

*Proceedings of
National Conference on*

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND STRESS

3

OHAS-2011

25-26 February, 2011



EDITOR: DR. (MRS.) R.I. SATHYA

Organised by



DEPARTMENT OF HOME SCIENCE
GANDHIGRAM RURAL INSTITUTE DEEMED UNIVERSITY
GANDHIGRAM-624302, DINDUGUL DT, TAMIL NADU

The Stress Experienced by Homemakers of Male Migrants Families

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Abstract—The wives of migrated husband who head the families face inter related managerial and social problems such as difference of opinion with inlaws, incurrence of debt initially over loading of responsibilities, fatigue, difficulty in decision making and in child rearing and other personal problems which cause stress in them.

Keywords: *Stress, Migrants, Management of Resources, Decision Making, Homemaker.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The home is a unique place in which always a woman is identified as its beacon light. Though in modern times women have ability and freedom when compared to olden times they are burdened with multiple chores. This demands good management of the household by the homemakers so as to perform the task with reasonable amount of ease and efficiency with minimum use of resources. Women are forced to take up the role of the head of the family now a-days due to their husband's job related migration. In such cases, the homemakers had to manage the household, child nurturance, financial management and take decisions concerning the family single handedly (Bharat, 1998). These women who head the families are forced with a set of inter related managerial and social problems which cause stress in them. Hence this study was undertaken with the objective, to find out the managerial practices of the homemakers in relation to money, energy, decision making and child rearing practices and stress experienced.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study was targeted to assess the dimensions of migration, its impact on the families residing in different places of Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts of Kerala, as these areas consisted of large pockets of migrant households and also approachable by the investigator. Two hundred homemakers from male migrated households employed and full time home makers belonging to nuclear and joint family were selected through purposive sampling method. The interview schedule was framed to collect required information from the homemakers whose husband had migrated abroad on employment.

III. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Management of house is difficult for the homemakers in the absence of their husband because until the time of the departure, the responsibilities were shared by both the husband and wife and now she has to do it alone. With the passage of time, these homemakers generally learn to manage things on their own (Kaila, 1996). The result of this part of the study is given under the following headings.

- Homemaker's Relationship with Other Family Members
- Details about the Management of Resources and
- Extent of Social Support Received by the Homemakers.

A. Homemaker's Relationship with Other Family Members.

This part of the result renders information about the homemakers relationship with their in-laws, help received and problems faced with them.

While the homemakers were enquired about the management in joint family, 88 per cent of them had a good relationship with their in-laws as they were very adjustable and understanding, whereas 12 per cent responded negatively.

Due to difference of opinion (40 per cent), unnecessary interference in their private affairs (35 per cent), quarrel (20 per cent), mishandling of money (10 per cent) and other personal problems (10 per cent) twelve percent of surveyed home makers living in joint family did not have good relationship with their in-laws. This situation had caused stress among the homemakers. In spite of having understanding relationship with in-laws in various matters 47 per cent of the in-laws of the surveyed homemakers expected the remittance of money in their name. Those who accept this had an understanding life while the rest faced problems.

It is quite interesting to note that 15 per cent of the homemakers who lived in joint family experienced difference in the treatment of in-laws during the presence of their husband. They loved, cared and helped in the presence of their husband and things changed after his departure.

Social support is extremely important especially for the wives of the migrants. For all the selected employed homemakers except three per cent, the rest had their colleagues support by the way of making adjustments at the work place (44 per cent), accompanying them for shopping and travelling (27 per cent) and by helping them in purchase and payment of bills (18 per cent). To tide over difficult periods, 11 percent received advices and suggestions from their colleagues. A study conducted by Kaila (1996) on "Psychometric problems and social support: Perception of women whose husbands are abroad on job", also revealed that 90 per cent of the homemakers found their colleagues supportive.

B. Details about Management of Resources by Homemakers

In migrant households the homemakers have to manage things single handedly. The part of result present details about the, Money management of homemakers, Time management of homemakers, Energy management of homemakers, Problems in decision making, Problems in child rearing and Personal problems of homemakers.

1. Money management of homemakers

An important aspect of female autonomy is the role of the wife in managing the finances of the household (Zachariah et al. 2001). The impact of migration on consumption, savings and investments are largely determined by the amount of remittances sent by migrants and the utilization pattern of remittances by the homemakers. After expending for the household requirements, they saved their money through insurance (61 per cent), fixed deposits (53 per cent), post office (37 per cent), chit funds (15 per cent), shares (12 per cent) and provident fund (12 per cent).

Though the total earnings of the migrant's family are adequate, due to the debts or other financial commitments incurred in migration, eight per cent expressed that they do not have adequate money for their expenses. During such situation they managed by pledging gold (44 per cent), taking loan (25 per cent), and by cutting down unnecessary expenditure (38 per cent). For migration 30 per cent had incurred debt. Only 57 per cent among them were able to repay while the rest were in the mode of repayment. Inadequate inflow of money motivated 29 per cent of the migrant families to take up loan for the purpose of house construction (63 per cent), purchasing of four wheeler (25 per cent), to start new business (18 per cent) and to conduct marriage of their dear and near ones (7 per cent). Figure 1 give details about loan availed by migrant.

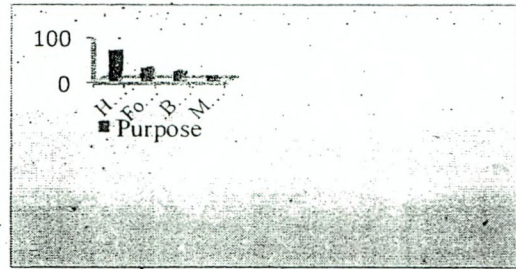


Fig. 1: Details about Loan, Availed by Migrant

2. Time management of homemakers

Irrespective of the type of families and employment status to which the surveyed homemakers belong, above 88 per cent of homemakers were satisfied with the help extended to them in the household activities by the concerned persons so far. The household activities performed by various members are given in Table 1

TABLE 1: THE HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY VARIOUS MEMBERS

Activities	Homemaker		Parents / in-laws		Children		Others	
	NF	JF	NF	JF	NF	JF	NF	JF
Purchasing	64	20	5	62	18	7	12	7
Cooking	89	83	3	33	0	0	8	4
Cleaning	44	22	3	21	1	0	52	49
Maintenance of house	29	10	2	28	8	7	62	54
Payment of bills	55	21	3	56	24	7	18	7
Caring of children	64	58	0	10	14	2	10	11
Teaching of children	22	11	0	1	0	26	22	14
Attending family functions	80	64	8	70	12	8	0	0

Irrespective of the type of the family, cooking was done by majority of 89 per cent and 83 per cent of the homemakers in nuclear and joint families respectively. Attending family functions was also the responsibility of 80 per cent homemakers of nuclear family. Attending the family functions, household purchase and payment of bills were done by the parents in laws of 70 per cent, 62 per cent and 56 per cent of joint families respectively. Among the nuclear families children were responsible for payment of bills (24 per cent), household purchase (18 per cent) and caring of younger children (14 per cent).

Sixty nine per cent and 60 per cent employed homemakers of nuclear and joint families respectively were spending 5-8 hours on performing household activities. However, only 47 per cent and 51 per cent of the nuclear full time and joint full time homemakers respectively were spending 5-8 hours for the household activities as the other family members shared their household works.

Irrespective of their employment status and family type, only minimum of three per cent to 11 per cent of the home makers expressed that they are always overloaded with responsibilities. However, 77 per cent of the homemakers in nuclear families felt the pinch, sometimes, while 52 per cent of homemakers from joint families felt the same occasionally. It is encouraging to see that 42 per cent of the homemakers in the joint families have never been overloaded since the other family members shared the responsibilities during difficult period.

When loaded with activities maximum of 76 per cent of homemakers in joint family managed with the help of other family members. However maximum of 41 per cent of the employed homemakers in nuclear family tried to over work and finish their duties by themselves. It was observed from the survey that 93 per cent of the homemakers had adequate leisure time.

3. Energy management of homemakers

When the homemakers were enquired about their energy management, 32 per cent of the homemakers had experienced fatigue. The type of fatigue they experienced were physiological (83 per cent) and psychological (17 per cent) fatigue in the form of boredom or frustration fatigue. It was clear that most of them who experienced physiological fatigue were mainly homemakers from nuclear families.

It was noted that most of them were able to overcome their fatigue. They adopted various methods such as taking rest in between (67 per cent), by listening to music (20 per cent), watching T.V. (17 per cent), developing positive attitude (14 per cent), concentrating in prayer (10 per cent) and taking help from others in household chores (10 per cent). Some of the employed homemakers took leave and relaxed (10 per cent), while they experienced fatigue. However, 21 per cent informed that they take things as it comes and they do not get frustrated or bored while performing activities.

4. Problems in decision making

Decision making, a crux in management is an important aspect in everybody's life. The wife of migrated husbands faced many problems while making a major decision in the absence of their spouse. The survey revealed 82 per cent of the homemakers when forced to take major decisions, communicated with their spouse over the phone or consulted their in-laws. When they do not find time, 15 per cent of them revealed that they informed their migrated husband after taking decisions. The major decisions taken by homemakers as expressed by them were, purchase of valuable durable goods such as gold, land, house etc (30 per cent), seeking for admission in school or selecting career for their children (22 per cent), taking up a job for themselves (8 per cent), giving or taking loan (14 per cent), giving valuable gifts (3 per cent), and finding a

match for their children (3 per cent). Very rarely two per cent had even taken decisions on legal actions on their trouble causing neighbours. In the absence of the spouse, the homemakers had found it difficult to take decision in the above matters even after communicating with their husband. They expressed that they needed the moral support of their husband in such situations. Figure 2 shows the major decision taken by the selected homemakers. While taking crucial decision 14 per cent of the homemakers had faced conflicts with their in-laws, by making them understand the situation or by neglecting their ideas.

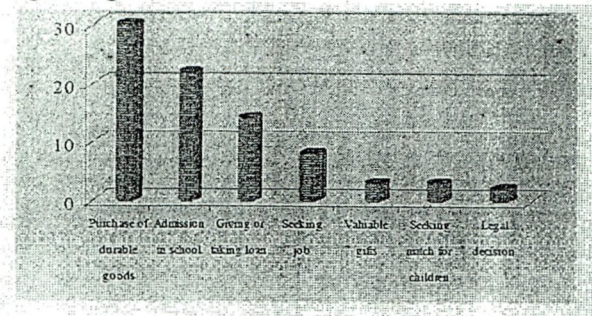


Fig. 2: Major Decisions Taken by Homemakers

5. Problems in child rearing

For the migrant's wives, care and discipline of their children is burdensome in the absence of their husbands. The children seemed to have become more indulgent, spendthrift and careless about their education in their father's absence. When asked about their experience with their children, 77 per cent of the homemakers, were satisfied about the upbringing of their children in a fully disciplined manner and 23 per cent were able to do so but not to full satisfaction. While 65 per cent of the homemakers reported that their children obey them, 33 per cent of the migrant's children did not obey always and 2 per cent of them were bothered about their children's disobedient behavior. It was clear that homemakers residing in joint family were able to bring up their children in a disciplined manner with the help of other family members.

The homemaker's with young children (74 per cent) expressed with sorrow that their children missed their father and sometimes longed to see him especially during functions (50 per cent), festivals (69 per cent), during celebrations such as birthday (20 per cent), when they saw the other children with their own fathers (19 per cent), during holidays (15 per cent), immediately after the departure of their father (11 per cent), during some frustrating situations (6 per cent) and while taking some crucial decision (4 per cent). They also missed their father while travelling in the night (9 per cent) and while shouldering more responsibilities due to his absence (4 per cent). The homemakers also experienced some behavioural problems among their

children rarely like getting into bad company and disobedience. During such situations 28 per cent of the homemakers strived hard to divert the attention of their children, 15 per cent showered their child with love and affection to compensate the father's absence, 14 per cent communicated with the migrated father through phone, letters, e-mail and chatting through internet, another five per cent tried to console themselves. The situations during which the children missed their father is given in Figure 3.

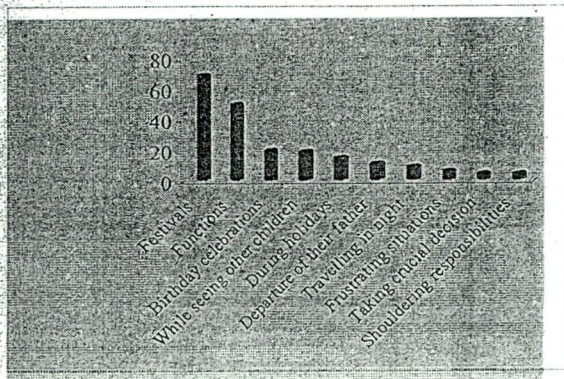


Fig. 3: Situations during Which the Children Missed Their Migrated Father

6. Personal Problems of homemakers

The wife of the migrant husband missed their husbands companionship at times or always. The survey revealed that the homemakers missed their husband during difficult situations such as stress (93 per cent), during worries (78 per cent), while taking major decisions (42 per cent), and when family members fall ill (3 per cent). However 62 per cent missed their husband during leisure time and 20 per cent during functions and festivals. Seventeen per cent of the homemakers expressed that they missed their husband always. It is noted that a greater percentage of employed homemakers in joint families missed their husband during happy occasions when compared to full time homemakers. Figure 4 informs the situation during which the homemakers missed their migrated husband.

Except five per cent who suffered from depression, others did not experience any major health problem due to the migration of their husband. Only 16 per cent of the homemakers in nuclear families faced some

antisocial problems like anonymous calls (65 per cent), robbery (19 per cent), physical torture (6 per cent), and eve teasing (10 per cent). Most of the homemakers acted against this by reporting in the telecom department (58 per cent), police station (16 per cent) and with the help of relatives and neighbours (10 per cent), whereas 23 per cent of the home makers neglected the issue.

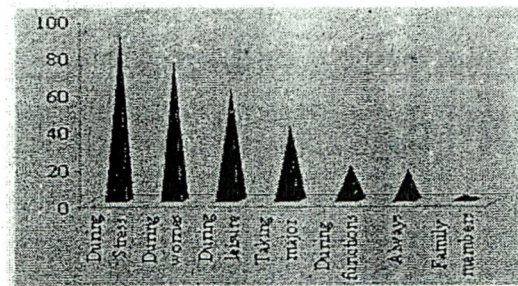


Fig. 4: Situation during which the Homemakers Missed Their Migrated Husband

IV. CONCLUSION

Loneliness, mental strain, hard work, minor problems with in-laws and children all have to be faced by her single handedly by undergoing stress in different situation. However, the wives of migrated husbands developed an innate capacity to get things done, not only within the household but also in the community. The husband's absence, increased economic resources at the disposal of the wife and the ability to communicate with him whenever needed have all become instrumental in transforming a shy, dependent woman into a self-confident autonomous manager with a status equal to that of any man in the neighborhood.

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