

©KY PUBLICATIONS
RESEARCH ARTICLE
Vol.3.Issue.3.2016
July-Sept.



ISSN:2349-4638

<http://www.ijbmas.in>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT
AND ALLIED SCIENCES (IJBMAS)**

A Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

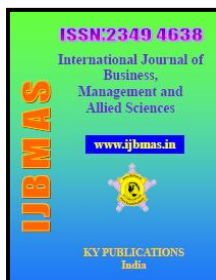
**A SURVEY ON THE PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL
HANDLOOM WEAVERS OF BHATTIPROLU CLUSTER, GUNTUR DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The present study concentrates on the socio-economic analysis of handloom industry in Bhattiprolu Handloom Cluster (Isukapalli, Bhattiprolu, ilavaram, Repalle, Cherukupalli), Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. The handloom industry is facing several problems such as non-availability of adequate quantity of quality raw material, shortage of working capital, non-availability of marketing facilities, credit needs to handloom weavers in co-operative field, low capacity utilization due to not utilizing of new technology, failure of co-operative movement, facing stiff competition from organized mill and powerloom sector in the area of marketing the handloom products and central and state government's low budget allocations and nonutilized budgeted funds in a proper way. In the present survey, the socio-economic profile and the problems of silk weavers in Bhattiprolu Handloom Cluster analyzed and trying to offer possible recommendations to address the problems and perspectives. This study is based on both primary and secondary data sources. A primary survey was conducted in six villages of bhatiprolu cluster during the year 2013, consisting of 100 respondents chosen randomly. The study results revealed that the situation of the weavers was worrying: they were feeble due to illiteracy, financial constraints, health problems, meagre remuneration and poor Government support.

Key words: *Handloom, Weavers, Bhattiprolu Cluster, Socio-economic conditions*

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INTRODUCTION

Handloom industry is one of the vital industries of India and its survival is a remarkable one despite decline in some countries and it was wiped out in certain other countries where modern textile industry was established. The industry is unique in the sense that in no other country in the world, hand weaving is being carried vastly on such a nation-wide basis. It withstood the onslaughts and stiff competition from machine-made products. In the wake of mobility, growing urbanization, scientific and technological revolution, it

escaped unscathed from annihilation keeping all the ancient tradition of weaving and carrying out improvements in tools and accessories. Indian weavers are not only producing enough cloth to meet internal demand, but also exporting numerous artistic varieties to industrialized countries of the World. Handloom is a way of life for many people in India. From the view point of employment, it ranks second next to agriculture and people dependent on it are heterogeneous in nature, among whom are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parses, Zoroastrians, besides Tribal, hill people and the like. Particularly Mahatma Gandhi recognized this significance of textile handicrafts during the struggle for independence. A notable aspect of Gandhi's views on this issue is that he emphasized not only handloom weaving but also spinning by hand. Gandhi emphasized hand spinning so much that the instrument for this the Charkha become a leading symbol of the freedom movement. This was important because while the handloom weaver was a symbol of a community's self-reliance in matters relating to a basic need (clothes), the availability of basic raw material in the form of hand-spun yarn within the community was a symbol of self-reliance of handloom weavers themselves. In addition as spinning work required little capital investment and could be taken up anywhere, anytime by any person, it offered a good source of employment for villages which could be adjusted to their rhythm of life. The Government of India's policy for the handloom sector had two objectives social and economic. The business objectives anchored in the thrust for growth, were to update old technology, innovativeness, increase productivity, introduce new colors, new designs and to export the handloom fabrics

Statement of the problem

The significance of the handloom sector in India lies in the fact that it is a major employer next only to agriculture. The dependence of 16 million weavers on this sector in the country is a clear evidence of its importance in terms of livelihood. The contribution of this sector to total cloth production in the country has been around 22 percent. The State of Andhra Pradesh, following Tamil Nadu, has the second largest concentration of handlooms in the country. There are estimated to be around 1,71,660 handloom weaving families and 2,13,404 working handlooms in the State. Clothing is a basic human need as much as food and shelter. Till the 19th century, when there were no machines for the production of cloth, the handloom industry was the sole supplier of cloth for the entire need of the world. Handloom weaving is the India's biggest cottage and labour intensive sector, which has been playing a very important role in the country's economy by forming part of India's rich heritage and exemplifying the rich artistry of the weavers. There are historical records to show that handloom fabrics of India had established their reputation in the international market long before the historic Industrial Revolution in the West and the Indian Handloom fabrics received popular patronage and adorned regal personages, besides having received acclaim abroad in the olden days. As an economic activity, the handloom sector occupies a place second only to agriculture in terms of employment.

Bhattiprolu weavers and cotton products are of international repute. Though the Bhattiprolu cotton saree products are enjoying a ready market both at home and abroad, there are grey areas demanding immediate attention to sustain and further improve this traditional craft and to help the Bhattiprolu weavers to achieve new heights. In the present study, we have analysed the socio-economic profile and the problems of Bhattiprolu weavers in Bhattiprolu handloom cluster, trying to offer possible recommendations to address the grey areas.

Review of Literature

The survey of literature plays an important role in establishing the backdrop for any research work in social sciences. To analyse any field of study, it is vitally important to go through and discuss, various reviews and articles worked out by many eminent scholars and writers who have vividly and sagaciously studied and analysed with their intellectual perception. Plenty of research is carried out by research scholars, NGO's Govt organization not only in India but also in global scenario. Few studies related to the present survey are discussed here. Survey of literature is focused mainly on "to cover studies related to socio-economic conditions of weavers, problems of handloom industry and weavers, organizational issues and implementation of various development and welfare schemes of handloom industry, that have direct and indirect bearing on the objectives of the study.

P.C.Mahapatro conducted a study in the state of Orissa. He examined the relevance of the handloom industry to the economy of the Orissa state and scrutinized the general characteristics of the industry. Output

and employment aspects of the industry, income of the weaving households and their economic conditions have been analyzed. The major problems facing the industry such as marketing, finance and supply of yarn were highlighted. In addition, the study also evaluated the efficacy of various policies adopted by the Government for the development of the handloom industry in Orissa. A field study was conducted by Gundeti Ramesh3 on *.Some Issues of Handloom Weavers. A Study in Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh*. In this study, the author has made an attempt to highlight the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers by selecting 180 handloom weavers working in weaving co-operative society of Kothapally of Karimnagar District. The author particularly highlighted the issues such as poverty, low standard of living, hunger, poor health, malnutrition, illiteracy, deceases, poor sanitary housing conditions, lack of communication and infrastructure facilities. *.Socio-Economic Status of Handloom Weavers*. is the study of L.P.Ramalingamanalysed the socio-economic factors of age, gender, marital and educational status, occupational distribution, ownership of house property and occupational diseases. The major findings of the study are: i) majority of the weavers are in the age group of above 40 years; ii) educational status of the weavers is below 10th standard; iii) system of occupation is hereditary in nature; iv) 88 per cent of the weavers lived in rented houses and 91 per cent of the weavers were attacked by occupational diseases. Finally, the author suggested some measures, viz. attracting young generation in this field, conducting periodical medical camps, extending loan facilities to the eligible weavers and providing minimum guaranteed wage, PF, etc. to regain the glory of handloom industry. S. MahendraDev, S. Galab, P. Prudhuikar Reddy and SoumyaVinayan, examined the problems and prospects of the handloom sector in Andhra Pradesh. This study adopted a four stage stratified purposive sampling technique selecting five agro-climate regions of the Andhra Pradesh, viz. North and South Costal Andhra, North and South Telangana and Rayalaseema on the basis of maximum and smallest decline in loomage between 1987 and 1995. One of the landmark studies conducted in this area was by *Sameer Sharma* (Commissioner of Industries, Government of Andhra Pradesh) about APCO. An Experience of Restructuring an Organisation in an Emerging Market Economy . In this study, he described various gaps for fall in the sales of APCO, which were identified by the technical consultancy cell appointed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Hyderabad

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The primary objective of the present research work is to analyse the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers. The detailed objectives of the study are:

- 1) To study the present situation prevailing in the handloom industry with particular reference to the problems faced by handloom weavers.
- 2) To examine the policy of the Government of India towards promoting the handloom industry since independence.
- 3) To study the social conditions prevailing among the handloom weavers with an objective to find out their place in the society.
- 4) To examine the organizational issues having impact on the socioeconomic conditions.
- 5) To study the status, problems and prospects of the handloom sector in the present location
- 6) To study Improving poor ergonomics and working conditions so as to attract new generation to weaving.
- 7) To provide concrete recommendations for overall development of handloom &Powerloom industries and to enhance its efficiency
- 8) To study the social conditions prevailing among the handloom weaverswith an objective to find out their place in the society

HYPOTHESES

The study attempts to test the following hypothesis for their acceptanceor non-acceptance.

- 1) The plight of handloom weavers has only led them to commit suicides.
- 2) The policies of the Government have adversely contributed for thegrowth and development of handloom industry in India.
- 3) The social conditions of the handloom weavers is very low in the societydue to lack of education and migratory character are not very congenialfor making a better living and enjoying a just status in the society.

- 4) The economic status of the handloom weavers is very poor due to low remuneration and lack of adequate work.
- 5) The co-operative form of organization has not helped the weavers for a better standard of living of the weavers.

Study Area

Bhattiprolu is a Mandal in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. Bhattiprolu Mandal Head Quarters is Bhattiprolu town. It belongs to Andhra region. It is located 51 KM towards East from District head quarters Guntur. 331 KM from State capital Hyderabad towards west.

Demographics of Bhattiprolu Mandal: Telugu is the Local Language here. Also People Speak Urdu. Total population of Bhattiprolu Mandal is 51,385 living in 13,858 Houses, Spread across total 28 villages and 16 panchayats. Males are 25,772 and Females are 25,613. Bhattiprolu Handloom Cluster is composed of six villages viz, Isukapalli, Bhattiprolu, Ilavaram, Repalle, Cherukupalli.

Data and Methodology

To fulfill the objectives of the study primary data has been collected from the respondent weavers. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques of research have been used in the study. Interviews have been qualitatively analysed and interpreted. The study was conducted in Isukapalli, Bhattiprolu, Ilavaram, Repalle, Cherukupalli of Bhattiprolu handloom sector. As in Bhattiprolu handloom sector a majority of the people are weavers they are spread over the entire blocks of Isukapalli, Bhattiprolu, Ilavaram, Repalle, Cherukupalli as per the survey taken by the Zonal Handloom Officer during the year 2014. Purposive sampling method was used. Primary data was collected from 100 respondents' household interview schedule. Interview schedule contained both open ended as well as close ended questions. The first part of the schedule dealt with general information of the respondent about the demographic profile and other necessary information's, the second part dealt with the social conditions of the weavers and third regarding the economic conditions of the weaver family. The other factors such as the problems of production and marketing, though are significant in terms of their impact on the general plight of the weavers, the study could not focus much on such issues. Further, the information collected through the schedule is presumed to be correct and the validity of information given by respondents is verified by way of cross checking.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This is clear from the study that the women engaged in job as sales women is comparatively higher than the other works like construction, contract work etc. because of easy accessibility, less hard work and also no need for particular skill. But compare to men women also face some sort of inequality in wages. This revealed that most of the women were satisfied with the facilities at work place given by the employer like special refreshment room for the women staff and staying or hostel facility etc but there is no time for refreshment because of continuous working hours without shifting the job. Respondents also said that they had more work load at season like Onam, Bakrid, Christmas etc and less break time at that time. The main points of the study were noted in the below table 2.

As a prelude to an analytical study of the handloom sellers of the study area, a study of the age distribution of sample population is attempted. It is helpful to determine the proportion of labour force in total sellers. The age-wise sample population of the study is taken in class intervals often for convenience (Table 1), Sex composition, marital status, educational status, of respondents has been furnished in the Table 1. Problems of handloom weavers and their responses included in Table 2.

Inference: It is clear from the study that the 82 % of the workers were highly dissatisfied on the seasonal workload. Some of the employers ensure the fulfillment of basic needs of their employees like staying facility, sanitation etc. for their wellbeing and security, more employees also show positive responses towards it i.e. 43%. In contrast, sales women faced some problems like seasonal work load, low wages compared to men, less break time and continuous working hours. So the poor women consider it has their livelihood and still continue with the job just like an addition to the family income for better life.

Table 1 Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weavers in select Villages

Age (in years)	Percentage of respondents	
	Males	Females
Younger (Below 25)	8	03
Middle age (Between 26-50)	65	17
Old age (Above 50)	6	01
Total	79	21

Educational Status	Percentage of respondents
Illiterate (unable to read and write)	16
Primary (I-IV standard)	21
Middle school (V-VII standard)	26
Secondary (VIII-X standard)	19
Senior secondary (XI-XII standard)	11
Graduation and above	07

Family Type	Percentage of respondents
Nuclear	42
Joint	58

Family Size	
Small (up to 3)	11
Medium (4-6)	74
Large (more than 6)	15

Annual income (Rs.)	Percentage of respondents
Low income (Below 50,000)	37
Middle income (50,000-80,000)	59
High income (Above 80,000)	04

Category	Percentage of respondents
Independent weaver	07
Master weaver	04
Working with master weaver	45
Working in Family Owned Units	44

Working Hours /Day	
Up to 8 Hours	13
8-10 Hours	29
11-15 Hours	58

n=100, Source Field Survey

Table 2. Problems of handloom weavers& their responses

	HS		S		NO		D		HD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
About Wages	0	0.00	28	33.73	7	8.43	40	48.19	8	9.64
Facilities at workplace	12	14.46	20	24.10	0	0.00	46	55.42	5	6.02
Working Hours	6	7.23	29	34.94	7	8.43	33	39.76	8	9.64
Basic needs	18	21.69	29	34.94	6	7.23	27	32.53	3	3.61
Working conditions at season	0	0.00	10	12.05	0	0.00	33	39.76	40	48.19
Break time including lunch & prayer	15	18.07	31	37.35	0	0.00	29	34.94	8	9.64

Note: HS – Highly Satisfied, S – Satisfied, NO – No Opinion, D – Dissatisfied, HD – Highly Dissatisfied

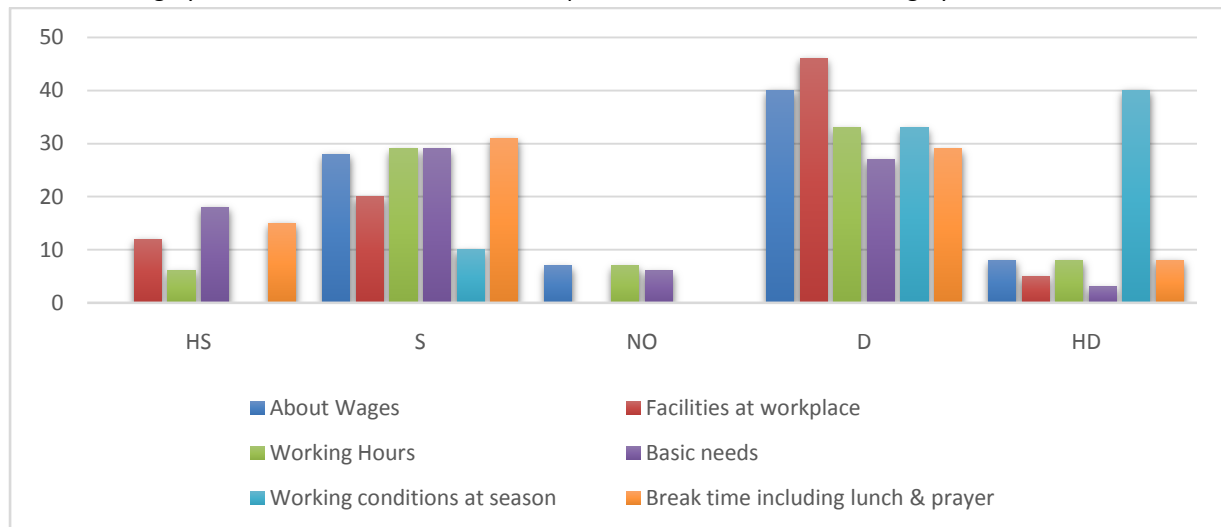


Chart 1. Opinion of handloom weavers

The following conclusions are drawn from the present study:

- 1) Age is the important social factor on the demographic profile on study based. The ageing population increases dependency ratio.
- 2) Among the sample weavers, 30 percent weavers working are less than 30 years of age, 31 percent of weavers are coming under the age group of 30-45, 22 percent of weavers are coming under age group of 46-60 years and about 18% weavers were above 60 years of age.
- 3) Gender also plays an important role. Weaving is a kind of profession that can be done by both the genders. With respect to that of marital status, the needs and requirements of the unmarried have less needs compared to the married weavers. According to the study 88 percent weavers are married and 12 percent are unmarried weavers.
- 4) Social grouping also plays a major role. In the study area of bhattiprolu cluster the community was fully dominated by the OBC weavers and Hindu religion.
- 5) Literacy is also one of the important social aspect for the development of individuals. It was surveyed that 18 percent of weavers never attended the school. 46 percent have education below primary school, 28 percent attended middle school, 28 percent attended secondary school and remaining 8 percent weavers attended higher secondary school.
- 6) Type of family and size of family are also the important issues to find out the social conditions of family. Nuclear family was found to be the highest at about 92 percent.
- 7) Study have also been made based on the number of dependents, nature of number of rooms, looms etc. Every respondent family had more than three dependents in their family.

- 8) They owned thatched house by their own funds and none of them have more than two to three rooms. Every respondent have only one loom in their family.
- 9) None of the respondent families had sanitation facility nor even electricity connection. They are able to take twice meal a day provided by a kilogram rice per rupee under
- 10) Government scheme.
- 11) The present study also reflects that the majority of respondents prefer Government services as an occupation for their children for better livelihood of their family.

CONCLUSION

Women workers have to perform dual role of both outside employment with or without violent working conditions and also manage their home. They are also having same productivity and efficiency like men even then they faced discrimination in wages and poor working conditions and insecurity. Both the central and state governments have formulated certain specific schemes to support unorganized workers but which fail in meeting the real needs and requirements of the unorganized labour force. This study deals with the problems and satisfaction level of sales women in the textile shops and found that their working conditions and wage patterns were comparatively higher than other unorganised work like contract, agriculture, self employed, household units, construction field etc. Engagement of women in this field was high because of less hard work, no skill and easy accessibility even some sort of inequality is there when compared to men. This revealed that most of the women were satisfied with the facilities at work place and showed dissatisfaction in continuous working hours and work load at season like, Bakrid, and Christmas etc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank University Grant Commission for rendering financial assistance under the scheme of minor research project No.F MRP-4683/14(SERO/UGC) March 2014 and Management of SVRM College for providing necessary facilities.

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