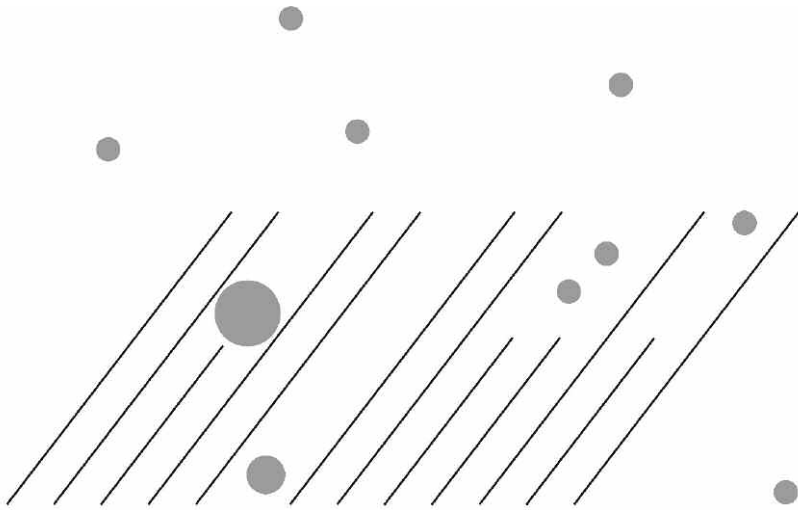


Extended abstract

*Care, Work and Gender: Labour
Insertion and Centrality in Rural Family
Farming in Chile*



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Highlights:

1. Socializing gender is essential to understand the productive base of peasant family agriculture.
2. Women engage in both unpaid caregiving and production tasks from childhood.
3. Gender socialization has implications for women's occupational decision-making.
4. The unequal sexual division of labour promotes the migration of women to cities.
5. Rural development must include the economy of care for the sustainability of the AFC.

Abstract: Based on the Care Economy theory, we explore the relationship between care, work and gender from the perspective of women raised in families dedicated to family farming. We applied a grounded theory design and 18 semi-structured interviews of women from this type of families in Chile. As a result, we observed three phases in women's labor insertion process and we described their vital decisions to prioritize familiar cares over work, specifically over their personal feelings of autonomy and job satisfaction. We conclude that care tasks have consequences on women's occupational trajectories and, indirectly, on the rural development.

Keywords: Gender socialization, sexual division of labor, double-duty, rural development, care economy.

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1. Introduction and justification

Care responsibilities are a factor that deepens inequalities for gender reasons in terms of productive work, understood as the performed tasks that pursues the accumulation of capital or the production of an income or an added value (United Nations Women [UN Women], 2020). The probability that women participate in the labour market decreases according to the costs associated with caring for household members (Petrongolo & Ronchi, 2020). It is especially strong in the rural family farming. In this social context, we asked about how the role as carer has implications both, in the women's insertion in the productive sphere and in the centrality that they give to remunerated work (hereinafter only "work"). For doing this, we aimed to explore the relation among care, work and gender from the perspective of women socialised in farming families in Chile and who, as adults, are under social pressures of privileging the care of their family member over their occupational interests. By this way, we assumed the Sustainable Development Goals as the framework that encourage governments to create conditions for doubling the income of small-scale food producers, particularly women, and to generate decent and safe job for them (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2018).

2. Objectives, methodology and sources, areas of study

It was a qualitative study. Our objective was to explore the relation among care, work and gender from the point of view of women socialised from an early age in the rural family farming, who were enquired, as adults, about their process of productive insertion and the centrality that they give to work based on their role as carers. The research design corresponded to the grounded theory (Charmaz, 2013). The study area was La Araucanía Region in Chile which concentrates a mostly rural population distribution in the country with a population of at least 621,547 in this area (MIDESO, 2018). We used a theoretical sampling method (Vivar et al., 2010). Accordingly, the participants were fifteen women, socialised as girls in farmer families. We applied eighteen interviews. All the interviewees gave their approval as research participants through an informed consent.

3. Results

The results showed that, from an early age, in rural family farming, women are introduced to productive activities, as well as to the activities assigned to them based on gender. Throughout gender-based socialization, their trajectories are defined from three phases about their process of labour insertion. These phases are:

The first phase is, priming or preparation for work, which begins when women are girls and they play a part in activities that, on the one hand, contribute to the production of the rural family farming and, on the other, to unpaid domestic tasks, such as home cleaning, preparation of meals and assistance to other people.

The second phase is transition, that coincides with the choice of technical or higher studies and, simultaneously, or later, with the beginning of an activity that gives entry to the labour market. Although, for a smaller number of women, represents the continuity of the work in the rural family farming. Regarding the first group, migrating to urban areas occurs as a search for a better future, either to obtain better economic income, or to have shorter working hours and better payment than in the countryside. Regarding the second group, these life decisions seem to be the result of the intersection of gender oppression and poverty.

The third phase is labour insertion in which the relation among work, care and gender acquires the manifestations of adulthood, such as the choice of occupations associated with the support and assistance to others, traditionally called feminine careers; the duty to reconcile work and family and, consequently, to prioritize maternity and marriage; and the reissue of the farming pattern, learned in childhood, according to which women, unlike men, make their time and labour a family resource.

From this last phase, according to the results, women prioritize family care over work, even though they lose autonomy and personal satisfaction. Their work, as adults, acquires a sense of vital priority, which is based on two opposite senses: 1) because it contributes to the care of others, mainly sons, daughters and parents; and, 2) because it contributes to their independence and self-realization. In this paradoxical situation, when they face the tension between occupation and care, they choose to prioritize the latter. At the base of it could be their lack of questioning about their gender responsibilities and a decision-making process based on beliefs in which the feminine appears as superior to the masculine, for example, due to their apparent multitasking capacity. However, behind these decisions, it is possible that hidden social pressures push women to assume traditional gender roles.

4. Discussion

The study set out to explore the relation among care, work and gender from the point of view of women socialized in farmer families, who, as adults, are questioned in terms of their productive insertion process and the centrality they give to job. The findings showed the meanings of the women's farmers lives because of the intersections between their productive and reproductive roles. We showed that women -girls, youth and adults-, continue under care patterns that diminish their educational and occupational opportunities and that it perpetuates circles of familiar poverty. We argued some women's occupational decisions; for example, migrating to urban sectors are related to the gender-based tasks distribution in farmer families. So, the reproductive tasks that women carry out from their childhood are part of the productive base of the family and farmer agriculture and its future projections.

5. Conclusions

We concluded that considering care issues as part of the economic analysis of family and farmer agricultures is relevant to advance in decent jobs for small producers. Additionally, it is necessary to agree on criteria that allow evaluating about the forms of dignity work in the rural family farming, according to gender and age of each member. To link the care dimension to the economic one promotes new possibilities to project the future plans of the farming families.

6. Next steps

We encouraged to generate more research on the specific mechanisms from which gender relations are reproduced in rural areas, in order to advance in policies that allow reducing social inequality and, simultaneously, to promote the sustainability of the AFC. This research was limited by the ethnic dimension. Therefore, it would be convenient to delve into the relations among work, care and gender from the position of indigenous women. Future research should continue to explore into how gender is articulated with other factors such as ethnicity and local cultures and economies, in order to understand the complex relations between women and rural development.