

WOMEN'S HOME-BASED HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING: A CASE STUDY OF BADIN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study aims to explore prospects of economic wellbeing through women handicraft industry. Badin is an underdeveloped area despite having treasures of resources, woman is one of them especially the skilled ones. The industry will empower women and they will contribute in economic development rather playing a passive role, their dependence on welfare program and philanthropy will also be decreased. The study sought to identify problems, weaknesses and opportunities that affect the industry and need to be worked on. Data were collected through interview method from the sample of 40 Handicrafts women in Badin District. The industry in Badin is found to be at low ebb and requires a serious consideration. A meager amount is earned by the women. Lack of awareness and education is found to be the main hurdle behind their non-profitable vocation. Removing middlemen and having their own shops would be profitable. NGOs and vocational institutes should help the women in their skill development and promotion of products through exhibition and export. Most of the women were found hesitant to borrow. Easy and interest free financing schemes with conducive counseling are required.

JEL Classification: B54, I31, Z10

Keywords: Handicraft, Women Contribution, Economic Wellbeing, Underdeveloped area

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan's culture, it is customary to teach some craftworks to girls. This convention is common in both educated and uneducated families, but uneducated families concentrate more on it. The common craft taught to girls are embroidery, sewing, *Ralli*- quilts, appliqué, crochet, knitting and *Chunri* etc.

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Penchant for splendor and elegance is natural. Glamour and ornamentation for themselves and for house have always been fondness of ladies, they love embellishment on clothing for that they long to contact craftswomen or buy ready to wear items, as it portrays culture and makes dresses flamboyant and unique. Embroidered/appliquéd clothing and *Ralli* quilts are traditionally collected by women for their daughters' dowry or just for depicting feminine taste. *Ralli* quilts are specialty of Sindh. *Ralli*, Sindhi embroidery, appliqué work, and dresses are famous and are gaining international acclaim.

As most of the ladies are good at handicrafts in Pakistan especially in rural and underdeveloped areas but their talent is unrecognized, therefore, it remains unproductive. Women's fondness for handicraft products can be exploited by what is traditionally imparted to women — the craftwork.

Pakistan's Labor Force Participation (LFP) rate of female is 24% which means a massive portion of workforce is idle and includes Pakistan in one of those few developing countries where LFP rate of women is less than world average of 51.2% (Sarwar & Abbasi, 2013).

Badin district had 0.628 Human Development Index, the sixth lowest in the province (Jamal & Khan, 2005), reliable recent data could not be accessed. Despite having treasures of natural resources—fertile soil, minerals, coast, and most important humans—Badin is an underdeveloped district of Pakistan. According to the conclusion of 1998 census, Badin district has 47.40 percent of female population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2015). According to 2010 and 2013 estimation, Badin comprises female population of 673403 and 909024 respectively. Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance IV Report (2013) concluded that 20 percent of the heads of households in Badin district are female. Dependent population in Badin district is 48.10 percent of the total population, which shows that dependency ratio in the district is 93 percent (Ahmed, Omar, & Rehman, 2012). The high dependency ratio urges approximately half the gender ratio to participate in economic development.

The question of what goes on within households can't be ignored. The major motive behind the study is determining the factors that affect women home-based handicraft industry and the eminent prospects of this industry in contributing towards economic development of Badin and the country as a whole.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study in hand are:

- To determine the types of handicraft produced by the women in Badin
- To identify the few demographical characteristics of craftswomen
- To know about their accessibility to financing and skill development activities
- To know about the handicrafts distribution
- To know about their economic contribution
- To provide some valuable recommendations

LITERATURE REVIEW

The division of labour on the basis of sex at family and at national level was considered natural in several communities for centuries, because it has undergone little or no change for generations (Boserup, 2007), (Boserup, 1970). Male is considered as bread earner in Pakistan and most south Asian societies, hence women's efforts are unrecognized. In Pakistan 80 percent has been engaged in the informal sector of economy and out of those 50 percent are women. Home-based workers representing 60 percent of the women work force of Pakistan even young girls of 6 to 14 years of age were helping their mothers in making and finishing the tasks (Azhar, 2010).

Studying at South Asia and South East Asia, it was inferred that women have only home-based work as an available option, as they are restricted to remain within the household due to gender-designated responsibilities. Poverty hampers them to compete as they are deprived of technology, material and new ideas (Doane, 2007). The high cost of commencing a business was perceived by the women as barriers (Neila, 2014). A study on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) concluded that houses are used as work places, women and their minor children work for 5 to 8 hours and even exceed for up to 12 hours, just for a few rupees. Majority of which ie 51 out of 60 started works due to poverty and unemployment of the male members of family (Global Network, 2011).

Wassan, Chandio, and Khatoon (2010) inferred studying the bangle industry of Hyderabad that culture of Sindh does not allow woman's

interaction with outsiders therefore dealing, procurement of raw material and distribution are done by older females. For women it is difficult to access market, information and developing a wider range of skills.

The handicraft industry has tremendous potential. Indian handicrafts are a flourishing sector with sizable market demand and economic potential, which substantially contributes in exports and for employment generation (Jena, 2010). Jammu and Kashmir home-based handicraft industry has contributed millions of rupees as foreign exchange and is globally acclaimed for their exquisite designs, utility and craftsmanship, because it does not require heavy capital investment or infrastructure such as machinery, buildings and power (Dar & Parrey, 2013). Handicraft sector is a source of cultural and ecotourism which opens job opportunities for many. The lack of shop/store in market centers or outlets for the handicrafts is also considered the main hurdle (Sirika, 2008). Handicraft workers are considered either ignorant, or sometimes they lack taste and discernment. Craftwork deserves serious attention from South Asian social scientists rather just labeling it a symbol of tradition that can serve as profitable commodity. It needs some research findings and great improvement (Wilkinson-Weber, 2004).

Lack of continuous work was considered a hurdle for home based workers. The certainty of work will make them self-reliant participant in the national income (Hassan & A Zaman, 2014). The Self Help Group movement has been working in right direction in India (Levaku, 2014). Pakistan also needs such consideration and initiative in this sector. Women entrepreneurship is a means of enhancing women's life in a holistic way, at personal and family level, and in the context of society, therefore, good training programs including projects and exhibitions will stimulate entrepreneurial activities (Day-Hookoomsing & Essoo, 2003).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory and qualitative. Primary data were collected through interview method (structured cum semi-structured) from a sample of 40 home-based handicrafts women residing in different areas of Badin. Purposive sampling technique was used as done by Hassan & A zman (2014) while studying on women home-based workers in Lahore, Pakistan. The respondents for this study are adult women that work as self-employed within the confines of their homes, and contribute to the family income, engaged in making handicrafts particularly apparel — clothing or beddings.

Wassan et al. (2010) studying the bangle industry of Hyderabad also used purposive sample, as the population of this study is also demographically similar to that study in terms of education, economic deprivation and belongs to an informal sector.

Secondary data were collected by reviewing journals, magazines, reports, conference proceedings, and by visiting websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to lack of education and confidence, the women were reluctant and hesitant to answer but through conducive motivation they were convinced. The data were compiled in tables showing frequencies and percentages. Descriptive interpretation is also provided about data.

Handicraft Production

For collecting data about what handicraft they know and work on, a checklist was provided in which the variety of handicrafts they could select with the option 'others' as well. They were also asked about their main handicraft production.

Table-1: Handicraft Production they are engaged in, and their main handicraft

S.No.	Type of Handicraft	# of women engaged in	%of women engaged in	# of women having main vocation	%of women having main vocation
1.	Hand embroidery	21	52.5	12	30
2.	<i>Ralli</i> -quilt	26	65	15	37.5
3.	Applique	09	22.5	02	05
4.	Sewing	17	42.5	11	27.5
5.	Crochet	05	12.5	00	00
6.	<i>Chunri</i>	01	2.5	00	00
	Total	---	---	40	100

Ralli quilt was concluded as the most common craft among the women with 65 percent, and it was also found to be main craftwork among the craftswomen with 37.5 percent. *Ralli* is a special craft of Sindh that is getting popularity internationally. The reason could be its utility as a comfortable quilt and its flamboyance as well. Second and third common and main crafts are Hand embroidery and Sewing respectively. Hand embroidery can be fondness of customer whereas Sewing has great utility.

Education

Question regarding the education of these women was asked as a great focus was found on it while reviewing literature, it was considered a determinant and an important factor in the studies conducted on handicraft.

Table-2: Education the women have got

S.No.	Academic Qualification	# of women	% of women
1.	Uneducated	25	62.5
2.	Primary	05	12.5
3.	Metric	05	12.5
4.	Intermediate	03	7.5
5.	Graduation	01	2.5
6.	Post-graduation	01	2.5
	Total	40	100

Faridi, Chaudhry, and Malik (2011) found that the low level of education motivates the women to start their own business in Bahawalpur district. Makhdoom (2015) concluded that education has a negative relation with being self-employed by women in Jamshoro district. This study also shows that education affects women to work at home as craftswoman, Table 2 indicated. A big number of women population engaged in handicraft are uneducated with 62 percent. Only 2.5 percent are graduate and post-graduate in our sample. Global Network (2011) found that 97 percent women are uneducated engaged in home-based work in KPK.

Age and Motive

It was important to know which age group is working as craftswomen, and motive behind it.

Table-3: Age brackets and motive behind their work

S.No.	Age brackets	# of women	% of women	Motive for work (# of women)		
				Extreme need	Support the family	Interest & Independence
1.	15-25	09	22.5	07	01	01
2.	26-35	19	47.5	09	01	09
3.	36-45	06	15	02	04	00
4.	46-55	04	10	02	01	01
5.	56-65	02	05	02	00	00
Total		40	100	22	07	11

The age bracket 26-35 - the adult and mature group has high frequency in craftwork with 47.5 percent that has high frequency in both motives: working for extreme need and for independence and interest that can be attributed to their poverty and self-esteem factor respectively. Global Network (2011) conducted a similar study in KPK, in which the highest frequency that is 21.6 percent of home-based women workers is from age group of 31 to 35. Majority of which ie 51 out of 60 started works due to poverty and unemployment of the male members of family. In this study the highest frequency of workers have extreme need their motive with 55 percent, whereas 27.5 percent of women work for independence and interest.

The age group with lowest frequency is 56-65 with 5 percent, which is a retiring group and it is evident from the table that they work because of extreme need. Age group 46-55 also has low frequency and work either for extreme need or supporting the family. Global Network (2011) also found the lowest percentage of 6.6 of women age group 46 - 50 in home-based work.

Marital Status and Motive

On one side, marriage makes women dependent but increases her responsibilities as home-manager on the other.

Table-4: Marital status and motive behind their work

S.No.	Marital status	# of women	% of women	Motive for work (# of women)		
				Extreme need	Support the family	Interest & Independence
1.	Married	28	70	15	06	07
2.	Unmarried	12	30	07	01	04
	Total	40	100	22	07	11

It is evident from Table 4 that married women are more prone to work at home with 70 percent, and 53.6 percent (15 out of 28) of them are working because of extreme need. Global Network (2011) found that 83 percent of home-based women workers are married. Faridi et al. (2011) described a positive relationship between marital status and self-employment.

Contribution in Family Income

It was explored by questions as to who is breadwinner for the household, and how much is contributed by craftswomen in family income.

Table-5: Breadwinner for the family

S.No.	Breadwinner	# of women	% of women
1.	The woman	11	27.5
2.	Male member(s)	18	45
3.	The woman & others	11	27.5
Total		40	100

Global Network (2011) found in KPK that unemployment of the male members of family cause women to be home-based workers. Results of this study show that mostly male is breadwinner for the family with 45 percent, despite working women are less likely to be sole breadwinner. It can be attributed to social/cultural/religious values or because of Role Conflict.

Table-6: Percentage in family income

S.No.	Income Brackets	# of women	% of women
1.	0%-25%	10	25
2.	26%-50%	19	47.5
3.	51%-75%	08	20
4.	76%-100%	03	7.5
	Total	40	100

The highest frequency lies in 26 percent-50 percent income bracket with 47.5 percent, which is somehow consistent with Table 5, and interprets the same facts because of some values and role conflict that women are less prone to participate fully in family income.

Distribution

Questions about where their products go and how they reach their customer were asked and when they start producing mostly, ways of distribution were also compared in terms of annual income they earn.

Table-7: Access to Customers and Market

S.No.	Market	Women		Distribution		
		Total #	Percentage	Door to door sale	Sale at home	Middlemen /Shops
1.	Local	14	35	02	11	01
2.	Nearer villages	08	20	02	04	02
3.	Big cities	11	27.5	01	03	07
4.	Local, villages and big cities	07	17.5	02	02	03
	Total	40	100	07	20	13

Most of their handicraft products i.e. 35 percent are sold locally, out of that 78.6 percent sale is made at home. Total 50 percent of handicraft is sold at home. Big cities have second high frequency with 27.5 percent and main means to access there is middlemen, which means 63.6 percent of the big cities are covered by middlemen. Total 32.5 percent of handicrafts reach customers through middlemen/shops. Women have very low frequency who reaches at big cities or door to door sellers with 9 percent in the category and 5 percent in total. Wassan et al. (2010) concluded that the culture of Sindh does not permit the woman to interact outside, therefore, only older females can go to the open market places. Studying the bangle industry of Hyderabad, Sirika (2008) found lack of shop/ store in market centers where they may display their products for sale or store them for the next market days. Wilkinson-Weber (2004) argued that home-working women are at a disadvantage all over the world; however, handicrafts industry in South Asia has potential. Doane (2007) concluded that women are required to remain within or close to the household in South and South East Asian countries that is a big hurdle.

Table-8: Annual income according to distribution

S.No.	Annual income (brackets) in rupees	# of women	% of women	Distribution		
				Door to door	Sale at home	Middlemen/ Shops
1.	0-25000	06	15	02	04	00
2.	25001-50000	12	30	02	08	02
3.	50001-75000	10	25	03	05	02
4.	75001-100000	10	25	00	03	07
5.	Above100000	02	05	00	00	02
	Total	40	100	07	20	13

Highest frequency with 30 percent in 25001-50000 income bracket shows that most of the women would have monthly income Rs. 2083-Rs. 4167 which lies in approximately 1/3 of minimum wage rate of Pakistan. This bracket has highest frequency of women who sale at home with 66.6 percent. Wassan et al. (2010) found 50 percent of women have monthly income of Rs. 2100 – Rs. 3000 in Hyderabad bangle industry.

Only 5 percent of them are earning more than Rs.100000, minimum Rs.8334 monthly that is also less than minimum wage rate of Pakistan. All of them are women who give their products to middlemen/shops. Rs.75001-Rs.100000 are earned by 25 percent only, 70 percent of them are women who give their products to middlemen/shops. Jena (2010) argued while conducting research on Indian handicraft industry that craftspeople should be properly exposed to the market leaving a little room for the intrusion of the middlemen

Experience and Circumstances

It was important to know the time period they have passed working on the craftwork, and to see whether it has changed their economic conditions and circumstances or not.

Table- 9: Years of experience and change in circumstances / economic conditions

S.No.	Years of experience	# of women	% of women	Change in circumstances		
				Much improved	Little bit	No change
1.	0-5	07	17.5	01	04	02
2.	6-10	12	30	06	04	02
3.	11-15	04	10	02	01	01
4.	16-20	10	25	03	04	03
5.	21-25	02	05	01	00	01
6.	Above 25	05	12.5	00	03	02
	Total	40	100	13	16	11

Faridi et al. (2011) described a positive relationship between experience and working as self-employed. In this study it was evident from the data that majority of women have been working for 6-10 years with 30 percent, and 50 percent of them find much improvement in their circumstances. This experience bracket has highest frequency of Much Improvement. It was miserable to know about the women working for more than 25 years that none of them found improvement in circumstances, it could be concluded that their talent, time and resources had been wasted or gone in vain.

Global Network (2011) also found that 98 percent of women home-based workers could not change their economic conditions by their vocation. In this study most of the women that is 40 percent find only little bit change in their circumstances as a result of working on handicraft.

Export and Exhibition

Richard (2007) advised that handicrafts should also be promoted in international markets and market surveys should be conducted to find out the potential for exporting in Cambodia.

In the present study five women whose products were distributed through middlemen state that their products are exported to foreign country but they do not have any idea as to which country their items were sent. They also said that for exported goods, their profit margin is not changed. It means middlemen exploit their craftwork and earn handsome amount by only

telling the women and women just feel proud for foreign demand not enquiring for their due share and recognition.

Richard (2007) also argued that exhibitions should be organized where craftspeople from all over Cambodia could participate. In this study three of them said their products were presented in exhibition by the middlemen but they did not get any recognition for that. In exhibitions that are arranged in big cities, products are sold at high price, women neither get monetary benefit nor recognition in that situation.

Two women who sale at home also told about exhibition, one was held in a vocational centre and second one in a village. The exhibitions in village or in vocational center do not mostly earn much, but women craftwork is recognized though at small scale.

Accessibility to Financing

Sirika (2008) concluded the need of financial assistance to set up their business and availability of capital for further investment for handicraft women of Ethiopia. Richard (2007) stressed the improvement in access to credit for empowering poor women of Cambodia for increasing their income generation opportunities. In the present study, two handicraft women (5 percent) have taken loan from a bank. One (2.5 percent) of them took from private lender on very high interest. One (2.5 percent) mentioned an NGO that provided her funding without interest but insufficient. Two (5 percent) of them said there is no NGO working in their village – Haji Abdullah Gopang Goth – that can help.

Most of them have negative attitude towards credit and consider it shameful to borrow – concluded through observation – as they bluntly replied "No, we have not taken any money from any one".

Attainment of Training and Skill Development Activities

Doane (2007) found lack of access to important factors like information and the means to develop a wider range of skills that may make the home-based working women highly vulnerable to changes in their environment in South and South East Asia.

In the present study two women (5 percent) said they learnt all from vocational center in a 5-6 month course. Four (10 percent) said they also learnt little bit in 1-2 months at a vocational center. Two (5 percent) have been part of an NGO crafts learning program.

Eight (20 percent) of them proudly said they learned from mother. The others said they learnt from family members. It shows very little number (20 percent) has attained skill development and training programs, or such organizations do not have full access to the population. Richard (2007) recommended workshops for training of craftspeople of Cambodia in designing products so that they may bring innovation and variety in their handicrafts. Sirika (2008) suggested training to artisans for the promotion of women handicraft sector to enhance the quality, quantity and design of their products to be competitive in local or national market in order to improve the industry in Ethiopia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the analysis of the collected data and its findings, following recommendations are suggested for further work and implementation:

- Handicraft industry in Badin is found to be at low ebb. It requires a serious consideration by Government, NGOs, researchers, and public for its betterment.
- Lack of awareness and confidence is found to be the main hurdle behind their non-profitable vocation. Women should be empowered and get socialized and acquainted with the external environment. Male/female members should counsel them regarding various external relevant factors.
- Lack of education is found to be the characteristic of most of women that itself is a weakness. Government and NGOs should start adult education program especially for craftswomen. Women education should be obligated.
- *Ralli* quilt is the most common and main craft among the women, Hand embroidery and Sewing second and third respectively. Most of the women have no idea about the high demand of their product in local as well as international market. 'Exhibition' was a question for most of the handicraftswomen. The very few whose products have been in exhibition did not get much recognition or reward for that. Their handicrafts should be promoted by NGOs, Vocational Institutes through exhibition, publicity etc.

- Majority of handicraft women are adult in the mature age group i.e. 26-35, majority is also married. Mostly women are working in extreme need. Poverty eradication program should be properly designed by replacing charity/alms/relief with 'funding for business' and skill development programs
- The craftwork has not improved their circumstances to a considerable extent. Some of them have worked for more than two decades but are still in poverty. Mostly women are not sole breadwinner for the family but most of them are moderately contributing in family income. There should be poverty eradication programs in which both male and female members of a family can be beneficiary e.g. launching a shop run by male member and handicraft produced by women
- Most of the handicraft products are sold locally and at home. Door to door sellers are in minority. Big cities are only approached by middlemen. A meager amount is earned by handicraft women. Women who sale their products to middlemen/shops earn slightly better. Women-focused financing and promotion by Government or NGO level can help them reach directly to big cities and wide range of customers. Removing middlemen/shopkeeper and having their own shops or direct contact with retailers would be beneficial.
- Their handicraft has demand but there is a very limited access to foreign market only through middlemen, but women do not get any extra margin and recognition. Vocational institutes, NGOs work in liaison with 'Export Promotion Bureau Government of Pakistan', so they should promote their export which will help in earning foreign exchange.
- Approximately 50 NGOs are working in the region, but craftswomen have not been beneficiary of NGOs either for skill development or for financing. NGOs should extend their network or especially approach to handicraftswomen
- Very little number of vocational institutes is working there. And a negligible number of these women have access to that. Number of vocational institutes and programs should be increased, and their objective should be concentrated

- Most of the women were unfamiliar with 'Loaning', some of them consider it unethical, so how could they borrow? Banks have different financing products most of them require collateral/security, guarantee or are based on substantial mark-up/interest rate. There is also First micro finance bank limited which can be beneficial for the women. Easy and interest free financing schemes should be offered. Islamic-banking products should be included in banks. As their feature 'sharing profit and loss' would motivate the craftswomen. Mindset should be changed through counseling that 'borrowing is not a sin but begging is'.

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