



Contents lists available at [ojs.aeducia.org](https://ojs.aeducia.org)

## Journal of Gender and Millennium Development Studies

Volume 3, Issue 1 (2026), 10.64420/jgmds.v3i1

Journal homepage: <https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/jgmds>

JGMDS

E-ISSN 3063-3850

P-ISSN 3063-3842

Read Online: <https://doi.org/10.64420/jgmds.v3i1.499>

Open Access

# Gender-Based Family Approach: Causes and Factors of Gender Inequality in Family Life

Alice Ayawine<sup>1\*</sup> , Mtebi Nkrabia Gmaligan<sup>2</sup>, Joseph Ayamga Awimboora<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Ghana, Fiapre, Ghana

<sup>2</sup> University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

<sup>3</sup> Christian Aid Program Officer, Serra Leone

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: February 17, 2026

Revised: May 5, 2026

Accepted: May 12, 2026

Published: May 25, 2026

## KEYWORDS

Gender model family approach;

Gender inequality;

Women's roles;

Family life

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Gender role inequality within the family is shaped by gender discourse that is legitimised through cultural norms and everyday practices, where domestic responsibilities are often perceived as “natural” obligations of women, placing them in subordinate roles. **Objective:** This study aims to analyse the factors that construct women's role inequality in families and to explore the processes of negotiation and transformation in gender relations through the Gender Model Family approach. **Method:** A qualitative design grounded in Gender Discourse Analysis was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to examine narrative patterns, social legitimacy, and power dynamics within family life. **Result:** Findings show that gender inequality is maintained through traditional discourse and social pressures that normalise male dominance in family roles. However, emerging negotiations between family members foster more cooperative domestic practices and participatory decision-making, indicating a gradual transformation in gender relations. **Conclusion:** The family operates as a dynamic arena in which gender norms are both reproduced and reconstructed through continuous interaction and meaning negotiation, leading to more equitable and adaptive relationships. **Contribution:** This study advances the Gender Model Family framework by providing a discourse-based understanding of how gender inequalities are constructed and transformed, offering implications for promoting more egalitarian family relationships.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The imbalance of women's roles within the family remains a persistent social issue in gender studies because it touches on dimensions of social structure, everyday practices, and the cultural construction of meaning. Ideally, family life positions men and women as equal partners in sharing domestic responsibilities, making decisions, and managing emotional relationships (Adongo et al., 2023). Within a gender-equality framework, an ideal family functions as a collaborative space in which each member's contributions are recognised in proportion to their contributions (Nartey et al., 2023). Equitable relationships enable open communication, fair labour distribution, and shared participation in determining the direction of family life (Ayentimi et al., 2020). Such conditions not only support individual well-being but also strengthen the social stability of the family as a fundamental unit of society.

\* **Corresponding Author:** Alice Ayawine, [alice.ayawine@cug.edu.gh](mailto:alice.ayawine@cug.edu.gh)

Faculty of Public and Allied Health Sciences, Catholic University of Ghana, Fiapre, Ghana

Address: P.O. Box 363, Fiapre, Sunyani, Bono Region, Ghana

## How to Cite this Article:

Ayawine, A., Gmaligan, M. N., & Awimboora, J. A. (2026). Gender-Based Family Approach: Causes and Factors of Gender Inequality in Family Life. *Journal of Gender and Millennium Development Studies*, 3(1), 62-72. <https://doi.org/10.64420/jgmds.v3i1.499>



Copyright © 2026 by the Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

However, empirical evidence indicates that the division of roles within families often continues to follow traditional patterns that position women as the primary actors in domestic labour and men as the principal decision-makers (Wrigley-Asante, 2011). These practices are legitimised through cultural norms, everyday language, and social expectations that construct household work as a natural identity for women (Tufuor et al., 2016). As a result, women frequently face a double workload and limited opportunities for participation in strategic family domains (Sekyi et al., 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that inequality is not merely a technical issue of task distribution, but part of a discursive system that shapes perceptions of normality, authority, and legitimacy in gender roles.

The problem of unequal roles for women in family life cannot be ignored (Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2013; Naab & Laube, 2025; Ngulube, 2018). The core issue extends beyond who performs domestic work to how language, symbols, and social interactions generate legitimacy for such role divisions (Teye et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study seeks to address questions concerning the discursive mechanisms that reproduce inequality, as well as the spaces for transformation that allow more equitable family relationships to emerge.

From the perspective of social constructionism and gender discourse analysis, gender is understood as a product of socially constructed meaning. Within this framework, the family is viewed as an arena in which cultural norms, power relations, and gender identities are continually negotiated (Dery et al., 2019). Discourse operates as a symbolic mechanism that shapes perceptions of responsibility and authority, enabling inequality to be maintained or challenged through everyday communicative practices (Nartey, 2021). This approach allows for analysis that considers not only social structures but also interpretive dynamics occurring at the micro level of family life.

Previous studies have highlighted the relationship between patriarchal cultural norms, the division of domestic labour, and women's subordinate positions within the family (Sikweyiya et al., 2020; Nartey et al., 2023; Adisa et al., 2019; Mengba et al., 2022). Unequal role distribution contributes to women's double workload and restricted participation in decision-making processes (Gadzekpo, 2013; Adjei & Chan, 2023; Kwaku & Adusah-Karikari, 2015; Orkoh et al., 2022). However, most prior research has focused primarily on structural or economic dimensions without deeply examining the discursive aspects that construct the social legitimacy of inequality. A discourse-oriented approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of how gender meanings are produced and reproduced through everyday interactions.

A gap analysis in the literature indicates the need for a conceptual model that integrates normative structures, family practices, and processes of meaning negotiation within a single analytical framework. This absence creates an opportunity to explore how the family functions not only as a site for reproducing inequality, but also as an arena for transforming gender discourse. This study addresses that gap through a Gender Model Family approach, which positions the family as a dynamic locus for reconstructing gender relations.

The Gender Model Family approach used in this study frames the family as an active social space that shapes, sustains, and negotiates the meaning of gender relations through everyday interaction. Rather than viewing the family solely as a structure that reproduces traditional norms, this approach emphasises that communicative practices, the division of responsibilities, and decision-making processes constitute arenas in which power relations and gender identities are continuously reconstructed (Alo et al., 2022; Mersha & Van Laerhoven, 2016). Within the context of this study, the family is understood as a dynamic locus that allows reflection and adjustment to social norms, so that role inequality is not treated as a static condition but as the outcome of discursive processes that can change (Cobbinah et al., 2020; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). This perspective enables a more comprehensive analysis of how transformation toward more equitable relationships emerges from micro-level family practices, while also demonstrating that gender change is rooted in the ongoing negotiation of meaning in everyday life.

This study aims to analyse the causes and factors shaping the unequal roles of women within the family, while also identifying processes of negotiation and transformation in gender discourse that lead to more equitable relationships. The study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of family-based gender scholarship and to broaden understanding of how social change can originate from everyday practices within family life.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in a Gender Discourse Analysis framework to examine how inequality in women's roles within the family is constructed, negotiated, and reproduced through language practices, social interaction, and cultural norms in everyday life. This approach treats gender as a socially constructed phenomenon produced through discourse, directing analysis toward relations of meaning, social positioning, and power dynamics that emerge within family practices.

The study design is exploratory–interpretive. Its primary focus is to identify discursive patterns that influence the division of domestic roles, family decision-making, and the social legitimacy attached to women’s roles. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of how family members interpret and negotiate gender roles within a broader social context.

## **2.2 Participants**

The study was conducted with families from diverse social backgrounds in order to capture variation in gender practices and narratives within family life. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria focused on families with direct experience of domestic role division and household decision-making. Participants include married couples and other family members actively involved in daily family practices. The principle of data sufficiency determined the number of participants: recruitment continued until recurring discursive patterns were observed, and no substantially new findings emerged.X

## **2.3 Data Collection**

Data were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews, small-group discussions, and contextual observation. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants’ subjective experiences regarding gender roles, domestic labour division, and decision-making processes. Group discussions allowed examination of how gender discourse is collectively negotiated, while observations provided insight into everyday interaction patterns representing role distribution within the family. All data collection procedures were conducted reflexively, with attention to the sensitivity of gender-related issues and participant comfort. Data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymised to protect participant confidentiality.

## **2.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis proceeded in stages using a Gender Discourse Analysis framework: (1) data reduction and organisation to identify meaning units related to gender practices within the family; (2) discursive coding to trace patterns of language, narratives, and symbols that reflect legitimacy or resistance toward gender role divisions; (3) power-relations analysis to understand how discourse shapes social positioning and authority within the family; (4) contextual interpretation linking discursive findings to broader social norms and cultural structures.

The analytic process was iterative, involving repeated transcript review, thematic comparison, and conceptual categorisation until a consistent interpretive pattern was established. Data Validity, study validity was ensured through methodological and data-source triangulation, participant verification of findings, and ongoing analytical reflexivity throughout interpretation. These procedures aimed to ensure that the analysis accurately and contextually represented participant experiences.

## **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in accordance with principles of informed consent, data confidentiality, and respect for family dynamics. Participants were informed about the study’s purpose, their rights during participation, and their freedom to withdraw at any time without consequence.

# **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

## **3.1 Result**

Gender discourse analysis shows that inequality in women’s roles within the family is maintained not only through traditional divisions of labour, but also through social narratives that normalise male dominance in decision-making. At the same time, this study finds ongoing processes of discursive negotiation and transformation that move toward a more equitable distribution of roles. From the analysis of interviews and group discussions, six major themes emerged.

**Early Experiences of Gender Role Division.** Most participants described domestic work as having long been understood as women’s responsibility. This discourse is passed down across generations and is rarely questioned. A female participant stated, “For a long time, women have taken care of the household. If men help, it is seen as assistance, not an obligation.” This narrative illustrates how domestic labour is legitimised as part of women’s identity, causing inequality to be perceived as a normal condition.

**Social Legitimacy and Cultural Pressure.** Social expectations reinforce gender discourse. Men who engage in domestic work are often viewed as deviating from established norms. A male participant explained, “If I cook or wash

dishes, people sometimes say I am getting too involved in women’s matters.” This finding indicates that social pressure plays a role in sustaining unequal role divisions.

**Negotiation of Roles in Everyday Life.** Despite the strength of traditional norms, many families are beginning to renegotiate the distribution of responsibilities. New discourse emphasises cooperation and family efficiency. A female participant stated, “When we work together, the tasks are finished quickly, and no one feels burdened.” This negotiation reflects a shift in the meaning attached to domestic responsibility.

**Changing Discourse on Decision-Making.** The study identified a shift from male-dominated authority toward shared decision-making. Women are increasingly involved in economic and family decisions. A male participant noted, “Now household decisions are discussed together so they are fair.” This change reflects a restructuring of power relations within the family.

**Impact on Emotional Relationships and Harmony.** A more equitable distribution of roles is associated with improved communication and greater family harmony. Participants reported fewer domestic conflicts. A female participant said, “When we help each other, the atmosphere at home is calmer.” This suggests that transforming gender discourse contributes to relational well-being.

**Resistance and Challenges to Transformation.** Although change is underway, some families continue to face cultural resistance. Traditional narratives still shape perceptions of women’s ideal roles. A focus group participant stated, “Sometimes extended family members still think women should spend more time at home.”

These findings show that discursive change occurs gradually and is shaped by context. The interview data confirm that inequality in women’s roles is produced through discursive systems that shape perceptions of normality and gender authority. However, negotiation practices reveal opportunities to reconstruct meaning in more equitable ways. The interviews demonstrate that families function not only as sites where traditional norms are reproduced, but also as important arenas for transforming gender relations through evolving understandings of responsibility and power.

**Table 1.** Summary of Interview and Focus Group Findings

Theme	Dominant Narrative	Gender Discourse Indicator	Implications for Women’s Roles
Traditional role division	Domestic labor is defined as women’s responsibility	Normalization of gender inequality	Increased double workload for women
Social pressure	Men performing domestic tasks are perceived as deviating from norms	Reinforcement of conventional gender expectations	Continued concentration of women in domestic roles
Role negotiation	Cooperation is framed as efficient and practical	Emergence of equality-oriented discourse	Greater flexibility in task distribution
Decision-making practices	Household decisions are made collaboratively	Redistribution of authority within the family	Strengthened participation and voice of women
Family harmony	Shared responsibilities reduce conflict	Discourse of relational equality	Improved emotional well-being
Cultural resistance	Traditional norms remain influential	Tension between continuity and change	Gradual and uneven transformation

The analysis of the findings shows that inequality in women’s roles within the family is primarily shaped by traditional discourse that normalises domestic work as women’s responsibility. This norm is reinforced by social pressure that limits men’s involvement in the domestic sphere, making inequality appear natural and difficult to question. Such discourse operates as a social mechanism that reproduces gender hierarchies, resulting in women carrying a double workload and having limited space in family decision-making.

**Table 2.** Theoretical Framework: Gender Model Family Approach

Theoretical Layer	Conceptual Focus	Core Components	Discursive Mechanism	Analytical Interpretation
Gender discourse structure	Formation of norms shaping family gender roles	Family gender socialization; normalization of women’s domestic labor; patriarchal	Cultural norms define perceived appropriateness of gender roles	Inequality becomes naturalized and intergenerationally reproduced

Theoretical Layer	Conceptual Focus	Core Components	Discursive Mechanism	Analytical Interpretation
Family relational practices	Everyday implementation and negotiation of roles	legitimacy; social expectations Domestic labor division; joint decision-making; emotional interaction; external pressures	Interaction reproduces or challenges gender norms	Family operates as both a site of inequality reproduction and negotiation
Gender discourse transformation	Reconstruction of meanings and role relations	Domestic cooperation; participatory decision-making; equality awareness; adaptive practices	New practices gain legitimacy and establish alternative discourse	Gender relations evolve through reinterpretation of norms
Dynamic cycle of change	Iterative relationship among structure, practice, and transformation	Meaning negotiation; social reflection; development of new norms	Transformation reshapes subsequent structures	Gender change is gradual, contextual, and continuous

The theoretical framework table for the Gender Model Family Approach shows that inequality in women’s roles within the family is formed through a dynamic relationship among gender discourse structures, family relational practices, and processes of meaning transformation. The discourse structure functions as a foundation that normalizes role division through socialization and cultural legitimacy, which is then enacted in everyday family practices either as a reproduction of inequality or as a space for negotiation. When these practices undergo reflection and reinterpretation, discursive transformation emerges, encouraging more participatory and equitable relationships. This dynamic cycle emphasizes that gender change within the family is not a single event but an ongoing process in which norms, practices, and social meanings continuously influence one another, positioning the family as a strategic arena for reconstructing gender relations toward a balanced distribution of roles.

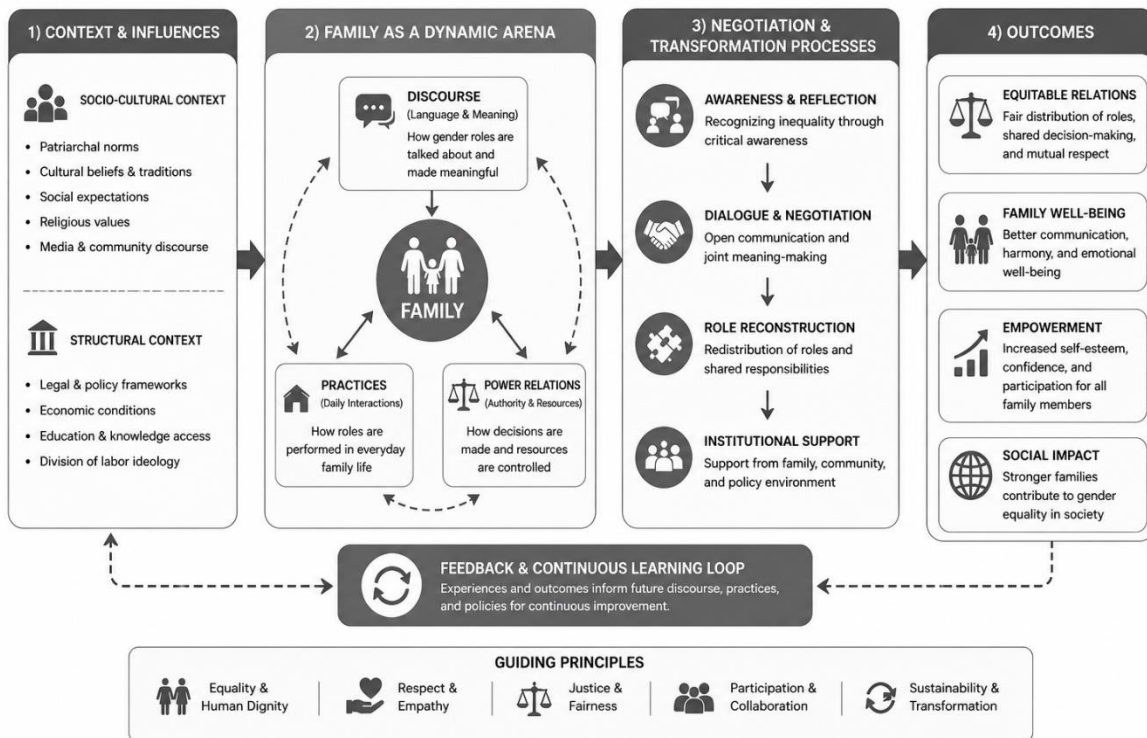


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model Flow Diagram: The Gender Model Family Approach

Figure 1 presents the Gender Model Family Approach as a dynamic framework that explains how gender relations within the family are socially constructed, negotiated, and transformed. The model begins with contextual influences, where socio-cultural norms and structural conditions shape initial perceptions of gender roles. These external factors establish a discursive environment that legitimises specific expectations regarding roles and responsibilities within family life.

At the family level, gender relations emerge through the interaction of discourse, everyday practices, and power relations. This interaction determines how responsibilities are distributed, how authority is exercised, and how gender meanings are reproduced or challenged in daily interactions. Through reflection, dialogue, and role negotiation, families may reconstruct traditional arrangements toward more equitable and participatory relationships.

Such processes of transformation generate positive outcomes, including enhanced gender equity, improved family well-being, increased empowerment, and broader social impact. The model further emphasises a feedback loop, indicating that gender change is cyclical, adaptive, and continuously evolving, positioning the family as both a site of norm reproduction and a strategic arena for reconstructing gender relations.

The conceptual flow diagram reinforces the idea that gender inequality is not static but continuously shaped and reshaped through the cyclical interaction among structure, practice, and meaning-making processes. Gender discourses initially frame role perceptions through cultural socialisation and normative legitimacy, which are enacted in everyday family interactions. These interactions may reproduce existing inequalities while simultaneously opening space for reflection and renegotiation. As families adapt to changing social conditions, role reinterpretation fosters more equitable cooperation, leading to the emergence of new norms that gradually reshape family structures. Overall, the diagram highlights that gender relations develop through an ongoing dynamic process in which the family functions as a primary site for reconstructing meaning, power distribution, and role balance.

### 3.2. Discussion

The study findings show that inequality in women's roles within the family does not exist merely as an individual practice, but rather as the outcome of socially constructed discourse that has been culturally legitimized and transmitted across generations. The normalisation of domestic work as part of women's identity illustrates how language, habits, and social expectations shape perceptions of what constitutes "appropriate" gender behaviour. Within the Gender Model Family Approach framework, this condition represents the structural layer of gender discourse, functioning as a symbolic foundation for role division. This structure not only determines who performs particular tasks but also produces power relations that position women in subordinate roles. Inequality, therefore, is not simply a technical matter of task allocation, but a manifestation of a broader system of meaning that frames authority, responsibility, and social legitimacy within the family.

Social pressure directed at men who participate in domestic work reinforces the argument that gender discourse operates as a mechanism of social regulation (Pearse & Connell, 2016). Community reactions to behaviour perceived as deviant demonstrate how gender norms function to preserve traditional structures (Sanchez et al., 2012). In everyday family relationships, this mechanism reproduces inequality through routine interaction. At the same time, the study reveals that the family is not a completely static space. Role negotiation within domestic life indicates that family members can reinterpret responsibilities in light of practical needs and principles of fairness (Sterponi, 2009). This shift marks a move away from hierarchical relations toward more flexible partnership patterns, where efficiency and shared well-being serve as the basis for distributing tasks.

Changes in discourse surrounding family decision-making serve as an important indicator of the restructuring of power relations. Women's increasing involvement in economic and domestic decisions reflects a redistribution of authority previously concentrated in men (Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019). From a discourse analysis perspective, this shift suggests that the legitimacy of family leadership is increasingly built through dialogue and participation rather than domination. The effects extend beyond structural change to emotional dimensions (Grenier & Bidgoli, 2015). More equitable role distribution is associated with improved communication, greater mutual respect, and reduced domestic conflict (Pekdemir et al., 2013). In other words, transforming gender discourse directly contributes to the quality of interpersonal family relationships, demonstrating that equality is not a threat to harmony, but a foundation for relational stability.

Even so, the transformation process does not occur without obstacles. Cultural resistance that continues to preserve traditional narratives shows that discursive change unfolds gradually and is shaped by context (Dalpiaz & Di Stefano, 2018). The tension between long-standing norms and emerging practices reflects a social dynamic in which the family becomes a site of negotiation between cultural identity and the need for adaptation (Cook & Waite, 2016). Within the conceptual model framework, this condition underscores the cyclical nature of change: new prac-

tices that gradually gain legitimacy form alternative norms that, in turn, influence subsequent discourse structures. Inequality and gender transformation, therefore, should be understood as continuously evolving processes in which the family functions as a strategic space for reconstructing meaning, building partnerships, and creating a more equitable balance of roles (Carmichael, 2016).

Compared with earlier research, this study's findings reinforce the evidence that cultural norms and social expectations often sustain inequality in women's roles. Many previous studies emphasise that traditional domestic labour divisions contribute to women's double workload and limit their participation in family decision-making (Carlson & Hans, 2020). This study adds to that body of knowledge by highlighting the discursive dimension, showing how everyday language and narratives help legitimise or challenge inequality. In addition, findings related to role negotiation demonstrate that change occurs not only at the structural level, but also through micro-level family practices that gradually shape alternative norms.

Comparison with prior studies also reveals similarities regarding the impact of role equality on the quality of family relationships. Earlier research indicates that more balanced task distribution is associated with improved communication and relational satisfaction (Havens et al., 2018; Margalina et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2020; Men, L., 2014). The present findings deepen this understanding by demonstrating that shifts in gender discourse contribute to restructuring the meaning of responsibility and authority, so that family harmony results not only from redistributing labour but also from changing how roles are interpreted. In this sense, equality functions as a symbolic mechanism that strengthens family social cohesion.

While much earlier work primarily highlights women's double workload and structural inequality, this study offers a more integrative perspective by positioning the discursive dimension at the centre of analysis. A key strength of the findings lies in their ability to connect normative structures, family practices, and meaning negotiation within a coherent conceptual framework. This approach explains not only why inequality occurs, but also how change can develop through everyday micro-level practices. Furthermore, the study shows that transforming gender relations has direct implications for family emotional well-being, framing equality as a factor that reinforces relational stability rather than merely a normative goal.

This discussion indicates that the study's findings not only support existing theoretical perspectives but also introduce a new lens on how families function as agents of social change. The integration of discourse analysis, relational practices, and psychosocial impacts provides conceptual novelty and practical relevance. The strength of the findings lies in their capacity to explain gender inequality and transformation holistically, while positioning the family as a central site for reconstructing more equitable and sustainable relationships.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

### 4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study imply that gender relations in religious life should not be understood solely through normative theological perspectives, but also through the social and cultural contexts that shape religious interpretation. The study demonstrates that patriarchal bias in religious practice is largely influenced by discourse, power relations, and historical social constructions rather than by the essence of religious teachings themselves. Therefore, educational institutions, religious leaders, and policymakers need to promote a contextual, gender-sensitive understanding of religion through inclusive education, critical interpretation of religious texts, and social policies that support equality. In addition, this study highlights the importance of developing religious discourse that positions men and women as equal partners in social and spiritual life, so that religion can function as an instrument for strengthening social justice and transforming more equitable gender relations.

### 4.2 Research Contributions

This study contributes theoretically and conceptually to the development of gender and religion studies by offering an integrative analysis that connects religious teachings, discourse, power relations, and socio-cultural contexts in shaping gender construction. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on a single religious tradition or structural aspects of inequality, this research adopts a comparative and discourse-based approach to explain how gender relations are reproduced and transformed across religious perspectives. Furthermore, the study contributes methodologically by applying gender discourse analysis as a critical framework for examining religious narratives and social practices. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for academics, educators, and religious institutions in promoting inclusive religious discourse and encouraging the development of more equitable and sustainable gender relations in society.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

### 5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a qualitative library-based approach, meaning that the analysis relied primarily on religious texts, academic literature, and theoretical interpretation without incorporating extensive empirical field data. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the complexity of lived experiences and everyday gender practices within diverse religious communities. Second, the study examined gender discourse across multiple religious traditions in a general and comparative manner, limiting deeper exploration of specific denominations, schools of thought, or local cultural variations that may yield different constructions of gender relations. Third, the use of discourse analysis emphasises interpretive understanding, which may be influenced by the researcher's analytical perspective and contextual interpretation. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a conceptual and interpretive analysis that requires further empirical and contextual validation.

### 5.2 Recommendation for Future Research Direction

Future research is recommended to develop more comprehensive approaches by combining gender discourse analysis with empirical field studies, such as interviews, ethnographic observation, or case studies within specific religious communities. Further studies may also focus on specific religious traditions, denominations, or local socio-cultural contexts to deepen understanding of how gender relations are negotiated and practised in everyday religious life. In addition, future research could explore contemporary issues related to gender and religion, including women's religious leadership, gender-sensitive religious education, digital religious discourse, and the role of religious institutions in promoting social equality. Expanding the scope of analysis to include intersectional perspectives on class, ethnicity, education, and generational differences would also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in religious contexts. Such studies are expected to strengthen both theoretical development and practical efforts toward more inclusive and equitable gender relations.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that inequality in women's roles within the family is a social phenomenon shaped by gender discourse constructions deeply rooted in cultural values and everyday practices. The assignment of domestic labour to women functions not merely as a task allocation but also as a representation of social identity, legitimised through language, habits, and collective expectations. This normalisation creates the perception that inequality is natural and stable, making imbalanced power relations rarely subject to challenge. Within this framework, the family operates as a primary site for the reproduction of gender norms, where social meaning structures are continually reinforced through daily interaction. Inequality in women's roles should therefore be understood not as an individual issue, but as a systemic outcome of ongoing social processes.

At the same time, the findings show that the family is also a dynamic space that enables negotiation and reinterpretation of gender roles. Practices of domestic cooperation and participatory decision-making reflect the emergence of alternative discourse emphasising shared responsibility and relational fairness. These processes demonstrate family members' reflective capacity to adjust norms in response to practical needs, allowing previously hierarchical relations to shift toward more equitable partnership patterns. Such a transformation affects not only the redistribution of workload but also strengthens communication, mutual respect, and emotional stability within the family. In this sense, changes in gender discourse directly contribute to the quality of interpersonal relationships and overall family well-being.

The study further demonstrates that gender relations evolve through a cyclical process involving discourse structures, family practices, and the transformation of social meaning. Although cultural resistance continues to shape perceptions of women's ideal roles, sustained negotiation practices create opportunities to reconstruct more inclusive norms. The Gender Model Family approach highlights that the family is not solely a site for reproducing inequality, but also a strategic arena for social change. Through reinterpretation of responsibility and redistribution of authority, families can cultivate more just and sustainable relationships. Gender equality within the family, therefore, functions not only as a normative goal but as a foundational element for balanced roles, relational harmony, and broader social development.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to co-authors Mtebi Nkrabia Gmaligan and Joseph Ayamga Awimboora for their valuable collaboration, academic support, and meaningful contributions throughout the research and writing process of this study.

## Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Alice Ayawine: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis. Mtebi Nkrabia Gmaligan: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing, Data Curation. Joseph Ayamga Awimboora: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

## Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used only to assist in language editing, grammar checking, and improving the readability of the manuscript. All scientific ideas, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study remain the full responsibility of the authors. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JGMDS GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study, whether financial, personal, or institutional, that could have influenced the research process or the interpretation of the findings.

## REFERENCES

- Adisa, T. A., Abdulraheem, I., & Isiaka, S. B. (2019). Patriarchal hegemony: Investigating the impact of patriarchy on women's work-life balance. *Gender in Management: an international journal*, 34(1), 19-33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2018-0095>
- Adjei, M., & Chan, A. H. N. (2023). What Women Do, Believe in, and Financially Contribute—What Matters More in Couples' Decision Making? Gender Inequality in Ghana's Small-Scale Fisheries☆. *Rural Sociology*, 88(1), 220-251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12474>
- Adongo, A. A., Dapaah, J. M., & Azumah, F. D. (2023). Gender and leadership positions: understanding women's experiences and challenges in patriarchal societies in Northern Ghana. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 43(11-12), 1114-1137. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-02-2023-0028>
- Adu-Gyamfi, A., Cobbinah, P. B., & Poku-Boansi, M. (2021). Positionality of women in homeownership: A process of gender contract negotiation. *Housing Studies*, 36(2), 180-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2019.1690131>
- Alo, S. A., Sedegah, D. D., & Akagbor, M. A. (2022). Gendered power relationships and inequality in Northern Ghana. In *Democratic governance, law, and development in Africa: Pragmatism, experiments, and prospects* (pp. 223-254). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15397-6\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15397-6_9)
- Ayentimi, D. T., Abadi, H. A., Adjei, B., & Burgess, J. (2020). Gender equity and inclusion in Ghana; good intentions, uneven progress. *Labour and Industry*, 30(1), 66-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2019.1697486>
- Carlson, D. L., Miller, A. J., & Rudd, S. (2020). Division of housework, communication, and couples' relationship satisfaction. *Socius*, 6, 2378023120924805. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023120924805>
- Carlson, M. W., & Hans, J. D. (2020). Maximizing benefits and minimizing impacts: Dual-earner couples' perceived division of household labor decision-making process. *Journal of Family Studies*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2017.1367712>
- Carmichael, S. G. (2016). *Marriage, family and gender inequality: An historical exploration of the relationship between family systems, the position of women and development* (Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University). <https://research-portal.uu.nl/en/publications/marriage-family-and-gender-inequality-an-historical-exploration-o/>

- Cobbinah, J., Otchere, S., & Akossey, S. E. (2025). The Everyday Politics of Gender, Work, and Domestic Labour: A Qualitative Inquiry into Changing Family Roles in Contemporary African Households. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 2293-2297. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.3188>
- Cook, J., & Waite, L. (2016). 'I think I'm more free with them'—Conflict, Negotiation and Change in Intergenerational Relations in African Families Living in Britain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(8), 1388-1402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1073578>
- Dako-Gyeke, M., & Owusu, P. (2013). A qualitative study exploring factors contributing to gender inequality in rural Ghana. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 481-489. <https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/11608>
- Dalpiaz, E., & Di Stefano, G. (2018). A universe of stories: Mobilizing narrative practices during transformative change. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3), 664-696. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2730>
- Dery, I., Fiaveh, D. Y., & Apusigah, A. A. (2019). "You cannot be like that here": Discourses of sexual identities among urban Ghanaian families. *Gender Issues*, 36(4), 342-356. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-019-09230-6>
- Gadzekpo, A. (2013). Ghana: Women in decision-making—New opportunities, old story. In *The Palgrave international handbook of women and journalism* (pp. 371-383). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137273246\\_27](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137273246_27)
- Grenier, A. M., & Bidgoli, E. (2015). The emotional consequences of organizational change. *Canadian social work review*, 32(1), 187-205. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44387626>
- Havens, D. S., Gittell, J. H., & Vasey, J. (2018). Impact of relational coordination on nurse job satisfaction, work engagement and burnout: Achieving the quadruple aim. *JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration*, 48(3), 132-140. <https://doi.org/10.1097/naa.0000000000000587>
- Kwaku, O. F. L., & Adusah-Karikari, A. (2015). Breaking through the glass ceiling: Strategies to enhance the advancement of women in Ghana's public service. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(3), 359-379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614530381>
- Margalina, V. M., de Pablos Heredero, C., Botella, J. L. M., & Martinez, A. R. G. (2014). The role of relational coordination in final teacher satisfaction in e-learning. *Procedia Technology*, 16, 365-375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.protcy.2014.10.102>
- Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: Transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management communication quarterly*, 28(2), 264-284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914524536>
- Mengba, J. D., Atanga, R. A., & Akurugu, C. A. (2022). Small-scale gold mining and gender roles: Critical reflections on socio-cultural dynamics in north-eastern Ghana. *SN Social Sciences*, 3(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00591-6>
- Mersha, A. A., & Van Laerhoven, F. (2016). A gender approach to understanding the differentiated impact of barriers to adaptation: responses to climate change in rural Ethiopia. *Regional Environmental Change*, 16(6), 1701-1713. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-015-0921-z>
- Milazzo, A., & Goldstein, M. (2019). Governance and women's economic and political participation: Power inequalities, formal constraints and norms. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 34(1), 34-64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lky006>
- Naab, F. X., & Laube, W. (2025). "Beyond Bloodlines": Exploring Changing Patrilineal Family Dynamics, Gender Roles and Gender Disparities in Education in Rural Ghana. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1530-353520250000028008>
- Nartey, M. (2021). A feminist critical discourse analysis of Ghanaian feminist blogs. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(4), 657-672. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1837910>
- Nartey, P., Bahar, O. S., & Nabunya, P. (2023). A review of the cultural gender norms contributing to gender inequality in Ghana: An ecological systems perspective. *Journal of international women's studies*, 25(7), 14. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11086636/>
- Ngulube, Z. (2018). The influence of Traditional gender roles and Power relations on women and girls' education and health in Northern Ghana. *Unpublished BA Thesis. University of Iceland School of Education.*
- Orkoh, E., Claassen, C., & Blaauw, D. (2022). Poverty and intrahousehold gender inequality in time use in Ghana. *Feminist Economics*, 28(4), 221-253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2022.2080854>
- Pearse, R., & Connell, R. (2016). Gender norms and the economy: Insights from social research. *Feminist economics*, 22(1), 30-53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2015.1078485>

- Pekdemir, I., Koçoglu, M., & Gürkan, G. Ç. (2013). The effects of harmony of family, distributive justice, and role ambiguity on family member impediment: The mediating role of relationship conflict as an example of developing country Turkey. *Asian Social Science*, 9(9), 131. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n9p131>
- Sanchez, D. T., Fetterolf, J. C., & Rudman, L. A. (2012). Eroticizing inequality in the United States: The consequences and determinants of traditional gender role adherence in intimate relationships. *Journal of sex research*, 49(2-3), 168-183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2011.653699>
- Sekyi, D., Aduko, B., Kontor, F., Ofori, R., Arthur, A. N., Boateng, A. A., & Appiah, S. C. Y. (2025). Work–family conflict among women in male-dominated informal sector: a case study of Suame Magazine, Ghana. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1), 2574398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2574398>
- Sikweyiya, Y., Addo-Lartey, A. A., Alangea, D. O., Dako-Gyeke, P., Chirwa, E. D., Coker-Appiah, D., ... & Jewkes, R. (2020). Patriarchy and gender-inequitable attitudes as drivers of intimate partner violence against women in the central region of Ghana. *BMC public health*, 20(1), 682. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08825-z>
- Sterponi, L. (2009). Accountability in family discourse: Socialization into norms and standards and negotiation of responsibility in Italian dinner conversations. *Childhood*, 16(4), 441-459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568209343269>
- Teye, J. K., Darkwah, A. K., Thorsen, D., Abutima, T. K., & Boateng, D. A. (2025). Negotiating gender roles and power relations through the management of international migrant remittances in a patriarchal community in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 60(1), 36-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231160695>
- Tufuor, T., Sato, C., & Niehof, A. (2016). Gender, households and reintegration: everyday lives of returned migrant women in rural northern Ghana. *Gender, place & culture*, 23(10), 1480-1495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2016.1204999>
- Wrigley-Asante, C. (2011). Women becoming bosses: Changing gender roles and decision making in Dangme West District of Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Geography*, 3, 60-87. <https://journals.ug.edu.gh/index.php/gjg/article/view/493>

## Article Information

### Copyright holder:

© Ayawine, A., Gmaligan, M. N., & Awimboora, J. A (2026)

### First Publication Right:

Journal of Gender and Millennium Development Studies

### Article info:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64420/jgmds.v3i1.499>

Word Count: 6168

### Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:

The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of AEDUCIA and/or the editor(s). AEDUCIA and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.

This Article is licensed under: **CC-BY-SA 4.0**