

TIME USE AND GENDER INEQUALITIES. SOME EVIDENCE FROM THREE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

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Recibido, septiembre 1/2013
Concepto evaluación, octubre 2/2013
Aceptado, noviembre 20/2013

Referencia: Pedrero Nieto, M. (2013). Time use and gender inequalities. Some evidence from three Latin American countries. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, 16 (2), 55-62.

Abstract

This article presents gender differences on time use for three Latin American countries. Variations on time use depend on being male or female and the roles played in the household, which are identified through the marital status, kinship and age. Gender inequalities in the global workload - defined as the sum of time spent working for the market and the time devoted to domestic tasks - are disadvantageous for women limiting their access to other opportunities because time is not an endless resource. Such inequalities are of great significance, since a higher workload for women does not represent greater well-being for them. Also, there is a lack of economic compensation for it since higher workloads rely on unpaid work. More working hours demand more effort and cause more fatigue and in many cases, greater alienation. On the other hand, free time for men means more autonomy for them, more recreation and in some cases, greater opportunities for personal enrichment (cultural or spiritual) and the strengthening of their social networks. These results lead us to consider specific necessary actions to achieve gender equality so that women can decide about their own personal use of time as a precondition to achieve equality in other fields of life.

Key words: Gender, time use, gender roles, inequalities, work burden.

USO DEL TIEMPO E INEQUIDADES DE GÉNERO. ALGUNAS EVIDENCIAS EN TRES PAÍSES LATINOAMERICANOS

Resumen

Este artículo presenta diferencias de género sobre uso del tiempo en tres países latinoamericanos. Las variaciones en uso del tiempo dependen de ser hombre o mujer y los roles que desempeñan en el hogar, lo cual se identifica a través de la situación conyugal, el parentesco y la edad. Desigualdades de género en la carga total de trabajo - definida como la suma del tiempo dedicado al trabajo para el mercado y el tiempo dedicado al trabajo doméstico - son desventajosas para las mujeres limitándoles otras actividades porque el tiempo no es un recurso ilimitado. Tales inequidades tienen gran significado, puesto que la mayor carga de trabajo no representa para las mujeres mayor bienestar. No existe una compensación económica por ello pues la mayor carga de trabajo es no remunerado. Trabajar más horas significa mayor esfuerzo que causa mayor agotamiento y en muchos casos mayor enajenación. Por otra parte, el tiempo libre para los hombres significa para ellos mayor autonomía, mayor recreación y en algunos casos mayores oportunidades para su enriquecimiento personal (cultural o espiritual) y fortalecimiento de sus redes sociales. Los resultados nos llevan a considerar la necesidad de acciones específicas para lograr igualdad de género de manera que las mujeres decidan sobre su propio uso del tiempo como una precondition para lograr la igualdad en otros campos de la vida.

Palabras clave: Género, uso del tiempo, roles de género, desigualdad, carga laboral.

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USO DO TEMPO E INIQUIDADES DE GÊNERO. ALGUMAS EVIDÊNCIAS EM TRÊS PAÍSES LATINO-AMERICANOS

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta diferenças de gênero sobre uso do tempo em três países latino-americanos. As variações no uso do tempo dependem de ser homem ou mulher e os papéis que desempenham no lar, o qual identifica-se através da situação conjugal, o parentesco e a idade. Desigualdades de gênero na carga total de trabalho - definida como a soma do tempo dedicado ao trabalho para o mercado e o tempo dedicado ao trabalho doméstico - são desvantajosas para as mulheres limitando-as a outras atividades porque o tempo não é um recurso ilimitado. Tais iniquidades têm grande significado, já que a maior carga de trabalho não representa para as mulheres maior bem-estar. Não existe uma compensação econômica, já que a maior carga de trabalho é não remunerada. Trabalhar mais horas significa maior esforço que causa maior esgotamento e em muitos casos maior alienação. Por outro lado, o tempo livre para os homens significa para eles maior autonomia, maior recreação e em alguns casos maiores oportunidades para seu enriquecimento pessoal (cultural ou espiritual) e fortalecimento de suas redes sociais. Os resultados nos levam a considerar a necessidade de **ações específicas para obter** igualdade de gênero de maneira que as mulheres decidam sobre seu próprio uso do tempo como uma condição prévia para conseguir a igualdade em outras áreas da vida.

Palavras chave: Gênero, uso do tempo, papéis de gênero, desigualdade, carga de trabalho.

INTRODUCTION

Gender studies have had a long presence throughout history; however, for a long time there was a lack of systematic research in the field and in fact those studies were not identified as a specific research topic. It was not until the 1970s that they blossomed with great power. First, their importance grew in the academic world; later on they have been gaining space in the political agenda, at least discursively. Pioneer studies developed a very strong line of thought revolving around labor market inequalities, focusing both on the constraints for their access as well as the discriminatory working conditions affecting women. Thereafter gender studies have been expanding to address a wide range of aspects. In the current research agenda, “gender violence” is an outstanding theme, as well as studies on new forms of cohabitation for couples and sexuality practices. Other aspects discussed are the inequalities in social and political participation, starting with the suffragists’ struggles and later focusing on women’s access to high positions in hierarchical structures.

In recent decades a methodological and theoretical breakthrough has taken place: the recognition that time distribution by sex is the origin of many problems and generates many aspects of gender inequality. This article depicts specifically the gender differences in time devoted to domestic and care duties, showing the disadvantage for women in the global workload. The disadvantages in opportunities for women are derived from differences in the distribution of time between persons according to their sex, age, marital status and position in the family. Such differences produce

inequities in workload, either paid or unpaid. This article is devoted to time use and gender inequities.

The concept of gender

We can define gender as “a network of beliefs, personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behavior and activities that differ among men and women through a process of social construction to encompass distinctions that society has erected on the biological basis. Thus, gender connotes a social construction, which includes distinction of roles and behaviors, as well as mental and emotional features, whereas it has become common to use the term sex to refer to biological differences” (Beneria & Roldán, 1992; p.3).¹

The formulation of a gender category as something separate from biological sex was a great theoretical rupture within a system of male domination. Before, such domination was regarded as an immutable natural fact. With this theoretical advance, the division of labor between men and women could be recognized as a social phenomenon and not something belonging to the natural world. This was demonstrated empirically by showing the variability through space and time. With respect to differences on economic activity according to varying geographical areas, Boserup (1970) with her broad analysis of different realities in Asia and Africa showed that women’s participation in productive activities for the market depended on the interests of capital and not on their gender. On the other hand, we observed that the participation of women in the Latin American labor market has at least duplicated over the past 40 years.

¹ The original text is larger and is written in Spanish.

Gender differences in the use of time

However, while women’s participation in income-generating activities has increased, the distribution of household chores has not changed much. Domestic work remains as a female responsibility. Therefore, the incorporation of women into the labor market frequently means a double working day.

The purpose of this study is to show gender inequalities in three Latin American countries in terms of working time. Therefore it is important to consider a wide concept of work that includes labor for the market as well as domestic work, in order to evidence gender differences on work burden against women which mean limited opportunities in other life spaces. With the evidence of such inequalities showing a higher workload for women it is possible to develop some propositions for public policies as well as to increase awareness about the need to share domestic duties among the household members in order to reduce gender inequalities and thus attain a greater sense of well-being of the society as a whole.

METHOD

Universe of analysis

This study includes three countries of Latin America: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. The analysis covers their national population 12 years old and above in recent dates, when the statistical information about time use is available.

Procedure

Data analyses are based on the time use bibliography in order to depict the main features of the population time use patterns by gender. First of all the comparability of the time use surveys among the countries was verified. All indicators were obtained from the original micro-data data using the SPSS program.

To measure this, an indicator known as the “Global working load” (GWL) has been created which consists of the sum of the time spent in the labor market and the time used in domestic tasks (García Sainz, 1999). This indicator shows higher workload for women with respect to men, which demonstrates an objective disadvantage since the higher participation of men in the labor market does not compensate the overall women’s burden. To illustrate this fact we will present information for three Latin-American countries - Ecuador, Mexico y Peru - that share cultural patterns, specifically those of gender (see Table 1).

RESULTS

First of all it is found that the global working load is much higher for women, the advantage for men is in free time. Some light is shed on the domestic work distribution among household members. In addition to the low participation of men it is confirmed that the male and female roles that exist in the public sphere are also present within the household. An outstanding result was that in the three countries, daughters devoted more time to domestic tasks than sons. Such fact means that even today, in Latin America, there is a cultural pattern that is unfavorable to women. Therefore the struggle for equality has to be extended to all levels, starting at their own home.

Table 1

Average weekly working time in both types of work and global working load by the employed population in paid activities, by sex: Ecuador, México and Peru

Sex	Domestic Work	Paid Work	Global Working Load (GWL)
ECUADOR 2007			
Male	10:36	43:58	54:34
Female	34:02	37:25	71:27
MEXICO, 2009			
Male	11:43	48:20	60:03
Female	38:56	40:05	79:01
PERU, 2010			
Male	15:09	50:42	65:51
Female	38:47	40:02	78:49

Note. Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country

Everybody has the same amount of time each day. However different time use by gender is a real fact. The majority of adult women spend much of their time doing non-remunerated domestic work, which limits their access to other opportunities since time is finite.

People distribute their time among different activities, such as training, recreation, taking care of their own personal vital needs (eating, personal hygiene and rest), and working, either for the market or for the household (which includes caring for other people and home management).

² Only two countries are included in order to have more clarity.

This graph depicts the time distribution among men and women considering activities clustered in four major groups for illustrative purposes².

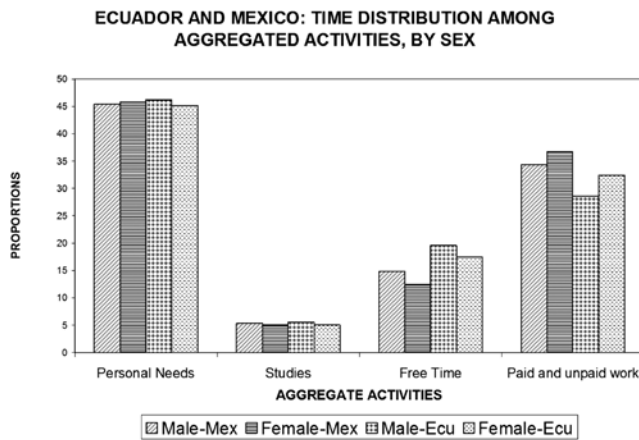


Figure 1. Ecuador and Mexico: Time distribution among aggregated activities by sex.

There is no much difference among the time men and women devote to personal needs or training time. However, there is a great imbalance in the time spent working and in free time. Working time is higher for women and for men the advantage is in free time.

Such inequality has a great significance, since women's higher workload does not represent greater well-being for them. In addition to not having any economic compensation, they do not have any other type of recognitions. They perform an invisible work which inhibits other personal opportunities to enrich their lives. As seen in table 1, the higher workload is in unpaid work. More working hours denote more effort, more fatigue, and in many cases greater alienation. On the other hand, more free time means more autonomy, more recreation and in some cases greater opportunities for personal enrichment (cultural or spiritual) and the strengthening of social networks.

Unpaid domestic work shows gender inequalities. Studies of time use on specific activities are important to design public policies and to undertake social actions. In fact, actions should be carried out to fight those inequalities in different fields, such as public policy, cultural changes within families' habits (to avoid increased workloads). Negotiations among household members to distribute the burdens of domestic tasks, are particularly relevant. A tool to raise awareness on their importance is sizing up the economic value of domestic work. Its invisibility is one of the origins of gender inequalities. Just making it visible

in economic statistics has assayed the dimensions of its impact on society (Pedrero, 2011). In 2007 the estimated economic value of unpaid work in Ecuador reached 29.72 percent of the Gross National Product GNP. in México it represented 22.57 and in Peru it amounted to 27.18. In these countries, none of the economic market sectors reached such percentages (Pedrero, 2013).

Some questions that need to be addresses are: How is domestic work distributed among household members? How do power relations operate by gender? How does authority between generations operate?, What is the relationship between domestic work performance and status among members of the family (either as a provider or as an economic dependent)?

The following data can shed some light in this regard by considering, in addition to being male or female, the roles played within households, identified through marital status, kinship and age.

Table 2 shows the weekly average working hours devoted to domestic tasks by men and women considering their marital status. The higher burden of domestic work falls down on married women or those in a consensual union with twice the time than single ones, who have the smallest load. Women in a consensual union or married have working days that go beyond 10 hours more than women either divorced or separated, who do not have spouse; this has been called the husband effect by A. Picchio. However, a deeper analysis is needed, considering household as the unit of analysis.

Table 2

Average weekly working hours in domestic duties by marital status and sex; Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

Marital Status	ECUADOR, 2007		MEXICO, 2009		PERU, 2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Consensual Union	10:30	45:21	13:07	52:19	15:46	51:12
Separated	14:53	34:00	15:56	39:38	21:13	39:15
Divorced	15:56	31:18	15:38	37:05	15:08	32:37
Widow	16:20	30:17	14:59	32:02	21:22	37:45
Married	12:07	43:09	12:47	51:35	16:59	47:09
Single	8:29	19:47	9:28	20:43	12:54	24:39
Total	10:36	34:02	11:43	38:56	15:09	38:47

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country

³ Mentioned in her speech at the "The International Association for Feminist Economics" Congress, held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2000.

Divorced or separated men are more involved in domestic tasks than single men. This might be due to them having to meet at least the minimal needs of their children, or having to deal with their own domestic needs, because they do not have a spouse or mother.

Table 3 presents the average weekly working hours in domestic duties by kinship. Considering the previous data in relation to marital status, it was expected that the spouses and daughters-in-law had the longest working weeks. An outstanding result was that in the three countries, more time was devoted by daughters than sons to domestic tasks; the same inequitable pattern exists among granddaughters and grandsons. Working time is two times higher for females than for their siblings. This indicates that inequitable practices were conceived within their own home because boys and girls are children from the same parents. That should not be happening, since in there has been progress in other fields for young people, either girls or boys. Such is the case of access to basic education. However the time difference in domestic work among the youth means that even today, in Latin America, there is a cultural pattern that is unfavorable to women. Therefore the struggle for equality has to be extended to all levels, starting at their own home.

Table 3
Average weekly working hours in domestic duties by sex and kinship: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

	Household Head	Spouse	Daughter or son	Grand child	TOTAL
ECUADOR, 2007					
Male	12:47	11:04	07:50	07:10	10:36
Female	35:15	44:40	20:10	16:16	34:02
MEXICO, 2009					
Male	12:28	15:56	09:30	10:20	11:43
Female	36:25	45:43	22:39	21:23	38:56
PERU, 2010					
Male	17:23	14:07	12:44	12:19	15:09
Female	39:31	49:55	26:41	21:05	38:47

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country.

Certainly the marital status and the family position are related to age. The pattern is repeated in terms of more time spent on domestic work by women than by men. Analyzing working time by age (table 4) not much variability among men was found, except in adolescence, when the working time is shorter than for other groups: the variation range is around 2 hours in Ecuador and Mexico. For Peru, where

male participation is higher, the variation range is greater, but it never exceeds twenty hours. Among women the picture is different. In the central middle ages, when procreation is concentrated, working days in all three countries exceed forty hours. Women in the age group 20 to 25 and after 60 years do not reach 40 hours in domestic work, but exceed 30 hours. Only at ages below 20, working days are shorter, but always women's working time is far superior to men's for more than 6 hours. This is a pattern that should be broken, since in the three countries basic education for both sexes has reached a similar coverage.

Table 4
Average weekly working hours in domestic duties, by age and sex: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

AGE	ECUADOR		MEXICO		PERU	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
12-14	06:53	13:09	06:51	13:10	13:05	19:33
15-19	07:39	20:48	08:37	21:42	12:56	25:13
20-24	08:41	32:03	10:20	34:59	12:15	33:34
25-29	11:05	40:06	12:50	45:45	14:39	44:23
30-34	11:51	44:11	13:17	49:48	15:34	50:38
35-39	12:06	42:41	13:24	48:59	17:24	47:43
40-44	11:46	41:29	12:22	46:12	16:38	45:13
45-49	11:38	40:15	12:25	45:08	14:53	43:26
50-54	11:46	38:43	11:39	42:32	17:17	41:35
55-59	12:14	38:36	11:54	41:47	16:56	42:21
60-64	13:04	37:09	10:59	38:42	17:39	43:11
65 years and above	13:38	30:32	11:42	30:12	19:01	37:00
Total	10:36	34:02	11:43	38:56	15:09	38:47

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country.

This difference is important because gender disadvantages among female teenagers extend for a lifetime. Teenage years are a time for search and experimentation and if there is no opportunity to do that, personal human development is limited.

Occupational segregation in domestic activities by gender

Domestic work includes a variety of activities involving different effort and commitment, affecting in particular the opportunities that people may have. Therefore, we do not have to consider only the time spent on domestic work, we must observe its nature. Some activities require daily preparation, as cooking. Others are carried out when the service is required, as it is the case of specific care to

others, it might not consume much time, but the person in charge of that has to be ready to perform such service on demand. The total burden of domestic work in a home varies depending on its size, the stage of the household life cycle and the presence of disabled persons with high degree of dependence in their daily lives.

Some activities can be programmed and the time for their performance can be chosen, which makes them less stressful, such as the arrangement of some spaces (gardening for example, washing the car, etc.). Also, within the domestic sphere there are hierarchies and a division of labor according to gender, not only based on intensity, but on derived personal gratifications, for example, between rewarding and unpleasant duties (cooking or washing the

bathroom). It is necessary to measure the time spent on each activity.

In table 5, we can see how men and women distribute the time they devote to domestic work among various activities. Cooking is the more absorbing activity in terms of time spent by women in the three countries. Among men, the predominant activity is house cleaning (gardening, taking care of outside spaces, car washing). Shopping is also an important activity for men.

The distribution for each sex separately presented a curious coincidence in terms of the proportion of time devoted to the care of children. However, this does not mean that men and women share that care equally. Differences are shown by the distribution of each activity between men

Table 5

Male and female time distribution among main domestic activities: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

MAIN DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES	ECUADOR 2007		MEXICO 2009		PERU 2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cooking	20.39	42.70	21.26	37.04	18.73	34.19
House Cleaning	27.19	18.47	19.77	22.33	21.68	17.32
Laundry	11.07	16.38	8.77	12.93	12.12	14.47
Repairs	4.69	0.32	6.99	0.36	4.99	0.32
Care of children	10.87	10.91	12.51	12.73	17.81	18.45
Care of sick people	1.69	1.03			1.61	1.29
Care of disable people	0.87	0.97	9.16	6.39	0.67	1.03
Shopping	13.14	5.35	9.91	4.74	13.60	8.22
Managing	10.07	3.87	8.68	2.65	8.78	4.73
Transportation			2.93	0.82		
Total Domestic work	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country.

Table 6

Distribution by sex in each domestic activity: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

MAIN DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES	ECUADOR 2007			MEXICO 2009			PERU 2010		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Cooking	11.69	88.31	100.00	12.69	87.31	100.00	17.58	82.42	100.00
House Cleaning	28.98	71.02	100.00	18.32	81.68	100.00	32.69	67.31	100.00
Laundry	15.78	84.22	100.00	14.66	85.34	100.00	24.61	75.39	100.00
Repairs	80.33	19.67	100.00	83.18	16.82	100.00	85.93	14.07	100.00
Care of children	21.65	78.35	100.00	19.93	80.07	100.00	27.68	72.32	100.00
Care of sick people	31.27	68.73	100.00				32.63	67.37	100.00
Care of disable people	20.02	79.98	100.00	26.64	73.36	100.00	18.79	81.21	100.00
Shopping	40.50	59.50	100.00	34.67	65.33	100.00	39.18	60.82	100.00
Managing	41.93	58.07	100.00	45.29	54.71	100.00	41.90	58.10	100.00
Transportation	22.28	77.72	100.00	20.22	79.78	100.00	28.15	71.85	100.00

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country.

and women (Table 6). Thereafter we will see that they do not devote the same time (Table 7).

If we read the percentages in table 6 by rows, we can observe the share between men and women in each activity. In caring for children, boys and girls, men use between a fourth and a fifth of the total caring time. The country presenting greater collaboration of men in this category is Peru, where it reaches 28 per cent for total children's care and women 72 per cent. The only activity in which men dominate in the three countries is repairing the house and its equipment and crafts, absorbs four or fifth parts of the total time devoted to this activity; this fact confirms that male and female roles that exist in the public sphere are also present within the household.

Table 7 registers the average time in hours and minutes that people are involved in each activity. Data illustrate that for children care women devote more than twice the time men spend in this activity in Mexico and Peru, while in Ecuador women's dedication is more than four times the time spent on the kids with respect to men's dedication. This Table shows that the activity that absorbs more time in the three countries is cooking. Among people who develop this activity it is only surpassed by the time dedicated to the care of people with disabilities in the cases of Mexico and Peru.

Cooking is an activity that must be carried out on a daily basis – of course, you can concentrate such activity on any specific day and freeze the meals for the whole week, if you have access to the necessary equipment - but any way you have to do something every day, either heating or serving. The care of children and the disabled who require assistance in their daily lives is also not cumulative. These activities affect the whole life of the people who have this responsibility.

So, if we contrast the time in hours with the proportions of time distribution, we see that the category of caring for the disabled does not occupy a prominent place in terms of its share, because at the present time the number of disabled people in Latin America is relatively small. However, time consuming care to attend the needs of a disabled person alienates much of the opportunities for the caregiver to devote such time to other activities. This fact must be regarded as a sign to draw attention to the problem in the near future because of the imminent ageing of the population in all Latin American countries by the drastic reduction of fertility in the last 30 years. CEPAL (2009) estimates that 17 percent of the total population will be over 60 years old in 2030. The increase in the proportion of elderly dependents should be considered a social problem and not merely an individual or family problem.

DISCUSSION

Evidence on time use shows that differences are determined by the gender roles that society assigns both to men and women. Gender inequalities in the global workload are disadvantageous for women. The picture shown leads us to consider specific necessary actions to achieve gender equality in the use of time as a precondition to achieve equality in other fields of life.

It is necessary to raise awareness to act in different areas to decrease the work burden on women. A greater distribution of labor among all members of the household should be encouraged in the family. In the public sphere it is necessary to develop public policies (Pedrero, 2012), one of the most outstanding of which is to “pay attention to the development of social care services”, especially in

Table 7

Average hours devoted by men and women to main domestic tasks: Ecuador, Mexico and Peru

MAIN DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES	ECUADOR 2007		MEXICO 2009		PERU 2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cooking	2:02	14:08	04:10	14:57	03:58	13:30
House Cleaning	2:43	6:07	03:26	09:17	03:29	6:38
Laundry	1:06	5:25	01:42	05:23	02:05	5:35
Repairs	0:28	0:07	02:32	01:52	03:30	2:09
Care of children	2:01	8:08	05:08	11:37	05:48	12:11
Care of sick people	0:10	0:20			03:26	4:28
Care of disable people	0:05	2:58	13:32	21:27	08:50	16:44
Shopping	1:19	1:33	02:17	02:43	02:38	3:37
Managing	1:00	1:17	01:26	01:31	01:40	2:16
Transportation	10:36	34:02	11:43	38:56	15:09	38:47

Note: Calculations based on the micro-data of the Time Use Surveys of each country.

relation to elderly people whose population share is increasing day by day. Their care is now assigned to women, but in the near future it cannot depend only on families, and specifically on women, because they don't have time for such activity in private, given their increasing participation in the labor market.

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