

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WEAVING COMMUNITY IN
KERALA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE KUTHAMPULLY WEAVERS**

A project report submitted in
Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

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UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
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25 March 2022

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, '**Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Weaving Community in Kerala : An Empirical Study On The Kuthampully Weavers**' prepared and submitted by **Malavika Nair** in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication is a bonafide record of project work done by the student and is hereby accepted.

Ernakulam

25 March 2022



Ms Remya John,
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GUIDE'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, '**Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Weaving Community in Kerala : An Empirical Study On The Kuthampully Weavers**' is a record of the original and independent work carried out by **Malavika Nair** under my guidance and supervision. This has not previously formed the basis of the award of any degree/ diploma /other similar title of recognition.

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25 March 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Maria Jose', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ms Alan Maria Jose

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled '**Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Weaving Community in Kerala : An Empirical Study On The Kuthampully Weavers**' is an original work prepared and written by me, under the guidance of **Ms Alan Maria Jose**, Department of Communicative English, St Teresa's College in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication. This thesis or any other part of it has not been submitted to any other University for the award of other degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Weaving Community in Kerala : An Empirical Study On The Kuthampully Weavers

During the epidemic, the inhabitants of Kuthampully, a village noted for handloom and Kasavu sarees, was an ethnic minority that struggled to make ends meet. The study places a strong emphasis on fully comprehending the situation and developing a communication strategy to improve their market stability post Covid-19.

The study brings out the trials and tribulation of the demarginalized group into the arena of socio-economic discussions. The research aims to conduct a survey and an interview in Kuthampully and will try to understand the degree of awareness and accessibility to different social media platforms. Though there have been various studies about the community and its various problems, none of the earlier studies have fulfilled the objectives in the present one.

This empirical study is intent to take a sample size of 100 families using the probability sampling method.

Key words : Kuthampully, Pandemic, Social media, and Socio-economic.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Kuthampully is a handloom community approximately 50 kilometres from Thrissur district in Kerala state. This town is famous for kasavu sarees handloom and kasavu sarees are famous in this town. Kuthampully is a traditional weaving village with over 600 Brahmin families that conceive some of the country's most exquisite sarees. For centuries, many folk communities, traditional artists, and artisans have lived on the banks of the Nila (Bharathapuzha). Kuthampully is a well-known weavers' village in Kerala, India, located on the banks of the Nila River. The drape and borders of the traditional Kerala sari, settu mundu, and dhoti are instantly recognisable.

The saris are usually five metres long, have a cream body with golden motifs and golden or colourful borders, and are woven in the Kuthampully village. The Kuthampully sari was granted exclusive intellectual property rights in September 2011 under the Geographical Indication Act. Despite the large handloom production units that have sprouted across Kerala in recent years, weaving was an integral part of the village even before this. It is impossible to find a single house without its own traditional loom here.

1.1 History

This village has a history that spans more than 500 years. The Devanga community makes up the majority of the population. They can be traced back to modern-day Karnataka. According to legend, the Kochi Royal family brought this community of traditional weavers to work exclusively for the palace. Kuthugo in Kannada means to sit. The place

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where the weaving took place was later known as Kuthampulli. The current generation follows in the footsteps of their forefathers, carrying on the Kuthampully handloom tradition. Fascinating adaptations were made by the weavers and their families. Their festivals and customs are very similar to Tamil culture, and they are devotees of goddess Chamundeswari, whose main deity is on Chamundi hill, 13 kilometres from Mysore city. Chamundi's devotees in Kuthampully have constructed two temples for the goddess, and the 1,000 families in Kuthampully celebrate a day dedicated to the goddess in February – the weavers believe that Chamundeshwari's benevolence is reflected in their craftsmanship.

The Kuthampully Handloom Industrial Co-operative Society, which has 102 members, is the main representative of the community. They've made sure that the past's traditions were not forgotten. Kasavu's double dhoti, set mundu, and veshti are also popular items of clothing. To keep up with current trends and create designer clothing, modern weaving techniques have been incorporated. Although powerlooms are replacing the old-school throw-shuttle pit looms all over the world, Kuthampully's weavers prefer the traditional method and are resistant to change. The Kuthampully weave's secret is the fine cotton (pavu) and pure gold thread (kasavu). Paavu, or starched cotton thread, would be delivered in bundles from the spinning mills. The family's elders would separate and straighten the threads before twisting them into rolls to feed into the loom. Because these threads were 44 metres long, they had to be straightened and rolled while standing on the road, which took at least seven pairs of hands. Meanwhile, the family's women and children would help spin the yarn and use a charkha to twine the kasavu bundles into smaller rolls. It would take an entire day to complete the process.

They believe that any ostensible technological advancements will only degrade craftsmanship and, worse, may enrage Chamundeshwari. In a variety of small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, over 3000 people are employed. It's a once-in-a-lifetime

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opportunity to witness an entire community dedicated to a single goal with such zeal and determination.

1.2 Kuthampully Handloom Industrial Cooperative Society

This society was founded in 1972 with the goal of providing a decent living for the weavers as well as coordinating efforts to promote and sell Kuthampully products. The society provides the raw materials to the weavers, and wages are determined by output. It is from outside Kerala, the cotton yarn and imitation Jeri (half fine Jeri) are acquired. Currently, the society employs about 160 weavers, compared to nearly 500 in the 1990s. In the village, the other private units combined had nearly 2500 weavers in the 1990s, but that number has now dropped to less than 1000. The Kuthampully Sarees were granted exclusive Intellectual Property rights in September 2011 under the Geographical Indication Act. Designer items have been produced since the early half of the last decade.

1.3 Need for the Study

During the epidemic, the inhabitants of Kuthampully, a village noted for handloom and Kasavu sarees, was an ethnic minority that struggled to make ends meet. The study places a strong emphasis on fully comprehending the situation and developing a communication strategy to improve their market stability post Covid-19. The study brings out the trials and tribulation of the demarginalized group into the arena of socio-economic discussions. The research aims to conduct a survey and an interview in Kuthampully and will try to understand the degree of awareness and accessibility to different social media platforms. Though there have been various studies about the community and its various problems, none of the earlier studies have fulfilled the objectives in the present one.

1.4 Statement of Problem.

As the available literature reflects, there are not many studies conducted to analyze the challenges faced by the weaving community of Kuthampully due to the Covid-19. They are confronted with numerous challenges, including but not limited to insufficient revenue and a lack of understanding of the various business prospects offered by social media. As a result, the current study intends to identify and analyse these issues, as well as collect data on their socioeconomic and communication profiles, in the context of the current pandemic.

1.5 Objectives of the study.

1. To identify major obstacles and issues confronting Kuthampully's weaving community, as well as strategies to reduce the pandemic's effects.
2. To investigate weavers' socioeconomic position and way of living during the Covid-19.
3. To assess their knowledge of and access to various social media platforms.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the major challenges and issues that Kuthampully weavers face, and what is the best way to mitigate Covid-19's impact on their business?
2. What is the weavers' socioeconomic situation during the pandemic?
3. How well-informed are weavers about the various business opportunities and possibilities available on social media platforms?

1.7 Theoretical Framework

According to the Digital Divide Theory, there is an economic and social divide between the population of a country and their access to information and communication technologies. In the digital divide, there are at least three main determinants:

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1. Information accessibility
2. Information utilization
3. Information receptiveness

The digital divide is more than just a matter of access; people must also understand how to use the information they obtain from, various sources.

In this study, the theory of digital divide have been adopted to better understand the nature of the study.

1.8 Organisation of Chapters

All the information that makes up this study have been organized and sequenced into five chapters including the introduction chapter. The chapters have been arranged in such a way that each unfolds into the succeeding one and the details of the contents of each chapter have been explained in the following paragraph.

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two reviews relevant literature and research on weaving community. Chapter Three discusses the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents results of the survey and interview to answer the research questions. Chapter Five presents the research findings by discussing the data gathered. It also concludes the thesis project with summary, limitations of the study and offers recommendations for further research on the weavers of Kuthampully.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the study's goals include identifying main challenges and issues facing Kuthampully's weaving community, as well as developing methods to mitigate the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. The study also looks into the socioeconomic status and manner of life of weavers in the backdrop of the pandemic. In order to assess their knowledge of and access to various social media platforms, the researchers will need to review related literature on India's weaving community.

A previous study on weaving communities on several issues such as the socio-economic background of weavers, how successfully they have embraced new technology, and the problems they faced are discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Socio- Economic Perspective

Sajithkumar (2018) in the research paper titled “An economic analysis of handloom industry in Kerala A comparison with Tamil Nadu” conducts a detailed comparative study on the economic aspects of the handloom industrial units in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The researcher used a methodology that was both descriptive and empirical to meet the study's goals. A structured interview schedule is used to obtain primary data from a sample of handloom manufacturing firms in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Secondary data is gathered through books, journals, and dissertations, among other sources. In Kerala, sample units were chosen from each district based on their respective fraction of the sample frame's population. The sample units were chosen using a simple random sampling method based on a random number table. The minimal number of samples necessary for a study in Kerala was calculated to be 220 using the sample size table. To make comparisons easier, the researcher

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collected an equivalent number of samples (220 units) from Tamil Nadu. The study discovered that Kerala's handloom industry is facing various issues in areas such as production, finance, and marketing. In contrast to this, the handloom industry in Tamil Nadu has not only survived but expanded in some areas throughout the years. Handloom is one of Tamil Nadu's most important economic activities, employing over 3.52 lakh people, including 90144 ancillary employees.

Sreenivas (2016) studies the socioeconomic conditions of handloom weavers in Karimnagar district from 2005 to 2015 in his work titled "Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weavers –A Study of Karimnagar District." Through his study, he found out many difficulties such as raw material scarcity, marketing, financing, and, most importantly, the high prevalence of animals presented to authorities. Karimnagar district was chosen by the researcher because it ranks highest in the state in terms of productivity and membership in societies. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. A total of 200 weavers from the Karimnagar District were chosen for the study.

In the research paper titled “Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weaving Societies-A Case Study of Warangal District” Sadanandam (2016) points out the weavers of Warangal district encounter a variety of obstacles that have an impact on their livelihood and general well-being. The study's goal is to look into the weavers' socioeconomic situation and make suitable recommendations to help them out. This research is based on primary data gathered through interview schedules with 57 active societies in Telangana's Warangal area. The survey found that weavers face several obstacles, including financial constraints, an inability to purchase up-to-date machinery, bad working conditions, low pay, and a lack of government support.

Das (2015) focuses on the importance of both socio-economic profiles of the weaving community in the Bargarh area of western Odisha in his paper

"Socio-Economic Profile of Handloom Weaving Community: A Case Study of Bargarh District, Odisha." In the study, the researcher highlights how the traditional Indian handloom has a worldwide reputation and is in high demand in domestic markets. However, the weavers encounter several obstacles that harm their livelihood and general well-being. The study's goal is to look into the weavers' socioeconomic situation and make recommendations to help them out. This study is based on primary data acquired from 100 weavers in the Bargarh area of Odisha via interview schedules. The study found that weavers face a variety of obstacles, including financial constraints, inability to purchase up-to-date machinery, bad working conditions, low remuneration, and a lack of government support.

2.2 Adoption of technology

Sadanandan (2021) emphasises the importance of the handloom sector's contribution to India's economy in his study article "Adoption of technology among micro-entrepreneurial handloom weavers in Kuthampully, Thrissur district." The researcher emphasises the importance of technology acquisition and adaption to an enterprise's ability to maintain cost efficiency and improve product quality, both of which are critical for long-term viability and success in a competitive market. The research is purely descriptive. The information was gathered using a questionnaire from 200 people. The study discovered that the handloom business is facing significant challenges and that micro-entrepreneurs level of awareness has emerged as a vital component in determining and comprehending the factors that drive the adoption of new technologies. Handloom weavers need the most up-to-date technologies to meet global problems and enter new markets. Long-term, technology can play a large role.

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Mochahary, Gogoi, and Chetia (2020) focus on the problems that conventional weaving societies just like the Bodo have in modernization and being not able to take part withinside the industrial global marketplace of their observe "Traditional Weaving Technology of the Bodo Community of Assam." The observation found that the Bodo humans have historically appeared weaving as a dignified and honourable conventional occupation. Their conventional weaving technology, however, has converted into new technology, current developments, and a dynamic propensity as time and developments have changed. Despite this, a few skilled Bodo weavers retain to instruct the historical weaving agencies of their homes, unaffected with the aid of using technology. Handloom weaving and spinning, on the alternative hand, is turning into more and more uncommon amongst them.

Tanusree (2015) claims that the handloom business has fallen since industrialization in her research paper "A Study of the Present Situation of the Traditional Handloom Weavers of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India." She describes the different issues faced by the handloom weavers of Varanasi through her research, which are mostly due to the introduction of new technology (power-loom), capitalist domination, wage stagnation, higher yarn prices, and so on. She conducted the study in a descriptive method to attain the study's goal, and data was obtained through an in-depth interview, a semi-structured interview, a case study, and a focused group discussion.

In their research work "Handloom weaving, the traditional craft of Manipur," Amita and Joymati (2010) discuss how to hand woven textiles have been a rich source of one's tradition. Manipur's crafts have been connected with their culture and spiritual beliefs since time immemorial. The study discovered that traditional handwoven textiles of Manipur are few and far between, and that their designs, motifs, yarns, and processes are fast changing as a result of social changes and contemporary technologies. The information was gathered on purpose from three villages utilising the observation and interview method.

2.3 Role of Gender

In the research paper “Constructing cultural identity through weaving among Ri-Bhoi women weavers: a symbolic interactionist approach” Dias, Ogle and Diddi (2020) has examined weaving in the context of gender. . To acquire pertinent data, the researchers used an ethnographic technique that included participant observation, field notes/journaling, and informal and formal interviews to collect relevant data. The value that Ri-Bhoi women weavers attached to various aspects of their weaving tradition, which in turn supported their cultural identities, was revealed in four themes: (a) maintaining the tradition of weaving through acquisition and exchange of knowledge, (b) securing social support from family and community, (c) maintaining the tradition of weaving through the creation of textiles that symbolise tribe and culture, and (d) achieving a sense of fulfilment (i.e., joy, happiness, and pride). Further investigation indicated that the development of the Ri-Bhoi handloom sector increased women's involvement in weaving and their desire to maintain their heritage, strengthening their bond with weaving.

In their paper "A Survey on Women Working in Weaving Industries of Manipur," Sharma, Kashyap, and Pranali (2017) examine the socioeconomic situation, nutritional consumption pattern, and health problems of women in Imphal, Manipur. A total of 50 people were chosen to find out the study's outcome. According to the findings, the weaving women come from a low socioeconomic background, and most of them are uneducated. The majority of the weavers had occupational health issues as a result of their long hours of hard labour. In addition, 68 per cent of female weavers reported back pain as a result of sitting for long periods. Because of the limited ventilation and strong glare of the electric bulb, 60% of them had eye problems. Menstrual pains, stomach cramps, disorientation, and numbness are also common among weavers.

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The study "Study of Socio-Economic Status of Women Engaged in Handloom Weaving and Measures For Enhancing Their Sustainability" by Barooah and Dedhia (2015) revealed that handloom weaving is an exclusive preserve of Assamese women, with women involved in both production and marketing. The study's major goal was to document the socioeconomic state of women weavers in Assam, as well as to suggest strategies for ensuring the handloom industry's long-term viability. Women handloom weavers from three categories were included in the study: self-employed weavers, government-funded weavers, and factory weavers. Each group of weavers participated in workshops to show how they might enhance their sustainability by adding value to their products and broadening their product lines. According to the survey, the majority of weavers have a poor level of education, and the majority of handloom weavers live in poverty and face extreme hardships.

In their paper "Women in the Handloom Industry: Concerns and Prospects," Premsundar and Kannan (2013) explore the status and livelihood problems of unorganised women handloom workers, as well as the significance of social protection and security. According to the findings, about 2.57 lakh handloom workers (including women) prefer other livelihoods, and weavers are not interested in weaving as a career due to its declining popularity and profitability.

Devi (2012) uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the lives of Manipur's women weavers in her study "Exploring the Lives of Manipur's Women Weavers." The study aims to comprehend the world of Manipur's female weavers from the perspective of a changing society. The lives of the 300 women chosen for this study, which looks at their socioeconomic circumstances, the benefits and drawbacks of their working conditions, aspects of their health, wages, and aspirations, as well as the changing market structure, technology used, and production, reflect their integral role in an industrially backward state. An examination of the lives of women weavers, according to the researcher,

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becomes a matter of recognising their contribution to society in the fulfilment of their obligations and functions in accordance with their capacity, culture, and traditions.

2.4 Health Issues

In their study "Prevalence of low back pain among handloom weavers in West Bengal, India," Durlov, Chakrabarty, Chatterjee, Das, Dev, Gangopadhyay, Halder, Maity, Sarkar, and Sahu (2014) examine the prevalence of low back pain among handloom weavers in West Bengal, India. Handloom weavers were given a modified Nordic Musculoskeletal Disorder Questionnaire and an Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire, as well as a body part discomfort rating. The Ovako Working Posture Analysis System was used to measure the participants' working posture (OWAS). They discovered that 68% of the participants had low back pain, highlighting the need for more research into weavers' postural strain. They also recommend incorporating ergonomic design into weaver workstations to reduce the negative effects of their existing working positions. The weaver's work position might be improved, which would improve their quality of life.

The study "Visual Impairment in Weaving Communities in Prakasam District in South India" by Marmamula, Narsaiah, Shekhar, and Khanna (2013) examines the prevalence and causes of visual impairment in weaving communities in Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh, South India. A population-based cross-sectional study was undertaken using the Rapid Assessment of Visual Impairment (RAVI) approach. The 3000 participants under the age of 40 were chosen using a two-stage sampling approach. Personal and demographic data were gathered via a questionnaire. They discovered that weaving villages in Andhra Pradesh, India, suffer from a large burden of visual impairment, the majority of which is preventable.

The socioeconomic and other key obstacles faced by the weavers of Kuthampully, as well as measures to alleviate the impacts of the Covid 19 epidemic, are not

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covered in the papers reviewed above. The current study will also measure their understanding of and access to numerous social media sites, which has never been done before by any researcher.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to bring out the trials and tribulation of the demarginalized group of Kuthampully village into the arena of socio-economic discussions. The research aims to conduct a survey and an interview to understand the degree of awareness and accessibility the weavers have to different social media platforms. Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic. In a research paper, the methodology section allows the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability.

The chapter discusses the research methodologies used by the researcher to address the study's research questions, as well as the reasons behind them. The chapter consists of the following sections: research design, sampling design, tools used for data collection.

3.1 Research Design

Research Design is simply a structural framework of various research methods as well as techniques that are utilised by a researcher. It is defined as it is the specification of techniques and processes for obtaining the information required. It is the over-all operational pattern or framework of the project which states what data is to be gathered from which source by what processes (Green and Tull). The techniques of data gathering must be thoroughly specified in the research design.

The mixed approach is used in the study to collect data. A mixed approach research design is a way for gathering, analysing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study in order to better understand a research problem. In the

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study, a mixed method is employed to gain a better and more in-depth understanding of the issue that the weavers face, as well as to determine what they genuinely desire. This is a means of ensuring the validity of research by applying a mixed approach to collect data on the same issue. Mixing methods offers enormous potential for generating new ways of understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience, and for enhancing our capacities for social explanation and generalization (Mason 2006). The major aim of mixed methods research, which combines qualitative and quantitative research components, is to broaden and deepen a study's results and, as a whole, contribute to the body of the study.

3.1.1 Quantitative Approach

Quantitative research is a type of research that emphasises the quantification of data collection and analysis. The researcher primarily uses post-positivist approach to develop knowledge when quantitative research is selected (i.e cause and effect thinking, use of measurement and observations, and test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Creswell 2003).

In this study, a structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from respondents in order to assess their knowledge of and access to various social media platforms, as well as the business challenges they faced during the pandemic, in order to answer the research questions and meet the study's objectives. A questionnaire is a research tool that consists of a set of questions or other forms of prompts designed to gather data from a respondent. A typical research questionnaire has a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was written in Malayalam, the indigenous language of the weavers. The survey was conducted in a scheduled manner, with the questions being read aloud and the responses being recorded.

3.1.2 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is defined as a means of gathering information through open-ended and conversational communication. Qualitative research is a research strategy that indicates the relationship between theory and research and usually emphasizes on how theories were generated (Bryman and Bell 2007).

This approach is used in the study with the aim of knowing the crisis the weavers went through during the lockdown period as well as to know their expectations and hopes regarding the future of their community. The qualitative data was collected through structured and face-to-face in depth interviews with Kuthampully community leaders. “The information secured through interviews is likely to be more correct compared to that secured through other techniques,” (Vijayalakshmi and Sivapragasam, 2008).

3.2 Sampling design

A sample design is a framework, or route map, that guides the selection of a survey sample also while influencing many other critical parts of the survey. A pilot survey was undertaken before the main study to determine the practicality of the research.

3.2.1 Universe

The study's universe includes all traditional handloom weavers in Thrissur's Kuthampully village.

3.2.2 Unit

A single handloom weaver of Kuthampully is the unit of the study.

3.2.3 Population

Population can be defined as a group of individual, items or objects from which samples are taken from measurement (Kombo, 2005). The population of the study is 700 weavers who live in Kuthampully village.

3.2.4 Sample size

A sample is a smaller group of subject drawn from the population in which a given study was conducted for a purpose of drawing conclusions about the population targeted (Kothari, 2004). The sample size of the study is 100 weavers.

3.2.5 Sampling

Probability sampling method is followed in the study to collect data.

3.2.6 Tools of data collection

Weavers' information was gathered through a questionnaire and a structured interview.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**4.1 Introduction**

The study's primary objectives are to identify major challenges and issues confronting Kuthampully's weaving community, as well as strategies to mitigate the pandemic's effects. The study will also look into weavers' socioeconomic status and way of life during the Covid-19. The researcher also attempts to assess their understanding of and access to various social media platforms. All data collected for the study is thoroughly analysed and interpreted in order to answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. The data collected from the Kuthampully weavers through scheduled surveys and interviews is analysed and interpreted in this chapter.

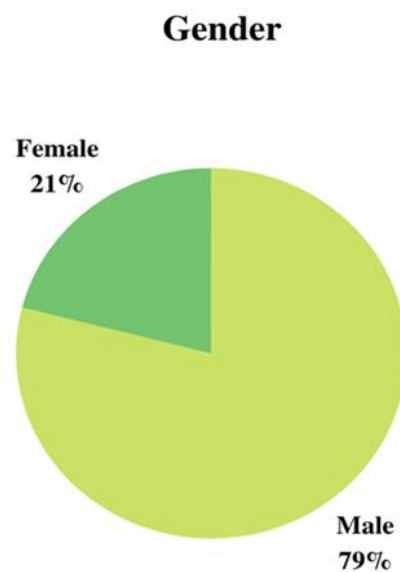
Graphical representations are used to interpret and describe the data, highlighting survey responses. Data from the survey will be analysed first, followed by the interpretation of data obtained through interviews. This chapter is also divided into sub headings to throw more light on questions asked to the respondents.

4.1.1 Gender

Respondents were asked to select their gender from the list of options provided in the questionnaire.

Table 1 - Gender of Kuthampully weavers

<i>GENDER</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Male	79	79.00%
Female	21	21.00%

Figure 1*The gender of kuthampully weavers*

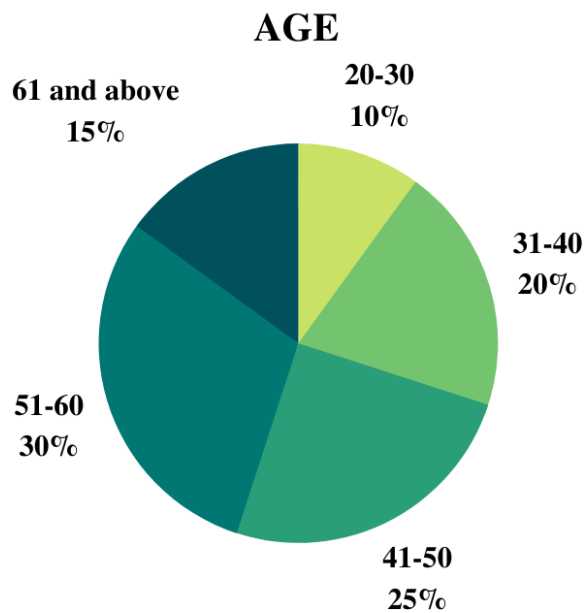
The gender of Kunthampully weavers who responded to the survey is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. According to the data, 79 percent of respondents are male and 21 percent are female. According to the data presented above, the majority of the weavers who responded are male, while the minority are female.

4.1.2 Age

Respondents were asked to choose their age group from a list of options on the questionnaire. Table 2 illustrates the result.

Table 2 – Age of Kuthampully weavers

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20-30	10	10.00%
31-40	20	20.00%
41-50	25	25.00%
51-60	30	30.00%
61 and above	15	15.00%

Figure 2*Age of Kuthampully weavers*

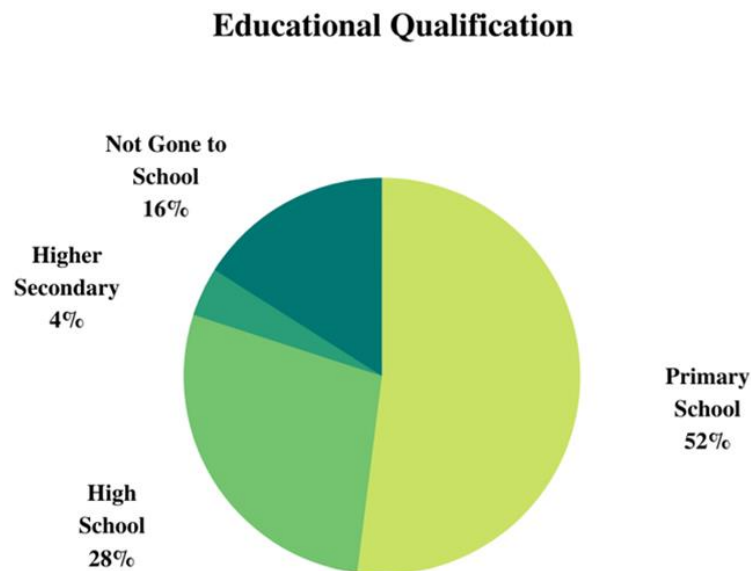
The result shows that 10 percentage belongs to 20-30 age group category, 20 percentage belongs to 30-40 age group, 25 percentage of them belongs to 40-50, 30 percentage falls under the age group of 50-60 age group and finally 15 percentage falls in the age category of 60 and above.

4.1.3 Educational Qualification

Respondents were asked to select their educational qualification from the categories listed in the questionnaire. Table 3 illustrates the result.

Table 3 – The Educational qualification of the weavers

<i>EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Primary school	52	52.00%
High school	28	28.00%
Higher secondary	4	4.00%
Not gone to school	16	16.00%

Figure 3*Educational qualification of weavers*

The educational qualifications of Kuthampully weavers are depicted in table 3.

According to the information gathered, 52 percent of the respondents have only completed primary school. Higher education is held by 28 percent of the population, whereas higher secondary education is secured by only 4 percent. The remaining 16 percent have never attended a school.

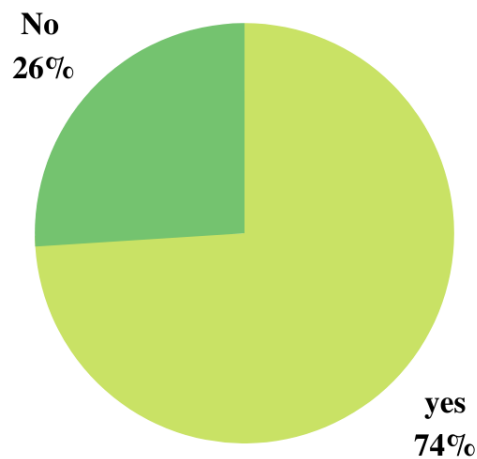
IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON KUTHAMPULLY WEAVERS

4.1.4 Traditional Weavers

The respondents were asked if they were traditional weavers or not, and the results are shown below.

Table 4 – Traditional weavers

<i>TRADITIONAL WEAVER</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Yes	74	74.00%
No	26	26.00%

Figure 4*Traditional weaver***Traditional Weaver**

The result shows that 74 percentage of the weavers are traditionally into weaving whereas 26 percentage are not into this field traditionally.

4.1.5 Family Involvement

The respondents were asked about their families involvement in this profession.

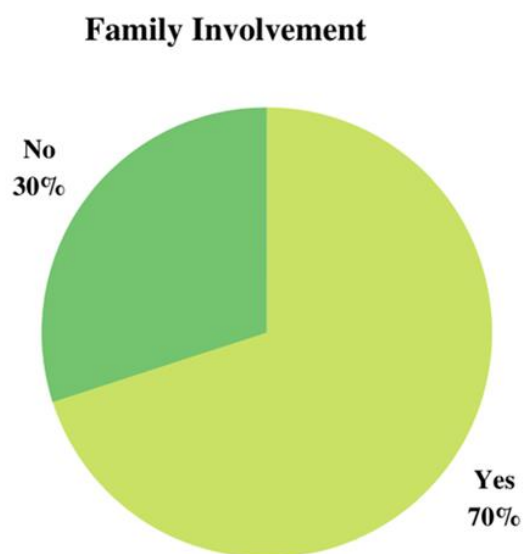
The results are illustrated in table 5.

Table 5 – Weavers family involvement

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	70	70.00%
No	30	30.00%

Figure 5

Family involvement of the weavers



According to the results, 70 percentage of the respondents' families are active in weaving, while the remaining 30 percentage are not.

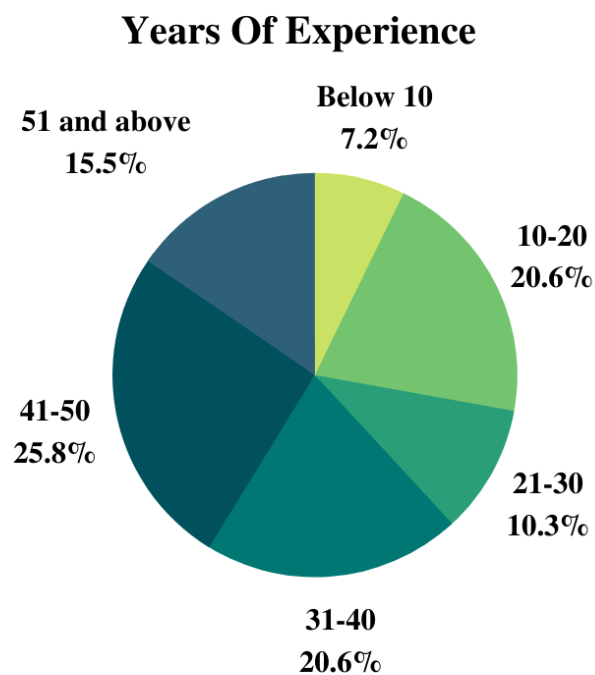
IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON KUTHAMPULLY WEAVERS

4.1.6 Years of Experience

The respondents are asked to select their year of experience from the categories listed in the questionnaire. Table 6 illustrates the result.

Table 6 – Years of experience

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below 10	7	7.2%
10-20	20	20.6%
21-30	10	10.3%
31-40	20	20.6%
41-50	25	25.8%
51 and above	15	15.5%

Figure 6*Years of experience*

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According to the information received, 7.2 percent of the weavers had less than ten years of experience. 20.6 percent have ten to twenty years of experience. 10.3 percent of respondents have experience between 20 to 30 years. 20.6 percent of the respondents have 30-40 years of experience. 25.8 percent of the weavers have between 40 and 50 years of experience. 15.5 percent of the remaining respondents had 50 or more years of experience.

4.1.7 Earnings: Satisfaction level

Kuthampully weavers were asked to choose their level of satisfaction with their earnings from a list provided in the survey.

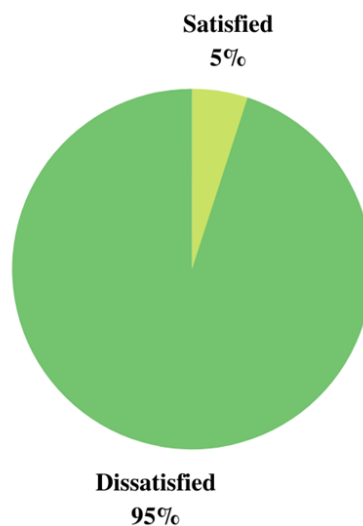
Table 7 – *Earnings: Satisfaction level of the weavers*

<i>EARNINGS: SATISFACTION LEVEL</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Satisfied	5	5.00%
Dissatisfied	95	95.00%

Figure 7

Earnings: satisfaction level

Earnings: Satisfaction Level



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The aforementioned data clearly reveal that 95% of weavers are dissatisfied with their earnings, while only 5% are satisfied.

4.1.8 Exploitation by Middlemen

The respondents were asked if they had been taken advantage of by middlemen. The results are shown in Table 8.

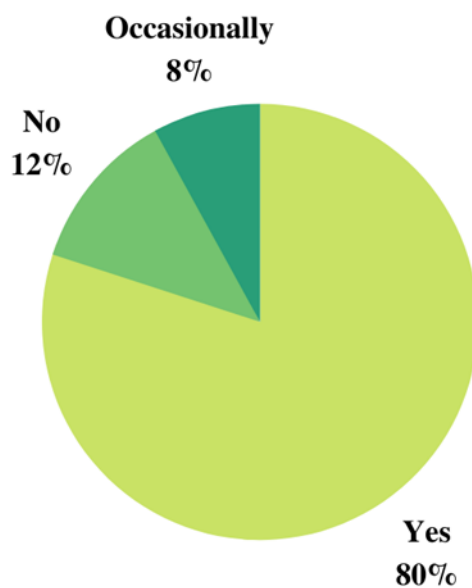
Table 8 – *Exploitation by middlemen*

<i>EXPLOITATION BY MIDDLEMEN</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Yes	80	80.00%
No	12	12.00%
Occasionally	8	8.00%

Figure 8

Exploitation by middlemen

Exploitation By Middlemen



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According to the findings, 80 percent of weavers are exploited by intermediaries, whereas only 12 percent responded negatively. 8 percentage of respondents claimed that they are occasionally exploited by middlemen.

4.1.9 Social Media Support

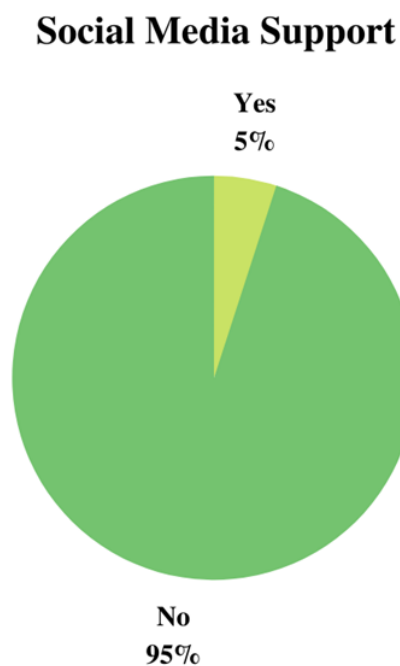
Weavers were asked if they receive any social media assistance for their businesses.

The results are shown in table 9.

Table 9 – *Social media support*

<i>SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
No	95	95.00%
Yes	5	5.00%

Figure 9 *Social media support*



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The data gathered shows that 95 percentage of the respondent are not getting any social media assistance for their business whereas 5 percentage responded a yes.

4.1.10 Government Support

The respondents were asked if they receive any government assistance. Table 10 illustrates the result.

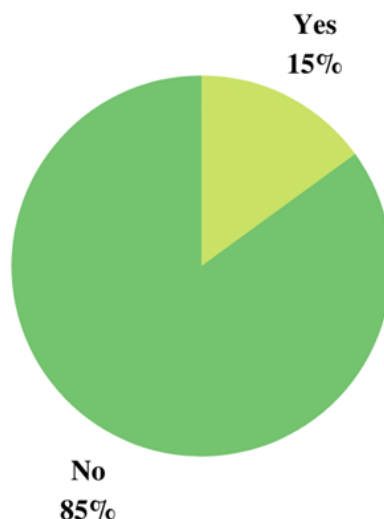
Table 10 – *Government support*

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	15	15.00%
No	85	85.00%

Figure 10

Government support

Government Support



Only 15 percentage of weavers over the age of 60 receive government assistance in the form of a pension, according to the findings. The remaining 85 percent do not receive any government assistance.

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4.1.11 Help from Kuthampully weaving community : Health and Pension

The weavers are asked whether they are getting any help from their community in terms of health facilities and pension. The results are shown in table 11.

Table 11 – *Help from Kuthampully weaving community*

COMMUNITY HELP:HEALTH& PENSION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	0	0.00%
No	100	100.00%

According to the data, 100% of weavers do not receive any kind of health or pension support from the Kuthampully community.

4.1.12 Assistance from Society : Raw Materials and Equipment

The respondents were asked whether the society extend help in providing raw materials. The results are shown in table 12.

Table 12 – *Assistance from society in terms of raw materials and equipment*

COMMUNITY HELP:RAW MATERIAL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	100	100.00%
No	0	0.00%

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The findings indicate that 100 percentage of weavers receive raw materials in bulk from the society.

4.1.13 Sales Outlet

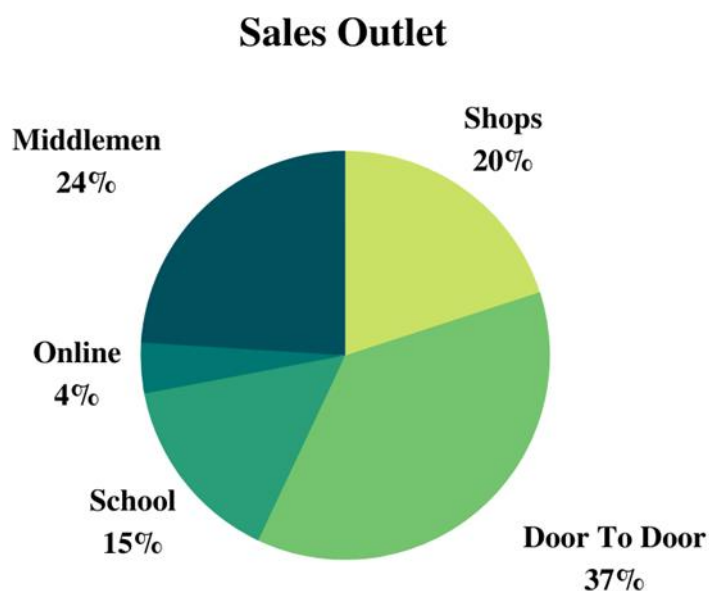
The respondents were asked about their sales outlets. The results shown in table 13.

Table 13 - Sales outlet

SALES OUTLET	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Shops	20	20.00%
Door To Door	37	37.00%
Schools	15	15.00%
Online	4	4.00%
Middlemen	24	24.00%

Figure 13

Sales outlet



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According to the report, 20 percent of weavers sell their products in shops, while 37 percent sell door to door. Only 4 percentage sell their goods online, whereas 15 percent market their products at school. The remaining 24 percent sell their goods through middlemen.

4.2 Interview with Kuthampully Weavers Society Heads and Panchayath Member

Five village heads and one panchayath member were particularly interviewed to gather more specific information on various challenges and concerns experienced by weavers, especially to learn more about what was not included by the survey. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on their business, a lack of information about social media opportunities, their concern for the future of their community, and their expectations and needs that they expect to be addressed are among the major points that were highlighted. The results are summarized as follows.

4.2.1 Impact of Covid-19

During the discussion, Kuthampully weavers were asked how the recent pandemic affected their business. To make ends meet, most of the interviewees said that the pandemic had an adverse impact on their business, forcing them to take on odd jobs like construction, vegetable vendors, and cleaning. The majority of them in the village sell their products via door-to-door services and visits to schools. Weavers have found it extremely difficult to market their products since the pandemic and the strict social distancing rule. Buyers have been unable to make payments, and there have been no transactions at all. This made it more difficult for the weavers to feed their family and even to meet any medical needs.

4.2.2 Awareness of Business Opportunities Through Online Marketing

During the interview, one of the primary questions was regarding their level of awareness about the numerous business options available on online platforms. One of the interviewee said that “Most of us here aren't really that highly educated, the world of online and social media is pretty far away from us. Yes, we are not stating that no one here have access to these platforms; in fact, only a few people sell their products online, and the majority are unaware of these opportunities”.

Another respondent mentioned that the majority of the weavers are traditionally inherited and still sell their products through door to door services and handing over to the shops. One respondent said that “There are possibilities through online but we don't have the facilities and chances to explore these opportunities.”

4.2.3 Who Eventually Profits From This Business?

Because many weavers sell their products through middlemen, the next question posed to the interviewees was who, in the end, gains from this enterprise. The majority of them said that the concept of profit is difficult for them to grasp because most of the time the weavers do not make any money. Even when they do make a profit, it is relatively small. One interviewee mentioned that “A handloom worker should be able to earn a least of Rs 6,275 per month, according to the minimum wage rule. However, 67% of all handloom employees still earn less than Rs 5,000 per month. Weaving isn't a long-term profitable business anymore”.

Weavers aren't getting paid what they deserve, especially because of the pandemic, and profits are something they can't even conceive these days, according to one respondent.

4.2.4 Future of Traditional Weaving Community

“The future of the traditional weaving community is at stake in the current scenario”, said one interviewee to the question about their opinion and taught about the future of the weaving community. Another respondent said that the decline of the handloom weaving tradition can be seen in weavers abandoning their long-standing jobs and taking on odd jobs like selling vegetables or working in construction.

The Kuthampully sarees, veshtis, and settu mundu have all received GI (geographical indication) certificates, which are issued by the government to protect a community's traditional knowledge. It denotes that a product or craft has a distinct origin and, as a result, have attributes or a reputation unique to that origin. But here Kuthampully weavers, on the other hand, are fighting to preserve their traditional handloom culture and identity, Another interviewee mentioned. "The youngsters of the village are not interested in weaving because they feel it is a non-profitable business and prefer to take up other professions," the panchayath member added.

4.2.5 Requirements and Expectations

During the interview, one of the main questions was about their requirements and expectations. One of the interviewees believes that because these weavers belong to the Devanga community, which is not classified by caste, they are not eligible for any government benefits or services other than the pension, which is only available to those over the age of 60. As a result, they lack significant government support. Another respondent mentioned that inadequate marketing strategies are a key worry for weavers because they are unaware of new techniques and opportunities available through internet platforms.

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One of the interviewee pointed out that, “Weavers carry down the art of handloom weaving from generation to generation as part of an age-old heritage. But now in this current scenario, weavers are hesitant to encourage future generation to take up weaving. There is a drastic change in the purchasing behaviour of the consumers, nowadays they prefer to purchase online rather than offline. Weavers are unable to directly approach online consumers, therefore many do not know the exact demand for their products and are unable to obtain good profits, another interviewee added.

4.2.6 Inferences from the interviews

From the interview conducted with Kuthampully village heads and panchayath member, it may be concluded that, the weavers are having a difficult time, and the survival of the traditional handloom village is in jeopardy. There is a critical need for education and awareness about the various opportunities accessible on internet platforms that can assist them in offering better marketing opportunities and allowing them to survive in this competitive area of textiles and fashion. Because most weavers feel it is a non-profit industry, there is a need to attract new weavers. The government must play a key role in uplifting the Devanga community by providing them with adequate benefits and other facilities. These are the inferences drawn from the interview conducted by the researcher.

4.3 Major Findings

In this chapter the researcher has analysed and interpreted the data gathered from the survey and interview. The findings of the study are as stated below.

- Majority (79.00%) of the weavers are Male
- Majority of the weavers (30.00%) comes under the age group of 51-60
- Majority (52.00%) have only primary level educational qualification
- Majority (74.00%) are traditional weavers

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- Majority (25.8%) have an experience from 41-50 years
- Majority (95.00%) are dissatisfied with their earnings
- Majority (80.00%) are exploited by middlemen
- Majority (95.00%) are not getting any social media support
- None of the respondents (100%) receive any kind of health and pension support
- All of the respondents (100%) receive raw materials from the society
- Majority (37.00%) sell their products through door to door services.
- Majority found it difficult to sell their products during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Majority are unaware about the vast opportunities available in social media platforms

4.4 Discussion

The data collected through the survey and interview has helped the researcher to analyse and interpret the problems and challenges faced by the weavers of Kuthampully village. The responses helped to throw light to the major concerns of the weavers in the context of the pandemic.

The majority of weavers are men, but this does not mean that women do not participate; they do, but in smaller numbers than men, perhaps because women are expected to care for their families, especially in rural areas. The majority of the concerns and challenges stem from the fact that the majority of weavers only have a primary level of education, making it easy for middlemen to exploit them. The majority of weavers are descendants of traditional weavers, and as a result, they are hesitant to adopt modern weaving technologies. According to the survey, the majority of weavers are dissatisfied with their earnings due to a lack of opportunities, and the majority of them are unaware of the various opportunities available on online platforms, which could be a major factor.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION**5.1. Conclusion**

The study's goal was to bring the trials and tribulations of Kuthampully's marginalised weavers into the realm of socioeconomic debates in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey and interview were used to analyse and assess the level of awareness among weavers about social media platforms and the vast business opportunities they provide. The study's key findings show that weavers are having a difficult time as a result of the pandemic. Their business has suffered a significant setback as an outcome of covid, as most of the weavers have been forced to take up other jobs to make ends meet. The majority of respondents are unaware of the business opportunities available on various online platforms, indicating a lack of awareness of new media. According to the research, the art of traditional weaving in Kuthampully is on the verge of extinction due to a lack of income generated by the business, and the pandemic has added more fuel to the fire that already exists. The researcher tries to emphasise the importance of bridging the digital divide that exists among weavers by educating and introducing them to online platforms that can help to uplift the community while also preserving the art form of traditional handloom weaving.

5.2 Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, weavers need to be made more aware of social media platforms, which will help them grow their business and stay competitive, thereby improving their socioeconomic status. To start with there is a need to suggest some solutions by proposing an effective communication model for their

post-Covid market sustainability. A proper class on how to use social media and how to make it useful for boosting their business must be provided to the weavers in a manner that is understandable to them. More young weavers need to be drawn into this field because most of them believe it is a non-profitable venture. Through their new and innovative ideas, the youth can make a significant difference in the current state of the weavers. Except for those over 60 years old, weavers do not receive much government assistance, which is a major concern for them because they desperately need it. As a matter of fact, programmes and strategies must be developed to draw the attention of the government to the plight of the Kuthampully village weavers.

5.3 Limitations

The study was conducted in a time-bound manner within academic constraints leading to a few inevitable limitations. Due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, the study focused solely on the traditional weavers of Kuthampully; however, a comparison study with the weavers of Trivandrum could be conducted to better understand the issues and other challenges faced by the weavers. Because the majority of the weavers only had primary school education, the survey questions were written in a limited manner. The researcher was unable to ask more detailed questions.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study have highlighted some of the weavers' challenges and concerns, as well as their lack of knowledge about social media platforms.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire and interview questions for data collection to find out the major challenges and concerns of Kuthampully weavers.

Survey Questions

1. പേര്
2. വയസ്സ്
3. ആൺ/ പേണ്സ്/ മറ്റുള്ളവർ
4. വിദ്യാഭ്യാസയാഗ്യത
5. നിങ്ങൾ പരമ്പരാഗത നെയ്ത്തുകാർ ആണോ?
6. നെയ്ത്തിൽ കുടുംബപങ്കാളിത്തം ഉണ്ടോ?
7. ഈ മേഖലയിലുള്ള പ്രവർത്തിപരിചയം ?
8. നിലവിൽ ലഭിക്കുന്ന വേദനത്തിൽ സംഭൃപ്തരാണോ?
9. ഇടനിലക്കാരില്ലിനും ഏതെങ്കിലും രീതിയിലുള്ള ചൂഷണങ്ങൾ നേരിടാറുണ്ടോ?
10. സോഷ്യൽ മീഡിയ സഹായം ലഭിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
11. സർക്കാർ സഹായം വല്ലതും ലഭിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?
12. പെൻഷൻ ചികിത്സ സഹായം സൊസൈറ്റിയിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിക്കാറുണ്ടോ ?

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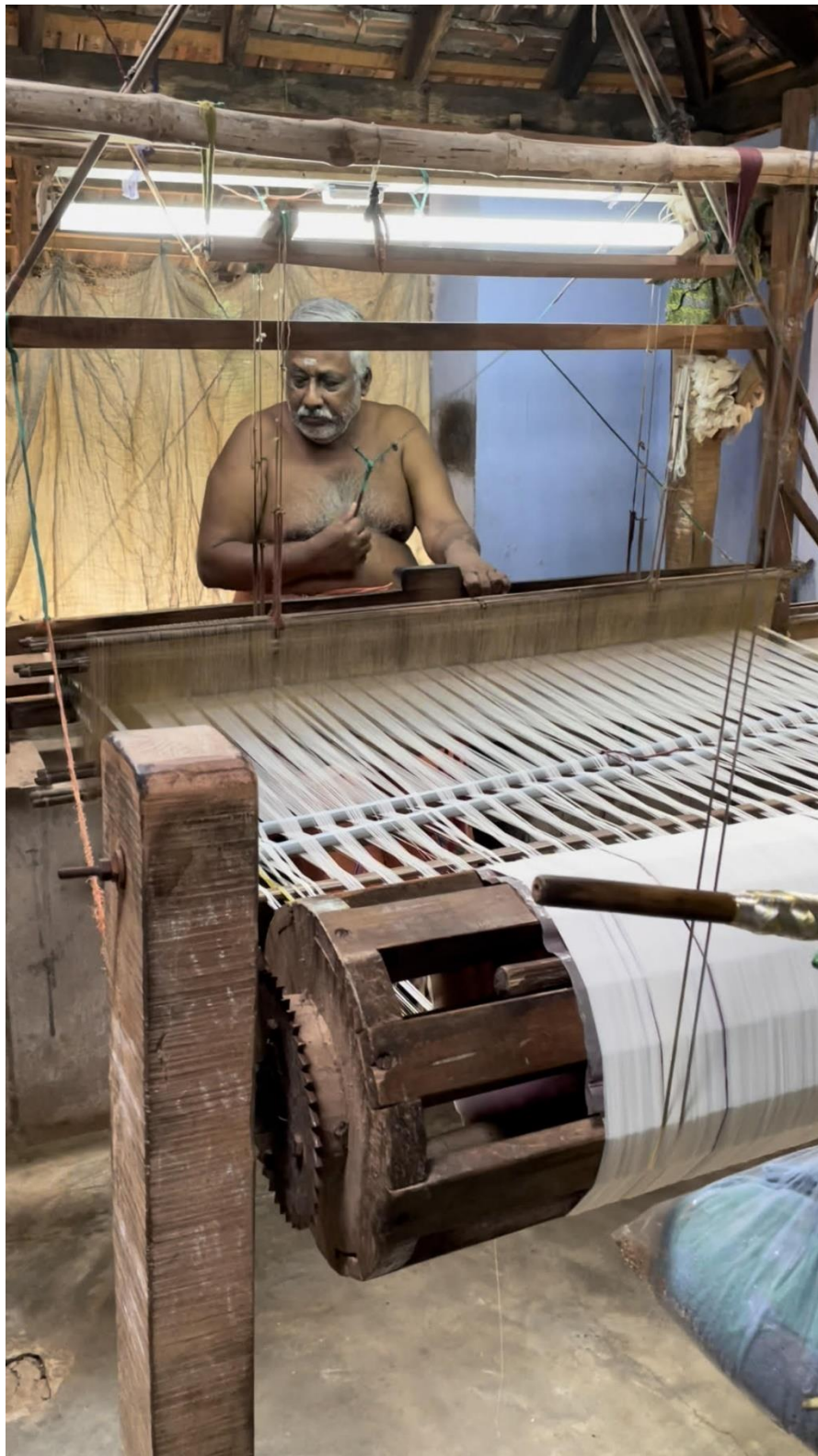
13. സൊസൈറ്റിലൂടെ എന്തെല്ലാം സേവനങ്ങൾ ആണ് നെയ്ത്തുകാർക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്നത്?

14. പ്രധാനമായും നിങ്ങളുടെ ഉത്പന്നങ്ങൾ എവിടെയാണ് വിൽക്കുന്നത്?

Questions for Interview

1. ലോക്കഡോൺ ഈ വ്യവസായത്തെ എങ്ങനെ ബാധിച്ചു?
2. നിങ്ങൾ ഓൺലൈൻ ബിസിനസ് ചെയ്യാറുണ്ടോ, ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഏതു രീതിയിൽ ആണ് നടത്തപ്പെട്ടുകൊണ്ട് ഇരിക്കുന്നത് ?
3. പരമ്പരാഗത നെയ്തുമേഖലയുടെ ഭാവിയെ കുറിച്ചു എന്താണ് അഭിപ്രായം ?
4. നെയ്ത്തുകാർക്ക് ആവിശ്യമായതും പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നതുമായ പ്രധാന സഹായം എന്താണ്?
5. ഈ ബിസിനസിന്റെ യഥാർത്ഥ ലാഭം ആർക്കാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ കിട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്?

Photographs from Kuthampully village



IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON KUTHAMPULLY WEAVERS

