Working Conditions in the Unorganized Power-looms of Maharashtra

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Abstract: The unorganized power-looms are the second largest source of employment after agriculture. Maharashtra accounts for about sixty per cent of the total power-looms in the country. However, the working conditions in this sector are considered to be exploitative because workers in this industry suffer a variety of problems. Understanding the situation and issues related to power-loom workers these clusters of Maharashtra would provide insights into the industrial structure and exploitation of the labour. Various schemes of the Ministry of Textile for the welfare of power-loom workers and weavers and up-gradation of production process with modernization of industry have not yielded the desired outcomes. The lack of modernization of power-looms and absence of skilled labour force are the main barriers to compete in internal and external market. Illiteracy, communication barriers due to excessive reliance on Marathi language, ineffective trade unions, and lack of other options of job for workers result in their exploitation by the owners. Lack of marketing facilities and absence of market information allows middlemen to exploit weavers or power-loom owners. The present study highlights the need to pay attention to the improvement of standards and conditions of work in the power-looms for the long-run survival of this sector.

Keywords: Exploitation, Modernization, Skilled labour, Unorganized power-looms, Up-gradation, Welfare.

I. INTRODUCTION

The power-loom sector of Maharashtra has an important place in the Indian economy and occupies a leading position in the world textile exports. The power-loom industry of Maharashtra contributes to about fifty-seven per cent of the total power-loom cloth production in the country and sixty per cent of the country's total power-loom export earnings. Around forty-four lakh people are directly and indirectly depend for employmenton the power-looms of Maharashtra. It is the second largest employment provider after agriculture sector in the Mumbai and Pune divisions of Maharashtra. Readymade garments and home textile sectors are largely dependent on the power-loom sector to meet their fabric requirements. In 2011-12, approximately 5.20 lakh power-loom units were registered in India including approximately 2.87 lakhunits in Maharashtra. The power-loom sector in the country has registered employment of 57.46 lakh people of India which includes 29.43 lakh people of Maharashtra in 2011-12. There were approximately 27.01 lakh power-looms registered as on 31st October 2017. Of these, only 1.5 lakh are shuttle-less power-loom and remaining are obsolete and out-dated. The power-loom industries which are concentrated in clusters across Bhiwandi, Ichalkaranji, Malegaon, Nagpur, Sangli, and Solapur, among others, produced 37,445 million square metersoffabrics in 2011-12 and 38,038 million square meters in 2012-13 at an annual growth rate of about 1.5 per cent. The US and the EU markets account for about two-thirds of India's textile exports. During April 2017 to August 2017 India's power-loom production was 16,119 million square meters. Power-looms in Maharashtra recorded a higher growth rate than all-India until 2010-11. These unorganized power-looms avoid regulation of taxes and duties, licensing, factory acts and other labour laws. In most of the registered power-loom units many extra power-looms operate without permission, licenses and registration. Many power-loom workers are paid subsistence wages. Most of the power-looms are operated in tiny houses and crowded workshops in Maharashtra. Power-loom sector is highly competitive when compared to handloom sector. Its main challenges are out-dated technology, poor working conditions, and exploitation of labour and high cost of production. Lack of quality production on out-dated looms and asymmetric market information leads to exploitation of power-loom owners by the middlemen. The other problems of this sector include high cost of production because of high yarn prices and high charges of electricity which reduces their profit margin. While the needs of modernization call for huge investments, low profitability and formalities of financial institutions force them to continue production with out-dated power-looms. Lower price for their low quality product and high cost of production reduces profit margin of owners to adjust this

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and to earn basic minimum profit they exploit workers by forcing them to work hard at low wage rate under poor working conditions. Thus, the power-loom sector, in spite of its importance in the economy, faces a multitude of problems. The present article studies those related to the conditions of the workers employed in the power-loom sector and propose to provide some policy prescriptions to improve their living standards. Section two provides a review of literature. The third section states the key problems facing the power-loom units in the six clusters of Maharashtra. Sections four and five discuss the objectives of the study and the research method employed in the present study. Section VI provides the key findings and observations on the basis of the study. Sections seven and eight provide limitations of the study and recommendations. Section nine concludes.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thakor and others (2010) studies major issues facing by the decentralized power-loom sector by examining their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They point out that the power-loom industry in Maharashtra is suffering from lack of technology up-gradation, absence of trained work-force and scarcity of institutional finance. They show that there is an opportunity to make changes in the production pattern, design and product as per changing demands in domestic and international markets. They suggest need of modern technology in production to produce quality fabrics with low cost of production. There is also need of product diversification and up-gradation in production technology for power-loom clusters to survive and remain in complex internal and external competition for them. Therefore, for quality production, to face competitions successfully and profitable fabrication at low cost of production it is necessary to encourage power-loom sector for up-gradation and development of technology.

Anjum and Thakor (2011) study the conditions of power-loom workers and shows that terms and conditions of their work need to be update for their social welfare in Malegaon power-loom cluster. The study point out that main source of finance for the power-loom industry is self-finance. The majority of the weavers belongs to Muslim community and preferred to keep themselves away from taking loans at interest rate. Their religious Law not allows them to practice lending or borrowing on the basis of interest. They suggest in Malegaon power-loom cluster needs the modernization, up-gradation of plain power-looms, establishment of industrial estate and Textile Park marketing complexes, provision of processing facilities are needs to improve the marketing facilities and price realization.

Mote (2011) studies the industrial and occupation stress and its effect on health in power-loom weaving section with the experiment on a rat in the power-loom sector at Ichalkaranji. The study indicates that industrial stresses in the power-loom sector induce a fairly characteristic bilateral hyperplasia is the enlargement of an organ or tissue caused by an increase in the reproduction rate of its cells, frequently as an initial stage in the development of cancer. The study suggested there is urgent needs of modernization and use of advance power-looms in Ichalkaranji to avoid industrial and occupational stresses and their adverse effects on the health of workers. Because use of traditional or out-dated method and technology in the power-loom sector is responsible for the generation of industrial and occupational stresses among the workers. Flying cotton dust particle and continuous high frequency sound in the congested power-loom shed creates risk of these stresses among the workers to avoid or ignore them they directed towards addiction of alcohol and tobacco.

Dabade and others (2012) studies the marketing and financial problems of textile industry in Solapur. The study shows that Solapur power-loom units are facing the problem of high level of competition in the market because of the absence of marketing information and poor efforts made for sales promotion. According to the study many power-loom units are on the way of close down because of the lack of product diversity and increasing overhead expenditure. These power-loom units are not able to remain in global market and to survive in increasing competition in domestic market because of out-dated production technology and traditional products. Therefore suggests there is need of huge investment in modern technique of production and up-gradation of power-loom textile through the technology up-gradation fund scheme (TUFS).

Shaikh and Dulange (2013) study the factors affecting productivity of power-looms in Solapur power-loom cluster. The study observes that fluctuation in the price of yarn affects productivity of power-looms but this is external factor regulated by government. The study points out human factors and technological factors are the two most important factors affecting productivity of power-looms. Workers get satisfaction from job by getting appropriate wages, paid leaves, bonus and insurance for their work. But the power-loom workers of the Solapur are out-of-the-way from proper communication with owner's decision of plans and government schemes. They are just engaged in completion of their contractual work and subject to exploitation through getting low wages and absence of any kind of developmental and beneficial support to them. They also points out that attitude factors affect the job performance of workers. Therefore, they suggest the implementing motivational schemes for the workers helps to build confidence and belongingness among them and direct communication with workers regarding the strategic plans of work increases productivity of workers. There is need to provide training and well treatment to workers during working hours helps to improve their productivity workers and power-loom sector.

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Gangurde (2014) studies socio-economic conditions of workers in the Bhiwandi power-loom cluster of Thane district. He observes that in most of the power-looms workers, power-loom units, power-loom sheds and beams of yarn are running on the contract system. Most of power-looms are producing grey materials which are used for the suiting-shirting and as dress material. There are many government schemes operated for the welfare of power-loom workers but due to lack of knowledge and awareness about these schemes to workers they are not able to get benefits of schemes. Most of the power-loom workers are came from poor families with little or no land or have been landless laborers and combination of local and migrant workers. In these power-loom workers many of them are migrants and hence there is anger, apprehension and competition among the local workers and migrant workers. According to researcher the power-loom cluster gives income above the subsistent level to migrated workers which help them to maintain higher standard of living as compared to their native places. The power-loom workers face several injuries by machinery like dhota which is a speedily moving part of machine used for weaving thread. They sometimes experience electric shocks and accidentally cut on their fingers. The power-loom workers are observe to be addicted by tobacco, gutkha and liquor because of long and continuous working hours, late night shifts and poor working conditions as the nature of work creates physical and mental stress on them.

Joshi and Padole (2016) study the challenges and barriers in the growth of power-loom industry in Solapur power-loom cluster. They points out that power-loom owners suffering with marketing problem with monopoly of middlemen hence they have to implement new strategies for marketing and prevent exploitation from middlemen.

Amiri (2016) studies the problems being faced by small scale power-loom unit owners of Solapur, India. He points out problems related to production process are irregular supply of raw material. He examines the causes behind this irregular supply as low quantity order, frequently break down of machinery, obsolete plant and machinery, inadequate water supply and frequently power cuts. The study identifies the barriers for marketing of the output as absence of proper marketing strategy, high competition from Bangladesh, price fluctuations in the market, lack of market information and poor efforts put for promotion of the sales. He observes that lack of skilled labour, financial problems, lack of market information; unfavorable government policies and contender attitude of politicians towards power-loom sector are the causes of unfavorable market condition for power-loom production.

Kolgiri1 and Hiremath (2017) study on occupational health assessment of power-loom industry workers in Solapur. They observe that the general health of power-loom workers improved as they worked regularly. They shows that workers worked under exposed to higher levels of air pollution therefore most of them are suffered with asthmatic tendency and few are shown symptoms of chronic bronchitis. The study shows the incidence of chronic distress increases and the muscle tendency of those workers engaged in recurring painstaking work declines with increasing number of working years. The eyesight of most of the workers is weakening over a time in all locations and it is declining more rapidly for those engaged in certain tasks which requiring constant attention in the work. They points out that many workers have complaints regarding the body pain, uncomfortable, scratch, burn and hard skin, lung and eye problems, deafness, tiredness and sleeplessness, and stomach problems in which most of the workers have complained of muscle and body soreness. In these situations habits of smoking, chewing tobacco, drinking alcohol and taking in toxic materials creates worse problem for the worker. The study suggests possible solutions for justifying the problems that owners provide regular work with regular wages to the workers, avoiding intake of toxic substances, use of non-toxic materials, provision of proper and improved ventilation and lighting, compulsorily regular medical checkups, adequate rest periods, and rotation of the job.

III. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM FOR STUDY

The power-loom workers are the main source of attaining growth of the power-loom textile. The hard work of power-loom workers brings billions of dollars from foreign market but they get pitiful returns. Majority of the workers are forced to work in an unfriendly working environment which deprives them of their lawful dues. In the power-loom sector of Maharashtra, most of the workers face exploitation in the form of deprivation of the basic facilities, absence of protection measures, old age benefits or social security. The workers are paid very low wages for their long hours of hard work without any kind of incentives and extra benefits. The problem gets compounded with the power-loom unit owners saddled with out-dated technology, lack of fresh investment, high cost of raw materials and exploitation by middlemen. The issues of power-loom sector need immediate attention in order to provide better working conditions and to boost exports.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study proposed to examine the following issues:

i) Understand the working conditions of power-loom workers.
ii) Study the role of modernization in the power-loom sector to improve working conditions.
iii) Study the problems facing the power-loom workers and owners.

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iv) Identify the reasons behind the exploitation of workers and owners.

V. RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The present study employs random sampling survey and general observation methodsof research. A total of 845 workers employed in 270 power-loom units located in the six power-loom clusters of Maharashtra, namely, Bhiwandi, Ichalkaranji, Malegaon, Nagpur, Sangli and Solapur are interviewed in mid-May 2016. The study covers five year period of 2011-12 and 2015-16.These areas are selected for the research by taking in account the importance of these power-loom clusters in the India's textile exports and the economy of Maharashtra. Close ended and descriptive types of questions are used during the schedule of survey. This is supplemented by direct interviews and by general observations and discussions. The sample consists 210 workers from 60 power-loom units in Bhiwandi,140 workers from 48 power-loom units inIchalkaranji, 130 workers from 41 power-loom units in Malegaon, 110 workers from 36 power-loom units in Nagpur, 75 workers from 33 power-loom units in Sangli and 180 workers from 52 power-loom units in Solapur. The sample comprises of small scale to medium scale units. Geographical convenience in reaching the workers has been the main consideration in selecting the sample. Secondary data, to supplement the primary, are obtained from online annual reports of Ministry of Textile, India stat, district directory reports, local magazines and the Reports Power-loom Service Centers of the concerned clusters. The data are processed using Microsoft Office Word, Excel and online software. The study employs descriptive statistics and measures of description to draw inferences.

The purpose of studying these power-loom clusters is to understand the main problems of the workers and working conditions prevailing in the power-looms in these clusters. Level of technology employed in any power-loom is determined with the help of information obtained on acquisition of power-loom in terms of old, new, second hand or mixed type of looms. Distribution of capital accumulation is analyzed through the use of cumulative frequency and percentage methods. Issues related to workers welfare facilities are tested with the help of Chi-square test on the level of satisfaction of workers with the facilities available for them. Similarly workers satisfaction level on working conditions and health problems related to their work are analyzed using the Chi- square test to understand the poor working conditions and their adverse effects on health of power-loom workers. The prevailing wage rate among the power-loom workers represents low levels of income and exploitation of the workers. Observations and open-discussions with workers indicate that there is considerable political interference in production and marketing in the activities of these power-loom clusters. This is observed to have a direct bearing on the operations and welfare issues of the power-loom sector in Maharashtra.An examination of government policy documents and annual reports on decentralized power-loom sector helps to understand the various government schemes implemented for the power-loom sector and their impact. It is observed that most of these schemes are ineffective due to poor implementation and the bureaucratic indifference. Interestingly, the producers/loom-owners also express their inability to implement these schemes due to shortage of financial resources.

VI. KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Unorganized power-loom sector of Maharashtra is facing numerous problems. The performance of this industry has been affected adversely because of the use of obsolete technology, poor working environment, absence of implementation of business principles, exploitation, traditional method of marketing, lack of trained human resource, high cost of production with low quality inputs and outputs etc. The performance of the industry has established that the industry is adapting to the challenges of globalization and transforming itself into a modern industry.

Issue of out-dated technology operated in power-looms: At initial stage of introduction of power-loom technology in cloth production, many handloom weavers shifted to power-loom because of high speed production, quality production, time and energy saving method, use of electricity instead of manual energy and other benefits. But even after massive technological innovation and up-gradation take place in the world power-loom sector, in India and Maharashtra most of the power-loom owners preferred to use old power-looms. The power-loom workers working on out-dated machineries in the congested and less developed power-loom shed. These plain power-looms influence the productivity, profitability of power-looms and adversely affect working conditions of workers. The power-loom sector of India and Maharashtra is in need of adopting the advanced and more beneficial power-looms. However, this is precluded by the lack of adequate and cost-effective investment and inadequate finance due to the less supportive government policies. Semi-automatic and fully auto power-looms, if introduced will help to increase productivity speed of production and economies of scale. This will also improve the quality of production, variety of products and in competing successfully in internal and external markets. The improved performance will also help to ameliorate the standard of working conditions. The technology played a very vital role in increasing the productivity in Solapur power-loom cluster. This sector benefited from the government subsidies for technology up-gradation through various schemes such as TUFS because of the barriers of absence of availability of huge investment.

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Table 6.1:- Distribution of the power-loom units by the acquisition of power-looms in Maharashtra.

The Acquisition of Power-looms	Number of Observations	Cumulative Frequency	Distribution Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Old	133	133	49.26	49.26
Second Hand(Old)	35	168	12.96	62.22
Purchased New	21	189	7.78	70.00
Second Hand (New)	14	203	5.19	75.19
Mixed	67	270	24.81	100

Table 6.1 represents the data obtained from the field survey. Most of the power-loom weavers operate as family business with looms installed and operated for more than two generations.

Table 6.2:- Distribution of the power-loom units by the capital accumulation.

The Capital Accumulation	Number of Observations	Cumulative Frequency	Distribution Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Low	107	107	39.63	39.63
Medium	81	188	30.00	69.63
High	82	270	30.37	100

Table 6.2 shows that most of the power-loom units prefer to purchase second hand power-looms because of their cheaper prices. It shows that most of the power-loom units prefer to acquire old and second hand power-looms. This is because to purchase new power-looms huge capital outlay is required while the second hand power-looms are easily available at low investment. Therefore, they invest capital in the outdated and old power-loom machineries which leads to low capital accumulation. Low profit margin and income of power-loom owners is also one of the reasons behind it. The government scheme of technology up-gradation benefited the large scale power-loom units in capital formation while it is less effective in case of medium-sized units. This low level of capital accumulation in out-dated power-looms has adverse effects on working conditions.

Issue of poor working conditions: The power-loom workers are not able to get minimum basic welfare facilities from owners at work place. The power-loom workers are far away from social welfare facilities and working with low job satisfaction without any kind of job security. Moreover, the working conditions in the power-looms are totally ignoring environmental standards that absence of proper ventilation system, adequate lighting, washroom, drinking water, fire-fighting system, security means and emergency medical facilities. In Bhiwandi most of the workers are migrants and subject to ignorance about the local people and the different basic government welfare facilities. Power-loom owners ignore the safety and welfare of workers and due to absence of other job opportunities, workers continue to work in adverse conditions. It is also to be noted that the owners, even if desirous of introducing improved working conditions, cannot afford them at the existing profit margins. They themselves are on the verge of subsistence. Thus, it is to be noted that to some extent, the low profitability, adverse working conditions are inter-related. Together, they impact the production and profitability.

Table 6.3: -Satisfaction of workers with Welfare Facilities in the power-looms.

Satisfaction of Worker with Job	Satisfaction with Welfare Facilities.				
	Not at All Obs.	Somewhat Obs.	Significant Obs.	Fully Obs.	Total
Not at All	155	54	28	40	277
Somewhat	73	63	57	58	251
Significant	51	53	52	42	198
Fully	25	32	28	34	119
Total	304	202	165	174	845

(Obs.: Observations)

Here the critical value of chi-square statistic is 79.7772. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$ hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted that satisfaction of worker with job is dependent on satisfaction with welfare facilities available at work place. The survey data indicates that most of the power-looms are not providing welfare facilities in power-looms shed. The power-loom workers do not have access to the benefits of insurance facility, provident fund and sanitation facility. They do not have any first aid medical treatment during minor and major injuries and free regular medical check-up facilities. They also do not get benefits of training about modern technology and marketing skills to improve their knowledge and skill.

Table6.4: - Satisfaction of workers with working conditions.

Satisfaction of Worker with Job	Satisfaction with Working conditions.				
	Not at All Obs.	Somewhat Obs.	Significant Obs.	Fully Obs.	Total
Not at All	166	44	28	39	277
Somewhat	74	57	59	61	251
Significant	50	55	46	47	198
Fully	25	28	30	36	119
Total	315	184	163	183	845

Table 6.4 shows the value of chi-square statistic is 97.0889. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$ hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted that satisfaction of workers with job is dependent on satisfaction with working conditions at work place. It is observed that there is absence of proper working conditions for the workers in most of the power-loom units. The conditions of ventilation, lighting and working space are grossly inadequate. The power-loom machine are set up in such a manner that it causes over-crowding and very less space is available for the workers to work freely. Further, as these machines are generally outdated they cause sound pollution and release more dust which is harmful for the workers. The workers are made to work in spaces that are ill-constructed and unhygienic.

Health issues in the power-looms: The power-loom workers are suffered by physical injuries, health issues and works in poor working conditions due to the operation of out-dated plain power-looms. They live in disgracefully

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unhygienic and overcrowded conditions. Some of them live in power-loom shed and work too hard to have the basic facilities like water or sanitation. The dirty living conditions, with no proper toilets and open drains, make workers more exposed to several diseases, like malaria or cholera. The temperature in power-loom shed is around 45 degrees but none of the rooms have a fan or cooling facilities. In the power-loom sheds workers are not get nose-mouth mask to protect themselves from flying cotton dust, which is the main cause of never-ending diseases like asthma, blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, heart problems, hepatitis, respiratory issues, skin disease and tuberculosis. Also high and continuous noise pollution of power-looms has affected the normal power or strength of hearing of the workers. Among all these hazards, flying cotton dust particle and continuous high frequency sound in the congested power-loom shed creates risk of industrial and occupational stresses among the workers. Due to these stresses the power-loom workers addicted by alcohol and tobacco. The workers working in this industry are exposed dangerously to high levels of noise of looms which affect and stimulate the nervous system of the body.

Table 6.5: -Satisfaction of workers with Health Problems associated with working conditions.

Satisfaction of Worker with Job	Satisfaction with Health Problems.				
	Not at All	Somewhat	Significant	Fully	Total
	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	
Not at All	142	35	46	54	277
Somewhat	67	56	62	66	251
Significant	50	59	41	48	198
Fully	24	28	30	37	119
Total	283	178	179	205	845

Here the critical value of chi-square statistic is 67.3964. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$ hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted that satisfaction of workers with job is depends upon satisfaction with health issues related to work and working conditions. In the power-loom units workers are working under the risk of injury and continuous inhalation of cotton dust particle. Workers work under insufficient light with continuously high levels of noise from out-dated machineries which creates serious physical and psychological disorders among them which reduces their satisfaction from work.

Absence of labour Laws and factory Acts in the power-looms and exploitation: There is absence of factory acts and labour laws in the power-looms such as weekly holidays, causal leaves, medical leaves and earned leaves. Workers are keeping away from constitutional rights by avoiding to issue of appointment letter. The workers are exploited to work round the clock during peak days by the owners at low wage rates. In most of the power-looms workers are working on job work basis. Minimum wage rate limit and rules set by the government are not followed by the power-loom owners. Workers are getting low rates of wages for longer working hours and also not received any incentive for extra hours of work. The level of satisfaction with their wages is dependent on satisfaction from job. These workers are forced to work in two shifts at very low wages. Most of the times, workers do notgetpaid over-time payment for their extra hours work. In the organized sector like the car carpet manufacturing factory in Maharashtra workers get payment for over-time.

Table 6.6:- Distribution of the power-loom workers by the wages.

Distribution of Wages	Number of Observations	Cumulative Frequency	Distribution Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Up to 5000	164	164	19.41	19.41
5000-8000	270	434	31.95	51.36
8000-12000	312	746	36.92	88.28
12000-15000	58	804	06.86	95.14
Above 15000	41	845	04.86	100

Table 6.6 shows that most of these workers earn their wages by circumventing the labour regulations. Variation in the wages of the power-loom workers are based on the work or task they perform. Working hours, skill, efforts put by worker at the work place also play a major role in the earnings per month. This shows that on an average majority of the power-loom workers can be classified as being in the middle income level of lower income category.

Issue of high cost of production with low quality of inputs: Yarn, electricity, water and other raw materials are main inputs for the power-looms. The power-loom clusters of India and Maharashtra suffer from inadequate or interrupted supply of these essential inputs. In most of the clusters it is observed that electricity supply to power-loom units is marred by frequent power cuts and high per unit charges. Most of the power-loom industries in Bhiwandi, Ichalkaranji, Malegaon and Nagpur are located in the residential areas and this creates threat of diseases to the residents and increase in crimes. Absence of adequate electricity supply, theft and looting in the outskirts are the reasons for many power-loom owners to set up industry in the residential areas. A number of power-loom owners are observed to have become bankrupt due to excessive charges of electricity, labour wages and fluctuating yarn cost. Labour supply to this sector also not satisfactory there is frequently shortages of supply and unrest between owners and workers. Yarn is main raw material for cloth production price fluctuations due to demand and supply factors is compounded by the low quality of yarn.

Political and marketing issues in the power-looms: The power-loom owners are ignorant of the prices at which their output is sold by the middlemen who purchase from them. Majority of the units are not able to get feedback and knowledge about preference of consumers and actual needs of the market. Because they are not able to maintain direct contact with their end users to know their needs, likes and dislikes. Absence of proper marketing chain leads to market imperfections and unwanted production that adversely affects profitability of the power-loom sector. It is observed that the power-loom sector of India and Maharashtra also suffer from the political interference in production and marketing activities. Most of the workers from Maharashtra's power-loom clusters are not only exploited by their owners but also from local political parties. Decisions and supports of trade union of these workers are influenced by political interference.

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VII. LIMITATIONS

The research is restrictedto the different power-loom clusters of Maharashtra. The respondents had to rely on their memory and provide the information for the query put forward by the researcher. In the absence of any permanent records maintained by the workers, the data collected are subject to recall bias. Respondents encountered some difficulties to attend the interview and were reluctant in providing information. It is also observed that respondents found it difficult to manage time to participate in in–depth interviews. Respondent are apprehensive that the past interviews, many in number, never benefited them. Respondents are found not replying freely or not open-minded enough to answer the questions of researcher.The interviews were conducted with a lot of background noise and workers not being able to devote the time required due to their own work pressure. To this effect, we can say that more systematic interviews may provide a more detailed data set highlighting some of the problems that the workers in the six textile clusters of Maharashtra are facing.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above analysis of data relating to the working conditions in the power-loom clusters of Maharashtra, it can be seen that there is urgent need of improvement of working conditions in the power-looms with special focus on modernization. Positive response of stakeholders of this sector is required for effective implementation of government policy. It is observed that the government is active in policy-making to promote the power-loom sector of Maharashtra. The state government has been continuously evolving the policies for the growth and development of power-loom sector. Realizing that welfare of industry is inter-linked with workers as well as owners; the government is also operating various social welfare schemes for both of them. The government needs to work towards creating proper awareness among workers and owners about its policies and their implementation.Itneeds to endeavor to eliminate malpractices/leakagesin the implementation of these policies and schemes.

The following are the main recommendations of the present study:

1. Thegovernment needs to pay adequate attention for the proper implementation of labour laws and the Factory Acts in power-loom sector.
2. The government needs to ensure proper working conditions, designed to improve the efficiency and working conditionsof the workers in this sector.
3. The government needs to develop proper marketing chain for power-loom products. Remunerative prices to the owners will improve their economic position to implement the schemes such as wage regulations.
4. The government needs to ensure adequate supply of yarn of required quality at reasonable prices.
5. Government welfare programmesneed to be effectively implemented in terms of targets and coverage. This also calls for educating the workers as well as the owners.
6. Up-gradation of technology will also facilitate larger output at lesser costs.There is need to motivateboth the owners and workers to opt for technological modernization to improve their working and economic conditions.
7. Adequate institutional financial support needs to be provided to facilitate cost-effective modernization programme and quality improvements.

IX.CONCLUSIONS

Power-loom industry in the state of Maharashtra is suffering with different issues which affect the competitiveness and existence of this business. Lack of modernization reduces productivity, profitability of power-looms and adversely affects working conditions of workers.In most of the power-looms,working conditionsare poor. These are, the inadequate ventilation, lighting and working space. Improper working conditions are found toexpose workers to the risk of serious physical and psychological disorders. The power-loom machines are set up in over-crowding manners in power-loom units and therefore workers work invery less space between two machines.The power-loom workers does not have access of insurance, provident fund and sanitation facilities. They are not benefited with first aid medical treatment during injuries and free regular medical check-up facilities. There is absence of factory acts and labour laws related to refreshment of workers such as weekly holidays, causal leaves, medical leaves and earned leaves. Workers are keeping away from constitutional rights and exploited to workat low wage rates.The power-loom clusters suffer from inadequate or interrupted supply of yarn, electricity, water and other raw materials which areessential inputs. It is observed that the power-loom sector of India and Maharashtra also suffersfrom the political interference in production, electricity supply, trade union decisions and marketing activities. Lack of institutional finance, investment and government policy with political interferences keep this sector backward in technological up-gradation and modernization which resulted high cost of production, low productivity, low investment in modernization, low wages, poor working conditions, ignorance of laws and more exploitation.

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