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A Study on Household Consumption Expenditure of Dalit Women Labourers in Rural Haryana

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Abstract

The present study reveals that Dalit women labour households, on an average, have a consumption expenditure of ₹93003.86 annually in rural Haryana. This consumption expenditure is highest, i.e., ₹101837, in Sirsa district and lowest, i.e., ₹84214.81, in Mahendragarh district. It is ₹93812.85, ₹91474.15 in Sonipat and Yamunanagar districts, respectively. The annual per-capita consumption expenditure of these households comes to ₹19293.14 in rural Haryana. It is ₹20309.33, ₹20294.44, ₹19388.98, and ₹17108.20 in Sirsa, Yamunanagar, Sonipat, and Mahendragarh districts, respectively. Dalit women labourers have very low consumption expenditure because their income is usually irregular and insufficient. The average propensity to consume for these households is 1.05. Since the value is more than one, it means that, on average, these households spend more than their total income. As a result, a typical household in the sample faces a yearly deficit.

Keywords

Dalit women, Consumption expenditure, Rural Haryana, Durable, Non-durable, Services, Socio-religious ceremonies, Average propensity to consume.

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1. Introduction

In rural India, Dalit women labourers occupy one of the most disadvantaged positions within the socio-economic structure due to the intersection of caste, gender, and class inequalities. Dalits officially recognized as Scheduled Caste (SC) have historically faced social exclusion, limited access to productive resources, and discrimination in labour markets. When gender is added to caste disadvantage, Dalit women experience a double or even triple marginalization, which significantly influences their income levels, employment opportunities, and ultimately their household consumption expenditure patterns. Consumption expenditure is widely used in development economics as a key indicator of living standards, poverty, and economic well-being. For rural Dalit women labour households, consumption expenditure does not merely reflect spending behaviour but also indicates survival strategies under constrained income conditions. A large share of their income is generally allocated to essential needs such as food, fuel, healthcare, and basic clothing, leaving very little scope for saving, education, or asset creation. In many cases, the average propensity to consume of these households tends to be high, sometimes even exceeding income, forcing families to rely on informal credit sources and debt cycles (Kumari, 2017).

Rural labour markets often confine Dalit women to low-paid, irregular, and informal employment, such as agricultural wage work, domestic labour, brick-kiln work, and seasonal migration. Wage discrimination, delayed payments, and the absence of social security further reduce their disposable income. These structural barriers directly shape consumption patterns, where expenditure is largely need-based rather than choice-based (Singh, 2005).

2. Review of Literature

Regional studies, like those in Punjab, reveal that landlessness, lack of skill development, and limited bargaining power in labour markets are central factors influencing consumption expenditure patterns. Households headed or supported by Dalit women labourers usually display low asset ownership and high consumption vulnerability, making them more sensitive to inflation and price fluctuations of essential commodities. Consumption expenditure among rural Dalit women labourers provides deeper insight

into poverty dynamics, gendered economic inequality, and social justice issues (Singh *et. al.*, 2019).

Haryana is considered one of the more prosperous agricultural states in India, but the benefits of development are not evenly distributed across social groups. Rural Dalit women labourers are landless or possess very small landholdings, which limits their economic independence. Their dependence on daily wage labour makes household income highly unstable. So, consumption expenditure is largely subsistence-oriented rather than growth-oriented. Employment conditions further influence expenditure patterns. Rural Dalit women in Haryana frequently face wage discrimination, seasonal unemployment, and a lack of social security benefits, which restrict their purchasing power. Government initiatives such as MGNREGA, old age pensions, widow pensions, and subsidized food programs provide partial relief but are often insufficient to ensure long-term economic stability (Narayan & Laxmi, 2016).

Several studies (Thresia, 2004; Balakrishanan, 2005; Reddy, 2008; Kareriya, 2011; Goswami, 2013; Mondal, 2013; Dar, 2014; Dinesha, 2016; Gundemeda, 2020; Kumar, 2020; Pramod, 2020; Raja, 2022) indicate that almost woman labourers are Dalit, illiterate, unskilled, and economically very weak. Because of the economic compulsion, they are employed in the unorganized sector, where Dalit women labourers are working as labourers in agriculture, construction work, factory work, and other marginal work for daily wages. Women from poor families accept the inferior working conditions due to their economic compulsion. Rural Dalit women labourers usually have low consumption expenditure because their income is limited and irregular. They mostly work in daily wage jobs where payment is small and not guaranteed every day. Due to this, they spend less on food, health, education, and other basic needs. Social discrimination and a lack of job opportunities also reduce their earning capacity. As a result, their overall standard of living remains low compared to other groups in rural areas. In many cases, they also have a large family responsibility, so their earnings are used only for basic survival. Savings are very rare, and unexpected expenses like illness or emergencies create more financial stress. Therefore, their consumption pattern remains very low and reflects their economic vulnerability in rural society.

3. Objectives of the study

Objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To estimate per household and per capita consumption expenditure of the Dalit women labourers;
2. To analyze the patterns of consumption expenditure on various items; and

3. To examine the average propensity to consume (APC) among Dalit women labourers.

4. Research Methodology

The present study describes the consumption expenditures of rural Dalit women labourers in Haryana. It is a cross-sectional analysis related to the year 2020-21 that includes the data related to the consumption spending of Dalit women labourers. The sampling design is selected by the three-stage stratified sampling; selection of districts, selection of villages and selection of households. Haryana state can be divided into four parts based on geographical factors and natural regions. Based on random sampling, Sonapat district has been selected from Eastern Haryana, Sirsa district from Western Haryana, Yamunanagar district from Ambala Plain or Sub-montane Belt, and Mahendragarh district from Southern Haryana.

Based on random sampling, one village from each development block of the selected district has been chosen. Thus, in all, thirty villages have been selected for the survey, eight from Sonapat district, seven from Sirsa district, seven from Yamunanagar district, and eight from Mahendragarh district. Out of the total 30 selected villages, 535 Dalit woman labour households have been randomly selected and investigated by taking 10 per cent of the households from the total number of Dalit woman labour households. The primary data were collected from the selected households through well-structured questionnaires. The majority of the respondents were illiterate, so the questionnaire was filled out by the interview method.

5. Levels of Household Consumption Expenditure

Table-1 explains the average spending pattern of Dalit women labour households in rural Haryana. It shows how much money a normal rural Dalit woman labourer's family spends in one year on different needs. On average, a rural Dalit woman labourer household spends about ₹93003.86 per year. A large share of this money is used on non-durable goods, which is around ₹55808.75. After this, families spend on services, durable goods, and social-religious ceremonies, which cost ₹21344.20, ₹8880.50, and ₹6970.41, respectively.

Among non-durable items, the biggest expenses are food grains and milk & milk products, where families spend around ₹11345.64 and ₹9584.95 each year. For durable goods, the highest spending is on house construction, addition of rooms, & major repairs, which is about ₹4838.21 annually. When it comes to services, the highest cost is health care, with an average spending of ₹13282.80 per year. In addition, families also spend money on marriages and other social ceremonies, which comes to around ₹6320.84 annually. Overall, food, housing repairs, health care, and social ceremonies are the main areas where rural Dalit women labour households spend most of their money.

**Table-1: Levels of Consumption Expenditure of Rural
Dalit Woman Labour Households**

(Mean Values in ₹, Per Annum)

S. No.	Items of Consumption	Sonapat District	Sirsa District	Yamunanagar District	Mahendragarh District	Haryana
A.	Non-durables					
1	Food grains					
1.1	Cereals					
I	Wheat	7778.90	7178.93	7502.09	6403.10	7219.80
II	Rice	1248.38	1152.50	1271.10	1341.01	1251.40
III	Maize	871.00	455.36	1117.94	2537.21	1226.77
1.2	Pulses	978.77	1221.93	1193.31	1456.82	1212.21
1.3	Food grains are received as wages in kind.	447.00	371.21	426.03	503.49	435.46
2	Milk & milk products					
2.1	Home-produced & purchased	10099.02	7008.50	9556.29	6782.94	8352.74
2.2	Received as wages in kind	1098.85	1653.57	1157.94	987.60	1232.21
3	Condiments & spices	3580.38	3562.14	3528.68	3503.88	3544.02
4	Fruits	722.85	688.36	541.10	486.51	610.64
5	Vegetables	2981.54	3139.64	2995.00	3044.88	3041.61
6	Edible oils	1925.00	2386.07	1863.97	1744.19	1986.54
7	Sugarcane products	4066.46	5562.14	3902.06	4158.91	4438.36
8	Meat, fish & eggs	1156.54	1787.86	1162.13	802.25	1237.74
9	Tea leaves	3465.31	4731.43	3397.06	3117.83	3695.50
10	Biscuits, bread & sweets	999.61	1102.86	1055.66	899.61	1016.77
11	Pickles	457.31	389.29	424.34	430.15	424.58
12	Intoxicants & drugs	1680.77	4239.29	2314.93	2348.06	2672.39
13	Fuel, LPG & Electricity	6152.31	5885.72	6122.06	5613.95	5945.05

14	Clothes & footwear	4554.61	5365.00	4004.78	3636.43	4405.51
15	Soaps & detergents	1577.31	2073.93	1571.40	1569.15	1703.79
16	Water filter	190.15	217.71	206.47	—	155.66
Sub-total (A)		56032.07	60173.44	55314.34	51367.97	55808.75
B.	Durables					
1	House construction, addition of rooms & major repairs	4768.46	5250.71	4996.62	4293.80	4838.21
2	Television	302.54	235.14	237.94	89.77	217.18
3	Computer/ laptop	—	—	—	—	—
4	Electric fans/cooler	185.77	293.36	212.13	183.88	220.17
5	Utensils	242.23	354.50	260.59	224.65	272.04
6	Cots	288.92	325.50	289.04	244.96	287.93
7	Furniture	248.08	342.50	213.16	214.50	255.81
8	Refrigerator	23.08	57.07	7.35	1.55	22.79
9	Bicycle/rickshaw / autorickshaw	27.46	70.71	72.43	91.01	65.53
10	Sewing machine	7.85	24.36	16.29	5.58	13.77
11	Motorcycle/ scooter/ moped	1294.38	1120.71	941.62	276.74	913.89
12	Mobile phones	1490.00	1765.71	1370.07	1255.04	1475.01
13	Ornaments	282.31	497.86	194.27	206.98	298.17
Sub-total (B)		9161.08	10338.13	8811.51	7088.46	8880.50
C.	Services					
1	Education	4069.23	3428.57	3511.03	3670.54	3663.55
2	Health care	13123.08	14335.72	12486.03	13141.09	13282.80
3	Conveyance	2377.54	3021.43	2530.59	1886.05	2466.43
4	Communication	1283.85	1942.86	1272.94	1194.57	1432.00
5	Entertainment	455.38	443.21	413.01	277.91	398.64
6	Newspaper & books	131.08	36.43	128.60	110.78	100.78
Sub-total (C)		21440.16	23208.22	20342.20	20280.94	21344.20

D.	Socio-religious ceremonies					
1	Marriage & other social ceremonies	6552.31	7530.00	6340.81	4754.26	6320.84
2	Religious ceremonies	627.23	587.21	665.29	723.18	649.57
Sub-total (D)		7179.54	8117.21	7006.10	5477.44	6970.41
Total (A+B+C+D)		93812.85	101837.00	91474.15	84214.81	93003.86

Source: Field Survey, 2020-21.

The above table highlights that there are considerable variations in the consumption expenditure levels of rural Dalit women labour households across all the districts. The table shows that the annual household consumption expenditure, on an average, is the highest in Sirsa district, i.e., ₹101837 and the lowest in the Mahendragarh district, i.e., ₹84214.81. It is ₹93812.85 in Sonipat and ₹91474.15 in Yamunanagar districts.

An average annual household consumption expenditure on non-durables is highest in Sirsa district, i.e., ₹60173.44, followed by Sonipat, Yamunanagar, and Mahendragarh districts with ₹56032.07, ₹55314.34, and ₹51367.97, respectively. In the case of services, the highest consumption expenditure for an average rural Dalit woman labour household is ₹23208.22 in Sirsa district, followed by Sonipat (₹21440.16), Yamunanagar (₹20342.20), and Mahendragarh (₹20280.94) districts.

The consumption expenditure on durables is the highest in Sirsa district, i.e., ₹10338.13, while this amount is ₹9161.08 in Sonipat, ₹8811.51 in Yamunanagar, and ₹7088.46 in Mahendragarh districts. In the case of socio-religious ceremonies, the highest consumption expenditure for an average rural Dalit woman labour household is ₹8117.21 in Sirsa district, followed by ₹7179.54, ₹7006.10, and ₹5477.44 in Sonipat, Yamunanagar, and Mahendragarh districts, respectively.

6. Patterns of Household Consumption Expenditure

Consumption spending can be better understood by looking at how much money families spend on different daily items. Table-2 shows the spending pattern of Dalit women labour households in rural Haryana. The table explains that the highest part of their total spending is on non-durable goods, which is about 60 per cent. After that, they spend on services (22.95 per cent), durable goods (9.54 per cent), and socio-religious functions (7.50 per cent). This means that most rural Dalit women labouring families spend their money mainly on basic survival needs for their households. Among non-durable items, food grains are the most important. On average, a Dalit woman labourer household in rural Haryana spends 12.20 per cent of their total budget on food grains. Milk & milk products are the second most important item, with about 10.31 per cent of the total spending. The field

survey also found that most families keep one or two milch animals to meet their daily milk needs. Spending on fuel, LPG, & electricity is the next important expense, making up about 6.39 per cent of the total household spending. After this comes spending on sugarcane products, which is about 4.77 per cent of the total expenses of rural Dalit woman labour households. On average, these households spend only a small part of their income (4.74 per cent) on clothes & footwear. Their earnings are very low, so they are often unable to buy enough clothing for all family members. The field survey also showed that many of them usually wear used or old clothes given by wealthier families. Tea leaves, condiments & spices come next in spending, making up about 3.97 per cent and 3.81 per cent of the total household consumption expenses, respectively. After this, money is spent on vegetables, intoxicants & drugs, edible oils, soaps & detergents, meat, fish, & eggs, and biscuits, bread & sweets. Their shares in total spending are around 3.27 per cent, 2.87 per cent, 2.14 per cent, 1.83 per cent, 1.33 per cent, and 1.09 per cent, respectively. Other items like fruits, pickles and water filter take only a very small portion of the total consumption budget of an average rural Dalit woman labour household. When it comes to durable goods, the largest expense is on house construction, addition of rooms & major repairs. This alone forms about 5.20 per cent of the total consumption expenditure of an average rural Dalit woman labour household in Haryana.

Table-2: Patterns of Consumption Expenditure of Rural Dalit Woman Labour Households
(Percentage of Total Consumption Expenditure)

S. No.	Items of Consumption	Sonapat District	Sirsa District	Yamunanagar District	Mahendragarh District	Haryana
A.	Non-durables					
1	Food grains					
1.1	Cereals					
I	Wheat	8.29	7.05	8.20	7.60	7.76
II	Rice	1.33	1.13	1.39	1.59	1.35
III	Maize	0.93	0.45	1.22	3.01	1.32
1.2	Pulses	1.04	1.20	1.30	1.73	1.30
1.3	Food grains are received as wages in kind.	0.48	0.36	0.47	0.60	0.47
2	Milk & milk products					
2.1	Home-produced & purchased	10.77	6.88	10.45	8.05	8.98

2.2	Received as wages in kind	1.17	1.62	1.27	1.17	1.33
3	Condiments & spices	3.82	3.50	3.86	4.16	3.81
4	Fruits	0.77	0.67	0.59	0.58	0.66
5	Vegetables	3.18	3.08	3.27	3.61	3.27
6	Edible oils	2.05	2.34	2.04	2.07	2.14
7	Sugarcane products	4.33	5.46	4.27	4.94	4.77
8	Meat, fish & eggs	1.23	1.76	1.27	0.95	1.33
9	Tea leaves	3.69	4.65	3.71	3.70	3.97
10	Biscuits, bread & sweets	1.07	1.08	1.15	1.07	1.09
11	Pickles	0.49	0.38	0.46	0.51	0.46
12	Intoxicants & drugs	1.79	4.16	2.53	2.79	2.87
13	Fuel, LPG & Electricity	6.56	5.78	6.69	6.67	6.39
14	Clothes & footwear	4.86	5.27	4.38	4.32	4.74
15	Soaps & detergents	1.68	2.04	1.72	1.86	1.83
16	Water filter	0.20	0.21	0.23	0	0.17
Sub-total (A)		59.73	59.07	60.47	60.98	60.01
B.	Durables					
1	House construction, addition of rooms & major repairs	5.08	5.15	5.46	5.10	5.20
2	Television	0.32	0.23	0.26	0.11	0.23
3	Computer/laptop	—	—	—	—	—
4	Electric fans/cooler	0.20	0.29	0.23	0.22	0.24
5	Utensils	0.26	0.35	0.29	0.27	0.29
6	Cots	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.29	0.31
7	Furniture	0.26	0.34	0.23	0.25	0.28
8	Refrigerator	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.002	0.02
9	Bicycle/rickshaw autorickshaw	0.03	0.07	0.08	0.11	0.07
10	Sewing machine	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
11	Motorcycle/scooter/moped	1.38	1.10	1.03	0.33	0.98
12	Mobile phones	1.59	1.73	1.50	1.49	1.59
13	Ornaments	0.30	0.49	0.21	0.25	0.32
Sub-total (B)		9.76	10.15	9.64	8.43	9.54
C.	Services					
1	Education	4.34	3.37	3.84	4.36	3.94
2	Health care	13.99	14.08	13.65	15.60	14.28

3	Conveyance	2.53	2.97	2.76	2.24	2.65
4	Communication	1.37	1.91	1.39	1.42	1.54
5	Entertainment	0.49	0.44	0.45	0.33	0.43
6	Newspaper & books	0.14	0.04	0.14	0.13	0.11
Sub-total (C)		22.86	22.81	22.23	24.08	22.95
D.	Socio-religious ceremonies					
1	Marriage & other social ceremonies	6.98	7.39	6.93	5.65	6.80
2	Religious ceremonies	0.67	0.58	0.73	0.86	0.70
Sub-total (D)		7.65	7.97	7.66	6.51	7.50
Total (A+B+C+D)		100	100	100	100	100

Source: Computed from Table-1.

The next important items are mobile phones, which account for about 1.59 per cent. Spending on other durable items such as motorcycles/scooters/moped, ornaments, cots, utensils, furniture, electric fan & coolers, television, bicycles/rickshaw/autorickshaw, refrigerator, and sewing machine is very low. Each of these items usually makes up less than 1 per cent of the total household spending. Among service expenses, health care takes the biggest share, about 14.28 per cent of the total expenditure for an average rural Dalit woman labour household in Haryana. Education comes next with 3.94 per cent, followed by transport or conveyance at 2.65 per cent, communication at 1.54 per cent, entertainment at 0.43 per cent, and newspapers & books at only 0.11 per cent. Some families face serious illnesses, which force them to spend more on medical services. Most rural Dalit women who labour in households suffer from different health problems. This is mainly due to poor housing conditions, an unbalanced diet and unsafe drinking water. The field survey showed that people usually depend on local village medical practitioners for treatment. It was also observed that even with government efforts, many problems remain. Because of financial pressure, many school-going children also work to support their families, which leads to frequent absences from school. In terms of socio-religious ceremonies, rural Dalit women labour households spend about 6.80 per cent of their total income on marriages & other social ceremonies. After this, they spend around 0.70 per cent of their income on religious activities.

The district-wise patterns reveal that the consumption expenditure is highest on non-durables, followed by services, durables, and social-religious ceremonies in all the districts. The proportion of consumption expenditure on non-durables is highest, i.e., 60.98 per cent in Mahendragarh district, followed by 60.47 per cent in Yamunanagar, 59.73 per cent in Sonipat, and 59.07 per cent in Sirsa districts. Services rank second in consumption

expenditure of rural Dalit woman labour households; this proportion is 24.08 per cent in Mahendragarh district, followed by 22.86 per cent, 22.81 per cent, and 22.23 per cent in Sonipat, Sirsa, and Yamunanagar districts, respectively. In the case of durable items, an average rural Dalit woman labour household spends the highest, i.e., 10.15 per cent in Sirsa district; however, this proportion is 9.76 per cent in Sonipat, 9.64 per cent in Yamunanagar, and 8.43 per cent in Mahendragarh districts. On socio-religious ceremonies, an average rural Dalit woman labourer household spends the highest proportion in Sirsa district (7.97 per cent), followed by Yamunanagar (7.66 per cent), Sonipat (7.65 per cent), and Mahendragarh (6.51 per cent) districts.

Out of the total expenditure on non-durables, food grain accounted for the largest spending component, i.e., 14.53 per cent in Mahendragarh district, 12.58 per cent in Yamunanagar, 12.07 per cent in Sonipat and 10.19 per cent in Sirsa districts. The second rank of milk & milk products, accounting for the maximum share, i.e., 11.94 per cent, 11.72 per cent, 9.22 per cent and 8.50 per cent in Sonipat, Yamunanagar, Mahendragarh, and Sirsa districts, respectively. Next, for fuel, LPG & electricity, on an average, Dalit women labour households spend 6.69 per cent in Yamunanagar district, followed by 6.67 per cent in Mahendragarh, 6.56 per cent in Sonipat, and 5.78 per cent in Sirsa districts.

The next non-durable item, according to their use and importance in Mahendragarh district, is sugarcane products, followed by clothes & footwear, condiments & spices, tea leaves, vegetables, intoxicants & drugs, edible oils, soaps & detergents, biscuits, bread & sweets, meat, fish & eggs, fruits, and pickles. In Yamunanagar district, the next non-durable item according to their use is clothes & footwear, followed by sugarcane products, condiments & spices, tea leaves, vegetables, intoxicants & drugs, edible oils, soaps & detergents, meat, fish & eggs, biscuits, bread & sweets, fruits, pickles, and water filters. In Sonipat district, the next important items are clothes & footwear, sugarcane products, condiments & spices, tea leaves, vegetables, edible oils, intoxicants & drugs, soaps & detergents, meat, fish & eggs, biscuits, bread & sweets, fruits, pickles, and water filter. The order of these items in Sirsa district is sugarcane products, clothes & footwear, tea leaves, intoxicants & drugs, condiments & spices, vegetables, edible oils, soaps & detergents, meat, fish & eggs, biscuits, bread & sweets, fruits, pickles, and water filter.

Among the durables, the most important component of consumption expenditure is house construction, addition of rooms & major repairs in all the districts. The Dalit women labour households, on an average, spend 5.46 per cent of the total consumption expenditure on this item in Yamunanagar district, while this proportion is 5.15 per cent, 5.10 per cent, and 5.08 per cent in Sirsa, Mahendragarh, and Sonipat districts, respectively. The field survey

revealed that the housing conditions of rural Dalit women labour households are deplorable, and their houses are not repaired on time. Expenditure on mobile phones ranks second in all the districts. The share of this item in the total consumption expenditure is 1.73 per cent, 1.59 per cent, 1.50 per cent, and 1.49 per cent in Sirsa, Sonipat, Yamunanagar, and Mahendragarh districts, respectively. The share of motorcycle/scooter/moped is 1.38 per cent in Sonipat, 1.10 per cent in Sirsa, 1.03 per cent in Yamunanagar, and 0.33 per cent in Mahendragarh districts. The share of other items such as television, electric fans/cooler, cots, furniture, refrigerator, bicycle/rickshaw/autorickshaw, sewing machine, and ornaments is quite meagre. It is less than 1 per cent for each item for an average rural Dalit woman labour household in all the districts.

The table also clearly shows that the consumption expenditure pattern for services is the same in all the districts. Health care is the most important item, followed by expenditure on education, conveyance, communication, entertainment, and newspapers & books in all the districts.

Among the socio-religious ceremonies, Dalit women labour households spend the highest proportion of their income on marriages & other social ceremonies, which is 7.39 per cent in Sirsa district, followed by 6.98 per cent, 6.93 per cent and 5.65 per cent in Sonipat, Yamunanagar, and Mahendragarh districts, respectively. The expenditure on religious ceremonies is 0.86 per cent in Mahendragarh, 0.73 per cent in Yamunanagar, 0.67 per cent in Sonipat, and 0.58 per cent in Sirsa districts.

7. Per Capita Consumption Expenditure

After examining the levels and patterns of household spending among Dalit women labour families in rural Haryana, it becomes important to study their per-person consumption expenditure, as family-size differs from one household to another. The average family-size of the respondents is 4.82 members. Table-3 indicates that the average yearly per capita consumption expenditure of these households is ₹19293.14 in rural Haryana. However, spending differs greatly across various items. The highest per capita expenditure is on non-durable goods, which is ₹11577.22. Expenditure on services, durable goods, and social-religious ceremonies is ₹4427.74, ₹1842.20, and ₹1445.98, respectively.

Among daily household items, the highest spending per person was on food grains (₹2353.60). After that, they spent money on milk & milk products (₹1988.34), fuel, LPG, & electricity (₹1233.27), and sugar products (₹920.71). Other expenses were on clothes & footwear (₹913.90), tea leaves (₹766.61), condiments & spices (₹735.19), and vegetables (₹630.97). Smaller amounts were spent on intoxicants & drugs (₹554.37), edible oils (₹412.10), soaps & detergents (₹353.44), meat, fish, & eggs (₹256.76), biscuits, bread, & sweets (₹210.92), fruits (₹126.67), pickles (₹88.08), and water filters (₹32.29).

For durables goods, the biggest yearly expense per person was on house construction, addition of rooms, & major repairs, which was about ₹1003.66 for an average Dalit woman labour household in rural Haryana. After this, spending was mainly on mobile phones (₹305.98) and motor- cycles/ scooter/ mopeds (₹189.58). In the case of services, health care had the highest annual expense at ₹2755.45. This was followed by education (₹759.98), transport/conveyance (₹511.65), communication (₹297.06), entertainment (₹82.69), and finally newspapers and books (₹20.91). For an average rural Dalit woman labour household, per capita expenditure on marriages & other social ceremonies accounted for ₹1311.23, and religious ceremonies for ₹134.75.

Table-3: Per Capita Consumption Expenditure of Rural Dalit Woman Labour Households

(Mean Value in ₹., Per Annum)

S. No.	Items of Consumption	Sonapat District	Sirsa District	Yamunanagar District	Mahendragarh District	Haryana
A.	Non-durables					
1	Food grains					
1.1	Cereals					
I	Wheat	1607.72	1431.70	1664.41	1300.79	1497.71
II	Rice	258.01	229.84	282.01	272.43	259.60
III	Maize	180.02	90.81	248.03	515.43	254.49
1.2	Pulses	202.29	243.69	264.75	295.95	251.47
1.3	Food grains are received as wages in kind.	92.38	74.03	94.52	102.28	90.33
2	Milk & milk products					
2.1	Home-produced & purchased	2087.24	1397.71	2120.16	1377.95	1732.73
2.2	Received as wages in kind	227.11	329.77	256.90	200.63	255.61
3	Condiments & spices	739.98	710.40	782.87	711.81	735.19
4	Fruits	149.40	137.28	120.05	98.83	126.67
5	Vegetables	616.22	626.14	664.47	618.57	630.97
6	Edible oils	397.85	475.85	413.54	354.33	412.10
7	Sugarcane products	840.45	1109.26	865.71	844.88	920.71
8	Meat, fish & eggs	239.03	356.55	257.83	162.98	256.76
9	Tea leaves	716.20	943.59	753.67	633.39	766.61

10	Biscuits, bread & sweets	206.60	219.94	234.21	182.76	210.92
11	Pickles	94.52	77.64	94.14	87.39	88.08
12	Intoxicants & drugs	347.38	845.44	513.59	477.01	554.37
13	Fuel, LPG & Electricity	1271.54	1173.79	1358.24	1140.47	1233.27
14	Clothes & footwear	941.34	1069.94	888.50	738.74	913.90
15	Soaps & detergents	325.99	413.60	348.63	318.77	353.44
16	Water filter	39.30	43.42	45.81	—	32.29
Sub-total (A)		11580.57	12000.39	12272.04	10435.39	11577.22
B.	Durables					
1	House construction, addition of rooms & major repairs	985.53	1047.15	1108.55	872.28	1003.66
2	Television	62.53	46.89	52.79	18.24	45.05
3	Computer/laptop	—	—	—	—	—
4	Electric fans/cooler	38.39	58.50	47.06	37.35	45.67
5	Utensils	50.06	70.70	57.81	45.64	56.43
6	Cots	59.71	64.91	64.13	49.76	59.73
7	Furniture	51.27	68.30	47.29	43.57	53.07
8	Refrigerator	4.77	11.38	1.63	0.31	4.73
9	Bicycle/rickshaw/autorickshaw	5.68	14.10	16.07	18.49	13.59
10	Sewing machine	1.62	4.86	3.61	1.13	2.86
11	Motorcycle/scooter/moped	267.52	223.50	208.91	56.22	189.58
12	Mobile phones	307.95	352.14	303.96	254.96	305.98
13	Ornaments	58.35	99.29	43.10	42.05	61.85
Sub-total (B)		1893.38	2061.72	1954.91	1440.00	1842.20
C.	Services					
1	Education	841.02	683.76	778.96	745.67	759.98
2	Health care	2712.24	2858.97	2770.15	2669.61	2755.45
3	Conveyance	491.38	602.56	561.44	383.15	511.65
4	Communication	265.34	387.46	282.41	242.68	297.06
5	Entertainment	94.12	88.39	91.63	56.46	82.69
6	Newspaper & books	27.09	7.26	28.53	22.50	20.91
Sub-total (C)		4431.19	4628.40	4513.12	4120.07	4427.74

D.	Socio-religious ceremonies					
1	Marriage & other social ceremonies	1354.21	1501.71	1406.77	965.83	1311.23
2	Religious ceremonies	129.63	117.11	147.60	146.91	134.75
Sub-total (D)		1483.84	1618.82	1554.37	1112.74	1445.98
Total (A+B+C+D)		19388.98	20309.33	20294.44	17108.20	19293.14

Source: Field Survey, 2020-21.

The family-size varies from one district to another. It is the highest, i.e., 5.01 in Sirsa district and the lowest, i.e., 4.51 in Yamunanagar district. It is 4.92 in Mahendragarh and 4.84 in Sonipat districts. Table 3 also displays the mean values of per capita consumption expenditure for rural Dalit women labour households in all the districts. There are considerable variations in per capita consumption expenditures across all the districts. The per capita consumption expenditure is the highest in Sirsa district, i.e., ₹20309.33 and the lowest in Mahendragarh district, i.e., ₹17108.20. It is ₹20294.44 in Yamunanagar and ₹19388.98 in Sonipat districts. The per capita consumption expenditures depend on household income, family-size, and the number of earning members of the family.

The per capita consumption expenditure on non-durables is the highest in Yamunanagar district, which amounts to ₹12272.04, followed by the Sirsa, Sonipat, and Mahendragarh districts with ₹12000.39, ₹11580.57, and ₹10435.39, respectively.

In the case of services, the average per capita consumption expenditure for rural Dalit woman labour households is ₹4628.40 in Sirsa district, followed by Yamunanagar (₹4513.12), Sonipat (₹4431.19), and Mahendragarh (₹4120.07) districts.

The per capita consumption expenditure on durables is the highest, i.e., ₹2061.72 in Sirsa district. While this amount is ₹1954.91 in Yamunanagar, ₹1893.38 in Sonipat, and ₹1440 in Mahendragarh districts.

The per capita consumption expenditure on socio-religious ceremonies is the highest, i.e., ₹1618.82 in Sirsa district and the lowest, i.e., ₹1112.74 in Mahendragarh district. It is ₹1554.37 and ₹1483.84 in Yamunanagar and Sonipat districts, respectively.

8. Average Propensity to Consume

Average propensity to consume (APC) means the share of income that is spent on consumption. In this study, APC is calculated for rural Dalit women labour households in Haryana. A detailed description is given in Table 4. The table shows that the average propensity to consume for these households is 1.05. Since the value is more than one, it means that, on average, these

households spend more than their total income. As a result, a typical household in the sample faces a yearly deficit of about ₹4357.85.

Table-4 Average Propensity to Consume of Rural Dalit Woman Labour Households

District	Average Income (₹)	Average Consumption Expenditure (₹)	Average Propensity to Consume C/Y	Annual Deficit (₹)
Sonipat District	87151.92	93812.85	1.08	6660.93
Sirsa District	98718.23	101837.00	1.03	3118.77
Yamunanagar District	85057.71	91474.15	1.08	6416.44
Mahendragarh District	83003.63	84214.81	1.01	1211.18
Haryana	88646.01	93003.86	1.05	4357.85

Source: Field Survey, 2020-21.

The above table shows that the average propensity to consume is more than one in all the selected districts. The highest value is found in Sonipat and Yamunanagar districts, which is 1.08, while the lowest value is recorded in Mahendragarh district, which is 1.01. Sirsa district has a value of 1.03. When the average propensity to consume is greater than one, it means that a rural Dalit woman labour household spends more money than it earns in a year, leading to a financial deficit in every district studied. The largest annual deficit is seen in Sonipat district at ₹6660.93, followed by Sirsa with ₹6416.44, Yamunanagar with ₹3118.77, and Mahendragarh districts with ₹1211.18.

9. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The expenditure pattern of rural Dalit women labour households shows that their average annual consumption is quite low, which reflects their weak economic condition. Most of their income is spent on basic non-durable necessities such as food grains, milk & milk products, while only a small share goes toward clothes & footwear and similar goods. Spending on services, socio-religious ceremonies, and durable items remains limited, indicating that survival needs are prioritized over comfort or long-term assets. Field observations also highlight poor living standards, as many families wear old or low-quality clothes, sometimes received from others, which points toward financial hardship. Overall, the per capita consumption level is modest, with the highest share directed towards essential non-durables, followed by services, durables, and socio-religious ceremonies. This pattern clearly suggests that these households struggle to move beyond subsistence and have very limited capacity for saving or investment, underlining the need for stronger economic support and welfare measures. The study indicates that

the average propensity to consume of rural Dalit women labour households is slightly above unity, which means their expenditure generally exceeds their income and many families run a deficit. To maintain even a minimum standard of living, these households often depend on borrowing from various sources. This situation keeps them caught in a continuous cycle of poverty where meeting daily needs themselves becomes a challenge, and there is little scope for saving or future security. The pattern of spending further reflects their vulnerable condition, as insufficient resources prevent them from allocating adequate funds toward better consumption items or improving living standards. Variations in family-size and income levels contribute significantly to this imbalance. Overall, the findings highlight economic instability and the urgent need for supportive policies to uplift the living conditions of these households. Rural Dalit women labour households have very low income and often spend more than they earn. The government should strengthen wage employment schemes, rural job programs, and women-focused livelihood missions. Proper implementation of minimum wages is also essential to ensure stable earnings. A major share of expenditure goes to food and other basic non-durable goods. Strengthening the Public Distribution System, nutrition programs, and subsidies on essential burdens will improve food security.

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