



**INEQUALITY IN GENDER ROLES, A CHALLENGE TO OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING: A CASE OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN
DIPLOMA IN PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION –
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA**

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Abstract:

Open and Distance Learning could not only help in gender equality and women empowerment, but also may facilitate the effectiveness and strengthening of women education. However, there is little knowledge on how gender roles affect performance of girls/women education. The paper set out to examine whether inequality in gender roles affect women's education, find out types of domestic chores that women normally engage with and how they affect their academic progress and assess whether women have assistance in performing domestic chores or not. The study was carried out at The Open University of Tanzania, Tanga Regional center. Fifty-one (51) Female students pursuing Diploma in Primary Teacher Education were involved. Questionnaire survey and documentary review methods were employed in data collection. A quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20th version). While qualitative information was analyzed using content analysis. The study observed that majority of the respondents (71%) agreed that inequality in division of household roles affect their academic carriers. Food preparation, washing clothes, house cleanness and family care mentioned as the main domestic chores that attribute to poor academic progress among DPTE female students at the OUT. The study concludes that division of household roles should be restructured so as to refrain women from domestic chores that constraints their participation in education.

Keywords: open and distance learning, inequality in gender roles, impact of gender roles to women education

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1. Introduction

Gender roles are social constructed, which implies that each society allocates roles to girls and boys, men and women according to what the society considers appropriate (Thobejane and Khoza, 2014). There has been significant variation in gender roles over culturally and historically contingent (Ibd). The day-to-day lives of women around the world share one important characteristic: unpaid care work is seen as a female responsibility, women across different regions, socio-economic classes and cultures spend an important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles (OECD, 2014). On average, women worldwide spend more than double the amount of time on domestic work than men. When counting both paid and unpaid work, women work more total hours per day than men (UNSTATS, 2010, cited in Meeks, 2012).

In Europe, the new family trends and patterns have been paralleled by changes in gender roles, especially an expansion of the female role to include economic provision for a family, and lately also transformation of the male role with more intense involvement in family responsibilities, especially care for children (Olah et al, 2014). However, women spend more time for housework than their partners. On average, in Nordic countries, the difference between women and men is about few hours a week, provided that they are the most egalitarian. In Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Greece, the wives do around 20 hours more housework than men (Malina et al, 2008). Thus, women are often faced with a “double shift”, performing both productive and reproductive work. Women in paid employment typically take on the main responsibilities in the home and continue to bear the biggest burden of domestic work, childcare responsibilities, and care for older, disabled or sick family members (ibid).

In United States as Europe there is also a shift in gender roles pattern, most men have egalitarian attitudes regarding household labor division hence they engage more in a variety of household tasks and they are more likely to be involved in cooking and laundry if their wives contribute more to total income (Calasanti and Bailey, 2008). Contrary to western European and American societies where there is change in gender roles perspectives, gender disparity in household division of labor is still very high in developing countries. When considering the size of the housework load the women of less developed societies tend to spend more time on housework, than women in western and northern European societies where housework performed by both husband and wife (Malina et al, 2008).

Yu and Xie, (2012) report large gender gaps in household work in contemporary China, with the lion's share falling on the shoulders of the wife rather than the husband. It is quite possible that this traditional division of labor in the household, with women being mainly responsible for caring of children and the household to impede realization of women's full potential in the labor market (ibid). In Pakistan, gender roles are constructed in a combination of traditional roots and social values, primarily based on the concepts of production and reproduction, taken to mirror masculine and feminine traits of an individual (Mahsud et al, 2014). Thus, most women are confined to their homes to do housework for the extended family and are excluded from main decision making (Ibd).

In South Africa, women perform the vast majority of unpaid reproductive labor as necessary work to maintain society and reproduce future generations. This includes childcare, home-based health care, informal education, household production/maintenance, and taking care of the sick / elderly (Liesls and Meelis, 2014). Traditionally men in Nigeria do not participate in domestic work including child rearing – such tasks are considered to be the exclusive domain of women (Asiyanbola, 2005). Women oversee the domestic chores: they kept houses, processed and cooked all foods, responsible for the bearing and rearing of children from birth on; men were only called upon to assist when extraordinary discipline was considered necessary especially for the boys (Aweda, 1984:184) cited in Asiyanbola, (2005).

Feinstein et al, (2010), posts that more women in Tanzania are increasingly receiving higher education and getting jobs outside of the house, but they are still expected to take care of the household responsibilities, which further increase the amount of work women do in comparison to men. In addition to that, Tanzanian women desire egalitarian households but men are not ready to allow those changes in their families because of the prevailing patriarchal ways of life. Thus, the paper set out to examine the impact of domestic roles in women education at the OUT, assess the types of domestic's chores that affect women's education, find out the measures that could be adopted in achieving gender parity in household division of labor.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Definition of key terms and concept

a) Gender roles

Gender roles are the roles that men and women expected to occupy based on their sex (Blackstone, 2003 in Hajanalka, 2014). They are expectation regarding proper behavior,

attitudes and activities of males and female. Gender roles are socially constructed, which implies that each society allocates roles to girls and boys, men and women according to what the society considers appropriate (Thobejane and Khoza, 2014).

b) Gender Socialization

Socialization is a process through which the child becomes an individual respecting his or her environment laws and customs (Vuorinen and Tuunala, 1997) cited in (Crespi 2003). Gender socialization refers to the way in which girls and boys learn how to act, how to behave into society where raised (UNICEF, 2007). It is a process by which people learn to behave in a certain way as detected by societal believes, values, attitudes and examples (ibid). It is a more focused form of socialization whereby children of different sex are socialized into their gender roles (Hajanalka, 2014). Girls and boys do not wait to have gender norms imposed on them but throughout childhood, they actively incorporate gender images into their fantasy, games and forms of social interactions (UN, 2008). Boys as well as girls practice, use and reflect on gender, sometimes dividing along gender lines and sometimes crossing gender boundaries (Ibd).

Gender socialization for girls involves different physical activities related to care and household keeping while boys involved in outdoor activities (UNESCO, 2007). Girls were socialized at an early age into their future prescribed gender roles as mothers by learning to tend to do domestic chores while boys were exempted from performing the said activities (Njie, 2013). Gender socialization identified the following domestic roles for girls: cleaning dishes washing laundry, taking care of their young kids and cooking meals while boys were excluded from performing roles related to nurturing and care responsibilities (Njie et al, 2015). Gender socialization is at times regarded simplistically as a one-way process of providing young men with their gender identity and the norms by which they should live. Research reveals, however, that “gender learning” is a highly active process in which both boys and girls seek and process cultural information about gender and gender equality (UN, 2008). Gender roles are learned through agencies of gender socialization that includes: family, peer groups, school and media. Family is very powerful agent of gender socialization in which parent’s day to day social economic activities influenced their children and encourages them to engage in sex related roles (Crespi, 2003).

c) **Gender Socialization Theory**

The “social construction of gender *“approach assumes that early socialization and Intergenerational influences are important for the gendered division of housework”* (Cunningham 2001). Several theories have been attempted to explain gender socialization that manifest itself in inequality gender roles. Social Learning Theory insists on the importance of Reinforcement for change of behavior. Children are reinforced either positively or negatively to encourage or discourage certain behavior (Burn, 1996; Wharto, 2005). Children learn by observing and imitating the behavior of the adult of the same sex adults (Research Starters, 2009).

Structural Functionalist on the other hand believes on natural division of labor, women are the one who give birth and nurse the children, thus they should be involved in domestic activities such as preparing meals for the family and maintaining home (Reeves and Baden, 2000). Women are generally expected to fulfill reproductive roles of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members and household management tasks while men tend to be associated with productive roles particularly paid work (ibid). Traditionally, men are supposed to earn a living to support their families while women belong at home cooking, cleaning and caring for children (Crespi, 2003).

2.2 Empirical review

Women and girls’ education

Globally, education is regarded as *“the key factor in overcoming the barriers that women face in enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse their lives”* (UNICEF, 2004). The empowering role of women’s education affects not only the lives of the women, but also the lives of their children and other dependents such as the aged (Gaba, 2007). Women education can enhance their individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold empowerment level to bring a positive social change and raising their status in the family and society (Mahsud et al, 2014). Worldwide commitment to gender equality in education was reflected in Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All (EFA) 2000 and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2000). The two frameworks under their gender and educational specific related goals insisted on elimination of gender disparities in all levels of education by 2015.

Despite, all these efforts gender disparity in education persist in most developing countries. Women/girls continue to be disadvantaged in education at all levels in sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East/North Africa and South Asia. Even where enrolment of

girls/women in different levels of education has increased, positive outcomes are not guaranteed (UNICEF, 2004).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there is low enrolments rates and strong gender disparities/ inequalities where access to secondary and tertiary education is still limited to a minority and half of the countries show gross enrolment rates of no more than 26% for secondary and 2.5% for tertiary (UNESCO, 2004). In tertiary education, girls/women are not only much less represented (fewer than 5 girls/women to 10 boys/men) but often confined to be in a so-called “feminine” fields, such as social sciences, humanities, services and health-related courses, that do not boost their chances of equal job opportunities with men (Ibid). Gender disparities in education performance and completion rates persist in many African countries where more girls than boys found to repeat classes or drop out of school in primary and secondary levels while in colleges and university the rate of supplementary, repeat and even discontinuous cases is higher among female students as compared to male students (Johannes,2010). Statistic shows that women and girls from nine out of ten poorest Countries in the world have not complete school (UNESCO, 2013). Majority of regions have reached gender parity in primary education, but disparities persist in secondary levels of education (Ibd). Access to higher education remains a problem for women in many developing countries than in developed countries. In more developed regions, women have fairly equal access to higher education where they comprise 52/% of tertiary students (UNESCO, 2002). In less developed regions the percentage of women in tertiary education vary from one country to another: China (33%), Latin America (49%), India (38%), Sri lank (41%), Malawi (30%), Uganda (32%), Zimbabwe (29%) and Tanzania (36%) (Ibid).

Gender equality in higher and technical education is a serious constraint in Tanzania more so in science and technology related academic programmes (World Bank, 2004). However, there is slightly growth whereas the percentage of women students in higher education grown from 7.5% (2003) to 23% in 2006 (Ibid). The rate of female student’s enrollment increased up to 36.2% in 2012/13 and projected to reach 50% by the year 2020 (Tanzania Commission of University – TCU Rolling Strategic Plan 2016/17 – 2020/21).

2.3 Women/girls Education and Gender Roles

Women and Education is said to be a vehicle that break the shackles of poverty thereby leading to transformation, development and progress (Ikoni, 2009). With the 2005 MDGs’ first deadline for attainment of gender parity in primary and secondary schools’ enrolment already missed, the ability of women and girls to empower themselves

economically and socially by going to school, or by engaging in productive and civic activities is still being constrained by their responsibility for everyday tasks in the household division of labor (CEC Report 2007).

Though many governments in Africa are committed in providing equal education opportunities for girls/women following various gender equality frameworks, in practice the rate of school dropout among the girl is very high as compared to boys (ADB, 2010). The obstacles to gender parity in education are many despite the tremendous effort made over the last 10 years. Gender division of labor allocation and control over resources and male dominant patriarchal orders are among the factors that hinder female participation in education in Africa (Mbilinyi, 1990). Inequality in gender roles for example was pointed out to be the main challenge facing women/girl's education in developing countries Sub Saharan Africa in particular (Meena,1996, Mbilinyi, 1990). Traditionally, labor division for women/girls allocated household roles related to kitchen and care giving to the family members (King and Winthrop, 2015). Women /girls are usually expected to be fully engaged in domestic works including food preparation, collecting water/fuelwood and cleaning compound yards, look after young siblings and other care activities which may or may not be flexible enough to allow them participate fully in education (Ibd). Thus, educational dreams of women and girls are being jeopardized by the amount of time and energy required to meet their intense family responsibilities (Njie, 2015). The pressure of domestic work both constraints women/girls access to education and their ability to participate in education when they have been enrolled (Kabeer, 2003). The situation in family where women are employed in the public sector is even more difficulty as office works coupled with domestic chores constrain time for study (Ibd). Cross (1981), observed that job and home responsibilities consume time for study.

Taplin (2000) cited in Gaba, 2007, found that the female students at Indira Gandhi National Open University of India (IGNOU) reported severe bottlenecks in pursuing their studies due to their social commitments and a similar finding was visible through their academic results. Report by "*Our Africa Women*", show that care of children, sick/ elderly people with poor childcare facilities and support services take up a lot of women's time and hence deprive time for other valuable activities including concentration for their studies. Similarly, Girl's work burden become heavier in the absence of their mother due to employment that push significant care and household work onto children particularly girls who fail to concentrate on their normal study after school hours (Njie, 2015).

2.4 Open and Distance Learning in promoting women education

The global education agenda has raised awareness for the support of gender parity and gender equality in education as the Human Development report for 1995 declares that *'If human development is not engendered, it is endangered'*. Development goals now focus on gender equality and women empowerment. Goal number three of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), was to promote gender equality and women empowerment. The fourth target of this goal was to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015, (UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 2005). Therefore, the shift in the international education goals beyond gender parity to gender equality has had a positive influence in promoting a meaningful education agenda towards the education of females in relation to males.

Achieving gender equality in education implies equality of opportunities for males in relation to females, equality in the learning process, equality of outcomes as well as equality of external results after leaving education, (UNESCO, 2004). As mode of study, Open and Distance Learning found to boost women education because it provides flexibility in time management possibilities while preventing classroom attendance (Kwapong, 2007) cited in Njaya 2015. The ODL mode has enhanced enrolment of thousands of women both from rural and urban areas (Vidanapathirana, 2011) cited in (Mbwete, 2013).

Statistics show that the percentage of female students in Open University of India (IGNOU) was 76% as compared to male students 24% in 2005 (Gaba, 2007). Records from the Distance Learning Institute of the University of Lagos in Nigeria indicates that, in 2001, about 2874 female students enrolled in Administration Degrees and 164 female students enrolled in science Degrees (Temitayo, 2012). Chabaya and Gudhlanga, (2013) shows that there is quite a fair percentage of women participating in university education in Zimbabwe, whereas the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) alone enrolled about 8,485 female students. The number of female students enrolled in University of South Africa (UNISA) has almost doubled that of male in 2014/15 where female students were 215,669 as compared to 121,943 males. (Unisa Annual Report, 2015)

According to The Open University of Tanzania Facts and Figures published in June 2006, the total number of undergraduate students admitted annually has increased from 1209 in the year 2001 to 2692 in 2005. The percentage of female students has also increased on average from 18.6 in 2001 to 26.6 percent in 2005. Likewise, the number of

female enrolled into DPTE program continues to increase for three years consecutively from the average of 51% in 2011/2012 to 52% in 2013/2014 (OUT Facts and Figures 2014/2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study design

The study used case study research design. Miles and Huberman (1994) define a case study as the investigation of a phenomenon occurring within a specific context. Furthermore, Gall & Borg (2007), Case study has been chosen so as to save time and obtain in depth information about the challenges of domestic roles toward DPTE female students education carriers. Both qualitative and quantitative research approach were used.

3.2 Study area

The study was conducted in Tanga Regional Center at the Open University of Tanzania. The center has been chosen because of the researcher's familiarity and the accessibility of the respondents.

3.3 Study population

Population is defined as the total number of subjects or the total elements of interest to researcher (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the target population was DPTE female students from Tanga Regional Center. The choice of the group was due to the fact that DPTE program provide female primary school teachers with opportunity to develop their carrier while attending family responsibilities.

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedures

Sample size refers to the number of items to be included in the sample. Patton (2002) argues that sample size selection is influenced by the time and resources available for collection of data in a particular research study. To achieve this goal and compromise with the time, in this study data were collected from the sample of 51 DPTE female students so as to capture information on how inequality in gender roles affect female students at The Open University of Tanzania. Then, simple random sampling procedure was used in selecting the required number of DPTE female students both first and second year from Tanga Regional Center.

3.5 Data collection methods

In this paper, survey and documentary review methods were used in data collection. For example, survey method was used to obtain data related to the inequality in division of household roles that affect DPTE female students' education progress. Data obtained through questionnaire survey was analyzed quantitatively.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study on how inequality in gender roles affects academic progress of DPTE female students were discussed as follows:

4.1 Domestic roles and women education

The respondents were asked whether domestic chores have any impact on their study. The findings indicated that, 71% of respondents agreed that domestic chores have impact on their study compared to 29% who disagree (Figure: 1). Kabeer, (2003), reported that pressure of domestic work both constraints women access to education and their ability to participate in education when they have been enrolled. The study by Nyaruwata, (2014) observed the same in Zimbabwe whereas 84% of respondents reported that they lack study time for study after working hours due to family commitments.

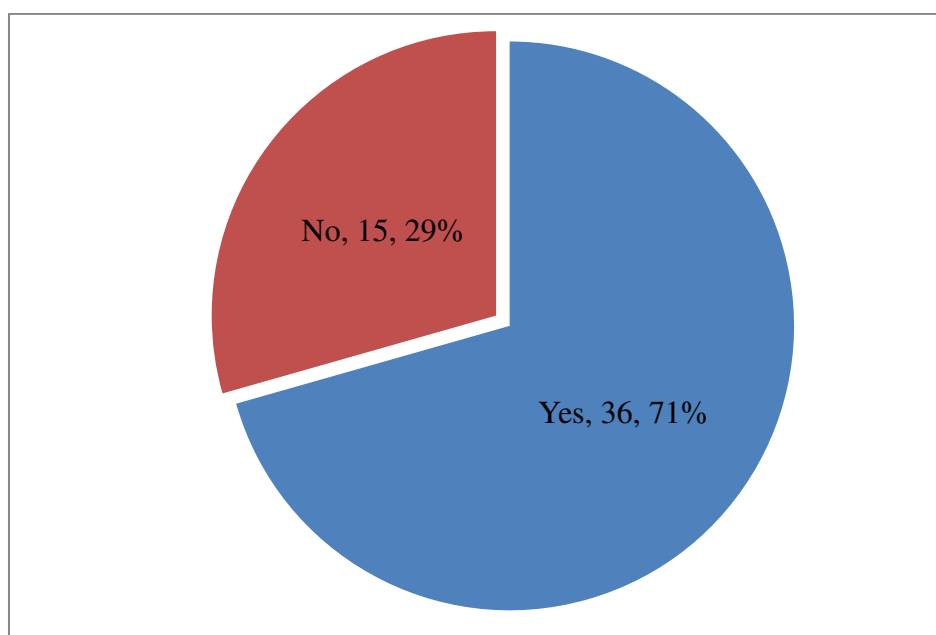


Figure 1: Domestic echoes

Source: Field data, 2016

4.2 Types of domestic chores

Respondents were also asked to mention types of domestic chores they perform in their respective home. Food preparation, washing clothes, house cleanliness, family care and gardening were mentioned as main household works (Figure 2). This was equally observed by Njie, (2013) in Gambia, whereas 96.6% of the respondents agreed that they have domestic chores to perform at home, the chores including: washing dishes, cleaning the house, sweeping compound yards, taking care of children/young siblings and shopping.

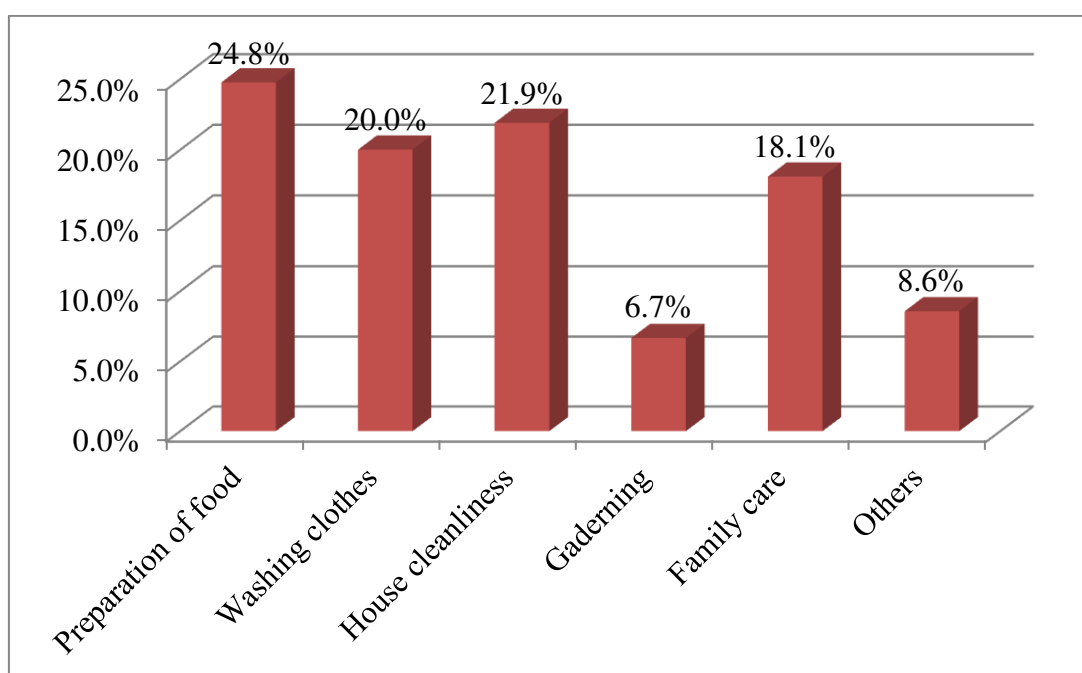


Figure 2: Types of domestic chores

Source: Field data, 2016

4.3 Assistance from housemaid

The respondents were further probed whether they have housemaid to assist them in domestic chores. During survey, the study findings revealed that, 80.4% of respondents have no housemaid (house girl or houseboy) who can assist them in domestic chores (Figure 3). The respondents claimed that situation become worse in the absence of housemaid as they become fully engaged in multiple domestic roles coupled with office duties and responsibilities.

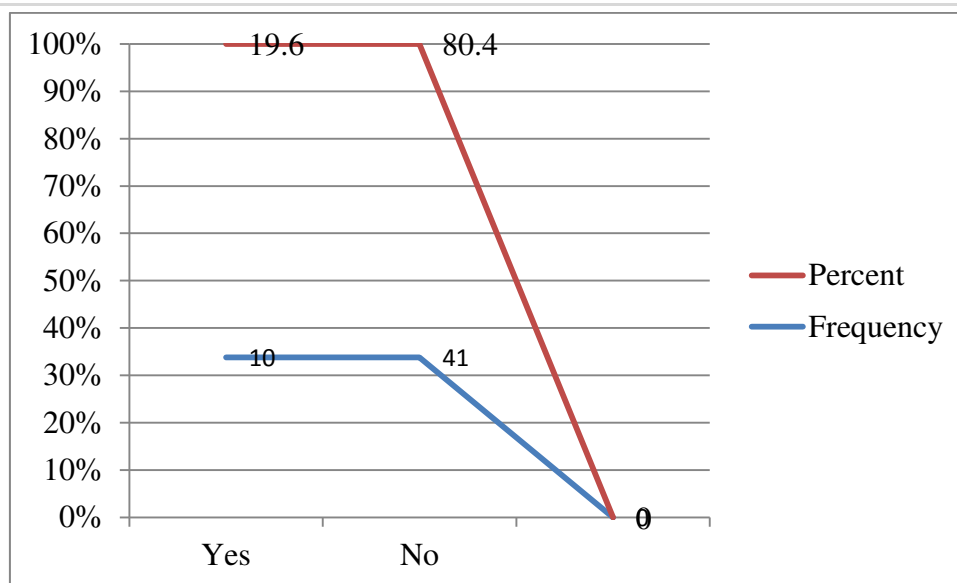


Figure 3: Housemaid

Source: Field data, 2016

The respondents were further asked to state the way on how they manage to carry out the three tasks (office work, family care and study) in absence of housemaid. They commented that, they efficiently allocate time for each task to be accomplished. However, most respondents reported that they spend most of time in the office works that range from 8- 11 hours per day, domestic work ranked the second in terms of time consumption after office works (2-6 hours) while study hours were found to be very few as compared to office works and domestic chores; it takes only 2-4 hours in a day (Table 1). The study by Buber, (2002) observed the same where respondents reported that women do the lion’s share of family work; they spend from six up to nearly nine hours per day on household work while husbands spend only two hours on average. Equally, the study by Malina et al (2008), in Europe found that women in paid employment typically take on the main responsibilities in the home and continue to bear the biggest burden of domestic works and family care despite the fact that men are increasingly participate in domestic chores. UN, (2008), argued that employed women are often faced with a “double shift”, performing both productive and reproductive works.

Table 1: Time allocation in various tasks

Task	Time used		
	Time interval	Frequency	Percentage
Working hours	8-9	44	86.3
	10-11	7	13.7
Studying hours	2-3	39	76.5
	4-6	12	23.5
Family care	2-4	32	62.7
	5-6	19	37.3

Source: Field data, 2016

Assistance from Partners

The respondents were further probed whether they get assistance from their partners/husband in performing domestic chores. The finding revealed that 62.7% of the respondents reported that their husband does not assist them in domestic works despite the fact that they are all employed (Figure 4). Contrary to this finding the study by Gasper and Klinke, (2009); Calasanti and Bailey (2008) in Europe and United states of America respectively show that in developed countries men are increasingly assist their wives in domestic chores.

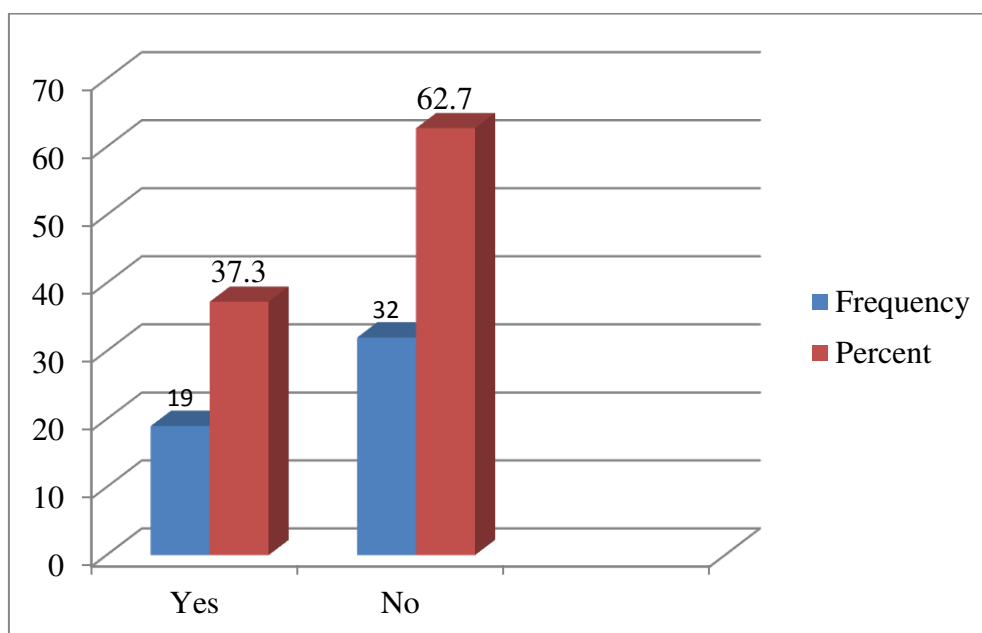


Figure 4: Assistance from partner

Source: field data, 2016

In addition to that, few respondents (37.3%) who agreed that they get assistance from their partners were further asked to identify the types of domestic chores which their

husband are most likely prefer to engage. Surrounding cleanness, animal husbandry and washing clothes were pointed out as the most common domestic tasks performed by men when assisting their wives at home (Table 2). Contrary to this finding the study by Gasper and Klinke, (2009) show that in developed countries men are increasingly assist their wives in childcare and cooking. In most cases, childcare tasks are shared to a greater extent by both partners. Cooking has been said to be increasingly an area of convergence between husbands and wives, more men increasingly found to be involved in the kitchen preparing family meals while women doing other tasks that are more physically demanding, such as home cleaning or doing the laundry and ironing (Gasper and Klinke, 2009).

Table 1: Types of domestic echoes performed by partner

Variables	Responses	
	Frequency	Percentage
Surrounding cleanliness	13	20.3
Animal husbandry	16	25.0
Family income	22	34.4
Washing clothes	09	14.1
Food preparation	04	6.3
Total	64	100

Source: Field data, 2016

4.4 The extent on how domestic chores affecting academic carrier among DPTE female students

The respondents were asked to state how family care and domestic chores affect their academic carrier. The study finding revealed that 54% of the respondents claimed that multiple domestic chores affect their academic progress. In absence of housemaid and little or no assistance from partners/husband they become fully engaged in multiple domestic chores after office works and hence be tired and exhausted to the extent that they fail to concentrate to their study even for an hour (Figure 5). Musingafi et al (2015), observed the same in Zimbabwe in which, 75% female students studying at the Open University of Zimbabwe agreed that lack of sufficient time for study and conflicts between work schedule were challenge to their study. Similarly, Dodo (2013) shows that most of female students pursue their studies through Virtual or Open and Distance Learning in Zimbabwe were facing social problems related to their responsibilities in nursing ill people and general care of their family. Various studies on women education observed the same that domestic chores negatively affect academic progress of

girls/women to the extent that they get tired and unable to read and concentrate in class (Cross, 1981; Meena, 1996; Njie, 2013).

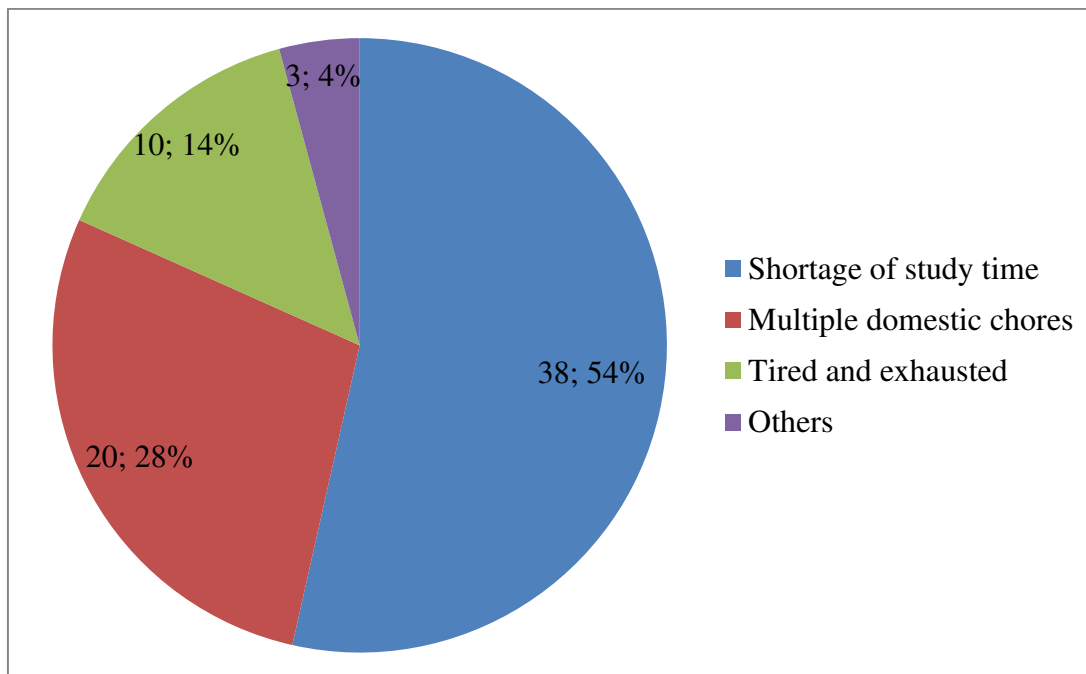


Figure 5: Effects of domestic chores on academic progress of the respondents

Source: Field data, 2016

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

ODL is very important tool in promoting gender equality in education for disadvantaged group of people including women. It provides an opportunity to them to realize their educational goals while attending other socio economic responsibilities for the well-being of their family and society in general.

The study found that inequality in gender roles is a major challenge facing female students pursuing Diploma in Primary Teachers Education offered at The Open University of Tanzania. Overburden of women in domestic chores found to constrain women's studies both in terms of energy and time consumption. To realize potential of ODL in promoting women's education and empowerment, the study recommends on restructuring of traditional gender roles so that men can participate fully in household roles as women in Tanzania are increasingly engaged in paid work to promote family's income. Thus, more work is still needed to be done on how gender parity in domestic roles can be achieved among African societies as European societies do.

5.2 Recommendation

The study on inequality in gender roles and its effects to DPTE female students recommends the followings.

1. The Government should support women studies through providing them with full study leave so as to release them from office duties and hence increase study hours.
2. The government should consider reducing working hours from eight to six for employee who study through ODL.
3. The Government officials should allow their employee who studying through ODL to attend different academic activities related to their studies when requested.
4. The Community should support women who study through ODL by releasing them from unnecessary community issues except the basic socio- economic ones.
5. The Family members should assist women who pursue their studies through ODL in household chores. It can be achieved if husband /partners could have positive outlook toward women's education.
6. The Family members should also be tolerant when women failed to fulfill normal responsibilities due to limited time. This can be achieved if there will be a clear understanding about the value of women education to the whole family.
7. The family member should consider restructuring domestic chores allocation to provide ample time for women to concentrate on her study. It can be achieved if partners/husband change his mind set in relation to persisting traditional gender roles that allocate most of domestic works to women.

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Rahma M. Msoffe -
INEQUALITY IN GENDER ROLES, A CHALLENGE TO OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING:
A CASE OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN DIPLOMA IN PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION –
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

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