

CHALLENGES FACED BY HANDLOOM WEAVERS IN TENKASI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The handloom industry in India is a vital source of livelihood and cultural heritage for millions of weavers and artisans. However, this industry faces several challenges in the contemporary context of globalization, technological change, and market competition. These challenges include obsolete technologies, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing link, poor infrastructure, low wages, health hazards, and lack of government support. This article aims to analyse the various issues and problems faced by handloom weavers from an ergonomic, economic, and social perspective. The researcher has collected the primary data from 50 sample respondents using questionnaire. The study also suggests some possible solutions and interventions to improve the working conditions, income, and welfare of the weavers and to revive the handloom sector as a viable and sustainable industry.

KEY WORDS: Handloom industry, Artisans, Weavers, Sustainable, Globalization, etc.,

INTRODUCTION

In the intricate tapestry of India's cultural heritage, handloom weaving stands as a time-honored craft, embodying the skill, tradition, and artistry passed down through generations. However, behind the vibrant threads and rich patterns lies a complex narrative of challenges faced by the artisans who bring these creations to life. The predicament of handloom weavers in the contemporary world is marked by a convergence of economic, technological, and societal factors, posing a threat not only to their livelihoods but also to the preservation of a craft integral to the nation's identity. This article delves into the myriad problems faced by handloom weavers, exploring the profound implications of dwindling demand, technological obsolescence, and insufficient support systems. From the pulsating hubs of textile production to the quaint weaving clusters nestled in rural landscapes, the struggles resonate, urging us to reflect on the urgent need for comprehensive solutions. As we unravel the layers of these challenges, it becomes evident that the fate of handloom weaving is at a crossroads, demanding collective action and innovative strategies to ensure the endurance of this timeless craft.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Aswani and Bhat (2022) in their study stated that the hand-weaving sector is one of Kerala's main traditional industries, an important part of the country's economy as well as its

socio-cultural traditions. It is the second-largest provider of employment in the state after the agricultural sector, it has been sustained by transferring skills from one generation to another, depending on a large number of weavers and they are preferred as the traditional handloom industry as their livelihood. Consumers at the international level appreciate the craftsmanship in the products of the handloom sector. Despite such unique features, the industry comprises a small proportion of Indian exports in the global market, thus crying for efforts to promote and utilize full potential of the industry. The industry faces a large number of problems today despite its glorious past, it is striving for survival. This study highlights various problems and challenges faced by the handloom industry in the Chendamangalam handloom community. The study found that the main problems faced are lack of working capital, increasing price of raw materials, stiff competition from the power loom sector, lack of organizational capacity, and lack of policy support and it also indicates that the handloom weavers are not happy with the financial benefits of this particular qualified job, where they receive low income, there is a lack of government support in this regard. Their existence is inevitable and the government should take the necessary measures to improve their current financial situation to survive in the industry.

Rejitha and Sindhu (2023) in their research paper explained that the Indian handloom is one of the country's largest unorganized economic activities and the warp and weft of Indian culture, particularly in the rural sector. Its craftsmanship and elegance portray our rich tradition and heritage's history. The hand-spinning and weaving techniques of Indian weavers are famous over the world. The pandemic and lock downs of the past two years have significantly altered the Indian economy and devastated the lives and livelihoods of many citizens, particularly those who worked in MSMEs, where the case of handloom is not an exception. The third handloom census report highlighted the key statistics that alarmingly demanded the need of a rebirth of the sector. Therefore, it is a challenging and crucial duty to revive the industry and return it to its original state. The popularity and demand for Handloom products have declined especially in the domestic market. The main reason is that the modern societies' gloomy view toward sthe traditional industries and its perception of Indian weaves as old aged fashion that do not cater to modern needs. Even though the government has offered assistance through various programmes and policies, including those for base yarn, dyes, designs, credit, product development, entrepreneurship, technology up gradation, packaging, and market access, the handloom industry is in terrible condition.

Kethan et al. (2022) opined in their study that handloom sector in Andhra Pradesh is known to manufacture exclusive sarees with intricate and distinctive designs. Every piece woven is often different from others. In view of the field work, the present study examines the problems and prospects of handloom sector of Andhra Pradesh which contributes significantly to the state economy and provides sustainable livelihood opportunities to natives of the state This study is concentrated in Rayalaseem and Costal Region of Andhra Pradesh, because in spite of decrease in handloom weaver population in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The studies also revealed that customers are willing to buy handloom and handcrafted

products but they do not have this knowledge whether they are spending money on the original or the imitated product. The studies also revealed that customers are willing to buy handloom and handcrafted products but they do not have this knowledge whether they are spending money on the original or the imitated product. The visibility of handloom and handicrafts in the fashion and textile market had increased with the mobile applications and the handcraft will develop into a brand in itself with improved customer experience in Andhra Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-demographic profile of the handloom weavers in Tenkasi district
- To examine the challenges faced by the handloom weavers in the study area
- To offer suitable solutions to overcome the challenges faced by the respondents.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is empirical in nature. Both Primary data and secondary data have been used by the researcher. The primary data has been collected by the researcher from 50 sample respondents using a well-structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling has been used by the researcher for identifying the sample respondents.

The secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, magazines and websites.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

The following table shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents,

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Socio-Demographic Profile	Categories	Categories	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	78
	Female	11	22
Age	Less than 30 years	3	6
	30-40 years	12	24
	40-50 years	20	40
	Above 50 years	15	30
Family type	Nuclear family	35	70
	Joint family	15	30
Monthly Family income	Less than Rs.10,000	5	10
	Rs.10,000-20,000	7	14
	Rs.20,000-30,000	18	36
	Rs. 30,000-40,000	8	16
	Rs.40,000-50,000	9	18
	More than Rs. 50,000	3	6

Source: Primary Data

The above table 1 shows that 78% of the respondents are male; 40% of the respondents are between 40 and 50 years of age; 70% of the respondents are from nuclear family and 36% of the respondents' monthly family income is between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000.

Association between the Monthly Family Income of the respondents and the Challenges faced by the Handloom weavers

The researcher has identified nine problems faced by the handloom weavers namely obsolete technologies, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing link, poor infrastructure, low wages, health hazards, and lack of government support.

In order to examine whether there is any association between the Monthly family income of the respondents and the intensity of challenges faced by them one-way ANOVA has been applied.

The hypothesis testing with ANOVA on the association between the intensity of challenges faced by the handloom weavers in Tenkasi district and their demographic feature, Monthly family income was carried out by formulating the following null hypothesis.

Ho: There is no significant association between the intensity of challenges faced by the handloom weavers and their monthly family income.

Table 2

Association Between the Challenges faced by the Handloom Weavers and their Monthly Family Income - ANOVA

Challenges		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Obsolete technologies	Between Groups	8.031	5	1.606	.931	.000
	Within Groups	75.889	44	1.725		
	Total	83.920	49			
Low productivity	Between Groups	5.672	5	1.134	1.043	.002
	Within Groups	47.848	44	1.087		
	Total	53.520	49			
Inadequate working capital	Between Groups	6.716	5	1.343	1.063	.001
	Within Groups	55.604	44	1.264		
	Total	62.320	49			
Conventional product range	Between Groups	13.419	5	2.684	1.709	.000
	Within Groups	69.081	44	1.570		
	Total	82.500	49			
Weak marketing link	Between Groups	2.950	5	.590	.368	.015
	Within Groups	70.570	44	1.604		
	Total	73.520	49			
Poor infrastructure	Between Groups	2.924	5	.585	.415	.000
	Within Groups	61.956	44	1.408		

	Total	64.880	49			
Low wages	Between Groups	1.569	5	.314	.278	.000
	Within Groups	49.651	44	1.128		
	Total	51.220	49			
Health hazards	Between Groups	6.191	5	1.238	1.043	.029
	Within Groups	52.229	44	1.187		
	Total	58.420	49			
Lack of government support	Between Groups	5.239	5	1.048	.806	.001
	Within Groups	57.181	44	1.300		
	Total	62.420	49			

Source: Primary Data

The test of difference using ANOVA is found to be significant with regard to monthly family income and the challenges such as obsolete technology [$F(5, 44) = 0.931, p = .000 < 0.05$], Low productivity [$F(5, 44) = 1.043, p = .002 < 0.05$], Inadequate working capital [$F(5, 44) = 1.063, p = .001 < 0.05$], Conventional product range [$F(5, 44) = 1.709, p = .000 < 0.05$], Weak marketing link [$F(5, 44) = .368, p = .015 < 0.05$], Poor infrastructure [$F(5, 44) = .415, p = .000 < 0.05$], Low Wages [$F(5, 44) = .278, p = .000 < 0.05$], Health Hazards [$F(5, 44) = 1.043, p = .029 < 0.05$] and Lack of government support [$F(5, 44) = .806, p = .001 < 0.05$]. It implies that there is significant association between the intensity of challenges faced by the Handloom weavers and their monthly family income.

SUGGESTIONS

- Organising training programs to enhance the skills of handloom weavers and introduce them to modern techniques and designs.
- Launch awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the cultural and environmental significance of handloom products.
- Collaborate with fashion designers and influencers to promote handloom weaves and create a demand for these products.
- Facilitate easy access to credit for handloom weavers to invest in raw materials, equipment, and technology upgrades.
- Establish technology centres or workshops to provide hands-on training for weavers on the use of new tools and equipment.
- Develop online platforms to facilitate the direct sale of handloom products, connecting weavers with a broader customer base.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the challenges faced by handloom weavers are multifaceted and demand immediate attention from both policymakers and society at large. The dwindling demand for handloom products, coupled with the impact of mechanization and globalized markets, poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of these skilled artisans. Additionally, issues such as lack of access to credit, outdated technology, and insufficient government support further exacerbate their plight. To secure the future of handloom weavers, a

comprehensive approach is essential. This includes promoting awareness about the cultural and environmental significance of handloom products, creating avenues for skill development and technological upgrades, and implementing policies that facilitate fair wages and market access. Collaboration between government bodies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector is crucial to developing sustainable solutions that not only preserve the rich tradition of handloom weaving but also uplift the socio-economic status of the weavers.

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