

Household Responsibilities of Adolescent Girls in Kangra and Kullu Districts of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The present study examines the household responsibilities of adolescent girls in Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. A sample of 440 school going adolescent girls of age 12 to 17 years were identified from two blocks each from Kangra and Kullu districts. The girls were selected from Government schools located within 17 villages of the four blocks of Kullu and Kangra districts. Focus groups discussions were held with girls in schools on the topics of responsibilities expected by girls at home by parents, daily schedule of girls, type of farm activities and domestic activities of boys at home. Each group consisted of 12 to 15 girls from 6th to 10th standards. The results revealed that girls spent most of the time in activities like cooking food, washing clothes and utensils. Boys did not perform much activities in house. It was also observed that fieldwork was the activity which consumed maximum of the time of girls work in a day.

INTRODUCTION

India has one of the fastest growing youth populations in the world with an estimated 190 million adolescents. Girls below 19 years of age comprise one quarter of the country's rapidly growing population.

Adolescence is a crucial period for healthy development in both psychological and physical terms. During this period attitudes beliefs and values tend to settle into a pattern, out of which emerges the shape and direction of one's life-style. For rural India, a girl's adolescence can best be defined as the period of engaging extensively in household activities, as a pre-requisite for a good woman in future, and also the premature end of education.

In rural areas there is marginalization of girl child's work and feminization of her labour. Girls are often confined to do household work. The domestic burden of girl child is always higher than the male child. The bulk of rural girl children indirectly contributes to the family purse by taking care of the younger siblings, cleaning utensils, fetching water, collecting fuel and fodder and looking after domestic animals. They also assist in certain agricultural operations such as sowing, weeding, watering, etc. A study by Krishnamurthi (1991) revealed that girls are often

withdrawn from the school to lend a helping hand to her mother's in the household duties.

Keeping in mind the above background, the study was formulated with the objective of examining the work pattern with reference to the household responsibilities of adolescent girls in the two districts of Himachal Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total sample of 440 girls of age 12 to 17 years from 6th to 10th standards were selected from government schools of Kullu and Kangra districts. Two blocks were identified from each district, thus, Panchrukhi and Bhawarna from Kangra district and Naggar and Bhunter from Kullu district.

Nine villages from blocks in Kangra districts and eight villages from blocks in Kullu districts were identified. School going girls (253) from villages in Kangra district and 186 girls from villages in Kullu district were selected for the study. Focus group discussions were conducted with girls from each school on the aspects of work expected at house, domestic activities performed at house and time spent on these activities. A self structured guide for focus group discussions were used as a tool for the study. Data collected was analysed through means and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Indian society, girls are made to accept the male supremacy and to look themselves as inferior and having less authority than boys. The

same is the case within the area of sharing of house and allied work, where girls are expected to do each domestic activity and practice them in their future household.

It was revealed from the study that the most common activity expected by parents for the girls at house was cooking food / meal preparation followed by washing utensils and clothes (86%) and sweeping and mopping (73%) in the villages of Kangra district. While in the households of villages in Kullu, washing utensils (87.6%) was the most common activity expected by girls followed by washing clothes (79%) and meal preparation (65.6%). Other kinds of activities like cutting and bringing grass from fields, taking care of animals, barging fire wood, etc were also the expected activities by the percents in this district as compared to Kangra district. An earlier report (Chatterjee, 1988) depicted that these expectations from parents are not new and they are coming from time immemorial where girls are expected to do all domestic activities at house

A girl's childhood years are often crowded with domestic chores and the image that society creates for her is one of worthlessness, servitude and dependence. It is reported in the investigation carried out by Subramamiam (1991) that most of the girls in the age group of 3-8 years were involved in domestic work and by the time they were between the ages of 13 to 15 years, they did all types of domestic work. This was revealed through the present study wherein the daily schedule of work of girls in both districts included cooking food, washing clothes and utensils, sweeping and mopping and bringing and filling water. More percentage of girls in Kangra districts were engaged in fieldwork daily. Girls in Kullu district were found to be doing activities like cutting and bringing grass, taking care of animals, of siblings daily as observed in Table 2.

Table 1: Household responsibilities domestic activities expected by girls at home

Activities	Kangra (n=253)	Kullu (n=186)
Cooking food	253 (100%)	122 (65.6%)
Washing utensils	218 (8.6%)	163 (87.63%)
Washing clothes	218 (8.6%)	147 (79.03%)
Sweeping and mopping	185 (73.1%)	50 (26.8%)
Bringing & filling water	121 (50.1%)	83 (44.6%)
Dusting	68 (26.8%)	80 (43%)
Working in fields	55 (21.7%)	54 (29%)
Cutting & bringing grass	20 (7.9%)	102 (54.8%)
Taking care of animals	15 (5.9%)	99 (53.2%)
Bringing firewood	-	60 (32.3%)

Table 2: Daily schedule of girls in the two districts

Schedule of girls	Kangra (n=253)	Kullu (n=186)
Cooking food	241 (95.2)	186 (100%)
Washing clothes	213 (84.10)	186 (100%)
Washing utensils	238 (94)	156 (83.87)
Going to school	231 (91.3)	76 (40.86)
Sweeping & mopping	253 (100)	141 (75.80)
Bringing is filling water	173 (68.3)	125 (67.20)
Working in fields	158 (62.4)	31 (16.66)
Cutting is bringing grass	95 (37.5)	117 (62.90)
Taking care of animals	75 (29.6)	137 (73.65)
Taking care of younger brothers	22 (8.6)	61 (32.79)
Disposing cow-dung	53 (20.9)	80 (43.01)

Note: Figures in parenthesis denotes percentages

When it came to domestic activities done by boys at home, it was observed that none of the boys performed activities like cooking food, washing utensils or sweeping and mopping. But boys in both the districts did activities like marketing, filling and bringing firewood or grass, Majority of boys as perceived by girls did not perform any activity at home in villages of Kullu districts. This is evident from a study by Thakur (2002), which showed that girls helped more in household chores/activities after school lows in comparison to boys. According to a Human Development Report (1995) girls are more encouraged to carry out household work than boys.

Helping their mothers to carry out domestic chores is perceived as preparation of girls for their future role as caregivers. As revealed from table 3, on an average, girls in Kangra district spent about 201 minutes daily on household activities out of which most of the time was spent in fieldwork (127 minutes) followed by washing clothes and cooking. The girls in households by Kullu district spent more time in fieldwork (157.5 minutes), 49 minutes in washing clothes and cooking (46.25 minutes). The average time spent in this area was 195 minutes on all activities. The

Table 3: Average time (in minutes) spent daily on household activities by girls

Activities	Kangra (n=286)	Kullu (n=186)
Washing clothes	53	49.37
Cooking	39	46.25
Sweeping & mopping	28	20
Collecting water	26	31.25
Cleaning vessels	27	21.87
Collecting firewood	4	10.62
Other work	25	15.0
Field work	127	157.5
Average time on all activities	201	195

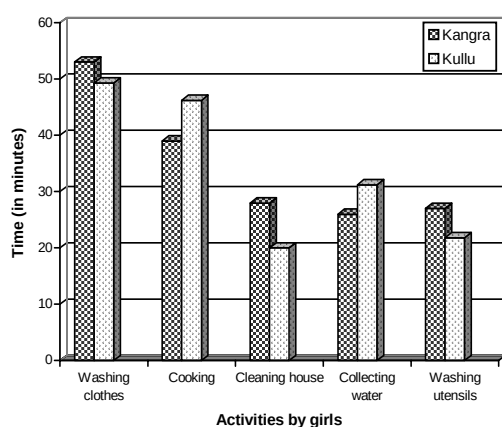


Fig. 1. A comparison of average time spent in household activities by girls in Kangra and Kullu districts

comparison on average time spent by girls in both districts is depicted in Figure 1.

In a study by Kishtwaria (1999a, b) it was found that the time utilization of women on food related tasks were more followed by care of clothes, fetching fuel and child care. Women in the study spent a large proportion of their time in carrying out household tasks, animals care agriculture and allied activities.

Women work for longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's. A study by Coonrod (1998) also showed that women's contribution to agriculture, when measured in terms of the number of tasks performed and time spent is greater than men. In addition to performing domestic activities at home, field activities are also one of the area where inputs of girl child are found. As it came out from the average time spent on activities, girls in both the districts were engaged in different farm activities like sowing cutting and bringing grass, harvesting, weeding, manuring etc. On a comparison, more percentage of girls in Kullu

Table 4. Domestic activities done by boys daily at household level

Activities	Kangra (n=286)	Kullu (n=186)
Filling water	103 (40.7)	-
Bringing water	57 (22.5)	64 (43.4)
Washing clothes	15 (5.9)	34 (18.3)
Taking care of animals	32 (12.6)	31 (16.6)
Cutting & bringing firewood/grass	38 (15.0)	76 (40.8)
No activity	50 (19.7)	91 (48.9)
Marketing	125 (49.4)	-
Doing field work	92 (36.3)	31 (16.7)

Note: Figures in parenthesis denotes percentages

Table 5: Type of farm activities done by girls in both districts.

Farm activities	Kangra (n=253)	Kullu (n=186)
Sowing	253 (100)	95 (51.0)
Cutting & bringing grass	228 (90.1)	167 (89.7)
Harvesting	213 (84.1)	144 (77.4)
Weeding	93 (36.7)	129 (69.3)
Manuring	37 (14.6)	110 (59.1)
Cleaning fields	32 (12.6)	-
Irrigating fields	105 (41.5)	45 (24.19)

Note: Figures in parenthesis denotes percentages

district were engaged in works like cutting and bringing grass (89%) followed by harvesting (77.4%) and weeding (69.3%).

CONCLUSION

Despite widespread progress in improving the situations of children, the situation of girls continue to be disadvantaged compared to that of boys. In the years, when importance has to be given to education and future career, the emphasis is on carrying out domestic activities and fulfilling parents expectations. It can be concluded from the study that girls did a major share of domestic work at home as well as farm work. At this stage, the adolescent girls should be enabled to avail of learning opportunities, especially for the development of their self-image. Thus her burden of domestic work and care should be reduced by providing supportive services and facilities.

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