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Invisible Workers: A Case Study of Unpaid Female Family Helpers in District Lahore –
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This research focuses on measuring socio-economic value of work performed by unpaid female family helpers who work in small scale set-ups operating at their homes and do not get compensated in cash or kind for their work. By using mixed method research strategy, the current research estimates their contribution in annual household income and their involvement in household decision making and spending.

Key Findings

1. Firstly, the percentage contribution of unpaid female family helpers in household income was found out to be significant. The women in service had the highest share of about 22.8 percent in their household income. The category service contained activities such as food preparing and processing, making textile and crafts, and personal care services. The female's involvement in such type of activities is highest regardless of the purpose of work whether performed for domestic use or market use.

2. The study highlights that increase in level of education of unpaid female family helpers shows a negative impact on time invested on unpaid work, so relatively high female literacy is an important policy option for promoting decent work. As female's level of education increases they find less time from education activities to get involved in unpaid work. As increase in the level of education also increases the probability of getting into paid employment and hence the time invested on unpaid work decreases.

3. Total number of household earners is negatively related to the time by unpaid female family helpers on unpaid work and their income contribution. As the number of household earners increases their household income also increases the need to earn more by involving unpaid family helper decreases.

4. In nuclear families, women working as unpaid female helpers are contributing more to their family income. Nuclear families usually have limited earners placing a relatively high demand on family members to support in increasing household income.

5. Finally unpaid female family helpers are more involved in decision making and spending regarding their self needs and needs of their children; on the other hand they have less participation in decision making and spending regarding the needs of rest of the family and community.

Policy Implications

1. The term unpaid female family helpers is discriminatory in itself; the prefix 'unpaid' used for such workers should be replaced with some decent alternative.

2. This study has shown the income contribution of unpaid female family helpers is not negligible to be all ignored. Therefore, policy makers must recognize the importance of unpaid female family helpers in household economy and their work must be comprehended in GDP calculation just as foreign remittances are admired in GDP.

3. NGOs with the help of local government should introduce different types of support programs in these communities such as loan scheme, community development programs and technical trainings. These community development programs will eventually uplift the economic condition of local people, so they would be motivated to engross women in better work options.

4. Considering the skills of unpaid female family helpers women should be provided proper work options in their own villages, providing proper work would bring unpaid female family helpers out of vulnerable unpaid work and engross them in decent work.