

Survival of Handloom Workers: Causes and Remedies

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Abstract: *Indian handloom industry plays a vital role in countries economy. It is one of the largest cottage industries in India. It is the second largest employment generator after agriculture in the rural sectors. India contributes 95% to the total world exports of handloom products, enjoying almost monopoly. Spread across the country, the industry is known for its delicate, diverse and fine craftsmanship. Out of the 344 Geographical Indication tags held by India, 202 are of the handloom and handicraft products. However, the handloom industry's current status in India is disturbing in the socio-economic conditions of the workers. The present study highlights on the socio-economic conditions and the remedies for the survival of handloom workers of Maharashtra State.*

Keywords: Handloom Industry, Socio-Economic Condition, Handloom Workers, Remedies

1. Introduction

The handloom is symbol of our country's rich and varied cultural heritage. Handloom industry, a labour-intensive industry is one of the largest cottage industries in India. It is the second largest employment provider in the rural sectors, providing employment to around 43.32 lakh workers. The handloom textiles differ across regions, representing the unique diverse cultures of India. India holds 202 Geographical Indication tags in handloom and handicraft products alone. The intricacy of the designs and the excellence in its quality is a major driver for the global demand of Indian handloom products. India's share to the total world exports of handloom is 95%. A characteristic feature that highlights the handloom industry is the major contribution of women in the workforce. As per the Handloom Census conducted by the NCAER in 2010, the industry engages approximately 29.98 lakh women in a ratio of 3.5:1 against the males. Impressively, the composition of the SCs, the STs, and the OBCs in the workforce is also significantly high. Such attributes of the handloom industry make the study of the socio-economic conditions of the weavers of great importance.

According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census, the total number of households engaged in handloom activities (weaving and allied activities) is 31.45 lakhs in India. This has been increased over the Third Census where the count was 27.83 lakhs.

The study focuses on socio-economic conditions of handloom workers working in Maharashtra State, the causes and remedies for the survival of Handloom Workers of Maharashtra State.

2. Review of Literature

The Handloom sector is the glory of India and plays important role in the context of Indian economy. The artistry and intricacy in the handloom fabrics is unmatched to the modern machinery. It shows the culture, sincerity and

dedication which take months to weave. Hand weaving is one of the richest and the most resilient media of ethnic expression. There is a vast literature available on Handloom Industries with various aspects. Several studies at Regional, State, National and International level on different aspects of the handloom industries has been conducted by Researchers, State and Central Government agencies.

The study is primarily based on the secondary data. The inputs and insights of the 4th All India Handloom Census (2019-20)¹ have been reviewed for the study purpose.

Some of the selected literature related to the features, scope and management of handloom industries are also reviewed.

Sharma D.S. (1980)² in his article "Strategy to boost handloom Industry in North Eastern Region" published in Economic Times, 13th December 1980, p-9 opined that the government made several programmes for the benefit of the handloom weavers, but the weavers did not receive any benefit from any source, because of the master weavers and middlemen. So the government introduced photo pasted identity cards for the real weavers to eliminate the master weavers or middlemen.

Humbe Veena R. (2014)³ in her Research Paper "Role of Social Media in Marketing of Handloom Products", International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), Vol.13, Issue 7, P-136-139, 2014 has emphasised on use of social media for increasing the demand of handloom products. The study suggests that Government of India should help and promote handloom industries by using social media and bring awareness among the consumers for handloom products.

Dr. Sabiha Khatoon (2016)⁴ in her article "Make in India: A Platform to Indian Handloom Market" highlights on the importance of Indian handloom sector and problems suffered by the sector. The study revealed the shortcomings of Indian handloom sector and problems of handloom weavers. The author opines that there is a need to make

handloom tradition fashionable by introducing new designs and colour scheme.

Pallavi Bhalerao & Veena R. Humbe (2018)⁵ in their study entitled “Social Media - A Tool for Empowering Women Working in Handloom Industry” suggest that the use of social media in marketing can benefit the handloom industries by developing the awareness and benefits of handloom products, reducing marketing expenses, increasing the sales, providing the details regarding the marketplace to purchase the handloom products and exposure towards handloom products.

Statement of Problem

“Education & Employment play important role in eradicating poverty of Handloom Workers”

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are :

- 1) To study and analyze the socio-economic conditions of the handloom workers of Maharashtra State.
- 2) To provide proper suggestions and improvements to reduce the financial crises faced by the handloom workers of Maharashtra State.

Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis is a necessary link between theory and investigation which leads to discovery and addition to knowledge. The hypothesis plays a significant role in facilitating advancement of knowledge beyond one’s value and opinions.

Following hypotheses have been designed for the study purpose.

Hypothesis 1

H₀: There is significant impact of education in increasing the income of handloom workers of Maharashtra State.

H₁: There is no significant impact of education in increasing the income of handloom workers of Maharashtra State.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Employment plays important role in eradicating poverty of handloom workers of Maharashtra State.

H₁: Employment does not play important role in eradicating poverty of handloom workers of Maharashtra State.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the Maharashtra State only. The figures published in 4th All India Handloom Census (2019-20) related to Maharashtra State have been taken for the study.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive study based on secondary data. The secondary data required for the study has been collected through published materials such as Government Reports / Census, Plan Documents and Articles.

3. Data Analysis

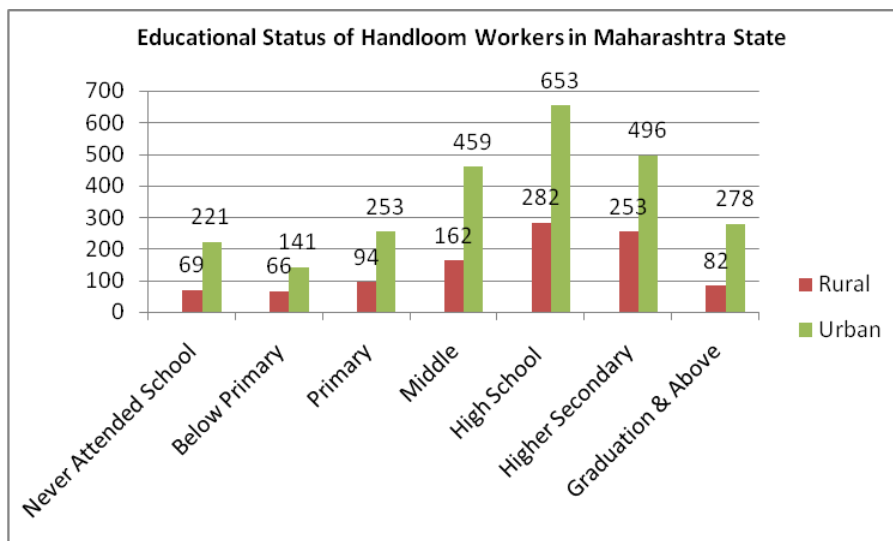
Education and income plays a significant place in one’s life. It leads to liberal attitudes, social and legal reforms and desire to acquire higher standard of living. It also helps in gaining knowledge about the schemes, facilities, work culture and its benefits provided by the government for empowering the handloom workers.

Table No. 1 shows the education status of the handloom workers from rural and urban locations working in Maharashtra State.

Table 1: Educational Status of Handloom Workers in Maharashtra State

Education Location	Never Attended School	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Graduation & Above	Total
Rural	69	66	94	162	282	253	82	1,008
Urban	221	141	253	459	653	496	278	2,501
Total	290	207	347	621	935	749	360	3,509

Source: Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20.



It can be clearly seen from the above table and chart that maximum 935 (26.64%) handloom workers from overall 3509 have attained their education till High School, whereas 207 (05.89%) are from below primary level. Hence it can be seen that due to illiteracy or poor education of the handloom workers, they are not aware of advantages and benefits provided by the government schemes.

From the table, it is observed that calculated p-value is less than the level of significance 5% (.00064 < 0.05). Hence the null hypothesis (H₀) “There is significant impact of education in increasing the income of handloom workers of Maharashtra State” is rejected and alternative hypotheses (H₁) “There is no significant impact of education in increasing the income of handloom workers of Maharashtra State” is accepted.

The handloom workers face many problems due to lack of education. The wages, work-life, decision making, unaware of government schemes are the major issues with these workers.

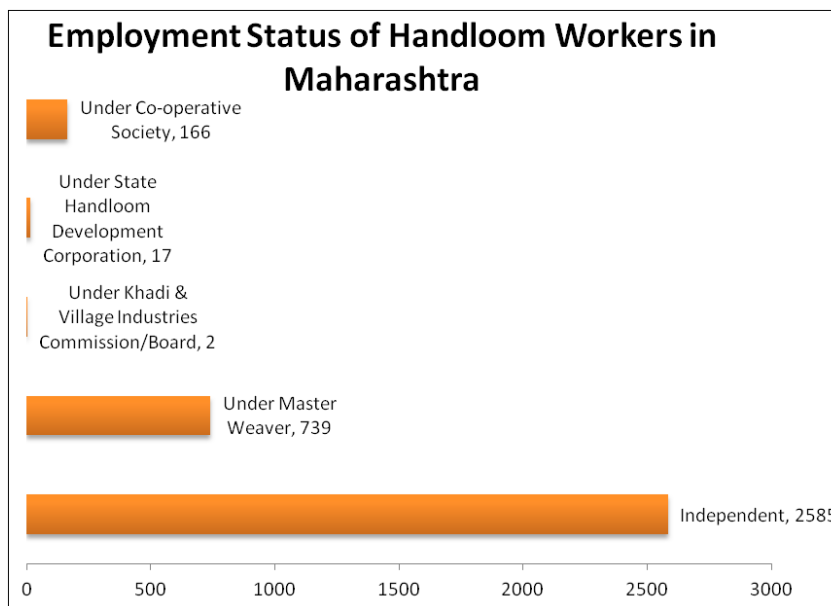
As these handloom workers are illiterate, they don't understand the procedure for availing benefits from Government Schemes. Hence providing proper information and communication in simple manner about the government schemes is very important. Such information can help them to avail the facilities provide by government schemes for developing their economic conditions.

Table No. 2 shows the employment status of the handloom workers from rural and urban locations working in Maharashtra State.

Table 2: Employment Status of Handloom Workers in Maharashtra

Location	Independent	Under Master Weaver	Under Khadi & Village Industries Commission/Board	Under State Handloom Development Corporation	Under Co-operative Society	Total
Rural	752	188	1	12	55	1,008
Urban	1833	551	1	5	111	2,501
Total	2585	739	2	17	166	3,509

Source : Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20.



The above table and chart depicts that maximum 2585 (73.66%) handloom workers work independently and only 2 (0.06%) work under Khadi & Village Industries Commission / Board. Only 17 (0.48%) work under State Handloom Development Corporation.

From the table, it is observed that the Chi-square value for the above table is 20.633 with Degree of Freedom 4 and the p-value is less than the level of significance 5% (.000374 < 0.05). Hence the null hypothesis (H₀) “Employment plays important role in eradicating poverty of handloom workers of Maharashtra State” is rejected and the alternative hypotheses (H₁) “Employment does not play important role in eradicating poverty of handloom workers of Maharashtra State” is accepted.

Handloom workers are considered among the low-wage workers. It is important that unless they have money or assurance of acquiring it, they cannot be regarded as empowered. The money they earn effect the type of their living.

To understand the reason of handloom workers of Maharashtra State living below poverty line, their income, debt and purpose of debt was also taken into consideration.

Table No. 3 shows the Income of the handloom workers from rural and urban locations working in Maharashtra State.

Table 3: Income of Handloom Workers in Maharashtra State

Location	Less than 10000	10001-20000	20001-30000	30001-40000	Total
Rural	998	09	01	00	1,008
Urban	2329	147	19	06	2,501
Total	3327	156	20	06	3,509

Source : Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20.

The above Table No. 3 depicts the Income of handloom workers of Maharashtra State. The values of the above table clearly indicate that maximum 3327 (94.81%) workers of handloom industries in Maharashtra earn Less than Rs.10,000/- per month. Only 6 (00.17%) handloom workers earn upto Rs. 40,000/- per month.

These workers are illiterate or have less education or unemployed and hence they don't have any option but to work in unorganised sectors like handloom industries where income is very low as compared to organized sectors. The income of handloom workers is insufficient to maintain their family and meet their requirements.

Debt is also the major hurdle which stops empowering handloom workers. As the income of these workers is not specific or fixed, they have to rely on the work. If they don't work continuously and hard, they have to bear the loss of their daily income, which leads them in debt.

The following Table No. 4 shows the causes of debt taken by the handloom workers.

Table 4: Handloom households in Debt and Purpose of Debt

Location	Handloom	Other Purpose	Both	Total
Rural	36	29	1	66
Urban	116	22	0	138
Total	152	51	1	204

Source: Fourth All India Handloom Census. 2019-20.

The above table clearly indicates that from total 204 debt ridden handloom workers, maximum 152 (74.50%) handloom workers have debt on them as they have to invest in raw material and other expenses related to their work. It can be seen that among these 152 workers, 116 (56.86%) are from urban areas as they have to bear more expenses which are more in urban areas rather in rural areas. 51 workers are debt ridden due to their personal reasons.

4. Conclusions

The Indian Handloom constitutes a timeless part of the rich cultural Heritage of India. The element of art and craft present in Indian handlooms makes it a potential sector for the upper segments of market domestic as well as global.

In India, large number of people work in handloom sector. As workers working in handloom industries are found to be poorest of the poor section of the society, special consideration and provisions for their health safety and security should be made by the handloom owners and state government so that they can enjoy their strength, unity and feel satisfied for their work. The study reveals that though the handloom workers are educated and employed, still their income is insufficient to fulfill their daily needs.

5. Suggestions

Hand woven cloths or fabrics from India account for 95% of the world's production of hand woven fabric. Over the years, the Indian Government has implemented number of schemes to help handloom communities. In the current situation, expenses of a family are increasing day by day. But with the present wages handloom workers are receiving remuneration cannot meet all their expenses. So the wages of these workers have to be increased. They should be provided subsidies, just like farmers. Government should help handloom workers with easy loans to set up their own looms.

The handloom products are costly due to their quality, design and uniqueness as compared to other clothes. The efforts to weave them are painstaking and time consuming. The workers have to be expertise and need lot of concentration for completing the task. Hence it is highly recommended to the handloom owners that they should pay atleast 20% of the cost of finished product as the labour charges to their handloom workers. The citizens of India should support the handloom workers by buying handloom products.

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