

Women's Unpaid Labour: the Missing Piece of the Economy: A case study of rural women in low-income households in Palwal

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i01.011 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i01.011>

Received: 5 Jan. 2025 / Accepted: 15 Jan. 2025 / Published: 28 Jan. 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to calculate the economic value of the unpaid domestic work that Indian housewives perform but which is not included in national statistics. We focus on rural women in low-income households, who often bear the brunt of unpaid housework due to several factors like the stereotypical gender roles, the patriarchal set up of the society and the low opportunities for women in the market.

This paper analyses primary data collected from over 100 households in the Palwal District of Haryana, which has a predominantly rural population. Using time use surveys, we measured the number of hours spent in various household activities such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc. We use the opportunity cost and replacement cost methods to impute a hypothetical salary to this unpaid work. We then give short term and long-term policy recommendations to recognise this invisible work.

The final goal of the study is to reiterate the economic worth of women's hidden labour and that inclusion of this value is a prerequisite for gender equality.

Keywords: Unpaid Labour, Rural districts, Gender Equality, Quantification

1. Introduction

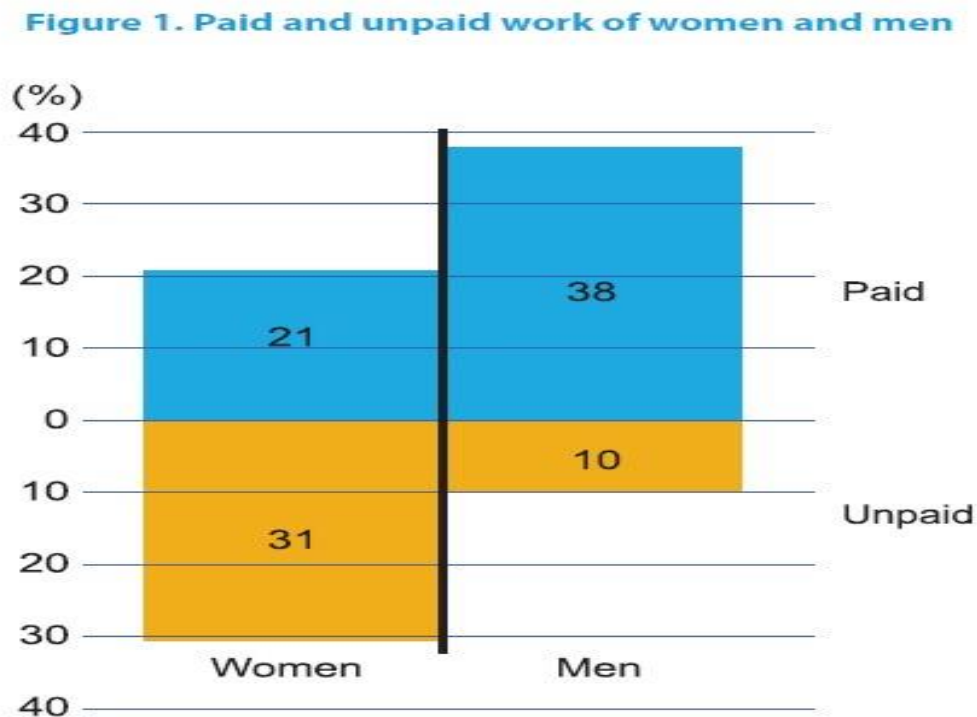
Target 5.4: *"Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."* – United Nations (UN), Sustainable Development Goal 5

The building blocks of a functional society are household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of dependents and other related activities. While these tasks are essential and labour intensive, they are overlooked by economists and policy makers.

These tasks are also disproportionately handled by women without any compensation and are ‘The Hidden Backbone of the Economy’. Their devaluation has created a cycle of women providing a valuable service to society without gaining any recognition for it. Over the years, substantial research has been conducted towards its quantification using primarily two methods which will be examined in detail. Supranational organisations and governments have also recommended that countries recognize the work and integrate it into their national statistics. This study analyses the scope to which that can hold for India.

2. Rural Low-Income Women: The Most Marginalised of an Already Discriminated Group

Fig. 1 Paid and unpaid work of women and men



Note: Data are a female and male population-weighted average of 63 countries representing 69 percent of the world's adult (ages 15 and older) population.
 Source: Human Development Report Office calculations based on Charmes (2015).

Source: UNDP (2015:107).

Unpaid labour and housework are characteristically done by women in most parts of the world. Women perform around 75% of the world's total unpaid care and domestic work, valued at approximately 13% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In terms of unpaid work, women perform nearly 2.5 times as much of this work as men, with large gender disparities in time spent cooking, cleaning and caring for household members¹.

This disparity is concentrated further in India. While in theory men and women are granted equal rights and opportunities, the patriarchal system in place represents housework as 'feminine', normalising the devaluation of unpaid labour. This age-old tradition of 'women's responsibilities' stemming from prejudice and social standards, is still a major force in pushing women towards familial work, childbearing and domestic duties and away from educational and professional opportunities. As per the Census 2011, 60% of all women describe 'housework' as their primary occupation. Furthermore, in India, women spend more than 297 minutes on household activities, while men spend only 31 minutes on average².

While the nature of division of work is in itself concerning, what is even more so is the attitude and mindset towards the time-consuming work done by women. According to Census 2011, housewives are officially classified as 'non-workers'. This covers up the multitude of tasks that are carried out by them and also their value. They provide an indispensable service to the country. The work they do saves crores of rupees for the government in terms of geriatric facilities and childcare centres. Tax accounts do not register transactions that take place within the household as women handle the non-market activities.

They are considered 'second-class citizens' and the work done by them is not respected. And that is only a facet of it. Since this work is not recognised, it does not generate any compensation.

This problem is worse in rural areas. 2011 Census figures indicated only 15.5% of rural women as employed, majority occupied in home-based subsistence production. In contrast, urban women had 19.8% workforce participation³, indicative of better education, shifting cultural norms towards dual-earning nuclear families and increasing employment choices leading to outsourcing of domestic chores to paid help.

These figures are still astoundingly low. Most rural women in low-income households are forced to stay at home and perform unpaid labour. Lack of agency or financial valuation increases their economic dependency leaving them with no plan post widowhood or divorce and no voice in finances.

¹ UN Women, Discussion Paper (2016)

² Chaudhary, N. et al (2009)

³ A. Shaji George and Shaji, T. (2024)

Fig. 2 Unpaid work in the home across India

UNPAID WORK IN THE HOME ACROSS INDIA

Girls and women aged 6+ surveyed in India (n = 447,250) were **more likely** than boys and men to report doing unpaid domestic or care work in the house. Those who did also reported **spending more time** doing it.

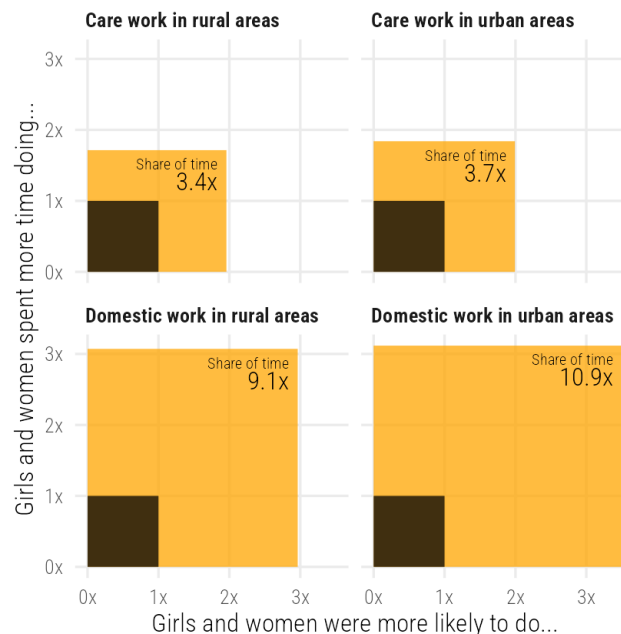


CHART: James Goldie, 360info

DATA: Time Use Survey 2019

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Indian Government



3. Is Housework Actually “Work”?

Housework consists of non-market activities which produce goods and services for the members of the household not desired in and of themselves, but rather for the utility which they yield⁴. As per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data, ‘domestic duties’ are ‘non-economic activities’ and therefore, not considered as labour force. The ‘non-market’ quality has led to the omission of its value from national statistics.

However, in economics the market price of a good or service is determined by the forces of demand and supply. Therefore, from a purely economic and theoretical approach, the housework done by a homemaker is the supply of labour. The expectations of the family members to do the work may be considered as demand for that very labour.

⁴ Hawrylyshyn, O. (1977)

John Kenneth Galbraith however, called the post-war American housewife a 'crypto-servant' for her critical role in the expansion and administration of private consumption. His theory of convergence suggests that essential, but non-market-driven work, can be undervalued.

Ivan Illich created an analysis of women's 'shadow work' that became a necessary complement to wage labour in modern industrialized economies⁵.

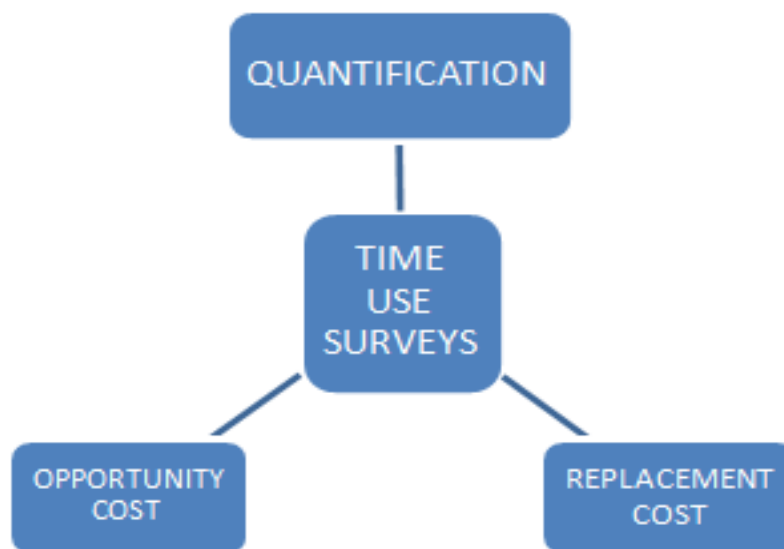
Feminist economics highlights the overall economic importance of non-market work, such as subsistence production and caring activity which are predominantly provided by women. They aim to reduce income inequality and harness economic growth that is inclusive.

The views on housework have changed over time and are still being critically examined. In the current era, I believe it is crucial to acknowledge that housework is a vital part of the economy and its definition as non-economic, demeans the role it plays.

5. Quantification Methods

Economists have primarily two methods of measuring the value of housework, both with their merits and demerits. This following section analyses the two models theoretically as well as assessing the possibilities for their practical application in India.

Fig. 4



⁵ Swiebel, J. (1999)

A) **Time Use Surveys (TUSs)**

Time use surveys are a statistical tool, essential to collecting the data necessary to apply the two quantification methods. Time use statistics are quantitative summaries of how individuals allocate their time over a specified period. It contains a background module that gathers the required demographic characteristics of households to provide rich accurate figures for use.

Over the years India's TUS system has developed increasingly, with a new category that asks 'for whom' that time is being allocated, i.e. who is receiving the benefit of the labour, especially helpful in valuating how much work is being done for others. In the context of this paper, they are a necessary feature of gathering data.

B) **Opportunity Cost Method**

It is the method which computes the Individuals' unpaid work and the amount of time spent on it by considering their hourly wage rates and further multiplying it by the number of hours worked each day.

This method is based on the theory that when an individual engages in non-market work, s/he has to sacrifice activities that could have been done instead, along with all associated monetary and non-monetary benefits.

In laymen terms, it measures the value of the homemakers' time based on their value in the current market. If a woman is capable of earning Rs. X every hour and she has to supply food to the family instead, the cost of that hour is Rs. X.

$$HW = W \left(\sum_{i=1}^n T_i \right)$$

Symbolically, in the case of opportunity cost method,

HW is the dollar value of household work, T_i is time spent in household work activity i , n = number of household work activities and W is opportunity cost of time (market wage) of the individual doing household work⁶.

Opportunity cost is deeply correlated with the educational status of the woman as with every extra year of education, her potential value in the market is higher. Notionally it could be

⁶ Hawrylyshyn, O. (1977)

difficult to assign skill value to women if we use this method for quantification. However, this method is beneficial when welfare payment has to be given as it assigns a value more accurate to what the women should be given.

C) Replacement Cost Method

The replacement cost approach asks “how much would it cost to replace the services of housewife?”. The central idea is that someone could go find the market wages of a job, for example a cook and use these wages to assign a value to the housewife’s services.

So, if a person is cooking for an hour, then she gets Rs. X, where X is what the minimum wage is for a person in the labour market doing the same occupation.

$$HW = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n D_i \right)$$

In this method, it is assumed that the time spent on that activity is valued by the relative wages given to that occupation and that the household members are as productive as someone performing this task in the job market.

D_i = cost of service i and n = number of market agents or specific services hired.

This method specifically quantifies the value of the work done, rather than the value of the time it took. The approach aligns more with the supply and demand theory. It is also easier to assign a numerical value using minimum wage rather than estimating a person’s value. However, due to gender norms and an inbuilt patriarchal society, a proportion of highly skilled women are engaged in domestic pursuits for a large share of their time. This method gives the same value to the same work, irrespective of the skill set of the woman conducting it, thereby underreporting the value of the work they could do.

D) Challenges with Quantification:

1. It can be difficult to set a boundary defining when housework is for self, versus when it is adding a value to the economy. For instance, if a woman makes a sandwich for herself, it is not considered to be adding to the economy, however when she does so for family members it is. This limitation can be overridden by conducting time use surveys that specifically ask how much time is for the individual and how much is for others.
2. The data used to quantify work done is self-reported, so there is no way to verify it. This also increases the possibility for this data to be misused for personal gain.

3. India is a diverse country, with different regions having different types of work prevalent due to socioeconomic conditions. It is difficult to formulate uniform policy for quantification due to this multiplicity.

6. Should the Value of Homemakers be Included in the GDP?

“A country’s GDP falls, when a man marries his maid” – Renowned economist, Paul Samuelson’s quote highlights that when domestic work is shifted from the paid market to the unpaid sphere, it becomes invisible and is unaccounted for. This is precisely the injustice that this paper seeks to address. While quantification of unpaid labour is the first step in this endeavour, including this value in the Gross Domestic Product of a country has also gained popularity.

By failing to count unpaid work, the current GDP calculation creates a hidden tax on millions of unpaid workers—primarily caregiving women, the stay-at-home mothers and daughters who are forced to reduce hours or leave jobs to care for children or parents.

Moreover, according to calculations, unpaid labour accounts for more than 30% of India's GDP⁷. Omitting this results in a severe undercounting of women’s work. This leads to their systemic economic exclusion which further depresses women’s socio-political status, bargaining power and perpetuates gender inequality.

Despite these figures, there are certain challenges that are associated with this inclusion. Firstly, it gives a false estimation to how rich a country is. There is no economic output in monetary terms. This is especially dangerous in terms of the rural poor, who spend a great deal of time on unpaid labour. This could give an inflated sense about their standards of living and that of the country.

Secondly, the GDP is a comparative measure for countries. It will not work unless there is a uniform procedure in which all countries include their housework in the economy.

Thirdly, most countries, especially India, are very diverse. It becomes difficult to compute a single measure for housework that takes the different socio-economic standards and urban-rural divide into account.

A Review of Norway: An Alternative Path

Norway, like India, uses time use surveys to gather data about unpaid housework and conducts in depth analysis of it. However, Norway goes a step further and quantifies this value using the replacement cost method. It has also implemented satellite account systems to a large scale.

⁷ A. Shaji George and Shaji, T. (2024)

A Satellite Account is a term developed by the United Nations to refer to an extension of the System of National Accounts to measure the size of economic sectors that are not defined as industries in national accounts⁸. Numerous countries have started using it as a complementary system to expand the traditional GDP framework. This is an alternative way of including the value of unpaid labour while solving some of the challenges involved.

7. Primary Research Conducted: Case Study of Rural Women in Low-Income Households in Palwal

A) Experimental Techniques

The research has been done primarily using quantitative methodology while conducting a cross-sectional study with over 100 participants from the Palwal District in the state of Haryana.

The sole intent of the study was to utilize a time use survey to gain a better understanding of the time allocation to different household activities and summate the unpaid work done by one woman in one week. This was done to ultimately calculate the estimated cost of her work.

The data was gathered through a questionnaire⁹. Initially, it was filled out by a few literate women in that district. The bulk of the responses were filled out after I personally visited, translated the questions and gathered the information more flexibly. A total of 105 usable responses were collected and analysed.

Fig, 5 and 6 Exploring Palwal: A rural district in Haryana



⁸ Smith, S.L.J. and Massieu, A. (2005)

⁹ Refer to Appendix A

B) Pilot Study

The sample size is the 105 women from whom the data was collected. Table 1 shows the number of housewives engaged in different household activities.

Household Activities Rural Woman are Engaged in



Fig. 7 Cooking



Fig. 8 Milking a cow



Fig. 9 Taking care of dependents



Fig. 10 Cleaning



Fig. 11 Working in the fields

Table 1: An Overview of the Data

| TYPE OF WORK | NUMBER OF RURAL WOMEN ENGAGED IN THAT WORK |
|---------------------------|--|
| Cooking | 100 |
| Laundry | 101 |
| Cleaning | 100 |
| Taking care of Dependents | 93 |
| Grocery Shopping | 38 |

Note: These are 5 out of 33 activities that women are engaged in, but through initial research it was discovered these are the predominant ones in the Palwal District.

Time Use Survey: Hours per Household

How many hours a week do you personally spend cooking?

102 responses

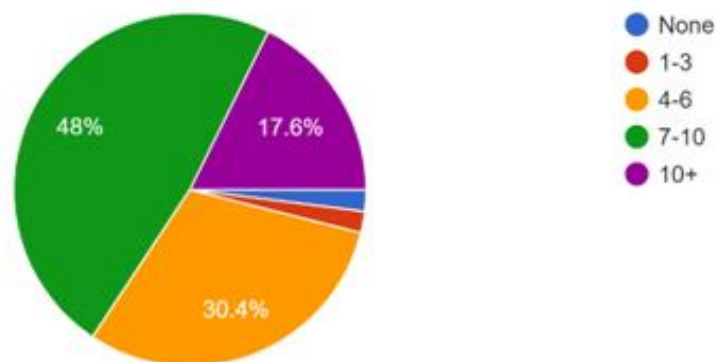


Table 2: Cooking

| Percentage of Women | Assumed Median number of hours |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 | 2 (1-3) |
| 30.4 | 5 (4-6) |
| 48 | 8.5 (7-10) |
| 17.6 | 12 (10+) |

Weighted Arithmetic Mean of the Above Medians:

$$\frac{2 \times 2 + 30.4 \times 5 + 48 \times 8.5 + 17.6 \times 12}{100} = \mathbf{7.75 \text{ hours per week spent cooking by the average woman}}$$

How many hours a week do you personally spend on laundry?

102 responses

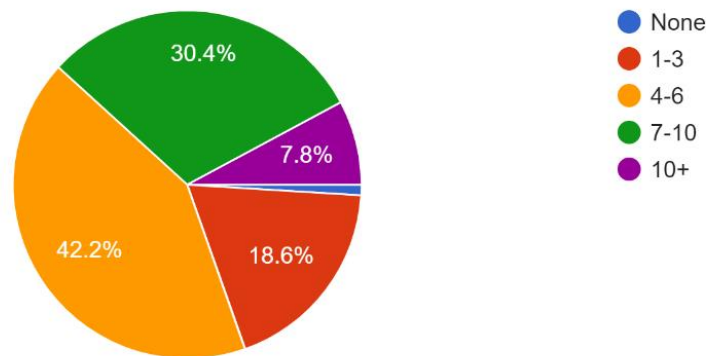


Table 3: Laundry

| Percentage of Women | Assumed Median number of hours |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 18.6 | 2 (1-3) |
| 42.2 | 5 (4-6) |
| 30.4 | 8.5 (7-10) |
| 7.8 | 12 (10+) |

Weighted Arithmetic Mean of the Above Medians:

$$\frac{18.6 \times 2 + 42.2 \times 5 + 30.4 \times 8.5 + 7.8 \times 12}{100} = \mathbf{6.002 \text{ hours per week spent doing laundry by the average woman}}$$

How many hours a week do you personally spend cleaning? (Dusting, sweeping)

102 responses

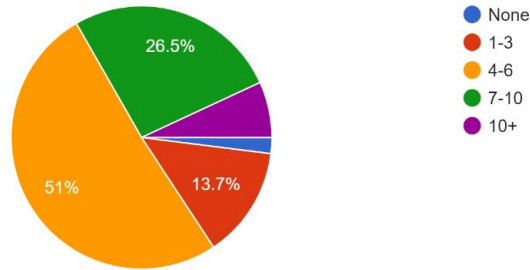


Table 4: Cleaning

| Percentage of Women | Assumed Median number of hours |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 13.7 | 2 (1-3) |
| 51 | 5 (4-6) |
| 26.5 | 8.5 (7-10) |
| 6.9 | 12 (10+) |

Weighted Arithmetic Mean of the Above Medians:

$$\frac{13.7 \times 2 + 51 \times 5 + 26.5 \times 8.5 + 6.9 \times 12}{100} = \mathbf{5.90 \text{ hours per week spent cleaning by the average woman}}$$

How many hours a week do you personally spend taking care of dependants?

96 responses

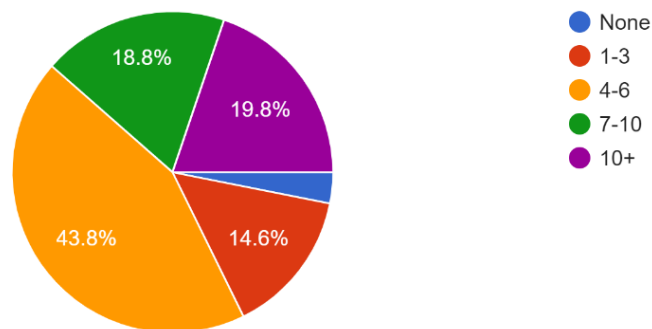


Table 5: Care of Dependents

| Percentage of Women | Assumed Median number of hours |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 14.6 | 2 (1-3) |
| 43.8 | 5 (4-6) |
| 18.8 | 8.5 (7-10) |
| 19.8 | 12 (10+) |

Weighted Arithmetic Mean of the Above Medians:

$$\frac{14.6 \times 2 + 43.8 \times 5 + 18.8 \times 8.5 + 19.8 \times 12}{100} = 6.46 \text{ hours per week spent taking care of dependents by the Average woman.}$$

How many hours do you personally spend grocery shopping?

100 responses

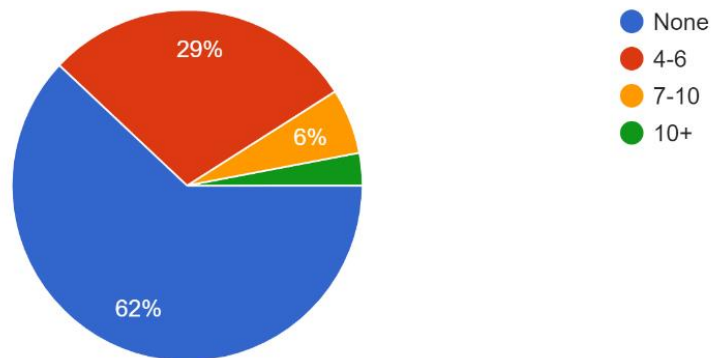


Table 6: Grocery Shopping

| Percentage of Women | Assumed Median number of hours |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 29 | 5 (4-6) |
| 6 | 8.5 (7-10) |
| 3 | 12 (10+) |

Weighted Arithmetic Mean of the Above Medians:

$$\frac{29 \times 5 + 6 \times 8.5 + 3 \times 12}{100} = 2.32 \text{ hours per week spent grocery shopping by the average woman}$$

$$\sum \text{Cooking} + \text{Laundry} + \text{Cleaning} + \text{Taking Care of Dependents} + \text{Grocery Shopping} = 28.43 \text{ hours per woman per week}$$

The median hours based on the investigative criteria were calculated, after which the arithmetic mean of the number of hours of that category of work was arrived at. This led us to the total number of hours that the average woman spends across the 5 activities under consideration. The purpose of the above data is to firstly give an accurate understanding of the time spent on housework in the Palwal District of Haryana by low-income rural woman and secondly to utilize these figures to quantify the value of this unpaid work. This has been done using

- i) Opportunity Cost Method
- ii) Replacement Cost Method

The aim of this is to get a representative idea of the monetized value of work done by homemakers to assess whether it should be included in national frameworks like the Gross Domestic Product and compensated for.

C) Opportunity Cost Method

In this pilot study, we have calculated the total number of hours per week devoted to non-market work to be 28.43.

The minimum wage for Haryana for unskilled labour is INR 10,661 per month which works out to INR 51.25 per hour. This gives us the average value that a woman should be earning in a week, which is equal to INR 1,457.

This calculation is based on the assumption that their qualifications are only enough for minimum wage. However, through the study we find that a proportion of the women in Palwal have higher education diplomas, which would increase this amount significantly.

Education level
102 responses

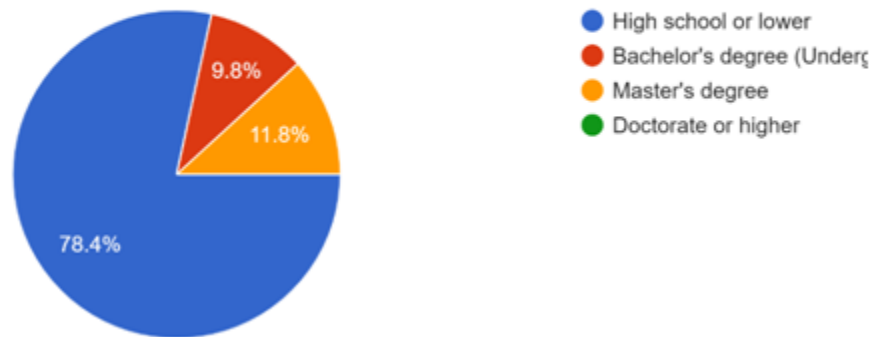


Table 7: Educational Qualifications

| Qualifications | Number of Homemakers |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| High School or lower | 80 |
| Bachelor’s degree | 10 |
| Master’s degree | 12 |
| Doctorate or higher | 0 |

From this data we can infer that even amongst rural women from low-income households, just over 20% of the women had higher education qualifications yet due to socioeconomic customs they are involved in unpaid labour for a large quantity of their time.

D) Replacement Cost

Table 8: Summary of hours per activity per week

| UNPAID WORK | MEAN HOURS PER WEEK |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Cooking | 7.75 |
| Laundry | 6.00 |
| Cleaning | 5.90 |
| Care of dependents | 6.46 |
| Grocery Shopping | 2.32 |

Table 9: Market Values of the Work

| Types of works | Market value (in Rupees) |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cooking (two times in a day) | 5000 |
| Babysitting | 5500 |
| Cleaning and sweeping | 1500 |
| Full time worker | 6500 |

Using tables such as the above, which exist for each area, an estimate can be made for the value of housework. For the sake of convenience, in this study, we assume the homemaker to be a full-time worker and should thus earn at least INR 6500 a month. The values of different tasks can be calculated more accurately as more data becomes available.

E) Limitations of the Data:

- 1) All the data was self-reported so there is no way to verify it. However, since the purpose of the study was not revealed, the data should be free from biases.
- 2) Only 5 major house activities have been considered for the purpose of this study. In reality there are at least 33 activities which come under this purview. Due to limitations in the amount of data that could be collected, only the main activities were considered.
- 3) This case study focuses only on the Palwal district in Haryana. Due to geographical constraints on the enumerator, the study was limited to certain localities.

8. Policy Formulation: The Way Forward

We can infer from the above data that unpaid labour done by women is indeed work and should be acknowledged in some manner, with ‘should’ being the operative word.

Quantification of the work done has its own challenges but it is not impossible, especially considering that other countries have done so. The pure economical and ethical part may partly support the above conclusions, but it is not enough without a policy framework. This section seeks to analyse how unpaid housework can be recognised in India to what extent this is feasible.

A) Making Unpaid Work Visible

The first step towards recognising this work is making it distinctly clear as ‘work’ to the general populace. Time Use Surveys in India, conducted by the NSSO have been very useful in this area as research, providing an idea of how much work is being done by women on an average.

Another approach in making visible the importance of unpaid work for society as a whole is imputing its value in monetary terms. Imputing a monetary value for unpaid work is a necessary condition for its inclusion in national accounts or satellite accounts and in the models used for economic. In this paper, we have discussed two methods of doing so – both of which have their merits and demerits.

India already has precedent to base this quantification on. In the historical Supreme Court Case of *Kirti and Anr. v. Oriental Insurance Company*, the court recognised the value of calculating the notional income of a homemaker while awarding compensation. The ruling also acknowledged the high percentage of women that are homemakers and appreciated the “work, labour and sacrifices of homemakers”¹⁰.

Another key ruling was in a domestic dispute case Tamil Nadu, where the Madras High Court ruled that the woman who had looked after the family had an equal share in the property and assets. Saying that a housewife works 24 hours without holidays performing various roles including that of chef, manager, "home doctor," and "home economist," the judge said that the wife had helped in the acquisition of the family assets by performing household chores for decades. "And moreover, she sacrificed her dreams and spent her entire life towards the family and children," the judge noted in his verdict¹¹.

These rulings are vital and provide a basis for the formation of policies.

A special case of recognising monetary value is remunerating it i.e. providing financial compensation. On one hand, implementation of wages for housework (and paying for other forms of currently unpaid work) would mean transferring some productive activities from the unpaid sector to the paid labour market. This could increase economic productivity in rural households.

On the other hand, critics believe it would solidify women’s presence in the household and reinforce gender norms, by making it their full-time occupation. It is important to understand that a policy like wages for housework cannot and should not be used to replace the investment in public services needed to reduce the burden of unpaid work on women. Moreover, once women’s invisible work is recognised, it can also be used to argue for a more equitable redistribution of this work within the household¹².

¹⁰ Chauhan, S. (2021)

¹¹ Pasricha, A. (2023)

¹² Samuel (2019)

Such debate about the monetary value of unpaid housework has always existed among economists. This question was put forth to both Dr. Dhruv Nath and Mr. Deepak Sanan¹³.

Should the women, especially in rural low-income households in a developing country like India, be compensated for this work in the future?

DEEPAK SANAN: Certainly women in low income rural households should be compensated for their labour. This has profound implications for their place in society in terms of status, dignity and self esteem. It will also mean that their contribution will have monetary value which can be counted in GDP! In a sense, this process has begun in different states of India where governments have begun paying a monthly sum to poor women. This is viewed by many as a 'freebie' but instead should be seen as a way to empower women by compensating them for their unpaid labour.

DHRUV NATH: Almost impossible. The question is: Who will compensate the lady? The government? Not feasible. As it is, MNREGA has a lot of frauds taking place - people claim to have done work, get a fake certificate, and get their money. Working at home takes this complexity to a much higher level.

As seen above, there are strong opposing opinions regarding remuneration. In my opinion and through the research I have conducted, while compensation is difficult, it needs to be done. In recent times, several political leaders in India have highlighted the need for remuneration for women's unpaid domestic and care work. Makkal Needhi Maiam, a regional political party in India, promised wages for the housework done by the homemakers in its manifesto for the 2021 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly election¹⁴. In the run-up to the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly election, the Indian National Congress promised to provide ₹2000 per month to every housewife through the 'Grihini Saman' scheme¹⁵.

As a first measure, policies can focus on rural low-income women, as they are the worst affected by this crisis. In a utopian world, where the division of labour was more equitable, such measures would not be needed. However, in the current paradigm initiatives to compensate women for their unpaid labour would increase their possibility of being financially independent and ending the social stigma around housework.

After receiving input relating to the scope of corruption, further research was conducted. It is relevant to acknowledge that this policy could be manipulated and misused. That is true of all

¹³ Refer to Appendix B for full transcript

¹⁴ Makkal Needhi Maiam (2020)

¹⁵ Indian National Congress, 2021

policies though. We need to be vigilant in the collection of data through TUSs as well as the implementation of the policy.

Other challenges include the possibility that women may not have control over the remuneration they receive. More research needs to be done in this sphere but overall, the need for this policy overrides the potential risks that come with it.

As economist Marilyn Waring has observed, “the distinction between market and nonmarket production is a heavily gendered one; work done predominantly by women remains invisible to economic policy makers.”

Fig. 12 Illustration



B) Policy Recommendations – Long Term

Educational reforms: Education should be prioritised by the government to allow women to gain access and entry into the formal labour market. Women with greater education have an edge over others and are well equipped to cater to the needs of their families and the financial situation, have more decisive options, and manage their homes better. The government can design special programs for skill training and increasing productivity, targeted at young girls.

Legal reforms: Extending social security coverage, health insurance, pension and widow benefits to housewives can provide safety nets recognizing their economic contributions. Legal

reforms for equal inheritance rights regardless of marital status can enhance property ownership. Mandating minimum 50% marital property registration in wives' names can reduce vulnerability.

Equitable distribution of housework: Measures for a more equitable distribution of household labour should be established. Gender norms have to be challenged to make men take more responsibility in the household. This can be done through increased paternity leave, equal caregiving rewards and social destigmatisation.

Satellite Accounts: India should consider adopting Satellite Accounts for unpaid work, following Norway and other countries. These accounts expand national accounting to cover specific social concerns without disrupting the central system. For instance, the unpaid work account extends beyond traditional limits, offering new insights into national income. Once methodologies are refined, these accounts can integrate into the main system. Globally, discussions at forums like the United Nations should establish standardized methods for satellite accounts.

C) Policy Recommendations – Short Term

I propose the creation of a 4R policy, an expansion on the triple R policy, a unique approach for integrating unpaid work with macroeconomic policies recommended by Diane Elson to handle unpaid labour.

Fig. 13



Recognition of unpaid work through time use surveys, quantification and expressing the data to the public.

Reduction in unpaid work by moving it to the paid market sphere. Reducing the time and effort it takes for this work to be done by making it more efficient. This can be done by providing infrastructural support, improved technologies and better access.

Redistribution of work amongst the family to reduce the burden on the women. This can be done by challenging patriarchal standards and through the long term measures. The government can also invest in the creation of some childcare facilities and geriatric homes to allow women to pursue the job market.

Remuneration: The policy can begin by remunerating women from rural low income families on the basis of the quantification already done in terms of money. The government should dedicate a fund towards this very purpose. As this will take a lot of time, money and effort on the government's part I suggest they begin by compensating portions of unpaid family care through universal basic income transfers that recognises household production as legitimate economic work. Piloted cash transfer programs to women show positive health, nutrition and education outcomes via increased autonomy in domestic budgeting.

9. Conclusion

Through the course of this study, I have explored numerous models of quantification and different theories as to why it should be done. We can conclude that housework done by women does indeed have an economic value that should be assigned a numerical value to recognise women and uplift the economy. This paper exhibits that even though there are problems associated with quantification, we must take every effort to do so. The question of 'should' turned to 'how' as this paper provided different policy options and alternative solutions. Further research needs to be done in the sphere of satellite accounts for India, choosing and refining quantification methods and generating ways to finance remuneration.

From an economics perspective, an ideal society is a society at equilibrium – a stable state from which it has no desire to deviate. I believe that 'True Equilibrium is at Equality'. To achieve this equality, we have to bring the women to the forefront, and this can only be done if their contributions to society are recognised and valued. We must start with the rural women in low-income households, then expand our ideology to apply to rural and urban women of all income levels. The goal is ambitious and there are many challenges but it is imperative that we, as a society and as a nation, overcome these obstacles and find a solution to highlight this invisible bedrock on which our entire modern society stands.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to my teachers such as my Principal Dr. Vijay Datta and my economics teachers, Ms Puja Kapur who have encouraged and inspired me to research and investigate the possibilities of recognising, quantifying and including the value of womens' unpaid work in the national statistics. This topic is very close to my heart as I believe it is an essential pre-requisite to correcting gender disparity and biases.

In the process of this research, I was able to apply the tools of economic enquiry such as creating a questionnaire, conducting surveys and collecting raw data. I was then able to compile the raw data into graphs and draw meaningful conclusions. I also studied various methods of quantification and applied them to my study in order to support my hypothesis.

In order to make my study more comprehensive, I was fortunate to be able to conduct interviews with eminent personalities such as Dr. Dhruv Nath and Mr. Deepak Sanan. Dr. Dhruv Nath, PhD (IIT Delhi), B Tech(IIT Delhi) is a former professor at MDI, Gurgaon and former advisor to the prime minister of Nairobi and the chief minister of Delhi as well as having published multiple books. Mr. Deepak Sanan, MA Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, is a retired additional Chief Secretary, government of Himachal Pradesh and a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research. I am extremely thankful to them for sharing their time and expertise with me.

Finally, I would like to thank all my teachers who have contributed to my intellectual development, my parents and younger sister for being my biggest cheerleaders and lastly, but most importantly, the women of Palwal, with whom I was able to interact and gain valuable insights.

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