

Gender Division of Domestic Labour in Hồ Chí Minh City

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Abstract: Gender equality is the fifth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations and Vietnam. Accordingly, ensuring equality in the division of labour between husband and wife in domestic work is essential content for realising gender equality. Based on a survey with 1,128 households in Hồ Chí Minh City, the article analyses the current situation of gender division of labour in families. Two-variable and multi-variable analyses were applied. The results showed that there was a greater share of both husband and wife in jobs that conventionally belonged to either gender. However, gender specificity still exists. The amount of time spent on daily household chores by women is still significantly higher than that of men. Interestingly, the majority of respondents are satisfied with the current division of labour. This shows cultural preservation and long-term stability of the gender division of labour.

Keywords: Gender equality, family, gender division of labour.

Subject classification: Sociology

1. Research background

The division of labour between husband and wife is an important indicator of gender equality in the family and, therefore, affects the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). One of the fundamental causes of gender inequality in Vietnam is related to the strong attachment of women to the role of the caretaker within the family, stemming from the notion that it is a woman's "natural duty". To fulfil this role, many women have lost opportunities in the study, career, social activities, leadership, and management (ISDS, 2015). For that reason, in the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020, the sixth goal on ensuring gender equality in family life and step-by-step eliminating gender-based violence has identified that "narrowing the gap in the amount of time of women's participation in housework compared with that of men twice in 2015 and 1.5 times in

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2020” (Prime Minister, 2010). The prime minister also issued Decision No.622/QĐ-TTg dated 10 May 2017, on the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims at “Ensuring equality in housework and family care; recognising housework and unpaid care; strengthening public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, family support services, and childcare.”

Thus, striving to achieve an equal division of labour between husband and wife in the family was an essential goal in the past and will remain so in the coming years. Over the past decade, the state and the whole society joined hands to realise this goal. The husband and wife relationship in the household chores division has experienced changes, reflected in the increase of the proportion of both husband and wife participating in household chores. At the same time, regarding some jobs such as taking care of older and sick people and communicating with the government on behalf of the family, the proportion of husband and wife doing these same jobs is higher (Nguyễn Hữu Minh, 2014; Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019; Nguyễn Hữu Minh, 2020).

However, the realisation of this goal still faces multiple difficulties. The results of large-scale surveys, and in-depth studies in recent years, have shown the preservation of the traditional gender division of labour in families. Women and men are often associated with types of work that are considered appropriate for their gender. For example, the woman/wife usually takes care of housework, manages household expenses, and takes care of older and sick family members and children. Meanwhile, the man/husband is responsible for communicating with the government on behalf of the family and maintaining and repairing household appliances (Trần Quý Long, 2007; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and other agencies, 2008; Nguyễn Hữu Minh, 2016; Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019). After nearly ten years of implementing the National Strategy on Gender Equality, target 6.1 on narrowing the gap in the time spent on housework between men and women has not been achieved. According to the results of the Labour and Employment Survey in 2019, the amount of time spent on housework for women is 2.1 times higher than that of men¹ (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2020). At the same time, the positive change in the gender division of labour has not taken place evenly across all types of jobs and social groups.

Studies show that the gender division of domestic labour can change depending on age, education, living area, income contribution, and gender concepts. For example, research by Nguyễn Hữu Minh (2016) shows that the proportion of wives doing housework is higher in young families, while in older families, the husband’s participation is higher. At the same time, the more educated the wife, the higher the proportion of the wife who is mainly responsible for receiving guests and the share of both husband and wife in those jobs increases. One of the reasons is that people with higher education are less likely to have gender stereotypes in household chores, so they are more willing to participate in housework. This finding of the role of the educational factor was also shown in a previous national-scale study (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and other agencies, 2008, p.78).

¹ Women spend nearly 39 hours a week on productive labour and 18.9 hours on housework, while men spend 40 hours on productive labour and 8.9 hours on housework.

In general, husbands in urban families participate more in housework than in rural ones, although the difference is insignificant. In addition, the presence of domestic workers in many urban families is a factor that helps reduce the housework of mothers and wives in the family (Lê Thái Thị Băng Tâm, 2008; Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019).

Regarding the role of contributing to the family income, Nguyễn Hữu Minh (2016) points out that when the husband's income is significantly higher than that of the wife, the wife tends to take on the household chores to create favourable conditions for the husband to perform the main job in order to maximise the aggregated income of the whole household. When the wife has a higher income than, or equal income with, that of the husband, each member will have to rethink the division of labour in the family to maintain and improve the aggregated income. Under such circumstances, the husband can participate more in household chores.

The traditional concept of gender roles has a great influence on the division of labour in a family (Nguyễn Hữu Minh, 2016). The housework must be done by women regardless of the type of family. This concept is not only reflected in men but also in women. Many people believe that, for a happy family, a wife who is good at housework and knows how to take care of all the household chores is indispensable.

Thus, the gender division of labour in family life has a common pattern but also shows diversity depending on the research area and social groups. Hồ Chí Minh City has one of the highest levels of urbanisation in Vietnam and is an economic and scientific centre. Therefore, families in Hồ Chí Minh City are expected to have fewer gender differences in the division of labour. However, there is currently little research on this issue locally. A few years ago, some research results showed that people still believe that housework and childcare in the family are women's jobs, which leads to an unequal division of labour.² This article will provide a more updated picture and in-depth analysis of the gendered division of labour in Hồ Chí Minh City by social groups, contributing to a better understanding of the implementation of the sustainable development goals of the country in the largest city in the country.

This includes such questions as: How does the gender division of labour in household chores in Hồ Chí Minh City show itself? What are the similarities and differences between social groups in terms of such a pattern?

2. Data sources, theories, and methods

The article is based on the survey "Research to assess the status and role of the family in realising gender equality in Hồ Chí Minh City" from 2020 conducted by the Hồ Chí Minh City

² Report of the Committee for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, Hồ Chí Minh City People's Committee, on implementing the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 (No.10/BC-BVSTBPNTTP dated 20 April 2020).

Branch of the University of Home Affairs. The selected survey sample was guaranteed to be representative of the districts, based on the geographical areas of the city, including the central area (District 8, District 10, and Gò Vấp District), the peripheral area (District 9), and suburban districts (Cần Giờ and Hóc Môn). Each urban and rural district had two wards and communes randomly selected. A total of six districts and 12 communes and wards were surveyed. In each commune/ward, a list of households with children aged 10-17 was made, divided into two-generation households with parents aged 18-60 and three-generation households including grandparents and parents aged 18-60. Next, the research project applied systematic random sampling using the list of two groups of households, with each commune/ward comprising 50 two-generation households and 50 three-generation households. The number of questionnaires satisfying the requirements for information related to the relationship between husband and wife was 1,128 households, with representatives aged 18-60.

Suggestions from modernisation theories, social exchange theories, and cultural approaches were used to examine the influence of economic, social, and cultural factors on the division of labour patterns and decision-making power in the family. The Modernisation Theory (Goode, 1963, 1987) suggests that the process of industrialisation and modernisation with increased levels of education and urbanisation would contribute to reducing traditional gender differences in the division of labour and decision-making in the family. Young people are seen as pioneers in adopting the new behaviours, and they have more modern characteristics and are therefore also assumed to practice a more equal relationship in the division of labour in the family. The social exchange theory (Schwartz & Scott, 1994) suggests that those family members who provide more income are given more time to earn income. Thus, when women have higher incomes than their husbands, the division of housework between them and their husbands may also change. They will probably do less housework. This also explains the slow change of the division of labour in the family as the majority of husbands have higher incomes than their wives, so they are expected to continue with those income-earning jobs, leaving the housework for their wives to do. This can be called the “‘family benefit optimisation’ perspective” (Nguyễn Hữu Minh, 2016).

However, the influence of the above factors depends on the cultural background of the society. In traditional Vietnamese society, housework is considered a ‘natural task’ of women, while men have to do meaningful work. This gender bias makes it so that many family members and wives will still follow the traditional division of labour, even if they have an advantage in education and income. In other words, the preservation of traditional culture can act to inhibit the change of gender stereotypes concerning labour division for many people. Traditional culture is expected to be preserved stronger in older, less educated groups who live in rural areas.

Based on the suggestions from the above theories, the following analysis uses several independent variables to test hypotheses related to the role of modernisation and cultural

factors (education variables with four levels” grade 9 and below, grades 10-12, intermediate, and college/university or higher; as well as urban or rural residence; and age groups of 40 and under or 41 and older) or compare the resource position (i.e., income of wife and husband, separated in three groups: wife has more income, husband has more income, husband and wife have equal incomes). For the variables of education and age, the article uses the wife’s characteristics because these characteristics better reflect women’s perceptions and needs for a more balanced share of household chores relative to the husband’s characteristics. In addition, the results of the preliminary analysis between the use of characteristics of the wife and the husband do not differ much.

The article first analyses the general situation of labour division between husband and wife in terms of household chores. Next, the article will analyse the difference between social groups according to each of the above-mentioned independent variables. Finally, all independent variables will be included in the multivariate analysis model to better determine the role of each factor affecting labour division in the family.

The household chores/activities in this article focus on daily household chores and some less frequent activities. The list of these jobs is detailed in the following analysis tables.

3. Status of gender division in domestic labour

3.1. Gender division of labour in daily household chores

The division of labour in daily tasks is one of the most apparent indicators of equality/inequality for women. The double burden of labour (both production, income-generating business and daily family work) on women’s shoulders make their contribution to society limited, limiting their chances to participate in social work.

The question for household representatives is: “In your household, who is currently and mainly performing the following tasks?” Performers may include household representatives or wife/husband; parents on both sides; children; and domestic workers.

To facilitate an understanding of labour division between husband and wife, the following analysis is performed for families where only the husband or wife is the principal performer (i.e. excluding those families with the participation of grandparents, children, and domestic servants). Therefore, compared with the number of 1,128 respondents, the sample analysed in the article has decreased. In addition, some jobs may not be available to certain types of families (e.g. care for older people and children) or no respondents. As a result, the actual number for the analyses will be reduced. The distribution of people who perform mainly these tasks in the family is shown in *Table 1*.

There are five types of daily work where the distinction between husband and wife shows most clearly. These include buying food, daily cooking, cleaning and tidying up the

house, washing clothes (the wife does most of the laundry), and maintaining and repairing household appliances (the husband works as the key person). However, in these five activities, the level of participation of husband and wife is different. Within the two activities buying food and cooking, the ratio of the wife working as the key person compared to her husband is higher than with the other activities, and the percentage of both husband and wife doing the same housework is lower. These are two particular jobs for women. However, if compared with the findings from the Vietnam Family Survey 2017, a survey with more than 2,000 households in seven provinces/cities in six socio-economic regions of Vietnam (Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019), the percentage of both husband and wife as well as the percentage of husbands participating in housework in Hồ Chí Minh City families is significantly higher. For example, in the 2017 Vietnam Family Survey, only 7.4% of the food buying and cooking work is done by both husband and wife and 9.5% by the husband. Similarly, with house cleaning and laundry, in the 2017 Vietnam Family Survey, 11.5% is done by both husband and wife, and 8.4% is done by the husband (Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019). Regarding maintenance and repair of domestic appliances, the difference between husband and wife is huge, with the percentage of the husband serving as the prominent worker about 40 percentage points higher than that of the wife.

Table 1: Main Performers of Daily Household Chores

Daily household chores	Husband	Wife	Both husband and wife	Unit: %
				N
a. Buying food	25.2	47.1	27.7	1,057
b. Daily cooking	30.1	46.7	23.2	1,026
c. House cleaning	25.1	37.5	37.4	1,000
d. Washing clothes	28.7	35.2	36.1	1,008
e. Taking care of older and sick people	19.3	22.0	58.7	799
f. Childcare	19.6	20.7	59.7	981
g. Taking children to school and bringing them back home	24.8	20.7	54.5	975
h. Teaching, guiding, taking care of a child's learning	25.0	24.6	50.4	1,017
i. Maintenance and repair of household appliances (electrical appliances, water, vehicles, furniture, etc.)	54.5	14.7	30.8	1,002

Source: Survey results.

Care for children and older and sick people has the highest percentage of husbands and wives working together. Even the percentage of husbands who take their children to school and bring them back home is higher than that of wives (although the difference is not very significant). The percentage of husbands working as the main doers of these jobs in households in Hồ Chí Minh City is significantly higher than what the results in the national general survey show (Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019). This is shown very clearly by observing the scenes of delivering children to school and picking them up from school, especially in urban areas. Transporting children to school and back home is considered a job that requires strength and safety, so men are mobilised quite a lot. In addition, qualitative data also shows that transporting children to school and back home is often difficult to combine with housework, so women rarely participate directly, while men can combine this with going to work. A 36-year-old woman in District 8 said, “Going out on the street, people are faced with a very crowded and dangerous traffic situation. I have to take my children to school and bring them back home, unwillingly, if my husband is unable to do so. He is capable of doing so better and safer than me.”

Since women do much more housework than men, women’s time spent on housework is generally higher. Collectively, the difference in daily time spent by women and men in these jobs amounts to nearly one hour or nearly 1.4 times more for women (2.54 hours/day for men and 3.51 hours/day for women). However, compared with the national rate as assessed by the 2019 Labour and Employment Survey (2.1 times), the difference in time spent on housework between husband and wife in Hồ Chí Minh City’s families is smaller.

3.2. Division of labour in non-recurring activities

In addition to daily tasks, there are non-recurring activities in the family that are important to maintaining life, such as working on behalf of the family with the government and the community, purchasing valuable household items (cabinets, televisions, vehicles, etc.), taking care of the death anniversary and Tết holiday, and managing income and expenditure for common activities of the family. The results show that, for some activities, the traditional gender division continues to be preserved. The husband is still the main character, representing the family in external relationships (men are responsible for external affairs while women are for domestic ones), at the same time, the wife continues to be the manager of revenue and expenditure for everyday family activities. Perhaps, the management of the family budget is influenced by the traditional concept that a woman is the domestic “prime minister”, the authorised person in charge of “handling the finances and paying the bills” in the family. The responsibility for managing the family’s budget is assigned to women because women tend to care for savings and thrift while men tend to spend more freely. A 40-year-old woman in Hóc Môn

District said, “I have to manage the expenses of my family. If I let my husband do it, sooner or later we will be bankrupt. He buys things wherever he finds it convenient. Sometimes in a merry mood, he spends lots of his money drinking with friends.” However, as with some of the housework as mentioned above, the balance between husband and wife in managing household income and expenditure in Hồ Chí Minh City families is higher than the findings of other studies (Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019).

Death anniversaries, Tết holidays, and the purchase of valuable household items occupy the highest percentage of husband and wife working together. However, the percentage of wives who are responsible mainly for death anniversaries and Tết’s events is higher than that of husbands, perhaps because these tasks require calculation and procurement of ceremonial items, which are associated with budget management. Meanwhile, with regards to purchasing valuable items for the family, the husband still has a higher rate of being the leading performer. The main reason, according to some interviewees, both men and women, is that husbands tend to be more knowledgeable about such high-value items because they are related to technology, such as buying cars or electronic appliances.

Table 2: Division of Labour between Husband and Wife Performing Non-recurring Activities

Unit: %

Non-recurring activities	Husband	Wife	Both husband and wife	N
a. Working with the government/ community on behalf of the family	49.8	18.8	31.5	1,109
b. Buying valuable household items (cabinets, televisions, vehicles, etc.)	24.1	18.3	57.6	1,119
c. Taking care of death anniversaries and Tết holidays	17.1	25.0	57.9	1,041
d. Managing revenues and expenditures for common family activities	10.7	46.4	42.9	1,067

Source: Survey results.

Thus, the gender division of labour in household chores in Hồ Chí Minh City is not significantly different from the general pattern in other localities as discussed above. However, compared with the general picture, it can be seen that the proportion of family activities shared between husband and wife in Hồ Chí Minh City is significantly higher

(Nguyễn Xuân Thắng, 2019). This result may reflect the reality of a higher level of development in Hồ Chí Minh City than in other localities.

4. Similarities and differences in gender division of labour

The similarities and differences in the gender division of labour in families in Hồ Chí Minh City are analysed according to some characteristics of education, occupation, region (urban/rural), and correlation on income contributions. For each type of daily household chores and non-recurring work, the article chooses to present one type of activity that the wife or husband usually does for illustration. Specifically, the following activities will be analysed: House cleaning (usually done by the wife), taking care of children (usually done by the wife), and working with the government/community on behalf of the family (usually done by the husband). In order to exclude some factors that may be related beyond the scope of the relationship between husband and wife, the analysis only focuses on two-generation families. The results of the analysis are shown in *Table 3*.

The results show that there is a difference according to the wife's age in the division of childcare between husband and wife with the percentage of both working as the main workers being higher in the age groups of 41 and older, while the percentage of husbands taking part in childcare is higher in the age group of 40 and younger. It is possible that the younger age groups often have young children, so the husband is more actively involved in taking care of the children.

The significant difference between the educational groups mainly occurs in house cleaning activities, in which the percentage of both husband and wife working together is higher in the intermediate and higher education groups, while the highest percentage of the husband's participation is found in the group of wives with lower secondary school education or below this level. This seems to contradict the assumption that cognitive levels increase in the higher educated groups.

The main difference between rural and urban families lies in working with the government on behalf of the family. The percentage of both husband and wife doing the same work is higher in rural areas, while in urban areas, the percentage of wives doing the work is higher. It is possible that in urban areas, the wife's ability in this regard is higher, so they can do the work independently.

There are significant differences in the proportion of spouses participating in childcare and working with the government on behalf of the family between families according to the spouse's income contribution. The percentage of both working together is highest in the group of husbands who contribute more income, followed by the group where both wives and husbands have equal incomes. Meanwhile, with the group of wives with higher incomes, the husband's participation rate is the highest, explaining the rationalisation of household chores according to the social exchange theory. The same pattern is shown for work on behalf of the family working with the government.

Table 3: Labour Division between Husband and Wife in Household Work According to Some Personal and Family Characteristics

Unit: %

Characteristics	House cleaning			Childcare			Working with the government / community on behalf of the family			N
	Husband	Wife	Both husband & wife	Husband	Wife	Both husband & wife	Husband	Wife	Both husband & wife	
<i>Wife's age</i>										
					*					
40 or younger	25.1	42.4	32.5	24.9	19.2	55.9	45.0	22.7	32.3	291
41 and older	27.4	39.5	33.1	16.9	23.1	60.1	48.8	16.4	34.8	371
<i>Wife's education</i>										
		*								662
Grades 5-9	32.1	39.7	28.2	23.1	28.2	48.7	50.0	15.0	35.0	80
Grades 10-12	28.2	44.9	26.9	22.4	18.7	58.9	44.6	23.2	32.2	276
Intermediate + College	22.0	33.1	44.9	20.9	22.7	56.4	51.1	14.3	34.6	133
University and above	24.4	40.6	35.0	15.9	20.5	63.6	46.8	18.5	34.7	173
<i>Living area</i>										

Urban	26.8	41.7	31.5	21.1	22.9	56.0	47.7	23.3	29.0	386
Rural	26.0	39.4	34.6	19.6	19.1	61.3	46.4	13.4	40.2	276
<i>Income contribution</i>										
					*				***	
More from wife	30.0	37.0	33.0	29.9	20.7	49.4	54.6	21.3	24.1	108
More from husband	24.9	42.1	33.0	19.2	16.9	63.8	50.0	12.6	37.4	262
Equal	26.5	40.9	32.7	18.2	25.3	56.5	41.8	24.3	33.9	292

Note: Statistical significance level: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Source: Survey results.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Division of Labour between Husband and Wife in Housework

Personal and family characteristics	Husbands participating in house cleaning		Husbands participating in childcare		Wives participating in working with government on behalf of family	
	Odds ratio	N	Odds ratio	N	Odds ratio	N
<i>Wife's age</i>						
40 or younger	0.9	243	1.2	245	1.1	291
41 and older	1	347	1	308	1	371
<i>Wife's education</i>						
Grades 5-9	1.0	78	0.6	78	0.8	80
Grades 10-12	0.8	234	1.1	214	1.1	276
Intermediate + College	1.4	118	0.9	110	0.8	133
University and above	1	160	1	151	1	173
<i>Living area</i>						
Urban	0.9	336	0.8	323	0.9	386
Rural	1	254	1	230	1	276
<i>Income contribution</i>						
More from wife	1.1	100	1.3	87	0.6*	108
More from husband	0.9	233	1.6*	213	0.7*	262
Equal (the control group)	1	257	1	253	1	292
<i>Nagelkerke R Square</i>	0.014		0.029		0.019	
<i>N</i>	590		553		662	

Note: Statistical significance level: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Source: Survey results.

The logistic regression model is used to evaluate the role of factors in the participation of the wife or husband in work. Three dependent variables are built based on the difference from the traditional model as mentioned above. Specifically, for house cleaning and childcare, the dependent variable is whether the husband is involved (as the principal performer or both husband and wife work together). For work on behalf of the family to work with the government, the traditional stereotype is that of the husband, so the dependent variable would be the wife participating and taking the lead (alone or with the husband). The results of the analyses of the three logistic regression models are presented in Table 4. The number of analyses in Table 4 varies by job type because some families do not have that type of job or do not have information from respondents.

The results show that, in two models where the traditional work is done by the wife (cleaning the house and taking care of the children), the wife's characteristics such as age, education, living in urban or rural areas, etc., all do not make a significant difference in husband's ability to participate. The similarity between social groups is relatively high. As for childcare, it is interesting that in families where the husband earns more than the wife, the husband is more likely to participate in this work than in families where the husband and wife have equal incomes. The reason for this result may be that in the current context of families with few children, and in families where husbands have higher incomes than wives, husbands perceive that it is necessary to invest better in children, so they participate more in childcare.

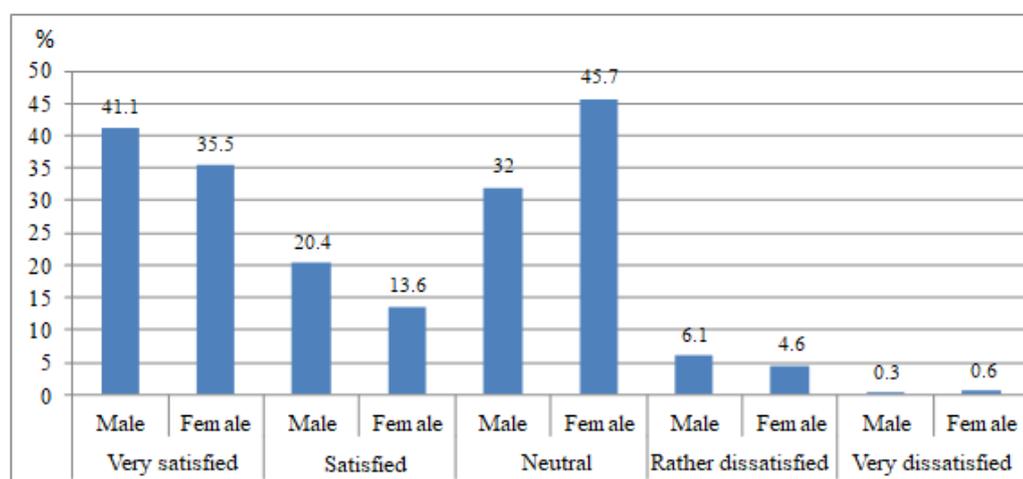
With regards to acting on behalf of the family in relation to the government, the regression results do not show that the wife's characteristics in terms of age, education or place of residence make a difference in the likelihood of a wife participating in the employment as a key person. However, it is worth noting that in families where the wife and husband have equal incomes, the likelihood of the wife participating in family representation working with government agencies is higher than when the husband or wife has a higher income. This may be because for families where the wife has a higher income, they can spend more time on earning income, and the husband will represent the family in relation to the government. In families where husbands have higher incomes, they continue the tradition of treating it as the husband's job and they also have more advantages when dealing with the government. In contrast, in families where husbands and wives have equal incomes, the role of wives is perceived as more equal, so they are supported to represent the family.

Thus, the analysis of the gender division of labour in three specific types of family work in Hồ Chí Minh City shows that the hypotheses drawn from the modernisation theory are not fully confirmed on an empirical basis. There are no significant differences in gender-specific stereotypes (i.e. husband cleaning the house, husband taking care of children; wife representing the family) according to age groups, education, or place of residence. Meanwhile, the testing of the hypothesis drawn from the exchange theory also shows that the role of the higher income factor is not clear. With regards to childcare, it seems that husbands with higher incomes than wives are more concerned with children than in the case of equal income couples, which is contrary to the hypothesis. However, with the work of representing the family in relation to the government, the hypothesis from the exchange theory is only partially confirmed. The wife with more income does less of this hypothetically, but in families where the husband has more income, the wife still does this less. This means that in the case of work that is symbolic of power, it is possible that the traditional gender position is still preserved. This issue should be further analysed as data on other involved factors is available.

Further analysis shows that most respondents are satisfied with the assignment of work as above. The rate of respondents being satisfied and very satisfied accounts for 55%. The percentage of people who are not very satisfied and very dissatisfied is deficient, and the rest is at an average level. At the same time, the rate of being satisfied and very satisfied is higher for men than for women, which shows that the change in perception of men seems

to be slower than that of women. Satisfaction with the above division of labour is also an indicator that shows the weight of traditional gender stereotypes with the notion that the wife’s role is to be responsible for and capable of taking care of the housework of the family. This is also shown in a number of in-depth interviews with women when they consider housework as their responsibility and do not believe that their husbands can do it as well as they do. One woman said, “Sometimes, I also want to let them do it, but then I think I’d rather try a little harder. What they do will create more work for me” (50 years old respondent, doing handicrafts, Hóc Môn).

Figure 1: Satisfaction with Division of Labour in Family by Gender of Respondents (only in two-generation families)



Source: Reference results.

5. Conclusion

The initial analysis shows that the gender division of domestic labour in Hồ Chí Minh City tends to be more balanced than the general pattern of the whole country. The husband and wife’s share in jobs that belong to either gender is quite evident. Some jobs that used to be mainly done by women are now done with the active participation by the husband, such as taking care of children or the older people (about 80%). Even some jobs that used to be completely taken care of by women, such as going to the market to buy food and cooking every day, are now also done by more than 50% of the male respondents (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and other agencies, 2008). The difference in the amount of time spent on housework between husband and wife is also less than the national average. The practice of labour division in families in Hồ Chí Minh City shows a positive signal towards the effective implementation of the national SDG.

However, the tradition of gender division of labour for domestic work is still preserved to a certain extent in Hồ Chí Minh City. Gender specificity exists in some activities such as managing the family's budget or going to the market for food, cooking (mainly taken care of by women), working on behalf of the family with the government or maintaining and repairing household appliances (mainly men). The difference in the amount of time spent on daily household work between men and women is still about one hour. Interestingly, the majority of respondents is satisfied with the current division of labour, which shows the cultural sustainability and long-term stability of the traditional gender division of labour.

The analysis of the current gender division of labour for some relatively specific activities by social groups shows that the differences between age groups, education level, and area of residence for the participation of either husband or wife in the activities are basically insignificant. However, the role of the income factor is more pronounced, with different trends. In the family group where the husband has a higher income, he generally takes care of the children more than those families where the husband and wife have equal incomes. This is contrary to the hypothesis. The reason may be due to the change in the husband's perception of investing in children in the context of a low birth rate. In families where both husbands and wives contribute equally, wives are more likely to participate in working with the government on behalf of the family than in families where either the husband or wife has a higher income. In this case, the hypothesis derived from the exchange theory is only partially confirmed as commented above. In other words, depending on the development context of the survey area as well as the specific type of work in the family, the role of factors like age, education, place of residence, and relative income between husband and wife will be expressed differently. More attention should be paid to this issue in future studies.

The results show that, although the gender division of domestic labour in Hồ Chí Minh City is more favourable than the national situation, the traditional division of labour is still preserved. At the same time, a part of the population is still delighted with that stereotype. It suggests that it is necessary to continue activities to raise awareness of people, especially among men, about more equitable sharing of household chores between husband and wife.

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