

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE HANDLOOM WEAVERS AND WEAVER COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

Abstract

Aim: Handloom plays a very important role in country's economy, because of various challenges handloom weavers are migrating to other occupations. Hence an in-depth investigation was attempted to understand the constraints faced by the handloom weavers and Handloom Weavers Cooperative Societies (HWCS) in Tamilnadu.

Study Design: Thirty Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society (HWCS) under the VMHC and 200 individual weavers under the cluster were interviewed with the help of well-structured questionnaire for collection of primary data. Stratified random sampling method was employed for selection of the sample.

Methodology: Garrett's ranking technique was used to analyse the data.

Results: Results revealed that lack of effective government policies, lack of availability and quality of raw materials, inadequate infrastructure development and poor marketing linkage were the major constraints faced by handloom weavers and handloom weaver's cooperative societies.

Keywords: Handloom, Weavers, Cooperative society and Constraints.

1. Introduction

The handloom sector plays a very important role in the country's economy as it is the second largest sector in terms of employment, next to agriculture. This sector has a unique place in the Indian economy in terms of providing employment, cloth production and value addition at the same time preserving India's rich cultural heritage. Around 4.30 million people are directly and indirectly involved in handloom production activities. Production of hand-woven fabric from India constituted 95 percent of the global production and about 15 percent of cloth production in India is from handloom sector. [1]

Tamil Nadu state is uniquely positioned in the sense that majority of the Handloom Weavers are functioning under the Cooperative fold. There are 1,134 handloom weavers' cooperative societies functioning in Tamil Nadu as on 2021, (4th all India handloom weavers census) [1]. The handloom weaver's cooperative societies widely existed in the rural and semi-urban areas, where there is large concentration of weavers. During the year 2020-2021, the handloom weavers cooperative societies have produced cloth valued at Rs. 847.65 crore and sold handloom products to the extent of Rs. 1027.01 crore [2]. At the same time because of lower wages and other constraints, handloom weavers are migrating to other occupations, and this had become a great challenge to handloom sector in Tamil Nadu. Hence an in-depth investigation was attempted to understand the constraints faced by the handloom weavers and Handloom Weavers Cooperative Societies (HWCS) in the state.

Virudhunagar Mega Handloom Cluster (VMHC) is one of the major clusters promoted in Tamil Nadu state under the Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) that covered six districts with its headquarters at Virudhunagar. The constraints faced by the weavers and weavers cooperative societies were identified and ranked based on the priorities expressed.

2. Methodology

To fulfil the objective of the study, thirty Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society (HWCS) under the VMHC and 200 individual weavers under the cluster were interviewed with the help of well-structured questionnaire for collection of primary data. Stratified random sampling method was employed for selection of the sample.

2.1 Henry-Garrett Ranking Technique

Garrett ranking technique was employed to rank the constraints faced by handloom weavers and handloom weaver's cooperative societies under VMHC. The orders of merit by the respondents were converted into ranks by using the following formula.

$$\text{Percent Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.05)}{N_j}$$

Where, R_{ij} is ranking position and N_j is total number of ranks.

The percent position of each rank thus obtained was converted into scores by referring to the Garrett table. Then for each factor the scores of individual

respondents were added and divided by the total number of respondents for whom the scores were added. The mean scores for all the factors were arranged in rank order for deriving the inferences.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Constraints faced by weavers

The constraints faced by the handloom weavers were identified and analysed using the Garrett's technique and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1 Constraints faced by the weavers in the VMH cluster

S.NO	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Over dependence on government policies	68.89	1
2	Non availability of raw material in time	65.69	2
3	Poor quality of raw material	59.25	3
4	Inadequate infrastructural development	55.30	4
5	Insufficient wages	51.00	5
6	Lack of employment stability	50.42	6
7	Limited availability of skilled human resource	47.54	7
8	Lack of training	44.65	8
9	Outdated design	37.23	9

From table 1, it could be understood that dependency of the weavers on government policy had the highest mean score of 68.89. This was one of the major constraints as the government played a major role in fixing the wages, size of production, and type of cloth to be produced. Many other key livelihood activities of the weavers were further determined by the government. Hence the weavers expected a participative approach to address this constraint through effective policy measures for sustaining their livelihood.

The constraints related to raw material like non availability of raw material in time (65.69) and poor quality of the raw material (59.25) were the next major constraints faced by them. The weavers were unable to get the raw material on time because of the extensive preparatory work required to source them and the quality of raw material was unstable. [3]

Inadequate infrastructure (55.30), like work shed for weaving and space for preparatory work was another important constraint. Most of the weavers lacked separate work shed and they operated the loom in the living area of the house, which disturbed the regular household activities.

Insufficient wage (51.00) was an important constraint, as they earned lesser wage per unit of finished cloth. Hence most of the weavers were forced to move to other occupations like farm labours and mill workers. There is a need for increase in daily wages of handloom weavers, the same was also reported in recent past studies. [4]

Lack of employment stability (50.42) was caused by the non availability of raw material in required time periods. Weavers were unable to weave continuously and due to certain unfavourable climatic conditions, the handloom weaving activity was hampered. in handloom becomes tough.

Lesser availability of skilled human labour (47.54) affected the operations, due to the poor wages and opportunities for continuous employment. The younger weavers were not willing to learn weaving and they are moving to other occupational opportunities.

The government policy is to promote implementation of new technology to increase the productivity whereas lack of training (44.65) towards the new technology or new methods led to decreased adoption of technology among the weavers.

Outdated design (37.23) was a constraint as nowadays there is a change in fashion and trend among the customers. The weavers were unaware of the trending design; they lacked proper knowledge in capturing the recent trends and implement those designs in weaving.

3.2 Constraints faced by HWCS:

The constraints faced by the Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society (HWCS) were analysed using Garrett ranking technique and presented in table 2.

Table 2 Constraints faced by the Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society

S.NO	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Lack of effective government policies	74.46	1
2	Poor market linkages	72.73	2
3	Higher cost of production	65.96	3
4	Inadequate contemporary technology	56.83	4
5	Lack of commercially viable products	53.06	5
6	Low Productivity	48.13	6
7	Increased competition from powerloom and machine made products	40.96	7
8	Lack of attractive promotional measures	37.67	8
9	Lack of customer awareness about handloom products	25.66	9
10	Environmental issues	22.40	10

From table 2, it could be observed that, lack of effective government policies (74.46) was the major constraint. The profitability of the society was highly dependent on government policies regarding units of production, fixation of price for the cloth, supply of raw material etc. Hence the performance of HWCS highly depended on the government policies. **Effective government policies are needed to promote handloom sector and livelihood of weavers [5]**

The Societies lacked market linkage (72.73), to promote the sales of handloom products in the domestic and international markets. They lacked

knowledge about export potential for the handloom products and were unaware about the actual needs of the domestic and international customers. [6]

Higher cost of production (65.96) was due to fluctuation in the price of raw material. In handloom weaving, there were various stages of preparatory work, which incurred labour cost at each stage leading to increased cost of production.

Inadequate contemporary technology (56.83) related to weaving, marketing and preparatory work was the next major constraint faced by the HWCS. There is a need for research and development of new technology to improve weaving process, ease of preparatory work and to link with potential market for sustained development of HWCS. The same was also reported in past studies [7]

The societies lacked understanding of commercially viable products (53.06), in terms of customer's needs in design and type of cloth preferred. Age old designs were still used and wide spread among the weavers of the society.

Low productivity (48.13), was because of the reduced availability of skilled handloom weavers leading to longer production cycles. Because of the low productivity, there was increased competition from powerloom and machine made products (40.96), as they were able to produce bulk quantity of cloth at a lesser time and in turn that led to reduction in cost of production [8]. Therefore, the power loom products were highly price competitive when compared with the handloom products. This was followed by lack of attractive promotional measures (37.67), due to lack of commercially viable products and lack of awareness about e-commerce platforms for promotion of handloom products.

The customers lacked awareness about the quality of handloom products (25.66). Most of the customers were concerned about the higher cost of handloom products but they were not aware about the quality and intense labour involved in making one unit of handloom product. Though the price of the machine made products were lesser than the price of handloom products, the quality cannot be compromised in handloom products. Hence awareness among the customers can be improved by implementing advanced e-marketing strategies for the upliftment of the sector. [9]

Dyeing of yarn is an important preparatory work, which involved discharge of waste water into open land or into water bodies. Hence Environmental issues (22.40) became a major concern for the people around dyeing unit. Some of the societies operated their own dyeing units to reduce the cost of production.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, lack of employment stability and insufficient wages to handloom weavers forced the children of handloom weavers not to adopt weaving as a profession. This led to migration of weavers to non-craft activities. Lack of planned training with continuous monitoring and support was another major issue among handloom weavers. There is a need for infrastructure development, support in design and improved technology to increase the productivity and quality of handloom products.

The government can ensure the timely availability and quality raw material through schemes. In order to reduce the competition from powerloom and mill made

products, the government should insist the usage of handloom mark on the products produced through Handloom Weaver's Cooperative societies. The government can organize training program to the members of the society to catch the customer trends to develop and produce commercially viable products. The government can increase the wages to reduce the migration of weavers and to improve the livelihood of weavers. The effective way of implementing these suggestions would be through cooperative institutes [10], the same was also reported in past studies.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

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