



The Prevailing Status of Chikankari Workers After COVID-19 in Lucknow District of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

This study examines the prevailing status of Chikankari workers in Lucknow District, Uttar Pradesh, post-COVID-19. Through data collected from 300 workers using questionnaires and interviews, the research identifies factors influencing the shift to other businesses, the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in supporting these workers, and strategies to retain workers in the Chikankari industry. Statistical analyses include descriptive statistics and inferential tests like Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, Z-test, proportion test, and standard error calculations.

Keywords

Chikankari, COVID-19, Lucknow, livelihood, governmental support, non-governmental organizations, statistical analysis

Introduction

The Chikankari industry in Lucknow, known for its intricate embroidery, faced significant challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to explore the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on Chikankari workers and to identify measures for their economic revival. The primary objectives include understanding the shift of workers to other businesses, evaluating the support from government and NGOs, and developing strategies to retain workers in the industry.

Review of Literature

Historical Evolution of Chikankari

Chikankari, a time-honored form of hand embroidery, traces its roots through centuries of cultural evolution. The journey of Chikankari is a tale of artistic refinement, cultural amalgamation, and the endurance of a craft that has transcended time.

1. **Mughal Origins (17th Century):** Chikankari is believed to have originated in the Mughal courts during the 17th century. The Mughal empress Nur Jahan is often credited with introducing this delicate embroidery. Initially an adornment for royal attire, Chikankari showcased intricate stitches and fine craftsmanship that set it apart. The craft flourished under the patronage of the Mughal emperors, becoming synonymous with opulence and refinement.
2. **Spread Across Regions:** With the decline of the Mughal Empire, Chikankari did not fade away; instead, it spread across different regions of India. Lucknow emerged as a prominent center for Chikankari, with artisans adapting and evolving the craft to suit local tastes. The artistry diversified as it integrated with regional influences, creating unique variations in places like Agra, Delhi, and Hyderabad.
3. **Traditional Techniques and Stitches:** Chikankari is distinguished by its array of stitches, each with a specific purpose and aesthetic appeal. The 'taipchi' (chain stitch), 'phanda' (knot stitch), 'jali' (mesh work), and 'keel kangari' (eyelet stitch) are some of the traditional stitches employed. These stitches form the foundation of the intricate patterns that characterize Chikankari.
4. **Floral Motifs and Inspirations:** The motifs used in Chikankari are often inspired by nature, with florals being predominant. Elaborate patterns of flowers, vines, and paisleys became hallmarks of Chikankari embroidery. The intricate detailing and the harmonious arrangement of motifs reflect the artistic sensibilities of the craftsmen.
5. **Royal Endorsement and Cultural Symbolism:** Chikankari gained royal endorsement as it adorned the garments of nobility. The craft, however, transcended its aristocratic origins and became a cultural symbol. The garments crafted with Chikankari embroidery came to symbolize grace, elegance, and sophistication, making them popular choices for special occasions and ceremonies.
6. **Decline and Revival (19th Century Onward):** In the 19th century, Chikankari faced challenges due to changing patronage patterns and the rise of industrialization. However, it experienced a revival in the mid-20th century, thanks to the efforts of designers and artisans who sought to preserve and promote traditional craftsmanship. This revival not only preserved the craft but also catapulted it into the realms of high fashion.
7. **Global Recognition and Contemporary Resurgence:** In recent decades, Chikankari has gained global recognition. Designers both in India and abroad have embraced this traditional craft, incorporating it into modern and contemporary designs. Chikankari has witnessed a resurgence in popularity, with fashion enthusiasts appreciating its timeless elegance and intricate detailing.
8. **Challenges and Innovations:** Despite its rich history, Chikankari faces contemporary challenges such as competition from machine-made imitations and changing consumer preferences. Artisans and entrepreneurs are responding with innovative adaptations, blending traditional techniques with modern designs to ensure the continued relevance of Chikankari in the ever-evolving world of fashion.

The historical evolution of Chikankari is a narrative that weaves together the threads of cultural patronage, regional adaptations, and artisanal creativity. From its Mughal origins to its contemporary global appeal, Chikankari stands as a testament to the enduring beauty of traditional craftsmanship.

Studies on the Impact of COVID-19 on Artisan Communities

There are following researches have been done on Chikankari Workers-

Khare(2012) says, The area in which Chikankari embroidery is done ,training must be provided in the particular area at block level. In the training session they must provide the knowledge of computer so that they can interact with the outer world and can produce products according to the demands .The banks must provide concession in the interest rate of loans so that they can produce their products without any burden .The government should provide land and electricity at reasonable price to big fashion houses so that The embroiderers can find a good amount of their work.

Chakraborty (2014) Says, that Chikankari is hand intensive occupation involving repetitive use of hands and wrists. Chikan embroiderers perform a highly tedious occupation and various ergonomic conditions work as predictors for development of musculoskeletal discomfort among them.

Chantalia(2015) says It is clear that export of handicraft(Chikan) since 1995-96 is increasing year by year and its future is bright because variety, seasonal variation and cheap chikan is gain momentum day by day and the most important factor is impact of bollywood at global level which is the key factor for global market of chikan. Apart from these positive factors we can't ignore the economic crisis at global level due to recession, so chikan is not an exception. It is very much clear that chikan is not only a local based work but it also is gaining global market due to increasing as trend in fashion and finally export which is making this nation strong by its local product – chikan

Wason (2017) says that there is a segment interested in paying for genuine designer Chikankari products but branding and strategic positioning is required.

Shukla (2018) highlights that both government and non-government organizations have made efforts to eliminate intermediaries to maximize the income of Chikankari workers. The most significant changes in the lives of these workers have been observed among SEWA's workers. Particularly, SEWA's regular staff members, the artisans, have gained maximum exposure and independence in making decisions.

Yadav, N., & Chhabra, S. (2024)- After covid-19 pandemic lock down chikankari business had suffered a significant setback. It had caused delay and shortage of materials affecting the production and supply. Because of which artisans suffered decline in revenue and store closures.

Research Methodology

A cross-sectional research design was employed to assess the immediate impact of COVID-19. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed among 300 artisans selected using random and snowball sampling techniques. The research focused on evaluating changes in income levels, shifts in occupational patterns, and the satisfaction with support measures provided by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Study Area and Sampling

The study focuses on Chikankari workers in five areas of Lucknow: Chowk, Aminabad, Hazratganj, Nakhass, and Nala Pata. Data were collected from 300 workers through random sampling and the snowball method.

Data Collection

Data were collected via a structured questionnaire covering demographic details, work experience, income levels, and impacts of COVID-19. The questionnaire also included sections on government and NGO support, and the expectations of workers for their future livelihoods.

Age Distribution

Age Group	Count	Percentage
15-20 years	30	10%
20-30 years	60	20%
30-40 years	120	40%
40 years and above	90	30%
Total	300	100%

Religion Distribution

Religion	Count	Percentage
Hindu	30	10%
Muslim	261	87%
Sikh	6	2%
Christian	3	1%
Total	300	100%

Education Level

Education Level	Count	Percentage
Illiterate	75	25%
Primary-High School	135	45%
Intermediate-Graduate	45	15%
Other	45	15%
Total	300	100%

Number of Family Members

Number of Family Members	Count	Percentage
4 members	21	7%
5-8 members	60	20%
9-12 members	195	65%
More than 12 members	24	8%
Total	300	100%

Duration of Work in Chikankari

Duration	Count	Percentage
Less than 5 years	30	10%
5-10 years	60	20%
10-20 years	135	45%
20-30 years	75	25%
Total	300	100%

Duration of Family's Work in Chikankari

Duration	Count	Percentage
Less than 5 years	30	10%
5-10 years	60	20%
10-20 years	135	45%
More than 20 years	75	25%
Total	300	100%

Number of Family Members Involved in Chikankari

Number of Members	Count	Percentage
1 member	24	8%
2-3 members	36	12%
4-6 members	135	45%
All members	105	35%
Total	300	100%

Number of Family Members Involved in Other Work

Number of Members	Count	Percentage
0 members	105	35%
1-2 members	24	8%
3-6 members	135	45%
all except respondent	36	12%
Total	300	100%

Types of Other Work

Type of Work	Count	Percentage
Online sales of decorative item	21	7%
Delivery and logistics services	39	13%
Rickshaw driving	180	60%
Other	60	20%
Total	300	100%

Source of Maximum Family Income

Source	Count	Percentage
Chikankari	135	45%
Other Work	45	15%
Both Equally	90	30%
Not Sure	30	10%
Total	300	100%

Family Income Before COVID-19

Income Range	Count	Percentage
10-15 thousand	37	12.33%
15-20 thousand	41	13.67%
20-25 thousand	144	48%
25-30 thousand	78	26%

Total	300	100%
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Family Income During COVID-19

Income Range	Count	Percentage
10-15 thousand	128	42.67%
15-20 thousand	100	33.33%
20-35 thousand	44	14.67%
25-30 thousand	28	9.33%
Total	300	100%

Family Income After COVID-19

Income Range	Count	Percentage
10-15 thousand	61	20.33%
15-20 thousand	158	52.67%
20-25 thousand	44	14.67%
25-30 thousand	37	12.33%
Total	300	100%

Orders Per Week Before COVID-19

Orders per Week	Count	Percentage
3-5	48	16%
5-10	48	16%
10-20	132	44%
20-30	74	24.67%
Total	300	100%

Orders Per Week During COVID-19

Orders per Week	Count	Percentage
1-3	31	10.33%
3-5	101	33.67%
5-10	49	16.33%
None	119	39.67%
Total	300	100%

Orders Per Week After COVID-19

Orders per Week	Count	Percentage
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3-5	66	22%
5-10	145	48.33%
10-20	50	16.67%
20-30	39	13%
Total	300	100%

Jobs They Shifted to During COVID-19

Jobs Shifted To	Count	Percentage
Mask and Sanitizer Making	90	30%
Delivery and logistics services	60	20%
Online Decorative Items	27	9%
Other Work	21	7%
Total	300	100%

Reason for Shift During COVID-19

Reason	Count	Percentage
Due to COVID-19	132	44%
Interest in Other Work	30	10%
More Profit in Other Work	27	9%
Other Reasons	9	3%
Total	300	100%

Jobs Other Family Members Shifted to During COVID-19

Jobs Shifted To	Count	Percentage
Mask and Sanitizer Making	60	20%
Delivery and logistics services	60	20%
Online Decorative Items	42	14%
Other Work	27	9%
Total	300	100%

Government and NGO Help During COVID-19

Help Provided	Count	Percentage
Yes	246	82%
No	54	18%
Total	300	100%

Type of Help from Government During COVID-19

Type of Help	Count	Percentage
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Financial Help	120	40%
Employment Security Schemes	60	20%
Technical and Online Skill Development Programs	75	25%
Other	45	15%
Total	300	100%

Satisfaction with Help from Government and NGOs

Satisfaction Level	Count	Percentage
Yes	162	54%
No	27	9%
Partially	33	11%
Can't Say	24	8%
Total	300	100%

Help from NGOs During COVID-19

Type of Help	Count	Percentage
Financial Help	75	25%
Employment Security Schemes	45	15%
Technical and Online Skill Development Programs	120	40%
Other	60	20%
Total	300	100%

Expectations from Government

Expectations	Count	Percentage
Financial Help	150	50%
Employment Security Schemes	60	20%
Technical and Online Skill Development Programs	45	15%
Other	45	15%
Total	300	100%

Expectations from NGOs

Expectations	Count	Percentage
Financial Help	135	45%
Employment Security Schemes	75	25%
Technical and Online Skill Development Programs	45	15%

Other	45	15%
Total	300	100%

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics summarized the data, while inferential statistics identified patterns and correlations.

1. Relation between Income and -Demand of chikankari products during covid-19

Aim- To calculate or state whether two variables i.e., Income and order-demand are co-related to each other or they do not have any co- relation to each other.

Statistical Tests -Karl Pearson's Co- Relation coefficient test and Z-Test

Variables-

- i Income of Chikankari workers
- ii. demand of chikankari products

Null Hypothesis (H_0)- there is no significant relationship between the reduced income of Chikankari workers and Product demand during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Alternate Hypothesis- (H_1)- there is a significant relationship between the reduced income of Chikankari workers and Product demand, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

For a 0.05 significance level (two-tailed test), the critical value is ± 1.96 . If the absolute value of the Z-score is greater than 1.96, the correlation is statistically significant.

Correlation Results-

BEFORE COVID , $r=0.8774$, Z score= $27.37 < 0.05$ (Significant)

DURING COVID , $r=0.8774$, Z score= $26.82 < 0.05$ (Significant)

AFTER COVID , $r=0.8774$, Z score= $24.88 < 0.05$ (Significant)

Conclusion - "The strong positive correlations ($r > 0.8$) between income and demand across all periods suggest a robust relationship." - "The Z-test results confirm that these correlations are statistically significant (Z-scores > 1.96)."- "Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between the reduced income of Chikankari workers and the demand for Chikankari products during and after the COVID-19 pandemic."

2.Effect of Covid -19 on the shift of chikankari workers to other businesses.

Aim – To test if there is a significant effect of Covid -19 on the shift of chikankari worker to other businesses during covid -19

Statistical Tests -Proportion Test and Z-Test

Variables-

1.Presence of covid -19 Pandemic

2.Shift of chikankari workers to other businesses.

Null Hypothesis-There is no significant effect of covid -19 on the shift of chikankari workers to other businesses during covid -19

Alternate Hypothesis- There is significant effect of covid -19 on the shift of chikankari workers to other businesses during covid -19

Significance Level= Specified a significance level of 0.05.

Critical Value= 1.645

Proportion of workers who shifted due to COVID-19 = 0.44

Proportion of workers who shifted due to other reasons: $p_2 = 66/300 = 0.22$

Combined proportion: $p = 0.33$

Standard error: $SE \approx 0.1215$ approx

Z-Test Value: The absolute value of the z-test is 1.811

Comparison: The absolute value of the z-test value (1.811) is greater than the critical value (1.645).

Decision Rule: if the absolute value of the z-test value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Since the absolute value of the z-test value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, based on the results of the z-test, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that -There is a significant effect of COVID-19 on the shift of chikankari workers to other businesses during COVID-19.

3.Role of Government and NGO'S in dealing with financial hardships faced by Chikankari embroidery workers during and after the pandemic

Variables-

- 1. Government and NGO'S interventions
- 2. Financial hardships of Chikankari workers during covid-19
- Null hypothesis (H0): Government and NGO's did not play a critical role in mitigating the financial hardships faced by Chikankari embroidery workers during and after the pandemic.
- Alternate hypothesis (H1): Government and NGO's played a critical role in mitigating the financial hardships faced by Chikankari embroidery workers during and after the pandemic.
- Sample proportion = 0.54
- Hypothesized population proportion under the null hypothesis = 0.46
- Sample size = 300
- Significance Level= Specified a significance level of 0.05
- Z-Test Value= The absolute value of the z-test is approximately 2.782

Comparison: The absolute value of the z-test value (approximately 2.782) is greater than the critical value (1.645).

Decision Rule: if the absolute value of the z-test value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Since the absolute value of the z-test value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, based on the results of the z-test, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that - Government and NGO's played a critical role in mitigating the financial hardships faced by Chikankari embroidery workers during and after the pandemic.

Recommendations for Future Research and Policy

- **Enhance Support Mechanisms:**
- **Government:** Implement targeted financial aid and skill development programs to support Chikankari workers.
- **NGOs:** Facilitate market access and provide business training to artisans to help them diversify their income sources.
- **Promote Sustainable Practices:**
- Encourage the adoption of sustainable and eco-friendly practices in Chikankari to attract a global market focused on ethical fashion.
- **Strengthen Market Linkages:**
- Create platforms for direct sales and collaborations between Chikankari artisans and designers to ensure fair prices and reduce dependency on middlemen.
- **Diversify Product Range:**
- Innovate within the craft by introducing new product lines that cater to contemporary tastes while retaining traditional techniques.
- **Conduct Longitudinal Studies:**
- Carry out long-term studies to monitor the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and other economic changes on Chikankari workers.
- **Digital Literacy and Online Platforms:**
- Enhance digital literacy among artisans and provide access to online marketplaces to expand their reach and customer base.

By implementing these recommendations, the sustainability and resilience of the Chikankari craft and its workers can be significantly improved, ensuring their continued prosperity in a post-pandemic world.

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