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# A Look at Management Skill of Housewives during COVID-19

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**Abstract:** With the onset of COVID-19, there was a drastic change in household income. The entire economy came to a standstill. The global pandemic was hammering and shutting down businesses. The layoffs and resultant business shutdowns impacted badly on the household sectors. The significant role of housewives cannot be ignored at this crucial time. It is these warriors who shun their boundaries to facilitate help to the people in their surroundings, to empathize with their neighbor, family members. This bunch of fiery women, who otherwise lagged the four walls of their houses, set out their business, believed in themselves, in their grits and guts and proved themselves in different ways. Initially started as a home-grown tiffin service, to help the surroundings, to nurture the dear one during COVID, these services ushered flawlessly into home grown businesses. The paper aims to highlight the much-neglected management skills of housewives, who worked relentlessly and effortlessly to maintain the bread and butter of their house intact. The research was conducted with a case study approach. For data In-depth interview was conducted. The result showed that management skills such as interpersonal skills, decision making skills, problem solving ability, team building, resilience, leadership skill helped the housewives to confront difficult

situations both in home front and in their surroundings.

**Keywords:** Management skills, COVID-19, Resilience, housewives

## 1. Introduction

Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping-stone to greatness. - Oprah Winfrey

For Renu Saini (Name changed), Coronavirus brought an opportunity to follow her passion for baking and culinary skills. One request from a friend, during the lockdown, to bake an anniversary cake changed everything for this Odisha based housewife. The help she gave to her friend for celebrating the anniversary was a starting point for Renu to give a thought to pursue her passion for baking and cooking. There was no looking back after that, '*All about Cakes and Bakes*' was born. Initially she took up orders from her own housing colony, approximately 1-2 orders in a week. Gradually, she had to hire staff members for meeting the high demands of orders. The operation has increased since that time. She takes up orders now as high as 7-9 in a single day. Once started as a hobby, for helping friends is showing colors; her new venture, the bakery business is showing

great promise. Renu is now looking forward to upgrading her culinary skills, sharpening her management skills like decision making, problem solving ability. She has become more focused, resilient towards her goal. She is busy in expanding menus and increasing her client networking,

For Shalini Mishra (Name changed) a banker by profession had to leave her job so that she can take care of her family in the mid of the COVID, support her children for their online classes and let her husband attend work from home office. She would get up early so as to help her ailing mother-in-law and doing other chores. However, the uncertainty of her leaving a job and suddenly becoming a housewife did not deter her from pursuing her passion. Rather, it pushed her to turn her efforts for caring others into a sustainable venture. She is now the founder of a elderly home. Providing a good and healthy life to the elderly has become her goal for life. Not planning to go back to a desk job, this fiery lady is utilizing her management skills like decision making, problem solving ability in her own venture. Anindita, along with her household help Rekha, runs *Dish n' Dish* that delivers healthy and simple Indian home-cooked food at affordable prices based on a subscription model. Though the venture is only a five months old, Anindita already has a list of loyal customers. She is confident about growing her business in a large scale. She believes there is a massive scope to grow given the huge demand for customized, home-cooked meals that appeal to the young health and health conscious customers.

The extensive effects of COVID did not appear same for everyone. While the Pandemic has wrecked havoc in many lives, distraught many businesses, has caused huge, irreparable damage to the economy, it has also showed hope to a major chunk of housewives. It has given birth to this new crop of micro-entrepreneurs that have found new opportunities and take risks during these adverse times. Their resilience has helped them to confront the adversity in every possible way which also showcased their managing skills. As Chakrabarti contends, “when it comes to housewives, they are more responsible person in the family, regards to food intakes of family members, especial of their kids” (Chakrabarti, 2010), at this Covid times. In a 21st century we live in a country where we proudly highlight our progress by citing the instances of a rapidly rising female workforce, one that includes highly educated and skilled professionals. To our credits, we have Indra Nooyi, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chanda Kochhar, Malavika Hegde to name a few. Yet, we cannot deny the fact that a majority of Indian women still do not go out to work. Instead, they work at home. They work in their houses, as housewives. They are a lot who are unpaid, unattended, and much neglected. Many a times, their works are considered as a mere duty and responsibility. The present article is motivated by the significant role of housewives taking the lead during COVID and proved their substance while exploring self in different fields. They are tested for their resilience, grit and courage.

## **2. Background**

A housewife is a familiar role to all of us. She is taken to be the pillar of a family, be it a nuclear or joint one. The mental and physical health of a family revolves around her. She works round the clock, often neglecting her own needs and priorities. Singlehandedly, she does the household chores including cooking, cleaning, taking care of each and every family members. Emotionally, she holds the family together. She is a pillar of support for her husband, a guiding light for her child, and a harbour for the family's elderly. It's as though her existence is entirely selfless, always putting the interests of others over and above her own.

In India, the patriarchal understanding of the role of a housewife is that her job is a duty. Almost without help, single support, she handles her daily chores, performs her unavoidable tasks on a daily basis almost with an ease. A housewife wants nothing more than to be treated with love, respect, gratefulness and dignity. Her 'job' is perhaps the most magnanimous one in the world. It's time society woke up to her domestic significance, instead of taking her for granted. She deserves her due and it's up to us to change the regressive mindsets, celebrate her place in the familial ecosystem and recognize her noble.

## **3. Research Problem**

The paper focuses on how women took up a stronger role during the COVID times, displayed resilience and other inherent

management strategies while tending the family and pursuing her career. The paper interviewed housewives who took a different route when an adverse situation was compelling them to surrender. When the layoffs were at its peak, these housewives were generating revenue for their family, sometimes supporting the housemaid's family. They ventured new businesses and provided employment to their maids, neighbors. Their ability to multi-task pushes them to find a way to save their family income. During the interview with its respondents, the research observed that housewives started their businesses through social media, through their contacts.

## **4. Methodology**

The research is qualitative in nature. It is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words that are extracted from respondents during an interview. We also observed the behavior while talking to the respondents. Their tone, their body language was also observed during the interview. The objective of the study was to explore the management skills in housewives during COVID time which helped the family both economically and mentally. In depth interview was done with eight housewives who started their business venture in the time of Pandemic. The interview helped the research to know more about their passion, their ability to explore and excel. Their tone was exciting, full of life, thrilled while describing their passionate journey; effortlessly, they were narrating the support, the oppositions they

came across round the corner while realizing their dreams.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

Based on the results of the interview and observations conducted by the author, the following management skills were found to be clear and relevant among housewives. The housewives chose to become a problem solver rather than being a cribber; they became a bread earner rather than becoming dependent on their husbands for running the family. In spite of insufficient funds, place constraints, quarantine period, zero mobility, these housewives displayed an array of management skills which helped them to excel in their respective field. A discussion of these management skills are given below:

### **5.1. Interpersonal skills**

When several human restrictions were imposed due to COVID, a strong interpersonal skill of housewives helped to run their business. Anindita did not take time to think before starting her venture. Initially it was planned to support the COVID affected families. Her strong bond with her neighbor helped her to initiate and transform her business idea. She paid active attention to the feedback from her customers, built a trust with them over a period time. Her amicable nature during an uncertain period has been a prominent factor for realizing her dreams. In a quarantine phase, when social distancing was the norm, she maintained the norm and took care of her customers.

### **5.2. Flexibility/ Open-mindedness**

It was the flexible attitude of housewives which helped them to excel and realize their dreams. Having an open mindset, being able to work well under pressure, adjusting to new and unexpected deadlines, prioritizing tasks are some of the much sought-after management skills which helped housewives to set up their business amidst a global crisis. It proved their resilience, their strong willed open-mindedness. They were kind to people and at the same time they were focused towards their goals. They never hesitated to take up extra burden, additional responsibilities; rather they handled the added responsibilities with ease and stature.

### **5.3. Problem solving and critical thinking**

These two abilities are prerequisites for any business venture. In a pandemic, which led to innumerable problem including social distancing, lack of trust, being restless, an increase in mental health problem, the housewives utilized their time and energy wisely and cautiously. They became problem solver while showcasing their leadership skills in various arena of their life. Researchers, social scientists, psychologists observe problem solving as a common strategy by which individuals find effective coping responses for challenging situations (Barghandan, 2009). Similarly, Black and Harsen (1995) contend that problem solving is very important for psychological adjustment because in the

scope of stressful situations, it affects on the adaptive function. Compromise and successful adaptation to the social environment require a set of interpersonal problem-solving skills (Barghandan, 2009). The analysis reveals that house wives exhibit high level of problem solving ability during COVID.

## **6. Conclusion**

The analysis and subsequent discussion has certain observations so far as housewives are concerned. It was observed that despite facing limitless challenges, the housewives displayed a remarkable resilience and grit and made effort to explore life in a vibrant manner. The significant role they played while supporting their family in the midst of a global crisis cannot be denied. The study recommends that there should be separated policy implemented for the untapped ability of the housewives. Keeping in view that, their effort, role is still being ignored and neglected by a significant sector of the society, the present research points to the need for a stronger and solid rule that supports, facilitates and promotes housewives to realize their dream and passion.

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