

SLUM HOMEMAKERS: TOWARDS TECHNOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Science and technology have generally made homes cleaner, safer and more comfortable. New inventions and technologies have drastically changed everyone's daily life, and homemakers are no exception. The Lifestyles of homemakers have evolved alongside technologies such as washing machines, refrigerators, television, and air conditioners, which were only available to wealthy families; they have become affordable to middle-class families and slum dwellers too. The study examines how science and technology empower homemakers in slums to raise the standard of household comfort and convenience. The paper discusses how homemakers use technology to reduce their housework, maintain their health, help them to expose their talents over social networking sites and help to educate their children in a better way with the help of the internet and learning platforms. It has also made the preservation and preparation of food more convenient. Household technologies have enhanced the quality of homemaker's life in homes of all kinds. Modern household technologies have empowered homemakers and given them the freedom to aspire to their dreams. It is a blessing for homemakers, and at the same time, if they do not use technology sensibly, it might bring a curse as well.

Keywords: Slum, homemakers, science, technology, empowerment, blessing-curse.

Introduction:

The 21st century is the era of science and technology. Science has converted the world into a small global village and human beings cannot imagine their life without applying science and technology. Science does not necessarily mean tools equipped with technology, but it is all about innovating new ideas and discovering knowledge based on facts.

The influence of science and technology has become a part of everyone's life, and housewives, i.e. homemakers, are not excluded from the list. It has smoothened the homemaker's life in every aspect. From communication to transportation, entertainment to education, technology has helped homemakers by innovating new machines and appliances, which ease all household chores of homemakers. A day's work of homemakers is now a minute away, and many people's work is in the hands of a single person.

Over the years, household chores have been transformed by new innovative technologies to ease and automate the work of homemakers. Technology is behind all these, and this will make women more than just a homemaker. Many technological innovations, such as washing machines, refrigerators, television, etc., were only available to wealthy families, but over the period, this changed due to the evolution of technology; it became affordable to middle-class families and helped to raise the standard of household comfort and convenience. In a study set in slum areas of the city of Belagavi of Karnataka state, India, over 63 per cent of homemakers have access to household technologies. They opine that every family member uses technology at home, and they (homemakers/respondents) are no exception. They make use of it in various household chores. Homemakers' chores include many things from morning to night, which include operating different apparatus and appliances.

Improved financing and technology play an increasingly significant role in improving slum habitats. Slum women, especially homemakers, are part of the fabric of India's urban communities and play a key role in infrastructural development. If all the technological inventions are not used sensibly and carefully, they could result in life-threatening disasters. All home appliances work on electricity; hence, homemakers should know how to operate these appliances. Homemakers must also follow best practices like using electricity with Residual Current Devices (RCD) protected fuse boxes. RCD are the switches that trip a circuit under dangerous conditions and instantly disconnect the electricity. Also, homemaker should read the user manual that comes with every appliance; this will make homemakers knowledgeable about the product and ensures safety.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

'Homemaker' is a married woman who does not have paid job outside the home, manages a home and family and takes responsibility for household chores without earning money from employment.

'Empowerment' is becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one rights. Empowerment of women means encouraging and allowing them to take personal responsibility for improving how she does their tasks and contribute to the family.

Science is a systematic study of nature through observations and experiments. It plays an important part in everyone's daily life; science is all around us. The use of scientific knowledge to meet the needs of daily life or the practical form of scientific knowledge is called 'technology'. Technology is the application of science to solve problems. Technology is the making, modifying, using, and knowledge of tools, machines, and techniques to solve problems. When scientific knowledge is used in practical tasks, it is called technology.

Purpose of the Study:

- To examine how science and technology empower homemakers in slum areas to raise the standard of household comfort and convenience.

Research Methodology of the Study:

The target group of the study is the homemakers in slum areas of Belagavi City of Karnataka state, India. With the help of simple random sampling, forty-five (45) slum homemakers are considered for the study. Researchers have used interview schedules and held discussions. Secondary data like articles, news, books, research paper, etc., have also been considered for the study. This paper is part of the researcher's (second author's) doctoral thesis, 'A Sociological Study of Homemakers'.

Findings

Profile background of the respondents and their husbands:

Out of the total respondents, 88.88 percent belonged to the age group of 26-30 years, and 11.11 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 31-35 years. The study exhibits 66.67 percent belonging to the Hindu religion (Scheduled Caste 26.66, Other Backwards Classes 22.22 percent and 17.77 percent belonging to Scheduled Tribe) and 33.33 percent belonging to Muslim. The majority of 93.33 percent of respondents have a nuclear family. The study found that 28.89 percent of the respondents are graduates, 48.89 percent are matriculated (10th grade), and 22.22 percent are illiterate. The study reveals that education has positively associated with the homemaker's lifestyle.

The husbands of the homemakers are engaged in various informal sector jobs, 22.22 percent are car/cab drivers, 26.68 percent have a small business (exactly not revealed by the respondents), 11.11 percent are guest lecturers, and 33.33 percent are auto-rickshaw drivers. 06.66 percent are into building construction work. Respondents said that 48.88 percent have an average monthly income of their husband is around Rs. 10,000, 24.44 percent of them have about Rs. 15,000, and 26.66 percent have a maximum of Rs. 20,000 average monthly salary.

The standard of living and occupation of the respondent's husband has been positively related to the prevalence of modern equipment usage and the homemakers' education level.

Homemakers and Technology:

The current study focuses on forty-five homemakers dwelling in slums. The respondents have more access to technology and home appliances than their mother's generation. The following factors enlighten the current research:

It is a known fact that the kitchen is the heart of a home. The generation of the respondent's mothers used a legacy kitchen setup, whereas the homemakers (respondents) used a modern kitchen. 88.8 percent of homemakers have appliances like a pressure cooker (100 per cent), mixture-grinder (88 per cent), juicer (66 per cent), blender (68.88 per cent), toaster (48.44 per cent), automatic stove (22.22 per cent), and refrigerator (42.22 per cent).

A clean house is important for well-being and peace of mind, and cleaning helps keep family members healthy. In this study majority of the homemakers use cleaning gadgets like a vacuum cleaner (33.33 per cent), washing machines 11.11 per cent), sponge mops (55.55 per cent), garbage cans and dustpans (93.33 percent respectively), spray cleaners (66.66 per cent), liquid soaps (77.77 per cent), dish soap (95.55 per cent), sponge cloth (91.11 per cent), bathroom brush (88.88 per cent), wall duster (68.68 per cent) and toilet cleaner 64.44 per cent).

Many electronic gadgets will ease the homemaker's work and help them stay entertained. A gadget like television will help homemakers stay enthusiastic and entertain them with knowledge of happenings worldwide. The majority of the homemakers use electronic devices like iron boxes (82.22 per cent), water heaters (93.33 per cent), fans (100 per cent), and sound system speakers 46.66 per cent) and torch (71.1 per cent).

The smartphone has become an integral part of the homemaker's life. Smartphone helps homemakers ease their daily chores and enhances their knowledge. The majority of 88.88 percent of homemakers use smartphones. They revealed that smartphone users listen to music, talk to friends and family members, search for small business ideas, do online shopping, browse new recipes and housekeeping tips, search for home remedies, and sometimes schedule household chores.

The majority of 86.66 percent of the respondents have great knowledge of the modern products they use in their daily lives. 62.22 percent of the respondents reported that they faced the consequences like a cooker blast, electric shock while using a blender, and finger burnt while ironing.

Discussions:

Science and technology have not only facilitated new machines but also helped to mitigate many superstitions and evil social practices because science has improved the thinking of humankind. With the implementation of science, one can spend even a single day of their life. Science and technology have changed many homemakers' lives compared to their mother's generation.

A household activity done by homemakers a few decades ago is different. Decades ago, all household activities were done manually, and only affluent families were seeking help for cooking, cleaning and washing clothes from the servants;

however, in the current study, the homemakers in slums have access. The style of performing household activities has changed. With the help of new technological home appliances, homemakers have more free time. They are more involved in activities like watching videos, attending cooking classes, tailoring at home, watching women-related shows on television, surfing the internet, etc., and they credit it to technology.

Respondents reveal that technology has empowered homemaker's life in various ways. Modern appliances have helped them save time and energy, and the same is utilized for the betterment of their life. The old sewing machines were fitted with pedals, but modern-day sewing machines are electrical. Respondents say that food preservation techniques have become simple with modern refrigerators. Most respondents revealed they enjoy their life as homemakers with household chores and responsibilities.

Some respondents opined that washing machines of the new age have become more advanced with self-drying technology. The vacuum cleaner is more portable and cleans all the corners and edges. Few respondents opined to having a modular kitchen fitted with automatic chimneys, and there is no task of cleaning oil stains. However, the study shows that petite portion size data may have limited ability to illustrate dietary variations. The researchers express the study in a relatively large sample of homemakers dwelling in slums to strengthen furthermore.

TO SUM UP:

New inventions and technologies have drastically changed societal life. Especially modern home appliances have been a boon for homemakers to save and have a leisure time with the family. Household technologies have empowered homemakers and given them the freedom to aspire to their dreams. It has helped slum homemakers reduce their housework, maintain health, helped them to expose their talents, made communication easy over social networking sites, made available affordable kitchen appliances, and helped them to educate their children in a better way with the help of the internet and learning platforms. It has also made the preservation and preparation of food more convenient. Household technologies have enhanced the quality of homemaker's life in homes of all kinds. Lifestyles of homemakers in the slum have evolved alongside technologies. Science and technology have generally made homes cleaner, safer and more comfortable. It is a real-time blessing, especially to the homemakers in the slum; at the same time, if they do not use technology sensibly, it might bring a curse as well.

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