

Bamboo And Dhokra Crafts in Jharkhand: Unveiling Demographic Challenges and Government Scheme Awareness Among Women Artisans

Anjali Kumari

Research Scholar

Department of Commerce and Financial Studies

Central University of Jharkhand

anjaliibhardwaj8092@gmail.com

Dr. Pranay Parashar

Assistant Professor

Department of Commerce and Financial Studies

Central University of Jharkhand

Parashar.pranay@gmail.com

Abstract

'Cane & Bamboo' and 'Dhokra' crafts are the two main handicrafts in the state of Jharkhand. Dhokra craft is the traditional craft of Jharkhand, while cane & bamboo craft is one of the most practiced craft in the state due to its abundant presence. The paper explores the demographic profile and outreach of government schemes for rural women artisans engaged in practicing two major crafts of Jharkhand, namely cane & bamboo and dhokra craft. It also highlights the importance of the above crafts in uplifting livelihoods of rural women artisans. The present study is based on primary data collected via random sampling in two villages of Lohardaga district, namely Kocha and Hirhi. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire from 50 rural women artisans, 37 cane & bamboo artisans and 13 dhokra artisans respectively. Different attributes of the demographic profile of the respondents were considered, like age, income, marital status, experience in the handicraft industry and time dedicated for making handicraft, measured in terms of number of working days in a year. The findings highlight the need for focused interventions to improve the well-being of craftswomen and highlight their lack of knowledge about government programs.

Keywords: Cane & Bamboo, Dhokra, craft, women artisans, demographic profile, government schemes

1. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of craft has emerged from a wide range of multiple histories, cultural traditions, creativity, languages and contexts. It is a claim of human and environment relationship that has emerged beautifully by the artisans of the country (*Bose, 2017*). It is a traditional skill that has been handed down from one generation to another (*Grobar, 2017*).

Handicraft sector constitute an important share of country's unorganised sector and majority of the artisans are concentrated in the rural areas of the country. The sector contributes a significantly to the Indian economy providing employment to a large segment of the population. Considering the above, the government has promoted several policies for the development and expansion of handicraft industry. The government is aware about the potential of the industry and hence is developing various policies according to the sector's requirements and limitations (*Pandey, 2021*). Despite its contribution towards employment of a large segment of rural women and its share in generating foreign exchange, the industry's data is not properly documented which results as a hurdle for policy makers. This industry needs to be understood properly because the artisans are working hard to keep

their traditional culture and traditions alive. If this is not protected, many cultures and traditions are on the verge of being extinct (*Grobar, 2017*).

The paper selects to study two precious handicrafts of India viz., cane & bamboo craft and dhokra craft. India has the biggest area under bamboo production, with about 15.69 million hectaress and is ranked second highest in terms of species having 136 varieties of bamboo species. As bamboo is one of India's most precious resources, its prudent use can uplift the lives of rural and tribal population by reducing poverty, empowering rural women, and benefiting the environment through its sustainable use (*Bhargava et.al, 2021*). On the other hand, dhokra craft is the traditional craft of Jharkhand state which represents different cultures of the state (www.jharcraft.in). Among all the bell metal crafts, dhokra craft is one of the oldest craft carried back from Harrapan civilisation (*Yadav et.al, 2022*).

Jharkhand, an Indian state which falls under Chota Nagpur plateau region, is densely forested with bamboo and the people living there are masters in making beautiful and amazing cane and bamboo products like baskets, woven floor mats, furniture, water containers, etc (*ministry of textiles*). This craft is a source of living for majority of the rural tribal population living in these regions.

The study is based on Kocha and Hirhi village in Lohardaga district of Jharkhand state. The women of these village are practicing multiple bamboo and dhokra crafts like, baskets, watch, sofa set, pen holder, metal tribal standing man, metal Nandi and many other fancy crafts.

The paper examines the demographic profile of women artisans and the outreach of various welfare schemes launched by the government. The study is timely and pertinent as it will identify their current living situation and whether various welfare schemes are beneficial for them or not. The paper is arranged in 6 sections including the introduction. Section 2 of the paper explains the overview of bamboo and dhokra craft and various literatures on them. Section 3 explains the objective of the study and section 4 discusses the data and methodology which were used for the analysis. Section 5 comprises of results and discussion forwarded by section 6 i.e., conclusion of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bamboo is an essential Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) that belongs to a poaceae family grass that looks like a tree. It is the fastest growing plant with 136 varieties of species and is capable of producing stems every year. It grows in 3-5 years while other plants take 15-20 years to grow completely. Based on its structure bamboo is classified into monopodial bamboo, sympodial bamboo, and amphipodial bamboo. It has a wide range of uses like food, fuel, constructions, medicinal products, Fiber, paper etc (*Bhargava et.al, 2021*).

Its large and unique ecological, economic and cultural services have made it an important part of international sustainable development agenda (*Mwanja, 2023*). Bamboo market has reached \$ USD 68.8 billion in 2018 and the same is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.0% by 2025. Not only this, bamboo is capable enough to address the current prevailing problems related to climate change and provide the much-needed solutions of the time. Scientific plantation of bamboo could control soil erosion and improves air quality as it releases 35% more oxygen than other plants to the environment and sequester more carbon dioxide from the same (*Dutta, 2019*).

In India, bamboo grows naturally in almost every state of the country except Kashmir. India is a region with almost 125 indigenous and 11 species of bamboo from 23 genera (*ISFR India State of Forest Report, 2019*). Every year, India produces 5.38 million m³ of bamboo, which is utilized in cottage industries and as a timber alternative. The bamboo plays an important role in the lives of the rural people as they make crafts from it to generate their income. Indian handicrafts are recognised in the global market for their skill and elegance (*Kumar, 2023*). According to the *Export Promotion Council of Handicraft (EPCH)*, India's global market share in handicraft products is only 0.08%, with China accounting for 56% of exports market in just five years.

Dhokra craft is an ancestral craft of India mostly practised by the tribal people of Chitrghasi and Ghasi group. The craft is mostly practised in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. Dhokra craft not only showcases the skill and creativity of the artisans but also reflects the cultural richness of the regions where it is practiced. The dhokra contain hollow brass objects and images using the lost wax casting process. Lost wax is a method of producing a metal item by first creating a wax model of the item and then melting off the wax to produce a mould cavity that is filled with molten metal (Mukherjee, 2014).

Women represent an important portion of the population, and their engagement and empowerment have a positive impact on many sectors of society, including economic development (*Setyaningsih, 2012*). According to *Bayeh, (2016)* Utilizing the full potential of both men and women in the workforce contributes to economic and sustainable development of any country or state. Economic empowerment for women can have a significant impact on a country's economic progress. *Hazarika & Goswami, (2016)* Economic engagement of women always results in a higher standard of living, more decisionmaking authority, and hence an increase in women's empowerment. The handicraft sector, among other options, has given a viable platform for rural women's economic participation and socio-economic growth. In the age of globalization and trade liberalization, women-dominated businesses such as handloom, handicraft, leather, and Agro-processing are quickly expanding. According to *Sarmad & Khan (2018)* women's working conditions in the handicraft sector are terrible. Despite the fact that their products have found a position in the worldwide market, their efforts have yet to be appreciated. Their participation is in vain since they are not given adequate attention.

In order to address the prevailing demographic profile of handicraft women the study addresses two types of women artisans, one who were engaged in making cane & bamboo products and another making dhokra craft.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objectives that were set for this research study is to explore and examine the demographic profile and outreach of government schemes to the women artisans. The study has the following specific objectives: -

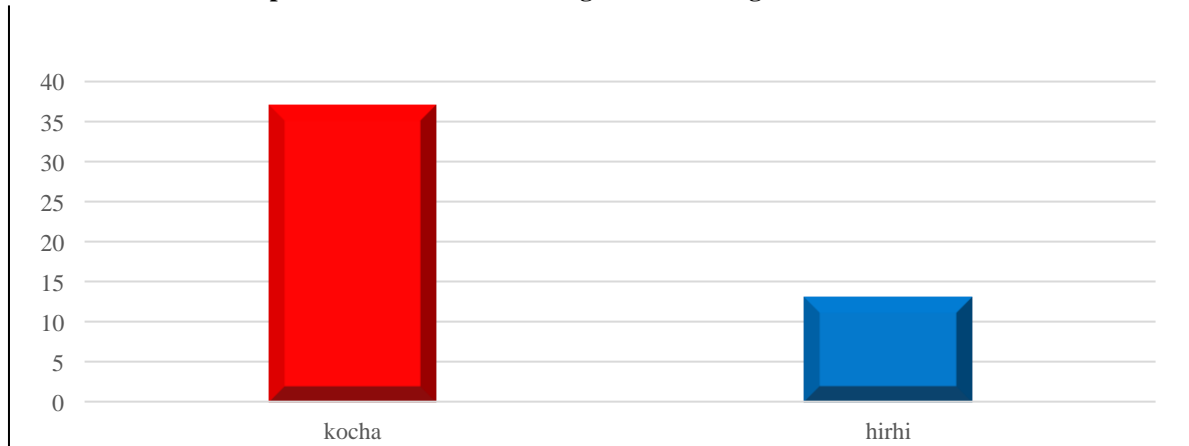
- I. To examine the demographic profile (socio-economic) of the women artisans living in the villages of Lohardaga District.
- II. To explore whether women artisans are aware of the government schemes and whether they are taking benefit of the schemes or not.

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is based on primary data collected using a structured questionnaire followed by in depth discussion. The study is based on 50 women artisans making cane and bamboo crafts and Dhokra crafts in the two villages of Lohardaga district namely Kocha and Hirhi. Random sampling was used to select women artisans from the villages. The women artisans living in the Kocha village belong to Turi community which is known for making bamboo crafts and the women artisans making Dhokra craft from Hirhi village of the district belong to Lohar community. The present paper is a descriptive paper and the data collected were analysed using pie charts, bar graphs in MS Excel.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

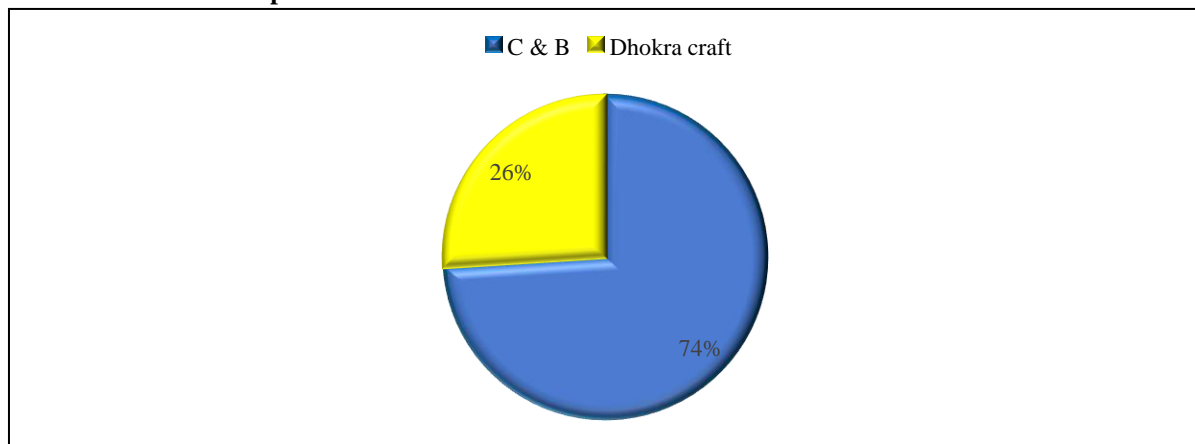
5.1 Total number of respondents from the two villages of Lohardaga district



Source: - Primary data

The graph 5.1 shows that the two villages of the Lohardaga district namely Kocha and Hirhi were selected for the study. The Kocha village is known for its cane & bamboo craft made by the people of Turi community and Hirhi village is known for dhokra craft made by a family to whom the craft making skill was passed on from one generation to another. From the Kocha village, a total of 38 respondents were selected and from Hirhi village, a total of 12 respondents were selected on a random basis.

5.2 Total number of respondents from Cane & Bamboo craft and Dhokra craft



Source: - Primary data

The chart 5.2 shows that 74% respondents make Cane and Bamboo products and 26% respondents make Dhokra crafts. In the Kocha village, larger segment of the population were involved in making cane & bamboo crafts. In Hirhi village, there was a family carrying on their ancestral business of dhokra craft making so that they can keep alive the traditional craft of the Jharkhand state.

5.3 Total number of respondents under different age groups

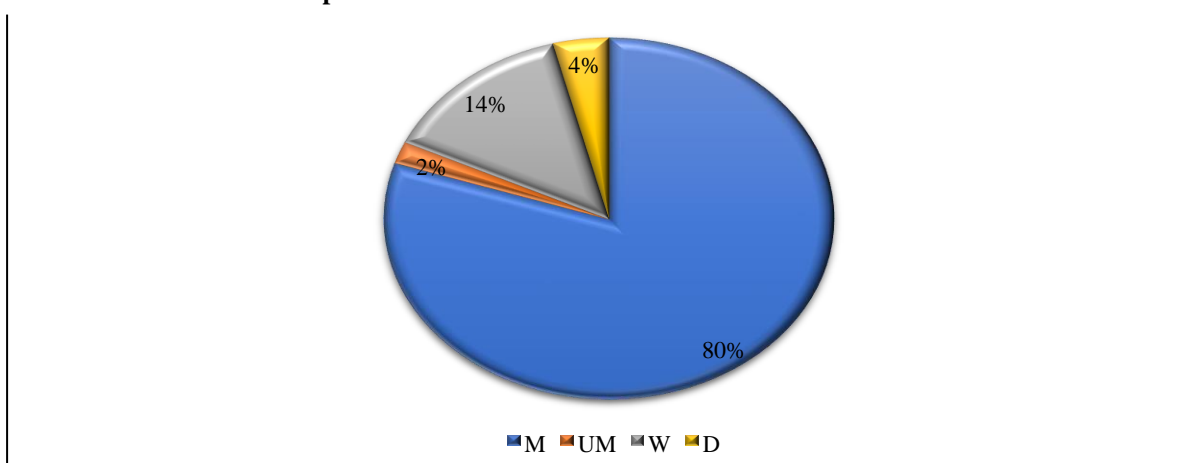
AGE GROUP	NO. OF ARTISANS
Less than 30 years	10

30-60 years	29
Above 60 years	11

Source: - Primary data

According to the data shown in the table 5.3, a large proportion of the respondents come under the age group of 30-60 years and a smaller proportion of the respondents were under age group less than 30 years and above 60 years. Majority of the respondents were from the age group 30-60 years when they find it the most suitable age group for craft making. According to the respondents, after 60 years it is very difficult to sit for long hours for craft making and age group before 30 years is suitable for marriage and family planning and they are not focused towards any kind of work.

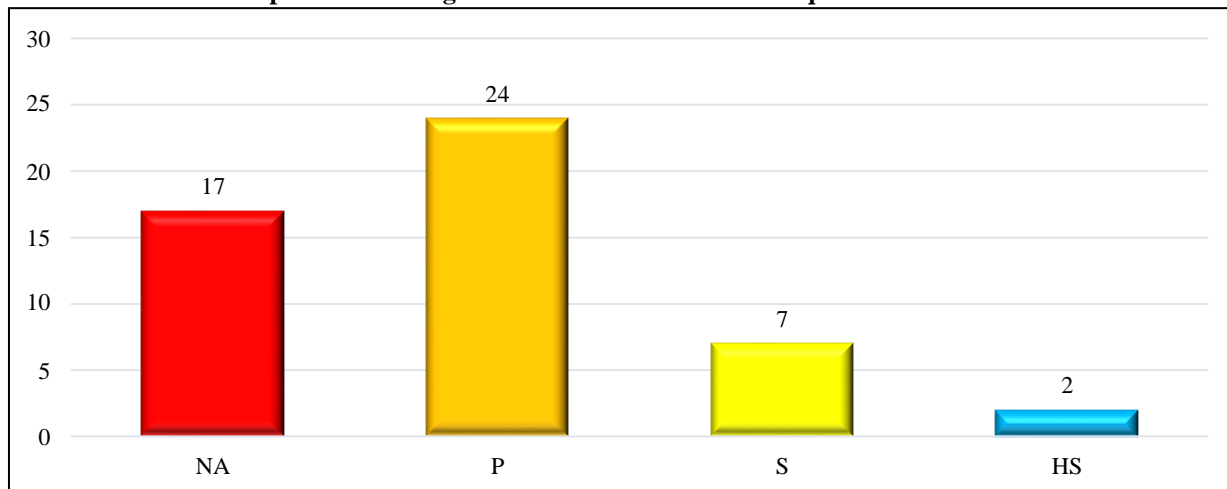
5.4 Marital status of the respondents



Source: - Primary data

The chart 5.4 indicates that out of total 50 respondents, a significant proportion of the population i.e., 80% of the respondents were married. The remaining 20% respondents were divided as 2% unmarried, 14% widow and 4% divorced. The reason for only 2% unmarried respondents is because all 50 respondents belong to SC and ST category and in these communities, it is believed that girls should be married in their early age.

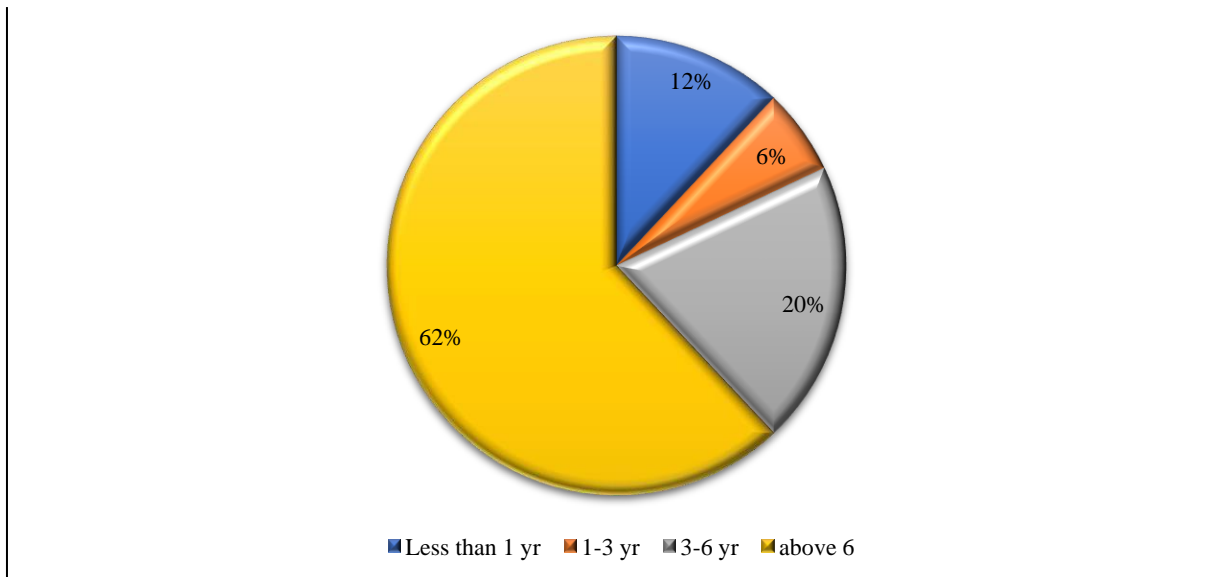
5.5 Total number of respondents having different levels of educational qualification



Source: - Primary data

The data shown in graph 5.5 indicates that out of 50 respondents, 17 respondents i.e., 34% women artisans have never been to any school or attended any formal education and 24 respondents i.e., 48 % women artisans have gained primary education but only up to 2nd or 3rd grade. The remaining 7 respondents and 2 respondents have attended secondary and higher secondary education respectively.

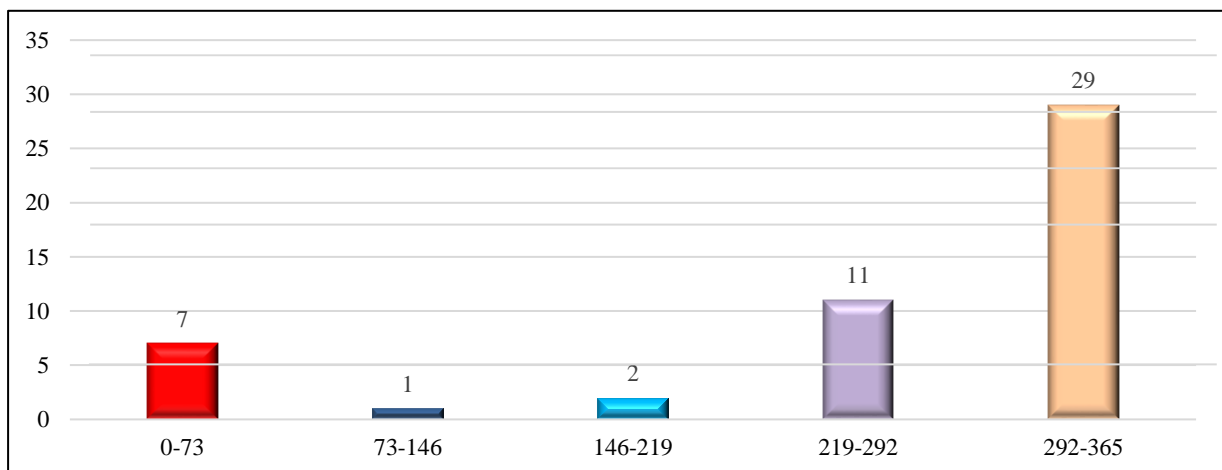
5.6 Experience level of the respondents in the handicraft industry



Source: - Primary data

In the chart 5.6 it has been observed that a significant proportion of the respondents i.e., 62% have more than 6 years of experience in the handicraft industry. 20% respondents have 3-6 years of experience and 6% respondents have experience level ranging between 3-6 years and 12% respondents have working experience of less than 1 year. Majority of the respondents have years of experience, as being part of Turi community and Lohar community it is their general work to practice cane and bamboo craft and dhokra craft.

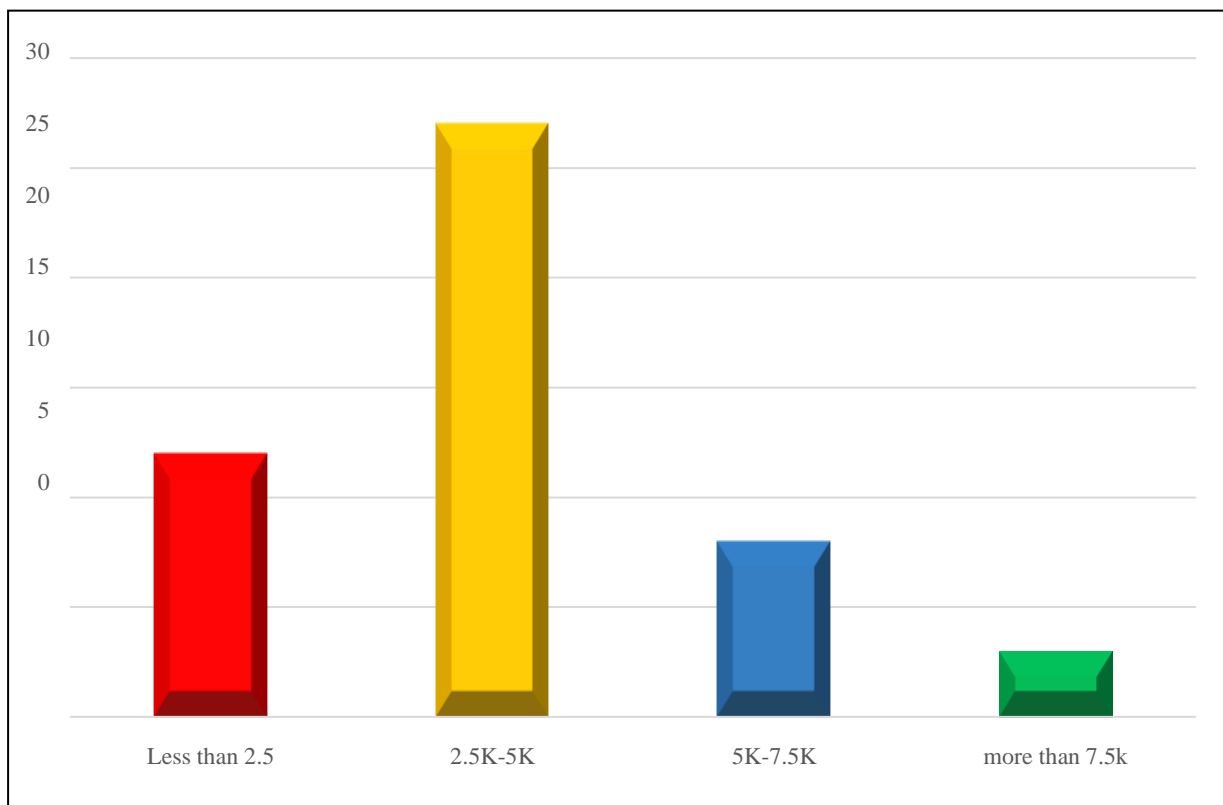
5.7 Time devoted for making handicrafts



Source: - Primary data

The data in graph 5.7 clearly shows that out of 50 respondents, 29 respondents' amount of time dedicated for making handicraft, measured in terms of number of working days in a year, lies between 292-365 days, 11 respondent's working days is between 219-292 days, 2 respondents between 146-219 days, 1 respondent between 73-146 days and 7 respondents between 0-73 days. The bifurcation is because for most of the women artisans, handicraft making is their primary work for income generation along with household chores. For other artisan respondents craft making is carried along with some other activities like farming, day-labour, etc.

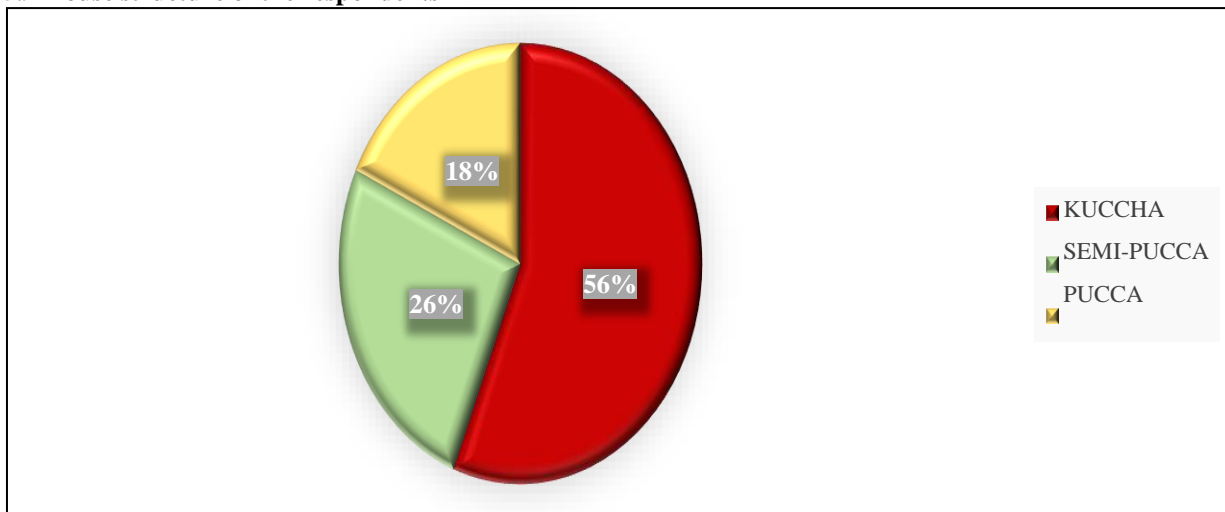
5.8 Average income of the respondents from their crafts



Source: - Primary data

According to the data shown in graph 5.8, 27 respondents out of 50 have an average income between Rs. 2,500 – Rs. 5,000 per month and 12 respondents have an average income of less than Rs. 2,500 per month. The number of respondents earning between Rs. 5,000 – Rs. 7,500 is 8 and only 3 respondents have an average income of more than Rs. 7,500 from the handicraft business. The data shows that majority of the women artisans earn a monthly income of less than Rs. 5,000 and only a few women artisans, who are basically master artisans, have an average monthly income of more than Rs. 7,500.

5.9 House structure of the respondents



Source: - Primary data

The data from the chart 5.9 shows that 56% of the respondents have kuccha house and only 18% and 26% respondents live in Pucca and semi-pucca house respectively. Majority of the respondents live in kuccha house and only a few have pucca and semi-pucca house which has been built with the support of government funds.

5.10 Toilet facility inside/outside the premise

TOILET FACILITY	NO. OF ARTISANS
INSIDE	3
OUTSIDE	47

Source: - Primary data

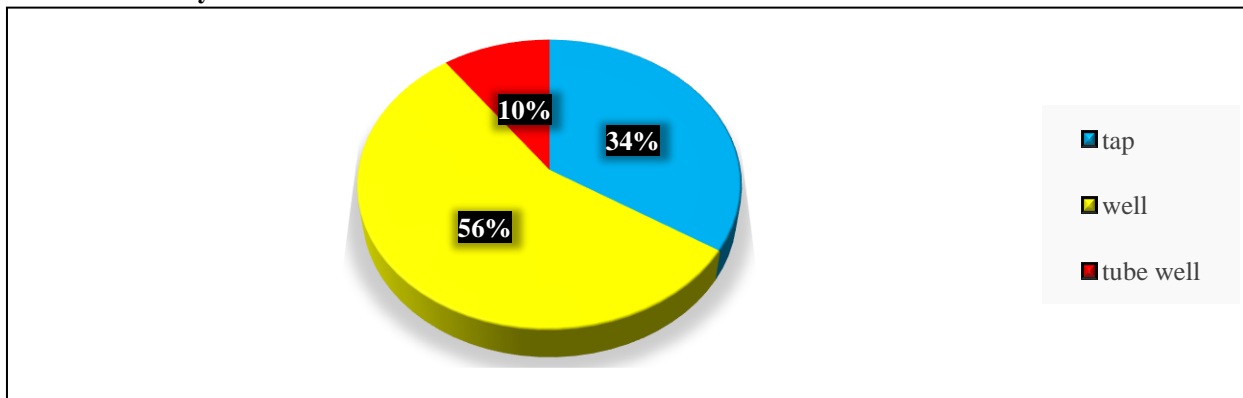
5.11 Septic tank facility

SEPTIC TANK	NO. OF ARTISANS
YES	3
NO	47

Source: - Primary data

The data shown in table 5.10 and table 5.11 indicates that 94% of the respondents do not have neither toilet facility nor septic tank facility. Only 6% respondents have pucca house, toilet facility and septic tank facility. So, out of the total 50 respondents only 3 respondents live in a hygienic environment having a toilet and septic tank facility and majority of the respondents either have toilet facility outside the premise or they do not even have it.

5.11 Water facility



Source: - Primary data

According to the chart 5.11, 56% women artisans have water access from the well and 10% artisans prefer tube well for the water facility. The rest 34% women artisans use tap for the water access which was provided by the government under the scheme “Har Ghar Nal Yojana”.

5.12 Respondents having artisan card

ARTISAN CARD	NO. OF ARTISANS
YES	11
NO	39

Source: - Primary data

The table 5.12 dictates that out of 50 women artisans, 39 artisans’ response was that they don’t have any artisan card and 11 women artisans had artisan card. Out of the 11 artisan cardholders, 8 artisans belonged to Dhokra craft and only 3 belonged to the Cane & Bamboo craft. The reason for not having an artisan card was their lack of awareness about it. Women artisans who belong to dhokra crafts and have an artisan card have been benefited by different government schemes as compared to those who don’t have an artisan card. The reason is that to avail of most of the government schemes, it is compulsory to have an artisan card. Only then can you avail of the benefits of the schemes.

5.13 Respondents’ awareness about different government schemes related to handicrafts

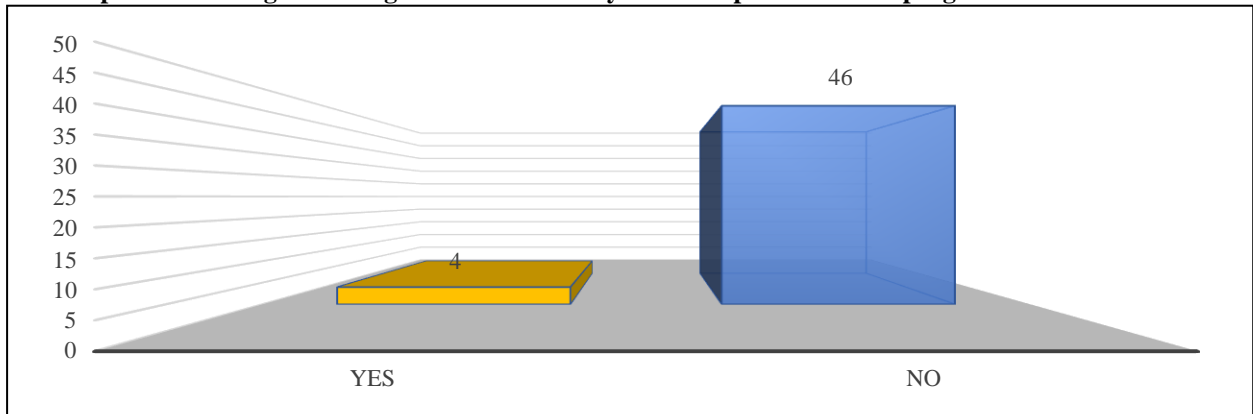
AWARENESS OF THE FOLLOWING SCHEMES	NO. OF ARTISANS
Guru Shishya Hastshilp Prashikshan Program	1
Comprehensive Skill Upgradation Program	2
Improved Toolkit Distribution Program	26
None	11

Source: - Primary data

The data shown in the table 5.13 shows the number of respondents who were aware of different government schemes launched to upgrade their skill and product quality. Out of 50 respondents, 26 respondents were aware of Improved Toolkit Distribution Program, 2 respondents about Comprehensive Skill Upgradation Program and 1 respondent about Guru Shishya Hastshilp Prashikshan Program. Out of remaining 21 respondents, 11 respondents

were not even aware of any kind of training program nor they got any training and the rest 10 have attended more than one training program. The majority of the respondents have got training under Improved Toolkit Distribution Program and also availed toolkit under the same.

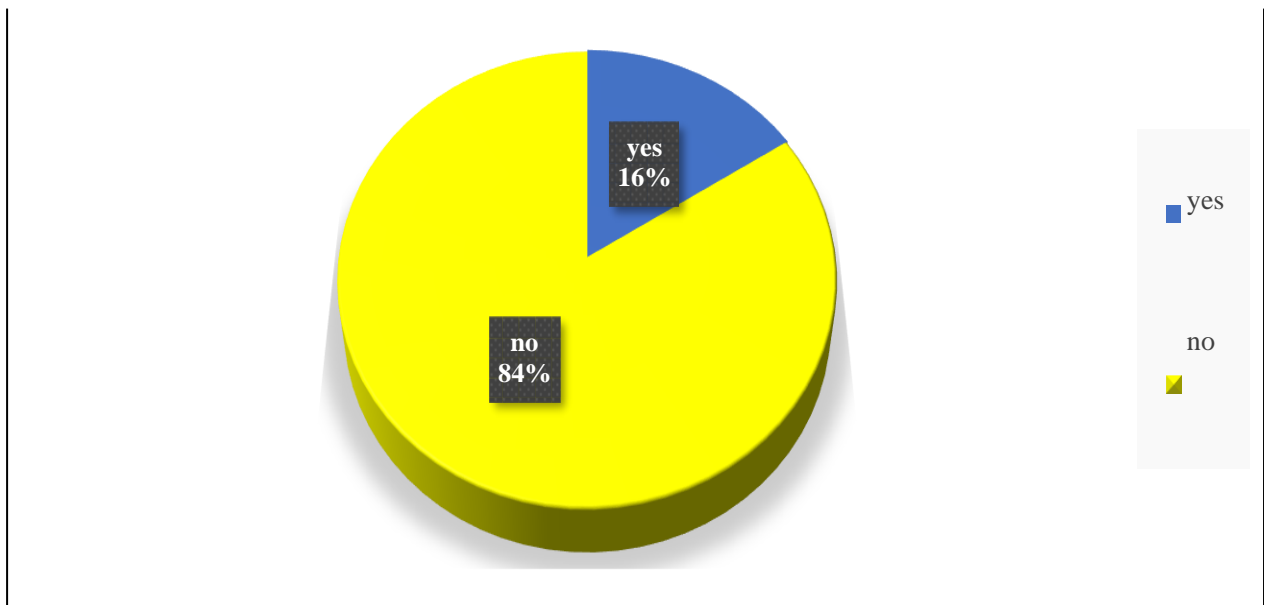
5.14 Respondents who got training under Guru Shishya Hastshilp Prashikshan program



Source: - Primary data

The data shown in the graph 5.14 highlights the number of artisans who got training under the government scheme “Guru Shishya Hastshilp Prashikshan Program”. As the name already defines the programme, it is a training provided by the master artisans to the new artisans on various skill learnings related to craft making so that the skill gap between the guru and shishya can be filled. The data shown in the graph highlights that out of 50 artisans, only 4 artisans got training under the programme and majority of the respondents didn’t get training under the programme. Majority of the respondents said that they were not even aware of this scheme and hence not able to avail the benefit of the programme.

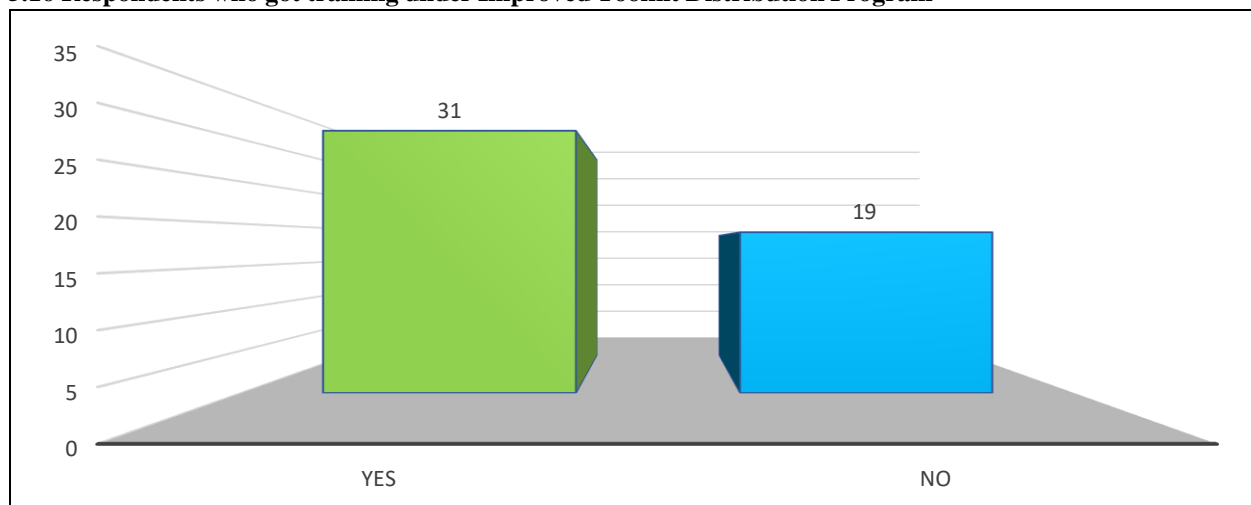
5.15 Respondents who got training under program Comprehensive SkillUpgradation Program



Source: - Primary data

The programme mentioned in the chart 5.15 Comprehensive Skill Upgradation Program intends to train individuals on traditional crafts, fill skill gaps and promote self-employment in the handicraft industry. Out of a total of 50 women artisans, 84% artisans did not get training under this programme and only 16% women artisans availed the benefit of the scheme.

5.16 Respondents who got training under Improved Toolkit Distribution Program



Source: - Primary data

The programme mentioned in the graph 5.16 i.e., Improved Toolkit Distribution Program is all about providing improved tools to the artisans so that they can make uniform quality products. Out of 50 women artisans, majority of the respondents got toolkit under the scheme and 19 respondents did not get the benefit of the improved toolkit as they were not aware of the programme.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study throws light into the world of Cane and Bamboo craft in Kocha village and Dhokra craft in Hirhi village of Jharkhand's Lohardaga district. The study focuses into the demographic features of women artisans engaged in this ancient skill, as well as their awareness and use of government programs. The findings revealed that the women artisan's marital status and educational background also contribute to a more detailed knowledge of their socioeconomic environment. However, obstacles such as low education levels and low income highlight the need for focused interventions to improve the well-being of the women artisans engaged in these handicrafts. The housing and sanitation circumstances of these women artisans are concerning, with the majority living in kuccha houses and missing basic toilet and septic tank facilities. These elements reflect the community's deeper socioeconomic concerns, which extend beyond the boundaries of craft-making. Furthermore, the report highlights the significant issues of women artisans and their lack of awareness about government schemes. While a significant proportion of women artisans are ignorant of schemes aiming at skill enhancement and comprehensive skill upgrading, there is evidence that some have profited from the Improved Toolkit Distribution Program. In essence, this study is a call to action. As we appreciate the wonderful tapestry of Indian handicrafts, we must not forget the difficulties that the women artisans behind these products face. We can fight to preserve cultural heritage, empower communities, and ensure the continued viability of the Cane and Bamboo craft and Dhokra craft sector in Jharkhand and abroad by addressing the challenges raised in this study.

7. REFERENCES

1. Bayeh, E. (2016). The role of empowering women and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Ethiopia. *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 37-42.
2. Bose, C. (2018). Crafting objects, crafting affinities, crafting selves: narratives of home and craft from Telangana, India. *World Art*, 8(1), 39-58.
3. Grobar, L. M. (2019). Policies to promote employment and preserve cultural heritage in the handicraft sector. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 25(4), 515-527.

4. Hazarika, B., & Goswami, K. (2016). Do home-based micro-entrepreneurial earnings empower rural women? Evidence from the handloom sector in Assam. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 22(3), 289-317.
5. Jamatia, S. (2012, August). Livelihood of the Bamboo base: Challenges and Opportunities. In Proceedings of 54th Society of Wood Science and Technology conference on sustainable development of wood and biomass in our new global economy, Beijing China: International Bamboo and Rattan (Vol. 20).
6. Kumar, S., Rawat, D., Singh, B., & Khanduri, V. P. (2023). Utilization of bamboo resources and their market value in the western Himalayan region of India. *Advances in Bamboo Science*, 100019.
7. Mukherjee, D. (2014). Dhokra art and artisans: An ethnoarchaeological study from Burdwan district, West Bengal. *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, 74, 141-152. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26264693>
8. Mukherjee, D. (2016). A comparative study of dhokra metal craft technology and Harrapan metal craft technology. *Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 4, 757-768.
9. Mwanja, C. K., Ishengoma, R., Terziev, N., Banana, A., & Kalanzi, F. (2023). Perception of artisans towards bamboo preservation for improved product durability in Uganda. *Advances in Bamboo Science*, 3, 100020.
10. Pandey, M. A Survey Research on Outreach and Effectiveness of Governmental Schemes on Lives of SC/ST Artisans of Jharkhand.
11. Setyaningsih, S., Rucita, C. P., Hani, U., & Rachmania, I. N. (2012). Women empowerment through creative industry: a case study. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 4, 213-222.
12. Yadav, S., Patoju, S. K. S., & Yadaveni, S. A. (2022). Dhokra craft: socio-economic conditions of artisans, economics and marketing challenges in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh state, India. *Creative Industries Journal*, 1-17.
13. file:///E:/PhD/NEW%20PAPER/Concept_Note_Bamboo_25&Feb.pdf
14. <http://www.craftclustersofindia.in/site/index.aspx?Clid=530>
15. <http://www.jharcraft.in/handicrafts/>
16. <https://bollywoodwallah.in/women-of-turi-community-in-lohardaga-made-mobile-stand-sofaand-bangle-from-bamboo/>
17. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turi_\(caste\)#:~:text=The%20Turi%20is%20a%20caste,items%20of%20bamboo%20and%20farming.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turi_(caste)#:~:text=The%20Turi%20is%20a%20caste,items%20of%20bamboo%20and%20farming.)
18. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/bamboo-and-climate-change/bamboo-andcane-tackling-climate-change-with-sustainable-materials-5484/>