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Research Article

Gender Inequalities in Everyday Life

Abstract

Background: Gender inequalities continue in all walks of life for all women, urban rural.

Objective: was to know gender differences in everyday life of women.

Material methods: Thousand non-pregnant and thousand, pregnant women were interviewed.

Results: The information revealed that around 90% pregnant, nonpregnant women, 25% men went to bed late, got up early. Women did all household chores, without any help from husbands. Grocery was brought by 269 nonpregnant, 78 pregnant women. Firewood was collected by 58% woman of 575, households where firewood was used 45% of 513 pregnant women's families. Of women who worked outside 61% of 656 nonpregnant, 93% of 353 pregnant did all household work also Age, education, occupation did not make any difference in gender inequality of everyday life.

Conclusion: All household chores are performed only by women even during pregnancy also, with some difference during pregnant state from nonpregnant. Less pregnant women worked outside, but those who worked did all household work also. Perception that men do outside jobs, women only household, was not true.

Background

Over last some decades there have been global advances in policy initiatives for promoting the advancement of women. The turning point was the declaration of 1975 as the International Women's Year and 1976-1985, the decade of women, however inequalities, discrimination in education, employment, family, society at large continues around the world. Even United States is 19th (till 2009 it was 34th) in gender equity [1]. In many parts of the world, the marital relationship has the dominance of husband, dependence and obedience of wife, who submits / surrenders at the cost of her own advancement, her self-esteem, and even her health. There is change in some parts of the globe, however situation is grim in most of the regions [2].

There are studies about intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic abuse [3,4]. Violence during pregnancy is also increasingly recognized as a public health hazard. Information about ground realities of everyday life gender differences is visible but not seen [5]. As such women's health needs, are not only different but are greater than men due to their body functions, reproductive health and so on. Attempts are being made to provide universal reproductive health services but the women's, needs beyond reproductive health and sufferings due to everyday, life remain largely hidden because of the socio-cultural milieu, traditions, economical constraints etc. Women shoulder most of the burden of everyday household chores of the family, without decision making power. It is imperative to have better understanding of their working, specially during pregnancy for quality life.

It was decided to collect the information about everyday life of pregnant and nonpregnant women by finding out about performance of most of the day to day chores of the household and whether pregnant state, education, socioeconomic status, occupation, family type make any difference.

Objective was to get the information so as to be able to think of possibilities of helping women and sharing with others because women's issues are global, though solutions need to be local.

Material and Methods

One thousand non-pregnant and one thousand pregnant women willing to participate in the study were randomly interviewed by the social worker assigned the responsibility in the outpatient randomly friends, relatives of patients or patients with minor illnesses. She used a pre-designed, pre-tested semi structured questionnaire in local language and recorded the information after taking consent. Confidentiality was assured and ensured. The information provided by the study subjects was recorded by the social worker herself, no one was given questionnaire are to fill. The analysis of the information was done in the context of age, education, occupation, socioeconomic status and family type.

Of 1000 non-pregnant women, 54 (5.4%) were teenagers, 858 (85.87%) were of 20-29 years and 88 (8.89%) of 30-39 years of age. Thirty (3%) women were illiterate, 34 (3.4%) had primary school education, 78 (7.8%) middle school, 618 (61.87%) had studied till higher secondary, 211 (21.17%) were undergraduates and 29 (2.9%) postgraduates. Two hundred five (20.5%) women were working as laborers in others farms, 380(38%) in the family farms, 47 (4.7%) did office jobs, 24 (2.4%) did business and 344 (34.4%) were housewives. Only one woman was from upper economic class, 26 (2.67%) from upper middle economic class, 282 (28.27%) middle class, 554 (55.47%) lower middle and 137 (3.77%) from lower economic class [6]. Four hundred and twelve (41.27%) women had nuclear families.

Of one thousand pregnant women also, fifty nine (5.9%) were teenagers, 855 (85.5%) of 20-29 years and 86 (8.6%) 30-39 years of age. Twenty nine women (2.9%) were illiterate, 28 (2.8%) had primary school education, 78 (7.8%) middle school, 623 (62.3%) had studied up to twelfth. Two hundred and eleven (21.1%) had done under

graduation and 31 (3.1%) did post graduation. One hundred seventy five women (17.5%) were laborers, 276 (27.6%) worked in their own family farms, 65 (6.5%) did office jobs, 62 (6.2%) did business and 10 (1%) did other jobs. Three hundred one eighteen 318 (31.8%) were housewives.

Results

On collecting the information it was revealed that, 903 (90.3%) nonpregnant women used to wake up between 4-6 am and only 87 (8.7%) used to go to bed between 8-10 pm. Two hundred seventy four (27.47%) husbands used to go to bed between 8-10 pm (Table 1). Only 15(1.5%) pregnant women used to go to bed between 8-10 pm, and 985(98.5%) between 10pm to midnight. Husbands of 988(98.8%) pregnant women also used to go to bed between 10 pm and midnight. During pregnancy also women’s day started very early, though the time of going to bed was same for wife and husband.

Nine hundred forty (94%) nonpregnant women did sweeping of the floor and 907 (90.7%) washed utensils also all alone. Husbands did not perform or help in these every day activities. Washing of the clothes was also done by women (463 (46.3%)), however 183 (18.37%) husbands helped in washing clothes. Meals were prepared mainly by the women in 921 (92.1%) households, 31 (3.1%) were helped by husbands and 937 women had to collect water also.

Of 1000 pregnant women, 960(96%) said that they did sweeping of the floor, 962(96.2%) did washing of the utensils, 993(99.3%) washed clothes, 990(99%) prepared meals and only 3(0.30) were helped by husbands. Nine hundred twelve (91.2%) women used to fetch water also and only 35 (3.5%) husbands did this job. Eight hundred eighty five (88.5%) women said grocery was brought by the husbands and 78(8.81%) pregnant women brought (Tables 1-4).

Out of the 575 households where firewood was used, it was

Table 1: Every day chores and person responsible.

Household chores	Family members mainly responsible						Total
	SS	Husband	* H & * SS	* MIL	SS+MIL	Others	
Sweeping	No	940	-	-	-	33	1000
	%	94.00	-	-	-	3.30	100
Washing Utensils	No	907	-	-	-	57	1000
	%	90.70	-	-	-	5.70	100
Washing Clothes	No	463	-	183	-	347	1000
	%	46.30	-	18.30	-	34.70	100
Collecting Drinking Water	No	912	35	16	-	22	1000
	%	91.20	3.50	1.60	-	2.30	100
Collecting Firewood	No	333	145	47	16	19	575
	%	57.90	25.20	8.10	2.70	3.30	100
Cooking meals	No	921	-	31	9	24	1000
	%	92.10	-	3.10	0.90	2.40	100
Grocery	No	269	624	53	-	-	1000
	%	26.90	62.40	5.30	-	-	100

*MIL - Mother in law
 *SS - Study Subject (women)
 * H – Husband

Table 2: Every day chores in pregnant women.

Household chores	Family member mainly responsible						Total
	SS	Husband	H & SS	MIL	SS+MIL	Others	
Sweeping	No	960	06	-	-	21	1000
	%	96.00	0.67	-	-	2.10	100
Wash Utensils	No	962	07	-	-	16	1000
	%	96.20	0.70	-	-	1.60	100
Washing Clothes	No	934	12	-	-	39	1000
	%	93.40	1.20	-	-	3.90	100
Getting Water	No	937	34	-	15	-	1000
	%	93.77	3.40	-	1.57	-	100
Collect Firewood	No	229	240	12	19	09	513
	%	44.90	46.70	5.20	3.71	3.90	100
Cooking meals	No	990	03	-	-	03	1000
	%	99.00	0.30	-	-	0.30	100
Grocery	No	78	885	32	05	-	1000
	%	7.80	88.50	3.20	0.50	-	100

MIL - Mother in law
 SS - Study Subject (women)
 H – Husband

Table 3: Awakening time of husband and wife in non-pregnant.

Locality		Awakening time				
			4-6 am	6-8 am	8-10 am*	Total
Rural 620	Husband	No.	160	450	10	620
		%	25.80	72.50	01.60	100
	Wife	No.	576	44	-	620
		%	92.90	07.09	-	100
Urban 380	Husband	No.	101	332.5	15	448.5
		%	22.51	74.13	04.14	100
	Wife	No.	327	71.2	-	398.2
		%	82.11	17.88	-	100
Total 1000	Husband	No.	261	782.5	25	1000
		%	26.10	97	02.50	100
	Wife	No.	903	115.2	-	1000
		%	90.30	-	-	100

* Cases of 10 am to 12 noon added.

Table 4: Awakening time husbands and wife during pregnancy.

Locality			4-6 am	6-9 am	Total
Rural 617	Husbands	No	174	443	617
		%	28.20	71.79	100
	Wife	No	603	14	617
		%	97.73	2.26	100
Urban 383	Husbands	No	88	295	383
		%	23	77	100
	Wife	No	372	11	383
		%	97	3	100
Total 1000	Husbands	No	262	738	1000
		%	26.20	73.80	100
	Wife	No	975	25	1000
		%	97.50	02.50	100

collected by the study subjects themselves in 333 (57.9%) households, husbands in 145 (25.2%). For getting firewood 119 (20.6%) women had to walk around a kilometer, 387 (67.3%) much more [69 (12%) up to five kilometers]. Grocery was brought by the husbands in 624(62.4%) households and 269 (26.9%) nonpregnant women brought grocery. In 513 pregnant women’s households firewood was used for cooking and was collected by women in 229(44.9%) households and 240(46.78%) by husbands and rest by others .Distance between the house and the place of firewood was around one kilometer in 39(7.6%) and in 5 (0.9%) households up to five kilometers. Of 656 (65.6%) nonpregnant women who worked outside to earn, 402 (61.2%) had to do all the household work also and only 254 (38.7%) were helped. Of the 353 pregnant women who were working outside, 330(93.4%) had to do all the household work also. Six hundred fifty two nonpregnant women had children Only 11(1.68) husbands looked after their children, 457(70.09) women themselves, 134(20.55) women as well as their husbands, 35(5.36) by women and their mother in law and 15(2.30) by other women like aunt or sister in law, so over all women. Of the 324 pregnant women who had children, 261(80.5%) women looked after their children, 55(16.9%) were helped by husbands and 7(2.16%) by mother in law. Children’s meals were taken care by 304 non pregnant women themselves, 3 by husbands and 14 by mother in law and 3 by others.

Pregnant women were also asked about differences from their nonpregnant state in everyday work when they were nonpregnant and only, 316 (31.6) said that there was some difference in their everyday chores during pregnant state than non- pregnant. Eight were restricted in sweeping floor, 16 in washing clothes, 286 in fetching water and 6 from doing other heavy work. There was no difference in relation to socioeconomic status or education or family type.

Discussion

Usual perception around this region is that the men do outside jobs and women do the household chores, but in the present study it was revealed that women do both the jobs. Men seem to support women poorly in day-to-day chores. Women help their husbands more often in the jobs which are supposed to be done mainly by the husbands like doing jobs outside to earn money, bringing grocery, but women hardly get any help in cooking, washing utensils/clothes, getting water, firewood and so on. Those women who worked outside for earning were also doing everyday chores in the house. Women reported getting up very early and going to bed after the husbands. With more work in and out of house during the day, less rest even at night make women prone to ill health. They do not get time to think about their health and in case of sickness do not or cannot go to a health facility. By measuring gender in equity through a series of economic, educational and political benchmarks [7].

The National Commission for Women (NCW) in India was set up to oversee the implementation of constitutional and legal safeguards against gender discrimination and the protection of women's rights and privileges [8]. The ninth five-year plan (1998-2002) identified the empowerment of women crucial to socio-economic change. However many things remain only on paper, which are many a times distorted, probably because they are mostly framed by men. In addition, in everyday life so many gender differences which cause many sufferings to women remain invisible.

One domain where gender differences appear to be particularly persistent is the allocation of time to housework and self-care. Over the times and across countries, irrespective of income, women bear disproportionate responsibilities of household work, while men are mostly responsible for market work. These differences deeply rooted in gender roles, reduce women's leisure, welfare and wellness. An immediate outcome of these different domestic responsibilities is that women have very different patterns of time use and different amount of leisure [9]. Through a recent study Robinson [10] has reported that in US women described their daily activities as more stressful, tiring, sad and painful, but at the same time also described that the activities make them happy suggesting that women see their lives as more engaging, intense or energizing.

The present study reveals that men hardly share responsibility in every day domestic chores and women continue to bear the double burden of looking after the families and earning livelihood. Gender differences continue in everyday life even during pregnant state. Age, education, occupation, family type also did not change anything. Almost all the household chores are performed by the women with very little help from husbands even during pregnancy. Some every day chores could be harmful to pregnant women and the baby in utero, like fetching firewood on head, baby on the back. Many women continue to cook all the meals with no windows in the huts exposing themselves to the smoke, which has harmful effects on their own as well as baby's health [11]. Number of pregnant women who work outside was nearly fifty percent of nonpregnant women, 353 out of 1000 and 656 of 1000 respectively, but out of all the pregnant women, who worked outside (93%) had to do all the household work also.

Some pregnant women (31.6%) did report difference in their everyday chores during pregnancy, from their nonpregnant state, with some restriction in the activities during pregnancy compared to non-pregnant state. The culture of assistance in getting water etc. was. At least one positive aspect though in few. It could be very dangerous for the baby and the woman, if the woman with the water load on her head or side, fell down with possibility of direct injury to the uterus or separation of the placenta, killing woman and the baby immediately or creating major problems. Labor pains could start before the expected date with early delivery, which is a major cause of death in newborns. The major obstetrical concern with motor vehicle crashes (MVC) is the strain placed on the uterus, which may result in placental abruption. Among severely injured women, placental abruption occurs in as many as 40% of cases. Pregnant women involved in MVC appear to be at increased risk for cesarean delivery, but the risk of preterm birth (PTB) and perinatal deaths seem to increase only if delivery occurs immediately after MVC, which is

fortunately uncommon with an estimated rate of 0.4% <20 weeks and 3.5% thereafter. This increased risk of perinatal death associated with immediate delivery reflects the severity of trauma. However delivery should never be delayed if clinically warranted in the hopes of improved outcomes [12,13].

Jones et al. [14] report that addressing gender inequality through social protection programmes designed to increase equity would be an effective way of reducing gender inequality. There is evidence that supports the notion that women have retained the primary caregiver's role within the familial life despite contributions economically. It suggests that women who work outside the home often put an extra 18 hours a week doing household or childcare related chores compared to men who average 12 minutes a day in childcare activities [15]. The same was revealed in the present study also. However study by Hoof et al. [16] has revealed that modern couples, do not purposefully divide things like household chores along gender lines, but instead rationalize it and make excuses. Gender roles permeate throughout the life and help to structure parenting and marriage, especially in relation to work in and outside the home. Gender equality in relationships has been improving over the years but for the majority of relationships, the power lies with the male. Society cannot progress with the major burden bearers suffering because of everyday work pattern. Support system is essential. It is also essential to recognize that, due to biological functions women do need support and special care. Gender inequalities need urgent attention.

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