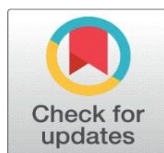


CANE AND BAMBOO CRAFT AND WOMEN'S SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT: EVIDENCE FROM RANCHI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose:

The paper explores the effect of cane and bamboo craft activities participation to various types of social empowerment in women artisans in the Ranchi district in relation to household decision-making participation, freedom of movement, as well as the decrease in domestic violence.

Methodology:

The structured questionnaire that employed Likert-scale based questions was used to collect primary data on 440 women artisans. The use of ordinal logistic regression estimation was to determine the effects of financial contribution and occupational involvement on the outcome of empowerment.

Findings:

The results indicate that when women are financially empowered by contributing to the household, they have more chances of being involved in household decision making. Although with a low explanatory power, occupational engagement has a statistically significant positive impact on the freedom of movement. It was also found that there was a strong relationship between occupational involvement by women and reduction in incidences of domestic violence. In general, participation in cane and bamboo craft has a positive impact on some of the chosen aspects of social empowerment.

Originality:

This paper gives empirical data on the effect of engagement in cane and bamboo craft on various levels of social empowerment among the women artisans. It contributes to the scanty studies existing on the interaction between conventional handicraft job and quantifiable social empowerment outcomes in a regional setting.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Cane and Bamboo Craft, Women Artisans, Handicraft Livelihoods, Household Decision-Making, Domestic Violence, Rural Women

1. INTRODUCTION

The handicraft industry is among the most culturally important and economically important industries in India that has a diverse set of crafts that showcase the artistic heritage of the country and the local diversity [Datta and Bhattacharyya \(2016\)](#). The industry is based on traditions that date back several centuries and has around seven million

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craftsmen as well as it is one of the biggest unorganized industries in the country [U. S. Yadav et al. \(2023\)](#). This workforce is composed of women who make up a significant percentage and have been involved in various fields of work such as weaving, embroidery, bamboo work, ceramics and metalwork which have cultural and economic value [Bano et al. \(2021\)](#).

Empowerment of women has become one of the key messages in the development discourse of the present time, especially in terms of gender equality and inclusive development [Kabeer et al. \(2012\)](#). The structural inequalities in the household and society remain a factor of constrained involvement of women in decision-making in developing countries like India and subject women to multiple types of domestic vulnerabilities [Mehra et al. \(2023\)](#). Social empowerment thus is not confined to economic independence but includes agency, autonomy and control over issues that influence the lives of women on a day to day basis [Deshmukh et al. \(2024\)](#). Some of the important indicators are: being involved in making decisions in the household, the freedom of movement and being free of domestic violence.

One of the traditional livelihood activities, cane and bamboo craft has become a major source of income in the rural Jharkhand. This industry can save the indigenous knowledge and enable women to have flexible job options to balance between productive and housekeeping jobs [Vyawahare and Centre for Civil Society \(2009\)](#). However, although the economic role of such industries cannot be underestimated, at the regional level, the impact of these types of industries on the outcomes of social empowerment is not empirically studied. There is a glaring gap in existing literature on craft-based occupational engagement as pathway to social change because most of the literature is about microfinance or self-help groups [Yang et al. \(2018\)](#).

This gap is addressed in the current paper by discussing the impact of involvement in cane and bamboo craft on three aspects of social empowerment amongst 440 women artisans in the Ranchi district: (i) household decision making participation, (ii) freedom of movement and (iii) decreasing domestic violence. Through Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR), the paper aims at giving empirical evidence on whether the involvement in craft-based livelihood can help to empower the social status of women.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Empowerment of women is a well-known multidimensional process which improves the capacity of women to make strategic life decisions, to have control over resources and decisions that impact on their lives [Bayeh \(2016\)](#). Social empowerment refers to involvement in decision-making, freedom of movement, independence and freedom of domestic violence which represent the changes in the power relations both at family and community levels [Kabeer \(2005\)](#). Empowerment can be viewed as a progressive process that is mediated through access to resources, agency and empowering structural environments [Kabeer \(1999\)](#).

This study has a theoretical framework base on the Household Bargaining Theory. It assumes that family relations are affected by the economic role of each member in the family whereby when women earn money; they become better bargainers which increases their control in decision making and decreases their economic dependence [Agarwal \(1997\)](#). The Capability Approach which was originated by Sen and applied to gender by [Walker and Unterhalter \(2007\)](#) also highlights the fact that empowerment revolves around the increase of freedoms; mobility, free participation in society and free living without fear of violence as opposed to generation of income.

Through empirical studies, it has been validated that income generating activities have a positive impact on the decision-making process among women [Haley and Marsh \(2021\)](#). The level of occupational engagement is also associated with enhanced mobility and interaction with the market albeit mediated by the cultural norms [Alhawsawi and Jawhar \(2023\)](#). In India, research indicates that the contribution of finances boosts the intra-household bargaining power and recognition [Deshmukh et al. \(2025\)](#). Concerning Jharkhand in particular, [Kumar \(2024\)](#) points out that the sector of handicraft is not fully employed because of the limited opportunities to access the market and insufficient support of policies, and [Singh et al. \(2025\)](#) refer to the duality of the role of artisans in the world of household economics and cultural preservation. [Shahzad et al. \(2025\)](#) also report the involvement of social capital in empowering rural artisans to be entrepreneurs. There is still a significant gap: little quantitative studies on the effects of traditional craft engagement on easily quantifiable indicators of social empowerment, especially domestic violence, exist [Duflo \(2012\)](#), [Das \(2017\)](#).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS, AND HYPOTHESES

The objectives of the study are: (i) to determine the level of household decision making among women artisans; (ii) to determine the level of freedom of movement as a relative to occupational engagement; (iii) determine whether craft engagement decreases domestic violence and (iv) determine the overall impact of craft participation on the chosen social empowerment dimensions.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How much do women artisans engage in household decision making, such as household management, family planning, children welfare and personal issues? RQ2: To what degree do women artisans enjoy freedom of movement in relation to their occupational engagement, particularly in business activities, household responsibilities, and social interactions with friends and relatives? RQ3: Does work in cane and bamboo craft result in a decrease in domestic violence? RQ4: Does craft engagement play an important overall role in chosen dimensions of social empowerment?

3.2. HYPOTHESES

H 0: Financial contribution does not predict decision making participation (H 11: It does). H 02: Occupational engagement is not significantly related to freedom of movement (H 02: It is). H0: Occupational engagement is not significantly related to decrease in domestic violence (H 13: It is).

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

This paper uses descriptive and analytical research design to examine the level of social empowerment of women artisans in rural clusters of the Ranchi district in Jharkhand. The sample size of 440 respondents was chosen through purposive sampling method who have a minimum of one year experience in the production of cane and bamboo craft. Structured interviews with a questionnaire having Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were used to collect primary data based on three dimensions: decision-making (household, family planning, and children welfare, personal), freedom of movement (business, household, social) and reduction in domestic violence.

Each dimension of empowerment was then made into composite indices, which were divided into ordinal levels (low, moderate, high). The independent variables were the financial contribution (monthly income) and the occupational engagement (years of craft experience). The SPSS was used to process the data, and Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR) was used to assess the impact of these predictors on the results of empowerment. The test of statistical significance was at level 5% (0.05). To investigate the model validity, Goodness-of-Fit tests (Pearson and Deviance statistics) and Parallel Lines test were used to test the proportional odds assumption.

5. RESULTS AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The Ordinal Logistic Regression analysis of three dimension of empowerment shows that social empowerment among women artisans is statistically significant as affected by craft participation. Monetary donation was also a strong predictor of the influence of decisions, whereas occupational engagement did not have a significant but a positive effect on the freedom of movement. The domestic violence model showed the most explanatory power, which showed the existence of a significant negative correlation between the engagement in craft and the exposure to violence. All the three models passed the proportional odds test and OLR was the correct method to analyze.

5.1. DECISION-MAKING PARTICIPATION

The last model showed a strong improvement on the intercept-only model, and the -2 Log Likelihood decreased to 26.643 (Chi-Square = 248.702, df = 1, p < .001) (See [Table 1](#)). This proves that financial contribution plays a significant role in predicting the decision-making participation, which results in rejecting H 0. The Goodness-of-Fit statistics (Pearson $\chi^2 = 4.352$, p = .298; Deviance $\chi^2 = 5.652$, p = .442) confirmed adequate model fit. The findings show a statistically significant and fitting decision making model. In [Table 2](#), both Pearson ($\chi^2 = 4.352$, p = .298) and Deviance

($\chi^2 = 5.652$, $p = .442$) tests are non-significant, confirming good model fit. Table 3 shows a moderate amount of explanatory power with Cox and Snell (0.445), Nagelkerke (0.352) and McFadden (0.271) values showing reliability. Table 4 shows that Monthly Income ($\beta = 2.219$, $p < .001$) has a significant impact on the decision-making process and its effects are strong and positive and the confidence intervals are rather narrow.

Table 1

Table 1 Model Fitting Information — Decision-Making (H_{01})				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	285.334	—	—	—
Final	26.643	248.702	1	0

Note: Chi-Square = 248.702, df = 1, $p = .000$. Link Function: Logit.

The values of pseudo-R²; Cox and Snell (.445), Nagelkerke (.352), McFadden (.271) mean that it has a moderate explanatory power. The fact that the positive parameter estimates (2.219, $p < .001$, Wald = 110.662, 95% CI [1.806, 2.633]) is positive supports the fact that higher income has a significant effect on the possibility to move to higher decision-making category. The proportional odds assumption was tested and the parallel lines test ($p = .082$) confirmed that it was met. The findings are a strong support of H 1 1 and suggest that financial empowerment via craft activities significantly increases the power of women in decision making at home in Ranchi district.

Table 2

Table 2 Goodness-of-Fit — Decision-Making			
	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	4.352	5	0.298
Deviance	5.652	5	0.442

Table 3

Table 3 Pseudo R ² — Decision-Making	
Statistic	Value
Cox and Snell	0.445
Nagelkerke	0.352
McFadden	0.271

Table 4

Table 4 Parameter Estimates — Decision-Making						
	Estimate (β)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% CI
Threshold [1.00]	1.828	0.258	50.164	1	0	[1.322, 2.334]
Threshold [2.00]	4.554	0.35	169.356	1	0	[3.869, 5.241]
Monthly Income	2.219	0.211	110.662	1	0	[1.806, 2.633]

$p < .05$. Dependent Variable: Decision-Making Power (Ordinal: Low=1, Moderate=2, High=3).

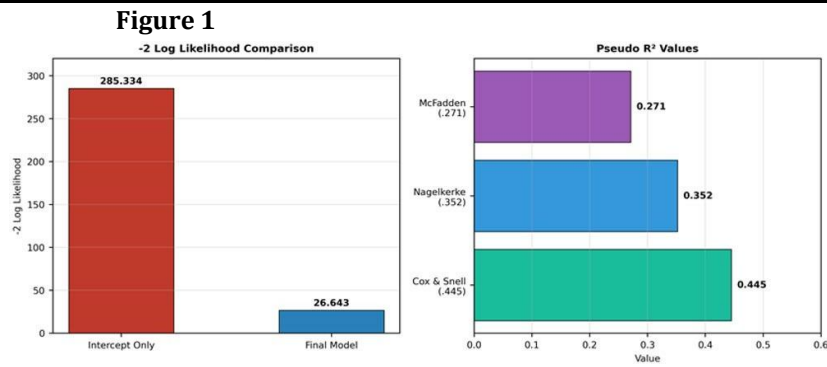


Figure 1 Decision-Making Participation — Model Fit and Explanatory Power

Figure 1 compares the significant change in -2 Log Likelihood (285.334 to 26.643) with the moderate values of Pseudo R 2, which indicate income is a powerful but not a complete predictor of decision-making participation; cultural variables are also likely to explain the remaining variance.

5.2. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

Table 5

Table 5 Model Fitting Information — Freedom of Movement (H ₀₂)				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	97.123	—	—	—
Final	75.32	21.703	1	0

Note: Chi-Square = 21.703, df = 1, p = .000. Link Function: Logit

The model of freedom of movement was much better than the baseline (-2 LL: 97.123 to 75.320; Chi-Square = 21.703, df = 1, p < .001), which rejected H₀₂, represent in Table 6. The values of Pseudo R 2 were however small- Cox and Snell (.044), Nagelkerke (.056) and McFadden (.025)- indicating that there is an insignificant explanatory power. The model adequacy was checked with the help of Goodness-of-Fit tests (Pearson p = .121; Deviance p = .097). Table 7 shows that the parameter estimate of the engagement in craft (= 0.298, p = 0.001, Wald = 20.961, = 0.170,0.425) was found to be positive and significant, meaning that increased occupational engagement is positively correlated with better mobility in business, household and social settings. The assumption of proportional odds was confirmed by parallel lines test (p =.612). Although statistically significant, the low effect size indicates that structural, cultural and social norms still limit the mobility of women even after engaging in occupational activities, and there is a need to complement this with other social interventions.

Table 6

Table 6 Pseudo R ² — Freedom of Movement	
Statistic	Value
Cox and Snell	0.044
Nagelkerke	0.056
McFadden	0.025

Table 7

Table 7 Parameter Estimates — Freedom of Movement						
	Estimate (β)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% CI
Threshold [1.00]	0.223	0.244	0.907	1	0.341	[-.246, .711]
Threshold [2.00]	0.966	0.248	15.121	1	0	[.479, 1.453]
Craft Engagement	0.298	0.065	20.961	1	0	[.170, .425]

$p < .05$. Dependent Variable: Freedom of Movement (Ordinal: Low=1, Moderate=2, High=3).

Figure 2

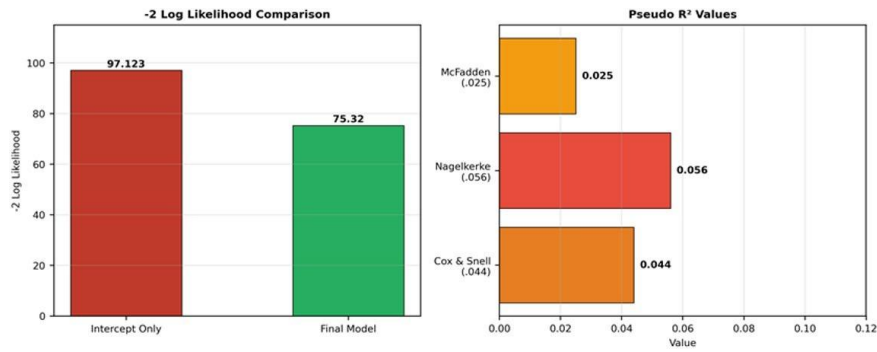


Figure 2 Freedom of Movement — Model Fit and Explanatory Power

Figure 2 indicates that the freedom of movement model has a modest explanatory power (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .056$), indicating that although craft engagement is a strong predictor of mobility, the strength is not that strong, which indicates that there is a role of more general socio-cultural constraints.

5.3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REDUCTION ANALYSIS

Table 8

Table 8 Model Fitting Information — Domestic Violence (H_{03})					
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	
Intercept Only	392.219	—	—	—	
Final	150.2	242.029	1	0	

Note: Chi-Square = 242.029, df = 1, $p = .000$. Link Function: Logit.

The model of domestic violence showed the best fit with -2 Log Likelihood decreasing to 150.200 (Chi-Square = 242.029, df = 1, $p < .001$), the Table 8 shows that it rejects H_{03} . The Goodness-of-Fit statistics (Pearson $p = .714$; Deviance $p = .520$) ensured that there was good model adequacy. The pseudo R^2 values of Cox and Snell (.323), Nagelkerke (.348) and McFadden (.291) suggest a moderate-good explanatory power, the highest of the three models. The estimate of the parameter ($\beta = 1.138$, $p = .001$, Wald = 189.097, 95% CI = .976-1.300) indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between occupational engagement and decrease in domestic violence. This means that involvement in income generating craft activities improves bargaining power and status of women in households and hence the vulnerability to violence is low in Table 9. The proportional odds assumption was confirmed by the parallel lines test ($p = .072$) and it is acceptable to use OLR framework in this analysis. Table 10 shows that there is a statistically strong model of reduction of domestic violence. There are significant parameters at the threshold ($p < .001$), which proves that there is strong differentiation of the categories. There is a positive and significant impact on Craft Engagement ($\beta = 1.138$, $p < .001$) which indicates that higher levels of participation have a significant positive impact. Small confidence intervals and large Wald are further confirmation of the predictive power and reliability of the model.

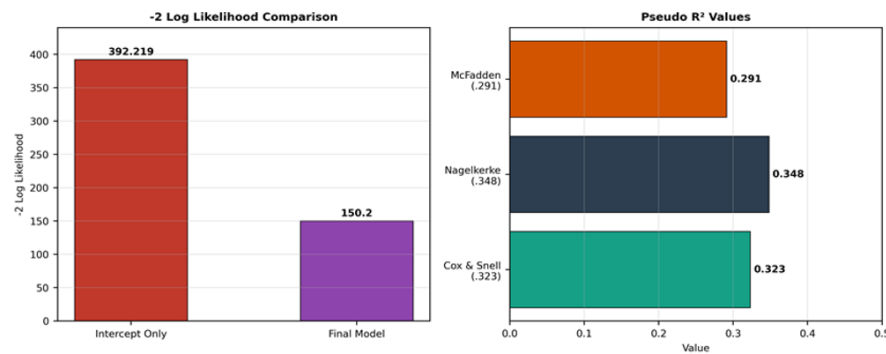
Table 9

Table 9 Pseudo R^2 — Domestic Violence	
Statistic	Value
Cox and Snell	0.323
Nagelkerke	0.348
McFadden	0.291

Table 10

Table 10 Parameter Estimates — Domestic Violence Reduction						
	Estimate (β)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% CI
Threshold [1.00]	1.81	0.259	48.799	1	0	[1.302, 2.318]
Threshold [2.00]	3.24	0.301	115.766	1	0	[2.650, 3.830]
Threshold [3.00]	3.429	0.307	124.414	1	0	[2.818, 4.020]
Threshold [4.00]	5.521	0.365	229.472	1	0	[4.816, 6.247]
Craft Engagement	1.138	0.083	189.097	1	0	[.976, 1.300]

$p < .05$. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence Reduction (Ordinal: 1=Low to 5=High Reduction).

Figure 3**Figure 3** Domestic Violence Reduction — Model Fit and Explanatory Power

The -2 LL of [Figure 3](#) illustrates the biggest decrease of the -2 LL (392.219 to 150.200) and the biggest Pseudo R² of the three models demonstrating that the relationship between craft engagement and decrease in domestic violence is best and most valid.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study offer some faint evidence to the theoretical frameworks, which connect the concept of income-generating involvement to social empowerment. The bargaining power of women in accordance to the Household Bargaining Theory [Agarwal \(1997\)](#) significantly rose with their financial involvement by engaging in crafts and thus proves economic inclusion to change the intra-household power relationship. The large coefficient of monthly income (= 2.219) shows the material bargaining dividend, which is received by livelihoods based on craft.

This minimal effect of craft involvement on the freedom of movement (Nagelkerke R² = .056), is also consistent with other researchers [Alhawsawi and Jawhar \(2023\)](#) who were able to conclude that even in the economic engaged women situation there remains a mediating role of cultural and structural factors that affect mobility. This does agree with the Capability Approach [Walker and Unterhalter \(2007\)](#) which observes that the participation in the economy is not sufficient, that freedom to grow needs to enable social environments to grow so as well.

The most striking finding is that craft engagement and domestic violence reduction have very significant correlation (= 1.138, Nagelkerke R² = .348). This is consistent with [Mehra et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that the economic empowerment of women will reduce gender-based vulnerability in Indian women, and with the general hypothesis by [Duflo \(2012\)](#) that the economic development of women will turn into the protective social outcomes. This moderate to good explanatory power suggests that the craft based livelihood programmes would be particularly useful in rural contexts as violence-reduction programmes.

7. CONCLUSION

In this study, the social empowerment of 440 women artisans in Ranchi district who were involved in cane and bamboo crafts under three dimensions of household participation in making decisions, freedom of movement and decrease in domestic violence was studied under Ordinal Logistic Regression analysis. Overall, the results support the hypothesis that the statistically significant and significant effect of traditional craft-based livelihoods is on the outcomes of social empowerment of women. The contribution of finance by participating in crafts became a strong indicator of decision-making authority, which implies that income generation is a fundamental change in the intra-household bargaining. The higher income women were, the more they were significantly involved in making decisions concerning household management, children and family planning, and personal affairs- highlighting the potential transformational power of economic inclusion. Freedom of movement was also greatly predicted by craft engagement at a very small magnitude, and it indicates that although occupational participation contributes to the increase in mobility in business, household, and social environments, the existence of cultural norms and structural barriers still hinders the complete manifestation of the autonomy of women. Most importantly, the research indicates that there is a great and trustworthy connection between work engagement, and the decrease of domestic violence- the most explanatory model in all the analyses. This observation places craft-based livelihoods as a feasible safeguard measure against gender-induced vulnerability to support the argument of policy-specific support. The paper finishes by concluding that encouraging women to get involved in the traditional handicraft sectors especially cane and bamboo craft in the state of Jharkhand may be an ideal solution to empowering social stand, augmenting intra-domestic equity, increasing mobility, and decreasing domestic violence. Investments in the craft-sector as a tool to holistically empower women should be prioritized by policymakers, NGOs and development practitioners, in addition to social norm-change efforts to deal with structural barriers.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has a number of limitations. First, the study is limited to Ranchi district and thus the findings cannot be generalized to other areas or craft industries. Second, cross-sectional data are not able to determine causal directionality of craft engagement and outcomes of empowerment; longitudinal designs would offer better causal results. Third, self-reported information of sensitive issues like domestic violence can be prone to social desirability bias that can underestimate the real situation. To establish a more comprehensive evidence-base on craft-based women empowerment in India, future studies need to utilize comparative designs in more than one district or state, use mixed methods to capture the qualitative aspects of empowerment, and expand the study to other sectors of handicraft like textiles, Dokra metalwork or handloom weaving.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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