

Socio Economic Conditions of Crochet Lace Workers in Andhra Pradesh- A Case Study

Subha. B¹ and M. Koteswara Rao²

Introduction

Cottage and small-scale industries plays a dominant role in the economic development of both developed and developing countries. In developing countries cottage and small-scale industries are especially important in context of employment opportunities, equal distribution of national income and balanced regional development of rural and semi urban areas. This sector is considered to be an engine of growth, especially in a developing country like India due to their contribution to employment, income generation, GDP and export earnings. Cottage industries, on the other hand also called household industries, are organized by individuals with private resources and with the help of family members and are provide as full-time or part-time employment. Small scale industries, including traditional cottage and village industries and modern small enterprises have been given an important place in India's economic planning¹. Besides economic aspects, the small scale and cottage industrial units are quite significant in achieving various social goals such as removal of poverty, attainment of self-reliance, reduction in disparities in income, wealth and standard of living and regional imbalances.

An attempt is made in this study to review the growth and development of crochet lace industry in Andhra Pradesh, to examine the socio-economic conditions of lace women workers and to suggest measures to protect the interest of workers and to promote the welfare of the workers engaged in lace craft industry in the study area.

History of Lace Industry

For centuries, India handicrafts have been distinguished for their great aesthetic value and functional qualities. Indian Handicrafts have continued to remain as an integral part of the life of the people, providing a means of livelihood to millions of families by generating productive employment and income to the people in the rural as well as in urban areas. Handicrafts always inspired a spirit of constant innovativeness, using the cultural cross currents from time to time³. Textile refers to any material made of interlacing fabric refers to any material made through weaving, spreading, knitting, crocheting, or binding that may be used in production of further goods. Crocheting is a process by which thread or yarn is used to create a cloth done by hand or by machine.

The oxford dictionary speaks about the word lace as "Delicate Ornamental open work fabric of threads". Lace work has added its own contribution to the cultural tradition and the heritage of the State and hence it has become a part of the cultural history of Andhra Pradesh. In

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

² Professor, Department of Economics, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.
Corresponding author: Subha. B can be contacted at: subhamanohar@hotmail.com
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fact, Narsapur, in West Godavari district, come to be recognized as the birth place of handmade Lace work in Andhra Pradesh which is still a flourishing trade.

Lace work, started long back, in remote Narsapur mandal, of Andhra Pradesh had grown into an internationally recognized handicraft and hence it demands the attention of the historians. It has grown from the status of mere skill, imparted to supplement family income to that of a full-fledged trade catering to the needs of world market. It provides nearly one lakh employment to middle class women at their own homes. Almost all women, irrespective of age, are to be seen working with the needle in the entire region in general and Narsapur in particular during leisure time. The lace product include dining table sets, napkins, pillow cases, bed sheets, table cloth, teapoy covers, the collars, cuffs, petty coat lace, door curtains etc. These products have both decorative and utilitarian value⁴. They are lovely and attractive and hence with the aesthetic or artistic appeal, they provide foreign markets. A great deal of minute, delicate and intricate work is involved in creating the fabulous crochet lace products.

The Lace work was introduced in 19th century in the Godavari delta area by wives of Christian Missionaries, began to teach the skill to the local women with a view to provide part-time employment. These lace items were sent to friends and relatives abroad as gifts and they were highly appreciated. Though only a dozen designs were introduced by those missionaries, later on, the ladies with their art and skill have developed more than 400 designs which speak of the high artistic standard of the people of this region in particular and the Indian people in general⁵. Crochet lace entered into the lives of the local poor women as means of livelihood and to mitigate their financial problems to some extent and to keep them away from the daily grind of the bondages of life. Lace making came as a hobby but later on becomes a craft and now it is a profession. For rich and middle class women it may be a hobby but to the poor rural women it is the chief means of the livelihood. The craft spread to the neighbouring villages with a radius of 50 kilo meters around Narsapur, Sitarampuram, Palakol, Mogaltur, Elamanchili, Poduru, Achanta, Penugonda, Peravali, Penumantra, and Tanuku Mandals of West Godavari District and Rozole mandal of East Godavari District and other parts of Krishna District.

Lace Industry is a typical women labour-intensive industry with a substantial share in exports and provides an important window to look into the nature of new opportunities that have come up with trade liberalization and globalization. They are contributing to this expanding industry and making it competes with world market and their own lives are mired in insecurity. The women workers are working without much social security in positions that are lowest paying and which are segregated from men. This segregation plays an important role in reinforcing gender bias in wages⁷. The rural women are *de facto* forced to continue to work, but they are now defined as non-workers, i.e, dependants, both by statisticians and planners, and that their economic contribution to their families fall under the heading of subsistence work and housework. That means their work is made invisible.

The following analysis of the development of lace industry as an export-oriented household industry may shed some light on the mysterious process by which women's work is pushed underground, while at the same time, capital accumulation is seen publicly as the main productive activity. The successful industrialization, or for that matter, export-led industrialization largely depended on a considerable expansion of female labour. The Labour-intensive products exported by developing countries are by nature low technology-intensive ones. This is especially true for the lace industry.

In this juncture, a comprehensive study for the future planning of self sustained growth of lace workers is the pressing need of the present situation. The people have to be educated and

trained; the government needs advice and suggestions in policy making. The problems, barriers and obstacles to development have to be detected and eradicated, markets have to be created and industries have to setup, skill and capital suitability have to be identified. The present study aims to provide a concrete and proper ideas and information about all the factors discussed above. This work may prove to be the pathfinder to the lace artisans who are willing to continue in the same job. This research would be of immense help to the lace artisans, the policy makers, government officials, researchers and also to other non government organizations who are engaging themselves in the upliftment of the poor in particular and the socio economic development of lace artisans as a whole.

Review of literature

A thorough review and survey of related literature forms an important part of research. The main findings of the reviews briefly explains different studies undertaken by various academicians on related issues pertaining to lace workers in West Godavari District.

Williams. A. H (1918), briefly considering that, the Christian missionaries encouraged the home industries in the Lucknow schools with a view to making them self-supporting, this latter fact would suggest that they gave preference to those activities like lace making, shoe-making and carpentry, which can be readily carried on by the pupils after they leave school, whether as side issues or as whole time occupations. They found that in the Godavari Delta district, almost every girl of about ten years and upwards seemed to knit crochet lace at every leisure time. Several merchants make considerable incomes by dealing in the finished lace. All this seems to be the outcome of instruction in lace-making given in missionary schools. In this connection there comes to mind the fondness for elaborate crochet-worked table-covers and bedspreads which is noticeable in Burma and which possibly has the same origin as the lace industry in Narsapur and other places in Telugu districts. Encouragement of industries such as lace-making and embroidery and silk work, is the opening up of markets for finished articles.

Maria Mies (1982), study mainly focused on women's work and subsistence of production both in and outside the home – in a rural household industry and agricultural labourer women in India. In 1977, she had made a field trip to the centre of the lace industry at Narsapur. This industry is located in one of the main areas of the Green Revolution in India. She found that the production of lace between 1942 and 1946 is reported to have been nearly Rs.3 million. Between 1951 and 1953 it rose to the record figure of Rs. 6 million because of the expansion of foreign lace market. In 1953, a number of importing countries imposed high import duties on lace items. They were Norway, New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia and Mexico and USA raised its import duties from 60 per cent to 90 per cent. Due to the rise of machine-made lace led to gradual decline of the Narsapur lace industry after 1953. Several lace manufacturing and exporting units had to close down and the production fell to Rs. 7,67,000 in 1960.

Jaya Arunachalam (2004), studied the widespread of Working Women's Forum's work exposed the exploitative conditions of women, the lace artisans of Narsapur numbering 80000, in West and East Godavari Districts especially around Narsapur, Palakol and Bhimavaram towns. Thus in 1981 President and her team replicated the experiment of Madras at Narsapur facilitating the lace artisans with a co-operative society and a marketing outlet, alongside in addition to credit. Majority of the Lace Artisans are being illiterate, the trade monopolists always kept them in ignorance without allowing them to learn new designs. The conditions of their children were very pathetic and for the sake of earning 10 to 13 paise, most children were stopped from attending schools. However, the Working Women's Forum has been able to give a new lease of

life to the women artisans through the credit options and marketing facility. In fact many of the quality producers are able to earn as much as Rs.600/per month, a reasonably better income in rural area like Narsapur in those days. Some of them teach this Lace-Craft to other rural women as craft trainers they even earn Rs. 1,200/- per month. In 1981, this region covers 70,448 members in 746 villages. Thus the growth of the Forum's credit option has strengthened the entrepreneurship of the poor women Lace Artisans and reduced their earlier inevitable dependence on exporters and middlemen.

Saritha Rao Rayachoti (2009), study discussed that the handmade crochet as an export industry is seeing a down-trend because, the machine made crochet has an advantage over handmade in drastically altering the time-lines, quality and volumes. The study found that Narsapur crochet industry as a biggest centre to cater to buying offices across the world as the women of the region took to making crochet to supplement the household income. Although the exports from India continue, they are affected by a slump in demand owing to a price advantage that China offers. A full-sized bedcover can hardly be sold for say, \$15. At the regional level, the income from crochet is not substantial for the women lace makers. They rarely earn more than Rs. 2000 a month by crocheting. The study indicates that presence of the middle-man and exploitation is said to be part of the problem.

Hari Prasad.M et al, (2011)¹² discussed about the origin, growth and economic empowerment of women artisans of crochet lace industry in Narsapur. These lace artisans are often socially and culturally depressed and isolated in the recent global economic recession lace exports have come down and owing to a sharp decline in export orders from abroad. Lace workers faced an uncertain future due to that workers daily wages are also reduced from Rs.100/- a day to Rs. 65/-even certain areas Rs.50/- only. It is observed that the employment conditions of women artisans are not as expected due to the exploitation of agents. The Crochet Lace industry currently behind the iron curtains of a few private exporters and most of the women artisans are un-organized and desperate. The Government started Lace-park organized in-house training programs to all interested women free of cost to improve quality of production and foreign exchange earnings through exports.

Objectives of the Study

The lace industry is the foreign exchange earner for the country and has a huge employment potential. Currently about 1 lakh artisans are employed in various segments of lace industry. The industry is spread over small-scale as well as household sector in rural India. With a view to bring about self sustainable development of lace workers in Narsapur Mandal, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, the present study aims to focus on Socio economic and working conditions and problems and prospects of lace workers.

1. To study the growth and development of Crochet Lace industry in the study area.
2. To study Socio-economic and working Conditions of respondents in the study area.
3. To discuss various government activities related to lace craft in the study area.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve a sharp pinning down of the research problems and objectives, the following hypotheses are structured. The study proposes to test the following hypotheses.

1. The lace workers are getting minimum wages from the lace work.
2. The lace workers suffer mostly from inadequate production and consequently the production declined during last five years.

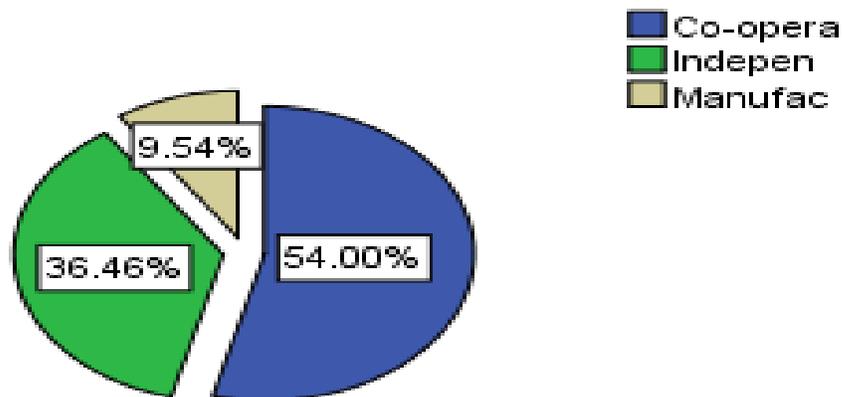
Methodology and Data Base

For the present study both primary as well as secondary data were considered. Accordingly, a field survey has been conducted to obtain primary data adopting a sampling design of “two stage stratified random sampling” with the selection of Mandals at the first and lace workers in the second stage. For this purpose an aerial survey has been done. A total of 650 lace workers have been selected from three groups as sample respondents. For the collection of primary data, the questionnaire has been structured for this study. The information collected from primary source has been edited, categorized and arranged in logical order. Tabular analysis was done both manually and also with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). In analyzing data, statistical techniques such as percentage, comparisons, mean has been used to deduce the association among variables, in order to reach conclusion. The che-square test and Regression test are also use for data analysis.

The researcher has investigated the socio economic conditions about 650 respondents in the study area with in different groups. Study on the work and living conditions of the women engaged in this industry and to find out whether production for the world market had improved their economic and social conditions in the course of more than one hundred years. It is expected that this industry will provide some additional income to the women by whom they can supplement the insufficient income of the family.

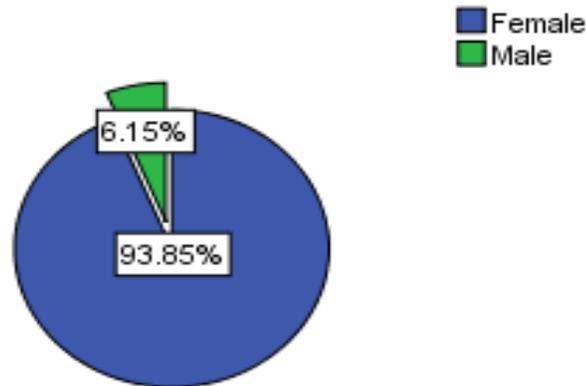
Category of Lace Workers

The number of artisans working in an industrial concern indicates the overall strength and capacity of the industry. About 54% workers working in Cooperative sector followed by 36.46% working as Independent workers and 9.54% working under manufacturing Units.



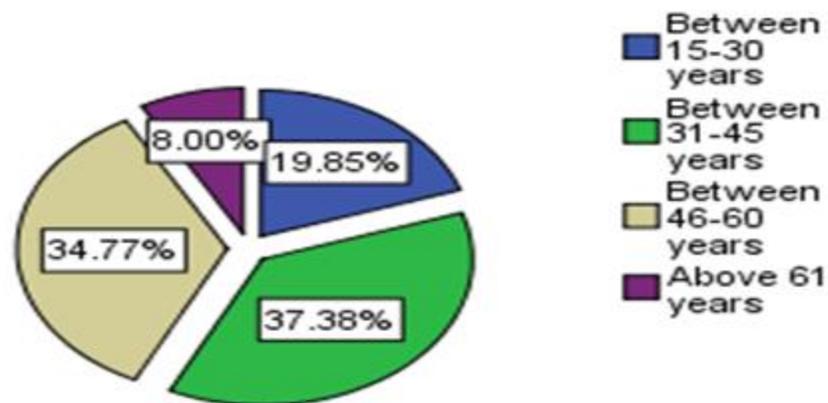
Gender

Gender still remains an issue in our Indian society. The need for women involvement in the process of economic development has well been recognized and steps are being taken in that direction. Out of the total respondents only 6.15% are men workers and the remaining 93.85% are women.



Age of the Respondent

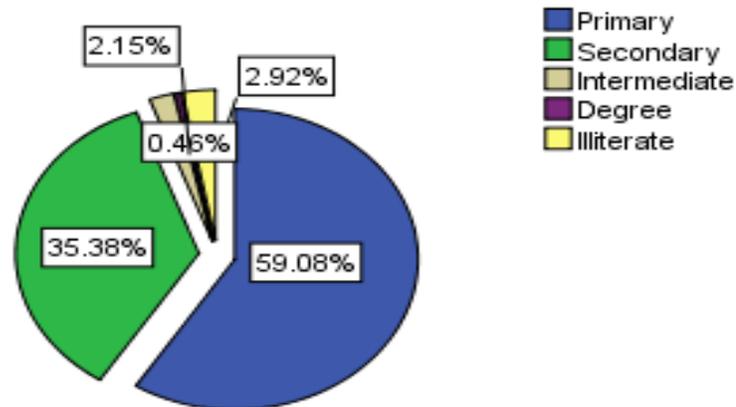
The age of the workers plays an important role in the overall growth and expansion of any industrial concern. Innovative spirit, adoption of new methods and techniques of production etc. are very closely related to the age of the workers. 37.38% of workers are in the age group of 31-45 followed by 34.77% in the age group of 46-60, 19.85% in the age group of 15-30 and 8% in the age group of 60 and above



Level of Education

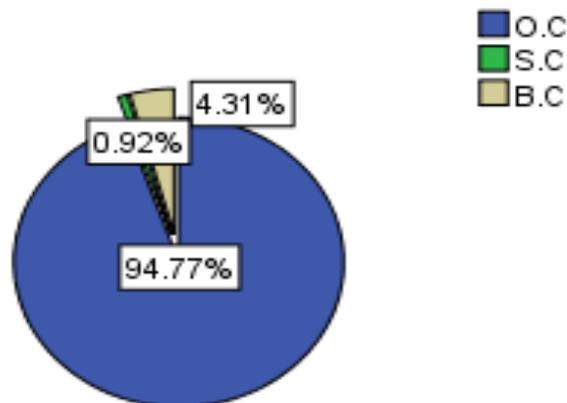
Education is a major factor which determines the quality of human resources of an area. Economic development largely depends on the quality of human resources; this is particularly true in case of lace industry. Education keeps them aware of various facilities, incentives and policies of the government. About 59.08% respondents educated up to primary level followed by 35.38% have secondary education and 2.92% percent are illiterate, 2.15% are intermediate and only 0.46% is degree holders.

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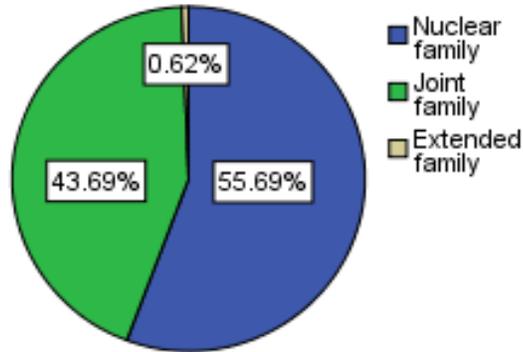
Community Wise Particulars

India is a country of diverse religions and castes. Each and every caste has its own customs, traditions and practices. Caste can impact on their life. The highest segment of 94.77% respondents belongs to O.C, remaining 4.31% are B.C and only 0.92% is S.C.



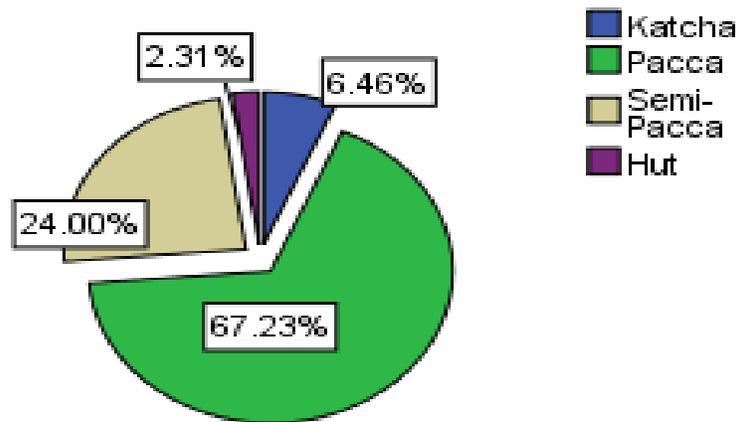
Type of the Family

The family is a social group and is the strongest source of influence on the individual. The family members influence the purchases in a family. In India, traditionally there were Nuclear, joint and Extended families. 55.69% of the respondents are living in Nuclear family, 43.69% are in Joint family only 0.62% of respondents are in Extended family.



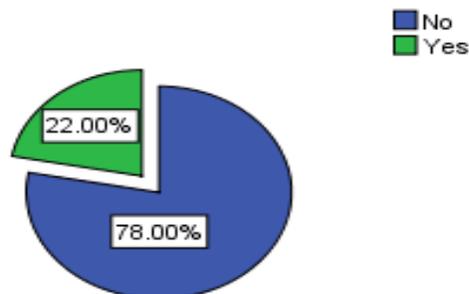
Type of the House

The house indicates the status of the family. It is found that 67.23 of them having Pacca houses, 24% of them having Semi Pacca housed, 6.46% of them having Katcha houses and remaining 2.31% of them having Huts.



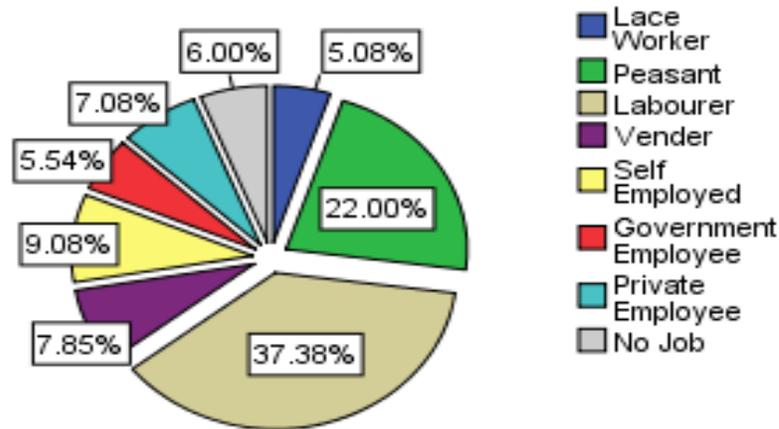
Land Holdings

The average size of land holding owned is an important indicator of economic status of the family. It is found that only 22% of respondents having the average size of land holding and remaining 78% of them have no land holding.



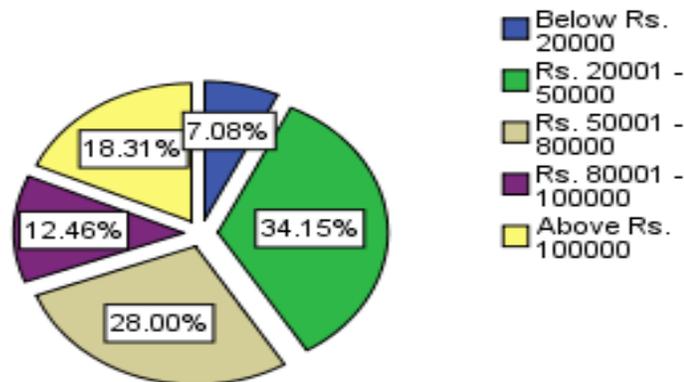
Occupation of the Head of the family

Occupation impacts socio-economic status of the household. The occupational distribution of the head of the family is examined to know the standard of living of the family. Among the respondents 37.38% have reported that their main income is from wage labour, 22% of them are Peasant, 9.08% of them are Self Employee, 7.85% of them are Vender, 7.08% of them are Private Employee, and remaining 6% of them have no job, 5.54% of them are Government Employee, and finally 5.08% of them are Lace worker like worker under manufacturing unit.



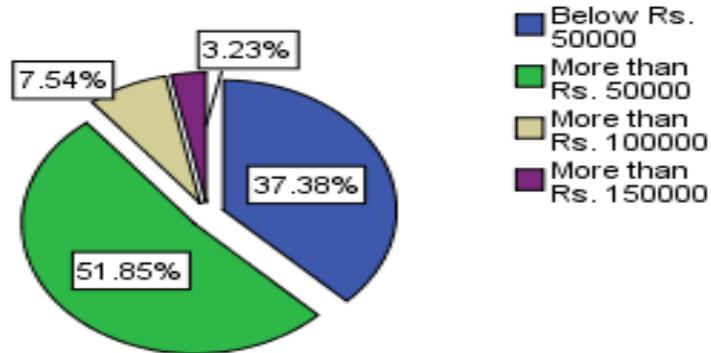
Annual Income of the family

The family income consists of income of the respondent and other members in the family from all sources. It is clear from that as many as 34.15% of the respondent’s family income is between Rs. 20001-50000 and 28% of the respondents family income is between Rs. 50001-80000. There are, however, 18.31% of the respondents whose income is between Rs. 80001-100000 and 12.46% of respondents having more than Rs. 100000 and remaining 7.08% of the respondents income is below Rs. 20000 only.



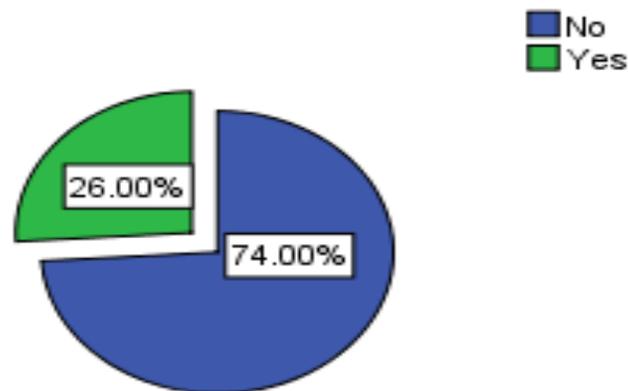
Family Expenditure per Annum

With a view to finding out the standard of living of the respondents information pertaining to the annual household expenditure was obtained. About 51.85% of respondents are spending more than Rs. 50000 per annum, 37.38% of respondents are spending below Rs.50000 only and 7.74% of them are spending more than Rs. 100000 and only 3.23% of them are spending more than Rs. 150000 per annum.



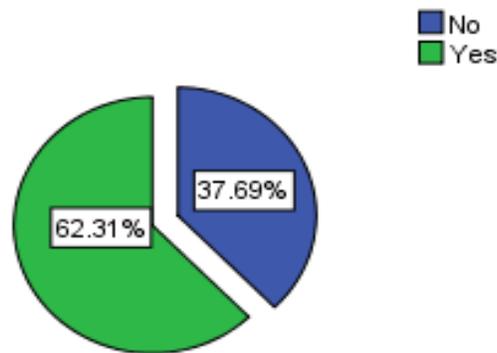
Annual Savings

A family's economic position consists of their spendable income, savings and assets and attitude towards spending versus savings. Only 26% of respondents are in a position of saving and remaining 74% of them are not able to save.



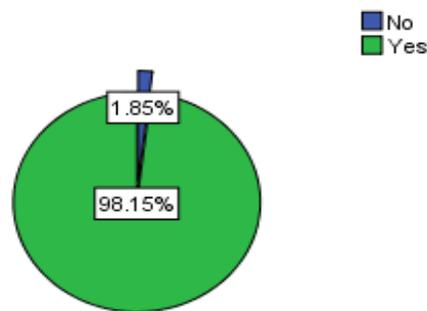
Indebtedness among the households

About 62.31% of respondents are in indebtedness, only 37.69% of them are not having any loan.



DWCRA Loan Holders:

Almost all women have taken DWCRA loan from government, that is 98.15%. Only remaining 1.85% of respondents have no DWCRA loan.



Government support

The lace industry is the foreign exchange earner for the country and has a huge employment potential. Currently about 1 lakh artisans are employed in various segments of lace industry. The industry is spread over small-scale as well as household sector in rural India.

Exports being the essential constituent in the economic development of the state, the export of lace items from the state of Andhra Pradesh also play a significant role, inviting foreign investments and earning foreign exchange. The state comprises large share of total exports from the handicraft sector. For this, the state had set up Export Promotion Council in 1952 to facilitate exports from the state. Majority export products from the state are apparel, hand-knitted carpets, coir, crocheted lace, etc. The prominent export zones in the state are Eluru, Machilipatnam, Narsapur and Rajahmundry.

The government of India has given major emphasis to all round development of traditional lace industry. Through DRDA and with the assistance of Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts, Lace Park is providing training and job-work to the women workers and providing infrastructural support and administrative support, etc. The wages, they are receiving from lace park are higher compared to what they used to earn in the other work. Apart from

decent wages, the women are provided functional literacy, health care and pleasant working conditions.

The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts is set up an International Lace Trade centre at Narsapuram in Andhra Pradesh with an outlay of Rs. 4.5 Crore. Ambedkar Hastashilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY) with DRDA assistance is currently being implemented by the Government of India for integrated development of the lace industry through selected institutions in the other parts of the country. It aims at substantial expansion in the value of output, employment and export from the lace centre by upgrading its production, quality, productivity, supporting infrastructure and marketing. The main objective of this initiative is not only providing work to rural women but also empowering them in other areas.

Summary & Conclusion:

To sum up the study findings, About 54% workers working in Cooperative sector followed by 36.46% working as Independent workers and 9.54% working under manufacturing Units. Out of the total respondents 93.85% are women and the remaining are men. The highest segment of 94.77% respondents belongs to O.C, remaining are B.C and S.C. About 37.38% of workers are in the age group of 31-45 followed by 34.77% in the age group of 46-60, 19.85% in the age group of 15-30 and 8% in the age group of 60 and above. About 55.69% of the respondents are in Nuclear family, 43.69% are in Joint family only 0.62% of respondents are in Extended family. It is found that 67.23 of them having Pacca houses, 24% of them having Semi Pacca housed, 6.46% of them having Katcha houses and remaining 2.31% of them having Huts. It is found that only 22% of respondents having the average size of land holding and remaining 78% of them have no land. Among the respondents 37.38% have reported that their main income is from wage labour, 22% of them are Peasant, 9.08% of them are Self Employee, 7.85% of them are Vender, 7.08% of them are Private Employee, and remaining 6% of them have no job, 5.54% of them are Government Employee, and finally 5.08% of them are Lace worker like worker under manufacturing unit.

It is clear from that 7.08% of the respondents incomes are below Rs. 20000 and 34.15% of the respondent's family income are between Rs. 20001-50000 per annum. It is proved that all of them (41.23) are below the poverty line in the study area. And 37.38% of respondents are spending below Rs.50000 per annum. Only 26% of respondents are in a position of saving and remaining 74% of them are not able to save. About 62.31% of respondents are in indebtedness, only 37.69% of them not having any loan. Almost all women have taken DWCRA loan from government, that is 98.15%. Only remaining 1.85% of respondents have no DWCRA loan.

This study discussed which explore the impact of Lace Industry on Economic and working conditions of women workers and the government support to the lace industry. Study is presented to provide insight, a link between lace industry and informal sector women lace workers. No systematic census of all the lace makers and manufacturing exporters had ever been undertaken. Either government or private industries should ensure adequate employment opportunities throughout the year, which will help the lace workers to get reasonable wages. There is a pressing need to improve the economic conditions of the lace workers in the study area. There is need to change this informal lace industry in to formal industry to generate more employment opportunities and to earn Foreign Exchange.

Limitations of the study

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The lace makers are not even recorded under the rubric of workers engaged in household industries. Because of the almost absolute absence of reliable secondary data, the study had to concentrate on the collection of primary data. From the viewpoint of the 'Foreign Exchange earnings and employment generation', Lace craft is a particularly apt subject for study.

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