

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LIVELIHOOD OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS: A CASE STUDY IN SUTI - II C.D. BLOCK, MURSHIDABAD, WEST BENGAL

Koushik Kumar Das¹, Dr. Ajay Debnath²

¹ Student, Nathulal Das P.T.T.I & B.Ed. College, Murshidabad, 742224, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Sripat Singh College, Murshidabad, 742123, India

ABSTRACT

Handloom is one kind of skill which is manually operated loom without using electricity. In India handloom weaving is one kind of ancient industry. This old culture of art is famous nationally and internationally due to the demand for handicrafts, cultural heritage and unique traditional design. Handloom industry in Suti – II C.D. Block is an ancient cottage industry which is take a unique place in the economy and social life. On 24 March, 2020 the Government of India declared lockdown across the whole country due to Corona virus pandemic and advised to stay at least 1 meter away from others. Due to SARS-CoV-2 virus's harmful effect Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19) spread all over the world also in India. Anyone at any age group may be affected by COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die. The lockdown created an inflationary situation which made them suffer more. Almost all sectors have implemented shutting down, lockdowns activities that require avoid human gathering and interactions– including schools, colleges, all kinds of small and big shops, temples, offices, theatre, airports, public transport etc. Since the lockdown, production has come to a complete halt. Huge unsold products have accumulated. There were no sales either through orders or exhibitions. If Government and local weaver's organisation should not pay attention on this concern topic then weaving become an old story in the books. In this present study reveals the COVID-19 impacts on livelihood of Handloom Weavers, A case study in Suti - II C.D. Block, Murshidabad, West Bengal.

Keyword: COVID-19, Handloom weavers, Livelihood, Shifting occupation

1. INTRODUCTION

Handloom weaving is one of the main sources of cash income and livelihood in rural India. weavers, Spinners and a huge number of allied artisans earn their subsistence from this unorganized economic activity which is took second position after agriculture. As a rural industry, India's handwoven industry has distinct pride in the world. A quarter of the Country's total textile production comes from the handwoven sector, just called arts and crafts sector. The handloom industry produces eco-friendly and sustainable energy-saving products for us. There are 4,06,761 household unit engaged with handloom weaving in West Bengal and annual production is 715.00 million Sq. Meter (Source: Directorate of Textiles, Annual Report, 2016-2017). This weaving industry assumes the responsibility of feeding the entire family. The sound of a handloom is the music of a rural India's home. This traditional rural and semi-urban profession has spread its wings widely across almost the whole of India.

Weaving is a family cottage industry and families from children to the elderly are engaged in various weaving related activities in Suti - II C.D. Block. Handloom industry in this Block is mainly concentrated in Aurangabad Census town which is the back bone of many peoples. This COVID-19 and lockdown was a main factor of financial crisis in every sector of the economy. The traditional sound of many old looms is slowly diminished. As a result, of the economic downturn across the country, their exports continue to decline. The GDP growth rate had fallen -6.60% (Source: Ministry of Statistics and programme Implementation, 2022). Low capital makes it very difficult to survive in a competitive market. Income and living standards of handloom weavers were moderate in Suti – II C.D. Block before COVID-19 but it decreased after COVID-19. Though weaving is their primary occupation, it failed to earn responsible money for them due to COVID-19 lockdown impact. After the COVID-19 pandemic situation, they are forced to change

their jobs and livelihood to meet their daily needs and support entire family.

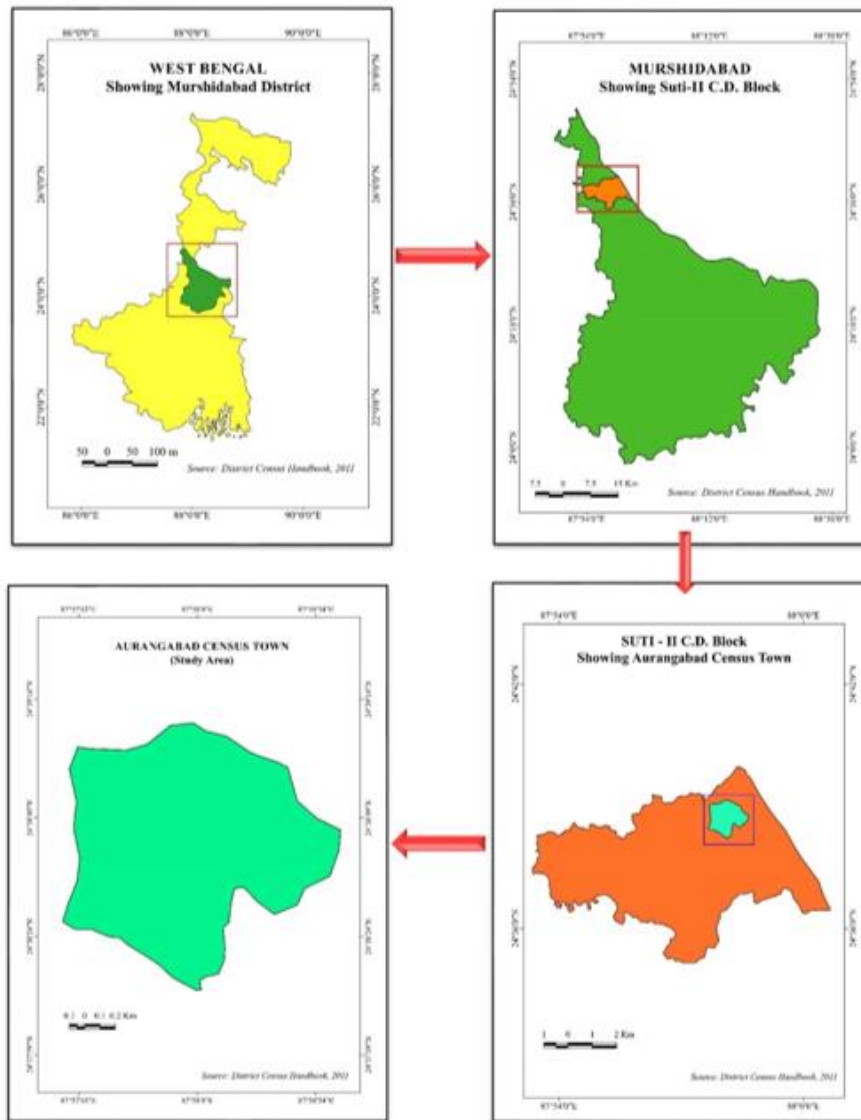


Fig. 1: Geographical location of the Study Area

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of the study are:

- i. To highlight the present scenario and demographic profile of handloom weavers of the selected area in Suti - II C.D. Block.
- ii. To identify the major problem being faced by the weavers during COVID-19 pandemic and prospects of the study area.
- iii. To find out the causes of declining weavers and shifting to other professions rapidly due to COVID-19 pandemic.

3. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY:

Data has a certain quantitative and qualitative value. Data sources mainly two types, i.e., primary data and secondary data. All work is based on both primary and secondary sources and random conversations with local weavers. For preparing location map and data analysis QGIS software and Microsoft excel have been used.

There are three stages in my total work which can be divided into Pre-Field, Field and Post-Field. which shows in below:

3.1 Pre-Field:

- Selection the study area.
- Preparation of the research questionnaire for primary data collection.

- Gather knowledge of the study and study area from different article, books, journals.
- Literature review.
- Prepare a rough plan to proceed in the survey.

3.1.1 Sample size determination:

We have selected 45 household from Aurangabad Census Town for primary data collection to prepare our work.

3.1.2 Sample type determination:

In this study we have selected the samples on the basis of Random sampling techniques for the primary household survey of Aurangabad Census Town in Suti – II C.D. Block.

3.2 Field:

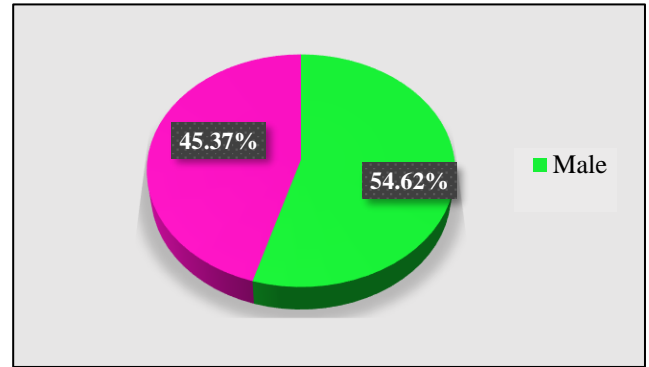
- Collection of primary data from the study area with the help of previously made questionnaire.
- Field verification and information gathering.
- Collection of data from personal interview, records through photographs, Group interview.

3.3 Post-Field:

- Tabulation, representation and analysis of collected data.
- On the basis of primary data analysing, find out the major conclusion of the research's aims.
- Preparation of study area map with the help of QGIS software.
- Cartographic representation by using different statistical software.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC STATUS:

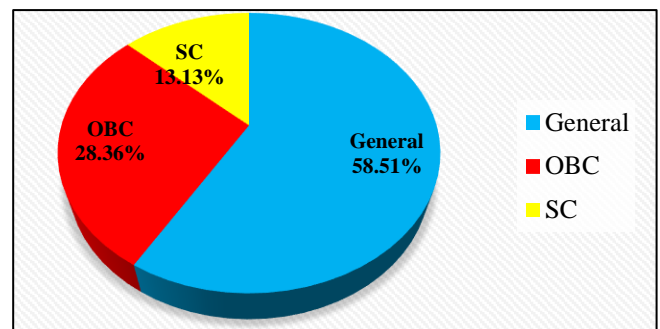
Variation of male female population distribution is one of the important characteristics of any demographic profile of any region. In this paper some specific area has been selected for survey purpose. Total sample population of our study is 335, among them male population was 183 and female population was 152. The percentage of male and female population was 54.62% and 45.37% respectively (Fig. 2). Sex ratio of Aurangabad Census Town is 1016 females for every 1000 males (Based on District Census Handbook, Murshidabad, 2011).



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 2: Total Male and Female Population

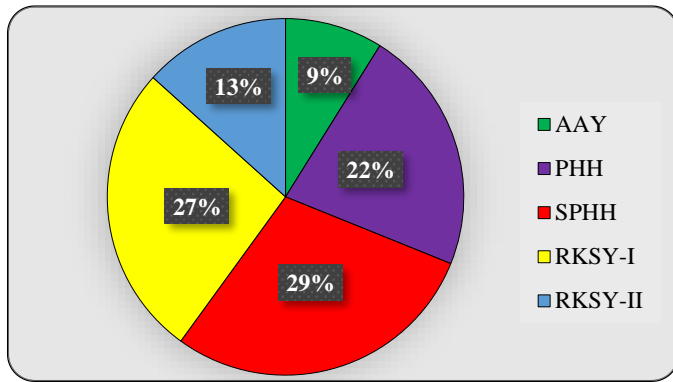
Caste is an important factor which influences the socio-economic status of any society. In Aurangabad Census Town General, OBC and SC community people are 196 (58.50%), 95 (28.35%) and 44 (13.13%) respectively (Fig. 3). Among of the primary survey households the major caste group is general and low caste group is SC (Based on primary data).



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 3: Caste wise population of weavers

In the Aurangabad Census Town based on primary survey there are 5 type of Ration card facility. It has been seen that 4 person belongs in AAY category, 10 family belongs to PHH category, 13 family belongs in SPHH category, 12 family belongs with RKS-Y-I category and 6 family belongs to RKS-Y-II category (Fig. 4). In Aurangabad a huge number of family belongs to SPHH category in Ration card and few families belongs in AAY category.

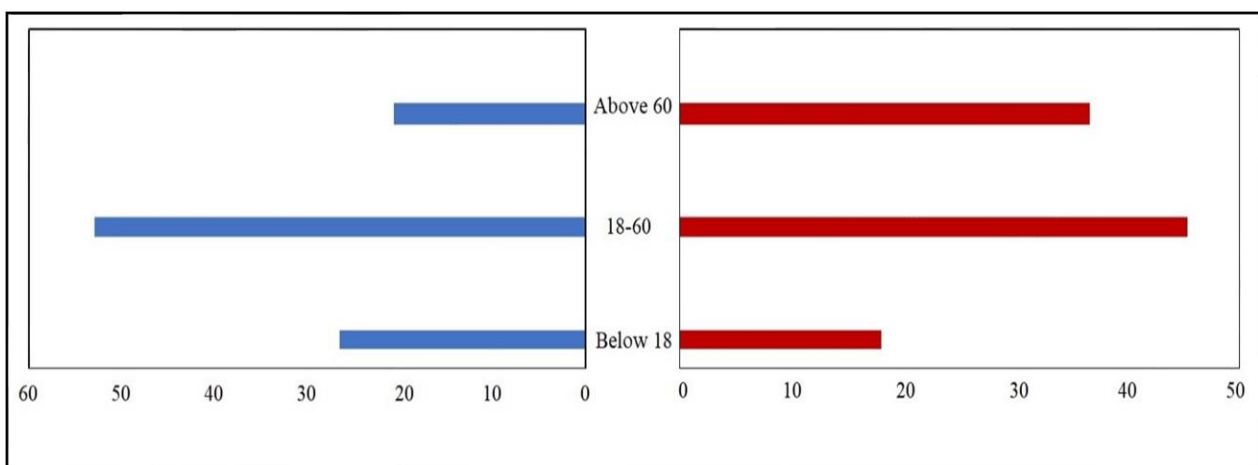


Primary data, 2022

Fig. 4: Family status of weavers

The age sex pyramid is helpful indicator of population structure. It reflects the socio-economic status of a society.

From this age sex pyramid, we can identify that the both male and female population within the age limit 18 to 60 years is high and male female population of below 18 years and above 60 years is low. In this study area working age group (18-60 years) is larger than the other groups (Fig. 5). The chance of development in socio-economic is maximum.



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 5: Age Sex Pyramid of the study area

The dependency ratio is a quantify that can describe how many people (including the child and elderly population) are dependent on working population. It is a useful indicator of the average number of people in the potentially active (i.e., employed) population.

In Aurangabad Census Town dependency ratio is 73.57%. In this case, working age group (15-59 years) is larger than any other groups. The dependency ratio indicates the potential impact of changes in the age structure of the population on economic and social development. A high dependency ratio indicates the economically active population (Based on primary survey).

Age wise population	Total person	Percentages
0-14 years	47	14.02%
Above 60 years	95	28.35%
15-59 years	193	57.76%

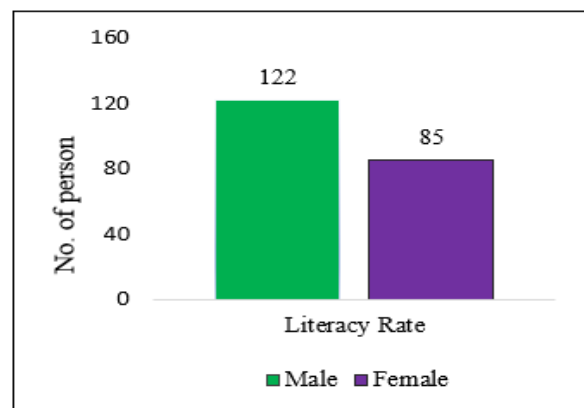
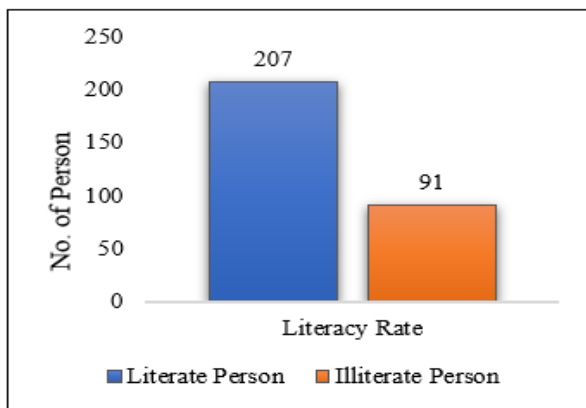
Primary data, 2022

Table No. 1: Dependency Ratio of surveyed family

Generally, literacy rate means ability of reading and writing of any simple message with understanding for everyone. A literate society means a society which all or almost adults can read and write in their own language with acknowledge for all. In other word literacy rate is

a very important measuring tool for analysing the socio-economic situation of any society.

In the study area total literacy rate is 69.46% (Fig. 6). Male literacy rate is 73.05% (122 person) and female literacy rate is 64.88% (85 person).



Primary data, 2022

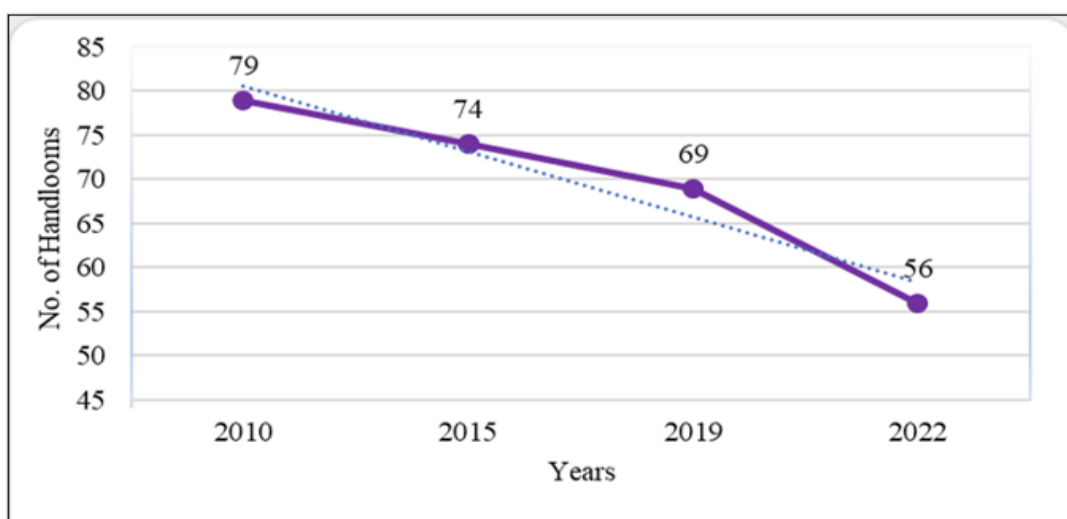
Primary data, 2022

Fig. 6: Literacy Status of Weaver's family

5. EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON HANDLOOM INDUSTRY:

Number of handloom machine is the main indicator of amount of work. Based on primary survey after COVID-19 pandemic we observes that most of the family reduced their handloom

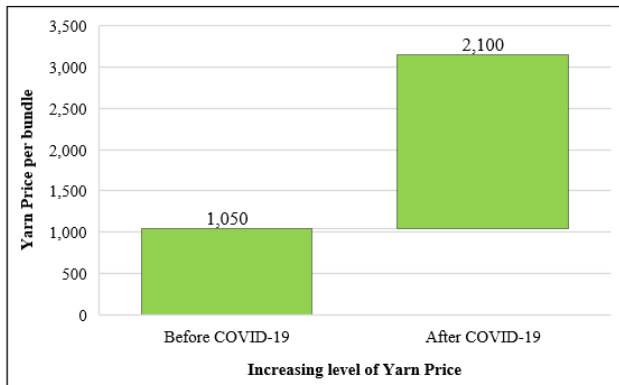
machine intentionally or unintentional. In Aurangabad most of the worker belongs to economically backward so they have been unable to keep up the occupation as before with the rising cost of living. From 2010 to 2022 a huge number of handloom machines decrease due to low profit in business. (Fig. 7).



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 7: Decreasing level of Handloom Machine with trend line

The most common problem is the increasing price of raw material and handloom equipment due to COVID-19. Raw materials have to be imported from other cities which further increases the price of raw materials for extra transportation cost. Before COVID-19, one bundle of yarn was available at Rs 1,050 but after COVID-19, the price of that yarn has grown up to Rs 2,100 (Fig. 8).

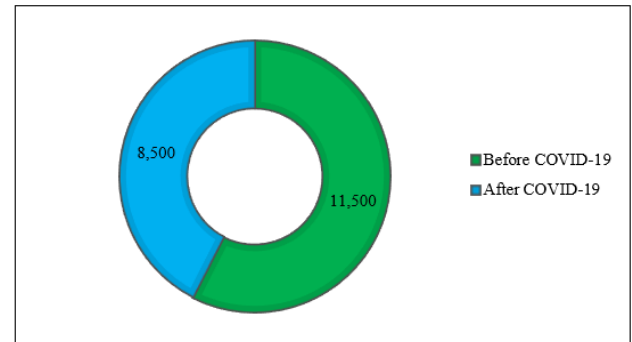


Primary data, 2022

Fig. 8: Increasing rate of Yarn Price

With increasing commodity prices, it is a little difficult to make a standard life through the earning from the textile industry. The situation became more deplorable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Weavers' monthly income is not enough for maintain their normal standard of living due to increased commodity prices. Based on primary survey we observed that before COVID-19 the selling price of 2-meter weaving towel was Rs. 58/- and their monthly income was around 11,500/- but after COVID-19 pandemic due to high production rate they forced to sell 2-

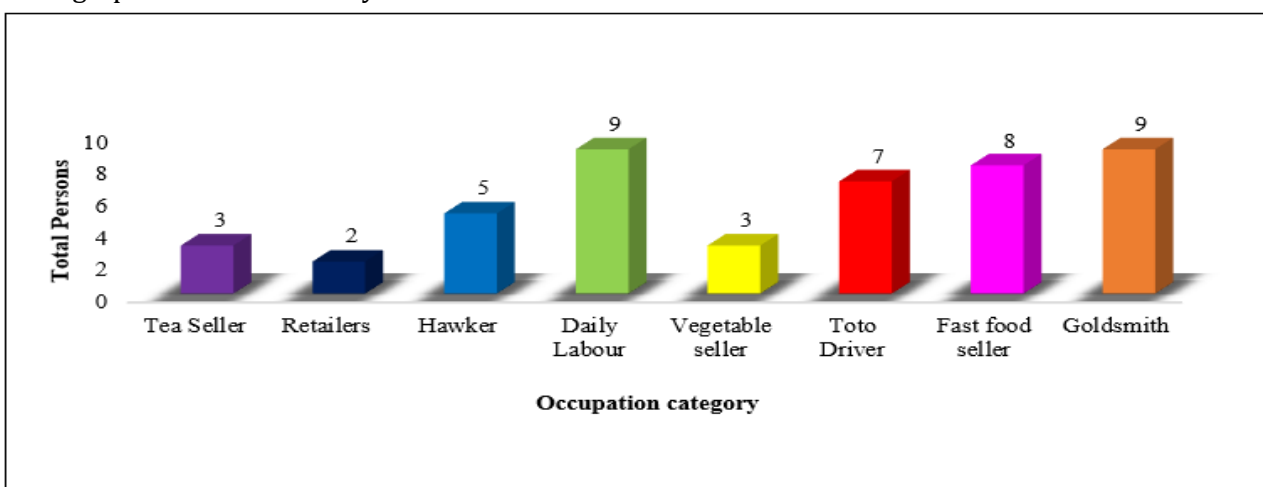
meter weaving towel in Rs. 70/- and their monthly income now decreased in around 8,500/-. That is not sufficient to fulfill their basic needs (Fig. 9).



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 9: Decreasing monthly income rate of weaver's

Most of the weavers of this C.D. Block belongs to the middle-income group and their work is based on small frame. After COVID-19 Pandemic due to increase in prices of raw materials required in the weaving sector they are failed to continue their family business and shift their occupation in different sector like- tea-sellers, toto driver, retailers, hawker, fuchka seller, mason, biri workers, mobile Phone operator, vegetable seller, fisher man etc. (Fig. 10). New generation is not interested to select this occupation. Mainly those who do not have the financial and physical capacity to relocate to another business want to stay in the weaving cottage industry. Majority of weavers turn their profession to daily labour and goldsmith occupation.



Primary data, 2022

Fig. 10: Shifting person of weavers' family member

6. MAJOR PROBLEMS OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY AFTER COVID-19:

The handloom weavers of Aurangabad Census Town are now facing different types of problems. The major problems are:

6.1 Competition with Power looms:

According to the handloom weavers power loom has a special role to play in the decline of their business. Its selling price is very low due to low cost of production, on the other hand in case of handloom industry higher the production cost so the higher the selling price. So, the handloom is lagging behind in the competitive market. Many handloom weavers have now shifted to the power loom by changing their profession. According to them in power loom factory workers earn Rs. 300/- for eight hours daily work but working all day in handloom profit was only 100/- rupees. So many of them shift their occupation.

6.2 Marketing:

The weavers and local Cooperative society do not able to fix the reasonable price of their product. The main reason is the higher price than the power loom products. There is no any central organization for the marketing of these handloom goods. Local weavers do not have the capacity to promote products to increase market value of their weaving items.

6.3 Raw materials:

The most common problem is the increasing price of Raw material and handloom equipment due to COVID-19. Raw materials have to be imported from other cities which further increases the price of raw materials for extra transportation cost.

6.4 Capital:

In the handloom weavers in Aurangabad, there is low opportunity to get any financial support from the cooperative banks and commercial banks. As the bank refuse the handloom weavers to debt money, They are force to take loan from the money lenders with higher rate of interest. As a result it affect badly to the whole industry.

6.5 Export:

Weavers are facing problems to export their product due to the low quality of goods compared to power looms. When they are exporting weaving product it being rejected due to little weaving

defects, colour defects, designing defects etc. and these products return back to the weavers which is one of the main problems related to export.

6.6 Investment:

The amount of investment by financial bodies is very low in this handloom sector. Both the Government and cooperative society or bank give weavers a very low amount of loan. Other investment companies are not enthusiastic to invest here. Business cannot prosper as a result of shortages of money.

6.7 Infrastructure:

There is no proper infrastructure in Aurangabad's handloom industry. Infrastructure for the development of export and import is also unavailable here. The weaving industry here is run by old infrastructure technology and management method.

6.8 Commodity prices rise:

It is not possible for the weavers of Aurangabad after Covid-19 to maintain the quality of production in line with the surplus. Everyone in the surplus commodity market is more interested in buying cheap power loom products which makes the current market of handlooms very bad.

7. SUGGESTION:

- i. Infrastructure should be well developed with workplace such as house, working shade and road connection, light and water, sanitation etc.
- ii. Appropriate health facilities coordinator hospital treatment, health insurance and medical care should be start and used properly and honestly.
- iii. Alternative occupation which are related with handloom should be established like - Garments industry.
- iv. Arrangements have to be made for the production of raw materials in the local area.
- v. Urban Haat can solve the marketing problem of weaving goods.
- vi. All weavers need to be aware of the current weaving information technology and improve various skill on weaving.

vii. Local handloom cooperative societies and the Government need to take proper steps to improve the handicraft handloom industry.

viii. New generation should be adopted innovative ideas to develop the handloom industry.

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