



Sustaining Traditional Craft: Constraints Faced by Sital Pati Weavers in Dubapara, Goalpara District, Assam

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Abstract – Sital Pati weaving is a traditional handicraft of Assam, primarily concentrated in Goalpara district, and plays a significant role in sustaining rural livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage. Despite its socio-economic importance, the craft faces multiple challenges, including raw material scarcity, inadequate tools, limited market access, low income, and insufficient institutional support. This study aims to examine the constraints faced by Sital Pati weavers in Dubapara village and analyze their impact on livelihood sustainability. A descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 60 weavers using a structured questionnaire covering socio-economic profile, production and marketing constraints, institutional support, and perceptions of livelihood sustainability. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and cross-tabulation were used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that production and marketing constraints are highly prevalent, significantly affecting weavers' income and perception of livelihood sustainability. Institutional support, although limited, positively influences sustainability outcomes. The study confirms the hypothesis that higher production and marketing constraints are associated with lower livelihood sustainability, while greater support enhances resilience. The results underscore the need for targeted interventions, including improved access to raw materials, skill development programs, market linkages, and increased awareness of government schemes. The study contributes to understanding the socio-economic challenges of Sital Pati weavers and provides practical insights for policymakers, NGOs, and cooperative societies aiming to sustain traditional crafts and improve the well-being of rural artisans.

Keywords: Sital Pati, traditional craft, livelihood sustainability, production constraints, marketing challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional handicrafts hold immense cultural and economic value in India, particularly among artisanal communities that rely on indigenous skills for livelihood. Sital Pati weaving, one such craft primarily practiced in Assam, is known for producing finely woven mats from murta (*Schumannianthus dichotomus*), a natural plant found in the region's wetlands. This traditional craft not only represents cultural identity but also supports thousands of rural households through their artisanal skills (Sharma & Das, 2020). In Goalpara district, especially in Dubapara village, Sital Pati weaving continues to be a key profession passed down through generations, predominantly involving home-based women artisans (Baruah, 2022).

Despite its heritage value and market potential, the craft faces multiple challenges in the contemporary economic environment. Limited access to raw materials, low income returns, inadequate market linkage, and lack of government support have adversely affected Sital Pati weavers' quality of life (Borah, 2019). Additionally, competition from machine-made and synthetic alternatives has reduced the demand for traditional mats, leading to declining interest among younger generations toward weaving as a profession (Ali & Gogoi, 2021).

Sustaining this traditional craft requires a focused understanding of the difficulties experienced by artisans at the grassroots level. This study, therefore, aims to explore the major constraints faced by the Sital Pati weavers in Dubapara village of Goalpara district and analyze how

these challenges impact their livelihood, productivity, and continuation of the craft.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the socio-economic profile of Sital Pati weavers in Dubapara village, Goalpara district.
- To examine the major production and marketing constraints faced by the weavers.
- To analyze the role of government support and institutional assistance in the development of the weaving community.
- To assess the impact of these challenges on the livelihood sustainability of the artisans.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between production and marketing constraints and the livelihood sustainability of Sital Pati weavers in Dubapara village.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sital Pati weaving is a traditional craft intrinsic to Assam's cultural heritage, particularly in Goalpara district. Despite its socio-economic and cultural significance, the craft faces numerous challenges that threaten the livelihood of weavers and the sustainability of the profession. Constraints such as irregular availability of raw materials (murta plant), limited access to modern tools, low market demand, inadequate income, and lack of awareness about government schemes have compounded the difficulties faced by the weavers (Borah, 2019; Sharma & Das, 2020).



Moreover, competition from machine-made and synthetic mats has reduced the demand for handcrafted Sital Pati, discouraging younger generations from continuing the craft (Ali & Gogoi, 2021).

Given these challenges, there is a pressing need to examine the specific production, marketing, and institutional constraints faced by weavers in Dubapara village. Understanding these problems is crucial for proposing interventions that could enhance livelihood sustainability, preserve the traditional craft, and improve the socio-economic conditions of the weavers.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study holds significance on multiple fronts:

- **Academic Significance:** The study contributes to the limited literature on Sital Pati weaving, particularly focusing on Dubapara village. It provides empirical evidence on production and marketing constraints and links these to livelihood sustainability.
- **Practical Significance:** The findings can guide policymakers, government agencies, and NGOs in designing effective interventions for the Sital Pati weaving community. Suggested measures may include skill development, improved market access, financial support, and awareness programs.
- **Socio-Cultural Significance:** By documenting challenges faced by weavers, the study underscores the importance of sustaining traditional crafts as a cultural heritage. It also promotes recognition of the artisans' contribution to local identity and rural economy.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study is geographically limited to Dubapara village in Goalpara district, Assam.
- It focuses specifically on Sital Pati weavers, including both male and female artisans actively involved in production.
- The study examines socio-economic profile, production constraints, marketing challenges, institutional support, and perceptions of livelihood sustainability.
- Data is collected using a structured questionnaire and field observations, emphasizing qualitative and quantitative insights.
- The findings are intended to provide general insights applicable to similar weaving communities, although they may not be universally generalizable.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- **Sample Size Limitation:** Due to time and resource constraints, the study is limited to 60 respondents. A larger sample might provide more generalizable results.

- **Geographical Limitation:** Findings are specific to Dubapara village and may not reflect conditions in other weaving regions of Assam.
- **Dependence on Self-Reported Data:** Information about income, production, and market challenges relies on respondents' honesty and recall ability, which may introduce minor inaccuracies.

VII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sital Pati weaving, a traditional handicraft of Assam, has been studied by several researchers in terms of socio-economic significance, challenges, and sustainability. The craft, made from murta (*Schumannianthus dichotomus*), has long been a source of livelihood for rural households, particularly women, in Goalpara and adjoining districts (Sharma & Das, 2020).

1. Socio-Economic Profile of Weavers

Borah (2019) highlighted that Sital Pati weavers are mostly small-scale, home-based artisans whose income depends entirely on seasonal production and market demand. Women constitute a major portion of the workforce, often balancing household responsibilities with weaving. Ali and Gogoi (2021) emphasized that educational level, household size, and family support significantly influence the productivity and economic well-being of artisans. This indicates the need for understanding the socio-economic characteristics of weavers to design effective interventions.

2. Production Constraints

Several studies have pointed out that the availability of raw materials is a primary challenge for Sital Pati weavers. Sharma and Das (2020) note that the murta plant is seasonal and susceptible to environmental changes, leading to irregular supply. Additionally, the lack of modern tools, physical strain due to manual weaving, and limited technical knowledge impede production efficiency (Baruah, 2022). These findings directly relate to the objective of identifying production constraints in the current study.

3. Marketing and Economic Challenges

Marketing issues constitute another major barrier for Sital Pati artisans. Borah (2019) reported that middlemen dominate the sale of products, often giving low prices that do not reflect the labor-intensive production process. Ali and Gogoi (2021) further highlighted competition from machine-made mats and synthetic alternatives as a factor reducing the market value of traditional mats. The inadequate knowledge of market trends and digital marketing opportunities also restricts the artisans' income potential. These insights support the second and third objectives of examining marketing constraints and livelihood impacts.



4. Government and Institutional Support

While some government schemes exist for handloom and handicraft development, awareness and access remain limited. Baruah (2022) observed that many artisans are unaware of training programs, subsidies, or financial support available for skill enhancement and market linkage. Even when support is provided, logistical difficulties and bureaucratic hurdles often reduce its effectiveness. This aligns with the study's objective of analyzing institutional assistance and its influence on weavers' livelihoods.

5. Sustainability of Livelihood

The sustainability of Sital Pati weaving is increasingly threatened by declining interest among younger generations, low profitability, and insufficient institutional support (Sharma & Das, 2020). Borah (2019) and Ali & Gogoi (2021) both concluded that unless structural interventions are introduced, the craft may face gradual decline. This body of literature underpins the study's hypothesis that production and marketing constraints significantly affect livelihood sustainability.

The literature highlights a clear relationship between socio-economic factors, production and marketing constraints, institutional support, and the sustainability of Sital Pati weaving. However, most studies focus on general handicraft challenges in Assam, with limited research specifically on Dubapara village. This study fills this gap by providing a detailed analysis of local constraints, weaving practices, and livelihood outcomes, thereby contributing both empirical and contextual insights.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design, aiming to identify and analyze the constraints faced by Sital Pati weavers in Dubapara village, Goalpara district, Assam. A descriptive design is suitable for this research as it allows systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of data regarding the socio-economic profile, production and marketing challenges, institutional support, and perceptions of livelihood sustainability among the weavers.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of all Sital Pati weavers residing in Dubapara village, Goalpara district. According to local cooperative records and field reports, the village has approximately 350 weaving households engaged in Sital Pati production.

A sample of 60 weavers was selected using purposive sampling to ensure that respondents had sufficient experience in weaving (minimum 3 years) and represented different socio-economic backgrounds. This sample size

provides a balance between manageability and reliability for descriptive analysis.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was adopted because the study focuses specifically on practicing Sital Pati weavers who can provide reliable information on the problems and constraints related to their craft. This method ensures that the selected respondents are directly involved in weaving and are knowledgeable about the production, marketing, and sustainability issues.

Data Collection Tools

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of five sections:

- Socio-economic profile of weavers
- Production constraints
- Marketing and economic constraints
- Institutional and government support
- Perception of livelihood sustainability

The questionnaire includes close-ended, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

Secondary data was gathered from government reports, published research articles, books, and local cooperative records related to Sital Pati weaving and handicraft industries in Assam.

Data Collection Procedure

- Field visits were conducted to Dubapara village to personally administer the questionnaire.
- Respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation.
- For literate respondents, questionnaires were self-administered; for those with limited literacy, face-to-face interviews were conducted.
- Observational notes on the weaving process, tools, and working conditions were also recorded to supplement the questionnaire data.

Data Analysis

- Quantitative data from close-ended questions was coded and entered into Microsoft Excel.
- Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) was used to summarize socio-economic data and constraints faced by weavers.
- Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, was applied to test the hypothesis.
- Qualitative data from open-ended questions and observations was analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.



IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The study included 60 Sital Pati weavers from Dubapara village, Goalpara district. The respondents' ages ranged from 25 to 55 years, with a mean of 39.5 years (SD = 7.5). Female weavers constituted a majority (65%), reflecting the traditional role of women in the craft. Education levels were generally low, with 55% having only primary or secondary education, highlighting limited formal skills beyond weaving. The average monthly income from weaving was ₹6,200 (SD = 1,200), indicating a moderate but unstable source of livelihood.

Interpretation: These results confirm earlier findings by Borah (2019) and Sharma & Das (2020), which emphasized that Sital Pati weaving is predominantly a home-based, women-led activity with low economic returns and limited educational support.

2. Production Constraints

Respondents reported significant production constraints. Raw material availability had a mean score of 4.0 (SD = 0.8) on a 5-point scale. Physical strain and tool inadequacy were also commonly reported issues.

Interpretation: These findings indicate that irregular supply of murta and outdated weaving tools directly affect productivity. This aligns with Sharma & Das (2020), who noted that environmental factors and lack of modern equipment limit efficiency in traditional weaving practices.

3. Marketing and Economic Constraints

Marketing constraints were prominent among respondents, with a mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.7). Major issues included- Dependence on middlemen, Low prices offered for handcrafted mats, Competition from machine-made and synthetic products Interpretation: These results support Borah (2019) and Ali & Gogoi (2021), showing that market inefficiencies and competition reduce the profitability of Sital Pati weaving, discouraging younger generations from continuing the craft.

4. Institutional Support

The mean score for institutional support was 2.3 (SD = 0.9), indicating limited awareness and access to government or NGO assistance. Cross-tabulation revealed that respondents with higher institutional support reported higher livelihood sustainability:

Institutional Support	Low Sustainability (≤3)	High Sustainability (>3)	Total
Low (1-2)	25	5	30
Medium (3)	12	8	20

High (4-5)	3	7	10
Total	40	20	60

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Interpretation: These findings indicate that support from government schemes or cooperatives can improve income stability and craft sustainability.

5. Livelihood Sustainability

The perception of livelihood sustainability had a mean of 3.0 (SD = 0.8), suggesting moderate sustainability among weavers. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships:

Variables	Correlation with Livelihood Sustainability (r)	p-value
Raw Material Constraint	-0.62	<0.01
Marketing Constraint	-0.58	<0.01
Institutional Support	0.41	<0.05

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Interpretation:

- Higher production and marketing constraints are associated with lower livelihood sustainability, supporting the study's hypothesis.
- Greater institutional support is positively correlated with sustainable livelihoods, indicating that interventions and training programs can help mitigate challenges.

X. DISCUSSION

The results of this study underscore that Sital Pati weaving faces multiple structural and economic challenges. Production issues, particularly raw material scarcity, and marketing limitations, including low income and lack of market access, are the primary barriers to livelihood sustainability. The limited reach of institutional support further exacerbates the problem.

These findings align with previous studies (Borah, 2019; Sharma & Das, 2020; Ali & Gogoi, 2021) and confirm that interventions aimed at improving raw material access, providing technical training, facilitating market linkages, and increasing government support are crucial for sustaining the craft. The study also highlights the importance of targeted policies and awareness programs to encourage younger generations to continue this traditional profession.



Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Improve Raw Material Supply:** Establish local nurseries or cooperatives to ensure consistent availability of murta plants.
- **Enhance Market Linkages:** Facilitate direct access to local and regional markets, reducing dependence on middlemen.
- **Skill Development and Training:** Provide workshops on advanced weaving techniques, quality enhancement, and design innovation.
- **Financial and Institutional Support:** Increase awareness and accessibility of government schemes, subsidies, and cooperative programs.
- **Promote Digital Marketing:** Encourage weavers to use e-commerce platforms to reach broader customer bases and improve profitability.
- **Preserve Cultural Heritage:** Initiate community-based programs to motivate younger generations to continue weaving, thereby sustaining the craft.

XI. CONCLUSION

The study highlights that Sital Pati weaving, though culturally and economically significant, faces serious constraints that threaten both artisans' livelihoods and the sustainability of the craft. Production challenges, such as irregular raw material availability and outdated tools, and marketing difficulties, including low income and limited market access, are the primary barriers affecting weavers in Dubapara village. The research also confirms that institutional support positively influences livelihood sustainability, though such assistance remains inadequate. Addressing these constraints is crucial not only for the economic well-being of artisans but also for preserving Assam's traditional heritage. Without targeted interventions, the craft risks decline, and younger generations may abandon this profession, further endangering cultural continuity.

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