

Quantification of Unpaid Domestic Work: Insights from Amritsar (India)

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Introduction

India is a vast country, rich in culture, norms and traditions. The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men, but a strong patriarchal system persists in majority of social systems which shape the lives of women with traditions that are millennia old. The origin of what is considered appropriate behavior for an Indian female can be traced to the rules laid by Manu in 200 B.C. In childhood, a female is subject to the wishes of her father, in her youth of her husband, and when her "lord" is dead then of her sons. In addition to the patriarchal culture, commonest in varying degrees throughout the world, equally common is the problem that while women typically carry out most of the household work which involves caring for the home and its residents yet this work is given little or no social or economic importance and as a result women economic contributions are perceived with little importance. While the work done by men is widely acknowledged as productive, women who are engaged in full-time household work are classified by the government of India as economically unproductive. When these very tasks are performed by hired maids and when it is done at somebody else's house, it become a paid job and therefore valued.

Domestic work by women has historically been identified as undignified and considered "dirty" work. This work divides women by race and class by defining domestic workers who are benefited from their labour as "clean" work (Palmer, 1989). Women domestic /household chores remain invisible and unpaid though they are contributing immensely to the home, to the society and to the whole economy. Household work is perceived as the main work of women in the Indian society. Women spend a lot of time and labour devotedly to maintain the house. Women's total workload is higher than men's because women work on an average for longer periods per day than men including paid and unpaid labour (Frances and Russel, 2005). Women worldwide perform most of the domestic tasks, including both household maintenance and childcare, even when they are employed part-time. Thus the mean time spent on unpaid work by women is more than twice that for men (Kulshreshther and Singh, 2005). But these efforts are not recognized rather are devaluated to continue the traditional male domination and power balance shifts in the favour of male in households. A general assessment of household work across the world is that it is "undervalued, underpaid, unprotected and poorly regulated" in spite of the contributions that domestic workers make to the care and welfare of millions of households (ILO, 2010). Women are putting longer working hours in family and their contribution is neither valued nor considered for inclusion in the GDP of the economy. Despite lot of progress in various indicators related to women, they are still facing a lot of barriers. The Census of India (2001) contains a chapter which titles "Non- Workers", comprising the following categories:

1. Students of all kinds and levels.
2. Household workers: - all those that attends to household chores like cooking, cleaning of utensils, looking after children, fetching water and collecting firewood.
3. Dependents, disabled, children not going to school, the elderly.
4. Pensioners, widows not receiving pension.
5. Beggars, prostitutes and other non-engaged in economically productive work.
6. Others, including convicts in jail and inmates of mental or charitable institutions.

As a result all females- have been classified by the Census of India as non- workers, placed in the same category as beggars, prostitutes and prisoners. Of the total of those listed as non- workers in India, 74.3% are women thus over 367 million women in India- or 32% of the entire population of India is considered as non-workers with NIL contribution to GDP of India.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the current situation of contribution in domestic work by housewives and working women in Amritsar.
2. To quantify and assign an approximate economic value to the hitherto unpaid work performed by women in the area of study.

Data and Methodology

The study is based on primary data. The data was collected from women with the help of a persistent questionnaire. The sample consisted of 100 women (60 housewives and 40 working women).A deliberate effort was made to take only one participant per household. Amritsar district of Punjab was selected as the study area. Since, the population did not consist of a homogenous group, the study adopted both purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques which is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling. Purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units that are to be studied. Whereas, snowball sampling is a technique for developing a research sample whereby existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their associates. For the quantification of unpaid domestic work performed by respondents, Replacement Cost Method has been applied.

Results and Discussion

1.1 General profile of respondents

Basic information was collected from the respondents in terms of their socio-economic characteristics such as age, family structure & size, educational qualification, occupation, monthly family income, ownership of the house and access to drinking water & toilet facilities.

Table 1 shows the general profile of respondents of both the categories i.e., house wives as well as of working women. Most of the respondents were young in which 45 percent with the age group of 26 to 35 years, followed by 24 percent with the age group of 36 to 45 years. While, overall the respondents had virtuous levels of education, in case of house wives 40 percent respondents were secondary educated, whereas, 42.5 percent of working women were educated up to graduate level and above. Majority of the respondents(66 percent) were part of a nuclear family in case of house wives 25 percent respondents belonged to joint family whereas, 47.5 percent working women were having joint family. Majority of the respondents (32 percent) were having Rs.5 thousand to Rs.20 thousand monthly income followed by 26 percent respondents with the income category of Rs.21 thousand to Rs. 40 thousand monthly income. 23 percent of the respondents followed by 19 percent of the respondents were falling in the income category of Rs.41 thousand to Rs. 80 thousand and more than Rs.80 thousand monthly income respectively. It has been found that the percentage of working women in higher income groups were more than house wives. Most (92 percent) of the respondents owned their own house and (7 percent) respondents stayed in rental houses. It has been found that all the respondents were having drinking water and toilet facilities at their disposal.

Table 1: General Profile of Respondents

Respondents	Age Structure in years				Total
	18-25	26-35	36-45	Above 45	
Housewives	7 (11.67)	26 (43.33)	12 (25.0)	55 (20.0)	60 (100)
Working Women	3 (7.5)	19 (45.5)	9 (22.5)	9 (22.5)	40 (100)
Total	10	45	21	24	100
Respondents	Education Level				Total
	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Above	
Housewives	5 (8.33)	14 (23.33)	24 (40.0)	17 (28.33)	60 (100)
Working Women	0 (0.0)	3 (7.5)	10 (25.0)	27 (42.5)	40 (100)
Total	5	17	34	44	100
Respondents	Structure of family		Total		
	Joint Family	Nuclear Family			
Housewives	15 (25.0)	45 (75.0)	60 (100)		
Working Women	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)	40 (100)		
Total	34	66	100		

Respondents	Monthly Family Income in thousands				Total
	5-20	21-40	41-80	More than 80	
Housewives	23 (38.33)	18 (30.0)	12 (20.0)	07 (11.67)	60 (100)
Working Women	09 (22.5)	08 (20.0)	11 (27.5)	12 (30.0)	40 (100)
Total	32	26	23	19	100
Respondents	Ownership of their House			Total	
	Own	Rental	Others		
House Wives	55 (91.67)	04 (6.67)	01 (1.67)	60 (100)	
Working Women	37 (92.5)	03 (7.5)	0 (0.00)	40 (100)	
Total	92	07	01	100	
Respondents	Access to Drinking water & Toilet Facilities		Yes	No	Total
House Wives	60			0	60
Working Women	40			0	40
Total	100			0	100

Note: Figures in Parenthesis are percentages

Table 2 shows the reported involvement of both household women and working women in various regular domestic tasks. As the table makes clear, women both housewives as well as working women are equally involved in overall domestic tasks. Except for some tasks such as cleaning the house where more housewives (66.67percent) are involved as compared to working women (55 percent). Similarly, in case of cleaning around the house, 58.33percent housewives are involved in this task were as only 42.5 percent working women are doing this activity. But in case of other tasks the percentage of working women (75percent) is more than housewives (43.33percent).

Table 2: Respondent's Participation in Domestic Work

Domestic Tasks	House Wives	Working Women's	Total
Cleaning the house (sweeping, washing floors, dusting etc.)	40(66.67)	22(55.0)	62
Cleaning around the house	35(58.33)	17(42.5)	52
Washing dishes	51(85.0)	34(85.0)	85
Washing clothes	51(85.0)	33(82.5)	84
Cooking food	60(100)	40(100)	100
Others	26(43.33)	30(75.0)	56
Total	60	40	100

Note: Figures in Parenthesis are percentages

Table 3 shows the self-reported frequency of participation by housewives and working women in caring for family members. As shown in the table 43 (71.67percent) house wives respondents reported taking care of their young children (Bathing, Feeding etc.) as compared to 26 (65percent) working women whereas, remaining percentage of both category of women had children who are independent and could take care of themselves. Although, more than

one third 47.5percent of the working women guided their children in doing their homework, whereas, only 28.33percent of house wives helped their children in their studies. Similarly, 27.5percent working women take their children to and from school and only 16.67percent house wives performed this task. Same is happening in case of paying bills etc.

Table 3: Respondents Involvement in Caring for Family Members

Family Tasks	House Wives	Working Women's	Total
Caring for children (bathing, feeding etc.)	43(71.67)	26(65.0)	69
Caring for sick	55(91.67)	34(85.0)	89
Caring for husband and in-laws	55(91.67)	36(90.0)	91
Teaching children helping with homework	17(28.33)	19(47.5)	36
Taking children to and from school	10(16.67)	11(27.5)	21
Feeding looking after guests	55(91.67)	38(95.0)	93
Paying bills	09(15.0)	14(35.0)	23
Shopping for food and vegetables	35(58.33)	26(65.0)	61
Shopping for cloths and other household items	52(86.67)	35(87.5)	87
Managing the household (organizing activities, expenses etc.	35(58.33)	31(77.5)	66
Taking the sick to the doctor	39(65.0)	32(80.0)	71
Others	39(65.0)	35(87.5)	74
Total	60	40	100

Note: Figures in Parenthesis are percentages

1.2 Quantification of the unpaid domestic activities performed by women

The unpaid work is employment done without giving wage to the worker or we can say unpaid work is the production of goods and services by household members that are not sold in the market. A substantial amount of women's time is devoted to unpaid work. The productive contribution of women towards household maintenance, provision of the family needs, and bearing and rearing of the next generation is ignored, and much of women's work remains invisible, unpaid, undervalued and unvalued. Learning to value women is one of the vital steps that must be taken to create more humane, healthy, balanced and caring societies. The household work of women considered as just normal or natural and that is why it is unpaid. Their immense contribution to societal build-up is overlooked just because patriarchy claims that they cannot contribute directly to the national economy. Capitalist patriarchy is unable to understand that homemakers are spate but sectors are equal and they are very closely integrated to the national economy. In general, any work that receives little pay is considered unimportant and is labeled as "women work", despite the fact that such work actually brings tangible economic benefits to the family. (Khatam et. al, 2014). If women were ever to go on strike, we would understand fully the worth and importance of their work. In fact, families would cease to function if women cannot go on strike (Etroymsom, et. al, 2007). Acknowledging the value of the work carried out by women for their families could be an important start.

Measurement of unpaid work of women in terms of monetary value is very complex and it might be impossible to generate a precise, accurate value of unpaid work of women. When looking for an appropriate way to assign economic value to the work performed by women, many questions arose in terms of what price to assign to different tasks, whether to assign wage based on the number of hours women work (and in that case how to assign multiple tasking) and what wages to use in such calculations.

On the basis of literature following are the different ways of assigning an economic value to the unpaid activities performed by women:

1. **Opportunity Cost Method:** - (utilizing household income for measurement). This model is based on the premise that when an individual engages in unpaid work, he or she has to give up activities that could be done instead, along with all associated monetary and non- monetary benefits (Hamdad, 2003). In other words, opportunity value is counted as the amount when women could be earning if they were in the paid labor market instead of doing unpaid work. Within the model, the actual income that the household in the study sites provided and the average income per capita in the country, as released by the General Statistics Office's in recent years are utilized. From this, a calculation is made of the hourly income for each individual, assuming that an individual will work for 240 hours each month (30 days x 8 hours/day). One problem with this method is that the use of an opportunity cost wage implies that different people performing the same household task can be paid vastly different rates, simply because each individual has a different job and therefore different wage rates.
2. **Market Replacement Cost Method:** -Another model of valuation of domestic labour is market replacement cost. Users of this method presuppose that the time a household member spends on unpaid activities can be valued at the earnings level of other people who are engaged in similar activities in the market sector. In this model, it is assumed that household members & their "replacements" are equally productive and responsible. Still missing in this will be the emotional and care quotient of family women as compared to a female hired employee. Another premise behind this approach is that households save money by performing the activities themselves. The amount they save, and hence the value added to the household's income by doing the work, is the cost of purchasing the same services in the market, or hiring someone else to perform the task (Hamdad, 2003). This approach is divided into two other variants of:
 - (a) Replacement cost specialist which inputs the unpaid work on the basis of hourly earnings of people employed in matched occupations.
 - (b) Housekeeper cost method which employs the wage rates of a general housekeeper in this respect.

It is advisable to consider that it is likely that market replacement exist for household activities, and there are normally a wide range of wage rates for the same task being undertaken by different people in the market. Meanwhile housekeepers are likely to be paid far less than many specialists. In addition, there will still be a number of household productive tasks that a housekeeper would be likely to carry out and applying the single wage rate could lead to inappropriate valuations (Handad, 2003).

3. **Labor output method:** -The average of the wage plus benefits of the lowest paid tasks, multiplied by the hours spent on each task.
4. **Output method:** - The household would be seen as a producer. Its production would be counted by pieces of work done. For example, the number of rooms cleaned, the clothes washed, and children cared for would be counted and priced. This would include the informal market, such as cottage industries.
5. **Pay Equity:** Jobs would be evaluated in terms of skill, responsibility, effort, and working conditions. This would allow for inclusion of the management and counseling aspects of a homemaker. This focuses on the work done rather than the person doing it. The hardest job is to evaluate care giving. What is the value of a hug?

It should be noted that in each of the above mentioned methods of assigning an economic value to the unpaid work performed by women has its own advantages and disadvantages. No one method is perfect; no method can provide an accurate answer of something that by its very nature is not tangible /accountable.

For the purpose of this study, a method of calculating economic value based on replacement value was adopted. In this method, the cost of unpaid workers is calculated by the cost of paying someone else based on current wages for comparable work. If a maid were to perform the same task, a value would be assigned to it, so this same value is assigned to the task performed by unpaid workers. This allows for the calculation of a reasonable (under) estimate of the contribution women make through their unpaid work. (As maids are extremely underpaid because housework is undervalued). There is going to be an error resulting in an underestimated value.

In order to calculate a wage for the unpaid work performed by women, first housewives and working women were separated and then a list of various tasks performed by both was prepared. After this a market wage was assigned for the individual tasks performed. Various tasks such as paying of bills and managing of household finances were excluded from the list for both housewives and working women due to difficulties in assigning suitable values to them.

Almost all the respondents of both categories of housewives as well as working women found it difficult and impossible to estimate the economic value of their domestic unpaid work. While 51.67 percent housewives and 50 percent working women said that domestic work should be paid and a value should be assigned; but none could come up with a specific figure. Whereas, the rest of the respondents said that ultimately the work performed by women is for their own family needs and since it is done within the house it should not be considered as work, and thus there need not be an economic value attached to it. Virtually, 54 percent (45 percent housewives and 67.5 percent working women) families out of the total had a maid servant at their disposal, but all the domestic work is not done by these maids except some specific tasks such as washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning house, food preparation and cooking, taking children to and from school. Wages were paid to the maids on the basis of per task.

Table 4: Payment for work done by maid servant per task

Work done by the maid servant	Average Payment per task /month (in Rs.)
Washing dishes	500
Washing clothes	500
Cleaning the house	500
Helping in food preparation & cooking	500
Cleaning around the house	300
Taking children to and from school	500
Feeding children	500
Taking care of old aged family member	1000
Tutor for children	1000

The tasks which women do for themselves such as bathing, praying and other leisure time activities are excluded, women still engage in roughly 30 tasks each day. It is difficult to determine which tasks are separate and which are sub-tasks; for instance cooking involves many tasks including extensive food preparation, cooking and serving. Women generally serve men and children before they eat. Although "caring for children" is noted as one task, it of course involves a wide range of sub-tasks including bathing, dressing, feeding, comforting, training/educating in values and household tasks (school work is separate) and so on. The figure of 30 tasks is given as a reasonable estimate, more in-depth studies of household work and its various components and how much time goes into each task need to be worked out. Consequently, it is difficult and complicated to calculate a wage for each individual task, therefore doing so would have raised the average wage, as some tasks (such as Caring for sick/old aged person or teaching children) incur a far higher wage than such tasks as cleaning house or washing dishes. In any case, for the sake of simplicity, only nine tasks were chosen from the list of 30, and the average wage paid to a maid to perform them has been taken which is shown above in the table (4).

It is important to keep in mind that women perform not only those nine tasks, but a total of 30 tasks. The average cost of each of those nine tasks has been applied across all 30 tasks to arrive at an estimate of the value of women's unpaid domestic work. The average value of one task is Rs. 588.88, multiplying these figures by 30 tasks yield a monthly figure of Rs. 17666.4 for women. Therefore, Out of 30 tasks performed by each women nine tasks were found to be performed by hired maids across households. As reported in table 4 these tasks are : Washing dishes, Washing clothes, Cleaning the house, Food preparation and cooking, Cleaning around the house, Taking children to and from to school, Feeding children, Taking care of old aged family member and Tutor for children respectively. It is then imperative to find out the number of households in which the maids performed these tasks. It has been found that on an aggregate 27 households (House wives) who haired maids to perform these nine tasks. Similarly, from 27 household, working women's also haired maids to perform with varied proportions. It has been found out that out of total 54 households (house wives as well as working women) 13 households hired maids for washing dishes in regular format. Similarly tasks viz. washing clothes, cleaning the house, food preparation and cooking, cleaning around the house, taking children to and from to school, feeding children, taking care of old aged family member and tutor for children respectively, performed by maids when hired by households (both house wives and working women) at regular time intervals.

Table 5: Number of Tasks Performed by Maids

Respondents	Task (1)	Task (2)	Task (3)	Task (4)	Task (5)	Task (6)	Task (7)	Task (8)	Task (9)	Total
No. of tasks done by Maids in case of House wives	5	6	25	2	10	0	3	2	1	27
No. of tasks done by Maids in case of Working Women	8	16	27	6	5	2	1	2	7	27
Total	13	22	52	8	15	2	4	4	8	128

Note: Tasks are numbered from 1 to 9 in line with the naming given as: Washing dishes, Washing clothes, Cleaning the house, Food preparation and cooking, Cleaning around the house, Taking children to and from to school, Feeding children, Taking care of old aged family member and Tutor for children respectively.

Further, it will be interesting to examine the average number of tasks performed by maids, house wives and working women and their respective income generation by these groups in a specific time period. It has been observed that on an average two tasks were performed by maids hired by house wives and three tasks when hired by working women. This provides us an estimate of Rs. 1178 worth of income generation by this group over a month. This leaves 28 tasks performed by house wives even after hiring a maid which in turn generate an income of Rs. 16489 per month. Similarly, in case of working women three tasks were prominently performed by maids' worth of Rs. 1767 income generation by this group per month. Whereas, they themselves generate an income of Rs. 15810 per month.

Table 6: Average Number of Tasks and Income Generation by HW, WW and Maids

No. of Tasks performed by Maid	Average No. of Tasks done by maid	Average income generated (Rs)	Average No. of Tasks by HW/WW	Average income generated by HW/WW (Rs)
when hired by HW	2	1178	--	--
Average No. of Tasks by HW	--	--	28	16489
when hired by WW	3	1767	--	--
Average No. of Tasks by WW	--	--	27	15900
Total	5	2944	55	32388

Note: HW – House Wife and WW - Working Women

Even though, households are hiring maids for performing different domestic tasks, the women at home are major contributors of work done, that in turn is unpaid amount to them. This exercise indicates strong implication of discrimination of household women in terms of domestic work output Vis-a Vis household economy and contribution to the family income. This is a fit case for projection of the positive contribution of domestic unpaid work done by all women (weather working or housewives) who must be given due importance and credibility in national income accounting.

Concluding Remarks

The study suggests that the average value of unpaid domestic work performed by women, both as housewives as well as working women in the study area amounts to approximately Rs 32,388 per month. Despite the magnitude of this figure, the financial value of the domestic work done by women continues to go unnoticed and women continue to be treated as if they contribute nothing of value to the society or to the nation. Women themselves contribute to their own under-valuation, as women are at least as captive to social forces as men- and likely more so- given their lesser exposure to other influences. The problem is more complicated by the fact that most of the educated women prefer to work outside the home and thus may undervalue the work performed by non-worthy working women in homes knowingly devaluing their contributions in houses.

Whatever, the cultural, economic, caste based, religious, social and other differences, a few factors are universal: women are seen as being responsible for the home and family, and the image of women earning as much as or more than men would threaten many men. The economic dependence of women on men harms many, but is absolutely devastating for women such as widows or wives of abusive partners, for whom there is no steady and safe support available from male relatives.

It is difficult to raise the status of women without raising their perceived value. Since virtually all women spend a significant amount of their time engaged in some critical tasks in the society- those of cleaning, preparing food and caring for others-the importance of those tasks must be emphasized as well as the valuable contribution of those who carry out such work without any expectation of any economic returns.

Unpaid work performed by women in and around their homes should be valued to improve the conditions of these unpaid workers and to support policy creation and implementation. If the amount and value of unpaid work were known, the impact of governmental policy changes such as cutbacks in health care and welfare could be better planned, measured and impacted. As such the valuation of unpaid labor should be done keeping in mind the aim to increase access to social benefits for all, while also increasing and ensuring women's full participation in the policy making process as well.

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