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A STUDY ON THE WAGE DIFFERENTIALS AMONG HOUSE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION WORKERS (HBCWS) IN THE URBAN AREAS OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

In the HBC sector of Assam, there prevails innumerable wage rates and unscientific differential in the wage rate with respect to gender, skill and geographical areas .The difference in wage rates of the workers is found to exist either in different skilled jobs or in the same skilled job in the different geographical areas of the state. Being heterogeneous groups, the HBCWs differ in terms of the levels of experience and training (skills) and the personal characteristics such as education, gender and age. The personal wage differentials emerge either in the same geographical area of the state or in the same industry due to the variation in personal characteristics such as gender, age, experience and skill knowledge. On the basis of the skill level of the workers, they are categorized into the groups of the unskilled, skilled and highly skilled workers. The difference in wage rates of the workers in terms of their levels of skill is defined as skill wage differentials. Differences in wages in the identical skilled jobs in the different geographical areas of the state may arise due to the factors such as the geographical immobility of the workers and the existence of the strong trade union.

So, in this academic work, (i) Gender wage differentials, (ii) Skill wage differentials, (iii) Geographical wage differentials and (iv) Wage differentials between native and migrant workers have been examined with field survey data.

Keywords: Wage Differentials, HBC sector, Native workers, Migrant workers

1. Introduction:

In the HBC sector of the state, there prevails innumerable wage rates and unscientific differential in the wage rate with respect to gender, skill and geographical areas (R C Saxena, 1963).The difference in wage rates of the workers is found to exist either in different skilled jobs or in the same skilled job in the different geographical areas of the state. Being heterogeneous groups, the HBCWs differ in terms of the levels of experience and training (skills) and the personal characteristics such as education, gender and age which create the personal wage differentials among them. The difference of the workers in terms of their levels of skill leads to

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

skill wage differentials among them. The factors such as the geographical immobility of the workers and the existence of the strong trade union may create difference in wages in the identical skilled jobs in the different geographical areas of the state.

So, in this academic work, (i) Gender wage differentials, (ii) Skill wage differentials, (iii) Geographical wage differentials and (iv) Wage differentials between native and migrant workers have been examined with field survey data.

2. **Review of Literature**:

C V Nguyen & T P Minh(2016), Yang LIU(2015), Haining Wang& et al (2014), Aruna Solanki & Kirti Zankharia (2014), Muhammad Waqas(2013), Lixin Cai& et al (2012) , Harilal K.N. (1989) have analyzed different types of wage differentials in terms of the nativity of the workers (urban local and rural migrants, native and foreign-born immigrants) and gender and skill arising out of different contributing factors such as education, market related factors and the earning-enhancing productivity factors using different techniques of analysis.

3. Objectives of the Study:

(i) To examine the wage differentials among the HBCWs.

(ii) To examine the wage and payment pattern of the HBCWs.

(iii) To suggest state intervention in accordance with the findings for the policy measures.

4. Research Questions:

i) Is there any significant wage differential among the HBCWs?

ii) Is there any significant difference between the actual wage paid to the workers and the state fixed wage rates?

5. Research Methodology:

Research Method: In the proposed research work, both the descriptive and analytical research methods have been used.

Area of the study: The geographical area of the study covers the urban areas in the Brahmaputra valley of the state. The rationale of the selection of the urban areas in the Brahmaputra valley is as follows:

(i) Out of 27 districts in Assam with a geographical area of 78,438 sq.km, 24 districts are located in the Brahmaputra valley with a geographical area of 70,634 sq.km (90 percent).

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

(ii) Out of the total urban areas of the state (1259.88 sq.km), the Brahmaputra valley covers total urban areas of 1,106.27sq.km (87.81percent).

(iii) In Assam, there is a total 214 nos of the urban areas (census report, 2011). The study area i.e the Brahmaputra valley covers 174nos of the urban areas (81percent) of the total.

(iv) Out of the seven large cities of the state, the study area covers six large populous cities of the state including the capital city – Guwahati,

(v) The total urban population in Assam as per the census report, 2011 was 43, 88,756.The Brahmaputra valley comprises 85 percent of the total urban population (37, 39,997).

Table no-1: The profile of the Brahmaputra valley as per Cenus, 2011:

Sl.No	Particulars as per 2011,census	Data/Information
1	Total Geographical Area (sq.km)	70,634 sq.km
2	Total Urban Geographical Area (sq.km)	1,106.27 sq.km
3	Total population	2,64,10,562
4	Total Urban population	37,39,997
5	Total Urban Households	8,46,327
5	Density of population	442per sq.km
6	Literacy rate	80.26%
7	Total number of Urban areas	214nos

Source: (i) Economic Survey, Assam, 2012-13. (ii) Census of India, 2001, 2011.
(iii) Office of the Register General of India, Guwahati.

Sample Design: There are 214 nos of towns of various categories in the state as per the census report, 2011(table no-1). For the proposed study, the towns/ urban areas in the Barak valley have been excluded. Only the urban areas in the Brahmapura valley have been considered for indepth study of the wage and payment pattern and the wage differentials among HBCWs.

Table no-2: The classification of towns in the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley in Assam, 2011:

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

Category of Towns	Class-I Town	Class-II Town	Class-III Town	Class-IV Town	Class-V Town	Class-VI Town	Total
Population (,0000)	100 and above	50-100	20-50	10-20	5-10	Less than 5	
Brahmaputra Valley							
Towns	3	11	25	36	77	22	174
Barak Valley							
Towns	1	1	1	09	13	15	40
Towns	4	12	26	45	90	37	214

Source: Office of the Register General of India and Census Commissioner, Indian economic survey.

Out of 174 nos urban areas of the Brahmaputra valley, 10 percent towns of each category have been purposively selected. The sample towns, thus, selected for the study of the wage and payment pattern of the HBCWs would comprise20 nos (about 11 percent of the towns in the Brahmaputra valley).

The number of the sample towns selected from each category of towns – 20nos in total has been shown in the chart-1.

Chart-I: Sample Towns in the Brahmaputra valley (Total of 20nos):

Category of Town	Sample No	Selected sample towns
Class-I	1	Guwahati MNC
Class-II	2	Jorhat MB and Tezpur MB
Class-III	3	Golaghat MB, Duliajaan MB and Lumding MB
Class-IV	4	Bokakhat TC,Doboka TC, Jagiroad TC and Titabor TC
Class-V	8	Amguri TC, Barpathar TC, ChabuaTC, Demow TC, Dokmoka(Karbi Anglong), Jamunamukh CT, Moranhat CT and Teok TC
Class-VI	2	Dhekorgorha (Jorhat) and Kamalabari (Majuli)

In selection of the construction sites, HBCWs and Contractors, relatively more weight has been laid on the higher class town where larger number of construction works has been undertaken. The study area covers a total of 90 construction sites for the field survey. Again, from each construction site, 5 HBCW has been selected and hence in total 450 HBCWs has been randomly selected for interview in a specially designed questionnaire for this study.

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

Table no-3: Nos of Sample Sites, HBCWs and House Building Contractors selected for the study:

Category of Urban areas	Sample Urban Area Selected for field visit	Construction Sites Surveyed	HBCWs interviewed	Class-I Contractors
I	01	1x15=15	15x5=75	1x4=4
II	02	2x10=20	20x5=100	2x3=6
III	03	3x5= 15	15x5= 75	3x2=6
IV	04	4x3=12	12x5=60	4x1=4
V	08	8x3= 24	24x5= 120	8x1=8
VI	02	2x2=04	4x5=20	2x1=2
Total	20 nos	90nos	450nos	30nos

Data Source: The study would be carried on the basis of both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary data sources: Due to the non-availability of the official and reliable data covering varied aspects of this sector in the district administrative and the public work departments in these respective districts, primary or basic data would be the major data source which has been collected mainly from the HBCWs involved in the HBC works and the HB Contractors.

Secondary Sources: The secondary data have been collected from –(i) Office of the Registrar General of India, Guwahati, (ii) NSSO reports , (iii) Office of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, (iv) District Level Offices of Economics and statistics, (v) Office of Labour and employment ,(vi) Offices of HDR, (vii) Reports of Economic Survey of Assam and India and (viii) Other government publications such as the state primary census abstracts of Assam and Statistical Handbook of Assam.

Analytical Tools to be used: The wage and payment pattern of the HBCWs and the wage differentials of the workers shall be analyzed with suitable statistical tools to draw conclusion. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilks tests have been applied to check the normality of the ratio and scale data. For determining the wage differentials of the HBCWs, the method of the

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

percentage difference have been used in addition to the Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis Chi-square tests.

6. Limitations of the study: The scope of the proposed work will be confined to study the wage and payment pattern and wage differentials among HBCWs in the urban areas of the Brahmaputra valley, Assam. It would, thus, exclude the rural areas of the state. The study is based on the sample data collection.

7. **Research Period**: The proposed research work has covered a period of five years from 2013 to 2018.

8. Wage Differentials among HBCWs:

8.1: Gender Wage Differentials:

Applying the method of percentage difference, it has been found that a male worker (Unskilled) on average earns 15.95 percent more for one day work than that of a female worker on average in terms of the daily wage rates of the workers.

The average daily wage rate of the male workers (unskilled manual workers) is reported to be Rs 252.5 and for female workers, it has been reported to be Rs 212.22. For examining the difference in the daily wage rates between the male and female workers, the independent sample‘t’ test has to be used which requires the normally distributed data. So, the normality of data on the daily wage rates has been checked by using Kolmogorov-Smirov and Shapiro-Wilk test. The significance value of the K-S and Shapiro-Wilk test for daily wage rates paid both for male and female workers are found to be less than 0.05 which indicates that the data are not normally distributed. So an important non-parametric test- Mann Whitney U test for comparing the means has been used.

Table No-: Test of Normality for data on Gender wise daily wages (unskilled Category):

SL.No	Variable	Gender	Mean	K-S Test	Shapiro-Wilk Test
1	Daily Wage paid	Male	252.5	0.000	0.000
		Female	212.22	0.002	0.002
2	Hourly Wage Paid	Male	27.99	0.200	0.146
		Female	22.06	0.186	0.111

The results of this test show that the mean ranks of the male and the female workers reported to be 19.45 and 5.11 respectively. The calculated value of U is 1.0 and its p-value 0.00 which is less than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that the difference in daily wage rates between male and female workers is statistically significant.

Table no-: Mann-Whitney U test for Gender daily wage Differential:

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

Gender	Mean Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test value	P-Value
Male	19.45	1.00	0.000
Female	5.11		

In the case of the hourly wage rate, it has been found that the average hourly wage rate for male workers is Rs 27.99 and it is Rs 22.06 for the female workers. The significance value of the K-S and Shapiro-Wilk test for the hourly wage rates paid both for male and female workers are found to be more than 0.05 which indicates that the data are normally distributed. So, for examining the difference in hourly wages paid to male and female, the independent sample‘t’ test has been used. From calculation, the Value of‘t’ is found to be 9.499 and its p- value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05.It can be concluded that the difference in daily wage rates between male and female workers is statistically significant.

Hence, the gender wage gap in the HBCS is smaller than that of the gender wage gap in the formal sector in India (24.81 percent) estimated in 2013[1].

Table No-: Independent sample‘t’- test value for data on gender hourly wage differential:

Gender	t-test value	P-value
Male	9.449	0.000
Female		

Skill Wage Differentials:

Wage Gap between Unskilled and Skilled Workers is found to be28.57 percent which reveals that a skilled worker on average earns 28.57percent more for one day work than that of an unskilled worker on average.

The calculated value of Mann whitney U is estimated to be 0.00and its p-value is 0.00(2-tailed) which is less than 0.05. So, it can be stated that the difference in the mean wage rate of the unskilled and skilled workers is statistically significant.

Table No-: Test of Normality for data on Skill wise wage rates:

[1] Varkkey Biju& Korde Rupa(2013); Gender pay Gap in the Formal Sector in India 200-13, Wage Indicator Data Report, India.

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

SL.No	Variable	Mean	K-S Test	Shapiro-Wilk Test
1	Daily Wage paid to Unskilled Workers	252.5	0.000	0.000
2	Hourly Wage Paid to Skilled Workers	353.5	0.004	0.000
3	Hourly Wage Paid to Highly Skilled Workers	475.57	0.002	0.000

Table no-: Mann-Whitney U test for Daily wage Differential between Unskilled and Skilled Workers:

Skill Category	Mean Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test value	P-Value
Unskilled Worker	10.50	0.00	0.000
Skilled Worker	30.50		

Wage Gap between Unskilled and Highly Skilled Workers is found to be 49.53 percent which reveals that a highly skilled worker on average earns 49.54percent more for one day work than that of an unskilled worker on average.

Wage Gap between Skilled and Highly Skilled Workers is found to be25.7 percent which reveals that a highly skilled worker on average earns 25.7percent more for one day work than that of a skilled worker on average. The results of Mann-Whitney test suggest that the mean rank of the skilled and the highly skilled workers are 10.50 and 30.50 respectively. So, the mean rank of the highly skilled workers is higher than that of the skilled workers which implies that the average wage rate of the highly skilled workers is higher than that of the skilled workers. The calculated value of Mann- Whitney U is estimated to be 0.00and its p-value is 0.00(2-tailed) which is less than 0.05. So, it can be stated that the difference in the mean wage rate of the skilled and highly skilled workers is statistically significant.

Table no-: Mann-Whitney U test for Daily wage Differential between Skilled and Highly Skilled Worker:

Skill Category	Mean Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test value	P-Value
Skilled Worker	10.50	0.00	0.000
Highly Skilled Worker	30.50		

8.3: Geographical Wage differentials:

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

The SD and CV of the daily age rates for the unskilled workers in the different geographical areas have been found to be 11.97 and 4.74 respectively. The SD and CV of the wage rates for the skilled workers are 9.76 and 2.76 respectively. In the case of the highly skilled workers, the S D and C V are found to be the highest of 29.88 and 6.28 respectively. Thus, the geographical wage differentials are low for the skilled workers and these are high in the case of the highly skilled workers.

Table N0- : SD and CV of the daily wage rates for the different skill category workers:

Particulars	SD	CV
Highly Skilled Workers	30.577	6.43
Skilled Workers	10.013	2.83
Unskilled Workers	12.280	4.86

For examining the significance of the disparity of the wage rates among the workers in the different geographical areas of the state, F-test has been used. The F-test value is reported to be 632.272 with its P-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a significant disparity in wage rates among the workers in the different geographical areas of the state.

Daily Wage Rate

	df	Mean Square	F-Test Value	P-value
Between Groups	2	249955.417	632.272	0.000
Within Groups	57	395.329		

Applying the percentage difference method, it has been found that there exists a sizable geographical daily wage differential among the unskilled workers in the state. The positive percentage difference in daily wage rates is found to be the highest in Guwahati MNC (+ 18.8 percent), followed by Jorhat MB (+ 6.8 percent), Tezpur MB(+4), Golaghat MB (+2.8), + 1.2 percent in each of Lumding, Bokakhat, and Dokmoka. This indicates that the unskilled workers have been paid more than the state fixed daily wage rate in these urban areas. The negative percentage difference in daily wage rate is found to be the highest in each of DobokaTC and Jamunamukh CT (-4 percent), followed by Titabor TC and Moranhat CT(-2.8percent),Amguri TC and Demow TC (-1.2 percent) indicates that they are paid less than the state fixed daily wage rate. It is found to be zero in Duliajan MB, Jagiroad TC, Barpathar TC, Chabua TC , Teok

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

TC , DhekorgorhaCT and Kamalabari revealing the fact that the workers are paid at par with the state fixed daily wage rate .

The research question designed has been investigated again in terms of hourly wage rate paid to the unskilled workers.

In the majority of the construction sites surveyed, it has been found that the workers have been paid more than the minimum wage rate of Rs 250, but they have to work for a longer time from 9 to 10 hrs per day contrary to 8 hours per day as fixed in the Factory Act, 1948. So, for grasping the real picture, the hourly wage rates received by the workers have been taken into consideration. Analysis of the hourly wage rates has indicated that there prevails a negative percentage difference between the state fixed rate and the area-wise average wage .The negative wage differentials for the unskilled workers in terms of the hourly wage rates negate the concept of positive differentials of daily rate rates. Findings indicate that the unskilled workers have been paid less than the state fixed hourly wage rate. The negative percentage difference is found to be the lowest in Dokmoka (-2.53 percent), followed by Titabor TC and Moranhat CT with -2.66 percent in each, Guwahati MNC(-5.06 percent), Teok TC with -6.94 perecnt, Jorhat MB(-8 percent) and Lumding MB(-9.31). The negative percentage difference is found to be the highest in Doboka (-23.2 percent), followed by Jagiroad with -20 percent, Demow TC (-14.4 percent),Dhekorgorha CT and Kamalabari CT with -13.34 percent in each. Hence, in the entire sample urban areas surveyed, there exist a negative percentage difference in hourly wage rates indicating the fact that the HBCWs are paid less than the state fixed hourly wage rates.

In the entire sample urban areas surveyed, there exist a negative percentage difference in hourly wage rates indicating the fact that the HBCWs are paid less than the state fixed hourly wage rates.

As regards the research question no-2, it has been found that there is a sizable difference between the state fixed wage rate and the actual wage rate paid to the workers. The prevalence of negative wage differential in each sample geographical area of the state indicates that the actual wage paid to the workers is less than the state fixed wage rate by a certain percentage. This reflects the fact of the exploitation of the unorganized HBCWs continues at the hand of the employers such as the contractors, Builders and the head masons.

8.4: Wage Differential between Native and Migrant workers:

A migrant worker on average earns 6.96 percent more for one day work than that of a native worker on average in terms of the daily wage rates.

Test of Significance of the difference in Wage Rates between Native and Migrant Workers:

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

Table No-:Tests of Normality for data on Daily wage Paid to Native and Migrant Workers:

SL.No	Variables	Mean	K-S Test Value	Shapiro-Wilk Test Value
1	Daily Wage for Native Workers	245	0.000	0.000
2	Daily Wage for Migrant workers	263.33	0.080	0.025
3	Hourly Wage for Native Workers	30.42	0.000	0.000
4	Hourly Wage for Migrant Workers	27.47	0.136	0.132

The normality of data on the daily wage rates has been checked by using Kolmogorov-Smirov and Shapiro-Wilk test. The significance value of the K-S and Shapiro-Wilk test for daily wage rates paid to native workers is found to be less than 0.05 which indicates that the data are not normally distributed. But, the P-value of the K-S test and Shapiro-Wilk test for daily wage paid to migrant workers are 0.080 and 0.025 respectively. So an important non-parametric test- Mann Whitney U test for comparing the means has been used.

Table no-: Mann-Whitney U Test for Daily Wage Differential between Native and Migrant:

Nativity	Mean Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test value	P-Value
Native Worker	9.50	16.00	0.000
Migrant Worker	22.93		

The results of this test show that the mean ranks of the native and the migrant workers reported to be 9.50 and 22.93 respectively. The calculated value of U is 16.00 and its p-value 0.00 which is less than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that the difference in daily wage rates between native and migrant workers is statistically significant.

Table no-: Mann-Whitney U Test for Hourly Wage Differential between Native and Migrant:

Nativity	Mean Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test value	P-Value
Native Worker	22.53	15.50	0.000
Migrant Worker	9.03		

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

The significance value of the K-S and Shapiro-Wilk test for the hourly wage rates paid to the native workers are found to be less than 0.05 indicating the normal distribution of data. But, these values are found to be more than 0.05 for the hourly wage rates paid to the migrant workers which indicates that the data are not normally distributed. So, for examining the difference in hourly wages paid to the native and migrant workers, the Mann-whitney U test has been used. The calculated Value of U is found to be 15.50 with its p- value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05.Hence, it can be concluded that the difference in hourly wage rates paid between the native and migrant workers is statistically significant.

9. Wage and Earning of the HBCWs:

- The average monthly earning of the unskilled workers (both the male and female) is found to be Rs 6474.25. In case of the male helpers, it is found to be Rs 7481.82 and for the female helpers, it is Rs 5466.67.The average monthly earning of the skilled work is Rs 8462.50 and for the highly skilled workers, it is found to be Rs 13357.14.
- The percent difference of the earning of an unskilled worker on average is found to be -31.35 percent which indicates that an unskilled worker on average earns 31.35 percent less for a month's work than that of the average earning of the all category workers. The percent difference of the earning of the skilled workers is found to be negative (-10.27 percent). In contrast, the percent difference of the earning of a highly skilled worker on average is found to be + 41.63percent.
- The gender earning gap is found to be 26.93 percent which indicates that a male worker (unskilled) on average earns 26.93 percent more for a month's work than a female worker on average.

10. Wage and Payment Pattern:

- **The employment status**: 82.89 percent of the workers have been engaged as the casual basis and 17.11percent have been employed on the contract basis. All the female workers have been found to be employed on the casual basis. This is contrary to the finding of Rahul(2015) who found that 95 percent of the migrant workers in the commercial construction sites in Uttar Pradesh are engaged in contract basis.
- **Types of employer**: The majority of the HBCWs have been employed under the head masons (45 percent), followed by the labour sardars(22 percent) , the contractors (18 percent) and the builders (15 percent).The majority of the female workers (77.59 percent) are employed under the labour sardar and a small percent (22.41%) are employed under the head mason.
- **Methods of wage payment**: 72.89 percent of the workers have been paid the time wage rate and 27.11 percent of the workers have been paid on the piece wage rate. All the female workers have been paid the time wage rate. The majority of the male helper (76 percent)

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

and masons (60 percent) have been paid on the time rate basis. In contrast, the majority of the masons (60 percent) have been paid the piece wage rate.

- **Time period of payment**: 59.78 percent of the workers have received the payments on weekly basis, next to it on daily basis (by 29.11%) and 11.11percent workers have received on fortnight basis.
- **Issue of Wage slip:** 96percent of the workers have reported that they are not given wage slips. Only a few workers (4 percent) have reported that wage slips are issued to them.
- **Regularity of payments:** 75.56 percent of the workers have reported that they have been made payments regularly.
- **Revision of payments:** 90.44 percent of the HBCWs have reported that their wage rates have been revised from the last few years as per the revised stated fixed wage rate while a small number of workers (9.56 percent) have reported not revision of the wage rates.
- **Overtime Wage**: 56.44 percent of the workers have reported that they are paid overtime wage while 43.56 percent of the workers have reported not payment of overtime wage rates.
- **Cut-off Wage or Jobber's Commission**: The majority of the workers (67.78 percent) have reported not payment of jobber's commission while 32.22 percent of the workers have reported that they have to pay jobber's commission for staying in the present job or getting a new job in future.

11. Conclusion and Policy Prescription:

In the HBC Sector of the state, the existence of the significant gender wage differential indicates the violation of the principle of the equal pay for equal work under the equal pay act, 1963 aiming at abolishing the gender pay gap. The prevalence of the skill wage differential among different skill category workers could be justified on the grounds that it require long experience and training cost for becoming a skilled HBC worker . Moreover, the increased marker demand for them coupled with their relatively inelastic supply pushes up the wage rates in the HBC sector of the state. The wage differentials between the native and immigrant workers reveals that an immigrant earns slightly more than a native worker in terms of daily wage rates sacrificing additionally more than 2 or 3 hours of work. The prevalence of negative wage differential in each sample geographical area of the state indicates that the actual wage paid to the workers is less than the state fixed wage rate by a certain percentage is a reflection of the exploitation of the unorganized HBCWs continues at the hand of the employers. The workers have been paid mainly on the basis of the time wage rate on weekly basis. Though overtime wage is paid to them, it has been paid at a lower rate than the stipulated overtime rate.

Under such circumstances the following have been suggested-

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:04, Issue:02 "February 2019"

i) Gender Wage gap could be minimized through the sincere and efficient implementation of the equal pay Act, 1963 by the government officials and formation of female labour unions and acquiring sufficient training and skill by the female workers.

ii) For ensuring that the HBC workers are paid at par with the state fixed wage rates , the minimum wage rate policy of the state government requires to be implemented in the case of the HBCWs. Failing to pay by the contractors, the registration of the contractors needs to be withheld.

iii) The HBCWs require being trained half yearly for 2/3 days as to provide training, skill, safety and know the legal rights.

iv) The unionism activities among the workers requires to be developed / improved by the social activists such as NGOs for deriving better deal from the employers.

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