

Value Perception of Unpaid Household Work –Women’s Perspective in Odisha**Meenakshi Bose**

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Abstract: The recognition of the domestic duties accomplished by women is not only dependent on the time used in undertaking such activities, but also depends on the value perception of others as well as women themselves. The article at hand, attempts to understand how women value their contribution to the household. It discusses pertinent issues related to the value perception of women regarding unpaid domestic activities resulting to the invisibility of women’s work based on an empirical study in the state of Odisha in India. Further, an attempt has been made to identify the different factors influencing women’s perceptions about their contribution towards their household.

Keywords: *Appreciation, Perceived Contribution, Perceived Interest, Recognition, Value*

1. Introduction:

Perception is defined as the process through which an individual becomes aware of a given situation by contributing meaningful relations to sensation (Giliner & Halter, 1970). Besides, it is a process of receiving, selecting, organizing, interpreting, checking, and rearing to sensory stimuli or data (Pareek, *et al.* 1981). The article at hand, attempts to understand women’s perception of themselves in the context of unpaid household work accomplished by them. It should be noted that the perception of an individual is influenced by three factors, such as (i) characteristics of the perceiver, (ii) the object or target being perceived, and (iii) in the context of the situation in which the perception is made (Lewis, 2001). However, perception is subjective, which an individual tends to develop, influenced by their nature and the way they are socialized. The paper at hand, attempts to understand women’s own perception about the value of unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by them. The self-perception theory, which was established by psychologist Daryl Bem (1972), explains that when individuals come to “know” or comprehend their attitudes, emotions, and other personal traits, mostly by concluding them from witnessing their conduct and, or the circumstances in which they behave. Also, self-perception is an individual’s ability to respond and direct their behavior and other controlling variables as a consequence of social interactions (Mead, 1934; Ryle, 1949; Skinner, 1957).

2. Methodology:

The research attempts to explore the perception of women regarding unpaid work accomplished by them through an exhaustive literature review and empirical study in Khordha district, Odisha. The research design adopted for the empirical study was exploratory in nature. Both rural and urban locations of Khordha district were selected based on purposive sampling. To get an in-depth understanding of the quantum of work done by women in rural areas, 200 women respondents were interviewed in both tribal and non-tribal communities/villages. Similarly, in urban areas, 200 women respondents belonging to middle, upper-middle, and low- income categories were interviewed. An attempt was made to develop a framework to assess unpaid household work, and the same was applied in the field. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for the study. Structured questionnaire and interviews with women respondents, and other family members was incorporated to collect the primary data. Besides, there were informal conversations along with maintaining notes to understand the perception of women about their own

contribution towards their household. Focus Group Discussions with all family members and women groups within the village community were used to understand their perception about women's contribution to the household. Case studies were collected to get better insights of different roles played by women within their household.

3. Women's Perception:

The value of unpaid work undertaken by women and their contribution towards the household is influenced by one's self-perception about the same. This means that women's perception about themselves influences the way other's perceive women's contribution to the household. Self-perception theory (Bem, 1972) proposes that individual make judgments about themselves by using inferential processes and errors as they would judge others. Self-concept is a significant attribute of self-perception (Dur, *et al.* 2014). Self-concept is an internally organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself using self-assessments (Carl Rogers, 1959).

According to Agarwal (2009), women do not have a clear perception of their interests in the society and thus suffer from "false consciousness", as a consequence, accept their unequal position within the household. During the study it was found out of 400 women interviewed, although 324 respondents responded that unpaid household activities have value, only 253 mentioned that household work should be recognized. This substantiates that though women respondents acknowledged the value of the unpaid household work accomplished by them, yet majority of them were confused whether such activities should be recognized or not. Women's self-perception about their contribution towards the household is influenced by their lived experiences, attitude, expectations, motive interests of an individual (characteristics of the perceiver); the nature of work accomplished by them (the object or target being perceived) and the situation in which they perform the tasks. How women interpret events and how this relates to their rationale can be explained through the attribution theory proposed by Heider in 1958. Figure 3.1 illustrates the different factors that influence perception of women regarding unpaid work undertaken by them. The factors that influence women's perception are of two kinds – internal (Dispositional) and external (Situational) (Lewis, 2001). Internal attributes including the characteristics of the perceiver whereas, external attributes such as the situation or the social environment and the target being perceived influences women's perception.

3.1 Internal (endogenous) factors: The Characteristics of the Perceiver

According to Randolph and Blackburn (1989), factors such as what the perceiver has previously learnt, along with the motivation and personality, encompasses the characteristic of the same. Further, the attitudes, interests, motives, experience, and expectations of the perceiver also influence perception (Robbins, 1991). The internal or endogenous factors include the needs and desires of women to get appreciated by family members. Women's personality that entails their exposure to the outside world - educational attainment, and their lived experience includes decision-making autonomy, expression of agency, consideration of her health status, and impact on the relationship with others.

3.1.1 Needs and desires of women: Appreciation by member of the family

Women accomplish different unpaid household tasks, which are not only overlooked, but also, often not appreciated. To take up the household responsibilities, women make many sacrifices which are ignored by their family members. Lack of acknowledgment and appreciation primarily by family members affect women's perception and as a consequence, she considers household responsibilities accomplished by her as obligations to be fulfilled. The seminal work by Hochschild and Machung (1989) "The Second Shift", explains how after marriage, a professional woman is expected to give up her career in order to take charge of household responsibilities, while her spouse is committed to his career growth, which is considered to be "do the best thing". Observations from the field showed that in urban areas, out of the 134 who responded that they are not engaged in paid activities outside the home, 90 asserted that they had to compromise with their career ambitions, due to household responsibilities. During the focus group discussions women insisted

that they stay back home, foregoing their career aspirations to take up unpaid household duties did not reduce their burden of work, instead demands more time and physical stress. It is a popular belief in the Indian society, women are expected to be educated not for their personal advancement, but to become more efficient in taking up household responsibilities and child-rearing. It is also well known that women serve the current labour force of the nation, yet their contribution towards the household and the national economy remains invisible, weakening the position of women both within their family and society. This substantiates Sen's (1987), stance about the perceived contribution response, which explains that due to household responsibilities and persistent child-rearing, women step out of the labour market, which lowers their ability to make their perceived contribution in terms of money and thereby weakens their bargaining position within the household.

Experiences shared by women during the study brought out dismaying concerns. One such experience was that although they work hard, their family members neither feel empathic towards them, nor their contribution towards family is appreciated.

One of the informants shared her experience stating:

“Despite of working hard, my husband never recognizes or appreciates me and neither he is thankful for any of my efforts. This really hurts and leaves me heart broken.”

Women in tribal villages expressed their feelings of embarrassment and feel disheartened with the lazy attitude and liquor consuming habit of their husbands.

Another respondent (Minakshi Das) stated:

“I am very hurt because of the nature of my husband who does not take interest in looking for income earning opportunities outside of the household. I am worried about the future of my children and so I took initiative to take up work out the house”.

Besides, there were also evidences of domestic violence against women by their husbands and in-laws is still prevalent in many households. One of the woman respondents shared that in case their family undergo financial struggle they have to face both physical and mental abuse.

“When there is not enough income in the household we are blamed. I personally feel helpless, because I do not have income generating work and not in a position to support my husband during his financial difficulties. My in-laws and husband very often pass taunting remarks saying that I am a burden to them and I should go out and earn money or else bring money from my parents.”

Such behaviour from their family not only disheartens and demoralizes them, but also shatters their emotions and, as well as expectations. Women in tribal villages expressed their feelings of disgust with the lazy attitude and liquor consumption of their husbands. Besides, there were also evidences of domestic violence against women by their husbands and in-laws among households. This substantiates how specific patterns of aggression in terms of domestic violence are associated with hegemonic masculinity (Bufkin 1999; Messerschmidt 1997; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

It is important to note that that appreciation by the family members for the accomplishment of domestic responsibilities and contribution towards their household not only heals their psychological stress, but also, boosts their confidence and motivates women to value their work. Table 3.1.1 shows that in rural areas, out of 200 women respondents interviewed 116 responded that their family members do not appreciate their efforts. Out of these, 75.9 percent women acknowledged that such activities have a value, which counts to 88 women respondents. Further, out of 88 only 55.2 percent replied that such activities should be recognized. Similarly, in urban areas, 120 women respondents out of 200 asserted that their family members do not appreciate them. Out of 120 only 98 women, i.e. 81.7 percent acknowledged the value of unpaid work. Furthermore, out of 98, only 77.5 percent believed that such activities should be recognized.

Table 3.1.1 Appreciation by family members and value and recognition of unpaid work

Location	Appreciation by family members	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women's work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	84	70.2	59	57.1	41.7	1.2
	No	116	75.9	88	55.2	43.1	1.7
Urban	Yes	80	98.8	79	60.0	35.0	5.0
	No	120	81.7	98	77.5	19.2	3.3

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

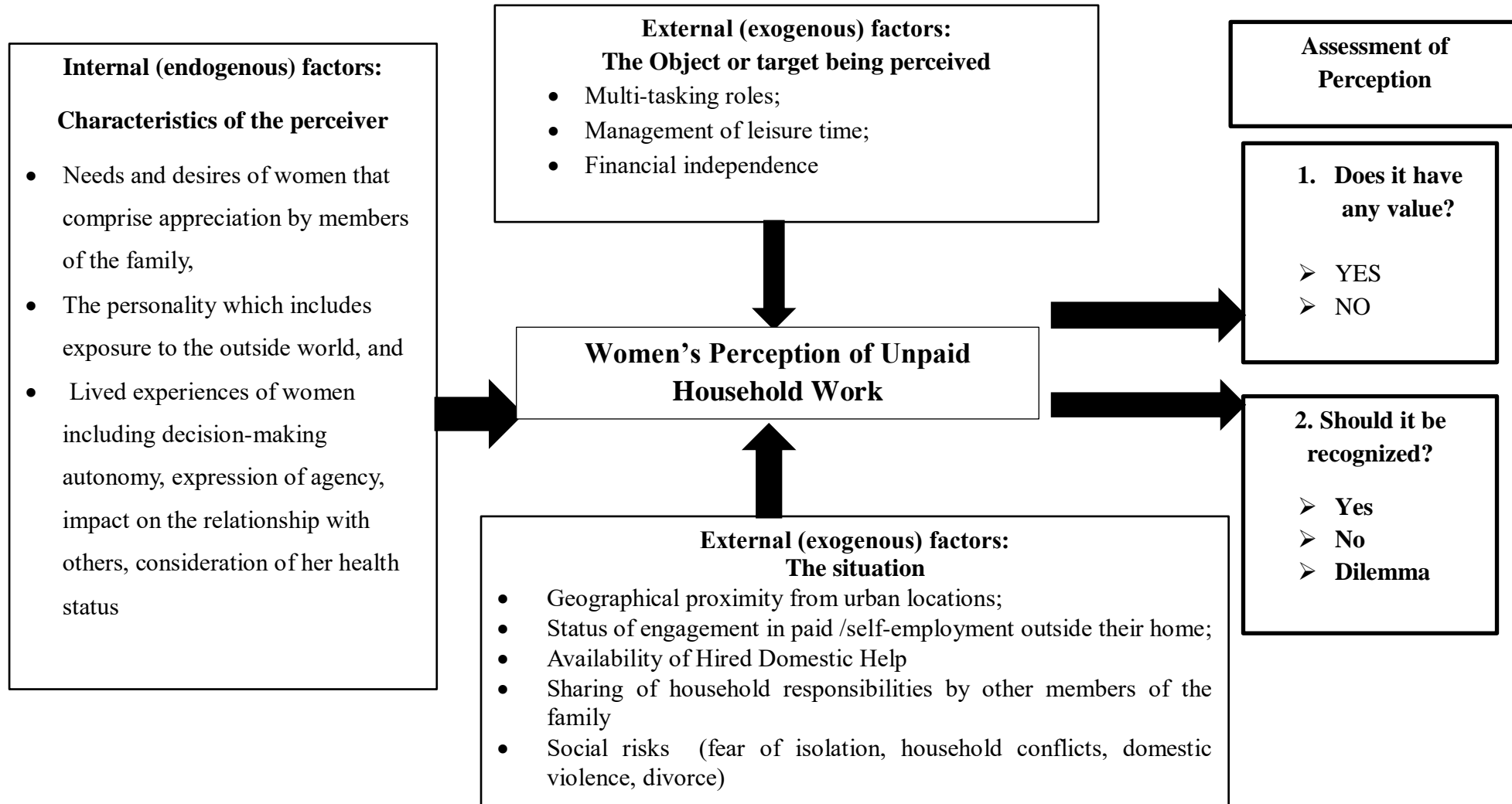


Figure 3.1 Framework to Explain Women's Perception of Unpaid Household Work

3.1.2 Personality: Exposure to the outside world (educational attainment)

Exposure to the outside world has a significant influence on their perception regarding the value of work accomplished by them. Individual often assumes that the people they come across share at least some of their attitudes, values, and beliefs (e.g., Adams-Webber, 1977; Benjafield & Adams-Webber, 1975; Blanchard, 1966; Cloyd, 1977; Messé & Sivacek, 1979; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Exposure involves the degree to which an individual encounters a stimulus either accidental or deliberate goal-directed. A single exposure is not enough to significantly impact individual perception. Observations from the field revealed that the continuous intervention of government and civil society organizations plays a significant role in generating awareness among the women and empowering them, especially in rural areas. The intervention of the non-profit organization Centre for Action Research and Documentation (CARD) in the tribal villages towards development and creating awareness about gender equality in education and women’s empowerment had a positive impact on their perception.. Women in the tribal villages were engaged in earning a livelihood for sustenance of their family and participated equally in the decision-making process within their household and community. Women with higher educational attainment in rural areas acknowledged the positive value of unpaid activities performed by them. Table 3.1.2 reveals that out of 200, 110 women respondents in rural areas, i.e., 55 percent had attended a primary level of education. About 79.1 percent out of 110 (i.e., 87 women respondents) acknowledged the value of unpaid work undertaken by them, and out of these 87, only 34.5 percent claimed that such activities should be recognized. In urban areas, the perception of women is influenced by factors such as education, media and social networking. In this context educational attainment was taken into consideration. Table 3.1.2 gives an idea that out 200 interviewed in urban areas, 160 attended higher education level, including exposure to college-level education. Among 160 women respondents who had higher educational attainment, 56.3 percent (i.e., 90 women respondents) acknowledged the value of unpaid work undertaken by them, while only 33.3 percent out of 90 women claimed that such activities should be recognized.

Table 3.1.2 illustrates Sen’s stance that a lower level of educational attainment by women negatively influence the breakdown positions worse for women, which further impacts their perception about the value of unpaid work. Besides, due to lack of exposure, women in rural areas were in a dilemma, in other words they are not clear about the recognition of unpaid domestic duties. This substantiates Gibson’s theory of direct perception that the information in our sensory receptors, including the sensory context facilitates perception about the object being perceived. As the environment provides all the information required for perception, this is called ecological perception.

Table 3.1.2 Value and Recognition of women’s work by exposure to the outside world (educational attainment)							
Location	Educational Attainment	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Illiterate	24	79.2	19	26.4	36.8	36.8
	Primary Education	110	79.1	87	34.5	48.3	17.2
	Higher Education	66	63.6	42	26.2	52.4	21.4

Urban	Illiterate	19	47.4	9	33.3	33.3	33.4
	Primary Education	21	71.4	15	40.0	33.3	26.7
	Higher Education	160	56.3	90	33.3	38.9	27.8

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.1.3 Lived experiences: Decision-making autonomy (Consideration of women’s opinion within their family)

Lived experiences such as consideration of women’s opinion within their family facilitate some sensory inputs that lead to perceptual learning. Observations from the field show that despite the excessive burden of women’s work at the household level, yet they do not have decision making authority within the family. Besides, women’s choice of whether to or not to take up household responsibilities is not considered necessary. In some cases, the burden of income-earning is also thrust upon them. However, liberty to take decisions or make choices is again very contextual and subjective, which influences their perception. The choice of decision-making among women belonging to nuclear families may be more noticeable than those from extended nuclear and joint families. Factors such as individual income, parental background, education level, family bonding, and cultural constraints guided by stigmatized gendered ideologies govern the position of women. Evidences from the field reveal that cultural norms influence the consideration of women’s opinion in household decision making. In the case of ‘ Brahminsahi’ of the Ratanpurpatna village of Khurda district, women consider their husband and in-laws as ‘Devta’, i.e., A deity or God with whom all decision making rests. Surprisingly, in India, a woman is expected to represent ‘Goddess Durga’ portrayed as the feminine embodiment of strength and power. Yet, their bargaining position within their household and as well as in society is very weak. In Nuagaon village of the same Khurda district, women are obliged to tolerate the humiliations and accept the decisions of men without any complaint as they are financially dependent on male members of the family.

The seminal work of Amartya Sen on household cooperation and conflict, explains how contributions made by women was perceived by themselves as well as by others that influence the bargaining position of women within the household and society. The bargaining position of women within the household and valuing of their opinion by other family members influence their perception about the value and recognition of the work accomplished by them. It was observed that women acknowledge that unpaid household activities undertaken by them have value irrespective of their opinion considered necessary by other members of the family. In rural areas, out of 200 women interviewed, 84 responded that their opinion is not considered important by the family members. Out of 84 women whose opinion is not considered by their family members, 70.2 percent (59 women) acknowledged that the unpaid household activities undertaken by women have value, but only, 57.1 percent out of 59 responded that such activities should be recognized. Whereas, 116 women responded that their opinion is considered important by the family members. Out of 116 whose opinion is considered by their family members, 75.9 percent acknowledged that the unpaid household activities undertaken by women have value, but only, 55.2 percent out of 88 women responded that such activities should be recognized (see table 3.1.3).

In urban areas, 80 respondents out of 200 women interviewed replied that their opinion is not considered important by the family members. Out of 80 women respondents whose opinion is not considered important, 98.8 percent responded that unpaid household tasks have value, out of which only 60 percent claimed such activities should be recognized.

Besides, 120 women respondents reported that their opinion was considered important by their family members. Among 120 women respondents whose opinion is considered important, 81.7 percent responded that unpaid household tasks have value, out of which only 77.5 percent claimed such activities should be recognized (see table 3.1.3). This validates that *“Social arrangements regarding who does what, who gets to consume what, and who takes what decisions, can be seen as responses to this combined problem of co-operation and conflict.”*(Sen,1987. p. 13). It has a significant influence on the perceived contribution regarding the value of unpaid household work accomplished by women.

Location	Opinion considered important	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent(%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	116	75.9	88	55.2	43.1	1.7
	No	84	70.2	59	57.1	41.7	1.2
Urban	Yes	120	81.7	98	77.5	19.2	3.3
	No	80	98.8	79	60.0	35.0	5.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.1.4 Lived experiences: Expression of agency

Women’s perception of the value of their household work is influenced by their attitude and experiences, which gets reflected in their agency role. Agency can be defined as a product of autonomy and freedom. This includes an individual’s capacity to act and the suitable conditions to facilitate any action. The spread of education and awareness generation, empowers women and strengthens their agency to resist subjugation and deprivation. Initiatives by government and civil society organizations act as development instruments that provide women a platform to raise their voice and challenges. Observations from the field reveals that women resist their unequal position within their household and society because of their exposure and awareness. These women were of the opinion that they have a significant contribution to their household by accomplishing household responsibilities

Surprisingly, observations at the ground level showed that women in rural areas and low-income group in urban areas tend to be more vocal in raising their issues and concerns. According to them, to bring about changes in the position of women, they must work collectively, which would influence and bring changes within individual households. In tribal villages studied, due to the continuous intervention of a non-profit organization Center For Action Research & Documentation (CARD) creating awareness about gender equality in education and empowerment, women formed groups ‘Mahila Sanga’ (women’s group) resulting in improved participation of women. These women participate in various village level meetings such as in Panchayat, Gram Sabha, Palli Sabha, Aanganwadi meetings, child club meetings, and interact with various government officials to raise their concerns. This helps women to educate themselves about different schemes and policies of the government. They are representation of change-makers who acknowledge the value of unpaid household work undertaken by them and are of the opinion that the same should be recognized.

In case of urban areas, there is a paradigm shift in the social status of women belonging to the lower income groups of the society, where they have a strong voice because of their contribution towards their household income for the sustenance of their family.

Whereas, those women from the higher income group, particularly the homemakers are still suppressed by the patriarchal norms.

3.1.5 Lived Experiences: Impact on women’s relationship with others

According to Gregory (1966), perception is a matter of receptors as well as of the brain. He explains that experience is more important than sensory images for interpretation of sensory data, which is based on previous experience. Women face numerous challenges in their relationship with others while undertaking different activities at the household level, which are often overlooked. The household responsibilities keep them busy as a result of which they are not able to manage time to meet their parents, in times of death and other occasions in their natal family. Status of their relationship with their family members and friends influence women’s perception of the value of work undertaken by them. Women affirmed that spending time on unpaid domestic duties have certain benefits such as their family lives are peaceful, the home remains organized, and proper upbringing of their children. This invariably has a positive impact on their relationship as they believe this is a part of their responsibility towards the family. In rural areas, out of 200 women respondents, 144 were of the opinion that engagement in unpaid domestic work undertaken by them has a negative impact on their relationships; while only 56 responded, such activities do have a positive effect. Out of those women who responded negative impact, 75 percent (108 women) acknowledged that unpaid household work has value, while only 64.6 percent out of 108 claimed that such activities should be recognized. In urban areas, 131 women respondents were of the view that due to engagement in unpaid household activities, have a negative impact on their relationship with others. Out of which 99.2 percent (130 women) asserted that unpaid domestic work has value while only 62.5 percent out of 130 claimed that such activities should be recognized (see table 3.1.5). This illustrates the fact that perception is an individual’s or group’s unique way of interpreting a phenomenon that involves the processing of stimuli, and integrates remembrance and experience in the process of understanding.

Table 3.1.5 The relationship with other and women’s value perception and recognition of unpaid work							
Location	Impact on relationship	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			(Yes)		Yes	No	Dilemma
			Percent (%)	Number			
Rural	Negative	144	75.0	108	64.6	34.2	1.2
	Positive	56	69.6	39	61.3	38.7	0.0
Urban	Negative	131	99.2	130	62.5	35.4	2.1
	Positive	69	68.1	47	88.9	5.5	5.6

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.1.6 Lived Experiences: Consideration of health status

Concerns related to the personal health of women accomplishing unpaid household responsibilities have a significant influence on the way they perceive it. For example, a woman having an asthma problems would consider using firewood for cooking more stressful than one without the problem. Similarly, a woman suffering from arthritis, finds it more painful to fetch water from a distant location. There were pieces of evidence that reveals that women have diabetes, gastritis, joint pain, blood pressure, and other ailments due to malnutrition and overwork. Moreover, problems such as anxiety, psychological disorder,

stress, etc. were caused because of conflicts due to delays in accomplishment of any of her household tasks was commonly observed. In the case of rural areas, women suffer from breathing problems such as asthma, bronchitis, and chest congestion, which occur due to excessive inhalation of smoke due to the use of firewood. Water for domestic use is a significant problem of the village, and it is invariably the responsibility of women to fetch water from well and other sources away from their homes. Focus group discussions among women revealed that it is physically tiring and time-consuming to fetch water from long distances, especially during summer months. Other activities such as washing clothes, cleaning dishes, sweeping and wiping the floor, collecting firewood are among the different tasks that also require physical exertion. Problems like cracked heels, fungal infections, and life-threatening snake bites are prevalent among the women working in the agricultural fields. Thus, women are not vulnerable to several health hazards, but also, many psychosomatic challenges daily.

Findings from the empirical study reveals that excessive burden of household responsibilities have a negative impact women’s personal health which further influences the way they perceive the unpaid domestic activities their perception regarding their work. When there are conflicts between cognitions (thoughts, beliefs, opinions), individual attempts to reduce the dissonance and feelings of discomfort. For example, a woman who cares about her health might be disturbed to learn that the burden of household activities is linked to a shortened lifespan. Since she has to work all day within the household and spend a great deal of time fetching water from long distances or working in the agricultural field as a helper, it is difficult to change her behavior to reduce her feelings of dissonance. Hence, to cope with the feelings of discomfort, she might instead find some way to justify her behaviour by believing that her sacrifice leads to the well-being of her family. In focus group discussions, women expressed that unpaid domestic work should not only be recognized by the policymakers, but also, should be considered for remuneration as their health gets neglected while contributing towards the welfare of the household. Table 3.1.6 explains that in rural areas, out of 83 women sometimes facing personal health issues and value unpaid work 64.2 percent and, out of 39 who often had health problems , 53.7 percent responded unpaid household activities should be recognized. In urban areas, out of 127 women who responded that sometimes had personal health issue, 70.8 percent replied that unpaid household activities should be recognized.

Table 3.1.6 Value and recognition of women’s work by consideration of health status							
Location	Health issue	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent(%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	54	72.2	39	53.7	46.3	0.0
	Sometimes	106	78.3	83	64.2	34.9	0.9
	Never	40	62.5	25	37.5	57.5	5.0
Urban	Often	44	90.9	40	68.2	29.5	2.3
	Sometimes	144	88.2	127	70.8	24.3	4.9
	Never	12	83.3	10	75.0	25.0	0.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.2 External (exogenous) Factors: The object or target being perceived

Randolph and Blackburn (1989) defined the nature of the object or target being perceived as physical and dynamic. Factors such as multi-tasking roles explain physical component; whereas, management of leisure time for rest and financial independence are dynamic dimensions associated with the type of work (i.e., The object being perceived) influence individual perception.

3.2.1 Multitasking:

Women are expected to be multi-taskers (super women, super mom etc.) and flexible in order to accomplish different activities that overlap in timing. The burden of work overloads has significant impacts on the way women perceive their household responsibilities. Women emphasised that multi-tasking becomes inevitable in case taking up paid engagement outside the home along with domestic duties. A woman engaged in paid employment comes back from work and starts cooking for everyone, while the husband and other members of the family return home and relax. There were cases where women wanted to hire domestic help, but the in-laws or husband would not want an outsider to take up the household duties. It is a paradox that women are expected to represent an epitome of Goddess Durga who is “**Dashabhuja**” (10 armed goddess) which signifies a woman who is a multi-tasker and manages everything efficiently. Social conditioning has made women accomplish different roles such as daughter, wife, mother and daughter-in-law one at a time. Women engaged in paid employment outside their home are multi-taskers who not only manage their homes but also, balance their professional engagement. . In such situations, women’s perception is ruled by the *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957) proposed by Leon Festinger which explains that human beings strive for internal psychological consistency to function mentally, leading to alteration in attitude and beliefs to reduce the discomfort and restore balance. Table 3.2.1 gives an idea that in rural areas out of 200 women interviewed 63 replied ‘often’, 64 responded ‘sometimes’ and 73 replied ‘never’ need to do multi-tasking. In case of urban areas, 42 replied ‘often’, 75 responded ‘sometimes’ and 76 replied ‘never’ need to multi-task. Those women who responded ‘never’ they did multi-tasking because their household responsibilities were shared by other members of the family or had hired domestic help. Among the 63 women respondents in rural areas who claimed that they ‘often’ did multi-tasking; 52.4 percent (33 women) responded that the unpaid household activities undertaken by them have value, but only, 34.9 percent out of 33 women emphasized that their work at household level should be recognized. Whereas, in urban areas, due to exposure to outside world women are aware and informed, therefore the majority of the women acknowledged the value of unpaid household duties and expressed that these activities should be recognized.

Table 3.2.1 Value and recognition of women’s work by multitasking							
Location	Multitasking	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	63	52.4	33	34.9	60.3	4.8
	Sometimes	64	92.2	59	71.9	28.1	0.0
	Never	73	79.5	58	60.3	39.7	0.0
Urban	Often	42	100.0	42	97.6	0.0	2.4
	Sometimes	75	90.7	68	76.0	20.0	4.0
	Never	76	81.6	62	50.0	44.7	5.3

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.2.2 Management of Leisure Time:

Leisure time spent by women allows them to relax impacts their perception about the domestic responsibilities accomplished by them. Focus group discussions revealed that those women who are not engaged in paid employment outside their homes have ample time to rest which they cherish. However, the amount of work and rest period depends on the type of household and number of children. Women in joint families often find it difficult to manage time for leisure. Similarly, women having more than one child were not able to take a rest. While, engagement in paid employment outside the home along with domestic duties makes it difficult for the women to find out leisure time. This defies Becker's theory, the amount of time spent at work (economic activities) has never consistently been more than that spent on other activities such as sleep, food, rest and even leisure, which are generally considered as non-work activities that may have some significance to economic welfare (Becker, 1965). Table 3.2.2 shows that in rural areas, out of 200 women interviewed 103 often find problems managing time for rest. Whereas, in urban areas, 148 women out of 200 women responded they sometimes feel that there is a problem with managing time for leisure. This is because women in rural areas are often engaged in extra-domestic activities along with domestic duties which makes management of leisure time difficult. The prevalence of joint families, particularly in rural areas, extends the working hours of women. In rural areas, out of 103 women respondents, 85.4 percent (88 women) responded that unpaid household activities accomplished by them have value and only 62.2 percent out of 88 replied that the same should be recognized. Whereas, in urban areas 148 women out of 200 interviewed responded that they sometimes have problems in managing leisure time. Out of these 148 women, 89.2 percent (132 women) responded that such activities have value and only 78.4 percent out of 132 responded unpaid household work undertaken by women should be recognized.

Table 3.2.2 Value and recognition of women’s work by leisure time

Location	Leisure time	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	103	85.4	88	62.2	35.9	1.9
	Sometimes	82	58.5	48	48.8	50.0	1.2
	Never	15	73.3	11	53.3	46.7	0.0
Urban	Often	27	100.0	27	25.9	66.7	7.4
	Sometimes	148	89.2	132	78.4	18.9	2.7
	Never	25	72.0	18	72.0	20.0	8.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.2.3 Financial Independence:

Unpaid household activities accomplished by women at household level remain unrecognized and unaccounted results to economic risks. The way women perceive the value of work undertaken by them is influenced by economic risks faced by them. Observations from the field reveals that even in those families where men hand over their income to women for the household expenditure still the economic decisions are taken by male members of the family because of the gender system prevalent in the society. Invariably women work in the field of others as seasonal labourers in rural areas. But, they are not treated as farmers, but rather as helpers which deprives them of equal remuneration that they

deserve. Besides, women in rural areas, engage in paid employment outside their home have a major contribution towards their household livelihood. Women in urban areas often find difficult to deal with economic risks because a major proportion of their income is spent in household expenditure such as paying back in Equated Monthly Installments (*EMI*) for home loan / housing loan, car loan and personal loan as a result they often have to compromise with their own expenses. This substantiates that concentration of economic resource and financial decisions in the hands of male members of the household results in dependency of women on men.

Due to their financial insecurity, 240 respondents out of 400 women interviewed (i.e. 60 percent) proclaimed that they are often susceptible to domestic violence and yet they are unable to raise their voice due to fear being abandoned by their men. But it is still possible to read between the lines that there were many more cases of abuse within domestic sphere which are concealed. Otherwise, the percentage of domestic violence due to women’s dependence on men would have still been higher. Hence, economic risks due to the unpaid nature of work accomplished by women make them most vulnerable to discrimination, violence and deprivation of fundamental rights both in domestic and public spheres. Financial dependence also includes vulnerabilities occurred during maternity, old age, unemployment, disablement or death. This shows that economic and social risks are interdependent.

The women mentioned that it is not only during pregnancy, but even after the surgical (caesarean) delivery of the child they took up household soon after without hesitation. The concern is that any kind of involvement of men in domestic work considered as extra work, but labour and pain undergone by women in giving birth to a child is not only overlooked by their families but also, by the policy makers. This substantiates Patricia Jeffery’s work “Frogs in a well” which analyses the purdah practices of Indian Muslim women specifically the wives and daughters of the custodians (*pirzade*) of the shrine of the Muslim Pir (Saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya) in Delhi. ‘Purdah’ is a set of practices both forced by men’s control over women.

During the empirical study it was found that in rural areas, out of 200 women interviewed 74 responded they often and 107 replied sometimes they face the problem of economic risks. The majority of these women, i.e. 70.3 percent out of 74 and 76.6 percent out of 107 responded household duties accomplished by them have a value (see table 3.2.3). Whereas only 51.4 percent out of 52 and 65.4 percent out of 82 women were of the perception that unpaid household work should be recognized. In urban areas, out of 200 women interviewed 97 responded they often and 82 replied sometimes they face the problem of economic risks. Out of 97, 83.5 percent (81 women) and 91.5 percent (75 women) out of 82 responded unpaid household activities have value. Whereas 82.5 percent out of 81 and 52.4 percent out of 75 were of the perception that unpaid household work should be recognized. This substantiates that the majority of women acknowledge the value of the unpaid work accomplished by them, but confused about recognition of such activities.

Table 3.2.3 Value and recognition of women’s work by financial independence

Location	Fear of Financial dependence	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	74	70.3	52	51.4	45.9	2.7
	Sometimes	107	76.6	82	65.4	33.7	0.9
	Never	19	68.4	13	21.1	78.9	0.0

Urban	Often	97	83.5	81	82.5	16.5	1.0
	Sometimes	82	91.5	75	52.4	40.2	7.4
	Never	21	100.0	21	85.7	9.5	4.8

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.3 External (exogenous) factors: The Social Context

The context or situation in which objects are perceived influences succeeding thoughts and conduct (Randolph and Blackburn 1989). According to Bem’s self- perception theory (1972) individuals form their attitudes and perception by inferring from the observation of their situations. Individual actions, emotions, thoughts, feelings of ultimately his behaviour are influenced by a perception of his surroundings (Kumar, 1995). Factors such as the cultural context (Scherer & Walbott 1994; Scherer 1997), the social condition along with the location and time of an occurrence (Randolph & Blackburn 1989; Robbins 1991) have a significant impact on that is being perceived. In this context, factors such as geographical proximity of urban locations; a situation considering the engagement of women in paid employment outside their home; availability of hired domestic help and sharing of household responsibilities by other members of the family are considered as indicators of the context in which perception is being made by women.

3.3.1 Geographical proximity to urban locations:

Women’s perceptions about the value of the work accomplished by them and its recognition is influenced by their geographical proximity to what?. Geographical proximity provides people opportunity and exposure that educates people and empowers them. It is well known that in urban areas, women having greater exposure to awareness and education. This influences the way women perceive the unpaid household activities and acknowledge the efforts that they put in order to accomplish household duties. Whereas, the existing social norms in rural areas influence the individual’s perception which is guided by the caste system and patriarchy to name a few.. Table 3.3.1 gives an idea about the influence of geographical proximity to urban locations on their perception of their work. In rural areas, 73.5 percent and 88.5 percent in urban areas emphasized that unpaid household tasks undertaken by women have value.

However, there was a state of confusion among the women respondents interviewed on the query on recognition of unpaid household tasks undertaken by women. Table 3.3.1 explains that out of the 147 women respondents who value unpaid work in rural areas 56 percent and 70.5 percent out of 177 were from urban areas responded that unpaid household tasks should be recognized. This is because unpaid domestic activities accomplished by women are considered as their obligation and duty towards their household. The focus group discussions with women respondents, of village Ratanpurpatna ‘Brahminsahi hamlet’ revealed that their contribution to household as ‘Dharmo’ i.e. religious obligation. Interestingly, elderly women belonging to this hamlet cited ‘tradition’ as a reason to justify their prejudices, and the reason why women’s work must be confined to the household and their obedience to their male counterparts. The case of Prabhati Praharaj which was the only household in ‘Brahminsahi hamlet’ of Ratanpurpatna village expressed that women’s work is the primary activity for any other activities due her exposure to awareness because of transferable nature of her husband’s job in Indian army. She expresses that such unpaid activities accomplished by women. have value and needs recognition.

Discussions with respondents in Nuagaon a non-tribal village where the caste features are not so strongly present, women were more vocal about their rights and position within

their household and society They believed that there is no caste in human society, only two groups i.e. men and women and both are equal. They acknowledged that though women’s work does not have monetary transactions, but have innate value attached that cannot be expressed in terms of money.

Table 3.3.1 Value and recognition of women’s work by location						
Location	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
		Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	200	73.5	147	56.0	42.5	1.5
Urban	200	88.5	177	70.5	25.5	4.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.3. 2 Engagement in paid employment:

Empirical evidence from the field authenticates the radical feminist idea that engagement of women in paid work outside their homes do not liberate them rather over burdens them with additional responsibilities. Working married women experience more stress in their lives as compared to ones who stayed at home (Hashmi, *et al.* (2007). Engagement of women in paid employment provides them exposure to the world outside that influences their ideological beliefs. These women are more informed and aware about new policies and amendment in laws that influence their perception about the value of work accomplished by them. In rural areas, out of 200 women respondents 113 were engaged in paid employment outside the home. Whereas, in urban areas 134 out of 200 women interviewed were engaged in paid employment outside the home. In case of women engaged in paid employment, 85.8 percent in rural areas and 84.8 percent in urban areas responded that unpaid household activities have significant contribution to the well-being of the family members and therefore, have value (see table 3.3.2). Which means that the earning opportunities of women outside their household influence their perception of their individuality and well-being, and a higher 'perceived contribution' to the family, thereby improving their breakdown position (Sen, 1987).

However, 90.3 percent women respondents not engaged in paid employment in urban areas and only 57.5 percent in rural areas, felt that unpaid household activities have value. Further, among those women engaged in paid employment and valuing unpaid work, 63.7 percent in rural and 69.7 percent in urban areas responded that unpaid household tasks should be recognized. Whereas, among those women not engaged in paid employment valuing unpaid work, 70.9 percent in urban and only 46 percent in rural areas responded that that unpaid household tasks should be recognized (see table 3.3.2). In urban areas, women not engaged in paid employment, acknowledged that unpaid household activities do have value and should be recognized which would improve the bargaining power of women not only at the family level, but also in the public sphere. Whereas, 51.7 percent women not engaged in paid employment, in rural areas were of the opinion that unpaid household responsibilities is a part of their family welfare which is their responsibility and not charity and therefore, does not requires recognition. The reason for such a view could be attributed to the fact that those women who are confined to homes and do not have any exposure outside tend internalize that unpaid domestic activities are their responsibilities and reason for their

destiny. This substantiates Freud’s famous phrase ‘Anatomy is Destiny’ and considers unpaid household responsibilities as extensions of women’s physiology and not as conscious interaction with nature like other plants and animals (Bose & Panda, 2016). Besides, in a rural area it is well known that the perception of women is often influenced by the process of socialization which is guided by patriarchal societal norms. They believe that only those activities are superior which have exchange value. This substantiates Boserup’s seminal work explaining the point that women relatively have better position within the household in those societies where they play a major role in acquiring food from outside (Boserup 1970, chapter 1; see also Boserup 1986). Women’s involvement in paid employment outside the home has a significant influence on the perception regarding individual’s contribution towards their household and in creating a differences within the family. Hence, there always remains a difference in the perception between the contribution of women engaged in paid employment outside their homes and those who not.. This corroborates with the fact that “*the perception bias tends to relate to the size of the direct money earning, rather than to the amount of time and effort expended or to the role of non-market activities by other members of the family, who indirectly support such earnings*”(Sen, 1987. p30.).

Location	Engagement in paid work outside the household	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	113	85.8	97	63.7	35.4	0.9
	No	87	57.5	50	46.0	51.7	2.3
Urban	Yes	66	84.8	56	69.7	27.3	3.0
	No	134	90.3	121	70.9	24.6	4.5

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.3.3 Presence of hired domestic help:

Women of the household usually look for basic traits such as competency, experienced with docile behaviour that is not threatening towards their family while engaging hired domestic help (Rustagi, 2016). Presence of trustable hired domestic help eases women from the burden of household activities to a certain extent. Observations from the field reveals that women in rural areas cannot afford paid domestic help irrespective of their engagement in paid employment outside their homes. Table 3.3.3 reveals shows that women acknowledge that unpaid household tasks performed by them have value irrespective of the presence of domestic help in their homes. In urban areas, where out 200 women interviewed 43 have access to hired domestic help. There exists a highly personalized nature of the work relationship between their hired worker and the employe’s household (Banerjee, 1992). Out of 43 women, 88.4 percent i.e. 38 responded that unpaid household duties have value, but only 58.1 percent out of 38 women claimed that such activities should be recognized. This explains that despite acknowledging the value of unpaid activities accomplished by them still women respondents are not sure whether unpaid household duties should be recognized. Besides, women respondents in urban areas who do not have access or cannot afford hired domestic help did not only acknowledge but also, claimed that such activities should be

acknowledged. Women emphasized that acknowledgment of such activities would help to make the value of unpaid women’s work visible. Out of 157 women respondents who do not have access to hired domestic help, 88.5 percent i.e. 139 responded unpaid domestic activities have value and 73.9 percent out of 139 women respondents claimed that such activities should be recognized. This authenticates that 'perceived contribution' of women to household economy in terms of 'time allocation', women spend ample time on a large amount of household responsibilities, even when their 'economic' contribution towards the household is perceived to be relatively modest (Batliwala 1985; Jain and Chand 1982; Mukhopadhyaya 1982; Jain and Banerjee 1985).

Location	Presence of domestic help	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	No	200	73.5	147	56.0	42.5	1.5
Urban	Yes	43	88.4	38	58.1	37.2	4.7
	No	157	88.5	139	73.9	22.3	3.8

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.3.4 Sharing of household responsibilities:

Sharing of the household responsibilities is influenced by gender differences in human behavior. Gender roles are indispensable for understanding the relationship of work and domestic sphere (Javier Cerrato and Eva Cifre, 2018). Surprisingly, the entry of women in the labour market has not led to a substantial improvement in men’s involvement in domestic work (Hooff, 2011). The frequent lack of harmony between values and practices is a consequence of variance that remains between men’s involvement in domestic work as ‘helping’ and ‘taking responsibility’. Further, in households where domestic responsibilities are shared by other members of the family influences women’s perception about the unpaid work accomplished by her. Focus group discussions revealed that women were of the opinion that there should be equality in the division of labour (especially equality between spouses) within the household. Field observations reveals that the field showed that women value unpaid household tasks accomplished by them irrespective of sharing by other members of the family (see table 3.3.4). In rural areas, out of 200 women interviewed 103 and in urban areas, 109 responded that their household responsibilities are shared by other members of their family. In rural areas, out of 103 whose household responsibilities were shared, 63.1 percent acknowledged that unpaid household activities have value. Remaining 97 women whose household responsibilities were not shared, 84.5 percent responded that household tasks performed by women have value and therefore every member of the family must appreciate and share it equally.

In rural areas, out of 65 women respondents who value unpaid work and whose household responsibilities were shared by other members of the family 45.6 percent responded that such activities should be recognized. Whereas, 67 percent out of 82 who value unpaid work and whose family members did not share their household responsibilities

asserted that such activities should be recognized. In urban areas, out of 107 whose household responsibilities were shared by other members 63.3 percent responded that such activities should be recognized. Out of 70 women whose family members did not share their household responsibilities 79.1 percent asserted that such activities should be recognized (see table 3.3.4). Discussions in the above lines validates that “ *biologistic definition of women’s interface with her nature, giving birth and taking care children along with the rest of domestic work is not considered as labour*” (Mies, 1986, p.45).

Table 3.3.4 Value and recognition of women’s work by sharing of household responsibilities							
Location	Sharing of household responsibilities	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	103	63.1	65	45.6	51.5	2.9
	No	97	84.5	82	67.0	33.0	0.0
Urban	Yes	109	98.2	107	63.3	32.1	4.6
	No	91	76.9	70	79.1	17.6	3.3

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

3.3.5 Social Risks (Fear of Isolation, Household Conflicts, Domestic Violence, Divorce):

Perception is influenced by the process of socialization which is guided by traditional customs. Women are aware that violation of traditional norms may lead to social risks. Social risks is defined as a situation of vulnerabilities such as gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion, unequal distribution of resources and power distribution within the household. It is important to note that social risk is always intertwined with financial dependence. Social risk is also influenced by other factors such as educational attainment, exposure, status of engagement in paid employment outside the home and geographical proximity from an urban location. As mentioned earlier, women are expected to accomplish household responsibilities without any expectations and complains. Any kind of deferment of the expected results of intra-household conflicts, violence against women, which could be physical or psychological resulting in depression. According to WHO (2000), depression is predicted to be the second significant reason of disability across the world by 2020. The depression is most predominant psychiatric disorder that affects women twice as compare to the men (Iowa, 2007).

Women tend to develop their perception about the value of the work undertaken by them based on social problems like gender-based violence within the family, getting abandoned and their vulnerable situations. Table 3.3.5 explains that in rural areas, out of 200 women respondents 67 often and 123 sometimes feel the problem of social risks. Out of 67 women respondents who often feel the problem of social risks, 64.2 percent acknowledged that unpaid household activities undertaken by women have value of which only 47.8 percent perceive that such activities should be recognized. Similarly, out of 123 women respondents who sometimes have the problem of social risks, 78.9 percent (97 women) responded that domestic duties have value out of which only 61.8 percent acknowledged that such activities should be recognized. In urban areas, out of 200 women respondents 40 often and 76 sometimes have the problem of social risks. Out of 40 women respondents who often have the problem of social risks, 85 percent acknowledged the value of their work which counts to 34 women. Further, out of these 34 women 80 percent were of the opinion that

unpaid work should be recognized. Whereas, out of 76 women respondents who responded that they sometimes have the problem of social risks all admitted that unpaid household duties have value, only 72.4 percent responded that there is a need to recognize such activities. They are also of the opinion that unpaid household duties accomplished by women should be recognized. Recognition of such activities would not only make their efforts visible and accounted for but also, would improve their bargaining position both within their families and the society.

Table 3.3.5 Value and recognition of women’s work by personal social risks

Location	Social risks	Total	Value of unpaid household tasks (Yes)		Recognition of women’s work (%)		
			Percent (%)	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	67	64.2	43	47.8	50.7	1.5
	Sometimes	123	78.9	97	61.8	36.6	1.6
	Never	10	70.0	7	40.0	60.0	0.0
Urban	Often	40	85.0	34	80.0	15.0	5.0
	Sometimes	76	100.0	76	72.4	25.0	2.6
	Never	84	98.8	83	64.3	31.0	4.7

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

4. Concluding remarks:

In order to estimate the value of the unpaid work accomplished by women, it is important to understand the perceived worth of work undertaken by women.. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the unpaid household responsibilities are perceived by both men and women in our society. This paper has made an attempt to analyze women’s perception regarding their contribution towards household by accomplishing domestic work by understanding the factors influencing the same. There still remains a blind spot in the way women perceive the value of work accomplished by them and whether it should be recognized or not because of lack of education and awareness household responsibilities are considered as a duty. The three dimensions of the society such as political, ideological and economical leads to the subordination of women’s position within the society as a process of socialization and social stratification and resulting into seclusion from social supports, economic status, education and property rights.

A framework for the measurement of different various internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors that influence perception was adapted to assess women’s perception about the value of such unpaid work accomplished by them and recognition of the same. The labour and pain undergone by a woman in giving birth and rearing children besides undertaking domestic responsibilities irrespective of their age are not only, overlooked by their household members but also, by the policy makers.

Therefore, understanding the different factors influencing individual’s perception about different domestic activities could pave a way to value to women’s household work. Several internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors that influence perception have been outlined in detail that the planners and policy makers can take into consideration to formulate a framework for valuing women’s unpaid domestic work. It is time that such factors be understood and researched further to visibilise women’s unpaid household work.

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