

UNVEILING THE HIDDEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF HOMEMAKING

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ABSTRACT

Homemaking is frequently seen as a labour of love, yet the mental and physical toll it takes is often overlooked. The hidden of home making are still mostly unknown, despite being typically linked to caring and household management. This study explores the physical and mental strains that stay-at-home moms endure, exposing the long-term effects on their health. This research investigates the concealed effects of homemaking, illuminating the psychological and physiological challenges linked to un paid domestic work. The idea of "invisible labour, "in which house wives perform mental and emotional labour that goes unnoticed and results in cognitive overload and burn out, is examined in the study. This study emphasizes how critical it is to recognize the hidden costs of housework by combining qualitative interviews with an existing literature review. In order to promote a more just and healthy society where domestic work is recognized as a major factor in social and economic stability, these problems must be resolved. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, which includes surveys and interviews with 162 homemakers obtained through convenient sampling via Google Forms, the study assesses stress levels, musculoskeletal strain, emotional fatigue, and the effects on mental health. The results indicated that prolonged involvement in domestic tasks leads to chronic fatigue, anxiety, and a reduced sense of self, especially in the absence of external affirmation. The research also underscores the gendered dimensions of homemaking, pointing out how societal expectations increase stress and hinder personal growth. By revealing these overlooked repercussions, this study calls for enhanced acknowledgment of homemaking as valid labour, the necessity for mental health resources, and policies that foster work-life balance for homemakers. Tackling these issues can enhance well-being and promote a fairer sharing of domestic duties.

KEYWORDS: Homemakers, unrecognized labour, emotions, physical pain, multitaskers.

INTRODUCTION

Homemaking has always been a vital yet often unappreciated component of everyday life, frequently viewed as a private, instinctual duty mostly associated with women. Traditionally, domestic activities like cooking, cleaning, and caregiving are seen as manifestations of love and care instead of recognized forms of labour. Nevertheless, this entrenched societal viewpoint has ignored the significant mental and physical impacts of homemaking. In numerous societies, stereotypes persist that portray women as suited only for household responsibilities and family care. Women have remained largely unheard globally.

There are approximately 160 million women in India who are engaged in homemaking. On average, women invest 297 minutes each day on household chores, while men only contribute about 31 minutes daily, based on data from the National Sample Survey Organization published in The Hindu. Homemaking is frequently envisioned as a rewarding and relaxing occupation that requires the full commitment of the housewife and has many uncounted consequences. The pressure to fulfil societal expectations also negatively affects emotional well-being. Homemakers find it quite difficult to maintain balance and consistently feel the weight of these expectations.

However, subtle changes by family members, particularly partners, can gradually alter this dynamic. First and foremost, it is essential to acknowledge and respect their physical and mental contributions. Taking time to recognize their hard work for the family's benefit and showing appreciation through small gestures of kindness is important. By sharing the job and appreciating the importance of unpaid domestic labor, family members can lessen the load on women. Additionally, offering emotional support makes a big effect. Husbands could also participate in parenting and other household responsibilities, providing moral support that is as crucial as physical help. Allowing them a day off to rest can also rejuvenate their energy. Additionally, understanding their choices and showing respect for them is vital, making them feel valued. Words of affirmation can help maintain their spirits.

Objectives

- 1) To identify the coping strategies that can support mental and physical health.
- 2) To bring to the fore front that common mental illness faced by the homemakers.
- 3) To shed light on the role of societal expectations in shaping the experience of homemakers.

- 4) To examine the financial and economic disadvantages confronted by the homemakers.
- 5) To offersuggestionstohomemakerstoprioritizementalandphysicalwell-being.
- 6) To explore the physical task of repetitive chores.
- 7) To analyse how the time constraint affects adherence to preventive health- care.
- 8) To highlight the skills that homemakers develop.

Statement of the problem

Although homemaking entails handling domestic duties like childcare, chores, money, and meal preparation, it is sometimes underestimated and unappreciated. Despite its significance, homemaking has serious negative effects on one's mental and physical health, such as loneliness, sadness, low self-esteem, financial reliance, and health problems. These responsibilities are disproportionately assigned to women by societal conventions and gender expectations, which hinders their ability to advance both personally and professionally. These difficulties are made worse by a lack of support networks and acknowledgment. The research presented here examines the actual experiences of homemakers, draws attention to the psychological and physical effects of homemaking, and suggests ways to encourage acceptance, assistance, and a fair division of duties.

Research instrument

Period of the study	December 2024 -March 2025
Data used	Primary data and secondary data
Sampling design	Convenience sampling
Total number of respondents	162
Statistical tools used for analysis	Percentage analysis, Chi-square analysis, mean Ranking analysis, Likert ranking analysis

Limitations

- 1) The data provided by the homemakers are personal testimonies which may be biased.
- 2) The study's measurement tools may not accurately capture the complications of homemaking experience.
- 3) The discoveries of the study may not be generalizable as the homemakers may differ based on geographical locations, cultural and socio- economic backgrounds.
- 4) The data collection period is limited which may restrain the depth of the insights.
- 5) Various factors such as family support and financial position may have a significant influence over the responses.

RESULTS&FINDINGS

1)Major factors for stress (Mean Ranking)

Major factors for stress	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean rank
Feeling burdened by the household responsibilities	2.8827	0.99929	III
Anxiety about managing the household budget	2.8457	0.87456	IV

Feelings and hopeless due to homemaking responsibilities	3.0062	1.00617	II
Being detached with your family	2.8025	1.18395	V
Home making valued or respected by family members	2.5864	1.14558	VIII
Prioritizing self-care	2.3580	1.15623	IX
Beingpressurizedbysocietal expectations To perform household chores	3.1728	0.91625	I
Experiencing injuries such as cuts or burns	2.6173	0.97252	VI
Practicing relaxation techniques to manage stress	2.2778	1.31994	X
Engaging in activities that bring you joy and happiness	2.6049	1.04173	VII

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

The table reveals that the primary concern is *being pressurized by societal expectations to perform household chores*, which is the top-ranked issue (Mean = 3.1728), suggesting that people's experiences with homemaking are greatly influenced by social standards.

feeling sad or hopeless due to homemaking responsibilities had the second-highest mean (Mean = 3.0062), indicating that many people suffer from emotional pain associated with domestic chores. The financial and practical components of homemaking are factors that lead to stress, as seen by the third and fourth-place rankings of *feeling burdened by household responsibilities* (Mean = 2.8827) and *anxiety about managing the household budget* (Mean = 2.8457). The fifth-ranked item, *being detached from your family* (Mean = 2.8025), indicates that family relationships may be impacted by home duties. *Experiencing injuries such as cuts or burns*(Mean=2.6173)comes in at number six, indicating the hazards that come with being a housewife. Positive practices like *engaging inactivities that bring you joy and happiness* (Mean=2.6049)come in at number seven, indicating that although some people enjoy these kinds of activities, they do not sufficient importance. People may believe their home making efforts are not fully acknowledged, as evidenced by the eighth-ranked item *homemaking being valued or respected by others* (Mean=2.5864).The ninth-ranked item, *prioritizing self-care*(Mean=2.3580),suggests that self- care is frequently over looked in favor of house hold duties. The element that is ranked lowest(Mean=2.2778) is *practicing relaxation techniques to manage stress*, suggesting that stress management approaches are not commonly used or given priority.

2) Chi-square analysis

Observed value

Factors assisting budget preparation	Identifying The household needs &expenses	Knowing the income of The family	Setting goals like savings, higher education	Smart shopping like looking for discounts or bulk purchases	Total
Level of education					
HSC/ SSLC	17	8	14	8	47
UG	36	10	16	8	70
PG	17	5	10	2	34
Diploma	4	3	1	3	11
Total	74	26	41	21	162

Expected value

Factors assisting budget preparation	Identifying The household needs &expenses	Knowing the income of The family	Setting goals like savings, higher education	Smart shopping like looking for discounts or bulk purchases	Total
Level of education					
HSC/ SSLC	21.5	7.5	11.9	6.1	47.0
UG	32.0	11.2	17.7	9.1	70.0
PG	15.5	5.5	8.6	4.4	34.0
Diploma	5.0	1.8	2.8	1.4	11.0
Total	74.0	26.0	41.0	21.0	162.0

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	8.535 ^a	9	0.481

Source: Primary data

H₀ □ There is no significant association between the amount of education and the elements supporting budget preparation.

H_A □ There is a significant association between the amount of education and the elements supporting budget preparation.

INTERPRETATION:

To ascertain whether there is a significant correlation between the parameters aiding in budget preparation and educational attainment, the Pearson Chi-Square test was employed.

Chi-Square

Value(χ^2): 8.553

Freedom Levels

(df): 9

p-value (significance level): 0.481

The null hypothesis is cannot be rejected since the p-value (0.481) is higher than the traditional significance limit of 0.05. This suggests that there is no statistically significant association between the amount of education and the elements supporting budget preparation. In other words, respondents' educational attainment had little bearing on differences in budget preparation components.

3) Stress about homemaking activities (Likert ranking scale)

Opinion based on acceptance	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Average	Rank
Home making is often undervalued due to societal norms that prioritize income earning people	160	264	99	26	18	567	3.5	IX

Societal expectations place a significant burden to prioritize house hold duties over Personal aspirations	145	228	153	46	2	574	3.5432	VII
Media and advertising reinforce traditional stereotypes of homemakers.	55	108	300	28	10	501	3.0925	XVI
Changing societal Expectations are	80	128	138	120	8	474	2.9259	XVIII
There is a societal bias that homemaking is less valuable than roles Outside the home	95	292	147	28	7	569	3.5123	VIII
The society does not recognize the contribution of homemakers.	235	256	87	18	13	609	3.7592	III
Being without a job Stagnates the skills	145	268	138	28	6	585	3.6111	V
Lack of independence in financial decisions affects mental soundness.	175	276	120	26	5	602	3.7160	IV
Government policies reduces the financial dependency to some extent.	25	128	261	50	13	477	2.9444	XVII
Being unemployed the knowledge about financial products and Investment is low.	80	300	144	32	7	563	3.4753	XI

The monotonous work results in constant exhaustion.	325	128	120	30	10	613	3.7839	II
Cleaning agents causes Difficulty in breathing	40	84	162	124	17	427	2.6358	XX
Endless errands have negatively affected the physical health over time.	95	304	129	24	12	564	3.4814	X
Taking adequate Breaks to reduce the Physical toll of Household chores.	100	216	186	34	9	545	3.3641	XII
I manage time efficiently by balancing household responsibilities.	55	224	213	28	10	530	3.2716	XV
I am skilled at creating and maintaining household management.	95	216	183	40	8	542	3.3456	XIII
I plan and prioritize Tasks daily	75	200	204	50	4	533	3.2901	XIV
In negotiate with service providers and vendors To get the best value.	55	80	174	120	13	442	2.7283	XIX
I can maintain a well-structured living space by organizing households.	130	296	123	28	7	584	3.604	VI
I understand the feelings and address the emotional needs of The family members	420	144	69	14	12	659	4.0679	I

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

The most important part of homemaking, according to the statement with the highest ranking (4.0679), is recognizing and meeting the emotional needs of family members. The physical and mental burden of repetitive home duties is shown by the second-rank (3.7839) effect of monotonous work. The fact that the contributions of homemakers were not acknowledged came in third (3.7592), suggesting that homemaking is not valued in society. Homemaking-related financial and skill-development issues were reflected in the high rankings for lack of independence in financial decisions impacting mental soundness (3.7160) and unemployment stalling skills(3.6111).The tendency of society to devalue homemaking was confirmed by the mid-to-high ranks given to statements about societal bias and expectations, such as the belief that homemaking is less important than external roles (3.5123) and that income-earning people are given priority over homemakers(3.5).The significance of self-care is demonstrated by the necessity for sufficient pauses(3.3641) and the impact of endless errands on physical health (3.4814) indicating the importance of self-care. There are differing opinions on how homemaking can foster skill development between being unemployed and

Having financial knowledge (3.4753) and having house hold management skills (3.3456). Effectively juggling household duties came in lower (3.2716), indicating that these areas might not be as common or important. Government policies minimizing financial dependency (2.9444) ranked lower, demonstrating that existing policies are not effective. Negotiating with service providers (2.7283) stating that the homemakers do not do follow it often. The lowest ranking of cleaning products that cause respiratory problems (2.6358) indicates that this is a less common issue than others. The lowest ranking of cleaning products that cause respiratory problems (2.6358) indicates that this is a less common issue while compared to others.

4) Pre dominant impact faced as being unpaid homemakers

Impact	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Completely rely on spouse for financial support	47	29.0
Notable to save money	27	16.7
Notable to manage households due to income of a single person	41	25.3
No source of personal income to make independent Financial decisions	47	29.0
Total	162	100.0

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

The table illustrate that, the most significant issues highlighted include complete financial dependence on spouse and lack of personal income preventing independent financial decisions as they hold the first place with 29%, difficulty in managing the households with a single person's income is considered as the next predominant impact with 25.3%, additionally 16.7% of the total respondents feel that they are not able to save money.

5) Skills developed from home making

Skills	No. of respondents	Percentage(%)
Time-management	59	36.4
Multitasking	26	16.0
Budgeting	10	6.2
Flexibility	6	3.7
Organizing	5	3.1
Culinary skills	56	34.6
Total	162	100.0

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

The table reveal the skills developed by the homemakers. Out of 162 respondents 36.4% of the respondents agreed that their time management skill has developed during home making, 34.6% state that they have developed culinary skills, 16% of the respondents

feel that they have become well- versed in multitasking, 6.2% of the respondents have learnt to draft a proper budget, 3.7% have learnt to be flexible to adopt to different situations and 3% have developed in organizing the available space.

6) Measures that could be taken to reduce physical pain

Measures taken	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Using light-weight cookware	22	13.6
Plan a weekly schedule to spread out heavier chores	31	19.1
Take breaks to relax muscles	29	17.9
Share responsibilities with family members	66	40.7
Use labor-saving devices	14	8.6
Total	162	100.0

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

The above table outlines that, the most commonly adopted strategy is sharing responsibilities with family members which accounts for 40.7% of the respondents, the next notable strategy adopted is planning a weekly schedule to spread out heavy chores (19.1%), the next strategy adopted is taking breaks to relax muscles as it preferred by 17.9%, using light- weight cookware is being adopted by 13.6% of the total respondents and 8.6% rely on labour saving devices to reduce physical pain

7) Common preconceptions of the society about homemakers

Ways of Societal expectations	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
They are primarily caregivers and nurturers	57	35.2
They are equal contributors to household income	30	18.5
They are independent decision-makers outside the home	27	16.7
They are less significant in societal contributions	48	29.6
Total	162	100.0

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

From the above table, presents that, the most common preconception is that (35.2%)home makers are mainly responsible for caregiving and nurturing, nearly one-third of the respondents (29.6%) believe homemakers have a limited role in societal contributions, a small proportion(18.5%)consider them to be economic contributors and a least percentage of16.7%consider that they have limited autonomy over the decision making beyond household affairs.

8) Activities done by the respondents for self-care

Activities done	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Proper sleep routine	56	34.6
Social connections	50	30.9
Therapy/Counselling	9	5.6
Using eco-friendly and Natural products	16	9.9
Connecting with nature	31	19.1
Total	162	100.0

Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION:

From the above table, it is inferred that a major part of 34.6% of the home makers follow a proper sleep routine as a method of self-care, 30.9% adopt social connections as a means of self-care,19.1% connect with nature through gardening and other outdoor activities, 10% (9.9%) use eco- friendly or natural products for self- care and 5.6% of them take up counselling.

CONCLUSION

The research emphasizes the need for tailored interventions to enhance the well-being of homemakers. Support systems, such as community organizations, peer networks, and family engagement, are essential for alleviating stress. Promoting self-care routines, scheduled break times, and emotional backing can greatly improve their mental health. Moreover, fostering physical health through appropriate ergonomics, stretching exercises, and consistent health assessments can lessen the effects of repetitive physical stress.

In addition, tackling financial dependence is crucial for empowering homemakers. Programs focused on financial literacy, entrepreneurial prospects, and policies that provide financial assistance can offer them increased independence and security. Promoting equitable distribution of tasks within families and nurturing an atmosphere of gratitude and respect will help to alleviate the mental load on homemakers. Interventions from both government and society are vital for achieving meaningful change. Policies that enable homemakers to access health care, social security, and opportunities for professional growth will enhance their financial and emotional well-being.

To sum up, the overlooked impacts of homemaking need to be addressed through joint efforts of families, communities, and policy makers. By recognizing the mental and physical challenges of homemaking, advocating for self-care, financial independence, and just labour division, and promoting a culture of appreciation, society can ensure that homemakers receive the acknowledgment and support they rightfully deserve. Establishing an inclusive atmosphere where the contributions of homemakers are respected will not only enhance their well-being but also build stronger, more resilient communities.

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