

CHAPTER I
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Family is a social unit of interacting and interdependent personalities related through marriage, blood or adoption with a distinguishable identity. Recent literature identifies the family as an energy driven ecosystem.^{55,87.} From the ecological perspective, the members of the family are inextricably woven to the environment through energy flows. The family performs certain functions comprised of expressive and instrumental tasks for its existence and survival.⁸⁸ The instrumental functional requirements centre around tasks that are directed toward getting the work of the family done. These may further be divided into those that are relevant to the internal functioning of the family and those that are relevant to the relations of the family with the larger world of which it is an integral part and upon which it depends. The managerial aspect of family living and the managerial roles the family members assume, appear to be explicitly associated with the internal and external instrumental functioning of the family.¹⁵

Edwards³² stated that family behaviour can be studied from two aspects: one, dealing with family relationships and interpersonal behaviour and the other, emphasising the problem-solving or goal-oriented behaviour. She stated further that:

Goal-oriented behaviour encompasses the act of setting goals for the family system, the determination of means by which goals will be achieved and the development and allocation of resources to be invested in goal achievement ... the securing and maintaining of support and cooperation from family members for system goal attainment (p.652).

Families become motivated to strive for the attainment of goals once these are established. The goal complex gives overall direction to family behaviour. Gross et al.⁴⁸ states:

The development of awareness of the goals a family has at a given time is . . . the first requirement in the development and maintenance of the goal complex (P.284).

The micro-decisions families make in relation to their resources are the out-comes of certain goals held by them either at the conscious or subconscious level of mind. Conscious or explicit goal-setting is a prerequisite to expedite goal attainment. Goal-setting is considered now as an integral process in the managerial behaviour of families.^{17,26,32} Goal is 'a desired state of being' and the goal complex of the family has been visualised as being in a constant state of flux³² (p.653). As established goals are attained, new goals may be added, some may be eliminated, the importance and immediacy of goals may be shifted. Some family goals are continuous and others are fulfilled and terminated as the family progresses in its life cycle. When a family lives a goal directed life it

has the desire or obligation to attain ends.¹⁹ This feeling of desire or obligation was conceptualised as 'commitment' by Dean and Spanier²⁸, and Theodorson and Theodorson.¹⁰⁷ Commitment, then, is this feeling of desire or obligation or moral binding which enables one to materialise one's goal or goal complex. The realisation of a goal, thus, depends to a great extent on the intensity of desire to attain the same.

The concept of commitment is relatively new to home management literature, though it is widely used in sociology and management of organisations. Becker⁹ has pointed out that this concept has received little formal analysis. Commitment brings about consistent behaviour in people. Kiesler and Sakumura⁶³ define commitment as the pledging or binding of the individual to behaviour acts. Kanter⁵⁹ theorized that commitment to a particular system tied a person to that and the sacrifices and investments thus made to specific ends deprive him of other ways of allocating resources for other ends which are less important. Becker⁹ conceptualises commitment as an act consciously or unconsciously accomplished where an individual because of a series of 'side-bets' of value finds himself hard to lose them and hence continues the act. He also states that when a person by making a 'side-bet' links extraneous interest with a consistent line of activity, commitment

is obvious.

Family goal commitment is the binding or pledging of family members to certain behaviour acts for the attainment of their family goals. Commitment reflects the willingness and determination of the family to allocate resources to attain their goals. It acts as a force which compels an individual to pursue certain lines of action consistently.

Families experience commitment to many and varied goals right from its inception. However, there is dearth of knowledge based on empirical information regarding the commitment of families towards their goal or goal complex.

1. Statement of the Problem

An attempt is made through the present investigation to determine the energy related goals held by families and their commitment to those goals. Energy or power is one of the essentials required for the very existence and survival of man. The use and control of energy from the environment has been the key to man's ability to live, develop socially, control the environment and above all, to emerge into a mechanised era. The current life style of families appears to have been built around the premise that energy resources are abundant and inexpensive. Life activities are energy intensive rather than labour intensive. Families consider freedom, individualism, high standard of living and so on

as important values in their lives. In the process of socialisation, growth and development families assume the role of primary converters of energy and thus become one of the major consumers of energy from the environment.

Families formulate goals that are associated with energy consumption in daily living and they make innumerable decisions in relation to its behaviour, which is concerned with energy consumption. The energy related goals could be identified under two categories. On the one hand, it is concerned with the acquisition of such material goods in the quest for higher level of living which when attained lead to an increase in energy consumption level i.e. level of living oriented energy goals. On the other hand, it is associated with the conservation of energy resources, i.e. conservation oriented energy goals. The energy related goals families formulate and the related decisions they take at the micro-level are of vital significance in its relation to energy resources available at the macro-level.

Certain questions like: What are the energy related goals held by families? What are the differential levels of commitment of families to those goals? What factors do influence the extent of family commitment to those goals? Is there any relationship between commitment of families to those goals and their personal and demographic characteristics and so on, need to be explored. Though a few

studies were undertaken abroad on family goal commitment behaviour, little research has so far been devoted in India to the same. The study would make valuable contribution to the knowledge base concerning family goal commitment behaviour in relation to an ecologically significant aspect of family living. In addition, the intricacies in purposive family functioning could be unravelled to understand and interpret family behaviour.

2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives drawn to give proper direction to the investigation were to:

- (1) Ascertain the energy related goals held by families.
- (2) Develop instruments that would appropriately measure the extent of family commitment to energy related goals.
- (3) Construct an instrument that would appropriately measure ecoconsciousness of the respondents and their husbands.
- (4) Determine the interrelationships between the extent of commitment to energy related goals and the selected situational, personal and family variables of the study.

3. Assumptions of the Study

The study is based on the assumption that:

- (1) The family is a purposive system and family members are goal-oriented in their behaviour.
- (2) The family consumes energy for various purposes and therefore has energy related goals.
- (3) Families are unique and differ from each other, therefore exhibit differential levels of commitment to attain their goals.
- (4) The homemakers can identify energy related family goals and reflect family commitment to those goals.

4. Hypotheses

H_A : There exists a relationship between family commitment to energy related goals and the selected situational, personal and family variables.

H_B : There exists a difference in the influence exerted by the selected situational, personal and family variables on the commitment of families to energy related goals.

5. Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to:

- (1) Families that held energy related goals.
- (2) Families that were intact.
- (3) Ascertaining the interrelationships between extent of commitment and the following variables:

- (i) Situational variables: levels of past and future goal attainments with reference to energy related goals.
- (ii) Personal variables: Age, education level and ecoconsciousness of respondents and their husbands.
- (iii) Family variables: Income, size and years of married life.