

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

The handloom business in India has a long and storied history, and it is also the biggest cottage industry in the country. More than 65 lakh people in rural India are directly employed in weaving and related activities; it is the second biggest income-oriented business in the country, behind agriculture. The handloom weavers' socioeconomic situations are the focus of this investigation. Two hundred and sixty-six people filled out the surveys that provided the data. A simple bar chart was used to examine the data according to age, educational attainment, family type, employment, ration card, and loom type.

Keywords: Socio Economic Conditions, Income, Education, Loom

I. INTRODUCTION

Weaving, particularly hand weaving, has a long history in India. One example of the diversity through which we are progressing is the handloom. One of India's cultural legacies is the handloom industry. The skill and artistry of the weavers are on full display in these beautiful goods. Experimentation and displays are constant means by which Handloom promotes product improvements. The handloom sector is a globally recognised industry due of its distinctive and unusual style. The handloom sector has a long history of significance in India's textile industry due to its deep cultural roots. The handloom industry is located close to the agricultural sector, which is convenient given its contributions. Since most weaving societies are located in rural areas, it plays a significant role in improving the livelihood of rural residents and eliminating poverty. Countless weavers and associated artisans find employment opportunities through it. Discrimination between males and women is lessened as a result. The handloom sector employs a large number of women. Building bridges between rural and urban areas is one of its primary goals. As a result of the handloom industry's production of energy-efficient, environmentally friendly goods, sustainable development is being advanced. In 2014–2015, handloom fabric output reached 7203 million sq. meters, with exports reaching 2246 crores.

An important part of India's economy is the handloom sector. With its emphasis on providing many job opportunities, particularly for India's working class, this industry ranks second only to agriculture as India's most important economic driver. It has grown into a major player in India's textile sector because to its long history of innovation and storied cultural legacy. It has disseminated extensively over the nation. Forty lakh weavers and others in related fields are employed by it. The skill and artistry of the weavers are on full display in these beautiful goods. Since the majority of weavers reside in rural areas, it plays a significant role in improving the livelihood of rural residents and eliminating poverty. As an important piece of art history, it represents Indian culture. Indian cotton garments were popular all across the globe. The handloom industry is an integral part of India's cultural heritage. It helps boost the country's export revenues and accounts for almost 15% of the country's fabric output. India is the source

of 95% of the world's hand-woven cloth.

In rural and regional areas, weavers' cooperatives provided various opportunities for people to rest. Therefore, cooperatives offer a convenient means of resolving issues faced by members. The definition of a co-operative society is a type of business organization in which members form a group to pursue shared goals, such as the creation, distribution, or marketing of goods and services, and the improvement of their members' standard of living through the implementation of mutually beneficial welfare programs. Co-operatives are self-governing groups of people that voluntarily band together to pursue shared goals. In a cooperative society, helping others, rather than maximizing one's own financial gain, is paramount. Therefore, our cooperative society is a giving one.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhardwaj, Akshay & Venkateshwarlu, Babburu (2024) Himachal Pradesh's handloom sector contributes significantly to the state's GDP. It provides employment to 13,688 families in the state. In an effort to boost the handloom business, the federal and state governments launched a number of programs. The last census (2019-2020) found that 13.5 million Indian households relied on handloom weaving. This research mainly focused on the economic and social situation of the handloom workers in Himachal Pradesh. The team was able to accomplish this goal by making use of data from outdated loom censuses. People in rural areas make up the bulk of those who work with handlooms. The handloom workers probably aren't aware of any government initiatives that may help them since only 3.63 percent of them have a high school diploma or equivalent. Only around 0.02% of the revenue for the top 20% to 25% comes from handloom activities. The data shows that the handloom sector provides a little more income for the workers.

Venugopal, Koppala (2023) Weavers of handloom textiles are in a precarious position in every part of India where demand for their products is low. Despite many efforts to put a stop to the enterprise through different initiatives and interventions, the weavers' livelihood is still in jeopardy. Disorganised operations, product diversifications, finance demands, raw resources, low returns, and marketing challenges are among the many major factors that have contributed to the reduction in weavers' satisfaction. The goal of this research is to determine the factors that have contributed to the betterment of the lives of weavers in Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh state. The data was collected using a non-probability sampling strategy and a cross-sectional survey, which combined descriptive and quantitative methods. Influencing statistics from multi regression analysis and factor analysis were used to identify and explain the dependent and independent variables, respectively. The study's interpretation and management implications informed the particular recommendations it offered. This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the impact of each component on the sustainability of handloom weavers.

Panda, Priyabrata (2022) The economic and social condition of weavers has deteriorated in recent years due to a number of factors, including decreasing incomes, increasing production costs, a multitude of health issues, and the loss of jobs. Consequently, this study will conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) based on a survey of 30 articles published between 2015 and 2021 on the issue of socio-economic problems, health threats, and commercial challenges of handloom weavers. This will help us get a clearer understanding of these areas. The intriguing results obtained by SLR through the use of the Google Scholar search engine are detailed in this review paper. Many government aid programs and laws have

been put into place. Poor income, low market price, and worldwide marketing rivalry are just a few of the challenges that the handloom business faces, despite several attempts. The social and economic situations of weavers have been deteriorating as a result. Low salaries, obsolete machinery, dispersed weaving platforms, inadequate promotion, and a lack of assistance from higher-ups made them more vulnerable to abuse.

Paul, Asit (2022) The glorious history of handloom in Bengal and India is well known. The modern handloom is famous for being both unique and versatile. Along with the agricultural sector, it is among the country's top employers. There is hope for the future in this industry because it requires little in the way of capital and a lot of workers. The handloom sector is obviously a key economic engine in both West Bengal and India, with 6.6 lakh people directly involved in weaving and associated activities and over 6.5 million people in India. Despite its reputation as a "backward" place, the industrially Black and border-attached district of Dakshin Dinajpur is making significant strides in the creation of handloom-related employment opportunities. The most well-known handloom makers in the area call Gangarampur, one of the eight CDBs in Dakshin Dinajpur, home. This "Green Industry" in Dakshin Dinajpur has recently faced numerous obstacles, such as inadequate financing, low wages, a dramatic decline in the number of weavers, little interest from younger generations in weaving as a career, fierce competition from the power loom industry, a small local market, and scarce raw materials.

Datta, Dibyendu & Agrawal, Bikas (2018) By sharing ownership and management of a democratically controlled firm, members of a co-operative society are able to satisfy their material, social, and cultural requirements. The cooperative movement was a new beginning for handloom and associated activities. Without the handloom cooperative societies, we would not have been able to construct our economy. These towns were vital to the survival of millions of handloom weavers. They aid the innocent and the downtrodden by solving their difficulties and advising them on how to advance strategically in their chosen fields. This proves how important handloom co-ops are and why they should grow quickly. The government has instituted several measures to assist the handloom co-ops, allowing them to compete more effectively. Some handloom cooperatives are not well-run, which is a shame. Through their success, co-ops have paved the way for several other kinds of institutions, middlemen, master weavers, independent weavers, and end users. The handloom industry is safeguarded by cooperatives that effectively defend the rights of their members as weavers and serve as a check on the authority of the master weaver. Everyone in the community, not just the members, would feel the impact of the collapse of handloom cooperative societies. Although the powerloom is certainly formidable, it is up against unique handloom items that are popular all over the world. In this field study, weavers who participate in handloom cooperatives and those who do not are compared with regard to their revenue distribution. Key spending, saving, and investment patterns of members and non-member weavers are compared and contrasted, along with an analysis of the disparities between the two groups. This inquiry took place at Bishnupur Municipality, which is located in the Bankura District of West Bengal. Statistical significance was determined by comparing the responses of members and non-members, who were selected using a three-stage sampling procedure. The results demonstrated that the cooperatives had significantly enhanced the weavers' economic conditions. Weavers who aren't members of the guild can't expect to enjoy the same benefits or advance economically or socially as guild members.

Mishra, Vandita & Bhattacharjee, M. (2017) In India, the handloom industry is a source of national pride

because it accounts for 10% of textile exports each year and employs 14% of the poor, making it the second most populous industry in the country after agriculture. Unfortunately, mechanisation has threatened the very survival of this beautiful art form of weaving by hand on looms. In order to examine the challenges faced by handloom weavers, this article paints a complete overview of the handloom industry's value chain. In the Nadia region of West Bengal, the cities of Shantipur and Phulia are the sites of a field study that investigates the value chain's sustainability. A cost-benefit analysis approach is utilised all the way through the handloom value chain. The primary nodes in the value chain of this article are the saris known as Jamdani, Shantipuri, Baluchari, and Tangail. Weavers who were part of cooperative organisations and those who were self-employed were both compared in terms of their short- and long-term profitability. While cooperative weavers make more money in the long term, independent weavers enjoy a 50% boost in short-term profits. The research proves that in order for the handloom sector to survive, it is necessary to expand and streamline the market for independent weavers.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the socio-economic profile and working conditions of handloom weavers.

Sources of Data Collection

For this study both primary and secondary data was utilized.

Primary Data: Using structured questionnaires, the data was mostly gathered from the hand loom weavers. In addition to this, primary data was gathered through in-person interviews, focus groups, and observation.

Secondary Data: The secondary data has been collected by using published reports from the DIC, published research papers, books and listing websites related to the area.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a simple random sampling technique.

Sample of the Study

The data has been collected from 260 hand loom weavers from Murshidabad, West Bengal.

Statistical Technique used

The data has been analyzed by using percentage and chi-square test.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30	10	3.8
31 to 40	46	17.7
41 to 50	88	33.8
51 to 60	107	41.2
Above 60	9	3.5
Total	260	100.0

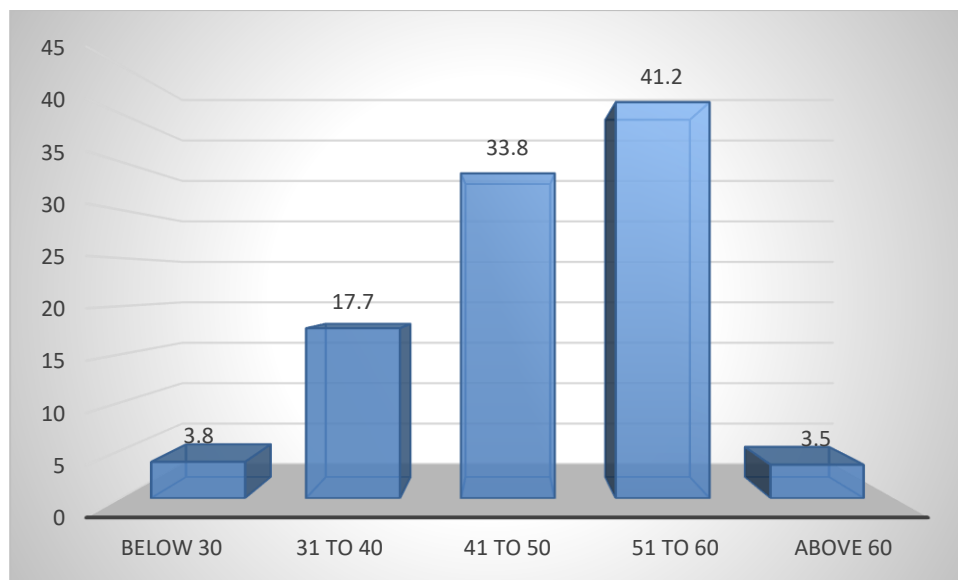


Figure 1: Age of the respondents

The distribution of respondents by age is displayed in the table above. 3.8 percent of the sample is under the age of 30, 17.7 percent is between the ages of 31 and 40, 33.8 percent is between the ages of 41 and 50, 41.2 percent is between the ages of 51 and 60, and 3.5 percent is over the age of 60.

Table 2: Educational status of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	163	62.7
Secondary	59	22.7
Under graduates	33	12.7
Post graduates	5	1.9
Total	260	100.0

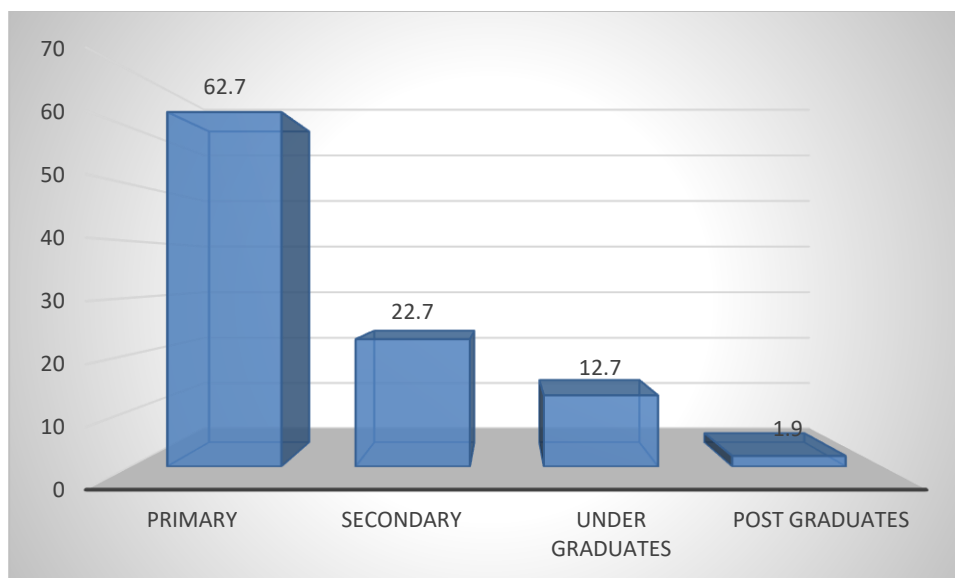


Figure 2: Educational status of the respondents

The table above illustrates how the responses were spread out by education level. 62.7% of the people who answered had just elementary school, 22.7% had only secondary school, 12.7% had only college, and 1.9% had only graduate school.

Table 3: Type of Family of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Joint	75	28.8
Nuclear	185	71.2
Total	260	100.0

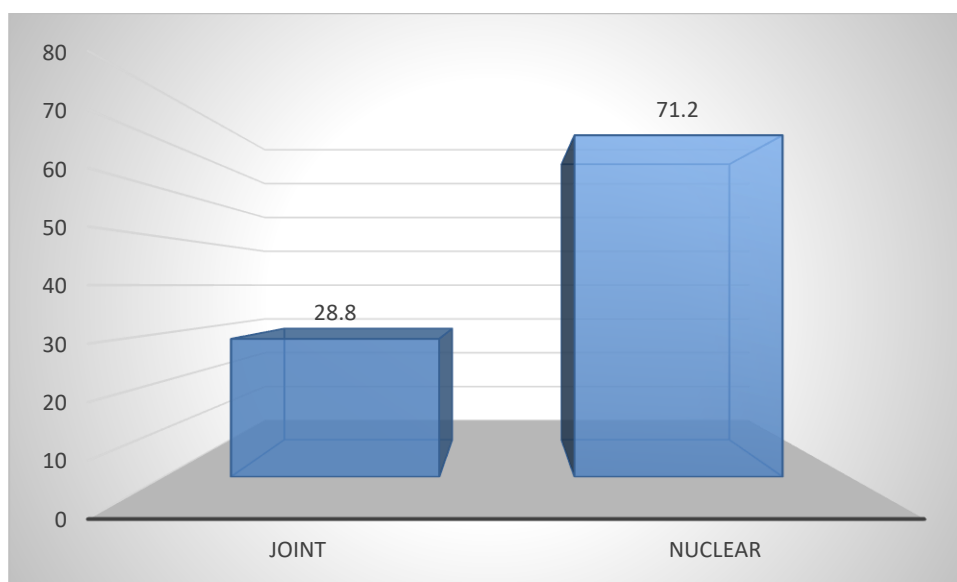


Figure 3: Type of Family of the respondents

The type of family is shown in the table above. Only 28.8% of those who took the survey are part of nuclear families, while 71.2% are joint families.

Table 4: Type of the ration card of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
AAA Card	26	10.0
BPL Card	234	90.0
Total	260	100.0

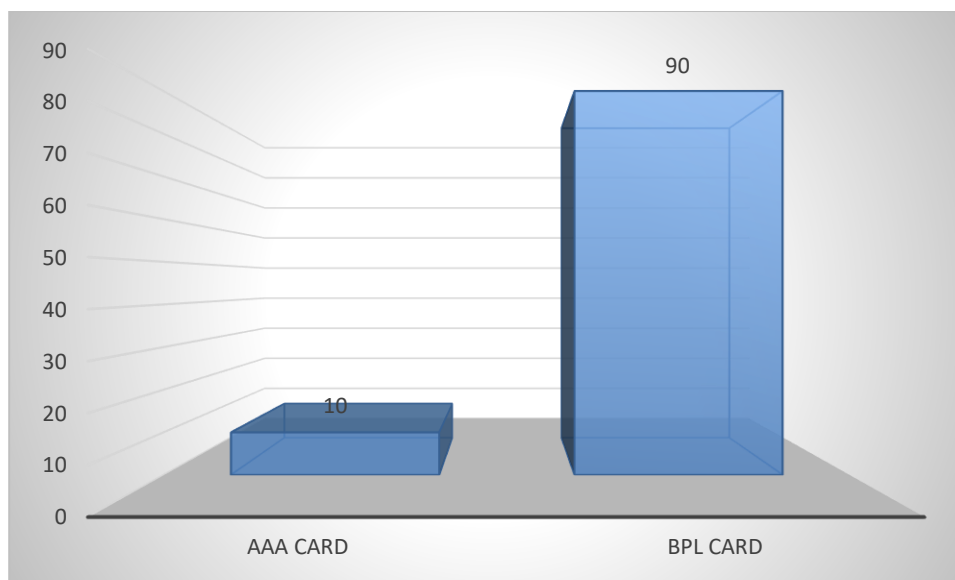


Figure 4: Type of the ration card of the respondents

The distribution of responders, broken down by ration card type, is displayed in the table above. A total of 90% of respondents have a Below Poverty Line card, while 10% hold an Antodaya Anna Yojana card.

Table 5: Income of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 4000	42	16.2
4000 to 6000	94	36.1
6000 to 8000	78	30.0
8000 to 10000	26	10.0
Above 10000	20	7.7
Total	260	100.0

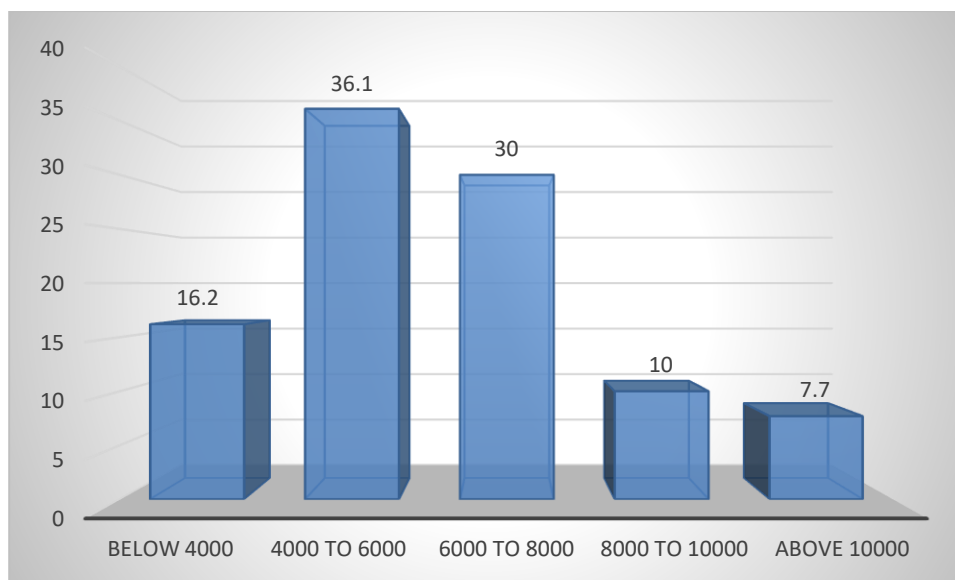


Figure 5: Income of the respondents

The respondents' monthly incomes are displayed in the table above. The breakdown of the respondents' incomes is as follows: 16.2% earn less than 4000, 36.1% earn between 4000 and 6000, 30% earn between 6000 and 8000, 10% earn between 8000 and 10,000, and 7.7% earn more than 10,000.

Table 6: Working status of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Indep weaver	88	33.8
Middle men weavers	65	25.0
Co-operative weavers	75	28.8
Master weaver	32	12.3
Total	260	100.0

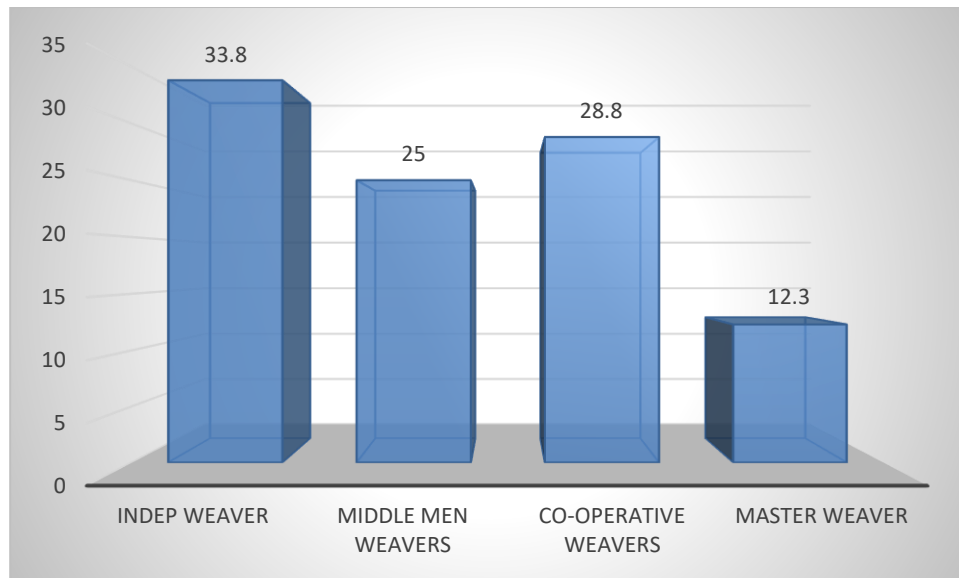


Figure 6: Working status of the respondents

Hand loom weavers' employment status is shown in the table above. 33.8 percent of the respondents are self-employed weavers, 25.0 percent are employed by middlemen, 28.8 percent are members of a cooperative organization, and 12.3 percent are apprentices to master weavers.

Table 7: Type of loom used by the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional	159	61.2
Through shuttle	36	13.8
Jacquard	65	25.0
Total	260	100.0

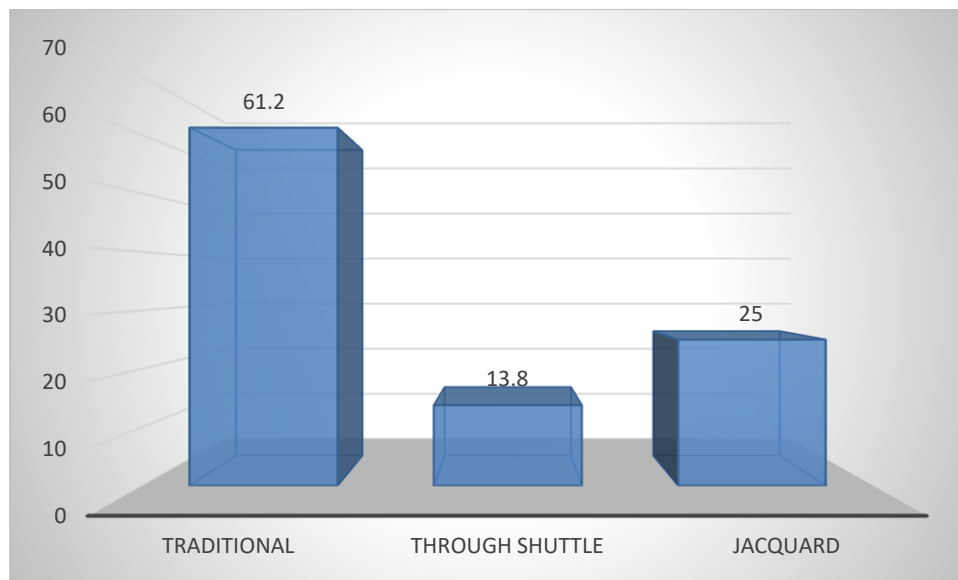


Figure 7: Type of loom used by the respondents

The types of looms utilised by the participants are displayed in the table above. Traditional looms are used by 61.2% of the respondents, 13.8% by shuttle weavers, and 25% by jacquard weavers.

Table 8: Results of Chi-Square Test Showing Relationship Between Socio-Demographic Factors and Income of handloom weavers

S. No	Variable	Chi-Square Value	p-value
1	Age vs Income	8.42	>0.05
2	Education vs Income	18.75	<0.05
3	Family Type vs Income	4.26	>0.05
4	Working Status vs Income	21.38	<0.05
5	Loom Type vs Income	16.82	<0.05

The Chi-square findings show that there is no strong link between age and income ($\chi^2 = 8.42$, $p > 0.05$). Family type and wealth are also not strongly linked ($\chi^2 = 4.26$, $p > 0.05$). But there is a strong link between education and income ($\chi^2 = 18.75$, $p < 0.05$), which means that those who go to school do better at making money. There is also a robust link between working status and income ($\chi^2 = 21.38$, $p < 0.05$). Also, there is a strong link between loom type and wealth ($\chi^2 = 16.82$, $p < 0.05$).

V. CONCLUSION

The handloom industry's weavers are feeling the pinch of bad government policies, globalisation, and shifting socioeconomic circumstances, all of which are having a severe effect on their way of life. Although the handloom industry provides a large number of job possibilities, this study shows that it is plagued by socio-economic issues, such as the poor weavers' economic position, challenges relating to inputs, and the cooperative sector's poor performance. There are a lot of obstacles in the area of creative and innovative design that would raise the product's value on both the local and national markets, despite the fact that this sector is vital in lowering poverty, increasing employment, and improving household income and consumption in the state. Thus, the government's support in the form of funding, expertise, and policies is urgently needed to foster the growth of the handloom sector.

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