

# CULINARY HABITS AND FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF WORKING WOMEN - A STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*Food habits in households, over the years have changed due to dual income, variety of dining spaces and rising health awareness. The dining out option, ready to cook meals, take-away and pre-prepared meals are common now which once was considered as the prerogative of the wealthy class. Though this kind of food behaviour varies from house to house but this type of consumption has penetrated deep into the Indian masses. With more and more women in the occupational sector with unconventional working hours and busy lifestyles, food habits or eating habits have undergone a sea-change, which are dictated by the kind and type of work and leisure time. Traditionally women, who were considered responsible for the healthy diet of the family, no longer have the time and energy to prepare home-cooked meals due to more and more women joining the workforce. With increased income, being able to own and drive vehicles, better road connectivity, increased growth of the food industry, there is an increase in the frequency of eating out something which was considered affordable only for the elite class. The purpose of this study is to understand how the change in occupational status of women have affected their food buying and cooking behaviour.*

**Keywords:** *Culinary habits, food buying behaviour, occupational status, Food service industry*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decades and years, India has a significant growth in the working women population which has resulted in increased women getting engaged in outdoor activities like shopping, get-together with friends, families and colleagues. This has led to people preferring to dine out which has contributed to the food service market of the country. Shrinking households, nuclear families, long working hours, more women in work force have witnessed women looking for meal options which are quicker and easier to prepare such as ready meals, cooking aids and takeaway meals.

The food industry in India has a phenomenal rise in the last couple of years due to increased urbanisation, majority of working women having the money to spend in buying food, increase in the demand for variety food due to increase in standard of living, penetration of supermarkets to small towns where consumers can choose, check and pick up food items in a comfortable ambience. Decline in the marriage rates, increased number of working women, delay in marriages and starting families and an ageing population, all contribute to rising number of people remaining single for whom food habits are more flexible compared to families.

This paper investigates the changes that has happened in the cooking and eating habits due to the occupational status of women

## 2. FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY IN INDIA: MARKET SIZE

The Indian food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest, with retail contributing 70 per cent of the sales. The food processing industry which accounts for about 32% of the country's food market is ranked fifth in terms of production, consumption, export and growth. It contributes around 8.80 and 8.39 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) in Manufacturing and Agriculture respectively, 13 per cent

of India's exports and six per cent of total industrial investment. Riding on urbanisation, rising income levels and improved investment climate, India's food service sector has grown at 11 per cent in the last three years and is estimated at Rs 423,865 crore in 2018-19, providing employment to some 7.3 million people, the National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI) said in its India Food Services Report 2019. Growing at 9 per cent, it is projected to reach Rs 599,784 crore by 2022-23, report said. (www.indiaretailing.com).

Organised segment, which holds a 35 per cent share, grew 13 per cent in the last three years and is estimated at Rs 148,353 crore in 2018-19. It is estimated to grow at 15 per cent to Rs 257,907 crore in 2022-23. Within the organised sector, affordable casual dining restaurants accounted for a whopping Rs 60,255 crore in 2018-19 and fine diners for Rs 2,872 crore with PBCs (pubs, bar cafes and lounges) and cafes in between at Rs 17,979 crore and Rs 9,370 crore, respectively. In terms of taxes, the organised sector contributed Rs 18,000 crore in 2018-19 - 12 per cent of the total organised market. The unorganised sector rose 10 per cent in the past three years to touch Rs 275,512 crore in 2018-19 and is expected to touch Rs 341,877 crore by 2022-23 - a growth of 6 per cent, the report added. (www.indiaretailing.com).

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Working women manage not only their career but also their family and prepare food for their families. (Murdia, 2015). Women who work full time should focus on attributes which save time and engage themselves in behaviours which save their precious time. To be more specific they go by convenience and ease of preparation resulting in eating supper away from home more frequently than women who are not employed. (Becker 1965). One of the major factors influencing the working women's attitude towards ready-to-eat food products is 'Convenience' due to their busy and hectic work schedule. The other influencing factors are sensory variables, health issues, mood, price and familiarity. (Gupta and Singh (2016). The one of the main factors that influenced working women to go for ready-to-eat foods was non-availability of some ingredients at home used in the preparation of food (Srinivasan and Shende, 2015).

Changes in lifestyle required changes in food habits and hence require convenience foods (Carrigan et al., 2006). The most important determinants of convenience food usage were nutritional knowledge, socioeconomic status (SES), marital status, employment status and stage in the family life cycle. Veenma et. al. (1995). Working wives relatively buy more food away from home thereby decreasing the demand for food prepared at home. A study on the attitudes and behaviour of working and non-working women shows that status of employment, income of family, children below the age of twelve, and personal values also influence their decision in eating out and buying readymade items from the market (Gregory M. Rose, Lynn R. Kahle, and Aviv Shoran, 1995).

### 4. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The main objective of the study is to identify and understand the cooking habits and purchase behaviour of working women. The other objectives include:

- To examine how occupational status of women has changed the cooking culture in India.
- To identify the changes in Indian food industry with the changes in role of Indian women from housewife to working women
- To understand the relationship between demographical profile of working women and their food buying habits

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The researcher has used nonprobability sampling based on convenience and quota sampling. 120 working women from different sectors were selected for the study. The research design was exploratory as well as descriptive in nature. Data was collected from selected working women in Vadodara who are in the age group of 18 to 60. The researcher has used structured non disguised

questionnaire as research instrument for collecting primary data. The sampling design of the research study was non-probability sampling based on quota sampling and convenience sampling.

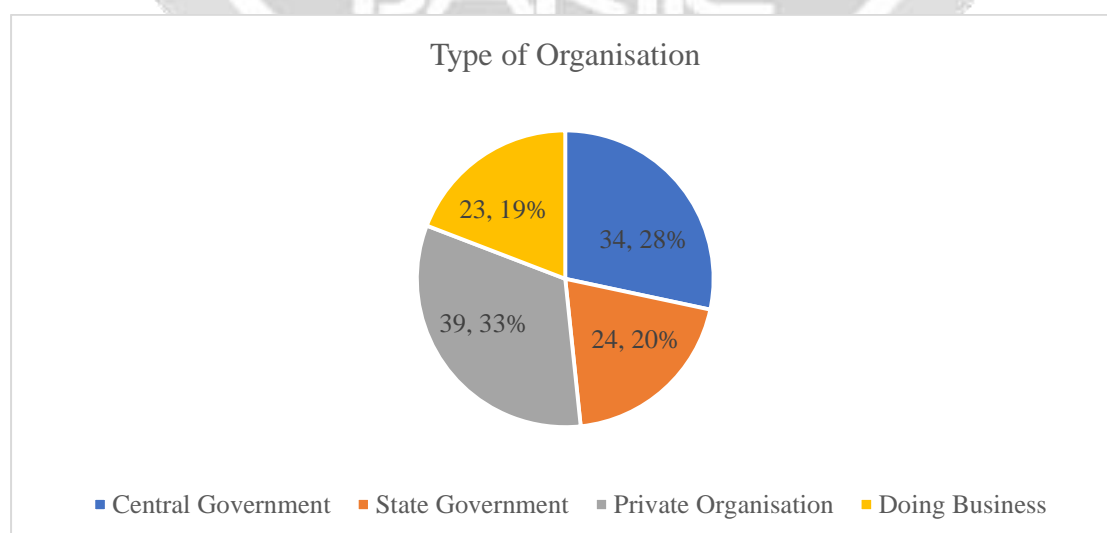
**Table 1- Age of the respondents**

Age	No. of years	Percentage
18 -25	19	16
25 to 30	22	18
31 to 45	36	30
Above 45	43	36

Out of the total 120 respondents, 36 percent are above 45 years of age, 30 percent are between the age of 31 to 45, 18 percent are in the age group of 25 to 30 and the remaining are in the age group of 18 to 25. Majority of the respondents (72 percent) are married. 55 percent of the respondents live in nuclear family system. Regarding their educational qualification. 22 percent of the respondents have studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> standard. 43 percent are graduates, 20 percent are postgraduates and remaining 15 percent of the respondents have professional degree.

**Table 2-Kind of organisation respondents work**

Institution	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Central Government	34	28
State Government	24	20
Private organisation	39	33
Business	23	19

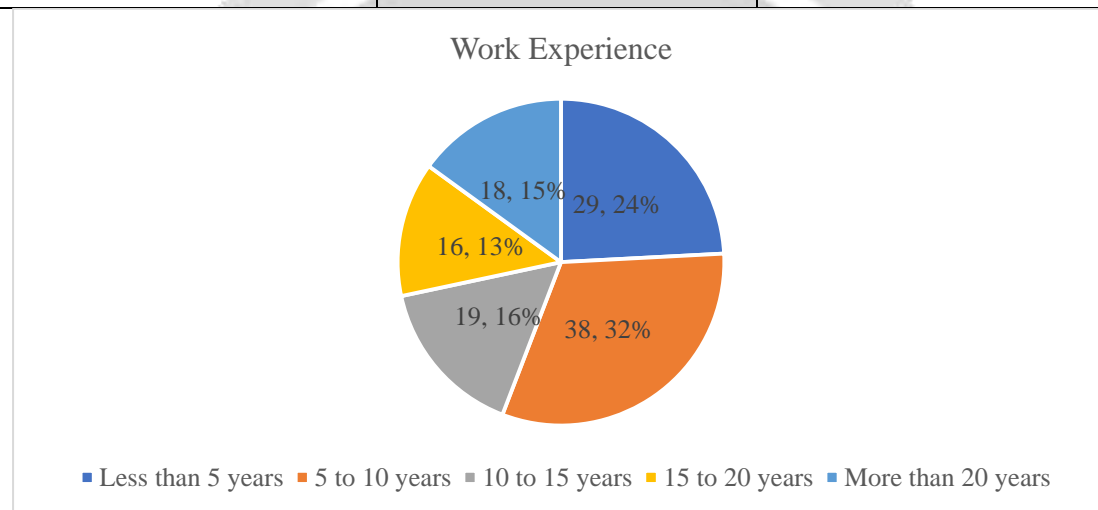


**Chart 1-Type of organisation respondents' work**

Among the respondents, 28 percent are working in central Government, 20 percent are with state government, 33 percent are working in private institution and the remaining 19 percent are doing own business.

**Table 3- Response regarding their work experience**

Work Experience	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 5 years	29	24
5 to 10 years	38	32
10 to 15 years	19	16
15 to 20 years	16	13
More than 20 years	18	15

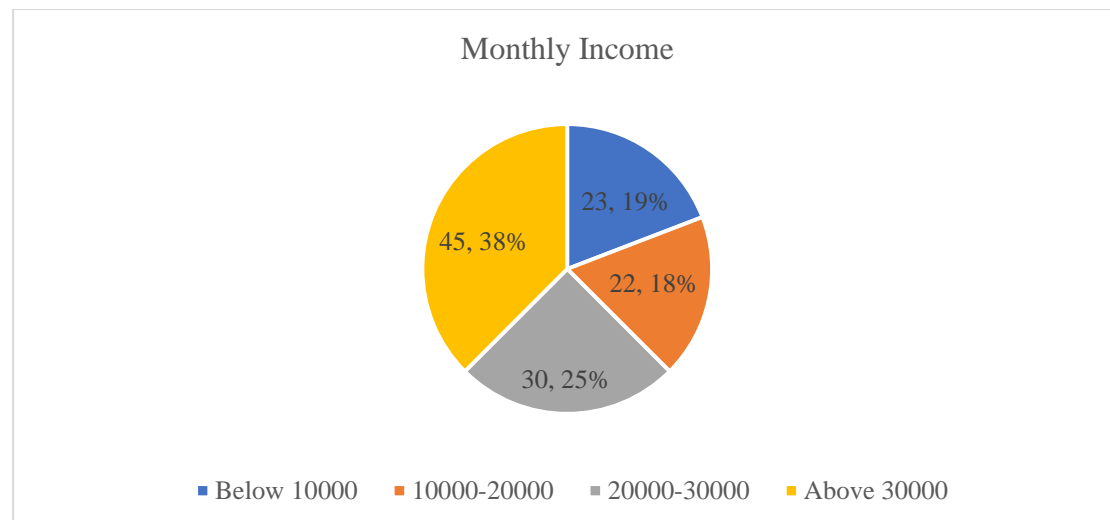


**Chart 2- years of work experience**

Regarding their work experience, 24 percent of the respondents are respondents have work experience of less than 5 years, 32 percent have experience between 5 to 10 years, 16 percent have 10 to 15 years, 13 percent having 15 to 20 years of experience and remaining 15 percent are working for more than 20 years.

**Table 4- Response regarding monthly income**

Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 10000	23	19
10000- 20000	22	18
20000-30000	30	25
30000 and Above	45	38

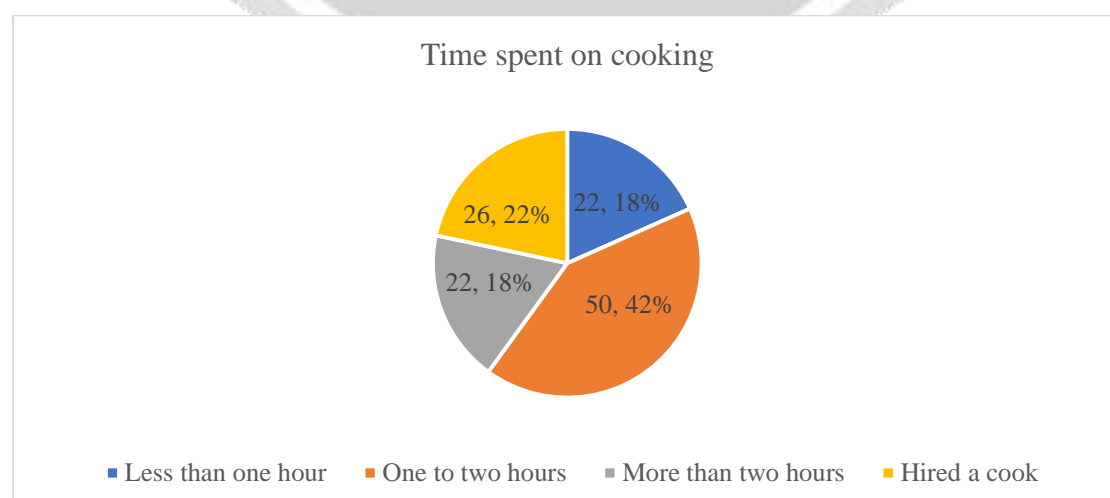


**Chart 3- Monthly income of respondents**

Out of 120 respondents, 19 percent are having income below Rs. 10000, 18 percent are having income between Rs. 10000 to Rs. 20000, 25 percent are having income between Rs. 20000 to Rs. 30000 and the remaining respondents (38 percent) are getting more than 30000 rupees as monthly income.

**Table 5: response regarding time spent on cooking**

Time spent on cooking	No. of Respondents	Percentage
less than one hour	22	18
one to two hours	50	42
more than two hours	22	18
Hired a cook	26	22

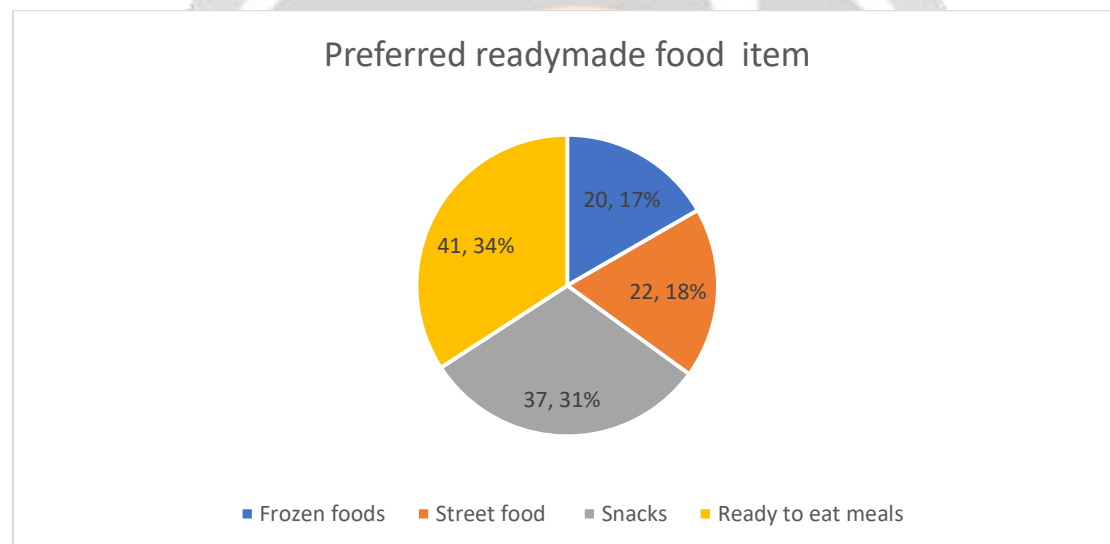


**Chart 4- Time spent on cooking**

Question regarding how much time they spent on cooking every day, 18 percent of the respondents said that they spent less than one hour in kitchen, the main reason cited are they buy readymade masala for cooking. 42 percent respondent spent one to two hours in the kitchen, mainly for preparing lunch and dinner. 18 percent of the respondent spent more than two hours in the kitchen as they prefer to use fresh ingredients/ masala for cooking, remaining 22 percent do not spent considerable time in the kitchen except for making morning tea and milk for kids or for making some instant breakfast as they have hired a cook .

**Table 6- most preferred food item from outside**

Preferred food item	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Frozen food	20	17
Street food	22	18
Snacks	37	31
Ready to eat meals	41	34

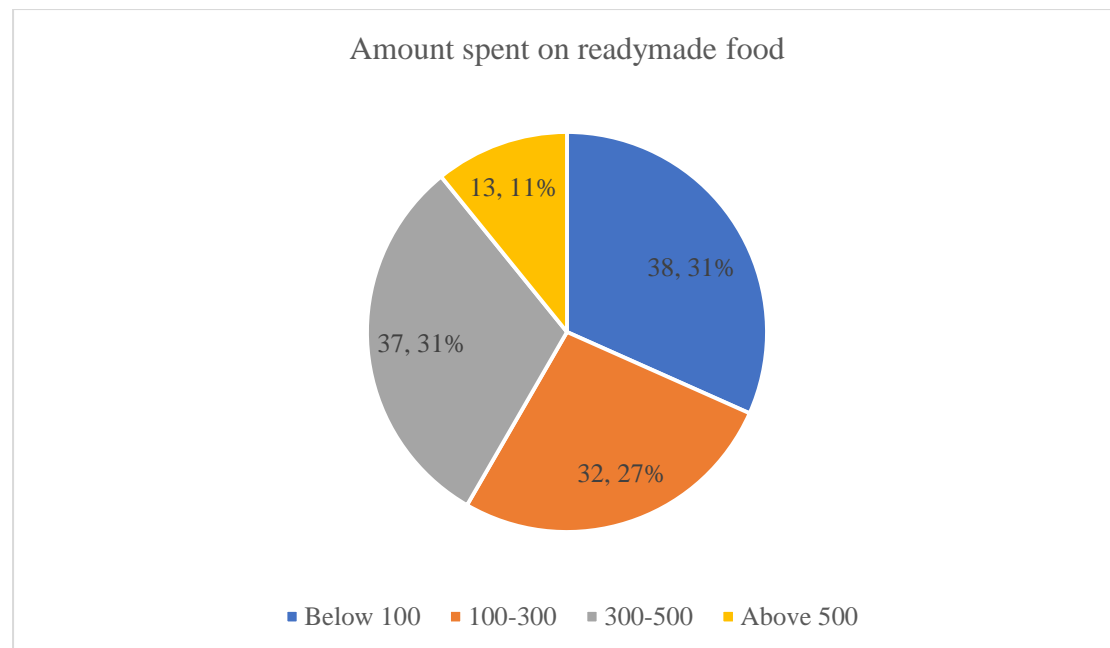


**Chart 5-Most preferred food item**

The most preferred food items bought from outside include street food (18 percent), frozen food (17 percent) ready to eat meals (34 percent) and snacks (31 percent)

**Table 7- Amount spent on ready made food on daily basis**

Amount spent on readymade food daily	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
Below 100	38	32
100-300	32	26
300-500	37	31
Above 500	13	11



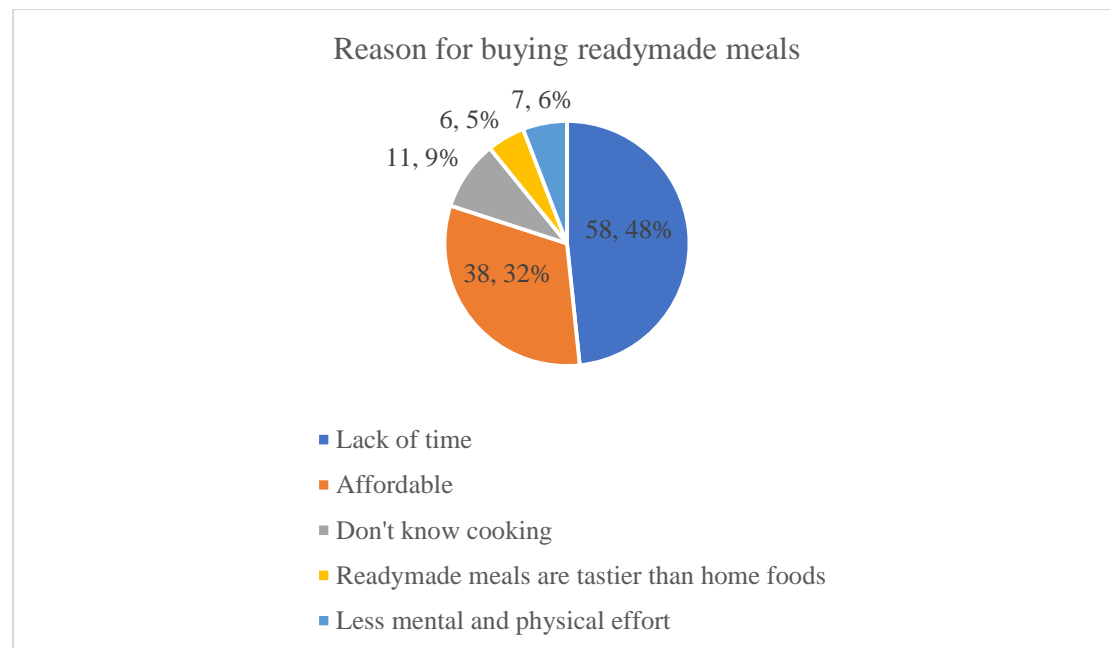
**Chart 6- Amount spent on readymade food daily**

More than half of the respondents (57 percent) are spending between Rs.100 to Rs. 500 on daily basis the main reason cited are they prefer readymade meals.

**Table 8- Reason for buying readymade meals**

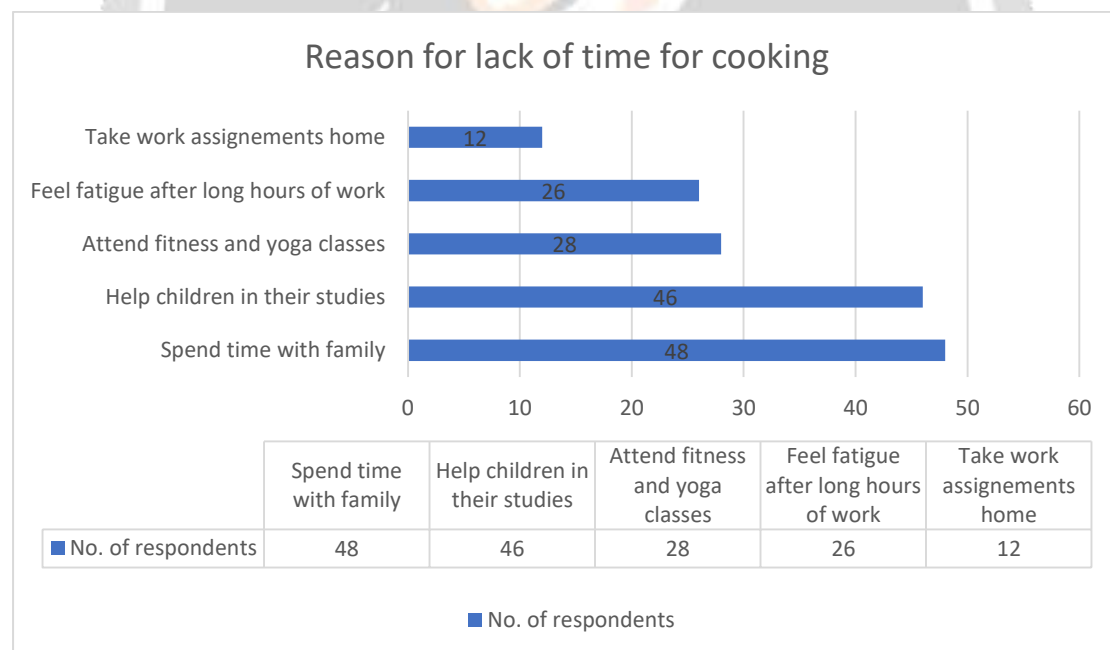
Buying readymade meals	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Lack of time	58	48
Readymade meals are affordable	38	32
Don't know cooking properly	11	09
Readymade meals are tastier than homemade food	06	05
Require less mental and physical efforts	07	06





**Chart 7- Reason for buying readymade meals**

The main Reason for buying readymade meals are lack of time (48 percent), ready meals are affordable (32 percent), don't know cooking properly (9 percent), know cooking but don't like to cook (9 percent), require less mental and physical effort (6 percent) and readymade meals are tastier than homemade food (5 percent).



**Chart 8- Reason for lack of time for cooking**

For the questions regarding take away meals or dining at restaurant, most of the respondents preferred takeaway meals (65 percent) than dining in a restaurant during weekdays but prefer to go to restaurants during weekend to relax and refresh with family. The last question regarding satisfaction level, more than 80 percent of the respondents agree that home food gives them more satisfaction, but they don't have much choice.



## 6. MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- The study indicates that many people today lack basic cooking skills, which are not being passed on from one generation to another as much as they were in the past, reason being children, especially in Urban are having a tight academic schedule and after studies are joining the workforce immediately thereby staying away from home and kitchen.
- It was found that age and marital status also has a significant impact on the cooking habits and food buying behaviour of women.
- Findings show that after the long day of work they either preferred buying Ready-made food or order online.
- For women living in joint family the preference of family members and the support they get from them also affect their food buying decision.
- The main reasons cited by respondents for lack of time for cooking are they want to spend time with family, help children in their studies, attend fitness and yoga classes, feel fatigue after long hours of working. Some of the respondents say that they take work assignments home to meet the deadlines.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The growth of food industry in India in the past decade suggests that convenience food is here to stay and with more and more companies jumping into the fray the popularity of convenience food will be on the high cutting across gender, class and age. With companies competing to garner the market in terms of quality, price, availability, shelf life, easy to cook etc., it would become safe for consumption and a viable option for everyone working. In the decades to come more and more women will be joining the workforce due to accessibility to good education, supportive family and market growth. In the process of maintaining a balance between work and home, working women would try to find ways to be happy at both the ends and devote quality time to both. On the other hand, the burgeoning food industry would be definitely more tempting for the women in work force to reduce their time spent in preparation food at their homes. In this scenario the use of convenience food by working women in particular will be ever upward. A general observation is that most of them buy food, which is low in cost, available easily and give immediate satisfaction. However, when making a choice of buying convenience food over preparing food in their respective homes the following suggestions if kept mind would enable them to enjoy and eat what they buy. Only those convenience foods which list out the ingredients in detail and the possible health benefits should be purchased. With respect to frozen foods due importance should to be given to storage criteria, shelf life and additives like preservatives which are healthy and unhealthy. The effects of consuming convenience foods on the body in the long run should also be investigated.

## 8. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since the study is conducted in Vadodara city in the current scenario, the perceptions, opinions of the respondents cannot be generalized. There are various other factors apart from occupational status that affect the cooking habits and food buying behaviour of women in India like psychographic variables, lifestyle, personality, attitude and market belief which is not considered in this study. There is tremendous scope of further study based on urban-rural divide, economic disparities, types of job, pay packages and demographic divisions thereby intensifying the scope for further research.

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