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IMPACT OF WOMEN'S INVISIBLE WORK ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT :

The hidden efforts of women hold up homes, neighbourhoods, and entire countries - yet these contributions rarely show up in financial records or government plans. This report looks at the wide variety of unpaid jobs women do every day - not just cooking and cleaning, but also looking after kids and elders, offering comfort during tough times, even pitching in small ways that keep local markets moving - all vital for households to survive and systems to stay afloat. Even though such labour keeps things running smoothly, it's left out of GDP numbers, missing from employment data, and treated as less important in both public opinion and job environments, which only deepens long-standing gaps between men and women.

Looking closely at writings from around the world and South Asia, this work shows how old biases, outdated views on gender, or poor data collection hide what women truly add to economies. Studies suggest their unseen efforts boost countries by building stronger people, reducing pressure on government systems, while also letting paid workers keep going without burnout. Still, females face hurdles such as lack of time, limited jobs, mental stress, along with little say in key choices.

The study lists five main aims - spotting kinds of unseen labour, measuring how it affects economies, looking into its role in societal growth, checking gender gaps tied to it, while stressing why recognition matters. Findings suggest that counting unpaid tasks in official stats, improving childcare support, offering adaptable job setups, pushing for equal home responsibilities, alongside expanding public initiatives might greatly raise women's visibility and participation.

This study points out how noticing women's hidden labour matters if we want fairness between genders, better economic data, while pushing broader national progress. Seeing this invisible effort improves decision-making in government, also helps build fairer, long-lasting communities.

INTRODUCTION :

In every neighbourhood, women make things work - managing homes, building connections nearby, dealing with money stuff. But most of this work stays hidden, doesn't bring income, isn't tracked anywhere. Preparing food, cleaning spaces, looking after kids or older relatives, sorting out home tasks, supporting loved ones, jumping into family-run shops rarely shows up in government stats. Because these efforts aren't counted in economy numbers and don't have price tags, people often miss how vital they really are. Still, this hidden work clears the path for progress in a nation. Because it takes place, people stay healthier, think clearer, while tackling bigger challenges; as a result, relatives take on jobs that pay wages; at the same time, care spots like medical centers or babysitting don't get overwhelmed. If neighbourhood ignore the chores women do without pay, leaders miss how vital they are - helping economies grow and holding everyday routines together. Acknowledging the hidden work women do actually matters - whether it's shaping fairer rules, boosting equal opportunities between genders, or building economies that bring more folks in. Real shifts kick off in any country once every individual's contribution, noticed or not, gets seen and supported.

Women help countries move forward in many ways, yet most of their efforts stay unseen or ignored. Every day, large numbers of women spend time running households, preparing food, raising kids, caring for older relatives, keeping friendships alive, also supporting family businesses - often getting no pay or public credit. Such massive unpaid contributions are usually labelled hidden female labour because they're left out of financial measurements like GDP plus rarely taken into account when leaders make choices. This work doesn't show up in numbers, yet it keeps daily life running smoothly. Because of it, kids go to school, households stay well, also people with jobs can focus on their duties without extra stress. Across many poorer countries - India included - women help grow crops, run tiny businesses, or take part in local groups, but nobody counts those actions as real jobs even though they're done outside formal workplaces. The impact of this hidden effort on how well a nation moves forward really adds up. Since women handle chores and look after loved ones without pay, public systems - like clinics, schools, or neighbourhood help groups - don't get stretched too thin. Because family life stays balanced emotionally and socially, workers show up more focused, thanks in part to that behind-the-scenes support. All told, what women do out of sight acts like an unnoticed engine, keeping homes running - and the whole country ticking along.

LITERATURE REVIEW :

Blumberg, R. L. (1979). In over a decade, indications have become evident - progress frequently marginalizes impoverished village women rather than supporting them in various disadvantaged areas. Nevertheless, fresh attempts to integrate these women into advancement encounter a significant barrier - their lives and efforts remain unrecognized, obscured by what is referred to as an invisible curtain. In this section, we present preliminary concepts regarding why women are often neglected and their actual level of activity, then challenge the widespread notion that rural women in developing nations are inactive by examining two factors: first, insights from early human history, and second, new localized studies alongside United Nations statistics. That initial perspective clearly indicates – they controlled the operations in most societies prior to the advent of agriculture. Women continue to produce nearly half of the global food supply, although this varies significantly by location. Numbers frequently fail to reflect their contributions due to data being distorted by outdated perspectives, this concealed work ultimately damages both countries and women farmers.

Moser, C. O., & Peake, L. (1994). The piece looks at research about women in developing countries, gender issues, and city growth since the 1960s - checking whether these topics shaped their own path or got folded into broader studies. Instead of just adding them on, it shows how urban gender matters have often been overlooked, pointing out why they must be part of future work. With an eye on four distinct stages of city expansion, each driven by different ideas and policy shifts, it explores how thinking evolved. Because of that shift over time, methods for studying women and gender changed too, setting clear standards for how such research gets structured and supported. The review wraps up by sketching a city-focused research plan centered on gender for the '90s - tagged along is a solid list of sources

Feldman, S. (2019). This section looks at how the idea of informal work has changed over time, pinpoints main topics shaping gender studies plus shifts toward informality, while underlining issues today that demand deeper exploration. The notion of an informal economy - useful not just to describe reality but also to shape policies - became more relevant after the ILO adopted it back in the 1970s. When researchers zoom in only on individual small businesses, they miss complex ties and working conditions tied to casual jobs, making unseen countless home-based operations depending on free labor from females and kids. Broader trends like cross-border manufacturing networks, international job splits, and shifting national priorities show evolving patterns where women are increasingly part of wage-earning roles.

Ustek, F. (2015). Women around the globe often land at the lowest levels of informal jobs, just like in Turkey - only there, deep-rooted male-dominated family norms and a work system that rewards only certain types of employees make things tougher. Looking into past research on why people take informal jobs shows two main paths: some get pushed in because of big issues like few openings, bias at hiring or promotion, lack of chances for those with less training, while others jump in on purpose to skip taxes or red tape, or try out small ventures. Still, this split view doesn't really explain why more women keep joining these kinds of jobs, nor does it highlight what unique hurdles or benefits they face. Given that gap, this study argues that splitting informal work into just push or pull forces oversimplifies life, and that women's experiences sit somewhere in between - they see the walls blocking better lives yet still find ways to act despite them. So instead of treating them as victims or free agents, the paper explores the mix of tactics women use to survive in these jobs, when each option works, and what stands in the way.

Daniels, A. K. (1987). Most people think "work" means stuff you must do to earn money. Yet women's efforts often don't count, since they're either not paid or tied up in chores at home. That mindset carries a hidden rule - like you've got to labor to be worthy. But this idea narrows what we see as real contribution. The article highlights how narrow views hide entire forms of effort. I zero in mostly on the effort tied to shaping everyday life socially, along with keeping and growing institutions. In the end, I lay out why we should broaden what counts as work - bringing in actions once left out of common views: seeing clearly the labor behind shared realities gives value to that effort, plus builds appreciation for those doing it.

Lavee, E., & Kaplan, A. (2022). Studies show when free-market policies mix with tight government rules, social workers end up doing lots of extra tasks without pay - often tied to their gender roles. Following this idea, the study looks at how these unseen efforts shift power between men and women in welfare agencies, focusing on what's called "hidden labor." Through a method known as institutional ethnography, we explore real-life stories from civil servants in Israel, treating unpaid help as personal support staff give beyond job duties. Looking closely at 185 deep interviews, we found three main ways workers explain why they offer private time or goods. In each case, off-the-record actions get masked across different layers - one's self, office culture, and wider society. Much like chores done at home that never get praised, this invisible effort at work quietly keeps unequal gender patterns going.

Malhi, F. N. (2024). This piece uses a rare Time Use Survey from Pakistan to uncover job-like efforts often missed by standard labor polls. By digging into detailed time records along with work category questions, we spot and study this unseen group of workers. On top of that, through a multinomial logit setup, I look at what drives people - men and women between 10 and 74 - to end up in hidden jobs, focusing on things like education levels, movement barriers, or money security. Findings show big gaps between genders in these unnoticed roles, as females take up a striking 88% share. Some women mostly do odd jobs while juggling chores at home - often seen in things like sewing, handmade goods, or looking after animals. On top of that, I show how having fewer skills plus tough access to transport boosts chances they'll end up doing unseen labor. What this study tackles is the challenge of counting exactly how many women work by spotting and checking on these hidden roles using a fresh way to gather data. Big thing here - the time-use survey stands out across South Asia because it adds standard employment questions to better capture off-the-record work. Bottom line? Results point toward smarter ways to measure who's working - and help level the field for women joining the job force.

Kulkarni, A., & Mishra, M. (2022). In most organizations, women are underrepresented in top positions. Many aspects of Women's Leadership are studied in the literature for underrepresentation of women leaders. This research aims to look at - also pull together - what we know about how women lead in ways that help them gain solid positions inside companies, moving past hidden hurdles tied to gender. It covers what holds back female leaders

along with what helps or strengthens their roles - not just flaws but also advantages they bring. For this, a structured review of earlier studies was used as the main approach instead of new data gathering. Articles from academic journals plus books - all checked by experts - were included if published between 1990 and 2021, pulled mainly from Scopus and Web of Science collections. Findings showed strong similarity across global cases when it comes to patterns around women leading. This study found that work on Women's Leadership mostly shows up in areas like social sciences, business plus management, medical fields, or education. On top of this, most research about women leading happens in richer countries - places where female leaders are more common than elsewhere. Even so, women in charge face similar hurdles whether they're in high-income regions or developing ones. Issues such as unequal treatment between genders or invisible barriers blocking progress pop up no matter the company. Things like workplace prejudice, lack of confidence in speaking up, or weak professional connections can slow down advancement for women stepping into leadership roles. Some things still help women step into leadership - things like guidance from mentors, solid training setups, or a supportive office vibe. Yet juggling personal life with job demands, handling heavy pressure, or navigating unclear chats at work can slow them down. Traits such as sharp emotional awareness, the ability to relate to others, leading in an open way, staying real, and making quick calls during crises give teams a boost. This study aims to pull together different angles of female-led leadership into one clear picture inside companies. On top of that, it might guide firms in shaping fair rules that lift more women into key roles.

Sivakumar, I., & Manimekalai, K. (2021). The way manhood is shaped in India's been looked at through different feminist angles. Feminist thought zoomed in on conversations, picking up real speed before and during British rule. Before independence, women's lives got a lot tougher - work, childbirth, health, freedom to move, money - all hit hard by deep male control. These days, after colonial times, testing babies' sex and killing girls before birth has messed things up, plus the number of females compared to males keeps dropping. Fast-changing ratios and more proof of abuse against women clearly show we need to rethink how society defines what it means to act like a man. Women hold back - not because they're raised that way - but 'cos powers denied, voices ignored, too much on their plate in a world tilted against them. This piece stresses steady moves to boost everyone's role, swap outdated views, end harm aimed at women, ditch unfair norms - so balance isn't just talk.

Galsanjigmed, E., & Sekiguchi, T. (2023). An aspect of handling differences at work means pushing for equal chances between genders while building a space where women feel backed up. Still, many companies keep running into fixed ideas about gender - some clear, others hidden - even when women step into top jobs. Besides that, females run up against multiple hurdles if they're aiming to lead or move into boss-level roles. With this situation in mind, we look through and piece together past studies on how careers and management play out, focusing on what stands in the way of women climbing higher in their organizations. We take a close look at outside and personal factors that create unique hurdles for women reaching leadership positions in organized settings, seen through the lens of gender. Using insights from an overall summary of past research, we check out what these barriers mean for real-world efforts meant to increase female representation in top roles.

OBJECTIVES :

1) To identify the different forms of invisible work performed by women.

Women take care of unseen tasks - no paycheck involved - that make households tick: prepping meals, wiping floors, tending to little ones, scheduling doctor visits. Society brushes these aside because they're stuck in outdated gender roles, labeled natural instead of labor. Stuff like packing school lunches, sorting socks, mapping out dinner plans runs quietly in the background but keeps families on track - even spills over into job performance. This role often goes unnoticed but treated like a natural female task - making it fade quietly through the years. An easily missed piece of invisible chores is the brainwork - basically, all the behind-the-scenes planning that keeps a household going. That includes getting ready for upcoming needs, keeping tabs on checkups or parent-teacher nights, organizing food schedules, plus watching inventory so stuff doesn't run out. It's like quietly balancing daily patterns, spotting hiccups before they happen, while managing ordinary details most people don't see. One moment you're shifting appointments around, then suddenly you're solving what's for supper - with zero applause. This thinking job usually lands on females, particularly where both partners earn - though it's frequently overlooked or shared unfairly.

2) To examine how women's invisible work contributes to the national economy

Women do countless jobs behind the scenes - like housework, looking after family, and managing childcare - that quietly power economies worldwide, yet rarely get noticed. Across India, most working women operate in informal setups - over 95 percent - with no official backing; they stitch clothes at home, clean others' houses, sell goods on sidewalks, farm small plots, or sort through trash, holding up everyday life without recognition. Even if they matter a lot, these efforts still get ignored in official numbers and rules across the country - yet show up nowhere meaningful. The economic role women play in India's informal jobs is huge - count it right, their work might boost the country's GDP numbers by 20 to 25 percent. In the U.S., if women got paid minimum wage for unpaid labor, they'd have earned \$1.5 trillion back in 2019 - that's close to 130 times what Amazon profited that year. Across the planet, women's unpaid work adds up to roughly \$10 to \$39 trillion every year - that's equal to 10-39% of all global economic output.

3) To analyse the role of invisible work in supporting social development

Hidden work plays a big part in helping society grow by keeping key services running while also bringing people together - this kind of effort often shows up in social aid groups. Done mostly by women who look after others, it's usually unpaid, overlooked, or taken for granted; yet it runs deep through the fabric of everyday community life. The mix of neoliberal ideas with New Public Management changes has boosted pressure on these efforts - since tighter budgets and scarce supplies push social workers to cover gaps through informal means, such as working off-the-clock hours or helping clients from their own pocket. This hidden effort, even though it's ignored by official channels, keeps things running day to day - holding up both workplaces and people's lives in ways paperwork and systems just can't match.

4) To understand the gender inequalities

Gender gaps show up in school too, since choices often follow old-fashioned ideas about roles - guys usually go into engineering or coding fields while females tend to pick subjects like literature or history. These trends demonstrate societal norms that influence career trajectories from a young age. In politics, females still don't show up much in top roles or key choices - this stays true even though things have moved forward across many countries. Women and girls face unfair treatment more often, which leads to problems getting healthcare, going to school, finding jobs, or taking part in politics.

Take women, they usually handle unpaid chores or look after others - this leaves less time for work or studying. In jobs where skills are similar, females often get paid less than males - not just anywhere, worldwide ladies make around 20% fewer bucks than guys, whereas across the U.S., the gap without adjustments sits near 22%. Once you factor in job type or time on the clock, there's still a difference left over - this part often comes down to how men and women are treated differently plus unequal strength when asking for pay.

5) To highlight the importance of visibility and recognition

Awareness plus recognition matter if you want to get ahead at work - these things make sure your efforts, skills, or wins don't go unnoticed in the office scene. When people can't see your work, strong performers might miss out on advancement, key roles, or big assignments - because bosses usually overlook those who stay under the radar. This idea often gets summed up like this: "When nobody notices you, it's like you don't exist." For women facing ongoing barriers at work, being seen really matters. Despite progress, equal opportunities between genders remain far off - so pushing yourself forward becomes key to moving up. Many women feel uneasy talking about their wins due to social expectations or fear of being judged harshly - still, sharing achievements in a genuine way builds trust at work, opens doors to fresh chances, while inspiring others to speak up too. Seeing more means you can do more - when folks notice what's happening, they jump into big choices while shaping how things run at work.

Challenges Faced by Women

I) Time poverty — long hours of unpaid work.

Time poverty means someone doesn't have much free time to rest or enjoy life because work, house chores, or daily duties take up too much of their day. Long stretches spent on paid or unpaid work leave little room for things that boost health, since hours pile up without relief while life slips by through routine drains. This trend shows up a lot more in women - every day they handle about 4.5 hours of unpaid caregiving worldwide, close to double what men do. This gap hits harder in poorer countries, where females often handle most of the job fetching water and firewood - adding up to around 200 million hours daily across the globe just for hauling water.

II) Limited opportunities for paid employment.

Limited job opportunities usually stem from several connected issues. As the economy cools, positions tend to disappear - nudging people into worse-paid or short-term work instead. Firms facing weaker demand - like factories or mines - could end up offering less work, especially for people who haven't had extra schooling. This could lock people into endless cycles of low-paying jobs, but it may also reflect poorly on them when applying for better positions - hurting their shot at higher salaries, particularly if they've already got certified credentials. The features of contract jobs tend to limit opportunities. Doing work through temporary contracts - linked to a single project or finish line - doesn't mean another gig will follow, so schedules get spotty with downtime between roles. Folks doing odd jobs rarely land fixed hours, leaving banks or property owners unsure - meaning borrowing cash or renting a place turns tough when income jumps around. These setups usually offer few benefits - things like medical insurance or time off - which makes them seem less attractive.

III) Lack of social recognition and decision-making power.

The lack of social respect or a say in decisions often goes hand in hand, fuelling unfairness and leaving people powerless. When folks aren't seen or valued by society, they're usually left out of key activities - blocking their chance to influence outcomes right from the start. This cut-off hits harder in overlooked crowds - take people living with disabilities, for instance - who usually get shut out from deciding stuff about their own day-to-day, which ends up treating them like they don't legally exist. The absence of recognition at home, in local circles, or within government feeds deep imbalances while keeping exclusion going.

IV) Increased physical and emotional burden.

Carrying more stress - both on the body and mind - is tough for people dealing with long-term health issues, along with those who look after them. Parents handling type 1 diabetes in kids might see better blood sugar numbers using tech tools; however, this brings extra chores every day that pile up physically and mentally. That pressure doesn't go away fast - even emotions stay heavy over months or years, affecting how parents feel and how well they manage their child's condition. When family members care for someone with mental illness, constant worry and anxiety can wear them down until they're drained, irritable, and feeling like nothing helps anymore. Being surrounded by a loved one's pain for too long may trigger what experts call compassion fatigue - a state where sympathy fades, tension builds, and conflicts grow, sometimes turning into harsh words or even violence at home.

Strategies to Recognize Invisible Work

I. Conduct national time-use surveys.

National time-use surveys collect loads of info on how folks spend their hours - whether it's working a job, handling chores or family duties, kicking back, studying, or hanging out with others. These polls really help make sense of how people take part in the economy and society - stuff that numbers like GDP usually miss out on.

The primary aim? To gather solid info on how much time people spend doing different things - broken down by group, like guys or gals, young or old - so decisions can be smarter and fairness between genders grows bit by bit. The United Nations Stats Division helps build consistent ways to run time-use surveys through a group focused on fresh, practical data gathering ideas - this team's come up with key rules, like a basic shared tool for collecting info along with tips to refresh how stats are made.

II. Include unpaid work in GDP estimates.

The inclusion of unpaid work in GDP figures sparks lots of debate. Standard GDP math skips things like cleaning, looking after kids, or helping without pay - simply because there's no cash changing hands. This leaves out key parts of the economy - like work mostly done by women - that don't show up in official numbers. Take a mom or dad watching their children during the day - this work doesn't count toward GDP but hiring someone else to do it does. Critics say leaving this out paints a skewed picture of how economies function or how people are really doing. Studies show housework without pay makes up a big chunk of total output - back in 2010, counting it might've pushed America's GDP up by 26%, according to one analysis.

III. Provide childcare facilities, flexible work policies.

Companies might help workers who look after kids or family by setting up childcare right at work - so little ones stay nearby, commutes shrink, while peace of mind grows. One choice could be teaming up with local daycare centers, so staff get lower costs along with faster sign-up, making sure kids receive solid early education. Offered flexible setups - like working from home, splitting time between office and house, or shifting schedules - helps moms and dads manage kid duties while keeping up with career demands.

This includes options like job splitting, where several people take turns doing one full-time position part-time - while some arrangements let staff adjust their work times within set limits.

IV. Promote shared household responsibilities.

Folks splitting tasks should chat honestly - trying back-and-forth options - so each person feels listened to, perhaps even respected. Time to ditch outdated views on who does what based on gender - pair chores with skills, interest, or free hours instead; that way stuff gets done easier while keeping everyone less stressed and more satisfied. A strong approach involves choosing particular people for set tasks - this lets them take full ownership of just one job, gaining skill and trust step by step; picture a child now responsible for the dinnerware, dealing with scraps first then arranging clean plates afterward.

V. Government schemes supporting women's labor participation.

The Indian government rolled out several programs to boost women's participation in jobs - focusing on hiring, starting businesses, learning skills, but also safer work conditions. In 2017, the updated Maternity Benefit law extended paid leave to 26 weeks while making crèches mandatory in offices with at least 50 workers, helping moms return to their roles after having a baby. The PMMVY gives ₹5,000 to women during pregnancy or while nursing - this helps when it's their first baby. Support like this boosts care for mom and child at a key time. The National Creche Scheme takes care of kids during work hours - meanwhile, the Working Women Hostel gives a secure place to stay for women on the job.

CONCLUSION

Women do tons of unpaid work - at home, in neighborhoods, or odd jobs - that quietly keeps societies running. Even though they handle childcare, cook meals, comfort family members, also take on side hustles without contracts, most of it doesn't show up in official economy stats or shape laws. Because of outdated views about gender plus deep-rooted imbalances, what they truly add to economies and communities often gets ignored. The literature shows women's contributions often stay unseen - not by chance, but shaped by deep-rooted customs, past biases, or gaps in how info gets collected. Such factors feed imbalances in jobs, choices, or chances people get. Still, even with these hurdles, their behind-the-scenes efforts keep households running, hold neighborhoods together, while boosting a country's output - easing pressure on state resources so others can take part in official work. To build a fairer society, we need to notice, value, or spread-out invisible work more evenly. Tools like national time logs, adding unpaid tasks to economic stats, better childcare, offering adaptable jobs, also balancing home chores can push progress forward. Public programs helping women gain skills, stay safe, find employment boost their role in the workforce. In short, seeing women's hidden work matters - both for fairness and smarter economics that boost a country over time. Once their contributions are noticed and supported, everyone gains through better output, stronger communities, plus fairer roles between genders.

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