

QUALITY OF BETTER HOME ENVIRONMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOME MAKERS

MoumitaDey*

Abstract

Environment is an important word in geographical Discourse. It indicates both the physical and Social Environment. In modern civilised society, Social environment consist of two type of space – 1.Private Space 2.Public Space. People mainly share this private space with their family members or close one. Unfortunately Geographers analysed the quality of this private space measuring only the quality of the objective home environment. They mainly analysed the building plan, building architecture, and accessibility of the facilities broadly whereas they overlooked the issues of the quality of subjective home environment. As house and home is two different things by nature, previous researchers had given emphasis on the first one. People like women mainly housewives who spend their time inside the four walls of the house, Quality of home environment (both objective and subjective) have played a vital role to control their quality of life. This study was attempted to understand the quality of home environment from the perspective of young home makers (18-40) of a suburban area of greater Kolkata. In suburban area, diversification of society was found clearly and it will be helpful to analyse the aforesaid issue from the context of different social class. This study indicated the influence of their aspiring private space or home environment to determine their satisfaction level inside their home. Purposive random sampling method was used to collect the primary data. Data analysis was done with the help of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It was found that quality of real subjective home environment and the quality of their aspiring home environment has

*** Doctorate Program, Department of Geography, University of Calcutta, West Bengal,India.**

played an important role to determine their satisfaction level inside their house and it affects their spiritual and mental development.

Keywords: Objective home environment; Subjective home environment; aspiring home environment; Quality of life; Suburban home makers.

1. Introduction

Environment is the most popular word in geographical discourses. With time, it has changed its dimension. Geographers have analysed the importance of both physical and social environment on human civilisation. Housing Condition has been considered as one of the important parameter to assess the quality of life. Unfortunately people have analysed the building plan, building architecture and several objective indicators to understand the quality or nature of household environment whereas satisfaction level of each family members have not given any importance. In case of housewives whose lives entirely move around the four walls of houses, their satisfaction level equally depends on both objective and subjective indicators of their home environment. For this reason, most of the housewives of suburban and metro cities have been suffering from different mental health related problem like anxiety, insecurity, and low confidence level in spite of the existence of better objective home environment Among young generation housewives who are aware of their rights and well connected with social media, their perception regarding the quality of subjective space inside their home rather than the objective space of house has played an important role to measure their satisfaction level. In earlier studies of geography in urban and suburban context, researchers have discussed the quality of life in respect of sanitation system, source of drinking water, accessibility to better infrastructure. There is no doubt that these are the basic indicators of development but in 21th century when we have started to spend most of the time of a day in cyberspace related activities; choose mass media as the most accessible recreation medium of our life, we never deny the fact that for each person, meaning of space is different. According to class, caste, gender this whole matter can be different from each other though they live in a same spatial location. Inside the four walls of the houses, the rules, regulations, customs, values are different from the the prevalent system of the outer society. In other social science discipline, social scientists have discussed this concept vividly. Though they have analysed the whole matter from the perspective of objective

indicators. Most of studies have taken in the context of western urban society. With the rapid scenario of urban sprawl and expansion of the city region, Suburban part of the city have shown a different scenario of city life as those areas are in the transitional zone, consist of both rural and urban people. These parts of the region and its inhabitant should be taken into consideration as their actual social space and ascribed social space may be different and it can help the social scientist to analyse the issue- 'objective or subjective home environment- which one is more important to understand the satisfaction level. As women have spent their huge time inside their house, study on them can show the actual scenario of home environment. To indicate the important factors of a quality life and well-being, Smith (Sen, 2011) has considered housing environment as an important issue. House and home has two different meaning. House is a concrete structure whereas home is a place where people live with their family. Here the problem has been raised if someone consider housing environment it mainly indicate the outer layer like building structure, accessibility to better facilities of water, electricity and other basic requirement or at a certain extent it may include the availability of sunrays, fresh air, etc. When issues shift from house to home, some other parameters like relationship status of family members with each other, authority of members to express their opinion, approach of family members towards social issue will have to take into consideration. Unfortunately Geographers ((Rahaman,1998;Audinarayan,1987) have discussed the issues related to household environment in their work highlighting the issues of building plan and facilities .Discussion was done from the perspective of physical health related issue. The issues related to mental health was totally absent. Other Social scientists; mainly psychologists have discussed the interrelationship between mental health status of the family members and the quality of subjective home environment in their work. Some scientist find out the difference between gender perception on these issue (Langham, 2005). Some scholars (Lever, Longzagorta, Wardle, 2005) have pointed out the issue of psychological poverty which can be raised due to dissatisfaction with other needs (not the economic condition). As the result of this discussion it can be said that only economic well-being can't be useful to make someone happy. Home is the first world of every woman mainly for the housewives. Working women, who do not get satisfaction from their home environment, might fulfil it from their working place or recreation place. At present the door to outer world has already become easily accessible to the housewives with the help of mass media and communication technology. Though the scenario is not same everywhere. Considering the

concept of feminist post modernism difference theory, it can be said that housewives and their situation ,condition, perception inside home may varies from one to another and a single category can't represent the whole scenario and this Categorization may hide the problem of this community as a whole. Dualism (Categorization) may keep some problem invisible to us (Hughes).

2. Research Method

Data have been collected from 50 housewives of 10 ancient neighbourhood of Madhyamgram Municipality with the help of questionnaire. Purposive sampling method has been applied and certain criteria have been ascertained for sample selection. After data collection data have analysed with the help of qualitative methods like participant observation, personal interview. For micro level study, Case study method has been applied. Then data have been also analysed with the help of quantitative method like composite score index.

For Case study, 5% housewives are selected from a particular neighbourhood of Madhyamgram municipality. Among them 5% are happy in their home environment and 5% are unhappy in their home environmen A composite score index has been prepared on the basis of the of the indicators of objective and subjective home environment. Availability of own room, House type, Number of kitchen appliances, Number of servants, Number of communication medium, Number of entertainment medium are the selected indicators of objective Home Environment. Family Type, Restriction, Decission making authority, Companion inside the house, Authority to express opinion, Taking permission before using facilities, Willingness to become housewives are the selected indicators of subjective Home Environment. As the numbers of objective and subjective indicators are not same, composite score has been presented as a ratio using this formula $\text{Composite score} / \text{Potential highest score} * 100$. There are certain qualitative data which have been converted to quantitative data using coding method. Family Type: Orthodox=0, Medium=1, Modern=2. Restriction: Yes=0, No=1. Decision making authority: Others=0, husband=1, jointly=2, Self=3. Companion inside the house: Yes=1. No=0. Authority to express opinion: Yes=1, No=0 Taking permission before using facilities: Yes=0, No=1

3. Results and Analysis

3.1. Objective and subjective Home Environment:

Objective home environment of these housewives have been analysed in respect of two basic indicators (Planning Of space, Existence of facilities). Majority of women (90%) live in pakka house. They have their own houses .Due to nuclear family pattern (78%), their husbands are the owners of the house. Most of the houses (52%) consist of 2-4 houses. Women who live in the two store houses, they have more than 4 rooms. Women who live in joint family her families were allotted two rooms. They have shared common toilet. In 94% houses, there are attached bathroom. 98% houses have roof and courtyard though courtyards occupy a small section of building area.86% women have their separate rooms. Most of the houses are surrounded by concrete wall. Only 2% of the women live in flats and room size in flat are medium in size. 62% housewives have 1-3 modern kitchen appliances in their houses. Most of them have 24 hours drinking water facilities in their houses. Few of them who belong to lower economic class also have accessed drinking tap water for at least 6 hrs per day. They have sink in the kitchen. They have used separate garbage disposal bucket in the kitchen. Very few of them have purifier in their kitchen.86% houses have Cable connection in their house.86% housewives use mobile phone for communication.82% housewives works 4-6 hours every day 62% of them get help from servants in their regular housework.This environment varies from family to family. Reaction of housewives to this environment is totally dependent on the perception of housewives; what they expect and what actually happen to them. 84% families have male head where as 16% families are headed by female members though in 25% families housewives are head and rest 75% are headed by oldest female lady of the families like mother in law. Only 2% families are orthodox by nature. Most of the housewives live in those families where people are modern or medium by their approach. 50% women have faced restriction in selection of their dress by the family members. Only 33% have faced restriction in case of their check in time at night in the house. Only 17% housewives have to face restriction from their family members in case of their friend selection. 84% housewives have trustworthy reliable companion inside their house whereas 16% do not have this facilities 30% women maintain very good relationship with their relatives whereas 60% women have cordial relationship with their neighbours and friends. 74% women are able to take decision in family matter where as 28% have enjoyed self-decision

making authority in this matter. 86% women are allowed to express their opinion in their family matter. 86% women are happy in their home environment.

3.2. Case Study: Objective vs. subjective home environment

Table 1: Composite score of objective home environment of those housewives who are happy

Sl No.	No of own room	House type *	Appliances	Servants	No. of Communication medium	No. of Recreation medium	Composite score	Potential highest composite score	Composite Score as ratio in percentage
1	1	0	3	0	1	2	7	17	41
2	1	2	2	1	1	2	9	17	52
3	1	2	2	1	1	2	9	17	52
4	0	2	1	0	1	2	6	17	35
5	1	2	2	0	1	0	6	17	35

*House type: Own=1, Rented=0, Pakka=1, Kaccha=0.

{No of own room: maximum value =1, House type: maximum value=2, Appliances: maximum value =6(Fridge, Roti maker, Induction, Chimney, Microwave, Mixture machine), No. of servants: maximum value=3 No. of recreation medium: maximum value =2(Television, Radio), No.of Communication medium=3(Mobile, Land phone, Internet)}

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

Table 2: Composite score of subjective home environment of those housewives who are happy

Sl no.	Family Type	Restriction	Decision making authority	Company Inside the house	Authority To express opinion	Taking permission before using facilities	Composite score	Potential highest composite score	Composite Score as ratio in percentage
--------	-------------	-------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	---	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--

						es			
1	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	9	44
2	2	1	1	1	1	1	7	9	78
3	2	1	3	1	1	1	9	9	100
4	2	1	3	0	1	1	8	9	89
5	2	0	0	1	1	0	4	9	44

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

[Family Type: Orthodox=0, Medium=1, Modern=2. Restriction: Yes=0, No=1, Decision making authority: Others=0, husband=1, jointly=2, Self=3, Companion inside the house: Yes=1.No=0, Authority to express opinion: Yes=1, No=0, Taking permission before using facilities: Yes=0, No=1,]

Table3: Composite score of objective home environment of those housewives who are unhappy

Sl No.	No of own room	House type*	Appliances	Servants	No. of Communication medium	No. of Recreation medium	Composite score	Potential composite highest score	Composite Score as ratio in percentage
6	1	2	3	0	1	2	9	17	52
7	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	17	17
8	1	2	4	1	2	1	11	17	64
9	1	2	3	1	1	1	9	17	52
10	1	2	5	1	1	1	11	17	64

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16).

{No of own room: maximum value =1, House type: maximum value=2, Appliances: maximum value =6(Fridge, Roti maker, Induction, Chimney, Microwave, Mixture machine), No. of servants: maximum value=3 No. of recreation medium: maximum value =2(Television, Radio), No. of Communication medium=3(Mobile, Land phone, Internet)}.

Table 4: Composite score of subjective home environment of those housewives who are unhappy

[Family Type: Orthodox=0, Medium=1, Modern=2, Restriction: Yes=0, No=1, Decision making

Sl No.	Family Type	Restriction	Decision making authority	Companion Inside the house	Authority To express opinion	Taking permission before using facilities	Composite score	Potential highest composite score	Composite Score as ratio in percentage
6	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	9	11
7	1	0	3	1	1	1	7	9	77
8	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	9	33
9	2	0	3	0	1	0	6	9	66
10	1	1	3	0	0	1	6	9	66

authority: Others=0, husband=1, jointly=2, Self=3, Companion inside the house: Yes=1.No=0, Authority to express opinion: Yes=1, No=0, Taking permission before using facilities: Yes=0, No=1,]

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

Table 5: Composite score Index of objective and subjective environment (Happy housewives)

Sl No.	Composite score of objective Environment	Composite score of subjective Environment	Total score	Potential highest score(objective)	Potential highest composite score	Total potential highest score (Objective +Subjective)	Composite score as ratio in percentage
1	7	4	11	17	9	26	42

2	9	7	16	17	9	26	62
3	9	9	18	17	9	26	69
4	6	8	14	17	9	26	54
5	6	4	10	17	9	26	38

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

Table 6: Composite score Index of objective and subjective environment (Unhappy housewives)

Sl No.	Composite score of objective Environment	Composite score of subjective Environment	Total score	Potential composite highest score(objective)	Potential highest composite score	Total potential highest score (Objective +Subjective)	Total of Composite score (objective+subjective) as ratio in percentage
6	9	1	7	17	9	26	27
7	3	7	10	17	9	26	38
8	11	3	14	17	9	26	54
9	9	6	15	17	9	26	58
10	11	6	17	17	9	26	65

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

Table 7: Comparison between the score of objective and subjective environment of the housewives who are happy inside their home

Sl no.	Composite Score of objective environment as ratio in percentage	Composite Score of subjective environment as ratio in percentage	Difference
1	41	44	3
2	52	78	26

3	52	100	48
4	35	89	54
5	35	44	9

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

Table 8: Comparison between the score of objective and subjective environment of the housewives who are unhappy inside their home

Sl no.	Composite Score of objective environment as ratio in percentage	Composite Score of subjective environment as ratio in percentage	Difference
6	52	11	41
7	17	77	60
8	64	33	31
9	52	66	14
10	64	66	2

Source: Primary Data, (2/3/16-26/6/16)

3.3 Findings:

From above discussion, it has been cleared to everybody that young housewives are quite happy in their home environment. As they mainly live in nuclear family, they do not have to face the authority of their in laws. In case of building plan they can enjoy their privacy inside their home. Most of them have their own room. They can indulge their hobby like gardening in the balcony, roof and courtyard of their houses. They have modern kitchen appliances in their kitchen and it helps them to complete their work within time. They get help from servant and their family members in completing their housework in time. Besides this most of them have expressed their opinion in family matter. They are able to take decision in different issue. They can enjoy their leisure time according their own will. They are quite happy in their home environment because the average quality of the objective and subjective home environment is satisfactory and help

them to develop their mental and spiritual quality of life. Though a question is still need to be answered that between objective or subjective environment which one is more powerful to make them happy inside their home. In table no. 5 and table no. 6, it has been seen that the combined score of home environment is same for both happy and unhappy in some cases. This fact has denoted that when the index of quality of home environment is prepared taking all the objectives and subjective indicators together, it fails to indicate the actual scenario. In table no. 7, it has been seen that the housewives who are happy inside their home have enjoyed the facilities of good subjective environment. Most of them have enjoyed three basic facilities. They have considered three important issue like restriction imposed by family on them; devoid of the freedom to express opinion; absence of decision making authority as the main hindrance to the way of their happiness inside their home. They do not feel any problem if they work hard inside their house in the absence of servants or if they do not have modern kitchen appliances or entertainment medium. Though the data related to unhappy housewives (see table no. have revealed some interesting information totally exceptional from the viewpoint of happy housewives. 40% housewives have suffered from lower quality of subjective home environment. 60% housewives who have expressed their unhappiness inside their home have enjoyed basic facilities of subjective home environment. To understand the matter properly personal interview of them have taken to understand the matter

Interview No. 1: S. Malakar is a housewife. She is 38 years old lady. She did not complete her basic education due to poverty. She lives in an extended family. Her financial condition is very poor. She has to work throughout the day to maintain her family. Her husband does not have permanent income. Though she has taken all the decisions about family matter but poor financial condition and inaccessibility of basic facilities of life have made her happy with the quality of her home environment.

Interview No. 2: S. Bose is 39 years old woman. She lives in a nuclear family. Due to family problems she had to get married at an early age. She did not complete her dream to complete college education and to become a working lady. She has been suffering from loneliness due to the absence of any female member inside the home. She loves to travel though she has not gone anywhere for a long period out of work schedule of her husband and Son.

Interview No. 3: S.Chowdhury is a 40 years old housewife. She has also been suffering from the problem of loneliness. As her husband is busy in his job (railway employee) and daughter in her work, she does not get any one to share her thoughts. As she does not have to do any housework, she feels bore.

This analysis have raised some others issues which are need to be discussed to understand the home environment such as relationship status among the family members, Changing scenario of this relationship within time or different stage of life. It indicates that when the ascribed home environment of a person does not match with the reality it caused dissatisfaction to her. Though more emphasis already has been given to the issue of Subjective home environment, importance of objective home environment can't be denied, when someone does not get basic facilities inside the home like privacy, recreation and have to pay huge effort to complete basic housework, it creates anxiety in their mind and affect their mental health. When someone do not find companion, they have to find somebody outside their house that they can rely, trust and they can maintain good connection without any restriction from the family members. As these housewives are totally disconnected from their childhood friends due to migration they do not get these opportunities. Neighbourhood concept has also been changed in modern time. People do not have intimate relationship with their neighbours so good relationship status with neighbours does not show intimacy with them.

Above all, it can be conclude that objective subjective and also aspiring home environment have a great impact on the satisfaction level of the housewives for whom home is synonymous to their world. Only analysing one part of these three environments, actual scenario will not be shown properly. Besides this, combined index will not be shown the actual result. Actual satisfaction or perception can't be judged without the documentation of their feelings on these issues. Participatory Approach is the best way to understand the scenario. Housewives of this suburban are mainly suffering from the problem of loneliness, insecurity in personal life which can be solved through the better understanding of the family members on the issues related to them.

4. Conclusion

Though housewives have done a tremendous job inside the house but they need to expand their own world outside the four walls. They need to indulge their hobby. They need to give importance to their own requirements. Family members should have to show respect to them and their work. To analyse the quality of home environment, researchers have to judge how far the ascribed home environment of a women is deviated from the reality. Statistical index is not always useful to indicate the actual scenario of any behavioural information which can be changed at any time. There is no doubt that average women of Madhyamgram have enjoyed better environment inside their home but for holistic development of the housewives of these area ,it is seemed important to make out the problems of those housewives who are lacking these basic facilities. They need to expand their social circle and social activity to get rid away of their problems and they have to speak out in favour of their rights; otherwise problem will not be solved.

References

- Audinarayan, N., "Environmental Sanitation: A study in Village of Andhra Pradesh", *SwastiHindi*, Vol. XXXI, New Delhi, pp.248-249, 1987.
- Diener, ED. And Chan, M., "Happy People Live Longer: Subjective Well Being Contributes to health and Longevity", Blackwell: Applied Psychology Health and Well Being', *International Association of Applied Psychology*, Vol.3, No.1, pp. 1-43, 2011.
- Hughes, C., "Key Concept in Feminist Theory and Research", *SAGE: London*, pp57-82, 2001.
- Langhamer, C., "The Meaning of Home in Post War Britain", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, pp. 341-358, 2005.
- Lever, P. Pinol, N. and Wralde, J., "Poverty, Psychological Resource and Subjective wellbeing", *Springer: Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 73, pp.375-408, 2005
- Lotfi, S. and Kooshari, M.J., "Analysing Accessibility Dimension of Urban Quality of Life: Where Urban Designers Face Duality between Subjective and objective Reading of Place", *Springer: Social Indicators Research*, Vol, pp.417-435, 2009.
- Rahaman, A., "Household Environment and Health", B.R Publishing Corporation, 1998

- Muoghalu, L., “Subjective Indices of Housing Satisfaction as Social Indicators for Planning Public Housing in Nigeria”, *Springer: Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 15, pp.145-164, 1984.
- Riemer, S., “Maladjustment to the family home”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 642-648, 1995.
- Sen, J., “A Text Book on Social and Cultural Geography”, Kalyani Publishers, pp 45-55, 2011.