

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Life since late 20th century has posed more severe challenges to people than those during earlier part of the 20th Century. Challenges have been of different types and have resulted in deep imprints on the pace of life which people have had to cope up with.

With the commercialization in agrarian style of life more of competition and effort are required to cope up with the day to day life needs and this has caused material changes in the way that people need to lead their day to day lives. Technology has become ubiquitous in the lives of people and the practical applications of science and technology have started touching the life-styles of people.

Technology is defined as the “science of industrial arts” by the Oxford dictionary and there are varying definitions of technology. Man has begun depending on technology for his minute to minute living, let alone his day to day living. When Edison developed the electricity, did he ever imagine that human beings cannot live without electricity or when the Wright Brothers flew their first ever airplane did they ever imagine that civil aviation would be part of man’s day to day life? Many scientific inventions have been converted to gadgets which have been mass produced with the use of technology and human striving is towards reducing the cost of these gadgets and making them more easily and commonly available. The late 20th century has witnessed the commercialization of technology with Research and Development and mass production.

As stated above, technology has started playing a very important part in the homes of people. Mechanization of home is one of the significant development of the twentieth century and is the result of advancement in the field of science and

technology (Varghese *et al* 1996).¹ As a result , a number of new household equipment and appliances have also stormed the market, that have helped the homemaker to reduce their work input and increased their efficiency to a great extent. Many questions rise when we study the impact of technology on life-styles of people and homes, social systems, buyer-behavior etc. Modern gadgets have an important role in making the home comfortable for its inhabitants. Even a couple of decades ago, the dream house of a common man included the gadgets, which could make his life easier with lesser drudgery -now it is 'almost' reality. The presence of gas stoves, food processors, microwave ovens, washing machines, antenna wires, telephone lines and a multitude of electrical and electronic devices like computers, mobile phones, air conditioners, coolers etc. in the smallest of dwelling units stand testimony to this. These appliances play an important role in improving the physical quality of life by making time consuming and difficult household chores easier.

To give an operational definition we can say Technology refers to the methods, systems and devices that are the result of scientific knowledge being used for the practical purpose. For a homemaker the modern household technologies are those devices which are time and energy saving and help to improve the quality of life.

On one hand, these gadgets have proved to be a boon, especially in nuclear families where both husband and wife are working. Further, in a society where women have to shoulder single-handed the responsibility of domestic work, these gadgets have helped to reduce the drudgery of work but have also helped in household management, reduced the workload and instilled more confidence in homemakers. Terberg (1977)² also reported that women found it difficult to justify both roles due to limited availability of time and energy at their disposal. The modern household technology is a great conserver of human energy and time resources particularly for homemakers with dual responsibilities. These technologies have played their role in the improvement of communication, thus having a positive impact on social fabric of life. Television and radio has supplied with the knowledge required by them as mothers and wives. Changing life style and bettering the quality of life, especially

where both husband and wife are working, these appliances have proved to be of great help.

On the other hand, however, these gadgets have also made humans their slaves. Lack of physical labour in daily routine has led to deterioration in health and an increase in the level of obesity. The impact of harmful radiation of television, computer sets and microwave oven sets is still to be fully explored though it is indubitably there. Access to indoor entertainment has reduced outdoor activities of both, adults and children and reduced social interaction in the neighborhoods. These appliances have also been a cause of major accidents within and outside households.

Scientists in home management from the very beginning have shown great interest in time and energy cost studies, and recommended some of the work methods which could reduce the cost of time and energy in the household work. Some of the studies directly focus on the adoption and use of the time and energy saving devices, the use of right postures for work and organization of work places to minimize the cost of work in the kitchen.

Mostly the research work has been done on the use of the kitchen equipment, cleaning and laundry equipment. (Dickson et al. (1982)³ Goyal and Kakar (1986)⁴, Lovingood and McCullough (1986)⁵, Odland et al (1987)⁶, Sharma et al (1991)⁷, Virk et al (1991)⁸, Dhablania (1992)⁹, Shashi (1995)¹⁰, Gill (1996)¹¹, and Kaur et al (2001)¹². Very little research work has been done to find the use of telecommunication equipment like home personal computers, Internet, cell phones and their utility to the homemakers. In India the status of women is improving only among the urban middle class. Progress for the lower class is very slow. New technologies like the computers, the Internet and the cell phones are available largely in the cities and there too in the upper strata of society. It is needless to emphasize that the awareness has to be generated particularly in the women of the lower middle class regarding the new technologies and equipment that could conserve time and energy. Some families may be possessing some of these devices but they need to be taught for their proper usage. Similarly, there is a pressing need of the day to understand the availability of new

technologies in urban and rural homes, their financial and other constraints, the reasons for using or not using them and attitude towards the change in equipment.

Status of Women

Many research studies have proved and substantiated the fact that the rate of change in the position and status of Indian women, urban and rural, gainfully employed or self employed in their own homes or farms is almost negligible. Their chores continue to be what they have been through the ages. If at all there is any difference, it is only further addition to their cumbersome task of home making on account of additional job responsibilities necessitated by the need to enhance the family income through work outside the home. Their lives have become more cumbersome with the disintegration of the joint family system and with greater mobility; thus necessitating greater reliance upon improved home technologies.

There has to be an in-depth study of the reasons for non-adoption of new technologies in household work. It is a big problem confronting scientists in the field of home management. One wonders if there are some psychological factors relating to the homemaker's values and attitudes, which hinder the adoption of these innovations. Women's non-participation in the financial decisions of the family is possibly a factor of momentous importance. There is very little literature available to provide appropriate answer to these questions.

So the present study was planned with a view to find out the extent of use of new technologies and equipment, the constraints of women in the adoption of new technologies in household work so that women may be really emancipated and fulfill themselves through innovative work in commercial, intellectual and imaginative fields. As the availability of domestic help declines, there will certainly be a spurt in the purchase and use of time and energy saving devices.

As stated earlier the researches conducted so far are focussed only on the household equipment used in cooking, washing, ironing and cleaning. The present study will cover a much wider area by including in it television, music systems,

coolers, air conditioners, personal computers and mobile phones etc. Telecommunication equipment, the Internet, mass media transmitted via satellite, cable and fiber optics, videotexts and fax machines, are opening new options across the globe.

The Internet has revolutionized the world like no other technology before it. The internet or 'net', as it is better known has been perceived to be of several dimensions to its users; a medium of intercommunication between remote users, a mechanism to share the information, and work collaboratively; a means of publishing the information globally; and a near exhaustive repository of information. Today the Internet forms an essential infrastructure for any society, quite at par with radio, telephone, or electric power. The global information infrastructure is a reality. So, this study will be of great help to increase the awareness of homemakers regarding the use of new technologies for better management of homes.

Women's participation in technology development shall be successful since there is no operation where women can not render themselves useful. At this time when the developing nations are giving more attention to the removal of backwardness in female population in our society, by improving their educational background and providing job opportunities for them to become financially independent, it is imperative that women who constitute 50% of our population, should dictate the market for production of efficient goods and services to reduce their workload in their domestic chores, which has remained their exclusive domain in underdeveloped and developing countries

The products and services tailored to men's requirement tending to reach saturation, it is natural that the future focus would be on the untapped potential in the areas covering the domain of female activity, especially when the independent purchasing power of women is growing by leaps and bounds. With India and China leading the way for emancipation of women from handicap of their financial dependence, it would be naive to ignore this future potential in the economic activity of the community at large. Financial independence and access to good education

among the women, is bound to open the floodgates of demand in products and services encompassing the female activity domain. There is no gainsaying the fact; that the future economic activity focus lies in their sphere of activity.

It is an incontrovertible fact that every new idea has a negative side to it. The present researcher will take a due notice of this fact and suggest ways and means of countering them. In the present investigation an attempt was made to develop a specific questionnaire to get feedback from the urban working and nonworking women to study the possession, use and impact of modern gadgets on life style

In the end, even at the cost of sounding presumptive, Researcher will suggest that the present study is ultimately aimed at meeting the challenges of 21st century by creating in home makers, the awareness of their potentialities and raising them to the new levels of achievements. Without a visible improvement among women, no nation and society can really flourish and progress. Indira Gandhi has rightly said, “I do not think that any society can progress if half of its members do not have equal opportunity and their talents and capabilities are ignored.”

Scope

The present study, “Impact of modern household technologies on management practices of working and non-working women of Punjab” was planned to study the types of improved technologies possessed and used by the home makers, the problems faced by them for their possession and use and the impact of these technologies in management practices of household activities. In this study besides including selected cooking, washing and cleaning equipment, the information technology equipment like personal computer, internet, mobile phones, and other equipment used for entertainment and comforting the life like, television, music systems, coolers, air conditioners etc. will also be included. The findings of the study are expected to be helpful for extension workers and policy makers. It will also help to make some motivational plans for the homemakers, to purchase and use time and energy saving equipment and other new technology equipment.

The study was planned with the following specific objectives:

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the types of improved household technologies possessed and used by the homemakers;
2. To study the extent of use of these selected technologies by the homemakers;
3. To study the perception of the homemakers regarding the impact of improved technologies on the management practices of the household activities;
4. To study the attitudes of the working and nonworking women towards the possession and use of selected technologies;
5. To study the factors affecting the purchase and use of these technologies; and
6. To study the problems faced by the homemakers for buying and using the selected technologies.

HYPOTHESIS

1. The improved household technologies have improved the quality of the management practices of homemakers.
2. The attitude of working women towards the possession and use of improved household technologies is more positive than that of nonworking women.
3. The extent of use of improved household technologies is greater among working than in nonworking women.
4. The problems of working women for the purchase and use of modern household technologies are less than non-working women.

5. The effect of different factors for possession of modern household technologies do not vary for working and non-working women.

LIMITATIONS

1. The study is limited to one sex i.e. women only.
2. The study is limited to the urban homemakers working in schools and colleges and non-working urban home makers.
3. The study is limited to the selected household technologies extensively used by the homemakers.
4. The study is limited only to the subjective responses of the homemakers.

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