

Challenges And Motivations Behind The Survival Of Handloom Weavers In Kanniyakumari District

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In Tamil Nadu's Kanniyakumari district, the handloom weaving sector is a key source of income for many rural craftsmen and an example to the state's rich heritage of culture. Power loom competition, declining demand, a lack of market access, and insufficient government assistance are just a few of the many obstacles that need to be overcome. The socioeconomic challenges, coping mechanisms, and driving forces that keep handloom weavers going in spite of these challenges are examined in this study. The study emphasizes persistence derived from custom, community identity, and a dedication to craftsmanship through field surveys and interviews. The results are intended to guide governmental decisions that help uphold sustainable livelihoods and protect this age-old art form. This study examines the challenges and motivations behind the survival of handloom weavers in kanniyakumari district. Both primary and secondary data are extensively used in this study. Then, the primary data was collected through the questionnaire method from the weavers. For this study 96 respondents were selected positively. For collecting necessary data, 96 respondents have been collected in Kanyakumari district by using convenience sampling method.

Key words: Handloom, Craftsmen, Power loom, Weavers.

INTRODUCTION

One of India's oldest and most traditional textile production industries, handloom weaving reflects the nation's rich creative and cultural legacy. For numerous generations, handloom weaving has been a major source of income in Tamil Nadu's Kanniyakumari area. Despite its potential for employment and cultural significance, this industry is currently dealing with significant difficulties. The weavers are under a great deal of difficulty due to the rise of mechanical textile production, falling interest among younger generations, a lack of funding, and restricted market access. Their difficult situation gets worse by inadequate infrastructure

and fluctuating raw material prices. However, a large number of handloom weavers persist in their art with perseverance and commitment. A strong sense of identity, family connections to the profession, and cultural pride are frequently the sources of their inspiration. The purpose of this study is to examine the issues that are endangering Kanniyakumari's handloom industry and the reasons why weavers continue to practice their traditional trade in spite of these difficulties. It is essential to comprehend these processes in order to formulate strategies that promote and revitalize the handloom sector. The purpose of this study is to investigate the multiple aspects of the Kanniyakumari district's handloom weaving situation, looking at the significant obstacles it faces as well as the fundamental drives that ensure its continued existence. This study aims to offer important insights into the current state of the handloom business by examining the socioeconomic circumstances of weavers, their coping mechanisms, and the outside factors influencing the sector. Designing focused interventions, protecting traditional knowledge, and encouraging sustainable growth within rural artisan communities all depend on an understanding of these factors.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Once a flourishing sector based on tradition and expert craftsmanship, the Kanniyakumari district's handloom industry is today facing a sharp collapse. A mix of social, technological, and economic factors are responsible for this decline. The demand for handloom items has significantly decreased due to the widespread availability of cheaper, mass-produced textiles from power looms and imported materials. Traditional weavers have also found it challenging to compete in the modern market due to a lack of significant government support, poor marketing infrastructure, and restricted access to new design trends. The lack of social recognition, low and unpredictable pay, and better job prospects elsewhere have made younger generations less inclined to pursue weaving as a career. As a result of these difficulties, the number of active handloom weavers in the area has been steadily declining. There's a chance that this traditional art form might fade away without prompt action and strong support systems, taking with it an important piece of the district's cultural and economic legacy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- ❖ Devbrath and Singh (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of data from the 3rd and 4th Handloom Census reports to evaluate the changing socio-economic conditions of handloom workers in India. Their study found that despite slight improvements in literacy and infrastructure, a large percentage of weavers still earn below ₹5,000 per month. The paper emphasizes the need for enhanced government intervention, better access to markets, and more inclusive welfare schemes to ensure long-term sustainability of the sector.
- ❖ Meher et al. (2024) explored the issue of multi-dimensional poverty among handloom weavers in Odisha using the Alkire–Foster method. The study highlights how deprivation in areas like education, health, and living conditions affects weavers' overall quality of life. The authors argue that to improve the livelihood of weavers, development policies must go beyond income-based support and address holistic welfare dimensions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To study the demographic profile of the handloom weavers in Kanniyakumari district.
- ✓ To identify the key motivational factors that inspire handloom weavers in Kanniyakumari district.
- ✓ To identify the reason for reducing handloom industry in Kanniyakumari district.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on primary and secondary data. The primary data is to be collected from the sample respondents in the study area. The secondary data will be collected from various books, journals, magazines, internet etc.

❖ Target Respondents

The target respondents for the study are weavers in Kanyakumari District.

❖ Sample size

The sample size for the study is 96.

❖ Sampling Method & Type

The sampling technique used in this study was Convenience sampling method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE HANDLOOM WEAVERS

Essential details about the age, gender, education, family structure, and work experience of handloom weavers can be found in their demographic profile. Rural households in the Kanniyakumari district are the main practitioners of handloom weaving, frequently lasting multiple generations. Most weavers come from lower socioeconomic groups and have no formal education. In the industry, women are also important because they contribute to household income and output. Designing welfare programs and development strategies that are specifically targeted requires an understanding of these demographic aspects.

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROILE OF THE CUSTOMERS

Category	Options	No of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 25	15	16
	25-40	19	20
	40-55	27	28
	Above 55	35	36
	Total	96	100
Gender	Male	34	35

	Female	62	65	
	Total	96	100	
Marital status	Married	77	80	
	Unmarried	19	20	
	Total	96	100	
Residential status	Rural	80	57	
	Urban	16	43	
	Total	96	100	
Education qualification	SSLC	17	17	
	HSC	15	16	
	illiterate	64	67	
	Total	96	100	
Monthly income	Below 5,000	25	26	
	5,000-10,000	44	46	
	10,000-20,000	15	16	
	Above 20,000	12	12	
	Total	96	100	

Source: primary data

From the above table, it shows that 36 per cent respondents were from the age group of above 55 years. 65 per cent are females. Majority of the respondents were married which constitute 80 per cent.57 per cent were belongs to rural areas. Majority of them studied were illiterate which consists of 67 percent. Majority of the weavers earned 46 per cent range between 5,000-10,000 per month.

TABLE 2 MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS THAT INSPIRE HANDLOOM WEAVERS

S.		Mean Score	F - Stat	P -
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No	Motivational factors that inspire handloom weavers	20-30 Years	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	Above 50 Years	Total		
1	Cultural heritage	1.30	1.17	1.19	1.17	1.22	3.969	.008*
2	Family legacy	1.91	1.11	1.33	1.95	1.63	211.687	.000*
3	Sense of identity	1.88	1.15	1.18	1.91	1.59	209.902	.000*
4	Self-satisfaction	1.29	1.25	1.39	1.26	1.30	2.913	.005*
5	Economic necessity	1.34	1.39	1.07	1.46	1.33	15.560	.000*
6	Community support	1.86	1.40	1.23	2.00	1.67	127.748	.000*
7	Recognition and demand for handloom products	1.33	1.32	1.31	1.63	1.39	13.895	.000*

Source: Primary Data

Regarding the motivational factors that inspire handloom weavers in relation to their age level, there is a significant difference have been identified in all the seven variable's they are "Cultural heritage", "Family legacy", "Sense of identity", "Self-satisfaction", "Economic necessity", "Community support", "Recognition and demand for handloom products". Since, the respective 'F' statistics at five percent level. (i.e) p value is lesser than 0.05 percent.

TABLE 3 REASON FOR REDUCING HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

S.No	Reason for reducing handloom industry	Garrett rank	Rank
1	Rising cost of raw materials	38.2	VIII
2	Low income and wage insecurity	84.3	I
3	Competition from power looms	79.6	II
4	Lack of government support	45.1	VII
5	Limited market access	64.9	IV
6	Decline in interest among younger generations	60.1	V
7	Outdated tools and technology	72.2	III

8	Inadequate infrastructure and working conditions	49.3	VI
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Source: Primary Data

The table 3 shows that the reason for reducing handloom industry in kanniyakumari district that “Low income and wage insecurity” with the mean score of 84.3 contributed first rank, “Competition from power looms” with the mean score of 79.6 contributed second rank, “Outdated tools and technology” with the mean score of 72.2 contributed third rank. Fourth rank is for “ Limited market access” with a mean score of 64.9. Fifth rank is for “Decline in interest among younger generations” with a mean score if 60.1. Sixth rank is for “Inadequate infrastructure and working conditions” with a mean score of 49.3. Seventh rank is for “Lack of government support” with a mean score of 49.3 and least rank is for “Rising cost of raw materials” with a mean score of 38.2 respectively.

FINDINGS

- ✓ From the table 1, it shows that 36 per cent respondents were from the age group of above 55 years. 65 per cent are females. Majority of the respondents were married which constitute 80 per cent.57 per cent were belongs to rural areas. Majority of them studied were illiterate which consists of 67 percent. Majority of the weavers earned 46 per cent range between 5,000-10,000 per month.
- ✓ Regarding the motivational factors that inspire handloom weavers in relation to their age level, there is a significant difference have been identified in all the seven variable’s they are “Cultural heritage”, “Family legacy”, “Sense of identity”, “Self-satisfaction”, “Economic necessity”, “Community support”, “Recognition and demand for handloom products”. Since, the respective ‘F’ statistics at five percent level. (i.e) p value is lesser than 0.05 percent.
- ✓ The table 3 shows that the reason for reducing handloom industry in kanniyakumari district that “Low income and wage insecurity” with the mean score of 84.3 contributed first rank and least rank is for “Rising cost of raw materials” with a mean score of 38.2 respectively.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Increase the effectiveness of government assistance programs by guaranteeing prompt financial assistance, raw material subsidies, and welfare and health benefits for weavers.
- ❖ To assist weavers in adjusting to current trends while maintaining traditional methods, promote skill development and design innovation through frequent training sessions.
- ❖ Increase market access by linking weavers to fair trade networks, exhibitions, and e-commerce sites to boost sales and exposure.
- ❖ Promote youth involvement by providing financial aid, educational possibilities, and business ventures in the handloom industry.

CONCLUSION

The Kanniyakumari district's handloom weaving sector is at a turning point, dealing with both enduring impulses and recurring obstacles. Many weavers maintain this age-old craft with unbelievable resolve in the face of low income, growing raw material costs, and competition from robotic looms. Their artistic fulfilment, family heritage, and cultural pride are the main sources of their inspiration. But this industry needs more than just interest to survive—it needs tangible assistance. In order to guarantee that social benefits and financial assistance reach grassroots craftsmen, government policies need to be more accessible and inclusive. Transformation without sacrificing heritage requires technology advancements, skill development, and market connections. In order to stop a generational fall in engagement, it is also essential to promote youth involvement. In the end, maintaining handloom weaving in Kanniyakumari is about maintaining a living legacy rather than only protecting a means of subsistence. This industry has the potential to flourish and make a significant cultural and economic contribution with concerted efforts.

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