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10 March 2021

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/108758/>
MPRA Paper No. 108758, posted 15 Jul 2021 04:20 UTC

How do Indians split their time for different activities? A Gender wise Analysis of Rural-Urban Differences using Time Use Surveys

Dr. Pradeep Kumar B¹ & Dr. M. P. Abraham²

Abstract

Time use surveys have been used widely to know how economic agents spend their time effectively to participate in different economic and non-economic activities. This paper sets out to discuss the urban/rural difference in respect of the time spent for different activities by both men and women in India. The paper reveals that men spend more time for employment and related activities while women spend more time for unpaid domestic service for household members. The paper finds hardly any serious region wise gender difference in respect of the average time spent for different activities in both rural and urban areas in India. This work takes note of the fact that works being done by the female at their homes go unidentified and demonetized, putting them in a disastrously disadvantages condition, which by any count would impoverish and stand in the way of their further empowerment. Gender inequality has also been observed in the time spent for employment and related activities. The paper looks into an important gender disparity in respect of the percentage of persons engaging in the production of goods for own final use.

Keywords: *Time Use Survey, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Unpaid Work, Care work*

1. Introduction

In recent times, time has become an important variable in many production functions and consumer behavior studies. Time is one of the most precious things in the world. Perhaps, it is the only asset that is equally distributed. Everyone has the same time in life: 24 hours in one day, 365 days in one year, 8760 hours every year ([Ortiz-Ospina, Giattino, & Ros, 2020](#)). Man power deployment in economic activities usually takes place based on the time spent in activities. The

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significance of manpower has long been recognized in development literature albeit certain variations in its stress in influencing the level of production thanks mainly to the technological advancement. Indeed, the early theories of economic development place indomitable role on the labor power in enhancing economic activities. The Classical Labor Theory of Value (LTV), for instance, echoes the significance of labor by stating that the exchange value of a commodity is solely determined on the basis of the labor embodied in the commodity. Marx even goes to the extent of distinguishing the value of a commodity into congealed labor and crystalized labor. It is true that in the aftermath of increasing automation of certain routine works, the use of labor has slightly been reduced. Nevertheless, the use of labor in highly skilled activities and in managerial functions has shown an upward trend in recent times.

Labor disposes available time mainly for two things: either for work or for taking leisure, and both. Since most of the laborers mixes up their time for work and leisure, theoretically it could be argued that shifting the time between work and leisure involves changes in opportunity costs. By rule, a worker will devote time for work if opportunity cost of work is less than is the benefits that would stem if he were to take leisure. It is true that the quality and pace of development could be gauged from the purposes for which the labor force of a country earmarks their time. in a well advanced industrial economy, it is quite natural that people may spend a good part of their valuate time for productive work which would enable them to earn a considerably good remuneration. In such economies, people search for better jobs offering those high wages and perks, not to speak of finding a job that normally unfits them as in the case of developing economies. The time that people spend for different activities also shows up many ‘differences’ which are of utmost important in the development process of a country. For instance, women devoting more time for unpaid jobs which mostly take the form of ‘care works’ could be an eye-opener towards the ill-treatment of women in development endeavors.

2. Previous Studies

Time use surveys have been used widely to know how economic agents spend their time effectively to participation in different economic and non-economic activities. Alexander Szalai, a well-known Hungarian sociologist is regarded as the principal architect of the international comparison of time use surveys organized in 1965 ([Ironmonger, 1999](#)).

Fisher in a study argued that policy implications of studying well-being in Time Use Surveys include evaluation of policy measures based on emotional responses to them, promoting greater well-being and reducing harm and suffering (Fisher, 2016)

Fisher et al (2016) explain that the more complex an instrument becomes the more likely people are to refuse to participate. Non-response in time use research may occur to a number of factors including features of the sampling design (Phipps, 2009) and demographic characteristics of respondents (Abraham, 2005)

Kenyon in a study threw light on the previous inconsistencies and deficiencies in the recording of time use, which might be preventing a full understanding of how people actually use their time in their everyday lives as multitasked or co-occurring activities like childcare, other caring activities, housework, communication activities, online activities, leisure etc., can have a significant impact quality of life, well-being and life chances (Kenyon, 2010).

3. Objective of the Study

This paper sets out to discuss the regional differences or urban/rural difference in respect of the time spent for different activities by both men and women in India. It needs to be reiterated here that in country as wide as India rural urban disparity matters a lot. Along with this, gender disparity is quite more pronounced in India. Hence, it would be worthwhile to look into how far gender differences can get reflected on the difference in the allocation of time for different purposes in Rural and Urban India.

4. Methodology

Time use surveys generally focus on the study of frequency and duration of both economic and non-economic activities that the respondents perform in their daily life ([Stinson, 1999](#)). Time use research is the actual enumeration of the activities that people perform. It is evident that while collecting data on time use research, utmost care must be taken to ensure a fair selection of samples and questions must be posed in a scientific manner. The success of such studies depends on how we collect data from the respondents. Hence, the present study employs exclusively secondary data obtained from the Time Use Surveys and made available in the website of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.

5. Analysis and Discussion

Now, we proceed to analyze the trends observed in time use surveys with regard to the allocation of time by both men and women in rural and urban areas. Before we plunge into such an exercise, it is worthwhile to give brief description about the type of activities that we intend to include in the present analysis.

5.1 A Brief Description of the Activity in Time Use Surveys

We have nine activities described here (Table No.1). Out of these, two are purely economic activities viz. employment and related activities and production of good for own final use whereas three activities are unpaid but contributing immensely to economic growth process. They are domestic services, caregiving services, unpaid volunteer works. Learning is of course activities which adds to the human capital formation but does not add to the economic progress unless the learned are engaged in economic activities. People may also find their precious time being used for building social capital by way of engaging in worthy community participation and religious gatherings. Besides, it is obvious that culture, leisure, listening to mass-media and sport practices also eat into the precious time of the economic agents. People also spend a lot of time for caring themselves.

Table 1 Description of the Activity in Time Use Surveys

Codes	Description of the activity
1	Employment and related activities
2	Production of goods for own final use
3	Unpaid domestic services for household members
4	Unpaid caregiving services for household members
5	Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work
6	Learning
7	Socializing and communication, community participation and religious practice
8	Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices
9	Self-care and maintenance

5.2 Participation in Different Activities in Rural Plus Urban

It is perhaps not disturbing that male involvement appears more in employment and related economic activities in contrast to the female. Taking rural and urban areas together, it is observed that in India, 57.3 percent of male engage in employment and related activities as against only 18.4 percent of female. However, more disturbing is the fact that in ‘unpaid domestic services for household members 81.2 percent of women are engaged while only 26.1 percent male show interest in such works. It is observed that more women are engaged in ‘Unpaid care giving services to household members’ compared to the male counterparts. In the case of percentage of persons participating in learning activities, male appears to have edge over the female. However, this may not true for all States and Union territories in India. It is quite interesting to note that gender difference hardly matters when it comes to the percentage of persons participating in ‘socializing’ and ‘culture cum leisure’ activities.

Table 2 Percentage of persons participating in different activities in a day

Activity	Male	Female	Persons
Employment and related activities	57.3	18.4	38.2
Production of goods for own final use	14.3	20.0	17.1
Unpaid domestic services for household members	26.1	81.2	53.2
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	14.0	27.6	20.7
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	2.7	2.0	2.4
Learning	23.9	19.8	21.9
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	91.4	91.3	91.3
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	88.5	85.3	86.9

5.3 Participation in Different Activities in Rural Areas

Turning to the analysis of percentage of persons participating in different activities in rural areas, we find that, the all India persons based trends almost exists in this case too. For instance, in employment and related activities in rural areas 56.1 percent male take part while the same for the all India level stands at 57.3 percent which hardly matters. In most of the other types of activities listed in the following table, it could be observed that all India trend repeats itself with slight but negligible differences.

Table 3 Percentage of persons participating in different activities in a day in Rural Areas

Activity	Male	Female	Persons
Employment and related activities	56.1	19.2	37.9
Production of goods for own final use	19.1	25.0	22.0
Unpaid domestic services for household members	27.7	82.1	54.6
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	14.4	28.2	21.2
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	2.8	2.0	2.4
Learning	24.1	19.4	21.8
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	91.7	91.2	91.5
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	87.0	82.2	84.6

5.4 Participation in Different Activities in Urban Areas

Quite different from the rural scenario in respect of the percentage of persons participating in different activities, urban India presents a unique at the same promising somewhat promising trends. A noticeable difference could be observed in the case of people working for the production of goods for own final use. As the table presented below reveals (Table No.6), only 3.4 percent of male in urban areas as against near about 20 percent in rural areas are engaged in the activity of production of goods for final use in urban areas. Almost same is the case with the female as well. Yet another promising change could be found in the case of percentage of persons participating in 'learning' activities in urban areas. It is obvious that 23.3 of males and 20.7 females in urban areas actively participate in 'learning'.

Table 4 Percentage of persons participating in different activities in a day in Urban Areas

Activity	Male	Female	Persons
Employment and related activities	59.8	16.7	38.9
Production of goods for own final use	3.4	8.3	5.8
Unpaid domestic services for household members	22.6	79.2	50.1

Unpaid caregiving services for household members	13.2	26.3	19.5
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	2.5	2.2	2.3
Learning	23.3	20.7	22.0
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	90.6	91.4	91.0
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	92.1	92.7	92.4

5.5 Average Time Spent in Different Activities in a Day per Person in Rural Areas

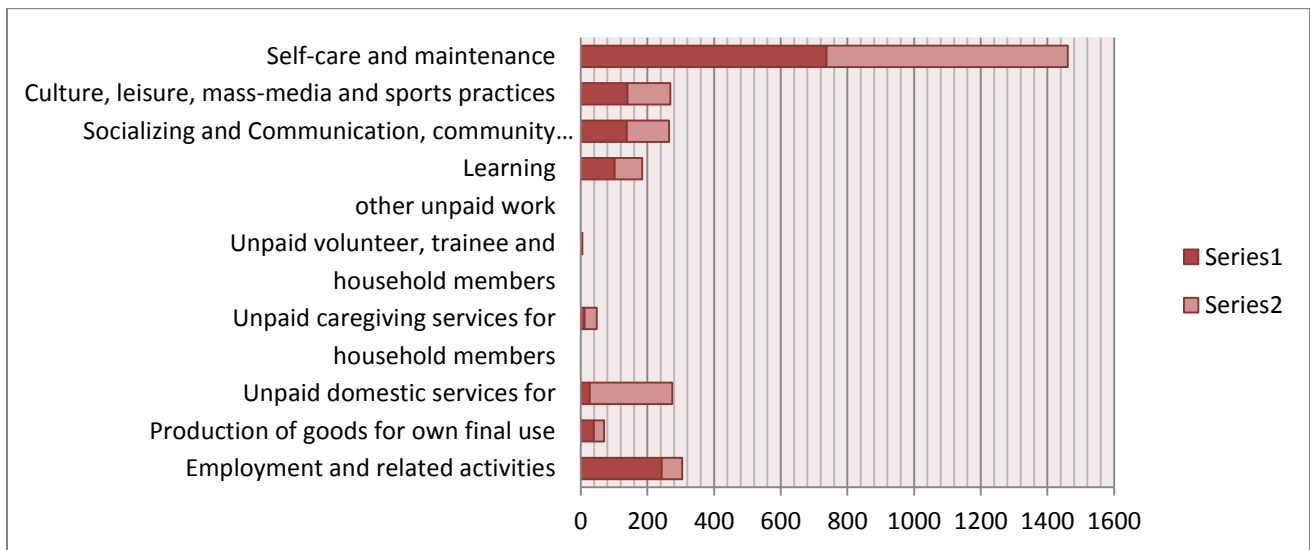
Having discussed the percentage of person's engaged in different activities in both rural and urban areas, now we turn towards explaining the average time spent in different activities. Here we measure the time in terms of minutes. Of the total minutes available for one day, that is 1440 minutes, how much minutes are earmarked for each activity in both rural and urban areas needs to be discussed. Turning to first to the rural areas, we find that male spend 243 minutes for employment and related activities while female only 61 minutes. Much discrepancy can be found in the case of 'unpaid domestic services for household members', where it is seen that women spend their precious 247 minutes whereas men only spend 27 minutes. The same huge inequality can be seen in the case of 'unpaid caregiving' works as well. When it comes to the case of 'learning', one could observe that men spend 102 minutes while female spend only 82 minutes. What is not disheartening is the fact that both men and women spend close to 730 minutes for 'self-care and maintenance' activities. In short, it is obvious that men spend more time for employment and related activities while women spend more time for unpaid domestic service for household members. This impediments our attempts towards women empowerment in rural areas in India.

Table 5 Average time (in minutes) spent in different activities in a day per person in Rural Areas

Description of Activity	Male	Female	Person
Employment and related activities	243	61	153
Production of goods for own final use	39	31	35
Unpaid domestic services for household members	27	247	136

Unpaid caregiving services for household members	11	37	24
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	3	2	2
Learning	102	82	92
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	138	127	132
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	140	129	135
Self-care and maintenance	737	724	731
Total (in minutes)	1440	1440	1440

Figure 1 Average time (in minutes) spent in different activities in a day per person in Rural Areas



Note: Series 1 stands for Male and 2 for Female

5.6 Average Time Spent in Different Activities in a Day per Person in Urban Areas

In urban areas too, similar picture persists but with much glaring differences. For instance, male spend 307 minutes for employment and related activities as against only 243 in rural areas. That means, men devote quite more time for employment activities in urban areas. However, this huge difference is apparently absent in the case of female in urban areas. Female in urban areas almost spend the same as their rural counterparts for employment and related activities. Obviously, it takes us to the conclusion that we can hardly find any serious region wise gender difference in respect of the average time spent for different activities in both rural and urban areas in India.

Table 6 Average time (in minutes) spent in different activities in a day per person in Urban Areas

Description of Activity	Male	Female	Person
Employment and related activities	307	62	188
Production of goods for own final use	5	5	5
Unpaid domestic services for household members	21	232	124
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	10	36	23
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	3	2	2
Learning	101	88	95
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	125	127	126
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	157	168	162
Self-care and maintenance	711	720	715
Total (in minutes)	1440	1440	1440

5.5 Average Time Spent in Different Activities in a Day per Person in Urban Pus Rural Areas

Turning to the All India case disregarding the Rural/Urban Areas, we find almost the same trend as described in the preceding sections. In a way, it is highly condemnable that the works being done by the female at their homes go unidentified and demonetized, putting them in a disastrously disadvantages condition, which by any count would impoverish and stand in the way of their further empowerment. Perhaps, taking note of this that promises have been made by some corners of the political realm of the country than housewives would be entitled to have lump sum amount of money on regular basis to ameliorate their concerns. However, this does not seem to be sustainable idea that would withstand the test of the time. Rather, it is imperative that constructive policy steps should be taken to ensure the monetization of the works that females do

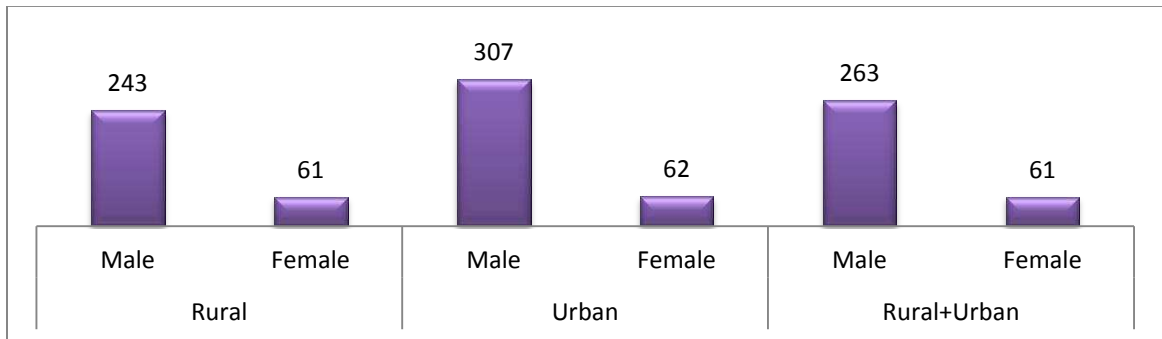
in their houses. At the all India level, it is disheartening to note that women spend on an average 243 minutes for unpaid domestic works while their male counterpart spend merely only 25 minutes.

Table 7 Average time (in minutes) spent in different activities in a day per person in Urban plus Rural Areas

Description of Activity	Male	Female	Person
Employment and related activities	263	61	164
Production of goods for own final use	28	23	26
Unpaid domestic services for household members	25	243	132
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	11	37	24
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	3	2	2
Learning	102	84	93
Socializing and Communication, community participation and religious practice	134	127	130
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	146	141	143
Self-care and maintenance	729	723	726
Total (in minutes)	1440	1440	1440

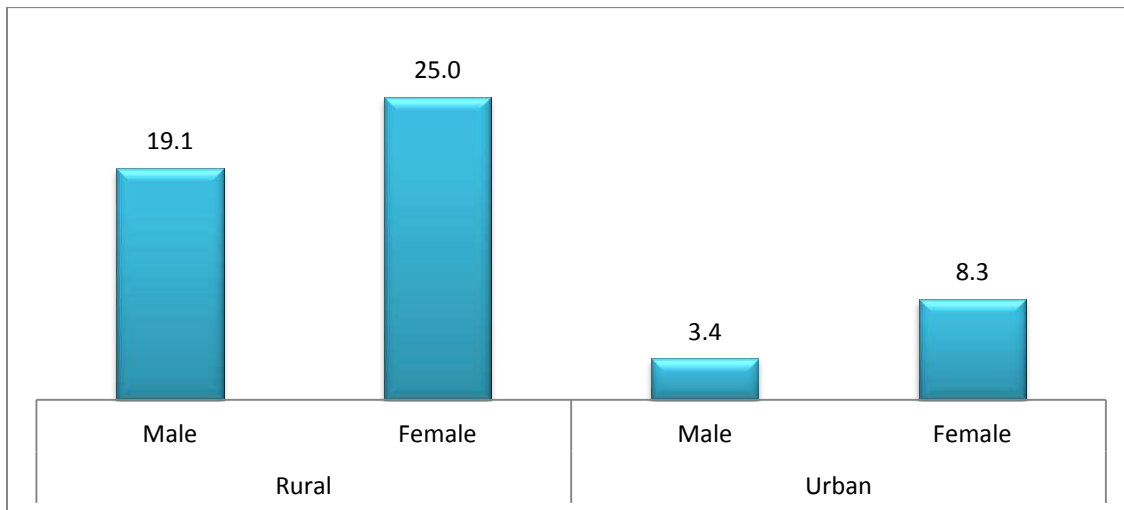
The gender inequality that has been observed in the time spent for employment and related activities need some more explanations. It is well acknowledged that the serious impediments towards the realization of women empowerment in India could be found in these kinds of inequalities. As is evident from the following figure (Figure No.2), it is obvious that in both rural and urban areas female spend fewer times for employment and related activities compared to their male counterparts. That simply means there is no gender difference in respect of the average time spent in rural and urban areas in India.

**Figure 2 Average Time Spent for Employment and Related Activities:
Gender Wise Rural/Urban**



Is there any rural bias in the participation of both men and women in the production of goods for own final use? It does seem so that in the present data on Time Use Survey which is under our consideration, in rural areas, 19.1 percent men and 25 percent women engage in the production of goods for own final use whereas the corresponding figure for the urban areas abysmally stand at 3.4 percent and 8.3 percent respectively. Again, what is noteworthy is that in both rural and urban areas, more female participate in the production of goods for own final use compared to the men. In this respect, one could gauge into an important gender disparity in respect of the percentage of persons engaging in the production of goods for own final use (Figure No3).

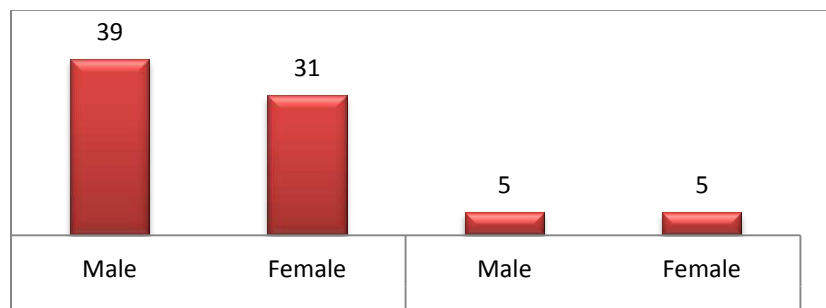
**Figure 3 Percentage of Persons Participating in Production of goods for Own Final use:
Gender Wise Rural/Urban Difference**



Needless to say that in the case of average time spent for the production of goods for own use, the same kind of gender disparity and regional disparity could be observed (Figure No.4)

Figure 4 Average Time Spent for the Production of goods for Own Use:

Gender Wise Rural/Urban



6. Conclusion

To conclude, it may be stated that Time Use Surveys (TUS) help us to go deep into gender differences in the participation of gainful and non-gainful employment opportunities. This study has served such a purpose. This paper sets out to discuss the urban/rural difference in respect of the time spent for different activities by both men and women in India. The paper reveals that men spend more time for employment and related activities while women spend more time for unpaid domestic service for household members. The paper finds hardly any serious region wise gender difference in respect of the average time spent for different activities in both rural and urban areas in India. This work takes note of the fact that works being done by the female at their homes go unidentified and demonetized, putting them in a disastrously disadvantages condition, which by any count would impoverish and stand in the way of their further empowerment. Gender inequality has also been observed in the time spent for employment and related activities.

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