



CHANGING PATTERN AND TREND OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD IN INDIA: EVIDENCES FROM VARIOUS ROUNDS OF NFHS

Moslem Hossain

*M.Phil. Research Scholar
International Institute for Population Sciences
Mumbai, Maharashtra (India)*

Mukesh Kumar

*M.Phil. Research Scholar
International Institute for Population Sciences
Mumbai, Maharashtra (India)*

K C Das

*Professor
International Institute for Population Sciences
Mumbai, Maharashtra (India)*

Abstract

According to the Census of India, the head of the household is a person who bears the chief responsibility for managing affairs of the household and makes the decision on behalf of the household. The head of the household need not necessarily be the oldest male member or the earning member but, maybe a female or young member of either sex. In case an absentee de jure "Head" who is not eligible to be enumerated in the household, the person on whom the responsibility of managing the affairs of the household rests is to be regarded as the head irrespective of whether the person is male or female. The head of the household plays a very important role for the collection of data in any demographic and health survey. Household Headship provides crucial information about household, members and their characteristics. It can influence the quality of data collected regarding household. Thus the characteristics of household head is considered as very important while collecting data. This information is very useful in classifying the data and to represent the results. This paper focuses on the changing pattern, trend, and characteristics of household head by using the empirical evidences from four rounds of National Family Health Survey.

Key words: Household Head, National Family Health Survey, Mean Age, Mean Family Size.

Introduction

The household is a collection of individuals, who behave as if in agreement on how best to combine time, goods purchased in the market and goods produced at home to produce commodities that maximize some common welfare index (Hjortsberg, 2000). The household is regarded as the fundamental, social, and economic unit of society (Darity, 1995), which is controlled and managed by a member called the household head (HH) (Angel-Urdinola & Wodon, 2010). Head of the household is generally the elderly male member who provides economic support to the family, sometimes having ownership on land and house and expected to take important household decisions, such type of household is called male-headed household (MHH). The contradiction is found in some cases wherein the presence of the husband; elderly women become the head of the household with decision making power and ownership on assets, this type of household is found in matriarchal society. Such type of household constitutes only in small proportion. Larger proportion comprises of the household with the female head which is widowed, divorced, separated, or her husband has migrated and lived somewhere else for a long time. In both cases, the household is regarded as a female-headed household (FHH) where the primary decision maker is female rather than male.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report reveals an increasing trend of the female-headed household from 9% in NFHS-1 (1992-93), 10% in NFHS-2 (1998-99), 14% in NFHS-3 (2005-06) to 15% in NFHS-4 (2015-16). The increasing trend in life expectancy among female compared to their male counterpart, large spousal age gap in Indian marriage leaving female alone after the death of husband in their household and other factors like divorce, separation and long term migration of husband, household with no mature sons and sons residing in independent nuclear units (Census Report, 2011) are the leading causes of female headship in India, despite having matriarchal society in Southern and North-Eastern region particularly in Kerala and Meghalaya.

In the United States, Canada, and North Western Europe about 20% to 40% of households are headed by women. It is estimated that approximately one-third of all households in a developing country are headed by women and in a few developing countries the proportion is even higher (Tinker, 1991; Praveen, 2008). The proportions of female-headed households in most developing regions currently constitute an estimated 13% of all households in the Middle East and North Africa,

16% in Asia, 22% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 24% in Latin America. (Buvinic & Gupta 1997; Bongaarts, 2001). About 27 million households, constituting 11 percent of total households in the country, are headed by women (Census, 2011.). The value was nearly 10% in census 2001. World Bank report shows female headship (% of the female-headed household out of total household) varies from 1.7% (Afghanistan) to 49% (Ukraine), and India has a rank of 63 with 14.4% (2006). Households headed by women are most common in Northern America (with a median proportion of 47%, followed by Europe 37%, Latin America and the Caribbean 34% and Oceania 33%. The median prevalence of female-headed households is lower in Africa 27% and lowest in Asia 19% (UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017).

Due to the transformation of household structure/composition and family size, the headship is fast changing under the impact of structural changes due to the development of Indian society (Vardhan, 1999). Again the proportion of de facto female household headship in rural areas is unusually high because most men are increasingly migrating to cities and towns of the world in search of employment. The high rates of migration of men to urban areas and the absence of adult males have led to most households being headed by a female in developing countries. Evidence shows Female headship has a positive influence on the health of women, education of children and autonomy, and it has a negative relationship with economic conditions (Unisa, 2005). A separate independent household is formed when a married woman with her children becomes single, neither she stays with in-laws nor goes to natal home. In most of the cases, women head the house by the coercion of her single status due to death of husband, divorce or desertion by husband (not a social norm) or the product of women rejecting the patriarchal constraints on their lives by "opting out" of the nuclear family (Tinker, 1990). Under such situation women's choice of leading the household is affected by her characteristics like age, income, education, the acceptability of her natal family and in-laws' (Hoddinot & Kanbur, 1995; Schultz, 2001). More than a quarter of the world's poor people live in India, and gender-bias against women is deeply rooted in the society placing female-headed households at potentially a greater risk of poverty (Rajaram, 2009). Hence, it is important to study the socio-economic and demographic status of household, autonomy and health-seeking behaviour of the female in the reproductive age group

classified by sex of the household head, particularly in the country where patriarchy dominates.

Over the past decade, the significance of female-headed household has received considerable attention. The attention may be due to the part of the assumption that this FHH is supposed to be economically stressed due to lack of available resources (education, wealth, information, opportunity, health facility), and differential in the management of resources compare to that of MHH. In FHH women place a higher priority than men on basic needs such as food and health care, and female heads have the opportunity to enforce these priorities in the allocation of household resources. Empirical studies reveal, not surprisingly, that the situation is somewhat more complicated. The economic and welfare implications of female headship depend on the cultural setting and a wide variety of other factors (Rogers, 1995).

It is usually expected that women take headship in compulsion in the absence of a male. But in significant cases where women are leading the household when the adult male in the household is present as well as she is not working and the economic responsibility is born by other members (Unisa, 2005). Studies have shown that women headed household is in a poor economic situation (Peters, 1983; Varley, 1996). The poor condition of female-headed households is explained as, the female heads are at disadvantage because they have low access to job market due to less education (Desai & Ahmad, 1998) so they mostly engaged in less remunerative jobs which may consume more time that could lead to lower standard of living (Parthasarthy, 1982). Further, the emotional problems of single mothers were not due to the absence of the spouse but due to resulting socio-economic hardships and anxiety regarding children's future. Other findings included woman heads have lower education levels, possess little or no land and households headed by them have significantly lower monthly expenditure than those with male heads (Bharat, 1986). The statistics on headship suggest that in the majority of the countries where the male is considered as the head of households (United Nations, 1997). However, the percentage differs from country to country, and over the years it is increasing (Visaria, 1983).

The odds of the labour market seem to be stacked against women universally (Stichter, 1990). More information about women headed household will help target the anti-poverty programme. More than half the poor urban households (in large cities of the world) have a woman as head of the household (Muller & Plantenga, 1990). In India,

Hinduism provides a secure place to a widow at least economically and physically within the joint family. Family income, though not associated with caregiving, the women in low-income families have comparatively more vulnerable with low access to health and violence (Parihar, 1989). In female-headed households where women, is the usual the breadwinner, face gender discrimination in education, earnings, rights, and economic opportunities (Barros *et al.*, 1997) and in the absence of productive resources such as land/house, female capital contribution to the country's economy is less than men in male-headed household. In India, gender-related economic gaps are largely determined by social, religious, old customs and traditions and age that led people to concord lower status to women (Arokiasamy & Pradhan 2006; Das Gupta *et al.*, 2003). Social and cultural determinants in India also restrict women's access to education and work, and hence women get less chance to participate in the labour market as freely as men do (Dreze & Sen, 1995; Dunlop & Velkoff, 1999). Moreover, with ideologies fortified in patriarchy which limited women's access to family inheritance and productive assets (Agarwal, 1995).

Socio-economic gender discrimination against women in India put female-headed households at a greater risk of poverty if it depends primarily upon female earner. Consequently, many studies in India show that female-headed households are poorer compared to male-headed households (Meenakshi & Ray, 2002; Dreze & Srinivasan, 1997 and Gangopadhyay & Wadhwa, 2003). Buvinic & Gupta, 1997) identify three factors that are likely to determine the cause that female-headed households are poorer than a male-headed household. Firstly, female-headed households, in general, have more dependent family members and thus have higher non-workers to workers ratio. Secondly, female heads mostly work for lower wages and have less access to assets compared to men owning. Thirdly women typically bear the burden of household chores that are resulting in time and mobility constraints compared to male-heads. In India evidence shows that violation of legal rights of widows in property (particularly in land ownership) contributes to the poor economic status of widows.

In many low and middle-income countries, there is increasing realization of the depleting financial impact of ill health on households (World Health Assembly, 2005; United Nations General Assembly, 2012; World Bank, 2016). Governments and health financing stakeholders have recommended prepaid healthcare as the approach for reducing out-of-pocket expenditure and facilitating access to health services against the

backdrop (World Health Organization, 2010). This has largely taken as the form of risk-pooling mechanisms in developing countries, with many governments aspiring to develop functional and comprehensive health insurance schemes (Soors *et al.*, 2010; Lagomarsino *et al.*, 2012; Giedion *et al.*, 2013). Further, females are likely to live longer than males despite higher incidences of chronic diseases and exposure to death through childbirth (World Health Organization, 2014). These realities accentuate the need to explore the driving factors of voluntary health insurance enrolment not just from the perspective of normative social convention, but also with a practical view of existing household headship structures. Several reviews have inspected the intersection between household roles and the decision to seek external health care and found that the treatment of sick household members in time is inevitably linked to the mother's influence on the final decision to seek external care (Colvin *et al.*, 2013). Further autonomy mothers were found to be associated with better overall health condition among children in the household (Richards *et al.*, 2013). Studies have shown that with more empowerment, women use household resources towards the improvement of their caring capabilities, skills, and practices, which ultimately stimulates the health, wealth and nutritional status of household members (Thomas, 1997; Smith & Byron, 2005).

There are practical issues related to identifying the actual head of the household, and female headship is not always correlated with poverty (Buvivnic & Gupta, 1997). The categorization of headship can be done by demographic, economic or self-reported factors. Demographic factors describe the presence of husbands in the family, economic factors consider the economic contribution of each family member, and self-reported factors are the survey respondent's perception of who the household head is. (Fuwa, 2000). NFHS-4 publishes data on headship based on self-reported which is primarily used in this analysis. There are two major approaches to defining the meaning of head of household first, a person who controls the maintenance of the household - that is the authority to run the household (United Nations, 1973; Youssef & Hetler, 1983) and second, the main economic supporter (chief earner) of the household. The notions of headship have suggested that decision-making is a complex process that involves the participation of various household members in accordance with the different roles and hierarchal positions within the household. The review of literature at international level and within the context of India reveals the

complexity of intra-household decision making is a product of socio-cultural and economic processes with in household.

The head of the household plays a very important role for the collection of data in any demographic and health survey. Household Headship provides crucial information about household, members and their characteristics. It can influence the quality of data collected regarding household. Thus the characteristics of household head is considered as very important while collecting data. This information is very useful in classifying the data and to represent the results. This paper focuses on the changing pattern, trend, and characteristics of household head by using the empirical evidences from four rounds of National Family Health Survey. This paper in the beginning discusses the sample of the household heads taken from first round of NFHS to fourth round. Secondly it shows the male and female household heads as gender plays a very important role in household headship. Mean age of household heads from first round to fourth round of NFHS has also been shown in this paper. Similarly education, age groups and standard of living of the household heads have been discussed in this paper which will throw light on the living condition and status of household heads over the rounds of NFHS.

Objective

To study the changing pattern and trend of household headship from NFHS-1 to NFHS 4 as well as to study the background characteristics of household head.

Methods

Using the data from NFHS-1 (1992-93), NFHS-2 (1998-99), NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2014-15) univariate and multivariate analysis has done for trends and pattern of different characteristics of household head.

Results

1. Sample number of Head of Household.

Figures 1 shows the sample of the household head from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4. It has been observed from the figure that the number of sample size is increasing over the survey period. In NFHS-1 household head sample was only 88495 where is in NFHS-4 has shown higher number of household head sample. In the NFHS-2 sample size is 92353 and NFHS-3 shows 109006, where in NFHS-4 shown the number of

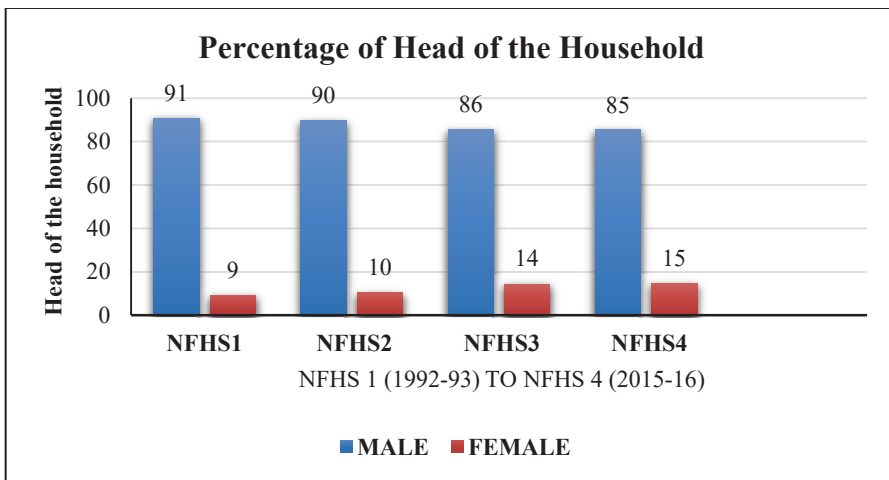


Figure 1: Number of head of the household from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4

household head sample is 601509. It has shown huge increase in the sample size during the very short periods. There is a sudden increased the number of household head sample from NFHS-3 to NFHS-4.

2. Sex of Head of the Household.

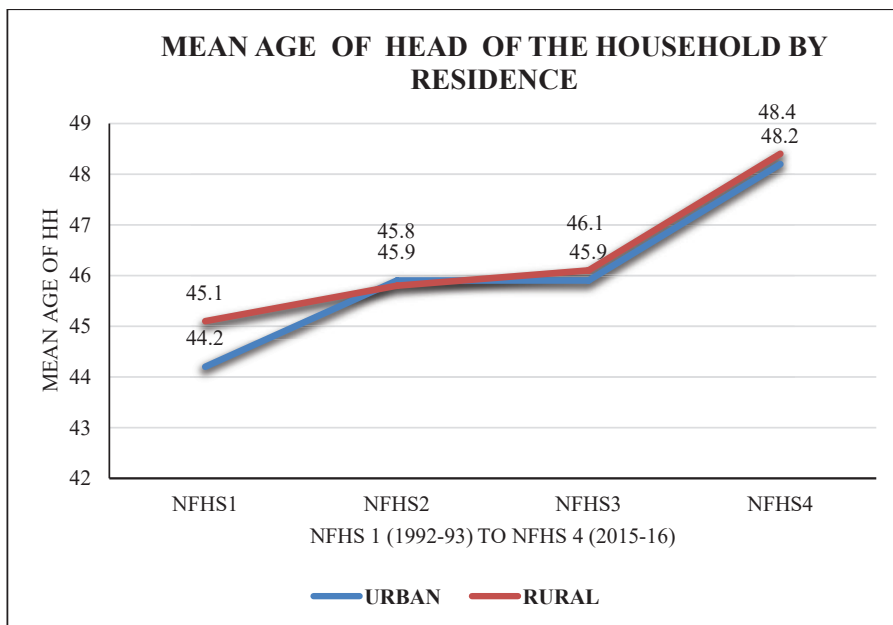


Figure 2: Percentage of Male and Female Head of the Household from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4

Figure 2 is showing the difference between male and female as household head. The female household head is gradually increasing during the study periods on the other hand the male dominant household headship is decreasing over the four national family and health survey. In the NFHS-1 only 9 percentage of female were considered as household head whereas 91 percentage of male were considered as a household head. There is 4 percentage increased shown between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3. In between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2, NFHS-3 and NFHS-4 only 1 percentage increase of female consideration of household head. Although the male percentage of household head is in decreasing trend, but there is still males are dominant in sample of head of the household. The figures depicts that the rate of increasing female head of the household is not satisfactory as well.

3. Mean age of Head of the Household by Residence.

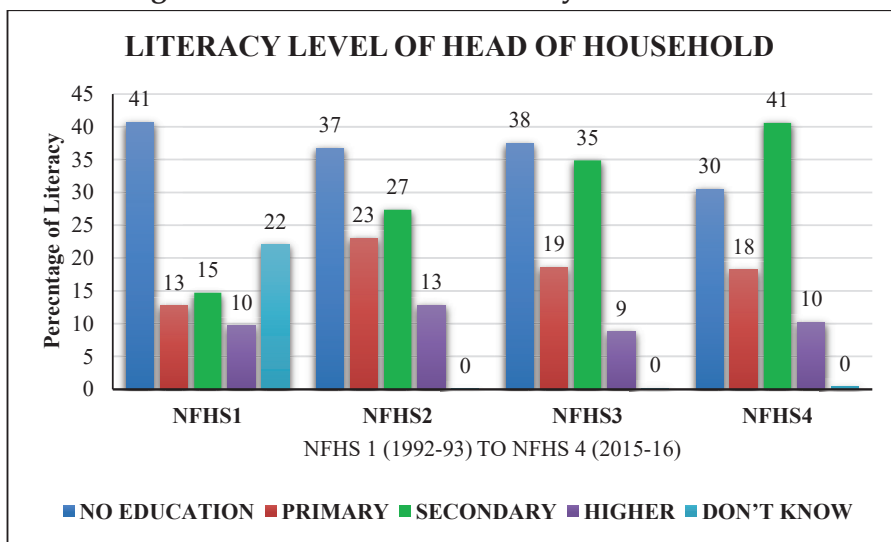


Figure 3: Mean age of Head of the Household from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4

Figure 3 shows the area wise mean age of household head during the study period. The mean age of household head is higher in rural area than the urban India. In the NFHS-1 the mean age of household head was 45.1 in rural area and 44.2 in urban area where as in NFHS-4 it has shown 48.4 for rural area and 48.2 for urban area. In the NFHS-2 the mean age of household head in urban area was higher than the rural area i.e 45.9 for urban area and 45.8 for rural area.

4. Level of Literacy of Head of Household.

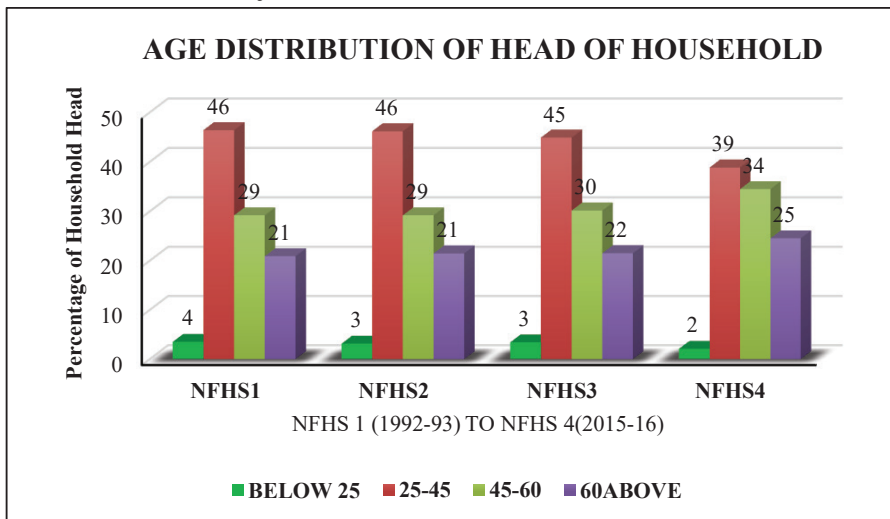


Figure 4: Percentage of Literacy of Household Head from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4

Figure 4 gives an idea about the literacy levels of household head over the four rounds of national family health survey. In the NFHS-1, 41 percentage of household head shown uneducated or the no education, 13 percentage household head were primary level of education, 15 percentage household head were secondary education, 10 percentage under higher secondary education, surprisingly 22 percentage of household head were recorded as unknown level of education of the household head. This trend has changed over the four round of national family health survey. In the NFHS-2 level of household head has increased, 37 percentage recorded as no education, 23 percentage has primary education, 27 percentage shown secondary education and 13 percentage household head recorded as higher level of education. In the NFHS-3, 38 percentage of household was no education, 19 percentage was primary education, and 35 percentage was secondary education and the 9 percentage.

5. Age distribution of Head of Household.

It may be observed from figure 5 that the percentage of below 25 years and 25-45 years age of household head has declining on the other hand 45-60 years and above 60 years age of household head is increasing over the round of survey. It has been observed that the age distribution of household head were almost same for the NFHS-1 and NFHS-2. There

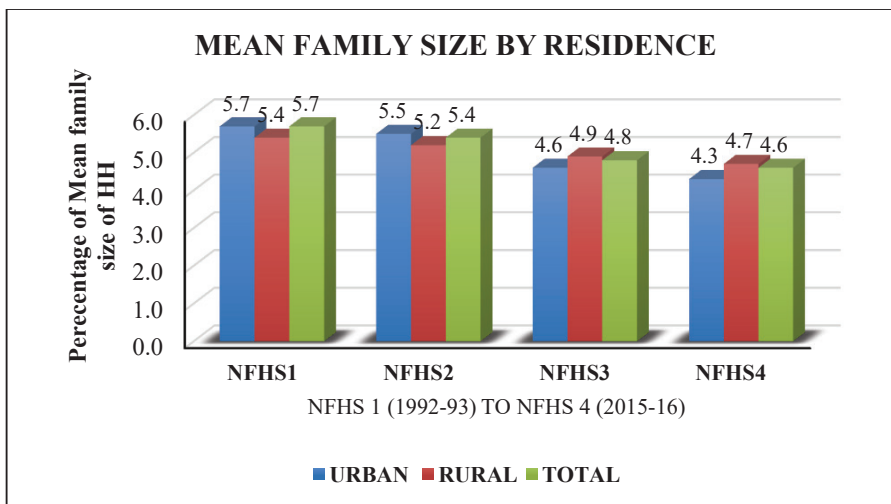


Figure 5: Age distribution of Household Head from NFHS-1 – NFHS-4.

is variation between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, 3 percentage of household were recorded as below 25 years age, 45 percentage were in age group of 25-45, 30 percentage shown as age group of 45-60 and 22 percentage were recorded as above 60 age group in the NFHS-3. In the NFHS-4 there found little bit changes, 2 percentage were under age group of below 25 years, 39 percentage shown as in the age group 25-45, 34 percentage under age group 45-60 and 25 percentage of household recorded under age of above 60 years of age. With the increasing aged population of the country, the importance of aged population also increasing over the time period.

6. Mean Family Size of households

Figure 6 shows the mean family size of household has a decreasing trend in both the urban and rural area during the period. The mean family size of India was 5.7 in NFHS-1 and 5.4 in NFHS-2, 4.8 in NFHS-3 and it reached at 4.6 in the last national family and health survey. The mean family size of the household head has also in decreasing trend in case of urban areas but the rate was high than the rural area for NFHS-1 & NFHS-2. But in NFHS-3 & 4 the mean age of the household head has showing higher for rural area then the urban area. The mean family size of the head of the household in NFHS-1 was high for category total than the rural and urban, in NFHS-2 high was for urban area than the total and rural area. In NFHS-3 and NFHS-4 the highest mean family

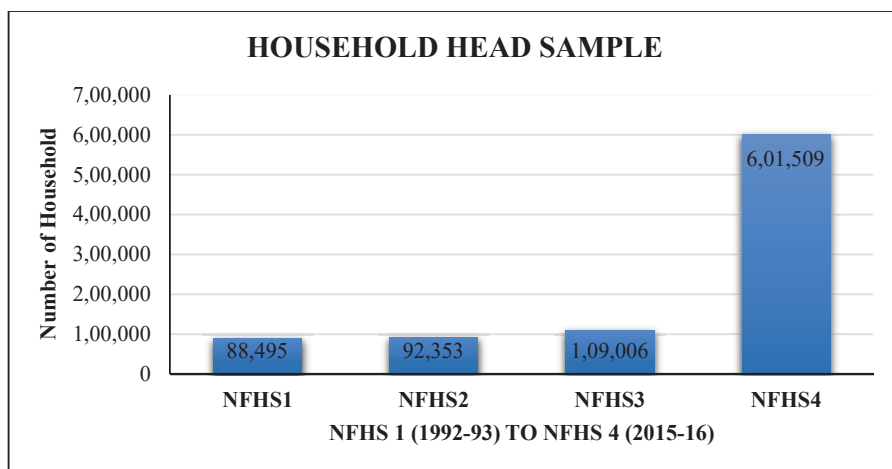


Figure 6: Mean family size of household

size of household head has been found higher for rural areas than the urban and total India.

7. Standard of living of the Household Head

Table 1: Standard of living (Percentage) for both Male and Female, NFHS-1 to NFHS-4

Standard of living of HH	NFHS1			NFHS2			NFHS3			NFHS4		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Low	89	11	52	87	13	36	79	21	29	83	17	40
Medium	90	10	33	91	9	44	88	12	32	86	14	20
High	91	9	15	92	8	18	89	11	37	88	12	40
Total	89	11	88495	90	10	92353	86	14	109006	85	15	601509

Table 1 presents the standard of living for head of the household, for both male and female during the study period. The standard of living of household head has shown improving trend from NFHS-1 to NFHS-4. In the NFHS-1, 52 percentage of household head has showing low standard of living, medium 33 percent, and high 15 percent. The percentage has decreased with improving standard of living of the household head over the round of survey. In NFHS-2, 87 percent of male household head has low standard of living, and that for female house hold was only 13 percent. In Medium standard of living 91 percent was male and 9 percent was female house hold head. 92 percent male house hold head were in high standard of living

in comparison only 8 percent female house hold head were enjoying the high standard of living. In NFHS-3 female household head were enjoying better situation, i. e. 79 percent male house hold head were in low standard of living and 21 percent of female house hold head were in low standard of living. 88 percent of male and 12 percent female household head were in medium quality of standard of living. 89 percent male and only 11 percent of female were in high quality of standard of living. In the NFHS-4, 40 percent of total house hold head recorded low, 20 percent medium and 40 percent high. Among the male female 83 percent male and 17 percent female recorded as low, 86 percent male and 14 percent female reported as medium where as 88 percent male and 12 percent female showing the high standard of living of the head of the house hold.

Conclusion

Share of women as household head has increased over period of time which indicates that women are being accepted as the household heads and their status has also increased marginally. Increase in mean age of Household Head and decrease in household heads below 20 years of age group shows that age is still an important criteria in deciding head of household. Literacy level of the household heads has increased which indicates that more educated people are now household head. The increase in education level is accompanied by increase in standard of living over the four rounds of National Family Health Survey.

REFERENCES

- Agarwala B.R. (1962): "Nature and extent of social change in a mobile commercial community". *Sociological Bulletin*. 11.
- Ames, M.M. (1969): "Modernisation and social structure: Family, caste and class in Jamshedpur". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4(28, 29 & 30): 1217-1224.
- Bongaarts, J. (2001): Household size and composition in the developing world in the 1990s. *Population Studies*, 55(3), 263-279.
- Buvinić, M., & Gupta, G. R. (1997): Female-headed households and female-maintained families: Are they worth targeting to reduce poverty in developing countries?. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 45(2), 259-280.
- Caldwell J.C., P.H.Reddy, and Caldwell Pat. 1984 "The Determinants of Family Structure in Rural South India." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 46(1): 215-229.

- Chakravorty C. and A.K. Singh (1991): Household Structures in India. Census of India. Occasional Paper No.1. Social Studies Division, Office of the Registrar General, India.
- Gupta, K., Arnold, F., & Lhungdim, H. (2009): Health and living conditions in eight Indian cities. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) India 2005-06*.
- Hjortsberg, C. (2000): *Determinants of Household Health Care Expenditure-The case of Zambia*. Lund University Centre for Health Economics (LUCHE).
- IIPS (International Institute for Population Sciences) (1995): *National Family Health Survey, India 1992-93*. Bombay: International Institute for Population Sciences.
- IIPS and ORC Macro (2000): *National Family Health Survey, India 1998-99*. Bombay: International Institute for Population Sciences.
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International, (2017): *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16, India, Volume 1*, IIPS, Mumbai.
- Meenakshi, J. V., & Ray, R. (2002): Impact of household size and family composition on poverty in rural India. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 24(6), 539-559.
- Niranjan, S., Nair, S., & Roy, T.K. (2005): A socio-demographic analysis of the size and structure of the family in India. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 623-651.
- Unisa, S., & Datta, N. (2005, July): Female headship in India: Levels, differentials and impact. In 25th conference of IUSSP in France.

* * *

Received on 7.6.2019, revised received on 29.6.2019 and accepted on 3.7.2019