



# A Study on Level of Competency of Rural Women for Professional Homemaking

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/CJAST/2020/v39i530550

### Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Orlando Manuel da Costa Gomes, Lisbon Accounting and Business School (ISCAL), Lisbon Polytechnic Institute, Portugal.

### Reviewers:

(1) Srinivasa Rao Kasisomayajula, Madanapalle Institute of Technology and Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapuramu, India.

(2) António Calha, Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre, Portugal.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/55690>

**Received 27 January 2020**

**Accepted 01 April 2020**

**Published 09 April 2020**

**Original Research Article**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Aims of the Study:** To study the background characteristics of the rural women and to determine their level of competency in various homemaking activities.

**Study Design:** Descriptive research design.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Place- Jorhat and Lakhimpur districts, Assam, India between January, 2018 to July, 2018.

**Methodology:** The rural women who were between the age of 18-45 years, members of at least one organization and below poverty line were selected randomly as respondents from the two sample districts. An interview schedule was prepared in order to collect data. The statistical tests and techniques used in the study for analysis of data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD).

**Results:** The findings of the study reveal that majority of the respondents (40%) included in the study were of lower middle age group (27-35 years), of OBC caste (52%), hindu (90%) and married (96%), had nuclear families (62%) with small family sizes (51%). Majority of the respondents (21%) were of middle school level, followed by high school level (18%). Most of the respondents (64%) had farming as their occupation, followed by the daily wage earners (28%), with moderate annual income (31%) followed by high annual income (27%). A large majority (72%) of the respondents did

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not have any subsidiary income for their families. Large majority of the respondents (86%) had no experience of homemaking at others' house. Also, the data found revealed that majority of the respondents (74%) were found to be somewhat able to carry out the different categories of homemaking activities, followed by 17 per cent that were not able and 9 per cent of the respondents were fully able to carry out different categories of homemaking activities as perceived by them.

*Keywords: Professional homemaking; competency; homemaking activities; rural women; research; development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the development of economy and society is not less important than men, who constitute almost half of the total population of the world. Over the last twenty years, the women empowerment and employment have gone through rapid changes and more women are engaged in different sphere of society than ever. Women now are taking part in all over the world and in enormous fields of society. As a result, the equality gender is close to being solved especially in a quantitative approach resulting in overall development of the society. But, as there is always an opposite side of a coin, likewise empowerment of women in the society has brought some negative impacts as well. Families have become nuclear. The wives and other female members of the house have engaged themselves in various works, from which the crisis starts. Due to their busy schedule at work, the female members especially, have left least time for various household works without which a smooth running of a household in daily life is not possible. They do not get ample amount of time to cook for the family members, to look after their children, clean the house and so on, which are generally considered as primary duties and responsibilities of a wife. Still, regardless of all the challenges, families have somehow managed to arrange a maid or a domestic worker from nowhere for carrying out all the activities in place of the wives.

But, according to the report of the National Commission on Self Employment Women, this sector of working is the most unregulated, and disorganized, and often the most underestimated and humiliating. There are evidences of violence against the workers and by the workers. There are cases of third degree treatment, sexual exploitations and non-payment of wages. Also, there is innumerable news to be found in which the domestic workers commit crimes like thefts, kidnapping children, murdering the elderly,

robbery etc. Professionalism of the workers or homemakers from an organised sector can be expected to greatly contribute to reduce the rate of crimes and other household violence in the society, showing better outputs in their household activities [1].

Thus, the women, before going for work in any other household, should be given proper training and guidance to refine themselves and develop their skills in home making activities. But, before conducting any training programmes for the women, it is very much essential to understand their existing extent of skills in different household activities. Here, another important aspect is that the expected trainees of the training programmes are already potential homemakers i.e. they already possess the skills of various homemaking activities within them, now it just required channelizing those skills of the rural women with the use of modern outlook, equipment and other homemaking appliances. Keeping this in view, it has been decided by the researcher to undertake the "study on level of competency of rural women for professional homemaking".

### 1.1 Objectives

- To study the background characteristics of the rural women.
- To determine the level of competency of rural women in various homemaking activities.

### 1.2 Literature Review

The review of literature for the purpose of this study has been taken from researches done on homemaking in general in India and abroad. Some of the available literature pertinent to the topic have been reviewed and presented under the following heads:

- Theoretical Foundation
- Empirical studies

### 1.3 Theoretical Foundation

According to English Oxford living dictionaries, competency is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently.

According to Cambridge dictionary, competency is an important skill that is needed to do a job.

Competency is the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced individual performance.

According to English Oxford living dictionaries, homemaking is the creation and management of a home, especially as a pleasant place in which to live in.

Homemaking is a profession, like any other, with its own set of knowledge, skills and abilities that must be learned if the job is to be done well. The environment we live in can have a powerful effect on how we think, on how we feel, and on our ability to be successful in our daily endeavours. The homemaker's task is to create and maintain a physical, social and financial environment that supports and promotes the well-being of all the individuals within the home. This requires a great deal of thought, careful planning, a solid vision of desired end-results, the willingness and ability to be self-managing and self-directing, flexibility and a great many technical skills. It is a complex and essential job [2].

Although household work is simply defined as unpaid work that is conducted to uphold a household, there are varying interpretations [3]. Household work definitions may include activities such as child care, cooking, and cleaning. Other definitions even specify typical "female" and "male" oriented tasks [4,5]. For example, typical female tasks would include cooking and cleaning, while typical male tasks would consist of paying bills [5]. Not all definitions of unpaid work or household work include physical tasks. Some definitions involve the concept of emotional work [6].

There are many different definitions used to encapsulate exactly what housework, household work, or unpaid work involves. Household work is defined as encompassing all physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual tasks used to uphold one's daily activities and household [7].

Goode [8] role strain theory states that the different roles individuals place themselves into

will sometimes conflict. One may try to please himself in one area; however, doing so will lead to dissatisfaction in another area. With increasing demands and expectations to meet role demands, this will eventually lead to role strain. However, if an individual becomes bogged down with too many roles there are ways to reduce conflict. Family life may encapsulate many roles as women are mothers, wives, the ones who take care of the home, and who also work a full time paid position. Women are now experiencing the problem of having too many roles which may eventually lead to strain.

Juggling a career and a myriad of domestic responsibilities has never been an easy routine especially for families in some of the fast-growing Asian economies. The extra pairs of hands often come in handy in such scenarios considering that they enable parents and homeowners to attain success in their careers or education while at the same time being sure that their children and homes are in caring hands. Domestic workers also dedicate their efforts to enhance the well-being of their employers' children and ensuring that the homes they manage are in perfect conditions. This offers parents and homeowners the time and luxury they need to toil in their careers or pursue education without any stress. As a result, both the employer and the worker benefit mutually [9].

Domestic workers become more important for households where women work outside the house and domestic workers take over the running of these tasks. Further, employers living in nuclear families or with young children are of the view that domestic workers are not only essential as support systems but also provide emotional support as companions [10].

In the changing socio-economic scenario such as increasing ageing population, occupations in industries becoming more lucrative with changes "in the organization of work and the intensification of work" (ILO, 2010), prompting participation of women, especially women from middle class families (Platzer, 2006), in labor market, hence the so called 'un-paid non-market activity', domestic work remains out of the purview of list of occupational options for educated persons, while raising the importance of outsourced domestic work as a separate occupation, mainly performed by migrant workers or economically weaker sections of the society. Partly, this phenomenon leads to a crucial role in making domestic work a segment of employment

choice for millions of workers across the world [11].

“Raising daughters who wish to pursue the profession of homemaking poses a delicate dilemma in today’s culture because “homemaking” isn’t considered a profession.

Childcare is, if you are getting paid.  
Teaching is, if you are getting paid.  
Cleaning is, if you are getting paid.  
Interior design is, if you are getting paid.  
Culinary art is, if you are getting paid.  
Counselling is, if you are getting paid.  
Nutritional expert is, if you are getting paid.

But a woman who wants to become adopt at all these professions tied into one is laughed off or pitied.”

#### 1.4 Empirical Studies

Sunita Malhotra and Sapna Sachdeva [12] in their study found that they have stepped into work place but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same, i.e., women may be a top executive, still the “nurturing” or “care giving” roles are considered much a part of feminine roles.

Sha Najak & Roderick Chia [13] wrote that there are training centres for domestic workers in Phillipines, where the Filipino maids are trained for three months and sent to abroad for job placements after interviewing over skype or telephone.

Paul et al. [14] revealed that domestic work as a feminine occupation in a global city like Mumbai is a epitome of critical deficits in human development, a vicious situation of lack of core entitlements which are required to enjoy freedom guaranteed by the democratic society and the necessity of appropriate alternatives to bring a positive social change, impacting lives of helpless domestic workers and their families.

Ramya, R [15] in her study revealed that working women face many problems related to health, psychology and family in association with their time allocation. It is true that with tight time schedule in between market work and domestic work, majority of working women even after realizing the significance of regular exercises can’t do it due to lack of time. Another significant health problem faced by Keralites is associated

with their life styles and we beautifully called it as life style diseases.

The Assam Tribune [16] reported that a seven-year-old girl was kidnapped from Guwahati, who was alone at home when she was taken out of their apartment around by their housemaid for kidnapping. According to the report, she was supposed to be handed over to another group for ransom. This behaviour is the outcome of lack of professionalism of the workers. They are not at all professional or knowledgeable/skilled enough to maintain the decorum of their work. And this professionalism can be grown through suitable training programmes which will polish their behaviour, attitude, ethics and skills.

The Times of India [17] reported that desperation to get domestic helps cost a family dearly when two maids robbed them of silver utensils and jewellery worth Rs 60,000 on the same day they were hired at Gurgaon. Like the previous statement, this is also a clear outcome of lack of professionalism of the workers. Therefore, an immediate training programme is highly recommended as the need of the hour.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in two districts of Assam, viz., Jorhat and Lakhimpur. Jorhat and North Lakhimpur sub divisions were selected from Jorhat district and Lakhimpur district respectively for the present study using random sampling method.

### 2.2 Selection of Sample

For the present study, rural women who were of 18-45 years and below the poverty line were selected. The samples were randomly selected from two study places namely Jorhat and Lakhimpur. 50 women from each study place comprising a total of 100 respondents were selected using simple random sampling for the present study.

### 2.3 Selection of Variables and Their Measurement

Keeping the specific objectives of the study in view, the following independent and dependent variables were selected. These variables are described below along with their measurement/ instrument used.

**Table 1. List of variables and their measurement for background profile of the respondents**

Sl. no.	List of variables	Measurement/Instrument
i.	Age	Chronological age of the respondent
ii.	Religion	Structured interview schedule
iii.	Caste	Trivedi and Pareek scale (1963)
iv.	Marital status	-do-
v.	Type of family	-do-
vi.	Occupation of the Family	-do-
vii.	Educational qualification	NSSO (2007-2008) with slight modification
viii.	Size of the family	Dey (2000)
ix.	Annual income of the family	Structured interview schedule
x.	Subsidiary income of the family	-do-
xi.	Experience of homemaking in other's place	-do-

## 2.4 Operational Definition of the Key Words

### 2.4.1 Rural women

Dictionary meaning of rural women is an adult female living in rural areas.

Rural women in this study are operationally defined as the adult women dwelling as housewives in rural areas between ages 18-45 years and who are below poverty line. 18-45 years are taken as sample considering the physical and mental strength of the women that are needed to carry out different activities.

### 2.4.2 Professional home making

Dictionary meaning of professional is relating to a person's work, especially work that requires special training.

Professional home making is operationally defined as the home making activities in others' house performed by a rural woman after attaining a formal professional training.

### 2.4.3 Level of competency

The dictionary meaning of competency is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently.

Level of competency is the degree of perceived ability of the rural women to carry out different homemaking activities.

### 2.4.4 Homemaking activities

Dictionary meaning of homemaking activities is tasks that are carried out in household management.

Homemaking activities in the present study has been defined as the activities that are performed daily to manage a home like cooking, cleaning, arrangement, caring of family members and use of appliances.

### 2.4.5 Development of data collection instrument

An interview schedule has been prepared keeping in view the objectives of the study. The interview schedule consisted of three parts. Each part contained separate framework pertaining to the different objectives as proposed in the study.

The first part of the interview schedule has been designed to collect information regarding the personal and selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. This part included particulars such as age, education, caste, religion, family type, family size, educational qualification, occupation, annual income, subsidiary income and experience of homemaking at others' house.

The second part of the interview schedule is constructed to study the level of competency of the respondents in various homemaking activities.

### 2.4.6 Development of level of competency interview schedule

To measure the level of competency of the respondents in various homemaking activities, an interview schedule was prepared. The schedule consisted different categories of homemaking activities under which varieties of tasks were enlisted. The responses were recorded on a 3-point continuum as 'fully able', 'somewhat able', and 'not able'. The responses were scored as 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding background profile of the respondents, the findings of the study reveal that majority of the respondents (40%) included in the study were of lower middle age group (27-35 years), of OBC caste (52%), Hindu (90%) and married (96%), had nuclear families (62%) with small family sizes (51%). Majority of the respondents (21%) were of middle school level, followed by high school level (18%). Most of the respondents (64%) had farming as their occupation, followed by the daily wage earners (28%), with moderate annual income (31%) followed by high annual income (27%). A large majority (72%) of the respondents did not have any subsidiary income for their families. Large majority of the respondents (86%) had no experience of homemaking at others' house.

Regarding level of competency of the respondents in various categories of homemaking activities, the responses of the respondents against each category of activities have been categorized as 'Fully able', 'somewhat able' and 'not able'. The mean score was found to be 230.15 and the standard deviation scored was 12.14.

Table 3 clearly indicates that 74 per cent of the respondents were somewhat able to carry out different categories of homemaking activities, followed by 17 per cent that were not able 9 per cent of the respondents were fully able to carry out different categories of homemaking activities. The ability of the workers to perform a homemaking activity fully or somewhat was completely on their own perception. However, sizeable percentage (17%) of the respondents openly declared that they were not able to perform certain homemaking activities. Since the fully able and somewhat able to perform an activity was measured from the point of view of their own personal perception, there is every room to examine their standard of performance to be considered as a subject of training in a formal training programme. Since competency is the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced individual performance, the pre testing of the skill of the trainees in such formal training would show the gap between what is and what ought to be to perform as a professional homemaking job in others' house. The unknown areas of activities declared by the respondents would definitely help in including the activities in the training curriculum.

**Table 2. Statistical analysis and scoring of level of competency of the rural women**

Category	Score Range	Score`
Fully able	Mean + SD	3
Somewhat able	Mean- SD to mean + SD	2
Not able	Mean – SD	1

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their level of competency in various homemaking activities**

Sl. no	Levels of competency	Percentage (%)	N=100
1	Fully able (>242.29)	9	
2	Somewhat able (242.29-218.01)	74	
3	Not able (<122.53)	17	
<i>Mean = 230.15, SD = 12.14</i>			

**Table 4. Ranking of the different categories of homemaking activities according to their mean scores**

Sl no.	Statements	Mean score	Rank no.
1	Cooking methods	75.08	I
2	Cleaning	46.98	II
3	Arrangement	31.71	III
4	Use and operation of appliances	22.26	IV
5	Cooking different food items	22.03	V
6	Laundry and care of cloth	18.38	VI
7	Caring of family members	13.71	VII

Table 4 clearly shows that the highest mean score was found to be of the category of "cooking methods" (75.08). The second and third highest mean score was of "cleaning" and "arrangement" which were 46.98 and 31.71 respectively.

The categories of homemaking activities like use and operation of appliances, cooking different food items, laundry and care of cloth, caring family members fall under the lower rank of mean scores, which indicates that the respondents were less competent in these categories as perceived by them. This finding will be of great help to formulate the course curriculum of professional homemakers so that training can be imparted to the trainees of professional homemaking training centres in order to raise their competency level in these areas.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the present study that a majority of the respondents were found to be somewhat able to carry out different household activities. Although the respondents were potential homemakers in their own families, they were not found to be competent enough in all the homemaking activities, except one or two, as perceived by them. Hence, providing them with proper skill development training in these activities can greatly help in raising their competency level which can help in smooth running of urban dual earning families. Also it can be expected to contribute in strengthening the economic empowerment of the rural women. This reflects a correct blending of two needs and this kind of mutual benefit always ends up in win-win situation. Since the competency level of the women is already known, thus, opening a professional homemaking training centre is the need of the hour. A business enterprise like a professional homemaking training centre started by any youth or any businessman can be of high demand in the society. One can start a training centre and give the society a chance to realize that well trained professional homemakers are of great importance for almost all the families. Once the society understands its importance, then within a very short time it can be expected that such training centres may be opened in almost every district of Assam on people's demand and gradually in other states of the country as well. This research is a true reflection of R & D (Research & Development) to be taken by any business organisation having a strong innovative entrepreneurial mindset.

Moreover, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has already started a flagship scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) under which a large number of people, especially the youth are provided with many skill development training programmes in various areas for securing a better livelihood. So, the researcher recommends that the ministry should include this area of professional homemaking also and train the people in different homemaking activities.

#### CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*  
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