

# Livelihood Dependence of Carpet Weavers in Kashmir: A Case Study of Kulgam District

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## Abstract

The survival of life depends upon the minimum amount of food required. There are different ways of earning this minimum subsistence. These ways in other words means different sources of living. There are different sources of living for diverse sections of the society. In this connection the present paper was undertaken in order to find out the livelihood sources of carpet weavers in the Kashmir. Therefore the objective of the paper was to find out whether the carpet weavers are dependent on weaving for their living or is it a supplementary source of income to them. However the findings reveal the significant livelihood dependence of weavers on carpet weaving with no or little other sources of living available and was found main reason why they are associated with this industry.

**Keywords:** livelihood dependence, supplementary, sources of living, carpet industry

## 1. Introduction

In today's developed nations, few traditional craft producers survive. In India millions of people possessing traditional skills and knowledge of traditional techniques still make a living by producing handcrafted goods. Handicrafts have not only been an important part of the economy, but have also played an important role in the formation of the ideology of development in the region. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was argued by the nationalist critics of British colonial rule in India that the 19<sup>th</sup> century globalisation and industrialisation had destroyed traditional industry in India. This view eventually gave rise to a package of measures designed to protect these industries from global and domestic competition. Another contemporary view held that globalisation had, in fact some handicrafts access markets that valued consumer goods intensive in craftsmanship. More recently, this latter view has gained ground, partly in response to export success of handicrafts in the post-reform trade regime in India. (Basu, 2007) The handmade carpet industry is an important foreign exchange earner for our country besides providing employment to over one million workers. The current estimated world trade of floor coverings is about US \$ 2.56 billion. India ranks first in the exports of handmade carpets both in terms of its value and volume. India faces the major competition from Iran, Pakistan and Nepal. Carpet exports have increased from US\$ 50 million in 1975-76 to US\$ 876 million in 2007-08. During 2008-09 and 2009-10, handmade carpet exports and other floor coverings declined by 23.15 % and 7.51 % respectively. However, the exports of carpets and other floor coverings have increased by 29.52 % during 2011-12. Before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, joint Iranian/American firms produced rugs specifically targeted to the American markets. After the crises of the American hostages in 1980, the United States imposed sanction against Iran and prevented Persian carpet imports into the country. Some rug dealers continue to export Iranian carpets to the United States from Canada, yet most American dealers, unwilling to risk their businesses, rely upon Chinese or Turkish hand-made carpets. As a response to the American demand for Persian carpets, carpets from China, India, and Pakistan with Iranian designs are flooding the market. India has a share of around 35 % of world market for handmade carpets and floor coverings, out of which India's exports to US accounts for about 39.25 % of total exports. India, Iran, China and Nepal are the major players in the global trade for carpets. Iran accounts for about 20 to 25 % of total exports, China about 20 % and Nepal near about 10 % global carpet exports. Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the other significant exporters of the carpets. Europe and America are the chief importers of carpets accounting for about 95 % the total carpet imports (News Bulletin of Carpet Export Promotion 2013).

In a State like Jammu and Kashmir, carpet industry has a big role to play for economic development as it occupies an important place in the economy. It is basically a cottage industry and provides direct and gainful employment to thousands of people. This sector is the largest employer in the State among different craft products and has the potential to generate more employment in future. The carpet products have won worldwide acclaim for their exquisite designs, craftsmanship and functional utility. The woollen and silken carpets of the State remain unparalleled on the national scene for quality and design. In fact, the Kashmiri craftsmen possessing a unique talent for intricate workmanship is one of our most important resources. This industry has a tremendous potential and has to be perceived with concern and with a precise understanding of its values. As an export-oriented industry, it has contributed considerably towards foreign exchange earnings worth crores of rupees annually. It is a cottage-based industry, which does not require heavy capital investment and heavy infrastructure such as machinery, buildings and power, is the environmental friendly industry which is the dire need of the present day world. This sector has a better scope for improvement, keeping in view the geography and the tourist visits to the State. This craft is an important source of income and livelihood to thousands of people in rural areas even today.

### 1.1 Handicraft Scenario in Kulgam District

The District has a total of 3364 artisans engaged in different handicrafts. Among the different crafts the major concentration is in carpet industry. Out of the total artisans the carpet industry alone accounts for 1944 artisans which is about 58% of the total artisans. After carpet industry, the crewl holds the second position which accounts for 849 artisans which is about 26% of the total artisans. The chain stich holds the third position with 179 artisans and sozni and zari fourth and fifth position respectively with near about same number of artisans 161 and 157. However, there are other crafts like kani shawl, paper machie, pottery machie, shawl, gabba, willow wicker, stapple, wood carwing etc but all these crafts are insignificant because of the limited number of artisans involved in these crafts. (District Handicrafts Department, Kulgam). Besides these registered artisans, there is a huge chunk of artisans reported during field survey which are unregistered mainly because of ignorance and negligence of the Handicrafts Department.

### 2. Review of literature

**Ghimire (2008)** in her thesis, An Assessment of the Dependency of Farmers on Bamboo Resource for Rural Livelihood in Lalitpur District, Nepal found that bamboo craft making is the traditional occupation of Pahari households (producing handicrafts such as dalo, naglo, chalno and rack). The study further shows that bamboo craft making significantly contributes to the livelihoods of poor Pahari households (e.g. to cope with food insecurity), however, their income from bamboo crafts is lower compared to medium and rich wealth categories. The reasons for low income are small landholding size, lack of adequate knowledge and skills, lack of bamboo raw materials, market and financial support to run the enterprise in a sustainable way.

**Berman and Ann (2006)** in their study, carpet weavers and global market, A case study of Turkey, studied the factors affecting the lives of women who weave carpets in rural Turkey by investigating as to why rural women weave carpets, what are the influences of the global market on carpet design and in what way is government involved in the weaving industry. The findings of their study suggest that if other income generating sources are available, the women are less likely to weave. Also, some women were found to alter their traditional designs in order to suit the global market. The government withdrawal of support from the weaving industry seems to lead the end of low-end weaving industry.

**Sosla, Banda and Johnson (2005)** have made a study on dependence of, rural livelihoods on bamboo handicraft making and Culm vending in Mvera, Malawi. The aim of the study was to find out the contribution of bamboo enterprises to household income and the management practices of the bamboo handicraft makers and bamboo collectors, and the activities of stakeholders in the bamboo industries in Mvera. Eighteen respondents have been randomly selected from the bamboo culm vending community for questionnaire survey and 74 respondents from bamboo handicraft making villages by using stratified random sampling. The study reveals that Bamboo handicraft making and bamboo culm vending are contributing significantly to the livelihood security in the areas studied. Further handicraft making shows gender imbalance as it involved mainly males except in one Chipala women's group, which is not also performing efficiently. However, bamboo culm vending involves both sexes. The average bamboo enterprise cash income contribution to household cash incomes was about six times the agricultural cash income. This is so because the bamboo entrepreneurs rarely sold their farm produce.

### 3. Objectives

1. To study the sources of living to carpet weaving community in Kashmir.
2. To find out whether the carpet weavers are dependent on weaving for their living.
3. To find out is carpet weaving their supplementary source of income.

### 4. Hypotheses

1. The carpet weavers do not have much sources of living other than carpet weaving.
2. The carpet weavers are significantly dependent on carpet weaving for their livelihood.

### 5. Sample

The paper is empirical and relies primarily on the primary data collected during the field survey. The Kulgam district consists of total population of 1944 artisans who were registered in the carpet industry. Out of these artisans, a sample of 202 artisans was undertaken for the analysis of the paper.

### 6. Sampling technique

A multistage but a purposive sampling technique was used for the collection of the data. The Kulgam district consists of six community development blocks viz Kulgam, Damhal Hanji Pora, Pahloo, Devsar, Qaimoh and Qazigund. In the first stage, two blocks viz Kulgam and D.H. Pora were selected out of these six Community Development Blocks due to the consideration that maximum weavers were present in these two Blocks. In the second stage fifteen villages, ten from Damhal Hanji Pora block viz Damhal Hanji Pora, Aadigen, Pombay,

Kokeran, Begema, Wattoo, Asnoor, Check, Tangmarg and Rambhama and five from Kulgam Block viz Gadihama, Harveth, Parivan, Sehpura and Nelove were selected keeping in view again the concentration of the carpet weavers. In the final stage, the households involved in the carpet weaving were selected after obtaining the required information from the elders or village heads of various sample villages.

### 7. Tools used

An interview schedule was used to collect primary data for the study. Besides, the researcher also used personal observation gained through the field survey. However, for the data analysis the SPSS version 16 was used.

### 8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 reveals the distribution of artisans with respect to their occupations and shows their dependence on carpet weaving for livelihood. The interview schedule included the main source of living to carpet weavers. Besides, the main source, the other sources of livelihood to the families were also investigated. After complete verification of these sources, the following results were drawn.

**Table 1**

<b>Occupational Distribution of Sample Artisans (Weavers and Owners) of Kulgam District in terms of their Livelihood Dependence on Carpet Industry with respect to their various Household Characteristics</b>									
Household characteristics				Artisans Mainly Dependent on Horticulture		Artisans Mainly Dependent on Business		Artisans Mainly Dependent on Weaving	
		Total	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Households	202	202	100%	5	2.47%	17	8.41%	180	89.10%
Rural/urban status	Urban	2	1.00%	0	0.00%	2	100%	0	0.00%
	Rural	200	99.00%	5	2.50%	15	7.50%	180	90%
Caste	General	161	79.70%	4	2.48%	17	10.55%	140	86.95%
	OBC	39	19.30%	1	2.56%	0	0.00%	38	97.44%
	ST	2	1.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	100%
Type of house	Pucca	35	17.30%	0	0.00%	15	42.85%	20	57.15%
	Kuccha	78	38.60%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	78	100%
	Semi- pucca	89	44.10%	5	5.61%	2	2.24%	82	92.15%
	Others	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Type of ration card	APL	87	43.10%	1	1.14%	15	17.24%	71	81.62%
	BPL	52	25.70%	2	3.85%	1	1.93%	49	94.23%
	AAY	37	18.30%	2	5.40%	1	2.70%	34	91.90%
	None	26	12.90%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	26	100%
Agriculture land	Yes	172	85.10%	5	2.90%	17	9.88%	150	87.22%
	No	30	14.90%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	30	100%
Standard of living	Low	193	95.50%	5	2.60%	10	5.18%	178	92.22%
	Medium	7	3.50%	0	0.00%	5	71.42%	2	28.58
	High	2	1.00%	0	0.00%	2	100%	0	0.00%

Source: Authors calculation

Table 1 shows that out of the 202 sample households, there were only 22 households who were involved in carpet weaving but were not economically dependent on weaving as income source. Out of the total households, only 2.5 % were found to be dependent on horticulture and 8.41 % on business. Consequently, out of the total sample households in the Kulgam district, 89.10 % were found to be mainly dependent on carpet weaving i.e. out of 202 households, 180 were dependent on carpet weaving. This shows an extreme dependence of the weavers on this occupation for their livelihood.

The rural and urban status of the households shows that neither of the two urban households has carpet weaving as their main occupation and both of them were found to be dependent on business. Since the study was almost exclusively conducted in the rural area, that is why 99 % of the households were from the rural area. However, due to the inadequate number of owners in the two selected Sample Blocks, the data for the owners was collected from the whole District and the two households belonging to urban area were both the owners, otherwise all the households would have been from the rural areas. While taking into consideration the rural dependence on carpet industry, 90 % of the households were found to be dependent on the weaving. Only 2.50 % and 7.50 % were found to be dependent on horticulture and business respectively. This also shows a high rural dependence on carpet weaving.

In order to study the differences in dependence in terms of the Caste, Table 1 shows that 161 households were from general category, 39 from the OBC category, the two from ST category and none was reported from the SC category as the study area was exclusive muslim community area. Thus, the general households constitute 79.70 % of the total households, OBC constitutes 19.30 % and the ST category constitutes about 1 % of the total households. If we examine their dependence on the weaving, 86.90 % of the general households are dependent on carpet weaving. In case of the OBC category, 97.44 % are dependent on carpet weaving and only 2.56 % are dependent on horticulture. However, in case of ST category both the households were found to be dependent on carpet weaving. This shows more dependence of backward classes on the weaving. The main reason why they are found more dependent on weaving was that they were not having other income earning avenues to support their families.

To study the differences in terms of types of houses, it was found that only 17.30 % of the households were having pucca houses, 38.60 % households were having kuccha houses and the rest 44.10 % were having semi-pucca houses. Out of these pucca households, only 57.15 % are dependent on carpet weaving while 42.85 % are dependent on the business. These households show less dependence on weaving as compared to other categories as it includes the owner class, whose main occupation was business and were having better economic condition. The kuccha households show 100 % dependence on carpet weaving owing to their weak economic condition. However, the semi-pucca household category includes 92.15 % of the households who are dependent on weaving. Only 2.24 % are dependent on business and 5.61 % on horticulture. This shows the direct relation between the poverty and the livelihood dependence of the weavers; poorer the households more are they dependent on carpet weaving.

As per the economic status of the 202 sample households is concerned, Table 1 shows that out of the total sample households 43.10 % of the households belong to the APL ration card category, 25.70 % to the BPL category, 18.30 % to the AAY and the remaining 12.90 % of the households were reported to have no ration cards. The researcher has observed great mismatch among households in the distribution of ration cards. Most of the households were found in weak economic condition but possessing either APL or having no ration card at all. When asked about the reason, most of the households had no clear reason to put forward. Among APL households, 81.62 % of the households are dependent on carpet weaving and among BPL households, 94.23 % show their dependence on weaving. However from AAY households, it is 90.91 % and those households having no ration cards show their 100 % dependence on the carpet weaving. This further supports that more stern the poverty, more is the dependence on the weaving and vice versa.

Table 1 also shows differences in dependence among households in terms of their possession of agriculture land. Out of the total households, 85.10 % were the agriculture land holders and the 14.90 % were landless households. While taking into consideration the differences in dependence on weaving, it is clear from Table 1 that all the landless households are dependent on the carpet weaving. However, 87.55 % of those households having agricultural land are also dependent on weaving. This also confirms that less alternative sources of living available, more is the dependence on carpet weaving and vice versa.

Table 1 further depicts the differences in dependence in terms of the standard of living of sample households. It shows that 95.50 % of the households are from the low standard category, 3.50 % from the medium category and the rest 1 % from the high standard category on the basis of standard classification of households in terms of possession of different household assets. This clearly shows that most of the carpet weaving community belongs to the poor strata, not possessing many of the specified consumption durables and highlights the poor economic condition of the weavers. Out of the low standard households, 92.22 % show their dependence on the carpet weaving. However, from the medium standard households, only 28.58 % show their dependence on carpet weaving and from the high standard, neither of the two households was reported to be dependent on carpet weaving. Both the households in this category belong to the business class. This clearly shows that most of the households depending on the weaving are poor.

## 9. Conclusion

Thus, the overall analyses of the livelihood dependence on carpet weaving shows that 89.10 % of the households are dependent on weaving. It has also revealed that more poor are highly dependent on weaving without having any alternative income sources available. This shows the direct dependence of the poor people on carpet weaving. This was also confirmed by the researcher by examining the alternative sources of living of the weavers at home. In percentage terms, most of the households who were found more dependent on weaving were from poor socio economic background. It further reveals that more severe the economic condition more is the dependence on carpet weaving and vice versa. As such, the study shows the significant livelihood dependence of the sample household weavers on carpet weaving.

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