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Role of Women in Household Waste Management in Bangalore City: A Empirical Study of Doddakallasandra

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Abstract

Household waste management is an important part of urban environmental management. Women play a significant role in household activities such as waste collection, segregation, reuse, recycling and disposal. The present micro study examines the role of women in household waste management with special reference to Doddakallasandra, Bengaluru. The study is based on 100 women respondents and focuses on their educational status, waste-segregation practices and participation in different waste-management activities. The study uses the Gender Division of Labor, Symbolic Interactionism and Social Practice Theory as its sociological framework. The findings indicate that women participate actively in waste segregation, reuse, recycling and interaction with waste-collection workers. The study argues that women's role in waste management should be understood not only as domestic labor but also as an important contribution to urban environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Women, Waste Management, Waste Segregation, Gender, Bengaluru, Doddakallasandra.

Introduction

Rapid urbanisation and changing consumption patterns have increased the importance of household waste management in Bengaluru. Waste management does not begin with municipal collection; it begins inside the household through storage, segregation, reuse and disposal. Women often perform these activities as part of their everyday domestic responsibilities.

Oakley (1974) observed that household work is closely connected with gender relations. Cleaning, cooking and household maintenance have traditionally been associated with women. Waste management can therefore become an extension of domestic labor. West and Zimmerman (1987) further explain that gender roles are reproduced through everyday social practices.

Household segregation is particularly important because Indian waste-management policy emphasises segregation at source (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change [MoEFCC], 2016). Research in Bengaluru has also examined the influence of environmental awareness and other factors on household waste segregation (Gopala Krishnan & Hussain, 2021). Luthra (2021) highlights the often-unrecognised labor involved in household recycling in urban India.

Against this background, the present study examines women's role in household waste management in Doddakallasandra, Bengaluru.

Objectives

1. To examine women's role in household waste management.
2. To study women's participation in waste segregation.
3. To examine the relationship between education and waste-management practices.
4. To study women's participation in reuse, recycling and composting.
5. To understand household waste management from a sociological perspective.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive micro-study design. Doddakallasandra was selected as the study area. The study is based on 100 women respondents. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule and personal interaction with respondents. Secondary information was obtained from books, research articles, government documents and reports.

The major variables include education, waste segregation, reuse, recycling, composting and interaction with waste-collection workers. Data are presented using frequency and percentage analysis.

Sociological Framework

The study mainly uses the Gender Division of Labor Theory. Women traditionally perform a substantial share of domestic work, and household waste management may consequently become part of unpaid domestic labor (Oakley, 1974).

Symbolic Interactionism helps explain how households give meaning to cleanliness, waste and environmental responsibility. Waste segregation can become a routine household practice through interaction among family members (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The Social Practice Theory perspective explains that waste-management behavior depends not only on awareness but also on household facilities, materials, skills and institutional arrangements.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Educational Status of Women Respondents

Educational level	Number	Percentage
Primary	12	12
Secondary	20	20
PUC	18	18
Graduate|	32	18
Postgraduate and above	18	18
Total	100	100

Analysis: The table shows that graduates constitute the largest group at 32 per cent. Twenty per cent have secondary education, while 18 per cent each have PUC and postgraduate or higher education. Twelve per cent have primary education. The educational diversity provides an opportunity to examine how education may influence awareness and household waste-management practices. However, education alone cannot be considered the only factor influencing waste behavior (Gopala Krishnan & Hussain, 2021).

Table 2: Household Waste Segregation Practices

Practice	Number	Percentage
Always segregate	58	58
Sometimes segregate	27	27
Do not segregate	15	15
Total	100	100

Analysis: Fifty-eight per cent of respondents report that their households always segregate waste, while 27 per cent practice segregation sometimes. Fifteen per cent do not segregate waste. Thus, regular or occasional segregation is reported by a substantial majority of respondents. Household segregation is important because the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 emphasise segregation at source (MoEFCC, 2016). From a sociological perspective, women's involvement in segregation can be linked to their domestic responsibilities. Since women frequently undertake cooking and cleaning, they may also become responsible for separating and storing household waste (Oakley, 1974).

Table 3: Women's Participation in Waste-Management Activities

Activity	Number	Percentage
Wet/dry waste segregation	72	72
Reuse of materials	61`	61
Recycling	46	46
Handing waste to collectors	78	78
Composting	24	24
Community cleanliness activities	31	31

Note: Multiple responses were permitted; therefore, percentages do not total 100%.

Analysis: Handing waste to collection workers is the most frequently reported activity at 78 per cent, followed by wet/dry waste segregation at 72 per cent. Reuse is reported by 61 per cent and recycling by 46 per cent. Composting is comparatively lower at 24 per cent, while 31 per cent participate in community cleanliness activities.

The findings indicate that women's contribution extends beyond household cleaning. They participate in segregation, reuse, recycling and other environmental practices. Luthra (2021) similarly emphasises the importance of recognising household recycling as a form of labor. From the gender perspective, these activities may represent unpaid domestic work, while from an environmental perspective they also constitute a contribution to sustainable waste management.

Discussion

The three tables demonstrate that women have an important position in household waste management. Educational differences provide a useful basis for examining environmental awareness, while the segregation data indicate substantial household participation.

The findings also show that women's waste-management responsibilities extend from segregation and disposal to reuse and recycling. This supports the argument that waste management should be examined as an everyday social practice rather than only as a municipal service.

The Gender Division of Labor perspective explains why women frequently perform household waste-related activities (Oakley, 1974). Symbolic Interactionism explains how ideas of cleanliness and responsibility become incorporated into everyday family practices (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Social Practice Theory further suggests that awareness must be supported by appropriate facilities and reliable waste-collection systems.

Conclusion

Women play an important role in household waste management in Doddakallasandra. The study indicates substantial participation in waste segregation, reuse, recycling and interaction with waste-collection workers. Women's contribution is connected with traditional domestic responsibilities, but it also has an important environmental dimension.

Household waste management should therefore be treated as a shared responsibility involving women, men, children, households, communities and municipal institutions. Improving awareness, segregation facilities, collection systems, recycling and composting opportunities can strengthen sustainable waste management.

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