

Does cooking for my wife make me less of a man?

I have been married to my wife, Shakira, for four years. She works in a bank and often comes home just as tired as I am. From the beginning, she made it clear that she does not believe kitchen duties are automatically a woman's responsibility. Many evenings, I cook supper, wash dishes, or we order food. Truthfully, I do not mind sharing the work because we both contribute financially. The problem is not inside my home; it is outside. My relatives constantly mock me, saying I am being controlled. Some have even told me that a man who washes saucepans will eventually lose authority in his marriage. Recently, an elder hinted that I am setting a "bad example" for younger men. Is modern marriage about partnership, or am I slowly surrendering my respect as a man to keep peace in my home? **Ronald Kato**

Dear Ronald,

This concern is very common in today's marriages and can indeed create tension. What you are experiencing reflects a gap between traditional expectations and the lived reality of modern relationships. Many couples today navigate roles that look very different from what previous generations considered "normal."

Let us begin with the reality; cooking does not define masculinity. Masculinity is not measured by whether you cook, wash dishes, or sweep. These are life skills, not indicators of gender. When a man feeds himself and cares for his household, he demonstrates responsibility, competence, care for his family, and emotional maturity. In fact, many people view this as a strength rather than a weakness.

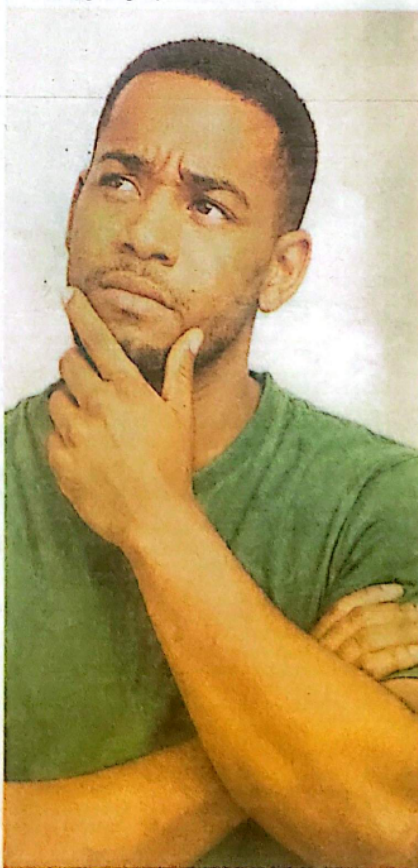
Growing up in the 1990s, I watched my father cook special meals for us and even wash clothes at times. It never made me see him as less of a man. On the contrary, I saw him as a gentleman, a caring and confident man who was secure in himself. To this day, he remains one of my strongest examples of healthy masculinity. His actions taught me that love and responsibility are not based on gender.

Your relatives may be interpreting your behaviour through a traditional lens, where men were expected to be sole providers, and women were the domestic managers. In that structure, roles were clearly divided, and stepping outside them could be seen as unusual. However, society has changed. Today, it is common for both partners to work and contribute financially, which naturally leads to equitable changes in household roles.

Marriage works best with teamwork, as you rightly mentioned. Since both of you spend energy earning a living, fairness at home becomes logical. Sharing household chores does not mean losing authority; rather, it reflects shared ownership and responsibility for the well-being of your home. A house belongs to both of you, and its maintenance should not rest on one person simply because of

gender.

Healthy marriages operate on mutual respect, negotiation, and flexibility. There will be seasons when one partner feels more stressed or overwhelmed than the other, and in such times, support becomes more important than rigid role-keeping. Authority in marriage should be based on influence built through respect, not control built



70%

Cause of conflict.

Surveys show that over 70 percent of cohabiting couples report disagreements about fair division of tasks, with chores such as cleaning, dishwashing, and trash disposal sparking the most arguments.

Women often report doing more housework, while men are more likely to perceive chores as shared equally, creating a perception gap.

Unequal or unfair chore distribution is linked to frequent arguments, dissatisfaction, and even relationship breakdowns, with some studies citing housework disputes in up to 25 percent of divorces. Clear communication and fair division are key to reducing tension.

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through fear. Influence grows when both partners feel heard, valued, and supported.

It is also important to understand that respect is not automatically guaranteed by avoiding chores. A partner can deeply respect you even when you wash dishes out of shared responsibility. Conversely, a partner may lose respect for someone who refuses to help while offering little emotional support or leadership in other areas. Respect is built through character, consistency, and fairness, not by avoiding the kitchen.

Comments from outsiders, including relatives, only gain power if you equate authority with control. If your sense of manhood depends on public approval, you may constantly feel pressured to perform for others. However, if your confidence comes from the health of your marriage, external opinions will matter less.

As a couple, focus on what works for both of you. Build your home around comfort, cooperation, and shared goals, not around proving a point to outsiders. Some men may appear authoritative in public by refusing domestic tasks, yet privately their marriages may suffer from resentment and emotional distance. Peace at home is far more valuable than praise from others.

You might even be setting a positive example. A young man observing your marriage could learn that cooperation is not competition. He may see that partnership strengthens a home rather than weakens it. Change often begins with someone choosing a healthier approach despite criticism.

However, it is essential to reflect honestly. Ask yourself: Do you feel respected by your wife? Do you feel valued? Are decisions made together? Do you feel heard when you express your needs? If your answers are yes, then your marriage is functioning well, and external comments should not sway you. If any of these answers are no, then the issue may not be chores but communication, and seeking guidance from a professional marriage therapist could help you both assess and strengthen your relationship.

In the end, modern marriage is less about rigid roles and more about partnership. True masculinity is not fragile; it does not disappear in the kitchen. It is reflected in responsibility, stability, and the ability to nurture a healthy, respectful home. If your actions are promoting peace, unity, and mutual respect, then you are not losing your authority; you are exercising mature and confident leadership within your marriage.