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HANDLOOM AS AN ACTIVITY TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Food security is built on three pillars, namely food availability, food access and food use. Handloom industry is one of those economic activities that help formation of resources or build up purchasing power not only of the weavers' families but also of middlemen, mahajans and traders and other families who are indirectly involved in this activity. Thus it contributes to food security by enhancing purchasing power of the artisan households and thus to access to food. Against this perspective the present study examines the demand (income or access) aspect of food security with reference to handloom industry of four sample districts of West Bengal. It examines the contribution of handloom industry in the form of employment and income generation and thus access to food security, assesses the share of the artisan households who are food secure and also analyses the problems that are encountered by the artisan households to ensure food security. The work is based on primary data. Multi-stage stratified random sampling has been used to collect primary data from sample 480 households. It is observed that food security is higher for artisan households who are independent and that is higher for districts which are relatively developed. Thus food security is related to production organization and the degree of development of the region.

KEYWORDS

Food Security, Handloom industry.

INTRODUCTION

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Household food security is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern. **Food insecurity**, on the other hand, exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined above.

Food security is built on three pillars:

- Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
- Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation.

Any economic activity builds up resources or increase purchasing power of an individuals/households or community. Handloom activity is one of those economic activities that help formation of resources or build up purchasing power not only of the weavers' families but also of middlemen, mahajans and traders families and other families who are indirectly involved in this activity. Thus handloom industry contributes to food security by enhancing purchasing power of the artisan household and thus to access to food.

Against this brief perspective, in the present study we examine the demand (income or access) aspect of food security with reference to handloom industry of four sample districts of West Bengal. The paper tries to examine two important things: i) food security in relation to level of development and ii) food security in relation to production organization.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the contribution of handloom industry in the form of employment and income generation and thus access to food security.
2. To examine the extent of food security of the artisan households and
3. To analyse the problems that are encountered by the artisan households to ensure food security.

METHODOLOGY

To serve our purpose, we resort to primary data. Multi-stage stratified random sampling has been used to collect primary data on characteristics of the artisans' households, production organization of handloom industries, economics of the industries, and consumption pattern of the handloom artisans' households. Stages here comprise District, Block, Village and Artisan Households while strata include relatively developed and relatively backward districts. Two districts each from among the relatively developed and the relatively backward districts have been randomly selected. Two blocks from each sample district and two villages from each sample block and thirty (30) artisan households from each sample village have been randomly selected. Thus our sample comprises 4(four) districts, 8(eight) blocks, 16(sixteen) villages and 480 households for our in-depth study on Handloom Industry in relation to food security. Simple statistical tools like percentage, mean have been used to analyze the data.

CONTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN THE FORM OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION AND THUS ACCESS TO FOOD SECURITY

Total number of workers employed in 480 sample handloom units is 1531. Largest number of workers is employed in sample handloom units in Bankura district (461) followed by Hooghly (363), Nadia (362) and Purba Medinipur district (345). Independent units employ largest number of workers (622) followed by cooperative (462) and tied units (447). In all the sample districts independent units employ larger number of workers than cooperative and tied units. So, independent units are larger in size in respect of number of labourers employed than other two organizations (Table 1).

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE HANDLOOM BY NUMBER OF TOTAL WORKERS*

Districts	Total number of workers working under different production organizations			
	Independent	Cooperative	Tied	Total
Bankura	200(43.38)	128(27.77)	133(28.85)	461(100)
Hooghly	146(40.22)	108(29.75)	109(30.03)	363(100)
Nadia	141(38.95)	116(32.04)	105(29.01)	362(100)
Purba Medinipur	135(39.13)	110(31.88)	100(28.99)	345(100)
Grand total	622(40.63)	462(30.18)	447(29.20)	1531(100)

Source: Field survey 2009-10

Notes: *Total workers = Artisans + Assistant Artisans. Figures in parentheses represent the percentage share.

WORKING DAYS

Average number of person days worked per worker in the year may be considered a good indicator of employment. The average number of working days worked per worker (pd) is highest in cooperative organization in the district of Bankura (329 days) and there is no significant variation of average number of working days worked per worker between the organizations in the same district. However, among the districts there are some variations in average number of working days worked per worker. The coefficient of variation among units in each organization in Purba Medinipur districts is higher than that in Bankura district (Table 2).

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM UNITS BY NUMBER OF PERSON-DAYS WORKED PER WORKER AND PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	Average working days in the year		
	Independent	Cooperative	Tied
Bankura	325.2{3.57}	329.4{2.50}	325.8{4.01}
Hooghly	303.77{3.93}	309.79{4.33}	309.59{3.93}
Nadia	293.7{2.90}	297.67{3.32}	300.75{4.32}
Purba Medinipur	276.38{6.44}	281.87{8.21}	275.91{6.29}

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Note: Figures in {} represent coefficient of variation.

EARNINGS FROM LABOUR

Actual earnings from labour per manday (Rs.) significantly vary across production organizations (Table 3). Earnings from labour per man-day in independent units are higher than those of cooperative and tied units in all sample districts at 1 percent level of significance. Earning from labour of tied units is lower than that of cooperative units also. Earning from labour per man-day is highest (Rs. 124.47) in independent units of Bankura district and it is lowest (79.25) in tied units in the district of Purba Medinipur. The labour earnings differential across production organizations is explained by the economic conditions of the labourers' households and also by the imperfect labour market.

TABLE 3: ACTUAL EARNINGS FROM LABOUR PER MAN-DAY FROM HANDLOOM BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	Earnings from labour per manday (Rs.)			F- statistic
	Independent	Cooperative	Tied	
Bankura	124.47 (12.59)	109.70(10.24)	107.51(9.80)	10.58 {0.000}
Hooghly	116.04(9.20)	96.41(7.43)	89.38(6.81)	56.59 {0.000}
Nadia	129.27(4.51)	110.42(6.50)	99.57(5.48)	118.51 {0.000}
Purba Medinipur	109.60(3.98)	91.57(7.68)	79.25(7.23)	137.91{0.000}

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Notes: Figures in parenthesis () represent coefficient of variation and figures in {} represent level of significance.

INCOME OF HANDLOOM HOUSEHOLDS

Income from handloom activities includes the gross profit earned from the handloom production. Percentage share of different sources of income to total income across production organizations reveals that 60 percent to 89 percent income is generated from the handloom activities. Even cooperative and tied weavers depend on the income from the handloom activities. Only 11 percent to 40 percent household incomes come from other than handloom activities (Table 4).

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE SHARE OF DIFFERENT SOURCES OF ANNUAL INCOME (RS.) BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	OrganiSation	Handloom industry income	Agricultural and allied income	Trade & Business	Service	Total
Bankura	Ind.	121751(89.12)	10416(7.62)	1600(1.17)	2850(2.09)	136617(100)
	Coopt.	46424(78.24)	10088(17.00)	1750(2.95)	1075(1.81)	59336(100)
	Tied	42513(81.92)	7280(14.03)	2100(4.05)	0(0.00)	51893(100)
Hooghly	Ind.	115206(89.13)	10072(7.79)	3280(2.54)	700(0.54)	129258(100)
	Coopt.	58803(83.27)	9023(12.78)	2115(3.00)	675(0.96)	70615(100)
	Tied	55603(85.45)	8015(12.32)	16000(24.59)	650(1.00)	65068(100)
Nadia	Ind.	129174(89.85)	9411(6.55)	1980(1.38)	3200(2.23)	143765(100)
	Coopt.	62800(82.44)	8591(11.28)	2665(3.50)	2125(2.79)	76182(100)
	Tied	50903(84.92)	7591(12.66)	16000(26.69)	650(1.08)	59944(100)
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	88949(72.45)	27950(22.77)	1375(1.12)	4500(3.67)	122774(100)
	Coopt.	56589(75.32)	13442(17.89)	1444(1.92)	3800(5.06)	75131(100)
	Tied	40486(60.34)	12532(18.68)	12500(18.63)	1575(2.35)	67093(100)

Source: Field Survey.

Notes: Figures in parentheses represent the percentage share of total income and Ind. Coopt. indicate weavers working under independent organization and cooperative organization respectively.

The principal source of livelihood of sample households is thus the weaving of handloom clothes. Per capita monthly income from handloom of independent weavers' households is higher than that of cooperative and tied weavers in the sample districts (Table 5). Similarly, per capita total income of independent proprietor households is higher than per capita income of cooperative and tied ones. Per capita income of cooperative units is not so high. Cooperative and tied weavers maintain their income from handloom activities at least at their subsistence level of living. Agriculture & allied activities, trade & business and service are other sources of income in order of importance. Per capita income of independent weavers from non-industrial sources is not necessarily higher than that of cooperative and tied weavers. It seems that two interacting forces can be worked in this circumstance. Generally, households deriving income from handloom industry might have a tendency to concentrate on handloom activities shifting away from other than handloom activities. They also maintain avenues of income from non-industrial sources (especially, agriculture) so that they can combat any recessionary situation in the handloom industry.

Per capita monthly income is highest (Rs. 2033) in independent organization of Bankura district followed by Nadia (Rs1964), Hooghly (Rs1766) and Purba Medinipur district (Rs1764). Similarly per capita monthly income from handloom is highest (Rs. 1812) in independent organization of Bankura district followed by Nadia (Rs1765), Hooghly (Rs1574) and Purba Medinipur district (Rs1278). Where as per capita total income and also per capita income from handloom activity are lowest in cooperative units and tied units of Bankura district. Percentage share of different sources of per capita income to per capita total income across production organizations reveals that 60 percent to 89 percent per capita income is generated from the handloom activities.

TABLE 5: PER CAPITA INCOME (₹) (MONTHLY) FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES OF HOUSEHOLDS BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	Organization	Handloom industry income	Agricultural and allied income	Trade & Business	Service	Total
Bankura	Ind.	1812(89.12)	155(7.62)	24(1.17)	42(2.09)	2033(100)
	Coopt.	679(78.24)	147(17.00)	26(2.95)	16(1.81)	867(100)
	Tied	622(81.92)	106(14.03)	31(4.05)	0(0.00)	759(100)
Hooghly	Ind.	1574(89.13)	138(7.79)	45(2.54)	10(0.54)	1766(100)
	Coopt.	803(83.27)	123(12.78)	29(3.00)	9(0.96)	965(100)
	Tied	713(85.45)	103(12.32)	205(24.59)	8(1.00)	834(100)
Nadia	Ind.	1765(89.85)	129(6.55)	27(1.38)	44(2.23)	1964(100)
	Coopt.	969(82.43)	133(11.28)	41(3.50)	33(2.79)	1176(100)
	Tied	816(84.92)	122(12.66)	256(26.69)	10(1.08)	961(100)
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	1278(72.45)	402(22.77)	20(1.12)	65(3.67)	1764(100)
	Coopt.	873(75.32)	207(17.89)	22(1.92)	59(5.06)	1159(100)
	Tied	553(60.34)	171(18.68)	171(18.63)	22(2.35)	917(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Note: Figures in parentheses represent the percentage share of total income.

EXTENT OF FOOD SECURITY OF THE ARTISAN HOUSEHOLDS

Consumption pattern is important aspect to measure the general standard of living of sample handloom industrial households. Consumption comprises food consumption and non-food consumption. Food consumption includes the consumption of cereals, pulses, milk and milk products, edible oil, vegetables, non-vegetables (meat, fish and egg), sugar, beverages, pan, tobacco etc. Non-food consumption is classified into three groups, namely expenditure on clothing and payment to washer man; expenditure on medical expenditure; expenditure on electricity, phone and other social, ritual and luxurious expenditures.

Consumption pattern across artisans' households having different production organizations has been depicted in Table 6. It reveals that the sample households have high percentage of their consumption expenditures on food items (about 70 percent in cooperative and tied units irrespective of sample district). Percentage share of food consumption of independent households is lower than that of the cooperative and tied artisans' households, while that of non-food consumption, e.g., clothing expenditure, medical expenditure and expenditure on other items of artisans' households is higher. This is because cooperative and tied weavers are relatively poor so that they cannot spend more on non-food purposes, which are not so important for their survival. To meet social and ritual expenses on account of the prevailing dowry system, marriage ceremony etc. even lower income households are sometimes forced to go beyond their means and are even bound to curtail food consumption and medical budget.

TABLE 6: ANNUAL CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURES OF HANDLOOM HOUSEHOLDS BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS (Rs. 000)

District	Organisation	Food-items	Clothing	Medicine	Electricity, Phone & other social, ritual, luxurious items	Total Consumption
Bankura	Ind.	46520(55.83)	14750(17.70)	6150(7.38)	15900(19.08)	83320(100)
	Coopt.	37290(69.73)	6010(11.24)	4870(9.11)	5310(9.93)	53480(100)
	Tied	34470(71.16)	5140(10.61)	4300(8.88)	4530(9.35)	48440(100)
Hooghly	Ind.	49830(58.05)	13520(15.75)	5980(6.97)	16510(19.23)	85840(100)
	Coopt.	42830(68.52)	8240(13.18)	5440(8.70)	6000(9.60)	62510(100)
	Tied	43410(72.39)	5500(9.17)	5810(9.69)	5250(8.75)	59970(100)
Nadia	Ind.	53200(58.01)	14260(15.55)	6710(7.32)	17540(19.13)	91710(100)
	Coopt.	38800(70.24)	6740(12.20)	4430(8.02)	5270(9.54)	55240(100)
	Tied	34210(70.41)	5830(12.00)	4180(8.60)	4370(8.99)	48590(100)
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	49530(60.43)	12810(15.63)	5880(7.17)	13740(16.76)	81960(100)
	Coopt.	39820(72.41)	6160(11.20)	3960(7.20)	5050(9.18)	54990(100)
	Tied	39450(71.60)	5870(10.65)	4460(8.09)	5320(9.66)	55100(100)

Source: Field Survey.

Note: Figures in parentheses represent the percentage share of total consumption.

Per capita monthly consumption expenditures of sample weavers' households on different items by organizations are shown in Table 7. Per capita monthly consumption expenditure of weavers under cooperative is more or less similar to those under tied units. Per capita monthly consumption expenditures on food varies from Rs 681 to Rs 727 in independent units where as in cooperative units it varies from Rs 545 to Rs 615 and in tied units it varies from Rs 504 to Rs 557. It reveals that the sample households have high percentage of their consumption expenditures on food items (about 70 percent in cooperative and tied units irrespective of sample district).

TABLE 7: PER CAPITA (MONTHLY) CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURES OF HANDLOOM HOUSEHOLDS BY PRODUCT AND PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS (Rs.)

District	Org.	Food-items	Clothing	Medicine	Electricity, Phone & other social, ritual, luxurius items	Total Consumption
Bankura	Ind.	692(55.81)	219(17.66)	92(7.42)	237(19.11)	1240(100)
	Coopt.	545(69.69)	88(11.25)	71(9.08)	78(9.97)	782(100)
	Tied	504(71.19)	75(10.59)	63(8.90)	66(9.32)	708(100)
Hooghly	Ind.	681(58.06)	185(15.77)	82(6.99)	226(19.27)	1173(100)
	Coopt.	585(68.50)	113(13.23)	74(8.67)	82(9.60)	854(100)
	Tied	557(72.43)	71(9.23)	74(9.62)	67(8.71)	769(100)
Nadia	Ind.	727(58.02)	195(15.56)	92(7.34)	240(19.15)	1253(100)
	Coopt.	599(70.31)	104(12.21)	68(7.98)	81(9.51)	852(100)
	Tied	548(70.35)	93(11.94)	67(8.60)	70(8.99)	779(100)
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	712(60.44)	184(15.62)	84(7.13)	197(16.72)	1178(100)
	Coopt.	615(72.44)	95(11.19)	61(7.18)	78(9.19)	849(100)
	Tied	539(71.58)	80(10.62)	61(8.10)	73(9.69)	753(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Note: Figures in () represent Percentage share.

Table 8 reveals that per capita average calories intake were highest (2928 kcal/day) in independent organizations of Nadia district and lowest (2536 kcal/day) in tied organizations of Bankura district and all the estimated per capita average calories intake (kcal/day) are more than standard norm (2400 kcal/day in rural areas) suggested by GOI. Only 7 (1.46 percent) artisans household of the total 480 are food insecure in calories consumption < 2400 kcal/day. The reason behind this is most of these 7 artisan household have to taken loan from mahajan or others and that's why they bound to curtail their consumption expenditure for repayment of loan. Out of 7 food insecure families 5 families are in cooperative and tied units of relatively backward district Bankura.

TABLE 8: PER CAPITA CALORIE CONSUMPTION OF HANDLOOM HOUSEHOLDS BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	Org.	Per capita average calories intake (kcal/day)	No. of families food secure according standard calories consumption \geq 2400 kcal/day	No. of families food in-secure in calories consumption < 2400 kcal/day	Total No. of families
1	2	3	4	5	6
Bankura	Ind.	2789	40	0(0.00)	40
	Coopt.	2641	38	2(5.00)	40
	Tied	2536	37	3(7.50)	40
Hooghly	Ind.	2831	40	0(0.00)	40
	Coopt.	2733	40	0(0.00)	40
	Tied	2696	39	1(2.50)	40
Nadia	Ind.	2928	40	0(0.00)	40
	Coopt.	2771	40	0(0.00)	40
	Tied	2681	39	1(2.50)	40
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	2867	40	0(0.00)	40
	Coopt.	2744	40	0(0.00)	40
	Tied	2695	40	0(0.00)	40
Total			473	7(1.46)	480

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Note: Figures in () represent Percentage share.

NB: The Planning Commission constituted a 'Task Force on Projection of Minimum Needs and Effective Consumption Demand' which, on the basis of a systematic study of nutritional requirements, recommended (GOI 1979) a national norm of 2,400 and 2,100 kilo calories/day for rural and urban areas (the difference being attributed to the lower rates of physical activity in the urban areas) respectively. The average calorie norm of 2,110 kcal per capita per day prescribed by the FAO for South Asia (Bajpai et al. 2005) in the eighties is much lower than the 2,400 kcal norm that has been typically used by government in India. The latest calorie norm used by FAO for India is 1820 kcal (IFPRI 2008).

The income derives from handloom activity of artisan households of sample districts are greater than that of total consumption expenditure except the sample artisan households working under cooperative and tied organizations in the districts of Bankura and Hooghly. These artisan households depend on other income only 6 percent to 15 percent of total consumption expenditure. From this, it is high lighted that the handloom activity ensures food security to the artisan households.

About 38% to 55% of incomes derive from handloom activity used to meet the food expenditure in independent organization of sample districts where as in cooperative organization it varies from 61 percent to 80 percent and in tied organization it varies from 67 percent to 97 percent of handloom income. Handloom income of independent units is much higher than their required food expenditure whereas. So degree of dependence on handloom income for food access is higher in tied units of relatively backward district (Table 9).

PROBLEMS THAT ARE ENCOUNTERED BY THE ARTISAN HOUSEHOLDS TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY

1. The mere consumption of an adequate number of calories may not ensure sufficient intake of other nutrients, such as proteins, fats and micro-nutrients, which are just as essential for human health. It can further be argued that there is a distinction between gross calorie intake and net calorie absorption, and that the relationship between the two may change over time depending upon the incidence and severity of gastrointestinal disorders.
2. Food security fluctuates due to change of handloom product price and also the price inflation of food items.
3. Intra house hold distribution of food determines the nutritional status of the individual member of the household. Consumption data on individual household members is hard to find. For example women could be getting less than men or girl child getting less than the boys.
4. At the household level food insecurity is mainly due to lack of economic access to adequate food. The poor are the worst affected by food insecurity, which is primarily of two types, *transient* and *chronic*. The longer-term problem related to malnutrition and poverty is referred to as chronic food insecurity, which is largely due to, continued lack of access to productive assets and employment.

TABLE 9: PERCENTAGE OF PER CAPITA CALORIE CONSUMPTION DERIVES FROM HANDLOOM ACTIVITY BY PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN SAMPLE DISTRICTS

District	Organization	Food expenses as a percentage of income from handloom	Total consumption expenditure as a percentage of income from Handloom
1	2	3	4
Bankura	Ind.	38.19	68.43
	Coopt	80.27	115.20
	Tied	81.03	113.94
Hooghly	Ind.	43.27	74.51
	Coopt	72.85	106.30
	Tied	78.12	107.85
Nadia	Ind.	41.19	71.00
	Coopt	61.82	87.96
	Tied	67.16	95.46
Purba Medinipur	Ind.	55.71	92.14
	Coopt	70.45	97.17
	Tied	97.47	136.10

Source: Field Survey, 2009-10.

Note: Ind. Coopt. indicate weavers working under independent organization and cooperative organization respectively.

CONCLUSION

Handloom activity ensures food security to artisan households by capacity building of food accessibility. Handloom activity ensures food security to artisan households by capacity building of food accessibility. Food security is higher for artisan households who are independent and that is higher for districts which are relatively developed. Thus food security is related to production organization and the degree of development of the region.

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