.405
Taiwan	1298	0	1	.177	.382

Note. Only married female respondents are included

3.3 Analytical strategy

To test the hypothesis in this research an ordinary least square regression is used. Three different models are used to analyse the influence of gender ideology on household division and the influence of hours spent on paid labour on the household division between spouses. Whereupon in the third model both the gender ideology variable and hours spent on paid labour are added together in an analysis to control if both variables influence each other as well. The significance level of .05 is most commonly used in social sciences, what motivates this research to measure with the same significance level.

Because this research focuses only on the female spouse, the data was first filtered so that only female respondents were left in the dataset. Furthermore, the data was filtered on women ranging between the age of 22 up to 50. Because for this research only women between the age that they are active in the labour market are included. China has the youngest retirement age of 50 years, so this is the maximum age for women that is included in the analysis (Trading economics, 2019). Lastly the data is filtered on women that are married, because of the interest of the research on the household tasks of the female spouse.

4. Results

In the first analysis the influence of *hours weekly worked* on *domestic work participation* is tested. The first model was significant ($F= 27.609$; $p<.001$). The R^2 of the model was .114, what indicated that the model explains 11.4 percent of the female *domestic work participation*. Table 2 shows that when a woman's *work hours* increase the amount of domestic work she does decreases with .007 ($B=-.007$; $t=-4.415$; $p<.001$).

Table 2. *Linear regression analysis for the effect of work hours on female domestic work participation*

	B	S.E.
Constant	6.886	.190 ***
Work hours	-.007	.001 ***
Age	.012	.003 ***
Education	-.047	.008 ***
Japan	-.245	.072 **
South Korea	-.043	.070
Taiwan	-.479	.060 ***
R^2	.114	

Note. * Significant ($<.05$) **Significant ($.01$) ***Significant ($<.001$)

Note. China is the reference county in the analysis

Second, the influence of *gender ideology* on *domestic work participation* is tested. The regression model is significant as well ($F= 32.930$; $p<.001$). The $R^2=.085$ which indicates that the model explains 8.5 percent of the *domestic work participation* of the female respondent. Table 3 shows that when a woman has a more traditional *gender ideology* the amount of domestic work she does increases with .091 ($B=.091$; $t=4.778$; $p<.001$). This indicates that when a woman has more egalitarian *gender ideology* she does less domestic work. For *gender ideology* the lowest value indicates an egalitarian *gender ideology* and the highest value indicates a traditional *gender ideology*.

Table 3. *Linear regression analysis for the effect of gender ideology on female domestic work participation*

	B	S.E.
Constant	6.105	.133 ***
Gender ideology	.091	.019 ***
Age	.008	.002 ***
Education	-.023	.006 ***
Japan	-.051	.053
South Korea	.168	.050 **
Taiwan	-.334	.049 ***
R ²	.085	

Note. * Significant (<.05) **Significant (.01) ***Significant (<.001)

Note. China is the reference county in the analysis

Furthermore, an analysis is added with both *gender ideology* and *work hours*. The model was significant ($F= 15.433$; $p<.001$). Table 4 shows that the R^2 of this model is .115, what indicates that 11.5 percent of the female *domestic work participation* is explained by the model. Table 4 shows that the effect of *gender ideology* has stayed almost the same after controlling for *work hours* ($B=.083$; $t=3.197$; $p=.001$). What indicated that when a woman has a more traditional *gender ideology* domestic work increases with .083. The effect of *work hours* has stayed almost the same as well, after controlling for *gender ideology* ($B=-.006$; $t=-4.284$; $p<.001$). The results in table four still indicate that when a woman's *work hours* increase she does less domestic work.

Table 4. *Linear regression analysis for the effect of gender ideology and work hours on female domestic work participation*

	B	S.E.
Constant	6.493	.223 ***
Gender ideology	.083	.026 **
Work hours	-.006	.001 **
Age	.012	.003 ***
Education	-.040	.008 ***
Japan	-.202	.073 **
South Korea	-.005	.071
Taiwan	-.454	.060 ***
R ²	.120	

Note. * Significant (<.05) **Significant (.01) ***Significant (<.001)

Note. China is the reference county in the analysis

5. Conclusion and discussion

The first analysis tested the effect of *work hours* of East Asian women on the amount of domestic work she does. The first analysis supported the expectation derived from the Relative resource theory. It was expected that when women spend more hours on paid labour they would do less domestic work. In the third analysis the effect of *work hours* was controlled for the woman's *gender ideology*. After controlling for *gender ideology* the effect of the hours that women weekly work stayed the same. The results still indicated that when a woman works more hours she does less domestic work, and when she works less hours she does more domestic work. The conclusion of this analysis is that the hypothesis

H1: When women in East Asia spend less time on paid labour, the time they spend on household labour increases

Could be confirmed.

The second analysis which tested the effect of the *gender ideology* of an East Asian woman on the amount of domestic work she does supported the expectation that resulted from the Gender ideology theory. From the Gender ideology theory it was expected that women with a more traditional gender ideology would do more domestic work, and women with a more egalitarian gender ideology would do less domestic work. In the third model the effect of *gender ideology* on domestic work of women was controlled for the amount of hours women weekly spend on paid work. After controlling for *work hours* the effect of *gender ideology* stayed about the same, and still supports the expectation derived from the Gender ideology theory. So it could be concluded that the hypothesis

H2: East Asian women with a more traditional gender ideology carry out more of the household tasks than women with a more egalitarian gender ideology

Could be confirmed as well.

The findings that the amount of hours East Asian women spend on paid labour influences the amount of domestic work that she does corresponds with that has been found in previous western research (Angrist, Lave, & Mickelsen, 1976; Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Kalleberg & Rosenfeld, 1990; Kroska, 2004). Just as the findings about the influence of gender ideology of East Asian women on domestic work (Cunningham, Beutel, Barber & Thornton, 2005; Vella, 1994). To answer the main question of the research

To what extent does hours spent on paid labour and gender ideology among women influence the amount of domestic tasks women do in East Asian households?

It could be concluded that both the hours that women spend on paid labour and a woman's gender ideology influence the amount of domestic tasks East Asian women do. With a higher amount of hours that East Asian women spent on paid labour negatively influencing the amount of domestic tasks. And as well for gender ideology of East Asian women, with a more egalitarian gender ideology negatively influencing the amount of domestic tasks the women does.

One of the limitations of this research is that gender ideology is measured with only four questions. A more extensive measure of gender ideology with more comprehensive questions could provide a more accurate representation of the respondent gender ideology. For further research it would be interesting to test whether the male spouse's gender ideology influences the domestic work participation of East Asian women as well. It would be interesting to research if it is not just the woman's gender ideology that has an influence on women's domestic labour, but whether the spouse plays a role in this as well. Considering the limitations of the dataset used in the research it was not possible to measure this because there was no subjective data available about the spouses domestic work participation registered by the respondent. Another recommendation for further research would be to look at the effect of both partners' amount of hours they spend on paid labour in East Asian households on the amount of domestic work a woman does. Or to look at the influence of hours women spend on paid labour on the amount of domestic work the male spouse does. I would encourage to keep researching these subjects specifically in East Asian countries. I have noticed that most of the research about household labour and the specific subject of this

research is based on western societies. More research is needed to fill in this research gap that exist on East Asian countries resulting from the main focus of many researches on western counties.

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