

Baluchari Beyond Beauty: A Socio-economic Lens on Bishnupur's Weaving Community

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Abstract:

Baluchari sarees are renowned for their intricate weaving and historical significance, and are known for their depictions of mythological scenes, usually from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, woven into the borders and pallu (the hanging end) of the saree. The weaving of Baluchari sarees is a highly skilled craft that involves traditional pit looms. These looms are operated manually, and the entire process of creating a single saree can take several weeks to complete. The survey-based research aims at studying the socio-economic perspective of Baluchari saree weavers in Bishnupur, West Bengal including the areas involved in examining various facets of their lives and work. This paper will try to depict economic conditions of such weavers and their social structure which was directly linked to the skills and techniques involving market dynamics. Here the Government interventions and challenges are areas involved in the discussion.

Keywords: Baluchari Saree, Weavers, Socio-Economic Perspective, Bishnupur, West Bengal

1. Introduction:

India is a treasure trove of diverse traditions. Among these traditions, the Baluchari Saree stands out as an exquisite masterpiece, celebrated for its intricate craftsmanship and historical significance. This silk saree is an example of the artistry that has been passed down through generations. People are often unaware of their own cultural heritage and the different crafts that are native to their birthplace. There is a need for people to know about the diverse crafts of India, because they directly talk about the country and its culture, and also because they are a repository of our traditions and way of life.

The pre-independent Bengal, with its muslins, brocades and jamdanis, was once one of the most important centers of handloom in the world. Baluchari, is a product of exquisite design and fabulous weaving technique of Bishnupur in West Bengal. The sophistication of the weave patterns and the stories that unfold with each saree, maybe it of mythology, history, or other contemporary events have made an incredible mark on our cultural heritage accounts.

Despite its cultural significance, the traditional craft of Baluchari weaving faced challenges over the years. The biggest problem faced by the weavers of Bishnupur is their economic backwardness. Most of them were not capable to arrange for capital required for invention and modification of Baluchari products. As a result, many weavers are slowly giving up their family businesses and taking up other trades and jobs and leading their future generations too to do the same.

Being a Library and Information Science professional, I got a scope to understand and interpret the topic in my own way. The community needs more attention to address the intricate web of necessities woven into their craft and livelihood. Proper organizational support and other financial assistance were required

to be arranged within the community to comprehensively recognize the information needs. The study would aim to provide actionable insights and recommendations to support and uplift the weaver community in Bishnupur.

2. Literature Review:

Mandal (2015) presented the demographic features, the socio-economic conditions and the on the whole living condition of the silk artisans of Mouza ChakHarharia, Murshidabad. This paper realized the problems faced by the artisans and also tried to find out the possible remedies. In other words, the investigator prepared a detail survey of the physical, cultural and social background of Mouza ChakHarharia.

Roy and Roy Mukherjee (2015) discussed the impact of productivity as an income generating factor in the artisanal silk sector of West Bengal. The article derived whether the income generation is translated into increase in land as well as labour productivity which can support this cottage-based industry to survive in this post-globalization era.

Chakrabarti et al. (2016) attempted to understand the major focal points of information needs of the weaving community of Madhya Sualkuchi of Assam such as their social and cultural life and other usual indicators of their information necessity. This field survey-based paper mainly concentrated on the information needs but also extent of access and exposure to information in terms of their profession.

Mallick & Dhar (2018) discussed the issues of rise, gradual decline, the revival and spread of the Baluchari craft and the Indian Government initiatives related with this weaving in their article. The study was done on spatial-temporal frame. The current status of the craft was analysed through primary research and field study and through in-depth personal interviews as well.

Banerjee and Chakrabarti (2020) attempted to examine the effect that the process of globalization has made among the silk weavers of Bishnupur region in West Bengal, India. It adopts a transformational approach and uses both contextual reading and ethnographic data collected through first hand fieldwork among the aforesaid community. The ethnography describes the messy and unquantifiable relationship between local actors and the international process.

Das (2021) examined the livelihood of Sambalpuri handloom weavers of Western Odisha, India. The study presented the socio-economic conditions of the weavers, by using the primary field survey data and analysing both the qualitative and quantitative data. A binary choice model is used to analyse the livelihood of weavers. The analysis showed that although the price of the product is quite high, almost all the weavers are not satisfied with the amount of the payments that they receive. There were recommendations for making necessary policies both by the central as well as the state governments to rescue these handloom weavers.

Patra (2021) attempted to study the role of the e-market in the marketing of handloom products in Cuttack district of Odisha. The research methodology followed here is based on both primary data and secondary data. The paper concluded with the importance of the E-market and how it is promoting the handloom products in the online platform, which leads to more popularity. Hence, the demands of handloom products in the technological era have a massive success for the Handloom Industry in Odisha. Thus, it may be concluded that the E-market has a significant role in the marketing of handloom products.

Das and Paltasingh (2023) showed the varied cultural legacy of Indian textile. The research was conducted in a hamlet in a prominent cluster in the western region of Odisha, India, utilizing both

qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study showed, Odisha's weavers faced a number of difficulties, such as ineffective marketing strategies, incompetent administrative staff, a lack of technological know-how, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of power looms, a lack of government support, etc. The analysis revealed that the majority of weavers were dissatisfied with the financial benefit while producing a high-quality, pricey product.

3. Objectives: The objectives of the study are:

- To evaluate the income levels, employment patterns, and financial stability of the weavers and to assess the contribution of Baluchari saree weaving to the household economy.
- To study the working hours, work environment, and health and safety conditions of the weavers.
- To identify the challenges and issues faced by weavers.
- To identify the role of government policies, subsidies, and schemes in supporting the weavers.
- To suggest strategies for improving the socio-economic conditions of the weavers.

These objectives can help provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic landscape of Baluchari saree weavers and inform policies and initiatives aimed at their welfare and the preservation of their craft.

4. Methodology

4.1. Scope and Coverage:

The researcher has physically visited the Bishnupur town and identified the areas of concentration of weavers. From the areas, the types of respondents were identified. There were big investors, small investors and laborers. Most of the weavers are practically loom-laborer. Thus, most of them are not capable to arrange for capital required for invention and modification of Baluchari products. The community needs more attention to address the intricate web of necessities woven into their craft and livelihood. Proper organizational support and other financial assistance must be arranged within the community to comprehensively recognize these needs. The study would aim to provide actionable insights and recommendations to support and uplift the weaver community in Bishnupur, fostering their cultural heritage while addressing their Socio-economic condition.

According to the 2011 census, Bishnupur has a total population of 137386. The municipality area consists of 19 wards. In these 19 wards the total population of the baluchari saree weaver community is 21264. In ward numbers 6, 7, 9, 10, and 17, the total population is 16,170. The Baluchari saree weaving centers are located at different areas namely Gopal Ganja, Krishna Ganja, Barakalitala, Patrapara, Raghunath Sayer etc. Amongst them, Patrapara and Krishnagunja, the busiest localities were occupied by the Baluchari weavers. To conduct the study the researcher has thoroughly examined the population and Morgan's sampling method is used to make a decision based on the representative sample. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method helps determine the sample size needed to make accurate inferences about the population.

4.2. Methods Used:

The researcher has carried out some reference works in several institutions and libraries to get in touch with demographic profile, population and the area's historical background. The literature relating to information need and weavers of Bishnupur, West Bengal has extensively browsed and consulted to get the categories of professional information need of weavers in Bishnupur. The work was based on a descriptive survey that consists of a structured questionnaire, interviews, and observation method. The

preliminary research questions were structured through a brief pilot project to get accurate information. Questions were grouped according to identify the information need of the community regarding their weaving profession and livelihood. The researcher has visited the area of study. After collecting the data, different tables were prepared considering different points of view. Finally, suggestions were given based on the conclusion drawn after analyzing the tables.

5. Significance of the study:

The weavers of Bishnupur, who work day and night to create art and tell stories through their weavings on cloth, the study aims to interpret their information need as an understanding of traditions, ethics, background, and experience along with how also traditions & techniques are becoming modernized. On the other side, the pre-independent Bengal, with its muslins, brocades and jamdanis, was once one of the most important centers of handloom in the world. Among them the most famous saree, which holds its well-known name, Baluchari, is a product of exquisite design and fabulous weaving technique of Bishnupur in West Bengal. The sophistication of the weave patterns and the stories that unfold with each saree, maybe it of mythology, history, or other contemporary events is spectacular. People are often unaware of their own cultural heritage and the different crafts that are native to their birthplace. There is a need for people to know about the diverse crafts of India, because they directly talk about the country and its culture, and also because they are a repository of our traditions and way of life.

The sustainable development comprises of different section of people consisting diverse nature. Baluchari saree weaving community is one such example. To develop them economically, we need to understand the different categories of information they require to develop their social and economic life. This study will help to give them different categories of information required for upgrading their socio-economic condition along with their trends of the satisfaction pattern towards their profession.

Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1. Distribution of population engaged in weaving and ancillary work of Baluchari Saree in Bishnupur, Bankura district

Category of Population in Bishnupur Municipality	Population (%)
Weaver and ancillary workers	21,264 (15.48%)
Other than weaving population	1,16,122 (84.52%)
Total Population in Bishnupur	137386 (100%)

Table 1 presents the distribution of the population in Bishnupur Municipality, Bankura district, based on their engagement in weaving and ancillary work related to Baluchari sarees.

Observations: Out of the total population of 137,386 in Bishnupur, 15.48% (21,264 people) are engaged in weaving and ancillary work related to Baluchari sarees. The remaining 84.52% (116,122 people) are involved in occupations other than weaving.

Distribution of questionnaire	Mode of Distribution	Number (%)
Total questionnaire distributed	Physical	1,000 (100%)
Questionnaire returned	Physical	733 (73.3%)
Questionnaire not returned	Physical	267 (26.7%)

Table 2: Distribution of the questionnaire among the weaver population in Bishnupur, Bankura

Table 2 shows the distribution of questionnaires among the weaver population in Bishnupur, Bankura district, highlighting the number of questionnaires distributed, returned, and not returned.

Observations: A total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed, and 733 were returned, resulting in a 73.3% response rate. 26.7% (267 questionnaires) were not returned.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents as per educational qualification

AgeGroup	Educational Qualification												Total	
	I-IV		V-IX		X pass		XII & above		Others		Illiterate			
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	5 (0.68)	0	0	0	9 (1.23)	2 (0.27)	10 (1.36)	2 (0.27)	1 (0.14)	0	0	0	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28-38 years	8 (1.09)	0	28 (3.82)	4 (0.55)	45 (6.14)	2 (0.27)	34 (4.64)	3 (0.41)	3 (0.41)	0	4 (0.55)	1 (0.14)	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38-48 years	17 (2.32)	4 (0.55)	84 (11.46)	10 (1.36)	85 (11.64)	2 (0.27)	34 (4.64)	1 (0.14)	3 (0.41)	0	9 (1.23)	0	232 (31.65)	17 (2.32)
48-58 years	29 (3.96)	8 (1.09)	63 (8.59)	8 (1.09)	67 (9.14)	1 (0.14)	21 (2.86)	3 (0.41)	10 (1.36)	0	6 (0.82)	0	196 (26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 years and above	28 (3.82)	0	43 (5.87)	3 (0.41)	22 (3.0)	0	8 (1.09)	2 (0.27)	0	0	0	1 (0.14)	101 (13.78)	6 (0.82)
Total	87 (11.87)	12 (1.64)	218 (29.74)	25 (3.41)	228 (31.11)	7 (0.95)	107 (14.60)	11 (1.50)	17 (2.32)	0	19 (2.59)	2 (0.27)	676 (92.3)	57 (7.77)

Table 3 provides the distribution of respondents based on their educational qualifications, segmented by age group and gender.

Observations: The majority of respondents have at least passed Class X (31.11% males and 0.95% females). 29.74% of males and 3.41% of females have an education up to Class V-IX. A significant portion of the 38-48 age group is highly educated compared to other age groups. Illiteracy is low, with only 2.59% of males and 0.27% of females reported as illiterate.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their Monthly Income with respect to age and sex

Age Group	Below Rs 5,000/-		Rs5,000/--Rs 10,000/-		Rs 10,000/- Rs15,000/-		More than Rs 15,000/--20,000/-		Total	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	2 (0.27)	1 (0.14)	19 (2.59)	2 (0.27)	4 (0.55)	0	0	1 (0.14)	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28-38 years	5 (0.68)	0	83 (11.32)	10 (1.36)	33 (4.50)	0	1 (0.14)	0	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38-48 years	7 (0.95)	3 (0.41)	167 (22.78)	12 (1.64)	38 (5.18)	2 (0.27)	20 (2.73)	0	232 (31.65)	17 (2.32)
48-58 years	2 (0.27)	4 (0.55)	145 (19.78)	16 (2.18)	37 (5.05)	0	12 (1.64)	0	196 (26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 years and above	3 (0.41)	1 (0.14)	69 (9.41)	5 (0.68)	22 (3.00)	0	7 (0.95)	0	101 (13.78)	6(0.82)
Total	19 (2.59)	9 (1.23)	483 (65.89)	45 (6.14)	134 (18.22)	2 (0.27)	40 (5.45)	1 (0.14)	676 (92.22)	57 (7.77)

Table 4 outlines the distribution of respondents based on their monthly income, segmented by age group and gender.

Observations: 65.89% of males and 6.14% of females earn between Rs 5,000/- and Rs 10,000/- monthly, making it the most common income bracket. A smaller percentage, 18.22% of males and 0.27% of females, earn Rs 10,000/- to Rs 15,000/- per month. Only 5.45% of males and 0.14% of females make over Rs 15,000/- to Rs 20,000/- monthly, indicating that high-income earners are relatively rare. The 38-48 age group has the largest percentage of respondents with higher income, particularly in the Rs 5,000/- to Rs 10,000/- range.

Table 5. Distribution of working hours of the weavers

Age Group	6 – 8 hours		8 – 10 hours		10 – 12 hours		Total	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18 – 28 years	8 (1.09)	4 (0.55)	7 (0.95)	0	10 (1.36)	0	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28 – 38 years	36 (4.91)	5 (0.68)	32 (4.37)	5 (0.68)	54 (7.37)	0	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38 – 48 years	60 (8.19)	15 (2.05)	103 (14.05)	2 (0.27)	69 (9.41)	0	232(31.65)	17 (2.32)
48 – 58 years	67 (9.14)	12 (1.64)	110 (15.01)	8 (1.09)	19 (2.59)	0	196(26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 years & above	60 (9.55)	6 (0.82)	25 (3.41)	0	6 (0.82)	0	101(13.78)	6 (0.82)

Total	241 (32.87)	42 (5.72)	277 (37.79)	15 (2.05)	158 (21.56)	0	676 (92.3)	57 (7.77)
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Table 5 provides the distribution of working hours among weavers, segmented by age group and gender. Observations: 37.79% of males and 2.05% of females work 8-10 hours daily, making it the most common working duration. 32.87% of males and 5.72% of females work 6-8 hours per day. 21.56% of males work 10-12 hours daily, while no females are recorded working more than 10 hours. The 38-48 years age group has the largest percentage of respondents working extended hours, particularly in the 8-10 hours range.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents regarding the category of role played in baluchari saree weaving

Age Group	Independent Weaver		Dependent Weaver/ Labourers		Total	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	25 (3.41)	0	0	4 (0.55)	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28-38 years	24 (3.27)	0	98 (13.37)	10 (1.36)	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38-48 years	36 (4.91)	2 (0.27)	196 (26.74)	15 (2.05)	232 (31.65)	17 (2.32)
48-58 years	41 (5.59)	1 (0.14)	155 (21.25)	19 (2.59)	196 (26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 and above years	40 (5.46)	0	61 (8.32)	6 (0.82)	101 (13.78)	6 (0.82)
Total	166 (22.65)	3 (0.41)	510 (69.57)	54 (7.36)	676 (92.3)	57 (7.77)

Table 6 outlines the distribution of respondents based on the category of role they play in Baluchari saree weaving, segmented into Independent Weavers and Dependent Weavers/Labourers by age group and gender.

Observations: 22.65% of males and 0.41% of females are Independent Weavers, while 69.57% of males and 7.36% of females are Dependent Weavers/Labourers. The 38-48 years age group has the highest number of both Independent Weavers and Dependent Weavers, indicating a significant portion of the workforce. Overall, the majority of weavers (both male and female) are Dependent Weavers/Labourers rather than independent artisans.

Table 7. Distribution of respondents regarding the involvement in the process of direct marketing

Age Group	Involved in the Direct Marketing		Not Involved in the Direct Marketing		Total	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	21 (3.41)	1 (0.14)	4 (0.55)	3 (0.41)	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)

28-38 years	32 (4.37)	2 (0.27)	90 (12.28)	8 (1.09)	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38-48 years	45 (6.14)	2 (0.27)	187 (25.51)	15 (2.05)	232 (31.65)	17 (2.32)
48-58 years	41 (5.59)	1 (0.14)	155 (21.25)	19 (2.59)	196 (26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 years and above	23 (3.14)	0	78 (10.64)	6 (0.82)	101 (13.78)	6 (0.82)
Total	162 (22.1)	6 (0.82)	514 (70.12)	51 (6.96)	676 (92.3)	57 (7.78)

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of respondents regarding their involvement in the process of direct marketing of Baluchari sarees, segmented by age group and gender.

Observations: 22.1% of males and 0.82% of females are involved in direct marketing, while the majority, 70.12% of males and 6.96% of females, are not involved in direct marketing. The 38-48 years age group has the highest percentage of respondents involved in direct marketing. Most weavers, particularly females, are not involved in direct marketing, indicating that a significant portion of the production is likely dependent on intermediaries or indirect market channels.

Table 8. Distribution of respondents regarding the category of house they live in

Age Group	Kachha House		Pakka House		Total	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18 – 28 years	4 (0.55)	0	21 (2.86)	3 (0.41)	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28 – 38 years	15 (2.05)	0	107 (14.6)	10 (1.36)	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)
38 – 48 years	30 (4.09)	3 (0.41)	202 (27.56)	1 (1.91)	232 (31.65)	17 (2.32)
48 – 58 years	32 (4.37)	4 (0.55)	164 (22.37)	16 (2.18)	196 (26.74)	20 (2.73)
58 years & above	16 (2.18)	1 (0.14)	85 (11.6)	5 (0.68)	101 (13.78)	6 (0.82)
Total	97 (13.23)	8 (1.091)	579 (78.99)	48 (6.55)	676 (92.3%)	57 (7.77%)

Table 8 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on the type of house they live in, categorized into Kachha (non-permanent) and Pakka (permanent) houses, across different age groups.

Observations: 78.99% of males and 6.55% of females live in Pakka houses, while 13.23% of males and 1.09% of females reside in Kachha houses. The 38–48 years age group has the highest percentage of people living in Pakka houses. Across all age groups, more people live in Pakka houses than Kachha houses, with the largest portion of respondents in the 38–48 and 48–58 age groups.

Table 9. Distribution of respondents regarding the ownership of Govt Identity Cards

Age Group	Voter Card		Aadhar	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	23 (3.14)	4 (0.55)	25 (3.41)	4 (0.55)
28-38 years	122 (16.64)	10 (1.36)	120 (16.37)	10 (1.36)
38-48 years	231 (31.51)	17 (2.32)	228 (31.11)	17 (2.32)
48-58 years	195 (26.60)	17 (2.32)	195 (26.60)	19 (2.59)
58 and above years	98 (13.37)	6 (0.82)	89 (12.14)	5 (0.68)
Total	669 (91.26)	54 (7.36)	657 (89.63)	55 (7.50)

Table 9 from the study presents the distribution of respondents based on the ownership of two government identity cards (Voter ID and Aadhar) across various age groups.

Observations: The majority of the respondents possess both Voter Cards and Aadhar Cards, with higher percentages in the male population. The 38-48 age group has the highest ownership of both cards. 91.26% of men and 7.36% of women have Voter Cards, while 89.63% of men and 7.50% of women possess Aadhar Cards.

Table 10. Distribution of respondents regarding problems faced by the weavers

Age Group	Minimum wages		Lack of skill development		Illiteracy		Unhealthy environment		Policy issues		Lack of govt. help	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	21 (2.86)	4 (0.55)	6 (0.82)	0	12 (1.64)	2 (0.27)	16 (2.18)	2 (0.27)	4 (0.55)	0	12 (1.64)	2 (0.27)
28-38 years	108 (14.73)	0 (1.09)	32 (4.37)	0	22 (3.00)	2 (0.27)	12 (1.64)	4 (0.55)	6 (0.82)	0	23 (3.14)	2 (0.27)
38-48 years	205 (27.97)	12 (1.64)	52 (7.09)	1 (0.14)	24 (3.27)	3 (0.41)	29 (3.96)	4 (0.55)	6 (0.82)	1 (0.14)	76 (10.37)	3 (0.41)
48-58 years	170 (23.19)	1 (0.14)	67 (9.14)	1 (0.14)	12 (1.64)	2 (0.27)	45 (6.14)	3 (0.41)	8 (1.09)	0	20 (2.73)	7 (0.95)
58 years and above	88 (12.01)	2 (0.27)	21 (2.86)	2 (0.27)	11 (1.50)	0	21 (2.86)	0	2 (0.27)	0	18 (2.46)	5 (0.68)

above												
Total	592 (80.76)	40 (5.46)	178 (24.28)	4 (0.55)	81 (11.05)	9 (1.22)	123 (16.78)	13 (1.77)	26 (3.54)	1 (0.13)	149 (20.33)	19 (2.59)

Table 10 illustrates the distribution of respondents regarding the problems they face as weavers, categorized by various issues such as minimum wages, lack of skill development, illiteracy, unhealthy environment, policy issues, and lack of government help, segmented by age group and gender.

Observations: The most common issue faced by weavers is related to minimum wages, with 80.76% of males and 5.45% of females identifying it as a major concern. 24.28% of males and 0.54% of females reported a lack of skill development as a significant problem. Policy issues and lack of government help are notable challenges, affecting 20.32% of males and 2.59% of females. The 38-48 years age group reports the highest levels of problems across most categories, particularly regarding minimum wages and lack of government help. This data reflects the major socio-economic issues impacting the livelihoods of Baluchari saree weavers, particularly in terms of wages, skill development, and government support.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents as per the facilities of Government policies for their professional development

Age Group	Government policies											
	Skill Development and Training		Market Access and Promotion		Infrastructure Development		Legal and Policy Framework		Cultural Preservation		Environmental Sustainability	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18-28 years	10 (1.36)	2 (0.27)	12 (1.64)	1 (0.14)	8 (1.09)	0	5 (0.68)	0	6 (0.82)	0	4 (0.55%)	1 (0.14)
28-38 years	45 (6.14)	4 (0.55)	55 (7.50)	5 (0.68)	38 (5.18)	2 (0.27)	30 (4.09)	1 (0.14)	40 (5.46)	2 (0.27)	25 (3.41%)	3 (0.41)
38-48 years	90 (12.28)	8 (1.09%)	100 (13.64)	7 (0.95)	85 (11.60)	6 (0.82)	80 (10.91)	5 (0.68)	88 (12.01)	4 (0.55)	70 (10.36%)	6 (0.82)
48-58 years	80 (10.19)	6 (0.82)	95 (12.96)	3 (0.41)	78 (10.64)	1 (0.14)	65 (8.87)	0	70 (9.55)	4 (0.55)	55 (8.13%)	1 (0.14)
58 years and above	50 (6.82)	3 (0.41%)	60 (8.19)	2 (0.27)	45 (6.64%)	2 (0.27)	38 (5.18)	2 (0.27)	40 (5.46)	3 (0.41)	30 (4.44%)	2 (0.27)
Total	275 (37.5)	25 (3.41)	322 (43.9)	18 (2.4)	254 (34.65)	11 (1.5)	218 (29.7)	8 (1.0)	244 (33.2)	13 (1.7)	184 (25.10)	13 (1.7)

	2)		3)	6))	0)	4)	9)	9)	7)		7)
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This table provides an overview of how different age groups and genders are benefiting from various government policies related to professional development, with varying degrees of awareness and participation.

Observations: Skill Development and Training benefits 37.52% of males and 3.41% of females, with the highest participation in the 38-48 years age group. Market Access and Promotion is the most widely accessed facility, benefiting 43.93% of males and 2.46% of females, particularly in the 38-48 years age group. Cultural Preservation is accessed by 33.29% of males and 1.77% of females, showing relatively balanced awareness across age groups. Environmental Sustainability policies have lower participation rates overall, benefiting 25.10% of males and 1.77% of females, with more awareness in the middle age groups.

Table 11. Distribution of Respondents getting facilities from the Govt. Social Welfare schemes

Age Group	Social Welfare Schemes																			
	100 Days Work		Mid-Day Meal		Indira Awas Yojana		ICDS		West Bengal Artisan and Weaver old age pension		Weavers Credit Card (Mudra)		Tantsathi		MGB BY		RSBY		Nekar Samman Scheme	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
18 - 28 years	21 (2.86)	3 (0.41)	21 (2.86)	4 (0.55)	21 (2.86)	3 (0.41)	11 (1.5)	0	15 (2.05)	2 (0.27)	15 (2.05)	0	13 (1.77)	2 (0.27)	6 (0.82)	3 (0.41)	21 (2.86)	1 (0.14)	1 (0.14)	0
28 - 38 years	67 (9.14)	2 (0.27)	23 (3.14)	0	59 (8.05)	2 (0.27)	23 (3.14)	1 (0.14)	28 (3.82)	2 (0.27)	24 (3.27)	1 (0.14)	25 (3.41)	3 (0.41)	20 (2.73)	0	13 (1.77)	0	15 (2.05)	0
38 - 48 years	12 (1.65)	13 (1.77)	98 (3.37)	0	25 (3.41)	1 (0.14)	24 (3.27)	1 (0.14)	40 (5.4)	7 (0.95)	12 (1.65)	1 (0.14)	12 (1.65)	9 (1.23)	26 (3.55)	5 (0.68)	12 (1.65)	0	18 (2.4)	0

ar s	1)										8)		9)				3)			
48	17	12	78	1	10	2	45	1	10	7	10	2	12	0	27	4	13	0	5	0
-	1	(1	(1	(0	6	(0	(6	(0	7	(0	2	(0	7		(3.	(0	2		(0	
58	(2	.6	0.6	.1	(1	.2	.1	.1	(1	.9	(1	.2	(1		68)	.5	(1		.6	
ye	3.3	4)	4)	4)	4.4	7)	4)	4)	4.6	5)	3.9	7)	7.3			5)	8.0		8)	
ar	3)				6))		2)		3)				1)			
s																				
58	81	0	78	3	36	3	25	0	77	4	78	1	88	7	15	3	71	1	11	1
ye	(1		(1	(0	(4.	(0	(3		(1	(0	(1	(0	(1	(0	(2.	(0	(9.	(0	(1	(0
ar	1.0		0.6	.4	91	.4	.4		0.5	.5	0.6	.1	2.0	.	05)	.4	69	.1	.5	.1
s	5)		4)	1))	1)	1))	5)	4)	4)	1)	9		1))	4)	0)	4)
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Table 10 illustrates the distribution of respondents regarding the problems they face as weavers, categorized by various issues such as minimum wages, lack of skill development, illiteracy, unhealthy environment, policy issues, and lack of government help, segmented by age group and gender.

Observations: 62.2% of males and 4.14% of females benefit from the 100 Days Work scheme, making it the most commonly accessed welfare benefit. 44.05% of males and 1.09% of females benefit from the Mid-Day Meal scheme. The West Bengal Artisan and Weaver old age pension is accessed by 39.49% of males and 3.05% of females. 56.5% of males and 2.87% of females use the Tantsathi scheme, indicating its wide reach. The RSBY scheme is utilized by 53.8% of males and 0.27% of females, showcasing its significant coverage.

Conclusion

The study on the socio-economic perspective of Baluchari saree weavers in Bishnupur, West Bengal, can conclude several key points based on various factors such as the economic conditions, social status, and challenges faced by the weavers. Here are some potential conclusions:

Challenges

Economic Importance: Baluchari saree weaving is a significant contributor to the local economy of Bishnupur. It provides livelihood to numerous families and sustains the traditional craft industry.

Income Levels: While the craft generates income for the weavers, many face economic challenges due to fluctuating market demands, competition, and the cost of raw materials.

Financial Instability: A significant number of weavers live with financial instability, lacking access to formal credit facilities and relying on informal lending sources with high-interest rates.

Raw Material Costs: The high cost of raw materials is a significant challenge. Measures such as subsidies or bulk purchasing options through cooperatives can alleviate this issue.

Social Dynamics

Community and Tradition: The weaving community in Bishnupur is tightly knit, with skills and knowledge often passed down through generations, preserving the cultural heritage of Baluchari sarees.

Social Status: Weavers generally enjoy respect within their communities due to their craftsmanship, though their social status might be lower compared to other occupations in urban areas.

Education and Skills Development: There is a need for improved educational opportunities and skill development programs to help weavers adapt to modern techniques and marketing strategies.

Government and Institutional Support

Schemes and Benefits: Various government schemes aimed at supporting handloom weavers exist, but their implementation and reach can be inconsistent. Better execution of these schemes can improve the weavers' socio-economic conditions.

Cooperative Societies: Cooperative societies can play a crucial role in enhancing the bargaining power of weavers, ensuring fair prices for their products, and providing access to better resources.

Market Dynamics and Opportunities

Market Access: Limited market access and reliance on middlemen reduce the profit margins for weavers. Direct market access through exhibitions, online platforms, and tie-ups with fashion brands can increase their earnings.

Innovations and Adaptations: Adapting to contemporary designs and diversifying the product range can attract a broader customer base and open new market opportunities.

Suggestions

The socio-economic conditions of Baluchari saree weavers in Bishnupur reflect both the rich cultural heritage and the significant challenges of sustaining traditional crafts in a modern economy. While the weaving community plays a crucial role in preserving this heritage, strategic interventions in terms of market access, financial support, and skill development are essential for their sustainable development. Collaborative efforts from the government, non-governmental organizations, and private sector can enhance the socio-economic well-being of these artisans, ensuring the continuity and growth of the Baluchari saree tradition. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the Baluchari saree weavers in Bishnupur requires a multifaceted approach involving government interventions, community efforts, market strategies, and educational initiatives. Here are several suggestions to help achieve this:

1. Government and Policy Support

- Subsidies for raw materials and financial assistance for weavers to invest in modern equipment and technology should be provided.
- Implementation of comprehensive health insurance and pension schemes tailored for weavers to ensure their well-being and financial security.
- Effective implementation of existing schemes like the Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme and others.

2. Market Access and Development

- Establishment of direct market channels such as government-run shops, and e-commerce platforms, and participation in national and international exhibitions to eliminate middlemen and increase profits for weavers.

- Development of a strong brand identity for Baluchari sarees through marketing campaigns highlighting their cultural and artistic value.
- Enabling connections with international buyers to support weavers in meeting export standards to open up global markets.

3. Skill Development and Education

- Regular training programs on modern weaving techniques, design innovations, and digital marketing to enhance the skills of the weavers.
- Educational opportunities like scholarships and incentives for the children of weavers to ensure they have access to quality education and alternative career options if desired.
- workshops with designers to help weavers create contemporary designs while maintaining traditional craftsmanship.

4. Financial Services and Credit Facilities

- Microfinance and Cooperative Banks: Establish microfinance institutions and cooperative banks specifically for weavers to provide low-interest loans and credit facilities.
- Savings and Investment Plans: Introduce savings schemes and investment plans to help weavers manage their finances better and plan for future needs.

5. Community and Cooperative Development

- Cooperative societies or establish new ones to improve bargaining power, collective purchasing of raw materials, and better distribution of profits.
- Community Centers: Set up community centers where weavers can gather to share knowledge, resources, and support each other in various aspects of their lives and work.

6. Technology Integration

- Digital Literacy: Provide digital literacy training to help weavers use technology for marketing, sales, and financial management.
- E-commerce Platforms: Develop and maintain e-commerce platforms where weavers can directly sell their products to consumers globally.

7. Infrastructure Development

- Workspaces and Facilities: Improve the infrastructure of weaving workspaces to ensure a safe and conducive working environment.
- Transportation and Logistics: Enhance transportation and logistics facilities to reduce the time and cost involved in sourcing raw materials and delivering finished products.

8. Cultural Preservation and Tourism

- Cultural Festivals and Exhibitions: Organize cultural festivals and exhibitions to promote Baluchari sarees and attract tourists, creating additional revenue streams for weavers.
- Tourism Initiatives: Develop tourism initiatives that include visits to weaving centers, where tourists can learn about the craft and purchase sarees directly from weavers.

By addressing these areas through a collaborative approach involving the government, private sector, and community organizations, the socio-economic conditions of Baluchari saree weavers in Bishnupur can be significantly improved. Ensuring sustainable development and preserving this traditional craft will not only benefit the weavers but also contribute to the cultural richness and economic diversity of the region.

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