

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Time, the nonphysical input in household work is one of the vital human resources. Its value is highlighted in all managerial sciences (Barnes, 1968; Wadia, 1969; Koontz and O'Donnel, 1972; Gross et al, 1973). In Home Management, emphasis is mainly on its utilisation in the home for meeting the multiple demands of individuals and householders. Time as a resource is gaining more importance currently on account of increase in time constraints and the time demands on individuals and families posed by the social, economic and technological changes occurring in societies all over the world (Walker, 1980). This, in turn, necessitates frequent assessment of time used by families on the day to day activities and calls for intensive research in the field.

The early attempts in household work assessment were made in the United States of America during the nineteen twenties (Gross and Crandall, 1967). Since then, interest in assessing the time cost of household work of larger populations has gained great momentum in the U.S.A. This was to enable scholars to come up with the time norms of household work and relate the same to their money worth for raising the status of the work and the workers, mainly the womenfolk. Such attempts have helped the Home Economists and supporters of

Feminist Movements of the Western World to strengthen their arguments for inclusion of household work contribution in the national income estimates. It has even enabled the courts to settle law suits involving loss of homemakers' services through death or disability (Gage, 1964).

In India, too, the welfare agencies and supporters of women's progress have started to voice the need for valuing household work and its inclusion in our national income estimates (ICSSR, 1975; Malya, 1979). But we lack the basic information on the time norms of the household work of our population, needed for estimating the money worth of household work.

The time norms of household work, i.e., the average time of a large and representative population is of great value in that it provides primarily an estimate of the time required for operating a home in a particular set-up. Such information helps in broadening the knowledge about time used in families and thus strengthens the research base enhancing the study and teaching of the subject-matter relevant to the situational needs of the society.

Home management as an academic discipline has gained importance only recently in our country. Little research has so far been done in the field. Consequently not much empirical data are available to make its knowledge-base sound. Due to this handicap, often one has to utilise the time norms developed abroad, both in teaching and research.

But such standards are very misleading on account of the cultural gap (Ogale, 1980). Hence it presents a potential field to conduct research studies by which one can arrive at sound foundations of knowledge for teaching Home Management. One area demanding most attention is household work and its management.

Over the years of progress of mankind, changes like mechanization of household work and improved availability of institutional services replacing some of the traditional tasks are expected to make household work simpler and easier than what it used to be. This improvement can partly be assessed through comparison of the time norms of the work established at intervals. Thus, the time norms of household work can also be used as an index of improvement of work in the home.

Benchmark information that provides an insight into time-use in household work is useful for the development of plans for management of household activities just as average expenditures can be used as a reference point in the analysis of financial management. As is stated by Deacon and Firebaugh (1981):

Time-use data on household activities are providing a social and historical record for studying various groups within and between countries (p.142).

So there is a universal need to establish time norms of household work and its component tasks at regional and national level.

Very often due to (a) the diversified nature of household work and its variation from day to day, task to task and family to family and (b) the unclear perception of the workers of the actual time used in the work, there are chances of over and under-estimation of time span for tasks. The reported data on time span of household work in such cases may not be dependable. So, to check on the spot the validity and reliability of the time span reported by respondents, necessary guidelines are required. This purpose also can be served by the time norms of household tasks, if available.

To establish time norms of a piece of work, a very clear perception of the work is needed. This step is found to be difficult with household work as the work does not have any 'absolute boundary' (Moore, 1963). The definitions of household work given by experts (Steidle and Bratton, 1968; Walker, 1970, Walker and Sanik, 1978), also give only the general directions for setting the limits of household work. None of the studies conducted in the field of Home Management gives us elementary data on the typical household tasks of our population so as to step directly into its measurement process. Supportive factual data appropriate to Indian situation are therefore needed on household work and its components prior to designing the instruments for establishing time norms for household work.

The method widely used for gathering time-use data on household work is self reporting of the same by the workers, generally the homemakers. This method is practical when the respondents are guided by clock timings and are able to record the time-use in some form. On the other hand, when the population to be covered comprises individuals of very low literacy level and a poor clock time concept because of less dependence on time indicators like a watch or clock, it becomes difficult to determine what methodology is to be used to elicit valid and reliable time data on household work.

Estimating time-use on different operations by observing workers performing a task is in practice in the industrial field. Can the same technique be used to gather a clear and total estimate of time-use on household work performance? What would be the limitations of the technique if used as the method for establishing time norms of the complex and fragmented tasks of household work? Literature available fails to provide necessary information in this respect.

Further, whether simulation, "... a way of separating a portion of action (real life situation) from the complex stream of life situations...." (Farris, 1973,p.13) can be employed as a valid and dependable method to establish the time norms of household task is to be verified. This, too, raises two other questions whether replication is possible

for all household tasks and how the typicalities of a household task can be replicated. These questions need to be answered in the process of examining simulation as a method for establishing time norms of household work.

The information we have about time-use in household work is limited to findings from small-scale studies conducted by students at the Master's level. Moreover, most of the studies have tried to elicit information only on the time used for a single member of the family in terms of his or her work participation. Eventhough household work continues to be an obligatory job of womenfolk, especially, the homemaker, in practice, it has always been a family venture in our society (Prafullakumari, 1963; Wells, 1967, Vyjayanthimala, 1968). So a family-centred approach is necessary to estimate the time cost of household work. This approach has been used in the studies conducted in the U.S.A. (Warren, 1940; Weighand, 1954; Walker, 1957, 1970; Sanik, 1978) and literature is available on the instruments used. But the same instrument cannot be directly used for eliciting data on time-use in household work from the rural population in India on account of the heterogeneity of their social, economic and cultural set-up. The instruments may, therefore, need further modifications in their use for our population.

Time norms of household work has application value in further research and extension work among the respective

populations. Even though Home Science education emphasizes the need for conducting researches that could come to the aid of the rural families, there is a great dearth of information about them, especially, about their resource management practices in daily life. So any improvement measure calls for intensive research in the field.

Statement of the Problem

The present study is an attempt to develop a technique for defining and estimating the time costs of household work of rural families which would enable establishment of the time norms of household work and its components. It aims at a holistic, family-centred approach to household work and its time cost measurement. It means the study of the time taken for units of household work as such and not the time taken for work done by each household member. 'Technique' here refers to the whole methodology to be followed to establish the time norms of household work.

Since the research attempt in this study is confined to the rural population unperturbed by many of the social changes, it is assumed that their clock time concept would be less dependable and may cause problems in eliciting time-use data on household work. Hence, it is but necessary to conduct a study of the methodological aspects of measuring work time among a selected sample of rural population.

The research task involved in the study relates to the development of a technique of collecting valid and reliable data on time-use for the different components of household work. This means (1) identification of units of household work (2) analysis of household work into its components (3) developing data collecting instruments to gather valid and reliable data on time-use and (4) testing of the different kinds of data collecting techniques.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is to arrive at a methodology for establishing time norms of household work of rural families.

The related objectives are:

- (1) to survey the time-use pattern of the households of the selected region with the instruments developed,
- (2) to identify the determinants of household work of rural families and
- (3) to establish time norms of household work and its components for the defined population.

Delimitations

- (1) Only three techniques of data collection were examined; self report, observation and laboratory simulation.
- (2) The techniques were examined only with reference to the rural population and further specifically to those belonging to the socially and economically

backward areas of the selected region.

(3) Only the following variables were tested as determinants of household tasks' temporal dimension:

- (a) Family Variables: Type, size, income and occupation, number of children in the family, age of the youngest child.
- (b) Worker variables: Age, employment, hours of employment and education of the homemaker.
- (c) Situational variables: Complexity of meal, source of water supply, water consumed and the like.

(4) As the purpose of the study was to develop a technique for establishing time norms of household work and not for establishing time norms of the work, no attempt was made to spread out the data collection over a full year, for seasonal variations.

(5) To avoid social resistance and allied problems due to continued and persistent disturbance to the privacy of the families, the data collection from households was not spread over the seven days of the week.

Limitations

Whatever limitations there would be in examining only three techniques and not all techniques would be reflected in the study.

The findings of the study would be more applicable to assessment of household work of illiterate rural population than the literate ones.