

## A Survey on Women Working in Weaving Industries of Manipur

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### ABSTRACT

*A study was conducted to see the socio-economic status, dietary consumption pattern and health problems of the women in Imphal, Manipur. The three handloom sectors were selected in Imphal west and Imphal east district. The total 50 respondents were selected to find out the result of the study. From the study, it can be interpreted that the weaving womens belongs to poor socio-economic background and most of them are uneducated. Out of 50 weavers, 18% were educated up to secondary level. A majority of women weavers (44%) belonged to the age group of 21 to 25 years. 88% of weavers were unmarried. More than half of the weavers (52%) were belonged to joint types of family. Majority group of weavers (40%) earned 6000 rupees per month than the other weavers. Majority of weavers (46%) work 6- 7 hours longer than other weavers. According to FFQ data, the consumption of fresh vegetables and dairy products was generally low. 58% of weavers were never include dairy products in their diets while 50% of weavers were less consumption of fresh fruits due to unavailability and low budgets. Around 16% of respondents were never had breakfast. 68% of weavers had snacks in between the work while 32% are not. Most of the weavers were suffering from occupational health problems due to prolonged excessive physical work. Also, found that, 68% of female weavers were back pain due to sitting for longer duration of time. 60% of them were having eye problems due to poor ventilated and bright light of electric bulb. The weavers also experience menstrual cramps, stomach cramps, dizziness and numbness.*

**Key words:** Dairy products, Health problems, FFQ.

### INTRODUCTION

India has one of the richest traditions of woven textiles manufactured from wide range of different materials using variety of weaving techniques for both functional and aesthetic purpose. Northeast refers to the easternmost region of India which linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India.

The name of Manipur has become almost synonymous with the fascinating dances and colourful handloom textiles. Hand weaving forms a part of socio-cultural tradition of the people of Manipur which has a rich cultural heritage. Handloom industry in the state, which has a legacy of unrivalled craftsmanship is spread throughout the length and breadth of the state.

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It is a household cottage industry with decentralized set-up. In terms of employment generation, it is next only to agriculture for the women-folk. The traditional skill of handloom weaving is not only a status symbol for the women-folk, but it is an indispensable aspect of socio-economic life in Manipur.

Cotton and Silk fabrics are most commonly used in Manipur. Designs of saris are of a mixture of hill tribal textiles and that of floral designs, etc. In most cases, designs have been woven with traditional temple design in border and floral in cross border<sup>6</sup>.

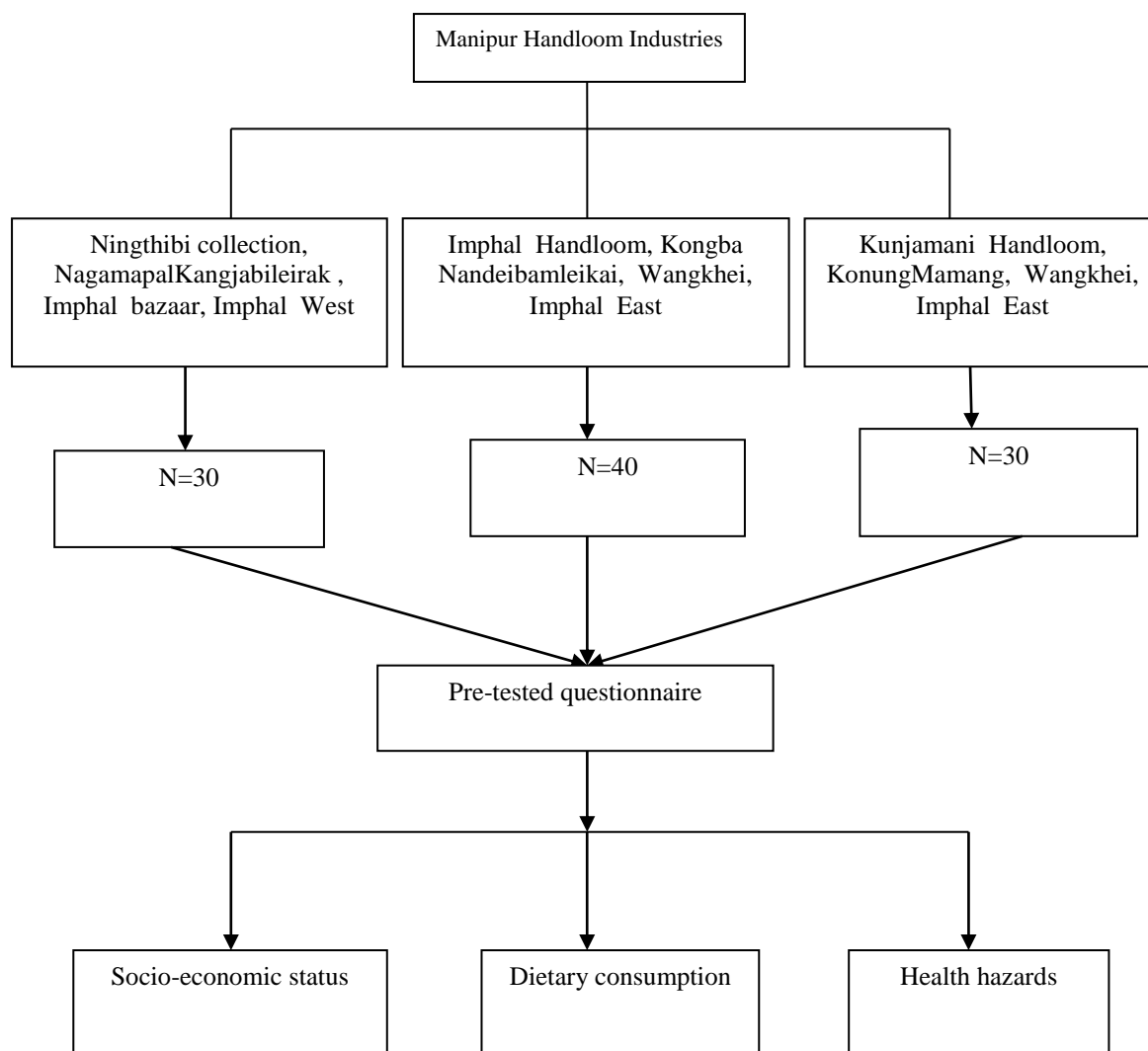
The development of cottage and small scale industry which provides rural employment to the weavers in rural India with assurance of complete employment to the weavers and by reviving the old culture they should be given proper dignity and position in the society<sup>8</sup>. There is an importance of clothing among the three basic necessities of human life. He focused on history of handloom industry its socio economic importance and the problems faced. His work also revealed on the structure, organization and wages condition and suggestions to improve the Handloom industry<sup>9</sup>. Also, Government implemented a scheme for the welfare of the society of the loom less weaver's large number of weavers without the loom are struggling hard under the control of master weavers on which they depend as there source of livelihood<sup>10</sup>.

Weaving involves several activities right from raw material (yarn) collection to winding, denting and then continuously sitting in static to weave fabric. Thus, like other occupation weaving also involves certain risk factors of health hazards. Also, weavers were not eating healthy diets due to low economic. Women weavers have been subject to

domestic violence and victims of violence in many places. They have also been at the receiving end of discrimination of all types. Whenever handloom sector is in crisis, the burden of carrying through the crisis is the most on women weavers, through increase in physical, psychological and social pressures. Their health condition is a major concern, as also their role in relations of production and also the future of girl children. While performing critical functions in production, their role in decision-making is rather poor<sup>11</sup>.

Major physiological problem for handloom women workers are menstruation. During that period in the name of traditions and culture, they are not permitted to work. Weaving for more than 12 hours in a day, they underwent gynecological problems too. The constant debts of the families, illness and other factors such as globalization, power looms and industrialization retained them at the lowest level of subsistence. Their low wages went to pay debts and forever they remained in poverty and deprivation. They toiled very hard, but the returns were very few and far between. In most of the weaving families in south India, the men turned to alcohol, neglecting work, indulging in child abuse and the women gradually took over the burden of the whole family. As a result, the women suffered with sociopsychological problems such as mental disorder, anger and rage over frustrations etc, Route to economic empowerment in trade also been neglected to women handloom workers, that has been informed by Centre for handloom information and policy on 28th April, 2006 in Hyderabad<sup>12</sup>.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS



**Fig. 1: Sample selection procedure**

A study was carried out in the handloom industries of Imphal East and West districts of Manipur. For the convenience of the study, three handloom industries were selected. From the three industries, 30 to 40 respondents of each industry were taken. A pre-tested questionnaire was prepared for obtaining the information related to socio-economic, dietary consumption and health hazards.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Age

In the given table no.1 shows that a majority of 44% of the females belonged to the age group of 21 to 25 year, 30% belongs to the age group

of 15 to 20 years, 10% of weavers belongs to the age group of 26 to 30 years. The remaining percentage of weaving women are included to the middle age group of 31 to 40 years above of age. In contrast with the result of the present study, a study was conducted by Amita Pandia & Joymati Thoudam<sup>3</sup>, and was found that 29% of weavers are in the age group of below 30 years, 31% belongs to age group of 30-45 years, 22% belongs to the age group coming between 46 and 60, 18% of weavers are above 60 years of age. This indicates that majority of person engaged in the handloom industry are the middle aged groups coming under age of 30-45 years.

**Table1:**

## A. General profiles of female weavers

AGE (years)	PERCENTAGE (%)
15 – 20	30
21 – 25	44
26 – 30	10
31 – 35	4
36 – 40	4
40 and above	8
Total	100

**Marital Status**

The above table reveals that, the majority of 88% female weavers are unmarried while 12% are married. Due to poor socio-economic background, the adolescent girls start working in the weaving industries at their early age. A contradictory result was found in a study conducted by Sandhya Rani Das<sup>7</sup>, shows that the majority of 88% of weavers are married and only 12% are unmarried and also mentioned that, this factor can affect the social status of the people.

## B. Marital status of female weavers

MARITAL STATUS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Married	12
Unmarried	88
Total	100

**Family Types**

From table 1, it can be seen that 52% of the female weavers belonged to joint type families and the remaining 48% belonged to nuclear family type. A similar study was conducted by Usharani *et al*<sup>1</sup>, which indicated similar results i.e 94% of male and 97% of the female adult weaver belonged to nuclear type of families and the remaining 6 and 3% of them belonged to joint family types. Also a similar result was found that 56% weavers were belong to joint family and 33% belong to the nuclear type family<sup>13</sup>.

## C. Family type

TYPES OF FAMILY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Nuclear family	48
Joint family	52
Total	100

**Education**

From the above table1, 82% female weavers are middle level education while 18% weavers are educated up to secondary levels. The causes of weavers are uneducated due to poor socio-economic background. They did not get job in other field. They are compelled to follow the handloom tradition for their survival. Sandhya Rani Das<sup>7</sup>, reported that, the level of employment is the deciding factor of the employee in which he is engaged in as low education has low employment opportunity and high education has high employment and higher income occupations Educational level of female weavers.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PERCENTAGE (%)
Primary	0
Middle	82
Secondary	18
Total	100

**Table 2:**

## Socio-economic condition of female weavers

## A. Monthly income of female weavers

INCOME (Rs)	PERCENTAGE (%)
2000	28
3500	16
4000	4
5000	12
6000	40
Total	100

## B. Daily working hours of female weavers

WORKING HOURS	PERCENTAGE (%)
3	22
4 – 5	32
6 - 7	46
total	100

An overview of Table no.2 shows that the monthly income of female weavers in Manipur industries and the distribution of 40% female earned the income of Rs. 6000 per month while 12% and 4% of female weavers earned the income of Rs. 4000 – 5000 per month respectively. 25% and 16% of female got only Rs.3000 to Rs. 3500 per month due to lesser work compared to other workers because these group of female weavers were still going to school so they did not get more hours for

work. A majority of 46% of female weavers work 6 to 7 hours in a day while 32% of them work around 4 to 5 hours per day, remaining 22% of them were only 3 hours a day.

A similar result was found in the study conducted by Shaw Tnusree<sup>15</sup>, 2015, shows

the same range of monthly income in the present study of weavers where 43% of weavers paid more than 5000 rupees and above and remaining weavers were paid from starting 1500 to 4500 rupees.

**Table 3: Food Intakes by the Weavers**

ITEMS	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	RARELY	NEVER	TOTAL (%)
Cereals	100%	-	-	-	-	100%
Pulses	18%	78%	-	4%	-	100%
Vegetables	22%	58%	20%	-	-	100%
Fruits	50%	38%	4%	8%	-	100%
Dairy products	6%	6%	30%	-	58%	100%
Fats and oils	94%	6%	-	-	-	100%

According to the Food Frequency Questionnaire data, the consumption of fresh vegetables, and dairy products was generally low. The weaving girls did not drink milk at all. Around 12% of the respondents consumed milk and dairy products in their daily diets or in two to three times in a week while 58% were rarely ate dairy products. A similar study was conducted by Usharani *et al*<sup>1</sup>, found that consumption of green leafy vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, sugar and jaggery were less among the weavers of Thiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu.

Also, 50% of female weavers were less consumption of fresh fruits due to poor economic and also reported that the fruits which are available near their residential was

expensive. These female weavers are staying in the industries located near the city. The other 50% of female weavers were staying little far from the city and these weavers were consumed fruits into their daily diets due to high availability and low cost.

Around 16% of respondents reported that they never had breakfast. Almost all the respondents had meal every day. The meal was prepared by themselves. 68% of weavers had snacks in between the work while 32% are not. 96% of the weavers reported that their daily diets can provide sufficient energy to do their work. Out of the 100 percentage, 44% of participants give more important to the lunch more than breakfast.

**Table 4: Health problems among the selected female weavers**

HEALTH PROBLEMS	PERCENTAGE (%)	TOTAL (%)
Back pain	68	100
Eye problem	60	100
Headache	40	100
Joint pain	6	100
Ulcer	10	100
Urine infection	6	100
Constipation	6	100
Sinus	10	100
Diarrhea	5	100
Coughing	20	100

The present study found that the handloom weavers are suffering from a variety of occupation health problems and other diseases. Occupational diseases are developed by

prolonged work, excessive physical work and the working in poor ventilated and illuminated condition. Pain is felt through most of the body including lower back, shoulders, neck,

arms hands, and the legs. Every women suffers from backache due to the sitting position and longer duration of work. Musculoskeletal pain becomes chronic problems as the women get older. It is worse if they spend a long time weaving without breaks. In the above paragraph, a similar study was conducted by Joanne *et al*<sup>5</sup>, found that the weaving sitting position can cause pain in the shoulders, lower back and legs.

The weaving position contributes largely to the pain; they sit on the loom for a long time with arm extended and with neck and back bent over their work as illustrated in the down image. Alka & I<sup>4</sup>, (2012), also reported that, the loom which are not supporting their back can lead increase stress in their lower limbs, calf muscles and on the back.

The table no.3 shows that female weavers were suffer from various diseases as their work is more physical and therefore, 68% of weavers suffers from back pain whereas 60% by eye problems, 40% by headache, 6% by joint pain, 10% by ulcer, 6% by urine infection, 6% by constipation, 10% by sinus, 5% by diarrhea and 20% by coughing. A similar study was conducted by Tanseem Shazli<sup>2</sup>, found that the female weavers frequently suffers from legs pain, back pain, joint pain, headache, coughing and other eye related problems. The weavers also experience menstrual cramps, stomach cramps, dizziness and numbness. Also, a similar result was found in a study conducted by TawheedYousuf I. K *et.al*<sup>14</sup>, shows the major ailments which people are prone to in silk weaving were 28% joint pain, 15% back pain. 8% knee pain, 10% respiratory ailments and 3% eye sight weakness.

### CONCLUSION

It was concluded from the study that, the weavers of Handloom Sectors of Imphal West and East district, had poor socio-economic background and mostly uneducated. The majority of female weavers were in the age group of 20 to 25 years, among adolescent's weaver's consumption of fresh fruits and dairy products was found very less so, it can be

assumed that the adolescent weavers might have chances of anaemia and other nutrients deficiency diseases. The weavers were also facing many health hazards like back pain, eye problem, joint pain due to excessive physical exertion. The weavers also experience other diseases due to unhygienic environment and nutrients deficiency. Therefore, there is a high need of nutrition education to reduce these alarming health problems.

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