



Participation of Women belonging to Socio-Economically Backward Sections of the Society in the Implementation of Household Tasks and Functions

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Received: July 08, 2019; **Published:** October 18, 2019

Abstract

The participation of women in household activities and functions is an imperative area, which women belonging to all categories and backgrounds are required to put into practice. The main purpose of this research paper is to understand the participation of women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society in the implementation of household tasks and functions. These women are in most cases, not educated or possess low literacy skills, hence due to this major fact, they are unable to get engaged in reputed employment opportunities. On the other hand, there has been prevalence of the viewpoint that women are meant to perform the household chores and education and jobs are not meant for them. Therefore, they are primarily engaged in the performance of household tasks, child development and in taking care of the needs of other family members. Household tasks are regarded as full time jobs and they are wholeheartedly dedicated towards them.

Keywords: Decision Making; Family Members; Household Tasks; Responsibility; Women

Introduction

The women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society render a significant participation in the performance of household tasks and functions. There are numerous activities and chores that are required to get implemented within the household and it is vital for the women to possess efficient skills and abilities. In rural communities and socio-economically backward sections of the society, there has been prevalence of the viewpoint that girls and women should be trained regarding the performance of household chores and in taking care of the needs and requirements of family members. Within the house of their parents, they are trained from the initial stage regarding the performance of household chores, taking care of elderly family members and younger siblings. These individuals mainly possess this viewpoint that girls have to eventually get married and have to render a significant participation in household and family responsibilities.

Position and participation of women are connected to the cultural practices and social system within the country. Women

contribute a significant part of the Gross Domestic Product of the country, in spite of this fact, they are not treated equal to men in many aspects. India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on the gender inequality index, lower than Pakistan (123), in accordance to the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report 2013. In India, in spite of six decades of development, rural women continue in the hold of economic dependence, social negligence and political ignorance, preventing them from achieving their due place within the society. Though women among the socio-economically backward sections of the society participate in economic activities, they have less role in the decision making processes, particularly in matters related to agriculture and finances. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and local levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice within the community [1].

House-work: The responsibility of women

When house-work is regarded as the responsibility of women, then there are certain questions that are associated. These include, how is housework carried out and maintained in contemporary Indian society? Are Indian norms, values, attitudes and beliefs effectively responsible for the gender roles in the household? Is labour divided by gender, so that women have to do housework, while men have to work outside the home? Within the Indian society, traditional norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are well maintained. These perform the role of regulating the lives of both men and women. Within the household, men and women are vested with certain rights and authority. They have respective tasks and functions, which they are required to carry out in order to make their living conditions productive and efficient [2].

Within the household, some of the job duties are carried out jointly with mutual understanding between the males and females, on the other hand, other job duties are assigned to men and women, on the basis of their aptitude and proficiency. Within the rural communities and among the socio-economically backward sections of the society, there has been prevalence of the viewpoint that the male members of the family should acquire education and get engaged in employment opportunities. On the other hand, female members should be trained regarding the implementation of household chores and school education and employment opportunities are not meant for them. From the stage of early childhood, females are trained regarding the implementation of household chores. From the childhood stage, they are trained regarding how to perform simple household activities, such as, cleaning the utensils, furniture and other small items and as they grow up, they are taught how to perform other household functions, such as, fetching water, washing, sweeping, purchasing items from the market, preparation of meals and rearing the livestock.

The woman looks upon her rights and duties with devoutness and responsibility in discharging all domestic work. The man does the masculine type of work, which is primarily based outside the home. Moreover, the cultural expectations that govern, what is masculine and feminine also set territorial boundaries, where masculinity and femininity are to be expressed in a better way. For women, it is household and for men, it is employment opportunities outside the home, around which their lives are centred. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are not merely biological

but also cultural. Usually the man is assigned the masculine duty of completely providing economic support and security to his family. He is governing and authoritative in the pursuit of personal and family needs and accomplishments [2].

As an ideal husband, he is to be the provider, supporter, protector and benefactor of his wife and family. In return, he is to get sincere, kind, expressive in interacting with others, and individuals of all categories require reverence, affection, admiration and services to satisfy various needs and desires. The concept of masculinity defines roles for the males and females within the family. This regulates their characteristics and specifies the household tasks to be carried out. If a man somehow gets engaged in feminine types of housework like preparation of meals, washing dishes or sweeping floors, it harms his masculinity. An ideal woman, who has to be true and devoted to the household and needs of the family members is expected to tend to the personal needs and the comfort of her husband and family. This compliments the assumptions of masculinity [2].

Standards, norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are responsible for regulating housework by gender. Housework is primarily regarded as women's work, whether or not they are educated or employed. In the present existence, women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society are also enhancing their literacy skills, acquiring education and getting engaged in employment opportunities. In spite of these factors, they have to carry out the household chores. Men are unenthusiastic to perform domestic tasks, because of deep conditioning in their background and early experience. Women normally possess this viewpoint that men are not prepared to do any kind of domestic jobs, as they have not been trained for such work by their mothers [2]. Generally, women have been performing the domestic tasks and feel that changes cannot come about in this tradition. In the present existence, changes have come about in this tradition. When men and women, both are engaged in full time jobs, then it is vital that they should jointly carry out the household tasks and other responsibilities. In nuclear families, they both have to assist each other in the implementation of household tasks and men too possess knowledge regarding preparation of meals or performing other kinds of domestic chores.

The universality of the domestic role of women is so well established that, in general, they are expected to be domestically expe-

rienced within the household. Therefore, in most cases, girls are given domestic learning and recreation during their early induction to family life. It has also been observed that women learn their gender role expectations in their families and afterwards transmit them to their children. Thus, women initiate and maintain ritualistic and traditional behaviour for the future lives of the female children. The deep-rooted and intensive idea behind the female's gender role responsibility is well expressed by phrases such as, the house as the woman's natural place or women are meant for housework. This is the reason, women have been responsible for doing housework for centuries, and they are indispensable and accomplished in this area [2]. In the present existence, women are becoming enthusiastic to contribute towards the generation of family income. Hence, they usually take up some kinds of minority jobs as well as carry out the household chores.

Contribution of women to household economy

Women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society are regarded as strong pillars of the economy. One of the most important institutions within the lives of these individuals is the household. The household is the basic unit of the society, where individuals, both co-operate and compete for resources [3]. Though, women may not render a significant contribution in the generation of income, but their contribution towards the household economy is recognized to a major extent. Operative contribution towards the household economy enables them to possess information and knowledge regarding various areas. Effective management of household resources enables individuals to live life more meaningfully and not only in India, but in other countries of the world as well, women are primarily responsible for the management of household resources. Women in most cases, are engaged in more than one economic activity, are major contributors to food production, have successfully managed human and economic resources to achieve optimum results, became employers of labour, thereby reducing unemployment, and the farms of these women in rural areas, contributed to reduction in food shortage crisis and contributing substantially to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security [4].

The factors that depict contribution of women to household economy have been stated as follows

- **Child Development:** Child development is a function that is of utmost significance and women are the ones who are primarily responsible. They have to take care of the needs and requirements of the children from the initial stage. Their diet and nutrition, health, education and overall growth and development of the children are the major responsibilities of women. Besides, growth and development, they are supposed to inculcate the traits of morality, ethics, honesty and truthfulness within their children, so that they turn into effective individuals within the home as well as outside the home. Women teach their children how to communicate in an effective manner with other family members, within and outside the home. In addition, they need to supervise the education of their children effectively. When they themselves are unable to teach them, they usually arrange for tuition classes, so that the children are able to receive adequate training in difficult subject areas.
- **Needs of Other Family Members:** Other family members include their parents, siblings, grandparents, spouse and in-laws. Women are responsible in meeting their needs and requirements. For instance, when parents go to work, they train their girls to take care of younger siblings, provide assistance to elderly grandparents in case they need something and even assist their parents with implementation of household chores and performance of other tasks. Usually, women are meant to cater to the needs and requirements of the individuals in their marital homes. These include, domestic chores, health care needs, financial management and making provision of support and assistance, when experiencing any problems or challenges.
- **Household Chores:** Household chores are numerous and among socio-economically backward sections of the society, women are responsible for their implementation, especially when their spouses go to work. These include, cleaning, sweeping, washing, fetching water, preparation of meals, going to the market to purchase items, management of the finances, home decoration and ensuring that all the tasks are carried out in an efficient manner. Women are required to be skilled, capable and hard-working, when they have to carry out all household chores by themselves. Usually, it is difficult to implement all tasks individually, as it causes manual labour. In most cases, women obtain help from other family members, mainly their children, especially when their spouses are engaged in full time jobs.
- **Health Care:** Health of the individuals is of utmost significance, belonging to all age groups. Women are the ones, who are mainly responsible in taking care of the health care needs of the family members. For instance, if anybody is ill within the family, then she is responsible for making provision of sup-

port to them. Preparation of adequate meals for them, providing medicines and other assistance is the responsibility of the women of the house. Getting engaged in physical activities are considered important for maintenance of one's health, therefore, women usually encourage their children to get engaged in some kinds of physical activities, such as, running, walking or other kinds of physical exercises.

- **Financial Management:** When women are not engaged in any jobs or businesses, then they obtain finances from the male members of the family to implement the household chores, especially for making the necessary purchases. Whether women are educated or not, it is vital for them to possess adequate information of how to manage the finances in an appropriate manner, especially when they have limited income. Families with limited income need to spend their finances on essential things. Women are required to purchase only the necessary items and not unnecessarily spend on items that they do not need. Proper financial management is the key to sustenance of ones living conditions in an adequate manner.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Within the households, there are occurrence of conflicts and disputes over some issues and concerns. These issues may be major or minor. When individuals are not educated and lack the awareness, they even tend to get engaged into violent and criminal acts and mistreat women. Making provision of effective conflict resolution methods is also one of the major tasks in the management of household economy. It is vital for women to possess the skills and abilities to prevent conflicts from assuming a major form. On the other hand, men should respect the women of the house and communicate with them in a polite and decent manner. It is important for women to ensure that they are proficient in the implementation of household chores and meeting the needs and requirements of other family members.
- **Decision Making Processes:** Decision making is an important area that individuals have to be skilled at. It takes place within the house as well as outside the house. Within the household, individuals are required to make important decisions with respect to purchase of items, preparation of meals, education of children, employment opportunities of the male members, purchase and sale of land, property, provision of civic amenities, infrastructure and other facilities and so forth. Women have the right to participate in the decision making processes, but they are required to consult others, others may include, other women, elderly and male members of the family.
- **Cultural Traits:** Values, norms, ethics, principles and beliefs are essential in the implementation of household chores. The cultural traits are primarily conceptualised within the traditions. They are the shared set of attitudes, norms, and beliefs. For instance, in some households, there is a trend that one

should not consume food, without offering prayers and taking a bath. In some households, individuals abstain themselves of certain food items, in some cases, women have to cover their heads, before the elderly and the male members of the household and so forth. The cultural traits are considered essential in the management of household tasks and in making ones living efficient.

- **Other Occupations:** Women, besides being engaged in household tasks, usually supplement family income by getting engaged in other activities. These may include, production and manufacturing of handicrafts, selling food items, agricultural sector, farming practices, construction work, domestic helpers and participating in cultural and religious activities. Rural women are mostly skilled at performing dance and musical programs. Therefore, these occupations not only generate extra income, but also make provision of the opportunities for them to utilize their skills and abilities. The family members usually feel pleased and satisfied, when women are engaged in creative activities and occupations, besides the implementation of household tasks.
- **Religious Activities and Functions:** Among the households, women are primarily responsible in the management of functions and religious activities. When there is celebration of any festival or ceremony regarding marriage or birth or when any other religious or social function is organised, then women have to play an important role. They not only are responsible for the management of various proceedings associated, but have to communicate in an effective manner with all the guests and other individuals involved. In some cases, management of religious and social activities and functions cause stress, but one has to learn how to cope up with challenges and problems in an appropriate manner.

Household responsibilities

The various kinds of household responsibilities have been stated as follows: [5].

- **Repairing things around the House:** Within the house, there are numerous areas that require repairing. The individuals, belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society, either themselves repair the things or they may discard the items, which they are unable to use. Men and women, both are usually engaged in the repairing of things. These may include, kitchen appliances, or other tools, machinery and equipment.
- **Making arrangements to have Repairs done:** In some cases, the individuals are required to make arrangements to get repairs done. For instance, when one is unable to get something fixed and need help from others. Then they

may either call someone in the neighbourhood or a person, who is skilled and proficient, such as plumbers, carpenters, electricians, painters and so forth.

- **Doing the Utensils:** Cleaning the utensils is an important household task. After preparation of meals and consumption of meals, it is essential to clean the dishes and utensils. It is mainly the job of the person to clean the utensils, who is preparing the meals. But one can assist the other, by cleaning one's dishes himself after consumption of meals. It is not a difficult job and women usually train their children from the initial stage, how to clean the utensils.
- **Preparation of Meals:** It is important for the individuals to possess the essential skills and abilities regarding preparation of meals. Before preparation of meals, it is vital to implement certain procedures, such as, washing the vegetables, chopping the vegetables appropriately, using clean utensils, using ingredients in proper quantities and following appropriate preparation strategies. The preparation of meals should take place within a hygienic, uncontaminated and clean place.
- **Cleaning the House:** Cleaning the house is an essential area, as all individuals desire to live in clean surroundings. Wealthy individuals usually hire helpers and cleaners to get their house clean. On the other hand, socio-economically backward sections of the society have small homes and are engaged in cleaning work on their own. Cleaning in some cases is hard and involves manual labour, but when their living accommodations are small, they are able to manage this task on a daily basis.
- **Laundry:** The meaning of the term laundry is washing of clothes. These individuals normally do laundry manually. In order to maintain one's health and sustain one's living conditions in an appropriate manner, it is essential to do laundry and use clean clothes. When these individuals are engaged in manual tasks, and they do not possess large amount of clothes, then it is essential to do laundry regularly.
- **Ironing:** The individuals belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society in most cases, do not iron their clothes, especially when they are engaged in manual and blue collar jobs. In the present existence, it is a fact that when parents are not educated, children belonging to these categories are acquiring higher education and are getting engaged in reputed jobs. Therefore, when they are going to educational institutions or to the workplace, they need to wear ironed clothes.
- **Rearing the Livestock:** Rearing of the livestock is an essential household responsibility of these individuals. This job is usually carried out jointly by men and women. But when men are engaged in full time jobs, then women have to perform this task. It includes, appropriately feeding them, looking after their health care needs, making provision of appropriate shelter in accordance to the weather conditions and providing medicines and other facilities, especially, when they are ill.
- **Purchasing Food and Other Items:** Purchasing food and other items is an essential aspect that members of the household have to carry out. In most cases, this job duty is carried out jointly by both men and women. In order to carry out this job in an appropriate manner, it is essential for the individuals to possess the basic literacy skills and how to manage the finances. Even when these individuals are not educated, their experience of life and engagement in jobs makes provision of knowledge regarding how to purchase food and other items from the market. They are well aware of how to manage the finances, as when they have to manage the household responsibilities, obtain salaries in their occupations or make use of finances in carrying out businesses.
- **Fetching Water:** In rural areas, individuals usually have to rely on water bodies or wells to make provision of water, as they usually experience scarcity of water in their homes. In most cases, women are required to go to the wells and water bodies to fetch water. As it is used for multiple purposes within the household such as, cleaning, washing, cooking, drinking etc. When families are large and they are also required to maintain livestock, then usually more water is required. It is one of the major responsibilities of the household, particularly in rural areas and need to be carried out on daily basis.
- **Organizing Social Life:** Organizing social life is an essential household responsibility of all the members of the households. Whether, they are educated or not, it is essential for the individuals to be social and form effective terms and relationships with not only family members, relatives and friends but also with the members of the community. Establishing effective communication terms is an essential area in the organization of social life. Organization of social life makes the individual feel elated, pleasurable and satisfied. An individual is more kind, sincere, honest and truthful, when he is able to organize his or her social life.
- **Communicating with Relatives:** It is primarily the household responsibility of the women to communicate and provide assistance and service to relatives and friends. When relatives make a visit to their house, then usually women have to communicate with them in an effective manner, provide them any kind of assistance they need or in serving meals. It is their responsibility to keep in touch with relatives and friends by speaking to them over the phone on a regular basis. Whenever any kind of give and take of gifts need to be carried out, then women usually participate before, even with the relatives within their marital homes.

Household production and significance of research for valuation of unpaid household production

The production of goods and services by the households can be divided into production, projected to be sold or exchanged, i.e. market production and that to be consumed by the household itself or given free of charge to another individual, i.e. non-market production. The former is within the domain of the System of National Accounts (SNA) economic production boundary and called SNA market production. The latter can be further divided into three sub-categories, specifically, the production of goods, the production of paid domestic services and owner occupied housing services and the production of other services. The first two also are almost completely included in the SNA economic production boundary and referred to as SNA non-market production. The third type of household production consists of formal and informal unpaid volunteer services and those other domestic and personal services that are consumed within the household, both of which are explicitly excluded from the SNA economic production boundary [6].

One can further divide the third category into two parts, specifically, personal activities, these mainly include, physiological and recreational activities such as eating, sleeping, exercising, etc. and the unpaid household activities, including care activities. Personal activities are defined as those activities and services consumed by an individual that cannot be performed by anyone else other than the individual himself. Such activities are not considered to be productive in an economic sense and are therefore, excluded even from the general production boundary of the SNA. One normally refers to them as non-productive activities. On the other hand, unpaid household activities include care activities, these are those, which are performed in most cases, by women but consumed not only by the women themselves, but also by the other members of the households. Therefore, they are positively productive activities, but not included in the SNA economic production boundary [6].

All kinds of household responsibilities that are unpaid are mainly referred to the production of goods and services by the family members that are not sold in the market. Some household work is for the consumption of the entire family, such as, cooking, and house cleaning. The products of household work can also be consumed by people, not living in the household, e.g. cooking for guests, buying groceries for an elderly relative, or training neigh-

bours regarding preparation of handicrafts. The border between household responsibilities and personal care and leisure is determined by the third person criterion. If any third person can be paid to do the activity, it is considered as work. Cooking, cleaning, child care, laundry, ironing, cleaning the utensils, repairing etc. comprise various kinds of household work. On the other hand, someone else cannot be paid to get engaged in any kind of recreation activity, games, read a book or sleep, as the benefits of these activities are enjoyed by the performer. Consequently these latter activities are considered to be personal care or leisure [6].

Household responsibilities in some cases cause stress, especially when they are implemented single-handedly. On the other hand, when several women of the household get engaged co-operatively, it is less stressful and less time consuming. In some cases, they are even considered to be enjoyable, such as, preparation of dishes that one enjoys, playing with children, feeding and playing with livestock or getting engaged in the production of handicrafts and artworks. Pleasure and satisfaction arising from these areas is a benefit that cannot be transferred to another person. The person, who is engaged in the implementation of these activities, he is the one, who benefits and feels pleasurable. Still, such activities are considered to be gratifying, which are unpaid. Thus the level of satisfaction of the person performing the task or activity cannot be used to differentiate between work and leisure [6].

Activities of the human beings can be classified into four main categories and these have been stated as follows: [6].

- **Unpaid Household Work:** The various kinds of household work that is unpaid includes, cleaning, cooking, fetching water, rearing the livestock, purchasing food and other items, home maintenance, child development, looking after the health care needs and meeting the needs and requirements of other family members. Even though some of the household responsibilities are difficult, but their implementation requires skills and hard work. The individuals need to possess the required skills and abilities to perform the household work in an efficient manner. Unpaid household work mainly contributes in keeping the women occupied.
- **Care Work:** When care work is taken into consideration, then emphasis is mainly put upon child care and care for the elderly members of the family. Child care can again be divided into three sub-categories, namely, physical care, educational or recreational care and travel related

to physical or recreational child care. Physical child care is meeting the basic needs of children, including, dressing and feeding, providing medical care, and supervising them in the performance of other tasks and activities. These may include, education, extra-curricular activities or any other work. Education and recreation child care implies helping children with their homework assignments, reading books, telling stories, teaching them drawing and painting and playing games with them. Travel related to any of the two other categories means taking children to school, medical centres, tuition classes, training centres and so forth.

- Caring for the elderly members of the family is an important household responsibility. When individuals reach the age of 70 and above, they begin to experience health problems. Their word usage and vocabulary begins to decline and in some cases, they need help in carrying out even activities of daily living, which includes, eating, bathing, dressing, toileting and transferring. The women of the household are primarily responsible in taking care of the needs and requirements of elderly family members. They prepare meals for them that are suitable for their health, provide them medicines, help them get engaged in physical activities and take care of other needs and requirements. When male members of the family are not around or are at work, then women are responsible for helping them, taking them to medical and health care centres and also helping them in the implementation of other routine tasks.
- **Construction and Repair:** Construction and repair of household premises is an important area. Individuals belonging to all categories and backgrounds desire to live in a house that is properly maintained. The tools, equipment and machinery that one makes use of within the house, to carry out different tasks and functions should be adequately maintained. This aspect is of utmost significance as if the appliances, machinery and equipment are not maintained properly can even cause accidents or other kinds of detrimental effects. Construction and repair work is mostly done by the male members of the family, but women are also trained and they can also carry out these jobs in an appropriate manner.
- **Jobs and Other Activities:** Paid work includes full time and part time paid jobs within or outside the household premises. Outside the home, jobs that these individuals are engaged in mainly include, minority jobs of construction workers, domestic helpers, repair workers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, painters, weavers, and so forth. Within the household premises, they are getting engaged in any kinds of businesses, such as, production of handicrafts, food items and so forth. Unpaid social or religious work include, getting engaged in any kind of religious and social activities. Personal care includes sleep-

ing, eating and drinking, and going outside the house for medical and personal services. Leisure activities include, pursuing hobbies, watching television, using computers and technology, getting engaged in sports, socialising with friends and family, attending cultural events, and so on. Unpaid social work means unpaid work for relatives, friends and for the community, i.e. various voluntary works which contribute directly and indirectly to the well-being of the community.

Participation in decision making by women on different aspects

Women within the age group of 36 to 45 years as compared to younger women and belonging to small farms and agricultural labour take decisions on important matters as they earn cash income and have control over resources. Division of labour within the household reflects the pattern of authority structure. Women primarily are meant to perform domestic chores and the functions of child development. They are deeply involved with the maintenance of the household. The fact remains that female workers contribute significantly to household income across all farm sizes and their earnings are found important for landless and small farm households yet, the status of female agricultural workers in the decision making processes is in a deprived state [1]. The women belonging to socio-economically weaker sections of the society are also engaged in minority jobs. These include, domestic helpers, construction workers, cooks, cleaners and so forth. Their income is meagre, but they usually feel that they will be able to sustain their living conditions through these minority jobs.

Women's autonomy in the decision making processes is associated with their background, culture, deprivation level, urban, rural classification, education, and the number of living children. The age and family structure of women are regarded as major determinants of women's authority in decision making [1]. The different aspects regarding which women render a significant contribution have been stated as follows: [1].

- **Participation in Decision Making in Domestic Activities:** Domestic activities are numerous in the implementation of which, women have to play an important part. They have to contribute a significant part in the decision making processes in domestic activities. These primarily include, purchase of food items, domestic goods and other items within the household, home decoration, new house construction, renovation of old house, child development, education of children, needs and requirements

of other family members, health care requirements, performing other domestic chores, such as, cleaning, washing, fetching water, taking care of the livestock and management of other aspects within the house. When women are making decisions concerning these matters, it is vital for them to be concerned regarding the family members. For instance, in the purchase of food items and preparation of meals, it is vital for them to take into consideration, which food items are healthy for the family members. Especially, when a person is ill, then he has to be careful about his diet and nutrition.

- **Participation in Decision Making in Money Related Matters:** Participation of women is less in money related matters. In the implementation of household tasks and functions, they have to obtain money from their husbands and convey to them the areas, where they have spent it. Money related matters include, purchasing and selling of different items, taking debt for the domestic needs, expenditure on different items, giving loans and saving and investment. The socio-economically backward sections of the society are primarily effected by the conditions of poverty. Therefore, they are cautious of money matters and mostly spend on items that are necessary. The decision making in money related matters is primarily vested within the male members of the household. On the other hand, women are usually consulted regarding how much money they require to carry out the household tasks. The domestic chores, education of children, health care, medical, home maintenance, buying and selling of property, provision of civic amenities and other facilities require decision making in money related matters.
- **Participation in Decision Making in Agriculture Related Matters:** Agriculture is the major occupation of individuals in rural areas. Decision making in agriculture related matters include, purchase of machinery, purchase and sale of animals, purchase and sale of land, sale of agricultural output, types of seeds, use of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, use of modern and innovative techniques, irrigation methods and other advanced technology to improve production. Participation of women within the decision making processes in agricultural related matters is usually in the purchase of agricultural tools, equipment, seeds, fertilizers and insecticides. Mostly decisions in agriculture related matters are taken by the male members. However, in the case of buying and selling of animals, the participation of women in decision making is significant as in most cases, they are responsible for the rearing of livestock. In rural areas, in most cases, women are engaged in the agricultural sector. Hence, they are faced with numerous responsibilities, household and family responsibilities and agricultural and farming practices.
- **Freedom of Women to go Outside the Home:** Women in their marital as well as parents home have to obtain permission, whenever they have to go outside the home. The main areas for which they have to go outside the homes mainly include, going to the doctor, medical or health care centre, visiting a friend's house, social and religious functions, educational institutions or training centres, market place to purchase something for themselves or the household or other family members and going outside for work or employment. In some cases, women have to obtain permission, while in other cases, they just have to inform their family members, when going outside the house. Regarding educational institutions and employment opportunities, women cannot make decisions on their own and have to seek guidance and permission from others. Whereas, when they are going somewhere for a short while, such as, market, friend's house, social function, health care centre, doctor, then they usually inform at home.
- **Factors Affecting Decision Making Power of Women:** There are number of factors which affect the decision making power of women such as, age, educational qualifications, skills, capabilities, size of the family, size of land holdings, and their participation in agricultural, farming or other occupations and businesses. Household decision making is normally associated with the size of land holdings and age of the women. Women's decision making power is expected to be higher in small farm households as compared to large farm households. If a woman is aged or head of the family, as grandmother, mother-in-law, and mother, her advice is taken, and in most cases, ideas and suggestions are taken from her. She exercises control over the implementation of all tasks and activities. On the other hand, daughter-in-laws or daughters are not expected to exercise independent decision making.
- Size of the family and type of family are the main factors that influence the decision making power of women. In nuclear families, men and women jointly make the decisions but in joint families, decision making is mostly implemented by the male head of the household. Levels of education and literacy skills also affects the decision making power of women. If women are educated, possess the basic literacy skills, are aware and are economically active in any work then their decision making power will be more as compared to illiterate or non-working women. Generation of awareness, development of skills and aptitude and acquisition of information regarding various areas enables women to make wise decisions and remain active in the implementation of household tasks and functions.

Lifestyles of women

The women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society in most cases are not educated. They either possess low literacy skills or no literacy skills at all. It is vital for these women to possess some kind of literacy skills, as they are considered essential to carry out various tasks and functions of the household, development of children and in taking care of the needs and requirements of other family members. The main factors that influence the lives of these women have been stated as follows:

- **Household Tasks and Functions:** Implementation of household tasks and functions are considered as one of the major aspects that these women are required to put into practice. Their lives are primarily focused upon household activities. The socio-economically backward sections of the society mainly reside in rural areas and when they migrate to urban areas, they look for one room apartments to sustain their living conditions. Preparation of meals, cleaning, repairing and tasks concerning the overall maintenance of the house are the essential household tasks and functions, which mostly women have to carry out.
- **Getting engaged in Creative Activities:** When women remain at home and need to look for means to supplement their income, then in some cases, they even get engaged in creative activities. These include, producing and selling handicrafts and artworks, preparing and selling food items or other activities such as, candle making and so forth. They acquire training regarding how to develop their skills in these areas and attempt to make their living productive by getting engaged in creative activities. When women are not able to acquire education and drop out of school, then they usually learn some skills to generate a source of income. When involvement in creative activities are utilized in an efficient manner to supplement family income, this causes pleasure and satisfaction among them.
- **Social Activities:** Women in most cases, take pleasure in socializing with other individuals. These may include, their family members, relatives, friends, neighbours and other community members. In the case of any function or event within the family or society, they jointly participate and render a significant contribution. Within their community, when there is organization of any function, then individuals are assigned certain responsibilities and collaborate with each other. In order to get engaged in social activities, it is vital for the individuals to possess an approachable attitude and effective communication skills. With these traits, one is able to create a social circle and is able to share ones joys and sorrows with others.
- **Religious Activities:** Women, belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society usually possess strong religious beliefs. They in some cases, make visit to religious places on a daily basis. Their viewpoints are strong that religious beliefs will help them to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner and eliminate any kinds of problems that they are experiencing. These problems may be regarding illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. Besides having faith in religion, it is vital for the individuals to work hard towards eliminating any kinds of problems and barriers that may arise within the course of their growth and progress.
- **Education and Child Development:** Education is regarded as one of the imperative areas that render a significant contribution towards the growth and development of the individuals. These women in most cases are not educated, but they possess the desire of educating their children and participate efficiently in child care activities. In the present existence, children belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society are attaining higher education and even acquiring reputed jobs. These children are attaining professional qualifications of doctors, lawyers, engineers, managers and are obtaining good jobs in reputed organizations. The main reason for this is, their parents have encouraged them towards pursuance of education and have supported them to a great extent. Women have a major role towards child development and encouraging them towards acquisition of education. Therefore, it can be stated that lives of women are primarily focused upon providing education and leading to effective growth and development of their children.
- **Violence and Criminal Acts:** There have been cases, when these women have been deprived of certain rights and have been subjected to violence and criminal acts. Domestic violence is regarded as a common area among the individuals, belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society. Lack of awareness and absence of literacy skills on the part of the individuals is a major factor that leads to prevalence of violence and criminal acts. In most cases, women are not allowed to have a say in the decision making matters, they are meant to just obey the male members of the household, perform the household chores and look after the needs and requirements of other family members. Research has indicated that women have been subjected to verbal and physical abuse. When they experience any kinds of mistreatment and exploitation, their lives become despondent and miserable. In some cases, they have made an attempt to raise their voice against the mistreatment that they have suffered at the hands of their husbands and in-laws. Seeking assistance from other organizations and court have encouraged women to acquire empowerment opportunities and enhance their living conditions.

Role of technology in consumption and daily life activities

In the present existence, technology has influenced the lives of the individuals to a major extent. The women, belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society, do in most cases feel apprehensive in making use of computers, but they make use of other technologies, such as, television, radios and mobile phones to enhance their living conditions and creating a means of recreation. It is vital for the individuals to generate awareness and develop their knowledge to make their living productive. Watching various television programs and making use of digital technologies are the most effective means in influencing their lives. The consumption of technology is connected to both macro and micro level changes within the society, where users are generally required to shape the usage of technology. Once it is adequately shaped, the consumption of technology becomes an integral part of social life [7].

The main areas for which these individuals utilize technology is to generate awareness regarding various areas and communicate with other individuals. It is the major source of entertainment for women as well as acquiring information regarding various areas. There exists a relationship between technology and consumption and individuals belonging to rural communities have benefitted to a large extent. Technology in many ways have facilitated the lives of individuals, belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society. The various kinds of technologies that have facilitated the lives of these individuals, and the ones that have proved to be advantageous to them, include, television, DVD player, and mobile phone [7]. Through these technologies, individuals in most cases, provide themselves recreation, they are able to communicate with others, and generate awareness regarding various areas. When they are engaged in production and manufacturing, they are able to acquire information regarding marketing strategies.

Television, radio and DVD player are the vehicles for allocation of everyday life experiences. They are regarded as objects of discussion, and provide sources for enhancing one's living. With the availability of these aspects, one is able to make ones living productive. The era of insufficiency continues to prevail among the socio-economically backward sections of the society. Their conditions of poverty and backwardness are regarded as major hindrances that prevent them from obtaining access to technologies. These individuals believe in socializing to a major extent and when they watch

television or listen to radio, along with family members, relatives and friends, they feel pleasurable. In some cases, when television is available at the neighbour's house, individuals get together and watch the desired shows or movies [7]. When women are working hard towards the implementation of household responsibilities, then after they have completed their work, they desire to create a source of recreation and leisure and enjoy watching television and listening to radio.

The mobile phone has brought these individuals multiple benefits. They are able to communicate with others at distant places or even in other countries. Producers, having information regarding the current market prices of commodities, can bargain with middlemen to ensure a fair price for their products. Shopkeepers can also keep in touch with their wholesalers and increase or decrease the prices of items for sale, and government administrative offices located primarily in urban areas can easily contact different institutions and persons within the community, especially in times of need. Many of these individuals have begun to think that having a mobile phone is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. In the present existence, the lives of these individuals have been influenced to a major extent through mobile phones. Their needs, lifestyles and even personalities would evolve, towards which the use of mobile phones rendered a significant contribution. Thus, the mobile has been a blessing to these individuals, who have played a significant role in their economic and social development [7].

Conclusion

For women belonging to socio-economically backward sections of the society, household is regarded as an important institution, in the management of which they have to not only render a significant contribution, but also enhance their skills and abilities. The main areas include, preparation of meals, cleaning, making provision of facilities, repairing, home maintenance, child development and taking care of the needs and requirements of other family members. These women believe in education and in the present existence make every attempts to provide appropriate education to their children to make their lives productive and to enhance their living conditions. Women in some cases are given freedom to make their own decisions. But in matters related to children's education, employment opportunities and money related matters they are given limited freedom. The movement of women outside the home in some cases is restricted.

There is still continuation of patriarchal forms of decision making and dominance. These attitudes have to undergo a change, before women are able to completely acquire independence and self-sufficiency. Education and improvement in their economic independence will help in increasing their involvement within the decision making processes in the household. Women are in many cases more constrained as compared to men in their access to productive resources, such as land, credit, and information. These mostly impose unfavourable effects. Women empowerment can generate positivity and enable them to acquire more rights and opportunities. The empowerment opportunities for women are well documented in various regions and different social frameworks. These would particularly be beneficial to the children, in terms of health, nutrition, and education.

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Volume 1 Issue 6 November 2019

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