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## Challenges Faced By The Handloom Weavers: A Study In Erode District Of Tamilnadu

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### ABSTRACT:

Handloom weaving is one of India's most important craft-based industries and represents the largest cottage industry in the country. It plays a crucial role in providing employment and income generator especially in rural and semi-urban areas, and is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of regions like Tamil Nadu. Despite its significance, the sector faces numerous challenges threaten its survival. One of the major problems is the intense competition from power loom and machine-made fabrics, which are cheaper and produced more rapidly, making it difficult for traditional weavers to compete. In addition, weavers suffer from health issues due to long working hours and poor infrastructure conditions, along with low and unstable incomes that make it difficult to sustain their livelihoods. On the marketing side, issues such as poor-quality control, dependence on middlemen, and high competition further affect profitability and growth. These combined production and marketing challenges have placed immense pressure on the traditional handloom industry. This study explores the key problems faced by handloom weavers and stresses the urgent need for policy measures aimed at improving market access, providing financial and health assistance, promoting fair trade practices, and preserving the cultural and economic value of this age-old craft through targeted interventions.

**Keywords:** Handloom Sector, Production Problem, Marketing Problem, Training Programme, Financial Assistance.

## INTRODUCTION

Handloom weaving stands as one of India's most significant craft-based industries and represents the largest cottage industry in the country. This traditional practice involves weaving textiles on manually operated looms, without the use of electricity or automated machines. It is a labour-intensive craft where skilled artisans intricately interlace warp and weft threads to create fabric. Handloom products, often crafted from natural fibers such as cotton, silk, wool, and linen, are prized for their vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and distinctive designs. The process demands exceptional precision, skill, and creativity, with artisans dedicating hours, and sometimes even days or weeks, to complete a single piece, depend on handmade product particularly when dealing with complex patterns. In India, the handloom sector ranks as the largest unorganized economic activity after agriculture and serves as a key source of livelihood in rural and semi-urban communities. This sector directly and indirectly employs around 35.22 lakh weavers and related workers, contributing about 15per cent to the nation's cloth production and significantly boosting export earnings. Remarkably, India supplies about 95per cent of the world's handwoven fabric. Among its many regional traditions, Tamil Nadu's handloom sector is especially renowned for its rich heritage and the exceptional craftsmanship of its weavers. By realizing this, this paper is an attempt to identify the challenges faced by the handloom weavers in Erode district. For which, the required primary data have been collected by using Interview Schedule. Such, collected data haven analysed with statistical tools like Garrett's Ranking Technique and Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance(W).

### Review of Literature

Poongodi (2024) made a study to identify the challenges faced by women handloom weavers in Pollachi Taluk. For which, she collected data from 74 handloom weavers. The collected data have been analysed with Multistage Regression Analysis. She found that the key challenges faced by the weavers are low wages, health problems, and income instability during off-seasons, difficulties in sourcing raw materials, and marketing their products. She suggested that the Government should emphasize the need for support and interventions to improve their livelihoods.

Rajyalakshmi (2024) made a study to investigate the challenges faced by handloom entrepreneurs in Telangana. For which, the required data have been collected by using simple random sampling method. She found that the major problems faced by the weavers are inadequate quality Control, insufficient marketing support, and restricted credit access. On the basis of her findings, she suggested that the Government policy reforms to sustain the sector and encourages consumers to support handloom products as part of preserving cultural heritage.

### Objectives of the Study

The present study is undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the challenges faced by the handloom weavers.
2. To offer suitable suggestion for further development.

### Research Methodology

This is an empirical study based on primary data. Convenience sampling technique has been adopted for collection of primary data. Required data have been collected from the selected 590 sample weavers.

## Framework of Analysis

For the present study, collected primary data have been analysed with statistical tools like Garrett's Ranking Technique and Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To know that significant challenges faced by the handloom weavers, the per cent position estimated with Garrett's Ranking Technique. Accordingly, score value as per Garrett Ranking Analysis for first rank to eleventh rank is calculated. Then for each factor, the score of each weaver is added and then mean value is calculated. The factor which has the highest mean value is considered to be the significant factor. Details of the findings are shown in Table 1<sup>1</sup>.

Ranks assigned by the handloom weavers have been converted into score by using the following formula and on the basis of Garrett Table.

$$100(R_{ij}-0.5)$$

Per cent position=

$$\frac{100(R_{ij}-0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,  $R_{ij}$  = Rank given for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  factor by the  $j^{\text{th}}$  respondents.

$N_j$  = Number of factors ranked by  $j^{\text{th}}$  respondents.

**Table 1**

### Challenges Faced by the Handloom Weavers: Garrett's Ranking Technique

Rank Scores(x)	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	Total	TS	MS	Rank
	83	72	65	59	55	50	45	40	35	28	18				
Higher wages	58	40	53	42	69	57	49	47	69	60	46	590	29270	49.61	VI
fx	4814	2880	3445	2478	3795	2850	2205	1880	2415	1680	828				
Unfair pricing	52	44	44	68	51	58	51	46	57	56	63	590	28892	48.97	IX
fx	4316	3168	2860	4012	2805	2900	2295	1840	1995	1568	1134				
Health issue	59	51	60	32	53	43	54	57	63	54	64	590	28999	49.15	VIII
fx	4897	3672	3900	1888	2915	2150	2430	2280	2205	1512	1152				
Frequent Power Failure	51	43	51	53	51	57	61	61	49	46	67	590	28816	48.84	X
fx	4233	3096	3315	3127	2805	2850	2745	2440	1715	1288	1206				
Inadequate family welfare scheme	41	55	68	47	42	43	57	47	61	59	70	590	28503	48.31	XI
fx	3403	3960	4420	2773	2310	2150	2565	1880	2135	1652	1260				
Non-availability of skilled labour	58	52	63	60	51	59	63	59	45	50	30	590	30656	51.96	II
fx	4814	3744	4095	3540	2805	2950	2835	2360	1575	1400	540				

<sup>1</sup> Garrett E.Henry and Woodsworth R., (1969), Statistics in Psychology and Education, Mumbai, Vakkil Feffer and simons(P)Ltd. Pp.328-331 and Ravichandran K. and Narayanarajan S., (2004), "Factors influencing the Brand preference of Television", Indian Journal of Marketing, Vol.XXXIV, No.4, April, pp.17-21.

Marketing problem	f	57	62	54	51	53	53	42	36	53	57	62	590	29176	49.45	VII
	fx	4731	4464	3510	3009	2915	2650	1890	1440	1855	1596	1116				
Non-availability of raw materials	f	43	63	61	63	57	51	57	47	32	50	66	590	29624	50.21	IV
	fx	3569	4536	3965	3717	3135	2550	2565	1880	1120	1400	1188				
Lack of Government support	f	53	57	54	51	59	51	54	61	49	55	46	590	29766	50.45	III
	fx	4399	4104	3510	3009	3245	2550	2430	2440	1715	1540	828				
Competition	f	61	52	35	61	41	58	59	61	58	50	54	590	29329	49.71	V
	fx	5063	3744	2275	3599	2255	2900	2655	2440	2030	1400	972				
High price of raw materials	f	57	71	47	62	63	50	43	68	54	53	22	590	30945	52.45	I
	fx	4731	5112	3055	3658	3465	2500	1935	2720	1890	1484	396				
		590	590	590	590	590	590	590	590	590	590	590				

Source: Primary Data. Note: x=Scale value, f=Number of weavers; fx=Score value.

The Table 1 clearly shows that the main challenges felt by the handloom weavers is High price of raw materials as indicated by its highest Mean Score of (52.45), this is followed by Non-availability of skilled labour, Lack of Government support, Non-availability of raw materials,

Competition, Higher wages, Marketing problem, Health issue, Unfair pricing, Frequent power failure and Inadequate family welfare scheme.

### Challenges Faced by the Handloom Weavers: Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance

To identify the challenges faced by the handloom weavers, it is decided to use Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance<sup>2</sup>. Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance also known as Kendall's *W*, it is non-parametric statistic. It is a normalization of the statistic of the Friedman test and can be used for assessing agreement among raters. Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance has been applied to find whether there is any similarity among the weavers in assigning the ranks to the given factors. Kendall's *W* ranges from 0 (no agreement) to 1 (complete agreement). Higher the value of Kendall's *W* more will be the similarity among the weavers in assigning the ranks whereas, lower the value of Kendall's *W* less will be the similarity among the weavers in assigning the ranks.

Mean scores have been calculated for the determinants of challenges faced by the weavers in handloom weaving occupation. Lower mean score shows higher performance of the respective item. Details of the findings are shown in Table 2.

<sup>2</sup> Saratha, P.,(200), "Needs and Satisfaction of foreign tourists visiting Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu", Unpublished Ph.D., Thesis submitted to Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, (Supervisor:Dr.R.Rajamani)

TABLE 2

**Challenges Faced By Handloom Weavers: Kendall's Co-Efficient of Concordance**

CHALLENGES	TS	MS	Rank	Kendall's ('W')
Higher Wages	4663	423.90	VI	0.123
Unfair Pricing	4808	437.09	IX	
Health Issue	4779	434.45	VIII	
Frequent Power Failure	4816	437.81	X	
Inadequate Family Welfare Scheme	4940	449.09	XI	
Non-Availability of Skilled Labour	4508	409.81	II	
Marketing Problem	4761	432.81	VII	
Non-Availability of Raw Materials	4623	420.27	IV	
Lack of Government Support	4586	416.90	III	
Competition	4641	421.90	V	
High Price of Raw Materials	4454	404.90	I	

Source: Primary Data. Note: TS: Total Score and MS: Mean Score.

Table 2 shows that result of the Kendall's Co-efficient of Concordance ('W') test relates to challenges faced by the handloom weavers is 0.123. It shows that there is less similarity among the weavers in assigning the ranks to the challenges faced by the handloom weavers. Looking at the mean ranks, it is understood that the highest preference has been given to high price of raw materials (lower the rank and higher the priority) constituting the mean score 404.90 and the lowest challenges is given to inadequate family welfare scheme the mean score is 449.09.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

On the basis of the findings of the present study, the following viable suggestion is offered for the betterment of handloom sector in the aspect of weavers. In the present study, it is found that the challenge of high raw material cost has been ranked first. Hence, it is suggested that proper steps to be taken by Government of India and Government of Tamil Nadu to ensure the proper control of the availability of raw material and material cost. It is hope that Government of India and Government of Tamilnadu will be serious about to solve the challenges faced by the handloom weavers.

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