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Economic empowerment of rural women engaged in applique work: A study in Pipili, Puri district of Odisha, India

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Abstract

The impact of globalization are said to be emancipating for the males and damaging the females. This too becomes the scenario in the craft sector. The craft economy accommodates more women as it is family based, localized and it is compatible with the core economy of the society. The present study has been taken up among the women workers of the applique crafts of the state of Odisha to locate the challenges faced, identify the causes and find out the solutions to them.

Keywords: Globalization, craft, economy, Odisha applique craft

Introduction

The rich Indian heritage of ethnic crafts and tradition is well known all over the world. Handmade crafts and creative arts have given livelihood to many rural Indians and fame to India across the globe. Diverse and rich cultural heritage makes the handicrafts of India unique. (Singh, 2016) ^[3]

Handicrafts constitute a virtual sector of Odisha's economy since they require only modest investment in tools, equipment and raw materials. While they provide employment to a sizeable segment of the State's labor force. Their production is almost entirely located in the informal sector dispersed over thousands of micro units in various towns as well as their rural hinterland. A note-worthy feature of Odisha handicraft sector is their contribution to Indian exports given the high incidence of handicraft units related to the selected crafts in the golden triangle region of Odisha- Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri & Konark.

Applique craft is also a popular craft of Pipili, Puri district of Odisha with a high employment potential and a flourishing market. In this context, it is worthy to note that women are mostly taking major role in making handmade products like applique work which has huge demand in both national and international market. Many women are able to solve their family problem through their occupation. Many girls or students are also earning money and it helps in fulfilling their personal needs.

Women are capable and have great potential but still then it is seen that the objectives to empower women has not been achieved. It also stated that various indicators were contributing to the status of women. Few among them are decision making role, control over resources, income and literacy. But in many cases it is seen that their social and economic status is neglected because of male dominance families. They are unable to take decision to spend their money. Hence there is a need for closer examination to measure the level of economic empowerment of women in applique craft of Pipili to achieve the objectives set for the study.

Objective

To study the socio-economic profile of rural women engaged in applique craft of Pipili.

Methodology

The design followed for this study is an exploratory research. Exploratory research types helps to determine the best research design. The objective of exploratory research is to gather the preliminary information that will help to define problems and suggest hypothesis (Kotler, Armstrong 2006) (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). This research design was adapted to gain familiarities to acquire new insight into the existing aspect of various issues related to economic empowerment. Sampling design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population. Multistage purposive random sampling design was used to select the study

area and respondents. For this study information about the women engaged in applique craft of Pipili was elicited from workers of applique craft training cum production units as well as from the head of organization. A total no. of 26 training cum production units are working in that area. Hence one third of the units that is 8 production units were selected for the study randomly and is presented below. It was observed that in each of these units both adolescent girls and married women are working. As per the objective of this study all the married women involved in these production units were included. Hence a total of 104 married women were selected as sample respondents to explore the necessary data which was 100% of the population. The tool selected for collecting the data was an interview schedule cum observation sheet. The data thus collected were analyzed by using statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Davis *et al.* 2004).

Results and Discussions

One of the major objective of this study to understand the socio economic profile of the rural women as well as their access and control over economic resources and the extent of participation in different decision making activities. It was intended to analyze the changes in the lives of women after their involvement in the production units. This was to be seen at the individual, familial and societal level. In other words, this was basically to develop an understanding about the views of women participants about the notion of empowerment after getting involved in the production units.

Table 1: Socio economic characteristics of Respondents

Demographic factors	Categories	No n=104	% (Percentage)
Age	25-35	48	46.15
	35-45	44	42.30
	Above 45	12	11.53
Marital status	Married	104	100
	Unmarried	Nil	-
Types of Family	Joint	93	89.42
	Nuclear	11	10.57
Caste	General	25	24.03
	OBC	62	59.61
	SC	17	16.34
	ST	Nil	-
Education	Literate	30	28.84
	Primary	43	41.34
	H.S.C	31	29.80
	Above	Nil	-
Total monthly income	Below 10,000/-	16	15.38
	10,000- 20,000/-	76	73.07
	Ab0ve 20,000/-	12	11.53

In order to study the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents a number of variables like age, marital status, caste, education, family type, occupation and total monthly family income were selected for the study. The data are presented in Table 1.

Being a member of the household, a respondent can be influenced a lot from the socio-economic status and attitudes of family towards education and employment of the individuals. Hence, it is imperative to give a first look over such characteristics of the households. The explanations of 104 respondent’s families are given according to socio economic characteristics.

It was revealed that 46.15% respondents belong to the age group of 25-35 yrs, followed by 42.30% respondents in the age group of 35 -45 yrs. All of them were married. Respondents belonging to backward castes was 59.61%, followed by 24.03% of them were of general category. Educational qualification of majority (41.34%) of the respondents was limited to the primary level. Altogether (29.80%) women attended high school. In the study area (89.42%) respondents belong to joint families in comparison to 10.57% were nuclear families. It is evident that still the joint family system is existing in our society. The monthly income in most of the cases (73.07%) of the respondent’s household was between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000, followed by 15.38% of respondent’s household was having monthly income bellow Rs. 10,000. The interactions revealed that after joining the training cum production units, most of the families had able to raise their income.

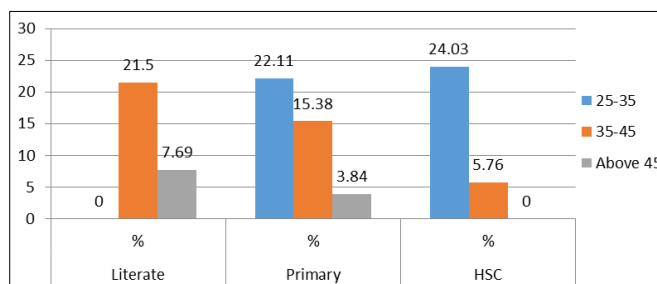


Fig 1: Respondents educational status according to their age n=104

It was revealed from the above table that a few number of older age group of women were just literate as compared to the younger women amongst whom many had passed the high school certificate education or beyond. None of the women of older age group had passed the high school certificate examination. The difference in literacy levels could be attributed to gender bias, conservative attitude and lack of educational facilities in bygone days. It was further evident that the women are gradually emerging out of the cloud of ignorance and conservative mindset towards women’s education.

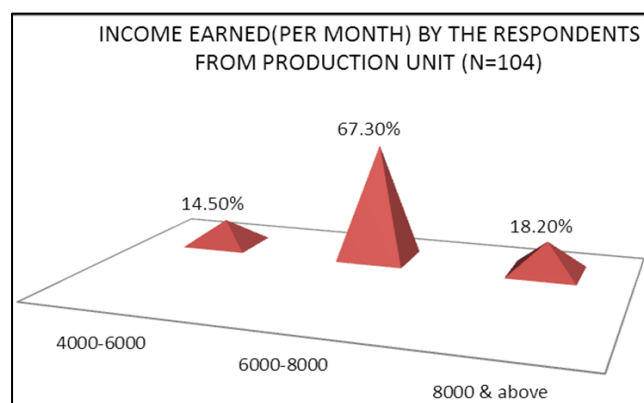


Fig 2: Income Earned (Per Month) By The Respondents From Production Unit (N=104)

Fig-2 revealed that the income earned by the respondents from the production unit per month. The monthly income falls in the income range Rs. 6,000/- 8,000/- in 67.3% respondents. In 18.2% cases monthly income was above Rs.8,000/- which might be due to they are working extra time in the unit.

Table 2: Working profile of Respondents (n=104)

Different dimensions	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Awareness about training cum production unit	Family members	7	6.73
	Friends	44	42.30
	Neighbors	53	50.96
Period of involvement	> One year	12	11.53
	1-5 year	70	67.30
	< Five year	22	21.15
Acquisition of skill based training	Yes	61	58.65
	No	43	41.34
Frequency of training	Once in a week	-	-
	Once in a year	3	2.88
	Once in two year	-	-
	As and when required	58	55.76
Working hours/day	Less than 5 hrs	-	-
	5-8 hrs	85	81.73
	More than 8hrs	19	18.26

In order to study the economic viability of selected enterprise, awareness about the enterprise. Period of involvement, information about acquisition of skill based training, frequency of training of the respondents as well as time spent were selected for the study. The data are presented in Table 2. It was revealed that 50.96% of respondents got the awareness about the training cum production units from their neighbors, followed by 42.30% from their friends. The period of involvement in the training cum production units was different for every respondent. Majority of the respondents (67.30%) were having working experience less than 5 years

Table 4: Respondent’s possession of assets other than land (n=104)

Assets	Asset holder	Frequency	Percentage (%)
House	Husband	27	25.96
	Wife	2	1.92
	In-Laws	75	72.12
Livestock	Husband	25	24.04
	Wife	28	26.93
	In-Laws	51	49.03

Rural women need to have control over productive resources like land; house & livestock etc. which create a sense of security, belongingness and owing. Other impacts of control over resources are to enhance their decision-making ability to meet some psychological needs like self esteem and confidence. The details of the possession of productive assets like house and livestock are presented in table 4.4. It was depicted from the above table that 26.93% respondents

Table 5: Distribution of Respondent’s according to the control of income/wages (n=104)

Sl. No	Aspects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Getting income regularly		
	Yes	104	100
	No	-	-
2	Who keeps the income		
	Self	15	14.42
	Husband	79	75.96
	Both	10	9.62

Income is an important factor enabling people to lead a happy life. The income determines the spending pattern and savings pattern of the family. It also determines the socio-economic empowerment of respondents.

and around 58.65% respondents had received skill based training before joining the units.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to gender wise access and control over resources (n=104)

Aspects		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Landed property	Cultivated Land	35	33.65
	Landless	69	66.35
Ownership of Cultivated Land	Husband	16	15.38
	Wife	2	1.92
	In-laws	17	16.34

The main obstacles to rural women’s access to land and their ability to enhance productivity are institutional barriers to their social recognition. Indian families remain strongly patriarchal with the men recognized as “heads of household” by both state and market institutions across the very diverse contexts. Land and other asset entitlements were generally issued to the head of the household. Women, constructed socially as dependent wives and mothers, are expected to obey and service men and family throughout their life cycle. It is evident from the Table-4.3 that only 33.65% respondents were possessed cultivated land, out of 15.38% land ownership lies with the husband followed by 16.34% with in-laws. Only 1.92% respondents were enjoying the ownership of land.. Rest of the respondents did not possess any landed properties. Thus, it can be concluded that out of total sample, female independent access to land was negligible and joint ownership was not found. Similar contentions was shared by Bansal (2004), Arora (2006) and sabharawal (2006), who reported that 91% female had no land.

had possessed productive asset (livestock) by taking bank loans. However, the control over residential house was not so encouraging since only (1.92%) of rural women had possessed this important asset where as in most of the cases (72.12%) the houses were owned by their in-laws. So it was clear that respondent’s possession of productive assets was poor.

The total sample (N=104) taken for the study were paid workers. They were getting income for their work regularly in every month. Further data indicated that money earned by respondents was mostly kept by their husband (75.96%) and

in only (14.42%) cases they keep their earnings with them. Few respondents (9.62%) stated that money was kept in common place for incurring expenditure. Similar results were stated by Arora (2006) who revealed that money earned by

females mostly was kept by their husbands (62.8%) followed by to keep themselves (20.00%) and handover to their in-laws.

Table 6: Respondent’s access and control over credit and savings (n=104)

Sl. No	Aspects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Credit		
	A) Access to credit		
	Yes	42	40.38
	No	60	57.69
	Doesn’t know	2	1.93
2	Saving		
	A) who’s name		
	Self	32	30.76
	Husband	72	69.24
	B) Operating Bank Account		
	Independently	12	11.54
Jointly	92	88.46	

Access to resources is important for economic freedom of women as freedom of movement is lined with their economic independence and also infuses with power. The summary of the results of all this variable observed in presented in Table 6. It is evident from the table that women’s access to resources is dismally poor in the study area. Only 40.38% respondents availed the loan for purchase of livestock and other assets for home. After joining the production unit only

30.76% respondents had opened savings bank account and also using A.T.M cards, where as 69.24% respondents bank accounts were owned by their husbands. Further results revealed that 88.46% bank accounts were operated by respondent’s husbands; whereas only 11.54% of accounts were operated by the respondents independently. It has been concluded from the above table that respondent’s independent access over savings and credit was very negligible.

Table 7: Opinion of respondents and level of changes in household economy (n=104)

Activities	High		Moderate	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Supplement Family Income	74	71.15	30	28.85
Increased saving habits	41	39.42	63	60.58
Participation in making decisions in family budgets	22	21.15	82	78.85
Spend money according to own decision	18	17.31	86	82.69
Independence in purchase of domestic goods	39	37.50	65	62.50
Able to meet personal expenses	28	26.92	76	73.08
Low dependence on money lender	18	17.31	86	82.69

Few indicators were considered important to understand economic empowerment of respondents. The women were queried on the issues of income generation process, access to financial resources, elimination of dependence on money lender, increase in income and savings, freedom to use that income, financial self-reliance, decision making in financial matter of family and ownership of income and assets. The data in table 7 shows that after joining the production units, 71.15% respondents were able to raise their monthly income to a greater extent. The income though meager provides significant support to address crisis in their families.

A large section of respondents believed that there was moderate changes in the Saving habits (60.58%), control over domestic financial decision making process was 78.85%. some moderate level of changes were also reported in case of spending money according to their own decision and independence in purchasing of domestic goods because of their involvement in production units. One significant outcome was observed which was low dependence on money lenders reported by 82.69% of women in the study. Similar findings were also quoted by koteole (2001).

Table 8: Opinion of respondents on Changes in personal and family values of respondents (n=104)

Changes observed in personal front	High		Moderate	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ability to interact with outsiders	35	33.65	69	66.35
Ability to face challenges	32	30.76	72	69.24
Sense of responsibility	49	47.11	55	52.89
Rise in Social Status	39	37.50	65	62.50
Increase confidence	22	21.15	82	78.85
Increase self-respect	25	24.03	79	75.97
Decline in family conflict	88	84.61	16	15.39

In a society where most of the women are illiterate or have very low level of educational attainment, gender sensitization

programme and capacity building for income generating activities could yield significant impacts. These are the forms

of raising self-respect to take responsibility and make decisions in all fronts of life.

Increase in some values of respondents like self-respect, confidence, social status, ability to interact with outsiders and ability to face challenges which are indicators of successful women empowerment are presented in table 8.

This table indicates that a large section of respondents (84.61%) perceived a high level of decline in family conflicts. In case of variables like rise in social status (62.50%), ability to interact with outsiders (66.35%), ability to face challenges (69.24%), sense of responsibility (52.89%) the respondents reported moderate level of changes. This result is also in tune with the study conducted by Islam et.al (2014). It can be assumed that the level of changes in household economy and personal aspect is possible after the respondents started earning for their family.

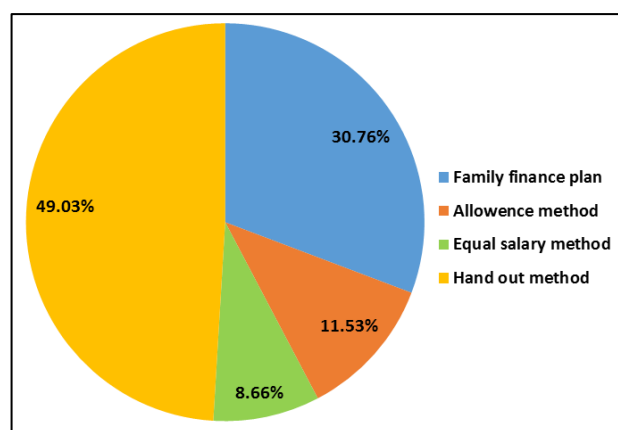


Fig 3: Expenditure pattern of total income in respondent's family

The choice of a method of handling money that will give all members of a family a feeling of satisfaction is a matter of major importance in the life of any family. Family finance plan, the allowance method, the equal salary method, Fifty-fifty system and hand out methods are various methods of handling family income.

It is depicted from the above figure that around 30.76% of the respondents were using income as a planned and shared family budget, which is the best method of handling money. Majority of the respondents (49.03%) opined that their husbands maintain complete control of the income and hands out small or large sum of money as needs arise. According to 11.53% respondents, their husband used to give a stipulated amount to cover the specified expense items in family living.

Though among all the methods of handling money family finance plan is considered as the best method, but few were adopting it which might be due to lack of education.

Conclusion

Handicraft sector have been identified as a way to alleviate poverty and women empowerment. Women empowerment aims at realizing their identities, power and potentiality in all spheres of lives. But the real empowerment is possible only when a woman has increased access to economic resources, more confidence and self-motivation, more strength, more recognition, and opinion in the family matters and more involvement through participation. Although it is a gradual and consistent process, but women should build their mindset for taking additional effort willingly for their overall development.

Since the economic independence is one of the stimulating

factor to enter the field of empowerment, it implies that the family members should be motivated to provide the women the opportunities for economic independence. This study points out to the fact that only female work participation rate does not ensure women's empowerment status, rather their access and control over economic resources is also an important determinant. In order of domain suggests a process of empowerment that begins at the level of women's individual consciousness and becomes externalized through greater physical mobility, raised awareness level, increased autonomy in decision making. It means a strong role in the household, greater self-esteem and eventually meaningful participation in the larger community.

The findings of the study suggest a formal and non-formal education and training to build the economic capabilities of women in rural areas and eliminate gender stereotyping. Therefore, it should be noted that education as a catalyst for promoting skills, knowledge and attitude for promotion of rural women's economic abilities and capabilities that will enable rural women to be effective in life and work., providing them with appropriate job opportunities, enhancing women's participation in the decision-making process, economic participation and power over economic resources. Equal opportunities should be provided for women as well as emphasis must be given on the empowerment of rural women through providing them with appropriate job opportunities.

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