

A profile on women handloom workers of Rajasthan

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Women play an important role in different home based cottage industry and other traditional art and crafts. Hand loom weaving is household industry where all the members of family participate. The women handloom workers and their specific role in fragmented manner do not reveal a clear cut picture of women's participation and time use pattern in various handloom related activities. Thus in the present study an attempt has been made to assess the work profile of women handloom workers in terms of their participation in handloom weaving *i.e.* pre-weaving, weaving and post loom weaving. The present study was conducted in Rajasthan state. Rajasthan state is divided into six divisions, one district from each division was selected on the basis of concentration of handloom weaving in the area, total six districts was selected. Thirty handloom weaving units were selected, from each unit one women respondent was purposively selected and interviewed for the purpose of data collection. The results of the study reveals that very high magnitude of women's participation was found in prim winding, creel winding, loosening and rewinding, checking and mending and storage. Spinning of yarn was carried out by few units it was solely performed by the women. Preparing warp reed filling, sizing of the yarn, setting of the loom were the activity where women were assisted by their counter parts. Women's participation was found very low in purchasing and selling activity. Further no significant difference was found in the time devotion pattern by men and women but significant difference was found on the basis of type of activity. On the basis of the study it can be concluded that women play significant role in handloom weaving due to their sincerity hard work and effective time management practices, what ever time the women gets after household task was consumed in handloom weaving to raise the quality of life of the family.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Women participation in handloom weaving, Work participation rate, Time use pattern

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Handloom weaving in Rajasthan is one of the decentralized industry governed by the cottage industries. It is mainly household industry Most of the handloom units are hereditary and involves all the members of the household including women and children with a view to supplement their family income. Handloom weaving activities are classified in three categories namely pre-weaving, weaving and post loom weaving The occupation of the head of the household is not exclusively his own, but of the household as a unit. The head of the family would be normally responsible for the execution of the manufacturing work and organization of the household in an informal way to ensure its completion. The division of labour among the household is on the basis of age, sex and experience.

Women play a very important role in handloom industry most of the tasks are handled taken care by the women folk. She equally participates with men and contributes in managing affairs of the family. An important area of workers, which escape attention, is laboring female in self employed and informal sector. In fact home based workers play a crucial role in the development of the economy both at the level of the family and at national level. In almost all developing nations and more particularly in India because of much unorganized nature of informal sector, women workers are subjected to various forms of oppression. As these workers are isolated in there homes doing odious work as piece rate workers, wage earners, casual labor and paid and unpaid workers. There is lack of adequate information regarding the time use pattern and work

participation rate of household workers in the handloom industry, hence the present study was under taken with following objective: To study the activity status of the household handloom weaving units of Rajasthan, to find out the work participation rate by gender and age, to assess the share of daily working hours of men women and children and to study the participation of women in different weaving process.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was carried out in Rajasthan, it is divided into six division, one district having highest number of handloom weaving unit in the division was selected for the present study. Thus, total six district namely Jaipur, Nagour, Bikaner, Barmer, Chittore, and Kota was selected. From each district 30 handloom weaving unit was selected randomly, in all 180 household handloom weaving units were selected. Structured interview schedule was used for data collection. The information collected were coded and analysed using suitable statistical technique.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

Activity status of the household unit :

To find out the activity status of the household unit the total population of the units was assessed. The total population of all the sample household unit was 1015 person (Table 1) Of them 540 persons reported that they were working in the house hold units The rest of the population was not available for work (46.79 %) This per cent comprised of mainly young children , student, old and disabled person. No retiring

age can be laid down for starting work and retiring it was considered appropriate to take 12 – 75 years as the period of working age.

The data presented in the Table 2 shows participation of the working population in the household handloom weaving units according to their age and gender. A careful examination of data depicts that the work participation was highest in the age range of 36- 55 years in males as well as females (92- 98 %) and very less difference was present according to gender. It was interesting to note that work participation rate of females was more in the age range of 16- 35 years and up to 15 years of age, this may be due to the reason males are no more interested in weaving whereas female found weaving as an easy vocation to show their creativity and to carry out work and household task together. Participation of old age person was comparatively less. The total number of workers among the unit came up 540 giving an average of three workers per household handloom weaving unit, work participation rate comes to 53.20 per cent .

Time use pattern :

An effort was made to find out the number of hours spent by each worker per day in pre-weaving, weaving and post loom processes. The average hours per day and per component was worked out for men, women and children separately to give a clear picture of the number of hours spent in the handloom work.

In all, 540 workers were engaged in the sample handloom units. The total number of hours worked in the units daily has been depicted in Table 3. On the basis of time spent for all (men, women and children) the workers taken together, the estimated working period per worker per day was 7.48 hours. The gender-wise distribution of working hours per day comes

Table 1: Activity status of the household handloom weaving unit

Activity status	Number
Children	217
Student	71
Working population	540
Non working population	170
Old and disabled person	17
Total	1015

Table 2 : Work participation rate by gender and age

Age group	Males			Females			Total		
	Total no.	No. of workers	%	Total no.	No. of workers	%	Total no.	No. of workers	%
Up to 15 years	182	20	10.98	212	70	33.0	394	90	22.84
16-35 years	162	83	50.60	97	80	82.47	216	163	62.45
36- 55 years	129	122	94.57	131	128	97.7	260	250	96.75
56- 75 years	42	17	40.47	58	20	34.48	100	37	37.0
Total	517	242	46.80	498	298	59.83	1015	540	53.20

to 8.47 hours per person per day for men, 7.25 hours for women workers and 4.36 hours for children.

The table further reveals that women workers dominate in the pre-weaving process while male workers dominate in the weaving activity. By tradition women were found performing pre-weaving activity no where male members of the family were engaged in these activity. These activity also requires concentration patients and less muscle power hence considered as female dominated activity. Gender wise no difference was found in terms of the number of hours spent in post loom process. But the type of post loom process carried out by men and women were different. All the females participated in storage, edge and dry finishing while the male workers performed selling, price finishing, and giving back the finished items to co-operatives or middle men. Children worked mainly in pre-weaving process for 2.52 hours followed by weaving (1.06) and post loom weaving (0.30hours). The results of the investigation are in coordination with those of Meher (1996) and Naik (1997).

Participation of women in different weaving process :

In order to provide a clear picture of women’s

involvement in different weaving activities, a list of all the tasks performed was prepared and women’s involvement was studied in terms of no participation, solely performed by women or jointly with men. The data presented in the table 4 reveals that very high magnitude of women’s participation was found in creel winding (100 %), Loosening and prim winding (97.77 %), checking and mending (84.44 %) and storage (65.55 %), respectively. Spinning of yarn was carried out in 60 units only, and in all these units it was solely performed by the women. The rest of the units were using mill spun yarn. Hence no participation of women was found. Thus, it can also be considered as a female dominated activity.

Preparing warp, reed filling, sizing of yarns, and setting of the loom were the tasks where approximately 50-83 per cent of women assisted their counter parts.

A critical examination of the data in the table inferred that women do not participate in the purchasing of yarn, dyeing of yarn, price fixing and selling of the produced textile items. Thus, these activities can be considered as male dominated activities. The present findings are in coordination with those of Mahapatra (1986), Meher (1995) and Naik (1996) who conducted studies in different parts of India. These data clearly

Table 3 : Share of men, women and children in pre weaving, weaving and post loom process

Person	No. of workers	Average time spent in hours/unit/person			
		Pre weaving process	Weaving	Post loom process	All process
Men	222	0.29	7.36	1.13	8.47
Women	228	5.15	0.59	1.11	7.25
Children	90	2.52	1.06	0.31	4.36
All	540	7.57	8.58	2.33	7.48

Table 4 : Per cent distribution of female heads of the units by their participation in different weaving process (n=180)

Sr. No.	Tasks	No participation	Independently	Jointly with male
Pre-weaving process				
1.	Purchasing of yarn	96.66	0.00	3.33
2.	Dyeing of yarn	94.45	0.00	15.55
3.	Spinning of yarn	33.33	62.67	0.00
4.	Loosening and winding	2.22	97.78	0.00
5.	Creel and prim winding	0.00	100.00	0.00
6.	Preparing warp	6.67	10.00	83.33
7.	Preparing sizing solution	3.33	44.45	52.22
8.	Sizing of yarn	3.33	45.55	51.11
9.	Reed filling	15.56	13.33	71.11
10.	Setting of loom	15.56	13.33	71.11
Weaving		73.11	8.89	20.00
Post loom process				
1.	Checking and mending	0.00	84.44	15.50
2.	Storage	0.00	65.56	34.44
3.	Price fixing and selling	95.60	0.00	4.40

point out that women play a significant role in the handloom cottage home based industry.

Conclusion :

The major conclusion drawn from the results of the present study are as follows :

- On an average 3 workers were working in each handloom weaving unit
- The over all work participation rate comes to 53.20 per cent. Maximum work participation rate was found in the age group of 36-55 years for both the genders
- Women spent maximum number of hours in pre-weaving while men spent on weaving process .

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