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NATURE, MAGNITUDE AND DETERMINANTS OF INDEBTEDNESS AMONG WOMEN LABOUR BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF MGNREGS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to analyze nature, magnitude and determinants of indebtedness among Women beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab. The present study is based upon the sample of 406 women beneficiary households from three selected districts viz., Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot. The socio-economic conditions of the beneficiary household's highlights that majority of them are illiterate, landless, wage workers and BPL card holders. The scheme failed in generating 100 days' wage employment and sustainable assets because of poor implementation of the scheme at grass root level. In Punjab, majority of households working in MGNREGS are labour households, therefore, their main source of income is wage work either farm or non-farm, highlighting their poor living standards, lack of regular source of income and deprivation from productive economic resources. The analysis of debt highlights that the share of non-institutional sources in the total debt is more than institutional source. The percentage share of non-institutional sources is the highest (82.81) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Pathankot (78.61) and Patiala (72.76), whereas among all household taken together this share is 78.74. The study points out that these poor women labourer households are mainly dependent on non-institutional sources for their credit requirement who charge high rate of interest and known for extreme form of exploitation. Majority of them have taken debt for unproductive purposes. The result of regression analysis shows that the coefficient of unproductive debt, assets, consumption and income are very important factors which determine indebtedness among sampled households in the rural areas of Punjab.

KEYWORDS

MGNREGS, Debt, women labourer, money lenders, traders, large farmers.

INTRODUCTION

The performance of Indian economy since the later part of the 1990 marks a significant achievement in terms of GDP, but there is a need to translate the benefits of economic growth into matching employment (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2011). The costs of economic and financial liberalization are often borne disproportionately by the poor and particularly by vulnerable women (FAO-IFAD-ILO, 2010).

As per 2011 census, about 69 percent of the country's total population was inhabited in the villages and female comprised 48.6 percent of rural population and out of them, about 90 percent of working women were involved in the informal sector (Kumari and Pandey, 2012). There is no doubt that women play a very important role in economic growth and can potentially lift their households and communities out of poverty and indebtedness. But women are pushed back by gender inequities that limit their access to decent work which is required for their economic, social and political empowerment (Rustagi, 2010).

The number of actual women workers is high in the rural areas in comparison to urban areas because of low enrollment of rural women in schools and high demand of female labour in the agricultural sector (Kumari and Pandey, 2012). The detailed macro-economic overview of occupational structure shows that larger share of women workers is still engaged in primary sector which accords low productivity in India (Sudarshan, 2010).

Punjab is fortunate in having abundant resources. After two decades of food deficit after independence, India now has a surplus of food grains. The situation improved after the mid 1960s with the development of agriculture infrastructure and as a consequence of these developments in agricultural infrastructure, Punjab demonstrated rise in agricultural production (Government of Punjab, 2009). The workforce participation rate of females in Punjab is 13.90 per cent while the male work participation rate is 55.20 per cent. In other words, workforce participation rate of females in Punjab is over four times lower than their male counterparts in the state and nearly two times lower than female work participation rate at National level (Government of Punjab, 2014).

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an important step of government towards achieving social protection as it provides: relief from deprivation, prevention and alleviation of poverty, promotion of economic activities as well as transformation for social justice for rural population in general and women in particular (Vij, 2011). The scheme aims at ensuring livelihood security to people in the rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a fiscal year to rural household (Ministry of Rural Development, 2010).

MGNREGS was launched in Punjab on February 2, 2006 in Hoshiarpur district in the first stage and later on it was extended to three more districts (Nawanshahar, Jalandhar and Amritsar) in second stage and finally to 16 districts in third stage. Women participation in MGNREGS in Punjab tend to increase from 24.62 percent of women person days to total person days in 2008-09 to 33.83 percent in 2010-11 to 46.67 percent in 2012-13 to 57.46 per cent in 2014-15 and to 59.97 per cent in 2016-17 (www.nrega.nic.in). However, the number of person days generated among each household is very less and failed to generate any significant impact on level of income and reduction in poverty and indebtedness in the rural area.

Low income among sampled households combined with lack of ownership of productive assets, gainful employment opportunities and regular source of income leads them to vicious circle of poverty and indebtedness. According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (2013), the incidence of indebtedness was about 31.4 per cent among rural households with Rs.1,03,457 as average amount of debt.

Poor labourer households because of their very low income and resource base, borrow from non-institutional sources such as landlords, money lenders, traders etc. to meet their day to day needs and for fulfilling their social cultural traditions. The dependence of these labour households on institutional resources is almost

negligible because of lack of security and awareness and complicated procedures associated with loans. The present study deals with the nature and magnitude of indebtedness among women beneficiary households in Punjab.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The specific objectives of the present study are:

1. to study the socio-economic profile of women beneficiary households;
2. to analyze the nature and magnitude of indebtedness among women beneficiary households; and
3. To examine the determinants of indebtedness among women beneficiary households in Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on multi stage random sampling techniques and related to year 2013-14. For this purpose, Punjab has been categorized into three groups based on women participation under MGNREGS as high participation districts, moderate participation districts and low participation districts. One district from each category namely, Sri Muktsar Sahib from high participation districts, Patiala from moderate participation district and Pathankot from low participation district have been selected. Further, three development blocks based on high, moderate and low women participation in MGNREGS have been selected from each district. As a result, 9 developmental blocks, have been selected. At the fourth stage, three panchayats/villages have been selected from each of the selected development blocks based on the women participation. Thus, a sample of 27 villages has been selected. Finally, a sample of 406 women beneficiary households consisting of 171 from Sri Muktsar Sahib, 160 from Patiala and 75 from Pathankot district has been selected. The required information has been collected from selected women beneficiary households under MGNREGS with the help of a pre-tested schedule/questionnaire by conducting personal interviews of the informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic and socio economic profile of Women beneficiary households in the Punjab has been presented in Table 1. The result reveal that out of the total sample population of 1793 persons, 706, 765 and 322 persons belong to Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively. The sex ratio has been worked out 908, 987 and 850 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively and for Punjab it comes out to be 865. The percentage of illiteracy is highest (47.60) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Patiala (37.69) and Pathankot (32.26) while among all the household taken together it is 40.51.

The table further reveals that highest percentage of women beneficiary sampled households belong to scheduled caste (77.09). The highest percentage of scheduled caste beneficiary household is in Sri Muktsar Sahib (87.72) followed by Pathankot (86.67) and Patiala (61.25). The percentage of working population is highest (62.12) in Pathankot followed by Sri Muktsar Sahib (62.04) and Patiala (54.64). The table clearly shows that the main occupation of majority of them is agricultural labour, i.e. 56.90 per cent followed by wage work in non-agricultural (35.22 per cent). The percentage share of agricultural labour is the highest (83.04 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib district due to lack of major industrial nodes and thus, most workers are engaged in agricultural activities, whereas percentage share of wage work in non-farm sector is highest in Pathankot 50.67 because some part of Pathankot is hilly terrain, their farming is not possible and people prefer to work in Sugar Mills and cement factories as they offer higher wage rates also.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE OF WOMEN LABOURER HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
Total number of Household	171	160	75	406
Total Population	706	765	322	1793
Average size of family	4.13	4.78	4.29	4.42
Sex Ratio	908	987	851	865
Illiteracy Percentage	47.60	37.69	32.26	40.51
Percentage of SC Households	87.72	61.25	86.67	77.09
Percentage of working population	62.04	54.64	62.12	58.90
Percentage of Dependent	37.96	45.36	37.89	41.10
Percentage of Non-agricultural Labourer	6.43	37.50	50.67	26.85
Percentage of Agricultural Labourer	83.04	53.12	38.67	63.05
Percentage of wage workers	89.47	90.62	89.34	89.90
BPL Households	65.50	56.25	57.33	60.44
Percentage of landless households	98.83	98.75	98.67	98.77

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Economic status of sampled Women beneficiary household highlights that as per provisions of ration cards 60.44 per cent of households belong to BPL category whereas the highest percentage is in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Pathankot and Patiala districts. The percentage of households owning unviable piece of land is 1.23 per cent whereas, majority (98.77 per cent) of them are landless.

EXTENT OF DEBT AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The extent of debt among Women beneficiary households in Punjab is presented in table 2. The perusal of table shows that the total sampled households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district is 171, 160 and 75 respectively whereas the indebted household respective number is 102, 69 and 40.

TABLE 2: EXTENT OF DEBT AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB

Extent of Debt	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
Total Sampled Households	171	160	75	406
Indebted Households	102	69	40	211
Percentage of Indebted Households	59.65	43.13	53.33	51.97
Debt Per Sampled Household (in Rs.)	23105.53	16635.38	19326.67	19857.65
Debt Per Indebted Household (in Rs.)	38735.74	38574.78	36237.50	38209.50

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Overall 51.97 per cent of Women beneficiary households are indebted whereas the percentage is the highest (59.65 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Pathankot (53.33 per cent) and the lowest (43.13 per cent) in Patiala district. The table further depicts that debt per sampled household is Rs. 23105.53, Rs. 16635.38 and Rs. 19326.67 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district respectively whereas the respective value of debt per indebted household is Rs. 38735.74, Rs. 38574.78 and Rs. 36237.50 among all households taken together, the debt per sampled household is Rs. 19857.65 whereas the debt per indebted household is Rs. 38209.50. It is important to mention here that no doubt the amount of debt is low among these households but their repaying capacity is also low because of their low level of income, lack of gainful employment opportunities etc.

DISTRIBUTION PATTERN OF INDEBTEDNESS AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The per household debt of women beneficiary households has been presented in Table 3. The institutional sources of credit are commercial bank, co-operative Bank and co-operative societies, whereas the non-institutional sources are money lenders, landlords/big farmers, traders, employers, friends and relatives etc.

The table reveals that non-institutional sources have major contribution in total debt, i.e., 78.74 per cent as compared to institutional sources (21.26 per cent) which highlights poor plight of labourer households in Punjab as these non-institutional sources are known for charging high rate of interest and extreme form of exploitation. The field survey highlighted that these poor labour households generally borrow from non-institutional sources at high rate of interest because they cannot fulfill the requirement of institutional debt because they have nothing to mortgage and are less aware about banks terms and conditions and most of this borrowed credit is used for unproductive purposes.

The table further exhibits that among all the beneficiary households taken together, the percentage share of institutional sources in total debt is highest (27.24 per cent) in Patiala, as compared to Pathankot (21.39 per cent) and the lowest (17.19 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib. In absolute terms, the share of institutional sources in total debt is Rs. 3971.02, Rs. 4531.25 and Rs. 4133.33 among Women beneficiary households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively, whereas as a whole, it is Rs. 4221.79 among all the Women beneficiary households taken together. From the institutional sources, commercial banks have major contribution in total debt, i.e., 11.90 per cent followed by co-operative societies (7.72 per cent) and co-operative Bank (1.65 per cent). The table further asserts that the percentage share of commercial banks is the highest (13.80 per cent) in Pathankot as compared to Sri Muktsar Sahib (11.74 per cent) and the lowest (11.08 per cent) in Patiala, whereas the percentage share of cooperative societies is the highest (15.40 per cent) in Patiala, highlighting the role and importance of organized co-operative societies in rural areas of Patiala district followed by Pathankot (6.21 per cent) and Sri Muktsar Sahib (3.09 per cent). Among non-institutional sources, landlord/large farmers have major contribution in total debt i.e., 32.29 per cent followed by friends and relatives (17.37 per cent), traders (14.61 per cent), money lenders (10.31 per cent) and employees (4.17 per cent) which clearly brings out that due to lack of resources, low level of income and lack of awareness, these poor labourer households have no other alternative but have to borrow from non-institutional sources for meeting their credit requirements. The share of non-institutional debt is Rs. 19134.50, Rs. 12104.13 and Rs. 15193.33 among Women beneficiary households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively, whereas for all the households taken together, the average per household debt from non-institutional sources is Rs. 15635.83.

The perusal of table shows that the percentage share of landlords/large farmers to the total debt among Women beneficiary households in rural areas of Punjab is worked out as 34.07, 30.62 and 30.49 per cent in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively. It has been observed from the field survey that traders/shopkeepers and friends & relatives provide loans in form of cash and kind to these poor labourer households for fulfilling their consumption needs for expenditure on marriage and other social-cultural ceremonies, health purposes etc. The share of debt from friends and relatives to the total debt is the highest (20.58 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Patiala (17.16 per cent) and the lowest (9.00 per cent) in Pathankot district. The percentage share of trader/shopkeeper among Women beneficiary households is 15.01, 13.07 and 16.35 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively.

TABLE 3: PER HOUSEHOLD DEBT OF WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Sources of Debt	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
I	Institutional Sources	Per Household Debt	Per Household Debt	Per Household Debt	Per Household Debt
1	Commercial Banks	2713.45 (11.74)	1843.75 (11.08)	2666.67 (13.80)	2362.07 (11.90)
2	Co-operative Banks	543.86 (2.35)	125.00 (0.75)	266.67 (1.38)	327.59 (1.65)
3	Co-operative Societies	713.71 (3.09)	2562.50 (15.40)	1200.00 (6.21)	1532.13 (7.72)
4	Sub-Total (1-3)	3971.02 (17.19)	4531.25 (27.24)	4133.33 (21.39)	4221.79 (21.26)
II	Non-Institutional Sources				
5	Money Lenders	2596.49 (11.24)	1793.75 (10.78)	1333.33 (6.90)	2046.80 (10.31)
6	Landlord/Big Farmers	7871.35 (34.07)	5093.75 (30.62)	5893.33 (30.49)	6411.33 (32.29)
7	Traders	3467.84 (15.01)	2173.75 (13.07)	3160.00 (16.35)	2900.99 (14.61)
8	Employers	444.44 (1.92)	187.50 (1.13)	3066.67 (15.87)	827.59 (4.17)
9	Friends and Relatives	4754.39 (20.58)	2855.38 (17.16)	1740.00 (9.00)	3449.16 (17.37)
10	Sub-Total (5-10)	19134.50 (82.81)	12104.13 (72.76)	15193.33 (78.61)	15635.86 (78.74)
11	Grand Total((I+II))	23105.53 (100.00)	16635.38 (100.00)	19326.67 (100.00)	19857.65 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages

The percentage share of debt from employers to the total debt is very small among Women beneficiary households in Sri Muktsar Sahib and Patiala district whereas in Pathankot the percentage share of debt from employer is 15.87 per cent. It has been observed from the field survey that in Pathankot district, majority of households main occupation is non-farm wage work such as labour force is working in sugar mills and cement industries, therefore the share of employers in total debt is the highest (15.87 per cent) in Pathankot and almost negligible in Sri mukatsar Sahib (1.92 per cent) and Patiala district (1.13 per cent).

The per household total amount of debt among Women beneficiary households comes out to be Rs. 23105.53, Rs. 16635.38 and Rs. 19326.67 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively in the rural areas of Punjab. As a whole, for Punjab the average per household debt is Rs. 19857.65. The foregoing analysis highlighted the fact that total debt is the highest in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Pathankot and Patiala districts. It has been observed from the field survey that beneficiary labourer households in Patiala have marginally better economic standards as compared to Pathankot and Sri Muktsar Sahib.

PURPOSE WISE UTILIZATION OF DEBT AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The purpose wise utilization of debt among women beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 4. The expenditure on agriculture farm inputs, livestock, machinery, house construction and others such as purchase and repair of durable, land development expenditure can be considered as productive whereas expenditure on consumption, medical treatment, marriage and social ceremonies and others such as paying old debt, uncertain expenditure and other household expenditure can be considered as unproductive purposes. The proportion of debt for unproductive purposes to the total debt is 66.50 per cent, whereas the proportion of debt for productive purposes to the total debt is 33.50 per cent among all the beneficiary households for taken together.

The percentage of debt spent for agriculture/farm input among beneficiary households is 1.92, 1.88, 1.10 per cent in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district respectively whereas as a whole this share is 1.76. The share of debt used for livestock is the highest (6.50 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Patiala (6.01 per cent) and the lowest (5.52 per cent) in Pathankot, while it is 6.16 per cent for all the beneficiary household taken together. The percentage of debt spent on machinery is 2.94, 2.63 and 2.07 per cent in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively. For house construction, proportion of debt spent is the highest (18.79 per cent) in Patiala followed by Pathankot (17.94 per cent) and the lowest (17.21 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib, whereas this share is 17.86 per cent for all the beneficiary households taken together. The share of others such as purchase and repair of durable or land development expenditure in total debt

is worked out as 5.04 per cent among all the beneficiary households taken together. It is clear from the analysis that share of debt used for productive purpose is the highest in Patiala (35.50 per cent), followed by Pathankot (33.11 per cent) and Sri Muktsar Sahib (32.30 per cent). However, proportion of debt used for unproductive purposes is the highest (67.70 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Pathankot (66.89 per cent) and Patiala (64.50 per cent).

TABLE 4: PURPOSE OF DEBT AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Purpose of Debt	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
I	Productive Purposes				
1	Agriculture/Farm inputs	444.44 (1.92)	312.50 (1.88)	213.33 (1.10)	349.75 (1.76)
2	Livestock	1502.92 (6.50)	1000.00 (6.01)	1066.67 (5.52)	1224.14 (6.16)
3	Machinery	678.36 (2.94)	437.50 (2.63)	400.00 (2.07)	532.02 (2.68)
4	House Construction/Repairs	3976.61 (17.21)	3125.00 (18.79)	3466.67 (17.94)	3546.80 (17.86)
5	Others*	859.65 (3.72)	1031.25 (6.20)	1253.33 (6.48)	1000.00 (5.04)
6	Sub-Total(1-5)	7461.99 (32.30)	5906.25 (35.50)	6400.00 (33.11)	6652.71 (33.50)
II	Un-Productive Purposes				
7	Consumption	3199.09 (13.85)	2517.50 (15.13)	2446.67 (12.66)	2791.49 (14.06)
8	Medical Treatment	2134.50 (9.24)	1974.13 (11.87)	2000.00 (10.35)	2046.45 (10.31)
9	Marriage and Social Ceremonies	9368.42 (40.55)	5300.00 (31.86)	7013.33 (36.29)	7330.05 (36.91)
10	Others**	941.52 (4.07)	937.50 (5.64)	1466.67 (7.59)	1036.95 (5.22)
11	Sub-Total(7-10)	15643.54 (67.70)	10729.13 (64.50)	12926.67 (66.89)	13204.94 (66.50)
12	Grand Total(I+II)	23105.53 (100.00)	16635.38 (100.00)	19326.67 (100.00)	19857.65 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages

* Purchase and repair of Durables, Land development, expenditure and other expenditure

** Paying old debt and uncertain expenditure and other household expenditure

This table infers that these poor households incur debt for consumption expenditure, for social institutional ceremonies such as marriage and death ceremonies and for other purposes. The percentage share of debt used for consumption expenditure is the highest (15.13 per cent) in Patiala followed by Sri Muktsar Sahib (13.85 per cent) and Pathankot (12.66 per cent).

The field survey further highlighted that these poor labour households spend very high amount on health and medical services and this is also reflected in their debt value as for all households taken together, the proportion of debt spent on health to the total debt is 10.31 per cent, highlighting poor health conditions, high incidence of morbidity and low access to government health services and this is also one of the major reason for the poverty of these labour households and this also point out the fact that free health services of the government are not really reaching to the poor labour households in the villages. It is important to mention here that it has been observed from the field survey that majority of them are living in unhygienic environment such as poor sanitation facilities, unavailability of safe drinking water, poor housing conditions which are adversely affecting their health.

The major proportion of non-productive debt is used for social ceremonies such as marriage, death and birth ceremonies in the rural areas of Punjab. The proportion of debt used for social ceremonies is the highest (40.55 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Pathankot (36.29 per cent) and Patiala (31.86 per cent). The percentage share of debt to the total debt for paying old debt, uncertain expenditure and other household expenditure is 4.07, 5.64 and 7.59 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively, whereas this share is 5.22 per cent for all the beneficiary households taken together in the rural areas of Punjab.

In absolute values, the amount of debt used for productive purposes among women beneficiary households is Rs. 7461.99, Rs. 5906.25 and Rs. 6400 in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district respectively, whereas respective proportion of debt used for unproductive purposes is Rs. 15643.54, Rs. 10729.13 and Rs. 12926.67. For overall Punjab, the proportion of debt used for productive and unproductive purposes is Rs. 6652.71 and Rs. 13204.94 respectively. It is lucid from the analysis of purpose wise utilization of debt among women beneficiary households that these poor labour households incur most of debt for unproductive purposes and since financial institutions do not give loans for unproductive purposes, the households incur such debts from private sources such as large farmers, money lenders, trades etc. The terms of such loans are most of times, unfavorable, as a result, these households frequently get trapped in debt trap and land in vicious circle of poverty.

DISTRIBUTION OF DEBT ACCORDING TO RATE OF INTEREST AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The distribution of debt according to rate of interest among women beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is given in Table 5. The table shows that 32.40, 24.97 and 17.07 per cent of women beneficiary households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively have taken loan at the rate of interest ranging from 0 to 8 per cent. The proportion of loans taken at the rate ranging between 8-16 per cent is 15.54, 27.50 and 30.36 per cent among sampled households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively, whereas as a whole, this percentage share is 22.15 per cent for all the beneficiary households together in the rural areas of Punjab.

TABLE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF DEBT ACCORDING TO RATE OF INTEREST OF WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Rate of Interest	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
1	0-8 per cent	7485.38 (32.40)	4154.13 (24.97)	3300.00 (17.07)	5399.41 (27.19)
2	8-16 per cent	3590.91 (15.54)	4575.00 (27.50)	5866.67 (30.36)	4399.13 (22.15)
3	16-24 per cent	8660.82 (37.48)	5775.00 (34.72)	6826.67 (35.32)	7184.73 (36.18)
4	24-32 per cent	2964.91 (12.83)	1787.50 (10.75)	2533.33 (13.11)	2421.18 (12.19)
5	Above 32 per cent	403.51 (1.75)	343.75 (2.07)	800.00 (4.14)	453.20 (2.28)
6	Total	23105.53 (100.00)	16635.38 (100.00)	19326.67 (100.00)	19857.65 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages

The table further asserts the most astonishing fact that major proportion of debt (36.18 per cent) has been taken by the women beneficiary households at the rate of interest ranging between 16 to 24 per cent. The percentage share of debt taken at the rate ranging between 16 to 24 per cent is the highest (37.48 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Pathankot (35.32 per cent) and the lowest (34.72 per cent) in Patiala. The data depicts that 12.83, 10.75 and 13.11 per cent of women beneficiary households in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot districts respectively, have taken loan at the rate of interest ranging from 24-32 percent, whereas for overall Punjab, the share of debt in this range is 12.19 per cent for all the beneficiary households together in the rural areas of Punjab. In the case of range above 32 per cent, proportion of debt is highest (4.14 per cent) in Pathankot, followed by Patiala (2.07 per cent) and Sri Muktsar Sahib (1.75 per cent), whereas for all the household taken together, it is 2.28 per cent in rural areas of Punjab.

It is important to mention here that most of debt i.e. 36.18 per cent is availed at exorbitant rate of interest between 16-24 per cent, 27.19 per cent debt in the range of 0-8 per cent rate of interest and 22.15 per cent debt in the range of 8-16 per cent rate of interest, whereas 12.19 per cent debt has been taken at 24-32 per cent rate of interest among sample households in rural area of Punjab. At exorbitant rate i.e. 32 per cent and above the percentage of loans availed is 2.28 per cent. It is mainly due to reason that most of labourers are engaged in low paid activities and need money for unproductive purposes such as marriage and social ceremonies and for consumption requirement for which they are dependent on non-institutional sources who charge high rate of interest and exploits labour households in many ways. The proportion of share of debt in range of 0 to 8 per cent is the second highest, the field survey highlighted in this regard that in this range generally credit is provided by banks for productive purposes whereas by trader and friends and relatives for meeting day to day consumption requirements and for other social obligations.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD DEBT ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT RANGES AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The data pertaining to the distribution of household debt according to different ranges among the women beneficiary households in Punjab has been presented in Table 7. The table reveals that 66.37 per cent of total women beneficiary households in the Punjab are concentrated in the indebtedness range of Rs.0-15,000 and their share in total household debt is only 4.02 per cent. In this range the percentage share of households is the highest (71.88 per cent) in Patiala followed by Pathankot (69.33) and Sri Muktsar Sahib (57.89 per cent). In the range of Rs.15,000-30,000 the number of households is the highest (10.55 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib with 9.95 proportion of total debt whereas in Patiala percentage of households is 6.88 with 8.87 proportion of total debt, similarly in Pathankot the percentage share is 8.00 and 8.35 respectively.

The table further asserts that in the range of indebtedness of Rs.30,000 to 45,000 the percentage share of households is 11.70, 6.25, 5.33 per cent in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district respectively whereas their share in total debt is 18.45, 12.85 and 10.21 per cent respectively. In the indebtedness range of Rs. 45,000 to Rs. 60,000 the proportion of households is the highest (5.26 per cent) in Sri Muktsar Sahib followed by Patiala (2.50 per cent) and the lowest (1.33 per cent) in the Pathankot district. Whereas their share in total debt is 11.67, 7.66 and 3.45 per cent respectively

TABLE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD DEBT AS PER DIFFERENT RANGE OF DEBT

Debt Range (In Rs.)	Muktsar		Patiala		Pathankot		Punjab	
	Households	Debt	Households	Debt	Households	Debt	Households	Debt
0 to 15000	57.89	5.13	71.88	3.37	69.33	3.55	66.37	4.02
15000 to 30000	10.53	9.95	6.88	8.87	8.00	8.35	8.47	9.05
30000 to 45000	11.70	18.45	6.25	12.85	5.33	10.21	7.76	13.84
45000 to 60000	5.26	11.67	2.50	7.66	1.33	3.45	3.03	7.59
60000 to 75000	8.19	23.85	3.75	13.71	4.00	13.52	5.31	17.03
75000 and above	6.43	30.95	8.75	53.54	12.00	60.92	9.06	48.47
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

It is clear from the analysis that concentration of debt lies in the higher indebtedness ranges i.e. Rs. 60,000-75,000 and Rs. 75,000 and above. For overall Punjab, under these ranges proportion of households are 5.31 and 9.06 per cent respectively whereas their respective share in household debt is 17.03 and 48.47 per cent. It is clear from the above analysis that majority of the MGNREGS households that household debt was in the range upto Rs. 15,000 and majority of them are indebted to non-institutional sources. They have taken debt mainly for unproductive purposes.

DEBT-ASSET RATIO AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

The outstanding debt of a household is potentially a charge upon its assets. Hence, debt asset ratio depicts burden of debt on any particular group of household. As the value of assets increases the burden of debt decreases or in other words the debt asset ratio decreases. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (2013) defined debt asset ratio as:

The average amount of debt outstanding on a given date for a group of households expressed as a percentage of average value of assets owned by them on a given date.

TABLE 7: DEBT-ASSET RATIO AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

Debt-asset Ratio	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
Average Asset Holding Per Household	291736.50	389900.06	287356.95	329612.62
Average Debt Per Household	23105.53	16635.38	19326.67	19857.65
Debt Asset Ratio	7.92	4.27	6.73	6.02

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

The analysis of table shows that the highest debt asset ratio (7.92 per cent) is in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Pathankot (6.73) and the lowest (4.27 per cent) in Patiala. It has been clear from the analysis that burden of debt is the highest in Sri Muktsar Sahib highlighting poor economic condition among Labourer households in Sri Muktsar Sahib district. It is mention here that majority of them are landless and dwelling house is major assets of women beneficiary households in rural areas of Punjab.

DETERMINANTS OF INDEBTEDNESS AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

In order to determine the factors affecting the indebtedness among women beneficiary households in rural areas of Punjab, simple regression equation is fitted to the field data. The independent variables selected for this purpose are household size, number of illiterate members, debt for unproductive purpose, household assets, household income and household consumption. Indebtedness is taken as dependent variable. The coefficients of indebtedness determinants are calculated with the help of following linear equation.

HH_indebtedness = $b_0 + b_1 \text{ HH_size} + b_2 \text{ Illiterate members} + b_3 \text{ earning_members} + b_4 \text{ unproductive_debt} + b_5 \text{ HH_income} + b_6 \text{ HH_consumption}$
 HH_indebtedness = Indebtedness of a Household
 HH_size = Number of Household members
 Earning_Members = Number of Earning members in a family
 HH_Assets = Total assets of households
 Unproductive_debt = Amount of unproductive debt per household
 HH_income = Total income of Household
 HH_consumption = Total consumption of a household

TABLE 8: FACTORS AFFECTING INDEBTEDNESS AMONG WOMEN BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

Determinants of Indebtedness	Sri Muktsar Sahib	Patiala	Pathankot	Punjab
Standardized Regression Coefficients				
Household size	-0.018 (-0.464)	0.055 (1.367)	0.012 (0.302)	-0.009 (-0.360)
No. of illiterate members	0.042 (1.130)	0.003 (0.069)	0.027 (0.688)	0.037 (1.563)
No. of economic members	-0.163* (-3.914)	-0.058 (-1.281)	0.028 (0.575)	-0.100* (-3.802)
Household assets	0.069** (1.981)	0.027 (0.709)	0.100** (2.098)	0.039 (1.753)
Debt for unproductive purpose	0.832* (20.723)	0.861* (22.643)	0.915* (19.421)	0.860* (37.098)
Household income	0.094** (2.222)	0.008 (0.208)	-0.155** (2.336)	0.028 (1.178)
Household Consumption	0.122* (2.705)	0.108* (2.619)	0.073 (1.025)	0.115* (4.498)
Adjusted R2	0.821	0.798	0.931	0.820

Source: Field Survey, 2013-14.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate t-statistics

*significant at 1 percent level

**significant at 5 percent level

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between indebtedness and other factors affecting it. The result of regression analysis shows that the coefficient of unproductive debt, assets, consumption and income are very important factors which determine indebtedness in the Punjab. The determinant of illiteracy is positively contributing to household indebtedness in the entire district though it is not statistically significant, hence can be concluded that education has very little role to play in poor labourer household income generation and hence reducing indebtedness. The determinant of number of economic members and household size is not showing the result as has been hypothesized. The result shows that coefficient for number of economic members is showing positive sign for Pathankot district but negative sign for Sri Muktsar Sahib and Patiala. However, coefficient for household size is showing positive sign for Patiala and Pathankot district, but negative for Sri Muktsar Sahib district. Therefore, established relationship is not concrete to conclude anything with certainty.

R2 shows goodness of fit or also known as coefficient of determination. It represents proportion of variation in dependent variable explained by linear combination of independent variable. The magnitude of adjusted R2 is 82, 80 and 93 per cent in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Patiala and Pathankot district. For overall Punjab the value is 82 per cent which means only 18 per cent of variation in indebtedness is due to some other variables than explanatory variables.

Above discussion shows that most of women beneficiary households in Punjab are indebted and their situation is further deteriorated as majority of them incur debt for un-productive purposes from non-institutional sources. District wise analysis reveals that indebtedness is higher in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Pathankot and Patiala district. The important factor which is responsible for this difference is utilization of debt for unproductive purposes and as a result higher dependence on non-institutional sources.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In a nutshell, the foregoing analysis of debt highlighted that the share of non-institutional sources in the total debt is more than the institutional sources among the women beneficiary households in Punjab. The share of non-institutional sources in the total debt is highest in Sri Muktsar Sahib as compared to Pathankot and the lowest in Patiala, whereas the share of institutional sources is highest in Patiala as compared to Pathankot and Sri Muktsar Sahib. Because of lack of resources, low level of income and lack of awareness, these poor labourer households depend upon the non-institutional sources for their credit requirements. The purpose wise utilization of debt among women beneficiary households reveals that the share of debt for productive purposes is quite low as compared to share of debt for unproductive purposes this is due to prevalence of some social compulsions in the society such as expenditure on birth, death and marriage ceremonies and expenditure of consumption and health. The distribution of debt according to rate of interest further reveals that due to more dependence on non-institutional sources, the women beneficiary households have to pay relatively higher rate of interest in the rural areas of Punjab. Further, distribution of the debt in different ranges of debt reveals that majority of women beneficiary households are in the debt range upto of Rs. 15000. It is important to mention here that no doubt the amount of debt per household is low but their repaying capacity is also low because of low level on income, lack of regular sources of income, lack of productive assets, lack of gainful employment opportunities etc.

Thus, these poor households get most of their loans at very high rate of interest from non-institutional sources for unproductive purposes such as consumption expenditure; social-cultural ceremonies etc. hence are exploited. Thus in order to decrease their dependence upon non-institutional sources, procedures for institutional source of credit should be simplified and credit should be made available even for unproductive purposes to these poor households for saving them from the exploitation of moneylenders, large farmers, traders etc. Moreover, positive contribution of cooperative societies is seen in Patiala district, hence the scope of cooperative societies for overall Punjab should be strengthened.

The guaranteed 100 days work from MGNREGS can ease the burden of poor laborer households at least for consumption expenditure only. However, the findings from the field survey revealed that due to poor implementation at grass root level, this scheme has failed to generate 100 days of guaranteed work to these poor labourer households in the rural areas of Punjab.

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