



SCALABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CHALLENGES AMONG SLOW-FASHION COMMUNITY: AN INVESTIGATIVE EXPLORATION

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Abstract

Current study explores the challenges which a front & centre worker of slow-fashion industry faces. Slow fashion is a philosophy of awareness to stakeholders' demands and the influence of fashion manufacturing on workers, consumers, and ecosystems. And the handloom weaving is such type of sustainable practice. A thematic analysis revealed 11 challenges and potential area of future research. A thorough in-depth interview has been conducted. We established a comparative evaluation Matrix to identify pertinent threats. This study has UN SDG focused consequences and provides future avenues for further research. Slow fashion industry is depleting with time. Findings highlights that despite the growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly fashion weavers and master weavers face challenges. Major challenges include wages, social status, infrastructure, supervision, and lack of job satisfaction. Government industry and civil society must work together in order to confront these challenges. This is the very first such type of qualitative study ever conducted as per the knowledge of the authors. The slow-fashion handloom is a viable and alternate solution to such an extensive energy demanding sector as textile. Slow fashion aspires to offer meaningful, sustainable products that meet stakeholder demands.

Keywords: Challenges, Community, Sustainability, Marginal Workers, Economic.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fashion industry collections come and go rapidly, especially in the fast fashion industry associated with clothing. In most cases, fast fashion apparels are manufactured in a cheap way with remarkably high speed, due to short production and distribution lead times. The fashion industry has begun to consider how to design and create garments with less negative impacts over their whole lives. Prior study has focused on the relationship between sustainable fashion and people's purchasing intentions and use of sustainable fashion (Song & Ko, 2017). The rapid expansion of fast fashion is accompanied by numerous severe environmental problems (Zarley Watson & Yan, 2013). The fashion business has a substantial carbon footprint due to its high energy use. In addition, nearly 15,000 distinct chemicals are employed during the production process.

The term "slow fashion" does not refer to the length of time it takes to produce an item; rather, it describes a concept that emphasizes awareness to the requirements of various stakeholders as well as the influence that the production of fashion has on artisans, weavers, consumers, and the whole ecosystems (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013). One such environmentally friendly kind of weaving is called handloom, and it involves manual weaving directly by human hands (Balaji & Mani 2014).

Fast fashion and Just-In-Time manufacturing have greatly accelerated the rate at which new styles enter the garment industry, which has led to a proliferation of trends. In turn, this has led to overconsumption, where people buy more clothes than they actually need, which has led to an increase in clothing trash (Pedersen & Netter, 2015). Both prices and social and environmental standards have been lowered as a result of intense competition. Affordable and trend-sensitive fashions, while typically highly profitable, also raise ethical issues (Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014; Moisander & Personen, 2002), and so over the past decade, businesses have

begun to recognise the importance of sustainability and ethical conduct in the fashion industry (Aspers & Skov, 2006).

In order to distinguish slow fashion from the many preexisting concepts (such as sustainability and social responsibility) from which it evolved; academics have been working to develop a clear definition of the term. Part of the problem is that the very word "slow" seems to run counter to the industry's reputation for speed, efficiency, and the latest trends. However, most academics agree that slow fashion isn't meant to figuratively slow down the textile and apparel supply chain, but rather to focus on the entire process of making clothes in a more sustainable way, from initial concept to sourcing of materials to educating the end user (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). Clark (2008) argues that "slow fashion" provides "more sustainable and ethical ways of being fashionable," which has "implications for design, production, consumption, and use.". Clark defines slow fashion as an approach that prioritises sustaining local economies and resources, promotes openness about the manufacturing process, and makes durable goods.

The concept of slow fashion is intertwined with, but not limited to the idea of "green living." Slow fashion is gaining traction, but the line between it and eco-friendly styles is still hazy at best. The handloom makes use of environmentally friendly materials, with a primary focus on minimizing its negative social and environmental impact. Handloom production is limited to satisfy demand, therefore there is less of an impact on the environment than with fast fashion, which has an unending supply of items that are of poor quality. A more environmentally friendly and morally sound alternative to slow fashion would be to promote handloom products. This research argues that in order to fully understand slow fashion, we need to first understand its foundational dimensions and how does slow fashion relate to ecological balance?

The objective of this research is to thematically analyse the challenges faced by weavers of slow fashion industry. This exploratory study goes through a sequence of steps from the identification of issues and various challenges that the front end workers of slow fashion industry are facing. Using these identified themes and the associated theories, we will discuss how the slow fashion concept is either similar to or distinct from industry practices centered on environmental sustainability. In addition, the study's findings on the slow fashion dimensions will offer sustainable future applications for the front-end workers of apparel industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Idea of slow fashion

The concept of "slow fashion" has different meanings to different modern scholars. Slow fashion, as defined by Flower, is the "farmer's market approach" to apparel production (Johansson, 2010, p. 28). When consumers learn the backstory of a garment, they develop a deeper sense of attachment to it (Johansson, 2010). According to Holt (2009), the term "slow fashion" refers to an antithesis of "fast fashion". However, the term "slow fashion" does not refer to a deliberate pace (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010).

Since the idea of "slow fashion" is still relatively novel in the textile and apparel industry, academics have been trying to pin down a clear definition of the term that sets it apart from the many preexisting concepts (such as "sustainability" and "social responsibility") from which it evolved. The problem starts with the name: nowadays, "fast fashion" is often associated with the opposite qualities, like "fast food" or "slow food." Scholars agree, however, that slow fashion isn't meant to figuratively slow down the textile and apparel supply chain. Rather, it

aims to create a more sustainable process from start to finish, with an emphasis on careful thought given to everything from product development and manufacturing to the education of end users (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). When it comes to design, production, consumption, and use, "the slow approach offers more sustainable and ethical ways of being fashionable," as (Clark, 2008). Clark (2008), defines slow fashion as an approach that prioritizes the preservation of natural environments, the development of local economies, and the development of products with extended lifespans. The principles underlying the slow food movement are reflected in Clark's perspective on slow fashion (Johansson, 2010).

The lead time of fast fashion is much shorter than that of traditional ready-to-wear with lead times often taking as little as one month or less (Doeringer and Crean, 2006) which can improve trend accuracy and reduce necessary markdowns (Bruce and Daly, 2006). Fast fashion firms often reduce lead time by adapted styles from existing designs with less emphasis on long-term forecasting (Doeringer and Crean, 2006; Reinach, 2005; Tokatli, 2008).

Concerns about the future of the planet and the textile industry

Research trends in environmentally sustainable clothing have centered on topics like consumers' intentions to purchase organically grown and recycled garments (Gamet al., 2010), as well as clothing discarding habits (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009) and environmental awareness of garment production and disposal (Gamet al., 2010). Studies addressing higher volumes of clothing consumption are scarce, despite the fact that excessive clothing consumption is a serious issue (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). In addition, the limited product assortment prevents consumers from expressing themselves and finding aesthetic satisfaction (Niinimäki 2010; Hiller Connell & Kozar 2012), which is why there is a gap between consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards environmentally sustainable clothing. When making purchases, consumers care more about the look and feel of an item of clothing than they do about its impact on the environment (Butler & Francis, 1997).

Slow manufacturing

Reduced production rates allow for natural raw material growth without the need for exploiting natural resources (Fletcher, 2007). Since slow fashion is typically created in smaller batches, it naturally reduces both resource usage and waste (Cline, 2012). The stress of working hours is reduced when manufacturing is slowed down, which benefits everyone's quality of life and helps protect basic human rights (Gupta & Bhaskar, 2016). Producers may have more time to foster team camaraderie through long-term planning. Workers may be able to find full-time employment with predictable hours instead of being forced to accept temporary or contract work or take on excessive workloads to satisfy fluctuating demand. In the meantime, they have more time to dedicate to each garment, improving overall quality. Cataldi et al. (2010), proposed that, in contrast to the mass production system, a defining feature of slow fashion is the collaborative creation of clothing between designers and consumers. For consumers' creative and individuality requirements, the slow fashion approach allows designers to include them in the design process. Co-creation not only strengthens ties between manufacturers and buyers, but also motivates shoppers to take greater care in their purchasing decisions by educating them about the garment's production process (Millspaugh & Kent, 2016).

Slow depletion

When it comes to clothing, slow fashion advocates for purchasing fewer items of higher quality that will last. With a longer product lifecycle, less energy and fewer natural resources are wasted. Quality, however, in slow and sustainable fashion systems extends beyond the physical and involves considerations of design. That is to say, high-quality designs last both in terms of

time and fashion (Johansson, 2010). Designs less influenced by fashion trends and garments constructed of long-lasting materials mean that items can be worn repeatedly despite the ebb and flow of the fashion industry (Goworek et al., 2016). This extra time spent living suggests low consumption rates. Instead of blindly following fleeting fashion trends, consumers who practice slow consumption may take the time to thoroughly appreciate an item of clothing and keep it for a long time, thereby satisfying a need for personal expression (Johansson, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

An exploratory investigation was employed and semi-structured in-depth interviews were done in order to understand the challenges faced by workers in handloom industry. The perspectives of weavers, master weavers and tie and dyers were examined. These stakeholders play significant role in production process of handlooms. The authors went to the field and conducted all the interviews in person in Sambalpur district of Odisha.

We chose to target minimum 30 respondents, as in a qualitative study, a sample size of 20-30 is needed for academic publications (Warren 2002). We used purposive sampling method to select the samples and subsequently each respondent was contacted. A total of 48 in-person interviews were conducted between Sept 2022 and Nov 2022. A typical interview lasted for about 25-30 minutes. Data gathering and interview analysis were simultaneously done. We understood we had reached theoretical saturation after the insights were repeated and no fresh data was available under the barriers and support mechanisms for each stakeholder (Creswell 2002).

The goal of the interview and the interviewing process were both explained to every interviewee. The research questions were taken into consideration when creating the interview process. From how many years are you working in this sector? For how many hours do you work every day? What are the various difficulties do you face? We asked 1-3 probing questions to get things started, then we moved on to open-ended questions and asked responders to go into further detail. Although the protocol was laid out, interviewers were urged to express their ideas honestly. Interviewees were invited to provide examples to support their statements when speaking about impediments. We also spent a lot of time talking about some of the issues, such what could be done to support them in order to save the handloom industry.

An amalgamation of thematic and matrix methodologies was used for the qualitative study. We began with thematic analysis (Bryman 2012), which required us to read and reread the interview transcripts numerous times in order to become familiar with the data and take notes in order to come up with a preliminary list of ideas. A list of codes was also discovered within the data set. The fundamental component of the data that may be accessed in a meaningful way to address the open research questions is represented by a code (Boyatzis 1998). For instance, the code "females given ancillary tasks" was created based on the following quotes from the interview: "wife or daughter will do tie & die part, as it takes lesser time and precision than weaving, master doesn't like to give them weaving part as he feels they will not do it neatly" (weaver-6). The authors are able to reach inferences from these codes, which are the responses to the research questions (Groenland 2018).

The codes were then divided into probable themes and sub-themes in the following stage. A theme highlights an important aspect of the data and denotes a recurring pattern of behaviour or significance in the data collection (Boyatzis 1998). Each theme's core was determined, and was given a name. One respondent stated "it's difficult to get our children married as Mehar's i.e., weavers, nobody will like to give their daughter to weaver" (weaver 11). We coded this

under the sub-theme of social stigma attached with profession. Which finally became part of theme “social factors”. (See table 1 and 2 for thematic analysis and challenges faced by weavers and master weavers).

Table 1: Thematic Analysis: Challenges faced by weavers

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Financial factors	Low wages	Paid on the basis of per piece
		Very less wages
		No bonus for extra work
Social factors	Social stigma with job	Marriage problems
		Casteism
Intellectual factors	Lack of training	No formal training
		Passed as heirloom
		Learning from family members
	Intricate work	Complex time-consuming work demands precision
Emotional factors	Gender discrimination	Females are given ancillary tasks
		Females are given to weave only cotton sarees and not silk sarees
		Females paid less for the same work
	Unsupportive master weaver	Scolding by master weaver form small mistakes
		Partiality and biases of master
Physical factors	Long working hours	Backache
		Eyesight issues at younger age
	Poor infrastructure	Old and worn-out yarns and other ancillary machinery used
Occupational factors	Dissatisfied with job	Less satisfaction Desire to switch the job
Environmental factors	Lack of basic facilities at workplace	Fluctuating electricity
		No proper sitting facilities

Table 2: Thematic Analysis: Challenges faced by master weavers

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Economic	Costly raw material	High cost of cotton and raw silk
		High quality costly Dye used
	Labour cost	Weaver demand high price
	Less profit margins	Profit margins are shrinking due to increased competition
	Capital/financing issues	Loans taking time 3-6 months to pass
		Complicated documentation
		scarcity of working capital.
Technological	High competition from power loom	Power loom is giving cut throat competition at lower prices
Political	Lack of government support	Government subsidies is very low
		Poor implementation of government policies
Environmental	Lack of worker/labour supply	Weavers switching to other jobs
	Wavering demand	Demand of the products fluctuates
Physical	Improper storage facilities	Small warehouses
		Sometimes rats, dust, spoil the product
Social	Social Stigma	Marriage problems
		casteism

We established a matrix in the second section, and this matrix serves as the centrepiece of our analysis. The rows of the matrix represent themes, whereas the columns represent intensity of those issues perceived by weavers. Each "cell" in the output provides a number, giving the compiled data a structure.

This output aids the researcher's systematic analysis of the data, both in terms of perception of challenges by weavers and themes (Ritchie et al. 2013). (For a matrix study of challenges faced by weavers and master weavers, see Tables 3 and 4).

Most frequently employed in business research as well as commercial and applied research, the matrix method is a flexible approach suitable for cross-sectional, qualitative data analysis (Groenland 2018).. In order to preserve the context of each research participant's opinions, the views of each participant could also be readily linked to other elements of their account within the matrix.

Thus, it is helpful when several researchers are collaborating on a project, especially in multi-disciplinary research teams where not all members have experience managing huge data sets and qualitative data analysis (Gale et al. 2013). A comprehensive, descriptive overview of the complete data set is provided by this combination.

Table 3: Matrix Analysis – Challenges faced by weavers

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Total
Wages			10	11	21	42
Social Status			9	10	23	42
Infrastructure		6	6	14	16	42
Supervision	1	4	5	12	20	42
Job contentment	8	4	5	3	22	42
Total	9	14	35	50	102	

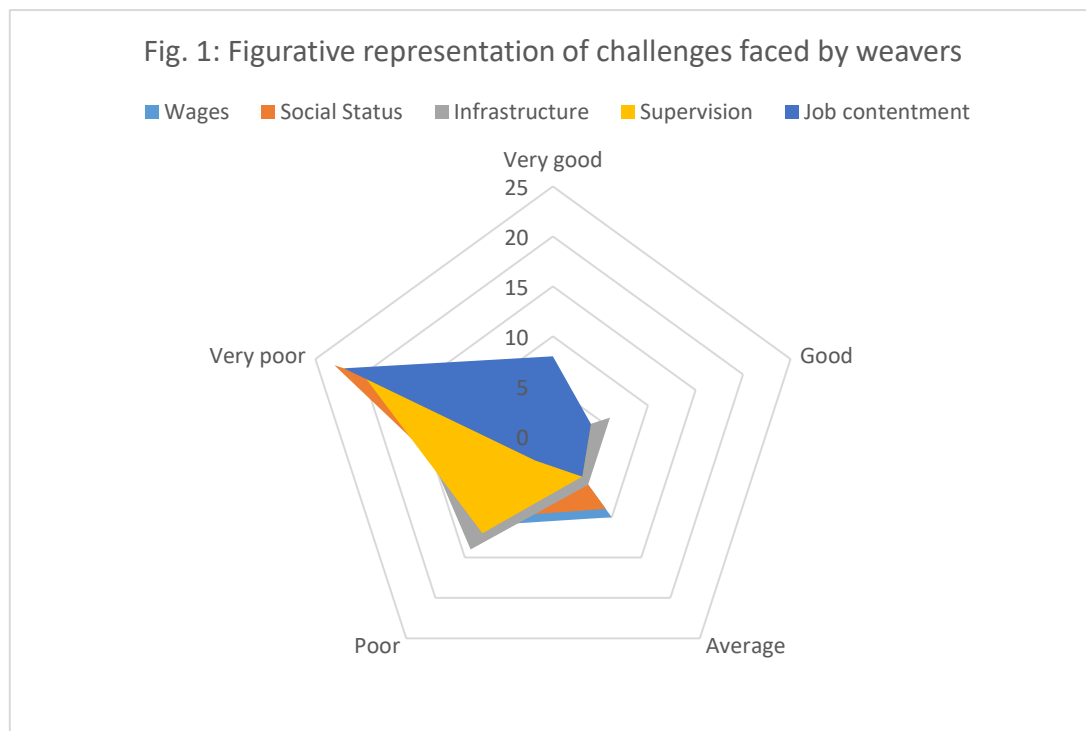
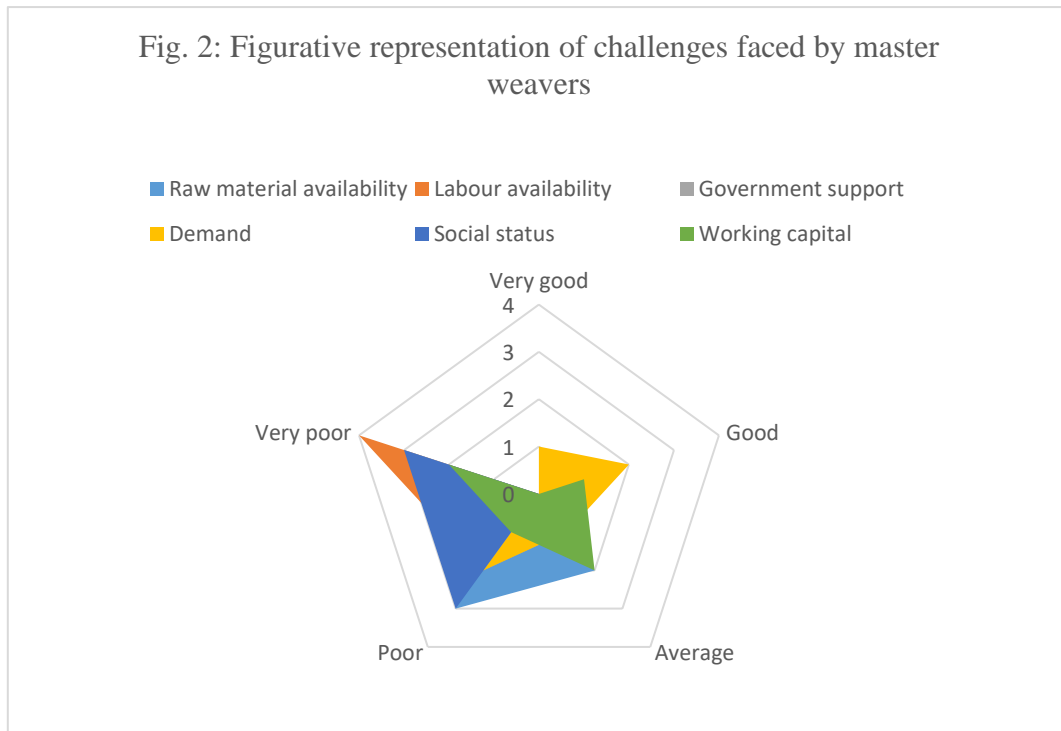


Figure 1: Figurative representation of challenges faced by weavers

Table 4: Matrix analysis - Challenges faced by Master weavers

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Total
Raw material availability			2	3	1	6
Labour availability				2	4	6
Government support			1	2	3	6
Demand	1	2	1	2		6
Social status				3	3	6
Working capital		1	2	1		6
Total	1	3	6	13	11	

Fig. 2: Figurative representation of challenges faced by master weavers**Figure 2: Figurative representation of challenges faced by master weavers**

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

We have divided the findings & discussion section into two parts, challenges faced by weavers and challenges faced by master weavers.

Challenges faced by weavers

The following subsection provides a detailed description of the Challenges faced by weavers and master weavers identified in the research.

Wages

Low wage is one of the main issues that weavers in slow-fashion industry deal with. Weavers frequently receive very little pay for their labour because it is frequently regarded as a low-skilled or unskilled profession. One of the weavers stated *“I get paid according to number of pieces I produce, sometimes the wage gets cut even for the minute mistake in design”*, another one added *“My whole family of five members participate in producing one handloom saree, the wages we earn are not sufficient for livelihood”*. As a result, weavers find it challenging to compete in the market and obtain a reasonable wage for their labour.

Number of steps could be taken in order to resolve the issue of low wages. Firstly, formation of groups and associations among weavers must be encouraged so that they can collectively bargain for improved pay and working circumstances. Weavers should be provided training and education to boost their output and efficiency, which could result in better pay (El-Kassar et al, 2023). The government could intervene by introducing laws requiring minimal wage rates for weavers and make sure these rates are adhered to. A collective effort is need to encourage the use of fair-trade procedures that ensure weavers are paid a liveable wage for their labour.

Social Status

In most cultures, weaving is frequently perceived as a low-status profession (Alon et al, 2016). Weavers find it challenging to find work and provide for their families as a result of this dearth of respect for them and their craft. The weavers in Odisha are referred as *Mehers*. One weaver raised the concern “*I am worried about my son marriage; nobody likes to give their daughter to Meher*”. His wife added further “*this status is all about money, our community is not wealthy hence we are looked down upon*”. The discussion revealed that the social status of weavers is low. The community is confined within itself, people from other communities do not mingle with them. Additionally, the way that society views weaving can make it difficult for weavers to get the tools and assistance they need to keep up their craft.

Weavers frequently have low social standing in society, which lowers their sense of dignity and self-worth. The problem can be fixed gradually by taking some concrete steps. At present it is necessary to increase public understanding of the value of weaving as a creative medium and its economic impact. Next, organizations must promote the work of weavers and develop a market for their wares to raise their revenue and social standing. It is vital to encourage the formation of weaving groups so that they can work together to raise their social and economic standing. It is also necessary to give weavers access to education and training so they can advance their knowledge and skills, which will raise their social standing.

Infrastructure

In order to successfully practise their craft, weavers need access to a variety of facilities and materials. It is a job which requires long hours of sitting, hence a place with proper light and ventilation is the basic necessity. One weaver quoted in the interview “*most of us work in our home itself, the electricity supply cuts in area is frequent, making it difficult for us to work*”. Weavers do not have access to basic resources in many communities, which can make it challenging for them to create high-quality textiles and compete in the market.

The working circumstances and infrastructure that weavers frequently face have an impact on their productivity and well-being. There are number of steps that could be taken to improve the infrastructure quality for them. Government and municipalities must ensure to give localities of weaver’s access to fundamental amenities like water, electricity, and restrooms. Also, the society must encourage the use of green technologies that can lessen the harm that weaving causes to the environment and enhance working circumstances. Also providing artisans access to contemporary tools and machinery that could boost their output and effectiveness.

Supervision

Weavers are supervised by master weavers. But they are not given any specialized training in the profession. One weaver had stated “*I learnt weaving from my grandfather, for us it is family profession, nobody else is here to teach/train*”. Weaving is frequently considered a lone profession; it can be challenging for weavers to get input and oversight on their work. This may result in mistakes and errors in the final product, further harming the weaver's image and

earning potential. Additionally, weavers lack access to the assistance or training they require to advance their skills and profession.

Weavers frequently labour alone, which can result in a lack of oversight and responsibility. We need to do the following to fix this problem: Peer learning is an effective tool (Koellner & Roth, 2024). Weavers must be encouraged to collaborate and support one another's work by forming groups or organisations. A formal education and training should be given to weavers so they can advance their knowledge and abilities and increase the quality and quantity of their output. On the job trainings and workshops could be organized to increase their skills.

Some effective quality control measures could be introduced to ensure that weavers produce high-quality products that meet industry standards.

Job contentment

For weavers, job satisfaction is an essential factor. If they are not paid a reasonable salary for their work, do not have access to the tools and support they need to keep up their craft, or do not receive the recognition and respect they merit, weavers may find it difficult to be satisfied at their jobs. While discussing about the recreation activities one weaver told *“our master takes us to picnic once a year, apart from that we not do anything”*. High levels of stress and annoyance may result from this, which often harm their physical and emotional well-being. The women in the community lacks job satisfaction as they are often discriminated (Bullough et al, 2017). One of the women weavers commented *“they (master weaver) do not give silk saree work to us as it is costly, women only work on cotton sarees”*. Women further stated that they earn lesser than their counterparts because of this discrimination.

Lack of job satisfaction is a common problem for weavers, which can affect their motivation and output. The following steps could be taken to improve the job satisfaction among weavers. Give weavers access to training and education so they can advance their knowledge and skills, which can improve their satisfaction with their jobs. Weavers must be encouraged to try out new patterns and methods so that their work can become more complex and fascinating. Lastly, giving weavers a fair wage for their labour can boost their sense of accomplishment and feeling of fulfilment at work.

Challenges faced by Master weavers

Master weavers are the businessman and supervise the other weavers. They collect the raw materials and deal with merchants & retailers. The difficulties master weavers encounter can affect their ability to maintain their craft and run profitable businesses. Some of the main challenges faced by them include the scarcity of labour, the lack of working capital, demand, societal standing, and government assistance.

Raw material availability

One of the main challenges that master weavers encounter is the lack of raw materials. The expense and quality of the final product, as well as the master weavers' capacity to practise their trade and build prosperous businesses is greatly influenced by the quality and availability of the raw materials. Traditional textiles are made from natural fibres like cotton, wool, and silk as well as plant fibres like hemp or flax in many parts of the globe. These fibres must be carefully grown and processed, and their quality and supply may be impacted by unpredictably weathered conditions or crop diseases. Master weaver 2 had commented *“we don't find good silk in our state, we bring it from Bengaluru & Mysuru”* Master weaver 5 further added *“raw material costly, this makes handlooms expensive”*. Environmental deterioration, deforestation, and changes in land use can have an impact on the quantity and quality of raw materials. These

factors can result in the loss of natural resources and jeopardise the sustainability of conventional textile-making techniques.

This challenge of raw material availability can be resolved in number of ways. Firstly, it is necessary to create dependable supply chain. One of the main causes of the raw material shortage is the absence of dependable supply chains. Many expert weavers reside in remote locations where it is difficult to obtain top-notch raw materials. We must create dependable supply chains that can transport raw materials to master weavers in remote locations in order to address this problem. To accomplish this, either collection sites for raw materials can be set up where weavers can obtain them, or transportation facilities can be set up to deliver raw materials to the weavers. Along with this it is also important to encourage sustainable behaviour. We must encourage sustainable practises, such as organic farming, water conservation, and eco-friendly dyeing methods, to guarantee the long-term supply of raw materials. In addition to guaranteeing a consistent flow of raw materials, this will also help to protect the environment.

Along with this it is important to support local production. Locally sourced raw materials allow us to cut back on shipping expenses while also supporting local economies (Gomez-Mejia et al, 2020). This can be accomplished by promoting regional processing and dyeing facilities as well as encouraging farmers to produce crops suited for weaving, such as cotton or silk. Additionally, giving instruction and training regarding how to choose, store, and handle raw materials can benefit. Master weavers can increase their output and improve the quality of their products by receiving instruction and education on raw materials. Workshops, training courses, and platforms for information sharing can all be used for this. Finally, forming partnerships with raw material suppliers can help to guarantee the supply of raw materials for master weavers. Master weavers can ensure a steady supply of high-quality raw materials, and raw material suppliers can ensure a steady market for their goods by establishing partnerships.

Labour availability

Master weavers need skilled labour to create textiles of the highest calibre. Finding skilled workers, however, can be difficult, especially in areas where conventional textile-making skills have been lost or are declining. Additionally, master weavers find it challenging to compete in the market due to high labour expenses. Master weaver 1 had commented “*no new weavers are joining the profession, even Meher families do not want their children to become weavers*”. Master weaver 6 had said “*all the weavers are leaving their jobs, 5 years ago I had 300+ weavers, today it is reduced to 95*”. Master weaver 3 commented that “*I go personally to weavers house to motivate them not to leave the profession, but all in vain*”.

Finding capable and dependable weavers to collaborate with master weavers can be difficult. The number of steps can be taken to resolve this issue. Firstly, opening education & training centres is essential so that new pool of weavers could be trained & join the industry. Establishing weaving-specific vocational training facilities in collaboration with the municipal cooperation can boost the labour availability. It would be an innovative step to create programmes for apprenticeships so that young people can learn from seasoned artisans. Weavers must be encouraged to join organisations or unions to share resources and labour.

Government support

Government policies and programmes can have a big effect on the textile industry and the master weavers' livelihoods. Government support for the textile sector is, however, insufficient or non-existent in developing nations. The resources and assistance master weavers require to keep their craft and operate prosperous businesses may be difficult for them to access as a

result. Master weaver 2 had said *“we do not want to get into sarkari (government) procedures, for little subsidy they make us wait for months”*.

Government policies and initiatives that could support master weavers in sustaining and expanding their companies are frequently lacking. We can take the following steps to resolve this problem. Advocate for laws, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and grants, that will help the weaving industry grow. Work with government organisations to give master weavers money, education, and training regarding growing their business. Simultaneously it is necessary to promote the growth of a regional market for woven handicrafts through steps taken by the government. The government should invest in the preservation and promotion of weaving as a part of the nation's cultural legacy.

Demand

Because demand for handcrafted textiles can fluctuate, master weavers may find it challenging to plan ahead and keep a steady income. Additionally, it may be challenging for master weavers to compete in the market and command a reasonable price for their work due to competition from mass-produced textiles. Master weaver 5 had commented *“why will public buy handlooms, when they can get similar looking textile at much cheaper price produced by power looms?”*. Master weaver 1 commented *“the demand fluctuates, sometimes the demand falls sharply, during Covid time all my stock got wasted since there was no demand”*

A lack of consumer willingness to purchase their product is one of the most common obstacles that master weavers confront. This lack of willingness has an impact on their ability to make a living and continues to have an impact on their ability to retain their livelihood. For the purpose of expanding the market for the products that are woven by weavers, it is of the utmost importance to promote the utilisation of traditional textiles in current fashion and design. This is essential in order to find a solution to this challenging situation. Master weavers are obliged to participate in the growing trend towards ecotourism and cultural festival marketplaces in order to sell their handloom textiles. This is because those marketplaces are becoming increasingly popular. To add insult to injury, master weavers are forced to make the most of e-commerce platforms in order to sell their products online and connect with clients from all over the world.

Social Status

Master weavers are thought to be of poor social standing, but this is to a lesser extent than normal weavers. A master weaver's social position may have an effect on their capacity to continue practicing their profession and to operate businesses that are extremely profitable. This is a possibility that exists. When it comes to successfully operating their businesses, master weavers may have a tough time acquiring the resources and assistance they require. One reason for this is that weaving is frequently seen to be a profession that is considered to be of very low prestige. Furthermore, because of their low social position, master weavers may have a difficult time attracting skilled staff and developing a reputation for manufacturing high-quality textiles. This may have a negative impact on their ability to attract and retain customers. It is possible that this will be difficult for them.. Master weaver 6 said *“marriages of our sons is big challenge; nobody wants to give their daughter to a Meher (weaver) family”*. Master weaver 1 had commented *“because the social image for the profession is poor, no new person desire to join this profession”*.

Master weavers frequently have a poor social status in society, which may impair their sense of dignity and diminish their sense of self-worth. This is a common occurrence. The issue can be resolved by teaching the general public about the significance of traditional textiles in terms

of culture and history (Eden & Gupta, 2017), as well as the contributions that master weavers have made to the craft. This would allow for the problem to be resolved. While this is going on, it is of the utmost importance to promote the artistry of master weavers and to create a market for their products in order to raise their income and improve their social standing. Weavers who are deemed to be masters ought to be incentivised to form cooperatives and collaborate with one another in order to enhance their economic and social position.

Inadequate working capital

Finally, master weavers may face significant difficulties due to insufficient operating capital. Making textiles needs a sizable investment in supplies, tools, and machinery as well as a consistent flow of working capital to pay for labour costs and other costs. But a lot of master weavers have trouble getting the money they require to run their companies and develop their art. Master weaver 4 had said *“when we are asked to pay for raw materials, we do not go to banks for loan since they take lot of time, we prefer our local mahajans (moneylenders) even if they charge extra”*

It is not uncommon for master weavers to struggle with a lack of operating capital, which limits their ability to purchase raw materials and make investments in their enterprises. This hinders their ability to make profitable business decisions. It is feasible to find a solution to this problem by giving master weavers access to microcredit and other chances for funding. Another possibility is to provide them with microcredit. Because of this, they will be able to take advantage of new investment opportunities and purchase materials for their enterprises. Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance that the government facilitate the construction of supply networks that provide master weavers with access to excellent materials at costs that are within their financial means. There is yet another innovative strategy that might be implemented, and that is the promotion of crowdfunding sites as a means by which master weavers can raise financing for their businesses.

Implications

A potential benefit of slow fashion is that it could help the developed countries' apparel manufacturing industry and their small enterprises (Gundlach & Sammartino, 2020). Due to rising domestic labour costs in the developed countries, the labour force is increasingly relied on foreign factories to produce its mass-market clothing. In contrast, small businesses that are less likely to benefit from economies of scale may not see significant savings from outsourcing. However, they are unable to recruit higher-quality partners due to low order size (Dana et al., 2007). The transfer in power to mass retailers may be seen in the correlation between the rise in average sales volume per store and the decline in the total number of stores as a result of large-scale production (Boyd, 1997).

Because the garment sector is so large, developed economies have the ability to structure their supply chains on a regional basis. This is because of the size of the industry. Slow fashion has the ability to revive local economies by making use of resources that are already accessible. This might be accomplished through the utilisation of current materials. Because it brings together the creative energy of young and independent designers with the resources of the local community, such as those of local artisans, slow fashion is likely to result in a diverse fashion scene. This is because slow fashion draws together the creative energy of young designers. Within the framework of the slow fashion system, things of exceptional quality are fashioned by hand, and each item bears a symbolic significance that is tied to the culture in which it was produced. Slow fashion is a fashion paradigm that has gained popularity in recent years. Consumers may have the option to purchase one-of-a-kind clothing items through the slow

fashion movement. This is due to the fact that regional differences in the materials and culture that are available, as well as the fact that not all hand-made products are the same. When compared to the uniform products that are manufactured by machines, this stands in stark contrast.

5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The study highlights that despite the growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly fashion, weavers and master weavers continue to face challenges. Weavers encounter a variety of difficulties that may affect their capacity to support themselves and their craft. These difficulties include compensation, social standing, infrastructure, supervision, and job satisfaction. To guarantee that weavers have access to the resources and support they need to thrive, it will be necessary for government, business, and civil society to make a concerted effort to address these issues. Overcoming the difficulties encountered by weavers necessitates a multifaceted strategy that takes into account their needs in terms of economics, society, and the environment. Weavers' livelihoods and well-being can be improved, and we can guarantee the survival of this art form by encouraging fair trade practises, granting access to education and training, and improving working conditions.

Apart from weaver even master weavers encounter a variety of difficulties that may affect their capacity to practise their craft and manage profitable enterprises. These difficulties include the scarcity of labour, the lack of working capital, demand, societal standing, and government assistance. Government, industry, and civil society must work together to find solutions to the problems master weavers confront. We can improve the livelihoods and well-being of master weavers and make sure that this art form endures by encouraging the use of traditional textiles, granting access to education and training, and enhancing working circumstances.

However, this study does have some limitations. First of all, since the study is only focused on the problems that weavers and master weavers encounter in the slow fashion sector, it is possible that the solutions won't be applicable to weavers and master weavers in other sectors. Secondly, our sample was limited to 42 interviewees due to accessibility of interviewees. In order to validate & generalize these results and, more quantitative investigation may be needed. Lastly, this is a country-specific study, we recommend further cross-country research in order to comprehend and generalize the situation of weavers in global context. Despite these drawbacks, the paper offers insightful analysis of the difficulties encountered by weavers and master weavers in the slow fashion sector and proposes solutions to these difficulties. By tackling these issues, we can make sure that the weaving sector is sustainable and enhance the living conditions of weavers and master weavers.

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