



Being Poor, Becoming Poor: Extent of Poverty among Dalit Woman Labour Households in Rural Punjab

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Abstract

Based on primary data collected from 927 Dalit woman labour households spread over all the three geographical regions of Punjab, viz. Malwa, Doaba, and Majha, the present study revealed that the socio-economic conditions of the Dalit woman labour households were very miserable. A large majority of the members of Dalit woman labour households were living in income-based and consumption expenditure-based poverty in all the three regions according to the different poverty criteria. However, the incidence of income-based poverty among the Dalit woman labour households was found relatively higher as compared to the consumption expenditure-based poverty in all the three regions in rural Punjab. Further the incidence poverty among the Dalit woman labour households was relatively higher in Majha, followed by Malwa and Doaba under the different poverty criteria.

Keywords: Dalit; Woman labourers; Poverty line; Head-count ratio; Rural areas; Income; Consumption expenditure

Introduction

The problem of poverty, especially rural poverty has drawn a great deal of attention of intellectuals, planners and policy-makers in India. Though many anti-poverty programmes have been strengthened in the successive years, a large section of the population is still living Below the Poverty Line. Such a heavy incidence of poverty is sure to adversely affect the country's development [1,2]. Poverty has mounted frustration among the rural households which led to even suicide by many farmers and agricultural labourers. It has also increased migration from rural areas and adversely affected employment in such areas [3]. The Dalits lie at the bottom of the Indian society. Economically poor and often living in dire poverty, their inferior position is explained by the permanent ritual impurity deriving from their association with death and organic pollution. They are engaged in

occupations which are indispensable for removing impurity from social life and work as sweepers, scavengers, grave-diggers and tanners. They also work as agricultural labourers and are predominantly landless [4]. Discrimination based on caste status is a root cause of the high poverty levels that caste-affected people experience. Most of the Dalits, live Below the Poverty Line, earn less than the minimum wages, have no access to education, experience segregation in access to housing and suffer from numerous diseases due to lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. This inequality is exacerbated by the lack of implementation of existing laws to protect the Dalits [5]. Gender dimensions of poverty often gain significance from the notion that woman labourers constitute the poorest of the poor, being the lowest in social and economic hierarchies [6]. Generally, female-headed households in the labour class are necessarily poorer and suffer from vulnerabilities when compared with those of male-

headed households [7]. Low wages, unemployment and poor living conditions are a familiar part of their daily life. At the same time, in most of these societies, the Dalit women bear the worst consequences of poverty and exploitation as they suffer from oppression based on sex, class, and race. The traditions of male-dominated society force women to think that virtue lies in self-sacrifice, leading to their slow starvation when the family is living at a bare subsistence level [8]. The reduction in poverty and provision of other basic needs have been emphasized in all the Five-Year Plans, particularly since the Fifth Five-Year Plan [9]. The Government of India has implemented several anti-poverty schemes. These schemes aim at creating adequate livelihood opportunities for the marginalised segments of the population, provisioning of public services and goods for improving standard and quality of life, strengthening of institutions and delivery mechanisms to empower the poor and targeted development of backward regions through resource transfers and supportive policy measures [10]. Despite efforts made over the past few decades, the rural poverty still persists, particularly among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe people in rural areas [11]. The presence of such disparities and widespread discrimination against the Scheduled groups is not a new phenomenon in India [12]. In recent times, there has been a significant shift in focus in the poverty literature away from the ‘trickle-down’ concept of growth towards the idea of ‘pro-poor growth’. The ideal outcome of such a growth process should be that no person in society is deprived of the basic minimum needs. Hence, promoting pro-poor growth requires a strategy that is deliberately biased in favour of Below the Poverty Line people, so that they benefit proportionately more than the rich. Adequate public spending on basic education and health services represents direct pro-poor policies. Hence, it becomes necessary to identify and control other factors that can reduce poverty directly even if growth does not increase, or which can improve the mapping of growth onto poverty. The state of Punjab has the highest percentage of Dalit population amongst all the states of the country. As per the recent Socio-Economic and Caste Census, the Dalit population in Punjab is 88.60 lakh, which is 31.94 per cent of the total population of the state. This percentage has been reported even higher (36.75 per cent) in the rural areas which is nearly double the national average (18.46 per cent). It means that most of the population living Below the Poverty Line in the rural areas belongs to the Dalit population. Poverty is a phenomenon which is complex in origin as well as manifestation. It is said to be easily perceived, but difficult to describe [14]. Poverty is a polysemic and multidimensional concept. In its broadest sense, it is defined as a situation where the level of individual welfare is inadequate and socially unacceptable. However, its measurement is the subject of considerable debate. The non-monetarist view of poverty focuses on the deprivation of rights [15]. Poverty in the Indian context is

related to the low level of Per Capita Income and its highly skewed distribution, along with a slow pace of economic development [16]. Poverty is a state of deprivation. In absolute terms, it reflects the inability of an individual to satisfy certain basic minimum needs for a sustained, healthy and reasonably productive living. There is no unique approach to estimate a poverty line for measuring the incidence of poverty in conformity with the absolute notion of poverty. In the Indian context, a consensus emerged in the early 1970s on the adoption of an energy adequacy norm to anchor the minimum consumption level for defining the poverty line [17]. On the basis of above studies, the term ‘poverty’ is defined as inability of an individual to satisfy certain basic minimum needs for a sustained, healthy and reasonable productive living. All those people who live below this minimum desirable level of living are said to be living Below the Poverty Line. Most of the economists and policy-makers are unanimous on this definition of poverty. However, the debate on what we mean by the poverty line is still going on in academic circles. Prevalence of poverty among the Dalit woman labourers in Punjab has been analysed on the basis of following criteria:

Expert group criterion

The poverty line worked out by the Expert Group was Rs. 49.09 monthly, per capita expenditure at 1973-74 prices for the rural areas. However, for the purpose of this study, the poverty line was estimated by using the General Consumer Price Index for the rural labourers for the year 2016-17. The poverty line comes to Rs. 28021.65 per capita, per annum. All the Dalit woman labour households having per capita income or per capita consumption expenditure below Rs. 28021.65 have been considered as poor. The commonest measure is the Head-Count ratio, given by the proportion of the population whose income is below the defined poverty line, which can be expressed as under:

$$HCI = \sum_{i=1}^N I(Y_i < Z)$$

Where,

- HCI = Head-Count Index
- I = Indicator function
- Y_i = Actual income of ith household
- Z = Income at the poverty line
- N = Total number of persons.

The indicator function I is 1 if (Y_i < Z) is true and 0 otherwise. So, if actual income (Y_i) is less than the poverty line income (Z), then I is equal to 1; and the person would be counted as poor.

Tendulkar criterion

In 2005, Suresh Tendulkar Committee was constituted by the Planning Commission to review the methodology for estimation of poverty in India. This committee recommended to shift away

from the calorie-based model and made the poverty line somewhat broad by considering monthly spending on education, health, electricity and transport also. For 2004-05, the poverty line using this methodology was estimated at Rs. 543.51 per capita, per month for the rural areas of Punjab. For the purpose of this study, the poverty line comes to Rs. 16686.71 per capita, per annum by using the General Consumer Price Index for the rural labourers for the year 2016-17.

Rangarajan criterion

An Expert Group under the chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan, to review the methodology for measurement of poverty in the country, was constituted by the Planning Commission in June 2012. This Expert Group submitted its report on 30th June, 2014. As per the report, for 2011-12, the poverty line was estimated at Rs. 1127.48 per capita, per month in the rural areas of Punjab. The poverty line comes to Rs. 19375.67 per capita, per annum by using the General Consumer Price Index for the rural labourers for the year 2016-17.

50 Percent of state pci criterion

The fourth criterion defines poverty in relation to contemporary living level by drawing the poverty line at, say, half of the average Per Capita Income (PCI) level of the state. Punjab's Per Capita Income at current prices for the year 2016-17 was Rs. 131112. The formula for finding the income level of persons, who appear Below the Poverty Line, can be worked out as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cut-off line} &= \text{PCI of state} \times 50\% \\ &= \text{Rs. } 131112 \times 50/100 \\ &= \text{Rs. } 65556.00 \end{aligned}$$

40 Percent of state Pci criterion

Below the Poverty Line persons in the rural Punjab can also be identified by taking into consideration only 40 per cent of Per Capita Income (PCI) of the state instead of 50 per cent. The cut-off line as per this criterion can be calculated as below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cut-off line} &= \text{PCI of state} \times 40\% \\ &= \text{Rs. } 131112 \times 40/100 \\ &= \text{Rs. } 52444.80 \end{aligned}$$

World Bank's extreme poverty line criterion

In the recent years, the World Bank's methods to measure poverty have also been applied to estimate poverty among people of developing countries. The World Bank's first concept of poverty is the Extreme Poverty. In October 2015, the World Bank revised (largely due to inflation) Extreme International Poverty Line to \$1.90 per day, per person at Purchasing Power Parity (Ferreira et al., 2015).

The purchasing power parity of the Indian Rupee with US \$ in 2016-17 was 1 \$ = Rs. 17.82 (www.data.oecd.org). The cut-off line as per this criterion is as below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cut-off line} &= 1.90 \times 17.82 \times 365 \\ &= \text{Rs. } 12358.17 \end{aligned}$$

World Bank's moderate poverty line criterion

The World Bank's second concept of poverty is the Moderate Poverty. The revised Moderate International Poverty Line is \$3.10 per day, per person at Purchasing Power Parity (Ferreira et al., 2015). As per this criterion, the cut-off line is as below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cut-off line} &= 3.10 \times 17.82 \times 365 \\ &= \text{Rs. } 20163.33 \end{aligned}$$

Objectives of the Study

Socio-economic profiles of the poor households provide a background in understanding the poverty prevailing in these households. Therefore, the present paper attempts to examine the socio-economic and living conditions of the Dalit woman labourers and the incidence of income-based and consumption expenditure-based poverty among their households in the rural areas of Punjab.

Data and Methodology

The present study, based on multi-stage systematic random sampling technique, is related to the year 2016-17. For the purpose of present study, four districts were selected from the three geographical regions of Punjab, viz. Majha, Doaba and Malwa. Majha and Doaba comprise four districts each whereas Malwa forms a major part of the Punjab state and consists fourteen districts.

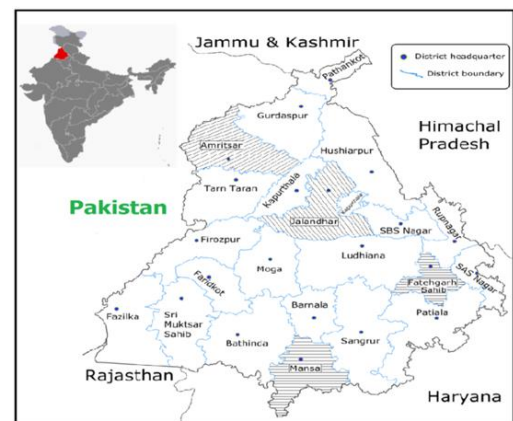


Figure 1: Map of the study area.

Amritsar district was selected from the Majha region; Jalandhar district from the Doaba region; whereas two districts, namely Mansa and Fatehgarh Sahib, were selected from the Malwa

region. The map of the study area is depicted in Figure 1 (Figure 1).

At the next stage, one village from each development block of the selected districts was chosen on the basis of random sampling technique. From these villages, 927 Dalit woman labour households were randomly selected and investigated by taking 20 per cent households from the total number of Dalit woman labour households. Out of these 927 respondent households, 340 households belonged to Malwa region, 243 to Doaba region and 314 to Majha region. The required primary data were collected from the sampled households through the well prepared questionnaire. Since the majority of the Dalit woman labourers were illiterate, it was decided to fill questionnaires-cum-schedules through the interview method. The results were analysed by using the mean values and percentages. Bar-diagram was used to present some of the results. The analysis has been divided into two sections. Section I deals with the analysis of socio-economic conditions of the Dalit woman labour households in the rural areas of Punjab, while Section II examines the incidence of income-based and consumption expenditure-based poverty prevailing among these labour households.

Results and Discussion

Section I

This section focuses on the analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the Dalit woman labourers in rural Punjab. Table 1 depicts that out of the total 4266 family members, 52.20 per cent members were in the earning category, 31.18 per cent members belonged to the dependent category, while the remaining, i.e.,

16.62 per cent members appeared under the earning dependent category in the rural areas in Punjab. In Doaba, out of the total 1091 family members, 54.45 per cent members belonged to the earning category, 30.43 per cent members appeared under the dependent category, while the remaining, i.e., 15.12 per cent members belonged to the earning dependent category. The corresponding proportions were 52.50, 28.63, and 18.87 per cent in Malwa; and 50.24, 34.58, and 15.18 per cent in Majha respectively. Education provides awareness to a person about the rights and prepares him/her for diverse occupation jobs [18]. Therefore, the education status of the earning members in a family is very important to examine the level of living of the family. The table reveals that out of the total 2227 earning members, more than half of, i.e., 56.31 per cent were illiterate. Thus, only 43.69 per cent acquired some formal school education in the rural Punjab. The level of literacy is low because the money meant for constructing and managing schools is often siphoned off and teachers are either not appointed or remain absent. According to the 10th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2014), 52 per cent of the school children in fifth grade were unable to read grade two books, and as a result they would be per forced to work at low levels of productivity for the rest of their lives and would likely remain poor. The region-wise analysis reveals that the percentage of illiterates was the highest, i.e., 65.31 per cent in Malwa and relatively the lowest, i.e., 40.74 per cent in Doaba. It was 58.06 per cent in Majha. Thus, only 34.69, 41.94, and 59.26 per cent acquired some formal school education in Malwa, Majha, and Doaba respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-Economic Background of Dalit Woman laborers.

Particular	Malwa	Doaba	Majha	Punjab
1. Economic status of the family members				
Earning	882 (52.50)	594 (54.45)	751 (50.24)	2227 (52.20)
Earning dependent	317 (18.87)	165 (15.12)	227 (15.18)	709 (16.62)
Dependent	481 (28.63)	332 (30.43)	517 (34.58)	1330 (31.18)
Total	1680 (100.00)	1091 (100.00)	1495 (100.00)	4266 (100.00)
2. Educational status of the earning members				
Illiterate	576 (65.31)	242 (40.74)	436 (58.06)	1254 (56.31)
Primary	120 (13.61)	128 (21.55)	89 (11.85)	337 (15.13)
Middle	68 (7.70)	123 (20.71)	84 (11.19)	275 (12.35)
Matric	67 (7.60)	65 (10.94)	98 (13.05)	230 (10.33)

Senior secondary	40 (4.53)	27 (4.55)	44 (5.86)	111 (4.98)
Graduate & above	9 (1.02)	5 (0.84)	0 (0.00)	14 (0.63)
Other professional	2 (0.23)	4 (0.67)	0 (0.00)	6 (0.27)
Total	882 (100.00)	594 (100.00)	751 (100.00)	2227 (100.00)
3. Age (in years) of the earning members				
Less than 30	196 (22.22)	153 (25.76)	221 (29.43)	570 (25.59)
30 to 44	340 (38.55)	220 (37.04)	327 (43.54)	887 (39.83)
45 to 59	231 (26.19)	176 (29.63)	133 (17.71)	540 (24.25)
60 & above	115 (13.04)	45 (7.58)	70 (9.32)	230 (10.33)
Total	882 (100.00)	594 (100.00)	751 (100.00)	2227 (100.00)
4. Family type				
Nuclear	340 (91.89)	208 (85.60)	294 (93.63)	842 (90.83)
Joint	30 (8.11)	35 (14.40)	20 (6.37)	85 (9.17)
Total	370 (100.00)	243 (100.00)	314 (100.00)	927 (100.00)
5. Family head				
Male	332 (89.73)	200 (82.30)	260 (82.80)	792 (85.44)
Female	38 (10.27)	43 (17.70)	54 (17.20)	135 (14.56)
Total	370 (100.00)	243 (100.00)	314 (100.00)	927 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2016-17

Note: The figures given in parentheses indicate percentages.

Age is an important factor which determines the physical ability to work as a labourer in the unorganised sector. It influences the behaviour of an individual by exposing him or her to varied situations a number of times. The table further reveals that majority of the earning members, i.e., 39.83 per cent were in the age group of 30 to 44 years. Slightly more than one-fourth, i.e., 25.59 per cent of the earning members was less than 30 years. Almost similar percentage of the earning members, i.e., 24.25 per cent was in the age group of 45 to 59 years. Only 10.33 per cent were in the age category of 60 years and above. The field survey reveals that most of the Dalit woman labourers representing this age-group got employment under MGNREGA. The region-wise analysis shows that majority of earning members of the Dalit woman labour households were in the age group of 30 to 44 years in all the three regions. As many as 43.54 per cent of the respondents in Majha, 37.04 per cent in Doaba and 38.55 per cent in Malwa appeared under this age group. Whereas 29.63, 26.19, and 17.71 per cent respondents were in the age group of 45 to 59

years in Doaba, Malwa, and Majha respectively. Further, 13.04 per cent respondents in Malwa and 9.32 per cent in Majha and 7.58 per cent in Doaba belonged to the age group of 60 years and above. In the age group of less than 30 years, the earning members were 29.43, 25.76, and 22.22 per cent in Majha, Doaba, and Malwa respectively. The table further reveals that most of the Dalit woman labourers, i.e., 90.83 per cent were living in the nuclear families with their husband and children. This also indicates that only 9.17 per cent of the respondents had the joint family system. It was observed during the field survey that all the adult members and in some cases, children in these households were contributing to enhance the family income. The region-wise analysis reveals that most of the respondents had nuclear families in all the three regions under study. The data clearly indicate that 93.63, 91.89, and 85.60 per cent of the respondents were living in nuclear families in Majha, Malwa, and Doaba respectively. It can also be interpreted that only 14.40, 8.11, and 6.37 per cent of the respondents had the joint family system in Doaba, Malwa, and

Majha respectively. A large majority of the Dalit woman labour households, i.e., 85.44 per cent were headed by male members of the family. This indicates that only 14.56 per cent of the households were headed by females. The region-wise data show that 89.73 per cent households in Malwa, 82.80 per cent in Majha and 82.30 per cent in Doaba were headed by male members. Only 17.70 per cent of the Dalit woman labour households in Doaba, 17.20 per cent in Majha and 10.27 per cent in Malwa were headed

by females. It was observed during the field survey that majority of the Dalit woman labourers heading their households were widows. This demonstrates that the Dalit woman labourers were living in a patriarchal society. The condition of Dalits is precarious in terms of residence, housing and health conditions. The living conditions of the Dalit woman labourers in the rural areas of Punjab were quite pathetic (Table 2).

Table 2: Housing Conditions of Dalit Woman Labourers.

Particulars	Number of Dalit woman labourers			
	Malwa	Doaba	Majha	Punjab
Type of house				
<i>Kutch</i>	8 (2.16)	7 (2.88)	7 (2.23)	22 (2.37)
<i>Semi- pucca</i>	332 (90.81)	219 (90.12)	296 (94.27)	851 (91.80)
<i>Pucca</i>	26 (7.03)	17 (7.00)	11 (3.50)	54 (5.83)
Total	370 (100.00)	243 (100.00)	314 (100.00)	927 (100.00)
Condition of house				
Good	5 (1.35)	2 (0.82)	5 (1.59)	12 (1.29)
Moderate	69 (18.65)	66 (27.16)	44 (14.01)	179 (19.31)
Dilapidated	296 (80.00)	175 (72.02)	265 (84.39)	736 (79.40)
Total	370 (100.00)	243 (100.00)	314 (100.00)	927 (100.00)
Status of kitchen in dwelling house				
Yes	95 (25.68)	77 (31.69)	111 (35.35)	283 (30.53)
No	275 (74.32)	166 (68.31)	203 (64.65)	644 (69.47)
Total	370 (100.00)	243 (100.00)	314 (100.00)	927 (100.00)
Average number of rooms available	1.84	1.65	1.75	1.76
Families having access to bathroom/toilet	294 (79.46)	216 (88.89)	265 (84.39)	775 (83.60)
Condition of bathroom/toilet				
Good	5 (1.35)	2 (0.82)	0 (0.00)	7 (0.76)
Moderate	46 (12.43)	32 (13.17)	24 (7.64)	102 (11.00)
Dilapidated	243 (65.68)	182 (74.90)	241 (76.75)	666 (71.84)
Total	294 (79.46)	216 (88.89)	265 (84.39)	775 (83.60)

Source: Field Survey, 2016-17

Note: The figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The houses, they were living in, were in a pitiable condition; and there was not even proper provision of drinking water which exposes them to many health hazards. A large majority of the respondents, i.e., 91.80 per cent were living in semi-pucca houses, whereas only 5.83 per cent had pucca houses. It is pertinent to note that 2.37 per cent of the respondents had kutchha houses to live in. The table further reveals that majority of the respondents, i.e., 79.40 per cent were living in dilapidated housing conditions, while the houses of 19.31 per cent respondents were neither in a good or bad condition. Only a small proportion of the respondents, i.e., 1.29 per cent had relatively better houses to live in. The table clearly reflects that the Dalit woman labourers were living in pitiable conditions due to their economic compulsions. The field survey brought out a disturbing fact that the Dalit woman labourers found it hard to even get their houses repaired.

The table also shows that 69.47 per cent of the total Dalit woman labour households had no arrangement of a separate kitchen in their houses. On an average, less than two (1.76) rooms were found in sampled household. Out of the total 927 households, 83.60 per cent had access to bathroom/toilet. However, the bathrooms/toilets used by them were not proper in any respect. Dalit labourers lacked the resources to avail these amenities. Even though the state government gives grant to construct the toilet in the rural areas but most of the Dalits, who lack even a pucca house to live in, cannot afford to spend a few thousand rupees on a toilet [19]. The bathrooms/toilets were in extremely bad conditions in the case of 71.84 per cent Dalit woman labour households. Only 11.00 per cent of the respondents have neither good, nor bad bathrooms/toilets, whereas a meagre proportion of the respondents, i.e., 0.76 per cent had bathrooms/toilets in a relatively good condition. The region-wise data explaining the housing conditions highlights that majority of the respondent Dalit woman labourers had semi-pucca houses. There were 94.27 per cent respondents in Majha, 90.81 per cent in Malwa, and 90.12 per cent in Doaba who lived in semi-pucca houses. Only 7.03, 7.00, and 3.50 per cent respondents had pucca houses in Malwa, Doaba, and Majha respectively. It needs to be noted here that only 2.88 per cent respondents in Doaba, 2.23 per cent in Majha and 2.16 per cent in Malwa had kutchha houses to live in. The table also reveals that 84.39 per cent of the respondents were living in dilapidated houses in Majha. The corresponding figures were 80.00 and 72.02 per cent for Malwa and Doaba respectively. It presents a clear picture about the poverty prevailing in their houses. As many as 27.16, 18.65, and 14.01 per cent respondents lived in moderate housing conditions in Doaba, Malwa, and Majha respectively. Only 1.59 per cent respondents in Majha, 1.35 per cent in Malwa and 0.82 per cent in Doaba lived in relatively good housing conditions. The table also indicates that 74.32 per cent of the respondents in Malwa, 68.31 per cent in Doaba and 64.65 per cent in Majha had no separate kitchens in

their houses. The average numbers of rooms available per household were 1.84, 1.75, and 1.65 in Malwa, Majha, and Doaba respectively. As many as 88.89 per cent respondent Dalit woman labourers in Doaba, 84.39 per cent in Majha and 79.46 per cent in Malwa had access to a bathroom/toilet. The bathrooms/toilets were in a dilapidated condition in the case of 76.75 per cent of the Dalit woman labour households in Majha, 74.90 per cent in Doaba and 65.68 per cent in Malwa. A small proportion of the respondents, i.e., 13.17 per cent in Doaba, 12.43 per cent in Malwa and 7.64 per cent in Majha had neither good, nor bad bathrooms/toilets in their houses. Only a minimal proportion, i.e., 1.35 per cent in Malwa and 0.82 per cent in Doaba had bathrooms/toilets in a relatively good condition. However, not even a single respondent fell under this category in Majha [20-29].

Section II

This section is devoted to the analysis of extent of income-based and consumption expenditure-based poverty among the members of the Dalit woman labour households.

Incidence of income-based poverty

All the Dalit woman labour households having Per Capita Income below the cut-off lines, defined by the policy-makers, economists, and institutions, have been considered as poor. Table 3 carries the data showing the total members of Dalit woman labour households living below the income-based poverty line, which have been worked out on the basis of different income criteria as mentioned above. A perusal of the table shows that out of 4266 family members of the Dalit woman labour households, 92.52 per cent were living Below the Poverty Line as suggested by the Expert Group criterion. As per the poverty criterion suggested by the Tendulkar Committee, out of total family members of Dalit woman labour households, 57.71 per cent were living Below the Poverty Line. However, according to the Rangarajan criterion, the incidence of income-based poverty among the family members of the Dalit woman labourers was 72.71 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab. Further, all the family members of Dalit woman labour households were living Below the Poverty Line according to the 50 per cent of state Per Capita Income criterion. Even when the 40 per cent of state Per Capita Income criterion was taken into account, the proportion of the family members living Below the Poverty Line was almost the same, i.e., 99.74 per cent. On the basis of the World Bank's Extreme Poverty measure of \$ 1.90 per person, per day; 33.29 per cent of the family members of the Dalit woman labour households were living Below the Poverty Line. On the other hand, 76.42 per cent of the total family members of the Dalit woman labourers were living Below the Poverty Line as calculated on the basis of World Bank's Moderate Poverty Line criterion (Table 3).

The table further highlights the data showing the region-wise percentage of the family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line as estimated on the basis of different income criteria. Some variations have been noticed in the levels of poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labourers across the three regions. According to the Expert Group criterion, the incidence of income-based poverty among the

family members of Dalit woman labourers was found to be the highest, i.e., 94.78 per cent in Majha, followed by Malwa, and Doaba with the respective percentages of 91.85, and 90.47. As per the poverty criterion suggested by the Tendulkar Committee, the percentage of the family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line was the highest, i.e., 69.50 in Majha, and the lowest, i.e., 49.59 in Doaba.

Table 3: Income-based Poverty among Family Members of Dalit Woman Labourers

S. no.	Criterion	Poverty line*	Family members living Below the Poverty Line			
			Malwa	Doaba	Majha	Punjab
1.	Expert Group criterion	28021.65	1543 (91.85)	987 (90.47)	1417 (94.78)	3947 (92.52)
2.	Tendulkar criterion	16686.71	877 (52.20)	541 (49.59)	1039 (69.50)	2457 (57.71)
3.	Rangarajan criterion	19375.67	1198 (71.31)	696 (63.79)	1208 (80.80)	3102 (72.71)
4.	50 per cent of state PCI criterion	65556.00	1680 (100.00)	1091 (100.00)	1495 (100.00)	4266 (100.00)
5.	40 per cent of state PCI criterion	52444.80	1678 (99.88)	1085 (99.45)	1492 (99.80)	4255 (99.74)
6.	World Bank's Extreme Poverty Line criterion	12358.17	489 (29.11)	289 (26.49)	642 (42.94)	1420 (33.29)
7.	World Bank's Moderate Poverty Line criterion	20163.33	1261 (75.06)	738 (67.64)	1261 (84.35)	3260 (76.42)
Source: Field Survey, 2016-17						
Note: The figures given in parentheses indicate percentages.						
* Per Capita Income, per annum						

This percentage was 52.20 in Malwa. According to the Rangarajan criterion, the incidence of income-based poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labourers were 80.80, 71.31, and 63.79 per cent in Majha, Malwa, and Doaba, respectively. According to the 50 per cent of state Per Capita Income (PCI) criterion, all the family members of Dalit woman labourers in all the three regions were living Below the Poverty Line. Similarly, almost all the family members of Dalit woman labourers, i.e., 99.88 per cent in Malwa, 99.80 per cent in Majha, and 99.45 per cent in Doaba were living Below the Poverty Line even when the 40 per cent of state Per Capita Income (PCI) criterion was taken into account. The table also demonstrates the region-wise percentages of the family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line which have been worked out on the basis of World Bank's Extreme Poverty Line criterion, i.e., Per Capita Income below \$1.90, per day. Accordingly, the incidence of poverty was the highest, i.e., 42.94 per cent in Majha, and the lowest, i.e., 26.49 per cent in Doaba. This percentage was 29.11 for the family members of Dalit woman labourers in Malwa. Similarly, as per the World Bank's Moderate

Poverty Line criterion, the percentage of the family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line was the highest, i.e., 84.35 in Majha, whereas the corresponding percentages for Malwa and Majha were 75.06 and 67.64, respectively. It is evident that the proportion of persons living Below the Extreme Poverty Line defined by the World Bank is lower as compared to the other criteria. This is because of the fact that the World Bank tries to prove that the proportions of persons living Below the Poverty Line are going to decline under the agenda of the corporate sector. Figure 2 highlights the proportions of the family members of Dalit woman labour households living below the income-based poverty line as suggested by different scholars and institutions (Figure 2).

Incidence of Consumption Expenditure-Based Poverty

The extent of consumption expenditure-based poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labour households has also been worked out; and the results are presented in Table 4. The basic criteria for the poverty line remains the same as applied in the

income-based poverty measures. All the family members of Dalit woman labourers having per capita consumption expenditure below Rs. 28021.65 in the rural areas of Punjab have been treated as poor, according to the Expert Group criterion. The table shows that out of total 4266 family members, 86.57 per cent were living Below the Poverty Line as per the Expert Group criterion. As per the poverty criterion suggested by the Tendulkar Committee, 44.07 per cent members of the Dalit woman labour households were living Below the Poverty Line.

According to the Rangarajan criterion, the incidence of consumption expenditure-based poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labour households was 56.68 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab. However, under the two criteria, i.e., 50 per cent of state PCI and 40 per cent of state PCI, a huge majority of the family members, i.e., 99.93 and 98.41 per cent respectively were living Below the Poverty Line. It was further observed that 13.03 per cent of the family members of Dalit woman labourers were Below the Poverty Line as per the World Bank's Extreme Poverty Line criterion. On the other hand, according to the World Bank's Moderate Poverty Line, 61.65 per cent of the family members of Dalit woman labourers were living Below the Poverty Line (Table 4).

The table also contains the data showing the region-wise consumption expenditure-based poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labour households in the rural areas of Punjab. The table indicates that the percentage of family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line, according to the Expert Group criterion, was the highest, i.e., 90.03 per cent in Majha and the lowest, i.e., 82.77 per cent in Doaba. It was 85.95 per cent in Malwa. As per the Tendulkar Committee, more than half, i.e., 51.44 per cent of family members of the Dalit woman labourers were living Below the Poverty Line in Majha.

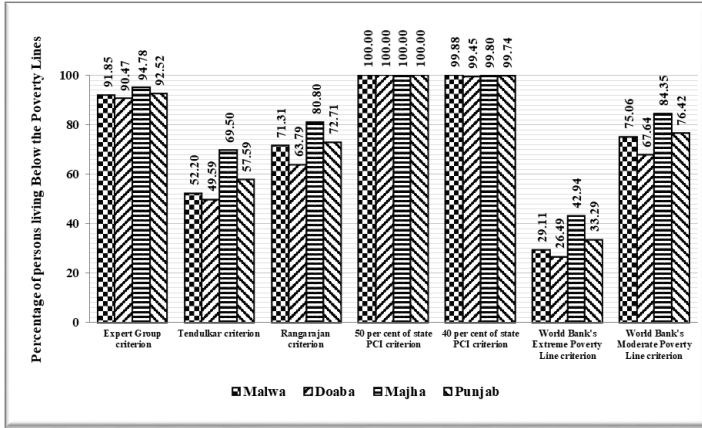


Figure 2: Percentage of Family Members of Dalit Woman Laborers Living in Income-based Poverty.

Table 4: Consumption Expenditure-based Poverty among Family Members of Dalit Woman Labourers.

S. no.	Criterion	Poverty line*	Family members living Below the Poverty Line			
			Malwa	Doaba	Majha	Punjab
1.	Expert Group criterion	28021.65	1444 (85.95)	903 (82.77)	1346 (90.03)	3693 (86.57)
2.	Tendulkar criterion	16686.71	718 (42.74)	393 (36.02)	769 (51.44)	1880 (44.07)
3.	Rangarajan criterion	19375.67	883 (52.56)	497 (45.55)	1038 (69.43)	2418 (56.68)
4.	50 per cent of state PCI criterion	65556.00	1680 (100.00)	1088 (99.73)	1495 (100.00)	4263 (99.93)
5.	40 per cent of state PCI criterion	52444.80	1657 (98.63)	1068 (97.89)	1473 (98.53)	4198 (98.41)
6.	World Bank's Extreme Poverty Line criterion	12358.17	207 (12.32)	117 (10.72)	232 (15.52)	556 (13.03)
7.	World Bank's Moderate Poverty Line criterion	20163.33	996 (59.29)	537 (49.22)	1097 (73.38)	2630 (61.65)

Source: Field Survey, 2016-17

Note: The figures given in parentheses indicate percentages.

* Per Capita Consumption expenditure, per annum

However, the corresponding percentages for Malwa and Doaba were 42.74 and 36.02 per cent respectively. According to the Rangarajan criterion, the incidence of consumption expenditure-based poverty among the family members of Dalit woman labourers was 69.43, 52.56, and 45.55 per cent in Majha, Malwa, and Doaba respectively. The table shows that all the family

members of the Dalit woman labourers in Malwa and Majha were living Below the Poverty Line according to the 50 per cent of state Per Capita Income criterion. The corresponding percentage for Doaba was 99.73. Even when we take into account only 40 per cent of the Per Capita Income of state instead of 50 per cent to identify the family members of Dalit woman labourers living

Below the Poverty Line, it was observed that a very large percentage of the family members of Dalit woman labourers was living Below the Poverty Line.

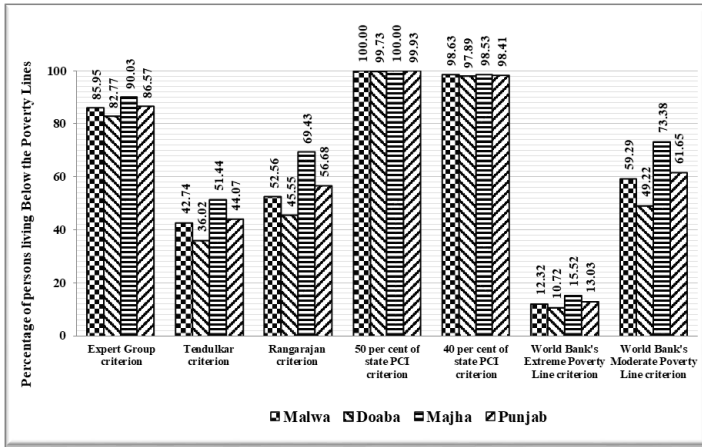


Figure 3: Percentage of Family Members of Dalit Woman Labourers Living in Consumption Expenditure-based Poverty.

The proportions of such family members were 98.63, 98.53, and 97.89 per cent in Malwa, Majha, and Doaba respectively. According to the World Bank's Extreme Poverty Line criterion, the incidence of poverty was the highest, i.e., 15.52 per cent in Majha and the lowest, i.e., 10.72 per cent in Doaba. It was 12.32 per cent for Malwa. Similarly, when the World Bank's Moderate Poverty Line criterion was taken into account; the percentage of family members living Below the Poverty Line was the highest, i.e., 73.38 per cent in Majha, whereas the corresponding percentages for Malwa and Doaba were 59.29 and 49.22 respectively. Figure 3 reflects the proportions of the family members of Dalit woman labourers living Below the Poverty Line as per the different criteria (Figure 3).

The figure clearly depicts that the incidence of consumption expenditure-based poverty among the Dalit woman labour households was relatively higher in Majha, followed by Malwa and Doaba under the different poverty criteria.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Policy implications on the basis of the conclusions of the study can be summarized as under:

- The study brings out a very disturbing fact that more than half (56.31 per cent) of the earning members of the Dalit woman labour households are illiterate. Therefore, adult education programmes must be effectively implemented for the Dalit woman labourers to curtail the illiteracy level among them on the priority basis. This will create awareness among the Dalit woman labourers about their rights, problems and solution of these problems. Quality education should be provided to the children of the Dalit woman labourers so that they may get jobs in the non-agricultural

sector also, which may ultimately lead to the improvement in the economic condition of their families. The government should come forward with more financial assistance for the students belonging to labour class families which may help to arrest the problem of drop-outs at the school level and encourage their parents to understand the significance of education more earnestly.

- A majority of the Dalit woman labourers under study are living in the semi-pucca houses and most of their houses are in dilapidated condition. They find it hard to even get their houses repaired. It clearly reflects that Dalit woman labourers have to live under pitiable conditions. To overcome this problem, the rural housing programmes chalked out by the government should bring more and more needy and poor people, particularly the Dalit woman labourers, in its ambit.
- A large majority of the members of the Dalit woman labour households are living Below the Poverty Lines defined by the policy makers, economists and institutions. Therefore, the central and state governments must take strong initiatives for creating sufficient employment opportunities and should effectively implement the policies for improving the economic condition of these households in the rural areas of Punjab. The agro-based small-scale industries should also be established in the rural areas on priority basis. There is an urgent need to create awareness among the Dalit woman labourers about the various employment programmes meant for them. Both the government and non-government organizations need to take the necessary steps to organise skill development programmes for the economic upliftment of Dalit woman labourers. The government should provide loans to the Dalit woman labour households either at zero or very low rate of interest for the establishment of various income generating ventures.
- The last, but the most important implication of the present study is based on the fact that all the Dalit woman labourers under study are landless. Therefore, the study highlights the need for land reforms in favour of the Dalits which have had been neglected since the ages. Land reforms in favour of the Dalits can really change their life. The practical example can be seen in Balad Kalan village of Sangrur district. In this village, under the aegis of Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Committee, the success of Dalit households' protests is to take control of common land despite having many opposing forces. Because the Dalit households have succeeded in leasing in common land, they are practicing co-operative farming and have acquired a feeling of self-respect. Now the Dalit women have not to go in the fields of large farmers to collect the fodder for their milch animals, and vegetables

and food grains for self-consumption. This successful struggle by the Dalit households has resulted in the elimination of many types of exploitation of the Dalit woman labourers in rural Punjab.

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