

An Empirical Evaluation Of The Livelihood Security Of Weavers Within The Cooperative Societies In Thoubal District, Manipur

Kiran Soibam¹, Dr. K. Angela Lalhmingsangi²

¹Research Scholar, kiraneco111@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor Department of Economics, Mizoram University, angelakhawlhring11@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Kiran Soibam, Dr. K. Angela Lalhmingsangi (2024). An Empirical Evaluation Of The Livelihood Security Of Weavers Within The Cooperative Societies In Thoubal District, Manipur. *Library Progress International*, 44(5), 344-350

ABSTRACT

The Manipur Apex Handloom & Handicraft Artisan's Co-operative Society Limited is a coalition of primary co-operative societies that plays a vital role in advancing the handloom industry in the state. Handloom weaving is not only a cultural symbol but also a key aspect of socio-economic life in Manipur. Livelihood security refers to the sustainability of socio-economic, cultural, and political systems, including their limitations, vulnerabilities, marginalization, and risks. There has been limited attention given to examining the livelihood security of weavers who face numerous challenges such as credit issues, low-profit margins, increasing yarn prices, and outdated technology. The present investigation has been conducted in the light of this context. An empirical assessment has been conducted to evaluate the livelihood security of weavers under the cooperative societies residing in two municipal areas of Thoubal district i.e. Thoubal and Wangjing. The livelihood security index is composed of seven indicators: economic security, food security, habitat security, educational security, hygiene and sanitation security, and social security, and yielded the following scores: economic security scored 0.4156, food security scored 0.6052, habitat security scored 0.7166, education security scored 0.5984, hygiene and sanitation security scored 0.4102, health security scored 0.4215 and social security scored the lowest with a score of 0.1892. The Weaver's Livelihood Security Index had an overall score of 0.4782 which is in the medium category. The study recommends the enhancement of efficiency of the underperforming primary cooperative societies, implementing a centralized network to distribute crucial information to the weavers, and establishment of a handloom institute in every town to revive the handloom sector and improve the livelihood security of the weavers.

Keywords : Livelihood Security, Handloom, Weaver, Socio-economic.

INTRODUCTION

India's handloom industry is a cornerstone of the country's rich heritage, known for its exceptional craftsmanship and preservation of vibrant cultural traditions. This sector plays a significant role in India's economy, contributing 6% to the GDP and accounting for 13% of the country's exports (Ministry of Textiles, 2015). Employing over 43.31 lakh weavers, the handloom industry is a vital part of India's unorganized sector (Third Handloom Census). Notably, Manipur holds a special place in India's handloom landscape, boasting one of the highest concentrations of weavers and looms in the country. Handloom weaving is not only a cultural symbol but also a key aspect of socio-economic life in Manipur, with approximately 5 lakh people directly or indirectly reliant on handloom-related activities, despite the state's smaller size. The manufacture of handloom items in Manipur is generally carried out by women living in rural and semi-urban settings (Sharma, 1996). The State Government has made significant efforts to foster the growth of the handloom and handicrafts sectors within the state. The Manipur Apex Handloom & Handicraft Artisan's Co-operative Society Limited is a coalition of primary co-operative societies that plays a vital role in advancing the handloom industry in the state. Its primary objective is to supply yarn to the primary weaver co-operative societies and support them in marketing their products, intending to enhance the socio-economic status of weavers and artisans and contribute to the overall development of the textile sector. In a study by Sadanandam (2016), it was highlighted that weavers encounter numerous challenges such as financial constraints, inability to invest in updated machinery, poor working conditions, low remuneration, and lack of government support. Women weavers in Manipur face difficulties stemming from market changes, competition, and limited access to

modern technology. Despite contributing to their family income, these women strive for self-reliance and financial stability. Unfortunately, their rights are insecure due to the absence of robust workers' organizations. Establishing sustainable cooperative societies could facilitate their access to government schemes and health insurance. Embracing new concepts and policies within the handloom sector could pave the way for increased employment opportunities and improve the socioeconomic status of these women Devi (2012)

Sarngadharam (1987) found that members of cooperatives gained greater benefits than independent counterparts. However, the cooperatives themselves could benefit from revitalization to increase productivity. The lack of employment stability and insufficient wages for handloom weavers have resulted in children avoiding the profession, leading to migration to non-craft activities. Government support is necessary to enhance the productivity and quality of handloom products. This requires infrastructure development, design support, and improved technology. The government should mandate the usage of the handloom mark, organize training programs, and increase wages to improve livelihoods and reduce migration Olive et al. (2021).

The concept of livelihood security has been subject to diverse interpretations by scholars. Livelihood refers to the sufficient provision of resources, including both money and goods, to fulfill the essential needs of individuals. Livelihood security, on the other hand, encompasses the possession or availability of resources and assets to mitigate risks, cope with unexpected events, and handle unforeseen circumstances. It also involves the ability to access social institutions related to kinship, family, neighborhood, village, and unbiased property rights based on gender, which are necessary to sustain a certain standard of living. (Chamber, 1989; Redelift, 1990; Chamber and Convey, 1992; Long, 1997; Complain, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Huq, 2000).

Livelihood security refers to the sustainability of socio-economic, cultural, and political systems, including their limitations, vulnerabilities, marginalization, and risks. Until the 1990s, there were not many studies in literature that evaluated livelihood security worldwide. However, in recent times, a few studies have emerged that aim to develop measures for assessing livelihood security, which has raised various methodological concerns. (Bouis, 1993; Haddad et al., 1994; CARE, India, 1997; Drinkwater and Rusinow, 1999; Frank, 2000; David, 1999; Rahman and Alam, 2001; Christina et al., 2001; CARE, USA, 2002; Fazeeha, 2002; Azmi, 2002b; Matshali, 2002; Frank et al., 2002)

In this specific context, the Centre for Agriculture and Extension (CARE), Kenya (1996) proactively undertook the task of systematically quantifying many aspects that impact the security of people's livelihoods. They accomplished this by developing an index that assesses the total level of livelihood security. The CARE score is calculated based on six main types of security indices: health, education, food, habitat, economic issues, and social network. The scholars have critically examined the index. Igniting a series of disputes and debates. However, academics broadly agree that the livelihood security model developed by CARE is widely accepted. A highly efficient analytical instrument that serves a practical function in understanding the needs of underprivileged populations in society.

The existing literature suggests that while there is research on evaluating household livelihood security in various countries and regions, there has been limited attention given to examining the livelihood security of weavers who face numerous challenges such as credit issues, low profit margins, increasing yarn prices, and outdated technology. The present investigation has been conducted in the light of this context. An empirical assessment has been conducted to evaluate the livelihood security of weavers under the cooperative societies residing in two municipal areas of Thoubal district i.e. Thoubal and Wangjing.

RESEARCH GAP

No comprehensive study has assessed the total livelihood security of handloom weavers in Manipur using the existing livelihood frameworks.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the socio-economic condition of the weavers under the cooperative society
2. To measure the overall level of livelihood security of the weavers under the cooperative society.

METHODOLOGY

THE STUDY AREA AND SAMPLING DESIGN

The study was carried out in two municipalities within the Thoubal district. Thoubal district is composed of six municipal corporations: Lilong Municipal Corporation, Thoubal Municipal Corporation, Yairipok Municipal Corporation, Heirok Municipal Corporation, Sikhong Sekmai

Municipal Corporation, and Wangjing Lamding Municipal Corporation. Multi-stage sampling was adopted to choose two specific municipal corporations, notably Thoubal Municipal Corporation and Wangjing Lamding Municipal

Corporation. One municipal area is chosen from each municipal corporation, namely Thoubal and Wangjing. The primary data for this study was gathered using meticulously designed questionnaires and pre-tested questionnaires. A total of 200 respondents were selected by interacting with 100 weavers from each municipality.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Data obtained from the field survey were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics which include frequency distribution, means, and standard deviation. The livelihood security index was adopted to examine the livelihood status among weavers in the two municipal areas of the Thoubal district. Livelihood security index consisted of seven livelihood outcomes and these were measured based on accessibility or availability, quality, and ranking and they included economic security indicator, food security indicator, habitat security indicator, education security indicator, hygiene and sanitation security indicator, health security indicator and social security indicator. To assess the diverse livelihood outcomes, suitable indicators were selected from the standard menu of indicators provided by CARE USA/Program Division/PHLS. Each indicator was evaluated using a five-point ordinal scale, and these scales were adjusted and standardized to fit the specific context of the study area.

Indicator j - Min j

Z ind j =

Max j - Min j -----

Each index ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 represents the minimum value and 1 represents the maximum value of the variable. The indicators are categorized as low (<0.33), medium (0.34 to 0.66), and high (>0.67).

To calculate the Overall Livelihood Security Index (LSI), the standardized indicators were averaged using the following formula:

LSI = (Indicator 1 + Indicator 2 + ... + Indicator n) / n where n represents the total number of indicators used in the assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ECONOMIC SECURITY INDICATOR

Economic security is the condition of possessing a constant and steady stream of income or other assets that can support a desired level of living, both currently and in the long term, while also ensuring the stability of one's family. The survey gathered data on four different indicators, including the mean monthly income of the household from all

sources and the monthly income specifically derived from weaving, they were asked whether monthly earnings from all sources are sufficient enough in the maintenance of their families and whether they could primarily rely on weaving as a means of supporting their families. From the Table 1, it is revealed the majority of the weavers (85%) belong to low to medium economic security. This indicates that weavers are economically and comparatively insecure (0.4156)

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on economic security.

Economic Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	88	44.00	0.4156
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	82	41.00	
High (>0.67)	30	15.00	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

FOOD SECURITY INDICATOR

Household food security is the state in which all individuals have access to enough food to sustain a healthy and productive life. Food security has been examined using two indicators: the average monthly consumption expenditure of the weaver's family and their self-reported ability to maintain an adequate stock of food grains. The majority of the weavers (68.5%) are moderately secured and have a medium food security score of 0.6052.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents based on food security.

Food Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	11	5.50	0.6052
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	137	68.50	
High (>0.67)	52	26.50	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

HABITAT SECURITY INDICATOR

The weavers' habitat security is dependent on the quality and type of dwelling unit, in addition to access to electricity. A residence's condition directly affects its occupants' well-being and serves as a reliable measure of their living circumstances. The habitat score index is 0.7166, indicating that weavers in the study area are highly secure in terms of habitat security.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents based on habitat security.

Habitat Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	6	3.00	0.7166
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	85	42.50	
High (>0.67)	109	54.5	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

EDUCATION SECURITY INDICATOR

The education security of weavers is determined by four key factors: their educational attainment, monthly expenditure on each child's education, accessibility and availability of schools and colleges in their vicinity, and the literacy proficiency of the head of the household. Generally, weavers with higher levels of education tend to have higher incomes, lower fertility rates, reduced infant mortality, and better nutrition. This suggests that investing in the education of weavers and their families can lead to significant improvement in their overall well-being and socio-economic status. The index of educational security is found to be strong as 63% and 29.5% of the weavers belong to the low and medium categories with a total score of 0.5984.

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents based on education security.

Education Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	15	7.50	0.5984
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	126	63.00	
High (>0.67)	59	29.5	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

HYGIENE AND SANITATION SECURITY INDICATOR

Hygiene and sanitation security has been assessed based on five key parameters: access to safe drinking water, the condition of the drainage system in the vicinity, the type of

toilet used by the family, the self-assessment of sanitary conditions by family members, and the habit of washing hands with soap. The final score is 0.04102 which means weavers' families have slightly better hygiene and sanitary conditions.

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents based on hygiene and sanitation security.

Hygiene and Sanitation Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	39	19.50	0.4102
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	158	79.00	
High (>0.67)	3	1.50	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

HEALTH SECURITY INDICATOR

Health security is the capacity of individuals to recognize, avert, and handle major threats to their well-being. The present study confined the health security in terms of accessibility of primary health care services, ownership of health insurance cards, monthly expenditure on medicines and check-ups, and intensity of the weaver's back pain or eye problem. Only 4% of the weavers have high security in the study area. This indicates vulnerability conditions of the weavers towards health security and the index score is 0.4215.

Table 6. Distribution of the respondents based on health security.

Health Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	52	26.00	0.4215
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	140	70.00	
High (>0.67)	8	4.00	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

SOCIAL SECURITY INDICATOR

Social security pertains to individuals' ability to engage in social networks that support their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods by mitigating risks and facilitating access to resources and information. A social network reflects the extent to which weavers participate in organizations such as cooperatives, self-help groups, and other associations. Additionally, access to support from friends and neighbors, along with elements of the social network like phones and televisions, plays a crucial role in determining the social network status of households. 96% of weavers in the study area have low scores and 4% have medium scores. The weavers working under the cooperative societies are highly insecure and the total score is 0.1892. This suggests that weavers are dissatisfied with their employment as weavers within the cooperative society and many of them do not participate in any fairs or exhibitions.

Table 7. Distribution of the respondents based on social security.

Social Security Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage	Mean
Low (<0.33)	192	96.00	0.1892
Medium (0.34 to 0.66)	8	4.00	
High (>0.67)	0	0.00	
Field Survey 2024	200	100	

LIVELIHOOD SECURITY INDEX

C The overall livelihood security index (LSI) for the weaver was calculated and presented in Table 8. In this research, the overall livelihood security index was 0.4782 which is in the medium category. The data for livelihood indices exhibit a notable disparity. The score for habitat security is the highest, followed by food security. Three indices i.e. economic security, hygiene and sanitation security, and health security, all have nearly identical scores. Social security has the lowest ranking.

Table 8. Livelihood security status of the weavers.

Indicators	Index Value
Economic Security Indicator	0.4156
Food Security Indicator	0.6052
Habitat Security Indicator	0.7166
Education Security Indicator	0.5984
Hygiene and Sanitation Security Indicator	0.4102
Health Security Indicator	0.4215
Social Security Indicator	0.1892
Overall Livelihood Security Index	0.4782

CONCLUSION

The research aims to empirically evaluate the livelihood security of weavers working in cooperative societies in the two municipal areas of Thoubal district in Manipur. The study aimed to determine the socio-economic features of the weavers and evaluate the level of livelihood security among them in the study area. The livelihood security index yielded the following scores: economic security scored 0.4156, food security scored 0.6052, habitat security scored 0.7166, education security scored 0.5984, hygiene and sanitation security scored 0.4102, health security scored 0.4215 and social security scored the lowest with a score of 0.1892. The Weaver's Livelihood Security Index had an overall score of 0.4782 (medium). Out of all the indices, social security has the lowest score. This is a result of the weavers' poor profit margin, which is caused by their adherence to traditional methods of pricing determination. The majority of weavers do not participate in any fairs or exhibitions, and they also have limited knowledge about the initiatives created to promote the advancement of the handloom industry and weavers. Consequently, they do not derive significant benefits from working as weavers within the society.

There is a requirement to enhance the efficiency of underperforming cooperatives. This necessitates the identification of the optimal methodologies employed by successful cooperatives, to duplicate them to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of underperforming cooperatives and the broader weaving community. The good practices encompass the production of fabrics that are distinct from those created by power looms, ongoing efforts to enhance designs to meet market demands, expansion of product range over time, engagement with various market channels including local markets and Manipur Apex Handloom & Handicraft Artisan's Co-operative Society Limited, and primarily relying on formal institutions for credit access. Implementing a centralized network to distribute crucial information to weavers, enhancing weavers' understanding of financial and sales procedures, and establishing handloom institutes in every handloom town are among the measures that will contribute to revitalizing the sector and improve the livelihood security of the weavers. There is a necessity for the government to urgently exert itself in order to ensure health, education, economic, habitat, and food security for the weavers, thereby enhancing the overall weavers' livelihood security.

REFERENCES

1. Bouis, H. (1993), "Food Consumption Surveys: How Random are Measurement Errors?" in J.von Braun and D. Pietz (Eds.) (1998), *Data Needs for Food Policy in Developing Countries: New Directions for Households Surveys*, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., pp. 219- 231.
2. CARE, Kenya (1996), "Rapid Food and Livelihood Security Assessment Report, Nairobi, Kenya, CARE, July.
3. CARE, U.S.A. (2002), "Household Livelihood Security Assessments: A Toolkit for Practitioners", TANGO International Inc, Tucson, Arizona.
4. CARE, India (1997), "Household Livelihood Security Assessment Report", Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, CARE, April.
5. Chamber, R. (1989), "Editorial Introduction: Vulnerability, Coping and Policy", *IDS Bull.*, Vol. 2, No.2, pp. 1-7.
6. Chamber, R. and G. Convey (1992), *Substantial Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century*, Discussion Paper 296, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K
7. David, Danderson (1999), *Household Livelihood Security in Urban Settlement*, Technical and Policy Unit, CARE International, U.K.
8. Devi, Ch. Victoria (2012), 'Exploring the Lives of Manipur's Women Weavers', in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol.19 (No. 1) pp 31-35
9. Drinkwater, M and T. Rusinow (1999), "Application of CARE's Livelihood Approach", Paper presented at NRAD, 1999, <http://www.livelihoods.org>.
10. Fazeeha, A. (2002), "Challenges to Women's Livelihood Strategies in a Dry Zone Peasant Colonization Scheme in Rural Sri Lanka", NTNU, Dragvoll. N-7491, Trondheim, Norway.
11. *Fourth Handlooms Census of India: 2019-2020*. Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India.
12. Frank, Ellis (2000), *Rural Livelihood Diversity in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, U.K.
13. Frank, E., K. Milton and N. Alfred (2002), "Livelihood and Rural Poverty Reduction in Malawi", LADDER Working Paper No.17, National Economic Council, Ministry of Finance, Capital Hill, Lilongwe.
14. Matshali, S.M. (2002), "Household Livelihood Security in Rural Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa", Ph.D Thesis, Wageningen, The Netherlands, Wageningen University
15. NCAER, *Handloom Census of India 2019- 20*. Survey. Ministry of Textiles, Government of India; 2020.
16. Sadanandam. B. (2016), *Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weaving Societies- A case study of Warangal District*, *International Journal in management and Social Science*, ISSN: 2321-1784, Vol. 3(9), pp. 296-300
17. Sarngadharam (1987). *Social conditions of the handloom weavers in Kerala*. Research Bulletin of the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants of India, July.
18. Sharma, L.S. (1996). *A study on the financial aspects of handloom industry in Manipur*. Ph.D Thesis, Manipur University.
19. *Vision, Strategy and Action Plan for Indian Textile and Apparel Sector*. (2015). Ministry of Textiles, GOI.