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## Artisans' Attitude towards the Library and Information Centre : A Study in North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal, India

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### Abstract

Cottage industries, the ingredient of micro, small and medium enterprises play an important role in Indian economy. This sector is based on the efficiency of the artisans. But the industries can be developed if the artisans are aware of the latest development about the materials required for manufacturing the cottage goods. The library and information centre is one of the important sources that can contribute to the development of cottage industries. The present paper analyses the artisans' attitude and satisfaction about the services provided by the library and information centres. This study is based on survey method. After collecting data through questionnaires from 533 populations it has been analysed and interpreted. The study shows that the use of public libraries by the artisans depends on their standard of education. The present information system is not in a position to meet the information needs of the artisans. The work concludes that almost all the artisans need the industry information centre for the development of cottage industries.

**Keywords:** Cottage Industries, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Artisans, Cottage Goods, Library and Information Centres, Information System, Industry Information Centre, Public Libraries.

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### 1. Introduction

The cottage and small scale industries (now known as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) have emerged as a dynamic and vibrant sector of the Indian economy during plan periods. As cottage and small scale industries constitute an important part in the industrial sector in India the socio-economic transformation of country cannot be achieved without paying adequate attention to the

development of this sector. This sector can mobilize the inequality of the country's income by providing greater income opportunities to the women in the society. Women are engaged in various cottage industries to produce beautiful handmade products. They also utilize their loan taken from the microfinance institutions to start new business or to run existing business. They contribute to national income of the country and maintain a sustainable livelihood of the families and communities, throughout the world. But the success of cottage industries depends on the extent and proper utilization of the available resources. Library and information centre is one of the most important resources. The artisans/cottage workers need various information ranging from raw materials to such complex information as procedure for export of the products.

The development of cottage industries depends very much on the availability of current information regarding the raw materials, availability of loan, technical know-how, market trends, price level of the products, up to date knowledge about latest development in the industries, etc. This information is available in various government offices and other information sources but there is yet no current policy and effort to bring all together at one place so that the information could be disseminated to the people engaged in cottage industries as a sort of assistance to update their knowledge. The library and information centre can fulfill the needs of the cottage workers if proper policy is taken. The existing libraries and information centres are needed to organize in such a way that the artisans can be free to access to have their required information. The industry information centre is essential to fulfill the requirements of the workers. The present work evaluates the satisfaction level of the artisans at North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, India.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

Cottage workers or artisans use various sources of information to meet their information needs. Library and /or information centre is one of the important sources. The main objectives of the present study are as follow:

- i) To know the attitude of the artisans about the present level of information system;
- ii) To know the use of the public libraries for getting industry related information;
- iii) To evaluate the awareness of the artisans about the services provided by the public libraries;
- iv) To examine the artisans' opinion about the industry information centre.

## **3. Methodology**

The study is based on the survey, questionnaire and observation methods and confined to the cottage industries located at Barrackpore and Barasat Sub-divisions of North 24-Parganas District in West Bengal, India. Only the heads of the cottage industries have been considered in the present study. The structured questionnaires were given to 557 artisans, but finally 533 questionnaires were collected which shows 95% of the total population. After collecting questionnaires data were tabulated and analysed by applying various statistical tools.

#### 4. Analysis of Data and Findings

The distribution of the population in different industries is furnished in table-1. The maximum number of artisans belonged to the embroidery items (19.7%) which are followed by batiks (11.44%), jute (10.31%), soft toys (9.56%), earthen-ware (9.38%), conch shell (7.69%), bamboo & cane (6.19%), textile (5.44%), confectionery goods (4.87%), etc. These types of industries are included under village industries, handloom industry and various handicrafts industries producing varieties of cottage goods.

**Table 1: Distribution of the population by different cottage industries**

Name of the industry	No.	%	Name of the industry	No.	%
Embroidery	104	19.52	Silver filigree	17	3.19
Batik	61	11.44	Wooden	15	2.81
Jute Product	55	10.31	Handmade paper	10	1.87
Soft toys / dolls	51	9.56	Bee keeping	9	1.68
Earthen-Ware	50	9.38	Sital pati	7	1.31
Conch shell	41	7.69	Leather	7	1.31
Bamboo & Cane	34	6.38	Coir	6	1.12
Textile	29	5.44	Incense	6	1.12
Confectionery	26	4.87	Musical instrument	5	0.93

##### 4.1 Opinion of the artisans regarding the performance of the LIC

When asked how far did the libraries and / or information centres (LICs) meet their information needs, 18.38% of the total respondents told that LICs meet their information needs to some extent, 4.69% mentioned moderately, 0.56% of the respondents mentioned that LICs meet information needs highly and only 0.38% mentioned that they receive information fully from LICs for the development of the industries whereas 75.60% complained that LICs did not meet their information needs at all.

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents in regard to their opinion regarding the performance of the LIC to meet their information needs**

LIC meet the information needs	Total respondents	No. of respondents	% of total respondents
Low (25%)	533	98	18.38
Moderate (50%)	533	27	4.69
High (75%)	533	3	0.56
Fully (Almost 100%)	533	2	0.38
Not at all	533	403	75.60

##### 4.2 Use of Library or/and Information Centres (LICs)

In order to find out whether the respondents had ever utilized the services provided by the library or / and information centres (i.e. public libraries, community library-cum-information centres and information centres) the respondents were categorized into different standards of education. Table-3 shows that the use of public libraries, community library cum information centres and information centres are proportionately related to the standards of education of the respondents i.e.

as the rate of percentage of level of education increases, the use of LICs also increases. The standards of education were classified as illiterate, upto primary level (I-IV), high schooling (V-XII), graduate consisting of two years and three years (XIII-XIV/XV) and above graduate (>XV). So it establishes an opinion that the use of LICs depends upon the standard of education of the persons engaged in cottage industries. Most of the respondents showed their interest to use fiction books from the public libraries.

**Table 3: Distribution of the respondents in regard to utilization of services of LIC**

Standard of education (Class wise)	No. of respondents	Use of public library		Use of CLIC		Use of information centre	
			%		%		%
Illiterate (<I)	49	0	-	0	-	5	10.2
Up to Primary (I-VI)	117	2	1.7	3	2.56	19	16.24
Schooling (V-XII)	276	6	2.17	12	4.34	62	22.46
Graduate (XIII-XV)	83	11	13.25	7	8.43	49	59.03
Above Graduate (>XV)	8	3	37.50	2	25.0	6	75.0

**4.3. Use of Public Library for getting industry related information whenever required and reasons for Non-use**

Table-4 provides the number and percentage of the respondents who used the public library for getting information to solve their problem towards the industries whenever required and also showed the reasons for non-use. It was seen that only 1.68% of the respondents used the public library for getting industry related information whereas 98.31% did not use the library. When questions were asked about the reasons for non-use it was revealed that 11.44% of the respondents did not use this source as they already had the required information, 22.32% thought it would take too much time to get information from a library. Again 40.52% of the respondents replied that libraries would not have industry related information. However, 16.69% of the respondents showed their willingness if they would have time to use the library and 20.26% of the respondents had no formal association with the library and they were ignorant about the services provided by the library.

**Table 4: Distribution of the respondent in regard to use of the public library for solving industry related problem and the reasons for non-use**

Use of public library to solve the problem			Reason for non-use of public library	No.	%
	No.	%			
Yes	9	1.68	Get information from other sources	61	11.44
No	524	98.31	Think library would take too time	119	22.32
			Library would not have industry related information	216	40.52
			Have willingness but no time to use library	89	16.69
			Ignorant about the services of public libraries	108	20.26

The reason for assessing this test of the respondents was to determine the satisfaction about the public libraries in providing information related to their cottage industries.

#### ***4.4. Attitude towards the present level of information system in the State***

In order to determine the attitudes of the respondents in relation to their standards of education and the gender towards the present level of information systems in the state of West Bengal, the respondents were asked to give their opinion. Table-5 examines attitudes of the respondents in relation to their standards of education and gender. Here the relations of three variables are sort that the two sub-categories namely standards of education and attitudes are distributed in relation to gender.

The table shows that 33.6% of the respondents (50 respondents) had a strongly unfavourable attitude towards the present level of information systems in the State of West Bengal having standards of education class V to XII. This group constituted 66% males and 34% females. So a greater proportion of male than female respondents in the standards of education mentioned above held a strongly unfavourable attitude towards the satisfaction about the present level of information system.

Similarly, 16.7% of the respondents had a strongly unfavourable attitude between the standards of education XIII and XIV/XV that comprised 76.0% males and 24.0% females respondents. Here also a greater proportion of males holding a strongly unfavourable attitude than females' respondents between the level of education V and XII are found. So it is seen how 144 respondents holding a strongly unfavourable attitudes towards the satisfaction about the present level of information system in the State differ in terms of standards of education and gender from one another. Similarly, those who held other sub-category attitudes i.e. strongly favourable, favourable, unfavourable strongly unfavourable and uncertain attitudes differ in level of education and gender.

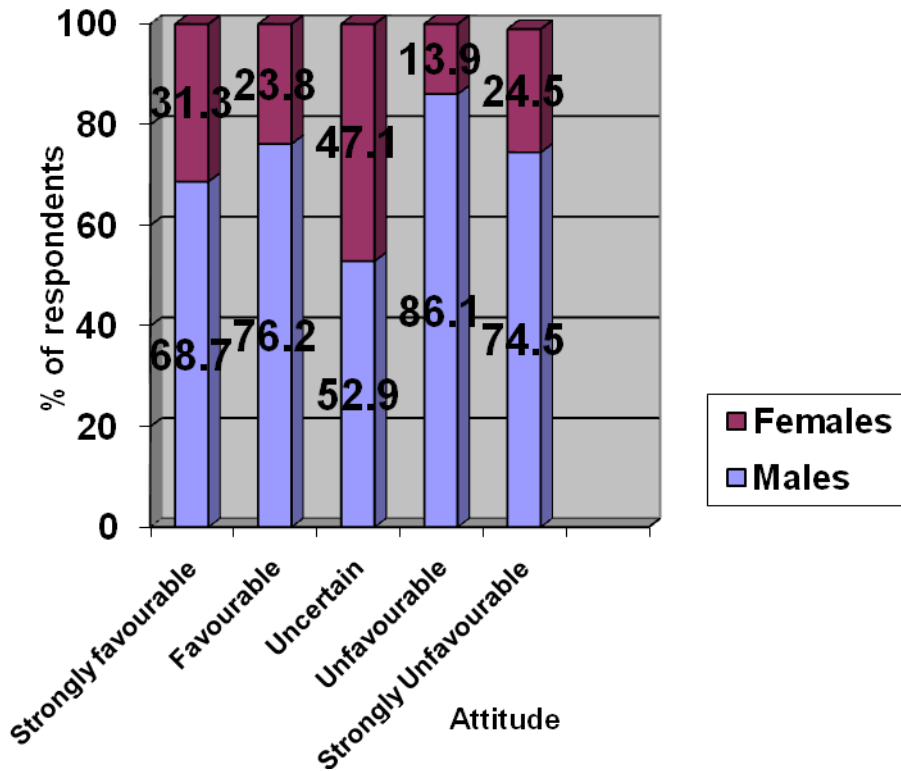
**Table 5: Distribution of the respondents in regard to attitude towards the present level of information system in the state by standard of education and gender**

Attitude towards the present information system	Number of respondents												
	Less than I		I – IV		V – XII		XIII – XV		>XV		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Strongly favourable	0	0	1	0	2	2	7	3	1	0	11	5	16
	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100)	(0.0)	(50)	(50)	(70)	(30)	(100)	(0.0)	(68.7)	(31.3)	(100)
Favourable	1	0	2	0	17	5	26	10	2	0	48	15	63
	(100)	(0.0)	(100)	(0.0)	(77.3)	(22.7)	(72)	(27)	(100)	(0.0)	(76.2)	(23.8)	(100)
Uncertain	3	2	2	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	9	8	17
	(60)	(40)	(28.6)	(71.4)	(93.3)	(6.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(52.9)	(47.1)	(100)
Unfavourable	12	7	56	4	169	26	9	3	2	0	248	40	288
	(63.1)	(36.9)	(93.3)	(6.7)	(86.7)	(13.3)	(75)	(25)	(100)	(0.0)	(86.1)	(13.9)	(100)
Strongly Unfavourable	15	9	41	6	33	17	19	6	3	0	111	38	149
	(62.5)	(37.9)	(87.2)	(12.8)	(66.0)	(34.0)	(76)	(24)	(100)	(0.0)	(74.5)	(24.5)	(100)
Total	31	18	102	15	225	51	61	22	8	0	427	106	533

Note: Figures in the parentheses are percentages.

Thus the table 5 shows that the artisans' level of satisfaction about the services provided by the public library / information centre is not encouragement. Only about 3% of the total respondents expressed their high satisfaction over the services rendered. However, these services are found to be satisfaction moderately (favourable attitude) by 11.82% of the total surveyed population. Remarkably, about 85% of the total respondents are not satisfied (either unfavourable or strongly unfavourable or uncertain attitudes) at all with these services. The attitudes of the respondents are also shown by 100 percent bar chart. Here the vertical axis shows the percent of the respondents of the attitudes and the horizontal axis shows the attitudinal scale.

**Fig.1 Attitude towards the present level of information system by gender**



**Attitudes**

Males	68.7	76.2	52.9	86.1	74.5
Female	31.3	23.8	47.1	13.9	24.5

**4.5. Need for Local Industry Information Centre (LIIC)**

Most of the respondents' attitudes were in favour of the necessity for a local industry information centre which would be responsible to look after the marketing and trading of different products and supply various types information like availability of government facilities and other relevant information related to the industries. Table 6 shows how the respondents' attitudes differ in age and gender. It is seen that of the respondents who held a strongly agree attitude towards the necessity of a local industry information centre, 68 respondents were of age group between 21 and 30. This group consisted of 72% males and 28% females which showed a greater proportion of male than female respondents in the age group 21-30 years held a strongly agree attitude towards the

necessity for establishment of a local industry information centre. Similarly, 94 respondents holding a strongly agree attitudes were in the age group 31-40 years which comprised 75 male and 19 female respondents, 72 respondents held a strongly agree attitude in the age between 41 and 50 years which comprised 64 male and 8 female respondents. Here in both these cases a greater proportion of males than females in the age group 31-40 years and 41-50 years respectively held a strongly agree attitude towards the necessity of a local industry information centre. So, this variable shows the variation of percentage in terms of age and gender among these respondents who held a strongly agree attitude towards the necessity of a local industry information centre. Similarly, for other sub-categories of attitudes, the respondents were obtained. So, 483 respondents out of 533 were either strongly agreed or agreed about the opinion that there is a necessity of a local industry information centre. This implies that about 90% of the total respondents thought that an industry information centre is essential in the locality for the development of cottage industries. The Table 6 is represented by 100 percent bar chart. The horizontal axis (X-axis) shows the attitude variables and the percentages of respondents are shown by the vertical axis (Y-axis).

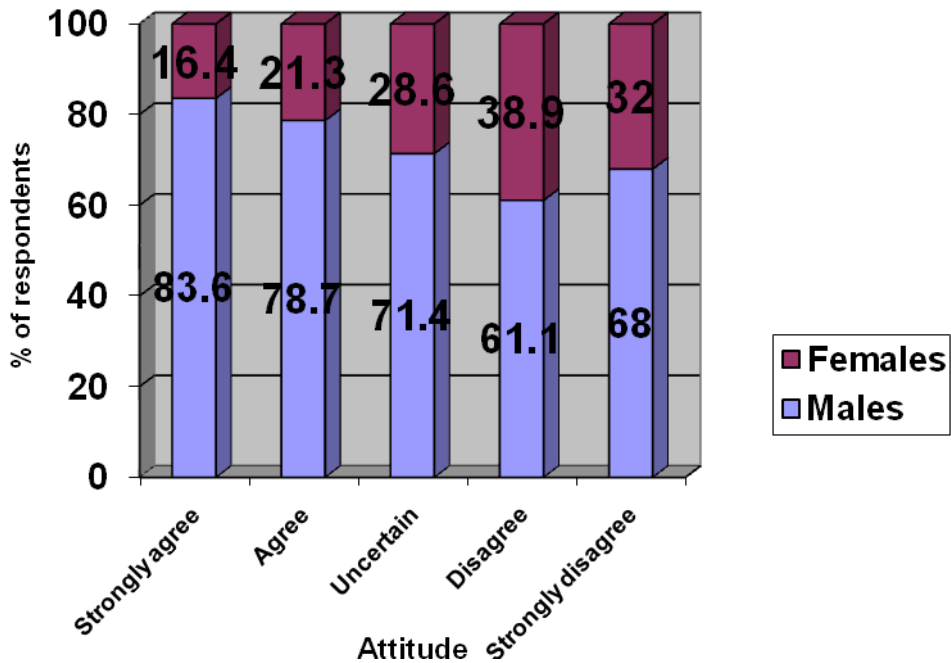
**Table 6: Distribution of the respondents by attitude towards the necessity of local industry information centre (LIIC) by age and gender**

Attitude towards the necessity of LIIC	Number of respondents												
	Less than 21		21 – 30		31 – 40		41 – 50		50+		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Strongly agree	18	0	49	19	75	19	64	8	29	0	235	46	281
	(100)	(0.0)	(72.0)	(28.0)	(79.8)	(20.2)	(88.9)	(11.1)	(100)	(0.0)	(83.6)	(16.4)	(100)
Agree	5	0	36	14	56	22	46	6	16	1	159	43	202
	(100)	(0.0)	(72.0)	(28.0)	(71.8)	(28.2)	(88.5)	(11.5)	(94.1)	(5.9)	(78.7)	(21.3)	(100)
Uncertain	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	5	2	7
	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100)	(0.0)	(33.3)	(66.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100)	(0.0)	(71.4)	(28.6)	(100)
Disagree	1	0	1	2	3	2	4	2	2	1	11	7	18
	(100)	(0.0)	(33.3)	(66.7)	(60)	(40)	(66.7)	(33.3)	(66.7)	(33.3)	(61.1)	(38.9)	(100)
Strongly Disagree	2	0	0	2	6	3	5	2	4	1	17	8	25
	(100)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100)	(66.7)	(33.3)	(71.4)	(28.6)	(80.0)	(20.0)	(68.0)	(32.0)	(100)
Total	26	0	88	37	141	48	119	18	53	3	427	106	=533

Note: Figures in the parentheses are percentages.



**Fig.2: Attitudes towards the local industry information centre by gender**



## 5. Findings

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of the data the following findings were obtained:

1. Public library is used by 4.13% of the respondents (22 artisans).
2. Library is used as an information source for getting industry related information by very small portion of the persons (1.68%).
3. Ninety eight respondents felt that the present services of library and/ or information centres meet about 25% of their information needs while twenty seven and three respondents felt that the activities of library and / or information centre are able to meet about 50% and 75% of their information needs respectively. Only two respondents felt that they get information completely from the LIC.
4. The utilization of services of the libraries, CLICs and information centres depend upon the standard of education of the people engaged in cottage industries. The influence of education on the

utilization of library and information centre is proportionately related which establishes a hypothesis that the persons engaged in cottage industries having more standard of education utilize more and more the services of LIC.

5. Nine artisans used public library for getting information whenever required to solve their problems related to the industries and five hundred twenty four persons did not use public library at all. The main reason for non-use was that they thought that the library would not be able to provide them the information they need in connection with their industries.

6. Most of the artisans (85.18%) were not satisfied about the present information system in the state. However, more than ninety percent(92.12%) of the artisans felt that there is a necessity to set up industry information centre in the locality to provide industry related information by linking with other industrial agencies.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Information Centre of the North 24 Parganas district acts as the basic information source to the people engaged in cottage industries. So this information centre in North 24 Parganas District can be regarded as the catalytic agent to cater to the information needs of the artisans. But the services provided by this centre in meeting the information needs are not up to satisfactory level. Ignorance about the services provided by the information centres and government officials in connection with the cottage industries is also an obstacle in meeting the information needs of the cottage workers in many cases.

If the artisans (i.e cottage workers) are adequately informed, their production will increase, marketing will hike and this will uplift the cottage and small scale industrial sector and subsequently the economy of our country. But the uses of public libraries and community library cum information centres are still meagre. Various journals and documents with information on foreign importers and exporters; names of highly demanded export items etc. are not available in the public libraries and the CLICs. The study, thus, demands us for improving the services of the existing public libraries of West Bengal by providing information needs to the local community including cottage industrial community.

In spite of all the good intentions of the government regarding the establishment of Community Library cum Information Centres (CLICs), a sizeable portion of artisans who are illiterate or semi-literate do not have access to these centres.

We can hope that the time will come when the industry information centres will be set up in every Block or Gram panchayat or Municipality and the CLICs will be established in all the villages even those without any public library and will reach all the cottage workers in solving their day to day problems by supplying required information. When such a time comes, the grass root level of our village and urban sector will attain such a financial solidity that on the foundation of that our nation's economy will be able to soar the heights.

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