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# **Socio-Economic Condition Of Women Weavers: A Study Conducted In Kosukhat Village Under Titabar Block, Jorhat District, Assam**

**Nivedita Brahma** MSW, MSc Psychology Oxford Brookes University, U.K.

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## **Abstract**

Weaving in India is a household, home based enterprise. This is the only manufacturing sector where one finds a large number of women producing such products, which are worn by mostly women. However, it has always been an ongoing struggle for women weavers which remains mostly concealed.

This paper throws a light on the socio-economic condition of women weavers in Kosukhat village under Titabar Block, Jorhat District, Assam. According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individualized group. It often reveals inequities in access to resources and issues related to privilege, power and control. Thus, the main objectives of the study are, (a) to assess the socio-economic condition of Kosukhat women weavers, (b) to understand their problems, and (c) to offer suggestions for their betterment.

The study is based on the primary data. The results display that a majority (around 82%) of women weavers in Kosukhat village believe that weaving cannot be taken as a full-time profession due to various obstacles. These are domestic problems, lack of access to raw materials, lack of livelihood -based skill training, and various other problems.

According to Handloom Census 2013, nearly 78 percent of handloom weavers in India are women among which Assam records the highest. Thus, the significance of the paper is to throw light on the actual situation of the women weavers in a rural village called Kosukhat under Titabar block, Jorhat district, Assam.

**Keywords:** Women weavers, Weaving, Socioeconomic condition, Problems faced, Equal economic opportunity

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Weaving: A fundamental part of a rural woman's life**

Handloom Weaving in rural Assam is household profession, passed on through generations. In these households, women are seen playing an important role. Sadly, the participation of women weavers has been limited only within the household. The most difficult aspect of women's lives is to integrate into a patriarchal model of the society. Feminisation of poverty, lack of access and control over productive resources, lack of livelihood-based skill training, limited opportunities to participate in decision making

process at various levels are among the critical issues that need to be addressed on an urgent basis.

### **1.2 Socio-economic background of the women weavers of Kosukhat village under Titabor block, Jorhat district, Assam**

Although with the impact of modernization weaving culture is becoming commercialized, however most of the rural women in Assam are unaware of the benefits of making it as a source of income.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

- I. To assess the socio-economic conditions of women weavers in Kosukhat village, Titabor block
- II. To understand the problems faced by women weavers
- III. To offer suggestions for the betterment of women weavers

## **2. Review of literature**

According to Baisya Mitali's (2016) research, most of the weavers are from poor socio economic background. Over 90% of the weavers experienced issues related to payment, poor and unclean lodging, and excess workload. The analysis proved that the industry was out of date.

Furthermore, Kalita Amarendra (2019) displays that the women weavers' low educational attainment and underprivileged upbringing forced them to enter the field. They are unable to speak out against exploitation since they are not well aware of their rights.

Additionally, Kalita Rituparna (2019) states that as weaving pays so little, younger generations seems less interested in it now. Besides, the kind of housing they lived served as an example of their low residential status.

Furthermore, Akhtar Nazneen (2013) depicts that the weavers work really hard for the entire day, only to receive extremely little pay. This occurs as a result of the weavers' ignorance of the true worth of their goods on the global market.

In addition, Baishya Prabin (1989) highlighted the attempts to alter people's perceptions on the adoption of intermediate technologies, while outlining the difficulties experienced by weavers in producing silk garments in Assam.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Sampling Universe**

The present study was carried out in Kosukhat village under Titabor block, Jorhat District, Assam. The total population is 1102 out of which 549 are males and 553 are females. The total number of households is 235. Total number of women weavers are 174.

### 3.2 Sampling Procedure

In the present study, for the selection of the samples, the researcher had used simple random sampling method.

### 3.3 Sample Size

For the study purpose, the researcher had selected 100 numbers of total respondents from Kosukhat village.

### 3.4 Method of data collection

A structured interview schedule was used to collect primary data. In addition, secondary data was collected from journals.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data has been analyzed and interpreted with the help of quantitative method, i.e., MS excel (using data tabulation).

## 4. Fieldwork

**Table No. 1: Distribution of respondents by educational qualifications**

Sl. No.	Educational Qualifications	Respondents	Percentage
1	Primary	4	4%
2	Middle	9	9%
3	Secondary	68	68%
4	Senior Secondary	3	3%
5	Graduate	2	2%
6	Illiterate	14	14%
	Total	100	100%

### Analysis:

A majority (68%) of the women weavers studied up to secondary level while 14% never went to school, 9% studied up to middle level, 4% studied up to primary level, 3% studied up to senior secondary level, and the other 2% studied up to graduate level.

**Table No. 2: Distribution of respondents by the house structure**

Sl. No.	House Structure	Respondents	Percentage
1	Bricks	17	17%
2	Kuchcha	83	83%
3	Bamboo	-	-
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

A majority (83%) of women weavers live in kuchcha house, while the other 17% live in pucca house (made of bricks).

**Table No. 3: Distribution of respondents by their reason behind weaving**

Sl. No.	Reason	Respondents	Percentage
1	Poverty	3	3%
2	Tradition	82	82%
3	Low Income	9	9%
4	Unemployment	-	-
5	Family burden	6	6%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

The causes which compelled the women weavers for work are tradition (82%), low income (9%), family burden (6%), and poverty (3%).

**Table No. 4: Distribution of respondents by their opinion regarding weaving as the source of income**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	18	18%
2	No	82	82%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

82% women weavers believe that weaving cannot be taken as a full -time profession, while the other 18% believe that weaving can be a source of income.

**Table No. 5: Distribution of respondents by the obstacles to take up weaving as a source of income**

Sl. No.	Obstacles	Respondents	Percentage
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1	Domestic problems	20	20%
2	Psychological issues	14	14%
3	Raw material problem	39	39%
4	Market problem	-	-
5	Diseases	9	9%
6	None of the above	18	18%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

39% believe that lack of access to raw materials is one of the main obstacles that deters them from taking up weaving as a proper source of income, 20% have domestic problems, 14% suffer from psychological issues (fear of failure, lack of trust on others, a sense of inferiority, etc.), 11% have physical diseases, while the other 18% do not have any such obstacles.

**Table No. 6: Distribution of respondents by monthly income from weaving**

Sl. No.	Total Monthly Income (Rs.)	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 100	0	0%
2	100-500	1	1%
3	500-1000	5	5%
4	Above 1000	12	12%
5	None of the above	82	82%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

From the above data, on a monthly basis 12% earn above Rs. 1000, 5% earn between Rs. 500-1000, 1% earn between Rs. 100-500, while 82% do not have any monthly income.

**Table No. 7: Distribution of respondents by monthly savings from weaving**

Sl. No.	Monthly Savings (Rs.)	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 100	1	1%
2	100-200	2	2%
3	200-300	5	5%
4	Above 300	6	6%
5	None of the above	86	86%

	Total	100%	100%
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**Analysis:**

6% save monthly savings above Rs. 300, 5% save between Rs.200-300, 2% save between Rs.100-200, and 1% save below Rs.100. However, 86% hardly save anything in a month.

**Table No. 8: Distribution of respondents by having other sources of income**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	37	37%
2	No	63	63%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

63% do not have other sources of income, while the other 37% have other sources of income (piggery, poultry, goatry, cattle breeding).

**Table No. 9: Distribution of respondents by annual income from alternative source**

Sl. No.	Annual Income (Rs.)	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 3000	21	21%
2	3000-6000	6	6%
3	6000-9000	4	4%
4	Above 9000	6	6%
5	None of the above	63	63%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

21% earn annual income below Rs. 3000 from other alternative source, 6% earn yearly between Rs. 3000-6000, another 6% earn above Rs. 9000, and 4% earn between Rs. 6000-9000 annually. However, 63% do not have any other sources of income.

**Table No. 10: Distribution of respondents by monthly working hours in weaving**

Sl. No.	Monthly working hours	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 30 hours	0	0%
2	30-60 hours	74	74%
3	Above 60 hours	26	26%
		100	100%

**Analysis:**

74% work between 30-60 hours in a month, while the remaining 26% work above 60 hours in a month.

**Table No. 11: Distribution of respondents by purchase of durable goods from income**

Sl. No.	Durable goods	Respondents	Percentage
1	TV	0	0%
2	Radio	0	0%
3	Cycle	4	4%
4	Mobile	5	5%
5	None of the above	91	91%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

5% have purchased mobile phones from their income, 4% have purchased cycle, while the remaining 91% have not purchased any durable goods from their income.

**Table No. 12: Distribution of respondents by membership in the Self-help Group**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	77	77%
2	No	23	23%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

77% are members of the Self-Help Group, while the other 23% are not members.

**Table No. 13: Distribution of respondents by improvement in the access to credit through participation in the Self-Help Group**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	6	8%
2	No	71	92%
	Total	77	100%

**Analysis:**

92% believe that their participation in the Self-Help Group have not improved the access to credit, while the other 8% believe that their involvement in the self-help group have helped them get access to credit.

**Table No. 14: Distribution of respondents by type of handloom at home**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Country Loom	92	92%
2	Flying Shuttle	8	8%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

92% have country loom at home, while the other 8% have flying shuttle at home.

**Table No. 15: Distribution of respondents by type of clothes woven**

Sl. No.	Types of clothes	Respondents	Percentage
1	Only chadar	26	26%
2	Gamosa	-	-
3	Set of mekhela chadar	-	-
4	Handkerchief	-	-
5	All of the above	74	74%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

74% weave chadar, gamosa, set of mekhela chadar and handkerchief, while the other 26% weave only chadar.

**Table No. 16: Distribution of respondents by having access to household drinking water facilities**

Sl. No.	Drinking water facilities	Respondents	Percentage
1	Well	7	7%
2	Hand Pump	69	69%
3	Pond	8	8%
4	Water Supply	16	16%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

69% consume water from hand pump, 16% consume water from water supply, 8% from pond, while the other 7% consume water from well.

**Table No. 17: Distribution of respondents by having access to household latrin facilities**

Sl. No.	Latrin facilities	Respondents	Percentage
1	Field	1	1%



2	Kuchcha	80	80%
3	Pucca	19	19%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

80% have kuchcha latrin, 19% have pucca latrin, while the other 1% do not have any such facilities.

**Table no. 18: Distribution of respondents by having electricity in household**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	76	76%
2	No	24	24%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

76% have electricity in their household, while the remaining 24% do not have such facility.

**Table No. 19: Distribution of respondents by having health problem from weaving activity**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	66	66%
2	No	34	34%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

66% suffer from health problem due to weaving activity, while the other 34% do not any health issues.

**Table No. 20: Distribution of respondents by nature of diseases**

Sl. No.	Nature of diseases	Respondents	Percentage
1	Leg pain	-	-
2	Back pain	8	8%
3	Eye problem	82	82%
4	Headache	10	10%
5	Any other	-	-
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

82% suffer from eye problem, 10% suffer from headache, and the other 8% suffer from back pain.

**Table No. 21: Distribution of respondents by improvement in economic and social status from weaving**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	4	4%
2	No	96	96%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

96% believe that there is no improvement in their economic and social status due to weaving activity, while the other 4% believe that their economic and social status has improved due to weaving.

**Table No. 22: Distribution of respondents by right to spend own income as per one's choice**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	6	6%
2	No	94	94%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

94% do not have the right to spend own income as per one's choice, while the other 6% have the right to use their own money however they like.

**Table No. 23: Distribution of respondents by having same rights as that of husband to express opinion during the time of decision-making**

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	20	20%
2	No	80	80%
	Total	100	100%

**Analysis:**

From the above data, 80% of women weavers do not enjoy the same rights as that of their husband to express opinion during the time of decision making, while the other 20% states that they have the same rights as their husbands to voice their opinions when it comes to making decisions.

**5. Discussion and Suggestions**

1. Workshops and livelihood-based skill training should be conducted in rural areas through which the women of the community will get a better chance to be specialized in their field.

2. 68 per cent of the women weavers have educational level till secondary level only. As such, introduction of the adult education programme in rural areas is a good option to uplift their educational status.
3. Only 37 per cent of women weavers have other sources of income. Thus, other women should be encouraged to be engaged in piggery, poultry, goatry, and cattle breeding, which would assist families in earning extra income.
4. Almost all the women weavers should be encouraged to be a member of Self-help group in the village. In this study conducted, 92 per cent of the women weavers believe that their participation in the self-help group have not improved the access to credit. Thus, the self-help groups should be active in the activities that they have undertaken.
5. It is seen that around 74 per cent of the women weavers are capable of weaving a variety of clothes such as chadar, gamosa, set of mekhela chadar, and handkerchief. Thus, all that is required is proper livelihood-based skill training at professional level, and also utmost support and encouragement from the family members at personal level.

## **6. Conclusion**

Economic independence is essential for women's empowerment. Moreover, the women weavers have to be made aware of the fact that self-help groups have been instrumental in empowerment by enabling women to work together in collective agency. There are many stories of women weavers who have been successful in making weaving as an income generating source. In some cases, women from self-help groups have also been elected to public office, their participation in such groups serving as an incubator for community leadership.

Women weavers in Kosukhat village are not completely averse to the idea of taking up weaving as a full-time occupation or enterprising. All that is needed is provision of raw materials, training, access to markets, help and encouragement from family members, etc. to help such women utilize their skills productively. If such provisions are given to the village women of Kosukhat, we could expect more talented women weavers joining the commercial activity, and thereby, making the socio-economic condition of women weavers in Kosukhat village a much better one.

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