Organization of housework in heterosexual couples: systematic review of the literature

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Introduction

We currently live in a society where men are increasingly involved in domestic activities yet women continue to be primarily responsible for their execution. Research Questions: Does the organisation of housework in heterosexual couples vary in frequency and time based on sex? Does the time spent performing household activities differ by gender? Which household chores are performed more often by women and by men? Which variables influence the division of domestic labour between women and men?

Purpose of the Study: The aim of this paper is to assess the fairness of the division of housework between men and women, how often men perform it as well as how much time they spend on it in accordance with sociodemographic variables.

Methods

The study was conducted based on the principles proposed by the Cochrane Handbook. A systematic review of the literature from September to November 2013 was carried out. A critical analysis was performed separately by two researchers.

Results

There is a statistically significant association between gender and performing certain types of housework. It was concluded that women participate on average more regularly on household chores related to laundry (washing, hanging it out, ironing), cooking, cleaning and tidying the house. Men participate more in administrative matters (going to the bank, paying water, electricity and gas bills), home repairs and car maintenance. (Silva, 2012).

Some studies report that relative to the time spent on household chores, for couples who both work, there are significant differences between women and men including the task of ironing clothes in which women spend 30 times longer than men; 7 times longer on cleaning and clothes washing; 4 times more on preparing meals and washing the dishes and twice as long with the day-to-day shopping. Activities such as repairing and administrative services are male, and men spend 19 times longer on repairs and twice as long in administrative services. It is in the category with more economic resources and cultural capital that the sensation of lack of time is more strongly felt, both by women and men, but more so by women. The differences and gender inequalities are more significant among blue-collar and agricultural workers than in higher socioeconomic groups; however, the latter group can compensate for their lack of time by paying for domestic services (Schouten et al, 2012).

The time women spend on carrying out household chores varies depending on their qualifications. (Carrasco; Domínguez, 2011).

Conclusion

In the literature review, it was found that housework was mostly done by women. The variables that most influence participation in domestic activities are the couple’s income and qualifications. The time spent on performing household chores and the amount performed vary inversely depending on education and employment status.

A higher prevalence of studies on this topic was found for homosexual couples. The existing information on the issue in heterosexual couples is scarce, so that conducting studies with higher levels of evidence is suggested. The division of housework between men and women is not equal, with women being overloaded. Sex should therefore be considered in planning children’s educational activities.

References