



The University Of Tehran Press

Woman in Development and Politics

Work and Home: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences and Narratives of Employed Women on Domestic Work

Hamed Shiri¹ | Yaghoub Ahmadi² | Bahar Shariati³ | Leila Khodavirdi⁴

1. Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Payam-e Noor, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: h.shiri@pnu.ac.ir
2. Full Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Payam-e Noor, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: yahmady@pnu.ac.ir
3. MA, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Payam-e Noor, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: shariatibahar1@gmail.com
4. MA, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Payam-e Noor, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: Lib.pnubijar@gmail.com

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 21 December 2024 Received in revised form: 26 January 2025 Accepted: 1 March 2025 Published online: 21 April 2025</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Domestic work,</i> <i>Employed women,</i> <i>Gender inequality,</i> <i>Housework,</i> <i>Patriarchy.</i></p>	<p>Introduction In contemporary societies, gender roles and societal expectations of women have undergone significant changes. One of the most notable transformations is the widespread entry of women into the labor market and the increase in their employment opportunities. Employed women, in addition to their professional responsibilities, still face traditional expectations of homemaking and family care. This issue gained prominence as a social problem with the publication of the book "The Second Shift" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989) which became a central topic in the sociology of family and gender. The Second Shift refers to the duties and responsibilities women face at home after completing their daily formal work. Research indicates that while the hours women spend on domestic work have decreased in recent years and men's participation in household tasks - particularly childcare - has increased, women still perform more housework than men in most households, even in those where women earn equal or higher incomes than their spouses (Greenstein, 2000; Tichenor, 2005; Gupta, 2007; Schneider, 2011). In Iran, women have gradually transitioned out of their traditional role as homemakers and entered the labor market. While this transition may improve women's economic status and quality of life through new opportunities, it also comes with additional responsibilities and challenges. Iranian women tend to carry more responsibility in managing household and family affairs compared to men. Even in families where both spouses are employed, women still dedicate more time to housework (Tabatabai & Mehri, 2019; Maqsudi & Bostan, 2004). The simultaneous performance of professional roles alongside traditional roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers creates challenges in achieving work-life balance and imposes psychological and physical pressures on women. Given these issues, this article aims to qualitatively examine the lived experiences of employed women in managing domestic work responsibilities and their related challenges in the city of Marivan (Kurdistan).</p> <p>Methodology This study adopts a qualitative approach with an interpretive phenomenological framework. The primary technique for data collection was in-depth interviews, combined with the researchers' prior lived experience and observations. Sampling and sample size determination were carried out using common qualitative methodologies, employing both purposive (prior) sampling and theoretical (progressive) sampling techniques (Flick, 2009). The adequacy of the sample size was based on the principle of theoretical saturation, resulting in the selection of 15 employed women from the public and private sectors in Marivan. Data analysis was performed through interpretive phenomenology using thematic analysis techniques.</p> <p>Results The findings of the study reveal that "housekeeping as an inescapable responsibility for</p>

women" remains a persistent social and cultural norm in society. Cultural pressures and the intergenerational transmission of domestic roles have prevented women, despite their participation in the workforce, from detaching from traditional housekeeping roles. Consequently, employed women inevitably experience a "dual identity" (employee–homemaker), placing them in a continuous cycle of conflicting responsibilities. Even women who have achieved financial independence or live in families with less traditional perspectives still feel that a home requires "feminine warmth" and "female management." The duality of work and home profoundly impacts women's time and energy, leading to significant emotional and psychological strains such as stress, feelings of inadequacy, and even resentment toward certain household duties. The study also highlights the role of cultural and social structures in reinforcing gendered roles. Patriarchal traditions in society continue to define housekeeping as a "natural duty of women." From childhood, men are taught that household tasks are the responsibility of women, leading many men to perceive participation in domestic chores as "beneath their dignity." These roles are reproduced within families and the broader culture, persisting widely even among newer generations. While employed women remain bound to domestic duties under the influence of patriarchal discourse, working outside the home represents a deliberate and autonomous act of resistance for many of them. Employment offers more than financial resources—it becomes a way to challenge structures that confine them to traditional domestic roles. Employment grants women economic independence, empowers them in family decision-making, and enables them to challenge their position as the "sole homemaker." Finally, the "emergence of progressive and egalitarian families" reflects a growing trend that challenges traditional perspectives and fosters a movement toward gender equality. This transformation promises cultures where cooperation and partnership replace traditional gendered divisions of labor, paving the way for more equitable societies.

Conclusion

Achieving improvements in the conditions and status of employed women primarily requires creating a balance between work and life while advancing towards gender equality. This necessitates fundamental changes in cultural, social, and economic structures through gradual steps toward fostering a participatory and egalitarian culture. These changes must extend from micro levels (family and individual) to macro levels (policy-making and public cultural awareness). In the cultural domain, it is imperative to reassess traditional attitudes toward gender roles. Raising public awareness about the benefits of men's participation in household responsibilities and promoting modern family models through mass media can be an effective step in this direction. In the social domain, there is a need to redefine familial roles and foster active collaboration and participation among family members. Consequently, providing educational opportunities for families, especially for men, regarding the importance of sharing household responsibilities can lead to positive changes. In the economic domain, policies must be designed to provide greater support to working women. Additionally, recognizing the economic value of domestic work and offering benefits and support for homemakers as part of the social workforce can elevate their status in society. The transition towards a participatory and egalitarian culture requires continuous and gradual efforts. Incremental steps such as implementing educational programs, reforming laws and policies, and identifying and encouraging successful models of egalitarian families can gradually undermine patriarchal structures and replace them with a culture of gender justice. These transformations can lead to societies where women and men have equal opportunities for growth, advancement, and a higher quality of life. Achieving such a goal will bring widespread benefits not only to women but to all members of society, as gender equality serves as a foundation for sustainable development and social justice.

Cite this article: Shiri, H., Ahmadi, Y., Shariati, B., & Khodavirdi, L. (2025). Work and Home: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences and Narratives of Employed Women on Domestic Work. *Women in Development and Politics*, 23(1), 91-118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2025.387216.1008501>



© The Author(s).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2025.387216.1008501>

Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.