



**A STUDY ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF
PATTAMADAI HANDLOOM MAT WEAVING INDUSTRY
IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU**

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Abstract:

The handloom sector plays an important role in the economic development of the rural poor in the state. It contributes significantly by generating more employment opportunities and providing bread to the rural poor. At present study of Handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli District is at stake and the weavers are panic stricken with miseries since they are facing acute production and marketing problems. The main aim of the study is to know the socio-economic conditions of handloom mat weavers in Pattamadai, Tirunelveli district, identify the problems of handloom mat weavers. The study is empirical nature, which includes both primary source and secondary source. Secondary data required for the study have been collected from the government agencies, journals, books, magazines and websites. Primary data was collected through a well-structured interview schedule. In this study, the researcher used proportionate random sampling method. The total sample respondents for the study were 60. They are 20 independent weavers, 20 weavers working under middlemen and 20 co-operative society weavers have been covered in the study. Statistical tools such as percentages, ANOVA and factor analysis have been used for analysis in the study. It is found that shortage of labour and unskilled labours are the major problems faced by the handloom mat weavers.

Key Words: Handloom Mat Weavers, Production & Marketing Problems

Introduction

Weaving is one of the most ancient of the arts known to man. It requires the combination of human ingenuity and needs. Whatever its origin, textile production is so essential that it has a significant presence in our language, customs, and literature. Mat weaving is Koragrass the most important industry engaging a number of workers throughout the State. Korai belongs to the Cyperus family. Cyperus are tender, aquatic perennials, grown for decorative foliage. Produces clumps of long stems, 1 to 3 feet normally, but up to 5 feet in excellent conditions; these are crowned with long, slender, radiating, dark green leaves like an umbrella, thus gives it the common name. India is traditionally a country of artistic crafts and handicrafts. For a long period of time these craft works in India were concentrated in specific geographical locations based upon a system of occupational specialization which in small segments of community created a special art folk. The history of mat weaving in India dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Mats in India are of different kinds and are produced in different parts of the country. The handloom sector is the oldest among them with a long tradition of excellence and unrivalled craftsmanship. Mat weaving is a highly developed rural handicraft in Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu and the mats woven there are renowned through India and abroad for their exquisite quality and texture. The famous Pattamadai Fine Mat Weavers Co-operative Society had unique honour of producing a mat of very exquisite quality and design which was presented by the then Government of Madras to Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth of England, as Coronation Gift through His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, when he visited Madras in January 1959.

Statement of the Problem:

The handloom sector plays an important role in the economic development of the rural poor in the state. It contributes significantly by generating more employment opportunities and providing bread to the rural poor. At present study of Handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli District is at stake and the weavers are panic stricken with miseries since they are facing acute production and marketing problems. The living standard of the weavers is significantly low and they are leading miserable and pitiable life due to unemployment and underemployment. This situation prevails everywhere in the study area which is chosen for detailed research study. This pathetic condition of handloom mat weaving industry in Tirunelveli District demands a thorough investigation into the problems and measures to plug the loopholes and find remedies to the problems confronting handloom the mat weavers.

Objectives of the Study:

The study was conducted with the following objectives.

- ✓ To know the socio-economic conditions of handloom mat weavers in Pattamadai, Tirunelveli district.
- ✓ To identify the problems of handloom mat weavers in Pattamadai, Tirunelveli district.
- ✓ To suggest concrete measures to strengthen handloom mat weaving.

Scope of the Study:

Handloom sector is a major non-farm employer in the country. Handloom weaving is one of the most important non-agricultural sources of income in India. The economic wealth of the working person depends on the work of the individual. The work also alters the social hierarchy of the individuals. Hence every individual employee expects social as well as the provision of higher economic status from the work or occupation. The economic growth of a country depends on the rate of employment and industrialization in the country. In this backdrop, the present study has been taken up to identify the problems in the study areas and to suggest appropriate measures to resolve the problems. To carry out the study on sound lines, it was hypothesized that the handloom mat weaving industry is suffering from several problems in raw material, production, marketing, technology, and finance.

Methodology:

The study is empirical nature, which includes both primary source and secondary source. Secondary data required for the study have been collected from the government agencies, journals, books, magazines and websites. Primary data was collected through a well-structured interview schedule. In this study, the researcher used proportionate random sampling method. The total sample respondents for the study were 60. They are 20 independent weavers, 20 weavers working under middlemen and 20 co-operative society weavers have been covered in the study.

Statistical Tools Used for the Study:

Statistical tools such as percentages, ANOVA and factor analysis have been used for analysis in the study.

Limitations of the Study:

The major constraints and limits were recorded by the researcher, especially while conducting the field survey. Surprisingly most of the mat weavers are illiterate and ignorant. Though, they might be aware of their exploitation by the loom owners and the middle men, they didn't disclose the issue because they don't want to lose their job by way of revealing the truth.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: Age wise classification of Handloom Mat Weavers

S.No	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	31-40 years	10	16.7
2.	41-50 years	35	58.3
3.	Above 50 years	15	25.0
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

It could be inferred from Table 1 that out of 60 handloom mat weavers, majority (58.3%) are in the age group of 41 to 50 years and next majority of 25 per cent of the handloom mat weavers are in the age group of above 50 years. This shows that those who are in the age group of 41 to 50 years and above 50 years have been highly involved in handloom mat weaving, because they do not know about other work and there are no employment opportunities in this area. Hence they are unwillingly involved in handloom mat weaving.

Table 2: Marital Status wise classification of Handloom Mat Weavers

S.No	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Unmarried	3	5.0
2.	Married	35	58.3
3.	Divorced	10	16.7
4.	Widow	12	20.0
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

The study indicated that out of 60 handloom mat weavers, the majority of the handloom mat weavers (58.3%) are married and next majority of 20 per cent of the handloom mat weavers are widowed. This shows that those who are married want to work in handloom mat weaving because they have family commitment.

Table 3: Education Status wise classification of Handloom Mat Weavers

S.No	Education Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	9	15.0
2.	Primary	40	66.7
3.	Secondary	7	11.7
4.	HSC	4	6.6
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

As set out in Table 3, out of 60 handloom mat weavers, the largest numbers of handloom mat weavers i.e., 66.7 per cent have primary educational qualification and next largest numbers of handloom mat weavers

i.e., 15 per cent are illiterates. This shows that those who have primary educational qualification want to work in handloom mat weaving and those who have high educational qualification do not prefer to work in handloom mat weaving.

Table 4: Monthly Income wise classifications of Handloom Mat Weavers

S.No	Monthly Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.2500	16	26.7
2.	Rs.2500-5000	40	66.7
3.	Rs.5001-7500	4	6.6
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 shows that out of the total 60 handloom mat weavers, majority of 66.7 per cent of the handloom mat weavers earn monthly income of Rs.2500 to 5000 and next majority of 26.7 per cent of the handloom mat weavers earn monthly income of less than Rs.2500.

Problems Among Different Age Group of Handloom Mat Weavers:

Handloom mat weavers of different age groups have different problems. In order to find out the significant difference in problems among different age group of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district, 'ANOVA' test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, "There is no significant difference in problems among different age group of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district". The result of 'ANOVA' test for problems among different age group of handloom mat weavers is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Problems among different age group of Handloom Mat Weavers

Problems	Age			F-Statistics
	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	Above 50 Years	
Shortage of labour	4.8286	4.5385	4.3000	1.814
Unskilled labour	4.8000	4.3846	3.7000	12.767*
Dual responsibility	4.6571	4.0769	3.9000	3.414*
Lack of access to new techniques	4.4223	4.3077	3.6000	5.531*
Lack of number of looms	4.3429	3.8462	3.5000	3.301*
Lack of upgraded looms	4.6571	3.5385	3.4000	11.226*
Lack of knowledge about new designs	4.6286	4.3621	3.8000	5.312*
Lack of financial help from government	4.6978	4.4483	4.2308	6.069*
Shortage of working capital	4.6286	4.4615	3.4605	7.239*
Low profit	4.7143	4.3077	3.3000	9.349*
High rate of interest for the loan	4.3429	4.2308	3.7000	1.423
No subsidy	4.4571	4.3846	3.6000	2.867
Imperfect knowledge to get assistance from commercial bank	4.4286	4.1897	3.3000	4.969*
Inadequate assistance from financial institutions	3.9429	3.6379	3.3077	2.712
Competition from power loom/plastic mats	3.9714	3.3846	3.1000	3.209*
Lack of adequate marketing facility	3.8462	3.6207	3.5429	1.306
Lack of knowledge about today's market trends	3.6857	3.6000	3.5862	1.499
Lack of motivation from government side	3.8000	3.6724	3.2308	1.257
Lack of knowledge in the export	3.7143	3.5000	3.1538	1.264
Lack of accessibility of market information	3.7714	3.6154	3.4000	1.399
Lack of awareness among the customer about product features	3.5714	3.5385	3.5340	1.070
Lack of promotion and advertising of handloom	3.4571	3.4004	3.1538	1.260

Source: Computed Data

*-Significant at five per cent level

Table 5 shows the mean score of problems among different age group of handloom mat weavers along with its respective 'F' statistics. The main problems among the handloom mat weavers in the age group of 20 to 30 years, 41 to 50 years and above 50 years are shortage of labour and their respective mean scores being 4.8286, 4.5385 and 4.3000. Regarding the problems, the significant difference among the different age group of handloom mat weavers, are identified in the case of unskilled labour, dual responsibility, lack of access to new techniques, lack of number of looms, lack of upgraded looms, lack of knowledge about new designs, lack of financial help from government, shortage of working capital, low profit, imperfect knowledge to get assistance from commercial bank and competition from power loom/plastic mats since the respective 'F' statistics are significant at 5 per cent level, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Problems Among Different Marital Status of Handloom Mat Weavers:

Handloom mat weavers of different marital status have different problems. In order to find out the significant difference in problems among different marital status of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district, ‘ANOVA’ test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, “There is no significant difference in problems among different marital status of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district”. The result of ‘ANOVA’ test for problems among different marital status of handloom mat weavers is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Problems among different marital status of handloom mat weavers

Problems	Marital Status				F-Statistics
	Unmarried	Married	Divorced	Widow	
Shortage of labour	4.8333	4.5758	4.7143	4.7500	1.276
Unskilled labour	4.7500	4.4371	4.5345	4.3636	1.363
Dual responsibility	4.7215	4.1500	4.5714	4.3966	1.707
Lack of access to new techniques	4.1667	4.0000	4.0862	4.1212	1.066
Lack of number of looms	4.5833	4.1429	4.2727	4.3793	0.955
Lack of upgraded looms	4.5800	3.8333	4.1429	4.1897	2.784*
Lack of knowledge about new designs	4.6607	4.3621	4.1818	4.5833	1.168
Lack of financial help from government	4.5714	4.1212	4.3966	4.3383	2.953*
Shortage of working capital	4.7583	4.0000	4.3793	4.2424	1.421
Low profit	4.2121	3.8571	4.2069	4.1667	1.609
High rate of interest for the loan	4.4167	3.7143	4.3636	4.2931	1.820
No subsidy	4.2500	3.8715	4.1897	4.0909	1.528
Imperfect knowledge to get assistance from commercial bank	3.8000	3.2857	3.7273	3.5800	1.299
Inadequate assistance from financial institutions	3.7273	3.6897	3.6667	3.2875	1.262
Competition from power loom/plastic mats	3.7556	3.0000	3.6207	3.5833	1.789
Lack of adequate marketing facility	4.1429	3.1667	3.4167	3.6061	1.890
Lack of knowledge about today’s market trends	4.3492	3.2500	3.7740	3.6970	1.981
Lack of motivation from government side	3.7567	3.0000	3.5000	3.5714	1.411
Lack of knowledge in the export	4.1564	3.6364	3.6724	3.7143	1.439
Lack of accessibility of market information	3.8571	3.1776	3.5345	3.5758	1.515
Lack of awareness among the customer about product features	3.7143	2.6667	3.4545	3.3793	2.912*
Lack of promotion and advertising of handloom	4.0000	3.3333	3.5717	3.6463	1.142

Source: Computed data

*-Significant at five per cent level

Table 6 shows the mean score of problems among different marital status of weavers working under middlemen along with its respective ‘F’ statistics. The main problems among the unmarried, married, divorced and widow handloom mat weavers are shortage of labour and their respective mean scores being 4.8333, 4.5758, 4.7143 and 4.7500. Regarding the problems, the significant difference among the different marital status of handloom mat weavers, are identified in the case of lack of upgraded looms, lack of financial help from government and lack of awareness among the customer about product features since the respective ‘F’ statistics are significant at 5 per cent level, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Problems Among Different Educational Status of Handloom Mat Weavers:

Handloom mat weavers of different educational status have different problems. In order to find out the significant difference in problems among different educational status of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district, ‘ANOVA’ test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, “There is no significant difference in problems among different educational status of handloom mat weavers in Tirunelveli district”. The result of ‘ANOVA’ test for problems among different educational status of handloom mat weavers is presented in Table7.

Table 7: Problems among different educational status of handloom mat weavers

Problems	Educational Status				F-Statistics
	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	HSC	
Shortage of labour	4.8462	4.7778	4.6552	4.4615	1.842

Unskilled labour	4.7143	4.5556	4.5385	4.3077	1.649
Dual responsibility	4.4615	4.3966	4.3889	4.2257	1.092
Lack of access to new techniques	4.2625	4.3793	4.3333	4.2308	1.226
Lack of number of looms	4.5385	4.0862	4.0556	3.8462	3.196*
Lack of upgraded looms	4.3077	4.2857	4.1897	4.0000	1.214
Lack of knowledge about new designs	4.4615	4.3621	4.2875	4.2778	1.205
Lack of financial help from government	4.3077	4.2700	4.1875	4.1667	1.173
Shortage of working capital	4.4610	4.3621	4.2778	4.0000	1.420
Low profit	4.5385	4.5000	4.4483	4.3350	1.062
High rate of interest for the loan	4.6154	4.3889	4.3089	4.2143	1.514
No subsidy	4.6541	4.3966	4.3846	4.3012	1.275
Imperfect knowledge to get assistance from commercial bank	4.3846	4.2069	4.1538	3.9286	1.886
Inadequate assistance from financial institutions	4.4630	4.3112	4.2931	4.0714	2.898*
Competition from power loom/plastic mats	4.4615	4.1897	4.0769	2.8571	5.156*
Lack of adequate marketing facility	4.2778	3.9231	3.7692	2.6429	2.838*
Lack of knowledge about today's market trends	4.1667	3.6154	3.5385	3.0000	1.516
Lack of motivation from government side	4.0556	3.4615	3.3571	3.3077	1.025
Lack of knowledge in the export	3.7143	3.6923	3.6724	3.6111	1.739
Lack of accessibility of market information	3.8462	3.5714	3.5385	3.1667	1.330
Lack of awareness among the customer about product features	3.9231	3.7143	3.6742	3.6154	1.123
Lack of promotion and advertising of handloom	3.5435	3.5000	3.4615	3.1546	1.240

Source: Computed Data

*-Significant at five per cent level

Table 7 shows the mean score of problems among different educational status of handloom mat weavers along with its respective 'F' statistics. The main problems among the illiterate, primary educational, secondary education and higher secondary educational weavers are shortage of labour, their respective mean scores being 4.8462, 4.7778, 4.6552 and 4.4615. Regarding the problems, the significant difference among the different educational status of handloom mat weavers, are identified in the case of lack of number of looms, inadequate assistance from financial institutions, competition from power loom/plastic mats and lack of adequate marketing facility since the respective 'F' statistics is significant at 5 per cent level, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 8: Prospects of Handloom Mat Weavers

Prospects	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	Total
To reduce the raw material price	24 (40)	15 (25)	6 (10)	7 (11.7)	8 (13.3)	60 (100)
Government and Co-operative society should supply raw material at subsidy rate	21 (35)	18 (30)	3 (5)	11 (18.3)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)
There is lot of scope for bringing the waste land (dry land) into raw material (korai grass) cultivated land	33 (55)	16 (26.7)	2 (3.3)	5 (8.3)	4 (6.7)	60 (100)
Provision of looms facilities is necessary	26 (43.3)	14 (23.3)	4 (6.7)	9 (15)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)
Government should take necessary steps to provide welfare schemes	28 (46.7)	14 (23.3)	3 (5)	9 (15)	6 (10)	60 (100)
Adequate training should be provided	31 (51.7)	11 (18.3)	2 (3.4)	9 (15)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)
Government to provide additional financial support	32 (53.3)	13 (21.7)	3 (5)	9 (15)	3 (5)	60 (100)
Low interest rate to be provided by financial institution	34 (56.7)	11 (18.3)	2 (3.4)	9 (15)	4 (6.7)	60 (100)
Co-operative society should provide warehousing facilities	23 (38.3)	13 (21.7)	3 (5)	10 (16.7)	9 (15)	60 (100)
Government and Co-operative society should make awareness regarding upgraded handloom	21 (35)	15 (25)	5 (8.3)	10 (16.7)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)

Government should provide training for making innovative designs	34 (56.7)	9 (15)	5 (8.3)	6 (10)	6 (10)	60 (100)
Development of looms facilities is necessary	29 (48.3)	21 (35)	1 (1.7)	6 (10)	3 (5)	60 (100)
Product development training should be provided	29 (48.3)	18 (30)	-	11 (18.3)	2 (3.3)	60 (100)
Government should take steps for the export of handloom mat products	27 (45)	15 (25)	1 (1.7)	15 (25)	6 (10)	60 (100)
Government should undertake advertisement and display for handloom mat products	29 (48.3)	13 (21.7)	1 (1.7)	12 (20)	5 (8.3)	60 (100)
Government should take steps to increase the sales by exhibition of handloom mat weaving products	26 (43.3)	14 (23.3)	5 (8.3)	8 (13.3)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)
Selling at different points will yield more income to improve the standard of living	38 (63.3)	14 (23.3)	-	6 (10)	2 (3.3)	60 (100)

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that most of the handloom mat weavers either strongly agree or agree with the statements of prospects. Among the handloom mat weavers, majority of 63.3% are strongly agree with the statement 'Selling at different points will yield more income to improve the standard of living', next majority of 35% are agree with the statement 'Development of looms facilities is necessary', 25% are disagree with the statement 'Government should take steps for the export of handloom mat products', 15% of the handloom mat weavers are strongly disagree with the statement 'Co-operative society should provide warehousing facilities'.

Suggestions:

- ✓ Government should give attention in up gradation and modernization of loom, equipments and infrastructural development for the betterment of the handloom mat weaving industry.
- ✓ In case of handloom, first of all, there is need to create awareness about the features and advantages of handloom mat products. Effective publicity through appropriate media mix should be done. Print and electric media can be used in right proportion. A regular buyer-seller meet is required so that the weavers get a platform to market their products.
- ✓ To bring superior quality in handloom products the pre and post loom process development should take place. Innovative and faster weaving processes and techniques to increase efficiency of weavers as well as loom will make handloom more competitive and profitable.
- ✓ Training to enhance the skills of mat weavers in manufacturing and marketing aspects in changing business environment. Effective implementation of various policies and programs could be successful when there would be proper integration, cooperation and coordination from the government. Skill and design development exercises can be conducted for the mat weavers which will help them to understand and develop new product range as well as improve their design sensibility.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the handloom mat weavers feel that due to various reasons they do not get job satisfaction in their present occupation. Due to modernization of mat industry, the handloom mat weavers face lot of problems like low wages, poor working conditions, inadequate non-monetary benefits, and insufficient work throughout the year. Thus, the involvement of members and opinion will certainly improve the performance of handloom mat weavers' co-operative societies not only in the study area. So, the Government should take necessary steps to overcome the problems of handloom mat weavers and improve the social status of the handloom mat weavers. It is expected that the above suggestion will help to resolve the problems faced by handloom mat weaving industry in Tirunelveli district of Tamilnadu.

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