

Contribution of Women Through Their Unpaid Work in Urban Punjab

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ABSTRACT The aim of the present study was to estimate the contribution of women towards the nation's economy and social development through their unpaid work. Primary data for the study was collected from 360 working and non-working women of three different income groups that is LIG, MIG and HIG from two major cities of Punjab namely, Patiala and Ludhiana. Results relating to the non-economic contribution of women have shown that most of them under study (351/360) performed daily household chores by themselves, and hence contributed indirectly towards their family income by saving some money. The average number of household chores performed by working (3.27) and non-working (3.36) women showed that working women do not lag far behind the non-working women, thus, both working and non-working women have almost equal contribution in the exchequer of their families. On an average, a woman saved INR 1,873 per month by way of doing household chores by herself.

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in all walks of life is increasing throughout the world. In India too, a large number of women are participating in almost all the spheres of economic and non-economic activities. Thus, contributing directly or indirectly towards the income of their family and national income of the country.

The foundation of a nation's economy is work whether it is paid or unpaid. Paid work is recognized to be a part of national economy whereas unpaid work is often neglected and not counted in the national income.

Society undervalues the most of the contributions made by the women especially in performing the domestic duties. In India during 2009-10, the total number of women who were performing the domestic work was 216 million, which was larger than the entire population of Brazil. Of these, 12.7 million were having graduate or higher degree, this number was more than twice the population of Singapore (www.thehindu.com/article4287620).

In India women do almost 10 times more unpaid work than men which is a much higher ratio than the global average (three times). Perhaps because of this reason contribution of Indian women in GDP is much less (17 %) as compared to China (41%), Sub-Saharan Africa (39%) and Latin America (33%) (www.huffingtonpost.com). So far as urban women are concerned, they are

slightly more engaged in the house work than their rural counter parts. Over the last decade more and more women are reporting domestic work as their main occupation especially in the northern states of India namely Punjab, Haryana and UP (www.thehindu.com/article6498326).

If the unpaid work performed by the women in India is valued and compensated, it would contribute to the tune output (www.huffingtonpost.com).

It is a well known fact that most of the unpaid work performed at home is done by women in addition to their work in the formal sector. They spend countless hours in the unpaid sector or domestic work and such work, which is least recognized (Barbara and Hong 2000). The lack of recognition given to their unpaid work is a major factor that leads to women's maltreatment, poor health and higher rates of poverty. In Punjab, women have a lower Well Being Index (WBI) than their male counterparts (Anupama and Harpreet 2015). Because of their much involvement in the unpaid sector, a large number of women have very limited access to higher education, jobs outside home, recreation, health-care, and even rest. Many women who are primarily housewives (not earning money) are in general not paid due respect by their families, which in turn affects their self-esteem.

Women, whether working or non-working (housewives) perform many non-economic activities in their families, which are not directly measurable in terms of money. These activities

add significant value to family, society and the nation. It is very true that if ever women were to go on strike, the families would cease to function. The activities, which are generally undertaken by the women are planning budget for family, make purchases for the family, plan the investment of savings, impart education to children, saving the money by doing daily household chores, fulfilling the emotional and psychological needs of the family members, helping the family in business activities and helping the children in their activities like going to school, college, tuitions (Voydanoff 1990; Rani 2012).

The invisibility of unpaid domestic work and the low value given to it is an issue, which is seldom addressed by policymakers. The inclusion of unpaid care and domestic work as a target to be achieved in the recently approved 2030 agenda for sustainable development is a ray of hope in the recognition and valuation of unpaid work. The target to recognize and value unpaid care or work falls under SDG 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (U.N. General Assembly 2015).

Although research has been conducted by different scientists in the related area, in India only seldom studies have been carried out to assess the contribution of women towards the nation’s economy through their unpaid work. Keeping all this in mind, an attempt has been made to identify women’s unpaid domestic work and to calculate an approximate economic value of women’s unpaid household work.

Objectives

The specific research objectives were as follows:

1. To identify the unpaid domestic work performed by women in urban Punjab.
2. To assess the savings ensured by women by virtue of unpaid work in their families.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in 2012 with a total sample of 360 married women in all, selecting 180 each as working and non-working women through purposive random sampling. Data for the purpose has been collected from two big cities of Punjab namely, Patiala and Ludhiana from 360 families, belonging to three different income groups that is LIG*, MIG** and HIG***

Each income group is represented by 60 families (30 working and 30 non-working) from each city. A structured questionnaire was developed for the purpose. Questions relating to the nature of domestic work performed by both working and non-working women were asked through the personal interview method to have a greater understanding of the issues. Collected data has been tabulated and analyzed by using suitable mathematical and statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are many economic and non-economic activities, which are performed by both working and non-working women in Indian homes. The analysis relating to the non-economic contribution of women (Table 1) has shown that most of them under study (351/360) perform daily household chores by themselves. Hence, in a way, they contribute indirectly towards their family income by saving some money. This has been found to be true in all the categories of respondent women irrespective of their income, working status and place of residence.

It has also been found that majority of the respondent women that is, 304 out of total 360, meet the emotional and psychological requirement of their families. The study further provides that the proportion of such non-working women (30.19%) is nearly double than that of working women (15.15%).

The analysis further brings out that only 156 out of total 360 respondent women are able to contribute indirectly towards the income of their families by way of assisting their children in their education. The reason for this comparatively low proportion is that in this age of tough competition all parents try to provide the best available education facilities to their wards. Further, it is found that comparatively less number of LIG category respondent women impart education to their wards than their counterparts in the MIG and HIG categories. This may be attributed to the reason that LIG category women are less qualified than their counterparts in other two income categories.

The study also reveals that 14.01 percent, 10.50 percent, 9.17 percent and 8.05 percent of the responses given by women respondents are to assist their families in banking activities, help

their families in business activities, help their children in various activities like schooling, coaching, swimming, and perform duties like depositing electricity, telephone bills, respectively. Further, the involvement of working women in all these activities is comparatively greater as compared to non-working women. The reason for it may be that it is easier for working women to do all these activities while going out for work, whereas non-working women usually remain at home. It is evident that working women not only contribute towards the income of their households but also have other responsibilities to share in their families. It shows that they have really a tough and challenging dual role to perform. Findings of the study have also shown that contribution of non-working women is also no less significant than working women though in a different manner.

The study has shown that both working and non-working women perform many household chores. In the study (Table 2), 345 out of total 360 prepare meals for the family themselves. This fact has been found to be true for all the women irrespective of their income, working status and place of living. This may have been for the reason that Indian women feel more satisfaction in preparing meals for their families with their own hands (Tang and Cousins 2005; Jain 2006; Choudhary 2006).

Other household chores performed by respondent women in a descending order are washing clothes (21.94%), ironing clothes (17.0%), dish washing (16.42%), and cleaning and mopping the house (13.82%). The participation of non-working women in these activities has been found to be more than the working women. This may have been due to the reason that non-working women have more time and energy at their disposal for such activities.

Further, the findings of the study relating to the average number of household chores provide that working women (3.27) do not lag far behind the non-working women (3.36) so far as performance of these household chores is concerned. It implies that both working and non-working women have almost equal contribution in the exchequer of their families.

The study also brings out that as income of the households increases, the involvement of both working and non-working women in household chores decreases. It may perhaps be due to the reason that the low-income category women are unable to afford the services of domestic

help and costly electronic appliances, and therefore, they perform most of the household chores themselves. Another reason could be that with the increase in the income, involvement of higher income category women in social, recreational and other activities increases.

In an effort to estimate the savings made by women by virtue of unpaid work in the families (Table 3), the study shows that on an average a woman saves INR 1873 per month by way of doing household chores by herself. The study further provides that average amount of savings made by non-working women (INR 2071 per month) is comparatively more than that of working women (INR 1674 per month). However, the average amount saved by the working women is maximum in the case of LIG category, which is followed by those in HIG and MIG categories. While comparing the indirect contribution of working and non-working, it has been found that in all the income categories the contribution made by non-working women is more than that of working women. Among non-working women this contribution is higher in the MIG category women than their counterparts in the LIG and HIG categories. Thus, the findings make it clear that on one hand, the contribution made by the non-working women in their households for doing daily household chores and other activities cannot be underestimated, while on the other, working women are also contributing equally in the exchequer of their families (Bryant and Zick 1996; Rani 2012).

Findings of the study further reveal that more than one-third of the respondent women (36.39%) save between INR 2000 and INR 2500 per month by doing daily household chores. The study has also indicated that on the whole, non-working women save more in comparison to their counterparts.

Further, while comparing the per month average savings made by the respondent women in both the cities under study, it has been observed that in Ludhiana (INR 1950 per month) average savings are higher than that of their counterparts from Patiala city (INR 1795 per month). This may have been due to higher cost of domestic labor in Ludhiana as compared to Patiala.

CONCLUSION

The research undertaken here is indicative of the fact that contribution of women, both

Table 1: Contd....

	Ludhiana										Total													
	LIG			MIG			HCI			Total			LIG			MIG			HCI			Total		
	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total
1.	30	30	30	29	26	89	86	175	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	56	56	176	56	56	176	56	56	176
	15.87	32.61	20.41	26.79	25.44	28.57	19.78	29.15	16.13	32.43	23.08	26.58	26.29	31.82	20.83	26.29	31.82	20.83	26.29	31.82	20.83	26.29	31.82	20.83
2.	30	29	20	29	30	65	88	153	60	58	56	58	32	60	128	32	60	176	32	60	176	32	60	176
	15.87	31.52	13.61	25.89	13.16	32.97	14.44	29.83	16.13	31.35	13.85	26.13	15.02	34.09	15.15	15.02	34.09	15.15	15.02	34.09	15.15	15.02	34.09	15.15
3.	30	3	28	6	29	5	87	14	60	7	57	12	56	8	173	56	8	207	56	8	207	56	8	207
	15.87	3.26	19.05	5.36	25.44	5.49	19.33	4.75	16.13	3.78	21.92	5.41	26.29	4.55	20.47	26.29	4.55	20.47	26.29	4.55	20.47	26.29	4.55	20.47
4.	6	8	15	21	18	12	39	41	14	19	29	36	37	21	80	37	21	94	37	21	94	37	21	94
	3.17	8.7	10.2	18.75	15.79	13.19	8.67	13.9	3.76	10.27	11.15	16.22	17.37	11.93	9.47	17.37	11.93	9.47	17.37	11.93	9.47	17.37	11.93	9.47
5.	28	10	17	12	8	10	53	32	58	16	26	26	9	15	93	9	15	108	9	15	108	9	15	108
	14.81	10.87	11.56	10.71	7.02	10.99	11.78	10.85	15.59	8.65	10	11.71	4.23	8.52	11.01	4.23	8.52	11.01	4.23	8.52	11.01	4.23	8.52	11.01
7.	30	5	17	8	5	7	52	14	113.17	7.57	19	17	5	4	83	5	4	88	5	4	88	5	4	88
	15.87	5.43	11.56	7.14	4.39	1.1	11.56	4.75	15.86	5.95	7.31	7.66	2.35	2.27	9.82	2.35	2.27	9.82	2.35	2.27	9.82	2.35	2.27	9.82
8.	7	0	7	0	0	0	14	0	12	0	7	0	2	0	21	2	0	23	2	0	23	2	0	23
	3.7	0	4.76	0	0	0	3.11	0	3.23	0	2.69	0	0.94	0	2.49	0.94	0	2.49	0.94	0	2.49	0.94	0	2.49
9.	189	92	147	112	114	91	450	295	372	185	260	222	213	176	845	213	176	845	213	176	845	213	176	845
10.	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
11.	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total	351	24.58	304	21.29	200	14.01	156	10.92	150	10.56	131	9.17	115	8.05	21	1.47	1428	583	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Survey 2008
 Note: The total number of activities are more than the number of respondent women because most of the women performed more than one activity in their families

Table 2: Contd.

	Ludhiana										Total							
	LIG		MIG		HCI		Total		LIG		MIG		HCI		Total			
	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing		
1.	30	29	28	29	29	26	87	84	171	60	59	57	58	56	55	173	172	345
	19.61	20.42	27.45	25.44	43.28	61.9	27.02	28.19	27.58	20.13	21.38	33.33	26.24	46.67	50.93	29.37	28.43	28.89
2.	30	29	20	25	15	9	65	63	128	60	56	36	50	32	28	128	134	262
	19.61	20.42	19.61	21.93	22.39	21.43	20.19	21.14	20.65	20.13	20.29	21.05	22.62	26.67	25.93	21.73	22.15	21.94
3.	28	27	13	19	10	6	51	52	103	49	55	26	39	16	18	91	112	203
	18.3	19.01	12.75	16.67	14.93	14.29	15.84	17.45	16.61	16.44	19.93	15.2	17.65	13.33	16.67	15.45	18.51	17
4.	28	30	17	22	8	1	53	53	106	58	55	26	42	9	6	93	103	196
	18.3	21.13	16.67	19.3	11.94	2.38	16.46	17.79	17.1	19.46	19.93	15.2	19	7.5	5.56	15.79	17.02	16.42
5.	30	26	17	19	5	0	52	45	97	59	50	19	31	5	1	83	82	165
	19.61	18.31	16.67	16.67	7.46	0	16.15	15.1	15.65	19.8	18.12	11.11	14.03	4.17	0.93	14.09	13.55	13.82
6.	7	1	7	0	0	0	14	1	15	12	1	7	1	2	0	21	2	23
	4.58	0.7	6.86	0	0	0	4.35	0.34	2.42	4.03	0.36	4.09	0.45	1.67	0	3.57	0.33	1.93
7.	153	142	102	114	67	42	322	298	620	298	276	171	221	120	108	589	605	1194
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
8.	5.1	4.73	3.4	3.8	2.23	1.4	3.58	3.31	3.44	4.97	4.6	2.85	3.68	2	1.8	3.27	3.36	3.32

Source: Field Survey 2008

Note: The total number of activities are more than the number of respondent women because most of the women performed more than one activity in their families

Table 3: Savings made by the respondent women by virtue of the contribution in daily household chores in different income groups

Savings made by virtue of Doing Daily Household Chores per Month	Patiala						Total
	LIG		MIG		HCI		
	Working	Non-working	Working	Non-working	Working	Non-working	
1. Below 1000	2	1	2	0	0	0	5
Percent	6.67	3.33	6.67	0	0	0	2.86
2. 1000-1500	6	5	6	1	3	15	23
3. 1500-2000	12	9	10	4	13	35	55
Percent	40	30	33.33	13.79	48.15	40.23	31.43
5. 2500-3000	30	46.67	36.67	34.48	25.93	31.03	36.57
Percent	0	1	1	10	4	5	23
6. Above 3000	0	3.33	3.33	34.48	14.81	24.14	13.14
Percent	1	0	0	4	0	1	5
8. Total	30	30	30	29	27	87	175
10. Average per Month	1588.3	1693.3	1575	2224.1	1753	100	1951.8
11. Average per Month							

Table 3: Contd....

	Ludhiana												Total			
	LIG				MIG				HCI				Total			
	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	Non- work- ing	Work- ing	Non- work- ing	Total	
1.	1	0	5	0	2	0	8	3	1	7	0	2	0	12	1	13
	3.33	0	17.24	0	6.9	0	4.6	5	1.67	11.86	0	3.57	0	6.86	0.57	3.72
2.	3	0	10	0	4	4	21	9	5	16	1	7	6	32	12	44
	10	0	34.48	0	13.79	4.65	12.07	15	8.33	27.12	1.69	12.5	10.91	18.29	6.9	12.61
3.	5	3	5	6	7	11	28	17	12	15	10	20	9	52	31	83
	16.67	10	17.24	20	24.14	12.79	16.09	28.33	20	25.42	16.95	35.71	16.36	29.71	17.82	23.78
4.	8	12	6	9	11	17	63	17	26	17	19	18	30	52	75	127
	26.67	40	20.69	30	37.93	44.19	36.21	28.33	43.33	28.81	32.2	32.14	54.55	29.71	43.1	36.39
5.	13	9	3	7	4	18	38	13	10	4	17	8	9	25	36	61
	43.33	30	10.34	23.33	13.79	20.93	21.84	21.67	16.67	6.78	28.81	14.29	16.36	14.29	20.69	17.48
6.	0	6	0	8	1	15	16	1	6	0	12	1	1	2	19	21
	0	20	0	26.67	3.45	1.14	9.2	1.67	10	0	20.34	1.79	1.82	1.14	10.92	6.02
7.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8.	30	30	29	30	29	26	174	60	60	59	59	56	55	175	174	349
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
10.	1795.3	2010	2306.7	1372.4	2380	1748.3	2190.4	1950.3	1799.2	2000	1473.7	2302.1	1750.6	1911.3	1674.5	2071.1
11.																

Source: Field Survey 2008

Standard Deviation WP= 490.41
 C.V.WP= 29.93
 Standard Deviation NWP= 514.10
 C.V.NWP= 26.34
 Standard Deviation TP= 528.65
 C.V.TP= 29.45

Standard Deviation WL= 650.79
 C.V.WL= 38.05
 Standard Deviation NWL= 526.12
 C.V.NWL= 24.02
 Standard Deviation TL= 637.31
 C.V.TL= 32.68

Standard Deviation WT= 578.81
 C.V.WT= 34.57
 Standard Deviation NWT= 533.99
 C.V.NWT= 25.78
 Standard Deviation T= 591.35
 C.V.T= 31.57

working and non-working, is quite significant in the family. Working women on one hand perform a really tough and challenging dual role. Contribution of non-working women is also not less significant than the working women, though in a different manner. They lead the role in fulfilling the emotional and psychological needs of the family and the average amount of savings made by non-working women is comparatively more than that of working women.

A substantial amount of both working and non-working women's time is devoted to unpaid work. For women, day-to-day domestic work is more important than their well-being. A woman's contribution in the family and society must be acknowledged and valued at least as much as the industry. Whether the contribution of women's unpaid work should be included in GDP or well-being of the family or society, is a matter that remains open to debate. By recognizing the contribution of both working and non-working women through their unpaid work, the orthodox mindset of Indian society for preference of a male child needs to be changed. A declining trend in the female sex ratio in India, especially in the state of Punjab is a cause of great concern for all. The government should formulate its policies in such a way that some concrete results start coming out in this regard.

*LIG – Income upto Rs. 1,80,000 (Zero income tax for women in 2008)

**MIG – Income between Rs. 1,80,000 to 5,00,000 (Income tax upto 20 percent in 2008)

***HIG – Income above Rs. 5,00,000 (Income tax upto 30 percent in 2008)

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