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Power-loom weaving in northern Karnataka: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

The Handloom sector plays a very important role in India's economy. It is a part of our culture and heritage and one of the largest economic activities after agriculture. *Khana* are the choli or blouse material with extra warp dobby figures, which are the traditional products of northern Karnataka. The traditional Guledgudda *Khana* (Choli or Blouse, elsewhere called *Khana*), which is only one traditional cluster making blouse fabric in India. Earlier it was woven on pit loom having no warp beam using silk warp and cotton weft but due to the availability, time consumption and higher production rate powerlooms are preferred by most of the weavers, but dimension of the material remains same. In this study we have analyzed the socio-economic status and different problems faced by the Guledgudda *Khana* weavers of north Karnataka. The information was collected through personal interviewing thirty *Khana* weavers from north Karnataka. The study revealed that the weavers are facing lot of problems like related to health, marketing problem, financial constraints and as well as merchandising problems due to age, illiteracy and low income.

Keywords: Guledgudda, *Khana* weavers, Socio-economic status, Problems, Prospects

Introduction

The Handloom sector plays a very important role in India's economy. It is a part of our culture and heritage and one of the largest economic activities after agriculture. This handloom saris and blouse weaving industry is highly traditional, labour intensive, caste based mostly unorganized and decentralized. It employs a large number of women folk and thrives on inherited skills and patronage by rural population and connoisseurs of art. Handloom industry occupies a prominent place in decentralized industrial sector of India. It is the largest unorganized economic activity in India, next to agriculture. It is scattered over the entire length and breadth of the vast country, mainly in rural and semi-urban and partly in urban environments, providing employment. *Khana* are the choli or blouse material with extra warp dobby figures, which are the traditional products of northern Karnataka. The traditional Guledgudda *Khana* (Choli or Blouse, elsewhere called *Khana*), which is only one traditional cluster making blouse fabric in India. In India the handloom sector occupies a second place next to agriculture in terms of employment. Powerloom sector comes second to it, it is easier and drudgery reducing machines were used widely across the country. Handloom Industries were facing many problems in decentralized handloom industry due to illiteracy, inadequate finance facilities, cost control, quality control, procurement of raw material, fluctuation in prices in raw material etc (Tripathy, 2009) [9]. Earlier it was woven on pit loom having no warp beam using silk warp and cotton weft but due to the availability, time consumption and higher production rate powerlooms are preferred by most of the weavers, but dimension of the material remains same. Despite the fact that Indian textile industry has made a distinct place in the world, this sector has not attained proper importance as far as weaving related problems and their effects are concerned. Several health hazards are associated with weaving and related activities which may cause stress and strain to weavers and pose several health related risk factors to them such as eye sight weakness, joint pain and dust allergy. The powerloom industry has done exceptionally well in India, in the long run and especially during an export boom after trade liberalisation in the late 1980s. Its growth illustrates several intuitions of recent international literature on small firm dynamics. An export recession in 1996-98, however, showed that the growth had happened without basic changes in the technological and organisational capability of the industry (Roy, 1999) [8]. Despite of its widespread across the country this sector is confronted with various problems, such as irregular and inadequate supply of raw materials, financial constraints, lack of marketing, lack of skill, obsolete technology, haphazard production system, inadequate working capital, weak marketing links etc.

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Most of the studies were conducted upon the handloom sectors of Indian weaving that are facing problems like health problems with their demographic profile. So an attempt was made to conduct a study on powerloom weaving sectors of India with all the problems like health and as well as merchandising and marketing problems faced by the weavers. Thus, the present study is conducted to know the socio-economic status and different problems faced by the Guledgudda *Khana* weavers of north Karnataka.

Methodology

The information on the problems faced by the *Khana* weavers of Guledgudda were collected by personally interviewing thirty randomly selected *Khana* weavers of Guledgudda using a self structured interview schedule. The data was statistically analysed using frequencies, percentages and weighted mean scores and chi square test of significance.

Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the weavers where, majority of the weavers belonged to middle age group (63.33%), followed by old age group (26.67%), with an education level upto secondary level (40%) followed by primary school education (36.67%). It is found that, most of the weavers belonged to joint family system (70%), followed by nuclear family type (30%), and low income group (53.33%) with rupees less than 20000/- per annum. It was also found that 50 per cent of weavers were working more than 8 hours per day. Since maximum percent of the weavers continued their ancestor's profession of weaving, belonged to middle age and old age group, they worked upto 8 hours/day, had an education upto secondary level and have joint family type system with medium family size. Hence may be to continue the weaving profession they did not try for government jobs. So, the income was through weaving and weaving became their main source of livelihood (Phukan, 2012)^[5].

It is clear from table 2 that majority of the weavers faced the problems of hike in price (60.00 %) while procuring raw materials, followed by non availability of required yarn counts (50.00 %). The Weighted Mean Scores (WMS) shows higher in hike in price of raw material (2.46), followed by of non availability of required yarn counts (2.26). This may be because most of the weavers did not have any kind of training so they continued their ancestor's occupation of weaving which affected their selection behaviour and also majority of them were independent weavers who procured the raw material from master weavers at high price. Since most of the weavers purchased raw materials from master weavers, the rates inferred and yarns given by them might were final and blindly accepted by the weavers.

From Table 3 it is apparent that, majority of the *Khana* weavers faced the problems of repairs and maintenance of

powerloom while weaving (53.33 %), followed by lack of publicity of finished goods (40.00 %). Whereas, the highest mean score is obtained by repair and maintenance of powerloom (2.26) followed by lack of publicity of finished goods (2.03). This may be because of lack of training among the weavers which affected the maintenance of looms by the weaver and they had no idea of advertising and publicising the new designed woven materials. Due to lack of knowledge in marketing the weavers face the problem of hike in transportation charges also.

Majority of the weavers faced problems like hike in price (86.67 %) for the raw materials before loom process, followed by non-availability in adequate quantities of raw material (83.33 %). Whereas, 63.33 per cent of weavers faced problems for repair and maintenance of powerloom, followed by hike in transportation charges (56.67 %) after loom process. The chi-square values were highly significant in both the cases of problems faced before loom process and after loom process. The chi-square values obtained for problems which were faced before loom process by the weaver like untimely supply of raw materials from master weavers, non-availability in adequate quantities, hike in price for raw materials *etc.* is higher in comparison to problems which were faced after loom process like lack of demand, non-profitable labour, hike in transportation charges and so on. The problems that arise before loom process were not in the control of weavers hence, the chi-square values were high. However, problems faced after loom process could be controlled by the weavers by them self which may be like producing new kind of designs according to the fashion trend and customers need. Taking a qualitative training regarding operating and handling looms, working under KHDC (Karnataka Handloom and Development Corporation) and so on can reduce these kinds of problems faced by the weavers after weaving (Table 4).

Table 5 shows the association between weaver's health condition with age and working. Here it is clear that besides the other factors, only age and working hour is discussed here. To check the association between weaver's health condition with age and working hours, chi-square test of significance is used. The chi-square values for age with eyesight weakness and joint pain are significant whereas, for back pain it is highly significant, meanwhile it was non-significant for dust allergy. Age only contributed in back and joint pain due to decalcification of bone calcium and have no relation with dust allergy. However, eyesight weakness and dust allergy are significantly related to working hours because of exposure to the weaving process which releases tiny particles of fibres that cause dust allergy while long time watching to the picking process caused eyesight weakness. Whereas chi-square values for joint pain and back pain are highly significant due to their working postures like bending, stretching, and moving front to back and soon.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Weavers, N=30

Sl. No.	Variables	No. of respondents (%)
a.	Age	
1.	Young (< 30years)	03 (10.00)
2.	Middle (30-55 years)	19 (63.33)
3.	Old (> 45 years)	08 (26.67)
b.	Education	
1.	Illiterate	02 (06.67)
2.	Primary (1 -7 standard)	11 (36.67)
3.	Secondary (8 -10 standard)	12 (40.00)
4.	Higher secondary (PUC standard)	04 (13.33)

5.	Degree and above (UG and PG standard)	01 (03.33)
c.	Type of family	
1.	Nuclear	09 (30.00)
2.	Joint	21 (70.00)
d.	Family size	
1	Small (≤ 4 members)	07 (23.33)
2	Medium (5 -9 members)	19 (63.33)
3	Large (> 9 members)	04 (13.33)
e.	Annual Income (in Rs)	
1.	Low Income (Rs. $< 20,000$)	16 (53.33)
2.	Middle income (Rs. 20,001-Rs. 40,000)	12 (40.00)
3.	High income (Rs. $> 40,001$)	02 (06.67)
f.	Working hour/day	
1	4 hours	05 (16.67)
2	6 hours	10 (33.33)
3	8 hours	15 (50.00)

Table 2: Problems faced by the *Khana* weavers while procuring raw material, N=30

Sl. No.	Problems	Always	Sometimes	Never	Weighted mean score
1	Untimely supply	11 (36.67)	09 (30.00)	10 (33.33)	2.03
2	Non-availability in adequate quantities	12 (40.00)	13 (43.33)	05 (16.67)	2.23
3	Hike in price	18 (60.00)	08 (26.67)	04 (13.33)	2.46
4	Non availability of pure yarns	10 (33.33)	14 (46.67)	06 (20.00)	2.13
5	Non availability of required yarn counts	15 (50.00)	08 (26.67)	07 (23.33)	2.26

Table 3: Problems faced by the *Khana* weavers during marketing of *Khana* mater, N=30

Sl. No.	Constraints	Always	Sometimes	Never	Weighted mean score
1	Lack of demand	07 (23.33)	06 (20.00)	17 (56.67)	1.67
2	Non- profitable labour	10 (33.33)	06 (20.00)	14 (46.67)	1.86
3	Hike in transportation charges	10 (33.33)	07 (23.33)	13 (43.33)	1.90
4	Repair and maintenance of powerloom	16 (53.33)	06 (20.00)	08 (26.67)	2.26
5	Lack of publicity	12 (40.00)	07 (23.33)	11 (36.67)	2.03

Table 4: Comparison between problems faced by the weaver before and after loom process, N=30

Problems faced before loom process		Problems faced after loom process	
Problems	No. of respondents	Problems	No. of respondents
Untimely supply	20 (66.67)	Lack of demand	13 (43.33)
Non-availability in adequate quantities	25 (83.33)	Non- profitable labour	14 (46.67)
Hike in price	26 (86.67)	Hike in transportation charges	17 (56.67)
Non availability of pure yarns	24 (80.00)	Repair and maintenance of powerloom	19 (63.33)
Non availability of required yarn counts	23(76.67)	Lack of publicity	16 (53.33)
Calculated X^2 value	60.31**	Calculated X^2 value	18.51**

Table 5: Association between weaver's health condition with age and working hours, N=30

Health ailments	Age			Total	X^2 values	Working hours			Total	X^2 values
	< 30 years	30-55 years	> 55 years			4-7	8-11	12 and more		
Eye sight weakness	-	15 (50.00)	06 (20.00)	21 (70.00)	13.50*	03 (10.00)	18 (60.00)	-	21 (70.00)	12.5*
Joint pain	-	07 (23.33)	01 (03.33)	08 (26.67)	9.53*	01 (03.33)	07 (23.33)	-	08 (26.67)	15.14**
Dust allergy	02 (06.67)	06 (20.00)	04 (13.33)	12 (40.00)	4.44 ^{NS}	01 (03.33)	11 (36.67)	-	12 (40.00)	9.49*
Back pain	01 (03.33)	17 (56.67)	08 (26.67)	26 (86.67)	16.20**	03 (10.00)	23 (76.67)	-	26 (86.67)	17.39**

Conclusion

The weavers are facing lots of problem but only the problems which were faced during procurement of raw material and while merchandising the product were considered here. Most of the weavers belonged to joint family system, medium family size, middle age, secondary school education level and lower income group. Maximum of the weavers are from middle age group and their working capacity is less than 12 hours per day. Majority of the weavers had back pain, eyesight weakness, dust allergy and joint pain. These

problems occurred due to their age and working hours. However, increase in age causes the problems like back pain, eyesight weakness and joint pain increasing but not dust allergy whereas, long duration working hours which affects all the above problems. From this it can be concluded that due to lack of supports from the master weaver, illiteracy and lack of training they are facing such problems like marketing problems, and merchandising problems etc.

Thus for uplifting the socio economic status of the *Khana* weaver's they must make use of the government subsidies and

policies so, that they can understand and avail the facilities and policies available for them. The powerloom sectors need to be decentralised across the country and the weavers especially the wage weavers need to be trained and skilled. There is a necessarily to publicizes *Khana* materials through advertisements, exhibition, fairs and showcasing the variegated *Khana* materials and to minimise the health problems the weavers need to take measures while weaving and during processing, by wearing a protective cover on the face, regular health checkups, include a balanced diet daily and also go for savings.

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