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A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS FACED BY TRADITIONAL HANDLOOM WEAVERS IN DHARAPURAM TALUK, TIRUPUR DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

Dr. R. Govindasamy[1] M. Soundharya[2], G. Srinidhi[3]
[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University*
[2]*M.A Economics, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University*
[3]*Phd Research scholar, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University*

ABSTRACT
Handloom weaving is one of India's most important craft-based industries and represents the largest cottage industry in the country. It plays a crucial role in providing employment and income generator especially in rural and semi-urban areas, and is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of regions like Tamil Nadu. Despite its significance, the sector faces numerous challenges threaten its survival. One of the major problems is the intense competition from power loom and machine-made fabrics, which are cheaper and produced more rapidly, making it difficult for traditional weavers to compete. In addition, weavers suffer from health issues due to long working hours and poor infrastructure conditions, along with low and unstable incomes that make it difficult to sustain their livelihoods. On the marketing side, issues such as poor-quality control, dependence on middlemen, and high competition further affect profitability and growth. These combined production and marketing challenges have placed immense pressure on the traditional handloom industry. This study explores the key problems faced by handloom weavers and stresses the urgent need for policy measures aimed at improving market access, providing financial and health assistance, promoting fair trade practices, and preserving the cultural and economic value of this age-old craft through targeted interventions.

KEYWORD: *Handloom Sector, Production Problem, Marketing Problem, Training Programme, Financial Assistance*

INTRODUCTION

Handloom weaving stands as one of India's most significant craft-based industries and represents the largest cottage industry in the country. This traditional practice involves weaving textiles on manually operated looms, without the use of electricity or automated machines. It is a labour-intensive craft where skilled artisans intricately interlace warp and weft threads to create fabric. With a history spanning centuries, handloom weaving holds a vital place in the cultural and economic fabric of countries like India, Bangladesh, and regions in Africa and Southeast Asia. Handloom products, often crafted from natural fibers such as cotton, silk, wool, and linen, are prized for their vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and distinctive designs. The process demands exceptional precision, skill, and creativity, with artisans dedicating hours, and sometimes even days or weeks, to complete a single piece, depend on handmade product particularly when dealing with complex patterns. In India, the handloom sector ranks as the largest unorganized economic activity after agriculture and serves as a key source of livelihood in rural and semi-urban communities. This sector directly and indirectly employs around 35.22 lakh weavers and related workers, contributing about 15per cent to the nation's cloth production and significantly boosting export earnings. Remarkably, India supplies about 95per cent of the world's hand-woven fabric. Among its many regional traditions, Tamil Nadu's handloom sector is especially renowned for its rich heritage and the exceptional craftsmanship of its weavers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rajyalakshmi et.al., (2024): The study investigates the challenges faced by handloom entrepreneurs in Telangana, focusing on resource scarcity, marketing hurdles, and limited technological progress, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context. Using secondary data and qualitative analysis, it identifies key issues such as inadequate quality control, insufficient marketing support, and restricted credit access. The study concludes by calling for policy reforms to sustain the sector and encourages consumers to support handloom products as part of preserving cultural heritage.

Poongodi et. al., (2022): The study sheds light on the challenges faced by women handloom weavers in Pollachi Taluk, highlighting their vital role in the local economy. Data from 74 weavers shows that most are aged 31-40, live in joint families, and have over a decade of weaving experience. Key issues they face include low wages, health problems, income instability during off-seasons, difficulties in sourcing raw materials, and marketing their products. The findings also reveal significant links between the problems faced and factors like age, marital status, and income. This research emphasizes the need for support and interventions to improve their livelihoods.

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OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study about the marketing problem of Handloom weavers in Dharapuram taluk, Tirupur district.
- To know about the Formal Training program of the Handloom weavers within study area.

METHODOLOGY

A preliminary survey was conducted using a questionnaire and interview schedule, involving 50 respondents (handloom weavers) in Dharapuram Taluk, Tirupur district. Data were collected from December 2024 to January 2025 using the simple Random Sampling Technique.

TOOL OF ANALYSIS

- Chi square, Garrett Ranking

Table 1: Attended Formal Training of the Handloom weavers

s.no	Type of Loom	Formal Training		Total
		Yes	No	
1	Traditional	26 (89.7) [60.5]	3 (10.3) [42.9]	29 (100.0) [58.0]
2	Modern	17 (81.0) [39.5]	4 (19.0) [57.1]	21 (100.0) [42.0]
3	Total	43 86.0 [100.0]	7 14.0 [100.0]	50 (100.0) [100.0]
Chi square		.381		

Source: Primary survey
***Note*:** Figures in parenthesis () indicates row wise per cent [] indicates column wise percentage

Table 1 presents data on the formal training status of handloom weavers based on the type of loom they use. Among traditional loom users, 89.7per cent have attended formal training, while 10.3per cent have not. Among modern loom users, 81.0per cent have received formal training, whereas 19.0per cent have not. Overall, out of 50 respondents, 86.0per cent have attended formal training, and 14.0per cent have not. The percentage of trained weavers is slightly higher among traditional loom users than modern loom users. However, a greater proportion of modern loom users (19.0per cent) lack formal training compared to traditional loom users (10.3per cent)

Table2: Problems faced by handloom weavers in Tirupur District

Factor	Descriptive Satsistics	Total	Mean	Rank
Health issues	F	50	359.9	II
	FX	3599		
Power loom cloths price	F	50	360	I
	FX	3600		
Labour security	F	50	205	V
	FX	2050		
Lack of technology	F	50	182.5	IX
	FX	1825		
Low income	F	50	332.9	III
	FX	3329		
Marketing difficulties	F	50	216.1	VI
	FX	2161		
Financial challenge	F	50	214.8	VII
	FX	2148		

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Consumer purchase	**F**	50	**266.4**	**IV**
	FX	2664		
Price fluctuation	**F**	50	**207.1**	**VIII**
	FX	2071		
Limited government support	**F**	50	**127.9**	**X**
	FX	1279		

Source: Primary survey

Table 2 outlines ten major challenges faced by handloom weavers, ranked across four severity levels (I to X). Leading the list is "Power Loom Cloths Price," ranked first, indicating its dominant impact as a key threat to traditional weaving due to competition from the machine-made fabrics. "Health Issues" follow in second place, reflecting the physical toll of the craft on weavers. "Low Income" takes the third rank, underscoring economic instability in the sector. Ranked fourth is "Consumer Purchase Behavior," highlighting shifts in buyer preferences. "Marketing Difficulties" hold the fifth position, revealing barriers in promoting and selling handloom products. In sixth place is "Financial Challenges," followed by "Price Fluctuation" in seventh, both pointing to the sector's economic vulnerability. "Labour Security" and "Lack of Technology" rank eighth and ninth respectively, indicating concerns over employment stability and the need for modernization. Finally, "Limited Government Support" is ranked tenth, suggesting either minimal assistance or limited awareness among weavers. These rankings shed light on priority areas requiring attention to ensure the sustainability and growth of the handloom industry.

Table 3: Marketing Problems Faced by Handloom weavers in Tirupur District

Factor		Total	Mean	Rank
Storage Facility	F	50	372	IV
	FX	1488		
Quality Issues	F	50	806	I
	FX	3224		
Middle Man	F	50	738.25	II
	FX	2953		
High Competition	F	50	558.75	III
	FX	2235		

Source: Primary survey

Table 3 illustrates four key marketing problems faced by handloom weavers, categorized across four severity levels (I to IV). Leading among these is Quality Issues, ranked first, highlighting widespread concerns over the perceived or actual quality of handloom products, which may be affecting consumer trust and purchase decisions. In second place is the influence of Middle Men, suggesting that intermediaries play a major role in controlling prices and limiting direct market access for weavers, thereby impacting their profits. High Competition follows as the third-ranked issue and finally, Storage Facility ranks fourth, indicating infrastructural gaps that hinder the safe storage of raw materials and finished goods, potentially causing losses and inefficiencies. These rankings underscore the critical areas where interventions are necessary to strengthen marketing channels and improve the viability of handloom enterprises.

CONCLUSION

Traditional Handloom is one of the most significant craft-based industries and represents the largest cottage industry in the country. Especially in Tamil Nadu, the handloom sector is rich in heritage even though weavers face the problems such as Power loom cloths price dominating the traditional weaving due to competition from machine-made fabrics, then health issues and Low income. In addition, traditional weavers are facing problems on the marketing side like- wise quality issues, presence of middle men, and high competition. These challenges continue to threaten the survival of the handloom sector, making it difficult for weavers to sustain their livelihoods. Without adequate support, there is a risk that this centuries-old craft may decline further. Therefore, it is essential to implement targeted measures such as improving marketing access, reducing the price fluctuation by the way of minimum fixing price for handloom weavers providing financial assistant and health support, and establishing equitable pricing systems to rejuvenate and safeguard this traditional industry.

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