

Role of Handlooms in the Socio-Economic Conditions of Handlooms Workers in Cholistan

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Abstract

Cholistan is a vast desolate sandy desert, stretching over two third area of former Bahawalpur Division (Tehsil Yazman, Liaqat pur , Khanpu & Tehsil Fort abbas). It includes 2.6 million hectares in the three districts i.e. Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur and Rahim yar Khan. The climatic conditions of Cholistan desert are highly unfavorable to human and animals life. The main source of income of nomad pastoralists of Cholistan desert is livestock rearing including sheep, goats, camels and cows. Along with livestock rearing, their cottage industry such as making woolen “Shawls”, camel and goat’s hair bedding called “Phalacies”, carpet weaving and “Khaddi’ cloth. Handloom is an important rural household activity in several parts (mostly lesser Cholistan) of the Cholistan desert. According to our results, the most of weavers think that this profession plays a positive role in improving their socio-economic conditions by their health and better education of their children. In the whole sample a vast majority (94%) of the weavers think that this profession plays positive role in improving their socio-economic condition. From which maximum (40%) of the respondents told that by getting better education, secondly (32%) think that by getting special status in the society because they weave the bride grooms wedding suits and (25%) replied by getting better health facilities they can improve their socio-economic condition.

Keywords: Cholistan, Handlooms, Socio-Economic Condition

1. Introduction

Cholistan is a vast desolate sandy desert, stretching over two third area of former Bahawalpur Division (Tehsil Yazman, Liaquat pur, Khanpur & Tehsil Fort Abass). It includes 2.6 million hectares in three districts i.e. Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Rahimyar Khan. Cholistan desert is about 480 km long and its width varies from 32 to 192 Km (Akbar et al., 1996, Chaudhary 1992).

Cholistan desert can be divided into two geomorphic regions. North western part comprising nearly 7,770 Km² areas is called "Lesser Cholistan". It borders the canal-irrigated areas consisting of a series of saline alluvial flats, alternating with low sandy ridges. The south eastern part of this desert covering an area of 18,130 Km² with wind resorted high sand dunes is called "Greater Cholistan" (Akbar and Arshad 2000, Arshad and Rao 1994).

About 4000 B.C., when the mighty river "Hakra"* also known as river *Saraswati or *Ghagra used to flow through this region. Cholistan desert was once a flourishing center of "Hakra" Civilization. The area was under perennial regular irrigated agriculture till 1200 B.C and under seasonal regular irrigated cultivation until 600 B.C. When "Hakra" River dried up, once fertile area turned into a desolate sandy monster over a period of centuries and was given the names of "Rohi"* or "Cholistan".

The climatic conditions of Cholistan desert are highly unfavorable to human and animals life. Annual mean rainfall varies from less than 100 mm in the west to 200 mm in the east. Rainfall usually occurs in monsoon (July, August & September) and in winter and spring (January, February & March). The temperature gains unbearable heights in summer and sometimes it rises up to 51 °C. (Akbar et al., 1996; Akhtar and Arshad 2006).

The total population of the Cholistan desert is around 1.2 million. Most of the Cholistani pastoralists experience two production systems (i) nomadic, and (ii) agro-pastoral. The people involved in nomadic production system lived in Greater Cholistan generally landless and their entire activities are centered on livestock rearing. Rangelands serve as the source of animal feed, while the water requirements are met either from "tobas" (rain water reservoir) or from wells. In agro- pastoral system of production, people own livestock as well as farmlands in irrigated area along with the periphery of the Lesser Cholistan. Agriculture production of these lands is very low due to shortage of the irrigation water. Split family system is observed in agro- pastoral production system, whereby women and children reside at farmlands with one or two milking cows, while the adults with their livestock move to the rangelands of the lesser as well as Greater Cholistan. Such movements and their destinations are pre-determined and properly decided. Generally, pastoralists move towards those areas where their own clans possess "tobas*", wells or "kunds*". During this movement, one or two women also company to facilitate cooking and milking of cows during their stay in the desert.

The main source of income of nomad pastoralists of Cholistan desert is livestock rearing including sheep's, goats' camels and cows. Along with livestock rearing their cottage industry includes such as making woolen "Shawls", camel and goat's hair bedding called "Phalasiaes"**, carpet weaving and "Khaddi"* cloth.

Handloom is an important rural household activity in several parts (mostly lesser Cholistan) of the Cholistan desert. These handlooms are simple in construction and raw material used in this industry is locally available. Historically, handloom weaving has long been a low cost cottage industry and a complementary source of income for agricultural and other rural workers in Cholistan desert. Weaving is one among other livelihood choices available to the Cholistani people. Even though they consider weaving as one of their traditional activities but now a days the choice to weave depends upon consumption patterns, household resources, personal preferences and larger market forces.

Majority of the products of handlooms in Cholistan desert is prepared by using cotton thread or thread prepared by camel, goat and sheep hairs. Higher quality handlooms are finer in texture and give a look just like silk. To make such handlooms the cotton thread and the hairs of different animal species are dyed with different colors of market choice. These different colored threads are put on "KHADDI" (an instrument used to wave handlooms) and handlooms of different types having beautiful patterns are prepared. Major handlooms prepared in Cholistan are "Phalasi", Carpet, "Chadar*", "Dari"**, "Khais"**, "Shalwar" and "Kameez"***etc.

Socio-economic condition of the handloom workers directly depends upon the income through weaving of the handloom products when they got more orders for the weaving of handloom products by the customers, they got enough money through weaving then they think about for the better facilities of health, education, access to sweet and clean drinking water, and also they have the power in decision making process of their society. In some areas of the Cholistan, people like to weave the dresses of their bride & grooms from the handloom workers. They are respected in the families of bride & grooms and also they have special status in these families of that area.

In summer when there is a hot they have less orders of weaving. In summer season, they have less work, less money, they minimize their social activities like wedding ceremony, culture events etc. All cultural events in Cholistan are celebrated in the spring; they celebrate their cultural events after fulfilling the orders of local peoples and especially of master weavers (Middlemen) in the moony nights of spring. The philosophy of the moony nights is because in Cholistan there is no electricity in Cholistan, they intentionally want to celebrate their cultural activities in moony nights. They have a lot of work in late summer & in winter. They earn more money in winter due to heavy orders of weaving especially "Dari", "Khais", and "Shawals" from local Peoples as well as supplier.

Keeping in view the importance of handlooms in Cholistan desert, the present study was being envisaged with the following objectives:

2. Objectives

- 1-To know the personal preferences of handloom workers
- 2-To study the role of looms according to their types in improving the socio-economic condition of handloom workers of rural area of Cholistan
- 3-To formulate suggestions about the improvement of handlooms in the study area

3. Methodology

This study was designed to estimate the impact of handlooms on the socio-economic conditions of the handloom workers in Cholistan desert. This study was mainly based on primary data collected from different types of handloom weavers. The proposed research procedure is given below.

This study was planned to conduct in Cholistan desert (Seven Cholistan union councils of districts Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagr & Rahimyar Khan). This area was selected; firstly the researcher was serving in an organization (National Rural Support Programme Pakistan) and posted in whole of Cholistan desert. Secondly, the researcher was familiar with the whole area and local language (Saraiklee) so it was easy to collect the data. Thirdly, in this area livestock especially goat, sheep and camel population is very high. Wool and hairs of these animals used as raw material for handloom. Weaving is found in huge and people prefer handloom products made by animal hairs.

Sampling

A simple ball method was used for the selection of respondent. This is the method in which one respondent is selected on the information other respondent was selected. There are seven union councils in three districts of former Bahawalpur Division. Weavers are basically nomads, they can move from one place to other according to the availability of water. Three hundred respondents (from the seven Union Councils of Cholistan) of different types of weavers were selected according to the simple ball method. The respondents were personally interviewed with the help of comprehensive interview schedule.

Data Collection

a) Interview Schedule:

An interviewing schedule was used for the collection of data. The interview schedule was comprehensive comprising of all necessary details of the respondents .It was prepared in English to seek the required information from the respondents local language Saraiklee or Urdu language was used.

b) Pre-Testing and finalization of Interview Schedule:

Pre-Testing is necessary to check the validity and accuracy of interview schedule. It was helpful to detect the mistakes and deficiencies in the tools of data collection. To judge the validity of the interview schedule, pre-testing was made on a group of 25 handloom workers from non-selected villages but representing socio-economic situation before going to the field for data collection. It was necessary, in order to collect reliable and valid information from the respondents. The interview schedule was modified by making necessary corrections in the light of suggestions given by the weavers during pre-testing. The unnecessary questions were deleted to make the interview schedule more comprehensive. After pre-testing questionnaire was improved and finalized.

c). Interview Procedure

The aim and objective of the study or data collection was explained in detail to respondents before starting the actual interview. All possible efforts were made to obtain correct information. Personal interview method was used for the collection of data. The selected 300 weavers were personally interviewed in local languages i.e. Saraiklee or Punjabi. Since the interview schedule was in English, it had to be translated into Saraiklee or Punjabi when ask the question to the respondents .and back again to English by the researcher. The respondents were interviewed mostly at their homes or weaving place, and data were collected in an informal and friendly atmosphere. During the process of interviewing, every effort was made to explain the questions where needed to the respondents, so that correct and reliable information could be gathered.

Difficulties Confronted

Some difficulties were faced by the researcher during the course of investigation. A few respondents were reluctant to give correct answers about personal information's. Therefore, a lot of time had to be spent to explain to them the purpose of the study to motivate them to give exact /correct information. Besides, means of transport and communication in rural areas retarded the progress of the research work and it took a lot of time and efforts of the researcher to reach the farmers. Metals roads did not connect most of the villages; therefore the researcher had to approach the villages mostly on foot.

Statistical Techniques & Methods

Data collected was tabulated systematically and analyzed statistically to bring it into comparable form. The data was analyzed through simple percentage test using the following formula

$$\text{Percentage} = F/N * 100$$

Where, F= Total Frequencies

N= No. of observations

4. Results & Discussions

Keeping in view the specific objectives of the research, an interview schedule was developed to collect the data. The data collected from 300 respondents have been tabulated, analyzed and discussed in this chapter.

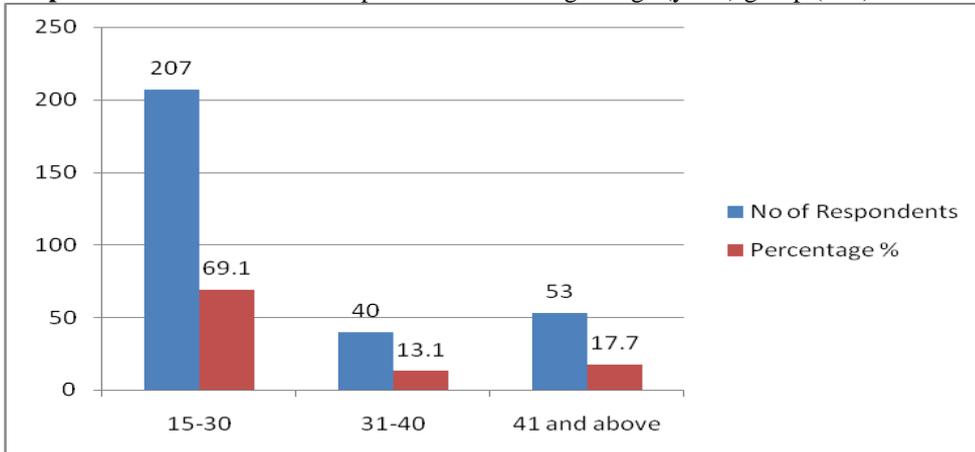
The respondents were asked personal questions regarding their age and education. These questions are also helpful to know the efficiency of workers. Working in this profession because younger weavers are more efficient and enthusiastic also their small and thin figures which are helpful for speedy weaving .Educated workers are better in adopting new technologies in this profession .Higher the education higher will be the rate of adopting new ideas in this profession.

1- Personal Information about the Respondents

1.1 –Age of the Respondents:

Age of the respondents play an important role in handloom weaving because of the reason , younger are more efficient workers and their small & thin figures were helpful for speedy weaving .Older weavers are helpful for the designs, color scheme selection and better marketing. It was therefore considered to collect data about age of respondents .The data collected in this regards are given in graph-1

Graph-1: Distribution of the Respondents According to Age (years) group (300)

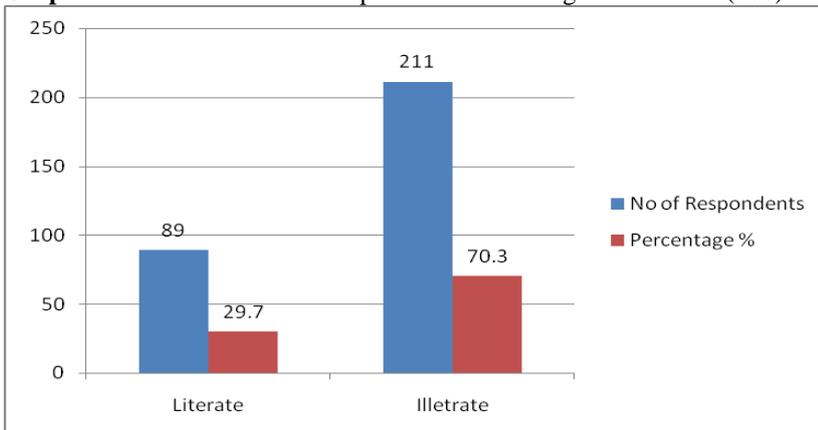


Graph-1 shows that that the majority of the respondents (69%) were of the age of 15-30 years. In this age group majority are carpet weavers, because younger are efficient workers with their thin and small fingers which are helpful for speedy weaving .13% were in up to the age of 31-40 years, out of which majority are cloth weavers and 18% of the respondents were up to the age of 41 & above, out of which majority are phalasi weavers.

1.2-Education of the Respondents:

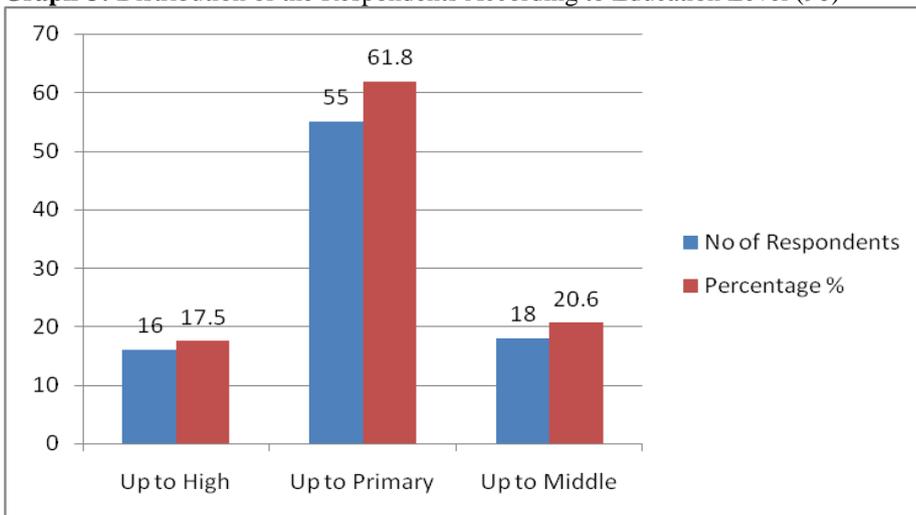
Education may be defined as the process of developing knowledge, wisdom, character, general competence & other desirable qualities of mind in the human being .It is considered as the formal stage of schooling .Education plays important role in business management like handlooms and marketing of their products . Educated weavers are more receptive to adopt new technologies of modern designs, color schemes and effective marketing of handloom products. Mostly weavers /respondents of the research study are not living in the settled areas. They are living in far fling areas of Cholistan desert where there is no basic necessities of life are available. Data regarding education & classification of literate respondents are given in graph-2 & 3

Graph-2: Distribution of the Respondents According to Education (300)



Graph -2 indicates that 70% of the respondents are illiterate and only 30% are literate. The data regarding classification of literate respondents are given in graph-3

Graph-3: Distribution of the Respondents According to Education Level (90)



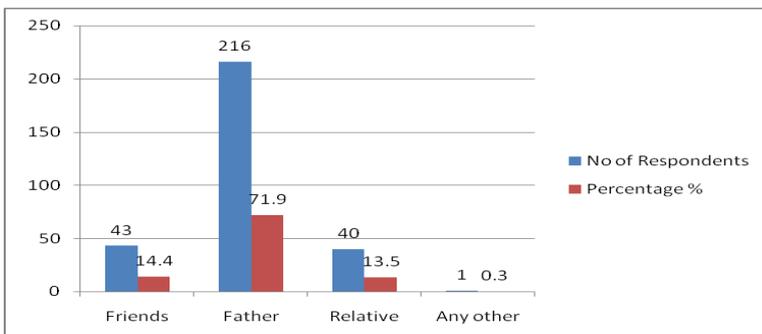
Graph-3 indicates that majority 62% of the respondents have primary education while 21% are up to middle and only 17% are educated and literate up to matriculation and no one was above matriculation.

2- House Hold Resources

The respondents were asked the relevant question to obtain their response how they had adopted this profession, about the members of the family who help in this profession, question regarding from where you have arranged the Handloom, about the arrangement of Handloom, purchase of raw material, information regarding raw material, regarding help when there is shortage of raw material, help when there is a problem in weaving information regarding marketing of handloom products, etc. The responses thus obtained are given in graph 4-13

2.1- How did you adopt this profession?

Graph-4: Distribution of the Respondents How do they Adopt this Profession (300)

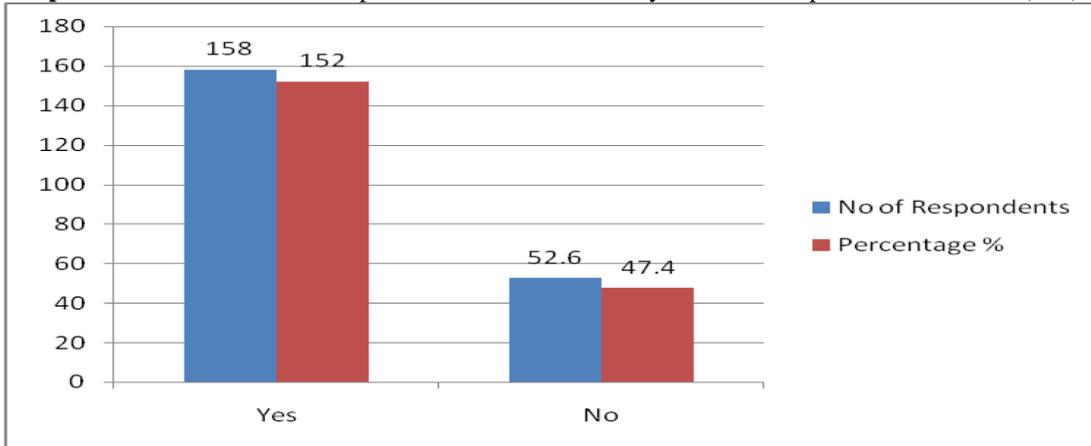


Graph-4 show that majority 72% of the respondents adopted their profession because of their father while 14% adopted this profession because of their friends and 13% because of their relatives. These results are similar to that of Soumhya (2007) who told that teaching within the home is informal youngsters learns by watching and occasionally receive direct instruction.

2.2- Members of the family who help you in your profession?

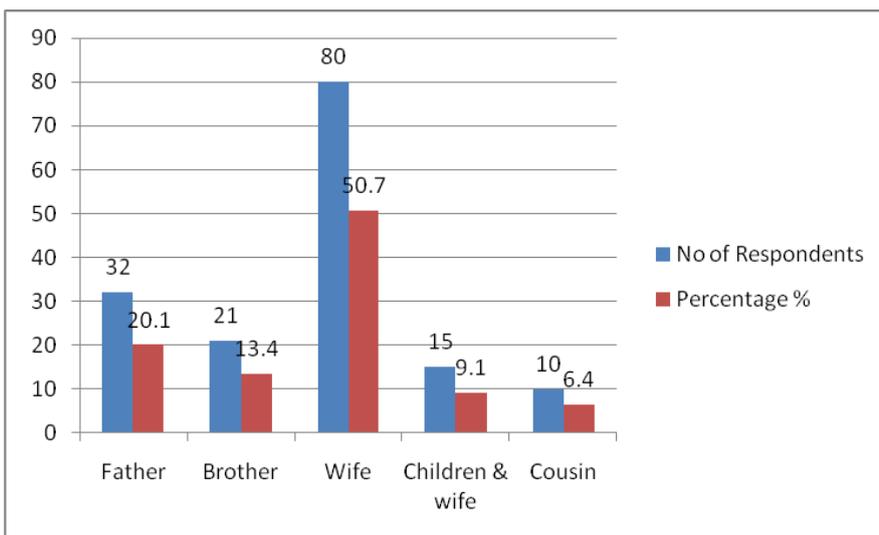
In the response of this question, is there any member of your family who help in your work. The responses thus obtained are given in the graph -5

Graph-5: Distribution of the Respondents either their Family Members help in this Profession (300)



Graph-5 reveals that majority 53.34% of the respondents were replied that members of their household (Father, Brother, Wife etc) always help with them while 46.66% replied no help them from their family members because carpet weavers work at the shops outside their houses in the supervision of their masters. In carpet weavers weaving family members cannot help as such. In cloth and phalasi weaving all the family members can help and support the weavers because cloth and phalsi weavers work inside their houses where every household can help. The respondents who replied in yes they further specify the relatives which are shown in graph-6

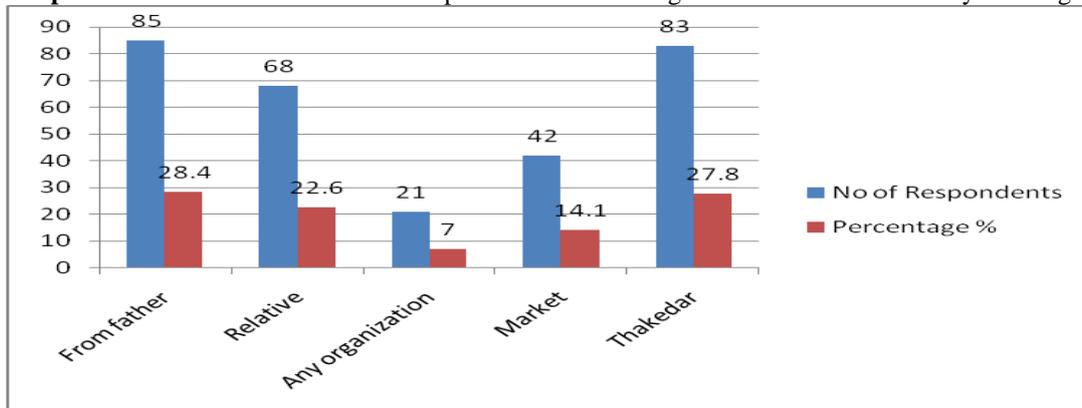
Graph-6: Distribution of the Respondents with the specification of Family Members who help in this Profession (158)



From graph-6, 51% of respondent told that their wives help with them, 20% replied that their father help with them 13 answered as that their brother help with them while 9% replied that their children and wives help with them and only 6% answered that their cousin help them. Our results are similar to that of the Seemanthini Niranjana & Soumya Vinayan (2001) explored that the handloom industry is largely household-based, carried out with labor contributed by the entire family. These results are also agree with the results of Venkatesan(2001) who resulted that weavers worked from within a household unit, the women and children of, which supplied auxiliary services including spinning in some cases.

2.3-From Where You Arrange Handloom:

Graph-7: Distribution of the Respondents According to from where they arrange Handloom (300)



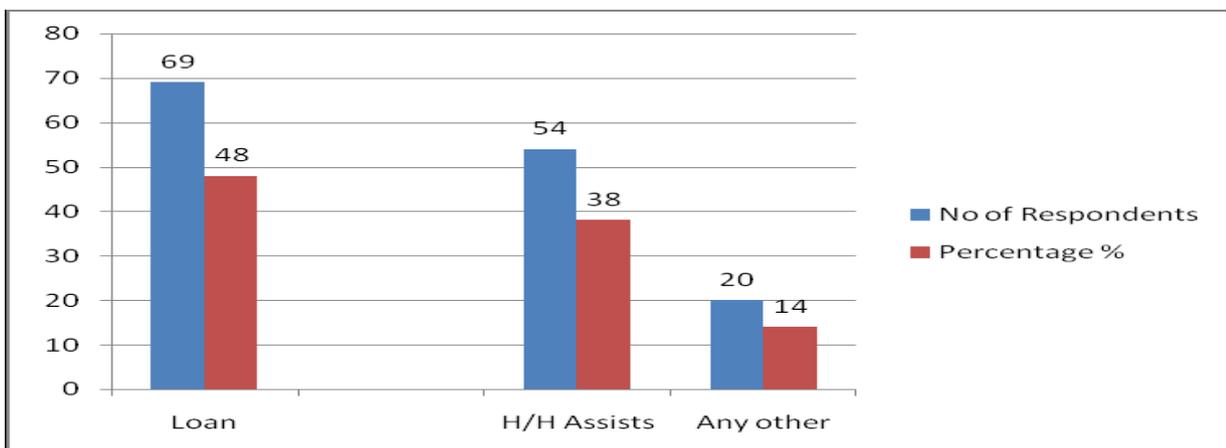
Graph -7 shows that 28% of the respondents arranged their handloom from their father, 28% of the weavers arranged from the Thakedar (Contractor), (23%) got from their relatives, while 14% purchases from the markets and only 7% arranged the handloom from any organization.

Our results are slightly supported by the results of the Gandhi (2005) who resulted that master weavers own looms in private shed and hire weavers to weave for the order the master weaver has in hand. Some of them have it in their own residential houses because loom is a physical assets, others depends on the ones made available to them by the relatives, industrial cooperative society or at factory of master weavers.

2.4-From where you arrange money to purchase the handlooms from market

In the response of the question from where you arrange handloom, there are 143 respondents who purchase handloom from market with money. Then in the response from where you arrange money these are shown in graph-8

Graph-8: Distribution of the Respondents According to from where they arrange money to purchase the handlooms from market (143)

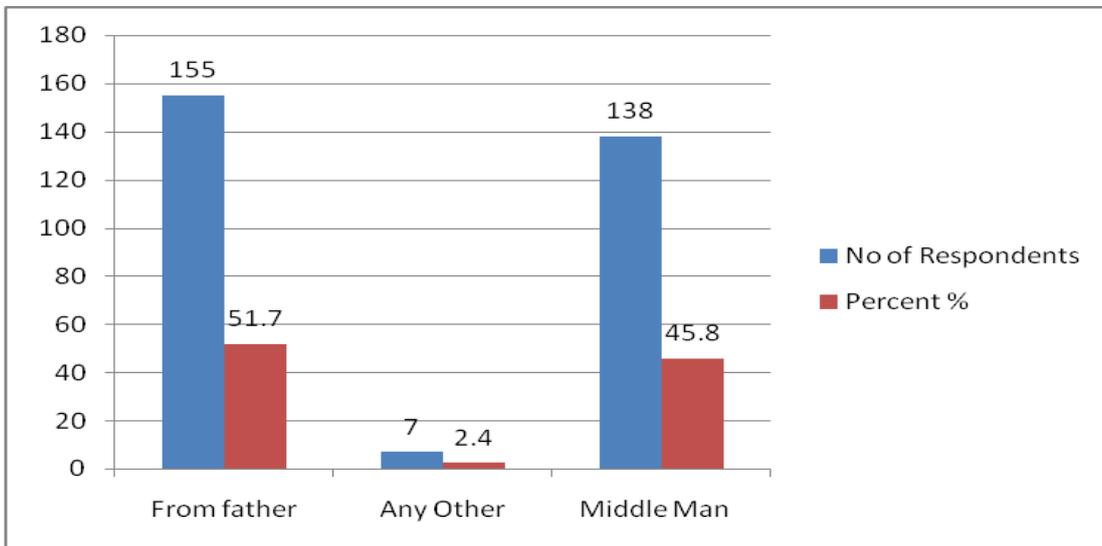


Graph -8 reveals that maximum (48%) get loan for purchasing, 38% sold out their household assets and only 14% arrange money by any other sources that includes advances which is from master weavers. Here results are slightly similar to those of Gandhi (2005) who resulted that financial charges are problem only for the individual weavers. They need money to purchase loom & yarn. Moreover they are indebted to traders and moneylenders and weavers have little assets as well.

2.5 From where you arrange raw material

In the Cholistan there is a trend that an old weaver who did not work more at handloom because of his age, he guides the younger and play the role of bridge between producers & sellers. Mostly in cloth weavers this is happening. According to our results which are shown in the graph-9

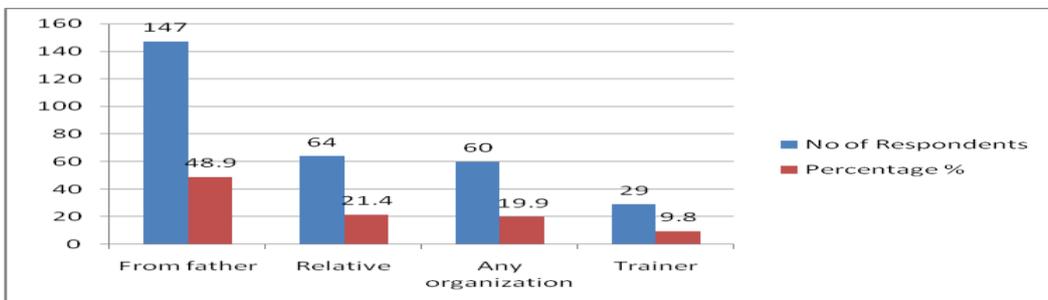
Graph-9: Distribution of the Respondents According to from where they arrange raw material (300)



Graph -9 shows that 52% weavers get raw material from their fathers. For carpet weaving, the Thakdar (Contractor) himself provide raw material to weavers so in our data 46% weavers get from middleman (Agent of Contractor). Remaining 2% weavers get material from any other source may be relatives or village fellows. These results are slightly supported by the results of Gandhi (2005) in which he explains that yarn and other raw material are provided by the master (may be Father or Thakedar) and weavers earn wages according to quantity produced.

2.6-From where you get information about raw material

Graph-10: Distribution of the Respondents According to from where they get information about raw material (300)

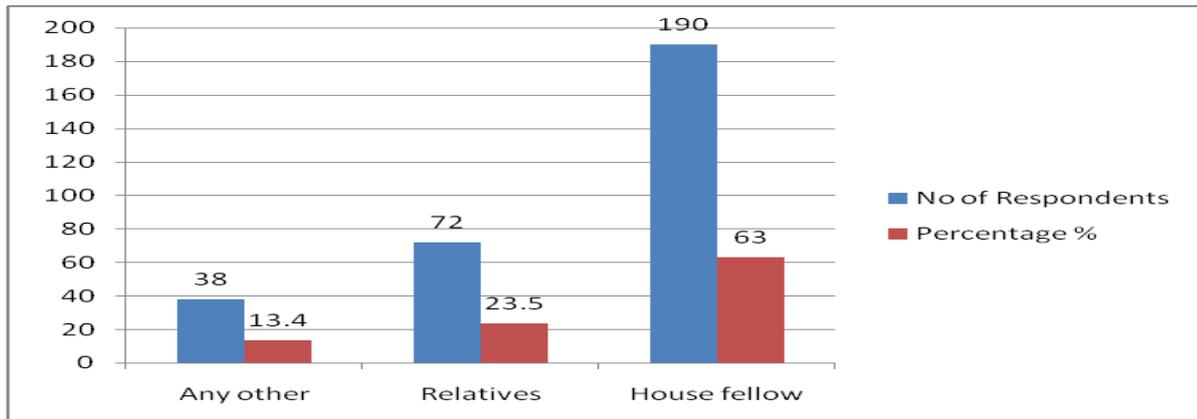


From the graph-10, it is very clear that the maximum (49%) weavers get information about raw material from their fathers, they recognized father as more reliable and unstable source of information. The remaining 21% get information through their relatives, 20% from any organization for which they work. These organizations also provide them raw material, design and other necessary information when they needed. And 10% says that they get information through their trainers (representative of organization). These results are agree with the results of Gandhi (2005) who wrote that 50% of the weavers of the Tamil Nadu state, cooperatives serve as a social assets in terms of helping in color scheme raw material and problems during weaving.

2.7- During weaving if you face shortage of raw material then who help you

As we discuss in earlier question we found that the cloth and phalasi weavers work at their houses and carpet weavers work outside the home so in cloth and phalsi weaving they solve their problem with in the house members and in carpet weavers they can solve by other master may be relatives or friends. These results are shown in graph-11.

Graph-11: Distribution of the Respondents According to during weaving if they face shortage of raw material then who help them (300)

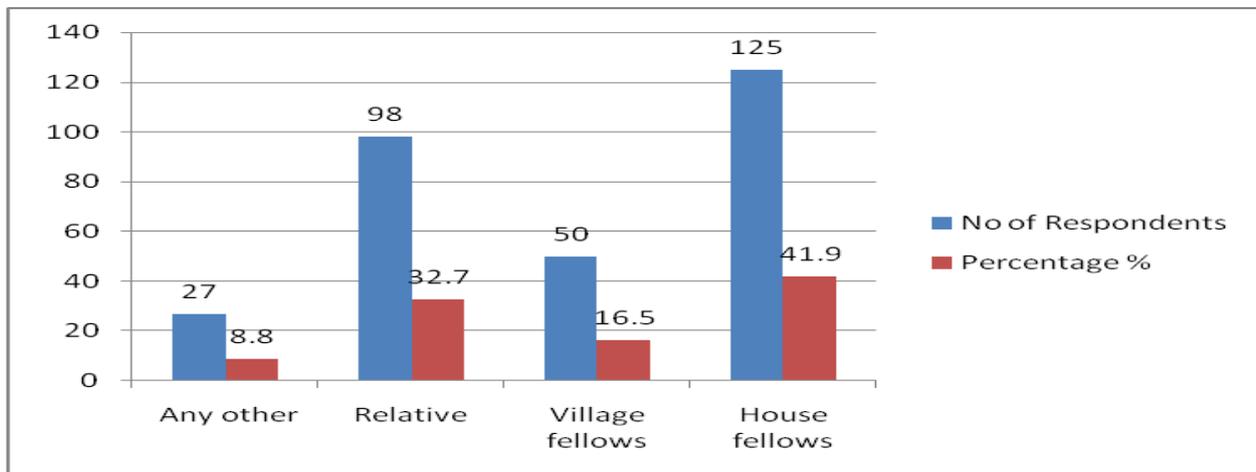


According to graph-11, 63% weavers overcome those problems by house fellows, 24% from relatives and only 13% from any other source. These results are agree with the results of Gandhi (2005) who wrote that 50% of the weavers of the TamilNadu state, cooperatives serve as a social assets in terms of helping in color scheme, raw material and problems during weaving. Roy (2004) also included that weaver worked from within a house hold unit.

2.8-If you face any problem in weaving who help you

Weaver’s communities have their houses at same locality, so that they can share their problems with one another. The data of the present research is shown in graph-12

Graph-12: Distribution of the Respondents According to if they face any problem in weaving who help them (300)

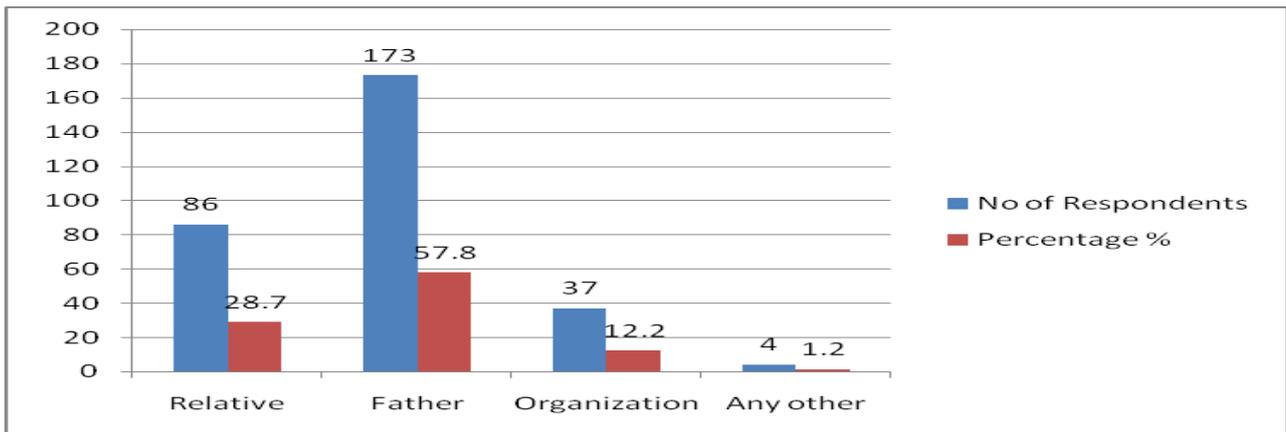


Graph-12 shows that maximum (42%) weavers overcome their problems during weaving by their house fellows, 33% from their relatives, while 16% from village fellows and only 9% says that they overcome their weaving related problems by any other way may be trainers, Thakedar, (Middlemen).These results are agree with the results of Gandhi (2005) who wrote that 50% of the weavers of the TamilNadu state, cooperatives serve as a social assets in terms of helping in color scheme , raw material and problems during weaving. And with the results of Roy (2004) studied that weaver worked from within a house hold unit.

2.9- From where you get information to sell your product

In Cholistan maximum of cloth and Phalasi weavers have their customers generation to generation, they get orders from them and prepare their orders. So in the response of the question from where you get information to sell your product the results are graph -13.

Graph-13: Distribution of the Respondents According to from where they get information to sell their product (300)



From our results in graph-13 maximum (58%) weavers get information from their fathers. When a weaver has enough orders he gives some partial orders to their relatives so 29% get orders from their relatives, while 12% from any organization and only 4% get through any other way. These results are similar to those of Gandhi (2005) who resulted that weavers are social assets, in terms of giving employments, ensuring a fixed wages, implementing government schemes.

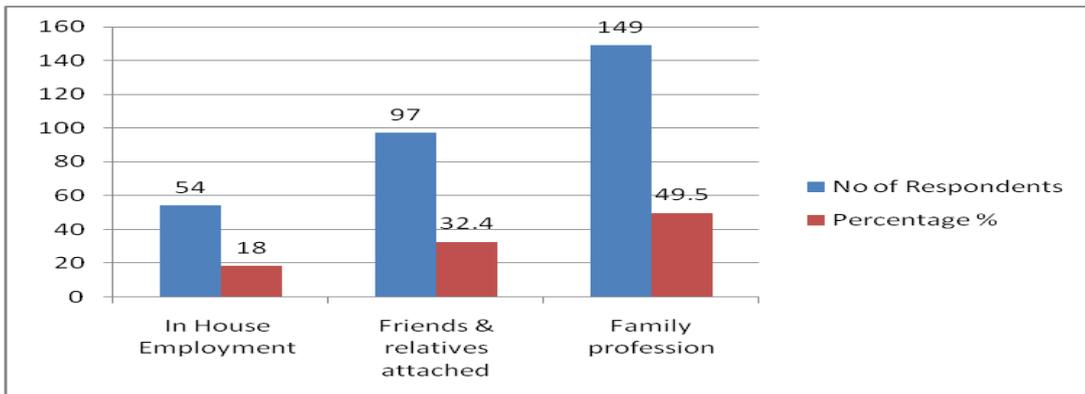
3 -Personal Preferences

The respondents were asked the relevant questions to obtain their responses, why did you prefer this profession? Did you want to continue this profession? Did you want your children should adopt this profession? Which type of handlooms you like and why did you prefer this profession? The responses thus obtained are in graph-14-21

3.1 Why did you prefer this profession?

When the researcher asked the question why they adopted this profession, the responses are shown graph-14.

Graph-14: Distribution of the Respondents According to why did they prefer this profession (300)

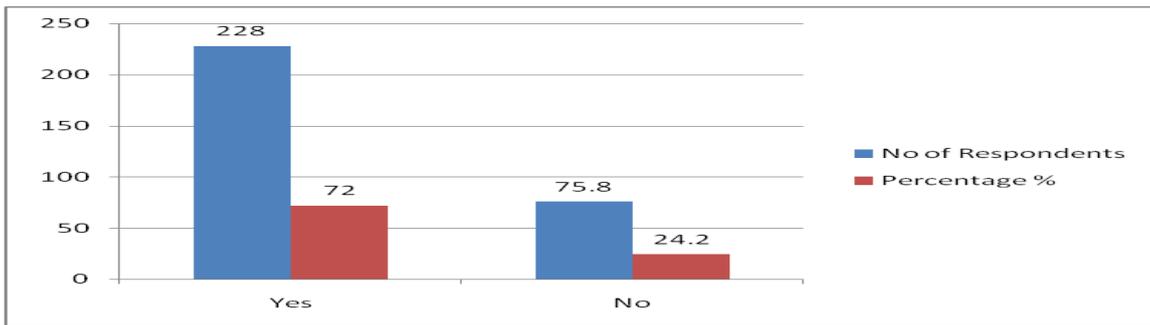


Graph-14 shows that maximum (50%) weaver’s claim that we prefer this profession because it is our way of life and family profession. Similarly nobody leaves his or her homeland in this case it is not easy for us to leave this profession. About 32% say that we prefer this profession because our friends and relatives are attached with this work. Another category (18%) says that they prefer this profession because i.e. provides home employment. The results of Gandhi (2005) are similar to our results, which shows’ weaving is a special skill, and weavers are living in specific places. It is traditional and usually handed down from parents to their wards. And also similar to those of Racine (1997) who should that weaving is a choice because of household occupation.

3.2-Did you want to continue this profession?

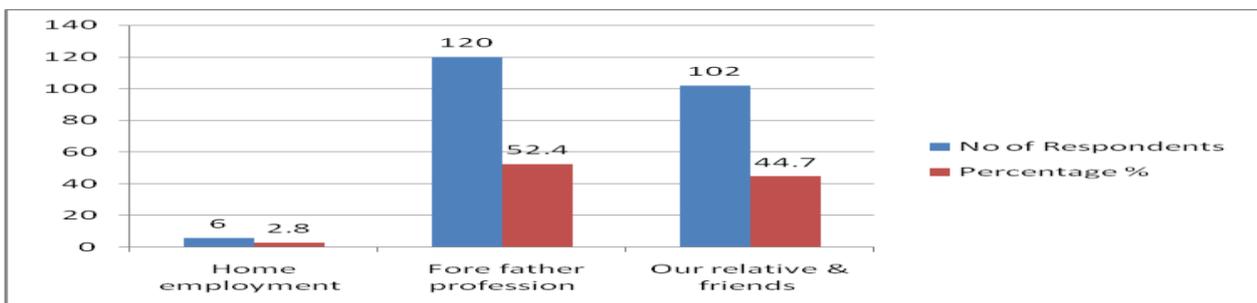
As mentioned earlier, they own this profession and this is why majority (76%) of the weavers say that they want to continue this profession. Remaining 24% replied that they did not want to continue this profession. This is shown in graph-15

Graph-15: Distribution of the Respondents According to did they want to continue this profession (300)



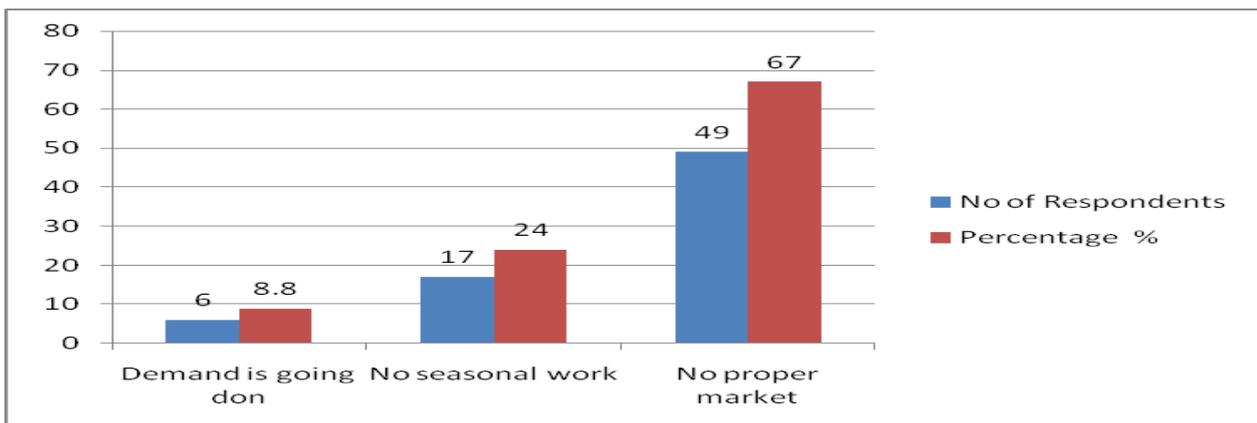
They respondents (228) who want to continue this profession were further asked to tell the reasons to continue this profession which are shown in graph-16.

Graph-16: Distribution of the Respondents According to reasons why did they want to continue this profession (228)



From graph-16 is clear that maximum (52%) weavers want to continue this profession as this is their forefather profession, while 45% says that their relatives and friends are attach this profession and only 3% says that this provide home employment. These results are supported by the results of Soumhya (2007) who reported that the choice of household based occupation-beedi rolling or mat weaving. It is dependent on the availability of equipment and someone (parents or a close relative) who can teach the requisite work to Younger’s especially females. The remaining (24%) who did not want to continue this profession they give the reasons which are shown in graph-17

Graph-17: Distribution of the Respondents According to why did they not prefer this profession (72)

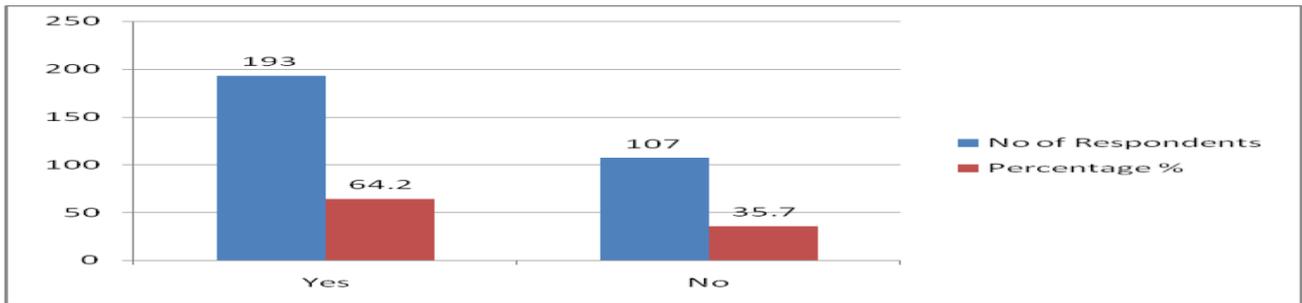


Graph-17 shows that majority of the respondent does not want to continue this profession, as they find it hard to find sustainable livelihood. Other 24% respondent indicated that this is just a seasonal profession and demand for these products is going down (9%).

3.3- Did you want your children should adopt this profession?

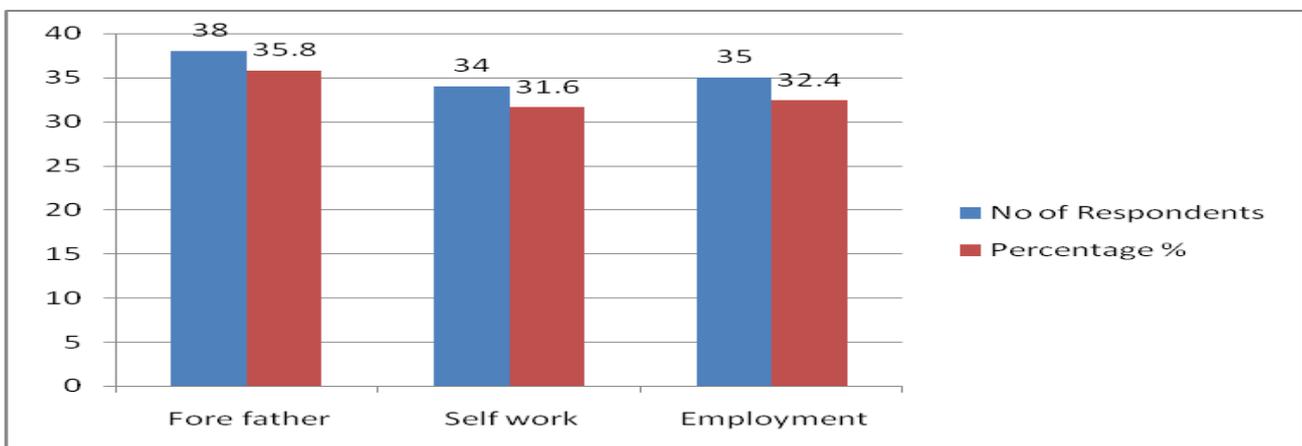
In this response that your children adopt this profession, the results are shown in graph-18

Graph-18: Distribution of the Respondents According to did they want that their children should adopt this profession (300)



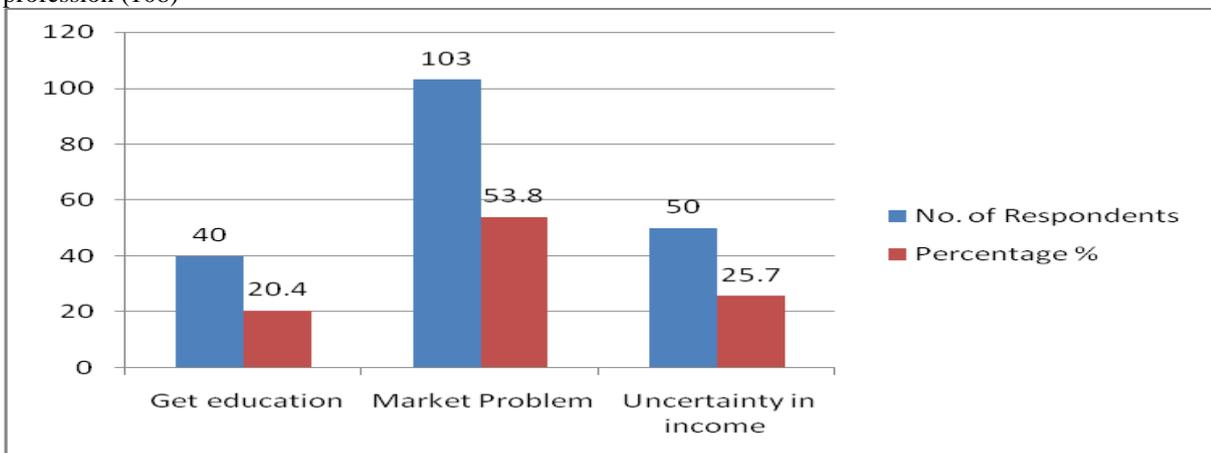
From the graph-18 it is clear that the majority (64%) of weavers responded that they want that their children should adopt this profession. While 36% of the respondents told that they did not want that their children should adopt this profession. 64% of the respondents who want that their children should adopt this profession further asked, why did their children adopt this profession, in this regards results are shown in graph-19

Graph-19: Distribution of the Respondents According to yes they want that their children should adopt this profession (192)



Graph -19 reveals that maximum weavers were of the view that their children should continue this as forefather profession (36%), self-work (32%) and as home employment (32%). They want that their young one remains in houses. These results are supported by the results of Soumhya (2007) who reported that the choice of household based occupation-beedi rolling or mat weaving. It is dependent on the availability of equipment and someone (parents or a close relative) who can teach the requisite work to Younger especially females. The 36% weavers told that they did not want that their children adopt this profession the justification of their answer is in graph-20

Graph-20: Distribution of the Respondents According to did they not want that their children should adopt this profession (108)

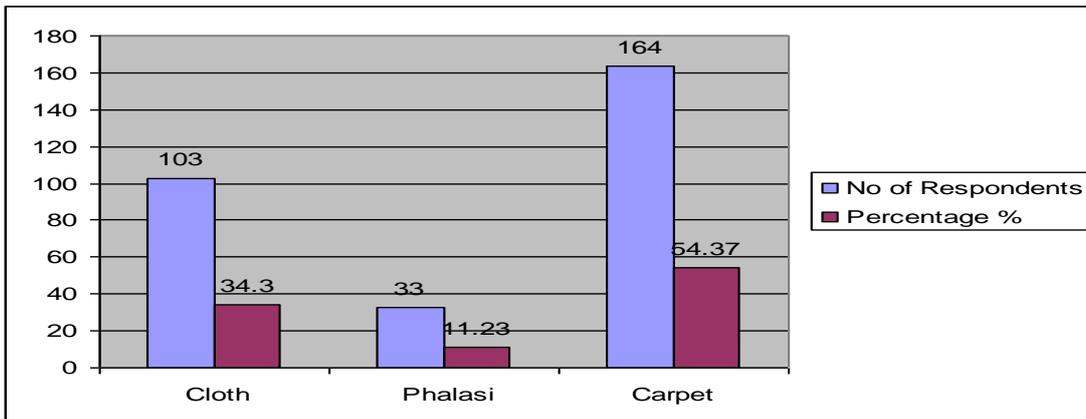


Graph-20 shows that 54% told that there is a market problem, no enough sales so that they can survive. 26% weavers answered that there is uncertainty in their income. So sometime they face serious problems and 20% weavers replied that they want that their children should get education and get respectful and reasonable jobs.

3.4-Which type of handlooms you like

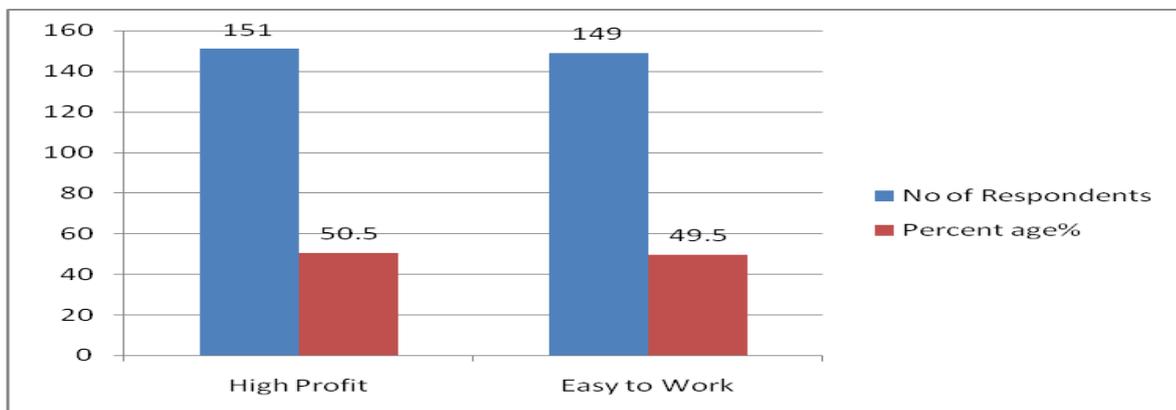
The responses from the respondents in this regard that which type of handloom they like are shown in graph-21

Graph-21: Distribution of the Respondents According to which type of handlooms they like (300)



From graph-21, it is clear that the majority (55%) of the respondent’s told that they like carpet weaving because of no investment, market is readily available, raw material and design is also supplied by master weaver (Thakedar) and to sale their product they did not have to go in the market. At home they can get money, material, and raw material. Around 34% weavers told that they like cloth weaving and only 11% weavers told that they like phalasi weaving. Further when the researcher asked them why did that type of handlooms they prefer. The responses of the weavers are shown in the graph-22.

Graph-22: Distribution of the Respondents According to why do them like that type of handloom (300)



Graph-22 reveals that 50% of the weavers told that they like because it gives high profit and remaining 50% responses that it is easy to work on it.

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