

## **Female Work Participation in Handloom Industry-A Case Study of Mubarakpur Town, Azamgarh District, U.P**

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### **Abstract**

*Manufacturing industries help to reduce poverty and unemployment in a variety of ways. The economy of a country is observed as a reflection of industrial development and work force participation. In the past, females were not treated as an integral part of the labor force; they entered the labor market after the introduction of machines. They were largely employed in those manufacturing industries which required less and semi-skilled female workers. During medieval period skilled Muslim weavers came to India along with Moguls and found Varanasi and its surrounding area's local climate conducive to handloom production. As a result, the study area in eastern Uttar Pradesh became an important site of weaving industry. The objective of this paper is to assess the female work participation in handloom industry of Mubarakpur town. The study is based on the socio-economic conditions, derived from primary data collected through questionnaire. Results show that weaving is the major occupation of Mubarakpur town, as there is high concentration of handlooms. The major reasons which forced females to do work in handlooms are economic necessity, unemployment, poverty, low income, low literacy and education and large family size. A gradual decline of the handicraft industry in Mubarakpur town in the last few decades due to economic and political reasons has caused a setback in the condition of female weavers. Thus, the government should address the issues relating to the female work participation and chalk out an action plan for the upliftment of poor female weavers.*

**Keywords:** Handloom industry, Work participation, Female weavers

### **Introduction**

Cottage and village industries are those in which manufacturing occurs on a very small scale by a particular family or group of persons. Thus those industries which artisans a setup in their own houses, work with wood, cane, brass, stone etc. are called cottage industries. Handloom weaving is the most important cottage industry and one of the earliest to come into existence in India, it accounts for 14% of the total industrial production, contributes to nearly 30% of the total exports and is the second largest employment generator after agriculture. Of the total handlooms in India 72 percent are engaged in cotton weaving, about 16 percent in silk weaving and rest are related to art silk and mixture (R. Jayavel, 2013).

Handloom sector is highly labor intensive industry with low capital investment. It is also a low energy sector with no adverse impact on the environment as weaving is a totally pollution free activity (Fayaz Ahmad and Hussain A.N., 2013). It plays a very important role in the country's economy. As per Handloom Census (2009-10), there are 27.83 lakh handloom households and over 65 lakh handloom workers in India, of which 2.6 lakh belong to Uttar Pradesh. The handloom work force is predominantly female, constituting 77.4 per cent of the total work force. This sector contributes nearly 19% of the total cloth produced in the country and also adds substantially to export earnings. The strength of handloom lies in the introducing innovative designs, which cannot be replicated by the powerloom sector. Thus, handloom forms a part of the heritage of India and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers.

During the medieval period skilled Muslim weavers from the west Asian countries came to India along with Moguls. These weavers found Varanasi and its surrounding areas local climate conducive to skill production.

Thus weaving became an important and developed industry of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Four districts namely, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Mau and Azamgarh have their distinctive place in eastern Uttar Pradesh. In the number of handlooms Azamgarh city occupies second place after Varanasi while in the number of powerlooms, Azamgarh occupies first place.

Women contributed substantially to the economic prosperity of India. Handloom sector is the only manufacturing sector wherein one finds large number of women producing products which are worn by large number of women. A unique feature of handloom sector is that 60 per cent women produce almost 70 per cent of women products. Despite such features, which are outwardly unique, female weavers were never given the primacy they require. Their role in production was never acknowledged beyond the confines of the home (Narasimha Reddy, 2006). At present the Handloom industry is declining due to globalization in general and socio-political reason in particular which has directly affected the women workers of this industry. Their work participation has increased as well as the increase in per day working hour has resultant more health issues especially pertaining to the physical problems. The present study has highlighted the work participation and socio economic condition of weavers of Mubarakpur town.

### ***Review of Literature***

The studies on handloom sector and socio-economic condition of weavers are not meager. Some of the important studies are mentioned here. Tawheed Yousuf and et. al in 2013 have analyzed the socio economic profile of silk weavers of Srinagar city. The study reveals that the situation of the weavers is worrying as they are feeble due to illiteracy, financial constraints, health problems, meager remuneration and poor Governmental support. Female work participation rates in India have been studied by Devi in 2011. The socio-economic condition of handloom workers in India and some policy options for improving the welfare of the weavers has been analyzed by N.D. George in 2011. Narasimha Reddy in 2006 has explained that women handloom weavers are facing the brunt, as well as provided some way for upliftment of poor female weavers. Rajani Sinha in 2005 has analyses the status of women and economic development in India. She has also found out the regional pattern in female participation. Nisar Ahmad in 1987 has examined the problems and management of small scale and cottage industries in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Carpet industry of Shahjahanpur showing occupational structure of workers in the city has been studied by M. Irshad Hussain in 1975. Importance of handloom in solving the problems of unemployment of women has been studied by TD Goswami in 1960. Srinivasachari in 1965 has examined the handloom industry in India. He described the history of handloom industry, its structure in the age of competition and also suggested some remedial measures.

### **Objectives**

- To analyze the socio-economic conditions of female weavers in Mubarakpur town.
- To get remedial measures for their betterment based upon observations and suggestions of female weavers.

### **The Study Area**

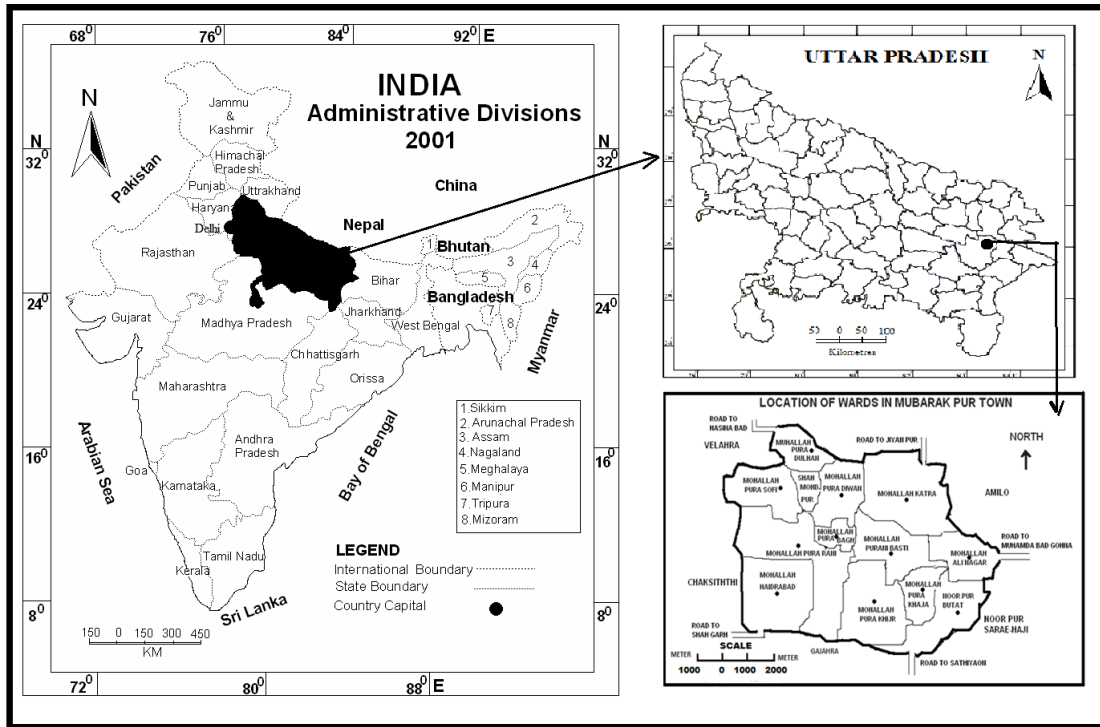
The area of study i.e Mubarakpur town is a municipal board in Azamgarh district. It is located at 26° 09' north latitude and 83° 29' east longitude at a distance of 13 kilometers northeast of the district headquarters (Azamgarh). This town comprises 25 wards. The town is located on alluvial tract of land in Ganga Plain of India. The average annual rainfall is 1021.3mm. The total population of Mubarakpur town is 70,365 (2011 census) out of which 49% are males and 51% are females. This town is dominated by Muslim culture.

### ***Database and Methodology***

The present study is based on the primary sources of data with the help of direct questionnaire to the respondent to collect the information pertaining to the socio-economic conditions of the female weavers in Mubarakpur Town. Mubarakpur Town has 6000 handloom households out of which 300 handloom households have been sampled for analysis. Random sampling has been applied in data collection. Care was also taken in the selection of handloom households that they should be truly representative of their wards. After collection of data, data were converted into the tabular form. After analyzing these tables and diagrams, inferences have been made pertaining to the various socio economic conditions of female weavers of the study area.

Location of Mubarakpur Town, Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh

Fig. 1: Socio Economic Profile of Female Weavers



Source: Census of India 2011 and Mubarakpur Town Area Office 2011

After analyzing the general profile of female weavers from Table 1, it has been found that these female weavers have been classified into five categories based on age groups. The age composition of the female weavers shows that 33 per cent weavers belong to the 15–29 age groups while 15 per cent weavers are above 60 years category. It shows that large proportion of female weavers belongs to working age group. As regards the marital status 64% of the female weavers are married whereas 28 percent are still un-married. Early marriages are common among weaver of the town.

Table .1: General Profiles of Female Weavers

<b>A: Age wise distribution of Female weavers</b>	
Age	Percentage
0 - 14	18
15- 29	33
30 - 59	34
60 and above	15
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>B: Marital status of Female weavers</b>	
Marital status	Percentage
Married	64
Un - married	28
Widow	8
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>C: Educational status of Female weavers</b>	
Educational status	Percentage
Literate	48
Illiterate	52
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>D: Educational level of Female weavers</b>	
Educational level	Percentage
Primary	51
Middle	25
Secondary	15
Graduate	9
<b>Total</b>	100

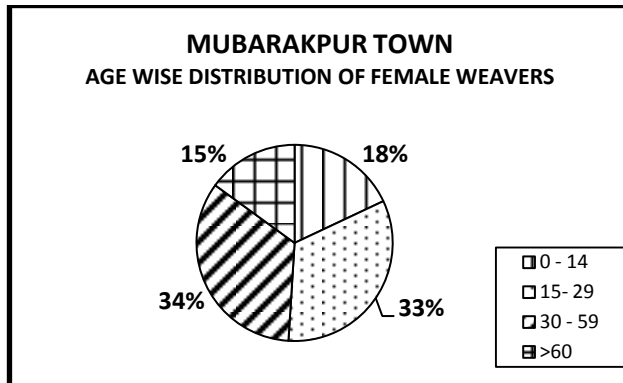
Source: Based on Field Survey 2010 – 2011

Table 2: Socio–Economic Condition of Female Weavers

<b>A: Economic causes forced for weaving</b>	
Causes	Percentage
Poverty	15.75
Low income	4.66
Unemployment	25.0
Family burden	9.24
Unskilled	7.35
Uneducated	17.43
Tradition	12.39
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>B: Daily income of Female weavers</b>	
Income (Rs.)	Percentage
< 50	12
50 -100	39
100 -150	32
150 -200	11
>200	6
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>C: Daily working hours of Female weavers</b>	
Working hours	Percentage
<6	-----
6 – 8	9
8 -10	14
>10	77
<b>Total</b>	100

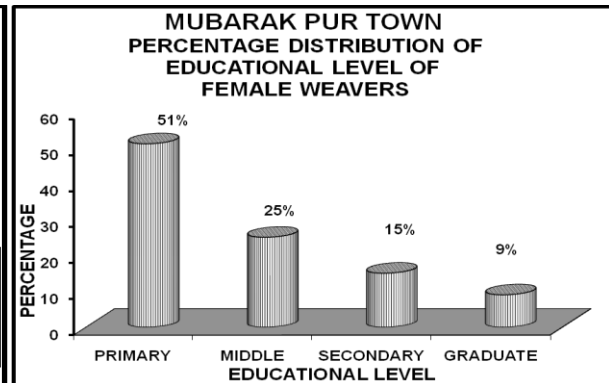
Source: Based on Field Survey 2010-11

Fig. 2



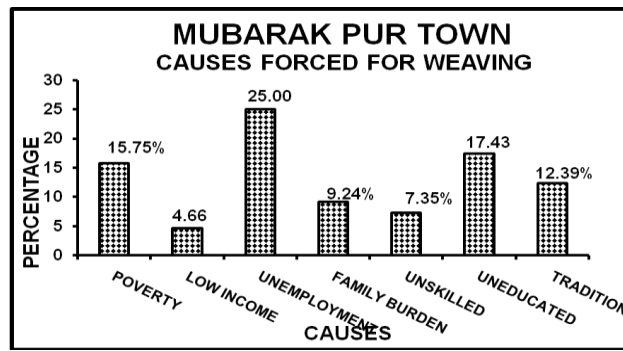
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Fig.3



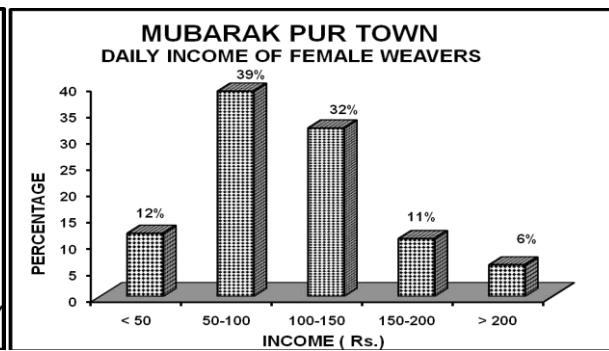
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Fig. 4



Source: Based on calculation by Authors

Fig. 5



Source: Based on calculation by Authors

Education is one of the principal means of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. It can be observed that in the year 2011, 48% female weavers were literate while 52% were illiterate who were not able to read and write but now these weavers are sending their children to school for education. It has been also analyzed that 51% female weavers are having primary education, while 25% and 15% female weavers are educated up to middle and secondary level respectively, remaining 9% are graduates. Females largely participate in weaving and different works associated to weaving, thus live at home, causing high dropout rates.

An overview of Table 2 shows that the causes which compelled the female weavers for work are poverty (15.75%), low income (4.66%), unemployment (25.0%), family burden (9.24%), unskilled (7.35%), uneducated (17.43%), and tradition (12.39%). The major cause is that these weavers are uneducated and they don't get job in other field. Thus they are compelled to follow the handloom tradition for their survival. The Table also shows the daily income of female weavers. The distribution of 12% female weavers get less than 50 Rs/day while 39% and 32% of female weavers get 50–100 and 100–150 Rs/ day respectively. The table reveals that most of female weavers are having limited source of income that's why they generally do hard work for whole day. 77% of the female weavers work for more than 10 hours/day while 14% of them work around 8-10 hours/day; remaining 9% of them work only 6-8 hours/day.

One of the basic requirements for human well-being is to have a roof over one's head, either owned or rented. The type of dwelling units of handloom house-holds and type of facilities obtained by female weavers are represented in Table -3. It is evident from the Table that 15.0% females are living in the kuchcha dwellings, 32.14% of them live in pucca dwellings, 17.14% in semi – kuchcha dwellings and 35.71% lives in semi- pucca dwellings.

**Table: 3 Infrastructural Facilities of Weavers**

<b>A: Types of dwelling units possessed by Female weavers</b>	
<b>Type of dwelling units</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kuchcha	15.0
Pucca	32.14
Semi-Kuchcha	17.14
Semi-Pucca	35.71
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>B: Possession of durable goods by female weavers</b>	
<b>Durable goods</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
TV	10.51
Radio	9.09
Computer	0.56
Fridge	9.65
Cycle	29.82
Mobile	36.63
CD Player	3.69
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>C: Drinking water facilities</b>	
<b>Types of Drinking water facilities</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Well	-----
Hand pump	86.42
Municipal taps	13.57
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>D: Latrin facilities</b>	
<b>Types of Latrin</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Flush	-----
Field	5
Public	10
Private	85
<b>Total</b>	100

**Source:** Based on Field survey 2010-2011

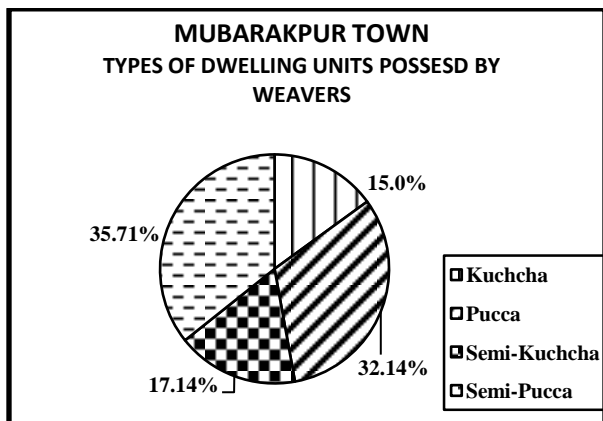
**Table 4: Problems and Diseases of Female Weavers**

<b>A: Problems faced in weaving</b>	
<b>Problems</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Breaking of yarn	15.0
Electricity	19.2
Weakness	7.2
Eye related problem	12.0
Hard work	26.2
Market problem	15.6
Heart problem	4.8
<b>Total</b>	100
<b>B: Diseases in female weavers</b>	
<b>Diseases</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Leg pain	13.14
Back pain	19.46
Joint pain	7.65
Chest pain	11.14
Gout	2.82
T.B	1.33
Asthama	2.99
Coughing	4.82
Eye Problem	10.98
Respiratory Diseases	10.64
Headache	14.97
<b>Total</b>	100

**Source:** Based on Field Survey 2010-11

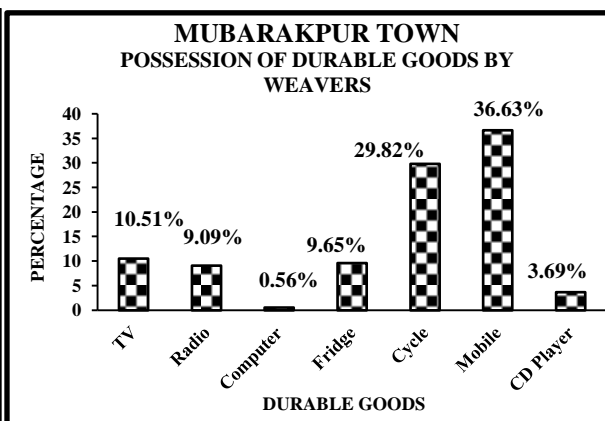
It has been analyzed that the durable goods possessed by female weavers are TV 10.51%, Radio 9.09%, Computer 0.56% , Fridge 9.65% ,Cycle 29.82% , Mobile 36.63% , and CD player 3.69%. As regards the Drinking water facilities it has been analyzed that 86.42% of the females are getting drinking water from hand pumps while remaining 13.57% of female weavers get it from municipal taps. The table also makes clear that around 5% of the female weavers don't have latrine facilities and they go to fields while 85% of them are having private latrine facilities, remaining 10 % are using public toilet.

Fig.6



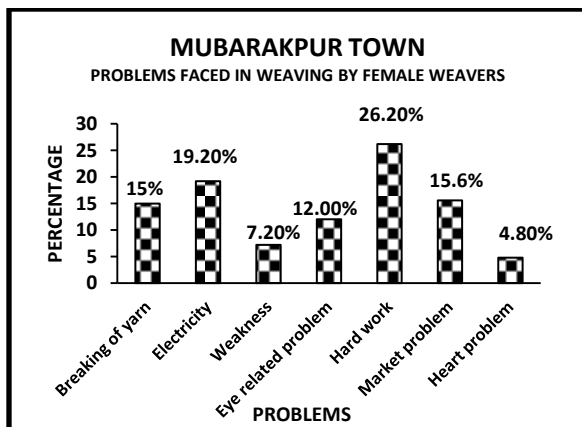
Source: Based on calculation by Authors

Fig.7



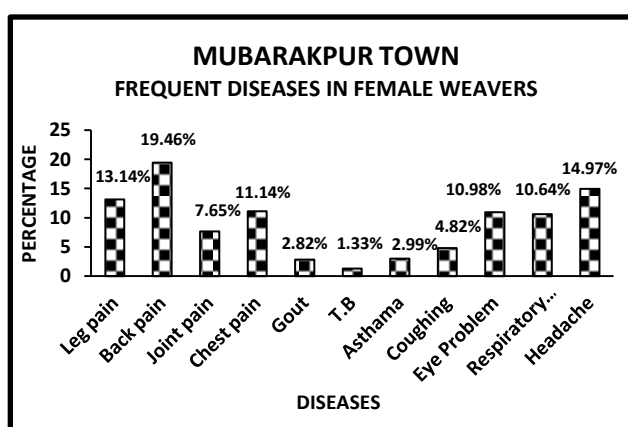
Source: Based on calculation by Authors

Fig. 8



Source: Based on calculation by Authors

Fig.9



Source: Based on calculation by Authors

An overview of Table no. 4 shows the problems and diseases of female weavers. As regards the problems after analysis, it has been found out that 15% female weavers are facing problems of breaking of yarn, another problem is of electricity that is faced by 19.2% female weavers, 7.2% of them are facing the problem weakness, 12% of them are facing the problems related with eyes. 26.2% and 15.6% of female weavers are facing the problem of hard work and market problem respectively; remaining 4.8% female weavers are suffering from heart problem. The table also shows that female weavers frequently suffer from various diseases as their work is more physical, and therefore, 13.14%, 19.46% , and 7.65% of female weavers suffers from leg pain ,back pain and joint pain respectively , whereas 11.14% by chest pain, 2.82% by gout, 1.33% by tuberculosis, 2.99% by asthma ,4.82 by coughing,10.98% by eye related problem due to hard work, 10.64% by respiratory diseases and 14.97% by headache. Due to religious influence 92.14% of female weavers of this town are free from bad habits and remaining 7.85% of them are chewing pan.

**Remedial Measures**

Some remedial measures have been suggested for the upliftment of female weavers, are- (i) There is need to develop educational infrastructure in the town as there is no college after intermediate. The vocational education is also required for the awareness of weavers towards girls education as well as weavers can diversify their traditional handloom product through innovative ideas.

(ii) There is also need to pay attention towards quick and cheap means of transportation and communication for the extension of trade. (iii) The town has lack of health facilities. There is only one Government hospital in the area with two or three doctors. The weavers have to go to Azamgarh city for better treatment. It is essential need to open more Government hospital in the area with maternal clinics and health centers. (iv) Government should provide raw material to the weavers at lower cost as well as cheap, regular and adequate supply of electric power for smooth functioning of the industry. (v) Government should also provide household employments to the uneducated female weavers. (vi) Females are mainly suffering after the declining of handloom sector. This declining is especially due to advent of powerloom sector in the adjoining regions like Mau. It is need of the hour to improve the declining status of this industry by Government through various plans. It can decrease the economic burden from females.

### **Conclusion**

The above analysis brings out the fact that textile female weavers of Mubarakpur town are very poor from economic point of view. These female weavers are suffering mainly because the handicraft industry in Mubarakpur town has declined in the last few decades due to intra muslim riots which has hampered the trade and due to the invasion of powerloom in the adjoining regions like mau. This gradual decline in handloom industry has badly affected the income of weavers. The share of females has increased after the decline in this sector from past few decades; this is mainly to raise the income status of their family. This continuous decline has increased the health problems in female weavers as their work is more physical. The status of education and health facilities is also poor in this town. Thus the problem of female weavers can be handled by qualitative modification, guidance and protection for the balanced development by the government in handloom industry.

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