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KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF RURAL MEN AND WOMEN ABOUT GENDER RELATED ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparities should be reduced at its earliest and the efforts should start from the domestic space; family as an institution should address these things primarily to create a just society. So it was decided to find out the knowledge, attitude and practice of rural men and women with children of both sexes. Sexwise comparison of knowledge, attitude and practice regarding gender-related aspects brought out the result that men had higher mean score on gender-related aspects.

Keywords: Knowledge, attitude, practice, gender-related aspects

INTRODUCTION

Gender is the social interpretation of attitude, behaviour, relationships, moral and social values of an individual on the basis of sex. It refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys (Suchinmayee 2008). Any form of gender discrimination is a denial of human rights and is an obstacle to human development. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people centered development. The family lays the foundation of inequality of sexes right from the childhood in the social process affecting their all round development. Gender disparities should be reduced at its earliest and the efforts should start from the domestic space and family as an institution should address these things primarily

to create a just society (Hindu, 2010). So it was decided to trace out the knowledge, attitude and practice of rural men and women in the age group of 18 to 40 with the children of both the sexes regarding gender issues.

Objectives

- To trace out the knowledge, attitude and practice of the selected rural men and women regarding gender-related aspects
- To compare and analyse the knowledge, attitude and practice of the selected rural men and women regarding gender-related aspects

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample were selected by multi stage sampling and the sample size consisted of 1400 with 638 men and 762 women from 14 villages which included educated and illiterate men and women belonging to different castes and income levels from Virudhunagar and Aruppukottai taluks of Virudhunagar district. Six and eight

villages from these two taluks respectively were selected. 100 people were selected from each village by using disproportional stratified sampling in order to trace out the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding gender-related aspects. From Virudhunagar taluk, 600 sample consisted of 273 men and 327 women and from Aruppukottai taluk 800 sample consisted of 365 men and 435 women were selected. A self-made interview schedule was used to collect the attitude of rural people after developing a rapport with the respondents. Codes were allocated, appropriate scores were given and the overall total scores were calculated and percentiles were calculated. For all the positive statements, expressing a favourable attitude, the scores were fixed to range from 3 to 1, for responses ranging from always, rarely, never. And for negative statements, expressing a negative attitude, the scores were fixed to range from 1 to 3, for responses ranging from always, rarely and never. The total scores for knowledge were 15, for attitude 252 and for practice 691. The obtained scores of the selected rural people were converted into mean score for total KAP scores of 958. Codes were allocated, appropriate scores were given and total scores of the percentiles were calculated.

RESULTS

The collected data were analysed using percentiles and 't' test.

1. Socio economic profile of the selected respondents

Out of the total 1400 sample, 638 and 762 were men and women respectively. Glancing at the age composition of the selected sample, 37 percent of the samples' age group range between 31-35 years, 32 per cent of them belonged to the age group of 36-40, 22 per cent of the sample were in the age group of 26-30 and rest of the

sample's age ranged between 18-25. It is sad to find that 40 percent of the sample were illiterates and only 10 percent of them completed higher secondary and degree courses. The literacy level of the sample shows that illiteracy is more among women (44 per cent) as compared to men (35 per cent). The percentage of the respondents who passed higher secondary and above is low among women (8 per cent) compared to men (10 per cent). This percentile disparity may be due to fear that education will make a girl less attentive to household chores and difficult to find a mate. More than half of the selected rural men and women's occupation is coolie only. The status of unemployment is more for women (27 per cent) as compared to men (three percent). Only four per cent of the men and women were doing farming. Three and one per cent of the women were self employed and involved in private works respectively. Six and two per cent of men and women respectively were the government employees. Communitywide classification shows that 44, 31, 24 and 1 percent of the sample belonged to BC, SC, MBC and OC respectively. The impact of social change in the family structure is revealed very much in the family of 93 percent of the families which was nuclear type. Eighty five per cent of the families' income was below Rs. 4500, 11 per cent of them belonged to the income group of Rs. 4501-7500 and only four per cent of the families' income was above Rs. 7501.

2. Knowledge of the population sample on gender-related aspects

Knowledge of the population sample on various gender-related aspects such as marriage, child-rearing practice, food, health, education, decision-making process, employment, household responsibilities, community activities, parental property, political participation and violence against women is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Knowledge of the population sample on gender-related aspects

Knowledge on	Men (N:638)		Women (N:762)		M±SD		't' value
	N	%	N	%	Men	Women	
Marriage							
Legal age of marriage for boys 21	55	9	51	7	46.04 ± 20.42	39.60 ± 22.22	5.647*
Legal age of marriage for girls 18	69	11	51	7			
Getting dowry is punishable	493	77	501	66			
Right to divorce the spouse	558	88	604	79			
Child-rearing practice							
Both parents are essential to take care of the children	616	97	735	97	96.55 ± 18.26	96.46 ± 18.50	0.096^{NS}
Food							
Both men and women are in need of healthy food	526	82	467	61	82.45 ± 38.07	61.29 ± 48.74	9.114*
Health							
Both men and women are in need of health care	523	82	469	62	81.97± 37.69	61.54± 48.99	6.972*
Education							
Both boys and girls have right for education upto 14 years	420	66	462	61	65.83 ± 47.46	60.63 ± 48.89	2.014*
Decision-making process							
Family members to be involved in decision-making process	427	67	497	65	66.93± 47.08	65.22± 47.66	0.670^{NS}
Employment							
Both men and women have the right to get equal pay for doing the same job	390	61	472	62	61.13 ± 48.78	61.94 ± 48.58	0.312^{NS}
Household responsibilities							
Both men and women can do the household work	109	17	117	15	17.08± 37.73	15.35± 36.03	0.942^{NS}
Community activities							
Both men and women can do the community activities	361	57	416	53	56.58± 48.35	53.19± 47.84	1.796^{NS}
Parental property							
Both men and women have the right to get property from parents	559	88	642	84	87.62 ± 32.96	84.25 ± 36.45	1.813^{NS}
Political participation							
Women's involvement in politics is low	105	17	123	16	16.46 ± 37.11	16.14 ± 36.82	0.159^{NS}
Violence							
Violence is punishable under law	368	58	420	55	57.68 ± 49.45	55.12 ± 49.77	0.962^{NS}
Over all knowledge					64.52 ± 18.87	60.07 ± 19.78	4.297*

***Significant at 5% level**

The study found that only nine percent of men and seven percent of women had knowledge of the legal age of marriage for boys (21); 11 percent of men and seven percent of women had knowledge of the legal age of marriage for girls (18). The aspect of, 'getting dowry is punishable' was known to 77 and 66 percent of men and women respectively. The right to divorce the spouse was known to 88 and 79 percent of the men and women respectively which may be due to the success of the mission on human rights. The men and women's mean score was 46.04 and 39.60 respectively which reflect the need for gender sensitisation on laws related to marriage. The mean score indicates that there was a significant difference between men and women's knowledge on gender and marriage with the 't' value of 5.647 at five percent level of significance.

Parents play a key role in disciplining the children. Parents' responsibility to take care of the children was accepted by 97 percent each of men and women. There was no significant difference in the score of men and women's knowledge on gender and child-rearing practice. Thus almost all the sample irrespective of the sex had similar knowledge on the aspect which is well known that both mother and father are essential to take care of the children. Table 1 also showed that 82 and 61 percent of men and women respectively accepted that people need healthy food irrespective of the gender. For the knowledge on food, the mean score for men (82.45) was higher than women (61.29) with the 't' value of 9.114 at five percent level of significance. It is therefore, concluded that there was a significant difference between men and women's knowledge on gender and provision of food. Mothers' priority in preparation and distribution of food to male members first then to female members, revealed the existence of

NS - Not significant

gender inequality among the population sample. They also justified that male members do more heavy work, hence they are in need of more healthy food.

It was found that 82 and 62 percent of men and women respectively had the awareness that both men and women are in need of health care. The mean score obtained by men (81.97) was higher than the women's mean score (61.54) regarding knowledge on gender and health. The 't' value obtained shows that there was a significant difference between men and women's knowledge on gender and health of the family members.

The policy of right to education up to 14 years was very well understood by 66 and 61 percent of men and women respectively. The mean score for the knowledge on gender and education obtained by men was 65.83, which was higher than women's mean score of 60.63, and the difference was statistically significant at five percent level. Women were confined within their villages or nearby villages only. So, they were unaware of the rights related to education as their counterparts had.

Involvement of all the family members in decision-making process was expressed by 67 and 65 percent of men and women respectively. The male members' mean score for knowledge on gender and decision-making process was 66.93, which was slightly higher than female members' mean score of 65.22. But statistically there was no significant difference between men and women's knowledge on gender and decision-making process. Even in this 21st century, still one-third of the population sample irrespective of the sex believed that all the family members need not be consulted while taking decisions at home.

Nearly two-thirds of the population sample of both sex knew that both men and women had the

right to get equal pay for doing the same job. There was no significant difference between men and women's knowledge on gender in relation to employment. One-third of the population sample was unaware of this right which may be due to the fact that majority of them were involved in coolie work where the wage discrimination exists.

In India, people have the notion that it is the duty of female members to do all the household work. In this research it was dreadful in knowing that only 17 and 15 percent of men and women respectively had the knowledge that both men and women can do the household work equally. The obtained mean score by men (17.08) and women (15.35) showed that rural people had poor knowledge in the aspect of gender and household responsibilities and there was no significant difference between men and women regarding knowledge on gender in household responsibilities.

Doing the community activities by men and women was stated by 57 and 52 percent of the selected men and women respectively. The mean score obtained by men and women was 56.68 and 53.79 respectively. Statistically there was no significant difference between men and women in knowledge on gender and community activities.

The impact of human rights education was very much found during the research that four-fifths of the population sample knew about the right to property from parents. For knowledge on gender and property rights also, there was no significant difference between men and women, though the mean score for male members' knowledge was higher (87.62) than the female members (84.25).

The fact about women's poor political participation was known only to 17 and 16 percent of the selected men and women respectively. There was no difference in the mean score for knowledge on gender and political participation of the selected rural men and women and both had low mean score of 16.46 and 16.14 respectively. Fifty eight percent of men and 55 percent of women expressed that violence is punishable under law. Men's mean score was higher (57.68) than women's mean score (55.12) for knowledge about violence, but the difference was insignificant. The mean score for overall knowledge on gender-related aspects of men was higher (64.52) compared to women's mean score (60.07) and the difference was statistically significant at five percent level with the 't' value of 4.297, proving that the selected men's knowledge on gender-related aspects was better than their counterparts .

3. Comparison of the mean score obtained for attitude of rural men and women about gender issues

Gender inequalities are reflected in different dimensions eroding the very vitals of social and economic justice throughout. With the objective of probing the attitude of rural people towards gender aspects related to marriage, child-rearing practice, food, health, education, decision-making process, employment, household responsibilities, involvement in community activities, parental property, political participation and violence against women, data were collected as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: comparison of the mean score obtained for attitude of the population sample about gender-related aspects

Attitude score	Group	N	Mean	SD	' t' value
Marriage	M	638	83.74	11.57	2.110*
	W	762	82.39	12.37	
Child-rearing practice	M	638	44.57	23.79	0.588^{NS}
	W	762	43.83	22.81	
Food	M	638	43.87	23.12	0.292^{NS}
	W	762	42.18	21.76	
Health	M	638	45.68	22.54	0.144^{NS}
	W	762	44.87	21.02	
Education	M	638	45.75	6.73	2.018*
	W	762	45.07	5.73	
Decision-making process	M	638	35.68	11.78	0.302^{NS}
	W	762	34.97	11.01	
Employment	M	638	51.25	24.73	2.436*
	W	762	48.11	23.06	
Household responsibilities	M	638	70.98	19.99	0.421^{NS}
	W	762	70.92	20.75	
Involvement in community activities	M	638	42.51	11.51	0.214^{NS}
	W	762	42.64	11.38	
Property rights	M	638	78.94	15.51	1.445^{NS}
	W	762	77.76	15.11	
Political participation	M	638	36.62	9.41	0.902^{NS}
	W	762	37.10	9.97	
Adequacy of laws for violence	M	638	36.05	12.23	0.629^{NS}
	W	762	35.65	11.41	
Overall attitude	M	638	54.49	6.24	2.479*
	W	762	53.68	6.03	

*Significant at 5% level NS - Not significant

M - Men W - Women

Table 2 projects the 't' value for the mean score obtained by the population sample for their attitude towards gender issues related to marriage, child-rearing practice, food, health, education, decision-making process, employment, household responsibilities, involvement in community activities, property rights, political participation and violence against women. There was a significant

difference between the attitude of the selected men and women towards gender issues in marriage, education and employment, which is evident from the mean score denoted in the table and the difference was significant at five percent level.

4. Comparison of mean score obtained for practice of gender-related aspects by the selected rural men and women

The statistical difference of the selected rural men and women's practice on gender-related aspects of marriage, child-rearing practice, food,

health, education, savings, decision-making process, household responsibilities and violence against women is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Comparison of mean score obtained by the population sample for practice towards gender-related aspects

Practice score	Sex	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Marriage	M	638	89.34	6.29	11.155*
	W	762	85.10	7.92	
Child-rearing practice	M	638	61.99	5.67	0.980^{NS}
	W	762	62.99	5.60	
Food	M	638	79.59	5.17	8.054*
	W	762	77.38	5.05	
Health	M	638	80.42	6.07	0.351^{NS}
	W	762	80.31	5.74	
Education	M	638	41.55	9.72	1.317^{NS}
	W	762	42.25	10.03	
Savings	M	638	40.13	7.03	0.747^{NS}
	W	762	40.41	7.03	
Decision-making process	M	638	51.44	8.24	0.985^{NS}
	W	762	51.91	9.31	
Household responsibilities	M	638	59.93	6.37	0.542^{NS}
	W	762	60.11	6.21	
Violence against women	M	638	97.08	2.66	21.789*
	W	762	93.36	3.72	
Overall practice	M	638	66.83	2.74	5.985*
	W	762	65.90	3.06	

***Significant at 5% level**

NS - Not significant

Difference in mean score explicit the prevalence of gender disparity among the selected men and women towards marriage, provision of food and violence against women. The 't' values, 11.155, 8.054 and 21.789 for marriage, food and violence against women respectively denote that there was difference in the practice of the selected rural men and women which were statistically significant. The obtained 't' values for gender-related aspects of child-rearing practice, health, education, savings, decision-making process and household responsibilities

were statistically insignificant, hence it is concluded that there was no difference in the practice of gender-related aspects between men and women in their families.

The mean score for overall practice on gender-related aspects of men and women was 66.83 and 65.90 respectively and the difference was statistically significant at five percent level which proves that the selected men and women's practice on gender issues was different. Though men scored higher compared to women for overall gender-related practices but obtained

mean score with less difference depicts that both sexes were in need of sensitisation regarding gender issues. The obtained mean score shows that still both the sexes follow gender discriminatory practice in their day to day life.

CONCLUSION

From this study it is concluded that the mean score for overall knowledge, attitude and practice on gender-related aspects of men was higher compared to women and the difference was statistically significant at five per cent level proving that the selected men's knowledge, attitude and practice on gender-related aspects was better than women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The effort towards the awareness and sensitisation programmes for the girl child, as is being carried out by the governments to be intensified and continued
- Information about gender equality to be propagated through the media to sensitise the public
- Publications about gender issues and information to be done to change the mind of the people

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