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Determining drudgery prone household activities performed by hilly tribal women of West Garo hills of Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT

The Meghalaya state of North East India is a tribal dominated area of India where matrilineal society norm is prevalent. The women folk of this mountain region feel proud of working in the field and household work without rest. For this study two villages of Gambegre block of West Garo Hills were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. Forty rural women of two age groups who were involved in household activities were selected purposely for the study. Garo rural women expressed their highest difficulties in collecting firewood which was followed by fetching water and cooking food. Maximum time spent in collecting firewood (178 min/day) which was followed by cooking food (134.75 min / day) and fetching water (70.5 min/day). Drudgery Index was highest in cooking activity (47.89) which was followed by firewood collection (47.20), washing utensils (21.56) and fetching water (21.12). Introduction of improve household technologies and work method can minimize their drudgery by saving time and energy.

1. Introduction

Indian peninsula has the second largest concentration of tribal population after the African continent and they are living in forest and mountainous region, within the close proximity of nature and their livelihood is mainly based on agriculture and forest. Hilly rural women undoubtedly play a unique role in the socio-economic set up of the hill economy. Over the last few decades, it has been widely accepted that women of the developing and under-developed countries are major care-takers of their families and their homestead activities. There is no denying fact that rural development is a very complex and challenging process in which women only play a predominant role in most of the countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, while instance of giving credit, rewards and recognition come, they are generally ignored and their male counterparts hog the limelight. This is the phenomenon, which has plunged the socio, political and economic systems in most of the developing countries (Samanta R. K. 2005).

Meghalaya is a hill state of the North Eastern India which is known for its natural beauty and simple lifestyle of its tribal people as well as matrilineal society. The Planning Commission of India has estimated the percentage of population below poverty line in Meghalaya at nearly one-third of the total population. The women folk of this mountain region feel proud of working in the field and household work without rest. They perform dual work, which causes considerable fatigue and drudgery. In spite of modernization, the rural tribal folk are still sticking to their traditional methods for doing work. The work they do is back breaking, repetitive, manual, arduous, time consuming and within economic return. Most of the time unnatural postures are adopted by the women while performing their household activities like stooping, squatting, bending, stretching *etc.* which create severe musculo-skeletal problems. Poor hilly women of this area pursue a number of survival strategies for their livelihood and maintain their families; one indisputable fact of these strategies is the frequent and inordinate extension of working hours inside and outside home. A review of case studies provides evidence suggesting that poor access to basic services such as water and sanitation, coupled

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with the need to search for fuel and food supplements, extends and intensifies the typical day of rural women, while adding innumerable difficulties (Balakrishnan R, 2005). But the home making work is almost an entirely neglected area of study, yet the job of home making encompasses a core of activities essential to our existence. This study was designed for inventory of household activities where hill women are involved and determination of drudgery prone tasks attended by them.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was carried out in Gambegre block of West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Two villages namely Lower Sangsanggre and Chengkhurigiri of Gambegre block were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. Forty rural women of two age groups (20-35 yrs and 36-50 yrs) who were involved in household activities were selected purposively for the study. A descriptive research design was used to conduct the study. Survey method was adopted with structured interview schedule to get required information from women. The interview schedule was consisted of frequency of performances, difficulty felt, time spent and drudgery index of rural hilly women in household activities. Drudgery Index (DI) was calculated as:

Drudgery Index= [(X+Y+Z)/3] x 100
Where,
X = coefficient pertaining to difficult felt
Y = coefficient pertaining to time spent in particular home activity.
Z = coefficient pertaining to frequency of performance

3. Results and Discussion

Frequency of performance in household activities:

Frequency of performance in household activities by rural women of two age group 20 – 35 years and 36 – 50 years are presented in Table 1 and it was found that all rural women of Meghalaya do some activities like cooking, washing utensils, sweeping floor and fetching water daily. But some of the activities like mopping or mud plastering of floor, most of the women of both age group do weekly followed by alternate day. In case of washing cloth, maximum number of women either do daily or alternate day. Carlyn J Matz *et al.* (2015) reported that Canadian rural women also spent maximum of their time in indoor doing household work (> 15 h/day). Naresh Chandra Sourabh (2008) also observed that in rural areas of Bihar major domestic tasks are kitchen work, processing of food and other item, care of house and garden, rearing & caring of children, caring for elderly, care of animals, handicraft, shopping, cultural and religious activities.

Difficulty felt in performing household activities

Rural women of Garo Hills expressed their highest difficulties in collecting firewood which was followed by fetching water, cooking food, washing clothes, washing utensils, mopping floor and sweeping floor. Rural women have to go far away forest to collect firewood for cooking purpose and far away stream to collect water for cooking and washing and they have to carry heavy load of firewood and water and therefore these activities were drudgery most in comparison to other activities. Borah R *et al.* (2010) revealed that the total distance travelled by women of Upper Brahmaputra valley zone of Assam was on an average 4.4 km for fetching water. Mrunalini A and Snehlata Ch (2010) indicated that drudgery in crop activities were differently prioritized men and women. The principal factors contributing to the priorities were found as work demand on time & posture at work for men and work demand on time, posture, work exertion, perceived difficulty and work load for women. The results guide in selection of suitable technology that can reduce the factors of drudgery. The activity of cooking food was also tedious for them as there is not any modern facility or techniques available inside the kitchen (Table 2).

Time Spent in performing household activities:

Time spent (minute/day) in performing household activities by rural women are presented in Table 3 and it was found that maximum time was spent in collecting firewood (178 min/day) which was followed by cooking (134.75 min/day), fetching water (70.5 min / day), washing utensils (56.875 min/day), mopping or mud plastering floors (40.5 min/day), washing (32.35 min/day) and sweeping floor (12.63 min/day). Borah R & Kalita M (2011) found that in rural areas of upper Assam time requirements for all landholding categories was almost same in case of cooking food because landless, marginal and small farm families prepared simple meals by using only firewood, but medium and large farm families prepared elaborate meals by using LPG / Stove / Heater *etc.* She also revealed that timer spent on fetching water decreased with increased land holding size.

Drudgery Index in household activities:

Drudgery index of household activities was determined by calculating the time co-efficient, frequency of performance co-efficient and difficulty co-efficient. Drudgery Index of

Table 1. Frequency of performances in household activities by rural women

Activities	Daily			Alternate day			Weekly			Fortnightly			Score			SD		
	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	Total N=40	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	20-50 N=40	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	20-50 N=40	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	20-50 N=40	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	Total N=40	20-35 n=20	36-50 n=20	20-50 N=40
Cooking Activities	20	20	40	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	0	0	0
Washing Utensils	20	20	40	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	0	0	0
Sweeping	20	20	40	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	0	0	0
Mopping/Plastering	2	3	5	--	4	4	10	7	17	3	6	9	3.3	3.2	3.25	0.49	0.61	0.55
Fetching Water	20	20	40	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	0	0	0
Washing Clothes	9	7	16	8	9	17	3	4	7	--	--	--	4.3	4.15	4.23	0.45	0.42	0.44
Collecting firewood	8	9	17	7	6	13	5	5	10	--	--	--	3.1	3.05	3.07	0.45	0.40	0.25

Rating: 5 – Daily, 4 – Alternate day, 3 – Weekly, 2 – Fortnightly, 1 – Monthly

Table 2. Difficulty felt in performing household activities by rural women

Activities	20 – 35 yrs. n = 20	SD	36 – 50 yrs. n = 20	SD	Total N=40	SD
1. Cooking activities	3.75	0.477	4.1	0.509	3.925	0.493
2. Washing utensils	2.75	0.424	2.9	0.318	2.825	0.371
3. Sweeping	2.45	0.350	2.55	0.350	2.5	0.35
4. Mopping/Plastering	2.70	0.396	2.85	0.301	2.775	0.349
5. Fetching water	3.95	0.336	4	0.283	3.975	0.310
6. Washing clothes	3.45	0.382	3.6	0.424	3.525	0.403
7. Collecting firewood	4.6	0.339	4.75	0.265	4.675	0.302

** Rating 1- very light, 2-light, 3-moderate, 4-difficult, 5- very difficult*

Table 3. Time Spent (minute / day) in performing household activities by rural women

Activities	20 – 35 yrs. n = 20	SD	36 – 50 yrs. n = 20	SD	Total N=40	SD
1. Cooking activities	130	12.728	139.5	11.703	134.75	12.216
2. Washing utensils	55.75	7.955	58	7.212	56.88	7.584
3. Sweeping	13.30	1.442	11.95	1.103	12.63	1.273
4. Mopping/Plastering	62.40	5.233	69.20	3.960	65.80	4.597
5. Fetching water	72.25	10.942	68.75	10.695	70.5	10.819
6. Washing clothes	30.45	3.338	34.25	6.134	32.35	4.736
7. Collecting firewood	240.30	8.344	240.10	9.069	240.20	8.707

farmwomen involved in household activities are presented in Table 4 and which was computed by using frequency of performance, time spent and difficulty faced. The table 4 shows that the drudgery index was highest in cooking activities (47.89) which is followed by firewood collection (47.20), washing utensils (21.56) and Fetching water (21.12). Again Borah R and Kalita M (2011) revealed that the fetching water and cooking were the maximum drudgery prone household activities for all the land holding categories of rural areas of upper Assam. The Difficulty Index of fetching water was the highest for the large farmers and for cooking activity, Drudgery Index was the highest in landless category. Another similar finding were also found by Bimla *et al.* (2006) in which fetching water, cooking and washing vessels were considered as three most drudgery prone activities in home sector for rural areas. Further, Borah R (1998) revealed that drudgery score of rural women in performance Household tasks was 7.70 in 10 point scales indicating relatively high drudgery and also reported that adoption of improved household technology had positive effect on household work time.

Table 4. Drudgery index of rural hilly women involved in household activities.

Activities	**Drudgery Index**
1. Cooking	47.89
2. Washing utensils	21.56
3. Sweeping	6.29
4. Mopping/plastering	15.51
5. Fetching water	21.12
6. Washing clothes	11.08
7. Collecting firewood	47.20

4. Conclusion

From the analysis of result it can be concluded that most of the household activities attended by Garo Women of Meghalaya were drudgery prone as there was no modernization in their lifestyle due to poverty and constrained livelihood. Introduction of identified household technologies and improve work method can minimize their drudgery by saving time and energy in their day to day activities.

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