

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FACED IN HANDLOOM SECTOR BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The handloom sector in India has long been recognized to the country's economy and cultural heritage. Within this sector, women entrepreneurs play a significant role in preserving traditional handloom techniques, generating employment opportunities, and promoting sustainable practices. This study aims to explore the participation of women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector in India and the obstacles they face and also analyze the government policies and schemes for the development of women entrepreneurs. This paper is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The data used in this paper is mainly from the secondary sources. The existing literature by shedding light on the participation of women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector in India and the challenges they face. It emphasizes the importance of empowering women entrepreneurs to enhance their participation and economic impact in the handloom industry, ultimately promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

Keywords: Handloom, Entrepreneur, Challenges, Women participation

INTRODUCTION:

The handloom sector holds immense importance in safeguarding cultural heritage, creating employment opportunities, facilitating rural development, promoting sustainable practices, and offering distinctive and high-quality products. It is a noteworthy industry that deserves acknowledgment and assistance due to its valuable social, economic, and environmental contributions. This sector is an integral part of the textile industry, focusing on the production

of fabric through traditional handloom techniques. Handloom weaving, a time-honored craft with a centuries-old legacy, continues to play a pivotal role in the cultural and economic progress of numerous nations (**Fourth Handloom census report 2019-20**). Women entrepreneurs have played a crucial role in propelling the growth and development of the handloom industry. Their entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and commitment to preserving traditional art forms have contributed to the success of numerous ventures. Some notable examples include Anita Dongre, a renowned fashion designer and entrepreneur; Laila Tyabji, the founder of Dastkar, a non-profit organization advocating for traditional crafts and artisans; and Archana Srinivas, the founder of 'House of Taamara,' a handloom store specializing in traditional textiles from South India. These women entrepreneurs, among many others, have made significant contributions to the handloom sector, empowering women weavers economically while preserving and promoting India's rich textile heritage. Women entrepreneurs often display high levels of determination and resilience, persisting through challenges and setbacks to achieve their business goals (**Shinnar, R.S., Giacomini, O., & Janssen, F. 2012**). Many women entrepreneurs bring creativity and innovation to their ventures, leveraging unique ideas and approaches to solve problems and meet market demands (**Marlow, S., & McAdam, M. 2013**). Networking and Collaboration: Women entrepreneurs often engage in networking and collaboration with peers, mentors, and industry stakeholders, fostering support systems and knowledge-sharing opportunities (**Brush, C., Edelman, L., & Manolova, T. 2008**). Many women entrepreneurs prioritize social impact and may be more inclined to start purpose-driven businesses that address societal or environmental challenges (**Terjesen, S., Hessels, J., & Li, D. 2016**). Women entrepreneurs often demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in response to changing market conditions and business landscapes (**Watson, A., & Robinson, S. 2003**). Access to finance remains a challenge for women entrepreneurs, and they may employ various strategies to secure funding, such as seeking loans, angel investors, or crowd funding (**Klyver, K., & Terjesen, S. 2013**).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jain and Jain (2012) conducted a study on the government's role in promoting industrial development in Uttarakhand, providing financial assistance and developing industrial infrastructure. They highlighted the challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in terms of low capital base, underutilization of capacity, lack of market information, and professionalism. The study concluded that SMEs require marketing support to enhance their global competitiveness and profitability.

Shazil and Munir (2014) focused on the socio-economic conditions of female weavers in Mubarakpur town, highlighting the labor-intensive nature and low capital investment in the handloom sector. Their research utilized primary data collected through questionnaires to assess the socio-economic conditions of female weavers. The study revealed a decline in the handloom industry, adversely affecting weavers' income and leading to health problems. The research suggested that qualitative modifications, guidance, and government support are necessary for the balanced development of the handloom industry and to address the challenges faced by female weavers.

Srimannarayana (2016) explored the problems faced by the handloom industry, such as limited marketing facilities, low-capacity utilization, and the failure of cooperative movements. The study combined primary and secondary data sources, including a primary survey conducted among 100 randomly chosen respondents from six villages in the Bhatiprolu cluster. The findings indicated challenges such as illiteracy, health issues, financial constraints, and inadequate government support. The paper emphasized the need for improved support systems for weavers.

Chatterjee and Sircar (2021) examined the decline in female labor force participation (FLFP) in India from 35% in 1990 to 27% in 2014. The paper aimed to address the challenges of reduced mobility, social stigma, and limited education that contribute to this decline. The research concluded that increasing FLFP would be a challenging and long-term task, emphasizing the importance of urban design that facilitates women's mobility as a crucial component of progress.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the classification of women entrepreneurs in handloom sector.
- 2) To study the obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in handloom sector.
- 3) To study the schemes started by government for women entrepreneurs in handloom sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper is descriptive in nature. The data used in this paper is mainly from the secondary sources. The data has been collected from secondary sources like Research papers, Articles, Annual Reports of government, Internet, Economic Surveys and Journals.

CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

1. Handloom Artisans: A large number of women working in the handloom industry are talented craftspeople who are actively engaged in the weaving and creation of handloom textiles. They may run their own businesses on their own or participate in cooperatives and self-help organizations (Roy, M., & Mitra, S.K. 2016).

2. Designers and innovators: Women business owners in this category concentrate on creating distinctive handcrafted goods that meet current trends and customer preferences. According to Jain, S., and Kaur (2019), they are essential in bringing originality and innovation to traditional handloom designs.

3. Exporters and traders: A few female business owners deal in the export and trade of handwoven textiles. They build relationships with global markets and advertise handloom items everywhere (Joseph, A., & Varghese, 2018).

4. Retailers and Boutique Owners: Women business owners may own boutiques or retail establishments that exclusively display and market handloom products. They provide a platform for traditional handloom items, bridging the gap between weavers and consumers (Sheth, J.N., & Sethia, N.K. 2020).

5. Social entrepreneurs: A few female business owners in the handloom industry are concerned with community improvement and social effect. They might create nonprofit organizations that support local craftspeople, pay them fairly, and encourage the use of sustainable handloom techniques (Garg, P., & Yadav, 2017).

6. Handloom Consultants and Trainers: Women business owners can serve as consultants or trainers, sharing their knowledge and skills in handloom weaving processes, product development, and marketing to help weavers and other sector stakeholders (Sheshadri, S., & Raghunath, P. 2015).

OBSTACLES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector encounter various obstacles that prevent their progress and success. These challenges can be classified into social, economic, and institutional domains. The following are some common hurdles faced by women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector:

1. Limited access to financial resources: Women entrepreneurs often encounter difficulties in obtaining financial support such as loans, grants, and credit facilities. Factors like the

absence of collateral, limited financial literacy, and gender biases contribute to this challenge (Das, 2021).

2. **Insufficient technical skills and training:** Many women in the handloom sector lack adequate technical skills and training, which hinders their ability to innovate, adapt to market demands, and enhance productivity. Access to training programs and initiatives for skill development is limited (Kannan et al., 2018).

3. **Gender-based discrimination:** Women entrepreneurs frequently face discrimination and biased attitudes rooted in gender. This includes unequal opportunities, biased policies, and societal expectations that restrict their participation and success in the handloom sector (Gulati & Sharma, 2019).

4. **Limited market linkages:** Women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector struggle to establish and maintain effective connections to markets. They often lack access to reliable and diverse markets, marketing skills, and information about market trends, which hampers their business growth (Khokhar & Pal, 2019).

5. **Balancing work and family responsibilities:** Women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector confront challenges in striking a balance between work and family responsibilities. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations place additional burdens on them. Insufficient support systems, lack of childcare facilities, and inflexible working arrangements contribute to this challenge (Rathore, 2018).

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The Government of India has initiated various schemes to support women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector. These schemes aim to empower women weavers and artisans by providing financial assistance, skill development, marketing support, and other resources. Here are some notable schemes:

1. **Mahila Coir Yojana:** This scheme, administered by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), emphasizes on authorizing women in the coir sector. It provides subsidized loans, training programs, and marketing assistance to women entrepreneurs involved in coir production (<https://msme.gov.in/mahila-coiryोजना>).

2. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** Although not specific to the handloom sector, PMMY offers financial aid to micro and small businesses, including women-owned

enterprises. Women entrepreneurs can benefit collateral-free loans up to Rs. 10 Lakh through various financial institutions under this scheme (<https://www.mudra.org.in/>).

3. Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme: This scheme goals to advance the socio-economic status of handloom weavers, including women, by offering financial support, skill development training, healthcare benefits, and marketing assistance. It also provides credit facilities and subsidies for the modernization of handlooms (<http://handlooms.nic.in/welfare-schemes-weavers>).

4. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA): DWCRA is a self-help group (SHG)

based program that focuses on providing livelihood support to rural women, including those engaged in handloom

activities. It offers credit, skill development training, and entrepreneurship programs, enabling women to establish

their own enterprises (<https://rural.nic.in/programmes/dwcra>).

5. Stand-Up India Scheme: This initiative promotes entrepreneurship among women, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST). It facilitates bank loans ranging from Rs. 10 Lakh to Rs.1 crore for setting up greenfield enterprises in sectors such as handloom, textiles, and other industries(<https://www.standupmitra.in/>). These schemes aim to uplift women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector and provide them with the necessary support to succeed in their ventures.

CONCLUSION

The paper highlights various categories of women entrepreneurs in the handloom sector and the obstacles they face like Limited access to financial resources, insufficient technical skills and training, Gender-based discrimination. Even after facing so many obstacles we have many successful entrepreneurs in our country. It concludes by shedding light on the significance of empowering womens in this industry to overcome challenges and foster sustainable growth.

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