

# Gender Role Reforms in Ghana: Analysis of the Nature, Drivers, and Dimensions in Rural and Urban Contexts

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## Abstract

Gender roles play a critical function in development processes. Gender role expectations by society led to gender stereotyping which placed limits on the potential of women and men to utilize their abilities. The stereotypical expectations from both men and women subsequently created the conventional gender division of labour where men were perceived as breadwinners while women were domestic moderators and passive recipients. Presently however, gender roles are shifting as the male breadwinner system has declined because more women are steadily entering active employment. Even though there are pieces of evidence of the transition in Ghana, the nature, drivers and dimensions of the transition process has been either unclear or not well documented. Therefore, using the mixed method approach, with a sample size of 400 households, this research examined how the transition process is happening, the factors facilitating the changes and the areas in which the changes are happening. Gender transition is currently both unidirectional and dual in rural areas and mainly dual/reversal in urban areas. Education is the main driver of the transition process in Ghana, both in rural and urban spaces alike while the economic dimension of the change in gender roles is the most common.

## Keywords

Gender Roles, Nature, Dimensions, Drivers, Gender Transition, Ghana

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## 1. Introduction

Gender roles play a critical function in development processes. These are societal constructs that determine what is expected of an individual based on the biological make-up [1, 2]. Gender roles also describe the cultural expectations of men and women in a specific society [3]. Such expectations range from the natural abilities of men and women, occupational prescriptions and acceptable behavior for each sex. An individual's ability to contribute meaningfully to societal development is therefore primarily influenced by the roles assigned to them in relation to others [4, 1].

Gender role expectations by society led to gender

stereotyping [5]. There was generalized preconception about attributes, or characteristics regarding the roles that were expected to be performed by men and women. Gender stereotyping placed limits on the potential and capacity of women or men to realize their abilities and follow their professional careers [1]. Unfortunately, gender stereotyping within the African context has had significant adverse effects on both sexes [6]. The stereotypical expectations from both men and women consequently created the conventional gender division of labour [5]. Men were perceived as breadwinners that have the role of earning an income while women were domestic moderators and passive recipients [7]. Ghana, with its rich cultural customs and immutable traditions held entrenched positions regarding gender

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stereotyping [8].

Presently however, gender roles are shifting within the household as several drivers have influenced the way society perceives masculinity and femininity [9, 10]. The male breadwinner system has declined because more women are steadily entering active employment [11, 12]. There is an expansion of the female role to include economic provision for the family as well as the transformation of the male role to include more intense involvement in family responsibilities [13]. Gender stereotyping is gradually fading away, giving way to a more gender equal society termed in this paper as *gender transition*. Gender transition describes the processes, strategies, and the associated development ramifications and implications characterizing the shift from gender stereotyping towards a more gender equal and all-inclusive society with equal privileges and opportunities for both males and females.

It must however be admitted that in a country with much-celebrated culture and traditions like Ghana, the shift from gender stereotyping towards equality would be neither smooth nor sudden. The rural and urban localities in Ghana is perceived to lend themselves differently to social changes due to the difference in culture. This research therefore examined the nature, drivers and dimensions of the current change in gender roles in rural and urban contexts. Specifically, how the transition process is happening, the factors facilitating the changes and in which areas the changes are happening were investigated. The research proposition also sought to confirm whether there is a significant variation between the nature of gender transition in rural and urban spaces. This was to provide field based-evidence to substantiate the occurrence of gender transition in Ghana.

## 2. Review of Literature on the Gender Transition Process

This section of the paper constitutes a thorough review of related literature on households, gender transition, and the systems theory, the gender transition concept, drivers and dimensions of the gender transition process.

### 2.1. Households, Gender Transition, and the Systems Theory

The gender transition process was put into the systems theory for thorough analysis. Systems theory emphasizes the relationship between the parts of an entity rather than focusing on its parts alone as proposed by Von Bertalanffy [14]. Societies as systems and households as sub-systems are complex entities with integrated, interrelated and interdependent parts which must be coordinated effectively

for productivity and effectiveness [15]. Males and females play a complementary role in an inter-related and interdependent society to ensure its coordinated functioning as posited by the structural functionalism theory [16, 17].

A system as a complex and highly intricate network exhibits synergistic properties. It constitutes an assemblage of interrelated parts which act in unison to achieve some goals in the environment [15]. A system could be likened to social functions and activities with dynamics like inputs, outputs and feedbacks [15]. With regard to societies and households, systems are operationalized in this research to mean *males and females working together in an interrelated and interdependent manner to achieve a common goal, sustainable livelihood and improved wellbeing*. Households are considered systems because they comprise interrelated elements, portray coherent behaviours, have regular interactions and are interdependent on one another [18]. There is the need for the households within societies to interact with themselves and the external environment for sustainable existence [14]. This is contrary to classical theorists like Max Weber and Taylor [15] who viewed societal entities as closed systems without elements of interaction and interdependence.

Critical issues concerning societal development like power and resource sharing among males and females, understanding the dynamics of relationships and changing societal values and customs through time can be better understood using the systems theory [19, 18]. Systems, subsystems, closed and open systems, boundaries, transfer of energy and influence across boundaries, feedback and system balance (homeostasis) are all essential in understanding how societies function in a coordinated matter to achieve their goals [19] In this regard therefore, societies interact with the environment and with time, transfer of energy across its boundaries changes its culture and traditions to suit changing developmental needs. Different societies also interact and shape one another.

The boundaries of households are now open, making them exposed to external influence ([18]. Globalization, education, multilateral trade, advancement in technology, tourism and millennium declarations leading to the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals and human right treaties as inputs or perceived drivers have penetrated into household sub-systems [20, 21] changing the functionality of the man and woman. The output from this system is the resultant changed and still changing gender roles within societies and households [22, 23, 13]. It is the feedback from this output that this research investigated. It is also important to emphasize that although societies are generally open systems, some aspects remain relatively closed. This therefore necessitates the study to be

conducted in urban (open) and rural (closed) spaces to ascertain the dynamics in the feedbacks within these different spaces. Societies would have to adjust to these feedbacks (homeostatic) through the dynamic processes of adaptation in order to achieve equilibrium in gender roles and stability in households and communities [19]

## 2.2. The Gender Transition Concept

Over the years, existing societal norms concerning the male and female division of labour have undergone many influences [24, 25]. Several factors including change in social structure, education and economic revolutions have greatly influenced gender roles [10, 3]. This has caused a rapid transition in the roles that men and women used to play at the household, community and national levels. [24, 13] both agree that the male breadwinner system has declined for at least half a century now. There is especially an expansion of the female role to include economic provision for a family. Lately also, there is the transformation of the male role to include more intense involvement in family responsibilities. There is a rise in women's participation in the labour market over the past few decades and today, in almost every household, there is the tendency for both partners to engage in some form of livelihood activity [13].

[26] also posits that fathers' roles are fast evolving in response to significant social and economic changes over the past thirty years. Presently, a large number of mothers are entering employment, families are becoming more diverse and fluid in form and there are structural changes to male employment. As a result, fathers are becoming increasingly involved in the lives of their children contrary to previous cases where they were mostly focused on breadwinner roles [26, 13].

The gender transition process could be either unidirectional or reversal/dual transition. The unidirectional transition occurs where women assume the roles that were considered traditionally as men's or where men assume roles that were considered traditionally women's at specified places and time. In this case, the change is in one direction [26, 22, 13]. Reversal/dual transition takes place when and where roles that were traditionally considered as men's are performed by women and those traditionally considered as women's are taken on by men at the same time at the same place [27, 28] This occurs concurrently in the household, community, nation or the international community at large. Existing literature however reveals that while women are increasingly assuming men's role, men are not usually seen taking up roles known to be for women [29]. The main factors that are shaping men's roles in the household include the rise in women's professional and educational status and the resultant increase in their earnings [28]. Evidence from Latin

America and the Caribbean however shows that men are not intensely increasing their role in domestic work and unpaid caregiving activities, even though women's participation in the paid labour market has increased [25]. This assertion warranted further research to ascertain the nature of the transition process in Ghana, hence the relevance of this research.

## 2.3. Drivers of the Gender Transition Process

Existing literature expounds that many factors have facilitated gender transition in recent times [30, 20, 21]. Proliferation of women's movement groups, multi-party systems, education opportunities, economic empowerment, civil society activities and international agreements and conventions are among the key factors [16]. It is also argued that the processes of transition in gender norms have mainly been driven by education, economic change, technology, political and social mobilization [21]. In addition, more significant investment in human capital, medical advances, technological progress leading to reduction in the burden of household work, and changes in policies, the removal of legal restrictions for women to work, enhanced provision of child care, and lower tax rates on two-income households have also contributed immensely to the gender transition process [2, 31] is of the firm view that education is one of the major drivers that underpin the recent gender transition phenomenon. She argues that education has recently given both men and women extensive and growing participation in income-generating activities. Education has significantly expanded the opportunities available for all genders which in effect has stimulated productivity and reduced the economic vulnerability of poor households [31]. In addition to education, the current wave of globalization has greatly facilitated gender transition worldwide, particularly the developing world [20]. Globalization and liberalization of markets have opened several pathways for men and women to participate in political and economic activities actively [32]. Change in social norms and attitudes have also contributed to the gender transition process [2]. Gender-based international conventions and agreements have contributed immensely towards the gender transition process [25]. Over a couple of decades, the United Nations has organized several world conferences and summits to call attention to the issues relating to gender stereotyping, family roles and responsibilities, gender equality and men's greater participation in family life [25]. This research therefore investigated which drivers as operationalized at the macro and micro levels in Ghana underpin the gender transition process within rural and urban spaces.

## 2.4. Dimensions of the Gender Transition Process

The gender transition process has various dimensions. These dimensions as pushed by the international community, governments and other developmental organizations include educational, economic, social, religious and political (GoG *et al.*, 2004). In Ghana, women currently assume various positions in society. A sizeable number of women have access to higher education, employment and good social standing. Women take part in family and societal decision-making process while quite a number of women are found in the country's parliament and ministries [33].

Economically empowering both sexes implies extending equal access to macro and micro economic structures like trade, industry, and productive resources [34]. It also involves giving access to gainful employment and awarding corresponding wages to women especially as is given their male counterparts. Women's economic empowerment is a precondition for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the attainment of all the Sustainable Development Goals. It also leads to the realization of rights and more equitable society [34]. The economic dimension of the gender transition process emphasizes among other things, the woman's ability to take up paid employment and determine what the resultant remuneration is used for.

Another aspect of the transition is educational attainment. Education is perhaps the most crucial dimension in empowerment. Education helps give the realization of one's rights and responsibilities; it expands capacities and makes one more capable of contributing meaningfully to household and community as a whole [6]. Educating both sexes expands their opportunities, stimulates productivity and reduces the economic vulnerability of poor households [31] According to [8] although Ghana has significantly closed the gender parity in primary education, much is left to be done in secondary and tertiary education.

Politically, it is imperative for both men and women to be empowered to take active part in decision making processes in households and communities. [34] argues that in recent years, women have been entering the professional and managerial ranks of corporations at about the same rate as men, even though there remains greater disparity at senior levels. Although their study was based in the US and European context, the same could be deduced in the Ghanaian context. Many women now find themselves in the mainstream corporate societies like banking, teaching and research, military, law, politics and other avenues that give them the capacity that they previously did not have [35]. This notwithstanding, women are under-represented in the Ghana Parliament and other local governments as compared to their

male counterparts [36].

The leading underlying cause of gender inequality is the social perspective of how a man and woman should behave and act [37, 17]. "Social empowerment" therefore becomes imperative for both men and women to enable them to attain similar or equal social standing in society. Persistent stereotyping and discrimination of one sex against the other needs to be removed [38]. Rights over one's own reproductive health and family sizes, improved self-worth, ability to be involved in prevailing social settings without prejudice and general social acceptance [21] are prerequisite to a smooth and sustainable gender transition process.

## 3. Method

This research used the mixed method approach and comparative research design. Questionnaires semi-structured interview guides, focus group discussion, observation, and document analysis were used to collect data. Two urban communities within the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and four rural communities within the Juabeng Municipal Assembly in Ghana were selected for the research. The Gomez and Jones [39] formulae was then used to calculate the sample size for the study at 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where 'n' is the sample size of the study,

'N' is the sample frame

and 'e' is the margin of error.

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{18,442}{1 + 18,442 \times 0.05^2} \\ & \frac{18,442}{18,843 \times 0.0025} \\ & = 399.98 \\ & = 400 \end{aligned}$$

A total of 400 households were subsequently selected from a total study population of 18,442 for questionnaire administration using systematic random sampling, starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> house in each community and successively choosing every 3<sup>rd</sup> house afterwards. The urban sect was allotted a quota of 200 respondents out of the sample size while the rural sect was equally given 200 respondents to ensure fair representation of rural and urban localities. A total of 12 in-depth interviews were also conducted with the help of officials from the Kumasi Metropolitan assembly, Juabeng Municipal Assembly, opinion leaders in the various

communities, one gender-based Non-Governmental Organization, two public institutions and four corporate organizations. Four focus group discussions were also conducted with ten people in each discussion. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data were also analyzed using thematic analysis. Primary data collected were presented using charts and tables. Secondary data for the study was collected through a documentary review.

A systematic review of extensive literature on gender and livelihood sustainability was conducted. Peer-reviewed articles, policy documents and textbooks were used.

## 4. Results

The main objective of this research was to investigate the nature, drivers and dimensions of gender transition process in rural and urban communities in Ghana. To achieve this objective, questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions were administered to respondents. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were also conducted among respondents and other stakeholders. The results are presented in this section of the paper.

### 4.1. Nature of Gender Transition Within Rural and Urban Spaces in Ghana

Over the years, particularly in the last two decades, existing societal norms concerning the male and female division of labour has undergone significant changes [24, 25]. These changes have enabled both men and women to be able to

cross roles and undertake activities that were previously out of reach. Even though there are pieces of evidence of the transition in Ghana, the nature of the transition process has been either unclear or not well documented. The nature of gender transition as posited in this research could be either unidirectional or reversal/dual. The unidirectional transition occurs where women assumed the roles that were considered traditionally as men's or where men assume roles that were considered traditionally women's. In this case, the change is in one direction [26, 22, 13]. On the other hand, reversal/dual transition takes place when and where roles that were traditionally considered as men's are being performed by women and those traditionally considered as women's are being taken on by men at the same time and the same place [27, 28]. Thus, whether only men or only women were changing roles, both men and women were changing roles was relevant in this research to determine the nature of gender transition characterizing the study localities.

Due to several drivers and the current dynamic household needs, it is argued in this research that the traditional gender division of labour is barely strictly practiced in most households. Even in the most conservative household, there is the likelihood of occasional switching of roles in response to family needs. While women are embracing paid jobs, the most culturally sensitive men might also perform some domestic roles once in a while. Even in rural communities where cultural entrenchments persist, it is assumed that not all men entirely cling only to their traditional breadwinner roles. Figure 1 shows the results of how the current change in gender roles is happening.

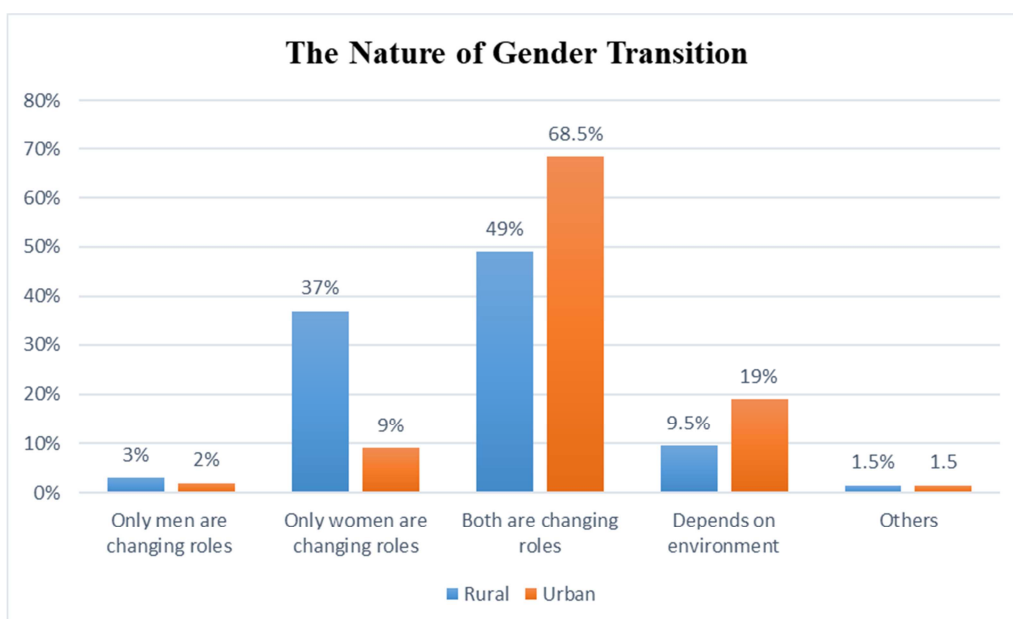


Figure 1. The Nature of Gender Transition in Ghana.

The blue markings in Figure 1 represent responses from rural communities while the red markings represent responses from urban communities. From Figure 1, majority (49 percent) of the respondents in rural communities (depicted by the blue colour) stated that the roles of both men and women are currently shifting in their households. From the shared experiences of respondents, within rural localities, women paid fees, bought books and provided money for their children while some men also washed, cooked, and cleaned utensils. Both men and women were observed to be working to support each other. This did not however mean that the men in rural communities fully embraced domestic work. They occasionally assisted where necessary as compared to the situation in the past when it was a taboo for a man to do any domestic work at all. Notwithstanding this fact, men and women were expected to perform their traditionally assigned roles in rural communities. It was revealed from the focus group discussions in rural communities that:

*“In this community, marriage is seen as the symbol of glory for women. They are supposed to marry and bear children to be recognized as women in the community. I am expected to respect and submit to my husband and protect his dignity. Women are generally expected to uphold their husbands”* (Female Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Odoyefe, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

*“Men must provide housekeeping money; that is their basic responsibility. Men are supposed to work to make sure that there is constant supply of income in the house. I am the one who pays our children’s school fees and other bills. I also engage in communal labour to ensure community development”* (Male Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Ofoase, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

The shift in gender roles was also found to be unidirectional in rural communities, where only women were changing roles in response to their household needs. Most men in rural localities were tagged irresponsible. As a result, the women were required as a matter of necessity to take up paid jobs to take care of their children. From Figure 1, another section (37 percent) of the respondents in rural communities stated that only women were changing roles. Most women in rural communities helped their partners on the farm or engaged in petty trading to help with the financial needs of the household. Also, as indicated earlier, most women did not receive support from their husbands and therefore had to perform double major roles.

Additionally, the women cared for their families and also took up paid jobs while most men were reluctant to engage in domestic activities due to male superiority. Another interesting revelation was that provision for the family was

found to be part of the woman’s core responsibilities in rural communities. It was revealed from the focus group discussion organized in a rural community that,

*“I am expected to support my husband financially in the payment of fees, taking care of children, house-keeping, cleaning and feeding the family”* (Female Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Ofoase, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

In urban communities on the other hand, as shown in Figure 1 the change in gender roles was found to be mainly reversal/dual with both men and women changing roles at the same time. The situation in urban areas demanded that both men and women switched roles necessarily. Most of the women in urban localities were engaged in formal public and private sector jobs. Even those found in informal sectors were out of the house most of the time. The men were therefore required to pick up children from school, heat dinner for the family, assist in household chores on the weekend, or help with babysitting. From figure 1, majority (68.5 percent) of the respondents in urban communities stated that both men and women were changing roles at the same time. This was because opportunities were available for both men and women because most of them were educated. Also, men were found assisting in child care, washing and cooking while women assisted in payment of fees and other bills. Both men and women were also found to be breadwinners in many households. In urban communities also, cultural barriers were relaxed which made both men and women goal getters and domestic workers at the same time. It was further confirmed in the focus group discussion in urban communities that:

*“Both men and women are responsible for the upbringing of children and the provision of food in the household. My wife and I are both responsible for cleaning, washing, cooking, and paying off bills in the household. Also, we are both obligated to ensure that our children become responsible in society”* (Male Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Asafo, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

*“It was a shame to see a man carrying children and doing some domestic stuff, but now, because the women work, the men also take care of the house. Some even post it on social media for the whole world to see”* (Female Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Amakom, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

#### **4.2. Drivers of Gender Transition Within Rural and Urban Spaces in Ghana**

Gender roles are changing within rural and urban spaces in response to changing household and community needs. Existing literature points out that many factors have facilitated this transition process [30, 20, 21]. Evidence from this study shows that even in rigid spaces like rural areas

with much-celebrated traditions, customs and culture, some men are crossing their breadwinner roles to help in domestic activities while some women are actively engaged in paid jobs. Several perceived factors account for these changes. Globally, the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals have codified gender equality goals that have in diverse ways contributed to the gender transition process [6, 21]. In Ghana also, apart from the national constitution making provision for gender equality, the National Gender Policy promulgated in 2015 has been put in place to facilitate the gender transition process [35]. The National Gender Policy among other things is to help remove all forms of gender inequality and ensure women's empowerment and livelihood sustainability, women's rights and access to justice, women's leadership and accountable governance, economic opportunities for women and streamline gender roles and relations.

Some officials from the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and the Juabeng Municipal Assemblies were interviewed to find out which drivers, as operationalized by their various assemblies, had facilitated the shift in gender roles in the

study areas. It was revealed that the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly had the "send the girl child to school" intervention. This was to get more females educated, empower, and increase their capabilities and opportunities. The Assembly also frequently have radio talk shows aimed at sensitizing the people. It was also revealed from the interview with the Planning Unit of the Ejisu-Juabeng Municipality that:

*"The Municipality has a social welfare department which has gender equality and women empowerment as one of its core mandates. Also, efforts have been made to get more girls into schools especially basic education to the senior high school level. The court in the municipality also handles issues of domestic violence and other abuses"* (Field Interview, Ejisu-Juabeng Municipal Assembly, 2018).

Education, globalization, civil society activities, women movement groups and technology have been noted in earlier studies as essential drivers facilitating the shift in gender roles [2, 31]. Figure 2 depicts the drivers facilitating the change in gender roles as operationalized in the rural and urban communities.

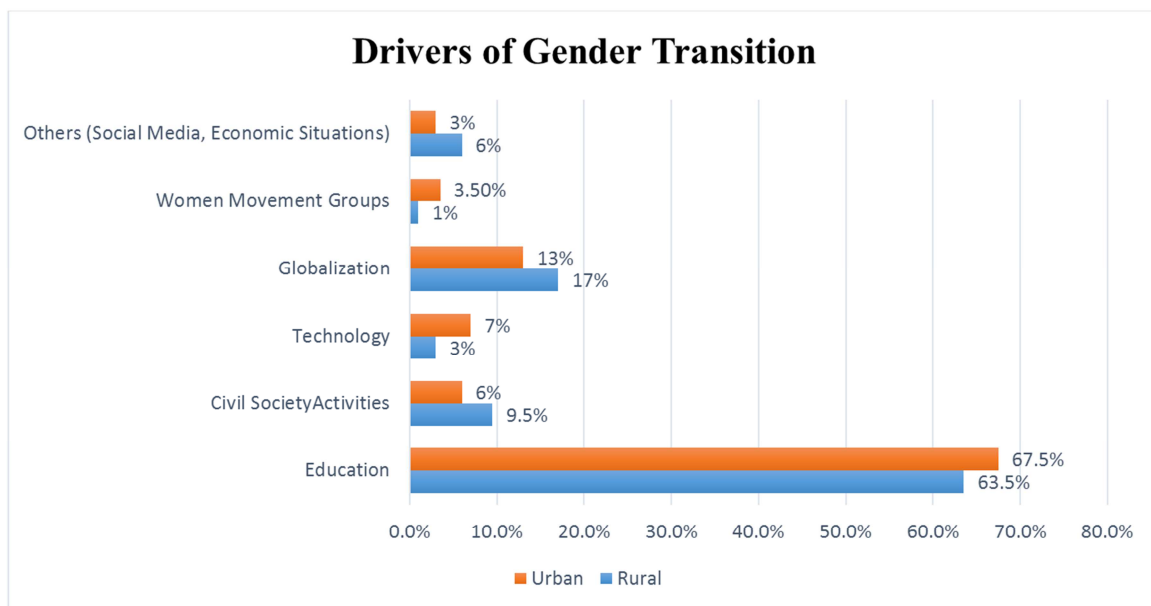


Figure 2. Drivers of Gender Transition.

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2018.

Figure 2 shows the response from respondents in rural and urban communities. The red markings represent urban communities whilst the blue markings represent rural communities. From figure 2, the main driver of the transition process in rural communities was education as noted by majority (63.5 percent) of the respondents. Other factors including globalization, civil society activities, technology, women movement groups, poverty and social media also partly accounted for the observed shift in gender

roles.

Similarly, figure 2 shows that in the urban communities chosen for the study, education recurred as the main driver of the transition process. This was noted by 68 percent of the respondents. Thus, the role that education plays in driving the change in gender roles in the study areas was found to be significant. Education has been emphasized as one of the inputs in the household sub-system which drives the gender transition process with the help of transforming agents like

the government, private sector and individuals. The study results therefore re-echo education as a significant input which modifies the functions of men and women within the household. Other drivers included globalization, technology, and women movement groups.

### 4.3. Dimensions of Gender Transition

Gender transition is a multi-faceted concept with several dimensions, including educational, economic, social, religious, and political [33]. The shift in gender roles has been perceived to have the potential of increasing economic productivity because empowering both sexes implies extending equal access to productive resources [34]. Socio-cultural empowerment, for instance, is imperative to enable men and women to attain equal standing in society. Regarding the political dimension, it is necessary that both men and women are empowered to take active part in decision making processes in households, community, and national issues. Education of men and women also helps with the realization of their rights and responsibilities, expands capacities and makes

one more capable of contributing meaningfully to household and community development as a whole [6]. From an in-depth interview with the planning department of the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, it was noted that,

*“Much respect and value are being given to women than before. Women are also embracing the roles that were tagged masculine like engaging in some form of employment, whether full or part-time. Women are now involved in decision making at the community and household levels. More women are also being educated; they have professions and participate more in social activities. These notwithstanding, they are also engaged in normal domestic duties. Most men, on the other hand, continue to perform their breadwinner roles. However, I cannot say much about how immersed men are in those roles considered feminine”* (Field Interview Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, 2018).

Figure 3 shows how the economic, socio-cultural, political and educational dimensions manifested in the study communities.

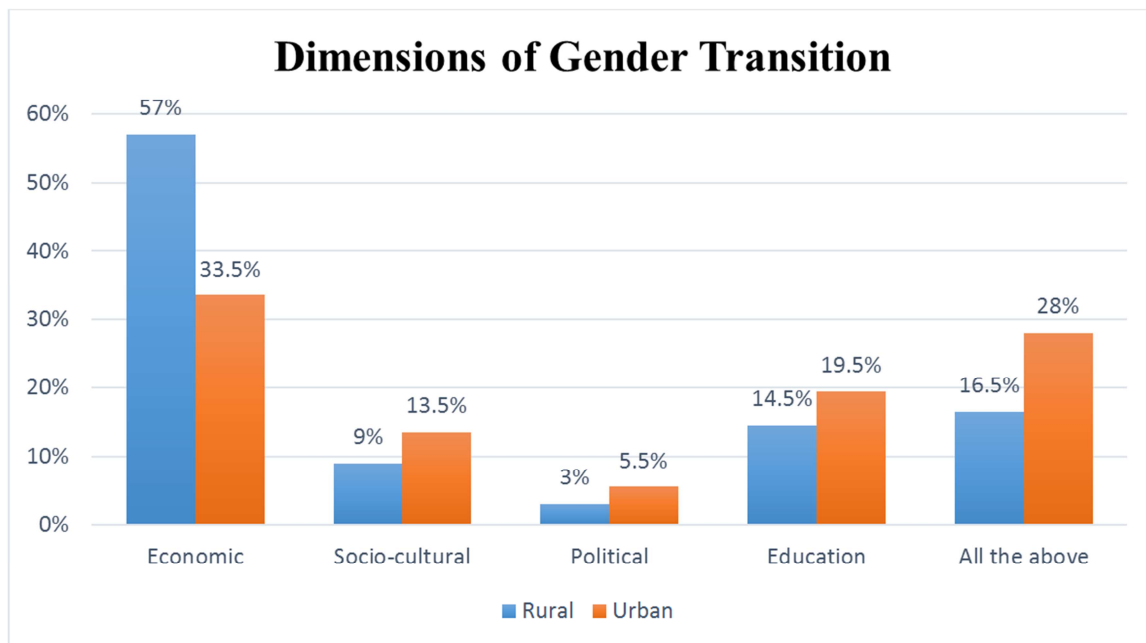


Figure 3. Dimensions of Gender Transition.

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2018.

#### 4.3.1. Economic Dimension

The most common dimension of the shift in gender roles is economic. Economically empowering men and women implies extending equal access to productive resources [34]. It also involves giving access to gainful employment and awarding corresponding wages to women as is given their male counterparts. An earlier study by [34] highlighted that more women are currently entering into paid jobs at the same rate as men. From the occupational data of the respondents

for this study, majority (85.7 percent) of the females were working as against only 14.3 percent who were not employed. These women were actively engaged in paid work in all sectors of the economy, including farming, trading, dressmaking, hairdressing, food vending, formal public and private sector jobs and even building and construction. Meanwhile, according to the modern sociological feminist theory [16], these women were previously burdened with all or most of the unpaid domestic and child-care work. The gender division of labour and conventional marriage caused



women's economic dependence and limited their autonomy.

Figure 3 gives detailed result of the dimensions of the transition process, prevalent in the study communities. From Figure 3, the most dominant dimension of the change in gender roles is economic. This was noted by 57 percent of the respondents in rural communities (depicted by the blue colour). The women in rural communities were engaged mostly in informal sector jobs. The male breadwinner role was therefore found to be dwindling in rural communities.

Majority (33.4 percent) of the respondents in urban communities (depicted by the red colour) also stated economic as the most apparent dimension in the shift in gender roles. In urban communities, women were engaged mostly in formal public and private sector jobs like nursing, teaching, military, banking, consultancy, and engineering. Others were employed as doctors, pharmacists, human resource managers, and cleaners. Some were also entrepreneurs who worked as hairdressers, fashion designers, food vendors and traders. These women were observed to be financially capable to support their family's financial needs.

#### 4.3.2. Education Dimension

Education enhances the realization of one's rights and responsibilities; it expands capacities and makes one more capable of contributing meaningfully to household and community as a whole [6]. Both men and women are currently being educated, unlike previous years, when education was the reserve of male children alone [31]. There are seemingly equal opportunities for both men and women to be educated to any level possible especially in urban communities. From the educational background of the respondents, more than half (57.6 percent) of the female respondents had senior high school and post senior high school education. Meanwhile, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has it that until the nineteenth century, women were recognized as the inferior sex and were subsequently not included in education and certain professions [34].

Education is emphasized in this research as an essential dimension of gender transition. A fairly significant proportion of the respondents (14.5 percent rural and 19.5 percent urban) indicated that education is an important dimension in the shift in gender roles. Due to access to higher education, more women in the study areas had had access to paid jobs and were able to assist their households financially. Education also had enlightened men to assist in domestic activities. In the study, the more educated the men were, the more willing there were to assist in domestic work.

#### 4.3.3. Socio-Cultural Dimension

One of the leading causes of gender inequality is the social

perspective of how males and females should behave and act [37, 17]. This makes "social empowerment" indispensable. Both males and females need equal social standing in society in order to live up to their full potential. It was revealed in the study that gender equality and general acceptance of both men and women for who they are is more conspicuous in urban (13.5 percent) than rural (9 percent) communities as shown in figure 3. This was due to the rigidity of cultural norms associated with some rural areas. A focus group discussion in an urban community however revealed that there are still pockets of social inequality in urban localities:

*"I disagree that the husband should do cleaning, washing and cooking. The man only does these things when the woman is incapacitated or unavailable (pregnant, sick, travelled). For me, domestic work is strictly for women"* (Male Respondent, Focus Group Discussion at Amakom, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

This notwithstanding, it was realized that women were well accepted like their male counterparts and treated equally especially in urban areas. Women had gained high self-esteem and respect in their communities. They were also more integrated into their communities and allowed to do things that they were previously not permitted to do. For instance, in rural communities in particular, women were previously not allowed to participate in community decision making processes. This situation has however, currently changed. This again could be traced among other things to the fact that more women were being educated and economically empowered. This confirms the socialist gender theory which holds the position that the elimination or significant reduction of material inequality and resource ownership could reduce social inequality and put men and women on the same social status [16]

#### 4.3.4. Political Dimension

It is imperative that both sexes are empowered to take active part in decision making processes in households, community and national issues [34]. Equal participation in household and community decision making was particularly emphasized in this study. This dimension of the shift in gender roles is not particularly celebrated both in rural and urban communities. However, women with access to formal education and paid employment were observed to be active in household and community decision making processes as compared to those who were not. Few women also held positions in government. For instance, the number of women who held positions in the metropolitan and municipal assemblies had increased marginally.

The interviews conducted with the officials from the assemblies in the study areas pointed out that the economic, education, socio-cultural and political dimensions were all

being experienced in those localities. An interview with the planning unit of the Ejisu-Juabeng Municipal Assembly revealed that:

*“Government has been providing some supports for ensuring gender equality in the municipality. As a result, the changing gender roles could now be seen economically (more women in paid employment), political (women taking up leadership positions and actively participating in decision making processes even though there is still more to be done in this regard), socially (the society embracing what men and women do to support their households without stereotyping) and education (both males and females given equal opportunities to be educated)”* (Field Interview Ejisu-Juabeng Municipal Assembly, 2018).

## 5. Discussion

It is evident from the research results that gender roles have changed and are still changing in rural and urban communities in Ghana. This supports earlier studies by [9, 10, 3] in rural and urban spaces. The nature of the change is mainly dual/reversal in urban communities because the urban situation demands that both necessarily switch roles. In rural communities, on the other hand, the transition process is both reversal and unidirectional.

It is also confirmed in this study that men are fighting to find their place not just at the work place but in the home to achieve “the whole person” and that there is the transformation of the male role to include more intense involvement in family responsibilities, especially care for children and other household activities [28]. The study by [27] revealed that over the last three decades, fathers have accepted much broader and varied demarcations of their roles and have been progressively enthusiastic about engaging in a broad array of activities which was previously viewed as components of the woman’s role. Also, the study is in line with the findings [13, 26] that fathers are becoming increasingly involved in the lives of their children contrary to previous cases where they were mostly focused on breadwinner roles. The study has also confirmed [13] postulation that there is a rise in women's participation in the labor market over the past few decades and an expansion of the female role to include economic provision for a family.

It was also revealed in the research that even though both men and women are changing roles, most women currently have “double major roles”. Such women have to work full time both at their paid jobs and in the house doing domestic activities. These women found themselves in very stressful conditions and sometimes had to rely on “house-helpers”. The situation in some instances had negative implications on their marriage, health and wellbeing. It therefore goes to

confirm [40] theories of marriage and family behaviour that increasing women’s empowerment and participation in the labour force has had a critical and presumably irreversible impact on the family. The work by [23] which posits that in most instances, women tend to do both their paid jobs and informal household activities is further reinforced by this study. Men mostly either “helped” or “assisted” women in their domestic work but did not see it as an obligatory part of their work in the household especially in rural communities.

It was also revealed in the study that most men currently have single major roles (their breadwinner role) and a minor role in helping with domestic activities. Few men in urban areas were however obligated to assist in domestic work since their partners were working full time. They therefore “shared” domestic work with their partners. In such instances therefore, both partners had single major roles and a minor role.

It must however not be ruled out that in some households, the transition is still unidirectional, with either only men or only women changing roles. Some households therefore had the woman in paid job and also doing domestic work alone. Other households also had “housewives” who did not engage in paid work and still had their husbands engaged in domestic work like dropping and picking up of children and doing groceries in urban areas.

Education, globalization, civil society activities, women movement groups, and technology, therefore, emerged as the main drivers of gender transition in both rural and urban communities in Ghana. This confirms the researches by [2, 21, 31]. Education had enhanced the capacity of both sexes, particularly women, and offered them the opportunity to be employed in the formal sector. More attention must, therefore, be given to girl child education as being carried out in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly to offer more women the opportunity to be employed in all spheres.

The most common aspect of the gender transition process in both rural and urban communities was the economic dimension. Conventionally, men are engaged in paid work. With the current shift in gender roles, women are equally stepping out into paid jobs, which implies that both partners jointly become breadwinners of the household. This confirms the study by [13] that in every household today, there is a tendency for both partners to work. Being economically empowered had enabled many women to take part in household and community decision making. Some women were found in leadership positions because they were well respected once they made money and were independent. In rural communities for example, once a woman worked and had money, her husband included her in household decision

making. It could therefore be deduced that the economic dimension of the changing gender roles is in a way enhancing the political dimension. Also, the economic dimension of the shift in gender roles is perceived to have the potential of increasing economic productivity, improving development outcomes and ultimately ensuring sustainable national development [35]. It was consequentially discovered that households with both partners working had “double income” which enhanced their family’s wellbeing.

## 6. Conclusion

Gender roles have been shifting globally and the change is currently evident in both rural and urban spaces in Ghana. This change is however happening at different degrees and scales. Gender transition is currently both unidirectional and dual in rural areas and mainly dual/reversal in urban areas. However, men were not intensely increasing their role in domestic work and unpaid caregiving activities, although women’s participation in the paid labour market had increased. It is therefore concluded that while the male breadwinner system has reduced, women are still burdened with most household activities with the current change in gender roles. Women used to perform only caregiving roles. They are currently however performing double major roles including caregiving roles and paid work. It is only when the men within the household assist in domestic work to the point of 50/50 that the responsibility of women is reduced since most men currently have single major roles. Education is a primary driver of the transition process in Ghana, both in rural and urban spaces alike. In order to expand the opportunities available for all and build an all-inclusive society therefore, access to education must be made available to both males and females without discrimination or stereotyping. The shift in gender roles is positively impacting households in all dimensions, especially economic. Female participation in paid labour must therefore be encouraged by restructuring the formal and informal work environments by employers to suit the special needs of women; there should be reformation of the current male-dominated work place model. Notably, the gender transition process must be dual/reversal for its impact on wellbeing to be enjoyed by all members within the household.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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