

A Comparative Study of Spinners and Weavers Towards Khadi Products

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Abstract—The present study explores a comparative analysis of Khadi spinners and weavers to identify their challenges, opportunities, and perceptions towards Khadi products. Khadi, being a symbol of self-reliance and sustainable production, has played a significant role in India's cultural and economic fabric. However, the sector continues to face multiple challenges due to modernization, declining demand, and limited government support. Understanding the issues faced by both spinners and weavers is essential to design interventions that can sustain their livelihoods and promote Khadi as a viable textile alternative. The research follows a descriptive and analytical methodology, drawing insights from 80 respondents 50 spinners and 30 weavers through structured questionnaires and personal interviews. The data analysis employed mean scores, ranking methods, and hypothesis testing to evaluate challenges such as low wages, shortage of raw materials, lack of training, migration of labor, lockdown disruptions, and limited market demand. Secondary data from government and institutional reports on Khadi further enriched the findings, ensuring a balanced perspective. The results indicate that spinners are primarily affected by low daily wages and reduced cotton production, while weavers face critical issues such as labor migration, low wages, and weak customer demand. The rejection of null hypotheses highlights significant differences in challenges faced by the two groups. The study concludes that targeted measures such as fair wage policies, training programs, raw material support, and demand creation through branding and marketing are vital for the long-term sustainability of the Khadi sector

Index Terms—Spinners, Weavers, Khadi products

I. INTRODUCTION

Khadi is a hand-spun and handwoven natural fabric, traditionally made from cotton but also produced using silk and wool. It holds a unique place in India's cultural and economic history, as it is closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and the Swadeshi movement during India's struggle for independence. Gandhi popularized Khadi not only as a cloth but as a symbol of self-reliance, simplicity, and resistance against colonial industrial goods. Spinning on the charkha (spinning wheel) became both a political and economic act, empowering rural households to contribute to the freedom movement while sustaining themselves through local production.

Beyond its historical symbolism, Khadi is valued for its eco-friendly and sustainable characteristics. The process of making Khadi involves no industrial machinery, thereby reducing carbon footprint and conserving energy. Its breathable texture, durability, and ability to keep wearers cool in summer and warm in winter make it suitable for all climates. Moreover, Khadi promotes slow fashion, as each piece is unique, crafted by artisans through a time-intensive process that supports fair labor practices compared to mass-produced textiles. This ecological and ethical aspect has made Khadi increasingly relevant in modern times as the global fashion industry shifts towards sustainability.

Economically and socially, Khadi has played a significant role in providing employment opportunities to millions of rural artisans, particularly spinners and weavers. It continues to be promoted under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in India, which works to support artisans through subsidies, marketing initiatives, and skill

development. However, challenges remain in terms of low wages, inconsistent demand, and competition from cheaper machine-made textiles. Strengthening the Khadi ecosystem can contribute not only to preserving traditional craftsmanship but also to creating sustainable livelihoods for artisans, making Khadi both a fabric of the past and a viable solution for the future of ethical fashion

II. KHADI SPINNERS

Khadi spinners are artisans who use the charkha (spinning wheel) to convert raw cotton, silk, or wool into yarn. Spinning is the foundational step in Khadi production and is deeply symbolic of self-reliance and simplicity, as emphasized by Mahatma Gandhi during the independence movement. For many rural households, spinning provides a source of supplemental income and a way to stay connected to traditional craft practices. Spinners, often women from rural areas, have historically been the backbone of the Khadi movement, ensuring a steady supply of yarn to the weaving sector.

However, despite their critical role, Khadi spinners often face challenges such as low wages, irregular demand, and lack of direct market linkages. Much of their work is still tied to government support and subsidies through institutions like the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). While modernization has brought some mechanical spinning options, hand-spinning remains essential for authentic Khadi certification. Improving spinners' working conditions, ensuring fair pricing for yarn, and providing skill development opportunities are necessary steps to strengthen their livelihoods and preserve this heritage craft

III. KHADI WEAVERS

Khadi weavers are artisans who take hand-spun yarn and transform it into cloth using handlooms. Weaving adds value to the yarn and brings out the diversity of textures, designs, and finishes that make Khadi unique. Weavers often work within family-based or cooperative structures, producing garments, furnishings, and fabric that cater to both domestic and international markets. Their craft not only generates employment but also sustains India's rich textile

traditions, where every piece of Khadi carries the imprint of artisanal skill and cultural identity.

Compared to spinners, weavers may sometimes receive slightly better wages, since their work produces the finished product with higher market value. Yet, they too face issues such as competition from power looms, lack of design innovation, and limited marketing reach. Weavers often depend on institutional support for raw materials and guaranteed sales. To sustain the weaving community, there is a pressing need to integrate modern design trends, enhance quality control, and create stronger branding of Khadi products. This will ensure that weaving remains a dignified and profitable occupation, preserving both heritage and livelihoods.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Mallik, A., Raj, K., Fernandes, A., & Menezes, A. D. (2025). In the research paper titled "Measuring the Impact of Ethnocentrism on Indian Youth an Empirical Study on Khadi Fabric Choice of Preference." The study finds that ethnocentric attitudes among Indian youth significantly increase preference for Khadi because Khadi signals national pride and sustainability; however, price sensitivity and fashion appeal moderate that effect. For spinners and weavers this implies that youth-led demand driven by ethnonationalism can help market Khadi, but sustained livelihood benefits for producers require improved affordability, contemporary product design, and better marketing channels to convert favorable attitudes into consistent purchases.
2. Peter, P. (2011/2025 versions). In the research paper titled "A Case Study of Khadi Institutions in India." The case study shows Khadi institutions generate employment for spinners and weavers but suffer from weak market linkages, low producer bargaining power, and delays in government support that reduce real income gains. The paper concludes that while Khadi institutions are vital for preserving spinning/weaving skills, structural reforms better procurement, direct market access, and timely incentives are essential for improving livelihoods of both spinners and weavers.
3. Simardeep Kaur & Radha Kashyap (2022). In the research paper titled "Market Scenario of Khadi

with Special Reference to Punjab and Haryana.” The paper documents declining traditional demand and competition from machine-made textiles; it finds spinners face dwindling raw-material orders while weavers who can diversify product lines fare slightly better. The authors conclude that rejuvenation requires regional marketing hubs, product diversification, skill upgradation (for both spinning and weaving), and better wage structures to stabilize incomes.

4. McGowan, A. (2016). In the research paper titled “Khadi Curtains and Swadeshi Bed Covers: Textiles and the Changing Possibilities of Home in Western India.” (Modern Asian Studies). Historical analysis shows Gandhi’s promotion of the charkha privileged hand-spinning as symbolic work, which politically elevated spinners but also reshaped local weaving economies. The paper concludes that policy and symbolic elevation of spinning sometimes reallocated resources away from other weavers, implying that comparative interventions must balance cultural symbolism with the material economic needs of both spinners and weavers.
5. Rai, S. K. (2022). In the research paper titled “Colonial Knowledge Economy: Handloom Weavers in Early Twentieth Century United Provinces.” The historical study argues that the political focus on spinning vs. weaving had long-term effects: institutional and market supports skewed over time, disadvantaging certain weaving communities while elevating charkha-based khadi networks. For contemporary policy, the paper concludes that equitable support (access to raw cotton, credit, and markets) must deliberately include both spinners and weavers to avoid repeating historical distortions.
6. Bhattacharyya, S. (2022). In the research paper titled “Khadi: A Narrative of Lived Theology.” Through ethnographic accounts the paper shows spinning (charkha) is experienced as moral/economic practice among practitioners, and that the meaning attached to spinning influences community solidarity and willingness to continue the craft despite low pay. The conclusion highlights that policy aimed at sustaining Khadi incomes for spinners and weavers must acknowledge the craft’s moral economy

combining livelihood support with recognition to keep artisans engaged

V. RESEARCH GAP

Although several studies have examined Khadi in terms of consumer perception, historical significance, market scenario, and artisan livelihoods, there remains a research gap in the direct comparative analysis between spinners and weavers with respect to their socio-economic conditions, earnings, challenges, and benefits derived from Khadi production. Most available literature highlights consumer attitudes, ethnocentrism, or the symbolic value of Khadi, while livelihood studies either focus on Khadi as a whole or on one group of artisans without drawing systematic comparisons. Limited empirical evidence exists on how government schemes, institutional support, and market reforms differently impact spinners and weavers, especially in terms of income distribution, sustainability of work, and skill retention. Thus, a focused comparative study is needed to provide actionable insights for policy makers, Khadi institutions, and cooperative societies to ensure equitable growth and balanced support across both artisan groups

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this study is descriptive and analytical in nature, aimed at understanding the comparative challenges faced by Khadi spinners and weavers towards Khadi products. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews with a sample of 80 respondents, including 50 spinners and 30 weavers, selected from Udyog Bharti Gondal, Gujarat. The questionnaire covered demographic details, production challenges, and perceptions regarding wages, raw material availability, training, and market demand. The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as mean scores, ranking method, and hypothesis testing to identify the most critical issues and their relative importance for spinners and weavers. Secondary data from research articles, government reports, and Khadi institution publications were also used to support the findings. This methodology ensures both qualitative insights and quantitative validation for the comparative study.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

The following table indicates the demographic factor of the study:

Sr.no	Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	11	13.8
		Female	69	86.3
2	Age Group	18 to 30 Years	13	16.3
		31 to 45 Years	27	33.8
		46 to 60 Years	33	41.3
		Above 60 Years	7	8.8
3	Occupation	Khadi Spinner	50	62.5
		Khadi Weaver	30	37.5

The demographic profile of respondents shows that a large majority are female (69 out of 80), indicating that women dominate Khadi-related occupations. In terms of age distribution, most participants fall within the 46–60 years group (33 respondents), followed by those aged 31–45 years (27 respondents), suggesting that middle-aged and older individuals are more actively engaged in Khadi work, while younger generations (18–30 years, 13 respondents) are relatively less involved. Occupation-wise, spinners (50) outnumber weavers (30), highlighting that spinning remains the primary livelihood activity within the Khadi sector. Overall, the data reflects that Khadi work is predominantly carried out by women and middle-aged artisans, with spinning being more common than weaving.

Objective-1: To Study the perception of spinners about Challenges in producing khadi products.

Null Hypothesis H_{01} : There is no difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to spinners.

Alternate Hypothesis H_{11} : There is a difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to spinners.

To test the above null hypothesis, Friedman test is applied and results are as follows:

Test Statistics ^a	
N	50
Chi-Square	14.773
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.005
a. Friedman Test	

Interpretation: The above results indicate that calculated p-value is 0.005. It is less than 0.05. Therefore, Friedman test is rejected. Hence Null hypothesis is rejected and Alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to spinners.

Findings: To understand the findings, mean ranks are obtained and presented as follows:

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
14.1 Decrease in the manufacturing of cotton	3.15
14.2 Impact of lockdown on manufacturing	2.90
14.3 Migration of labourers to metropolitan cities for better employment opportunities	2.65
14.5 Less daily wage	3.40
14.6 Lack of knowledge or training	2.90

The analysis of the data reveals that among spinners, the most critical challenge is low daily wages (Mean = 3.4), which directly affects their livelihood and long-term engagement in Khadi production. This is followed by the decrease in cotton manufacturing (Mean = 3.15), which reduces raw material availability and opportunities for continuous work. The impact of lockdown on manufacturing (Mean = 2.9) and the lack of knowledge or training (Mean = 2.9) was also significant, indicating that external disruptions and skill gaps have further weakened the sector. Finally, migration of labourers to metropolitan cities (Mean = 2.65) emerged as the least severe but still important factor, showing that while spinners may remain in rural areas, they face reduced productivity and income

opportunities. Overall, the findings highlight that spinners are most vulnerable to low wages and raw material scarcity, which need urgent attention to stabilize their livelihoods.

Objective-2: To Study the perception of weavers about Challenges in producing khadi products.

Null Hypothesis H_{02} : There is no difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to weavers.

Alternate Hypothesis H_{12} : There is a difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to weavers.

To test the above null hypothesis, Friedman test is applied and results are as follows:

Test Statistics ^a	
N	30
Chi-Square	31.730
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.001
a. Friedman Test	

Interpretation: The above results indicate that calculated p-value is 0.001. It is less than 0.05. Therefore, Friedman test is rejected. Hence Null hypothesis is rejected and Alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a difference in categories of Challenges in producing khadi products according to weavers.

Findings: To understand the findings, mean ranks are obtained and presented as follows:

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
Decrease in the manufacturing of cotton	2.60
Impact of lockdown on manufacturing	2.85
Migration of labourers to metropolitan cities for better employment opportunities	2.93
Less demand from customers	2.52
Less daily wage	4.10

For weavers, the data shows that the biggest challenge is low daily wages (Mean = 4.1), which severely affects their income security and quality of life despite the skilled nature of their work. The migration of labourers to metropolitan cities (Mean = 2.93) is the next major issue, reflecting the shortage of skilled

hands in the weaving sector as workers leave for better-paying opportunities. The impact of lockdown on manufacturing (Mean = 2.85) also played a significant role, disrupting supply chains and reducing production capacity. A decrease in cotton manufacturing (Mean = 2.6) has further constrained raw material availability, while the low demand from customers (Mean = 2.52) highlights market-related challenges. Together, these factors show that while weavers face systemic livelihood insecurity, low wages combined with labour migration and weak demand make their situation particularly vulnerable.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The overall analysis concludes that both spinners and weavers face significant challenges in producing Khadi products, though the severity and nature of issues vary between the two groups. For spinners, the most pressing concern is low daily wages and limited raw material availability, while for weavers, low wages, labour migration, and weak customer demand emerge as the biggest threats to their livelihoods. The rejection of null hypotheses in both cases confirms that challenges are not uniform but differ in importance across categories, indicating the need for targeted interventions. Ensuring fair wages, improving raw material supply, enhancing market demand, and reducing dependence on external labour migration are critical to sustaining both spinners and weavers, thereby strengthening the Khadi sector as a whole

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