

## Social Study of Family Roles: Men's Changing Contribution in Housework

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**Abstract:** Most human societies assign different roles to men and women. gradually, due to change of family structure and effective factors such as income level or level of education and women's contribution in the social fields and thought regarding equality of man and woman, family roles changed, that is men also were drawn to private field of family and cooperated with women in housework. This research tries to study the extent to which contribution is done by men in addition to studying social dimensions of housework division. This research started by use of survey method and questionnaire tool in 22 districts of Tehran city by selecting a sample of 200 married men and women with children. Sampling method was based on stratified sapling. On the basis of the results obtained from this research, one can find out that by stratifying social strata with education level criterion, the educated stratum has the most cooperation and contribution in housework and by increasing satisfaction with common life, cooperation and contribution in housework will increase. By studying on the obtained samples, effect of factors relating to family social relations network and socioeconomic base are visible in extent to which men contribute and cooperate.

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### Introduction

Family is a social entity with specific obligations defined and left from ancient times. One of the most important family obligations has been socialization training of its members. Bruce Kohen stated that: "Family is a kinship group with the main responsibilities for socialization training of children and satisfying some other basic needs (Kohen, 1993, p. 173).

Family relations face continual change from the impacts of dynamic social entities. New needs are created when biological conditions change. Thus, family roles are changing in such a way that the traditional roles are gradually losing their validity.

One important family issue is couple interaction and cooperation. Family interactions and style of decision making have changed both in large and small cities around the world. The traditional male-oriented family system has turned into a new system requiring division of housework between couples bringing about increasing contribution from men. These changes have introduced conflicts and confusions into family system.

It was expected that the increased female employment of the twentieth century would change family responsibilities for women and increase men's involvement. But we actually witnessed additional responsibilities for women in addition to what they had to do earlier. Women employment may

encourage men to make more contributions in family chores. The added responsibilities of employed women do not mean exploitation and servitude. The positive financial and psychological effects of employment benefit the working women and their families, alike.

Women with staff positions usually engage less at home and their husbands contribute more when compared with women with line positions. Evidences indicate that spouse relations and family as a whole face continual changes. The extent of men's contribution in family affair is not clear and needs scientific studies. This study intends to examine the subject with scientific method.

### Family Production

Family production includes all unpaid activities performed by and for family members. These works are left for persons outside family to perform if living conditions, income level, market situation, and personal preparedness permit. When it is possible to pay someone to do unpaid family activities, such as cooking and babysitting, the collection of paid activities is called work and be accounted for as paid market goods and services. The person who pays for these works is the beneficiary of such works (Jazani, 2004, p. 20).

### Housework Phenomenon

Work is described as an activity that is subject to receiving compensation. Women spend time and energy to perform various laborious activities around house without pay. Thus, women's housework remains invisible and its economic value is not account for by governments and international financial institutions. Currently, ninety percent of women in the world occupy with housework without pay.

Housework is a collection of unpaid and repetitious works. It requires management and coordination with family member schedules. An accurate study of the nature of housework in any country requires carefully examination of the works performed by men. This is important because various housework have certain timing (for example, gardening may be performed once a week and cooking is performed twice a day).

Statistics show that men have the tendency to avoid performing required and daily housework routines. They prefer outside work, instead. For example, about 60 percent of European men help with shopping - an outdoor entertaining activity that helps them control family expenses. Only 30 percent of European men help with house cleaning and cooking. Statistics show that men participation at home is limited to occasional voluntary works. Therefore, women remain responsible for housework.

Women in various social strata remain responsible for house management. This is even true about women with enough income to hire house help to perform certain housework. Women earn less than men at work. Yet, the likelihood that women spend their income on hiring house help or other mechanism to help them manage household activities is more than men. The reason is that women see themselves as responsible for housework and care of children. Some people believe that working outside jobs is an obstacle to carrying house responsibilities for women. Therefore, most women try to carry out their outside responsibilities in such a way to have the least impact on family. They either have to overwork or hire others to do the housework for them (Jamili, 2007, p. 175).

A study by Andre Mishel in 1996 showed a correlation between women employment and equitable division of family roles and works. This study compared working and non-working women and found out that unpaid work by women at home, store, or workshop never improved their standing and authority as women, merely, because their work was unpaid. Another finding of this study indicated that the higher the importance of economic activities of women or the higher women skills in labor or office works, the better the balance of power between the couple. The deciding point is the level of women's

income and its difference to men's income.

After a closer look into the division of responsibilities at home including housework, attending to expenses, shopping, and doing taxes, Mishel found out that the division of responsibilities was more equitable in the families where women worked. He believes that women with managerial jobs receive more help from their husbands. Women with other social-professional positions stood between women with managerial occupations and non-working women. The latter group received the least help from husbands. Women with labor jobs also took over responsibilities such as shopping, cooking, washing, etc, in spite of their heavy works at jobs. Traditionally, women are responsible for family expenses and they usually welcome that responsibility (Segalen, 1991, pp. 274-275).

### **Theoretical Principles**

Among complicated theoretical works in sociology, a large number is devoted to family theories. These theories are extensions of theories attributed to resources and power, time availability, gender work division, feminism, and the like.

### **Resources and Power**

Resource based family work division has a long history. This view assumes that housework is rarely upon as something valuable. Therefore, everyone tries to avoid it. The more power one spouse has over the other, the more likely to attempt to minimize his/her share of housework, thus, increasing the share of the other partner in the process (Shelton and John, 1996). The power of each partner stems from his/her available resources and the dependency of the other partner on those resources.

Several studies showed significant relation between income, employment, education, and similar resources with the time spend on housework. The partner who has the higher share of income spends less time on housework. Everyone tries to satisfy own needs and achieve own objectives (Good, 1989, p. 87). When women start outside work, men participate more in housework. This decreases husband's power, increases equality in decision making, and increases men's contribution to housework (Mishel, 1996, p. 18).

### **Gender-Based Work Division**

Gender-based work division theory states that gender views, opinion, values, and norms define family relations. The main assumption is that the position of one person in the family reflects couple ideology and beliefs regarding the roles and responsibility each partner should assume. Greenstein believes that when a couple defines their

gender identity as male and female, they lean toward certain beliefs. For example, a man sees his identity as not participating in housework. Such a man acquires traditional beliefs on housework division and, therefore, does not participate in housework.

Greenstein also believes that one shall pay attention to the interaction between couples' ideologies in order to understand how housework is divided in a given family. He believes that the extent of men participation in housework and the decision making power women exert shall be clarified based on women gender beliefs. Traditional men who are married to traditional women do not contribute much to housework. Traditional men who are married to equalitarian women are obliged to do part of housework. Finally, equalitarian men who are married to equalitarian women work out the most equitable work division at home.

### Time Availability

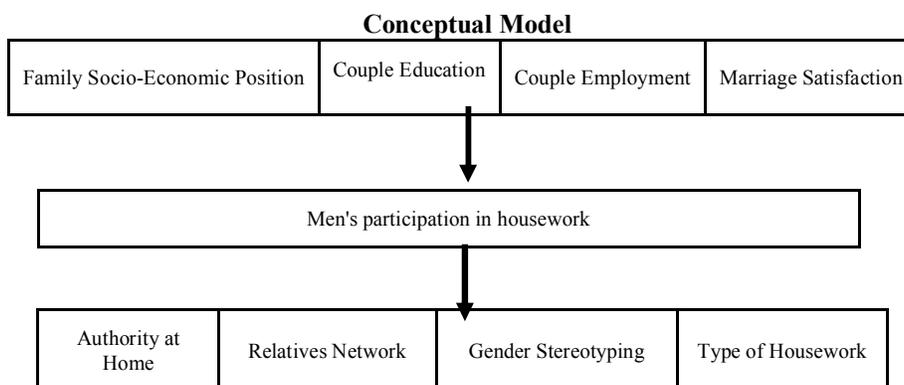
This theory states that the available time has a deciding role in the division of work in a family. Employed family members and those who spend most of their time outside of home, usually, have less time to spend on housework. According to Caliberg, individuals with enough time are to participate more in housework.

### Primary Hypotheses

- 1- There is a significant relation between marriage satisfaction and men's participation in housework.
- 2- There is a significant relation between educational background and men's participation in housework.
- 3- There is a significant relation between employment and men's participation in housework.
- 4- There is a significant relation between family social network and men's participation in housework.
- 5- There is a significant relation between family economic and social position and men's participation in housework.

### Methodology

This study used survey. Statistical population of this study includes every married couple with children between 25 to 50 years of age living in Tehran. The study sample was calculated at 200 by Cochran formula. The study sample was selected from the married couples living in Tehran districts by proportional stratified sampling. The study sample includes 100 men and 100 women. Two-dimensional tables, Chi-square test, and correlation coefficient were used to analyze hypotheses.



### Descriptive Indexes

The demographic information of study sample shows that 51% of respondents were females and 49% were male; 45.5% of respondents were self-employed, 31% had state jobs, and 20.5% were housewives. The monthly income distribution of respondents was: 10% had 150.000 Tomans or less, 16% had 150.000 to 250.000 Tomans, 23% had 250.000 to 400.000 Tomans, 14.5% had 400.000 to 500.000 Tomans, and 15% had over 500.000 Tomans.

10% of respondents were illiterate, 25% did not complete diploma education, 30% had diploma, 15% had technical degrees, 23.5% had bachelors' degree, and 5% had PhD. High school graduates had the highest representation in the sample.

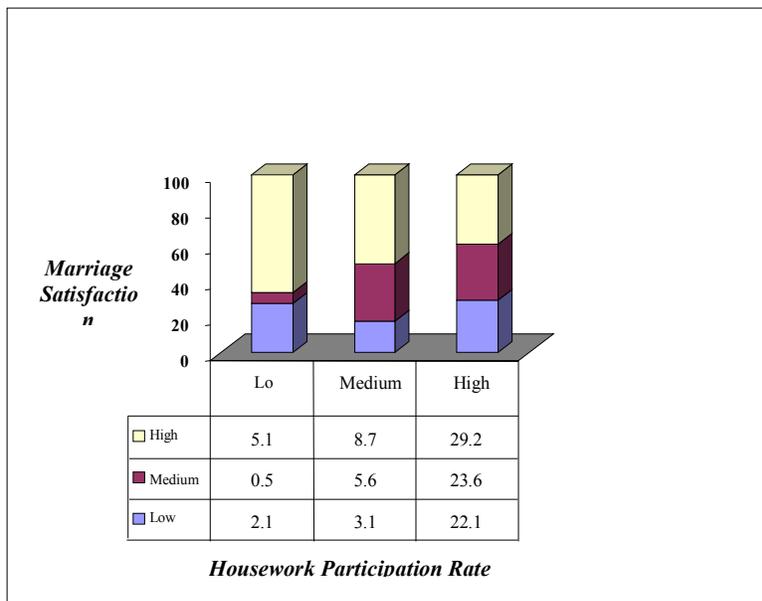
22% of respondents were under 29 years of age, 31% were 30-39, 32% were 40-49, and 6% were 50 years and over. The 30-49 year age group had the largest participation in the sample.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Table 1: Marriage Satisfaction versus Men's Participation in Housework**

Marriage Satisfaction	Men's Participation							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Low	4	2.1	1	0.5	10	5.1	15	7.7
Medium	6	3.1	11	5.6	17	8.7	34	17.4
High	43	22.1	46	23.6	57	29.2	146	74.9
Total	53	27.2	58	29.7	84	43.1	195	100

$\chi^2=27.4$      $df=4$      $sig=0.004$      $C.V.=0.29$

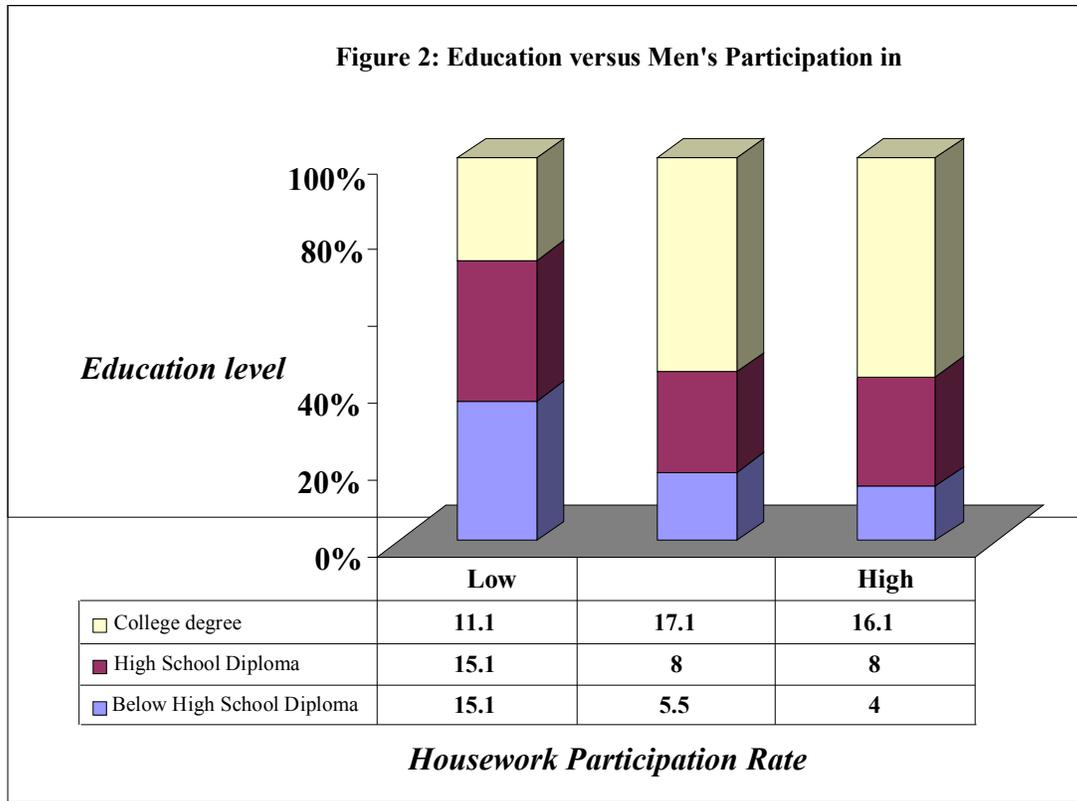


**Figure 1: Marriage Satisfaction versus Men's Participation in Housework**

**Table 2: Education versus Men's Participation in Housework**

Education	Men's Participation							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Below High School Diploma	30	15.1	11	5.5	8	4	49	24.6
High School Diploma	30	15.1	16	8	16	8	62	31.2
College Degree	22	11.1	34	17.1	32	16.1	88	44.2
Total	82	41.2	61	30.7	56	28.1	199	100

$\chi^2=19.196$      $df=4$      $sig=0.001$      $C.V.=0.31$



**Table 3: Type of Job versus Men's Participation in Housework**

Type of Job	Men's Participation in Housework							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unemployed	40	20.7	29	15	21	10.9	90	46.6
Employed	20	10.4	21	10.9	21	10.9	62	32.1
Housewife	20	10.4	10	5.2	11	5.7	41	21.2
Total	80	41.5	60	31.1	53	27.5	193	100

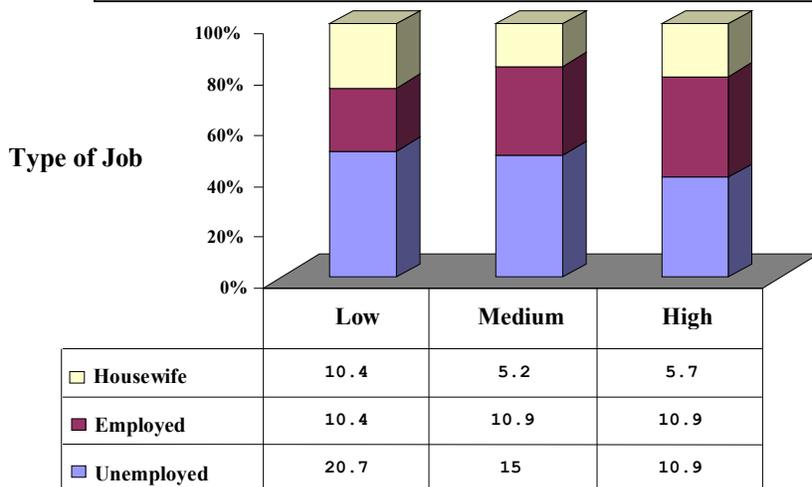
$\chi^2=4.265$      $df=4$      $sig=0.37$     (No statistically significant relation)

**Table 4: Family Ties versus Men's Participation in Housework**

Family Ties	Men's Participation in Housework							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Low	18	9.2	6	3.1	3	1.5	7	13.8
Medium	41	20.9	32	16.9	16	8.2	89	45.4
High	22	11.2	23	11.7	35	17.9	80	40.8
Total	81	41.3	61	31.1	54	27.6	196	100

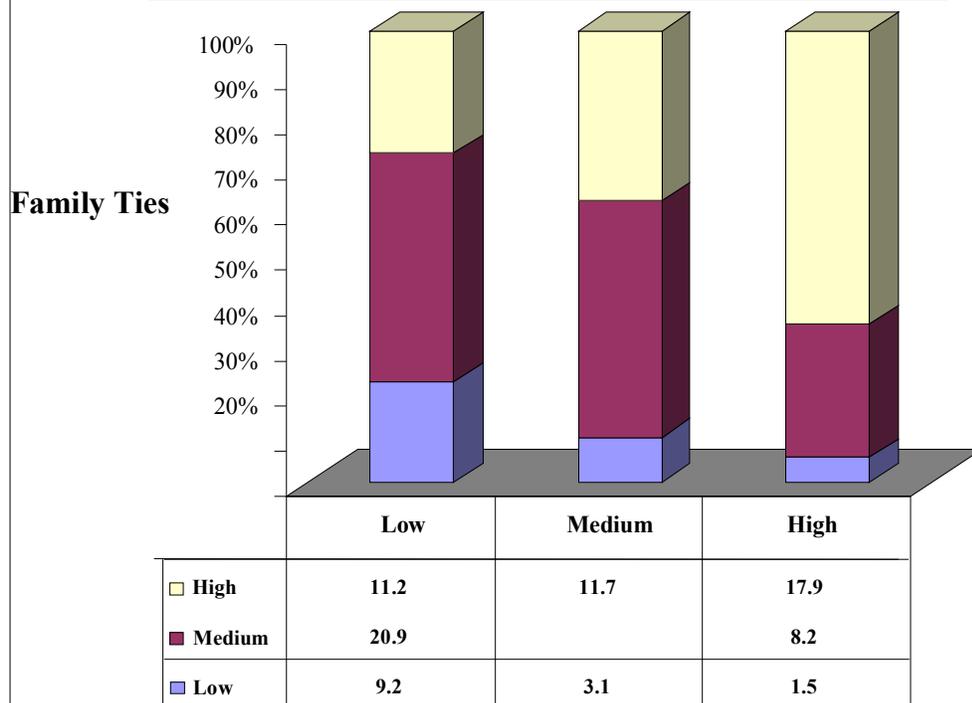
$\chi^2=23.109$      $df=4$      $sig=0.000$     C.V.=0.34

**Figure 3: Type of Job versus Men's Participation in Housework**



*Housework Participation Rate*

**Figure 4: Family Ties versus Men's Participation in Housework**

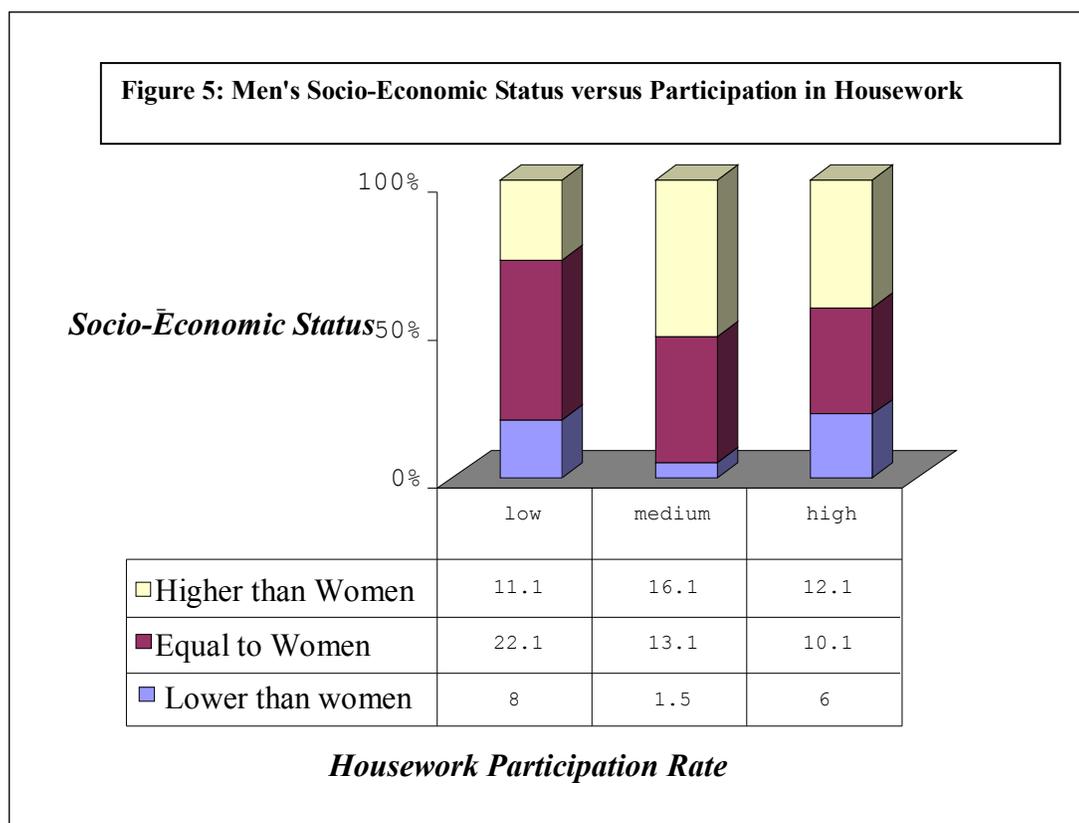


*Housework Participation Rate*

**Table 5: Socio-Economic Status versus Men's Participation in Housework**

Men's Socio-Economic Status	Men's Participation in Housework							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lower than Women	16	8	3	1.5	12	6	31	15.6
Equal to Women	44	22.1	26	13.1	20	10.1	90	45.2
Higher than Women	22	11.1	32	16.1	34	12.1	78	39.2
Total	82	41.3	61	30.7	56	28.1	199	100

$\chi^2=15.124$      $df=4$      $sig=0.004$      $C.V.=0.28$



### Conclusion

This study examines housework system with the special attention to men's participation in housework. It evaluated various factors that may influence men's participation. The methodology used in the present study included documents-laboratory research. Opinions of sociologists and scholars were considered in document part of this study. The field study included a survey conducted through a researcher-made questionnaire distributed to the selected married couples living in Tehran.

### Findings Summary

Socio-economic status has a weak relation with men's participation in housework chores (0.28). Men with high socio-economic status participated more in housework compared to men with medium or low socio-economic status. The higher the socio-economic status of a man, the higher he participates in housework. This study did not find a significant relation between occupation and men's participation in housework.

There was a significant relation between family ties and men's participation in housework. The results showed that the participation in housework

was high in families with extended relative network. According to Collins, the relative network is an important factor in changing the family roles of couples.

### Suggestions

1. Planning to change family gender attitudes
2. Cultural policy making to improve and strengthen couple interactions
3. Provide cultural environment to reduce family risks including competition, aggression, divorce, etc.
4. Offer family education programs based on traditional beliefs, values, and norms.
5. Promote equality in housework division and encourage men to provide more help
6. Include subject of gender inequity in school curriculums. Prepare new courses about family culture and history for women.

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