



Fabricating Handcraft and its Economical Roles in Family Investment (An Anthropological Study in Chahak Region of Yazd City, Iran)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the production of handicrafts and their economic roles in family investments in the Chahak region of Yazd City, Iran. The study is significant in exploring the economic and social dimensions of handicrafts within family communities. The primary aim of this research is to analyze the impact of handicraft production on the economic status of families and its contribution to sustainable development at the family level. The importance of this research lies in its potential to provide a better understanding of the economic capacities in rural areas and offer strategies to strengthen handicrafts as a key pillar of the family economy. The study employed a qualitative ethnographic methodology. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 15 randomly selected families, aimed at gaining insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding handicraft production and its economic impact. Data analysis was carried out in a descriptive manner using an ethnographic approach to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between handicrafts and family investments. The findings suggest that handicraft production, as an economic activity in Chahak, not only provides income for families but also enhances their cultural and social identity. Furthermore, it can act as a tool for poverty reduction and employment generation in rural areas. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the importance of sustainable development of handicrafts in improving the economic conditions of local communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional crafts, as a manifestation of cultural heritage, form a vital component of any nation's identity, encapsulating the culture and traditions of a specific region. While the significance of handicrafts is broadly acknowledged, there is a notable lack of comprehensive literature addressing the preservation of these traditional crafts (Yang et al., 2018). Economic growth that contributes to poverty reduction for individuals with the lowest incomes is often referred to as 'pro-poor growth' or the creation of 'inclusive markets' (Brennan & Fickett, n.d.). Handmade carpets are among the most renowned crafts worldwide, with Iranian handmade carpets particularly recognized as luxury items in both Family and international markets due to their durability and high value. Handcrafts are vital products of human societies, serving as representations of culture, art, customs, traditions, and historical events that define a community. In this regard, handicrafts can be regarded as tangible cultural heritage. Many countries preserve significant and unique elements of cultural heritage through these crafts. The term "handcraft" refers to "crafted artifacts," which reflect the lifestyles, social structures, and cultural contexts of a society at a specific time and place (Pourmoradian et al., 2021). There are other pitfalls we often encounter. In the study of rural areas, there is a tendency to focus primarily on primary production, neglecting the secondary and tertiary activities that define urban environments (Leimgruber, 2020). The handicraft industry in the United States remains largely understudied, with even less known about its specific aspects. There is limited understanding of its economic significance, the structure of its workforce, the legal considerations surrounding occupational participation, or its overall scale and reach (Miller et al., n.d.). Since the late Qajar period, Iran has experienced minimal intrinsic economic and social changes. Factories and machine-made products have gradually replaced traditional, locally produced goods and services. Investors came to own the majority of assets and production tools. The expansion of trade in this system led to a disregard for smaller outputs, causing traditional craft productions to evolve into factory-based manufacturing. Consequently, this era marks a period of continuous transformation in product types and production methods (Mohammadzadeh & Rezaei, 2022). Reviving traditional arts and crafts with great appeal through strategic planning and the implementation of development-oriented projects can significantly impact the empowerment of local villagers. However, the presence of such attractions alone,

without a solid foundation in empowerment initiatives, lacks the potential for effective introduction and recognition. Therefore, the village of Laft offers an ideal setting for fostering intellectual and cultural enrichment. The establishment and expansion of such projects not only revitalize traditional arts and crafts but also promote the empowerment and overall development of Laft's community(Davoodi & Dolatabadi, n.d.). Job creation in the cultural sector has been notably enhanced by external financial support. However, estimates suggest that investments and regional economic growth have not significantly boosted employment in the cultural field, likely contributing to capital loss. Furthermore, gender-related findings indicate that although the resources allocated to women entrepreneurs are lower per capita compared to their male counterparts, these resources have nonetheless had a positive impact on cultural employment in certain provinces(26, n.d.). The growth of the handicraft sector has the potential to drive much-needed rural development in India, yet there has been limited focus on modernizing the sector and supporting the people involved. West Bengal, as mentioned earlier, is a significant hub for handicrafts, witnessing impressive growth, particularly among the many skilled Muslim artisans in the industry. Murshidabad district stands out as a key center for jarikari crafts, renowned for its distinctive and timeless products, which have gained recognition both within and outside the state(Chakraborty, 2013). Handicrafts that portray the culture and tradition of the area might enhance the growth of tourism. Entrepreneurs may drive the handicraft industry's expansion rather of relying exclusively on government initiatives. Improved entrepreneurial skills can have a significant positive impact on rural residents' handicraft abilities, particularly as a way to raise their general socioeconomic standing(Hassan et al., 2017). The increase in production resulting from the new capabilities of handicrafts in rural areas has been significantly influenced by the intermediary role played by the development of target markets in Lorestan province. This influence has been such that the new capabilities of handicrafts have contributed to a 0.16 increase in production. Additionally, these new capabilities have also had an impact on the development of target markets, with an impact factor of 0.13.(Deb et al., 2022).The true cultural essence of the Caucasus is embedded in its handicrafts, which are deeply connected to Iranian culture and reflect the creativity, intellect, and aesthetic sensibilities of the region's inhabitants. The diverse climate, weather, and cultural influences are vividly represented in the wide range of handicrafts produced by the

people of the Caucasus during the Tsarist Russia era, significantly impacting the local family economies(Aghazadeh & Abdi, 2023). The handicraft sector not only generates employment and contributes to economic development but also serves as a meaningful artistic medium for artisans to express themselves. Handicrafts are unique forms of expression, embodying the culture, traditions, and heritage of a nation. This sector is intricately connected to the rural economy of India, with its growth and decline reflecting the broader economic trends of rural areas and the nation as a whole(Bhat, 2016). In a country like India, where traditions, rituals, and culture continue to hold significant value, crafts have managed to preserve their core essence through various interpretations by individuals, communities, and organizations. Handicrafts generally refer to items created by skilled artisans using traditional methods. These craftsmen produce a wide range of goods, from everyday consumer products to intricate artworks, using materials such as paper, wood, clay, shells, stone, and metal, all crafted with simple tools. The term "handicrafts" is used to describe these items because they are exclusively handmade, without the use of machines(Mohi & Din, 2014). important environmental elements impacting the handicraft industry's growth and competitiveness in both home and foreign markets. Important elements that contribute to increasing the awareness and demand for handicrafts include the expansion of the tourism sector, which highlights regional customs and indigenous inhabitants. The study highlights that creating successful policies that promote the survival and expansion of enterprises in this sector requires an understanding of both internal and external environmental elements(Honarbakhsh & Akbari, 2015). For the past 20 years, South Africa's handicraft sector has been erratic. While commercial handicrafts, especially those made primarily for the tourist sector, are struggling, the quality of cultural artifacts has been rapidly deteriorating. Since the handicraft industries may provide jobs, particularly in rural regions, and support both environmental sustainability and economic growth, they have been acknowledged as a solution to sustainable economic development(Oyekunle & Sirayi, 2018). Kerala, known for its rich cultural heritage, showcases a vibrant array of traditional handmade products passed down through generations. The region's craftworks, particularly, feature intricate and diverse designs crafted from wood, metal, glass, stone, clay, and various other materials. While large industries have not significantly penetrated rural Kerala, there is a strong emphasis on preserving local

traditions and fostering the organization of artisans into small craft cooperatives to promote and sustain these artisanal practices(globalizing rural markets: evidence from handmade traditional product markets, n.d.). The industrial development of Yi embroidery in Baishapo Village exemplifies broader trends and challenges, offering insights into the common issues faced in promoting rural economies through traditional handicrafts. This analysis asserts that local governments, as central actors in the governance network, play a crucial role in this process. Since traditional handicrafts possess both economic and cultural value, the Cultural Industry Office is considered the most suitable entity to drive the optimization of the embroidery industry. Key solutions to address the challenges include implementing a benefit-sharing model, establishing a robust system of oversight and accountability, and creating sustainable long-term mechanisms to ensure the industry's continued growth and development(Ling Tong, n.d.). The handicraft industry in India is a labor-intensive, decentralized, and largely unorganized sector. Despite these challenges, it plays a crucial economic role, contributing significantly to value addition, requiring minimal capital investment, and having substantial potential for export and foreign exchange earnings. Over the past few decades, Indian society and its economy have undergone dramatic transformations. In the era of globalization, Family economies have become increasingly integrated into the global market through trade and investment policies, aided by technological advancements, which have had a direct impact on employment, livelihoods, and incomes. With the opening of India's economy to multinational corporations in 1991, the handicraft sector, like other industries, was affected. While Indian handicraft exports and employment reached impressive levels, globalization has also heightened the vulnerabilities faced by artisans, exacerbating their precarious situation due to increased global competition, shifts in consumer preferences, and evolving cultural tastes(Majeed, 2018). The Indian carpet industry, a rural-based handicraft sector, has long been a vital contributor to the nation's economy. It significantly boosts the country's foreign exchange through exports while providing employment to millions, playing a crucial role in the economic development of India. As one of the few sectors in rural India that is nearly entirely export-oriented, the handmade carpet industry offers direct employment to a vast number of artisans, creating valuable opportunities for the rural unemployed. Currently, the carpet sector contributes approximately US\$ 932 million in export

revenues to the government and supports the livelihoods of millions of weavers and artisans. India's rich heritage in handmade carpet weaving is globally recognized for its intricate designs, refined elegance, and vibrant colors, showcasing the exceptional craftsmanship of Indian artisans(Bano, 2016). For many developing nations, handicrafts represent a significant export commodity and productive industry. New market prospects for artists have been made possible by the expansion of worldwide markets for home accessory products and a rise in consumer interest in international goods. However, despite extensive production, there isn't There is no universally accepted definition of handicrafts, despite several attempts to define this vast and mostly unorganized industry(Yassir M. Mahgoub Khalid M& Alsoud, 2015). The growth of small, medium, and microbusinesses (SMEs) plays a significant role in the generation of jobs(Aigbavboa CO & Thwala WD, 2014).Two elements had a major impact on the sustainability of handicraft businesses. These two elements were the degree of support and the conviction that a handicraft business could support a handicraft practitioner.for non-governmental organizations' handicraft enterprises is declining(Abisuga-Oyekunle & Muchie, 2020). The term "fast fashion" describes inexpensive apparel lines that imitate upscale fashion trends. In the industrialized world, fast fashion helps satisfy young customers' deepest aspirations for premium fashion, despite the fact that it represents unsustainable practices(Joy et al., 2012). These days, the sector is also known as the sustainable industry because handicrafts are typically sustainable products made by hand or with the aid of simple tools that are self-made in the hole process. The artisans who make the craft products are called craftsmen, and they use natural resources like wood, claystone, bamboo, jute, moonj, willow plant, banana leaf, monas plant, some special shrubs and scrub found in a forest or simply forest material. Some special stones also occur in rivers and oceans, and sheep. India is said to as the world's "land of handicraft products" because of its natural products(Yadav et al., 2022). The settlement of Sar Aqa Seyyed. Carpet weaving is one of the many handicrafts that are still quite popular in Sar Aqa Seyyed village. In addition to generating revenue and job possibilities, the village's handicraft industry can significantly contribute to sustainable growth and community autonomy(Divandari et al., 2017).

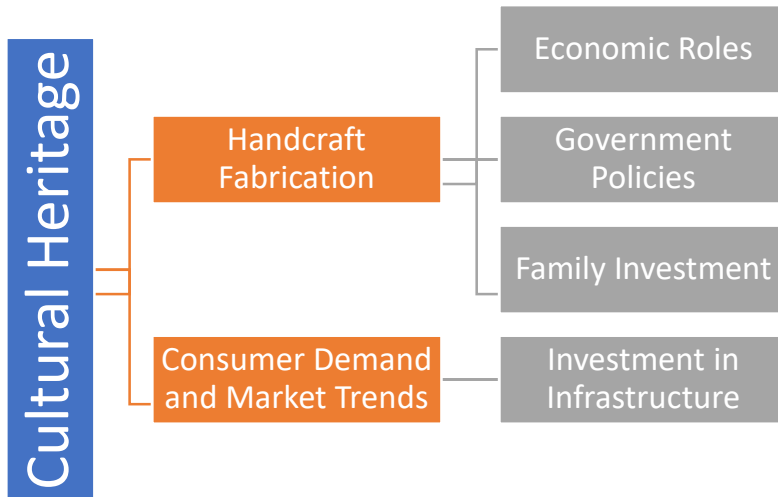


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

2. METHODOLOGY

In this research, a qualitative ethnographic research method is used to analyze the role of handcraft production in Family investments and its economic impacts in the Chahak region of Yazd city. This approach focuses on an in-depth and comprehensive study of local cultures, behaviors, and socio-economic patterns through direct observation and interaction with individuals. Ethnography allows the researcher to be immersed in the natural environment of the people being studied and closely observe their activities, behaviors, and interactions. In this research, the researcher collects data by being present in the Chahak village, directly observing the production of handicrafts and how it impacts the daily lives of individuals. Data collection is carried out through semi-structured interviews with 15 randomly selected families. These interviews are designed to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences, views, and attitudes regarding handicrafts and their impact on their economic status. The interviews are conducted informally in natural settings (homes, handcraft workshops) to obtain more accurate and authentic information. A random sampling method is used to select the samples. Fifteen families from the Chahak region are randomly chosen to examine their experiences and views

regarding handicraft production and its impact on Family investments. These samples are selected from families with different economic backgrounds to increase the diversity of the data.

2.1. Study Area

Chahak is a village in Yazd Province, Iran. This village is the administrative center of the Chahak District. It is located on the under-construction highway connecting Mehriz to Neyriz, which is the second main communication route between Fars Province and Yazd Province. This county consists of two districts: the Central District and the Chahak District. Khatam County was formed after the separation of the Herat and Mervost regions and Herabrjan from Shahre Babak County, as well as the Chahak area from the Meshkan District of Neyriz County, and the Kharkhangan and Chenar Naz regions from Buin va Miandasht County. The historical name of this county is "Herat and Mervost." Before becoming a county, it was a rural district under Shahre Babak County in Kerman Province. In 1980, it was separated from Shahre Babak and joined Mehriz County in Yazd Province. Later, in 1989, the Herat and Mervost Rural District was formed, and the city of Herat was selected as its center. In 2002, this rural district was upgraded to a county, and in honor of the services of Ayatollah Khatami, the late Friday Prayer Imam of Yazd and father of Sayed Mohammad Khatami, during the 1986 Herat flood, the county was named Khatam.



Figure 3 : Map of Chahak in Yazd Province.

Handwoven carpets from each region have unique characteristics based on the local, cultural, and historical features of that area. The handwoven carpets of Chahak, Yazd, are known for their delicate and thin structure, as they are produced in a desert region. Carpets from this area have always been famous for their lightness. Another distinctive

feature of carpets from this region is their weaving technique. Chahak carpets are woven using the asymmetrical (Persian) knot, which is also known as the two-ply knot. In some areas, the traditional three-ply method is also used by weavers. The fibers used in Chahak carpets are primarily wool, which is used in the yarn for weaving these carpets. One of the most important distinguishing features of Chahak handwoven carpets is the uniqueness of the designs woven in this region compared to other traditional carpet-making areas. Chahak carpets primarily use designs featuring warm colors. The patterns of these carpets are such that one can easily identify designs linked to the origins of Chahak, Yazd. While there are also designs influenced by other regions of the province, the presence of exclusive and local patterns is a significant advantage for the handwoven carpets of this desert region. An important characteristic of the designs of these carpets is that they often carry philosophical messages and symbols.



Figure 5 : Handcraft of Chahak

Figure 4: Region of Chahak in Yazd Province

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of opinions on the impact of handicrafts on household economic status

NO	KEY POINTS	Neutral points	Negative points	Positive points	Number of participants
1	Necessity of teaching manual skills to enhance production quality.	0	2	8	10
2	A decrease in income from handicraft sales.	0	4	6	10
3	Positive impact on the financial status of families	0	1	9	10
4	Challenges in sales and the limited market for handicrafts.	0	5	5	10
5	Challenges in sales and the limited market for handicrafts	0	3	7	10
6	Increase in Family investment and the revival of handicrafts.	0	3	6	10
7	Lack of appropriate training and skills in production Higher profitability of handicrafts compared to other occupations	0	1	9	10
8	Growth of local economic activities through handicrafts	0	2	7	10
9	Economic challenges in accessing raw materials	0	5	5	10
10	Job creation and income generation for unemployed individuals in the region	0	2	8	10

Figure 6: The table presents the distribution of opinions from 10 participants regarding various aspects of the impact of handicrafts on the economic situation of households in the Chahak region. Each key point is evaluated in terms of neutral, negative, and positive views. Most participants expressed positive views on the impact of handicrafts on family finances, with a strong emphasis on the necessity of teaching manual skills to improve production quality and the profitability of handicrafts compared to other occupations. However, there were concerns about decreased income from handicraft sales, limited market access, and challenges in obtaining raw materials. The table highlights both the economic potential of handicrafts, including increased Family investment and job creation, and the challenges faced by artisans in the region.

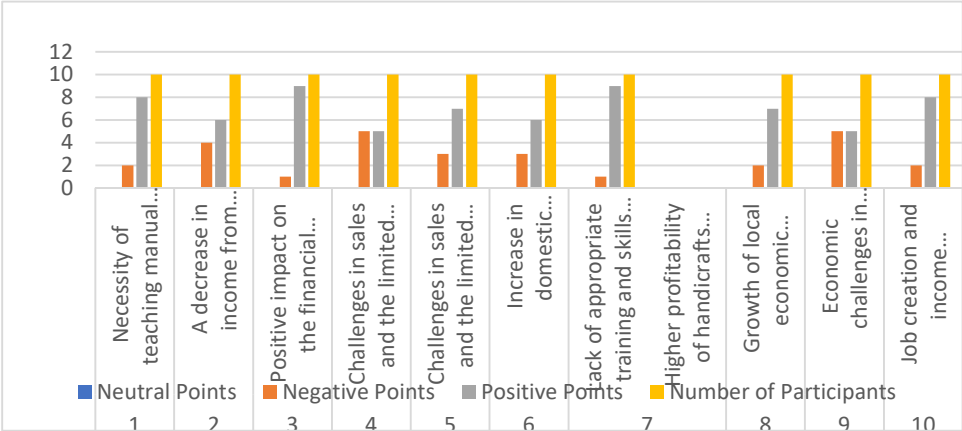


Table 2: Economic Impact of Handicraft Production

Key Points	Neutral Points	Negative Points	Positive Points	Number of Participants
Increased family income through handicraft production	0	1	9	10
Handicrafts as a supplementary income for households	0	2	8	10
Increased financial independence from selling handicrafts	0	2	8	10
Handicraft production reducing dependence on agriculture	0	3	7	10

Figure 7: The positive financial impact of handicraft production is widely recognized, particularly in boosting family income. Many participants view handicrafts as a supplementary source of income, contributing to financial independence and economic diversification in rural households.

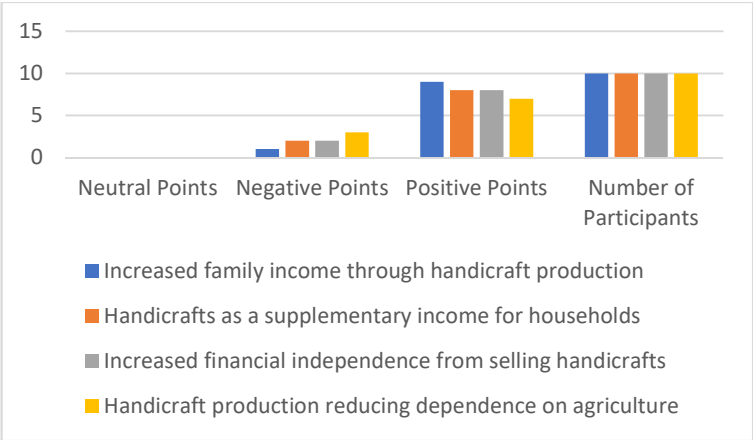


Table 3: Challenges in the Market and Sales

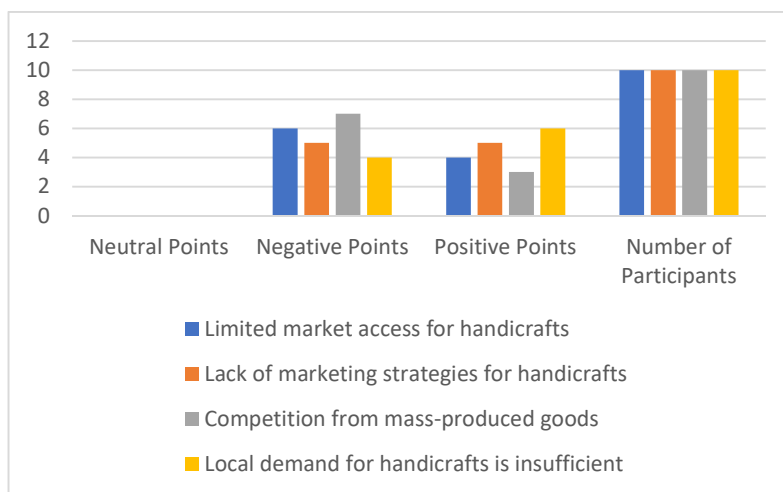
Key Points	Neutral Points	Negative Points	Positive Points	Number of Participants
Limited market access for handicrafts	0	6	4	10
Lack of marketing strategies for handicrafts	0	5	5	10
Competition from mass-produced goods	0	7	3	10
Local demand for handicrafts is insufficient	0	4	6	10

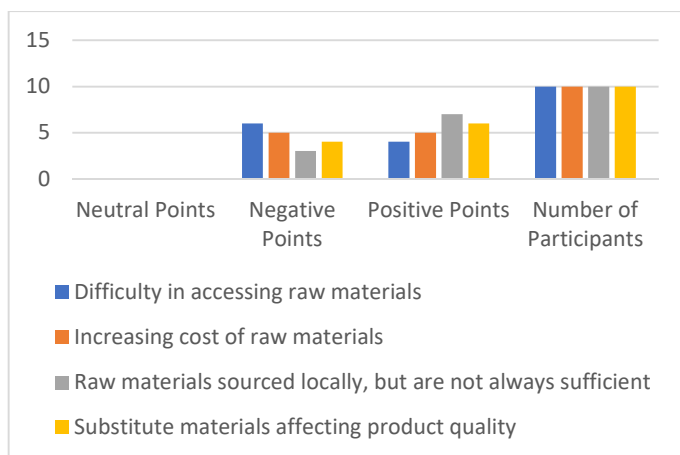
Figure 8: Market challenges are a major concern, with limited market access and competition from mass-produced goods identified as significant barriers to success.

Table 4: Fresh Resources and Manufacture Budgets

Key Points	Neutral Points	Negative Points	Positive Points	Number of Participants
Difficulty in accessing raw materials	0	6	4	10
Increasing cost of raw materials	0	5	5	10
Raw materials sourced locally, but are not always sufficient	0	3	7	10
Substitute materials affecting product quality	0	4	6	10

Figure 9: Access to raw materials and their rising costs are significant challenges in handicraft production.





4. Conclusion

Yazd, as one of the central and desert provinces of Iran, holds a unique cultural and historical richness. This city is one of the leading producers of handicrafts in Iran. In addition to handicrafts, various industries are active in Yazd. One of the most prominent industries in Yazd is the handwoven carpets of the region. These carpets are distinguished by their unique and eye-catching designs and patterns. Moreover, their high quality and density have earned them global recognition. In this article, the specialized editorial team of Chahak Handicrafts in Yazd has focused on the patterns and structures of these carpets.

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