

GENDER DISPARITY IN HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES AMONG GARO PEOPLE OF MEGHALAYA

DR. VEENITA KUMARI¹, DR. MAYA KUMARI² and DR. SARITA SRIVASTAVA

1. Deputy Director (Gender Studies), MANAGE, Hyderabad;

2. Scientist, KVK, Sahibganj, Jharkhand

3. Department of Food and Nutrition, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar

Corresponding author: veen_chand@yahoo.co.in**abstract**

India's gender chore gap, is the largest of any country for which data is available, according to new figures compiled by the World Economic Forum. India ranks top, in terms of the number of minutes women spend on housework each day versus the amount of time men dedicate to daily household tasks. Women in India on an average spend 351.9 minutes every day doing house work while men spend just 51.8 minutes on such duties: a difference of 300.1 minutes (World Economic Forum). The main objective of the study was to study gender disparity among Garo people of Meghalaya in carrying out household works. A total of 120 respondents (couple) were selected from four villages (random) from the two randomly selected blocks of West Garo Hills district, Meghalaya. The main findings of the study were that majority of the routine household works like cooking food (100.0 %), cleaning house (83.33%), cleaning utensils (90.0%), washing clothes (93.33%), collecting water (86.67%), child upbringing (93.33%) are carried out by women. Women contribute twice (8 hours 15 minutes) as much as their male folks (4 hours 50 minutes) in the family in doing routine household activities as is evident from the total time spent daily. Access to and control over the household activities like cooking food, cleaning house, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, collecting water, child upbringing and collecting fire woods are either exclusively or pre-dominantly women's job. Whereas access to and control over domestic works like children education, attending health services of family members, and banking/finance lies exclusively or pre-dominantly with the male members of the family. Some of the constraints that influence gender disparity of household work are- women are traditionally considered to be responsible for domestic chores (100.0%), low education and illiteracy of women restricts them to take up banking/finance work (68.33%), most of the time of women is spent in unpaid household work (91.67 %), excessive workload at home poses constraint for paid work (60.83 %) and feminisation of household work 'stigma' prevents male to share the burden of household work readily (87.50 %). Hence, it is utmost needed that men too share these responsibilities so that not only their workload will be reduced but also they can be gainfully employed in other income generating activities.

Keywords: Gender mapping, gender roles, household activities, Garo people, Meghalaya,

INTRODUCTION

India's gender chore gap, the difference between the amount of house work done by women and men, is the largest of any country for which data is available, according to new figures compiled by the World Economic Forum. India ranks top, in terms of the number of minutes women spend on housework each day versus the amount of time men dedicate to daily household tasks.

Women in India on an average spend 351.9 minutes every day doing house work while men spend just 51.8 minutes on such duties: a difference of 300.1 minutes (World Economic Forum).

Women in India do almost 10 times as much unpaid work as men - a much higher ratio than the global average - leaving them out of the formal workforce and unable to contribute to the economy, consultancy firm McKinsey said in a new report.

"Globally, women spend roughly three times the amount of time spent by men on unpaid work. In India, the situation is more extreme - women perform 9.8 times the amount of unpaid care work than men."

"Indian women end up doing very badly in paid work and one of the reasons for that is that they are spending so much time in unpaid work," - Saadia Zahidi, Head of the gender parity program at the WEF. But the chore gap is most pronounced in cities, rather than villages. Among women surveyed by India's National Sample Survey Organization in 2011-12, around 39% in rural areas and about 50% in urban areas spent most of their time on domestic duties. Of those women, "about 60 per cent in rural areas and 64 per cent in urban areas did so due to the reason 'no other member to carry out the domestic duties,'" according to the survey. The NSSO survey found that the majority, spent time making cow-dung patties—used for cooking fuel—collecting firewood, sewing, tailoring, or collecting drinking water.

Urban Indian women also make cow-dung patties and walk to collect clean water, but in lower numbers. Other household chores performed by women included: fishing, grinding food grain, husking rice paddy, preserving meat and tutoring children.

Women have a dominant role in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya. Care of children is the responsibility of mothers or mothers-in-law. Other household works are performed by women by-and-large but the spouses also shoulder some of the responsibilities. Due to the social system and culture of the people of Meghalaya, there lies a marked gender gap in performing house works.

With these points in mind the study was conducted with the objective to study gender disparity among Garo people of Meghalaya in carrying out household works.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya State. It was purposively selected because the college is situated in this district. Out of the six blocks, two blocks i.e. Gambegre and Rongram were randomly selected. From each block two villages were selected randomly. The villages selected were Darak A. Kongre and Chekwatgre from Gambegre and Ganol Songma and Chibrage from Rongram. Since the study was carried out on "Gender Analysis", therefore equal number of male and female respondents (couple) was selected. Fifteen number of male and female each (couples) were randomly selected from each of the four selected villages. Thus the total sample size was 120 consisting of 60 male and female each to study gender disparity in household activities. Gender roles were analysed using Harvard Analytical Framework.

Harvard Analytical Framework or Gender Roles Framework or Gender Analysis Framework

The framework consists of a matrix for collecting data at the micro (Community and household) level. It has four interrelated components:

- (i) **activity profile-** which answers the question, "who does what?", including gender, age, time spent and location of the activity

- (ii) **access and control profile-** which identifies the resources used to carry out the work identified in the activity profile, and access to and control over their use, by gender
- (iii) **analysis of influencing factors-** which charts factors that influence gender differences in the above two profiles

Data were collected from the respondents by using a structured interview schedule developed for this purpose as per Harvard Analytical Framework. The data was collected through personal face to face interview during the year 2011. The data so obtained were quantified and subjected to statistical analysis for drawing meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender roles of rural people of West Garo Hills, Meghalaya in day-to-day household chores were analysed using Harvard Analytical Framework consisting of 'Activity Profile', 'Access and Control Profile' and 'Analysis of influencing factors'. The results of the study were tabulated and presented for meaningful interpretation as discussed below.

I. Activity Profile

The activity profile of rural women of West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya in carrying out house work has been presented in table no. 1. The results of the table show that majority of the routine household works like cooking food (100.0 %), cleaning house (83.33%), cleaning utensils (90.0%), washing clothes (93.33%), collecting water (86.67%), child upbringing (93.33%) are carried out by women. In other domestic works like children education, collecting fire woods, attending health services of family members, marketing household needs and banking/ finance also women contribute significantly to an extent of 50.0 to 70.0 per cent.

Table no. 1 Gender roles of Garo rural women in daily household activities.

| Sl. No. | Activity | Frequency (n=60) | Percentage |
|-----------|---|------------------|------------|
| I | Routine | | |
| 1. | Cooking food | 60 | 100.0 |
| 2. | Cleaning house | 50 | 83.33 |
| 3. | Cleaning utensils | 54 | 90.0 |
| 4. | Washing clothes | 56 | 93.33 |
| 5. | Collecting water | 52 | 86.67 |
| 6. | Child upbringing | 56 | 93.33 |
| 7. | Children education | 38 | 63.33 |
| II | Non-Routine | | |
| 8. | Collecting fire woods | 42 | 70.0 |
| 9. | Attending health services of family members | 31 | 51.67 |
| 10 | Marketing household needs | 32 | 53.33 |
| 11 | Banking/ finance | 40 | 66.67 |

The data of this table reflects that in spite of Meghalaya being a matriarchal society where women enjoys greater power than women of rest of the country, but when it comes to household work, the scenario remains the same. Hence, it can be inferred that household work is considered predominantly to be a female affair irrespective of the structure, culture and forms of the society. There exists a distinct gender disparity in this regard and it may still take a couple of decades to change the scenario.

Further analysis of the activity profile of the respondents to study gender disparity with respect to their contribution in household work

is tabulated in table no.2 The results of the table shows their contribution in house work with reference to the gender and age. The data of this table shows that spouse of the respondents significantly contribute in only one routine activities of the house i.e. children education (34 nos.) but greatly in all the non-routine activities of the house i.e. collecting fire woods (49 nos.), attending health services of family members (53 nos.), marketing household needs (45 nos.) and banking/ finance (56 nos.) . It also highlights that women contribute twice (8 hours 15 minutes) as much as their male folks (4 hours 50 minutes) in the family in doing routine household activities as is evident from the total time spent daily. .

The reason for this is that house work is still considered to be a female domain which takes away major time of the day of women on a daily basis. The other reason is that some spouse of the respondents stays at home and hence contribute in some of the domestic works like children education and other non-routine activities of the house.

Children and old members of the family (male) have negligible contribution towards household work as compared to their female counterparts. Female children have a significant contribution in domestic chores and as such from their childhood itself they are involved in such activities affecting their education.

The routine activities are carried out from their homes but for the non-routine activities they travel between 2-5 kms depending upon the nature of work as indicated in table no.2. There is not much difference in the distance travelled between the respondents and their spouse.

II. Access and Control Profile

Access and control profile of the respondents with respect to the routine and non-routine activities of the house are depicted in table no. 3. It is evident from the data of this table that the access to and control over the household activities like cooking food, cleaning house, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, collecting water, child upbringing and collecting fire woods are either exclusively or pre-dominantly women's job. Whereas the access to and control over domestic works like children education, attending health services of family members, and banking/finance lies exclusively or pre-dominantly with the male members of the family. Access to marketing of household needs lies equally with male and female but its control is with the male members of the house. The reason for this is that due to the busy household schedule, women don't get enough spare time to do marketing work which requires long distance travel to the market sometimes upto 5 kms. Moreover women get exhausted after the complete household chores that they do not want to travel for it.

The data of access and control profile of the respondents also highlights the fact that household work is exclusively and pre-dominantly a women's responsibility.

Table no.2 Gender Analysis of the respondents in day-to-day Household activities -Harvard Analytical Framework (Activity Profile)

| Sl. No. | Activity | Male (n=60) | | | Time spent/ day | Distance of activity from home (km) | Female (n=60) | | | Time spent/ day | Distance of activity from home (km) |
|-----------|---|-------------|-------|-----|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------|-----|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | Children | Young | Old | | | Children | Young | Old | | |
| I | Routine | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Cooking food | 0 | 13 | 0 | 45 min | 0 (at home) | 37 | 60 | 28 | 120 min | 0 (at home) |
| 2. | Cleaning house | 4 | 18 | 0 | 15 min | 0 (at home) | 26 | 50 | 5 | 45 min | 0 (at home) |
| 3. | Cleaning utensils | 6 | 10 | 2 | 30 min | 0 (at home) | 18 | 54 | 10 | 60 min | Upto 2-3 kms. |
| 4. | Washing clothes | 8 | 20 | 4 | 20 min | 0 (at home) | 23 | 56 | 17 | 30 min | Upto 2-3 kms |
| 5. | Collecting water | 2 | 9 | 0 | 60 min | Upto 2-3 kms | 32 | 52 | 20 | 90 min | Upto 2-3 kms |
| 6. | Child upbringing | 5 | 25 | 0 | 60 min | 0 (at home) | 36 | 56 | 30 | 120 min | 0 (at home) |
| 7. | Children education | 14 | 34 | 0 | 60 min | 0 (at home) | 9 | 26 | 0 | 30 min | 0 (at home) |
| | Total time spent | | | | 290 min (4 hrs 50 min) | | | | | 495 min (8 hrs 15 min) | |
| II | Non-Routine | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Collecting fire woods | 0 | 49 | 10 | 120 min | 4-5 hrs. | 0 | 42 | 12 | 120 min | 3-4 kms. |
| 8. | Attending health services of family members | 0 | 53 | 0 | 120 min | Upto 2 kms. | 0 | 31 | 8 | 150 min | Upto 2-3 kms. |
| 9. | Marketing household needs | 22 | 45 | 15 | 90 min | Upto 4-5 kms. | 16 | 32 | 21 | 90 min | Upto 2-3 kms. |
| 10. | Banking/ finance | 0 | 56 | 17 | 120 min | Upto 5-6 kms | 0 | 40 | 10 | 120 min | Upto 5-6 kms |
| | Total time spent | | | | 450 min (7 hrs 30 min) | | | | | 480 min (8 hrs.) | |

Table. No. 3 Gender Analysis of the respondents in day-to-day household activities - Harvard Analytical Framework (Access and Control Profile)

| Sl. No. | Activity | Access by Gender* | | | | | Control by Gender* | | | | |
|------------|---|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | M | F | F/m | M/f | M/F | M | F | F/m | M/f | M/F |
| I. | Routine | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Cooking food | 0 (0.0) | 62 (51.67) | 47 (39.17) | 2 (1.67) | 9 (7.50) | 0 (0.0) | 54 (45.0) | 55 (45.83) | 6 (5.0) | 5 (4.17) |
| 2. | Cleaning house | 6 (5.0) | 60 (50.0) | 33 (27.5) | 8 (6.67) | 13 (10.83) | 2 (1.67) | 46 (38.33) | 48 (40.0) | 4 (3.33) | 10 (8.33) |
| 3. | Cleaning utensils | 10 (8.33) | 58 (48.33) | 23 (19.17) | 12 (10.0) | 17 (14.17) | 4 (3.33) | 62 (51.67) | 36 (30.0) | 6 (5.0) | 12 (10.0) |
| 4. | Washing clothes | 7 (5.83) | 36 (30.0) | 58 (48.33) | 9 (7.50) | 10 (8.33) | 6 (5.0) | 45 (37.5) | 38 (31.67) | 10 (8.33) | 21 (17.5) |
| 5. | Collecting water | 0 (0.0) | 72 (60.0) | 37 (30.83) | 5 (4.17) | 6 (5.0) | 0 (0.0) | 65 (54.17) | 44 (36.67) | 3 (2.5) | 8 (6.67) |
| 6. | Child upbringing | 20 (16.67) | 21 (17.5) | 48 (40.0) | 16 (13.33) | 15 (12.5) | 12 (10.0) | 30 (25.0) | 37 (30.83) | 23 (19.17) | 18 (15.0) |
| 7. | Children education | 29 (24.17) | 23 (19.17) | 15 (12.5) | 28 (23.33) | 25 (20.83) | 36 (30.0) | 8 (6.67) | 15 (12.5) | 40 (33.33) | 21 (17.5) |
| II. | Non-Routine | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Collecting fire woods | 4 (3.33) | 37 (30.83) | 52 (43.33) | 6 (5.0) | 21 (17.5) | 5 (4.17) | 53 (44.17) | 47 (39.17) | 8 (6.67) | 7 (5.83) |
| 9. | Attending health services of family members | 29 (24.17) | 13 (10.83) | 10 (8.33) | 32 (26.67) | 36 (30.0) | 23 (19.17) | 18 (15.0) | 12 (10.0) | 40 (33.33) | 27 (22.5) |
| 10. | Marketing household needs | 14 (11.67) | 24 (20.0) | 23 (19.17) | 28 (23.33) | 31 (25.83) | 31 (25.83) | 15 (12.5) | 15 (12.5) | 46 (38.33) | 13 (10.83) |
| 11. | Banking/ finance | 21 (17.5) | 9 (7.5) | 8 (6.67) | 44 (36.67) | 38 (31.67) | 21 (17.5) | 19 (15.83) | 11 (9.17) | 43 (35.83) | 26 (21.67) |

* M = Exclusively male; F = Exclusively female; F/m = Predominantly female; M/f = Predominantly male and F/M = Equally female/ male

**= Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

III. Analysis of influencing factors

Analysis of influencing factors that pose constraints and offer opportunities to rural women in different routine and non-routine activities of household was analysed using Harvard Analytical Framework. The result of the investigation is presented in table no. 4. The major influencing factor that poses constraint for women is the social stigma that identifies domestic work to be a female's job. The gender roles that attribute house work to be female dominant task are the biggest constraint. Some of the constraints that influence gender disparity of household work is women are traditionally considered to be responsible for domestic chores (100.0%), low education and illiteracy of women restricts them to take up banking/ finance work (68.33%), most of the time of women is spent in unpaid household work (91.67 %), excessive workload at home poses constraint for paid work (60.83 %) and feminisation of household work 'stigma' prevents male to share the burden of household work readily (87.50 %).

The only opportunity that could be analysed from this study was that if percentage of unpaid domestic chores is reduced, women can contribute more for the paid work and get economically empowered as opined by 90.0 per cent of the respondents. It indicates that the respondents are aware of the fact that due to excessive involvement in unpaid work women could not economically and productively contribute to the family and become economically empowered.

Hence there should be gender parity in shouldering household responsibilities so that the women too could become economically productive member of the family, society and nation.

Similar findings are evident from the study of Frances and Russel, 2005, which shows that women's total workload is higher than men's and with women working longer per day on average than men including paid and unpaid labour.

According to Kulshreshtha, and Singh (2005), throughout the world, women perform most of the domestic tasks, including both household maintenance and childcare, even when they are employed part or full time, the mean time spent on unpaid domestic work by women is more than twice of that for men.

Table. No.4 Gender Analysis of the respondents in day-to-day Household activities -Harvard Analytical Framework (Analysis of influencing factors)

| Sl. No. | Constraints | Frequency | Percentage | Opportunities | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|--|-----------|------------|---|-----------|------------|
| | Women are traditionally considered to be responsible for domestic chores | 120 | 100.0 | If percentage of unpaid domestic chores is reduced, women can contribute more for the paid work and get economically empowered. | 108 | 90.0 |
| | Low education and illiteracy of women restricts them to take up banking/ | 82 | 68.33 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-------|--|--|--|
| | finance work. | | | | | |
| | Most of the time of women is spent in unpaid household work. | 110 | 91.67 | | | |
| | Excessive workload at home poses constraint for paid work. | 73 | 60.83 | | | |
| | Feminisation of household work 'stigma' prevents male to share the burden of household work readily. | 105 | 87.50 | | | |

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the above study that there is a wide gender disparity in household activities even among the Garo people of West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, where women enjoys more power and privileged to be the only matriarchal society of India. Most of the domestic chores are performed by women keeping them busy throughout the day. This restricts in less involvement of women as productive labour force of the country. Hence, it is utmost needed that men too share these responsibilities so that not only their workload will be reduced but also they can be gainfully employed in other income generating activities. For this to happen, the societal view on the gender discrimination roles with respect to domestic work needs to be changed.

REFERENCES

1. Frances, Mc Ginnity & Russell, Helen (2005). The Distribution of Caring, Housework and Employment among Women and Men in Ireland, *Gender Inequalities in Time Use*, The Equality Authority and The Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin, Brunswick.
2. Kulshreshtha, A.C. & Singh, Gulab (2005). Valuation of Non-Market Household Production, Central Statistical Organisation, New Delhi.
3. Press.Joanna Sugden Gender Chore Gap: Where Housework Is Most Unfair, *The Wall Street Journal*; Oct 29, 2014.
4. Reuters (2015). Indian Women Do 10 Times As Much Unpaid Work As Men: McKinsey dated 4th November 2015.