

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH WEAVING INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY IN MARUTHAMUNAI, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT: Women empowerment is an essential tool to bring about changes in their socio-economic condition. The weaving sector is very important for income generating to people of Maruthamunai. The purpose of this research is to analyze how this field will affect the empowerment of the women when they get involved in this sector and economic condition of female weavers. Qualitative research method adapting with primary data collection process such as Questionnaire survey, interview, observation methods were used, to explore information from 100 samples of women weavers such as women entrepreneurs and women laboures of Maruthamunai. Cluster sampling method was used. Secondary data also were collected from Divisional Secretariat Office Kalmunai, related books and websites. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel through graphs, charts and diagrams according to descriptive manner. The findings show that, the women weavers of Maruthamunai are growing at accelerate rate and empower through their work and women are strengthening themselves economically through weaving industry. At the same time they face some problems related to it such as lack financial, marketing problem, opportunities and health problem are the barriers of women weavers in this area. It can be concluded that, women weavers are very significance in the study area and remedies should be taken by government or non-government organizations.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Socio-economic Growth, Female Weavers

1. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment literally means “to invest with power”. Power is defined as the ability to influence the behavior of other with and without restrain. Therefore empowerment provided women, the ability to gain control over resources, develop physical and psychological capacity to challenge the prevailing gender customs. Weaving is one of the oldest industries in the world and has the history of early stage of human civilization. According to some historical and archaeological evidence weaving was known in the Paleolithic era (Raju, 2014).

One form of economic activity that women have been involved with in diverse areas in South Asia has been weaving. More specifically, in Bhutan and Pakistan, women have been more involved in weaving. Sri Lanka weaving industry has a long history which goes beyond 543 BC. Prior to the open economy being introduced in 1977, weaving was an important cottage industry in Sri Lanka and thousands of rural people; especially women depended on it for their living. Sri Lankan communities of handloom weavers are mainly in the Kurunagala, Batticaloa and Ampara districts. In this industry, rural women do these works and wanted to launch a social enterprise. This is a social enterprise and they earn profits but hundreds of rural women to get benefits (Janthy, 2002).

This research was conducted on the contribution of weaving industry on women empowerment in Maruthamunai. Maruthamunai is a moderated village situated 2.3 km away from the north of Kalmunai at the 390 mile post in the administrative division of Kalmunai Divisional Secretariat. It belongs to the Ampara District of the Eastern Province. Since 1932 the people in this village produce handloom for the local community. Eastern Social Mobilizing Organization (ESMO) reports that, at present, Maruthamunai has about 210 of small cottage factories and about 1,500 families involve in weaving. They are earning more than Rs.1000 per day in engaged in producing handloom clothes(JayanthiLiyanage, 2009).

The productions of the Maruthamunai weaving industry are sarongs, bed sheets, towels, handkerchiefs and many more. These products are in good quality and texture and the products have a good demand in the open market and international level. With the expansion of this industry it has enabled the country to earn good foreign revenue. The Government as well as the private sector should give a helping hand to this industry to make it a great success (NaalirJamaldeen, 2013).

It is therefore clearly evident that, the progress of the weaving industry in Maruthamunai has greatly improved, facing the modern challenges. The people of Maruthamunai are too keen and competent in this field, and they are specialized in this field. It is the bounded duty of every citizen of this country to protect the industry of weaving which has an international reputation. Many women are involving in this sector in the research area. The motivation of this study is pure because this research was collected information on women weavers as we are interested in learning more about women empowerment. This research was explored the role of women in upholding the household condition. Therefore, this research was emphasized the opportunity for women empowerment through weaving industry in the research area.

2. PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY

Handloom sector is one of the most incomes earning way of women in Maruthamunai. Many women are doing weaving for their full time work. The weaving sector has a vital role to get revenue in the research area of Maruthamunai. Through this industry women are empowered for economically. Even government and non-government organizations encourage women through weaving but they are facing lot of problems.

This research was identified the economic condition of the women weavers through handloom sector and problems what they are facing in the research area. Women weavers are

facing lot of problems such as financial problems, marketing problems and health problems too. Women weaving entrepreneurs are facing competition in the local market. Problems are in get raw material and equipment and get lower prices for their product. The contribution of Organizations is very less in this area. Also this research was identified these problems and identified economic impact of women empowerment through weaving sector. These are identified as the problems of the study.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective is identifying women empowerment through weaving industry in Maruthamunai.

3.2 SUB OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the economic conditions of female weavers in Maruthamunai.
2. To identify the income utilized of women weavers through weaving.
3. To identify the challenges faced by women weavers in their work.
4. Identifying appropriate solutions for overcoming the issues of women weavers in Maruthamunai.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research mainly tries to find the contribution of the weaving industry on women empowerment. Data were collected by two ways, such as primary data and secondary data are used for this research. Hundred sample women weavers were collected out of two hundred women weavers in 6 G.N divisions of Maruthamunai and Periyaneelavanai Muslim division according to the percentages of women weavers in the area and 100 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of female weavers and also collected data through direct interview method, discussion and observation with related officers and female weavers by primary data collecting method. The questionnaires were distributed to the entrepreneurs and labours of the women weavers. Cluster sampling method was used in the research.

Secondary data for the study were collected from the published and unpublished sources, annual reports, former researches, journals, government and non-governmental reports, articles and various related website. The village vital information statistics were gathered from divisional Secretariat Kalmunai. All collected data were analyzed through descriptive manner. The excel package of Microsoft Office were used to making the data in the view of charts, graphs, table etc.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Raju (2014), according to his research article, traces the issues of women weavers and offers suggestions to overcome from them for the wellbeing of women weavers in India. The objectives of his research are facilitating an enabling environment for over-all development of women weavers in difficult Circumstances and highlighting important issues related to women weavers in India. This research is a descriptive study based on secondary data. He explains the women empowering through handloom working and government concentrate their needs. This research mainly focuses on problems of weavers and suggestions for governments.

Mridula Devi (2013), in her article explains, In silk industry of Assam, almost 60 percentages of weavers are women, it has been shown about the role of female weaver to empower them in the family as well as society through engaged themselves as a weaver in the Muga and Mulberry industry. Reasonably, 200 units of silk factories are taken as sample. She concludes that, through the weaving the female weavers get employment opportunities and makes them financially self-dependent. Female weavers contribute financial help to their family. Some of them take full responsibility of a family. She explains as a whole through the weaving they achieve economic empowerment which leads them to empower themselves in all respects.

Nufile (2000), in his research article explains that, Falling weaving industry in Maruthamunai after introduce of open economy. Objectives of this research are identifying the reasons of falling weaving industry and unemployment problems by impact of falling weaving industry in Maruthamunai. This research carried out the descriptive manner. Give guidance to improving weaving industry for employees, employers and political leaders in the research area. This article explains also the history of weaving industry in Maruthamunai, handloom production and Muslims and problems of weavers in Maruthamunai after the open economy.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to the research, female get employment opportunity through handloom industry in Maruthamunai. 100 percentages of female accept that, weaving industry give employment to female in the research area and also it gives employment neighborhood village's female too and it helps to empower women in economically. 23 percentages of female weavers are head of their family. They run their family with their earning. Majority of 47 percentages of females get income between Rs. 10,000-20,000 per month. 90 percentages of female weaver's standard of living is increasing by handloom sector. 95 percentages of female weavers accepted weaving industry help to reduce poverty in the research area. So, through this can fulfill basic needs, help to reduce burden of loan, encourage to saving.

The research has found that, income of female weavers use in various purposes such as, household consumption, children's education, health or medical treatment, clothes, paying local tax and bills, donation and help to poor. It is help for saving for women. 78 percentages of female are saving through their income. 70 percentages of female weavers enough to support to their family needs and majority of 98 percentages of women got satisfaction with their earning through handloom sector. So, women weavers are empower in economically through weaving industry in Maruthamunai.

Furthermore, the female weavers get not only income from weaving but also they get other types of benefits too. They get exercise to their body, no need to depend on others in economically, they feel happy and self-confident with their earning, they get good position in their society, reduce economic difficulties, they use in time management in their life, they get self-respect and social bond in the society. They ready to innovativeness with weaving. Now a day, they use technical wise pre-loom machine in their work.

This research has found problems of female weavers. Though, they get more benefits from weaving, they are facing some problems too in their work. 55 percentages of female weavers are facing problems in their work. But 45 percentages of female weavers are not facing any problems in the research area. Some of them are facing health problems. Marketing, hard work, time, financial problems and other problems too such as scarcity of laboures, seasonally demand for output and less price. The help of government and non- government is very low in the research area. Only 4 percentages of female weavers get help from women organization.

Table No: 01. Standards of living of female weavers

Amount: percentages

S.No	Statements	Fully accepted	Accepted	Not accepted
1	Weaving industry is increasing employment opportunity to female	58	42	-
2	Increasing living standard through income	33	57	10
3	Reduce poverty	37	58	5
4	Reduce burden of loan	38	55	7
5	Enough to fulfill of basic needs	50	43	7
6	Income is enough to saving	30	48	22

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2016.

7. CONCLUSION

The research conclude that, the women weavers get empowerment through get income, employment, improve living standard, and reduce poverty among women, social respect, self-confident, self-respect from their employment through handloom sector according to this statistical analysis. They not only empower through their earning in society but also they face some problems related to weaving. Problems must control the effective production and welfare of weavers. So, some of the problems will be solved by organization and themselves. The organization must give appropriate solution for their problems.

Key remedial measures need to focus on creating norms, raising awareness and providing capacity building services to help weavers to meet safety standards. A successful intervention for empowering women necessitates several elements an important one is imparting of new skills: the consequence of women assuming new roles is also support through training for enabling them to perform these roles and the training programs must promote

According to that following two hypothesis were taken for this research. H_0 is weaving industry does not contribute on women empowerment and standard of living and H_1 is weaving industry contributes on women empowerment and their standard of living. According to those two hypotheses, the H_1 is accepted for this research according to the above analysis. Weaving sector is very significant employment sector in the research area. Women get empowerment through this industry according to the analysis of research.

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