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Dr. Ganga Raju Vallam
Assistant Professor,
Department of Social Work,
Prabhala Lakshmi Narayana
Memorial Degree College,
Khaja, Krishna, Andhra
Pradesh, India

**Dr. Rama Satyanarayana
Mullapudi**
Faculty, Department of
Human Resource
Management, Acharya
Nagarjuna University,
Krishna, Andhra Pradesh,
India

Correspondence
Dr. Ganga Raju Vallam
Assistant Professor,
Department of Social Work,
Prabhala Lakshmi Narayana
Memorial Degree College,
Khaja, Krishna, Andhra
Pradesh, India

The life struggle of handloom weavers: A case study in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh

Dr. Ganga Raju Vallam and Dr. Rama Satyanarayana Mullapudi

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Abstract

India has great heritage in handloom sector. Handloom weaving is much popular and decentralized, traditional and skill-oriented activity in India. It is cottage industry and spread every nook and corner of the country and occupied everywhere both in rural and urban areas. After agriculture, the handloom industry provides significant proportion of livelihoods to majority of its people. The scope of employment is heavy, nearly 43.31 lakh people are engaged directly or indirectly by this industry. The present study is based on the primary data collected from handloom weavers in Krishna district, where majority of handloom weavers are located. The human resource generation is very high in handloom sector as well as the choosing this occupation also by heredity or profession by parents only. This study aims to explore the Struggles of Handloom weavers as well as to suggest appropriate measures to crack the problems and uplift their life.

Keywords: Handloom weaving activity, income, expenditure and indebtedness, uplift

Introduction

Handloom industry is proving a large scale employment in rural and urban places and it is an ancient industry. Handloom weaving is the traditional occupation in India. The handloom sector in India is the largest sector next to agriculture. Handloom sector has been organized in three predominant forms of weavers such Independent weavers, co-operative system weavers and wage weavers. The most prevalent system is that of the wage weavers. Presently, most of these wage work at takes at place from home. Their work ranges from pre-loom processing to mere weaving, at different places. The handloom industry is largely household-based, carried out with labour contributed by the entire family. It is dispersed, spread across thousands of villages and towns in the country. In the present economic climate where dependency on foreign capital and know how s increasing all round, the handloom industry presents a sustainable models of economic cavity that is not energy intensive and has low capital costs, as well as an extensive skill base. Its survival in and adaptability to, a wide range of economic conditions also needs to be understood in a proper perspective, in order to underline the inherent viability of this enterprise. Therefore, an objective appraisal of the handloom industry is the need of the day.

Handloom industry is one of the most decentralized, traditional and skill oriented industries in India. Handloom industry is one of the oldest industries in India. It is cottage industry in India and It is widely spreader every corner of the country. It is occupied place both in rural and urban areas. It is major sector number of people are getting the employment opportunities after agriculture sector. This industry providing employment to rural and urban people 43.31 lakhs people are getting the employment by this industry.

From total handloom workers 36.33 lakhs peoples are living in rural areas, 6.93 lakhs people are living in urban areas. In total handloom workers nearly 50 percent of the workers 21.6 lakhs workers are living in southern states. In this states west Bengal 7.8 lakhs, Tamil Nadu 3.5 lakhs, Andhra Pradesh 3.6 lakhs, utter Pradesh 2.6 lakhs. Orissa 1.1 lakhs, Karnataka 0.9 lakhs and other states 2.3 lakhs workers are living.

This sector contributes nearly 15 percent of the total cloth produced in the country and also contributed substantially to the export income of the country and 95 per cent of the world's hand woven fabric comes from India.

Handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has traditionally been one of the major handloom weaving regions of India. The state has the second largest concentration of weavers in the country after neighboring state, Tamil Nadu, with 6 lakh weaver families. In Andhra Pradesh, many, either work on their own or are attached to master weavers. At present, this activity provides full and part time employment to about 40 lakh persons. Weaving is a household activity, carried on by weaver artisans with the assistance of family labour, producing for a commercial market. It is largely a rural activity and is virtually synonymous with cotton fabrics and cotton accounting for about 79 per cent of the yarn consumed in the state. Some varieties of saris produced on the handlooms in Andhra Pradesh are among the world's finest pieces and known for their immaculate warps and wafts, eye catching shades and alluring texture. About 70 per cent of the looms in Andhra Pradesh produce traditional apparel items. Although handloom weaving exists in all districts of Andhra Pradesh, there are considerable differences between various regions within the State, with regard to numbers of weavers and looms, trends therein and products made. There is also a huge regionally specific product variation. In some areas very exclusive products are made, for instance in Vetapalem (Prakasam District), where saris are produced with real gold threads woven into the-silk product. The names of the weaving centers or villages sometimes even function as a kind of brand name, because the same products are not produced elsewhere.

The state of Andhra Pradesh has two regions—Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. These regions represent two homogeneous and distinct agro-climatic zones. In spite of the wide regional disparities in social and economic development, the region now covered under the state of Andhra Pradesh has historically been a major producer of cotton textiles. Traditionally, little cotton was grown in the state, though recently farmers in dry regions have been switching to cotton cultivation. Down the centuries textile production has depended on yarn brought in from other regions. Textile production is also segmented catering to three distinct and different markets – production for export, production of very specialized and high-valued textiles used by high-income groups and varieties for household use to be sold in local markets. One of the specialties of the cotton fabrics of Andhra Pradesh is the use of real zari or gold thread in borders and motifs in the body of the saris. Venkatagiri in Nellore district is best known for such saris woven with real zari and superfine cotton yarn of 100 to 120 counts. Similar saris are also woven in Pattur in Prakasam district, Madhavaram in Kadapa district, Mangalagiri in Krishna district and Uppada, a fishing village to the north of Kakinada in East-Godavari district. Often the local varieties have their own distinguishing features like the border design or the body patterns and so on.

Review of literature

Jayachandra K and Subramanyam NL (2014) ^[1] study focuses on the handloom weavers cooperative societies in Chittoor district Andhra Pradesh highlighting the

importance of cooperative societies and its benefits to the weaving community. The study shows how the weaving communities have become workless. It also highlights the functioning of the cooperative societies. The findings of the study demonstrate how cooperative societies are not active in the recent times due to various reasons. It concludes that the government must take care and provide the essential support to rejuvenate the industry.

Venkateswaran A (2014) ^[2] study brings to light socio-economic conditions of the weaving community in Tirunelveli District. The study findings show the socio-economic conditions of the weaving community in the district are not good, due to the poor income earnings, non-availability of credit and the competition of the readymade industry etc. The study suggests that there is a dire need to take welfare measures for the wellbeing of the weaving community. Apart from the welfare measures, the subsidiary mechanism has to be provided by the state to uplift sick handloom industry.

Naga Raju G and Rao KV (2014) ^[3] conducted a study on the socio-economic conditions of the handloom community in Andhra Pradesh. The study has been highlighted across Krishna district and also discusses the health conditions of the weavers. It is known from the study that the economic status of the weavers is not up to the mark due to their low income from their profession. In addition to the above issues, the study presents the perception of the youth of the community members and their attitudes towards their traditional profession. The findings of study reveal that the majority of the youth from the weaving community are reluctant to continue in the profession and they want to prefer or change to other professions.

Hegde Pandurang (2014) ^[4] editorial article highlights the plight of the handloom community in India. It brings to light the fact that the number of employees engaged in the profession has drastically declined as per 2010 Handloom Census. The study shows how the power looms have made the traditional looms workless. It also highlights the fact that the upcoming generations are not willing to continue this profession.

Objectives of the study

Major objectives of the study as follows

- To study the socio-economic status of handloom weavers.
- To know the income, expenditure consumption pattern of the sample respondents.
- To analyze the Living pattern conditions of the weavers.
- To study the health issues of the weavers.

Need for the study

Present the handloom weavers in Krishna district is facing acute problems of abject insufficient income, poverty, unemployment and illness. Majority of them are struggling hard to survive and income and expenditure are hues imbalance, the socio economic and living conditions were deplorable. The rapid expansion of power loom has doubled their problems. In past days handloom industry has glory in this district so many weaving families last generations and before generation families were migrated to Krishna district for handloom weaving from very long. But especially since one decade handloom industry condition is not well it was felling down. So far as the researcher's knowledge is

concerned no study has been in Krishna district Handloom weaving is popular.

Sample

The study has been carried out in Three Mandals viz. Pedana, Guduru and Ghantasala of Krishna district of Andhara Pradesh. The study adopted a stratified purposive sampling design for collection of data. The total sample comprises of 250 of the weavers households.

Data collection tools

Secondary and primary sources have been used in the present study. The secondary data comprises the government reports, official documents and other survey reports. Handloom censuses report, textile annual report 2012-2013, Directorate of Handloom, assistant Directorate of Handloom offices Krishna relevant journals, reports and books. Primary data has been collected with a structure interview schedules.

Tools of data analysis

Suitable and appropriate statistical tools and mathematical devices like average, percentage, compound growth and rates and the analysis of variance, and chi-square test were employed while tabulating, analysis and interpreting the data.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age groups

Age	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
20-30	2	9	0	11
	4.2%	4.7%	0%	4.8%
31-40	4	18	3	25
	8.5%	9.4%	25.0%	10.0%
41-50	18	49	6	73
	38.3%	25.7%	50.0%	29.2%
51-60	14	63	3	80
	29.8%	33.0%	25.0%	32.0%
Above 60	9	52	0	61
	19.1%	27.2%	.0%	24.4%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

The Table 1 is about the age group of respondents, of the total respondents 32 per cent of majority respondents follow between 51- 60 years age group, 29.2 per cent respondents are between 41-50 years, 24.4 percentage reported from above 60 years age group. A meager percent 4.4 of respondents are in 20-30 years age group. The data shows that younger generation are not willing to engage in the traditional profession. The majority respondents are still working without retirement in this work.

Table 2: Distributions of respondents by gender

Gender	Co-operatives	Master weavers	Independently	Total
Male	37	155	7	199
	78.7%	81.2%	58.3%	79.6%
Female	10	36	5	51
	21.3%	18.8%	41.7%	20.4%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Compiled from collected data

Table(2) reflects that 79.6 per cent respondents are males are engaging in weaving occupation only 20.4 per cent

respondents are females engaging in weaving occupation the male respondents have dominating position in industry. When compare with north states this area totally opposite in female participation.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by type of house

Type of house	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
Kutchha	17	54	2	73
	36.2%	28.3%	16.7%	29.2%
Semi pukka	21	77	10	108
	44.7%	40.3%	83.3%	43.2%
Pukka	9	60	0	69
	19.1%	31.4%	.0%	27.6%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

This table(3) is explaining about type of houses of respondents. The Majority 43.2 per cent respondents are living in semi pukka houses, 29.2 per cent respondents are living in katchha houses and the remaining 27.6 per cent respondents are living in pukka houses.

This Table 4 reflects that 90.8 per cent respondents have white ration cards, 6.8 per cent respondents are living without ration cards and only 2.4 percent respondents have pink ration card. So the majority respondents have only white card it indicating the poverty of the handloom weavers very minute per cent weavers have pink card.

Table 4: Possession of ration card

Type of Ration card	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
White card	45	171	11	227
	95.7%	89.5%	91.7%	90.8%
Pink card	0	6	0	6
	.0%	3.1%	.0%	2.4%
No card	2	14	1	17
	4.3%	7.3%	8.3%	6.8%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

Table 5: Distribution of Annual Income of Family (in Rupees)

Income	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
Up to 20000	4	16	0	20
	8.5%	8.4%	.0%	8.0%
20001-40000	16	116	0	132
	34.0%	60.7%	.0%	52.8%
40001-60000	17	50	1	68
	36.2%	26.2%	8.3%	27.2%
60001-80000	7	4	8	19
	14.9%	2.1%	66.7%	7.6%
80001-100000	1	1	1	3
	2.1%	.5%	8.3%	1.2%
Above 100000	2	4	2	8
	4.3%	2.1%	16.7%	3.2%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

The table (5) explains total family annual income level of the respondents. The majority 52.8 per cent respondents have total family annual income is 20001-40000, 27.2 per cent respondents have income 40001-60000 and 1.2 per cent

respondents families have annual income 80001-100000 only. The above 100000 annual income getting families are only 3.2 per cent and 100000 annual income figure crossing families are only eight.

Table 6: Annual Expenditure of the family (in rupees)

Expenditure	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
up to 20000	0	3	0	3
	0%	1.6%	0%	1.2%
20001-40000	12	42	4	58
	25.5%	22.0%	33.3%	23.2%
40001-60000	17	85	5	107
	36.2%	44.5%	41.7%	42.8%
60001-80000	16	43	1	60
	34.0%	22.5%	8.3%	24.0%
80001-100000	1	9	1	11
	2.1%	4.7%	8.3%	4.4%
Above 100000	1	9	1	11
	2.1%	4.7%	8.3%	4.4%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

The Table 6 portrays about the family annual expenditure of the respondents. The majority 42.8 percent of the respondents total family annual expenditure reported to be 40001-60000, as well 24 percent respondents expenditure reported 60001-80000 and 4.4 percent of the respondents annual expenditure reported 80001 -100000 only. In the similar way another 4.4 percent of the respondents' expenditure reported above one lakh. It is to be noted that the expenditure is very high among the almost all weavers than their income.

Table 7: Indebtedness of the Respondents

Do you have any indebtedness	Co-operatives	Master weavers	Independently	Total
Yes	31	142	9	182
	66.0%	74.3%	75.0%	72.8%
No	16	49	3	68
	34.0%	25.7%	25.0%	27.2%
Total	47	191	12	250
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

Table 7 shows about the indebted rates of the respondents. Through the above table it is come to know that majority of the respondents are struggling with indebtedness, of the total respondents 72.8 percent have more indebtedness and only 27.2 percent to be reported no indebtedness. It is indicating the gap between income and expenditure of respondents. So the respondents are not getting the sufficient income to full fill their minimum need that why majority respondents are depending on in debts. Nearly one by forth respondents have relaxation from indebtedness.

The above Table 8 revealed the majority 68.1 per cent respondents struggling with indebtedness for full their home needs only, 14.8 per cent respondents thronging in to indebtedness for their children marriages. Income which has been earning on the present work has not met the home need. It is very panic situation of respondents because all respondents have struggling with insufficient income.

Above Table 9 revealed facts about health conditions of handloom weavers 155 respondents are suffering from eye sight problem. 83 respondents are facing problems with

hernia. 69 respondents have orthopedic problems. 49 respondents are with B.P. 47 respondents have piles problem. 33 respondents have asthma problem. 21 respondents are suffering from diabetic. 8 respondents struggling with cardiac problems and 3 respondents have paralysis.

Table 8: Reasons for Indebtedness

Reason	Co-operatives	Master Weavers	Independently	Total
For purchase of raw material	0	0	3	3
	.0%	.0%	33.3%	1.6%
For home needs	18	104	2	124
	58.1%	73.2%	22.2%	68.1%
For children education	5	11	3	19
	16.1%	7.7%	33.3%	10.4%
For children marriage	6	20	1	27
	19.4%	14.1%	11.1%	14.8%
For medical treatment	2	7	0	9
	6.5%	4.9%	.0%	4.9%
Total	31	142	9	182
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from collected data

Table 9: Health Conditions of the respondents

Respondents working under category				
Disease	Co-operative	Master Weaver	Independent	Total
Sight	34	115	6	155
Blood Pressure (BP)	9	36	4	49
Diabetes	4	17	0	21
Asthma	11	22	0	33
Paralysis	1	2	0	3
Cancer	0	0	0	0
Hernia	17	39	7	83
Piles	14	29	4	47
Orthopedic	5	52	0	69
Cardiac	0	3	0	8

Source: Compiled from collected data

Findings of the study

79.6 per cent respondents are males are engaging in weaving occupation only 20.4 per cent respondents are females engaging in weaving occupation the male respondents have dominating position in this industry.32 per cent of majority respondents are between 51-60 years age group, above 60 years age group respondents have 24.4 per cent and least percent 4.4 of respondents are in 20-30 years age group. Younger generations are not choosing this profession. 90.8 per cent respondents have white ration cards, 6.8 per cent respondents are living without ration cards and only 2.4 percent respondents have pink ration card. The majority respondents have total family annual income is 20001-40000, only. The above 100000 annual income getting families are only 3.2 per cent. The majority 42.8 per cent respondents have total family annual expenditure is 40001 - 60000. The above 100000 annual expenditure families are 4 per cent and very least 1.2 per cent families' annual expenditure is up to 20000 only with compare annual income the expenditure are very high. Majority respondents are struggling with indebtedness, nearly only one by forth respondents have relaxation from indebtedness. 72.8 per cent respondents have indebtedness and only 27.2 per cent respondents have no indebtedness. So the respondents are not getting the sufficient income to full fill their minimum

need that why majority respondents are depending on in debts.

Conclusion

The handloom weavers are stretched out every day in the struggle for survival. Due to various structural changes in the society and the global the rich industry had lost its glory and the workers who depends on this industry has lost their livelihoods and forced to choose the other alternative livelihoods. The material cost has been increased in enormously and there is no scope left for the weavers to depend on the industry. Apart from the government subsidies have withdrawn and the government has not the adequate attentions towards the industry. Besides, the power loom industry has largely impacted handloom industry. The lackadaisical attitude of the policy makers and fund releasing towards these industry workers made them more badly. There are huge number of government policies schemes are introduced but they are in favor of the cooperative society workers, indeed this schemes to be diverted and covered towards the unorganized sector labors who work home based and under the master weavers, unless he situation of weavers cannot be expected as better than.

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