A STUDY ON WORKING CONDITION OF WOMEN IN HANDLOOM INDUSTRIES OF MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to measure the socio-economic conditions of women working in Handloom industries of Manipur. The data is collected with the help of interview scheduled and group discussion with women working in Handloom industries. It has been found that women are well educated and working in very friendly and cohesive environment. This job opportunity has improved their status in family environment as well and are their economic status in society.

INTRODUCTION

Manipur is a state situated in the northeastern part of India. Owing to the abundance of various natural resources, Manipur’s literal translation is ‘Jewel Land’ of India.

Manipur is famous for many exotic handloom and handicraft items. Products from Manipur are in demand in both national and international markets. This demand has successfully created various new industries in the state.

The reason for the demands for these handloom and handicraft products can be accredited to the manner of production. While industries around the world have a mechanical setup of production, which can be generally similar to the conveyor belt method of production, the industries in Manipur make everything by hand due to the lack of mechanization and also because of the small size of the industries. And there is a big market of people who prefer handmade items over factory made.

Moreover, the art of handloom and handicraft comes natural to the women of Manipur because these items are part of their culture. The women have been making these crafts since time immemorial and each intricate design carries a specific meaning relating to their culture, which is why it has an exotic quality.

Manipur has also a highest concentration of handloom and handicraft industries in the north eastern state of India. Despite the geographical conditions as well as lack of governmental support the specific occupation continues to grow and has been passed down from generations to generations and still it maintains its growth.

From the history of Manipur it is clearly seen that the handloom and handicraft industries play an important role in development of Manipur state economy. The intricate designs and products is a mandatory for every household to hold and own. In every household of Manipur there will be either one or two person who is well skilled in weaving the traditional attire.

In recent years many weavers face lack of financial and moral support from the concern authority which hinders the growth of these kind of industries. In order to flourish they need support from the government as many of the household in Manipur solely rely from this industry for living.
If this sector is well developed and meet the needs of the weavers many economic related problem will be lessened and will also help in solving the problem of unemployment. Government of India has come up with initiatives in order to uplift the weavers and artisans in India. Some of the schemes are listed below-

**Present schemes and programmes by Government of India**

To provide financial assistance adequately in an integrated way to the weavers and to strengthen the intricate design of the fabric, Government of India came up with new initiatives by adding to ongoing other schemes and programmes by adding and launching schemes such as DeenDayalHathkarghaProtsahanYojana and set up a National Centre for Textile Design (NCTD) are the recently added ones.

**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TEXTILE DESIGN (NCTD):**

National Centre for Textile Design was set up in January 2001 in Handloom Pavilion, PragatiMaidan, New Delhi to promote the Handloom sector to be responsive to the rapidly changing market demand.

**Objectives of the Scheme** -

- To provide him with adequate tools to respond to the rapidly changing market situation and demands and link weavers to the market.
- To link developments in other fields to all people belonging to the textile industry.
- To give weavers, workers and designers better livelihood and avenues for more sustainable development by bringing greater exposure and access to national and international markets.

**Health Package Scheme for Handloom Weavers** -

In March 1993 the Health Kit Scheme was launched. Under the scheme, the weavers are provided with financial assistance to control respiratory inflammation due to like tuberculosis diseases, asthma, maternity benefits for women weavers, drinking water supply, payment of reimbursement for permanent family planning initiatives and primary health care services.

**Thrift Fund Scheme for Handloom Weavers** -

It was implemented in the 7th Five Year as one of the Government of India's special welfare initiatives. The Scheme provides for the development of a fund to cover expenses for education of children, marriages, religious ceremonies, etc.

Although we have such schemes, it is very important that we get them functioning properly so that the benefits can be properly reaped. To get the most practical implementation, a committee has to be set up which will appoint a designated head of operations of these schemes so that the deserving public will get their share. Awareness must be spread to such public, and a public space must be created so that these likeminded people can meet each other and compare their benefits. Most importantly, it must be seen that no special family is reaping the benefits which was given to them in place of a more deserving candidate.
Women everywhere suffer from stigmatized views of not being able to take decisions. Overcoming this stigma is not an easy task. Many of the female entrepreneur face many other stigmas which are not even related to their craft, for example, their occupation has an image of being a low income work. Their occupation has an image of a place where low educational qualifications are required. The amount of support these entrepreneur benefits from the government is scarce, but above that even their families underestimate them oftentimes. This study will help in understanding the problems face by all entrepreneurs especially women. It will also help us to apprehend the ability of women to function independently as individuals successfully.

1. Dr. Dharam Chand Jain and Miss Ritu Gera (Jan.2017) conducted a study about “An analytical study of handloom industry of India”. In this study they can found some problems related to handloom industry. Lack of adequate and authentic data, poor quality of yarn, financial crisis, lack of proper infrastructure, lack of education, skills based training and research, shortage of input and their rising cost, problem of working capital, poor management.

2. K. srinivasalu (1994) conducted a study in “handloom weavers struggle for survival”. In this study the researcher identified a serious threatens is happening against handloom weavers from power loom weavers. Already seriously threatened by the unequal competition from power loom sector, the very survival of the handloom sector and of handloom weavers has now been imperiled by the sharp rise in prices of yarn and dyes the result of the economic reform programmed all out emphasis on developing exports and not considering domestic economic and social crisis.

3. K. Rari John and S. Kamini (Dec.2016) had conducted a study in “socio economic status of women entrepreneurs in handloom sector”. In this study they found the traditional weaver community is not active in the field in Trivandrum district. All the caste and communities are involved in weaving activities. Weaving makes income generating activity through caste diversity. Working conditions are pathetic. The sheds accommodate 8-10 loom; looms are too closed to each other. Most of the sheds are open, with unfinished floors, low roofs, and thatches, tin sheet, cramped with pit looms and without proper lighting.

4. A. Kumudha and M. Riswana (March-2013) studied about, “problems faced by handloom industry – A study with handloom weaver’s co-operative societies in Erode district”. In this study they introduced 3 types of problem in co-operative handloom sector; input related, marketing related, weavers related.

Major findings are,

- Yarn price is increasing day by day. So the cost of production proposing to increase.
- This is major important input related problem followed by poor quality of raw material.
- Considering the weavers related problem the societies consider lack of active member asa major weaver’s related problem followed by aged people.
- The Competition from mechanized sector such as mill and power loom Sectors isconsidered as a major marketing problem followed by Lack of attractive promotion.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1. To identify the problems faced by women in handloom society.
2. To examine the accessibility of governmental schemes for the weavers.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are various delimitations of the study.

1. The study was limited to Imphal district Manipur.
The study is limited 50 women workers from 5 handloom industries in Imphal district of Manipur.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

From this study we will be able to understand the important role that women play in the society. We also expect to see a correlation between a working environment and productivity of the women workers. Tolerant behavior of the Manipuri women are expected as they have made themselves internationally known by overcoming lack of infrastructure and other supports. With proper infrastructure and other support, we can expect the women to produce world class materials.

METHODOLOGY

- Detailed area of study: working condition of women weavers, handloom industry.
- This study has two parts. The first part of the study has a review of theoretical literature and methodology.
- The second part of the study deals with analyzing of data after its collection, and coming to a conclusion.
- The research will be conducted by using interview method with the help of semi structured questions.
- The samples will be collected from the subjects by using the interview schedule and face to face interaction.
- The sample size consists of 10 individual each from 5 different handloom industries.
- The raw data collected will be analyzed by using analytical method.
- Duration of the research will be one and half month. (June-July, 2019).
- Moreover, the proposal will be helpful to academicians, researchers, policy makers who are indulged in this field.

AREA

The study is focused on working condition of women who are working in handloom industry of Manipur. The reason for adopting this topic is to find out the problems faced by the women of Manipur as they have to compete with other mechanized industries using the help of basic traditional tools. Even with these adversities the women of Manipur are well known for their handloom products, which is the major reason for choosing this topic.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

ANALYSED DATA:

Handloom cluster

10 women are selected for the study. 7 women are married and 3 women are unmarried. There is an environment of maturity and experience as the majority of the women are married, and have work experience ranging from 1 year to 12 years. Not only being a good environment for the trustworthy members, the women have qualified up to their 12th standards. There is unity in the sense of religion too since all of the women belong to Meitei community. Many people join these industries as it is very easy to get in compared to a government job, only a friendly recommendation is enough to get you tested to see if you are capable of joining the industry. Workers in this industry have been found to be unsatisfied with their income, but a majority of them are independent financial decision makers. There is an
environment of comradery among the group of entrepreneurs living in this area as they have a connected platform to help members who are in need of solutions to any problem. But they express the need to expand the size of their network. Lastly, the women have a sense of adventure to push their products a little more, because they feel that this job has empowered them and made them stand out as independent people.

**Thourani Sabi Handloom and Textile**

10 women were selected for the study. Women who are married and unmarried are both in this industry, and also their experience in this field varies from fairly new to fairly experienced. Education levels vary from 8th standard pass to Graduate level, so there is an atmosphere of open acceptance of scientific temperament. All of the women belong to Meitei community. Workers in this industry have been found to be unsatisfied with their income, but a minority of them are independent financial decision makers. The reason they chose this industry again lies in the ease of admission into these industries, although some of them had previous knowledge on this subject, but a major factor which helps them join such industries is the will to be an independent earner. Everyone agrees that financial help has not reached them under any scheme, and would like the government to make it easier for them to notice such schemes and also reap the benefits of such schemes. Finally, they feel that this job has empowered them and has made them stand out as independent people.

**Ema Leishangkhong Handloom**

We have 10 women selected for the study. 9 women are married and only 1 woman is unmarried. So the ambitions of this industry are particularly mature in nature. Everyone is fairly educated and have work experience ranging from 3 months to 10 years. All of the women belong to the same Meitei community. Workers in this industry have been found to be unsatisfied with their income, but a majority of them are independent financial decision makers. They seem to enjoy their work environment which lacks only in terms of financial support. It is clear that the women’s self-respect has increased after engaging in this industry, or joint venture. Even though this field of work is fairly easy to get an entry in, the women steadfastly believe that women are better at this job than men. And it is mainly because of this reason that they like working in this industry, because they get great comfort in knowing that their work cannot be reproduced by just anyone other than themselves.

**Shangai Rani Weaver center**

10 women were selected again for the study. 4 women are married and 6 women are unmarried, so there is an atmosphere of both youthful experience and maturity. Also the women working this handloom industry have work experience ranging from 3 months to 10 years. All the members have a basic level of education. The women belong to a same community. They have joined this industry not as a last ditch attempt to get employed somewhere, because 3 of them were already skilled in this work, 5 of them joined because of their friends’ influence. Ease and convenience of work is one factor but their major driving force is the want to promote the traditional attire. Workers in this industry have been found to be unsatisfied with their income, but a minority of them are independent financial decision makers owing to the income coming from this industry. In terms of support, these women have faced not only lack of support from schemes or investors, but also have faced skepticism from their own family members. Moral support, financial support, lack of exposure are some things these women workers greatly desire. They have received support from the government, PMEGP (Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Program) loan and would like to receive more such loans. Finally the women have expressed that this job is not only about breaking stereotypes, and they believe awards like Padmashri can be achieved through hard work and perseverance in this field. There is a remarkable optimism in this workplace.
Palem handloom and handicraft

10 women were selected for the study. 9 women are married and 1 woman is unmarried so there is an atmosphere of experienced workmanship in the industry. All the members working under this handloom have a fairly good work experience ranging from 1 year to 7 years. All of the women belong to the same Meitei community. Since everyone has got a basic level of education, there is very small room for unscientific temperament. Other than the ease of admission into such line of work, majority of the women have joined because they were already adept in such handiwork and for some of them this is their family business. Joining this industry has made a majority of them financially independent, and strangely majority of the workers are satisfied with their income. There is a calming environment of optimism, satisfaction, and support in the industry. The women agree that the initial part of starting up a new industry was the hardest part of their journey. Unskilled use of time, lack of all kind of support, and finally lack of raw materials, employees and convincing their own families are seen as the most difficult obstacles. Overlooking all shortcomings, the women are proud of what they produce, and what they showcase to the world with their intricate designs and handloom techniques. Their voices are heard by the world in this manner, and that is why they chose to work in this industry amongst other reasons.

CONCLUSION

In this survey we have interviewed and questioned women working in handloom industries as entrepreneur. The researchers have come across women of all backgrounds and different skills and upbringing in this study.

Summarizing the gist of questions asked, the working conditions of these industries can be classified and examined against one another to understand their differences working environment.

Groups of entrepreneurs have answered that starting up a new venture was a very different part of their journey. Few of the entrepreneurs have done so without any help, but we can see that industries which got emotional and financial support fare better in the long run, owing to the enthusiastic workers and their straightforward aims.

Women are mostly educated in these industries while a good number of them have passed their high school exams even though handloom workers need no educational qualifications. But because of their educated nature their industries are very civil in nature. It has a women friendly environment.

The members are constantly encouraged to be self respectful decision makers, to protect their identity, and to dream bigger. Looking in a broad manner there is no reason for a chaotic moment to appear in the industrial environment because all of them belong to the same community and their religious preferences have very limited obstructions because they share a same religion.

Such industries present platforms to women to prove themselves internationally and nationally and after they succeed other girl of the community may look up to them as idols and inspiration which further leads to overall positivity.

The nature of these industries is very suitable for this area since Manipur is famous for their handloom and handicraft products. This has provided many job opportunities of the youth and as well as they are able to built a reputation in the society.

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